IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Ref. no:	RV262
Interviewee Surname:	Summerfield
Forename:	Peter
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	3 June 1933
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	8 February 2022
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	3 hours and 12 minutes

[00:00:00] *Today's the 8th of February 2022. We're conducting an interviewer with Mr Peter Summerfield. My name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London. Peter, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Archive.*

I'm pleased to be here.

I'm sorry it took longer because of COVID, and we had to postpone so many times, but here we are. Here we finally are.

Better late than never.

Exactly. Can you please tell us something about your family background?

Well, I was born in Berlin on the 3rd of June 1933. As it happens, only a matter of four months after Hitler came to power. Already in the Jewish hospital – already Jews were not allowed to be in the hospital other than a Jewish one, and I was born the 2nd of twins. I have a twin brother, George, who's twenty-five minutes older and it came as quite a surprise to both my parents.

No indication that they were expecting twins.

None at all. No, not in those days, they didn't know beforehand. And my parents then soon had to move because we were living in a flat on the ground – on the first floor, so we moved to a flat on the ground floor because otherwise she would have to carry one of us upstairs every few minutes.

And tell us a little bit about your parents and their – where they came from and...

Yes, both my parents were born in Berlin. My father and mother both lost their parents very early on, except for my father's mother who did live on and later on died in Theresienstadt, but all the other parents – I never had grandparents as such. My father learnt administration and he worked first of all at a bank in Berlin, but he lost his job just a question of four, five

weeks before I was actually born. **[00:02:14]** Because already then there was a decree that the Nazis wouldn't allow the Jewish people to be in the civil service, so she lost- he lost his job from one moment to the other. My mother learnt dressmaking. She learnt haute couture. She was actually very proud that she dressed the Tiller Girls. They were the equivalent of what one now would think of as the Spice Girls, and so- she lost – she couldn't lose her job, and that was very useful later on that she was a dressmaker. So, she continued to work, but not of course while we were very young, and she was having to look after us.

Did she have her own studio, or did she work for somebody or...?

No, she had her own clientele.

And where did – do you know how your parents met and...?

Yes, they met on a boat. Apparently, both used to go boating on one of the lakes near Berlin and on one day they were in the same boat together, and that was the beginning of their friendship, and that of course resulted in the end in their getting married in 1928.

And where did they get married?

In Berlin. But neither of them was very religious but they kept, they kept a Jewish household and we used to – I mean, I was pretty young at the time, but I know that they did -to begin with- have a Friday evening.

And were there – you said you didn't meet the grandparents but were there other family members living around or in –?

Yes, my mother had two sisters and to begin with, the first year they were very helpful, but then in 1934 they moved to Palestine as it was then called. **[00:04:02]** They already felt unhappy. My mother also had a brother and he died in 1928, and he – although he was only himself twenty-eight years old – was already saying then that there was no future for Jews in Germany. That was as early as 1928. But unfortunately, he died as a result of an operation

and whereas nowadays he would certainly have lived – it was not a major operation – so unfortunately, he died. But my mother's two sisters went to Palestine and then in due course got married there.

And your father? Did he have any other relatives?

He had one brother, but I don't really remember him, but I do know that he was later on sent to Auschwitz and he was murdered there.

What was his name?

Yes, his name was Reinhold [00:04:55].

Sommerfeld.

Yes.

And you said you moved to a ground floor flat, so tell us where was this flat and what was the area? Where did you live in Berlin?

We lived in Schöneberg and it was Heylstrasse 29, and we lived in a flat on the ground floor which had a very nice courtyard, and we used to play in the courtyard quite a lot, especially with the children of the caretaker. And I remember that my brother and I of course shared a room, and I still – I remember quite well that when I went back after the War it was much smaller than I remembered it.

What was it? A sort of building with a courtyard?

Yes, it had probably a few hundred flats all together.

So quite a large building.

Quite a large, yes, block.

And Peter, what are your – do you remember your first memories? What are your first memories of growing up in Berlin?

[00:06:00] We used to go quite a lot to the park and then I remember though, that my mother saying, 'Well, we can't go into this part of the park.' We weren't allowed to go into the whole of the park. There was one area which was designated as being available as well for Jewish people. And I also remember being told that I should not sit on the green bench, but I was only allowed to sit on the yellow bench. I remember that very well. I also remember that we went on a holiday once to Kolberg in the north of Germany [present-day Kolobrzeg, Poland], and there again there was only a certain part of the beach which was available for Jewish people, and we lived in a Jewish boarding house there. But best of all I remember playing with the two boys of the caretaker. They were, both of them, just a little bit older than we were but we were very friendly with them. Until one day unfortunately they came back from school, and they said to us that they were no longer allowed to play with us. We were quite perturbed. We couldn't understand why. They couldn't understand why. But as I learnt later on, they'd been told at school that they were not allowed to play with Jewish children and therefore that, there was an end at that time, to the friendship. But the caretaker actually came over and talked to my father about it, and he said, 'I wish I could do something about it,' but he was afraid because at that time any- any objection to Nazi rules and the rules and the regulations was usually met with concentration camp. So, he had no choice but to agree, but later on that very caretaker was extremely useful to us. He was most helpful later on.

Okay, we'll come back to that.

Yes.

And did you go to a nursery or to a pre-school? **[00:08:01]**

Yes. When we were about five years old, we had to go to a nursery school. Again, there was only one Jewish nursery school still open, and this happened to be just the other side of Berlin.

And where was that, Peter?

That I'm afraid I don't remember, but I know it was the other side because we used to have to take a train to get there. And I remember my mother later on telling me that when she had to wait for us for three or four hours while we were at school, there was nothing she could do any more. Because by that time you'd had the 1935 rules and regulations which the Nazis introduced, but also many edicts such as my mother wasn't allowed to go to a restaurant, wasn't allowed to go either to a cinema, a theatre, or anything like that. So, she just had to wait for us while we were at school, and then take us home. But I do –

So this was 1938.

This is 1938, yes.

And in that time between '33 and '38 did your father manage to get any wor, ork?

Yes, for a short while he did get a job as an insurance broker and an insurance agent with a Jewish company which bought in a little bit of money, and that was very helpful. And of course, from 1935 onwards my parents were already thinking of how they could possibly get away from Germany.

From 1935.

Yeah. Well, 1935 onwards.

And what options were they exploring at the time? I mean, you weren't probably aware of it.

I wasn't aware of it, but I do know because I've seen the letters which my parents wrote. They wrote many letters to a number of people and also the number of governments. They wrote to Australia where I've now got many children and grandchildren, but that was of no use because in order to get out there were only two ways in which this could be done. **[00:10:03]** Either you had to find a country where they were prepared to give you a job or to allow you to work, and you had to find that job in the first instance, or alternatively you had to find someone who was prepared to sponsor you, to guarantee you financially. And it wasn't until sort of 1936/37 that we finally found someone in Pennsylvania, in eastern Pennsylvania who was prepared to sponsor us. There were lots of letters which my parents had to write because he was already sponsoring two other families. But in the end, he relented and said he would be responsible for us.

And who was that person?

He was a very distant uncle. An uncle a few times removed.

What was his name?

[Pause] I'm trying to remember at the moment.

Don't worry, we can come back to it.

No, I will come back to it I think, yes.

Because he saved your life in that sense.

Well, he did, yes. But by this time as I say, we were going to the kindergarten but on the way to the kindergarten in 1938, must have been the 10th of November – I know that now – we passed the synagogue which we had visited with my parents. We'd been there for the festival of Shavuot, so we remembered it well, but as we passed we saw it burning. It was the day after *Kristallnacht*, The Night of the Burning Glass, and it really left an indelible impression on the minds of both George and myself to see the synagogue burning. Although in our

ignorance we thought they would probably soon extinguish the flames, but that wasn't why the fire engines were there. **[00:12:02]** They were there merely to protect adjoining property. But we saw there was a crowd there and they were cheering and whilst we didn't understand it, we were all very, very upset to see our synagogue burning. I remember going there once with my parents. And I also remember one incident because I remember that I was talking at the time when the, the Rabbi was giving his sermon, and my mother told me not to talk. And I remember turning to her and saying, 'Why shouldn't I talk? I see that man up there, he's talking,' so I was a bit naughty even in those days.

Peter, which synagogue was it? In the Fasanenstraße?

Yes, in the Fasanenstraße.

The main synagogue.

The main one.

Hmm-mm.

Yes.

And you said on –

Well, it's not the main one but it was the main one in the area in which we lived.

Yeah.

Yes.

And you said on Kristallnacht you were in a train or in a bus. How did you see it? Or you walked by?

No, there was a local train which passed, just a suburban train, but you see it had just left the station, the Zoo [00:13:14] station so it was going very slowly, so we had a lot of time to see it. It's just after it starts from that journey that we passed the synagogue, so we saw it very clearly.

And was the nursery kindergarten open on that day?

Yes, it was.

That's interesting isn't it?

Yes, it was open. Yes.

So you actually went there, and your mother left you there.

We went there as usual, yes.

[Pause] Hmm, that's interesting isn't it because one hears of –

It is interesting because, I mean, my father was very lucky because my late father-in-law was actually pulled out of bed on that day and taken off to concentration camp to Buchenwald and he had a terrible time there. **[00:14:01]** But my father was very lucky because he was hidden by the caretaker. The caretaker came – when he heard that things were moving against Jewish people, that Jewish people were being attacked on the streets, that businesses were being ransacked, that synagogues were burning and so on, he went to my father and hid him in the cellar of our block of flats. And that's one of the matters which was later on actually filmed by the BBC in the programme on BBC2, *Saved By A Stranger*, and at the moment that's still possible to see that on catchup.

Okay.

And that's part of the story that he was so helpful to us then, but he was even more helpful later on.

Peter, what was his name?

Schädler. His name was Schädler.

Schädler.

Yeah.

And first name?

I only know the boys' names and the one that we're still in touch with now as a result of the film is called Rolf Schädler.

So his father came on the 9th probably of November, or 10th.

Yeah, and hid –

And hid him where exactly?

He hid him in the cellar of the block of flats.

And for how –?

I don't think – I don't- my brother didn't say that they came looking for him. He was not the sort of person who was in the forefront of Jewish politics or any other politics, they were very just ordinary civilians leading a very ordinary life. And they were – certainly, I don't think they were particularly searching for him. He probably wasn't on any of the lists of people they immediately sent off to concentration camp like my late father-in-law.

Yeah, they arrested him. Where did he live at the time? Was it near you?

He lived in Breslau.

Okay.

And but fortunately, there the story did end reasonably well because my late mother-in-law was blonde and blue-eyed, and when she, you know, understood that my father must be having a terrible time in the concentration camp she took her own life into her hands and thought she might never be able to succeed. **[00:16:15]** But she had the guts, the courage to go to Gestapo headquarters to look for a letter which had gone astray which gave my father, late father-in-law permission to work in England. So, he had permission to leave, but the letter had gone astray, and it was vitally important to find that letter [phone rings].

One second. Talking about your father-in-law and that he was arrested.

Yes.

On Kristallnacht.

Shall I tell that story again?

Yes, please.

Yeah. My late father-in-law was less fortunate because he was arrested on *Kristallnacht* and he was pulled out of bed actually and put on a train, and then he was sent off to the concentration camp Buchenwald. I remember my father telling me that when they got there, although they were expecting the Jews it was all prearranged actually, although they pretended that it was spontaneous. When he got there, there wasn't room for him in the actual barracks, so he was – he had to sleep outside. And you can imagine how cold it must have been in November, to have to sleep outside. And he was very badly treated there, but fortunately he'd had –

One second.

Shall I start it again now?

No, it's okay. You were saying that he arrived in Buchenwald.

Buchenwald, yes. I was just saying that he had to stay, to sleep outside because there wasn't enough room. Have you got that or is that...?

Yes, that's fine.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Fortunately, my late father-in-law had permission to come to England. He'd been able to find a job here in London and but unfortunate –

Yeah.

Yeah, but unfortunately the letter had gone astray. **[00:18:06]** And so my late mother-in-law had the courage to go to Gestapo headquarters to see if she could possibly locate this letter. She took her life into her own hands because she told a friend at the time, 'I may not be able to come back,' because Jews were just being sent automatically to concentration camps for very slight reasons, often no reasons whatsoever. Anyway she went there, and she was able to find someone who was helpful because not all Germans were necessarily bad. And that person helped her to find the letter, and with that letter we were able to get my father-in-law out of concentration camp, and he immediately left for England. And then my late mother-in-law later on followed with Marianne, with my wife Marianne. Of course, she had to make this decision as to whether to leave behind the two grandmothers. Her - the two grandmothers who unfortunately then stayed in Breslau for a year or two before they were also then taken

by cattle truck to Lithuania. A journey which lasted three or four days, without food, without water, and when they got to Lithuania, the day after, they were taken to the – to a place. It's well-know now because there's a monument there, I think it's called The Red Fort. And there, together with 5000 other people, they were shot after having been made to dig their own graves. So that was how my grandmothers on that side died. But fortunately, my father was lucky, he escaped.

Yeah, because of the caretaker.

Well, because of the caretaker. But now we were desperate to get out of Germany because after *Kristallnacht,* Jews knew that there was absolutely no future whatsoever. **[00:20:04]** I mean, the Nazis even made Jewish people pay for the damage which they had created. They had destroyed and ransacked all the businesses, and any businesses which Jews still owned at that time, they had to give them up. Either for paltry sums of money or for no money whatsoever.

Peter, you were young at the time and what – do you remember what were you feeling? I mean, were you protected by your parents?

Protected as much as possible, but I do remember that my parents got much more nervous. We went out much less, we didn't go to the park any more. One of the reasons was because each Jewish person had to have an identity card, and I still have the original identity card of my mother, and that has a big J on it. And of course, anyone could be asked for an identity card and people could immediately see that we were Jewish. And also, by that time every Jewish person had to have a Jewish name. A woman had to have the name Sara, and the men had to have the name Israel. That's why all the documents I have including the original passport which I have which managed to get the family out of Germany in the end, still has all these extra names on it. So –

But what I mean is, for you because you sort of grew up in Nazi Germany, it must have seemed normal to some extent that all this –

It was normal but I was told by my parents, you know, we have to be good when we went out on the street with them. I remember there was – my mother was quite afraid at one point because I think George was the naughty one on that occasion when he rang a bell which he shouldn't have done of a house for no good reason. And that person came out and complained bitterly to my mother, and my mother said, 'Well, I'm holding my son here, he's next to me, he certainly didn't ring the bell.' **[00:22:06]** And of course, the reason was that the twin brother then had to come back and explain. And fortunately, that person had a sense of humour, but a silly thing like that could have ended up with us being sent to concentration camp. Such a stupid matter like that.

So there was fear.

There was fear.

You remember the fear.

There was fear, and let me notice: [00:22:26] we had to be good. And also, I remember very well because I'm just coming to this part of the story, that when we tried to find the place to leave Germany and find peace of mind and safety again, it was a long time before the Americans agreed that we could actually go to the United States. Because after *Kristallnacht*, two months later we got a letter from the embassy in – the American Embassy in Berlin which said yes, we could leave, but we were number 46,000 and so many hundreds in the waiting list. And so, although we got that permission from the Consulate as it was, in December of 1938, it wasn't until June of 1939 that we got the green light. And it was then that my father had to list everything which went into a big container. And not only did he have to list this, but he had to put against every item what we had originally paid for it. We have copies of these documents, and I remember my father sitting every evening typing away. By that time, I was six years old, so I remember this quite well. And the interesting thing is, you see, that there was a German Gestapo officer who was at the – in, in our flat watching whilst everything went into the container. **[00:24:14]** He made sure that everything that went in was permitted because only certain items were permitted, and lots of items were disallowed. And also, every evening he would seal up the room where the packing was being

done. Now, we only had three rooms and one of the rooms was now devoted to packing. And I remember my parents saying, 'For goodness' sake, don't go near the door,' of the room in which the packing was being carried out, 'and don't go near that seal.' My parents were really afraid that if we tampered with that seal, again it would have been reason to be sent to concentration camp. Now, all these items went into this huge container and as I say, my father had to indicate exactly what the original cost was. But although the container went to Hamburg, the port in the north of London [00:25:10], and it was supposed to go straightaway to the United States via New York and then to Pennsylvania. As soon as it got to Hamburg it was opened up by the Gestapo and they auctioned everything off. So, although we had to pay for everything in that container, from a toothbrush to a big cupboard to a bed- I mean, we had large assets and small assets, we never saw any of that again.

But how did you find out what happened to that container?

We only found out after the War. We didn't know.

At that point you were thinking –

Mind you, we'd given up [laughs] getting anything. By that time, we realised that the chances were pretty slim [both laugh]. We knew how they operated because after all, the Nazis were very keen to collect as much money as possible. **[00:26:05]** To drag out and get as much money from Jewish people and other people as well, in order to, in order to have a war chest because they were preparing for war, and it was an excellent way of getting money. So that's why a number of Jewish people were at that time still able to escape because they found someone who would take them, or sponsor them, or give them a job. What it meant was, that they left without any assets. Everything had to be given up. So, my in-laws for example who left a few months before I did and my wife also, they left in about February of 1939, they had to give up most things. But they- their container with their furniture and their assets did reach London. They paid again everything a second time, but they actually got that in the end. We merely paid for it, and didn't even get it [laughs], so it was adding insult to injury really.

Well, it was a tax.

A tax, yeah.

It was a tax to be paid, wasn't it?

And everything was very carefully monitored. For example, the number of knives and forks each – you know, you could only take one for one person and that sort of thing. And of course, no silver or anything which was valuable. And by that time in any case there'd been so many edicts which had made life so impossible for Jewish people. As I say, we hadn't been allowed to go to any theatre, any restaurant, and my parents-in-law were particularly unhappy because they used to like to go to gyms, to gymnasium, and that wasn't allowed either.

Yeah. What you said was interesting that there was a Gestapo man assigned to come –

That's right.

Every day –

Every day.

To oversee the packing. I mean –

And it took three days. I remember him well for a very silly reason actually. **[00:28:00]** He happened to be a one-armed person. He must have lost his first arm in the - maybe in the First World War, but he was unarmed – he was one-armed and so I remember him. He was a nasty fellow.

Was he nasty?

Didn't, didn't like him, I remember that. I mean, even as a boy of six, I didn't exactly take to him. And he wasn't exactly kind either. And - but we never saw any of that again, so now –

but we did have permission now at the end in June to leave. And so now the idea was that we would take two cases and some hand luggage, and so we made plans to leave. And the idea was that we would also go by boat from Hamburg, first to London. We knew that London would be a stepping-stone and we would have to spend a few weeks in London, and the Nazis did allow us to take a little bit of English money. Not much. No Germany money, but just a little bit of English money. And then we were intending – the intention was that we would go from Liverpool to New York, and then on to Pennsylvania. But the idea was that we were going to leave on a Wednesday. We had our tickets to go on the boat, and my passport indicates this as well which I've still got. And on the Saturday prior to that Wednesday my grandmother came very early in the morning. This I remember- because I remember my parents complaining it was much too early. It was about seven o'clock in the morning, and my mother was making some comment about, you know, 'We haven't had breakfast,' which was quite important to us in those days as young children. And she said she had been listening illegally to the radio. And it was of course illegal because we'd had to give up our radios as we'd also had to give up our tricycles and so on. **[00:30:04]** But even if you did have a radio you were only allowed to listen to German Nazi programmes. She'd been listening illegally, and she said to my parents, 'I really think that war is going to start any day now.' Now, of course, I wasn't really there when they spoke about it, but my parents told me afterwards that their initial reaction was quite naturally, 'Well, yes, we know war would - will probably start, but we're leaving on Wednesday. Today is Saturday so it's only another four days.' And she said, 'No, don't wait until Wednesday. Leave today, Saturday.' Fortunately, my parents were persuaded. I think it was my mother who persuaded my father. She had really the guts to do this, and it needed guts at the time. And so, my father and mother decided they would try and leave on the Saturday. So the only other way would be to go by train, but we'd given up all our money. How could we get away without buying new tickets? My father had this bright idea, yes, of going to the caretaker.

One second Peter. Let's just stop. Okay, Peter we were on the Saturday.

Yeah.

Tell us. Your grandmother came over.

Shall I start it again?

Yes, please.

So we were allowed – we were – sorry, let's start again. We now had tickets to go by boat from Hamburg, first to London, stay in England for a few weeks, and then go on further by boat to the United States. **[00:32:01]** And on – the idea was that we were leaving on the Wednesday, and on the Saturday just prior to that Wednesday very early in the morning, I think it must have been about seven o'clock, my grandmother on my mother's side came very early. And I remember very well my parents complaining. We hadn't even had breakfast, and my mother was rather annoyed about this. And the grandmother explained that she'd been listening illegally to the wireless as it was then called, the radio, and it was illegal because we'd had to give up all our radios, just like my brother and I had had to give up our tricycles which really hurt us tremendously. But she said she'd been listening illegally, and she had heard that war was really very likely to start any day now. Now, as my parents explained to me later on, their initial reaction was quite natural, 'Well, yes, we realise that it's now very possible that war will start, but we're leaving. Today, today is Saturday. We're leaving in four days time on Wednesday. We've got our tickets to go by boat.' The grandmother said, 'No, don't wait until Wednesday. It might be too late. No, you must leave today. Saturday.' Fortunately, very fortunately, my parents were persuaded. I think it was my mother. She had more guts, more courage to make decisions, and she said, 'Well, let's try and leave today.' And so, the idea was now to go by train from Berlin via Holland to London. But we'd given up all our money, so my father just did not have enough money to buy tickets for that journey. We already were no longer in touch with any of our Jewish friends because it was too dangerous, and so my father had the bright idea to go to the caretaker. **[00:34:01]** He went to the caretaker, and he said, 'Look, can you do me a favour? Could you lend us the money to buy these tickets?' He didn't need much persuasion. He said, 'Of course I'll lend you the money,' and he did. Of course, we repaid him after the War, we even gave a certificate to say he wasn't a real Nazi and that helped him because he had to join the German Army as every other German soldier – every other German adult had to do. But he lent us some money and with that money my father bought the tickets. Now, that is of course what is

really featured in this film which I mentioned beforehand, *Saved By A Stranger*. We were saved by that caretaker. Without that money we would not have been able to get away because the boat on Wednesday which we were destined to go on never left. It would have been too late. It made all the difference, those four days.

Peter, what was that boat called? The one which was supposed to leave.

The – Mr Schädler.

No, the boat.

Oh, the boat.

Yeah. Do you know?

No, because it was only going to be from Hamburg to London. It wasn't going to be a famous one because of course the famous one would have been from London to New York rather than this very short journey to- from Hamburg to London.

But it was – so what were the dates? Tell us about the dates.

We, we know the date from the passport. It would have been, it would have been actually by that time about 1941 already. It was going to take some time but that boat also from London never left because it was too dangerous, and that's why we stayed in England.

Yeah, but I mean, the original boat from Hamburg.

The original boat from Hamburg –

When was it supposed to leave?

Well, we were going to- we were going to leave on that Wednesday by train to go to Hamburg. It would have left on that Wednesday. **[00:36:02]**

Which was what date?

We left on the 24th so it would have been about the 27th. It was exactly the day when we arrived in England. It's a good point actually. You're making a very good point. The very day that we arrived in England was the day we were supposed to set off from Hamburg. Thank goodness we were in England. That boat from Hamburg never left because four days later the Germans invaded Poland. On the 1st of September and war broke out. England then declared war on the 3rd of September.

Yeah.

We were very, very lucky. Lucky to be alive. Yes.

So Peter, tell us about the journey and who was on that journey. Who was supposed to come?

Well, so on the Saturday in the evening, it was eleven o'clock at night, I still remember being on Bahnhof Zoo- on the Zoo railway station and the train coming in, and I remember everyone crowding on to that train. We really had to push our way on. And my parents managed to get on with my mother – someone offered my mother a seat. My father had to stand all night on that train, and my mother had two knees, one for each of us, so we were on her knees that night. It wasn't very comfortable, but we were at least on the train. There was one person who was seeing us off. She was the niece of my mother. She was about twenty-three/twenty-four years old, and she had gotten married a few weeks beforehand. She had permission to come to England and she had – she was going to be a nursery nurse to a family. And her husband of a few weeks had already gone to London to prepare the way. Each one had their separate passport, so he'd gone ahead, and he was waiting for her in London. **[00:38:04]** She had permission so on that same Saturday when we left, my parents got in touch with her and said, 'Why don't you come with us? You've got permission.' She said she couldn't come with us. 'Why not?' we asked. Well apparently, she said she had to collect

two dresses from the dressmaker, and she was going to pick those up on Sunday, and she would leave Sunday lunchtime. We know that on Sunday lunchtime she was on the train from the same station going towards Holland and safety. She was stopped at the border, a place called Bentheim. The border was closed. She was sent back. She was sent to a work camp, and she was worked to death or killed in some other way. What we do know is that she never made it. She died because of those two stupid dresses. Those two dresses made all the difference between life and death. The husband, he used to come and see us during the War. He would cry on our shoulder, 'Why couldn't you persuade her?' 'We tried,' we said. 'We failed.' We do know that he never married again. He lost not only his life, but the love of his life and all for two stupid dresses. But we were on the train going towards that same border, Bentheim. We reached it the next morning and as we reached the station there was an announcement in the usual rather abrupt way in which the Germans made these announcements, '*Alle raus*!' 'Everyone out!' Leave your luggage on the train where it would be inspected. Just come off with your hand luggage. **[00:40:01]** In fact, what we had to do was to prove that we had permission to leave, that we'd given everything we ever had to the Nazis, and that we had permission to go somewhere else, that some other country was prepared to take us. So, we got off the train, my father just with his attaché case and the papers. You wouldn't believe it- but not long after we got off the train, the whole train – which was supposed to take us as it was an express right the way through Holland – reversed back into Germany. Everyone on that train lost all their luggage. We were left now with just hand luggage [pause]. That's all we had now. And then we had to wait there for twenty-four hours. We had to either sit or lie on the bare floor. We were still surrounded by German soldiers. If we wanted to use the toilet we were accompanied by one of these guards. My brother and I remember it well because we were hungry. We didn't get anything to eat, we didn't get anything to drink. We didn't realise the agony of my parents. We'd got so near to safety and yet we weren't quite there. If a German train arrived and no Dutch train, we might be forced back into Germany. If a Dutch train arrived, we could escape. So, my parents must have been terribly anxious at that point. And most fortunately it was a Dutch train. And although we were now six-and-a-half years old, we remember that as soon as we got into the Dutch train, there was a real sense of relief. **[00:42:00]** And as we went through Holland, we had to change a few times because there was a – what they called a [inaudible **00:42:09**], a real little country train which arrived in Bentheim. And we had to change trains, and I

remember that quite a few Dutch people used to give us chocolate and sweets. They must have realised that there was already a difficulty, that we'd been kept there and that we probably needed some sort of nourishment. But then we got to Hook of Holland, we got on a boat which was very full. Fortunately we weren't seasick. But it was a pretty rough journey, and then we reached Harwich, and from Harwich by train to Liverpool Street Station. And there the four of us, mum, dad, my brother George, and myself, got off the train. We went along the platform, and we stood there. We didn't know what to do. We had no language. We had a few English pounds which we'd been allowed to take as I mentioned earlier, but we didn't know anyone, we didn't know where to go. We'd arrived early, there was no one to meet us. That I remember very well. Fortunately, there was a Jewish charity now known as World Jewish Relief. They heard that there were still refugees arriving in the same sort of difficulty as we were, and they sent someone, and they took us to a hotel, The Royal Hotel in London, where they put us up for two weeks and paid for us to stay there. They didn't make it clear that not only would we be served breakfast, but they would also serve us other meals. So, my mother used to take us round the corner to a little bar or restaurant, and just order carrots for us. **[00:44:06]** And I remember people asking whether we don't eat anything other than carrots, but of course my mother said, 'No, that's- they really only eat carrots,' because they didn't want to spend a lot of money. We had only very little money. But when we got back to the hotel, I remember my brother and I were hungry, and so we rang the bell [laughs] when my parents were downstairs just in the – in, in one of the reception rooms, and one of the maids came up. We made it clear by signpost, by signing, that we were hungry, and a few hours later – not a few hours, but a few minutes later my parents came back, and we were surrounded by all these maids [laughs]. Because being twins, we were quite an attraction. They liked to see two young boys, six-and-a-half, and we were eating away quite merrily [laughs], but my parents were then reassured they wouldn't have to pay for the food which we were then able to consume. We'd been given one address in London. This address was given to us by the people who took over our flat in Berlin. They said, 'We do know someone in London. They might be able to help you find a room to stay.' And that's where in fact we did go and find a room in Chiswick, and we stayed there for a few weeks. Just in one room. And in fact, for the next four years the one room was all that we could ever afford. But we were at least – we'd lost everything, but we were here, we had freedom [pause]. As we often say, my wife and I when we go round to schools and organisations and tell them what

happened to us, 'What is the use of belongings, of assets, if you haven't got freedom?' **[00:46:03]** And we had that in the UK even though war broke out within a matter of days. We even got a present from the government. Within days each one of us got a gas mask. [Laughs] My brother got a Donald Duck gas mask, and I got a Mickey Mouse gas mask.

Children – for children specifically.

For children, especially for children. They really thought that the Nazis would start not only bombing London but gassing London.

Peter, I want to ask you, speaking of belongings, what- did you bring anything? Could you bring anything on that journey?

No. The only thing we had was the attaché case with papers. Nothing. We just had the clothes we were standing in.

No toys or –?

Well, there was one thing I had. I had a teddy bear which I still have. But that was the only thing because they couldn't take that away from me, I was holding it.

You didn't leave it in the train. You took it out.

I took it. I've still got it. I've got it now. I've got it here.

So that teddy bear's from Berlin.

That teddy bear is from Berlin.

So that's the only thing you could bring.

The only thing of my first six-and-a-half years in Berlin, but –

And your brother? Could he take – did he bring –?

He did, but unfortunately, he's lost his, but I haven't, I've got him. And sometimes I'm asked, 'What is his name?' I say, 'Well, I wasn't very original, I called it Teddy,' [laughs] so it's not very original. But it meant a lot to me, it still does. I look after Teddy. He's only small, he's only about this size.

Okay, we're going to look at Teddy after the interview.

You can certainly look at Teddy. I'll show him to you. He's sleeping at the moment [laughs]. Yeah, but we were very lucky because right opposite where we had this one room in Chiswick, there was a school. It was a private school, and the headmaster there heard that two little refugee boys had arrived who didn't know any English. **[00:48:07]** And he had this bright idea of sending word over that he would accept us without charge to go to that school. So, at six-and-a-half we went to this school, and we – lucky, they accepted us. There was a much older girl there who was Dutch, and she was able to act as an interpreter, she was able to know enough German to be able to help us with language, but we orig- immediately started to learn English. And from that moment onward, all that George and I wanted to be, and my parents wanted to be, was to be accepted in England and to be British, as far as George and I were concerned. But then we were told that because we had no money it would be cheaper to live in Eastbourne. So, for a little while we went to Eastbourne and there, I remember that on Whitsun Sunday my mother was going to bake her first cake in England when my father was picked up by policemen in civil uniform, or in civil clothing. They came and picked him up and he was interned in the Isle of Man. He was one of the first people because they started- at the coast and worked their way up north, so we had no idea what it was all about. Apparently what the British government feared was that the Germans had been able to slip a few spies amongst those who had been able to escape at the last moment from Germany. And therefore, Churchill gave the order for all Germans, whether Jewish or not, to be interned. **[00:50:03]** Some were sent to Australia or Canada, but the majority went to the Isle of Man. I know my late father-in-law was interned, and he had apparently a very bad time. There are letters to show he was hungry, and he was cold, and he had to have some

blankets sent to him. My father always spoke quite well of internment, but he lost his freedom. My late father-in-law was there for a whole year, but my father was only there for six months.

Where was he exactly, do you know?

In the Isle of Man.

Which camp, do you know where he went to?

I don't know which camp, but I do know that he was one of the only people who found a job because he ran the canteen there.

He did.

And yes, and in fact so well that we have a letter saying how well he worked and how efficient and- how well he actually dealt with it. So, he worked and got a little bit of money for it which he sent to us because my mother, my brother, and I then had to return from Eastbourne to London to get away from the coast. They were expecting an invasion any day. So, they forced us immediately to come back to London. I was delayed a little while because I fell and hurt my knee, and I got special permission to stay an extra week while my knee was healing, to stay in Eastbourne.

By yourself?

Yeah.

Interesting.

No, with my mother and also my brother.

Right, so everyone was there.

Live in Eastbourne was still the same as ever. The band was playing. I remember my father used to take us and- before he was interned, to listen to the Royal Marine Band in the bandstand there. My mother managed to get a job. She did – she cleaned the inside of the public house there, and so she just did that work. **[00:52:06]** It didn't matter what work, but at least she earned a little bit of money.

And did you go to school in Eastbourne as well?

No, we didn't go. We didn't go to school because we were only there for a few months from about – must have been about December until about May. And we didn't go to school there, no. I don't suppose my parents had the money to send us to school, and no, we didn't go to school.

And they went to Eastbourne because they thought it was cheaper than being in London.

It was cheaper. So, we came back, and my mother found a room in Dennington Park Road in West Hampstead, right opposite a synagogue. And I remember our entertainment was whenever there was a wedding we used to go into the synagogue and listen in and - because at least it was warm, and there was something to do, and didn't cost anything. So, that was our entertainment. But then there was a friend there who started teaching us to read and to write and so on. And then in due course we went to another room in Chalk Farm. And there we were in a house where there was an exploded – there was a high explosive bomb which fell only a few doors away. By that time my father had been released because it was intended now that we would go to America, but our boat was cancelled at the last moment. But even before we went to Chalk Farm where this place was, because of the bombing which was going which started in about the middle of 1940. The air-raids were so terrible, and the bombing was so grave that the safest place was to be in the Underground. **[00:54:12]** So, my mother would take my brother and me -whilst my father was interned- to Tottenham Court Road Underground Station and there for eight months we used to sleep on the hard floor there. We just had one blanket, and we had to be there at three o'clock in the afternoon, and

we left again with the first trains which left at about six o'clock in the morning to one room in Camden Town.

Every day?

Every day. And when we - when my father was then released to be able to join us, we sent him a telegram which we still have as well, a copy of it, which said, 'Sleeping Tottenham Court Road Underground Station. Platform three or four, Northern Line.' Otherwise, when he came back, he wouldn't have been able to find us. When he did come back he went along the platform to see us again.

He found you.

But we were very lucky actually there as well. Lucky to be in England although it wouldn't have been unlucky to go to America, because someone took pity on my mother. Every lunchtime, just before going to Tottenham Court Road, she would take us to a place called Woburn House where people were being sent to America. That's where the administration was going on. And so, someone took pity on my mother and put us on one boat earlier than the one that we were expected to go on. But the boat which we were then put on was cancelled because it was too dangerous. They were bombing, torpedoing, even civilian ships crossing the Atlantic even though America wasn't even in the War at that stage. So that boat never left. **[00:56:02]** The boat a week later did leave and reached the United States. So just a coincidence that we stayed in England. Now, after the War we still had permission to go to America but by that time now we were, we were beginning to get settled. Whilst originally our passport did not allow my parents to work, gradually the government relented, and my parents were then beginning to work. Especially my mother. Dressmaking didn't need language, so she worked. My father's first job was as a timekeeper in a demolition company. Again, it didn't need English to be a timekeeper. But an interesting thing about the passport is, that we had one passport between the four of us. I've got the original here with me still. Unusual for one passport to have four different names on it.

Yeah.

Again, fortunate. If we'd each had our own passport my father might have gone ahead to prepare the way, the same as that unfortunate man who lost his wife, went ahead. So we were lucky that we only had one passport between the four of us.

Hmm.

So here we were in Camden Town in one room. My father, as I said, had now joined us but here we were beginning to go to school. The only thing is, we went I think to about five schools in a matter of just over a year because, I don't know, either the school was bombed or there was some other reason why we couldn't go there, it was too dangerous. And of course, we were - at night-time we were in Tottenham court Road Underground Station, so we only went there in the mornings.

And what was that like in the station with all the other people? Were there always the same people every night? **[00:58:01]**

No, there was a bit of a scramble, that's why we had to be there at three or three-thirty. And I remember one day someone stole our blankets, and others clubbed around and gave us blankets. But also what I do remember as well is, that when we went to Woburn House where my mother used to pester them, 'Why can't we go to America?' Because in America there was someone who would have paid for us.

Because you had the relative there.

We had the relative there. Here in London, we still had no money really at all. We were still living on borrowed money. Money which we had borrowed from my mother's two sisters who went to Palestine. They each lent us £200 which was given to a lawyer and gradually we managed to extract that money out of that lawyer, he was very difficult about it, and that's what we were living on.

So very difficult.

And also, the…the charity continued to help us. And I've got for example now a whole volume where they'd listed everything which they did for us, and it shows that even a year after we arrived, in other words in 1940/41, we were still being given some pants, some underwear, some pyjamas [laughs]. We didn't have anything.

And you have the Central British Fund.

Yeah.

And you have those files.

They were then known as the Central Fund for British Jews.

Yes.

Became World Jewish Relief which now helps not only Jewish people, but non-Jewish people as well, and I still support them.

And they have the files for the whole family.

They had the whole family. And one day they came here, and they said, 'Would you like to see the papers?' Because they released them many years later, now only about four/five years ago. And they took some film of my brother and myself seeing these papers for the first time. It's quite emotional. **[01:00:00]**

Because suddenly you see in black and white what happened.

And how little we had.

Yeah.

That we needed to have underwear given to us. Yeah.

You were refugees who came with nothing.

But then we –

Peter, can I just ask one question? Why did your mother – wasn't there – let's say, I always thought that at Belsize Park there was a shelter as well. Why did she go – or was it safer to be in Tottenham Court? Was it a deeper shelter?

No, it was the nearest to Woburn House so that she could go there, pester them, [laughs] ask to be sent to America. That's why we chose Tottenham – also, it's one of the deeper Undergrounds. Belsize Park is also very deep, yes, you're right. But that was the reason. But we weren't living in Belsize Park, we were living in Chalk Farm which actually is not very deep.

Right.

So the nearest would have been Chalk Farm.

Right.

But that was the reason why. And then we did go to school in Chalk Farm. That was just a primary school, and we didn't get on awfully well there. First of all, the standard was very low, even our standard was a little bit higher. And then because we were still not able to speak perfect English the boys there thought we were German, and we started to be bullied. And I mean, I've forgiven them for that. I could understand, after all the Germans were the enemy. And so, they started bullying us, and then even when my mother came to pick us up, even when she had one on the left hand and the other one on the right hand, they were still coming up and bullying us. My mother felt that she hadn't escaped Germany for us to be bullied in England. And then one day she had the bright idea- she heard that there was a school in Swiss Cottage called the Hall School, Hampstead. **[01:02:04]** So she went there,

and knocked on the door, and managed to find the headmaster. No appointment. And she went to the headmaster, and she said, 'Could you take my boys into your school?' Now, a lot of children had been evacuated at that time including for example, my wife Marianne, so he must have had some spaces. But I remember he took us to the Hall School in Hampstead, he played with us in the yard on tyres and other things, and he must have felt that we had some possibility of doing reasonably well. And that we probably, you know, could manage being in that school, and he allowed us to join the school, two for the price of one. That was a lot of money [laughs] for my parents. Two for the price of one was really very much money, but fortunately they said, 'Well, we'll give up other things, but we'd like you to have a good education.' And that gave us a brilliant start. We got a very good education in the Hall School in Hampstead. They were very good to us there. Within no time I was coming first in the class, and my brother was either second or third [laughs], always the same, and we were doing well. We liked it there, and we have a lot- owe a lot to the Hall School, Hampstead. And then when we were at an age when we had to move on, to secondary school, most were going to St Paul's, Westminster, and schools like that, City of London. Of course my parents couldn't afford that, and someone told my parents why don't we try to go to William Ellis Grammar School in Highgate? And we took exams to get there, and we were both taken to William Ellis and immediately moved from the first year into the second year, and there we had the majority of our education. **[01:04:15]** And it was a wonderful school. We learnt very well. We had a headmaster who was most helpful and very supportive. So much so that we did our matriculation there, we went on to take A-level, and our headmaster whom I'd like to name, Mr Lockwood, he was so good- he advised that if we worked hard, we could go to Oxford or Cambridge. He used to teach Latin as a foreign language. As a living language I should say, not a foreign one. Of course, foreign, but as a living foreign language. And he used to do demonstration classes. So, he would take about fifteen or sixteen of us to Oxford, to Cambridge, to London University, other universities and it was then that we thought it would be rather nice to be able to study at Oxford or Cambridge. And he said, 'Well, you can if you work hard enough.' We did. I won a state scholarship to Pembroke College at Oxford, and my brother won a major county scholarship to Pembroke College at Oxford. They took us on. We had to go – we went both to Oxford and Cambridge. I also managed to get into Trinity College, Cambridge but we preferred the smaller more intimate college, Pembroke. It was also not as cold as Cambridge because we were taking exams there and we were

freezing. There was no proper heating in those rooms at the time. **[01:06:00]** But Pembroke, we felt that that was much more the sort of college we would like to be in. And I'm not saying anything against Trinity College, Cambridge which – you know - is obviously one of the very best as I now know, but we did really well at Pembroke and because it was a smaller college, we managed to play an active part in the college which we would never have had a chance of doing at a place like Trinity. And we were a little bit out of place in Trinity as well. We were refugees. At Pembroke we were immediately accepted. We were seen by the then master, we were interviewed. We had, as I say, exams both at Pembroke college and other colleges around Pembroke because they also had a lot of other colleges taking in students while they were taking exams. We had many exams, but we were taken on.

And when was this? In the late '40s?

Yes, this was now 1951/52.

Right. So, let's just go back to the [inaudible]. What's amazing is that your parents thought education is so important that they put you into that Hall School.

And also that they allowed us to continue because of course they could have said after we reached the age of sixteen which I think is those days it was either fifteen or sixteen we could leave school and start earning, but they allowed us to continue. They could see that we were quite interested in carrying on our education.

And where was the Hall School, still where it is today in Belsize Park or where was it at the time?

The Hall School is still there. William Ellis is still there. Still a member of William Ellis alumni, and yes, they're still there.

And –

And of course we do go back to Pembroke College and support Pembroke College quite a lot. And at Pembroke College I became the chairman of the Blackstone Law Society and also of the literature Sir Thomas Browne Society. **[01:08:13]** My brother became chairman of World University Service. We both played tennis for the second team. So we worked hard, but we played hard, and we had a great time in Pembroke. It was a marvellous experience. It gave us a tremendous- a tremendous upbringing. We were now British. But- we also did one thing which also helped. Before we went to Pembroke, at that time National Service was necessary for anyone who reached the age of eighteen or nineteen. And whilst possibly we could have asked and suggested that we shouldn't join, by that time we had obtained British nationality in 1946, and therefore we felt that we should do our duty as well. So we both went into the Army in September 1952. We were kept together. Because apparently the older twin can claim the younger, so my brother claimed me, and we stayed together in the Army for two years. Not only did we stay together, but we were then posted together and believe it or not we were posted to Egypt on active service for a while. We both got a General Service Medal, and so we felt that we had done our duty there. So after two years in the Army we then went on to university. By that time, we were much more adult, and I think the Army did us good. **[01:10:04]** Before that we were still children. We'd lived with my parents, we'd had all the experiences I was telling you about, but after two years of the Army, we were adults. Especially after we had been in Egypt on active service where incidentally, when we were on active duty and it was dangerous, they would keep us apart. But otherwise they allowed us to be together.

Peter, I wanted to ask you a few things about the Army service, but let's just go back to the early '40s when you arrived. What other support network did your parents have? Did they meet other refugees? Did they join any institutions?

Very much so. When we first came to England not being able to speak the language, if we- if we wanted to meet people, we had to meet people who were also refugees. And the majority of the refugees were then in the Hampstead/Swiss Cottage area. It was very important. There was a restaurant called Cosmos, and also very important was Belsize Square Synagogue which was then known as the New Liberal Jewish Synagogue. New Liberal was actually a mis- a misnamer because they weren't really liberal, but we were helped by Lily Montagu to

establish this synagogue. I wasn't involved, but this was in 1938/1939. It was established by Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. And my parents joined in 1941 after we realised that we wouldn't be going to the United States. But we also met people socially and they were nearly all refugees living in the area. My brother and I always liked singing and entertaining. And it wasn't long before someone suggested that we should do some acting and also some entertaining. **[01:12:14]** The first entertaining which we did was actually in Belsize Park in a building which is now owned by the Hall School, Hampstead. It was already there as a junior school. At that time we didn't go there, but over the weekend it was available, so it was rented by someone called Arthur Steiner and my brother and I entertained there to German and Austrian refugees when we were now about seven or eight years of age.

And what was the framework, this Arthur Steiner, just as a private –?

Private cabaret.

Uh-huh.

It was called *By Candlelight* and my brother and I were dressed up as porters, and we used to do – we used to sing in English and in German. There were obviously many other entertainers, and we used to have little things to say to each other, you know, silly things like, 'Would you like a cigarette?' The other one – we were only eight years old – would say, 'No, I only smoke cigars.' You know, people laughed at that [both laugh]. I notice you still laugh [laughs]. And in fact, *Illustrated* which was a magazine like *Picture Post* got hold of it and they had a whole page about us and took photographs which I've still got. And so we were entertaining, but –

What were you singing Peter? Sorry to interrupt. What sort of songs? Do you remember anything?

Yeah. I remember we sang, *'Im boarding house, im boarding house, was das nur angeht'* things that are happening,' [laughs] and we used to say quite naughty things which were happening there. And I remember very well looking round at the audience and saying,

"hübsche Frauen, ausgesprochen hübsche Frauen". Lovely ladies,' [laughs]. **[01:14:06]** We were only eight years old and, you know, people used to enjoy that sort of thing.

Say again about the boarding house, say it slowly.

Well, the idea was to go – but they pretended to be a boarding house, but they had other entertainers obviously. People who sang, people who said jokes, proper jokes, and so on. There was Arthur Steiner, but then after that we then were asked whether we would also entertain at something called The Blue Danube Club in Finchley Road. And there we actually got a little bit of money I think, because every weekend we entertained three times. Twice on – once on Saturday evening and twice on Sunday. And I think we got two and six each or something which my mother carefully kept and put away for us. And there again, we used to sing but now by this time my parents realised that we liked entertaining, and they arranged for us to have tap dancing lessons. So, I remember our first big number was *Chattanooga Choo-Choo.* 'Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga choo-choo?' We had little cases, we used to go and tap dance on them, come off.

Fantastic.

And then when we were in the Army we entertained the Forces there. Oh, but before we went in the Army when we were only about eight or nine years of age of course the War was still going on. So they asked whether we would entertain the Forces, mainly the American Forces. So, the American Forces gave us naval uniforms, and we used to entertain them. And this was great. We used to say, 'Hey there mister, you'd better hide your sister 'cos the fleet's in, the fleet's in. Hey there mister, don't say nobody's kissed her, 'cos the fleet's in.' **[01:16:01]** Now you see, two of us doing it together absolutely in unison; that went down very well. And we did a lot of entertaining then which was important because the Forces were here waiting to go into Europe for D-Day. D-Day was the 6th of June 1944. They were waiting and there was no television in those days. Keeping them entertained, it helped their morale.

But how did they find you Peter? How – who organised it?

I think the lady who taught us tap-dancing, she said to the Forces, 'Look, you know, I've got two boys- they're available, they'll entertain.' That we did for free. We didn't charge for that. I'm not sure whether my mother got some expenses paid because, you know, we had to go round doing this quite a lot.

[Both talking at once].

[Both talking at once] they might have sent us abroad on the ENSA [Entertainment National Service Association]. There was a lot of entertaining at the time. Vera Lynn, people like that, you know. Well, we were nothing like that, but we did our little bit as well. And after the War, just after the War, we did a lot of charity work and we helped to collect money for victims of concentration camps who were still alive. I remember we were on a show with Anton Walbrook who was quite well-known at the time, at the, at the Embassy Theatre in Swiss Cottage, and we used to do song and dance. And then we did it in the Army. When we were out in Egypt, we did have a week where we were allowed as Jewish soldiers – they got all the Jewish soldiers in the Middle East to be together for what they called the Moral Leadership Course. And they sent over a Rabbi, Rabbi Alan Miller, and we had talks about Judaism and so on. But, you know, for the social side we entertained. Now it was active service, and it was actually the infant- there was the infantry- the British infantry that were protecting us at that point. **[01:18:06]** Because we were together in a camp and for that we entertained, and then when we did entertain we also invited some members of the infantry to come over to watch. So that was quite fun as well. And when we went to Oxford, of course we entertained. We participated in a variety show put up by Pembroke called *Back of Velvet* and that was great fun.

And Peter, did you have a singing teacher at all?

No, never.

Did you have contact with other – because I'm thinking of Belsize Square Synagogue –

Belsize Park –

Hanni Lichtenstern [01:18:46], the – does the name ring a bell? And her husband.

Yes, she sang at my first wedding. And of course, at Belsize Square we also entertained as you can imagine [laughs]. Here again, here were people, refugees, no money, but they had to keep active and social. So, on every Sunday they had a social and of course my brother and I entertained. Got photographs of us. At one time we did the play of the – Purim [01:19:16] play, and so then we were both soldiers. At that point, we didn't yet sing and dance but, you know, we were involved. We must have been singing, but not necessarily dancing. But we were involved, yes.

Yeah, there were Sunday afternoon concerts and –

Yeah, Sunday afternoon concerts.

Yeah.

And you see, the interesting thing is that when we first joined the synagogue, we were the only young people. There were a few slightly older, people like Charles Henry Guttmann, and Henry Kuttner, and Herbert Levy. But then there was a complete gap. Because what is generally not known is that after 1933 when my brother and I were born, Jewish people in Germany didn't have children any more. **[01:20:03]** It was too dangerous. Who wanted to bring children to the world under the Nazis? So we were the only ones. So, believe it or not for about six or seven years my brother and I were the only ones at Passover who said Ma Nishtana. There was no one younger than us to say the usual prayer which is said by the youngest.

Was there communal Passover in Belsize?

It was a communal supper and we said it – one of us said it in German, one of us said it in English, and we would say it in Hebrew together.

And where did the – the Seders, where did they take place?

They took place – well, we only had Belsize Square as it's now known, Belsize Square Synagogue just had two or three rooms, and there was one sort of double room, and everything took place in that double room, and that's where we had it.

Where was it Peter?

It was in Buckland Crescent. Number 28 or 30 Buckland Crescent.

And you said you also met Lily Montagu at some point.

I met Lily Montagu because when I was about – when I came out of the Army and when I was – just after – when I was still at Oxford I was asked whether I would start getting interested in the affairs of Belsize Square Synagogue. And I was on the board by the time I was probably about twenty-one/twenty-two- under Lily Montagu initially. And then of course I've known every chairman, every Rabbi, and every Cantor ever since. I'm now one of the oldest in the Synagogue. But we also bar mitzvah in the Synagogue. We were the only ones who went to religion school. We had Rabbi Dr Salzberger as our Rabbi and *Oberkantor* Magnus Davidsohn as our Cantor and also our teacher. And as it happened, we got bar mitzvah in 1946 in June. **[01:22:04]** A year after the War ended, but actually the same day as the big parade took place, the victory parade. Because after the War ended on the 8th of May and then later on the Japanese a bit later on, they had to bring all the troops back to England. So they couldn't have a victory parade without troops [laughs], so it took about a year. It happened that on the day we were bar mitzvah in June of 1946, was also the victory parade. And we just had a few people for dinner and believe it or not, we had to ask them to produce their ration books so that we could give them supper, or to give them a dinner. There were only about twelve people. But, you know, we were still rationed. Rationing of course continued right until 1950/1951/52. People forget that.

So it wasn't a first bar mitzvah for Belsize because you had already Henry Kuttner and they must have had bar mitzvahs earlier.

Yes, we were not the first. No.

But certainly –

We were quite lucky because being twins we could share, and we only had to do one half each [laughs].

Tell us your memories a little bit about Dr Salzberger and Magnus Davidsohn.

Magnus was a- one-and-a-half characters, he was a huge character. I mean, he really was *Oberkantor*. He had a lovely voice. He used to love us. He liked to show us off as his twins, he would say. Dr Salzberger was much more serious, and all his sermons were in German. For the first two or three years they were in German. His- he did try very hard on our bar mitzvah to say some – to give a sermon in English. **[01:24:04]** It wasn't perfect, but at least it was understood by those in the congregation who were no longer refugees from Germany. And we did all by that time have a few non-German friends as well. But it was very much – we were very much together in the sense that we needed each other because at that time we were all desperately worried about our family. You see, I mean, I lost as you know my grandmother, one grandmother in Theresienstadt. The grandmother who helped us and told us to leave earlier died a natural death in 1941. And I remember my parents, because I was in Camden Town at the time, being pleased that she had died because it was a natural death. She wasn't sent off to concentration camp, unlike Marianne's two grandmothers who were brutally murdered in Lithuania. So, it was very important for us to be together with other people who had the same experience as we had.

And Belsize provided that.

Belsize provided that. Of course, now it's a very different synagogue.

Yeah, but at the time it was –

But, you know, Sunday before last both Marianne and I went there and we spoke to the present bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah class, and also to the other children there. We gave two classes. And I looked around and I thought how wonderful to have so many children there now, when at one time my brother and I were the only ones in a class there at all because the older ones had already finished with their bar mitzvah. And we also had a few clubs there. **[01:26:00]** We had the Montagu Circle I remember, and so on. So, it was an important element in our lives.

And you mentioned language, so did you continue to speak German with your parents at all?

A very interesting question. Most immediately stopped to speak German. Again, Germany, the enemy. Who would want to be known as German? We wanted to be known only as British. The headmaster in the Hall School, Hampstead said to my parents, 'The War will not last forever. Continue to speak German to your children at school. They'll learn sufficient English at –' sorry. 'To speak German at home. They'll learn enough English at school.' And that's what we did. So we kept up our German and there were very few of the younger people who did that. Because after all, we only knew *"Kinderdeutsch"* so when it came to taking GCSEs and so on, we didn't take the first matriculation. I only took A-level German which was quite hard because it also involved literature and so on. But that was very useful because later on in my life – we haven't come to that yet in England – but as a solicitor doing international work, the fact that I had reasonable German, and I also learnt French, and also learnt Spanish, I could do international work. So German in particular was very useful because in due course I actually became the official lawyer in the United Kingdom for the Austrian government and embassy, and for the Swiss government and embassy. And they allowed me to mention that officially because that was an official title which they gave me. So, I'm quite in order mentioning that. **[01:28:12]** I also did a lot of work later on for the American embassy, but I wasn't just their official lawyer, but I did a lot of their litigation and arbitration. So I had an international practice.

So you must have been one of the few refugees who took A-levels in German I would think. I don't know.

I never asked them. I'm sure they did.

Yeah, some people would maybe.

It would have been easier.

Yeah, but maybe some didn't want to.

Marianne's parents did not speak German to her, but they spoke German to each other, and Marianne being quite curious as to what they were saying used to listen and that's how she did learn German. And then when she went over to Germany as sort of an au-pair for a while, she then gradually learnt German as well. As a result of which she now accompanies me and we actually talk to German students in Berlin in German, both of us. And have done so for twenty years except now in the last two or three years we haven't been able to because of COVID because of the –

To school children in Berlin?

Yeah. What happens there is, they bring schools to the Jewish Museum in Berlin. That's the place where these talks take place. And they come from all over Germany, even from as far as Munich. And we spend a whole morning or afternoon with them and talk to them in German.

So, you understood – in Belsize- you understood the other refugees, you could speak to them.

It helped, it helped.

And it must have helped you singing German songs for the cabaret.

Yeah, very few German songs, mainly British songs. **[01:30:03]**

Mainly English.

Yes.

In the Danube, what did you – because I'm interested in that. There must have been some Austrian songs.

Yes. We did, we sang one song but mainly in English. As I said, *Chattanooga, Choo-Choo,* and that sort of thing.

Was it full the Danube for example, each concert? Did lots of people come?

Yes, again a very small place. I mean, it was again a double room, and they probably had no more than about 100/120 people at each performance.

And where was it exactly? Finchley Road?

In Finchley Road.

Near?

Near where Sainsbury's are now. That's all been rebuilt. But there was a very important element. We did that probably for about nearly a year. We quite enjoyed that.

Well, that was proper performing if you were paid for it, yeah.

That's right, yeah. And of course, we both got the same degrees at Oxford. We both took jurisprudence. Now, that's very interesting because originally when we got into Pembroke College at Oxford, the idea was that we were going to study modern languages. I was going to study French and Spanish and with German as a subsidiary. But when I was in the Army in Egypt and then especially after Egypt when the troops there were sent away from Egypt – because the Egyptians, you know, tried to oust the British from the canal zone – and my brother and I were sent to Malta. When I was in Malta, I had more time to consider my

future. And there both George and I thought, what are we going to do with modern languages? **[01:32:00]** Neither of us wanted to be a teacher, and it was then that I started reading other subjects other than what I had had to read for my schooling, and I started reading philosophy, I read English literature, and I started reading law books. And I read a book called *Learning the Law* by Granville Williams, and I immediately thought, this is what I want to do. And that's why I wrote to Pembroke College and so did my brother and said, 'Look, we're supposed to be starting with you in a year's time as students in foreign languages, would you mind terribly if we switched to law?' And Pembroke College agreed. I'm not sure whether Trinity College at Cambridge would have agreed that, but Pembroke did. And that's why I was able really to use both my law and languages, and I've never looked back. It's been great. Because I did a lot of international work.

And your brother?

My brother? You see, when I did – after three years at Oxford we both got the same degree, good degrees, my brother didn't want to carry on studying but I agreed to be- to continue for three more years and do what was then called articles – it's now called traineeship – and became a solicitor. But then for three years I wasn't earning. My brother didn't like that idea, so he became a vocational guidance psychologist, and he opened a practice of his own, called Career Analysts which helped people to decide on their careers. It went very well indeed. He started it just with his then wife who unfortunately – Giselle, who unfortunately then died of cancer quite young, but they started it together, and in the end he had over ten other consultants working for him. **[01:34:01]** And they helped people to decide which career. They didn't place people in employment because then they couldn't be objective about it. But I continued as an article clerk, earned next to nothing. I got £1000 the first year as a present from an international firm at that time called Oppenheimer, Nathan and Vandyk. It was Lord Nathan's firm. Lord Nathan was the Minister for War during the War. And they took me on I think partly because of the fact that I did have languages because they were doing international work. They already acted for the Swiss government and that's how the Swiss government then took me on as their one UK representative. I obviously didn't do all their work, but they looked to me for making sure that the work was done properly. I was their main contact. And that gave us a great opportunity. We- my wife and I were invited

continuously to the German, the Austrian, the Swiss embassy functions. The numbers of time we had dinner there where we were the only untitled people there. And then it's not only those countries because I also acted at one time for Finland, Norway, Sweden, Ontario, and lots of other countries.

So were you an independent solicitor? You had your own –?

No, I was in a big firm. Oppenheimer, when I joined them already had about twelves partners, but by the time that I left them, they had nearly 100, and then I joined Nabarro Nathanson, now Nabarros, where there were again over 100 partners.

So you worked in the big law firm.

Big law firm because they're the firms that would do that sort of international work 'cos I was doing political work. I was sent – quite often had to go over to Washington and work there. They gave me an office there. **[01:36:00]** So I was advising them on English law in the United States. But I remember very well, it's rather interesting, that the very first time I ever went to Pennsylvania, I went there on American business. And as it so happened, in the aeroplane where I was flying from Washington, there was also the senator, a local senator, and he asked me if I was being picked up. And I said, 'No,' I was taking a taxi in, and he said, 'Come in my car.' That's how the first time I arrived in Pennsylvania in a senator's car.

And when you were in America did you sometimes think how different your life would have been?

I did.

If you'd gone to America on that boat.

I would have been a penniless refugee. And certainly, went back and saw the people who helped me as well.

Did you meet that family who sponsored –?

Of course, yes.

Yeah. Just to go back a little bit Peter, about this – anything else you remember about because you were really in that Swiss Cottage, the refugee neighbourhood. You mentioned The Cosmo. What do you remember? Did you used to go? It was quite expensive. Did you manage to do there with your parents?

Not with my parents because it was at the time when my father was interned. Mother used to take us there and we would just have – my mother would have a coffee and we'd probably have an ice-cream or something like that. And we always used to meet there. It was a meeting point. It was the main place. There was another place as well, but Cosmo's was the main one, we all met there.

That was a restaurant and a bar.

It was a restaurant.

Two rooms.

Yeah.

But you went to the bar mostly or...?

No, we sat there and we – we didn't have a lot- we didn't have a lot of money, but my father was, as I say, was interned. **[01:38:07]** My mother was doing dressmaking and we lived -you see- first in one room, but after about seven or eight years we did find a flat in Gilling Court in Belsize Grove and there we had a two-roomed apartment. And there, my brother and I shared one room, and that was the room which my mother used for having people come in for dressmaking. And then the other room was the room which my parents slept in. It was also our lounge. It was also our dining-room. And the first furniture which we ever got-we got,

was when my father was working in the place where they were – where he was a timekeeper in a demolition company. So, he got furniture from houses which had been demolished. And I remember my mother scrubbing the table because it still had dust on it. But, you know, we managed. We were not unhappy. And we used to play lots of games in the evening, and we used to listen to *ITMA*, and we- also when we were in Camden Town my mother already encouraged us very much to go to see films so that we could learn English. Yes, we went into the cheaper seats, but occasionally my brother and I were left there by my mother 'cos it was quite usual in those days, and we might have to ask someone to take us in if it was an A level film. But we had no difficulty. Being twins, they used to take us in quite readily. And so, we used to love those films, the old [inaudible] and we loved especially Fred Astaire and those sort of films, and all the musicals in particular. But we learned English that way. **[01:40:01]**

It helped you.

It helped us. And my parents, or my mother certainly realised that, and she encouraged it. And although we had no money we even went to The Palladium. We saw Danny Kaye in The Palladium, and then in Golders Green once we saw Marlene Dietrich. My parents were very modern, especially my mother. And I think that helped a great deal. But of course –

In which way Peter, in which way modern?

She never – because her parents died very young, it was rather sad because she lost her mother through cancer. The mother had remarried because her father had died a natural death, and when her mother died as a result of cancer, her stepfather committed suicide he was so upset. But what it meant is that he left the four children – because at that time, you know, she had a brother and two sisters so there were four of them – to be sort of palmed out to other relatives. So, she never had much chance. My father also didn't have much chance to do well educationally but my mother had sound common sense. She was very good at that. My father was able to start a business as an insurance broker. First of all, he acted for a solicitor and accountant, both well-known actually. One was Howard. Now, his firm Howard Kennedy is well-known. The other one was called Citroen. He was an accountant. The firm was Citroen Wells. They had their own clients as insurance people, they insured people, but they didn't

want to be bothered any more so, my father first of all did the insurance for their clients. But then my mother persuaded him, 'Why don't you open your own firm?' **[01:42:01]** He did, and it went very well. Even now people come up to me and say they still remember how helpful my father was. And he built up a nice little practice. But my brother and I, neither of us could see that this was a future for us. We wanted to do something slightly different and slightly more enterprising.

Yeah, and how long – you said you stayed in Gilling Court, and then where –?

We stayed in Gilling Court –

Gilling Court.

For about three or four years, and then we went into a three-bedroomed place. So, we had a half-room in which my brother and I slept. We only had room – we only this much room between us. One bed, one bed, but in the daytime, we could fold it down, and it could become a studio couch. But that's- but never mind, we were happy. And then my brother got married first which meant I had the half-room to myself and that was great and - but, you know, we were always quite happy. I never remember being unhappy in my childhood, except when we were bullied.

In that school.

Yeah, but otherwise I always remember being happy. And my brother married – as I mentioned, he married someone who unfortunately, died of cancer but she herself was a hidden child during the War. Because she was born of a father who was Belgian and of a mother who was English and had been to English university. And when the War started and they tried to move to Switzerland from Belgium, they got as far as ten miles away from the border when someone gave them away, some French people gave them away. They were all put into a prison and the – but fortunately the children, she had a sister called Maryanne, they were saved because the Salvation Army found them. **[01:44:09]** Giselle and Maryanne were then hidden in the War by a French family. And after the War the grandmother who had

escaped to England and didn't know whether her children or grandchildren were alive or dead, was able to help, was able to find them through the Red Cross. Bring the children over to England. And so they were – by that time they were well into their teens. Unfortunately, Giselle died of cancer, but my brother remarried and is now married to Marion. I'm married to Marianne. He's married to Marion. They've been married twenty-nine years yesterday. And his first marriage was twenty-five years, and so – yeah. She comes from South Africa. But Giselle as I say was very lucky as well to be alive because she was hidden during the War. Now, I met Marianne in interesting circumstances as well 'cos I went out with her for a little while when I was up at Oxford. I went to a Jewish dance, and I met her, and liked her, and we went out just a few times together. But then she went to Brighton where she studied to be a teacher. Although I invited her to a [inaudible] which was quite something in those days, you know, our paths just went apart and didn't meet any more and so I got married. I married someone who also had parents from Germany, Wartensleben **[01:46:04]**, Walton, Susie Walton. **[01:46:06]** And we got married, and very happily to begin with. Had three children, Mark, Mandy, and David. Lived first in Ealing and then in Hendon, but I think I was working too hard, possibly, but I'm sure I was also partly to blame but it was Susie who wanted to break the marriage. She felt that she'd had enough of me, and so she wanted to break the marriage which was terrible from my point of view because I lost my three children. And she then took – later on, much later, a number of years later, her second husband to Australia with my three children. So, I wasn't with my three children during the time when they were teenagers. But then unfortunately my first wife Susie Walton wasn't happy, and she was not well. So, she's no longer with us, and since then I've been on very, very good terms with my three children, but it wasn't always so. I had quite a lot of difficulties to begin with. But with Marianne, what happened was that when I moved to Hendon from – I was first in – further out in London, in Canons Park [01:47:32], and when I went to Hendon, I was told that the only good nursery school there was the one which Marianne had started. And I- so my first wife arranged for my youngest, David, to go to her nursery school. And I used to take my older ones, Mark and Mandy, to their school so I never went to that school at all, to the nursery school. But when I heard that her marriage had broken, and my marriage had broken, one day I thought well, I wonder if she's also on her own. **[01:48:06]** I'm on my own, I wonder what's happened to her. So, I was I think very – [laughs] must have been very courageous. One day when I was going home very much on my

own and having a terrible time, very sad, still went first living with my parents but then in a small flat of my own. I thought well, I'll go and see whether – you know, what's happened to her. So, I- instead of going over the flyover in Hendon I did a U-turn, went over to the street where I knew that the nursery was because my youngest son David had told me, 'Oh, that's where my nursery is,' when we passed one day in the car. Stopped the car, got out, and walked along the street looking in the windows [laughs]. And fortunately, Marianne hadn't yet closed the curtains. She'd been to an interview because she was at that time expanding and she was getting more and more nurseries. In the end she had ten nurseries of her own, but at that time she only had the one. And I saw her in the window, or through the window, and I rang the bell. And we took a long time though. Both of us had been hurt, both of us now had to go through a divorce. Took a long time, but in the end, you know, we knew- I think right from the start that it would end up in marriage. And we've been married forty-seven years now. We have five children between us, twelve grandchildren, and two-and-a-half great-grandchildren. Two great-grandchildren, two boys, one seven months, one nearly three months, and the half is a girl who will be born in April. But two of those of course, are in Australia. **[01:50:04]** Now, one of the things which Marianne and I have been doing together, and it's really been an important part of our lives especially when I started to retire from my practice, and that is that for the last maybe twenty years or so we've been going round and talking to schools, universities, colleges, other clubs, and so on, about what happened to us. Marianne in her own right has been speaking about her family, and she's been particularly good in trying to emphasise the reasons why we're doing this. The fact that Auschwitz wasn't just the start of the Holocaust. It was the end. It all started as we know from small beginnings. From bullying, from indifference. And Marianne's always concentrated on that area, but she's also told them how her mother had the guts to go to police headquarters, German Gestapo headquarters, to get her father out of concentration camp, and what – you know, what her parents suffered. So, we've each been speaking and that's been a very important element of our work. We've done it mainly for the Holocaust Educational Trust, but not only. We've also had a number of private invitations. We still do have. And I spoke again for example at St Albans at the Masorti Synagogue, now for Holocaust Memorial Day only a few days ago. And this was a civic meeting in front o the mayor and the local police and so on, they were all there, and even the local MP. So, we still do that all the time and we're saying that's very important because I think it's so easy for

people to forget what happened. I was one of the lucky ones because it was still possible for German people to escape if they could find someone who would help them to escape. **[01:52:08]** But once the Nazis invaded the rest of Europe it became impossible. They couldn't escape any more, and that's why of course at the end of the day six million Jews were killed. I think almost one half of the Jews of Germany were able to escape. And of course, I also talk about the fact that possibly things like the Holocaust wouldn't have got quite to a stage where – after first of all shooting people, because this was the way of killing to begin with. And then after Wannsee [conference] where they decided to murder all the Jews first in Europe, they decided it wasn't quick enough merely to shoot and it wasn't very pleasant for the German soldiers to keep on shooting, and that's when they started the gas chambers in Auschwitz and other death camps. I mean, it's something which people should know about because it all started with small beginnings. It didn't start with that. But gradually as I say, life had become so intolerable for us in Germany. My parents never ever thought they would ever leave Germany. They were happy there and Germans were doing quite – German Jews were doing quite well. Of course, Germany had lost the First World War and in fact, this is one of the things which Hitler quite wrongly used to say that the Jews were partly responsible. But the facts are – and I'm sure you know – that more Jewish people were in the Army for Germany in the First World War than there were non-Jewish people. [01:53:56].

*Yeah. Peter, I wanted to ask you about – because you said you went back to Germany obviously talking to children – when was the first time you went back to Germany and how – and the second question, how did the end of the War affect your family?***[01:54:09]**

Let me deal with the second question first [laughs].

Okay.

I mean, I remember it very well. I remember my brother and I were so excited that we ran out of our three-bedroomed apartment at Holmefield Court in Belsize Grove, and we were on the streets waving our Union Jacks. We were so excited. There's a photograph of us waving our Union Jacks because we were so excited. And of course we hoped now that – at least we

hoped that many Jews had survived and that some of our family had survived. A lot of it we only learnt later that they'd all perished. So, for us- we followed the War dramatically. We listened every day to the radio. Even at the ages of eight and nine we were listening every day. We followed every move. I remember D-Day very well. Sixth of June 1944. I remember even the hymn which we sang at the Hall School. It's *For Those in Peril on the Sea*. We sang it because that was the song which they said – the headmaster said, 'I'm sure you've heard that the invasion of Europe has started, and let's sing as a hymn *For Those in Peril on the Sea*.' So, you know, for us the War was something real and especially as we had to live in the Underground, and we saw the bombing which took place. The number of times we saw houses which were still on fire when we came out of the Underground and so on. So, we were absolutely thrilled at the end of the War. Now, that was the answer to your second question. Now, let me think about the answer to the first question. [Laughs] Can you repeat it?
[01:56:06]

I said when did you go back to Germany or contacted Germany after the War?

The first time we went back to Germany was after the War. Especially in Berlin, they tried to make some sort of amends. And they invited first my parents to come over to Berlin for one week, and they paid for them to go to Berlin, put them up in a hotel, and entertained them. While they were there my parents said, 'Well, look I've got –' they've got two sons. Why can't we be invited? And we were. By that time each one of us was married. I was married at that time to Susie and George was married as well, and so we went over together as a foursome to Berlin, and we were entertained there. We were given tickets for the theatre, for the opera, even for the ballet, so much so that on the last Friday when we didn't have any tickets we thought we'd go and see a show, so we went to a transvestite show [laughs]. A bit different because, you know, that's also something for which Berlin is well-known which we could enjoy because we could understand the jokes 'cos there were a lot of double entendre there.

When was that Peter?

Yes, now this was quite early on, probably about '56/'57, something like that. Yeah.

What was it like for you to go back?

Well, it felt strange but, you know, we were entertained to such an extent that we didn't really have a chance to go round and see other things. **[01:58:05]** But we did find out that the flat which we had rented before we left Berlin was still up and about, it had not been bombed. So, we went there, and we took some photographs. We tried to get in, but the place was locked up, so we didn't try very hard. But we didn't have a lot of time there. We were really being well looked after, but too much so that we didn't have much time for ourselves. But then- later on the reason we started going much more to Berlin was because the one thing which we had were our documents. And there was an advertisement in the papers here, in the Jewish papers, that Berlin Museum was looking for documents and other items of interest for the Jewish Museum in Berlin. And my brother asked me, and I agreed as well that we would send all our documents which we had including for example, correspondence with America when we wanted to get there, and other documents. The only thing which I kept and which I know they'd love to have, is my original passport and the original of the identity card of my mother. Because I still go round showing them. But of course they've got copies of that. The other thing which we did give up, is that when my father and mother packed this big container, my father had the bright idea of putting things into little boxes, or into little cases, and then lock them up. So we have keys – we had keys for about twenty of these. And those keys my father put in his attaché case, so we still had those. **[02:00:01]** And those keys we also gave, and they featured very much in the Jewish Museum. We had the keys but not the things which they closed up. And they featured that very much.

And you were happy that it's going to Berlin, to the Museum.

Yes, very happy.

You didn't want to give it here. At the time.

We'd approached Berlin and here we only – we approached The Holocaust Educational Trust because after Berlin had asked us to start going over there to talk, it was my brother who

went the first time. Because he handed over all these documents. And they've given us copies of everything, so we've got them, but they've kept the originals except for the items I've mentioned. And my brother went over there to talk because he was asked to. But then a year later he was asked again, 'Could you please come again and speak to other groups?' And my brother wasn't too keen on it, or he probably didn't want to, and also his wife by then, Maryanne, didn't speak German so it wasn't as interesting for her. So, my brother said, 'Look, why don't you ask my twin brother, you won't notice much difference,' [laughs]. So I started going with Marianne, and we've been going ever since. My brother still has done it once or twice, he still goes – I know this – recently he also went somewhere to a school, but he's never done it quite as much as Marianne and I. To such an extent of course, that both Marianne and I individually now – it has been recognised, and we've both been awarded the British Empire Medal. And Marianne also got it in her own right and the year we got it which was December of – three years ago, I think we were the only couple where two people got the – in the New Year's Honours List, were husband and wife. **[02:02:06]** So we're proud of that.

And you're going to the –

We have had – yes. We had a special time when the Queen of course wasn't available, no one was there, but we did have the Lord Lieutenant of the County, and they actually had a special ceremony in which we were given the medals. And I've got the original medal of course and so has Marianne which occasionally we wear. We wear for example when we go on AJEX Parade. This year I wasn't able to because I wasn't well enough, but my brother went on the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen's Parade wearing not only his – well, he hasn't got the same British Empire Medal, but he has got the three medals for his War effort on behalf of the British Army, as I have.

And Peter, what is it like for you to speak to – I mean, you speak to English children, British children, and German children. What is it like for you and how does it compare actually to do this work in Germany and here, and do you get different – you know, what is it –?

It is different. In Germany we're very well treated, very well met. Most of them – and we can feel they feel somewhat ashamed of what they're parents, now grandparents or even great-grandparents did. They're very keen to have photographs taken with us, to shake our hands, and they feel very guilty about it. They can't understand, they're very ashamed I think. But on the other hand, we always say to them, 'Look, you're not to blame. **[02:04:00]** You know, you're a different generation,' and we do not make it uncomfortable for them. We make it really comfortable, and I often say to them, 'You know, if it hadn't been for Hitler,' I said, 'I would have been very happy living in Germany.' It was a great place. My parents were very happy. I would have been happy there. I still like going to Germany. I like their sense of humour [laughs]. I feel great. When I get out in Berlin, I feel quite at home still. It seems strange. I wouldn't want to live there. My father could have gone back to live there. My father-in-law, my late father-in-law, he was actually offered to come back to the business he was working in, and he could have made a lot of money by going back. But of course, none of us wanted to go back to Germany. No. We'd been very well treated in England, and I always say how wonderful it is that I've been treated so well that as an [inaudible] person, I've been given every opportunity, and thank God the British won the War. How much we owe to the British Army and the Navy- and especially the Air Force. I often say that if we hadn't won the Battle of Britain in the air, Germany was poised to come into England. They even had lists as Wannsee, where they decided to kill all the Jews in Europe, they had a list. They already knew that there were about 300,000 Jews in England. It's on the list. They mention the 500,000 – well, they mentioned all the Jews in Europe in that list. Each country, how many there were there. They wanted to kill all of them. And they even made a list of the prominent English Jews they wanted to kill first. So, we're very lucky not only to be alive, but to be in a country like the UK that has given us every opportunity. **[02:06:01]** Yes, we've worked hard, but it's been worthwhile and that's what we try and tell the people we talk to. And people say to me do we talk to Jewish audiences? Yes, occasionally, especially for memorial days and so on, but I'd say nine tenths of the work we do is to non-Jewish audiences.

That's important.

Much more important. They're the ones who need to know and even to be told. They don't know it because, you know, there were recent statistics which show that I think about one-third of the people in this country have never even heard of the Holocaust.

And what do you make out of the recent debates now about this racism and Holocaust, with people –?

I think it's all the more reason to do that as well. And how to be kind to refugees who are arriving. Provided they're not just economic migrants, we should be helpful to refugees. I remember we went to one school, and we were told, and we could see immediately that nearly all of them were refugees. And I remember that – I never say the same. I don't use notes, I just speak, and I remember saying to them, I said, 'You know, I'm very pleased to be talking to you because I was a refugee like you.'

And what's your main message –

And they listened.

Peter, to these people?

The main message is: be understanding, be compassionate. We are all made of the same ilk, we all have the same beginning, we all have the same end. It doesn't matter what colour we are, what our religion is, as long as we're honest, decent people. Don't judge us by looks. Look behind. A book, you can't tell a book by its cover. **[02:08:02]** In the same way, treat people well, with respect. I remember that we went to one school, and it was the word respect which my wife used which is the one which the headmaster of that school we were talking to – 500 children in America at that time, because a few times we've spoken in Florida as well – and he took out the word respect. And he said, 'You know, that's what it all amounts to, respect each other.' Respect because we're all different. Respect the fact that we are different. It would be a very dull place if we were all the same. Respect each other. Let each other live. We should all live in peace and in harmony, and that's our message. We just hope we get through because unfortunately, we don't seem to have learnt from the past.

No. And Peter when you speak to children do you find yourself ever to get upset? Or is it- are you used to telling the story in a way or do you find it –?

I still get emotional. I get emotional particularly when I tell the story of the woman – the young lady who didn't get away because she wanted to go back and pick up two dresses. So unnecessary- she was a lovely person, and I can still see her, and I get upset about that. And yes, I do get emotional. I still feel that – I still feel emotional towards Britain [pause]. Yes.

*And Peter in terms of your identity, how would you describe yourself today?***[02:10:03]**

First and foremost, British. My religion happens to be Jewish. I believe in Judaism especially the way in which we come together as a family. I think family life is so important. I think a lot of the problems today is because we've lost this idea of family life. It's the parents who teach the children, and I don't think that parents are taking that task seriously enough. So I believe in Judaism, I feel myself British, I feel very lucky to be alive, and I feel that as long as I can, although I'm eighty-eight years old now, I would like to try and give something back. I've been given a lot, a chance, and I want to take that chance and do the best I can for as long as I can.

[Pause] And what do you think for you is the most important aspect of your German Jewish heritage?

The most important aspect is that I was able to escape from the Nazis. If only Germany had been different, I might have led a different life, but I can't complain because I've led a good life. But I feel very sad to think that we've lost six million people and amongst them I'm sure there were many people who would have made a big contribution. Because one thing which Jewish have regarded as important is education. So we've lost a lot of scientists, we've lost a lot of good people who would have made a big contribution. Perhaps we could even have found a solution to subjects like cancer and so on, if only it hadn't been for Hitler. **[02:12:06]** It was so totally, totally unnecessary, and yet it isn't it sad that people can be so persuaded, can be so hoodwinked into believing in someone like Hitler? Hitler who wanted to

create a master race. There's no such thing as a master race. We're all alike. We may look a bit different, but we all have the same likes and dislikes, we're all deserving of living peacefully with each other as good neighbours. And so, how a country such as Germany which was so civilised could stoop so low. It was not only that they killed, but it was the way they killed. The methods they used. The torture. Killing babies by shooting babies up in the air as target practice. It's that which I'm reminded of. I saw a film the other day of a concentration camp near Dachau where they gave Jewish people a choice. 'Either we'll beat you to death or you can jump off this cliff,' when they were standing at a cliff. That's what people should know about.

Yeah.

That people could stoop so low, and yet it all started because they could believe in someone like Hitler who promised them the world and in the end, what did it mean? The Germans suffered in the end- as well. So did the whole of Europe, so did the whole of the world. So unnecessary. We only have one life. Why can't we live it in good peace? Each person individually according to their own wishes and their own ideas of what life should really be about? **[02:14:09]**

And do you sometimes think what would have happened if Hitler hadn't come to power? To you, your life in Germany –?

I know that if they'd come to England I would have been amongst the first they would have killed. My father wasn't probably on the priority list, but he would have been on the list. Why? Just because he happened to be Jewish. We happen to be the same religion generally which our parents are, but we don't necessarily choose it. My wife, during her period of – when she was evacuated lived very happily with two non-Jewish families. She was quite happy. She went to Sunday School, she loved it. And in fact, when she went home, she cried. She didn't want to go home because she was happy with the non-Jewish families. In fact, so much so that when she first went home, she would say her prayers to Jesus, to Mary, to everyone around, until her father said to her, 'You don't have to. You're a little Jewish child. You can just pray to God.' And she said, 'You may risk it, I won't.' And that's it, it doesn't

really matter. She probably would have been quite happy to be non-Jewish/Christian. I probably would have been as well. I happen to be Jewish because my parents were Jewish. I quite like the Jewish religion. I think it has a lot to offer.

Peter, one thing I didn't ask you yet is obviously being a twin how did that affect your refugee experience? Having a brother so close. **[02:16:02]**

Everyone knew us. All the refugees knew us. They still sometimes come up to us, one of us, and they expect us to remember them. But we were very much the target of the refugees because they liked the idea of twins, Jewish twins, who'd been able to escape from Germany, so we were quite often approached. And we quite enjoyed it. It could be embarrassing because there are some people, we- just may have met a couple of times and forgotten, but we're never quite sure when we meet them, should we know them, or should we not know them? We've both enjoyed being twins. We're very close. I see my brother at least once in ten days. Of course, we couldn't see each other because of COVID, but we missed each other. We still speak to each other every second day, and I know that Marianne my wife loves the fact that she has a very good relationship with George and also with his wife, Marion. And we're all close together. I remember having a meeting here in this house of a B'rith Lodge where I was quite active, and my brother had been much more active than me. And then my wife asked me what did I enjoy about the visits? And I said I enjoyed it best when everyone left and we were here just with my brother and his wife. Because that's what I really enjoyed. We're very close and very lucky that both of us are still alive, and reasonably well, and enjoying life even now. **[02:18:09]**

And do you think it helped you – you know, you said you had a difficult school experience, that you had this together? That you were –?

It helped very much in the Army because there we were in tents and so on, and we had to go everywhere with a rifle. We even had to go – if we went to the toilet we went with a rifle. I mean, it was really active service. And so, I think the fact that we were together helped, that we had a friend together. But interestingly enough, both in Malta and in Egypt, our best friends were always non-Jewish. In fact, when we were given a choice as to who we should

share a tent which would take four people, we chose two people, both of whom then became clergymen. And they chose us because we had the same ideas. The same moral principles and moral ideas. And if we had a possibility, we used to talk. Never all four together, but whenever we were together even as individuals, we used to talk with them. And in Malta we helped someone to such an extent – just by teaching someone some English and other subjects, who felt that he wasn't- hadn't done enough in his lifetime at school to warrant becoming a priest, we gave him the confidence to go ahead and study. And when he was demobbed long after we were – we were demobbed a long time after he was, he did in fact, study, and he was in fact – he became a priest. **[02:20:06]** And when he had a ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral, he invited his parents, and he invited my brother and myself because we'd helped him to become a priest. And we went to his parish and spoke, and he came to our club and spoke. So we certainly feel that's very important, to speak to other religions. We like the fact that many of the schools we now visit do have people to happen to be of a different religion. A lot of them are Muslims. And we often say to them, 'How would you feel if your mosque or your temple was suddenly burning?' Because that is one of the things which I always refer to, the fact that we saw our synagogue in Berlin burning.

Yeah [pause]. Anything else I haven't asked you Peter; you want to add or –?

Well, is there anything more you'd like to ask me? I'm sorry, I probably spoke much too much.

No, you didn't. You didn't. It's so interesting.

But you can always cut out whatever you want to.

No, I mean, it's an interesting thing that you're doing.

I've had an interesting life, yes. And also, professionally I've had an interesting life.

And what was it like for you that you represent, you said the Austrians for example, Austria, Austrian embassy?

Well, when we went, you know, we often came home and we said, you know, 'It seems strange. We've been together –' you know, we were together with all these MPs, ambassadors. I've got one – I happened to find in preparing, you know, some photographs and so on for today, I found a letter where we invited to the – I think it was the Austrian embassy where we were the only untitled people there. **[02:22:02]** And there were two other ambassadors there. So, we were meeting people at the highest level.

And did you share your story in that capacity?

No.

No, ah.

I only shared my story in the last twenty years after I saw the film, *Schindler's List.* Before that the last thing anyone ever spoke about was their experiences. People didn't want to speak about them. People didn't want to hear about them. Never.

So that's really interesting.

I hid the fact that I was German. I hid it. I didn't – I hated the idea. They were the enemy. I hated the idea. The last thing I wanted was for anyone to think me as a – and if someone said to me, 'Now, do you feel that you're German?' I'd say, 'No, I don't.' That was an insult to me. No. And I don't – I haven't got a German passport which might be helpful now that we're no longer in the EU [laughs].

Would you consider it?

I have two grandsons who have taken on – because they were entitled to – taken on German nationality and I don't blame them because if they want to work in Europe then now they're able to do so because they've got EU passports. Personally, no. First of all I'm too old, and I wouldn't want to work in Germany, and I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. I'm retired

now. I feel I've deserved a rest [laughs]. But I did feel strange, and I used to think about it without saying to anyone, I said, you know, it seems strange. If they only knew my past, I used to think, but they didn't know it. Except that, when I went to Austria, I was interviewed by the ministry there, and I had to take my – I purposely took my German passport and everything. **[02:24:05]** I made no bones about it. I said, 'But look,' I said, 'if you appoint me as your official lawyer then you must know that I am Jewish.' It was very interesting because of course I had to advise the Austrian embassy politically as well. For example, in connection with Waldheim and other matters of that kind. And I acted for some of the biggest German companies like Siemens and AEG. And for Siemens I was invited to the 70th birthday party of the British representative of Siemens when he only had six people there and I was one of them. And when I met the – because we could speak German- we were invited all the time, and the people who invited us soon realised our German was too good. So they knew a little bit about our background, but we didn't say a great deal about it.

So did they initially think that you were an English person who speaks good German?

Yes.

Called Summerfield.

They said, 'English people don't usually speak German,' [laughs]. I said, 'Well, I learnt it at school,' which is the truth, but not the whole truth.

Ah-ha!

[Laughs] I just happen to be clever at languages.

Yeah, so you didn't feel comfortable –

I felt uncomfortable –

At that point.

Well, no. Now, you know, it depended on what point in time, you know, because after a while of course – well, the last thirty of forty years I didn't always hide it except for the ordinary man and in the street. But when it came to working with people – and you must remember because of my languages I was able to deal with a lot of documentation in the original language, and it was very useful not to have to translate every letter, every document. **[02:26:08]** I could tell immediately as a lawyer which papers were important and needed translation. And also, sometimes I've won cases because papers were wrongly translated by the opponents. They might have – not necessarily purposely, but sometimes nuance of language is very important. And occasionally I was able to win a case simply by saying, 'Well, I'm afraid that this letter doesn't really say that. Although it looks at first sight as if it does, this word can easily be interpreted in another way.' I know that. It's a feeling I have.

But you said let's say in the Waldheim era, in what capacity were you?

Waldheim. I can't say too much about that, but Waldheim had great difficulties. Although he was the UN representative at the time and so on, he was persona non grata in England.

Yeah.

So you can imagine, there was some difficulties when Waldheim wanted to come to England, and to what extent he was being maligned and so on, and questions like that. But as far as the American government was concerned, I dealt with the Libyan banking freeze, I was called over, and I had to learn – at one time I was being interviewed by Treasury there, by the Justice Department, and also by the foreign department there. So, it was very interesting.

Really interesting.

Because they tried to involve British companies and British banks as well. So, I was advising America in connection with that, yes. **[02:28:00]** But there were many other things. I also acted for the American Forces, for the American Air Force. Some interesting cases like, when one of their – in one of their aerodromes, a spy plane, an American spy plane was landing –

and it was fully reported in the papers that's why I can talk about it – and there was some work going on in the airport and there was a tractor there which wasn't working properly. The driver of the tractor got off and started playing with it, and the tractor started going down the runway, and went straight ahead, and the plane which was landing went straight into it. And there was litigation over that for two weeks. They blamed the pilot for not stopping quickly enough. And- but of course that was ridiculous, and there was also a special hearing about the damage which they'd caused because the plane had to be transported back to California. And the question of what damages were suffered by the Americans as a result. So there had to be a special hearing in privacy because otherwise we were giving information as to what was in that spy plane.

Interesting.

So, you know, I had some very interesting cases.

And Peter as a solicitor actually- what is your view on this whole issue of Holocaust distortion?

Oh, yes, I cannot understand how anyone can get up and say, 'The Holocaust never happened.' Or that there were no ovens in Auschwitz, or that people didn't get killed there. It beats me because there's a lot of photographic evidence, even films, because even the Nazis had one or two people who filmed on their behalf. **[02:30:01]** So it's absolute incredible that anyone can still believe that. And this, of course gives rise to anti-Semitism as well. And of course, anti-Semitism is something we always touch upon. This is what we're trying to fight. There shouldn't be any racial hatred, whether it's against the Jews or any other country. We also feel very upset about what's happening in China now. And I sometimes mention something which very few people know about, that after the *Kristallnacht,* people on the whole knew about it, there was evidence in the papers but very few countries actually objected. One of the countries which tried to do something about it -believe it or not – it wasn't a country, the Aboriginals. They had a letter which they tried to deliver to the Austrian embassy or to the German embassy in Canberra.

Really?

But the German embassy refused to accept it. But the Aboriginals who have always been maligned and persecuted, they had a letter from the head of the Aboriginal tribe complaining.

How did you find this information? It's very interesting.

I found out when I was in one of the Jewish museums in Australia.

Okay.

Interesting, isn't it?

Very interesting. So, Peter to round off this interview, what impact do you think did the refugee experience have on your life?

A great influence. Never a day goes by without my thinking of my past, and thinking of my family, and what happened as a result of the Nazis. **[02:32:11]** It's really not something which I forget about. But I do think about it. It's very much part of my life. I even dream about it. And therefore, it's played a great role in my life the fact that I came from Germany originally, but I'm very proud to be British, very lucky to be alive as I've said.

And you dream about what Peter? You dream about what exactly?

Well, I sometimes have a bit of a nightmare. I had a bit of a nightmare after I looked at this film, I mentioned about what happened in Dachau, and what – I mean, they must have been sitting around just thinking, how nasty can we be? I had – I think it was of the people carrying these heavy loads on their backs up and down stairs, for no good reason. Or making – made to do work which had no use but just to humiliate and to upset people. Yes, I do think of that occasionally. It doesn't happen very often, but maybe when I've seen something like I saw the other day, a film about Dachau on Netflix, that's what made me think about that. And afterwards I did have a bad dream about that, yes. Because I feel that it so easily could have

happened to me. And my brother and I being twins, we could so easily have fallen into the hands of – **[02:34:03]**

Mengele.

Mengele. Because Dr Mengele carried out these totally unnecessary experiments on twins, and that's something which really frightens me to think that we could easily have been victims of that. So yes, but I enjoy life and I'm glad to be alive, and I'm glad I've got an opportunity to share this. I mean, I think for example the AJR is a marvellous organisation and I think that [AJR Refugee] Voices in itself is also a wonderful way of perpetuating these stories. Because there's so many stories. Each one is different, but they all have the same basis. They all would not have happened, would not have occurred if it hadn't been for Hitler. So, I think it's very important for people to have the opportunity in the future to be able to pick up these tapes and these voices so that they can know what really happened. Because unfortunately we're dying out, but I don't think our stories should die out. It should remain alive. It should be a warning to the world. And that's why I think it's marvellous and I'm very happy to feel that I've perhaps made a small contribution towards that.

You certainly have Peter, and that's why we're doing this, exactly the way you have summarised it.

Well, thank you very much, especially you Bea, because I know that for twenty years you've been responsible for this. So, I congratulate you on it, and I wish you luck and hope that you have many more people you can still interview.

Thank you Peter. It means a lot. But I have just one question because I didn't come back to it, about the caretaker. Because we didn't know – **[02:36:01]**

Yeah, as a result of the –

Peter, one second. I think the tape is coming to an end so let's –

Yeah, I'll say it very quickly. As a result of the film, *Saved By A Stranger*, I'm now in touch with the son of the caretaker. And his name is Rolf Schädler, we're in touch, we're in communication, we speak to each other, and we're hoping to meet. We would have liked to have meet in Berlin but couldn't because of COVID.

Okay, I have – I need to follow that one up. Let's change tapes. [Break in recording] *I just wanted to come back to the caretaker because you said you repaid the money –*

Yes.

And you also gave him a certificate.

Yes.

Tell us a little bit more.

Now, for a little while after the War we were in touch. Not only did we repay the money and also certify that they weren't really Nazis, but although we had very little money here because of course – or little to eat as well, and we were rationed, we still sent them a few food parcels. Which we now know they received and very much welcomed, because they were even starving even more in Germany than we were here in Britain.

So you sent food parcels.

But then unfortunately they moved to the south of Germany, and we lost touch with them. And that's why when the BBC contacted us, they said, 'Look, we'd like to make a film of your story, and so that you have something to gain from it we'll try and find this family for you.' And they did. And when we began even filming and so on, we had no idea whether they would be able to. And as shown on the film, it came as a complete surprise, first of all when they said that they'd found the one son of the caretaker. **[02:38:07]** The caretaker was no longer alive, and one of the sons had died. And then they said, 'We can put you in touch with each other,' and they then made arrangements to actually film us meeting him again for

the first time. And then of course, was why the film was very well received, as I say, it's the fourth of the series in *Saved By A Stranger* on BBC2.

Yeah, but those are important stories to be told.

Yes.

Isn't it, that –

Yeah, and we're still in touch. He's unfortunately lost his own wife now. She appeared on the programme, and she was very lively, and it's affected him very badly, and he particularly wants to meet George and me. In fact, we've actually arranged that there's apparently a small bar in the corner of the *Heylstraße* where his father was the caretaker and we lived, but we haven't been able to meet. It's actually his 90th birthday in January which we congratulated him on, and we want to meet. And we are able to now, but we haven't yet been able to arrange that and we're not sure to what extent he is well enough to travel, to what extent we're well enough to travel, and of course we're all at the moment being very careful about intermingling. We're still keeping – certainly Marianne and I are keeping very much to ourselves. We haven't really been out very much for the last two years.

And how have you coped in the last two years Peter?

I think we've aged as a result [pause]. We're very happy because we've got each other, we love each other, and we're very happy in each other's company. I've missed seeing my children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren [laughs] in Australia. **[02:40:03]** We've got good children here in England, but even those we weren't able to see for quite a long while. I think it's really affected everyone. It's made everyone feel somewhat more depressed, but Marianne and I have been able to continue our work, but only spasmodically on Zoom. So, we have given a lot of talks on Zoom but not as many as we gave before. And it's not the same. We like to go to the schools, we like to see the children, and they like to shake our hands. They like to have films or photographs taken. But we've just had to make

the best of it. Everyone has suffered, and it's a great pity because it's so unfair isn't it, that something like an illness can make the whole world suffer.

Yeah, and do you think you will be going back to Berlin?

We've been asked to. We've been asked to. Maybe if my wife is well enough, possibly, yes. But it'll be in a few months' time, not yet.

Okay. Let's hope you –

I want to see what's happening in Germany because Germany has been as badly hit as we have, perhaps been worse hit. So, one wouldn't necessarily go to Germany until recently, but I think things are beginning to improve. But I think it's almost more important even to speak to German groups than it is to speak to English groups.

Okay Peter, I have to ask you, you told us the message you give to the school children. Have you got any message for anyone who might watch our interview today?

[Pause] **[02:42:03]** We hope that what we've said is a bit detailed, but that you bear in mind the important element of it. That if it hadn't been for the Nazis we would have lived quite happily in Germany. And it's so important for people just to recognise that we're all somewhat different and to respect that difference. That's what I would like people to remember. Respect our differences and in fact, almost welcome them, because otherwise the world would be a dull place. And as long as people live their lives decently and honestly, that's what's important. Morality is much more important than religion. That's my own feeling about it. Religion has a lot to offer, but unfortunately looking back on the history of the world, religion so far has not been for the good. It's been for the evil. That's not what should happen. Religion is supposed to teach people to be good, to be understanding, to be respectful. I welcome the fact that there are different religions, but I think the teaching of those religions should be one of morality. Not only teaching, but then living their lives according to that philosophy.

Okay, thank you so much Peter for this interview and for this message.

Pleasure.

And we are going to have a break and then look at your photographs and documents.

Okay.

Thank you.

Pleasure, I'm very pleased we have the opportunity.

Finally [laugh].

Finally.

One second [pause]. **[02:44:00]**

This is a photograph taken of my parents and my twin brother and myself. We're still in a pram. Probably there at about two years old, not quite. So, it would have been about 1934. And you can see that we've just gone for a walk in the local park.

Okay.

This is my mother in Berlin in 1933, not too long after we were born, and you can see both George and myself. I wouldn't know which is me and which is George, but we're obviously very happy. We were living in a first -floor apartment, and we moved into a ground floor apartment. It was easier for my mother with the two boys.

This is a photograph of my father taking us for a walk in the local park. It was only a certain section open to Jewish people and I'm sure that my father was probably telling us that we were only allowed to sit on a yellow bench and not on a green one.

This is a photo of my father taking my brother George and myself for a walk. You see that we were always dressed the same, and it was not very usual for fathers to take children for a walk, but my father was very proud of having twins and he loved to do so.

This is a photograph of George and myself. We moved to Eastbourne. **[02:46:01]** We were told it's cheaper than living in London. George is on the left, and this was already the – War has started, and Eastbourne was still the same as ever with the band playing. But soon afterwards the barbed wire appeared, and they were beginning to anticipate an invasion of the Germans into England.

This is in London. We're aged about eight. We loved entertaining and as twins we obviously looked very much alike. Here we were porters in a show especially put on for German and Austrian refugees, half in English and half in German. And we were obviously singing and really enjoying it.

What was it called Peter?

It was called *By Candlelight*, that was the name of the show.

Thank you.

Yes. Here my brother and I are about nine years of age in London, and it was still just the war time, but we loved to entertain, and we were at that time entertaining the United States and other Forces because they were waiting to go into Europe on D-Day in 1944. So we were about nine or ten years old there. And even today I find it very difficult to tell which is which.

So which one are you? What do you think?

I think I'm on the right, but I wouldn't want to swear to it.

This is a photograph of George and myself in the garden of a flat where we were then living in Belsize Park. Behind me you can see something has already been bombed out because they were bombed very near to us there. Fortunately, we were unaffected by that, but we were probably about eight or nine years old then. I'm on the right-hand side. **[02:48:00]**

Okay.

This is a photograph on the 8th of May 1945. It's VE Day and we were absolutely delighted that it was the end of the War and here we were celebrating outside the block of flats in which we then lived in Holmefield Court, Belsize Park in London.

In this photograph my brother George and I were preparing for A-level German in German language and literature, and we had a rather small class, just the two of us, with a Mr Beck who was the teacher of German.

[The Army one 02:48:49]

After school we spent two years in the Army on National Service, and after active service in Egypt we were then sent out to Malta where this photograph was taken. We'd both been promoted at the same time to corporals and at that time we were probably about twenty years of age.

After the Army we won scholarships to Pembroke College at Oxford where we both read jurisprudence, got identical degrees, and this was on the day we received our BA degree at the Sheldonian Theatre [pause].

Fifty years after George and I started at Pembroke College, Oxford, for a jurisprudence degree, here we were at a party to celebrate the occasion. We spent a whole weekend at Pembroke College, and here we are having a toast on that occasion. So, you can see my wife Marianne and myself on the left, and on the right, you've got George and his wife Marion. **[02:50:00]** So we've got Marianne and Marion. That's a coincidence. It doesn't make life any simpler.

In this photograph my wife Marianne and I are speaking to a group of German children. We gave a number of talks to German children over a period of about twenty years. Usually about twenty or thirty at a time [pause].

This is a photograph taken at the investiture when Marianne and I both individually and separately received the British Empire Medal from the Lord Lieutenant who was having to deputise for the Queen during the COVID period. On the right you've got the daughters of Michael and Susanne. They are Sophie and Emma. Then Michael and Susanne themselves, the parents, then my wife, then of course there's me, together with the son of Marianne's other daughter Jeanette, that's Harry Sassoon, and he's got his fiancé next to him, and that's Rebecca.

[Pause] This is a letter received by my parents on the 16th of December 1938. We'd been desperately trying to leave Germany to try and extricate ourselves from Nazi tyranny and now here at last we'd found a distant uncle to give us the necessary affidavit that we would be allowed to go to America. And this was confirmation by the American General Consulate to that effect. That was the good news, but the bad news was that we were number 42,686 onwards on the waiting list. **[02:52:00]** And we also were told, 'Don't contact the Consulate, we'll contact you.' And we had to wait until June of the following year, June 1939, before we got the green light. And it was only a few months before War began on the 1st of September, so it was just a very short window of opportunity to get away from Germany. [Pause]

On emigrating we put everything we had, all our belongings, into a big crate. And my father had to make a list which he had to type out, and I remember him typing many evenings, of a list of everything that went into the container. Everything that was permitted because much of it which was of any value was not permitted. But everything had to have a figure behind it as to what we paid for it originally. And we had to pay again whatever we had originally paid for it. As it happened, that particular crate which went to Hamburg, we never saw any of it again because once it got to Hamburg it was opened up and auctioned off, so that all our belongings were auctioned off. We never saw any of it again. This is just one page of about thirty which my father meticulously typed out. [Long pause] **[02:54:00]**

When packing the container with all our belongings in Berlin at the end of July/middle of August 1939, my father thought it might be a good idea to assist with the unpacking, to put things into little cases, and so this he did. And each case and each box, was separately sealed with a key. And those keys went into our attaché case, and when we got to England we'd lost all our belongings including the cases which we took with us on the journey. All we had was an attaché case, but the keys were in that attaché case. So we've got the keys, but not the belongings. Those keys are presently with the Berlin Museum, Jewish Museum, because it illustrates very clearly how we lost everything. The keys were pretty useless now, but they do have a definite meaning.

Okay.

This is a German identity card, and you can see a big J on it. Everyone had to carry an identity card, but only Jewish people had a big J on it of course. It immediately identified you as Jewish. This is my mother's German identity card, and you can see it was issued on the 14th of March I think- and has a photograph of my mother which one would expect, also a hole, two holes on it, to make sure you can't just change the photograph. It has a big J on the left-hand side and very interestingly, it also has the additional name which every girl or woman had to have if they were Jewish, namely Sara. Every man had to have the name Israel, so you can see it's a full name, given name Sara as well. And of course, what is interesting is it has fingerprints. **[02:56:01]** And I think it was only Jewish people whose fingerprints were demanded, although my mother was of course in no way, in any way a criminal.

Yes, please.

This is an important document because it's the original of the passport which got my mother, father, and my brother George, and myself out of Germany. This is the first page of the German passport, and you can see it starts with a big capital J, just to make sure you know immediately that it belongs to someone who is Jewish. And at this stage it just bears the name of my mother and father with their additional names insisted upon by the Nazis, Israel for my father and Sara for my mother.

This is the inside of the original German passport which was only issued on the 5th of August 1939. In other words, just about a month before the Second World War started on the 1st of September. You'll see the photographs of my mother and father, and you'll see some holes. That's to make sure we don't switch it for other photographs. It's got the full names of my parents including their Israeli names which they were given, Israel and Sara, but what is very interesting, it also has the names of my brother Günther and my own name of Peter, in the right-hand bottom corner. Fortunately, all four of us were on one passport as otherwise my father might well have decided to go ahead and prepare the way for us to come to England. But with this one passport, we all managed to escape.

This page of the original German passport indicated that it would be invalid after August 1940. **[02:58:00]** Also, it was approved by the police in Germany and in Berlin to say that neither my father nor my mother had any criminal convictions. Then down the right-hand side you've got two extensions by the Swiss legation which at that time acted on behalf of the British government, as of course War was already on in 1940 and 1941 so there was no British representation in Germany at that time. Only the Swiss legation at that time until that period of 1941.

These further pages of the original German passport. There's first of all an indication by the Germans that they allow four persons, and they name them, to be able to leave, and then also there is a stamp from the Hamburg America Line that we would go from Hamburg to London, and that we would have to leave again as soon as possible thereafter. And that's dated the 25th of August which actually is more or less the date just afterwards when we left Berlin itself. And on the right-hand side there's a visa for the United Kingdom granted in Berlin also in early August 1939, and it says that this was valid for entry to the UK until the 7th of November 1939. So, it's all very much last minute.

This is another vital page in the original German passport, and it indicates the exact date on which we arrived in London. It shows that we arrived at Harwich on the 27th of August 1939, and of course war broke out on the 1st of September, so it was only four days before the outbreak of the Second World War. **[03:00:05]** It also makes it very clear that we were only

given permission to stay in England as a stepping-stone to America because leave to land was granted on condition that my parents did not take on any employment or enter into any business at all in the United Kingdom. On the right-hand side there is the stamp of the Dutch when we reached the border between Germany and Holland, a place called Bentheim. It's there of course, that they even stole our luggage which we had with us until that point, so that when we arrived in England, we had nothing other than the clothes we were standing in, and some documentation in an attaché case.

This is another page of the original German passport, and you can see my name on it, and it gives permission for me to leave the United Kingdom for the United States. And each one of us, that is my mother, father, and brother, had a similar page in that same passport to the same effect. That they were being allowed to leave. In fact, they were being encouraged to leave as England was only going to be a stepping-stone, and we were supposed to go to America where there was someone prepared to vouch for us, and also to be financially responsible for us in eastern Pennsylvania.

The left-hand page is a further page in the original German passport, and it was issued in November of 1940, and it says quite clearly that we had to leave by the 26th of January 1941. We were in fact designated to go on a particular boat, and my father was going to be released from internment, but then someone took pity on my mother. **[03:02:08]** Because the two of us together with my mother were living in Tottenham Court Road Underground Station for about eight months because of the bombing which was going on, the *Blitzkrieg* by the Germans, the air attacks. And so, we never left because the boat which we were put on was then cancelled as it was too difficult and too dangerous to leave and go across to America, across the Atlantic Ocean. So, someone put us on a boat a week later. But that boat did actually leave and if it hadn't been for someone taking pity on us, we would have landed up in the United States. We've never regretted that and indeed, after the War we were quite happy to stay in England and not to use the fact that we had permission to go to the United States, to leave after the War and go to America. [Pause]

My father was interned as an enemy alien, so-called enemy alien, in June of 1940. And he was sent to the Isle of Man. But he was released about six months later just when we were

placed on the ship, or we were designated to go on a ship, to the United States. But by that time my mother always took my brother and myself to Tottenham Court Road Underground Station in the afternoon where we spent all our time until the next morning trying to get away from the terrible bombing which was going on at that time. And so when my father was going to arrive in London, he wouldn't know where we were, so we sent him a telegram. **[03:04:01]** That was the only way we could communicate at that time. And there my mother wrote, 'Are all right. Waiting for you always. Sleeping Tottenham Court Road Northern Line. Platform 3 or 4.' So that was the only way he could know where we were. It's quite interesting that telegram [laughs]. And of course, this is what happened. When he was released he came and he walked up and down the platform, three and then platform four, before he could find us. And then we were reunited. Of course, subsequently rather than leaving, our boat was cancelled, and we've stayed in England ever since.

Okay.

When my twin brother and my parents and I arrived at Liverpool Street Station on the 27th of August 1939, four days before the outbreak of war, we were standing there, we had nothing other than the clothes we were standing in, and we had no luggage. We had no one to meet us, anywhere to go, and fortunately we were picked up then by the Central Fund for British Jews, a charity which heard that Jews were still arriving in difficult circumstances. And they helped us not only by putting us up in a hotel, but also by giving us a certain amount of money. After which we were able to settle down in London with the help of loans from family members. But I can see here in an archive which was only released about two years ago by -what is now known as World Jewish Relief- which is the new name for that charity, the archive showed exactly how they helped us at the time. And it's very interesting to know that fifteen months after we arrived, in November of 1940 we were so destitute and in need that they gave us – and it's in red there – they gave us a suitcase and each, both my brother and I, were given two pairs of socks, two vests, and also, I think some pants. **[03:06:22]** So we still needed underwear fifteen months after we arrived. It does show how destitute we were at the time. And when we were given these archives we were filmed actually as well because it was really something George and I had not realised, how much we were dependent on charity when we first came to England. I hope I'm to the point, but I have to set the scene.

No, absolutely, absolutely.

Otherwise it doesn't make sense. It's a bit longer than you might have wanted but I –

No, no, it's perfect, it's perfect.

You don't mind that?

No, 'cos it's a wonderful thing to have. You see, you see the thing and then you hear your voice.

This is a letter written by a Rolf Schädler on the 24th of April of last year, that's 2021. Rolf was one of the two boys who was our playmate in Germany, in Berlin, when we were three or four and five years old. And then one day when they came back from school, they came to us in the yard where we used to play together, and said they were no longer allowed to play with us. They had been told by the school that under no circumstances should one play with Jewish children. So, they came back crying, they were most upset, we were most upset, but unfortunately from that day onwards we weren't allowed to play together. The father of those two children was the caretaker and he was afterwards very helpful because he was the one who later on hid my father during *Kristallnacht*. And he was also the one who lent us money which we needed when we had to try and escape a few days before we were destined to leave by ship. **[03:08:07]** By giving us some money so that we could buy tickets to go by train through Holland. Now, the way that it happened was that the BBC were interested in our story, and they filmed it in a film called *Saved By A Stranger*. The stranger was the father of Rolf Schädler, a Mr Schädler. He was the caretaker. He saved us by giving us that money which we so desperately needed. And fortunately, and to our surprise, the BBC were able to find the family and we were then put into touch again with Rolf Schädler. Unfortunately his brother had died, but we were able to meet him on Zoom. It was carefully arranged that as we came into a particular room, then he was also there on screen, and we were able to talk to each other. The interesting thing is that this was a letter written after our Zoom meeting by Rolf Schädler in which he says in some length how much his father was against what was

happening in Germany. How he was anti-Nazi, and how he couldn't understand why we couldn't continue just to be friends. It's a very interesting letter because it shows that not all Germans were bad, not all Germans were Nazis. It's a very valuable letter because it emphasises not only what the caretaker thought, but also what Rolf Schädler himself thought. We're still in touch with him. We would have met him if it hadn't been for COVID preventing us from being able to travel to Germany. He's just reached the age of ninety. Unfortunately, his wife has died which makes it as he said more important than ever that we should meet. **[03:10:00]** We still intend to meet. It's at least a good ending to what could have been a dreadful story if my family hadn't been able to escape at the last moment, four days before the beginning of war.

Peter, thank you so much for sharing your story –

[Laughs].

And for sharing your private archive with us and for giving us the time today.

Not at all.

Thank you so much.

You can see I do my best.

You've done your best. You have a well-deserved rest now.

Yeah.

Thank you.

No, I enjoyed doing –

[Break in recording]

Peter, tell us please who are you holding in your hand?

I'm holding my teddy bear. He's called Teddy and he's very precious to me because that's the only thing which I still have from my first six-and-a-half years in Berlin. And it's the only thing I was able to take with me, or to bring with me, when I escaped from Nazi Germany with the very last train from Berlin before the outbreak of the Second World War. So that's Teddy.

So Teddy has seen quite a lot.

He has, yes. Of course, the Nazis couldn't take him away from me because I was holding him. Even at the border between Germany and Holland when they took all our luggage away even, well, they couldn't take this away because I was holding firmly to him. And he came with me even when we were on the border between Germany and Holland and we were being kept there for twenty-four hours, not knowing whether we could get away, he came with me even to the toilet. And he, like me, was guarded by a German Nazi officer to make sure we don't escape. He didn't escape. He stayed with me.

Are you happy that you kept him for all these years?

I'm very happy because it's something which is personal to me and yes, I am happy.

Okay. **[03:12:01]** *I asked you before Peter whether you had a message. Do you think that Teddy would have a message here for anyone watching?*

Well, he says it's very important for people to be kind to animals as well. But, you know, the human being is also an animal and therefore I'm sure he would agree with me that we should be kind to each other whether we're animals or whether we're human. And that we should respect each other for what we stand for. And that we should look at a person for the goodness in him, and not always look to see what's bad about people.

Okay. So, you're in agreement.

I'm in agreement with Teddy. He and I are very close to each other. We have no problems, no differences, and no difficulties.

Okay Peter, thank you so much again.

[Laughs] Sorry, I wasn't very –

[End of transcript]