

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Gordon
Forename:	Helene
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	August 1940
Interviewee POB:	Antwerp, Belgium

Date of Interview:	25 March 2024
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 8 minutes



REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV294
NAME: Helene Gordon
DATE: 25 March 2024
LOCATION: London
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

Today is the 25th of March 2024 and we're conducting interview with Miss Helene Gordon and my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we're in London. Please tell me your name.

Helene, Helene.

And Helene, where were you born, please, and when?

I was born in Antwerp in 1940, in August 1940.

Helene, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive. Can you tell us something please about your family background?

My mother came from Poland. My father came from Transylvania, in Hungary-Romania at the time. And they met in Brussels in 1937, I think. My mother was on her way to Israel to make *Aliyah* but she stops – she stopped in Belgium to say hello to her brother who had moved to Belgium a few years before that. I knew nothing about that. And my father – I don't know how my father ended up in Brussels. I don't know why or when. But anyway, he met

my mother. She only stopped for a few days in Belgium and the first day she arrived she went to visit her brother. And on that evening she met my father, who was visiting her brother because they were in business together, doing various things. I mean doing – they were in business together. He met my mother there. It was love at first sight apparently and she never left Brussels. And that was it.

So he came from where? [00:02:01] From...?

He came from – my father came from Transylvania and he left all his family there. Some of his brothers had already moved to Israel, in 1934 I think they went to Israel and settled there and maybe he just wanted to leave as well but didn't want to go to Israel at the time, so he came to Brussels. But why Brussels, I don't know. I know why my mother came to Brussels, because she wanted to see her brother before she went – she made *Aliyah* to Israel, and she never did.

And she came from Poland?

She came from Poland, yes.

So did they speak Yiddish? What did they speak to each other?

They spoke Yiddish.

When they met?

Yeah.

So, they both didn't have any – their parents didn't come to Brussels [overtalking].

No, nobody. Nobody there.

And did they talk about their lives in Sighet? Sighet or in Poland or –

Not that I can recall. No, not really. I didn't know much of that. I only learnt much later but as – at the time, no. Only just after the war I remember certain things. But not – not – well, I wasn't born till 1940, so they had two or three years together, living I don't know where and doing I don't know what.

And where did they – when did they marry?

I think '38. I'm not quite sure actually. My brother probably has all the certificates and things.

In Antwerp?

In Antwerp, yes. Yeah.

I mean at the time in Antwerp there was quite a big Jewish community.

Yes, yes, yes. I think my father had a cousin in Antwerp, Nachum Feldman, I remember his name but [sighs] how was he related, I don't – I can't remember, I think one of the – I think Nachum Feldman's mother was a cousin of one of my father's – my father was out – one of thirteen children. [00:04:17] And my mother was one of nine. And of my mother – only one sister survived – then, I mean. She since died, a long time ago. And my father, about four or five siblings who went to Israel survived the war but everybody else just went. And I think there was one sister who was in a camp and she came back and went to Israel, to the others.

So, they came from very large families.

Yeah, a very large family but everybody – but I spoke to one of my aunts who kept quite a lot of paperwork and she said that the family in 1944 were still around in Hungary. They were still receiving – and after 1944 she never heard any more. But up to '44 they were still alive. And I suppose the Hungarians started deporting them around that time, is it?

Because Germany didn't occupy Hungary until 1944.

Yeah, so that's all I know.

Yeah, yeah. And do you know what your father – did he come to be in the diamond business? Why did he – what did he do when he arrived?

I have no idea. I have no idea. I know that when he came he had to look for business and he found this [sighs] – actually my friend – I have a friend who was one year older than I am and whose father was very, very friendly with my father, and the two of them went into business together. [00:06:13] And I think my father's friend was very outgoing and sort of, um, [sighs] well, my father was rather a sort of quiet and learned person and this other – his friend, Eugene – Yiddele he was called, Yiddele – he must have found them work of some sort and they did work together and they met this Belgian grand- he was like a grandmaster, he was a very tall man, very sort of majestic. But obviously very benevolent and wonderful because he actually ended up by hiding all of them. Well, he ended up by hiding Yiddele's son, Maurice, and my parents. Yiddele for some reason was deported with his wife back to Germany. But he came back without his wife. So, I don't know when my father came to Belgium but I know that at the time that he met Yiddele, they were doing business in, a gut covering for sausages and I think they were both salesmen for that. [Laughs] How did they end up doing that? I have no idea. It was a very unlikely thing for my father to do. I mean he was much more – he went into the diamond business afterwards. They both did. And they were both very successful at that job because they were trustworthy people, that you have to be in that business. [00:08:03] You sort of created an *ensemble*, you know, surrounding of clients who trusted you and who bought from you because they knew you wouldn't – they wouldn't be sold –

Cheap?

Crap [laughs] like, what's-his-name said, um, what's his name now? The one whose business went all the way down, oh, come on [sighs]. You know who I mean. You don't?

Tell me where, who?

In London, about twenty, thirty years ago this man who had this huge business. Now, his name was – I can't remember. He had a business of very reasonably priced jewellery, silver, glass, and he went into the Albert Hall one day, at the –

[cameraman] Gerald Ratner.

Gerald Ratner, that's the one. And he said, you know, we do well and we sell cheap because we sell crap, basically [laughs]. And basically, the people who my father and Yiddele sold to, they knew that they were selling good stuff at good prices, and they did very well, both of them.

Yeah. But at the beginning you said – so they were the gatkes, so it was –

The *gatkes*, yes [laughs].

For the sausages, they –

For the sausages.

The skin, the sausage –

Yeah, the skin of the sausages, yeah. And they also used them for tennis rackets, you know, sort of – in this sort of thing. So that's fine.

So do you know where they lived, where your parents settled in Antwerp?

No, I probably – I don't recall the address. My brother who kept quite a lot of paperwork probably does have some sort of documentation. But we moved to Brussels when I was six months old apparently, so we lived in Brussels. [00:10:00] [Sighs] When I was six months I

presume, we lived in Brussels because I was [sighs] – no, anyway, I don't remember much. I don't really know.

So Helene, because we're going to talk about your war experience [ph] and you were born in 1940, maybe tell us before we talk about it, what can you remember or where does your early memory actually start?

[Sighs] I think it starts with a few – I cannot remember anything chronologically but I remember shots, you know, visual shots of things that I was doing and hearing. And sometimes because we kept in touch with a family that hid that hid me in the – in – I sometimes have to call back as to do I remember that during the war or do I remember that when we were visiting them after the war when I was much older. So, what I remember during the war was the noises of aeroplanes and whenever there was a siren – I don't know whether there were sirens there because we were in the country, outside Brussels, a place called Linkebeek which was an outside suburb. And they had a farm. Well, I don't know if it was a farm, or was it just a house that backed on to fields. And I was supposed to be the grand – their granddaughter because they had a- and so I remember having to hide under a table in case something exploded. I also remember – I don't remember any bad things besides that and the sort of fear of going under the table. But otherwise, I don't really have bad recollections of my time there. I remember *Tante Annie* – who was the name we gave to the lady – I remember her doing her nails in a sort of lovely, muted colour, a sort of pinky-brown, and she always dried them under the sink with cold water. [00:12:13] And I remember her doing that but that's [laughs] got nothing to do with war, so it's just, you know, things that I remember. Otherwise, I really don't remember much.

Were there any other children there?

No.

No, so you were the only child.

Yeah. I was the only one. I have seen photographs of myself with dyed blonde hair, so I know that they did dye my hair blonde and it was very, very curly at the time, very frizzy. And we went to church. They went to church. I don't remember the churches but I was told that's what we did, so presumably we did.

What about your name? Did they change your name?

No.

No. So you were –

I was always Helenike. Helenike. It was a sort of – in [laughs] – in Flemish, a nickname, a short nickname is making it longer. So, Helene became Helenike. And in fact, later when my father got me some bracelets which were engraved, it always said Helenike on it, never Helene. So, it's a sort of diminutive, "ke", Helenike, which makes it sort of sweet and charming or friendly.

So you don't remember any separation in the first place or also afterwards?

No. In fact, I was told – and I don't recall that at all – before I went to that family, I went to a young couple who were friends of the daughter of the man who hid my parents. And this young couple, the daughter was about twenty years old and her friends were probably also in their early twenties, they were married, and they took me in. **[00:14:07]** I don't remember anything about that at all, but apparently, my parents paid them a regular *stipendium* [ph] to look after me and I was with them for about a year and apparently after the year I came out weighing less than I did when I came in. They apparently didn't feed me, they kept all the money for them, and when my parents or the daughter realised what was happening, she, you know, took me away and they found this other couple with whom I stayed. But I have no recollection at all of this first couple that I went to, nothing. I suppose I must have been two or three – two, and I would – I wouldn't know.

You were very young.

Yeah.

So tell us, so your parents, so what happened? Your parents, first you, all three of you went into hiding?

No, I – I was never with my parents in hiding. They went into hiding. They stayed in the house that Mr Van den Stock owned and they were in an attic. And he was at that time with a partner. He wasn't married to her but he had a partner who was called Jeanne, Jeannike [ph], and she was a wonderful woman who looked after my parents. It was a big house, they had people who looked after the kitchen and, you know, sort of – you wouldn't call them servants but they had staff. And the staff apparently didn't know that there was another couple hidden upstairs because Jeanne made sure that she only cooked for themselves. She never showed the staff that they had to cook more because, you know, they – you had to feed two other people. And apparently, she took all the food upstairs once the staff had gone home and nobody ever knew, because there was a lot of denunciation in Belgium, a lot of collaborators. [00:16:08] And so this couple, Jeanne and Monsieur Van den Stock [ph] just really looked after them.

What was his name, please? His name, Van den Stock [ph]?

That was his surname.

His first name?

It's – do you know, his first name, I think it was Henri but I'm not sure because we called him *Oncle Gentil*, which is nice uncle, because he was a big, formidable man, very tall. Well, to us he looked tall. To us, I mean, Maurice and me. Now, Maurice was one year older and he stayed hidden with them. He was blond with blue eyes. And once apparently, he wrote in his memoir that there was a German officer who came to look at the wholesale area. And Maurice was always told by *Oncle Gentil* that he shouldn't show himself at all, he should never walk around there. But Maurice being a sort of, you know, cheeky little so-and-so,

happened to be in the area where he was and he hid himself under a table when he saw the German officer come in. But the German officer saw him and he looked under there and he said to Monsieur Van den Stock [ph] in German, “*Was für ein schöne Aryan Kind haben Sie hier,*” [ph] which is what a lovely Aryan little boy you have here. Because Maurice was blond with blue eyes and he fitted perfectly. Nobody said anything. The officer didn't say any more. Maurice stayed there. And then when the guy was gone, Uncle Gentil just, you know, was very upset with him and said, don't you ever do this again. [00:18:02] You're lucky that this guy just took you as a nice Aryan little boy. And so that was – that was it. But, um, so Maurice was hidden with – but openly hidden. He – because he was too young to be kept in an attic.

So he's your brother?

No, no, this is –

So who is Maurice?

Maurice is the son of my father's best friend.

Yiddele?

Yiddele, yeah. And so –

So your parents in a way stayed with this child, or the child stayed in the same place?

In the same place, yes.

But you were considered too young? Or why –

I was far too young. I mean Maurice was a year, maybe eighteen months older than I am and maybe he was okay to stay there. I wasn't, I was just too young. And I was dark, with dark black eyes and, you know, I really looked like a Jewish girl, so maybe they thought it's best I

don't [laughs]. The only thing I remember about- you asked what I remember about being hidden at the farmhouse, well, at the – there, is that I got very sick with whooping cough, or probably more a croup type of illness. And apparently the doctor said to Tante Annie, who was the lady who was hiding me, he said to her, I know you're hiding this child, and the parents, the mother should come because this child is not going to last long, so you should let them know. And so my mother was told, my parents were told and my mother came to see me. Now, what I remember about that visit is only one visit, I don't remem – I was in bed and coughing away and I don't remember her sitting and looking at me like that. [00:20:01] I was there, the bed is here, and I remember it as an – I can still visualise it now as an out of body experience where I'm there and I'm lying there and I can see her bending over me – she was wearing a black coat – and *Tante Annie* was standing over there somewhere. And that's all I remember. I mean – so she did come, she did brave whatever it was you had to brave at the time to *traverser*, to cross the city, and to come and see me and – but I got better and [laughs] here I am. So that's all I remember from during the war. After the war I remember quite a few things because she had a son, Tante Annie and Oncle Leon, who were the people who were hiding me, they had a son who was not well, who was- at the time you would call them retarded. He was – he had difficulties. And I remember him from afterwards but I don't remember him during the war. And he must have been born because he was older than me.

Older. So, he was there but you can't [overtalking].

He was there but I don't remember him at all. So, he would have been maybe, I don't know, nearly ten years older than me.

And tell me, what was the motivation for this couple to take you? Did they –

I think just out of goodness of their heart. They were just wonderful people. And we kept in touch with them up to the – up to when they died. I mean, you know, long, long, long afterwards.

Did they receive the – a –

Yeah, they did.

The Righteous Gentile honour.

They did. And Monsieur Van den Stock [ph] also. And the daughter of Monsieur Van den Stock [ph], the one who was twenty during the war, she came to our chil – to Mark and Sara's wedding. [00:22:07] And when she came, my husband made a speech saying that, you know, we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for this lady who did blah, blah, blah. And he recalled what her parents did and the whole room – we had a sort of a tea, a tea dance, I think, the one I remember, it was a tea dance at Sara's wedding – everybody stood up and clapped and she was in tears because she didn't realise that, you know, her family's work would be so appreciated by everybody. She was really, really – she had no idea. She said, you know, my parents- my father – her mother was divorced already or had died, I don't really know what happened to her mother. But Jeanne wasn't her mother. Jeanne was her father's partner at the time. And Jeanne had a – anyway, so we did keep in touch and they're all in the *Yad Vashem* sort of thing.

And the house of Van den Stock [ph], where was it? Were your parents –

It was in the outskirts of Brussels, in Berchem-Sainte-Agathe which was a suburb of Brussels. It was in my eyes – I can't remember going there afterwards. Yes, we did. As [laughs] as everything, you know, to a child, this house looked like one of Dracula's castles, you know, with steeples and things. And when we went afterwards it looked like a big suburban house but it didn't look, you know, so sort of – but I think they did it, you know, we – there were some people just did things from the goodness of their heart, they –

Were they a part – they were not part of the Resistance or –

Not that I know – not that I know of. [00:24:09] They may have been but I don't – I don't know. No, I don't think so. Well, I don't know, the answer is.

Yeah, yeah. And so, your parents stayed there throughout the war, in the –

Yeah, throughout the war. And then when the war ended, I don't remember getting together at all. I don't remember the time or the day or the event. I don't remember that at all. I know that we were together and we lived in – and my father then when – he had done some studies in diamond, studying diamonds. [Sighs] I don't know whether it was before the war and then changed because he couldn't do that anymore. And so, he went back to diamonds after the war and did very well. And we lived in a flat- where was it. And then in 19 – oh, and 1946, just after the war ended, what I do remember, I had TB and I had to go to a sanatorium in France – in Switzerland, in Crans sur Sierre, Crans sur Sierre and I was there for six months, I think. And I remember at the time that I had there more than I remember – well, I was six by then. You do remember quite a bit of things. My mother came to see me a few times, when we went for walks in the woods and [sighs] what I remember about the time there mostly – I don't remember much about general life. [00:26:01] I think it was okay. What I do remember, what strikes me, is that I was very maln- – I couldn't eat well. I didn't eat well. I've certainly caught up [laughs] since. But I wasn't a good eater and so you had to stay and eat your food until you finished your plate and if you couldn't eat it – and I couldn't eat it and I threw up – and you had to eat what you threw up. So that stuck with me. And I remember sitting in this dark room with a door with stained glass above the door, with a light coming through but the room itself was dark, and I was sitting in the dark in the dining room with that plate and I had to finish everything that was on it. Whether it was vomit or fresh food, I had to finish it. And I must have done because they let me go after a while.

How long did you stay in the sanatorium?

I think it was about six months. And I think the doctors then afterwards they must have said, do you know, she's okay to go back to – she doesn't have to stay in the mountains any more.

Because that was another separation.

Yeah, I suppose so. Yes, yeah.

And it's interesting, you say you don't remember, because often in cases like that, many children didn't want to go to their parents or didn't recognise their parents. But you don't remember that?

I don't remember. I was pleased when my mother came. We used to walk in this – my father never came. It was always my mother and we used to walk in the snow in the woods and I remember those woods, those trees and just walking out in the fresh air. But I don't remember any antagonistic- [00:28:03]

So you think that you understood somehow that you were not with your parents, that –

I have no idea. No idea. No idea.

What, you can't remember feeling that?

No. No.

You just remember being together afterwards? After the war, not –

Yeah. Yeah. And, 1946, '47, '48, my brother was born in '48. By then my father had already done very well and we were living in a very smart area of Brussels. We had a beautiful flat in an *art nouveau* building with a lot of I remember wrought ironwork of the *art nouveau* period. And I was going to school, into this progressive Mademoiselle Hamaïde School. I always thought my parents – I mean [sighs] I've been – I've always been an easy-going person actually, so maybe all these things just wash over me and I only realise afterwards, oh, that's why this happened and that's why this happened, and that's why – why didn't I feel something? I didn't. I just didn't. In 1950 my father decided he wanted to make *Aliyah*, to go to Israel. My mother was very much opposed to that. My brother was only two years old and I was ten. And he wanted – he just wanted to go, he wanted to sell everything up and go to Israel and my mother was really opposed to that. And he finally said to her, if you don't want to come – and they were a very close couple, they've always been close, up to his death I mean, they were very close. He said to her, if you don't want to come, I'm going to go

anyway and you can stay here and if we want to divorce, you'll divorce because I want to go and you don't want to go, I'm – I have to go. [00:30:13] And so she gave in and she went. And so, he sold everything he had in Belgium and he bought a quarry with his friend, Yiddele, with – the two of them decided to go to Israel. I suppose he wanted to go with his friend. I don't really – I didn't realise that until I read Maurice's memoirs that his father went at the same time as my father. And Maurice says in his memoir that Yiddele and his good friend, Nachum – which was my father's Hebrew name, Nachum – went and bought a quarry in Israel because they both really wanted to build the roads of Israel. They were very idealistic. And my mother just, okay, let's do that. She didn't want to – as it happens, after two years she got really quite ill. This change of climate affected her very badly. She got quite ill. She couldn't take the heat. My father, who was a really gentle person who liked books and who could write beautiful letters and poetry – poetry, I don't know, but beautiful letters, he wrote to my mother in Yiddish. He had to walk around with a shotgun on his shoulders because at the time the Arab population was, you know, really still in the war, even though Israel had become independent in '48. It was still a very tough time. And things didn't go well. They lost everything and so after two years they came back to Brussels. [00:32:01] Yiddele stayed, stayed in Israel. And [sighs] okay, so, when they came back to Brussels, they had very little money and they lived in an attic. They lived on a top floor of a sort of house somewhere, which they managed to rent, with my brother. And they put me in a boarding school. Now, I didn't question until recently, how come if they had so little money could they afford to put me in a boarding school? I don't know. And also, only recently at the same time [laughs] it occurred to me that I never questioned, you know, some people – I mean I've read books, I've seen films, I have friends, and I've realised all this, antagonistic feeling of rejection. I never had that. I've never felt it. And afterwards I actually thought, how come they kept my brother with them and they put me in a boarding school? It never bothered me at the time.

How old were you?

I would have been twelve. It never bothered me. I was okay in that boarding school.

Where was the boarding school?

It was in – also in Brussels, on the outskirts, I think between Brussels and Antwerp. It was a very nice place. The problem I had there, even though I was already much better in Israel – I wasn't happy in Israel, by the way. Very unhappy, so I was quite happy that I would come back. The *Sabra*, the – I went to school in Israel and the children in Israel, like children everywhere, can be very cruel. [00:34:05] And we moved to Petah Tikva with a fridge, a three-piece-suite and, you know, in Israel at that time people had nothing. There were no fridges, you had a big cart with a horse that came with a huge block of ice and you used to chip it off and pass – sell it to people who lived there. So I was, you know, the rich kid and I was called *HaBelgit* [the Belgium] and they didn't like me. They were very jealous and they behaved like that and I was so – I don't have good feelings about my life in Israel at the time. But, you know, it was what it was. We came back, fine. I went to this *pensionnat*, a boarding school, for a while and then came back. Now, in that boarding school, the same thing happened as in the, the sanatorium. I was just not a good eater and they made you stay and eat – finish your food. I mean there they didn't go to the extreme. They just wanted you to finish your food. And I remember one day at lunchtime I was sitting in the *réfectoire*, a refectory table, with another girl and we both had to finish our macaroni cheese and I couldn't. She also [ph] couldn't finish macaroni cheese. I love macaroni cheese now [laughs] but I just couldn't finish it. And suddenly, the headmistress barged in and she said, girls, you can go out and play. Stalin just died. You can go out and play. Stalin died. So of course, you know, 1953, September, I'll always remember. Stalin died [laughs] in 1953. You don't have to remind me when he died. I – we could get up and leave our macaroni cheese on the table and go out and play. [00:36:01] That was that. So, after a few – I can't remember how long I stayed. Maybe a year. And then my father got, you know, did better and we moved in to this nice flat. We moved in to another nice flat and that's that.

So you then left the boarding school and –

Yeah, we left the boarding school and went to live together, the four of us.

Just to come back to the wartime, Helene. What about languages? What would your parents have spoken to you and then what did you speak in hiding?

Well, [sighs] I will have spoken French. And Flemish I suppose, a bit of Flemish. But mostly French. And I spoke Yiddish. My – just after the war my father sent a private detective – well, that's what I remember. Whether it's true, I don't know. Since reading Maurice's memoirs I've realised that I remember different dates and different things and I'm not accurate, so I can't tell whether this is – the dates are accurate but it must be just after the war, my father sent a private detective into Poland and into Eastern Europe and asked him to trace – to track anybody with a surname Adler, Perl and Rotmensz [ph]. And this man came back with two people, my mother's sister whose name was Rotmensz [ph], and my father's nephew whose name was Adler. He was the son of my father's older sister who married a man called Mr Adler. [00:38:08] And the son was about fifteen, sixteen, eighteen, something like that, and he lived with us for a while. Oh, no, and he also brought back another man called Karel Rotmensz [ph], who was my mother's cousin, first cousin. And the [laughs] – Karel [ph] was already in his twenties and Waldi [ph], the nephew, was nineteen, something like that. And my mother's sister was – I don't know, whatever my mother was at the time. My mother was about thirty-five. This was a younger sister who name was Pola. Not Paula but Pola, P-O-L-A. My mother's was P-A-U-L-A. Except that sometimes the Polish and the Hungarian people called her Pesele [ph], which my mother hated. She didn't like the name Pesele [ph] so she always called herself Paula.

So he went – the detective was sent to find people and bring them to Brussels?

Bring them back, yes. And he brought back those, one, two, three people. Yeah, three people.

Out of the huge families.

Out of this huge family, yeah. There was nobody left that he could find. [Sighs] Val –

So how – yeah.

No.

No, I was saying, how do you think that the hiding – I mean affect your parents and then the death of so many family members, after the war? I mean –

I don't know how it affected them. They – as far as I remember, they were a sort of, you know, normal – they were not people with any particular interests. [00:40:01] My father read a lot and my mother read a bit. But there was no music that I can remember, there was no – there was no love for going anywhere particular. They were just very home – they were sort of – my particular love of music started with my – was he my cousin, my father's nephew. He was an artist, he was – he drew and he also played the clarinet, so he was a musician. And he – when he came to Brussels, he took me to concerts and I remember that very well. He took me to a concert and at the time he was describing the atmosphere and the landscape of the music. And [laughs] to this day I remember, it was Beethoven's *Pastorale* where he described the greenery and the little sheep going up and, you know. And that was my first time ever. And after that I probably didn't go to concerts until I was at university and I met friends who liked music and theatre and- But my parents, there was no introduction to any of the arts – with which I couldn't live without now – at the time. So they lived their own internal life, whatever, you know, they seemed to be okay.

Because they spent a considerably long time in hiding in an attic, so it must have been difficult for them.

Yeah.

[Both talking at once] Did they talk about it?

But it was never discussed. It was never discussed. I never asked anything. I mean now I think, you know, how come I never – even in my – I mean I got married when I was twenty-one, so I left quite – I left home quite early – but why, I don't know. [00:42:12] But there's also something else which is quite hard for me to realise now, is that I had a sense of duty towards my parents but there was no real love there, I think. And of course, that's understandable. I didn't – there was no rejection from me to them or from them to me. I mean they were quite sort of sheltered. I lived quite a sheltered life until I got married. You know, I

wouldn't go anywhere without them, I always went on holiday with them. It's unheard of today, you know. But you have to look at things at the time in the 1960s, '59, even that, you know. So –

What do you mean by that, that there was no love? So, warmth or –

There was warmth and there was duty. I was a very – I know I was a good daughter but I wasn't a good daughter from love, I was a good daughter because that's what you – well, you had – you were dutiful. I mean my parents, my mother – my father died so young, so that really, I really – it's more my – my father died in '76 so I was already away from home and when he died, I was doing – coming home because he was in hospital for quite a long time. And I was coming and going between Brussels and London to visit him in hospital, which was quite hard actually because finally [laughs] as it always happens, I stayed for three or four days and then decided to come back because the children were still relatively, you know, needed – I thought needed me. [00:44:07] And then I came back and of course, when I came back, that's when he died. He didn't die when I was there, he died on – when I came back, and I went straight back and- And do you know what? I don't remember his funeral. I remember my mother's funeral which of course was much later but I don't remember his funeral. I'm trying to think. It was in the same place, 1976. Anyway, that's that.

But do you think you feel that partly because of your war experiences, I mean you had – you must have had a strong attachment to the people who you were with for three years.

Yeah.

You know, so even if you can't remember it.

Yes, but it – it – I don't know. I can't describe it. I can't describe it. I know that my mother especially always said that I was such a wonderful daughter, especially – well, she was telling me that after I was married and – because after we got married and we lived here, my parents were still in Belgium and we always made sure that we spent at least one month a year on holiday with the children in Belgium, so that they could see the children. And when my father

died, we always took my mother on holiday with us so that she wouldn't be alone and she would still know the children. But by then, you know, both of them were married, so – but we still took her away on holiday with us until – well, it was only two years – until after she died. And she did say that I was a wonderful daughter, always brought sunshine in the room when I walked in. [00:46:06] Funny – it's funny she should have said that because I mean I don't recall particularly doing anything special or – no, I just did what I did and that was it, you know, sort of.

But maybe it's also that I guess post-war, you know, you had the children of parents who either survived the camp or in hiding, you know, maybe there wasn't awareness that they had a hard time. I don't know whether you felt that about your parents.

Sorry, I don't –

You know, there was a – because you were almost the post-war generation, let's say, you know, that there was this feeling of responsibility to the parents who had gone through something –

Yes. Yeah, probably.

Very traumatic.

Maybe that. But I mean it wasn't conscious. It was totally subconscious. It was just a – just a way of being. And whether it's my nature or what, I don't know. I mean I know thinking back on both my parents' personalities I'm very much more like my father because my mother was a very bitter woman. When she came back from Israel she was very bitter. And I've always said to myself, I do not want to become like her. And so I've always thought that, you know, I'm probably more like my father who was sort of – things just went over his back. Well, over a duck's back. What do you call it? Water over a duck [laughs] – and he just lived life. There was no – [laughs] actually there was a wonderful incident – I can think about it now – in Israel. When we were in Israel, when we first arrived in Israel, we stayed with one of my father's brothers. [00:48:03] And [sighs] one night at two o'clock in the morning there was a

knock on one of the doors and somebody – and my uncle came downstairs and said, who's there? Nobody answered. And the knocking went on, and went on from all the way – it was a house within a sort of little garden going all around. And the knocking went round and round all the windows in the house. And by then everybody had woken up and had come downstairs and thought, who is knocking and not answering, and nobody wanted to open the door. And then suddenly my uncle said, oh, my God, I think it's Isaac. What do you mean, Isaac? Isaac was their older brother and he'd – for some reason the uncle in Israel had heard that he had survived the war and – so we're talking about 1950 because it was right at the beginning. And [laughs] they finally decided to open one of the doors where the last knock was and it was Isaac. And the reason there was no answer, Isaac was completely deaf. In fact, deafness did go in my – my father was quite hard of hearing. My uncle, I don't know, presumably he was also a bit hard of hearing. But Isaac appeared out of nowhere in the middle of the night and everybody was sort of, you know, sort of completely- And then – so he stayed in Israel for a long time. And in 1972 – '76 when my father got quite ill, we told the family in Israel that Father is ill and they kept in – phoning and say, how is Nachum? [00:50:06] Nachum is all right, he's not too bad but he's still in hospital, he's still in hospital. And then my father died and my mother said, if Beloš [ph] calls, don't tell him he died because they're very religious and they're going to have to sit *shiva* for a whole month and it's going to destroy – whatever it was. She had some beef with Beloš's [ph] wife. Beloš [ph] was my father's brother and she had some beef with his wife because something or other happened and she knew that she would be very angry if she had to stop working for a month or something. Something like that happened, so she told me, don't say anything. So, during the *shiva*, my father's *shiva*, Beloš [ph] called and he said, hi, how's your father? And I said, well, he's not very well but – and he said, Chaya, tell me, is your father alive or did he die? Because if he's dead, Isaac just died, and we want to sit *shiva* for both of them. So tell me. You can tell me. And I said, okay, yeah, he's dead. And my mother said, what did you tell him? I said, look, Isaac died so they're going to sit *shiva* anyway. And so that was [laughs] – that was the Isaac story.

So, they sat shiva.

So they sat *shiva* for both of them. And because of being so religious, you know, they sort of, they had to do it for a month, completely not working and everything, which, well, once they

were doing it for – this is what he said, I'm doing it for Isaac, so tell me if your father's died and you're not telling me, and I know why you're not telling me, so tell me now. And, you know, I told him. So that was that story, the Isaac story.

But you said your mother was bitter in Israel, of coming back from Israel. [00:52:01]

When she came back from Israel, life was quite tough in the beginning. My father had passed on a lot of his business to friends. We thought they were friends. And these friends didn't easily give him back the customers, although it's a two-way business 'cos the customer could have said, look, Nachum is back, we're going back to Nachum. They didn't. They stayed with, you know, whoever they knew for three or two years. So, they had a very tough time and so my mother was very bitter against those people. She was bitter about the people who stayed in Israel, she was bitter about life altogether. And I – you know, at the time I mean I didn't realise that. I only realised that much later. I didn't realise that at the time. I think it's a bit like – I don't reali – you know how you say people think on their feet. To think on your feet is to be able to retort something immediately. I don't seem to be able to do that. I sort of think of something much later. I don't think of it at the time. I'm not, well, I'm not a survivor in those days. I didn't need to be a survivor. I was sheltered. I was looked after, I was – I never had to fight for myself. My mother, my parents fought for me. When I got married, I was quite independent in marriage, so I didn't have to fight but I was able to be myself much more than when I was with my parents.

But by the sound of you, you were quite independent then because you were sent to the sanatorium then to boarding school, so you had –

Yes, I had to break up [ph] in different schools and, you know, I haven't kept in touch with friends because I haven't had friends that lasted long enough to be friends with, you know, sort of. But that didn't –

And Helene, did you – because obviously you were first in Belgium then in Israel, what was your identity? [00:54:03] Do you remember how you were feeling at the time? I mean – and religious observance, how observant were your parents post-war?

No, they were not. They were never observant really. They were traditional but they were not observant, no. So, when I got married, I came in a family that was more observant than my parents but I don't know whether they were observant from the heart or from tradition and social standing, you know. Social sort of thing, I don't know. But I was never observant particularly and I've – we – with Sidney we raised a family in what it should be and later you can choose whatever you want to be. But this is how we've grown up. So it could be hypocritical, you know, we had our wavy lines about this and that but I think that's what it's all about, you know, you teach tradition, you teach identity and then you did with it what you want later, when you're able to decide. And I think that's what our children have done. They've been independent in their own way and they've chosen their own way of life which I respect wholly, whether I go with it. I mean I go with it because it hasn't harmed anyone in any way, anywhere they're – [laughs] there's no harm to be done.

But what did you feel sort of growing up in Belgium after the war?

I've no idea. I didn't feel anything, no.

Did you sort of identify as Belgian? You said you came to Israel and you were called the Belgian girl.

Yes, so I always identified as a Belgian. And when I came here, I was glad to leave Belgium because Belgium in the '60s was a very provincial, small town – Brussels. [00:56:03] It's not what it is today. And London was just, you know, a sort of paradigm of excellence and I took up whatever it was able to offer me, which was a lot.

But before then you studied in Belgium?

Yeah, just for one year. I was only at university for one year.

What did you study?

Well, I was in the first year of medical school but I was going to study pharmacy. Again, not particularly my choice. I mean I was good at sciences but I was good at other things as well. But my mother always used to say that if you're a pharmacist, you can get a job anywhere. And with her mentality of having had to live different lives, she probably always thought, you know, wherever you go you'll be able to get a job as a pharmacist. And so, I did study that and then I met Sidney and never finished the study because when I came to England, I would have had to take all sorts of A-levels to get into university and to carry on, and my English was school English and I just didn't feel like doing that, so I didn't. I did other things which I enjoyed.

How did you meet Sidney? In Belgium?

Yes. Having lived a very sheltered life, my brother – my father had a cousin who came to visit him – apparently. I didn't even know he existed. I don't know whether my father even did. If he did, he never mentioned it. It was a man called Levi Gertner [ph], who came from London and who came to Brussels for a community, a Jewish community conference or something. [00:58:01] He was a leader of youth things. And he said to my – he came to – he knew about my father and his address, so he must have known of his existence. Obviously he came to visit and he said, oh, you've got a daughter of nineteen years old, wonderful. We'd – I'm running a seminar in Arosa this summer and your daughter should come. We'll have youngsters from all over the world. And my father said, my daughter doesn't go anywhere without us. And he – Levi [ph] said, well, I'll be there, I'll look after her. So, my parents agreed and I went to this seminar in Arosa in 1959, in August, the whole of August, and I met – there were lots of young people there. I met a young man from Switzerland there, we became friends, and it was a group of us there. And when we came – when I came back to Brussels and he went back to Zürich, he – we corresponded and he said to me, I've got a friend who's coming to visit me from London. His father and my father are doing business together and he's going to pass by Brussels and he'll come and say hello to you, from me. And so, one day I got this phone call saying, I'm a friend of Jack's and I'm bringing you regards from him. And I said, yeah, thank you very much, goodbye. And he said, no, no, no, no, I'm only in Brussels for one night, can we have coffee? And that's how we met. [Laughs] And we meet in an extraordinary way because he said, can we have coffee, so he

came to pick me up and we didn't go to have coffee, we went to a bookshop. And the English bookshops – the English books, were always on the top shelf of a sort of bookshop and there was a ladder and he climbed up there and there were all the Penguin paperbacks. [01:00:13] And we spoke English together but I mean my English was very broken. And he took a Penguin book and said, 'Catcher in the Rye', have you read this? I said no. I didn't even know anything about it. Oh, that's very good. You should read that. And he threw it at me, I caught it. And it went on to, you know, loads of classical – which now, you know, sort of – and [laughs] by the end of the evening – by the end of an hour or so I had to take [laughs] my skirt and sort of hold twenty books or whatever, English books that I was told these are wonderful, you should read them, Somerset Maugham, the sort of all the English classics. And so we got to the thing, he paid for all the books and then we went to a coffee next door and that was it, and I [laughs] went back with this paperback, two paperbacks worth of things [ph]. And so that was how we met and he was quite extraordinary, and that's it. A year later after corresponding he came with his mother on his way to Paris. She was a painter. She did these – that painting over there. And she had been accepted at the Salon de Paris and she was taking – she was going with – he was taking her to visit the exhibition where her painting was on show. And he came – he brought her to us and she, to the end of her life had always insisted that she met me first and she said to Sidney, this is the girl you must marry. And [laughs] he – she wouldn't – she would not believe that he had met me before, and he had actually brought her to say hello to me on his way. [01:02:06] And so that was the mother-in-law.

And what did your parents think of –

Of him?

Of Sidney, or that you were moving to London?

They were not very happy. They were anxious. And they made sure they – you know, they sort of, they were anxious but they, you know, it was what it was and they said Okay, they're not that far. But they were not over the – overjoyed that I was leaving. I said my brother was still there and, um...

And was it a culture shock for you, then, to come to England or –

No, I loved it. I absolutely adored it. I really did. I was very happy here, especially Sidney. Sidney was completely, you know, you can do what you like, whatever you want to do, just do. He was working quite hard morning to evening. I had the whole day free to choose what I wanted to do. And so [laughs] there were three things that were important that he said I should do. First of all, have contact lenses fitted. Take a driving course. And then what do you want to do? And I said, well, I'll study languages. Okay. So, I went to the Polytechnic in Regent Street at the time and I studied Italian, German and Russian to A-level 'cos I thought I'm going to live in England, I'm not going to learn English. I'm going to take English lessons? That's ridiculous. And I liked languages and I was good at languages, so I took those. And I had to translate everything through English, which I did. [01:04:00] And I passed all of them, not marvellous grades but I passed them. And I did nothing with them, which was a bit – well, I did speak a bit of Russian with his mother, with Sidney's mother, but I didn't really practise any more. I had learnt Hebrew in Israel and I was quite fluent in it. And again, you know, the lack of practice but it comes back very quickly. Funnily enough, when I speak Hebrew there were Russian words that come in. I don't know why. I don't know why. The languages are so different but somehow there is something in common, whether it's the musicality, the fact that you can sort of, you know, [laughs] you can do this in Russian, you can do this in Hebrew, I don't know. You can do this in Italian as well but it's just the Russian and the Hebrew. Very strange. Anyway, so that's – that's what I did. And my bookkeeping experience also started from then because Sidney said to me, look, I don't want to be bothered with any financial stuff. I'll open a bank account for you, I'll put in so much money every month and you pay all the bills. And I'd never seen an invoice, a bill in my life. I didn't even know what it was. I mean, you know, this sort of thing. [Laughs] And he bought me a little book and he said, look, on this side you put in what you spend and you total it at the end. And on that side, you put in what you've got in the bank and then you total it at the end. And then the difference between the two have always been blah, blah, blah. That seemed pretty simple. And so I did that [laughs] and he never, never saw an invoice from beginning to right at the end when he couldn't even work out an invoice because he was so ill. And so [laughs] in a way, he taught me life because when he died, I wasn't at a loss on – from a day-

to-day I was at a loss emotionally but I wasn't at a loss on a day-to-day basis. [01:06:12] I knew how to handle everything and what to do because I had done it all my life from day one. I mean I remember at the time we used to pay the cleaner five shillings. You know, that went into that little box there [laughs].

But you also worked with his business as a – you did some bookkeeping?

Well, afterwards I – that was the thing, I could apply to whatever he was doing. And I said, you know, I'll come and help out with the credit control, so I used to call people, you know, you haven't paid this, you haven't paid that and – and sometimes because my Eng – and at – that's where I learnt quite a lot of the dialects, you know, the northern people, their accents. I had to learnt to listen to the accents. And then one day I remember calling a creditor, a client, and said, you know, you haven't paid your bill and so on. I can't remember what it was but he said, you either have a very good memory or you have very few clients. I said no, we have plenty of clients but I have a good memory. I must have said something about him that I remembered and he was very sort of – anyway, I was good at that and people sort of – I wasn't abrupt and I managed to get things done but not always because things didn't always turn out right. But anyway.

What was the company? What did Sidney –

Oh, the – when I worked with Sidney it was the manufacturing of industrial vacuum cleaners. And he manufactured the cleaners and sold them to basically large companies who needed that type of equipment. [01:08:02]

But you also – you had three children. You raised three children.

Yeah. But I always had help. We always had at the time what was called au pairs. We always had an au pair living in and that was a lot of help. I'm sure that not all the children appreciated the fact that we had au pairs and that I wasn't always there. Sidney's mother was a very demanding person. When her husband died, she needed to go [laughs] – she needed to go out – she had a driver, she needed to go out and she never wanted to go out on her own,

not like today. I go out on my own quite happily. She wanted company and so she always wanted to take me out and she used to go to Covent Garden sometimes twice a week and I would have to leave the children early with the au pair. Sidney didn't come home until the middle of their supper and I wasn't always there, so I'm sure they didn't appreciate it very much. And she [laughs] – she was so demanding that not only did I have to accompany her, but I had to wear the correct clothes. In those days in the '60s – because Sidney's father died in '65 – so from '65 to '90 when – no, for '65 – for fifteen years – how many years is '65, '75.

'80?

'80. Yes, that's right. To '83 I looked after her. We looked after her in a sense because the family didn't really want to have much to do with her. And we were there. We were there. I was there like a sort of, [laughs] one of those. **[01:10:00]** And she said to me, what, you're wearing the same dress you wore on Monday? I said, well, you know, this is a sort of – no, no, no, no, she said, you've got to have a different dress every time we go out. And so I'd have to go and buy – and in those days it was a ball gown, it wasn't just a dress, it was a smart ball gown, so I'd have to go [laughs]. And I thought, what the hell am I doing? Not only do I have to buy a dress and I've got – but anyway- I loved what I was seeing. It was either ballet or opera and that's fine, you know, I loved the going-out but I resented having to sort of do it and leave the children. But I could never say no to her. I never said no to her. I don't know to this day why I didn't. Actually, I can't say no a lot. The fact that I'm sitting here is so [both laugh] – I can't say no. I could have said no. On the other hand, I haven't stopped talking, so it's probably come at the right time that you need to talk.

You couldn't say no to the interview. Your son asked you to do it?

Yeah.

Yeah, hmm.

So that's that. I do – maybe I'm lucky that I don't remember bad things. Maybe I'm the sort of person who remembers the positive things in life and that's lucky, I think. 'Cos you could have been like my mother who was really constantly hankering about past and, you know, on and on and that's – I can't be like that. And I don't think – I don't think I worked at it. I think it's in my – it's in your nature. You either are like that or you're not.

How do you compare your own experience with other child survivors? You have some friends who were child survivors. How do you feel –

[Sighs] Well, there's such a thing as the hierarchy of suffering. [01:12:03] And my hierarchy is very, very low. I'm nothing. I have – my parents came back, they – my parents didn't go to a camp, I had a full childhood, I had my parents there all the time. I haven't suffered, basically. My parents might have. The only thing, my mother never told me this but a friend of hers, who was a love-hate sort of friendship that she had with her – she adored her and yet she – there was lots of things she didn't like about her. That friend after my mother died, we got together and we asked a few questions, told me a few things about what my parents went through during the war. And she told me one thing, that she knew my parents when my mother was pregnant with me and apparently when she was pregnant with me, eight months old, eight months pregnant, they were told they had to leave Brussels and go towards Paris for some reason. Paris was already occupied. But they had to go to the north of France, so my parents left by car and then they got to a field where the car couldn't go any more and there was barbed wire in the field. And they had to sort of go under the barbed wire to get into the field to go into that direction. I don't understand. It doesn't seem to make sense. But the thing that she did say is that my mother, being eight months pregnant, had to go under there and she was absolutely terrified. And she was – and I was there and what – you know, what happens to a child in a womb of somebody who has to crawl under barbed wire? And it's only after she told me that story I thought, oh, well, maybe that's why I'm so sort of, you know, I don't like confrontation, I will always avoid an argument, I will give in, I will not say no, I will say yes. [01:14:16] I'm not a yes-person but I – I'll avoid confrontation, I won't do it. And I said, maybe all this fear and thing could stem from that even, one incident. Who knows? So I give myself – I give myself reasons as to why I am what I am because I've never been analysed properly and I don't particularly want to, although I'd enjoy the talk. But- so

that was one of the experiences before I [laughs] – that I don't remember and I'd obviously [overtalking] don't think about it. Pardon?

It might have affected you.

Could have done, yes. Could have done.

Yeah. Yeah, Helene, I asked you about how you compare yourself to other – to friends who survived as children.

Yeah. Well, I told you I'm not – I'm not part of that group at all. I have one particular friend who suffered tremendously and who is a real survivor in the sense that she is streetwise and, you know, can think on her feet. She – and these people are – these persons are – they belong to a different world. I can't compare myself to them at all.

So you don't see yourself as a survivor?

No, no. No. Not at all. Sometimes when friends ask me, I mean I've made a new group of friends in the choirs that I sing in and they, you know, Jewish friends, and they ask sometimes question, I tell them, they say, [gasps] gosh, you did this and you had that and you were hidden and – and I think, oh, for God's sake, you know, nothing happened, I didn't go to a camp, I wasn't imprisoned, I was – nothing, my parents survived. [01:16:25] My father was imprisoned for three days apparently, I was told. My mother never mentioned it. He didn't mention. And it's that other lady who told me about the barbed wire and going under who told me that. My mother, even though my mother was very forceful, she didn't want to go and visit my father in case she got imprisoned herself. And so, this woman went in her place and saw my father and told him that his wife was okay and, you know, everything was all right. And he was released after three days. I don't know why he was imprisoned. I don't know why. But he came out.

Helene, are you part of – because I know there's different organisations for child survivors. Are you part of any of it?

No. No.

No. You're not interested or –

No. No. I did join a group of people who – after Sidney died – because they were – for some reason, I don't quite understand why but Sidney, although he had Parkinson's, he wasn't – he didn't suffer from dementia. He had mental difficulties, memories and, you know, slowness, but it wasn't dementia at all. He was perfectly fine. But he was diagnosed with something called rare dementia syndrome with Lewy bodies. [01:18:05] Because when you have Parkinson, apparently – I said how – why do you call it dementia? He wasn't demented. They said Lewy bodies is a form of dementia, the only symptom of it is hallucinations and bad dreams, and that he definitely had. And so, they had an organisation – they organised something for people whose partners had died from that or had that syndrome, so I joined that for a few months. And then I stopped because at the end of the day, you know, I had nothing to say. At the end of the day, I'm living here in this golden cage, I live a perfectly – I mean since I was diagnosed with this which was last year –

Glaucoma?

Glaucoma, my life was everything I could have had except for Sidney. The move to this flat was absolutely perfect timing unfortunately, and I couldn't have been more comfortable and independent as I can be. Unfortunately now the independence starts to sort of wane a bit, which is not making me very happy at all. But I still carry on and it's – at the end of the day all it is, is getting [laughs] Ubers to where I want to go and I resent that when my car is in the garage and I have to pay for an Uber. [Laughs] And Mark says to me – my son says, oh, it's your refugee syndrome. You don't want to spend any money. I said, well, yeah, maybe it is, but that's what it is, I can't spend, you know, I don't want to leave the lights on when it's not necessary. It's – I'm not mean but I'm careful, and part of that is maybe what I've been brought up as. [01:20:04] That has never left actually.

What is that?

The fact that you're careful with financial things, you don't throw it out, you don't spend it, you don't spend it. I spend it when I want to, on me, I spend it, I go to theatres, I go to concerts, I spend – but there again [laughs] I only do what I do because unfortunately – fortunately, I have a blue badge and I can park where I want in Camden and thing – even Westminster, I get reductions. The blue badge offers you incredible reductions of seats and knowing how to use it, belonging to friends of certain things, I can get tickets much cheaper. I wouldn't go if I had to pay £200 a seat to go to Covent Garden. But to pay £28 for a rehearsal in the morning at 11:30, of course I'll go. And I'll take the bus, I'll sit in the bus for an hour until I get to Waterloo and then I walk to the Strand because there's nowhere to park now [laughs] except – except there's sod's law. If I take a bus and I get to Covent Garden – there are four blue badge bays opposite Covent Garden – if I go by bus they're all empty. If I go by car, they're full. So, you can't take a chance of – although I drive during the day. I don't – I wouldn't want to drive during – in town any more. I'm not sufficiently – so I keep the car to drive to the village, to go to the children, to go to the choir, but I can't even do that to the choir anymore because it's dark. But now this – soon, in a few days it'll be lighter and so maybe I'll be able to take the car. So, I have to depend either on Ubers or depend on other people who live nearby to pick me up and I don't like to depend on people, I like to be independent. [01:22:07] It's something that makes me feel better if I can be independent. I mean I had a mother-in-law who was not independent, except that she relied on cooks and drivers and daughters-in-law and, you know, her children didn't do anything for her. She had five children. Only one bothered to do anything for her. That was my husband. And even he – no, he would have done it even if I was against it. But like every couple, where is a mother-in-law, if the daughter-in-law doesn't sort of acquiesce or does something, the husband will also sort of slowly sort of not do. So, I was quite – I was always okay to do it. I wasn't okay actually because I lost my temper when [laughs] – when we'd go on holiday, for instance, she wouldn't have – she would only have *kosher* meat. She wasn't particularly religious but somehow or other you couldn't have a piece of steak that was not *kosher* in front of her. So, when we'd go on holiday in France – steak and chips is my favourite food – I could never have steak and chips when we went to a restaurant and I used to take it out on Sidney. He said, you're [inaudible] [laughs]. But I still couldn't do it. I just couldn't not have – I could have done it. Someone else would have had. I'm having a steak. And what she would have

done? She wouldn't have killed me. I could have done but – the one thing I hate doing actually is humiliate people. I mean that is something that is – where – I don't know where that comes from but I can't stand people being humiliated and I certainly would never want to do anything. It's not humiliating to have a steak in front of a person who doesn't believe in it but it is in a way, you're sort of contradicting. **[01:24:00]** I know she was very selfish and she was not sort of – she only cared about what she thought she'd – we didn't really care. But it doesn't matter. She had her problems as well I presume. And I just couldn't – but generally speaking, I won't say – I will rather say yes to somebody even if I don't agree because I don't want to upset them and I don't – I'll – I wish I wasn't like that because I would feel better. This way, I sort of eat myself inside, why didn't you do- why can't you say no, why can't you say I'm not doing this, why can't you – why do you always give in? But that's what you are. You have to live with the way you are.

Yeah. So, you spent quite a bit of time with both your parents as well in Belgium, and your mother-in-law? I mean not together I assume but –

No, after my father died, my mother and Sidney's mother came with us together.

Oh, so you all went together.

Yes, and we always had an au pair with us at the time, so, you know, they helped. And my mother was very diplomatic. That's one time she was always diplomatic, was with his mother. She always – she never – she could have really – she would have but she – she never did. She always made – she probably did it for our sake. She didn't want to sort of upset the balance of understanding, and the fact that we agreed to take them both on holiday with us every year for a month, she was grateful. Sidney's mother, grateful doesn't come into her vocabulary. It was what she deserved [laughs]. My mother – no, my mother was grateful. **[01:26:00]**

And Helene, you also said you kept in touch, that they kept in touch with the people who hid you and they – tell us a little bit more about that relationship.

Well, we saw them regularly. We saw them regularly, and basically until they both died actually. My- the couple, Annie and Leon Van Cranenbrock [ph], they – we kept in touch, we visited them regularly. When I – after I was married and I went to Brussels to visit my parents, we always called up – called on them. But they – they were both quite elderly then, so they died quite soon. They had a son whom we didn't keep in touch with because I think he was institutionalised afterwards.

And did you feel close to them at all or –

Yes but close in the sense of being grateful, but not close, sharing life or anything like that, no. It was always gratitude and thankfulness and just acknowledging the fact that we wouldn't be here without them.

And with your father's friend as well? Your – who hid your parents, they also stayed –

Yes. Oh, yes, oh, yes, definitely with him. He was quite an elderly person already and he died quite young – quite early on. But we stayed in touch with his daughter who as I said came to the wedding of the children, so we kept in touch with her for a very long time. She only died about five years ago. We kept in touch with her.

So is it something – did you talk about this to your children, about your past? [01:28:01]

Yeah, I think they know some of it. They don't know a lot but they do know some of it. They said that recently I told them certain things which they hadn't realised and that's why they were quite insistent that we would do this, so that – but I don't think I added much more than I've already told them. I don't think they'll find anything. By the way, what do you do with this?

I'll tell you – let's finish it and then I'll tell you. I'll answer any question. Helene, is there anything I haven't asked you that you –

I think I'm giving you plenty of things that you haven't asked for, so now I'm dry. You have to ask and it may be something I can answer [ph].

Just a few, few final questions. How do you see yourself today, in terms of your identity? How would you describe yourself?

[Laughs] Do you want the positive or the negative?

Both.

I've got both.

Both?

Positively, I'm – I think I've told you before, I'm grateful that I'm here, in relatively good health, being able to do a lot of things that some of my friends are not able any more unfortunately. I mean the friends that we made with Sidney, I – they're gone. They're either gone or they're unable to live a normal life because they are – mobility problems. And I've got the glaucoma problem, I've got the stick problem but that's not so much of a thing. I can handle that. [01:30:01] And the eyesight is a big drawback, so that's been a very negative – so otherwise, I am – I'm living a life that is productive, interesting, I'm very lucky that I have interesting hobbies that I can rely on. I don't have to play golf, I don't have to play cards, you know, I don't understand any of that but I'm the sort of person who lives from the outside in. I'm not an inside-out person. I can't write, I can't paint, I can't produce things from inside. I've got friends who are academics and who wrote poetry, they can write a monologue on a monograph, on a writer, they can do critiques [ph]. I can't do any of that. So everything I do has to be – I've got to go somewhere, I've got to go to a concert, I've got to go to a theatre, I've got to go singing. And so, I'm lucky that I can do that. If I couldn't do that physically it would be a real problem actually for me because what would I do? I would sit here very happily and watch the box. And the thing is, I say happily because I don't resent staying home, I actually – because I love the place that I live in, I could sit here and watch the box all day. Not all day. I don't watch the box during the day at all. It's a rule I have to – I've done,

I've made. I would watch it in the evening. But I can't – even on Saturday, with *Purim*, I could have gone to *shul* with Mark. He was – they were doing a thing there and I thought no, I'm not going to *shul*, I'm going to go to the Wigmore. And I look up what's on, I see if there are seats left, I go there an hour earlier, I get very cheap concession tickets. [Laughs] I have spent more money on transport than I spent on the ticket and that really annoys me.

[01:32:06] On the other hand, I feel positive about the fact that I got myself up, got myself dressed and went and order an Uber with all the anxiety, nine minutes, five minutes, three minutes, is he going to come on time? And I do that and I get there and I thoroughly enjoy it. It was a lovely concert. [Laughs] And I get there an hour early, I have a drink and a sandwich at the bar. [Laughs] There was a woman who comes, a little old lady, and she comes up and she said, oh, what a coincidence. How lovely to see you. And I think, what are you talking about? I didn't – couldn't tell where I met this woman before. Anyway, we started chatting and then she said, and the ballet, wasn't the ballet wonderful? And I suddenly thought, ballet, ballet, ballet. I said, I was there. And she said, of course you were there. [Laughs] That's why I'm talking to you. [Laughs] And I thought, God. And it was at Covent Garden three days before, they had a rehearsal of three short ballets and we sat before the ballet started and we just talked. I didn't recognise her. At the rehearsal in the morning, she had sort of long – a long white *tresse, tresse*, a plait, and very thin, very thin. And here, she had her head in a chignon. I didn't recognise her, only when she mentioned the ballet and [laughs] that she recogni – I would not have recognised me – her, rather. She recognised me and we chatted. And you chat to people. I always chat to people who are sitting next to me, even if they don't talk to me, I start a conversation. If they respond, fine. If they don't respond, I'll stop because then I know that, you know, they're not people who want to. But most people are very, very chatty and they – if whether they're with somebody or on their own, and a lot of people do go out on their own. [01:34:02] I love going out on my own because I don't have to rely on, oh, do I meet – I get terribly anxious. That's another thing today. I get very anxious about am I going to be on time, do I meet that person on time, will they like what I've invited them to, because I often take two tickets and I then invite somebody. And I prefer to go on my own, I get there in my own time, I don't have to walk faster, I go with people who can't walk at my space [ph] and I get nervous, I get hypertension and [sighs] I can't breathe any more. So I go on my own and I'm perfectly happy to go on my own and –

But have you become more anxious do you think with age or with –

Yeah, I – no, especially with the – yeah, the glaucoma. I wasn't anxious before. Now, I'm very anxious. Everything that is not absolutely correct makes me anxious. And [sighs] you know, when Sidney was ill and he had- he was open to things but the one thing he couldn't do is to- what do you call it- motivate. He had no motivation, so he would happily sit in front of the box, sleep, read, fall asleep, look at a film, and he spent the day like this because he didn't mind watching during the day – day and evening. So, I always make sure that I took him during the day to a lecture that would be of interest to him. So I took him to a lecture, I waited for him to finish and then I would bring him home. In the evening we would – I would book for something and he would say, we're not going out again tonight, are we? [01:36:02] I said yes, we are. I said I'm not letting you be a vegetable. And we would go. He would never say no. He would always come and he would always afterwards say, I really enjoyed that, or I didn't like that or I did enjoy it. And he would always appreciate it. And, you know, we'd – I did that for years because I just couldn't stand him becoming somebody who just read, looked at television and fell asleep and I felt, this is not the man who deserves to end up like that. He was full of life, he was always, you know, an extravert and things. He doesn't deserve to finish his days like this. So, I always enticed him. And do you know, there's one particular thing. We were married fifty-nine years and the fifty-eight years, at fifty-eighth year, I wanted to go and see a concert, hear a concert. It was the Rachmaninoff's Vespers and it was sung by a group by the Tallis singers and they had to bring in two *basso profundo*, male voices, because they – there's nobody in England that's going to sing so deep. And I know – I knew that that music is not what Sidney appreciated. He likes the big Turandot and, you know, the big orchestra and the noises and the thing, and I knew he wouldn't appreciate that but I thought you're not staying at home while I'm going to hear that, so you're coming. And I didn't tell him what we were seeing. I said, look, we're going to hear that. And it didn't matter because if he didn't like something he'd fall asleep [laughs] and then he'd wake up and he said, oh, that was a short concert [laughs]. He was fine with it. He was very happy-go-lucky when it came to that. He relied on what I chose for him. But this time I knew he may not appreciate it. Anyway, we sat there and it was a really – I mean I – we thoroughly appreciated – I didn't want to look at him because I thought, anyway, with Parkinson there's no expression, so I couldn't tell from his face whether he was enjoying it or not. [01:38:08]

He didn't have his eyes closed, so he obviously wasn't sleeping, or was he just bored, I don't know. Anyway, it was as far as I was concerned wonderful. So I turned right at the end and he turned around to me and he said, you know, this was absolutely sublime. And I thought, I've been married fifty-eight years to this man and I didn't know that he would appreciate this music, this sort of linear, Orthodox Russian music but he appreciated it and I thought, you should never give up, you should first of all never give up what you learn about someone else. And unfortunately, there was only about a year after that. And I think what's happened is that when he died I was on a roller coaster, I was doing that with him and I ended up by doing the same thing for me. I thought, I don't want you to end up watching the box. When we moved here – when I moved here, or when we bought the flat and he was going to be here, we always watched television in different rooms because he liked different programmes than I did. And so I said, we're going to have one television in the living room and we'll have another television in the bedroom for me and I'll sit in a chair in the bedroom, which is what I did in the flat we had before. And then he chose the size because in the flat we had before we had a television the size of that computer, you know, and it was fine. But here I thought I'll get this. He said, I want a television as big as Mark's smaller television, not the bigger television, so I said okay, so I bought that television for here and bought a slightly smaller one for the bedroom, behind the cupboard. [01:40:00] And then I thought this way, you know, he'll be able to watch at least some of the time and I'll be able to watch my programmes. As it happens, [sighs] I'm sitting here and he doesn't need the TV. And my television in the bedroom has not been used because I refuse to watch television in bed. It's another bad habit that can grow on you easily, so the only time I watch it is to watch the Laura Kuenssberg at nine o'clock in the morning. I'm still in bed at nine o'clock on a Sunday, so I put it on and I watch that. But otherwise, I never watch it. So I give myself rooms and that's what I think positively of me, that I try to –

What's the negative, then?

The negative is sometimes feeling quite rightly there is no one here to appreciate me the way Sidney did. And I miss that [gets upset] because nobody – I mean I've had a mother-in-law and I don't want to be that mother-in-law. So, I don't want to sort of – [laughs] it's funny actually, Mark said when I text somebody, I text one of the girls – what I enjoy doing now is

I enjoy taking them to the opera, the theatre and just taking them to things that they wouldn't normally see. And I said, look, try it. If you don't like it, you don't have to follow it up. But try an opera, try a concert, try an interesting play. And they do appreciate it. They're actually lovely and they've all always enjoyed coming to what I've invited them to and – but sometimes when I text somebody and they don't respond, I feel they don't want to be with me, they don't want me. What do they want an old lady – and Mark said to me the other day, you're very sensitive, the way you expect people to respond or not. [01:42:05] I said, well, yeah, maybe I am. And I don't want them to do it by duty, I want them to do it because they want to. I know what it's like to have done it all my life, duty for a mother-in-law. I don't want to be that mother-in-law or that grandmother. They didn't have – they didn't have to do anything with their grandmother and yet they were old enough that they could have done, when they were eighteen, nineteen. They do remember the Friday nights, they do remember, but they did –

You – you [overtalking] –

I have – I have much more – I will, well, I suppose you could say rely, because I enjoy their company, I want – and I want – I would want – I hope they enjoy my company but I never know because I very often think what I always felt like, you know, I didn't want to be with my mother-in-law, certain evenings and certain things and, you know, maybe they feel the same and I can't blame them. A grandmother, a mother-in-law, for God's sake, you know. And so sometimes I feel a bit sort of maybe – but I shouldn't because they're wonderful, they're all wonderful, they really are and they're very appreciative. [Laughs] In fact, they wrote me a card there if – and Anya [ph] said, you know, if you ever feel that you're not appreciated, read this card again. And I left it out there because I thought I should actually know that I'm appreciated. So, I do miss that but I miss that because of Sidney mainly. He was not a man of many words actually but he made you feel that what you did and how you lived together was of importance and so we were very lucky.

And he passed away in the first Covid – where in the first [overtalking].

Yes, and he passed away in the first – he went into hospital because he had pneumonia and he was – they cured him of pneumonia. [01:44:10] While he was in hospital, the first lockdown happened and they tested him. At the time they still did tests for Covid. They could do the test. And they were negative. But I think they must have been because of the very beginning of the test, there must have been false negatives because they released him, he came out of hospital and four days after he came out he felt very unwell. And although he couldn't come to me because I had a chest infection which wasn't Covid but it was a chest infection, so he stayed at a place that Mark had, he looked after, and he stayed there with a carer. And after four days he was feeling very unwell and couldn't keep food down, he wasn't eating and the children said he's got to go back to hospital and I said no, don't, please don't send him back to hospital, don't, don't, don't. And when they called a doctor, they called the ambulance. The ambulance came and they said if we don't take him to hospital he'll die tonight. Well, when you're told that you think, well, maybe the hospital will save him. So, they told me – they called me and they said, look, the ambulance is here, he's in the ambulance and they said that if you want to come and see him, because you won't be able to see him in hospital, it's a lockdown, you can come. And so I jumped in the car in my dressing gown, slippers, and drove, arrived there just behind the ambulance. [Laughs] And the girls told me – they were all there – and they said, you arrived like a sort of – on a broomstick. You just broom-stopped and sort of – and I came out and I went up on – in the ambulance and held his hand and that the last thing I saw him in. [01:46:08] He was in a coma then. He wasn't – he didn't know me. He didn't open his eyes even. He just – he was out of it. And so I was able to see him and that was the last time I saw him. So, he went back into hospital and he was quite sick. They tested him and he was positive and so – but they were very good. They called me every day. They called me in the morning and I – and they said, Mrs Gordon, he's still here. It's not going to be long but he's still here. So, I knew that, you know, every morning I was expecting them to say, well, he's gone but – four days and at the fourth day when they called, they said he's gone now. And that was it. I wasn't – I wasn't able to do anything or see anything or do anything. But there was a tacit – I think there was a tacit understanding I think with the Royal Free that if you had a member of the family who was dying, that somebody could come and visit. And Mark was able to come on a regular basis, and Sara I think also managed to come when he didn't come in, to come and visit him. Whether he was *compos mentis*, I don't think so. I was – he was already quite in a coma. He was never on a ventilator

but somehow – I don't think he was actually. I don't know. I don't think he was. And that was it. And then we had the funeral which Mark said he was going to sort of tape it on an iPhone, you know, record it. [01:48:00] But then he thought of a friend of his and asked him whether he would do it. And it happened to be – I didn't know but that friend apparently is a professional TV – something to do with TV and he took – he – it was on his iPhone as well, I think. I don't know whether he had a special camera or an iPhone. But anyway, it was magnificent. It was a wonderful day, blue sky, sunshine, and it was only the children. There was only five of them. There was Mark, Sara, and their partners. There was – no one else was allowed. The girls came to me in the flat. There was a communal hall where they sat together, two of them each – two of them had a laptop and I was inside the door of the flat with my own phone, with my own laptop or whatever I had then – and an iPad I think I had. And I watched – we watched it and he did it so beautifully. It was – I tell you. It was even more beautiful than if I had been there. And I was grateful I wasn't there because I would have been – it would have been – but it was, you know, the – he didn't follow the coffin all the time. He looked at the sky, he looked at the trees, he filmed the grass, the green grass there was at the – very early on there were not many stones, so the whole thing was grass and path and beautiful trees. And it was just a magnificent day and I'll always remember that. We've never – [laughs] we never recorded it actually when – I'm glad we didn't because who would want to watch that again? I mean to have that as a memory, it was as if I was there, without the angst, with being – I mean it – I think – I'm not sure – I'm not sure whether it would have been worse being there than not being there. [01:50:12] But it was a relief that it wasn't one of these jerky things that you took on with an iPhone, you know, where you're walking and you're sort of – he must have had a tripod or he knew how to hold a camera. And it was wonderful.

It was okay for you?

Oh, it was absolutely okay, absolutely okay. So that was a thing. And then the *shiva* of course was also on Zoom where we had many more people than we would have had [laughs] had it been a *shiva* in-house. And, you know, it's just – and you wondered, you know, and people said wonderful things about him and things that I didn't even realise. Some people described things and this conversation they'd had with him which they found very interesting

and funny, and remembered things about him which was really very, very positive as well and very, very good for me. So I was able to take the positive sides of that rather than – and now, now, even now, when I'm in here I see him, I see him standing there some – I have a very weird way of life. I like to get up late. I don't have to get up early if I don't have an appointment. And I go to bed very late. I watch films. I go to bed at about one in the morning. And I always watch a thriller or something tight and then I watch half an hour of comedy, just to have a smile before I go to bed. And I see him there, you know, sitting or watching, and if I hear a noise, that clock before it strikes it makes a sort of – a funny noise and it sounds sometimes like a door's opening and if I'm half-dozing at the end, by one o'clock in the morning, I think, oh, Sidney's come in to tell me that I have to go to bed now. [01:52:17] And he's there all the time, although my life is – you have to admit that – Mark said, Mum, if he had come out of hospital alive, he wouldn't have been the man he was when he went into hospital because spending three and a half weeks in hospital, he couldn't stand without a Zimmer frame, he couldn't walk the way he could before. His life would have been very different. Don't kid yourself. And so I know that if he had been around, both our lives would have been very much more difficult and my life now is [sighs] – besides the fact that I miss him, it's a wonderful life.

Helene, do you have any message for anyone who would – who's going to watch this interview in future, based on your experiences?

[Sighs] Take things as they come, deal with them as they come. The one thing I learned from Sidney is never – or try not to act on impulse, which I used to do a lot. Now – he used to say, sleep on it, just take your time, just don't reply to an email on a hot foot, you know, so take time, appreciate the good things in life and appreciate your friends, appreciate your family, just look at the good things in life. And I'm glad I – I can only remember the good things in my life. We've had plenty of nasty things but they don't play a big part. [01:54:03] I mean I had a stroke ten years ago and I came out of it fine. I was very lucky. Sidney wasn't ill yet and he found me on the bathroom floor, called the ambulance. And there was a trial at the time, four strokes, which I was a candidate for and they did it, they did the trial on me. The trial took – the result of the trial took four years to get on to the National Health but it saved my life, the way it saved hundreds of people's life and it saves money for the NHS. They

don't have to look after somebody in a wheelchair for months in hospital. So that's another good, positive sign – thing that happened to me, even though it's [laughs] a horrible – a horrible thing. It took a while to recover but I recovered fully, except for a couple of small things which are not even worth mentioning. And that's it. And I appreciate my family, I love my family, and – and have lots of interests in life, lots of different hobbies. Make sure that you have hobbies. I have friends who – the only hobby was their business and when they had to give up their business, they just disintegrated. They had nothing to fall back on. You have to have something you have passion for and that's the thing that really saves your mental health. My physical health is not what it could be. I know that I should do more exercise, I should eat better, I should walk more. I can't be bothered, quite frankly. ICBB is my shortcut for can't be bothered. I can't be bothered. I'll do the minimum I have to do to keep me in good form. **[01:56:04]** That's it.

Helene, do you have any regrets or anything you would have done differently or –

[Sighs] Yes, but no because knowing what I knew at the time, you couldn't have done anything differently. I'm thinking of, um, you can have regrets. It's ridiculous to have regrets because if you take action, a certain type of action at the time, it is what you do with the knowledge you have at the time. You can't have regrets with – hindsight, it doesn't work. So no, I wouldn't have done anything differently had I been in the same position. And the only regrets [laughs] really is actually little things like Sidney had a very good eye for art and in the early '60s we went to an art auction, a charity art auction where there was a Willem de Kooning print which he said, that's gorgeous and I said, that's ridiculous, that's really rubbish. [Laughs] And he said, no, it's not rubbish, it's really good. And I said, no, no, it isn't. I – and I don't like it anyway. So, he didn't buy it. And if he had [laughs] bought that, that would have been quite something in the collection to have. But, you know, that's a small nothing. But that's really due to lack of knowledge or lack of inner ability to judge art that is particularly good. Any case, I don't believe in art good or not. It's art you like or art you don't like. And Sidney happened to have a good eye for things that he liked, that happened to be good art. But that's it [laughs]. **[01:58:00]** That's small things. That's a really ridiculous thing.

Okay. Anything else, Helene? Is there anything else?

I can't think of anything else, no.

We've discussed – I mean the issue of memory that you say you can remember. Do you have any regrets? Do you sometimes wish you would like –

I do wish. I do wish.

Would you like to remember more?

Yes, I do wish I would. And I sometimes also wonder, I hear people who've lost their parents and who've lost – and who feel bereft and who feel – and I didn't feel that. I felt very sad when I lost my parents but I didn't feel completely bereft and completely – I didn't. So, I could explain that that is the reason why that feeling wasn't there because I had so many separations that when it finally happens, it's another separation. But that's only a logical thing. It's not an emotional reason. I don't know. I give myself reasons to make me feel better [laughs] that I'm not as emotionally hurt. That's it.

Okay. Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

All right [gets upset] [pause]. [02:00:00] Are you going down or am I – is my eyesight going funny? You look as if you're going down. [Laughs] God. Oh [sighs]. You are. You're bringing your tripod down. No, you're not, 'cos you're not moving. [Sighs] God almighty [laughs]. That's all I need, is hallucinations now.

Can you please tell us about this photograph?

It's a photograph that has been hanging in my parents' home and when my mother died, I decided to take it. And it's my mother and myself. I don't know how old I was then. I never looked at the back whether it's dated, the photograph. And it's framed properly, so I didn't – I

never wanted to open it. It might have a date at the back. And of course, it must have been a professional photographer because it looks very posed.

But probably 1940 or '41.

Well, '40 probably. I was – it's August, so what, that would have been, what, about four months, three months?

Yes, so yeah, 1940.

1940 probably, yeah.

Thank you.

[Coughs] My parents –

[Cameraman] Just a second.

Oh. My parents, my father and mother, and myself in – somewhere in Brussels near a lake, Les Etangs de lac de Genval [ph], quelque chose comme ca- And I must have been about six or seven I presume, so that would have been 1946, '47. [02:02:07] I would have been back from the sanatorium I presume there.

Who is on this photo?

So these – this is our wedding, a wedding photograph of myself and Sidney and Sidney's parents and my parents. So, starting from here, this is Sidney's mother. My father next to her. And then myself and Sidney. And next to Sidney is my mother. And next to my mother, Sidney's father.

And this was in 1961?

1961, yes.

And where?

In Brussels. And Sidney's father died in '65, so he died just three months after my – our second child was born. And in fact, he bought a present for her, baby. He died in Zürich and he bought in Zürich a beautiful little jacket, reversible. I always remember that jacket, lovely, beautiful. And of course, he never gave it to her because he died in Zürich. But it was found amongst his possession, his luggage, in the hotel in Switzerland where he died. [02:04:03] And Sidney actually went to retrieve his body and everything, brought it back to London, and it had that little jacket in there for her, which was rather sad but very nice.

Yes, please.

So this is a photograph of a robotic machine vacuum cleaner that Sidney and his head engineer had designed. It was robotic, it was one of the first machines invented, designed, at the time where you could sit – well, it wasn't quite robotic but you could sit on it, as we did there, the children did. And you would sort of guide it through the streets of London and it would pick up all the dirt from the sidewalks and the road. And so, when – that was before it was – before it was put on the road, we had a photograph, an official photograph taken. So there's Sidney. Well, you can see everybody, Sidney and myself on either side of the children. Shulamit, the youngest one, is in the middle. Mark, with his Beatle haircut. I presume that would have been about '75, something like that – '75. And Sara with her big glasses.

Thank you.

And it was a major sort of design thing at the time. Very, very proud of it we were. We all look very young and lovely [laughs]. [Sighs]

Okay, this picture was taken – I think it was my sixtieth birthday and it was taken in Belgium where we gathered the whole family. [02:06:07] Mark and Sara. Shulamit was there as well. And there's also my brother with his late wife. The two tallest people in the picture, my

brother and his wife. And the children, Mark, Sara and Shulamit. Sara is holding a baby, so she – my sixtieth birthday, it would have been 1940 – 2000. Yeah. 2000. Who was born near 2000? Presumably the youngest one, Chloe. And the others are little, very little children. Their Mark's and Sara's children. And we met – we agreed to meet in Knokke in Belgium, which was a place where we used to spend family holidays with my parents because they lived in Belgium and it was easier for us to come to Knokke, which was a seaside resort that the children absolutely adored. Mark and Sara and Shulamit remember it to this day where they were able to sort of drive along the promenade in those *cui-tax* as they called them, which were sort of like bicycles with big wheels but low bicycles, like, I don't know – they'd called *cui-tax* in those days. And that's it. And we met at this – in the woods there was a fan – a tea place called Siska [ph] where they had fantastic waffles and hot chocolate and we used to – we'd go there and have waffles and hot chocolate [laughs] for tea. And so we gathered there and just celebrate my sixtieth birthday that way.

Thank you, Helene. Thank you again for sharing your story and your – showing us your photographs.

Thank you. [02:08:00]

[02:08:09]

[End of transcript]