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## Interview Transcript Title Page

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<b>Forename:</b>	Miriam
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV304  
**NAME:** Miriam Freedman  
**DATE:** 26 July 2024  
**LOCATION:** London  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

**[00:00:00]**

*Today is the 26th of July 2024 and we're conducting an interview with Mrs Miriam Freedman, and my name is Dr. Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London. What is your name, please?*

My name is Miriam Freedman.

*And what was your name at birth?*

Name of birth was Eva Mannheimer.

*And Miriam, where and when were you born?*

I was born in Slovakia, in the capital city, Bratislava.

*And when?*

Pardon?

*When?*

[Laughs] 2<sup>nd</sup> of 7, 1934.

*So, it means you just had your ninetieth birthday.*

Ninetieth birthday.

*Happy birthday.*

Thank you.

*Belatedly. Miriam, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Thank you.*

Thank you.

*Can you tell me a little bit about your family background?*

Oh, yes. Well, I come from an orthodox background, quite a big family. My father comes – there were eleven children – actually twelve but one died – eleven children and in my family we were six, one boy and six girls, and I had a very happy childhood. We lived in a very nice place in Suché mýto dvanásť, we had a flat. Before we had a house – but I can't remember the house – for a very short time. And then we lived there. I was really – it was a very happy childhood. I had a nanny, a Jewish nanny, and my mother had a lot of help, so it was a middle-class sort of family. And we had a happy childhood. We went to kindergarten, the Jewish schools, and a lot of outing. Bratislava had a lovely landscape and we used to go for Saturday for outing. [00:02:02] And tell people who do not know, even how Orthodox you were, we were eating out on Saturday, in a restaurant. It was customary in a Jewish restaurant to pre-book on Friday a meal, and Saturday we used to very often go for a meal, the whole family. So, it was a very special outing for us. I remember those things. And we had a lot of picnics as well. We had also a auntie not far away from Bratislava, or maybe from Nitra, called

Piešťany and she had a farm, and there we used to go quite a lot. All our holiday was spent on a farm. Of course, there were animals there and it was fun.

*And where was the farm?*

It was – I can't remember – it will come to me in a minute. Výčapy.

*Výčapy?*

It was called Výčapy, the farm, and my father's sister lived there and they had four children. We used to love going there because they had a horse and cart, you know. It wasn't customary to have carts before, so those who can afford it had a horse and cart.

*And was that near Piešťany?*

I think it was probably – no, no, no, no, no, no, I don't think so. Výčapy probably nearer to Bratislava or Nitra. I'm not 100% sure geographically but I know that we used to see a bit more of this aunt because my father comes from enormous, big family, so we did not see many of them. A few – it's one uncle I remember, [inaudible] Tivadar, and that's my father's side. I did not know many of my father's side but as I said, we – they had a family and we had family, it was difficult to get together as a family, even on wedding and celebration because altogether I think must have forty cousins or something like that. [00:04:06] Oh, probably less, but something like that.

*Tell us a little bit about first your father's family. So, it was a very big family and he was born in Piešťany.*

Piešťany, yes, and it was as I said Orthodox family and my father – grandfather owned a– grocery business, if that's interesting you.

*Yes. A horse grocery?*

Wholesale.

*Wholesale?*

Wholesale grocery 'cos they didn't be in a shop. And my grandfather's side was very interested in becoming a *yeshiva* student, my grandfather on my father's side, and it's a very lovely story. My grandfather wanted to study always, so it left to my grandmother but my grandmother didn't want to do it, so she – and when the boys reached thirteen year old she put her children to the business to help out. But my grandmother was a very ambitious lady. She opened a cafeteria outside the spa, with a- her hair [ph].

*Wig?*

Wig, yes.

*She had a wig?*

She was very [inaudible]. What she done is, because she had an idea, too many girls in her family, and she want – we didn't – they didn't have a dowry. If you didn't have a dowry in those days, you were difficult to get married. So, she – my grandmother was a businesswoman, so apparently, this is a story that I was told – I never met her – she opened like a big trestle table, big table, with liquor, all kind of drinks. What was customary in those days, people coming out of the spa going for a walk. There was little lake there and water. You heard of the river Váh?

*Yes.*

So, they used to go for a walk. [00:06:00]

*Yeah.*

And so, they used to go for a walk and stop for štamprl was a little –

Štamprlk?

Štamprla little drink. And so, my grandmother apparently was a very clever lady, what are you doing, what children, everybody's son, so she made all matchmaking her daughters. That was her aim.

*So, she had this bar or it was [overtalking].*

Well, I don't know what it was exactly because I had never seen it. I was only told by one of my cousins who lived in Frankfurt and she was eldest, and I am the x, so, you know, what she was telling me, I have got it recorded, all our meeting in Slovakian and German.

*Oh, fantastic.*

I've got a recording of my family from my cousin who was in her nineties like- but I had a great desire to go to visit her and I'm very grateful I did.

*What was her name, your cousin?*

Bidi? And I –

*And she had some memories of Piešťany? She could remember it?*

She could remember it. She was the daughter of- I have to look it – Terka neni was her mother name. And she was, as I said, she married all her children, Terka – this was my father's sister – and as I said, [laughs] she married and I can only remember that – I'm very grateful – she came once to London and I went once to Frankfurt to see her. So, when I went to Frankfurt, I had to get recording with me and our conversation – so I learn from her anything what I telling you about the family because I never met my grandparents on either side. But Bidi knew them, so she was telling me about her grandmother, stories that I was fascinated. [00:08:08] As I said, that she, let's say, like her father, Bidi's father was in – was



the daughter of somebody but if you ask her, you know, questions that I don't remember, it's not that I should remember them, but I can't. It does come sort of occasionally back a little bit. So, she –

*Yes, yes, yes. That is so interesting. So, your father was born into this big family. So, what was expected of him? What was his –*

Well, the thing is that they had to go to business right away because they were big family and as I said, had school, basic a, eighth grade – what it means I do know – and after eighth grade he went to a school, a textile school, and then he become a tex – he owned a textile company. So, he was doing quite well and –

*It was – he started in Piešťany or he moved to Bratislava?*

00:08:

I think maybe in Bratislava already or somewhere else because I don't know where he went from – as I said, from Piešťany he met my mother's side of family while living Nové Zámky, so they must have met somewhere on business trips.

*So, he met your mother's father?*

Yeah. Yeah.

*And they were doing some business together?*

Business.

*What was the company called? Your father's textile company.*

No idea. Absolutely none. That's the reason that I wanted Slovakia [inaudible] to find out some more. I have no idea. I was the youngest. So, my eldest sister probably – I've still got one sister in Israel. She may remember a few things but I don't – I don't remember very – as – I remember only what Bedi told me.

*Yes, because you don't have that knowledge, it's not your memory, she could tell you.*

**[00:10:02]**

Yes, she told me stories, very nice story about my family.

*I mean did the other siblings – what I want to know, did they stay around Piešťany or did they all move away from there?*

I presume – I don't know at all how many remained there. I – as my grandparents perished- died there, died in Vrbo [ph].

*Vrbové?*

Vrbové, because I went to a cemetery one day to Vrbové I think but it's going many years ago.

*And there is a grave there?*

Yeah. Oh, yes, but I had to – it wasn't very easy to get into the cemetery. There was a lady in charge there and I had to bribe her a little bit and we went in.

*So, they died before –*

Oh, yeah, nothing to do with the Second World War, no. They all died before. But the other people of course, they died during the Holocaust. They also went – some went to Hungary and some were in Slovakia, different-

*Yeah. We'll talk about it in a second. What about – how did your parents meet? So, tell us the story there, if you know.*

Yes, well, I – my mother comes from a family of seven children, five girls and two boys. And my late mother was the eldest of the girls. She was a bit of a scholar, very beautiful, you can see her picture, some here. She was a scholarly woman and she was – wanted to study but it wasn't customary that girls will go to college. But she was. She studied apparently Latin and Greek and so on. So, she was interested. And so, she wasn't very interested to get married. And she was very, very close to my grandfather, what I was told. She was very, very beautiful. And she – he used to also travel around Europe those days in business and he took always Olga – my late mother name – with him. [00:12:03] And he actually he said – was told by a cousin, due to her he makes very good business because she was extremely beautiful.

*And what was his business, textiles?*

It was – tex –

*What was his business?*

Textile. They went – my mother used to be to Yugoslavia, in Austria. She was travelling around quite a bit those days, what wasn't very customary for but she travelled with her father. So, I heard that she – well, I didn't prepare unfortunately the pictures, I don't know why.

*Don't worry.*

I will give you another time. And so, as my mother didn't want to get married, she was getting twenty-five [laughs]. In those days you were put on a shelf if you were not married. So, my father did business with my grandfather and he said to my mother, we are getting a special guest today – and she was a very good cook – why don't you make a big dinner for our visitor? And he made the match. My late father was a very good-looking man as well. So, it was a love match, and they got married later – very quickly afterwards and they lived in Bratislava.

*So, when was that roughly? When did they get married?*

Oh, my – listen, my sister would have been alive today, my eldest sister, she was thirteen years older than me, she would be 103, so she would have probably 114.

*Okay, so you were born 19 –*

'34.

*'34. So, she was born roughly 1920 –*

Oh, there is a book. Over there is a book.

*Yes. So, they must have got married about 1919, something like that.*

A year at least. They must have married before. She was born in '21.

*Okay, so –*

Yes. Yes, I've got all the dates of my sisters. She was born in '21 and so obviously, they must have got married in 1920. **[00:14:03]**

*And they settled in Bratislava?*

And they settled eventually in Bratislava.

*And did your mother help your father with the business or –*

I don't – not to my knowledge, not to my knowledge, because she was quite – a very cultured woman. What she was, she become chaperone to very rich ladies and to family. She liked to go to opera. She met actually Johann Strauss and she met all these celebrity and she was crazy about music and Lehár and all these things. She was very – she liked cultural life.

Because she couldn't carry on studying whatever the reason was, so she was a chaperone to my cousins or family member when they used to go out with boys. It wasn't customary to go out a woman by herself, so she had an opportunity to go to very, very special places like opera and concert. That was – we were brought up in that sort of atmosphere, a lot of music in our house.

*Well, did your siblings play any music? Did [inaudible] play?*

My family?

*Yeah.*

Only my eldest because she was playing the violin. And no, I don't think so. The eldest one was studying. She played the violin. But my children, or grandchildren are – Martin has the trumpet and my daughter plays the piano and guitar, but my grandchildren is very talented. She is a concert pianist by age of eighteen. She does play piano and know clarinet, flute, so she wants to be a musician.

*So, it stayed in the family.*

It stayed – it started from my late mother. She was always singing. I never remember her – always singing. She was very – she must have been a very happily-married woman. As a child I remember only that she was my mother but she was cooking and I always remember she was singing. [00:16:03]

*Oh, what was she singing?*

What?

*What was she singing?*

Well, all the operettas, I believe Lehár and so on. I don't know exactly, I was very young. You're talking when I was four, five year old, so I cannot –

*But you remember a happy household or –*

A very happy household. My father was very affectionate to my mother. Yes, he was wonderful to all of us. My father was a very, very affectionate person. They say I am like him. My mother was more reserved person because she had to take a lot of responsibilities. My father wasn't much at home. He was always doing business, he used to go to places.

*When she had so many children. I mean –*

Yes, she had six children and of course also that she had domestic help but still she had the responsibility. But I know the household was always visitors coming on Saturday. It wasn't – it was a very happy atmosphere. As I said, Saturday going out, I remember happy memories of my childhood.

*What are your first memories, Miriam, if you look back?*

Well, it's not a first memory but it's something that very unusual for a Jewish family. I think this must have been already possibly in Nitra, I'm not so sure. I used – all around Christmas time I used to be jealous of all these Christmas trees in the window, of decoration. So, I used to look around and my father noticed that I'm – were telling me those children, the neighbours that getting gifts, Christmas stocking in a window and a lot of wool is in it. And one day, I couldn't believe it but it was Christmas and we were Orthodox, there were – I could see my father putting up some kind of stocking and filling with chocolates and then he said to me, it's for you, Father Christmas was here. [00:18:10] But Father Christmas didn't mean to me a Christian [inaudible]. It's like a old man with a long beard, is love children and gifts or present to children, so I was very happy. But I actually saw him doing it. I did like, that's why I – this was my first memory. It made me very, very happy.

*A surprise for you.*

A surprise, particularly and Orthodox family. So, because he was travelling a lot to Europe already, so he was clean-shaven of course. He was – he wasn't – he didn't look like an Orthodox Jew, he wear a hat because everybody was wearing hat those days.

*But you kept kashrut?*

Oh, much more than *kashrut*. Extremely Orthodox. Because my great-grandfather who was Franz Joseph II Advisor of Jewish Affairs, Chaim Zvi Mannheimer. I mean he's a very, very well-known person in the Jewish circle.

*Chaim Zvi Mannheimer?*

Chaim Zvi Mannheimer. He was Franz Joseph II Adviser of Jewish Affairs in central Austro-Hungarian Empire. And they lived in Vrbo [ph]. I think they lived in Vrbo [ph]. But of that I haven't got much details. If I would have known this is going to happen, I would have prepared myself. I wasn't quite sure.

*No, no. It's fine. So, your mother was – came also from a Orthodox household?*

She doesn't come from Orthodox background, my family – my mother.

*She didn't?*

Well, what I understood, my grandfather become religious later in life. But also, my grandmother wore a wig. But my – yeah, I got it on the landing, you can bring a photograph.

*We'll look at it later.*

He looks – didn't look very Orthodox at all, because he was a businessman, you know.

[00:20:07]

*Yes, so modern.*

Well, yeah, but very modern. Go on the landing, bring the photograph.

*We'll look at it in a little bit, Miriam.*

Okay.

*But did you remember, did you go to synagogue? Do you remember going to synagogue at all?*

Sure.

*In Bratislava?*

But not happy memory.

*No?*

No.

*Why? What do you remember?*

Terrible thing. When the Nazi came in, I remember. But it wasn't the Nazi, it was a Hlinka Guard.

*Tell us what happened.*

I don't think I used to go very much to the synagogue. I was – but – because the synagogue when we moved from suché mýto dvanást' to Judenstraße, there we have – and I used to go to the synagogue 'cos it was very close. And I had a horrible experience, I remember it, and it was – it could be a Sabbath because they were all wearing a *tallit*. They were taking us



middle of *Shabbat* from synagogue and made them to scrub the floor- pavement, and people were standing around there laughing. Well, for me it was such a shock, so I ran and told my mother about it and she sort of protected me but I couldn't understand these good men, for – and everybody standing around and laughing.

*And you saw it? You were –*

I saw it. That started to – my feeling changed. It's very difficult, I'm a grown-up person now but as a child when you feel very protected and everything goes quite well, all of a sudden you see terrible things, like people disappearing all the time, my father telling my mother he's gone, this gone. People disappearing, they caught them in the street and they just disappeared but we did not know why. And then in our – we had to put some shutters on our little place where we lived in Nitra because – was that in Nitra or – no, it was in Bratislava still.

**[00:22:09]** They put shutters on there, it was Judenstraße shutters because hooligan used to come around and throwing bottles and things like that. And people didn't go out in evening.

*So, things changed. And when as a child, when did you [overtalking]?*

Well, at least I try to remember because thirty – four – well, it could have been about seven, eight year old, you can see the picture here, in the back is written there '43, is written my date but that would have been nine but I don't look nine year old there, do I? At some – well, that sort of age, seven, eight, nine. I think I must have been about eight or nine year old.

*I mean do you remember – obviously Slovakia became independent and then had its own, you know, fascist regime. Do you remember when the Jewish Codex, when they made the laws and the yellow stars and all this kind of –*

I don't know the code but I do know remember that my late father – as I said, my brothers went to Hungary, two of them, Marci and Noemi were sent to Hungary to our family who – we thought that it's going to be better. There were rumours sometime, situation is better in one country, in other country, so they sent my brother and sister, hoping they will be okay. But before that, it was quite dangerous to go in the street. Well, Nitra was a very sort of small

town, probably a few thousand people, so people knew each other, they knew where the Jewish people live. [00:24:00] So they used to – we used to have behind the building there a kind of alleyway and they used to go to the synagogue, to their – sorry – through the alleyway, to the – through the alleyway to the synagogue and sometimes they were beaten up. So, my – so becoming fights dangerous to wander around.

*That was when you moved to Nitra? But in Bratislava...?*

This was already in Nitra.

*Yeah. And in Bratislava?*

In Bratislava I remember less because I was very young but I was about six, seven, I remember less, but I'm a bit older in Nitra. I do remember that they send me out to buy bread sometime and milk and I couldn't understand why they don't go, because they didn't harm children. And one incident, I cannot forget, a man came one day to us to see my late father and he asked – there's a kiosk not far from here, could you go and get me some cigarettes? So, he gave me the money and I went to buy him cigarettes. Well, he said, if you go and do this for me, I'm going to bring you next time, on next trip, a doll. I didn't have any toys, nothing at all. So, she went – he – I went to the kiosk and a man who was in the kiosk said to me, why doesn't he want come buy himself the cigarettes? Is he afraid he's going to be hit, bashed around? Why does he send a little girl? So, they realised I'm Jewish but somehow, they didn't want to harm me. So, this I remember. And I came back and I gave him the cigarette and he promised me a doll. Of course, I never saw him again, and that was that of him. We don't know what happened to him.

*This was in Nitra?*

That was in Nitra already, yes.

*But let's just talk about Bratislava. You also said your sister emigrated to Palestine.*

[00:26:00] *Tell us a –*

Yes, well, we are a – we were quite – well, I am sporty as well – I used to be. My sister belonged to something called Maccabi Hatzair. It's a youth movement. And she was very good at sports. And she was not probably as Orthodox as my father would have liked her to be [laughs] 'cos she was already eighteen, nineteen year old, so she was a bit more independent. And so then was what is called *aliyah*, the group of people from Bratislava went via Trieste to Palestine. And she told my late father to come and everybody but of course he wouldn't hear about it because the Messiah has not arrived yet, so we have to wait for the Messiah to come before we are going to move away. So, she left the family and it was very, very sad for us. And she went, as I said, it was British Mandate, and she got to Palestine. We had very little contact with her. She – we had some contact but I cannot tell you how 'cos I – they never told me as a child, my late parents, what contact they had with her.

*Yeah. So, she did it on her own accord, against your father's wishes?*

Pardon?

*She did it against your father's wishes?*

Against. So, we sat *shiva* apparently. Yeah, my father was heartbroken. My father was heartbroken that she left but somehow, she had this feeling or she has to do it.

*And when was that? When?*

'39. And because we found out that she tried to send us affidavit for it's called kind of a permit to emigrate and the Hlinka Guard would not let us out. But at one stage, they did let us go up to Switzerland and believe it or not, the Swiss would not let – wouldn't let us in, so we had to go back. [00:28:00]

*With this affidavit to emigrate to...?*

Pales –

*Palestine?*

Well, yeah. Details I haven't got. I only know we got the affidavit and we left home and we didn't – we reached the border and we were sent back. This is what I remember because we got again affidavit in '46, that when we – that was illegal already.

*Yeah, yeah. So, you were aware that things are happening?*

Oh, yes. But, you know, as a child you don't – it don't penetrate it [ph] so well, except that the neighbours who never want to play with you anymore, and it was dangerous to go in a street, and people disappearing, and of course standard of living changed and there was the –

*What about your father's business?*

Well, they took it away. [Inaudible] not asking permit. So we were actually in difficult state, so he looked for any kind – everything, his bank [inaudible] confiscated. He couldn't use his money any – he didn't have any money anymore, so he had to do any labour work he could. He was a bricklayer, whatever there was. We had to keep the family alive. But we were lucky enough to have family in Nitra who were very assimilated. That means, you know, they didn't keep anything, and they were – helped us quite a bit.

*So, was that the reason you went to Nitra?*

I'm sure. I'm sure but –

*So, family from whose side was there in Nitra? Your father –*

No, on the [inaudible] side of the family, my mother's side.

*Your mother's side.*

My mother's side lived in Nitra and they were – except one aunt was in England, one of my aunt. She was a nurse, and she was a nurse in a hospital, I think in Prague or somewhere, and the people told her – or she was working in hospital, you come out, are you going out, and she got out, and she got a job here in England. [00:30:14] She was a nurse in a hospital. So, she actually helped us afterwards, after the war. But [inaudible] Lila, Serin [ph], all live there. Ela, Olga, Lili, Manci. Yeah, yes, so they stayed.

*So, your oldest sister went to Palestine, your brother and sister were sent to Hungary because they thought it was safer.*

Yeah.

*And you stayed with your –*

Well, we stayed, three sis – two – three sisters, one was in Palestine and in my mother- very small flat in Nitra.

*But in Bratislava you already said you had to move from one – you had to leave your –*

To – we have to leave in Bratislava, I don't know exactly where – when moved to Judenstraße. We moved – from Judenstraße we went to Nitra.

*Yes, so because the Jews were assembled [ph].*

Yes, there is – Jews were not allowed to live in Bratislava, so we had to go where we could. [Inaudible] my mother family, we went where my family was.

*Yes. So did you think you left Bratislava before the first deportation from Bratislava took place, or –*

I don't know. I only remember from Nitra deportation. And I can tell you very extraordinary thing what happen in Nitra. I – we went for a little while to a school in Vatican. It was some kind of school, but not much of a school. Up today, I remember the teacher was cracking his knee [ph], he was so nervous, he hardly was teaching us, so it wasn't much of education in Nitra either. [00:32:11]

*And the area was called Vatican, you said? Vatican?*

Yeah, Vatican.

*Which was the Jewish area in Nitra?*

Jewish district in Nitra.

*Why was it called Vatican?*

Well, this is I never even asked the reason. There was Catholic possible. There was kind of a ghetto, in Vatican. They made it like a ghetto. But people lived still in there 'cos it was a very small town.

*So where did you live in Nitra?*

I told you, Suché Mýto 20 – no, no, no. Podzámska ulica 28.

*And what was it? A flat or –*

It was a little flat, yes.

*And who gave it to you? How did you – do you know how you got this flat or –*

Pardon?

*How did you get this flat?*

I have no idea. That my – I don't know, no idea.

*So, your parents moved there with you?*

No, my father was taken away.

*Before you moved to that flat?*

No, this – we lived in a flat across the road. My – I just want to know – yes, I know I have to go back a little bit. There eventually came a curfew in Nitra as well, the Jews must not be outside 6 o'clock. And he worked in a milk [ph] factory. There was River Nitra called, a river there, and other side of the river was this factory, my father used to go to work. Then a curfew came up one day that all the Jews must be segregated in some place. And Edith was my older sister. [00:34:04] She did not – there transport started to – transport started go from Nitra. I think the railway station wasn't far from Vatican; and Edith and the Hlinka Guard – well, this is a long story. Hlinka Guard, a doctor, devised a plan to make Edith – Edith got typhus. And if you got typhus, you cannot go on a train because it's contagious. So, they let us off the train with a certificate from the doctor and they sent us back to our little flat.

*So, you were- just to be clear- so, you were on the list.*

Oh, yes.

*So, who? Your father, your mother?*

Everybody.

*Your whole family. You were –*

Going there to the railway station. But my sister was carried on, I don't know, blanket or something, because she was – had typhus and the doctor came with us but this – and the Hlinka Guard, there's a special story about the Hlinka Guard. He was an S – Gestapo, you know, but he saved us. And the reason why he saved us, Auntie Ella – but that comes a stage afterwards. Auntie Ella had a business called corset-making that was very – all my aunt –

*Corset?*

Yeah. All my aunts had a trade, except my mother. One was a dressmaker, was a hat maker, was – so they – and one was a nurse. They're all in a trade. And an apprentice worked with my aunt and she had a boyfriend who become a Hlinka Guard. [00:36:05] Because they were such a nice family, my aunt, the Hlinka Guard couldn't believe what's going on. He planned to save us. Do you follow?

*Yes. So, he –*

So, his name was Hoffman and he saved us first time when we were going to be transported to God knows where to, it could have been Theresienstadt, we never idea where, but we were taken off and we came back to our flat. But they put a black heart [ph] outside the flat, nobody should come near to this building because there is a typhus, so nobody will come near to us. But of course, my family knew about it, so they brought us food.

*So, did she really have typhus or was it a – did she have typhus, your sister?*

Of course not.

*So, it was [overtalking].*

And the doctor with the Hlinka Guard devised a plan.

*So that was an idea –*



That was an idea. [Overtalking]. It worked. That's the first rescue. We were very lucky with some rescues.

*Which is interesting that they because of her then the whole family, that they managed to take you all out.*

Well, only five of us. Well – well, yes, so we may have typhus already, so they would not know what happened. Anyway, we were released and we stayed there for little while. And as I said, things always – every time it got worse and worse. After this episode, things become very bad but eventually, when the loudspeakers start coming around and the curfew, the Jews are not allowed to walk in a street and they have to segregate again in other place, then panic started because we did not know what to do. [00:38:01] So my father was on the other side of the bridge, we couldn't get hold of him, my sister, Edith, she was about fourteen, she was – my mother sent her out to find out what's going on, and I with my sister, elder sister, other sister – she was only a year and a half older – went with my mother. So, we couldn't contact my father and we couldn't find Edith. But my mother had a – oh, no, no, [inaudible]. Well, my uncle and aunt were hiding. My uncle, this and Ella and Miklos. He was an accountant in a mill and he had very good friends in the mill and they tried to save my uncle and aunt. But somehow my mother must have known something, but I did not know. We walked around the building and she heard somebody saying, 'Olga, Olga', so my mother realised that must be her sister, so she called us in. There were at that time that block, a ground-floor flat.

*In Nitra?*

In Nitra. Ground floor flat. We couldn't contact my father, we didn't have contact with any of them, and my sister, so we lost them. But when we go enter the flat, there were other five people already there. They were all – my aunt's sisters. So, we were eight in that one-bed-sitter sort of this size, size of this room, eight of us. And the caretaker of the building, a few – accountant knew about the situation because they helped us to get there. So, we stayed there for few days and we saw my father one day passing the road, and my uncle didn't call him. I can never forget that 'cos he must have tried to hide somewhere as well. Of course, he

was caught and taken to concentration camp. [00:40:02] And well, I never forget looking out the window, seeing him. But he must have known the building. But anyway, the room –

*This features also in the play, this scene. I remember it, obviously. And you were looking out. You're in the flat.*

In the play. You've seen the play?

*Yes. And what happened? So, you're looking and you see...?*

The first play or the second play?

*The first play, I remember this because I remember this scene. You are looking out, you're in the flat, you're looking out on to the street and you can see your father.*

And I wanted him so much. And my mother wanted to put her shoes on and my uncle said, if you go out, I'm not sure you can come back. All she wanted – she – you only had to cross the road. But then there was such – we would have been more people but I don't know what was the – my uncle thought. I never forget it. So, we lost contact with him, yes. And we stayed in that flat but it was dangerous. It was – every – the mill was a very prosperous mill, had every – workers had a flat, a bedsitter, so it was a nice block of flats for that time. And the caretaker and the [inaudible], they knew it's not very safe to be on the ground floor, somebody may pass the street, so they found empty flat upstairs, it's first floor upstairs, or could have been second floor, but it was only two or three-floor flat, very small block. And that was also a bedsitter. Well, that was much safer because nobody can see us but there was danger as well because a block of flats, there are other flats downstairs and upstairs, so we could never walk. So, we put up there and a caretaker used to night-time bring us food. [00:42:01] So we were my cousin, my sister and five adults, sitting there, and never able to talk, we just sitting and not having any toys or books or anything to read. So anyway, things becoming all the time worse. The caretaker was fantastic. Sometime – because it was a respectable block of flats and were – they know Germans are coming in and occupying the place, they were looking accommodation for the officers and for the – so we are taking a place of somebody, so what

did the caretaker do? He changed the lock of the flat and saying that somebody's away but nobody can use this flat. You know, he was very clever, the caretaker. He changed the lock, and night-time he used to bring us food. But I can't remember having a shower or – really, I can't even tell you what – and change of clothes, I can't recollect. Obviously, there was laundry going on sometime because the wife of the caretaker was in it. And they had a daughter called Duli. Maria – Maria was the mother, and Duli was my age. And they had a problem with Duli 'cos she was – and her mother is cooking a lot of food and they were only family. The downstairs were living grandmother, mother and father and the little girl. And this big pot of food, eight people, cooking, so the little girl had to be told about this, what was very dangerous because she was – I think younger than me or same age as me. They had to tell her but she went to proper school and you know what children do usually, I know something you don't know something, I know secret, so they didn't – they actually threaten her to death, the people who save our life, if she reveals anything to anybody what she knows. [00:44:11]

*And what was the motivation of him, of this man, to help –*

Pardon?

*What was his motivation to help?*

Yeah. He was paid for it first of all, but he was also a communist but we didn't know, not a open comm – those days was not like that. He was apparently a communist but we found out later on. But he was a caretaker with a building.

*So, he was paid by who?*

Paid by the company, by people who owned the flat.

*Right. But I mean to help you?*

While for us, first my – first we had a little money, my uncle, but eventually it ran out but accountant, a friend of my uncle, they paid for it. And also, my uncle promised after the war

that he's going to be compensated. He – by that stage, you must understand, it was difficult for them as bad as us. If they are caught, if they reveal us, that they are hiding Jews, they are in same position. They know they're going to be killed as well, if they caught us, they will be taken as well. So, they were in a situation of that they life was also in danger.

*So, Miriam, when was this? Do you know the date at all or is this –*

The date exactly I would not know but we're talking '43, '44. When were the war over, '45?

*Yeah.*

But it was about a year before, a year and a half before.

*Because I know that the interesting thing in Slovakia is that, the first round of deportation was in '42 but then between '42 and '44 there were no deportations.*

Maybe that – maybe '44, could have been. But beginning, yes, could be.

*Because my question to you is also, the Jews which remained, who remained, had sort of – they were economically important. [00:46:02] They had exemption from deportation. Does this ring a bell to you?*

Well, I'll tell you, once we had exempt only because of typhus but not because of any –

*Not because of anything else.*

I don't – not to my knowledge. Because of typhus we know exempt. But the second time, was when the German came occupying the building, became like a story that this is a respectable building and a very important general official – officer [inaudible], he look for a place.

*And this was already the Germans coming in?*

German came in already.

*Yeah, because until '44, you see, it was only the Hlinka Guard.*

Hlinka Guard. You must know about it yourself.

*Yes, so if you had Germans coming, then you will know it's already – it must be in '44.*

Well, it must have been '44.

*Because if you remember –*

Vaguely. Vaguely then.

*So, they wanted to requisition the building, or what, when they came?*

They want the building because they needed accommodation and at that time it was a very nice flat – building, so – but people are working there, so they couldn't. But they heard occasionally a vacancy, so the caretaker knew what to do. What [laughs] he's done is what I understood, he's changed the lock of the building for some people and secondly, some people can be on holiday as well. I don't know exactly. But I remember this incident that was- nearly caught forever. The caretaker – a drunken official came with about twenty soldiers, they could have been Hlinka Guard, they could have been Nazi, I do not know, and they said, we know, we know, we know there are Jews here, so we are going to find them one way or another. The caretaker didn't have – we had a – oh, I didn't tell you there was a bunker as well. [00:48:00] But it was dangerous. We went down to the bunker.

*So, a basement?*

Basement.

*A cellar, was it?*

Cellar. Well, every building in Europe has got a cellar. And he carved a hole there and we went eight people into this hole, like sardines. This side of the sofa, eight people, lying together, when there was a rumour that the building is going to be searched.

*You went there.*

We went there. And the caretaker would know in advance because they were all like not – he got information from somewhere.

*So, there was like a cellar and you were squeezed in to that cellar.*

So, what he's done is, every apartment had a little cellar but he carved a little hole, worked out a little hole that we can go inside. It was four foot by six or something. Eight people. And I don't remember ever – I said to somebody, I don't remember ever eating, I never remembered [laughs] going to the toilet, I don't remember anything. It was like you blocked it, to a state of denying, you don't want to believe it happened. But in the basement there was one hole that use it for something or another, the soldier used to come to regularly to exercise at, like a gym. And so, we were here and there was a wall like few – a little wall and there was this big room where the soldiers were exercising. So, we were in that hole and if you cough, we had it. So, if you know continental quilt, they're not like English, they have these big feathers, very big like that. So, all we have it on our mouth, if you cough into the quilt you don't hear the echo. So, we were there and we can hear those people next door exercising, and just a wall separating us from them, and we were there sometime for long time. [00:50:11] At night-time they went out, so we could go out into – outside, into this next part of the cellar for whatever reason. But it's – I went to see it. I – you have seen it in my book somewhere. You can't believe it, how small it was.

*That hole.*

I went there as adult and I hardly walked in, two of us, and we were eight people. And the ladies, my mother, sisters, were quite tall women, at least 5'6", if not taller. Nobody was

small, except me and my sister and my cousin. That, I remember it quite strongly. All I remember is, move, move, but where shall I move? There was only a wall and a pipe. So, it was – because I just couldn't move. I don't know how it was but it was so terrible. Now, when it got a little quieter, that nobody comes, somebody went up to the upstairs flat. And then again after some time, a rumour came again that official or officer wants to find the Jews here, got a rumour, and it won't be surprise because somebody lived downstairs, somebody lived upstairs, but the person on this side knew about us. One neighbour knew about us, so he sent all his family away and we could – and when he said the caretaker, I'm terribly – quickly run upstairs, and telling us, this is the end of it, if we have to surrender now to the Gestapo because I cannot take you down to the cellar.

*Too dangerous? [00:52:00]*

What?

*It's too dangerous?*

But we couldn't, there were a stable full of soldiers, so he couldn't bring us down.

*German soldiers?*

Yeah. And he was looking for Jews, the officer.

*They were looking actively, yeah.*

Well, I – well, I witnessed a little bit. What had happened, they came to the caretaker and they write that they had bottle of liquor with some whisky and vodka, you know, they used to drink a lot those days. So, they're pouring him all the time to drink to the officer, he become drunk like hell. So, every time he finish a glass, they're filling it again. But they couldn't do it to the soldiers, they only did it to the officers. So, they had to – so the caretaker dashed upstairs for when he said, it's finished. Now, I can't take you anywhere, say goodbye, pray, do whatever you like, and say goodbye to each other, and that is that. So, he was in danger as

well. Believe me, he was in terrible danger. So, what he has done, if it's possible to believe it, he – the officer took away all the bunch of keys from every single flat 'cos the caretaker had every – the spare ticket- spare key, so he gave the officer the keys. But how he could do it in five sec – he brought the old key into the chain and our key, it was put away. Up till – I could never understand it ever. So, when the – we actually can hear the officer coming from door to door, and he enters there, these people, and we can hear them talking but very merry, all laughing and joking. I suppose they gave more drink – drink, drink, drinking all the time. When they came out, there's a turn of our flat and we can hear him. He tried to enter the key in the keyhole. It wouldn't go in. [00:54:00] He tried to open the door, he couldn't get in. So, the caretaker said to him, listen, the only way we can break this door, we go downstairs and get some instrument, some heavy instrument to break the door and then if you don't believe me that you can – the door is not – and you can open the door. Whatever reason it is, it's not opening. So, he convinced the officer who were drunk and more drinks, going downstairs and he said to him, no, we – he said, well, we have seen all the flats, didn't we? So now we can say goodbye. It's the only flat he didn't enter. Only flat. 'Cos he was so drunk he didn't know what's happening and they talk to him more on this and he said, we have been to every single flat, so there's no more where to look. And this was our saving grace.

*And at that time, all the eight of you were in that flat?*

All eight of us. We couldn't hide anywhere because there was a cupboard there. We could have gone, it wouldn't make any difference, so we would have been caught. This was the end of our life. It would have been. And then we were rescued. And then we – trouble started with the Russian then [laughs].

*So, he saved you.*

He saved us, and with the other people, they all were in danger, he gave his life for us and we – well, I don't know if you know but I had this big ceremony in Bratislava in – for Yad Vashem, but that's later on.

*Yeah. For this man? For him?*



For all of them who saved us. There were more than two people. We only knew about two but there were more because they all got into trouble because they tried to save us, the two accountant and the caretaker. [00:56:05]

*So, the caretaker, what was his name?*

Well, I got – give me that thing. Vitek Perny [Voitech]. Vitek Perny and William Gavalovic. And Helena is – was wife, and Maria was the other one wife. Vitek and Maria, and Helena and – what did I say? My memory. William Gavalovic.

William?

William.

*Gavarovic [ph]?*

And Helena Gavalova. Helena Gavalova and William Gavalovic. So, they saved our life and I was in touch with them not till about few years ago. Not the parent, the daughter, Duli.

*So was it because – so probably while you were still in Nitra, and you went to the Jewish school –*

For a little while, yeah.

*Yes, so it was probably in that time when there was still an official Jewish community in Nitra.*

Yeah, yeah, some kind of –

*And then there was an uprising. So, was this after the uprising? Did you know about the Slovak – of the National Uprising, in Banská Bystrica?*

They must remember it [ph]. I only remember one story. Some people came in from Poland to Nitra and telling us they're burning Jews, they're burning all the people, and they didn't believe it, because things were not as bad in Slovakia than in Poland. And when they came, everybody said, oh, they've been making up stories, oh, who wants to burn people. But they eventually, realised that they're telling truth, they ran way, they managed to escape, they came to – I don't know how they escaped but some managed to escape. [00:58:02]

*So, Miriam, also at some point you were given away, or did you stay all the time with your parents? At some point you were not with your parents in hiding?*

I try to tell you that my father had to go work to make some living and he went away in a brick factory or somewhere.

*Yes, so you didn't see him – he was deported?*

Because when my mother – we heard that this curfew came, the Jews have to be segregate at particular place, my mother tried to get contact him but on the bridge, when he cross the river, the other side of river, there were some guards and I told my mother they're our guards, Slovakian guards, if you cross the river we don't know if you can come back.

*Yeah. But – so the eight people were your mother...*

No, Miklós and Ella, they're my uncle and aunt, Lily [ph] and her son, Roby [ph], Seren [ph], my auntie, Olga, my mother, Gerty and me. She had three children and five adults in that place.

*And how long did you stay there, roughly, in there?*

I – well, till end of the war. And it could have been ten months, eight months, or twelve months, but a long time. But in the flat some incident I must tell you about [laughs]. I think it's- the caretaker had a daughter called Duli and on Christmastime, Vitek told me, I'm giving

you a present, and he brought his little daughter to play with me. It was something wonderful because I never seen a child my age. And I didn't know what to talk to her any more – because I had nothing to talk to her about but – and she said – she brought a little something and she said – I said one thing, if I survive this war, I want to be a sportswoman. [01:00:08] That was my whole dream to running, running, running, you know that. I want to be a sportswoman. And my sister was a sportswoman in Palestine but I want to be – only I said to her, I'm going to race you and you never could catch me. The war came over, I couldn't walk any more, my – because lack of circulation, our legs were so swollen. We didn't move. When you don't move it won't be enough you can from till there. So, when the war was over, we went to this flat, oh, my uncle, he couldn't walk. So, Duli said, come on, let's have a race, and I couldn't even lift up my leg. But the determination to become a sportswoman, I become, and I reach quite a high level.

*With running?*

Running, swimming, handball. I was training for Olympic as well. I was train – all my life was sports, sports, sports. I was cycling, I was running, I was swimming. I – every possibility and I did not know why when I got out of the war something in me wanted to move. The running represent freedom to me, to move.

*You were confined, so for so long, confined.*

Yes, but my sister didn't have it but I had it and of course, eventually I become a yoga teacher because I become a bit older, I couldn't do so much sports any more. But tennis, every sport you can imagine, I was involved. I done [ph] occupied with. So that was a very nice part of it 'cos I become eventually a yoga teacher.

*But Miriam, so this girl saw you while you were in hiding, the girl. He brought the girl.*

What?

*He brought – the caretaker brought his daughter while you were in hiding there. [01:02:04]*

Well, it was Christmas. I suppose he knew the building was empty, people went on holiday, because he knew what's going on. He said, I'm bringing somebody to play [laughs]. But we were worried about the girl to know about us. He was worried about it but she was put in confidence. So, she kept the confidence and we – up till five, six years, I contact with her. I know she disappeared and I do not know where she is, I can't find her. Maybe you find her. She lived in- what's the name of town? It will come to me in a minute. She moved – I went to see her in Slovakia, she came to see me in Piešťany because I used to come a few times and I had a family of auntie near just after the war, I went to Piešťany to the spa.

*For a holiday?*

Trenčianske Teplice? She lived somewhere else and then one day, I tried to contact her and she's not there anymore. And I asked somebody in Nitra if they can find her and she shouldn't be – she could be alive still but I have no contact with her and I don't know what to do. I asked the embassy as well in Slovakia and here but they couldn't –

*What is her name?*

Today I'm not so okay. Her name is.

*Danka, you said.*

Pardon?

*Danka.*

No, Duli. No, but the family name. Horváthová.

*Duli Horváthová.*

Duli Horváthová, Elzsbeta, Elzsbeta Horváthová [ph]. And she – I was in touch with her whenever I used to go to – before the Covid I was- five, six years ago I was in Piešťany and so I had contact with her and then all of a sudden it's like she disappeared. [01:04:05] I don't know what. She went to her children – she had two sons, may have gone to live with some of them in Prague or somewhere.

*So, in hiding – because in your play there is a period where you were given away, you were given – you didn't stay all the time.*

This one.

*Yes, so tell us about that.*

This, well, it's in here. What happened was, is my mother was in – they were looking for something, so they put me in hiding with a man – he was black – not black, dark, I was so afraid of him – to look after me because she was looking with my father maybe somewhere to move or somewhere to go, so like a babysitter or something, you understand.

*When was – so that was before you went into that flat?*

Yes.

*Before?*

Before.

*When your father was still there.*

Yeah, yeah.

*So, you were given by yourself, not with your sister?*

No, just for few hours.

*Oh, I see. It's not – it wasn't for a long time.*

No, because I – find some scissors and I cut myself and so they – what happened was, is I was in that room, locked away in this room and I was so frightened and screaming for my parents, so I found a scissors and I cut – I thought I try to kill myself so I cut my leg, I'm still here, so I – I show it to somebody [laughs]. And then he opened the door, he had to find somebody to help me, and my parents, he found them and they came eventually. That was a horrible experience. I was so –

*In Nitra? In Nitra?*

In Nitra. For a few hours.

*Who was that man? Somebody –*

Somebody they must have known.

*But you were very scared.*

Well, obviously I was scared. They locked me in a room. But only for a few hours. He hasn't done anything to me. But I just saying that they probably trusted this person or something, I do not know. **[01:06:00]**

*So, it shows that you must – you understood the danger, I mean in that age you understood the situation.*

Well, of course I would have – yeah, but I didn't understand the political background, I did not know why they tried to kill Jews, why the people disappear, why we are moving from one flat to another flat. For me it was – I was with my family, I had my parents, that was enough for me.

*They protected you.*

Protected me. And do you know, I'm so pleased that I've done this book because I – gradually I'm forgetting more and more things. When particularly I was unwell, I forget even more because I start – I actually written – somebody interviewed me for something else about anecdotes of my life and so if something comes, certain things are coming back.

*Yeah, it's good to write it, that you wrote it down.*

Well, what you read in that book, is only part what I remember and that was written a few years ago now, 2014, '15, which was ten years nearly. And –

*Miriam, do you remember wearing the yellow star or – yellow star?*

Oh, yes, this is – yeah, yeah. So, my father comes home from the synagogue or from somewhere and he said everybody has to wear the yellow star, so – but not only they have to be stitched on. I cannot believe it but that's the way – I was always a bit of a rebel, so I didn't stitch on. I didn't stitch on my yellow star because I didn't – when I went out of the house, I took it off. I don't know. I didn't understand it or, you know, fear, so I took the star off 'cos I used to visit my auntie and so on. And my auntie used to say to me, oh, Eva – that was my name – will you go out to the grocery and bring us some milk and butter or something like that, and I went. But every time I went to a grocery for them, they said, why don't the grown-up coming to do shopping, always sending little children shopping. [01:08:07] They didn't do harm to children yet, but called us names, dirty Jew or things like that. But the Star of David, I didn't have, so I said, how do you know? [Laughs] I was such a cheeky girl. How do you know I'm Jewish? I could be a gypsy.

*So, what did they say?*

They laughed. I can't remember details but I know that I never – if my mother would have known about it, they would have killed me. I wouldn't go out with a Star of – yellow star, because it was quite big. It was like this size [demonstrates].

*And did you look Jewish in a way, that's why they thought – were you dark?*

No, I'm not – I was – no, I never taken for Jewish.

*You were not.*

I don't know in other places but I do remember I travelled through Europe when I was young and – because I speak German and so I was never taken for – it's in – oh, yeah, one incident I – they never were taken for Jewish. One incident I forgot to tell you, when the Hlinka Guard – the German children start arriving into Bratislava – to Nitra, on lorries, we did not know why they came, those children. They were waving flags and we just saw a lorry of children coming to Nitra, youngest, sort of teenagers or younger even, I do not know. And I remember that. And I went – I welcomed them like everybody else because I thought, how lovely. We just did not know. Everybody was waving because you see like a parade. And they settled somewhere and we had a park near us where we lived in Nitra- and they used to come there training and they're really very near the park. And I used to disappear from my home and wanted to play with children, so I went to the park – I remember this very clearly, I must have been eight or nine, at something at that age – going to the park and there are children playing games and I said, can I play with you? **[01:10:13]** As I spoke German, I said, what is your name? So, I said Eva Mannheimer. So, they said, your eye – you've got a German name but your eyes are black and we've got blue eyes. You know, it's a big deal was my black eyes, and they had blue eyes, so I said, I don't know, I've got black eyes. But they played with me. But when I came home, my mother nearly killed me. She said to me, how dare you to do things like that? And she said, give me soap and I'm going to wash my eyes out and they'll become blue [ph].

*You wanted to? You wanted to wash your eyes?*



[Laughs] Yes, and they become inflamed. This was – I mean it's things [ph] it's occasionally you – I'm sitting here talking to you, certainly bits of this coming back to me.

*Because that was picked up now in the most recent version of the play, was the eyes.*

Yeah. And it was too much. I told them not to do it like that. One incident you will like to hear. In Bratislava we used to eat in restaurant. Did I mention it to you before?

*In a kosher restaurant?*

Yeah.

*Yeah.*

We were walking like soldiers [laughs]. We were six of us, we're eight, two and two and two, marching. Yeah, it's in the second play, I told Diana. This is not to record it.

*It is recorded. So don't say it, then. Let's talk about it later. It's just because the eyes, the topic of the eyes. So, who were the – were the German children who came? Or who were – German children?*

Yes. [Overtalking].

*On holidays?*

We do not know. I don't know. Camping, I have no idea.

*Because it's interesting, you know, my mother, who was from Piešťany, she describes that where they lived, next door was a hotel and the Hitler Youth came there for a holiday.*

**[01:12:01]**

Maybe something like that.

*So maybe it was something like that.*

Maybe like that.

*And they regularly came on holidays? And –*

Well, your mother remember better than me because she was older than me anyway, so the thing is, that must be 'cos I remember youth movement coming in to Nitra.

*Yeah, so maybe it was that same. Were people just on holiday?*

They came on holiday because I saw them playing in a park and I wanted to play with them.

*Because my mother, she tells that, you know, they learnt the Nazi songs because they had to listen to all these Nazi songs next door, so [laughs] you know –*

[Sings] *Slovák som a Slovák budem, čierne čižmy nosiť budem.* I did this – I was singing it all the time.

*What is that?*

Well, I'll see if I remember all of it. [Sings] *Slovak som, Slovák budem, čierne spodky nosiť budem* - It is about, I am Slovak, I was born Slovak but I'm wearing all these black, black–

*Trousers?*

No. Um, no, you know, my mind is going today. Black, um –

*Knees? No.*

Black, er –

*Boots?*

Boots. Black boots. And I don't remember exactly the song but I used to sing it all the time, the Slovakian song.

*Were [overtalking].*

But if you see my film – if you want to see my film, Shop on the High Street [The Shop on Main Street], have you seen it?

*No.*

That is worthwhile. I've got it here. It's got a Oscar – it got a Wiener – er, Cannes Festival Osc – it got a reward. It's about my town when actually the occupation started. Ida Kamińska and Jozef Kroner act in – they're proper actors – play the film called Shop on the High Street.  
**[01:14:04]**

*About Nitra? Or –*

*Nitra.*

*Nitra.*

Yeah. And when I – the film came out in 1967, I was already married, I went to see it and it bring back – then I found out more about my town as – you can – like to see it, I going to take it to the Holocaust Centre one day to show it. It is not my story but it's my town where I lived and it was a story pre-taking the Jews away. So, it was one period still –

*So, tell us about that song, the Slovak song. The – it's a Hlinka Guard song or the –*

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I knew other one as well.

*Tell it. Sing it again.*

I don't remember.

*No, but the –*

[Sings] Slovak somnia Slovak budjem [inaudible] . I can't remember it exactly, I'm sorry.

*But you heard it enough that you learned it?*

Well, in there, in that film, you can – I – it brought it back. I watched the film. It's worthwhile to see it. I may lend it to somebody. The Holocaust Centre, I – it's really amazing story, how gentiles saved the Jew. It is amazing, amazing me, it was a peasant, peasant, peasant, and his mother becomes a top Nazi in a town and he- he didn't get on with his brother. One was ambitious and wants to get on in life. The film is marvellous.

*Okay, I'll look at it. But you said, you also remember that you were called names.*

Yeah, *Židovka*. Do you know the word? It's dirty Jew, all kind of names like that. You kill Jesus, and –

*In Nitra?*

In Nitra. And I never forget that one child said, you killed Jesus. I said, 'who is Jesus?'  
**[01:16:02]** You killed our god. I said, but I? When I could kill him? I don't know him. So, you know, it was all – I'd never heard of a Jesus up till that time.

*Do you think you were targeted on the way to the Jewish school, so that you were – when you were walking?*

No, no, we – our next-door neighbour, we used to play with them all the time but then all of a sudden, they start – because their parents told them to call us names. Yeah. I will – I certainly didn't tell you everything and certain things because just sometime it comes back on – during the question time, sometimes I remember things, all kind of things.

*What about language, Miriam? You said you spoke – what languages did you speak?*

Well, you see, because in Slovakia they speak German, Slovakian, Hungarian, 'cos of Austro-Hungarian Empire, yes. Then of course, Hebrew and English. And I learnt Italian and Russian but I don't speak those very – I just understand. I was brought up on three languages, Slovak, Hungarian and German.

*So, with your parents you spoke, what?*

I spoke Slovakian and my parents spoke German. And my mother spoke with her sister Hungarian. There was all kind of languages. But I went to Israel, I learnt Hebrew, I came to England, I had to learn English. And I was always love Italian and went to a course, study for a few – but I'm not speaking them much. Yes, I speak now five languages.

*But in the wartime, so you could speak to those German children?*

Well, obviously I spoke far better German because I speak still not such a fantastic German but at that time, I must have spoken much better German because they didn't take me for German, they realised why do you have black eyes, and they knew I'm from Slovakia.

**[01:18:05]** But it could be the same story as your mother, they may have holidays there.

*Interesting, isn't it? Yeah, yeah.*

Yes.

*So once that – so it's the confinement, you must – that experience of extreme confinement.*

Well, this is what I – why I wanted freedom. And not everybody has the desire when they get free to run but my always was, maybe I model myself on my sister who was a sportswoman. She was just generally athletic. But I was always excelled in school.

*You wanted to move?*

I move, move, move. I was always good at art [laughs] and exercise. I really liked run in my school but I studied. Sports was my life.

*Miriam, tell us a little bit about – so how did it end, this period of confinement? How did it end? You were there, you were...*

Well, then we – when we were released, we were looking for a place.

*But how do you remember when it ended actually, that somebody –*

Ah, well, it start – aeroplanes going around and they were bombing the city, there was quite – oh, it was pretty bad. And we – we were – a lot of commotion was going on and then we were put down quickly by the caretaker into the bunker again and this time with a lot of other people came as well because they were afraid, sheltering from the bombing. And then eventually a Russian officer arrived. We did not know that our caretaker speak Russian. So, our caretaker had something – so he came down with him, the other man, with the other officer, and they – he told them the story. [01:20:04] All we were told not to German – not to speak German. But there were some – my family wouldn't speak German, they all spoke English, er, they all spoke Slovakian. So, we were told not to speak German and they told us not to go out from the bunker because the soldier are mad, raping all women. They have – they thought the soldiers as they are in River Volga. We are little river. You know Volga? The Russian –

*Yeah.*

They thought they're in Volga, not realising they are somewhere – they were just very primitive soldiers and things were not very good. We had to be very careful from Russian for a while. But then it settled down and then we found a flat where we – and we moved there and I don't know who arranged it but it was empty – plenty of empty property all over the place.

*In Nitra?*

Nitra was empty because people ran away.

*But what I wanted to ask you, Miriam, also, were there any other families in hiding in that building? Or were –*

We found out, yes. We found out, yes. The family, I don't know, fifty per flat, I don't know how many. After the war we found out another family lived there.

*In the same building?*

No, we never met them.

*But they – and the same caretaker supported them?*

No, not the same caretaker.

*So, they –*

Well, maybe yes but he never told us. Well, there was other – I know there was – or maybe it was him but we never discussed that ever.

*That's amazing. So, in that building basically, two families were hiding.*

We found out that there were some other people, I don't know how, which way. Yes, there was another – some other people in our building.

*So, you must have been there at least from, what, from, let's say, October '44 –*

Well, it was quite warm still, so it was earlier. [01:22:07]

*To –*

*July –*

*And when was the liberation? When did the [overtalking]?*

*May '44, '45.*

*'45.*

Yeah. When we went it was – I had summer clothes on, so it must be July, August. September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April. About nine months or ten months, we don't know exactly.

*And how did you pass your – how do you remember, if you remember anything, what did you do there during the day? A long day.*

I try to say. It's difficult to say, because I'm a big talker now. I will never open my mouth for about a year because I was not allowed to, I would be smacked anyway, and I never walked, so I'm – I compensate for it, don't I? [Laughs]

*How did you keep yourself busy there? Do you remember anything?*

Doing nothing. I remember sitting – what I remember, I'm – the caretaker wife or somebody brought the ladies some magazine or something – 'cos I could read already, so they passed on



something to read. But no books – no, nothing. I don't know, I just sit in – really, looking back, I don't know how we survived doing nothing.

*And your sister? You and your sister, could you do some play or –*

Well, no. Well, we probably played some [demonstrates with her hands]. Maybe something but not really very much. We were completely in silence. We – like the Victorian said, to be seen but not to be heard.

*So, what – in that time, what do you think was the most difficult or traumatic thing for you, if there is something specific in this period?*

I – you know, when you block – you're blocked. I know you ask me question. That period is still blocked. I don't really – I can't go – if you asked me a lot of things what happened before the age of three or four or five, and I remember but only fragments of this and that.

[01:24:06] I don't think I remember many details.

*So, it's a bit like a haze.*

It's still there. When I tell this story and so important, I told it earlier, I was on television in 1995, VE Day. That time it was much clearer. I've got a video of that as well. I am much clearer than now because that was still not – my brain was [laughs] more active than it's now. I was much younger thirty years ago.

*And when did you start talking about it, Miriam? When did you start?*

Oh, that's a good question because I didn't talk about it at all. The first time I talked about it was – there was a radio station called You Don't Have To Be Jewish or something it was called. I'm not sure. You heard of this expression?

*Yeah, I have. Yeah.*

So, there was a radio station and I was in the kitchen with my husband and the programme was on and a woman was saying, I very much would like to interview some Holocaust people but somebody from Czechoslovakia or something like that. And I heard that and I wrote down the – she said, here is my phone number, she said, and I wrote it down. And my husband said to me, why don't you ring up the BBC, er, radio station – I don't know which station it was. It was, I don't know, One or Two – I don't know how it was – a radio station. So, I picked up the number and you wouldn't believe it, I was the first on the line, nobody hold on. And the woman came to the telephone and I told her, I am from Slovakia if you want to meet me or talk to me, and she said, yes, I do. I gave her my address and within a day or two she was here. [01:26:02] I couldn't believe it. That was the first time, that I was actually talking about –

*When was that?*

What year?

*Well, yeah.*

When it – I have to check up with the programme or something. I've got it recorded somewhere. don't know.

*In the '80s, '90s?*

Well, when, I'll check up when the radio station was in existence. I don't know when the radio station started. So, I talked a little bit to her here and she said, I want to take you to Slovakia to make a film of your life and because we don't have many people and they're – everybody was still alive, all the people. But they made a mistake, I think. They were still alive, Perny, Gavalovic, everybody was still alive at that time.

*Your rescuers. Your rescuers.*

All my rescuer were still alive. And she was an American journalist, she came to London to do this project and she couldn't raise the money. She said, I'm sorry, I pass it on to London television, BBC. And so, they made a mistake. They could have had really all the people still – who were still alive but they didn't see the urgency somehow. So, then she passed on that information of our interview to BBC Two and the BBC contacted me, we have a programme on VE Day, Day of Remembrance, and we would like to interview you. So, they interviewed me here like this, like Frank. They have even more cameras around here [laughs]. And so that was the first time. So, I got a recording of Day of Remembrance and it was on a VE Day, there was a big ceremony. Bevis Marks Synagogue, you heard about it?

*Yeah.*

And they were showing there who was Chief Rabbi was that time. [01:28:01] I don't know exactly who was that time Chief Rabbi but I know Tony Blair was – Tony Blair was there and the Archbishop of Canterbury. I don't know how many years ago is that.

*Because it's interesting what – how your story fits with VE Day but I guess –*

Yeah, but that was on tele – that was – so that was the first time I was actually talking. I was very nervous and then afterwards I had few other interviews.

*And before then had you talked about it with your family?*

Never. This I'm regretting it but because it wasn't done. Those – I tell people, when you survive, you block everything from your childhood and you want to live, you want to be educated, you want to have a career, you want a family. And so, I never – never asked my mother anything. It's terrible. But it was – nobody done it.

*Your mother didn't speak about it either?*

My mother was – no, she never talked about it. Never. It's I think she was blocked, she lost her husband, she had two children.

*When did you realise that your father –*

Well, after the war there was somebody called UNWRA, some United Nations organisation, opened an office in everywhere and they notify everybody who survived and who didn't survive. And then right away, immediately a group from Palestine arrived, some kind of Zionist movement, and start bringing us to – meet – to group for meeting people. I got those photograph as well from the holidays. But this one taken I think just at period before we were taken. This photograph here.

*Just before talking about that, I wanted to ask you because you said, they were recognised by Yad Vashem, the house thing.*

Oh, yes. **[01:30:00]**

*Because normally if somebody was paid something or received money, that disqualifies you from recognition by Yad Vashem.*

Okay.

*Normally when somebody received money, they're not eligible for the award by Yad Vashem. But this wasn't the case in your –*

I don't know how it all started. I know that I was – I wrote a letter, or somebody wrote a letter for Yad Vashem, and Yad Vashem contacted me and we wrote a letter for Yad Vashem the story. And I remember somebody, Ambassador who was ambassador to Austria because Slovakia didn't have embassy at that time, Ambassador Sher, wrote it and they – from Israel they contacted the embassy in Austria, and Austria embassy contacted me and asking me questions about the family and they went out and found out the family's still alive there. Not – Vitek and Perny were not, but the women were still alive.

*And they received the award?*

Yes, we had a big ceremony in the presidential palace and oh, yes, it was – all the whole parliament was invited and I gave a talk and I got a talk somewhere. It's in my book.

*In the – in Bratislava?*

In Bratislava. All my family came from – my sister from America came and my youth [ph] Israel friend and Gavalovic, Mrs Gavalovic. Her husband was not alive, it's her daughter, [inaudible]. And the others, [inaud] family came. They all came to the ceremony.

*You didn't tell us what happened to your brother and your sister who were sent to Hungary. What happened to them, please?*

I don't know very much about them. No, they were taken away. They tried to come back at one stage, they were caught at the border and then we never heard about them. **[01:32:05]** We did hear from somebody who came back from – after the war that he think he met my brother somewhere, but nothing else really. No. And she perished- they both. Some people think Eichmann march and I don't know what, she was about fifteen – fourteen or fifteen. She was young. No, if Edith was older. No, she was a bit younger.

*So, they didn't survive.*

No.

*And how – you were with your sister together in this hiding. Do you think it affected her differently than you?*

My sister was ill already. She had polio when she was a little child, so she had a disability. I don't think she ever talked to anybody, not to me. And I was surprised, in Israel they didn't interview her. No, she doesn't. I – sometime I asked her certain things but the thing is, as I told somebody, her memory is not my memory. You experience may not be same as your sister or your brother. Also, maybe same situation you've been in but your experience

personally were different. So, when she – she cannot read English, my sister, so when she heard bits of my book she said, but it was not like that, it was like this and like that. And I say to her, look here, you remember your, and I cannot remember. The way I remember, I cannot retell the story.

*So, does she remember things differently? [01:34:00]*

Slight differently, yes. I mean recently, I had to ring her up over something and she – I better – she remembers inside differently.

*Yeah. That's not uncommon.*

Well, it's very common. Everybody got his own journey.

*Yeah. Yeah. So, when you after the liberation and you said you couldn't – tell us again about the walking. So, you physically could not walk [overtalking].*

Well, for some time, till I start to walk slowly and gradually my circulation improved but it took a little time. And then we moved to a flat and I went to school in Nitra, what was a – I presume it wasn't yet communist but it was – we don't know what it was. Communists took over a little later on.

*So, it was a secondary school?*

Yeah.

*By then you were...?*

Well, I do – I did [laughs] – I only remember we had nuns teaching us in school and they were teaching us Russian and that was very strange. And I actually liked Russian, to be honest. I found it a very nice language. We had nun as teachers. And it was a mixed school.

There was nothing Jewish, except they started – Jewish organisation started. I used to go there.

*A Zionist organisation?*

Pardon?

*A Zionist?*

Zionist one [inaudible Palestine].

*Were there other Jews who survived in Nitra, then? Or did you move back to Bratislava? Or you stayed in Nitra? After the war.*

We stayed in Nitra.

*You stayed there.*

Yes. I'm sure there must other because there was a woman called Gerda, she's – used to be my friend for years, and she emigrated to – I went to Palestine, she went to Australia.  
[01:36:01] But we were in touch for a little while. I met her there. I don't know, sorry.

*And what was the post-war situation when people realised you survived? What – was there hostility from the Slovak side or – do you see what I mean?*

Yes, I –

*At school and –*

Yeah, in – well, I went to a mixed school but I don't think there were many Jewish children in that school. I don't have a recollection, negative recollection at all. I just remember that I used

to go to school, come home, and go to see my family. I don't have much memory of that period.

*Because some people like my mother reported that it was difficult, you know, just in the post-war period because they said, oh, you're still alive, you –*

Oh, they – oh, you said there a good word. That, well, we went to – went back to a street we used to live and some neighbours came out and she said, you're still alive. We thought all Jews were killed. I do remember that two people said it to me. Twice. Because not many came back. And so, somebody said, maybe they didn't mean it negatively, maybe she said, well, you're still – we don't know yet. It could have been, well, you have survived, or – we don't know. It could have been negative but it could have been just question, you survived.

*And did your mother – how did you support yourselves then after the war? Did she start to work or –*

Well, when we went to Palestine, my – we got affid – we got – legally we went to Palestine, my sister arranged for us to get there, we had a small place where we lived in and my – I was – my sister Edith went to a *kibbutz* 'cos she belonged already – she went to Shomer Hatzair in Bratislava already, to some social movement, and she went to a *kibbutz*. [01:38:06]

*Which kibbutz? Where did she go?*

Nir David.

*Nir David?*

Yeah. Near Afula. And there she met her husband and she had a lovely family. She just died a year ago, two years ago. She was a bit older than me. No, five years older. So, she died not two years ago, maybe already more.

*And you?*



Pardon?

*What happened to you once you arrived in Palestine?*

Well, when – I tell you what. When we arrived to Palestine, we came from near Paris to Marseille and we travelled by train and when I arrived in Haifa, I promised my father that I will kiss the ground because I enter the Holy Land 'cos he said this is the Holy Land, and my mother thought, what are you doing? It was just for a second to myself. I never told them. And then my mother took me to the flat of my sister and then they put me into a boarding school because my mother couldn't keep us. And she got a job – she was a good cook and she worked for the Knesset. It was – well –

*For Parliament?*

The Parliament. She was work as a cook. I have a nice story about her working in Parliament because she was very ladylike and she was always dressed – I got photograph – very elegant, very smart and she was a good-looking woman. I heard when she served food, nobody start eating before she sat down. If it's true or not, I do not know. You know, there are all kind of story. Because she wasn't a typical cook, you know, she was – and then she also got a prize of cooking because she could make wonderful dishes without any ingredient, powdered milk and powder – eggs and powdered things. You heard about it? [01:40:11] There was nothing proper to eat. So, she made wonderful pancakes out of powder [laughs] – powder eggs and she also out of vegetable, make wonderful pancakes, with cauliflower, carrots. She- more as vegetarian because we haven't – we couldn't afford to buy. But I think she must have earned some money because we had to – somebody had to pay for it. Or my sister paid a bit, I am not so sure, 'cos she was already working. She was married to a doctor in Israel and she moved – she gave us her place and she went to live in Tiberias. She very –

*This is your older sister?*

My eldest sister. She married a student doctor. He wasn't a doctor yet. And Josef Hermann [ph] was something very special because he was – went to Lebanon to study, apparently. He came from Vienna and didn't qualify as a doctor and went to Lebanon and had a wonderful reputation, one of the best medical school. You heard about it? He qualified as a doctor in Vienna but she had to help him as well and then – and she was working as a physiotherapist then she worked in a bank. She spoke quite languages. She spoke the same as me but she studied further. She took her master degree in German language as well. But she – so she was there and she – it was wonderful to see her. She waited –

*Did you recognise her?*

No. Well, when we arrived there was a curfew and then I got – I remember we were petrified that the curfew like we had all the time in Slovakia, because there was something between British and this Palestinian or Israeli or – not Israeli but Jewish people, Arab people.

[01:42:06] And that was the first impression, the heat was there, and it was different. But I don't know – I don't have such negative memories of that. Also, we didn't have comfort at all where we lived but it was not bad memory at all. I only never forget when I had first time olive. I never had it in my life. And the children, a neighbour who used to give it to me olive, it become more favourite thing now. And when certain things like that I remember.

*And did you want to emigrate?*

Pardon?

*Did you want to emigrate to Palestine at the time?*

How would I know?

*No, but did you want to? Was it your mother or – who –*

Well, we had no choice. What – my father was dead and we – my – you know, there was nobody to keep us. We got a permit and we – our journey was very interesting. We went to

Paris. My late mother being, as I said, a very culture woman, all she wanted to go to opera or something like that. And we were there for three, four days in Paris before we went to Palestine, so went to see La Bohème [laughs] and it was so important for her to see something what she want. And we went to see Eiffel Tower and she were walking around. She knew about things more than I understood. So, she was quite enjoying. We walked our feet down, our – because she wanted to see Paris. So, we were there and stayed in some kind of guesthouse. And from there we were taken by – to Marseille and then at Marseille got Anapolis [ph], a Greek ship took us to Palestine. But on our boat – ship, there was illegal people. But we were legal. We were legal.

*Right. There were other illegal – or survivors?*

Well, the ship was full of people. [01:44:00] But we did not know who they were. And there was – it must have been summertime because I don't remember any upheaval on the sea. And we had a permit, most people didn't have permit, they were all taken away [ph]. Soldier from Czechoslovakia Brigade there something as well, going to fight for Palestine. And I remember something that we – we were going legally through but our papers were moving out to other people, so that people – nobody checked properly, as long as you had a piece of paper.

*Oh, I see, so they were reused.*

So, our – a lot of our papers were used a lot by other people. But I heard about it afterwards. My mother was very careful with us on the ship. And the captain of the ship was very sweet to me. I remember he gave me some grapes and things like that, because we didn't have fruit like that.

*So, was it quite exciting to leave?*

Well, yes.

*What were you feeling, leaving Slovakia?*

Oh, I tell you what. I – not having my father and family there, I did not know if I was aware what's happening to me. I only remember on a train from Nitra to Bratislava, but Bratislava went further, to Paris and then we went ship. And the ship was a bit longer than normal, about – I can't – about ten days or something like that. And then my sister was waiting on the other side and she took us. People were very nice in Palestine in those days. We – 'cos we didn't have money or something, they came, paid for us for a bus or something. People were very welcoming 'cos they realised – not all, but some knew that what was going on. I don't –

*But you couldn't stay together? Because –*

No, we couldn't stay together. My sister went right into a *kibbutz* and I stayed with my mother and my sister. [01:46:04] My sister stayed – went – my sister who had polio, she went to some kind of college of handiwork because she was very good with- WIZO or something, it was called. And I went to Kfar HaNoar HaDati.

*So how was that for you, then, to go to a boarding school?*

Oh, it was terrible. I didn't speak the language and they were – they didn't have any proper carer [ph] at all those days. They were not trained. Only orderly room and tidy up your room, and they put me to a class and I went to a class and I couldn't speak the language. It took me one year but then I learnt it.

*And was it a religious –*

Yeah.

*A religious school?*

Yeah.

*So, it was a religious Zionist movement, or –*

Yes, it was a – yes. But not fanatically, boys and girls together. But it was – yes, it was a Mizrahi-type of school.

*And did you mind that or –*

I am not sure. It's as – you're not asked what you want. When you're a ten-year-old or eleven-year-old or less, you don't ask question like that, you do what you're told to do. You know, I was – I was first for a little while with a family in Kfar Haroeh, another place what I hated. And my mother came to see me, she was already in Jerusalem. Because nobody – I couldn't speak the language and I didn't know what to do and the woman wasn't very nice, of the family. So, they put me to this boarding school with all Holocaust survivor. Not all. They were [inaudible]. It was a good school actually.

*Oh, other survivors were in there. [01:48:00]*

Not all survivors.

*Some orphans? Some people who didn't have parents maybe, or –*

Yeah, but there were a lot of Israelis as well, Palestinian. It had a good reputation, the school. Kfar Haroeh had a good name. But I remember up till today I'm friendly with some of them, one who came from Romania and one is from Syria. We are friendly up till today. When I go to Israel, we remain friendly.

*And again, probably at that time nobody talked about their past?*

No. I – nobody. Nobody. And I can't understand it. Nobody, even when I went to – I don't understand why we were – somehow kind of a cloud came over us. All we want to study, to do our exams, and I wasn't [ph] a very good student. I don't know – I want to study, then I want to come here [ph]. I went to the Israeli Army. I was, you know, a few years and I was a sergeant, whatever [laughs]. As a teacher said, if you got some qualification. And then I was

sent to a Jewish agency to work in Europe. So, my main education become later on because I talk in the book, the woman who changed my life.

*Miriam, I think it's a good time to now take a break because we go –*

Yeah, let's have tea or coffee.

*Let's have a little break and then we'll continue.*

Okay, go.

**[Break in recording]**

*Yes, Miriam. We were talking about arriving in Palestine and then going to the school, to your boarding school. I was going to ask you, were you ready to go to a boarding school, to live your sort of – be independent after your experiences after coming to Palestine?*

It is nothing to – it was very difficult for me to explain. It wasn't up to me, it was decided for me. So I was in boarding school, what wasn't very happy first year too but eventually I made some very good friends, and they're friends up till today. [01:50:09] So obviously, because I don't know the language, you have to learn the language and then a new culture and all new environment, a new atmosphere. Everything was different. I think it must have been for other people but for us it was better off. We – I had good teachers, I must say, we had very disciplined teaching. I had to read every week a book, so I was very familiar with most Russian books, like Tolstoy, Tchaikovsky [sic] and a number – one of the books, you know, they don't come to my head right away but we read Russian books and also other books here, American book, literature, all different. The teacher was – school very good. German-orientated because a lot of – they were emigrant or they were born-German. So, school was all right. We had a lot of sports, we had a lot of activities. The school was fine. I don't think I liked very much studying but I studied somehow. It wasn't really my vocation. I was – I want to excel in something and I excelled even in school sport.

*So, at that school, you did sports, in that –*

Oh, yes, I started when I was fourteen, fifteen. I was quite competent, handball, basketball, running, anything, cycling, whatever. We didn't have water there yet.

*And you were there obviously before Israel was declared a state.*

Yes, of course.

*So, do you remember that, when Israel –*

Of course, I remember it very well. I was in boarding school, I was separated from my mother. She was in Jerusalem, I was in the boarding school. You probably didn't hear but there was an army who came to attack – is that Palestine or the Jewish state but it wasn't yet, Qawuqji army was coming from Iraq. [01:52:05] We could see them coming to the mountain but I don't know, they didn't get very far anyway. Obviously, they didn't get there. So, I remember that. And I remember I – we didn't experience so much the fighting because it was- I think now Jerusalem and other area. So, I didn't. But I was separated from my mother, so for one year I practically didn't from her.

*Because of the fighting?*

Because of the war. There was a war between Israel and Palestinian Arabs and so on. Yes. But my other sister from Tiberias, she came to see me sometime and so did my sister from the *kibbutz*. She was married already to Israel Glaser [ph], and who was a lovely person, and I was very happy when they came to see me.

*Because your mother was in Jerusalem, so it was more difficult to get to –*

Oh, well, of course, yes, yeah.

*You were near Haifa?*

Yeah.

*Yeah. And where were you – do you remember when Israel was declared a state? Where were you? In school or –*

Well, we were in school but I think that we had an experience, a lot of dancing going on in the streets and yes, I do remember it vaguely. I was after all fourteen or- four – fifteen, six – yes, I was – yes, I do experience – remember it. It was a very exciting time. Also in our boarding school, we had a lot of picture of communist leaders 'cos that was the time nobody know Israel's going to be a communist state or it's going to be independent state.

Independent, yes, but influenced by United States or Russia. Both, you know, Russia, it was the first one to announce to United Nation as a state and America was the second. [01:54:07] So that time was touch and go. We used to see photograph of Russia, Lenin and Stalin and people like that, black hats all over the place. But –

*But the school, what sort of Jewish education, what did they try to teach or –*

Oh, no, general. It was Hebrew literature, mathematic, chemistry, all the general knowledge. Hebrew – yes, Hebrew was of course the main important literature.

*Yeah. So, after a few years you spoke –*

I spoke – well, yes, not perfect but I spoke quite [inaudible] and gradually I start read Hebrew books. But I had to read from early stage. We were insisting to read books, what was in a way I was – when I was reading Anna Karenina, War and Peace and books like that.

*In Hebrew?*

In Hebrew. Looking back, I don't know how – I remember it. Well, it must have been second year, when I already was in school. But we really learned good books.



*And then after you finished school, then you joined the army?*

No. When I school – finished at school, I was got a scholarship to Jerusalem, to a teaching training college where I was trained for three years as a junior teacher. And when I qualified then I – as I didn't have to because I was not religious, I – religious girls didn't have to go to the army, but I did volunteer to go and I was working on the – what's called *yeshuvei zfar*. That means on settlement outside, a new settlement like near Beit She'an was a settlement, Parwanot and then – and one in Elkosh, what was in Galilee. [01:56:00] So I worked in the army as a teacher, in a kindergarten teacher, a junior teacher.

*In the army?*

No.

*No, no, no, not in the army.*

Not in the army.

*No. But then you joined the army, you said.*

After – You're quite right. No, no, no, first I finished my teaching training course, I went to the army and after the army I was working. Yes. Yes, I was in the army in a – yes, yes, I first had education and then I went to the army. In the army I was working in a new settlement.

*Okay. And did you want to be a teacher, then, when you – you said you became a headmistress or – for junior school and –*

I did not exactly know what I wanted to. I think I wanted [laughs] to study science when I – for a while but, you know, I had to help my mother as well and I studied and I could stay at home, so I decided that was suitable somehow.

*So, at some point you did move together in, with your mother?*

Yeah.

*You lived together?*

Yeah.

*In Jerusalem?*

In Jerusalem. But then I went to work. When I was in the army, I wasn't at home, I was in Kfar Hanoar HaDati then I was – no, no, no, no, no, sorry, Shluhot. I was in army – let's make it clearer in my head. When I finished the army, I went to work in a settlement near Afula. I lived in Shluhot and I worked in Parwanot then I went to – second year of that period I went to Galilee and I worked in a – near Nahariya, called Elkosh. [01:58:09] It was – so army education, teaching and army together. Does it make sense?

*Yeah, that makes sense. So, then what happened to you being sent – how did that happen [overtalking] Northern Ireland.*

So, then I went to Jerusalem visiting a friend, Sara Schwartz [ph], I'll never forget her. he was a friend of mine from college in Jerusalem. And then somebody came to visit her that weekend from Jewish agency and asked her to go to work as a Jewish Israeli representative in Northern Ireland and she said, well, I don't want to go at the moment. She came originally from Ireland and – but she said, no, no, better send my friend, Miriam. Ask her if she wants to do it. And I did want to do because I wanted to get out of – to see the world a little bit. So, I accepted that offer and I went to Belfast to work and I was the one representing Israelis there, in many level, tourism, and not only education, different things.

*Yeah. And what was it like?*

That was adventure. That was really adventure. At that time, I could speak but not fantastically good English 'cos first I had to learn Hebrew. I learnt English a little bit in

school but I took a private teacher in Belfast to improve my English, so I studied in English in Belfast. Yes, I was still quite Orthodox at that time. But because there were no Israelis there. There were small Jewish community, few hundred people, probably a thousand, so I used to go to the synagogue and met people.

*[02:00:00] And that's where you met your husband?*

Well, well, there used to be something called Hop in south of Ireland, of [inaudible] and people from Belfast used to go to Dublin for little parties, dances, and I went with some people and there I met my husband, who – I met him, he was an actor and he impressed me so much in the voice, such a beautiful voice, and I had such a difficult [ph] English voice. So, attraction was his personality and he was much older than me. But anyway, we got together, he came to Belfast to see me quite a bit and then after two years I went home to Israel and he followed me and send me telegram – there were not email things like that those days. So, there were telegrams going backwards and forwards [coughs]. And then I got married in '58.

*And he had grown up in Ireland?*

Pardon?

*He came from Ireland?*

He came from Ireland.

*He was Jewish? He grew up in Ireland.*

Jewish background.

*So, he then went on aliyah. He joined you in Israel.*

He went – well, he was in Israel before as well. He went to volunteer for a year during the – after the war I think, in '48, '49. He was there, yes.

*And then did you settle in Israel together?*

Well, we try – found difficult English, the language, he found very difficult, so we tried, we had a rented flat I think for a while. At that time, they were doing a film called Exodus and he was an actor, they wanted him to take part in the film, Exodus, to be one of the doctors.

[02:02:00] And I don't know if he – I don't think he went because I got pregnant very quickly and he had to go to Cyprus. You know, they made a film of Exodus in Cyprus, so he was chosen to the part of the doctor on the ship and I don't think I remember exactly what went wrong because he was a very – he didn't even much – need much audition, he was very good. Probably my fault because I was very insecure, you know. I did not know- we just newly married about six months or a year and then he wants to go to –

*So, he didn't do it.*

I feel very sorry I didn't go but that's the way it is.

*And could he find other work in Israel or was it difficult for him?*

Yes, we couldn't. He tried to go all kind of hotelier, in hotel business, we knew somebody, but he found it difficult. He really only wanted to be this one and he was trained podiatrician [ph]. He was – studied medicine few years but didn't qualify as a doctor, become a foot specialist. So, he worked in like a – what do you call it – yes, a podiatrician [ph].

*And did you teach, then, in that time, in –*

Yeah, I was teaching, yes, right away, yes. I never – I had no problem with that. I was teaching in Nahariya, was – we lived in Carmel, you know, and we had a flat there and we – a very nice place and then we had a few friends. So, after a year or so then he decided he must find a proper work, he has to go to – we came back to England.

*Would you have preferred to stay in Israel or –*

Of course. [02:04:02] That was my first choice. I loved Israel. I still love it. If you give me the choice, I don't find any problem with Israel. You know, I- was there during few wars, '50, '55, was a war? I don't know. Or '67 war. I was – I volunteered to go to the war. I had a baby, eight months' baby, I went and they're – they were still shooting in Israel and I volunteered to go to work. I was patriotic.

*So, when you came, where did you come, then? To London or – when you came back from – I mean you came from Israel.*

Yes, we had a flat in London then we bought a house in Hendon, yes.

*And when you came back, what did he – what was his job or what – did he find some work in England?*

Yes, he worked with a clinic, some clinics. Yes, he found a job, there wasn't a problem. I was also working in a school, I was teaching Hebrew. Yes, we lived in a quite nice flat in Golders Green when we came here, and then gradually of course we bought a house. I had certain amount of saving, we had, and we got a house in Hendon.

*And you came – when you came from Israel you had one child already, or – you came with one or two children?*

One, one, one. Yes. But my son wasn't born here, he was born in Dublin. His family came from Dublin still and that was nice place to be for – Martin was born in Dublin, yes.

*But you didn't want to go to Ireland, to settle in Ireland?*

I didn't really object to that, I didn't have this desire but Lenny wanted to come to England. He had a big family here. Yes, we lived in Hendon and we were quite happy and I was teaching Hebrew classes, he worked in a clinic, in hospitals, different places. [02:06:05] We just had a quite pleasant life, one child, 'cos Alison was born five years later.

*And what sort of – how did you want to raise your children and what sort of, I don't know, identity did you want to give them?*

Well, obviously I wanted them to understand their Jewish background. At that time, I was quite – quite – more than traditional but Lenny wasn't, so that was a problem here. I used to go with Martin until he was thirteen year old every Saturday to synagogue, till his *bar mitzvah*, and then I gave it up because I – you can't sort of live in environment that one is religious or not. And religious was for me a natural thing, upbringing, but not something you had to question too much. My background was Orthodox and it was quite natural for me to be what I – religious.

*But then you changed, or –*

Well, it was only when my second child was born five years afterwards, I'd never had a lot of back problem, I don't know why I had all kind of problem. And then I used to take Martin to school and there I met these lovely people, we all waiting outside the school for the children to come home and I met this woman, Jana Goldmann and her husband was a chemist but he was also yoga teacher, what I'd never heard about yoga, I didn't know what it was. So, she said, why don't you come over for tea? So, we lived nearby and we went there and he told me – well, I was good at sports and he said, well, we do exercises here, would you like to join us? I loved it, absolutely loved it. [02:08:01] Because I was quite flexible, so I did work with [inaudible] and with a nice group in [inaudible], if you know Hendon, and after in '96 – this is – it must have been '65 till '67 because I think there was the Six-Day War and they emigrated afterwards to Israel and they went to live in a *moshav*, Amirim, in Galilee. And I took over – he asked me take over his centre and I didn't particular want to because I didn't have qualification, so eventually I went to school of yoga, British Wheel of Yoga, and I had a lot of gurus coming at that time, Swami Vishnudevananda, so I started to get involved with yoga. [Inaudible] was very unusual. We called him [inaudible]. We were – he was [inaudible] was called [inaudible] but we called him [inaudible]. He was very unusual. He was also adventurous. So, we start going to different Hindu places because his guru sort of came there. He was – I wasn't into guru yet. I didn't quite understand that thing. And we used

to go to different – exploring London. I got introduced to Indian food, what was new to me, and to Indian lectures, and it was all new to me, fascinated me. So that's the way it started off, all this, second part of my life, through yoga it all started.

*So, exploration of...?*

Finding myself, I suppose so. And then I went to Iyengar school, a very well-known school, and took my diploma in British Wheel of Yoga. And then I was teaching, well, all over the place for about forty years. [02:10:01] But during that period- something was lacking in my life. I do not know what. I can't explain it what it was. I was still searching something, some meaning to life. So, Viktor Frankl – I don't know if you know about him – he had a influence on me as well because he wrote meaning of life and [inaudible], all kind of books like that, Erich Fromm.

*Yeah, I know Erich Fromm.*

Pardon?

*Yeah, Erich Fromm, To Have and Not to Have, or what is the title? To Be and – Haben und Sein. I don't know if it is to have and to be.*

Yes. Hard to say. Well, they are sort of people that have a – I find their books and I was reading them and they made me interesting, particularly Viktor Frankl. And –

*Viktor Frankl wrote about survivor-*

Yeah, he is a survivor. They both were survivors. They both were survivors. I mean Viktor Fr – I did a dissertation on Viktor Frankl in my courses. I did like his teaching. Also, he wasn't the easiest person. He was in London for a while.

*And what fascinated you about his writing, or what were you interested in?*

Well, this was before other things happened, before I – when yoga started, I met a lot of yoga people at yoga centres and thing. Something I was – cannot tell you exactly but I didn't understand or didn't get enough, it was too Indian for me and the culture was so different from my culture. So then was this period in late '78-'79 a television programme called Light of Experience and this was going on thirteen weeks and every week they interviewed different people, people who had a new super-conscious state and a new spiritual experiences. [02:12:05] So I found it terribly interesting. I wouldn't miss any of this programme, and I – as I said, many of them prominent, unusual people. But one day my husband tells me today a Russian lady's going to be on television, not a Indian person, and her name is Irina Tweedie. So, he said, why don't you give a chance to watch something, a European person is talking about a spiritual journey. And I saw the programme and that day was all changed my life. When I saw the television programme I don't know if I had a blackout or went to another state of consciousness, I don't know, but I said to my husband, I'd like to meet her. But she said on television, nobody needs to know my name and where I live, nobody needs my address, I have no telephone, you can't find me, nobody can find me. Well, before we went to watch the programme, another two yoga people, one was my yoga student and another was my yoga colleague. We just – I told them, let's watch that programme together with, everybody discuss it. And then Ahuva her name was, she Ahuva Spronz, she said to me, I just came back from Israel, and I happen to have her address of a woman in London, her name is Irina Tweedie. And I said, if you want to, the woman who was on television, let's go to see her, but I said she's not on anywhere to be – and nobody got her address, nobody know where she live. But she said, she only gave her address who she wanted to. And Ahuva met somebody in Israel, a woman, who said when you go to London, check out this woman, it will be interesting for you. So, we checked her up and we went to see her one evening and then I was hooked on it when I first start to gone. [02:14:04]

*Ahuva Spronz, the name, it sounds familiar to me, Spronz. Where was she from?*

She was Israeli, other was Czechoslovakian.

*From Slovakia?*



Yeah.

*From where?*

I don't know. I never asked her. No, he was from Slovakia.

*I know that name from somewhere but –*

Maybe. Well, he's – he passed away but she's still alive. He passed away, Shlomo. Spronz, his name was.

*He was the husband?*

Yeah. Ahuva was married to him. So, we –

*Is she still alive in Israel?*

Pardon?

*She's still alive in Israel?*

No, she's married to someone in Canada now. No, she's a bit younger than me but not much, just two, three years. So, we trained in the same school of yoga, we become friends and –

*So that day you were – that changed your life, watching this programme?*

Well, it took time but I realised that this woman has got some kind of power or some kind of knowledge that nobody got it for me. She talked to me.

*On that – in that television programme?*

On that television programme.

*So, what was it exactly? What was it which spoke to you, or –*

Well, she had blue eyes, you know [laughs]. She had these two – there's a photograph there when she was – when I first met her. So, she – there was some – she was just like an ordinary person but she had personality. Sometime I think I probably represent my late mother. I don't know what she was but she was very, very appealing person and she just said, my – and she met her teacher in a very unusual way as well. [02:16:00] And she said, nobody can find me, so – but I found her, so that was for her something very special. So, when I – she said, how did you find me, I told her and she said, well, older celebrities, Janet Baker John Sullivan [ph], that she attracted – she was an aristocrat anyway. She was aristocrat, she was – her husband first cousin of Queen Mother, so she belonged to altogether another society but she gave everything up and she become an ordinary person, she went to India, she met a guru there and a guru changed her life. And then she – a guru told her to go to England and to work and to do his work in England. So, I was one of the many people.

*But she was Russian, you said? She was born in Russia.*

Russian. Russian, Russian.

*So Russian aristocrat, or –*

She was – her – well, her father married Prince [ph] Olga of Russia, that means that was stepmother, Prince [ph] Olga of Russia, but her second – her real husband – no, the second husband was House of Tweed in Scotland and he was – his family came Queen Mother's cousin. So, they're related anyway. All the Royal Family, they're related somehow there. And because the Russian Royal Family are very connected to European family. But she didn't do anything like that. She was very ordinary person and she gave up everything. She was a very, very rich lady and she become a beggar. That's what she wanted. So, she gave to a guru everything. It fascinated me. She went to India to look because she – her second husband, Tweed – her first husband, I forgot his name but her second husband was House of Tweed and Charles, he died, she met him in – during the Second World War. [02:18:11] Because –

and so she met him when she was volunteer to work in Florence with British soldiers or something. So, there were a lot of people doing this kind of work. Her first husband died, who was a very, very wealthy man. He owned bank – [inaudible] of bank of Switzerland, so she lived like a queen. And she was so well-known in her day, she was compared – well, that's [inaud] Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, ten best-dressed women in whole Europe. So, you know, she was living a life of luxury, of luxury. But we did not – nobody knew about this 'cos when we met her she wasn't like that anymore. So, when Charles died, she lost interest. She – he was twenty years older, she met him during the war – after the war, somewhere in one of the soldiers' meeting places and she didn't want – she had no meaning to live. Although, we found out she had two sister, one in Vienna and one sister in Switzerland, 'cos she had two sisters, there were three girls. But she – for whatever reason it is, she was searching when Charles died – when Charles died, she was looking for some interest, so she went to a place called Theosophical Society in London and there she met some people and somebody told her about a woman called Lilian Silburn and she met her and they went to India. [02:20:05] She became good friend of hers, and Lilian found a guru before then Mrs Tweedie found her guru and they had the same guru. And Lilian worked in France and she came to work in England and when you seen her, she torn jumpers, everything, so I – we all went out to buy her clothes, we thought, poor woman. But that was her free choice in what she's done. Out of free choice she wants to surrender what she wanted through the light [ph], meaning to life and so on. Well, that all appealed to me. And first of all, she was fascinating. My late husband absolutely adored her. She was Russian. She speak Russian, Italian and French and German and Eng – she was a very worldly, sophisticated, gorgeous woman, and my husband, Lenny, really loved her because you could talk to her about anything and everything.

*Was he – sorry to interrupt you but was he also interested in your journey, the yoga and the –*

No, he wasn't. No. But he appreciated it. He liked the people he met. They came to my house and so on.

*So, it was very much your journey?*

It was my personal journey and my journey was completely different to my upbringing. I entered a completely another world. It was very Indian but also esoteric and spiritual and I found it so fascinating. And Mrs Tweedie, her being what she was, a very clever lady, she knew who she wants to have, who she can train and she always kept on asking, where is Miriam, why does she not come, and not realise in those days it was a privilege to be asked by her because at – according to traditions, a teacher has to find a student, not a student a teacher. [02:22:05] So she found me and I found her eventually and I followed this path.

*And did she have sort of regular classes, or how was it organised?*

All the time. Well, she was a Jungian.

*A Jungian analyst?*

No, she was a Jungian – following Jungian policy. No, she was educated in literature and philosophy as well but she could have followed Jung 'cos she knew him but she decided to go another way. But we- our teaching was Jungian, great influence interpretation of dreams and a deep psych – who am I and so on, all spiritual journey.

*But was she teaching? Did she give classes? How was it organised? I mean how – did she invite people to her house, or how –*

Well, the house, it was like that. She had a home. She didn't charge, what was very, very unusual those days. And she lived in poverty. The whole thing was fascin – she didn't charge, her – people who came to her mainly from the Theosophical Society, people who were looking, searching for something in life. And she had a pension from her late husband, so she had some means to live on, £60, £70 a week or something like that. She had some means to live. But she promised her teacher what she was with in five years in India that she's going to do his work. And he took away everything from her, but not for himself. He took it away for her to let go. She was attached to – really, really attached to everything. She had too much money, too much everything and beauty, and he took it away. A lot of people complained about that, because he didn't take it for himself, he wanted to know if she lets go. [02:24:05]

And she surrendered to him. And so, we got to know her and we couldn't understand, so we didn't know what to do for her.

*What was his name, the guru?*

Pardon?

*What was his name? His name?*

My teacher?

*No, his name. Her teacher.*

Radha Mohan Lal-ji. It doesn't – it's Indian name. Radha Mohan Lala-ji [ph]. No, that's – that was his name. No, his – so she – it's very difficult to explain. He was a Hindu but his teacher, her guru guru teacher, was a Muslim. And – but he did not believe in Islam as such, he said our teaching is a knowledge – transmission knowledge from heart to heart. It's a difficult way to teach. It wasn't through the mind. It's a transmission through the eyes and through the – through the eyes, to the heart. So, it's a transmission teaching. But it's not very easy to understand. So, he trained her and she was very intellectual and she kept on ask too many question and he couldn't handle it because she had a European mind, she want to understand what she – he say to her, you would not ever understand, if you want to understand with your mind. I don't work like that. So, she said, well, what shall I do? ust sit and do nothing. Drink tea and sit. Well, you know, this doesn't go very well with European people. So, he said, I tell you what you can do, write a diary. Write everything what happening here. And the book, Daughter of Fire, if you want to see it, a 1000-pages book she written, is what happened there during the period she was with him. [02:26:01] So it wasn't traditional teaching but it was transmission teaching and you have to pick up the thread, she said. If you don't pick up the thread, you don't understand what I'm doing here. Well, I didn't understand for sure. You read my book? I didn't understand what she was doing. But she said, when I pass away, you will know. You will know exactly what I was teaching. So, I did actually understood her teaching afterwards what it was. It's so difficult. We had to meditate

lot, and through meditation, there were discussions. But she was talking about Vienna, she was talking about Russia, she was talking about education she had, but she never talked what we should learn. She want – she said, you have to live in the present, to be. It's a very difficult system and not many people can cope with it. And I was fascinated. For me, her way of working, I'm still doing, you know, I'm teach, still got groups of people coming here, and people ask me what are you teaching? I say, only teach you to be yourself. Well, how many people know themselves [ph]? So, it was difficult to know who you are. So, this is the main thing, where we sit, we read a literature of course, read of teachers, of poetry and things like that. It was here a book before, about somebody send me. It's difficult to say what she was doing, but she was doing – she – mainly she worked – talked about love. Love was so important. For her, love and God were the same. So, she said, how can you love anybody if you don't love yourself? So, she tried to make us – you can only love other people – when you're going to interview my friend, he will tell you, he doesn't understand that and he knows me for eight years – if you don't love yourself, how can you love anybody else? **[02:28:12]** But people don't understand it like that. They say, oh, I love that person, I love that person, oh, I like – but what do you like about the person? You can't go into the other people's soul, to other people heart. So, this a concept what she was working, to find yourself and be yourself.

*And do you think, Miriam, part of the reason you felt attracted to – do you feel it had to do with your wartime experiences? There was something –*

I'm really sure I – something to do with that. But on the other hand, you know, because I was brought up in a very Orthodox upbringing, I found this was certain amount of freedom as well the way she was teaching, not restricted, you have to do this prayer or that prayer. We had to do twice a day meditation, meditation on the heart and on love, but you can meditate on anything you like. Some people got a mantra. You heard about mantra?

*Yeah.*

And that you meditate on your mantra. So, you say the mantra until the mantra becomes you.

*Yeah. So, it's different – so you found it sort of freeing in some way? Compared to Orthodox*

–

I become a happier person. I was much more contented person. I was not – I didn't care if people like me or don't like me. It didn't matter to me. It really – difficult to explain to some people. I held a meeting on Zoom and people asked me, forty years I'm working like that, I never charged one penny anybody. No, never. But Mrs Tweedie, for example, didn't charge either but if she wanted to go to Paris or somewhere, it was done. Who paid it didn't matter. [02:30:00] We used to go to seminars and workshops and all kind of teaching all over Europe but somehow, everything was done but we don't even know how.

*So, you do the same? In your teaching, you –*

I don't charge.

*So, people come to you, or –*

They're coming. But because every time I teach here [ph]. It's very wonderful to be in that environment that I was to acc – such acceptance, you are for what you are, not expecting you to be – not examine you or not asking you questions. Most people want to know why you do that, what the reasons why, the – it's not like. It is you are yourself. Until you come to this realisation, it took long time to understand.

*But do you think part of your – not knowing how you are, your insecurities or something, had to do with again with your hiding, you lost your father young.*

Well, I told them and they all know about it. My past is part of my life anyway. You only learn from the past. I hope it never happen again, a Holocaust. It was horrible thing that happened in history of mankind. I hope it never going to happen. But meantime, you have to live and you have to know how you're going to live. You may have a career, you bring up your family, you have your own career, you are your own destiny, your own journey. You

cannot anybody's else life. And that what she tried to always say to us, you only try to be yourself, you cannot be anybody else.

*And did you talk to her about your history? Was she interested in that aspect or not?*

No, she was not but she knew because she was highly, highly intuitive person. She was so intuitive and so knowledgeable that when Falkland War started, she knew beforehand it's going to start. [02:32:05] And I will never forget it. I was sitting with her and she said, oh, terrible war started. And she actually if accident in West End, she will tell you it happened. She was very uni – her – she had a knowledge, universal knowledge, that is difficult to explain. And we all found it so fascinating, so unbelievable. I mean she was- if really something happened ten minutes ago and she was telling us about it and we didn't even have time to read a paper. But she didn't indulge in her knowledge. It's called heart of the heart knowledge. So, it's – she always says there are two hearts, the physical heart what makes up the life, and the spiritual heart what makes you live, the inner world. So, all people understand that in my book. But in her book what is 900 pages book, she describe her training, how she layer on layer, 'cos she was so educated and so knowledgeable that to let go of all the knowledge, to be – he used to ask her, her teacher, tell me who you are. So, she will quote something from Shakespeare or something, or Dickinson or whatever. That's not your knowledge, that's information. Information is not knowledge.

*Right. It's about letting go.*

Letting go. You got it. Letting go. But how many people are willing to do it? And she also – attachment, you know. This is so – I, for example, tried to get rid of everything. I got rid of lot of thing. I gave all these books away already and I gave my pic – I don't need it.

[02:34:00] They are still here but I don't carry – I don't have them anymore.

*Are you not attached to – are you attached to things?*

Well, I, looking at my daughter over there who doesn't live anymore, I think I know she's with me, difficult to say, I – not physically but I see her all the time. So, integrating the thing



of life within yourself is the aim, why we are here and for how long are we here, are we are going to go over physically, or what is left behind? But what is left behind is what you gave up to other people. She always said, oh – if, for example, in religion, I'm a religion survive only by passing on. But it's book knowledge quite lot. And some people, how much you find knowledge in people in religion, it's still book knowledge. How many us, how much Judaism really mean to you in your heart? So, it's do with love.

*And it's also letting go of pain, I guess.*

Well, this is another point, pain –

*[Inaudible].*

No, we have got pain but we look at pain, we deserve it, we have to go through pain. Yes, suffering. You know, Buddha was in pain and he was meditating for I don't know how many years, forty years or. And they asked him, what did you learn? And he said, I learned nothing. I learned to be. And there were so much Ramana Maharshi, all the big gurus when they read about enlightened people, they will not tell you, pain is – this guru, Ramana Maharshi, he had cancer and he could have had all the best doctors possible but he want to go through this – to experience what is pain and he went through pain and accepted it. [02:36:12]

*So do you think this helped you to deal with –*

No, no, but I'm not thinking I would do that if I'm not well, I take my medication.

*Yeah, yeah, yeah. No [both laugh]. That's good, Miriam. But I think – I mean did your – the teaching help you to deal with your pain in life? Whether it's –*

I lost fear. I believe what's going to happen is going to happen and I don't want things to happen badly. I want everything to be nice, but in life is good and bad. You can't – you have to accept things as they are. I mean when my daughter died, I was in terrible state because she was apple of my eyes and she was very beautiful and very gifted and everything. But God

gives and God takes. Nothing you can – you can hold on to nothing forever, is nothing belongs to you. And that's the reason teacher asked you to give up possessions, all the possession to be given away. Now, there are big story she tells us 'cos she came from very highly aristocratic background and she found family heirloom, a broach, what were all the family in it. And she never wore it because she gave everything – but the only thing she kept to herself when she went to her teacher and she forget herself one day and she put it on. She doesn't know why she did it. But she went to her teacher and he said to her, I haven't seen that before and she said, no, this is my family heirloom. Can you take it off? And she had to give it to a beggar who didn't even know – this is –

**[Break in recording]**

*You were telling us about the heirloom. [02:38:05] So she had to give that heirloom away.*

So, she had an heirloom what was only thing that remind her of what her life really. And somebody walked in and he took it away from her and gave it to somebody. And she up till end, she didn't let go completely of the past because when we met her, she talked about it, the fact that it was very important, talked to about her family heirloom. That was the end of her identity. That was her real identity still.

*Because, you know, in our context now, often when we interview people, you know, they have one or few things connecting them to their past, very precious to them. So, the idea of, you know, that they'd have to give that up is quite a – quite radical, especially if people don't have anything and they have just a few things, you know, linking them to the past.*

Yes, well, when you interview people and you find that we haven't – you can't have very many heirloom from your past when you go through the war.

*No.*

No. But I, for example, could let go – I give to my grandchildren anything they want. I don't need anything. I always said, I've got my pension, I've got my roof on my head. The thing is,

attachment is very difficult. You – particularly for people of our background. I didn't want to say but Jewish people are attached to – you're attached to your family, you're attached to possessions, and you – the attachment to your knowledge. So, what do you let go first?

*Very difficult. But what about you? Have you got some heirlooms, of something from your family you're attached to?*

Well, I gave it to everything – no, not really. [02:40:01] I put on my – I found this from my late husband's wedding ring, what I didn't wear for long time and I found it and I said, well, I put it on. But only because people ask me if I'm married [laughs] to a [inaudible] or something like that. So said yes, I'm married.

*But what about anything from Slovakia? Have you got anything?*

Not from myself. I got something but from my unc – yes, I got something on a window from my unc – left over from my family. If you – behind the curtain, there's something there.

*What is it? We're going to look at it. What is it?*

Well, if you close the computer for a minute you can take it.

*We'll do it once we're finished. But –*

Okay, I'll show it to you. But remind me, because I forget.

*No, I will remember.*

Because my mind was little bit better now than before. It just revived a little bit.

*Maybe the topic itself –*

Maybe the topic is much closer to my heart now because the past is horrendously painful and I don't want to forget it because must not forget it. But I did forgive the Germans, you see. I went to Germany. Do you know that?

*Tell us about it. Tell us about it.*

Well, when Mrs Tweedie book came out in German, it been translated to a number of languages and when she went to Germany, influx of Germans came to her 'cos she spoke perfect German and she ask sometime people to accompany her and she asked me few times to go with her to Germany. I didn't want to go. That was anyway in our system it was very rude to object anything the teacher says, so I said, no, I don't want to go. She knew the reason. Then one day I thought to myself, she asked me to go to hard, where Hitler, near the Hitler bunker was, where, oh, practically in, er, what do you call the area, the German area?  
[02:42:06] It doesn't come to me now.

*Where, in Berlin, or – in Berlin?*

In – what?

*In Berlin or in the –*

No, no, no, no, no.

*No, in the Alps?*

No, no, no. Sorry about that. It doesn't come to me. It's area that is so familiar to me. I don't remember at the moment. Anyway, it's nearby. It's still at the moment a very Germanic area. So, one day she asked me, would you come with me, and you will teach yoga and I give my lectures and so I said okay. So, I went. And I thought – I didn't know what to do because I didn't want to go but she said, well, you teach group of German people yoga and give them talks or whatever you want to. And then a group of Germans after – all Germans, and I was teaching in English because I found it more difficult. I was trained in English. And there was

a break and then some of the girls from the class used to come to me, crying their eyes out, forgive us, forgive us, forgive us. I said, what do you – I can't forgive you. I said, it's not your fault what your parents and grandparents have done. It's not you who done it. Forgive us. So, I said, I forgive you but you see, you have to ask your heart if you are willing to overcome what – the pain that your grandparents did, or parents. And so, I wrote in my book a chapter about reconciliation with the German. I felt when the Germans start coming to England and I've got in my group as well Germans, and they kept on wanting to stay with me and talking about the past. [02:44:04] And somehow, they all knew quite a lot about what happened during the war 'cos in some school the teacher in other school, they don't, but I got at the moment in my group two German who the whole vill – the father was a top Nazi – I don't – they don't discuss his name – a Nazi. And the girls are possibly two of the finest people you can meet. They would do anything for me, not because I'm special or anything, because they are that kind of people. I think they will do it for other people as well. So, it has – behind the corner is a book what I'm going to show you. You probably about the March of Life. Not Living March.

*Hmm-hmm.*

But you were not there.

*No, I heard about the March of Life.*

But I was there. And Mr Bittner who was there, brought them over from Germany. They were all children of Nazis. There were 2500 people, not all, but there were some nuns there as well. They all came to England till I don't think you – many people knew about it. As far as I know, not many people know are going to bring them over. They came over, they were marching from Covent Garden to Whitehall and I gave a talk in Whitehall.

*Okay. Oh, so the Life March.*

I don't think – not March of Living, March of Life. They called it slightly different. They're organised by German, ex-Nazis. Er, not ex-Nazis, descendant. Descendant of Nazis. And they

– I make – I find it very easy to make connection with them because I forgive them. And this person who came over is a pastor, is a priest, and I can't tell you how much he loves Jewish people and how much he loves Israel. [02:46:03] He said we cannot enough ask forgiveness how much we have done. How could human being do what they've done to another human being?

*So, until you met these Germans with Mrs Tweedie, were you feeling different?*

Yes.

*What were you feeling until then?*

I just didn't want anything to do with them. My family, some people wouldn't buy German electric thing, they wouldn't buy this and that. I didn't know German people and I didn't make any way to meet them. So, it wasn't a problem. It wasn't until I met them actually and one of them become a very close friend, she lived with me for few years. She was- Ingrid was wonderful. She was really, really remorseful. But then you see, how can be sorry for somebody else? You hardly can say be sorry for yourself, how can you be sorry for other people. You know that the Jewish people always suffered, you know we all been persecuted. It's part of our history, from time of the Bible, before it started, Adam and Eve, afterwards, [inaudible], it started from the beginning, hatred, anti-Semitism, hated for always was. But why? This is the remaining eternal question. Why were they a scapegoat always a scapegoat and still is a scapegoat? I will never understand. One period – but 2500 years, they killed Jesus and something like that. Everybody was killed on a cross. That was the Roman way to murdering people. So, it's very difficult to understand that.

*But do you think that your meditation or Mrs Tweedie helped you to forgive that descendant generation, or helped you in that journey?*

I did, I said.

*Oh, you did.*

Second or third, yes, but not the parents. [02:48:01] You must not forget but can forgive. How can I forget what people murdered my father and my brother? But I forgive the second and third generation because they are not at fault their parents were evil. I forgive them. And I went back to Germany few times but I didn't think I can do it. But after meeting Mrs Tweedie, she tried to convince me if you are stay in a state of negativity, you will never move forward in life.

*Because that's part of letting go as well, isn't it?*

Pardon?

*Letting go. It's a part of letting go, the negative feeling.*

Yes. And people ask me today about Hamas and about Palestinian, things like that, I don't particularly like to talk about it but I can tell you, I've got Palestinian friends and Hamas friends. I met them. But they are not active any more but they're coming from somewhere. So, what is the fault of somebody if somebody's evil every – you can't take the responsibility of everybody's bad, all the Jews are bad, all Christians are bad. You can't do that. Only hardly is that's the reason she said you have to find yourself. You only hardly can do that. So how can we condemn. We condemn evil for sure, we praise good deeds, but that's where life it is.

*So how do you feel about things happening today?*

Well, I certainly feel very strongly and very pro-Israeli in many sense. I mean I don't want to get involved in politics – politics is not my field – but I understand. I got a lot of friends and my family in Israel and I feel for everybody. What can I say about the situation today? [Laughs] I just hope it will finish sooner or later, as soon as possible and with some kind of peace will be restored to the Middle East and worldwide as well. [02:50:05] It's not only in Israel there's a war, there's everywhere a war, but that's another subject altogether what's going on in the Middle East. It's tragedy. I'm heartbroken that people were killed, whoever

they are, and the Palestinian people, it must be terrible to lose their children and family. And what about 1200 soldiers also been killed? So, what about their families? Yes, it's a subject – we have got something – I think what she helped me, this woman, my teacher, is not to live with that pain or the past so much. You can't change it, it happened. But if I – I've reached this age of my life, I don't know how much I've got to live, but I don't want to live negativity, I just want to bring as much peace as I can. And my group, they are very wonderful people. We talk about love, we talk about friendship, we talk about all kind of things, plays, books we read, all kind of thing. But we don't attach to thing, we are just enjoying what there is to enjoy.

*So, do you feel that until you met her, you had the negativity in you? You were limited by your own experiences?*

Well, I was limited but I don't know of negativity. I probably never was like – but limited, yes. I was very narrow-minded. I expand my mind. My life was very narrow. Brought up in a family and I – then I have my education. Of course, we're the fighting the War of Independence, there's war here, war there, but – and that has to happen.

*But – so you broadened, you felt you can broaden out?*

I think – I have no prejudice for any religion. [02:52:00] In my group I got Iranian person, and anybody who have got a heart and want to improve their own life, I welcome to come. But it's difficult to explain. It's to do with her, Mrs Tweedie, because she – do you see what happened to her one day? She never locked her front door, what I think was a mistake, and she lived in Kilburn. And one day a man walked in and tried to rape her, and attack her, and she was old lady already. And usually, we come the same time but we didn't come the right time for whatever, because she doesn't lock the room. So, do you know what she did? She put a cross and said God bless you, and he walked out. He was a Catholic. He walked out. When she told us – she had a shock, she said that she had – teeth fell out, everything was bashed around. But she just stayed in [inaudible] and I said, how could you do it? I just did a cross of him and I said, God bless you, and he walked out. So how do you explain that? He probably came to rob her or something, I don't know what, and she had money anyway with



her. She said she had £10. That's all she – I think he took it as well, I don't know, but it – so she had that sort of under – acceptance. It was unbelievable.

*But do you feel that people can choose to be positive? Not choose, but to work on themselves, to –*

Of course. [02:54:03] Well, you have to work on yourself all the time. And well, of course. It's, you know, I mean I have just been recently in Paris there's a lady living there and it was two years ago or something, I went to Paris to see her. She's ninety-eight-year-old and she's also a disciple of one of these schools. She's French lady. She doesn't speak English and I don't speak French but we have contact with a third party, by French friend. So, she asked me to come to France and I went to. I don't know how I got there because I had a wheelchair and everything. We hardly spoke. It was such a wonderful experience. She lives in a chateau. You've never seen anything like that. She lives on her own, ninety-eight-year-old. She got a cleaning woman coming. And so, she said, I want to be with you alone and she sent the other people out, and she said, I give you a transmission, that again from – our transmission were eye to eye, from the eye. But we don't – the mind doesn't understand that, so there's no point even want to understand it. She asked me to sit with for an hour or two and I sat with her alone and that what happened. But I know something happened, but what exactly, I can't say. So, I went to see her because I thought it was important for me make the journey. I don't think I can do it again. This was – I was- You know, a couple of years younger. So, it's – you have to work at it. I don't like exactly her system, what she's doing because her system, not a word is exchanged. They come from – she lives in Paris and they come from Bordeaux for three-hour journey but they don't talk, they just sit together. [02:56:01]

*Okay. So, it's like, er, well, meditation or –*

Well, something like that. But I don't quite understand that but because our guru did talk and they talk but what is called Hind [ph]. They're talking all the time. Guru, our big guru talked politics as well, what happened in India. But if I tell you one experience what I had in India, you know, I've been three times in India, not as long as you've been but on my – one journey – I can't believe it's actually happened but it did happen – I got corresponded with the son of

my – the guru, the big guru. He's dead already. Since 1966 he died. But his son who was taking over and he invited me to one of the wedding of his son. That's going few years back now. And when I got there to India there was a curfew. And we already knew when I was in Delhi, or – no, Mumbai – wherever I was – in Delhi, there's a curfew in Kanpur, don't go, don't go, is a curfew, there's accident happen. But I went. And I – because I had my [inaudible] accident, I cut myself a little bit, fell down. And I went to this man, he was waiting for me in the station and I somehow recognised him, I don't know why, I'd never seen him before but he was a very distinguished-looking man, and I went to him. He said, we can't go wherever you want to go because there is a curfew till six o'clock and you want to go back tonight. So, I said, well, it doesn't matter, so let's sit here. So, we – he said, let's sit down and meditate. [02:58:00] And I never seen a person dead. He – breathing stopped completely of this man. He was sitting there and I couldn't close my eyes because I was too fascinated. The man did stop breathing completely for about half an hour or a bit more. And then he opened his eyes and he said, the curfew is over. And it was over. How do explain this sort of thing? So, we were called [ph], a messenger arrived, you can go out. They lifted up the curfew now. So extraordinary things happened in certain situation. I could not believe it actually, seeing it, this man didn't look alive for me. He just went so deep. So, you know, there are some extraordinary people in this world.

*Yeah. But Miriam, I wanted to ask you, in writing your book and the book obviously is about your past in the Holocaust and your journey with Mrs Tweedie. Was it important that you talk about both things?*

In one book?

*Yeah.*

It should be – you are absolutely correct.

*Because that's unusual [overtalking].*

I tell you what, I was thought a lot about it but I gave – I gave him a book as well, to Frank. I tell you what. What happened was is, I – it should have been two books because they're two different stories but I put it as one book, how it's possible to transcend the situation, the transmission, the change from one to another, so I put it in one book. But most people said they are so different, two different stories, why do you put – I thought it was for me anyway, the change from one stage of being to another. [03:00:00] There's – do you understand what I'm trying –

*Yeah. So that's what I was – so how do you see those two chapters or two – more than two chapters? Related?*

It is like two different books. I tried to say that my life was very unusual and why, I don't know. I don't know why it happened to me and didn't happen to somebody else. I'm sure it happened to other people.

*Let's put it the other way around. Do you think your experiences with meditation and, you know, that expression, shaped the way you look back also?*

Yes, you're right. I – well, you also must remember I was very young. So as a child, you know, if you know psychology, every seven years your mind, you change, up to the age of seven and then up to fourteen, twenty-one, then the whole system of thinking changes. So obviously when you're a child, I cannot go into my childhood. Some people probably can and you interview people. I cannot. You can – people who can –

*Some people can, some people can't.*

Yeah. I can't. I can't go, and I can't go into hatred. I used to dislike my sister. I used to fight her all the time. Things like that, I do remember. We used to fight in a class. But this is something probably natural happen between families. But I look back at my life, I'm pleased the way it was and I'm tragically upset what happened to my childhood, my father and my brother, sister and my – my life wouldn't have been the same if they would have been alive. If

they would have been alive, I would have been probably whatever I would have been, but I wouldn't be what I am today.

*What do you – do you sometimes think about it? What you – what, without Hitler, what –*

Well, I think very often about it, when my father would have been alive, I would have been brought up very Orthodox, good girl, would have gone to school, they would have married me off, and I'd have dozens of children, and I don't know what else. [03:02:02] So I wouldn't have any brain and I wouldn't be thinking. Who knows? [Laughs] I don't know. The thinking process, I think my knowledge what are book knowledge is not the same that knowledge I obtained through my experience, so I think – I don't go in to that one. I'm pleased that what happened, I'm grateful, but a lot of people didn't stay with Mrs Tweedie. People came to her and they couldn't handle the energy. She was very powerful. And she was very fierce. She can throw you out and scream at you. Well, you know, she shouted at me all the time. She didn't do it of that to shake me, it was like a waking-up call all the time. Don't just stay there. And some people asked me the other day, why does she repeat herself? All the time, she still repeat herself. Because till she realise, that you understand what she try to say, a good teacher has to repeat them self on and on till the student understand. And some teacher just give you right away like that. I know people who teach me something and I have to – don't understand, so make work it out. But she insist to repeat herself on and on and on.

*So, in writing this – the – your book, you also want to share – it seems that it's a very important part of your life that [overtalking].*

This book?

*Yeah.*

Well, it's not – it could have been slightly better written but anyway, 'cos I – somebody asked me if I willing to write it again, maybe I will think about it because I could have written a bit more about my training because people don't – on other hand, it's – it is what it is like, and difficult to say. But it's a small book but I think that her book is 900 pages and

not everybody can read it. [03:04:00] But I read it many times because it's all her teach. She – nothing there, the book was written for her and she keeps on saying, I wrote a book for myself, it's my diary. And my diary is my diary. If you want to take something from my diary, it's okay for you.

*And did all this, this teaching, do you think it changed you also in the way you parented? Or was it – did you get involved when your children were already a bit older?*

Well, no, they weren't – didn't actually, probably they suffered quite a bit actually, my children, because my husband was very tolerant. I used to travel on my own everywhere, to China, I went all over the place on my own because I – I don't know exactly. Well, not alone, I had a companion. But I think that my children probably suffered but I didn't neglect them. I was always there but – they had their dinner. You see, I gave to breakfast, lunch and dinner. I finish – I was at home for lunch, for – afternoon tea for the children, seven o'clock or eight o'clock they went to bed, I went to see Mrs Tweedie. So, it was obsession as well, and Lenny didn't mind. I mean I – they wouldn't stay the weekend because I used to – I spent time with the family as well because sometimes she insisted, I see my family.

*So, it took quite a portion of your time. I mean you were –*

But I didn't mind, I didn't care. If I go to see her, I tell her, go to the movies or go to this and that. It wasn't important, I didn't need many friends either 'cos I had what I wanted. So, you see, although I had – we knew quite a lot of people and I tried to keep separately my private life. This was very difficult to explain to people. This was my journey and I can share other things, literature, with them, see a play, whatever they like, I can do that. [03:06:03] But my private thing, I kept to myself. Even to Lenny I didn't tell, my husband. Because he gave me freedom. He must have been a very – he was an actor so, you know, he travelled around in Dublin, the Abbey Theatre. Have you heard about Abbey Theatre?

*Hmm-hmm.*

And he gave me a lot of freedom. I think he wanted freedom as well. So, I wasn't possess – he didn't like travelling, that's true. I went three time to India, he didn't want to come. And to China he went only once. And I went to other countries.

*What about Slovakia? Did you go back?*

My husband came with me to Slovakia. I've been to Slovakia many times 'cos I have my family there. I went first time –

*So, who stayed in Slovakia, of your family? Who stayed? Who stayed?*

My – one of my aunt who saved us, and Miklos. They stayed, I don't know why. They stayed in Slovaki. I went to see them and then I – my other aunt who was wife and two – two of my cousins just died in Covid. Two of them. But –

*And they stayed in Bratislava? Or where were they?*

What?

*In Bratislava?*

No, in Nitra.

*They stayed in Nitra?*

And they died, at Covid. But they got children what is my second – one cousin. They are there still, two of them. But I haven't been back there. I used to go there – I've been about – I used to go about five, six time, I don't know how many times, but I went back a few times to see my uncle and aunt and then the other people.

*And what do you feel like when you go to Slovakia? Do you feel a connection or do you feel – what about your language? Also, did you keep –*

Well, because I speak Slovakian, I – well, truth of the matter is, this is part of what I'd – wherever I am, I feel at home. [03:08:07] I really I can't explain. I went to China, I felt like I ever been in China. It's very strange but wherever I go, I feel quite like I'm at home, even – do you understand?

*Yeah.*

Because I've been to most place in Europe, Russia and Scandinavia. I've been to because – I must say that I love Scandinavia a lot, very much. I like Italy as well. But wherever I go, when I went first time to Italy when I was quite young, I was very dark hair and when I asked the policeman or somebody direction, they start talking to me – I said, don't talk to us, you know, you don't know, you know where to go, why are you asking a policeman? You speak – I spoke a little bit but no, I don't speak so much. So, they used to say to me, you are like one of Italian. I looked dark. Not dark like, you know, so sometime I thought maybe I'm a gypsy or something. Who knows?

*So, you feel at home – because that's another question. Where do you feel at home?*

*Everywhere?*

Well, I convinced myself Israel is my home but I feel at home here very much. I never experienced anti-Semitism or hatred. If I experienced it individually, I don't know how it will be. But I don't have Jewish friends. None of my friends are not Jewish. So that's also very unusual. Not out of choice, out of – it just happened. I have – I know from the Holocaust Centre that I go to, but my friends outside are not.

*So, when did you start going to the Holocaust Centre, Miriam? [03:10:01]*

Again, I went when it was the first one when it was in Charlotte Street, when it start originally. There used to be a bridge club and we – I had two friends, we were three friends and we used to go play, learning bridge, and they told us about the Holocaust Centre opening in Charlotte Street in West End and we used to go there once a week to play bridge. And I

learnt the bridge. But then nobody knows about it here, whoever I mention it. Then it moved to Golders Green to the nunnery. You know, it was in a nunnery?

*Yeah.*

So, they took it over, now it become the Holocaust Centre. It was a nunnery round there.

*The Hendon one? Hendon?*

No, in Golders Green.

*Ah, but it was in Hendon, wasn't it, the Survivors' Centre, at some point.*

The Holocaust Survivor from Charlotte Street went to somewhere else but I do not remember, to Hendon. No, in Golders Green. Then it went to Hendon. Yes.

*Yeah. And in Hendon to – okay.*

In a corner. And though the place I was told I'm not sure, where the nunnery was is the Holocaust Centre today. I thought it was further –

*So, what made you go there? Because that's interesting.*

Ah. I know. My late hus – they used to have a very nice – the children were out of the house and Friday night they used to sell – advertise dinner, Friday night dinner in the Holocaust Centre. They don't do it anymore. And Judith Hassan and somebody else, we used to go there because we knew some people and we had a lovely – every – was it every Friday, every – or every few weeks we start going there Friday night for dinner, on Friday night. And then we – somebody asked us one day to come to Holocaust Centre and I went with my husband and he came a few times. And I don't know, it just stayed like that. Then I used to go to Golders Green – no, in Hendon, then I start going Golders Green. [03:12:00] But I don't think I have got many friends but I'm friendly with everybody. I haven't got friends that I can talk from



heart to heart but Ivor is my friend and there are lovely people at Holocaust Centre. Most people I see in the Holocaust Centre is Ivor and we used to be four people playing bridge, still we are Sylvia, Kurt, Ivor and me and we remain friends.

*That's nice. So, there is something which attracted you to go –*

Well, I tell you the truth, it attracted me, I'm getting old and I can't run around where I used to love going to places. I used to go to seminars, to lectures and – I used to love going to this sort of thing but I've reached the stage I can't do it. I hardly can walk properly, so it suits me and it's very near.

*Yes. But you and Ivor are famous. You appear in the news together. So, there was a big article on the two of you.*

Not recently again.

*No, a few years.*

Well, I've got all of the place. Well, because – I don't know how it started. There's a photograph. Do you want to see my friend?

*We will soon. We will soon.*

Well, I met Ivor in the Holocaust Centre. His wife was – oh, very interesting. I met a man called Itzhak Perlmutter – this is his name as well – who stayed with me. I knew him for years. He and his wife used to come from Israel to stay with me. And then one day they said, we are going somewhere but they didn't ask me to come. And Ivor parents were still – wife was still alive. So, they went to visit Ivor – 'cos his name is also Itzhak Perlmutter [ph]. And the name didn't mean anything to me. But then I went one day to Holocaust Centre and having lunch and sitting next to him and he said- I said, what is your name? I said, oh, strange, I said, your name is Itzhak? [03:14:03] No, my name is Ivor now but it used to be Itzhak Perlmutter [ph]. I said, I know one and he's my cousin.

*That's nice.*

Yes, it's a very – so we are friends the last eight years. And we have completely different background, also, well, he comes from Hungary but he's a very kind person, a very nice person. So, I went there because for company, to be honest. When I could still – [phone rings].

**[Break in recording]**

What a good timing.

*Yes, you were talking about Ivor.*

No, he was just a friend from Holocaust Centre.

*Yeah. You said you went there for company to the centre.*

Yeah, it looks like it. There were – no, I was working there, sorry. I was giving – teaching yoga at chair for older people. You know, no, no, looking back I was going there and then somehow it came about the article Holocaust, not this one. I was teaching yoga in a chair and it didn't go very well, about six to eight people came, so I do not know. And then I met some people. That- I gradually met a few people. They used to have dance classes, Hebrew dances, Israeli dancing, what I like. There were different activities happening there. So, I went there, I liked the dancing. There was a choir as well. I used to go there then I got used to. Now I go regularly, at least twice a week, because I go to – there are very good programmes, wonderful programme.

*And speaking of age, you said, you know, now you feel you can do less things. Do you find with age that the past is coming back more to you? [03:16:03] Are you thinking about it more?*

I don't but I had last time there a very strange dream, so I didn't have dream but a very, very unusual dream and I – because I wrote a book about dreams, you know, it was my first book. But I – you wouldn't appreciate it but I was somewhere with my late husband and a very good friend of mine and we were going somewhere.

*That's your dream?*

That was in a dream. And I don't know where we are walking but a bit worry about her now because my husband passed away and she was – and she had Hodgkinson's so – but it's just she lives in Sweden but I haven't seen her for about fifteen years. That was in one night. The next dream was that I have a party here and a very Orthodox man walks in and he left the front door open and I ask somebody, come on, close the door, let him come in. I don't know, and I said to myself, why is he coming, or something like that. But that was very odd dream. I mean I have got interpretation for it because that was my work but the woman who – this woman- a friend, a very good friend, I haven't seen her, she moved from England to live in Sweden and I – first time I dreamt about her. Actually, I make contact – I'm not in touch with her so much but I will in touch – get in touch with her.

*Do you dream about your childhood, about your parents?*

Pardon?

*Do you dream about your childhood?*

No. No.

*But you said you didn't mind going to Slovakia, it wasn't a painful thing to go there for you, or–*

Well, I was – well, the first time was a quite awful situation because when I went first time to Czech Republic, I had my aunt living in Czech – I didn't tell you my aunt married in a

diplomat. [03:18:02] She was during the war in England, a nurse and she met somebody, Beneš. You heard about Beneš?

*Of course.*

Well, she – he was in Beneš government. So, Uncle Pepa [ph] was a linguistic as well. He was engineer but he spoke about eight languages and he worked with Beneš here in England, the foreign government, do you remember?

*Yes.*

So, he – this was – I didn't tell you about my mother's side so much. So, he still lived here and, er, why did I bring it up?

*Then they went back to Czechoslovakia probably, after the war.*

They went back after the war, back to Czechoslovakia, yes.

*So, you visited her?*

I – it's the first time we went to see her. Was it – it was still under communism. I wonder what year, '73, I don't know, something like that. We went to Czechoslovakia, to Prague, to stay with her and then from her I went – we went to Nitra, my Uncle Miklos and Ella to see. But the journey in Prague was very strange. It was quite frightening. When we came from London to Prague was fine but we had to take another plane from Prague to Bratislava. It was a one-hour journey. And in the airport, we were hanging around for some time and we saw a man with black glasses, sunglasses, but he looked so unusual. And Lenny – it was my late husband and me – and he – Lenny said he's hungry, he wants to eat something and this guy said, can I help you, and he offered to pay for us. I said to Lenny, but he's forgot he spoke English possibly, as it looks like he's a suspicious character. [03:20:02] So he chatted with us and where are we going, why we are going, where, for. Well, so I said, we're going to Bratislava to cemetery of my ancestors. I had good *seichel* [common sense], I had sense to

say, we are going to visit places of our ancestor. And he said, can I help you with anywhere? I said, no, we are going to Bratislava and we got the address. So, he said okay and he disappeared for a while. Then we were called to go on the plane and he wouldn't come with us, he was back. And I asked him – we talked to him over half an hour – I said, we'll keep you a seat. He didn't know us any more, like we don't exist. Then we got to Bratislava. I was going to go to toilet and there was somebody like that with this in hand, with a gun, it was him, this guy, he was looking for somebody. This guy was on our plane but he wouldn't talk to me. So, I went back to my seat and we couldn't wait to get down from the plane. It was very strict those days. When we got off the plane, I start again engaging him in conversation. I said, where can we find a bus or taxi to go to Nitra? We didn't stay in Bratislava. He did not know us. He was smoking, like chain-smoking and standing like that. Anyway, we – listen to this. So, we go to Nitra and nobody's waiting at the station, and they won't – they don't have taxis, very primitive it was. So, we dragged down to my uncle flat and my uncle was so relieved. I said, what's the matter? [03:22:01] He said, just the plane arrived, they blow up the plane. One plane after ours came from Prague. They were looking for somebody. And he was the man who was possibly looking for somebody. Do you understand? So, he wasn't sure – so he found out that we are quite innocent because I said, I am – we are going to Slovakia, to the cemetery of our ancestor and family and for little few days. He was asking too many questions.

*So, he was the secret service or something.*

Exactly. But on the plane was a bit worrying but nothing happened. So, he realised- they are experienced these people- and then on the plane, on our plane, were two American as well, with sombrero, big hat like this, from Mexico, they came. And they – nothing, we got to Nitra, safe. And then my – he said to us, my uncle, oh, thank God you are here, I was so worried because the news just came, a plane was blown up from Prague to Bratislava. All the passengers killed. So that was a frightening experience. I really, really frightening. But there were other incidents in Slovakia for me because – I was followed all the time. Because if you stay in a hotel – but we didn't stay in a hotel, we stayed in private home.

*Yeah, that's worse in a sense because you're in contact with locals.*

So, they become more suspicious when you stay with the local people. So [laughs] – so wherever we went to, we had all- And I made such a terrible mistake. I – we went for a – one day out with Slovakian people, offered to take us sightseeing. [03:24:00] And I was like a stupid woman, freedom for Bratislava. I don't know, something stupid in my – something – pray Slovakia, very Slovakia, or something like that. And I was told, shut up. You know, l'chaim. We drink, we're drinking, we're lifting up a glass for say good health for some reason. So, I said – something like that what I said, not exactly those words. And my goodness gracious me, I was told to be quiet because –

*You said l'chaim or –*

What?

*What did you say?*

In Slovakian, *nech žije Slovensko*, something like that. You understand? Oh, you didn't speak Slovakian. Long live Slovakia or something, or long live Czechoslovakia. Well, I said something I shouldn't say. This was – well, we were followed everywhere. And in the Jewish Museum in Prague we had a terrible experience. You know there's charity boxes? And one man followed us one day. He said, don't give the money into charities' box. It goes to the wrong place. Give it to me and it will go the right place. But we were told by my aunt not to deal with anything like that. He was very dangerous. But you would not know because you were not alive yet.

*No, but my mother had bad experiences.*

Did she?

*Yeah.*

Where?

*In Slovakia, with the secret service.*

What?

*The secret service.*

So followed her as well?

*Yeah.*

And nothing happened to her?

*No.*

Like- But all the time?

*Especially when they knew they were emigrating. You know, once they knew that they're emigrating, then she was followed then.*

Aha. No, we were followed in Nitra as well. We saw some workers and we went to a cafeteria and where I was told not to speak. [03:26:04] It was very sad.

*How did your relatives manage there as Jews in this – in communist Czechoslovakia?*

Well, they were not like Jews, 'cos they were not Orthodox, they were – one was called Paška [ph], one Fischer. I do not know – I don't think – but we were there as well with [ring tone in background] nothing. No, no, I don't think that that subject came about under communism. My uncle always said it was terrible when communists took from the German because all his papers, they tried to examine everything, looking for everything.

*Yeah. And you went to Piešťany a few times to the spa?*

Yeah, about three time, or three, four – yeah, I wanted to go but I can't do it anymore. A wonder –

*Did you like it?*

Wonderful.

*And did you feel you – you knew your father had come from there. Did you try to find –*

Well, I went to cemetery.

*Yes. In Piešťany?*

In Piešťany, in Vrbo [ph].

*And who is buried there?*

My grandparents.

*Your grandparents are buried –*

Yeah, yeah. I went to the grand – but it's not open to public. You've been there?

*No, I've been to the Piešťany cemetery.*

Well, it's – if you see Mannheimer somewhere, in Vrbo [ph] I found my Chaim Zvi Mannheimer in Vrbo. In Vrbové also a strong community but in Piešťany as well.

*As well, you found.*

Yeah, yeah. There's a Jewish cemetery there.



*Yeah. There are two, I think.*

I don't know which one.

*But you liked going there?*

Well, I tell you what. It was – I went with friends. We went a lot of people from Israel and we met all of them, Israeli friends those days, we all went to a spa. It was wonderful. The treatment were wonderful. But you have to tip all the time, you're always tip, tip, tip, tip, tip. [03:28:02] They're still doing it like that?

*I don't know. I've never –*

I mean everybody – I took a whole bunch of Slovakian money. I don't – the Euro wasn't yet. When Euro money started? Probably there was. I do – can't remember. Maybe it was Euro or–

*But you stayed in a hotel, in a –*

Oh, yes, a very nice hotel. Yes.

*You know, I recently looked at pictures of Piešťany and I found in some historic pictures, you know, they used to have like a rickshaw. I mean not – my mother never talked about it but on the pictures you see [overtalking].*

Yeah, yes, I –

*They carry.*

They use it now as a tourist attraction.

Yes.

Yes, try it, yes.

*I haven't seen it.*

Yes, when I was in Piešťany –

*Beautiful photos of, you know, 19 – around the turn of the century and you can see people being carried around in this –*

But not with horses.

*No, not with horses.*

That's right.

*With the person, yeah.*

I – we done one trip like that in Prague as well and one in Piešťany. Yes. Well, my husband was in Piešťany with me once, in – well, he came all over the place, Nitra, Bratislava and – well- I – my – the building we lived in, suché mýto dvanásť, is destroyed but I managed to write down the – on the street, on the street is a plaque, so I wrote down, suché mýto. The building doesn't exist but the building of my father before, where they got buried, is a listed building and it's still there. Well, I got photographs of it. It was very interesting but I don't miss anywhere really.

*Yeah. Do you miss anything? That's my other question. Do you miss –*

No.

*Anything from your childhood or from –*

No. I mean I like the Danube. I keep on seeing to Ivor, let's go on the River Danube. I'd love to go on Danube once. [03:30:01] But not particular. I don't miss anything. I mean I love Israel very deeply because I had my education there and I was very patriotic. But today, I don't think like that. I don't feel I – I'm comfortable everywhere where I am. I don't – what shall I miss? There's nothing there anymore. My two cousin when I saw them a few years ago, before the Covid, they both, she was a bit ill and they took her for hospital treatment and both died.

*In Nitra?*

Pardon?

*Nitra. In Nitra.*

Nitra. That leaves two boys. One is married, the other one, I don't know.

*And Miriam, how would you define yourself in terms of your identity today?*

Oh, dear, that's a one. Well, I'm still Jewish obviously. I cannot say – deny it because I am. But still let's leave it like that because it will be too complicated. I can't call myself universal because I – it's not the right word to use. But I am not religious.

*And British, or what – what is –*

Yes, I feel myself very – yes, very much.

*You feel British?*

I always suffered that I didn't pick up the English accent. Really, I've got a very strong accent still and it does bother me lot. Also, my –

*It does?*

What?

*Why does it bother you?*

I went to elocution, to top elocution teacher. They wouldn't take me on.

*[Both laugh] Why?*

Mrs Hodgson [ph], I never forget her. My daughter, Alison, used to go to elocution for her acting. She was- and Martin to her as well, and I went to her and I say, I want to speak English properly. [03:32:03] And she wouldn't take me on. She said to me, but I like your accent like it is.

*Why did you want to have lessons? Why did you want to sound [overtalking]?*

Because my husband had such a beautiful English accent. He was speaking like Richard Burton or Laurence Olivier, always – 'cos he was that class of people for me, his acc – he had a wonderful English-speaking voice. So – but I couldn't pick it up, I couldn't – I didn't hear properly. I don't know why. And then I let go. I said to myself, Mrs Tweedie got a Russian accent as well.

*You accepted your accent.*

Well, she had to. I have a choice?

*No, but you. You have.*

Have I choice?

*No [laughs].*

I do like good speaking English. I really appreciate some – the American accent is not so easy for me. Sometime I see film, I don't – but English, all the Shakespearean actors, all the proper actors, I love it. It's so easy for me to understand.

*Do you still – so do you feel – still feel a bit Israeli?*

Pardon?

*Israeli? You feel a bit Israeli?*

Some part of me. I love very – if I could live there – I couldn't live there anymore but if I would have been younger, I think I could have because I found that I always had difficulty with the climate but I could manage it. I got so many – from my boarding school, you know, I was – we were very young, we were alive, quite true, some of them passed away but I'm still friendly with two – three girls. One lives in America, two in Israel. No, Israel – yes, I stayed in Israel, we were together all the year of schooling. Yes. Their Hebrew is better than mine. And when I – when they tell me – I always keep on – saying to me, I speak – well, you don't read. I get books. People bring me Hebrew books. I give them away. [03:34:04] I don't read. I don't read much anyway.

*Did you speak Slovak or German to your children?*

My daughter, because she was born linguistic. She understood. She – German, she learned and she understood Slovakian. Alison, yes. But because she – languages, she spoke French and she spoke Hebrew and she spoke English. And I talked German and she understood a bit. Yes. I didn't speak much but I took them to Slovakia.

*Both kids?*

Twice. Yes. And I took her to Hungary as well. You have been to Hungary?

*Hmm-hmm.*

The big synagogue?

*Yeah.*

That was something, isn't it?

*Yeah.*

And so, they – yes, they've been. I don't think they had any connections. They had much Irish connection. They loved Lenny's family come – lived in Ireland.

*Yeah. Were they interested in your past, your children?*

No, they're not. No. It's not I wasn't – they didn't ask me like you ask. When other people coming, no. They never asked me many questions. They knew that I'm- when I came to the Holocaust Centre, they all said to me, you're not a Holocaust survivor, you are from Israel. I said, okay, because I always spoke Hebrew. So, I was Israeli.

*Do you feel now you are a Holocaust survivor?*

What do I...?

*Do you feel you are a Holocaust survivor?*

Well, I am. I am not sure. [Laughs] I am one. I don't feel being one. You see, you can't deny what you are or not. I mean some people do it but I don't think about it and we are – the Holocaust Centre is a wonderful cultural centre. It's not purely Holocaust but we do all kind of activities and we go to outings and – so we are going now on a steam engine, what I want to go to Oriental Express all my life, places like that. **[03:36:10]** So we are doing – on a steam engine. Not exact, not to Venice or something but –

*Where?*

We are going to Dover. I don't know where we are going to. By train, a five-hour journey. And we will do some – we have a meeting from time to time what we like to do.

*Yeah. You can tell them.*

So, I told them.

*[Coughs] What did you –*

I want a cruise on Danube and I want the Oriental Express. You can do it for AJR maybe.

*Yeah, why not?*

Well, you can do it for me, not for you.

*I'll tell the people in charge.*

I always said that I'd like to experience something once, like skiing once and all kind of thing. I want that sort of adventure, a very adventurous person. But Oriental Express always fascinates me and also – what did I say?

*Oriental Express and a cruise.*

And a cruise. And a cruise – but Ivor doesn't want to go, so I haven't got no one to go. On a small cruise, on Danube for a week. Well, tell him. He doesn't listen to me. When you interview him, tell him.

*We'll tell him.*

But you are waiting till November. It's too late [laughs].

*No, no, just we're going on a break but he's our next one.*

What?

*We will.*

Oh, you're going on a cruise?

*On a cruise, no. I've never been on a cruise.*

Where are you going?

*I've never been on a cruise.*

No, you're going on holiday.

*I'm going to Slovakia in two weeks.*

I know.

*In two weeks.*

You're not going to be in Nitra?

*Possibly, possibly. Let's –*

I can give you my cousins' – they will be –

*Yeah, I'll talk to you because –*



They're lovely people.

*My mother had an uncle in Nitra and he –*

Who?

*My mother had an uncle in Nitra and he had – he was a photographer. He had a shop on the main street.*

A shop on the high street?

*Yeah.*

You have to see my film. **[03:38:00]**

*His name was Samuel Winter. He had a studio.*

Not Winters, Winter, who's – not Winter.

*Winter.*

Well, there's a Winter who actually started Piešťany's spa.

*Yes, it's not related to that one. They came from Kežmarok. But – okay. Miriam, anything else I haven't asked you? There are so many interesting topics I can think of but is there –*

I don't know. Oh, there are a lot of things in somebody's life but I think I told you quite a bit.

*Have you got any message for anyone who might watch this interview? Or –*

Oh, yes.

*Based on your experiences?*

Yes. I will give a message to everybody who went through the Holocaust and who live in the past. You lived in the past, don't forget it. Live in the present and create a better future. So, the past is not forgivable but you can – if you cannot think about it, the present is the most important thing, how you live today, and a lot could create a better future. And I wish that never happen a war and everybody who suffered should overcome in some own way, make a better life for themselves and not to be stuck in the past because it doesn't help you to live a full life if you live in the past. You have to live in the now. That's the only one that can make you move forward and achieve whatever you want to achieve in your life, and main thing is to achieve peace.

*With yourself?*

With yourself, with everybody. The message is to have peace for everybody. I think that's it. I mean there's no point to repeat it but I did say it. I mean I can't take away my past. My past is my past. [03:40:00] But now this minute I'm alive today. Tomorrow, I do not know. In ten minutes, I don't know if I'm going to be here, so why not enjoy the second? You can't – what you cannot change, won't change. Just accept it.

*Accept the past? Accept –*

What you can – I didn't say accept. You have no choice. To live with it, you can. You have to live in now, in the present.

*And what – that gives you a certain resilience I guess. A resilience. Resilience. Is that a word you think is important?*

No, not – resilient, what do you mean? Powerful or resistant, or what?

*Well, in a way, by accepting your past, if you –*

Well, you have to. If you can't – things you cannot change, how can you not accept it? If people live in the past, a lot of people live – constantly talk about their past. You say resilient. Are you saying that what you cannot change you have to accept it, you have to live now, what is now, and could be wonderful but ten minutes' time is not the same minute as this minute. But people don't look at it, they plan. I never plan things. You see, I would like to go on a cruise but it doesn't mean I know when I'm going to go. Yes. I like to go on Oriental Express and it might happen not, happen. But it's no harm to occasionally have a bit of a dream. Dreams are very, very helpful. We say make your dream come true, so I made some of my dream come true. My granddaughter gives me such pleasure, both of them, but they're – she's so gifted and she plays so beautiful the piano. She's at York University and is going to – she wants to be a conductor, or just musician will be good enough. And my other granddaughter is also wonderful. She's more sporty like, also plays in the orchestra, she belongs to a youth orchestra, plays the trumpet. [03:42:00] So as long as they're happy, I'm happy.

*Yeah. Anything else, Miriam?*

I don't think – I give my message to – peace. There should be peace in the world. Let's forget about wars. We had enough wars, enough suffering. Stop suffering and stop –

*Maybe just to finish off there, so there is a play written about your life, by Diane – the play, written by Diane Samuels.*

Yeah.

*How do you – what are your wishes for it? Is it important for you that there is a play and –*

Well, I wrote my book, I wrote a few books, but this is my life-story book. I wrote book of my – professional books, you know, as a yoga teacher. But my play, I think it will be very good for education. People should learn. The whole idea is the play is to promote it for other people to learn from it and – but it's a complicated play because it's my – two part of my life but not everybody has two parts but they should learn from the past and the play is very

important for children or for adults to see how life can be transformed. You can change your life if –

*So, what do you want people to learn from watching –*

Transformation. I do believe people learn. We have to change to get on with life. That – in that book it tells us, or the play said that from difficult childhood, from tragic childhood, you can make something with your life. Everybody should have a purpose to live for.

*So, no matter in a way what your circumstances were –*

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter, circumstances.

*It's in your power to –*

Everybody got it. The thing is, you have to look at yourself. [03:44:01] That's the reason. If you look your power and whatever you got, you can always transfer it and put it out and give it out to other people. If you don't believe in anything, how can you inspire other people? So, the play is about giving purpose to live, a transformation which can change for bad, for sadness, to purpose.

*Purpose. Agency?*

Agency.

*I call it agency.*

Agency, you call it. Purpose.

*Yeah. Purpose, yeah.*

Yeah.

*Okay, so that's your hope for if –*

Well, I hope for future people to when they see that testimony that you interview me, I hope that people will also get the same from you and also from the book and also from – people should read my book and people also should see my play. I think that as a – it's certainly an experience to see my play, to see that it was possible to be – it doesn't have to be Mrs Tweedie. Maybe a friend or maybe a rabbi, maybe anybody, priest, who can inspire you. Then it can change a lot in your life, it can do whatever you should, a purpose. But life has got a purpose. Otherwise, what's the point to live?

*And you have to find it. You have to find your purpose.*

You have to find it. You can find it yourself. Somebody can help you.

*Well, you're in the unusual situation that you have a book and a play and interviews now, so yeah.*

So that's very – I'm very actually privileged, shall I say, or shall I say it's a wonderful experience. I never thought I'm going to have a book, I never thought I'm going to have a play, and I never knew about this interview either. So obviously, things are happening because they have to happen, and all have got a purpose. I hope somebody gained from my interview something, and other people gained from my book. [03:46:01] I'm going to give to Frank my book and see what he thinks of it. And the play, I hope – the play should be really a message really, of really what people can do with their life. But I do not know if the people understand that quite clearly because there is a controversy going on about the play.

*They will solve it.*

Pardon?

*They will solve it.*

Well, they solve it, I will be happy.

*And last thing, any regrets you have, Miriam? Anything you...*

Well, sure, I have certain regrets but I don't think about it so much. I would have liked to travel a bit more. I haven't travelled enough. And I had dreams of course like every young girl but I don't regret that – I don't regret many things. Of course, I'm sad about things but no, I think that my life is as it should be. It's for better and for worse. I think I'm okay. I'm quite contented and I don't know how long I've got on this planet still and as long as I have, I'm going to work with people. I want to work as long as I – people come. I don't want to stop working but I never ask people to come but if they're coming, then obviously they get something for it. They have experience. Life is for living, to be here and now.

*That's a perfect way to finish, for the here and now, so thank you, Miriam, for sharing your story and your journey, and –*

Thank you for your interview. Should I thank him?

*You can [laughs].*

I'd like to thank for the charming cameraman, Frank.

*And just one second. We're just filming a little bit in silence.*

**[Pause from 03:47:53 - 03:48:57]**

Frank: Okay.

*Yes, please.*

In the photograph is me, Miriam, Eva those days call me. On the right is my sister, Gerty, and on the left is Zuzka [ph], our neighbour's daughter. That was in a playground somewhere taken.

*And you're in the middle?*

I'm in the middle.

*And what's the date?*

Date is 1943 or probably '44, I'm not sure exactly.

*Yeah. I think it says '42. '43 in the back.*

'42 or '43, okay.

*Please.*

On this photograph are my – three of us, my sister, Edith on the left, Noemi [ph] in the middle, and Miriam Eva on the right. [03:50:03]

*You're the smallest one?*

Yeah, I'm the youngest [laughs].

*Yes, please. What are you holding in your hand?*

What – oh, you want – this is a place in Jašíkova 52 where were hiding first, on the first floor and then we moved to the second floor.

*So first you were on the ground floor there.*

This is the room. Well, I see there are three floors. One, two, three. First, we were here, then we were second one. But not overlooking the street. There was another back.

*Thank you. Yes, please.*

Oh, yes. This is a hiding place. Every basement in Slovakia – usually flats used to have a basement. And Perny carved out a hole. You see the basement, the little hole what is about four foot by six, I'm not quite sure. And here we were hiding eight people.

*Thank you. Yes, please. Who do we see on the photo?*

Miklos. Miklos is my uncle. And this is Helena and William Gavalovic. [03:52:04] Gavalova, Helena Gavalova and Miklos Fischer and the manager of the mill company. So, he knew about it.

*So those people saved you. They're on the bottom.*

Yeah, all of us, yes.

*And that is your uncle and aunt on top?*

They are – this – my uncle and aunt. And this is also my uncle here as well.

*Oh, I see. Okay. Yeah.*

This Miklos. No, Miklos [ph] is here, sorry. This is my uncle.

*And they were with you in the hiding place?*

Not him.

*No, the uncle and aunt.*



They saved us. And this also not – there was a – they were instigating, they're helping us.

*Try, we try.*

Well, if you – you should have prepared me. I could have brought all the photographs. I don't know where they are, different places.

*Yes, please.*

Yes, after the Holocaust we got united. And in the photograph is my sister. I start from right, Gerty, my mother, Edith and I am on the middle, bending down.

Yes, well, the name I won't tell you. I can't remember it. This is my friends in my – when I was in Kfar HaNoar HaDati, this is the friends of mine.

On the left is my closest friend up to today, Ajala. We are in touch nearly every day on the phone.

And here is a group of us from the boarding school. [03:54:02] No?

*Not yet. We're coming to it.*

Oh, you're coming to it.

*It's in chronology.*

Oh, I got it. Yeah, I got it all worked out.

*Yes, please.*

This was when I started to work in Belfast, it's outside the school.

19 –

'70 –

*'50-something?*

'58. [Laughs] This was '58 or '59. '59. '59, this was, yeah.

This is our wedding day, 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1959.

*And your husband's name, please?*

Leonard Freedman, and Miriam.

*In Israel?*

In Israel. Haifa, yes. Okay.

*Yes, please.*

This is – we gave a talk in Switzerland. That's Mrs Tweedie and me. And...

*Which year, roughly, Miriam?*

It could be early '90s, 'cos she died '99. It could be, late '80 or '90.

*Kamali [ph], Kamali [ph], Miriam, Martin and Lynnette, Hannah and [overtalking].*

This is the family what I got.

*Pesach dinner.*

Yeah.

*Yes. Tell me about this photograph, please. [03:56:01]*

Okay. Desmond, Alison, Martin, Hannah and Freya, Miriam. No, sorry. Miriam, Martin and Lynnette.

*So, your two children and grandchildren?*

Two – no, my daughter. Yes, this is my – son is sitting next to me. And the next is my cousin, Lynnette.

*And when was it taken?*

Well, I didn't put- but obviously by looking at the children, it must be put about five, seven years ago. Hannah is there, Passover dinner. Desmond passed away, my brother, two years ago.

*Thank you.*

**[03:57:04]**

[End of transcript]