

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	88

Interviewee Surname:	Lachs
Forename:	Ruth
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	7 March 1936
Interviewee POB:	Hamburg, Germany

Date of Interview:	23 January 2005
Location of Interview:	Prestwich, Manchester
Name of Interviewer:	Rosalyn Livshin
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 22 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 88

NAME: RUTH LACHS

DATE: 23 JANUARY 2005

LOCATION: MANCHESTER

INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN

NB: The beginning of tape three is also at the end of tape two

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 16 seconds

RL: I'm interviewing Ruth Lachs, and the interview is taking place on the 23rd of January 2005. The interview is taking place in Prestwich, Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

RL: What is your name?

RLachs: Ruth Lachs

RL: And what was your name at birth?

RLachs: Ganz. Ruth Ganz.

RL: Did you have any other names?

RLachs: I had a name in the war and that was Rudi Klein. Klein was my mother's maiden name and so when I went into hiding I had to find another name and we thought for everybody that was easy to remember. It was a neutral name which a lot of people had. And that's what I adopted, because Ruth was very Jewish at that time and Ganz was as well. So Rudi Klein sounded more Dutch and more common.

RL: Did you have any Hebrew names?

RLachs: No, my name is Ruth.

RL: Were you named after anybody?

RLachs: Yes I have a second name Merle, which is Miriam now in modern Europe. That was after my grandmother.

RL: And when were you born?

RLachs: I was born the 7th of March 1936.

RL: And where?

RLachs: In Hamburg, Germany.

RL: Can you tell me something about your family background – about your parents and maybe grandparents?

RLachs: My father came from a small village near the Dutch border. His father was originally Dutch but moved to Germany when he got married and they lived in Borken which is near the Dutch border and that's where he was born. They had 10 children – he had 4 brothers and 5 sisters. And...He was the youngest boy. My mother came from Cologne. Her father was a wine merchant and they had 3 children. My mother had a sister and a little brother who died at a very young age. And she grew up in Cologne. And when they got married they moved to Hamburg and my father together with his brother – he was in textiles - opened a wholesale business. My father was a traveller and his brother did the office.

RL: Do you know anything about your father's education?

Tape 1: 3 minutes 27 seconds

RLachs: Yes, in Germany you have the Einjährige and that was like O-levels I would think – comparative - and that's what he did. After that he went into business to learn textiles and things and was apprenticed to some firms and then he set out with his brother on his own and they had a big firm in Hamburg.

RL: What did his father do for a living?

RLachs: His father was in cattle. A lot of German Jews in those villages were in cattle. And his mother had a haberdashery shop together with her mother. Grandma helped her because she had 10 children so together they had the haberdashery shop

RL: Where was that?

RLachs: That was in Borken.

RL: Did you know your grandparents?

RLachs: My grandfather died before I was born, and my grandma. I was two years old so I can't really remember her very well.

RL: And on the other side, your mother's side?

RLachs: On my mother's side I remember my grandparents very well because they lived in Cologne. And then war broke out and we emigrated to Holland. They also followed us on. And my grandpa used to come and take me every morning for a walk together with my mother's sister's daughter. So the two girls went every morning for

a little walk if the weather was suitable with my grandpa - so I remember him very well.

RL: And then your aunts and uncles. Do you remember them at all?

Tape 1: 5 minutes 22 seconds

RLachs: Yes, I do. On my mother's side there was one aunt and she lived... also she emigrated to Holland. And she married a Dutch gentleman and they had two children. And one of my two cousins lives in London and the other still lives in Amsterdam and I'm still in contact with them. And on my father's side a lot of my uncles lived in America. They emigrated to America, and I've been twice to America after the war so I've met them and my cousins.

RL: How did your parents meet?

RLachs: They met through a mutual friend. My mother's sister had a friend and she was a cousin of my father. And they had a party or something – she introduced them and that's how they met, in Cologne. My father used to travel a lot for business so he used to go visit his cousins a lot and that's how they met.

RL: When did they meet?

RLachs: In 1935.

RL: What kind of a religious upbringing did your parents have?

RLachs: My father had quite a good Jewish upbringing. My mother – they weren't really from home very religious. But as father was more religious she adapted when they got married. We kept a kosher home and practised correct conservative type of religion.

RL: And how many children did they have, you parents?

RLachs: Three. That means me and I had a brother. And then after the war, because I lost my brother in the war – so my parents had another child and I have a brother who is 11 years younger than me and he lives in Israel. And he has 5 children now. And hopefully we are going to the wedding in March of one of his sons.

Tape 1: 7 minutes 42 seconds

RL: Were you the eldest?

RLachs: I was the oldest.

RL: What are your earliest memories as a child?

RLachs: Well, we had a very pleasant life. I can't remember very much in Germany because I was only two, two and-a-half when we moved. But when we lived in Holland we had a very pleasant life I remember. My grandpa came and we had a nice

family life and then, when I was a bit older, went to the Jewish school in Amsterdam till we were not allowed to go any more. And I had friends and... I remember it being quite a happy family life.

RL: What language did you speak?

RLachs: Dutch. My parents spoke German but us children, to go to school adapted very quickly to Dutch. And also my father was a salesman; he had to learn. So he spoke quite well. My mother never learnt so very well to speak Dutch, but as I went to school I used to speak Dutch to them and between them they spoke German. But I could understand German of course.

RL: Did you speak German at all?

RLachs: Not very well. I learnt at high school. I did learn as one of the languages was German. I could understand everything and read fairly well, but I couldn't speak it all that well.

RL: So they'd speak to you in German and you to them in Dutch?

RLachs: Yes. That's how it started off, yes. But they learnt and in the end also spoke Dutch because my father, being in business he had to speak Dutch.

RL: But where... can you describe your home in Amsterdam?

Tape 1: 9 minutes 42 seconds

RLachs: We lived in a flat. In Amsterdam most people lived in a flat. It was a nice flat in the south of Amsterdam, in a residential area not too far from the synagogue and not so far either from the Jewish school. It was in the area very close to where Anne Frank lived.

RL: Can you describe the actual apartment itself?

RLachs: The apartment had a very big living room with a big lounge, a kitchen, and a bathroom and two bedrooms – one fairly large. They were quite big apartments; they were very comfortable. Then we had two attic rooms as well so when we grew older and my brother was born I went upstairs to sleep. And those attic rooms were very much used in the war because when they were rounding people up we used to go at night. We made two bedrooms of it – one for my parents and one for us - so that if anybody knocked at the door we weren't there.

RL: How did you get up to the attic rooms?

Tape 1: 11 minutes 4 seconds

RLachs: Stairs - just ordinary stairs. They were just rooms. People had flats and we lived on the first floor and on the second floor we had also two rooms. And they were just - with ordinary stairs. It was like a top floor.

RL: Right...And did you parents manage to bring their furniture or belongings from Germany when they moved to Holland. How was the home furnished?

RLachs: They had some furniture made. They couldn't bring everything because it was just before the outbreak of war – we left fairly late in '39. They brought a lot of clothes and silver, and all those kinds of things. And they brought some of the furniture, but like sideboards and so on they bought and had made to measure, or they had things made. The lounge suite was from Germany. They did bring some furniture

RL: Do you remember the move?

RLachs: No I don't because I was too small. I don't remember that.

RL: Was your father able to re-establish his business in Holland?

RLachs: He was, but he was travelling and they had to sell their business in Germany. And they didn't get a lot for it, but they weren't allowed to trade any more so he sold his business. But he was travelling in interlinings for fur coats. In those days the winters were very cold; people used to wear a lot of fur and he used to do the interlinings. And he had manufacturers where he bought - he was like a wholesaler. And he travelled to Sweden and Norway and so on, so he carried on. He found customers so he did for a while, but then also in Holland you weren't allowed to trade any more. And what he did, he then got like a voluntary job in the old age home – a Jewish old age home – like porter and helped to do things, because people already started being rounded up to go to Westerboerk. And they did everything in their power not to be sent, and if you had an excuse that you were needed...those were the people they held back in the beginning, so that's why he volunteered to do help in the old age home. So that's why... he was like a necessity there.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 0 second

RL: At what stage did you start going to school?

RLachs: At six.

RL: So that would have been 19...

RLachs: '42.

RL: So how was life at that point?

RLachs: In the beginning it was still all right but then it started to go bad. I didn't go to school for very long because I couldn't any more. Already you were forbidden to go here...there were all kinds of restrictions, and in '42 things went that bad that my parents realised that if we weren't to be caught up and sent to camp, we had to hide.

RL: So before we go on to that can you just tell me a little more about life in Holland up till that point, and how you spent your day and how life was for you?

RLachs: It was fairly normal life. I went to school in the morning, came home, and I didn't really realise because I was a little girl. I played at home and we had... To give my mother sometimes a break we had a Jewish girl who came to look after us with my brother because he was three years old and myself, and we played. She took us to the park and we went on the swings like normal things. And so it didn't bother me that we weren't allowed to go to the cinema or weren't allowed certain things. It didn't register with me that much because that is not what children do really. So it didn't bother us really all that much as children. I still remember though that I went to school with some older children, to the Jewish school, and that we had to cross the road because they got frightened. They saw some soldiers you see so one had to cross the road and go to school. So people were very much aware that war wasn't far away sort of thing.

Tape 1: 16 minutes 18 seconds

RL: How aware were you of what was going on?

RLachs: Now my parents were preparing us for going into hiding so I must say they did it very well. They talked a lot about it that we couldn't go - because they wouldn't take families of 4, it was too many people - we had to be separated. So my brother and I had to go into hiding and my parents had to go into hiding. So they tried to explain to me that we couldn't go together but that there was a war on and that after the war we'd be together again and that I should write to them, that they'd try to see me occasionally and they did explain things. And I took it reasonably in my stride.

RL: How did you feel at the thought of being separated from them?

RLachs: Well no child likes to be separated. But I understood that it was a necessity. And I had to... My mother kept saying that I had to help to look after my brother who was 3 years younger, who couldn't really understand the situation at all. And we were very lucky we met a very nice family who were willing to take us. They had no children - couldn't have any children and were longing to have children - and I think in the back of their mind they thought if something happens to my parents they'll keep us.

RL: How you did... how did your parents meet this family?

RLachs: In the flats where we lived, in the back, there was a lady and she was married to a non-Jewish man and she did underground work. And my father somehow through the grapevine, I don't know exactly, heard about her. So he contacted her and said could she find people and she helped him to find this hiding place for us and also for himself. My parents went to people in the Grachten like Anne Frank also because they were very, very big houses and there was very much scope to hide people - to give them a room. And we went to a working class family who had no children and wanted children. And they were very, very good people. The lady only died two months before her 100th birthday last year. I already bought the ticket to go over. So she got a real good age.

Tape 1: 19 minutes 2 seconds

RL: Now before we go into...you mentioned restrictions that they didn't really impinge upon you. Were people having to wear the yellow star?

RLachs: Yes we all had to wear... Even the children, we had to wear a yellow star.

RL: How did you feel about wearing that?

RLachs: I don't really...we took those kinds of things in our stride. It was one of those things everybody did and we had to do it. And as a child I don't think you think too much about those kinds of things.

RL: What are your memories about your home life when you were all together before you were separated, what kinds of images can you conjure up about that time?

RLachs: My mother was very much a homely type and she was always there for us, and my father was out a lot because when he was in business was always out a lot so we didn't see as much of him. And we were just a nice ordinary family and we had ordinary family life – we had friends coming around, the neighbour's children and so on and that's as far as I can remember.

RL: Your neighbour's children, were they Jewish families or not Jewish, or did you...?

RLachs: It was very mixed. We lived in a fairly Jewish area but we played with the neighbour's kids outside some times. But usually we had Jewish friends. From school I had Jewish friends.

RL: What kinds of games did you play?

RLachs: Skipping outside with a skipping rope. I really exactly... I can't remember what games, like...oh gosh... snakes and ladders kind of games.

RL: What kinds of toys did you have?

RLachs: Dolls. I still have a picture with one of the dolls. Teddy bears and normal things what little children have.

RL: What about your memories of festivals or...different celebrations?

Tape 1: 21 minutes 39 seconds

RLachs: Yes we kept Yontif, we went to shul together, of course Friday night meals, put the candles on and...we kept a good Jewish house.

RL: Which Shul did you go to?

RLachs: There is one called the Lekstraat. It's now, I think, a museum. They don't keep service any more there.

RL: And what kind of religious level was that?

RLachs: All the religious schuls belonged to the Jewish Community. It's like the United Synagogue and that was the synagogue we belonged to.

RL: Do you remember the rabbi of that shul?

RLachs: I can't remember before the war no. I only remember the Hazzan because he was still there after the war, but I honestly don't remember any more. Because I was only 6 I can't remember names. They had a very well known rabbi - Moskowitz – and he was also the Hazzan there after the war but the rabbi I can't remember at that time.

RL: As a little girl how often would you go?

RLachs: Just on Shabbas morning and Yontav.

RL: Which was your favourite Yontav?

RLachs: Sukkot, I think. To go in the Succah and so on I thought it was a nice Yontav.

RL: Did your father make his own Succah?

RLachs: No because we lived in a flat we couldn't. Because we had a balcony, we had neighbours on top.

RL: Which Succah would you go into?

RLachs: The synagogue – the shul.

RL: And you said you played with other children. Were they mainly Jewish children you played with?

RLachs: On the street, not. At home, yes. You see I used to play out with the neighbours children on the street - we had a mixed crowd.

RL: How long were you in school before you had to stop?

RLachs: Only a few months, I can't remember exactly, but not very long because we went into hiding after that.

Tape 1: 24 minutes 16 seconds

RL: And were other children from your school also going into hiding at the same time?

RLachs: I can't remember. I wouldn't know.

RL: Did other people in your class start not coming to school or were you the first?

RLachs: No I'm sure I wasn't the first. I really haven't got a good memory about that.

RL: Did you have before you went into hiding, did you have any contact with what was going on on the street? You know...Did you come across... you mentioned seeing soldiers and crossing the road...

RLachs: Yes, this kind of thing. No otherwise...Yes they used to come and pick people up in the evening - knock on people's doors – they used to pick people up already and take them away. We went up...Every night we went upstairs. We made two bedrooms in the attic and when they banged the door down there was nobody in the flat. So we made sure we were never there until we went into hiding

RL: Did you know of families that were taken away?

RLachs: Not really at that time, but I hear about... Not particularly, not friends as such. But families were taken away all the time. Of course my parents were anxious and that came over a bit. By that time you know that we also were anxious to go into hiding. I did realise that things were going on and that I had to be brave and do as my parents were wanting me to do.

RL: How did you cope with the anxiety?

RLachs: I did take it in. I had to be sensible. I was I suppose for a 6 year old quite sensible. And, as I say, when the people, when my parents took me to the people and that was it and I had to stay there and I did write to them quite regularly.

RL: Can you describe that day from getting up to when you were taken. What do you remember of it?

RLachs: I remember very little except that I got up and that I was getting dressed and my case was packed for me and I was allowed to take my dolls – not too many toys but - I was allowed to take some, and the same with my brother. And then my parents took me and we had to stay. They were very nice people and they made me feel at home and...

Tape 1: 27 minutes 13 seconds

RL: Had you met them at all before that time?

RLachs: No. No. Because my parents were sensible. There wasn't much point in meeting them then saying 'We don't want to...' There was no choice. Because it wasn't so easy to find people who were prepared to take children on. It was a great responsibility to take two children on – one six, one three to look after; they had no children of their own. It was quite a thing for them to do, when I think about it.

RL: Where were they living?

RLachs: They were living in the south of Amsterdam. They were very working class. She was working in a bakery as a shop assistant but at the time when she got us she didn't work any more. Her husband worked in the shipyard – **Blau Refein** it was called – it was a shipyard and that's where he worked.

RL: When your parents left you there, what happened? Can we just continue through that first day?

RLachs: To be honest I can't remember exactly what – exactly happened. But they used to treat us; they used to take us out,; they used to take us to the park...they did the things that parents do with children. They were very nice and I can't all remember - unfortunately I can't remember it all that well. At six years old - it's a long time.

RL: How did you spend your day?

RLachs: I had a few...I did some work – there was a teacher who sent me some work in, because I had to get a bit of education. And, otherwise, we used to play and they took us also on holiday - we went to the seaside with them for a week. We used to go out shopping and playing. There wasn't such thing as television at the time. And she took us to her friends. Because we never said that we were Jewish. We told – we changed our name and we were told we were victims from Rotterdam. There was a big bombardment in Rotterdam at the time and we were the orphans from people who got killed in the bombing. That's what we were telling everybody. So she took us to her friends and she said: 'We have adopted those two children – they're victims from the Rotterdam bombing.' So everybody accepted it.

RL: What name did your brother take?

Tape 1: 30 minutes 6 seconds

RLachs: Karel – he kept his name - Klein. Because Karel was quite an acceptable name also as a non-Jew.

RL: So you were able to go out?

RLachs: Yes we went out and we lived a fairly normal life.

RL: But you didn't attend school?

RLachs: No. I didn't attend school but I had some lessons.

RL: Was that not problematic that you didn't go to a school? Was there not a law that you needed to go to school? How did she explain that you didn't go to school?

RLachs: It wasn't - times weren't like that that. The police picked you up when you ran about – and asked you questions because there wasn't such a lot of absenteeism. In those days there weren't such strict rules. I don't think anybody bothered all that much.

RL: So could you describe a typical day? What you did in a typical day?

RLachs: In the morning I did some sums and she made me do some work you see, and then in the afternoon we used to go out. We had breakfast, we had lunch and then we used to go to the park if the weather was nice or she used to meet some friends to be

with them or her family. She had a brother who did live very close by and he did have children so we used to play with them and then in the evening we went to bed.

RL: What was her name- what were their names?

RLachs: Anni and Wim Linden.

RL: How did they treat you? How were they with you?

RLachs: Yes, they were very good with us. They tried to treat us as their children really. They were very kind people and they treated us very, very well.

RL: Did they ever punish you for anything?

RLachs: I can't really remember anything serious. If kids are naughty they need to be punished but nothing outstanding that they punished us. I wasn't basically a very naughty child I don't think. I was quite sensible for my age and I did what I was told. I can't remember that we had any great problems there.

RL: And with regard to food, did you have enough to eat?

RLachs: Yes in those days it was quite good. I had no problems really. I only was there nine months; it wasn't so far into the war yet. Yes, they did have enough food really.

Tape 1: 33 minutes 16 seconds

RL: Was there anything that you didn't like?

RLachs: She knew that she shouldn't give us pork and things so she didn't just cook it. She knew that we didn't want that. She was fairly considerate. She gave us children's food; she tried to make things which we would eat. No she didn't force us to eat anything.

RL: Was there any religious activity?

RLachs: No because they weren't religious. Really they never went to church or anything, so it wasn't really a problem. They were Christians but they weren't Catholic or anything where they went to church all the time - they didn't. They just didn't go to church and that was it.

RL: And what kind of contact - did you have any contact at all with your parents?

RLachs: I used to write to them and they used to write to me. And once in the beginning they managed to come and see us. No, they took us to see them. But after that it got very dangerous and they didn't want to do it again. Once we went to see my parents.

RL: How was that?

RLachs: It was...I remember still sitting on my mother's lap and wouldn't go till we had to go again and it was of course a certain emotion. But I was sensible and understood that I had to go again and that hopefully we would be reunited. My mother always used to say to us: 'When the war is over we'll be together again. We'll have a normal life. It's only a temporary thing.' She tried to emphasise that very much so...

RL: And how was your mother each time you had to part from her? How did she bear up to that?

RLachs: She did. They did. My father was a great optimist. He always said: 'Things will be all right in the end.' My mother was more pessimistic about things. She was more sensitive about it.

RL: How often would you get letters from her?

RLachs: Not that often, once a month or so because they were also worried about sending post all the time.

RL: Did you have any dreams or nightmares during that period?

RLachs: I can't really remember that I had...At that time, not, because the people were nice and, as I say, I had contact so I didn't really feel all that terrible about it.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 9 seconds

RL: You say you were only there for nine months. What happened at the end of that nine months?

RLachs: The people where my parents were they weren't really all that good. They gave us away. They knew that... because I think they thought my parents had financial... were in a good way. And, as far as I know, they were the people who somehow made it known to somebody. And we got picked up one morning. The SS came and said that we were Jewish children; they wanted to take us away. And Tante Anni, she was at home, but her husband was at work and they took her to the police station and they took us as well to the Dutch Schauburgh – that's where they gathered people. And she was imprisoned but somehow she got released after a day. And they interviewed us and we kept on saying that we were from Rotterdam and tried to deny it, but still they took us on to the Schauburgh. And that Dutch Schauburgh was for the grownups to be sent to Westerboerk. And the children, there was across the road a school, and they gathered children in the school. So they brought us to the school, and when I got there, there was one of the helpers who used to look after us in the afternoon. So she recognised me and my brother and when it became evening she came to us and she said: 'Get dressed and I'll take you to the sandpit.' And she put me there and she said: 'Someone will come and take you away and bring you away into hiding again. But, in the evening, the Germans are coming and they count the children and I don't want you to be counted. So sit here and we'll fetch you again.' So she put me in the sandpit outside and that's where I sat till somebody came. And unfortunately my brother had fallen ill. There was a polio epidemic.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 32 seconds

RLachs: And he fell ill right away with this epidemic so they couldn't do anything for him because he was ill. But I was rescued. There were students - the illegal workers; they used to come at night. They told me to walk behind them and they took me to the station on a train to Limburg to the south. And they had people in the south. They were Catholics who hid children. So I got to one of these families. She had two children already but she was pregnant with number three and she was willing to take me in. Unfortunately, after a fortnight, I also contracted polio. I was only there a fortnight and I fell ill so she had to tell the hospital. I had to go into hospital, so she had to tell the director the truth. So he said OK, we'll have to accept her in the hospital. So I was for eleven weeks in the hospital and I was fairly ill and I still remember one of the boys who took me to Limburg, he came and I was in isolation - and he brought eggs. It was rare and food was already very difficult to get to and he showed me through the window that he brought eggs for me. That's still very much in my memory. So I was about 11 weeks in hospital and when I came out, because she was pregnant, she didn't want to have me back which I couldn't blame her for because she was very, very worried being pregnant herself that her children would get polio. So they had to find me another home. And that wasn't easy because I was quite disabled and couldn't walk very well. I was partly paralysed. So the illegal worker he took me again back to Amsterdam, and in Amsterdam there was a children's home for abnormal children where the matron had one room where she hid Jewish children. So they brought me there and there were about four or five other children - Jewish children - and she took me in. And of course there I was basically very unhappy because you know to be all day with abnormal children and so. And she kept us together very much. And she made us help in the house. She taught us how to sew. When there were holes in the sheets, we had to put pieces in and she made us peel potatoes just to keep us occupied because we weren't allowed to go out. We played together but that wasn't really a very happy time because then I really felt that the war was on and I couldn't walk very well and...And I stayed there till after the war.

Tape 1: 41 minutes 48 seconds

RL: Now taking you back first of all... You know you keep speaking about this illegal student... What was his name?

RLachs: I don't remember, but he got shot. He did a lot of this work taking people to places and ... in the end he got shot - didn't survive. He was a non-Jewish student. There were a lot of good people - young people - who were willing to help. It was like a network, an underground network they had.

RL: And the students that picked you up from the sandpit, how many of them were there?

RLachs: One.

RL: Just one... this one boy?

RLachs: Just one. And he came then to see me when I was in hospital and then he took me then back to Amsterdam.

RL: And the family that you went to initially, what was their name?

RLachs: The first family?

RL: The second.

RLachs: The second family. No I can't remember because I was there such a short time that I...

RL: Do you have any memory about those two weeks with them?

RLachs: Yes, I was... they were very Catholic and they did take me on Sunday to church. I remember going with them. And they were praying. There was a completely different atmosphere than there was in Amsterdam.

RL: What did you feel about that?

RLachs: I wasn't very pleased about that but I thought I had to do it, you see. But she was very good in that respect that when I fell ill she managed to get me into hospital and she managed to do all the things which she should have done and to get the doctor. So they were also very good people.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 53 seconds

RL: And your stay in hospital can you remember very much about that?

RLachs: I can remember yes. I was quite ill. I was very, very paralysed on one side and... of course all the memories from Amsterdam and so came back to me and they treated me well; they gave me treatment and so on. For the first few weeks they couldn't do anything. But then they tried to make me walk again and by the time I got out of hospital I could walk again but very badly. But there were no facilities and physiotherapy – I needed really a lot of physiotherapy. I had it in hospital but after I came out of hospital that all stopped because they couldn't take me anywhere because I was Jewish.

RL: How many people knew you were Jewish in the hospital?

RLachs: That I don't know – I don't think the nurses knew. It was just the director who had to take me in. He had to take me in under false papers. I couldn't produce real papers could I?

RL: So you think possibly he was the only one?

RLachs: Yeah I think he was the only one and he accepted me and helped to treat me and whatever.

RL: So were they still pretending that you were a refugee from Amsterdam?

RLachs: Yes.

RL: You were an orphan from...Rotterdam.

RLachs: Rotterdam, right.

RL: Right. And did you have any contact or any letters from your parents during that period?

RLachs: No. Because after this happened to us and the lady where I was hidden the first time. My parents were hidden in Amsterdam and she was the one who went to my parents -because she was not Jewish she could go there. And she told my parents: 'You have to leave' because she had the feeling that the people where my parents were, weren't good. And she said: 'We have some friends in Leeuwarden and I'll take you there. Leave this home because you're not safe.' And she took them to Leeuwarden to her friends in hiding. And so my parents went to Leeuwarden and I was in Limburg which is completely...and so we lost contact. And she didn't know exactly what had happened to us – the first Tante Anni – she didn't know what had happened to us because she lost contact. But she was released from prison and she immediately went to my parents and said: 'You have to come out of this hiding place' and she took them to Leeuwarden and we really lost contact... till really after the war.

Tape 1: 47 minutes 4 seconds

RL: So you were in hospital. How did you cope with all of that, being ill, no parents, and no support? How did you manage?

RLachs: I think I was too ill in the beginning to realise. What I was worried about that I would survive and do better. I was very, very pleased every day I could do a bit more and improved and I was very occupied with doing my exercise and getting better and this kind of thing.

RL: And then when it came to being sent out of hospital, what was going through your mind then?

RLachs: I had no idea but they said they were taking me back to Amsterdam. I was hoping I wouldn't be too frail. I hoped I would see Tante Anni at least you see. And then they took me to the children's home and they said I can't go out because it's too dangerous. And I had to accept it. I made friends with other children. I got quite close to them. We were just like a little group because, as I say, the others were terribly disabled and mentally disabled. So we couldn't communicate with those children at all. And the matron, she was a very nice lady, but she was ill- she was always in bed. I always remember she called for us sometimes to talk to us but she was always in her dressing gown and she was quite an ill lady. And, soon after the war, she passed away.

RL: What was this home called?

RLachs: I don't know. Sister Middle...I can't really remember the home if it had a name or not. It was in the Emmerstraat in Amsterdam South and - Sister Middleton she was called the headmistress – no, the matron.

RL: How many Jewish children?

RLachs: About five or six but food was very short and we used to go and get potatoes. You know, when the nurses had their meals there were cold potatoes and I remember we used to sneak out in the evenings getting cold potatoes because, at that time, food was really very rationed and we didn't always feel all that happy. That was really my worst time in the children's home. And the nurses – some were very nice and some were not very nice. And I remember a very bad time when the war was over and everybody was liberated and we as children waiting for people to come, you see. I was waiting for my parents to return and nothing happened. And I was one of the last ones unfortunately because my parents were in Leeuwarden lost complete contact. So through the Red Cross they made enquiries because they imagined that I had my name 'Rudi Klein'. So through the Red Cross they made enquiries, but they had transport problems after the war. They couldn't get out of Leeuwarden quick enough and they had nowhere to go. So it was a big problem to come to Amsterdam. So it took an awful long time till I found my parents again.

Tape 1: 50 minutes 52 seconds

And after the war was over some of the children had lost their parents so their aunties and uncles came and some of their parents came. But I was still there and thought: 'What am I going to do?' I knew I had relations in America. And how was I going to get in contact with anybody if I hadn't got anymore parents? And all these kind of thoughts came very much to my mind. But one of the boys who I got quite friendly with, his auntie and uncle came and they asked: could they take me out for a day to just have a change. And they took me to their house for the day and that was just in the neighbourhood where this Tante Anni lived so I kept thinking: 'Should I run away and see if I can find her?' and all these things went through my mind because I was sure I wasn't going to stay there all my life. But, finally, then one day they dressed me up and they said I was going to have some visitors. And when they called me in I saw my parents there and I recognised them immediately of course. And because they weren't sure they were my parents they wanted to have proof that they were my parents, so therefore they didn't tell me that my parents were coming. So that was a very joyous day then. But my parents had nowhere to go. One brother of my father had come back to Amsterdam and they lived in one room. And they hadn't got really place to put anybody else. So my parents rented a room but also only one room because they had very little money after the war. My father had some money invested in America but they couldn't get hold of it. So they said I have to stay in the home because they have nowhere for me to sleep even. So I said 'I'm not staying. I don't want to stay.' So they contacted Tante Anni and said would she take me back for a while. So she did till my parents could find a two bedroom flat to live in again. So I went temporarily back there because they were nice, but I hated it in the home so I couldn't wait to get out of there. So I went back for a bit to Tante Anni till my parents managed to have a flat again.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 26 seconds

RL: What was the worst thing about the home? What was it that you disliked the most?

RLachs: After the war the nurses were quite...not very understanding that we were longing to have family and people. They said: 'You're all right here! You have a good home, what are you worried about?' Their remarks upset me very much because I felt

they didn't have the understanding that I wanted normal home life again and not be in this kind of environment.

RL: The other Jewish children that you were with were they also disabled?

RLachs: No, no. They were just Jewish children like me hiding there.

RL: Can you remember who they were?

RLachs: Yes there was a boy and a girl and two little girls. I lost contact because as I say I started a normal life and I found my parents back

RL: Do you remember their names?

RLachs: The girl was called Ellie, and the boy was called Richard. I can't remember their second name.

RL: And what age were they?

RLachs: The girl Ellie was a similar age to me and the boy was I think a bit younger. And she had some who were very, very young, really. Much younger, yes, than me.

RL: How old were you at that stage?

RLachs: In '42 I was six so I must have been seven, eight. When the war was over I was nine – '45 – eight, nine.

RL: And during the war while you were there, can you just take me through a typical day? What happened on a typical day?

RLachs: We got up, breakfast, and then we used to go to the kitchen help doing potatoes or we used to do some sewing. They kept us occupied a bit with those kinds of things, household duties, and help. Then we played. I can't remember doing anything special. We were not allowed to go out.

Tape 1: 55 minutes 57 seconds

RL: Did the SS ever pay a visit to the home?

RLachs: Not as far as I know, no.

RL: You don't remember any sort of, danger during that time?

RLachs: No. No I can't remember any danger.

RL: Were you anxious while you were there of any threat?

RLachs: I wasn't particularly anxious, no. But a lot of those disabled children, they passed away and those kinds of things went on. You know, horrible things went on in the home.

RL: Did you have to help look after those disabled children?

RLachs: No, not really. No they kept us very much apart

RL: Was there any religious activity in the home?

RLachs: No.

RL: What kind of food were you given to eat?

RLachs: Just ordinary potatoes, vegetables and things like that. I can't remember but sometimes that we were hungry. Then we went to get the potatoes that the nurses finished and things like that. There wasn't too much at the time, but everybody... there was rationing. I don't think particularly that they wanted to deprive us of things. There was just not really enough to round all that much.

RL: This film is about to come to an end so we'll just stop here.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 40 seconds

End of Tape One

TAPE 2

Tape 2: Starts at 0 minutes.

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Lachs and it's Tape Two.

RL: I was just asking you about the home for disabled children that you were in. What do you feel was your most difficult time there? What was the most difficult thing that you faced?

RLachs: Those very disabled children- very, very disabled and we saw them. That and the view of that really... put me off – very much so. And, as I say, the nurses were ok, but some of them weren't very sympathetic to the cause. And that put me off.

RL: Were any nurses...Did any of them share sympathy or comfort? Was there anybody you could go to for a little bit of loving care?

RLachs: On the whole they were not very motherly. They probably didn't have children of their own and on the whole they had not the right understanding. The children... We kept very much to each other for comfort and talked to each other mainly. The matron was very understanding, but, as I say, whenever we saw her she was not well. She was very sweet and tried to talk to us. She made us come to her room very often and talk to her and she was I think the most understanding of the lot.

RL: What would you talk to each other about with the other Jewish children? What would you have conversations about?

RLachs: About our families and our past a bit.

RL: Do you remember anything in particular?

RLachs: No, not really. But they were telling about their parents and their brothers and sisters and so on. No I can't really remember the conversations exactly any more.

RL: Did you ever pray at this time?

RLachs: Yes but I was only very young I couldn't read very well Hebrew or anything, so... I had not a Siddur with me or anything because my parents were worried that if they find us with that that really would do us much harm.

RL: But in terms of...?

RLachs: Yes we did. Of course we did. I was very much praying to find my parents back and live a normal life.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 6 seconds

RL: Was there any...Did you experience any bombing...in Amsterdam?

RLachs: No. No, Amsterdam wasn't really bombed no.

RL: So there was none of that side of the war that impinged...?

RLachs: No.

RL: And did you have...Had you been able to take with you any belongings or toys or any prized possessions?

RLachs: To the first people where we went, yes. But afterward I had nothing to take really... because when we were sent to the Schouburg you couldn't take anything.

RL: So you had nothing...from your past?

RLachs: Not really, no.

RL: What do you think you were learning about people and about yourself during this time? What kind of lessons do you think you were learning at this stage?

RLachs: That you had to try to be self sufficient; that there were a lot of good people who tried to be kind and good but... in the home it was very difficult because they were very difficult situations. They had to deal with the very disabled children so they had to devote their time to them. And they just told us to peel the potatoes and this kind of thing because we were normal and it was easier for them. We didn't get that much attention because I suppose it's fair to say that the others needed them more.

RL: How were you coping with your polio?

RLachs: I managed. Of course I was walking very poorly but... I got around. And unfortunately if I would have had treatment – a lot of physiotherapy - right away it would have been better. But after the war my parents put everything in move to make me walk better and I had a lot of treatment then. It was a bit late in the day but I had very weak muscles and they did everything to try and strengthen them. I had a cousin in Leyden who was a professor in neurology. So after the war, when he established himself again, I was taken to Leyden for a thorough examination and he suggested the treatment I should have. And as I couldn't go from Amsterdam to Leyden so regularly he recommended another neurologist in Amsterdam who would treat me and give me electroshock treatment to strengthen my muscles. And after a while when that had finished I had, like, gymnastic lessons - a kind of physiotherapy - and I improved a lot! And I have still – I'm left with a bit of a limp. But over the years I've managed very well! And also swimming. They recommended me to go swimming and even today we always go every week - we try to go swimming once a week to keep mobile. So, on the whole, I'm grateful – I got still very lucky off.

Tape 2: 6 minutes 44 seconds

RL: Now coming on to liberation...How did you know when you'd been liberated-when war had ended?

RLachs: Well they told us. But also the streets were full of people with Dutch flags and dancing about and then they took us out. We weren't allowed to go out but one of the nurses did take us out. We had a very joyous feeling that now things were over, that now maybe everything...but very soon I felt very down because I didn't hear from my parents and had no contact with anybody. And I was then thinking how will I ever find somebody, and contemplating that I had family in America – how would I contact them? It made me think an awful lot then. And I was really considering should I run away then, because I wasn't going to stay in the home. And were they still living there? Because that's what my thoughts were – were Tante Anni and Uncle Wim - were they still living in the same house? In the same area? Because where I was hidden now wasn't all that far... but thank goodness it came to an end that I found my parents then.

RL: How long was it?

RLachs: Oh, it was a few weeks!

RL: When were you reunited with your parents? Do you know when it was?

Tape 2: 8 minutes 12 seconds

RLachs: No I can't remember...It was May – the 5th of May when Amsterdam was liberated. It must have been well into June till I found my parents. Because I was a bit despairing really that they hadn't contacted me. But it took my parents a long time... first they had to get through the Red Cross to find me where I was and then they had to get to Amsterdam and had to find...contact their family -because they also had to stay somewhere. And my father didn't have a lot of money because he paid the people where he was hidden. And he had some investments in America but he couldn't get hold of them – you couldn't after the war right away transfer money, so it took quite a

long time. But he knew manufacturers and so on and he started right away to open business again. They were very good, they let him have on credit, you know, materials, and he sold and he started. We rented a flat in the same area where we had the flat before and he started a business at home and he did quite well again and established himself again after the war. My mother helped him.

RL: Was it in the same line of work?

RLachs: Yes, he did the same again that he used to do. And he found some contacts and people were quite good. Got some contacts and people delivered him goods and he sold them. He was a very good salesman on the whole. And he managed to establish himself in the house and after a while when he was doing well he also rented the place in the Grachten and had an office there and employed somebody to do the office work. And in the beginning my mother helped him. And he built everything up again!

Tape 2: 10 minutes 10 seconds

RL: How long was it you had to go back to Tante Anni before you could then go back?

RLachs: Just a couple of weeks or so because they had to find a place to be suitable. They were staying with my uncle and aunt who came back from the war and had also a very little place and they hadn't got really room. And they had a son who wanted to come home. So they couldn't really – they wanted another room and I had to stay somewhere. So that then - I can't remember exactly – 2 or 3 weeks they rented a little place so that I could be with them, and then my father established himself again and we rented a proper flat where we lived before in the area.

RL: Where was this... the apartment?

RLachs: First, he rented just a couple of rooms after the war – one for them and one where I could sleep. And then he rented where we used to live in a block of flats – it was a big block of flats owned by the same people. That's how it goes; they have one management. And we rented – there was a flat empty there so we rented that in the same area where we lived before and he...that's where he started up in business again. And he took me every morning for treatment... My father really was very energetic then because he wanted me to improve and I went every morning before I started school. At 8 o'clock in the morning I had treatment. And then he took me to school because I was very behind in education of course.

RL: How did you learn about your brother and what had happened to him?

Tape 2: 12 minutes 6 seconds

RLachs: Only after the war because he fell ill and they took me away so I didn't really know what happened to him. They wouldn't tell me, you see. And he went to Westerboerk with the children's transport... and he also got... there was a children home, Birnbaum, where they took all the children in and they were all gassed. They were sent to Auschwitz I think.

RL: What happened to your grandparents?

RLachs: My father's grandparents weren't alive any more and my mother's grandparents, they moved to Amsterdam and they were also sent on a transport later. They went to Sobibor. And they perished in Sobibor. But my mother's mother was quite ill. She had a kidney problem so they couldn't hide because she needed medical treatment all the time and they were well in their 70s at the time. So they couldn't go into hiding because of the treatment she needed.

RL: Was it after the war that your parents found out all of this?

RLachs: Yes, after the war and because they lived near my mother's sister and uncle. He was Dutch and she came from German origin and they went to Switzerland with their family,. They went over the border; they managed to get to Switzerland during the war.

RL: And how did you find it being back with your parents?

RLachs: Of course I was very delighted obviously, and it was amazing. Although I had been away I had very good contact... Right away my father threw himself really into it, to get me walking much better and getting me all the treatment. So every morning he got up and took me to the specialist and so I had very good contact right away. You know because he devoted a lot of time to me, particularly my father. Before he went to business he made sure I had my treatment and everything. And I improved a lot due to that.

RL: How old were you?

RLachs: Nine. After the war – nine, ten.

RL: And which school did you go to?

Tape 2: 14 minutes 50 seconds

RLachs: To the local school because they wanted to put me in the Jewish school but they were advised not to because it was too far away. The best thing for me because I was having all the treatment, is to go to the local school and that was quite a good school. It was the **Donger** School and that was an infant school because I was still at that stage. And then I tried to catch up! And then I was at the higher school – like a Jewish grammar school. And I did the entrance exam for that and I passed and I went there until I did the equivalent to A levels or whatever.

RL: Did you find school difficult at first having missed so much?

RLachs: Yes it was difficult. Of course it was difficult for me. But eventually I did...I wasn't the most brilliant pupil because I had missed a lot I suppose.

RL: How long did it take you to get...?

RLachs: I'm not sure but, as I say, I wasn't a brilliant pupil because I had missed a lot. But I managed to get by eventually and pass the entrance exam because it was like an 11-plus here. I did pass the entrance exam for the Jewish High school so that was ok. And I was very happy there. I had lots of friends and so on. That time was a happy time because I had friends and I had Jewish friends.

RL: How did you get on at the non-Jewish school with friends and so on?

RLachs: Yes, I was very busy at that time because I had lots of exercises. I was much more burdened. I had to catch up on work. I was very occupied because of all this.

RL: Did you ever talk about your experiences with your friends?

RLachs: Here, you mean?

RL: No, as a child going to school...?

RLachs: No, I don't think so. Not that much. No, children, you know, they don't think about those kinds of things really, no. And at the Jewish school of course they all had experiences. There were a lot of children who had no parents, where uncles and aunts brought them up. I mean there it was commonplace that you were hidden or you'd been to camp or you were with your uncle and aunt. So...

Tape 2: 17 minutes 29 seconds

RL: Did people speak about it?

RLachs: No we didn't really speak a lot about it. We got on – everybody got on with life. No we started just a normal life again. Cycling. I learnt to cycle because I went on my bike. In Holland a lot of people went to school on their bike and it was good for me to do exercises. So I got on my bike and went to school on my bike every morning.

RL: And what about holidays? Did you ever have a holiday?

RLachs: In the first few years we didn't have too much holiday because my father had to build up the business, but then, after things got a bit better, my mother and me went on holiday. The first holiday we had in Holland, you know, in the forest. We rented a place - just a few rooms just to have a fortnight's holiday...and my father came in the weekend. And then things improved and, in the meantime, my mother had another child. In '47 my brother was born because they decided it wasn't very good for me to be an only child. So after they lost one they decided to have another child, so in '47 my brother was born... and he always calls me still his second mother because I was so much older and had a lot of input into his education.

RL: What's his name?

RLachs: Marcel. And at that time we had relations – my father's brother lived at the seaside. So before he was born they sent me to the seaside to my uncle and they didn't give me enough money. I'll never forget that. They sent me on the train and I didn't

have quite enough money to pay for the... so that was quite traumatic, but I got there. And I stayed with my uncle so my mother didn't have to worry about me, only about the baby. Because my mother was also already 42 I think when she had the...

RL: How did you feel about having a young sibling?

RLachs: Yes, I was quite happy about that. They made me - you know as you do with older children - help them. And, later on, when he didn't like it he always used to call me his second mother. But we now have a very good relationship. We go and see him quite often. He has 5 children of his own and we're going to the wedding of my nephew now. And he always comes - they've always been over, not always with all the children but he managed always to come on his own or with his wife or one of the children.

RL: Did you find there was any difficulty at all in your relationship with your parents having missed a number of years without them?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 40 seconds

RLachs: No. Amazingly not. I mean immediately things were as they had been before, kind of thing. That I must admit that I never found this gap very big. We weren't estranged as such. But that's how it is. I felt really again close to my parents immediately.

RL: Did they tell you much about what they had been through?

RLachs: Oh yes.

RL: What had happened to them after...?

RLachs: They went to Leeuwarden and the people weren't very easy where they were. They were very working class and my parents paid for whatever they did. They weren't always very pleasant - they had quite an unpleasant time, at times and my mother was not a very... positive person. My father was very, very positive and she's always said: 'I wouldn't have survived without him giving me all this positive input.' She helped and nothing was ever good enough. You know, people are difficult. But they stuck it out till after the war.

RL: Did they have any scares while they were there?

RLachs: Yes they have had. But they didn't go out - only at night sometimes in the evening to have some fresh air because it's very difficult to be in a place and never... They felt that very hard, never to be able to have any fresh air and that sort of thing. So they went out in the evening sometimes when it was dark for a few minutes. But they had children the people... it wasn't always easy to live together. They had a hard time I'm sure. But my father was a very cheerful optimistic kind of person. He said: 'Times will get better. We have to stick it out. We have to.' My mother always said I wouldn't have stuck it out without him.

RL: And then after the war, you're living back as a family and your brother's born. What stands out in your mind of this period?

Tape 2: 22 minutes 50 seconds

RLachs: Having the business at home. And my brother was a very friendly child. When he was very little the people came always to deliver things and he used to go always with the sweet bowl and bringing cigarettes to people who came to the door because he was very outgoing and sweet always. That sticks out very much in my mind that he wanted to give everybody always something at the door. And he once, when he had a tricycle and he used to ride it in the flat. And once he drove down the stairs because we lived on the first floor. But he go off very lucky with just a bump on his head. Kids do these kinds of things you know. We left the door open by accident. Those kinds of thing that...

RL: And did you belong to any youth groups?

RLachs: Yes, Jewish Youth Group - Hatikvah, - Hatikva Teine - it was called. Yes. And I went to camp and I met a lot of friends there. There was a gentleman – he started this group - a Jewish gentleman and that was a very successful group. That was when I was fairly small, nine, ten, and later on I joined the B'nai Akiva but you had to be a little bit older.

RL: And what kinds of activities did they do?

RLachs: Yes we had meetings Shabbas and we used to go on trips sometimes. And we used to meet. I used to meet up Shabbas afternoon with my friends. And we had taught things.

RL: Did you catch up with your Jewish education?

RLachs: Yes I did. I did catch up with the Jewish education quite well.

RL: Was that when you went to the Jewish school?

RLachs: No I had lessons. We had a private teacher I had to teach me. Yes the Dutch education was quite good – the Jewish education. I used to go on Sunday. We had a teacher; he was a bit like the Rabbi...like here a Rabbi in the holy law – What's his name he passed away - what's he called again, the strict Rabbi who the boys used to go to? Yes he was quite...

RL: Balkin?

Tape 2: 25 minutes 24 seconds

RLachs: Balkin, yes. He was something but not his nature... but people used to come. He had rooms somewhere in the school. And, on a Sunday, you could go as long as you wanted; there was no restriction. But he used to teach and he used to do voluntary and we learnt a lot with him. He was very, very good. You came and you went – you know, you did your work and everybody did individually Hebrew. Modern Hebrew

and things like that and I used to go to him every Sunday. When I came to England I found really that we were taught quite well basically. My kids went to King David at the time, so with the tuition I think in Holland was definitely as good.

RL: About these youth groups...you say you went to camps as well?

RLachs: Yes. We went to Akiva camps as well...and so on, yes.

RL: What about connection with Israel in those days? Do you remember the foundation of the state?

RLachs: Oh yes, we did. I remember that very well. We went to celebrate in Amsterdam, very big. I used to belong at that time to Youth Groups and we did celebrate greatly, yes. I must say my parents were very zionistically inclined. In 1935 it was very unusual to go to Israel and my parents went on their honeymoon to Israel. And that was not every day in those days, so they were very zionistically inclined as well.

RL: How long did they spend there?

RLachs: A few weeks. In those days you had to go on the boat and must have stayed a fortnight and then came back again. It was their honeymoon. And my uncle who lived at the seaside, he and his wife emigrated to Israel because they had children in Israel. So we went. I went to Israel quite early on. I spent a year there as well after I finished school.

RL: How old were you then?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 5 seconds

RLachs: No I was already... I went to a medical technician course so it must have been twenty-one.

RL: So how old were you when you left school?

RLachs: Eighteen.

RL: Right. And what did you do?

RLachs: I did a medical technician course. In those days...Now, biomedical science is a university degree course, social science and things like that. But in those days you did like a course.

RL: And where did you do that?

RLachs: In Amsterdam. And I worked in Israel. I worked in a lab.

RL: So you went out at 21 after you'd finished the course?

RLachs: Yes, I went out and I found myself a job and I worked. And I came back for my brother's Bar Mitzvah.

RL: How long were you in Israel?

RLachs: A year – just over a year.

RL: And could you speak the language?

RLachs: I learned. I had a fairly good grounding. But I made some very funny mistakes but I managed. Because I only spoke it in the lab – no other language allowed, so I managed. I coped.

RL: Where did you live?

RLachs: At that time I lived in Ramat HaSharon. There was like a Youth Hostel for new immigrants and people. I lived there for six months then I moved in with two Dutch girls. We had a house. Somebody won the (**Miffala Prize**) and so he rented this little house off and I joined up with these two girls and we rented the place and we lived there till I went back. And I went back for my brother's Bar Mitzvah and I stayed a bit after that and I met my husband and that was the end of me going back

Tape 2: 30 minutes 2 seconds

RL: How did you meet your husband?

RLachs: I met my husband here in England through mutual friends. My parents had some friends in Amsterdam and her brother lived here in Manchester. And my husband was widowed. He lost his first wife and he was looking for somebody to get married. And this lady here said to her brother: 'Do you know anybody in Amsterdam?' And he said: 'Yes, some friends of mine, they have a daughter may be suitable, who knows!' And that's how we got introduced. I was on holiday here in any case because I used to go the seminars. Lady **Gertner** used to have seminars in Carmel College - Hebrew seminars, and I went there, so in the summer...

RL: How did you get there? What was the connection?

RLachs: How I got there? It must have been organised by the Jewish Agency. After I came back from Israel I wanted to keep my Ivrit up and they kept them in the summer and sometimes in the winter. They kept them in Holland and I used to go to them. You meet a lot of people from all over. I was interested in that so...

RL: Was that the first time you'd come to England?

RLachs: No I'd been before when I was eighteen and finished school. I went to Withington College. That was – they had summer seminars that were Jewish organised by the school I think but they were...it was a kind of Jewish summer school. And I went when I was eighteen with a friend of mine from Holland to learn English - to perfect my English. So I'd been to England before.

RL: What did you think of England on that first visit?

RLachs: It was very pleasant. We were in Carmel College and it was very nice so we enjoyed it.

RL: And was it mainly for students from abroad to learn English?

RLachs: Yes, a lot of foreigners were there.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 38 seconds

RL: Was that Carmel College?

RLachs: No that was the seminar. No, no. I went to Withington College, that was to learn English really, that was mainly for foreigners. No, and then later on I went to the Jewish Agency's seminars.

RL: That was after you came back from Israel. That was to keep up your (GAP)...?

RLachs: Yes, that's right.

RL: Now how long were you here to learn English? How long was that course?

RLachs: About a month.

RL: Did you know people in England?

RLachs: At that time, no. We just went to this school with a friend of mine and we met people there and that was it - we went back to Holland.

RL: Then you did your medical technician course?

RLachs: Yes.

RL: As a sort of 18-20 year old in Holland, what kind of activities did you do?

RLachs: Oh we had a like a student organisation like here – a Zionist Youth Organisation that I belonged to. We had activities and I took part in all of those. We had B'nai B'rith like a (GAP Bibi Weill) group and I was part of that

RL: What was it called?

RLachs: B'nai B'rith Youth Club I guess.

RL: In Holland?

RLachs: Yes.

RL: What kinds of things did they do?

RLachs: They had lectures – yeah mainly lectures I think. And installations and...

RL: Had Jewish life completely re-established itself...after the war?

RLachs: Oh yes, yes it did. Yes, very soon.

RL: Were there people there from before the war – were there many people that you remembered from before the war or had the community changed in composition?

Tape 2: 34 minutes 44 seconds

RLachs: No. I think there were a lot of people came back from where they came from. Of course it had thinned out terrifically, not that many. But I was only six. I couldn't remember all the people. But I made new friends and...My parents knew people of course... and I was friendly with their children.

RL: And did you continue to go to the same shul?

RLachs: Yes, oh yes, we always belonged to that shul.

RL: You say the Hazzan was the same?

Yes, but they had a lot of changes in rabbis in Amsterdam because they used to come and go. **Brotman** was after the war was one of the rabbis – he's now in Israel.

RL: And when you met your husband, how did you feel about the thought of coming to live in England rather than living in Holland?

RLachs: As I'd been away in Israel already for a year I didn't think it was so far to come to England really. No. I was quite, quite happy to leave because there was...Jewish life I was very worried would decline and I was thinking that about bringing up a family and I didn't think that Holland at that time was the best place because at that time people after the war emigrated to Israel a lot. Real good Jewish life I thought was on the decline. Although I must say that that never happened really because they started the Yeshivas there and the ...there and they have now still a very religious Jewish school, so it has never really happened. But it wasn't such a big community. So I was worried what the future in Amsterdam might hold in the religious part. So I was in one way quite happy to move away. Because my best friend, she married a Dutch boy. But then he had a job in Paris so they moved to Paris and then from Paris, because Paris wasn't the best for Jewish people, they moved to Israel. And I'm still very involved with her now she lives in Israel.

RL: Did you ever come across any anti-Semitism in Holland?

RLachs: No, not really. After the war people were really not so anti-Semitic. They received you back and...no, I personally... I mixed mainly in Jewish circles so I couldn't really say, and in my work experience I didn't really experience anti-Semitism.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 44 seconds

RL: Were there other Jewish people on the medical technician course?

RLachs: No, mainly non-Jewish people. It wasn't really a Jewish profession as such.

RL: And they were all right?

RLachs: They were all right, yes, I can't...The Dutch were quite Jewish-minded on the whole, although in the war you had all kinds...But on the whole, no I can't say that it was any problem

RL: Did you keep up contact with Tante Anni?

RLachs: Yes. I did. All my life, till she passed away. We went to her 90th birthday and I used to go regularly over and sent her presents for Christmas and her birthday and, in the end, she was in a senior citizens home in Holland so I went to visit her there. And we have been...a friend phoned me she was very ill, so I went over very quickly to make sure I still saw her. Bbut then she recovered again. And in the end she was very, very poorly. I thought she would have made 100, but she didn't and we would have gone over for that. We'd already booked to go. No, I kept always contact with her.

RL: And of course she didn't have children?

RLachs: No she didn't have any children, no. I think she always felt a bit disappointed that we found our parents again and we felt a bit removed, although we always kept contact. But it wasn't the same for her. I think that was a bit disappointing for her. But she was...Basically they were very good people because they lived in Amsterdam...Her husband got ill – emphysema he got – and the doctor said if she wants to prolong his life she has to move out of Amsterdam in the country. So they moved to Reissen in Overreissel which is better air for him and there she got involved - although she was never religious – she got involved in the church and the Christian church, and she used to do for the Red Cross embroidery and do blankets and this sort of thing. And that was a good thing because after her husband died she got more involved and they took her in and they looked after her fantastic. I mean I once went to Holland and I didn't even know she had a heart attack. So when I contacted her I got onto one of her neighbours and they told me she was in hospital, so we hired a car and we went – my husband and I went - and she was so well looked after it was unbelievable. And also when we went, towards the end...when she wasn't so good I went over, her friends were just fantastic. They were even nice to us. When we came there they said: 'We'll take you by car. Come and have a coffee with us.' So they took us to their house and we had a coffee there and they really treated us very nicely.

Tape 2: 41 minutes 1 second

RL: So coming to your move to England - When did you marry?

RLachs: 1962.

RL: And where did you marry?

RLachs: In Amsterdam.

RL: And was that in the shul?

RLachs: Yes in the Lekstraat shul.

RL: And if you could tell me about your move over here and how you found it?

RLachs: Yeah, it was...as I say he was busy. Company secretary he was, of a big firm. So he told me right away he would be out of the house from eight till six. And I had the little girl to look after – she was six – so I had to take her to school every day. But she lived with his sister. They lived together after his first wife died and his sister, husband and little girl moved in with him to look after his little girl. So they lived together for – she was about... four years I would say. So it was a bit traumatic for his daughter to be moved away from this house and we started a new home. So we had quite a few problems – psychological problems which I didn't – newly married – I didn't recognise so clearly. I kept on taking her to the doctor because she wasn't well at school and I had to fetch her home, and finally I realised that there was something more to it than I had to give her tablets for this and tablets for that. And I went to the doctor and said: 'I want to see a specialist. I can't believe that that is just common.' you know. And she had a bit of psychological problems but we got her over that. We got a specialist from Booth Hall. He came to the house. He was very good and got her settled again and from then on things went quite well. So I was busy taking her to school and taking her to the doctor and cooking meals. In the beginning, when you're not very experienced, it takes time. So I was quite occupied. And then I decided I had to learn English. My English, I could speak English, but to improve my English I went to Hebrew classes. You see because you meet other people and you talk. So I went to King David Hebrew classes there once a week and I met quite nice people there and I'm still friends with some of them. You know making friends – so we started a bit of a social life. Of course my husband had friends, but he was nine years older than we so I wanted some younger friends as well. So I made friends and then I had my daughter so I kept busy with the baby... and

Tape 2: 44 minutes 3 seconds

RL: When was she born?

RLachs: She was born in '63.

RL: What's her name?

RLachs: Sharon.

RL: What's your husband's daughter called?

RLachs: Joanne.

RL: Was Joanne going to school?

RLachs: Yes she was six!

RL: Which school was it?

RLachs: Kind David. King David yes and then Sharon was born so I kept quite busy. With a baby and one to go to school, and...

RL: What did you think of England?

RLachs: Well I thought...I made friends and things like that. I thought it was quite all right. I saw quite a brighter future here because there was a Jewish community which I liked. And we got involved. My husband was involved with the shul so he was secretary, treasurer of Heaton Park Shul, so we were invited to Simchas to go to. So I got quite into it quite easily. And then I went to evening classes I made friends there. I tried my best to integrate.

RL: Was there anything about the way of life here that you found strange or not used to?

RLachs: Jewish life was much better here because there were more people; there were more activities. I found it quite pleasing. And my parents used to come over. They used to come over for Hanukkah and so on. That was quite nice.

RL: Did you miss anything about Amsterdam?

RLachs: Not really. No. I put my mind to it that I wanted to try and integrate. If you set your mind to do certain things...I did it. Listen, I wanted to get married and have a family. I was quite happy here – felt quite happy here.

RL: Where were you living?

RLachs: In Rothsay Road off Adler Road we started off. It was a very Jewish area and I got very friendly with my neighbour. She helped me out a lot because she was a very good cook. And I had been working and didn't know too much. I'd been to cooking class, but she was a real good Jewish cook and she used to give me recipes and show me what to do. And she had a girl the same age as Joanne so they used to go to school together. So I got quite integrated because she helped me out a lot.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 54 seconds

RL: Did you ever feel that you were not accepted here in any way?

RLachs: In one way of course people knew each other. I felt sometimes a bit an outsider. You know you make your best friends when you're at school really and you keep those all your life. And that I couldn't of course establish. But I had my sister in law, my husband had a sister and we were quite close. I was quite close with her. She would always help me if I needed anything and give me advice or so. No I think I was all right really. And when I married I wasn't eighteen any more. I was quite established. I had travelled the world a bit. I had done things. I was quite independent I suppose.

RL: What did you think of the non-Jewish people? Did you have much contact with them?

RLachs: In the beginning I didn't, not till I started work really. Because I mixed in a very Jewish area and only really had Jewish friends so I wouldn't know all that much. Only my husband worked in a non-Jewish environment, but I personally had very little contact with non Jews - not till I started work.

RL: When did you start work?

Tape 2: 48 minutes 21 seconds

RLachs: I started work after my son was – he was born - he was about seven. When he went to King David and when Sharon started in grammar school – she started in Withington and then I felt I really wanted to do something. And Joanne started university. That year I tried to pick up threads with my medical technician. And it was very difficult. Everybody just kept on saying, 'Find a job.' but I didn't want a full time job and my diploma wasn't really recognised here. I couldn't get satisfaction very much. Till a friend of my husband, he was a doctor, said: 'Try Christy Hospital. They do cervical smears and they train people on the spot. May be you can find a job there.' So I phoned up and I was successful. I spoke to the consultant and he said, 'Come along. I need some people. Come for an interview.' So I went to this interview and they said: 'You can start on Monday.' So they trained me but not as a cervical – as a cyto-screener they trained people. So I accepted that. And it was a part time job which suited me in Christy Hospital from 9 till 1 – so I would be home when the children would be home - and they would train me on the spot for this. And it was just what I was looking for. So I worked there for 29 years.

Tape 2: 50 minutes 4 seconds

RL: What children did you have?

RLachs: Three.

RL: Can you tell me how...?

RLachs: Oh that age. Joanne was already eighteen. Sharon was eleven and Martin was seven or eight. They have 3 years between – yeah three and a half years.

RL: So that was the whole family?

RLachs: Yes. Three. And you see it was very good because I used to take Sharon to Withington and go to work. And Joanne used to take Martin to King David and go on the bus to the university. The bus stop is not far from King David so she used to take him. So we were very organised and I used to come home at one, so I was home and fetched the children from school again. In those days it wasn't dangerous. Sharon could come on the bus home – there were no school buses. So it worked very well.

RL: Did they all go to Kind David?

RLachs: Yes.

RL: And then after King David where did Martin go?

RLachs: To Manchester Grammar and Joanne went to Bury. She went to Bury. My husband worked in Bury so he used to take her every morning to school.

RL: And did they belong to any youth groups?

RLachs: Yes. Joanne went to Bnei Akiva didn't like it for a very short time. And Sharon and Martin were very keen Bnei Akiva members. They were Madrichim they followed it through - all the way through. Sharon went to Sem when she was 18 and Martin went to – on Hachsharah for a year.

RL: Which Sem did Sharon go to?

RLachs: Orot.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 58 seconds

RL: And after that?

RLachs: She studied medicine and after she finished studying...and then she met her husband in the middle. He was very Zionist so they went back – they went to Israel. After she finished her studies and had the first child in 3 months she went on aliyah.

RL: Who did she marry?

RLachs: A boy from Kingsbury - Anthony Silverman from Kingsbury.

RL: And what children do they have?

RLachs: Five. Five children.

RL: And where do they live in Israel?

RLachs: Maalei Adumim.

RL: And what did Joanne do?

RLachs: Joanne studied pharmacy. She's a pharmacist.

RL: Where did she study?

RLachs: Manchester.

RL: Who did she marry?

RLachs: Stephen Cohen and he's an optician.

RL: And where do they live?

RLachs: In Gainsway here.

RL: And what children do they have?

RLachs: A girl and a boy, the eldest is a daughter.

RL: And then Martin?

RLachs: Martin married a girl from Cardiff – Jill Hyatt – and they live in London.

RL: What did he do after school?

RLachs: He went to university to Amsterdam and then he went to Leeds University and did cell biology.

RL: He did what?

RLachs: Cell biology. He did first cell technology whatever - the second degree – he did a PhD after that – it came after 3 years in Leeds when he got his BSc in Leeds he came back to Manchester and got a PhD. And he was now in drug research and moved to London because the possibilities of jobs was bigger than in Manchester. And they live in London and they have two children – also a boy and a girl.

RL: And how old is the oldest grandchild?

RLachs: In Leeds, that's Joanne's - she's 23.

RL: And what is she doing?

RLachs: She has done a degree in Business Studies and she works for a large firm of accountants in Chorley as a Public Relations officer. She organises Golf Days and all this kind of thing. And Andrew is doing Biomedical Sciences in Leeds. The Israelis are still all at school.

RL: So Joanne's are the eldest?

RLachs: Yes.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 54 seconds

RL: Did the grandchildren join any youth groups or clubs?

RLachs: Yes – the FZY I think Andrew used to be but he's now in a Jewish student organisation. And in Israel they're all with the B'nai Akiva the kids the two eldest ones.

RL: In terms of nationality how would you describe yourself?

RLachs: I don't feel very Dutch. I'm more Israel-minded than anything else. I feel more Jewish than I feel English and more Jewish than I feel Dutch.

RL: Did you become a British national when you...?

RLachs: I had to when I married my husband. We had problems because when we had children they were English because they were born here and when I had my Dutch passport they had to go to a different gate than I. And when I had little children it was a bit impossible and my husband said: 'You have to apply to be British.' To take the kids abroad on my own it was a bit problematic you see.

RL: When did your parents pass away?

RLachs: My father passed away... It was '69 in February. Wait a minute...1969. I have the Jahrzeit actually this week. And my mother, after my father died stayed in Holland, but then she came to England. She emigrated to England and she passed away here.

RL: Where did she live?

RLachs: She lived here in Holland Court in a flat.

RL: How long was she here for?

RLachs: '74 to '84 – about 10 years.

RL: Was that 1974?

RLachs: Yes, she came in 1974 and in 1979 she had a very bad stroke and after that she went to the Morris Feinman Home because I had three unmarried children at home and she needed looking after because she was walking with a tripod., and the specialist told me not to leave her on her own because if she fell she couldn't get up any more on her own and things like that. And I had only a fairly small house and with the stairs and one thing she couldn't cope. So she moved into the Morris Feinman Home.

RL: This film is about to end so we'll just stop here.

RLachs: Right.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 03 seconds

The tape continues.

RL This is the interview with Ruth Lacks and it's the beginning of tape 3. [not true]

I was just thinking in terms of your religious observance if that has altered at all over the years, if it's different in this country to in Holland or if it's altered over the years here.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 15 seconds

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Lachs and it's Tape Three.

RL: I was just thinking in terms of your religious observance if that had altered at all over the years? Whether it was different in this country to Holland or if it has altered over the years here?

RLachs: It has altered slightly. When my daughter came back from Sem in Orot she was really a bit more religious than we were. But I adapted to things. I thought it's better to be religious than being a teenager who goes in the pubs and drinks and things like that. And whatever she wanted me to do, I did. And I must say happily that my children all come home, all eat at home. Because I have acquaintances where the children are so religious that they won't eat even in their parents' home who keep a kosher home. But I have adapted things so the light in the fridge I put a plaster over it so that on Shabbas when I open the fridge it doesn't come on. I mean we weren't so bothered about things like that. But when she comes home I make sure that everything is just 101%. So I'm adaptable and I respect my children as my children respect me and I think that's the attitude you have to take to keep a happy relationship with your children.

RL: At shul that point would you say your observances were similar to what you were used to in Holland?

Tape 2: 60 minutes 0 second

RLachs: Yes, the observance was similar to what I was used to. We were always observant but maybe my children – my daughter definitely- is that bit more observant than what we were. But I sent her to Seminar and I can't grumble when she comes back and feels a bit more than we do so...I adapted myself.

RL: Was it usual to send girls to Seminary at that stage when she went?

RLachs: Not really from King David, but she was very involved with Bnei Akiva and some of the girls from Bnei Akiva did go. And she had this strong feeling she wanted to and I've always encouraged her because in particular Israel, my brother lived there and I'd always strong ties with Israel myself, so I was quite pleased that when wanted to take a year off and go to Sem. And she had a very happy year. We went to meet her in the middle of the year. Orot at the time didn't have like now they have a very nice building in Alkenaar where my brother lives – a nice purpose built building. In those days it was at Petach Tikva and the girls were farmed out into apartments and it wasn't so luxurious but it was ok. She met a very nice South African girl who she kept friendly with. And a lot of them have returned to Israel as well. As I say I would like to see them nearby but they're happy there and I have to respect their wishes. You have to let your children to. I left home and went to England so they left home and went to Israel.

RL: Yes. In terms of your experiences, did they affect your religious belief in any way? What you went through...?

Tape 2: One hour two minutes 2 seconds

RLachs: No, because I always think to myself, religion is not really quite rational. What happened now with the Tsunami – there is no rhyme or reason. Why did certain people perish and others didn't? You can't really make -even if you believe in God- you can't make God responsible for everybody, can you now, for everything? No it didn't really affect my beliefs that much....

Tape 2 Ends.

TAPE 3

RL: This is the interview with Ruth Lachs and it's Tape Three.

(At this point there is a repeat of questions above. Resuming where there is a new question at:)

Tape 3: 4 minutes 18 seconds

(Continuation from last statement above)

RLachs: No it didn't really affect my beliefs that much.

RL: Do you think your experiences affected you psychologically in any way?

RLachs: Yes I did... basically it made me a more serious person and things that people worry about I can't worry about like what people wear and very external things how superficial people are. And those kinds of things don't bother me at all. I really like to know the person, like being good or being bad and external things don't bother me so much. I think... you know the youngsters today - I feel really old because they're so flippant and so concerned about all trivial, in my opinion, trivial little things.

RL: Do you think it affected the way that you brought up your children?

RLachs: Yes, I'm sure it did. I tried to instil values into them what life is all about that you should be caring and interested in people more than all the little external things. I'm sure it made me a more serious person.

RL: Did you ever speak to your children about your experiences? Did you ever tell them about your past?

RLachs: They know about it, but not when they were little children we didn't talk that much. When they were grown up now. My son got quite interested when he was a teenager and the second generation because they started this group up. He was the one who was actually the youngest and the most interested in it. Joanna of course – My husband he came when he was a teenager to England and he hadn't really had a bad

time except that he had to emigrate and was not very well off because you couldn't take anything with..., and he had to work from the age of 14. But, otherwise, he wasn't terrible deprived. So he had really not so much of – he had not much of war experience.

Tape 3: 6 minutes 51 seconds

And Sharon was never really very bothered about it. I don't think it affected her very much. I tried to bring my kids up not talking too much about it or I didn't want them to be really affected by it. I wanted them to grow up like normal happy individuals because it doesn't do to make the children suffer because of their parents. And I think most of the children in England didn't really so much. They talk about second generation but I don't think many of the second generation I know are really so affected by what their parents suffered. I think most of them went to school and are professionals and are normal citizens.

RL: Have your children gone with you to Holland and seen where you lived?

RLachs: Oh yes, they have been. I used to go. My parents used to live in Holland so when they were very little I used to go very often home even if my husband didn't always come. I went to see my parents with the children. No, they know where I've lived. And my son, he travels with his firm and says: 'Oh I'm going to Amsterdam. I haven't been there for ages and I'm looking forward to going back to Amsterdam.' he told me just the other day. Yes, it's seen as a pleasurable occasion because we used to go have holidays in Holland at the seaside when they were very little. So it was a good time for them. They have pleasant memories in Holland.

Tape 3: 8 minutes 31 seconds

RL: How do you feel towards the Germans?

RLachs: This generation you can't blame for their parents' generation. I feel when you meet elderly people then you think: what were they in the war? But the young generation are no different from any generation. You can't blame the sins of the parents onto the children, that's how I feel about it

RL: Have you ever visited Germany?

RLachs: Yes we went back a couple of years ago because my husband's mother came from a little place called Düren and she had a brother who was paediatrician. And somebody, another paediatrician who is now retired, is writing about this paediatrician and his practices. Because there were a great many German doctors compared to the population. And he went into it, why there were so many doctors in this area. And they invited us. He has written a book and he invited us to come to Düren and he presented us with this book. He is involved with a church there and they had a reunion of previous inhabitants of Düren and they invited us to come, so we went for a couple of days. Because my husband also was curious also to see where his mother came from. So we had a few days with them. And they're all very sympathetic to the cause, but they were all too young really to be involved with the Nazis. And the doctor who has written this book, his father was a Nazi sympathiser and he fell out

with his father because he didn't agree with it. And they came over here and I did receive them. I didn't invite them to stay because I didn't know what kind of people they were so I put them up in a hotel. But I did entertain them and they did seem to be very sympathetic, and he wanted to write this book and tried to get a lot of information from my husband and they were quite nice people.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 53 seconds

RL: Have you ever received any restitution?

RLachs: Yes I got the ... The Dutch gave restitution not long ago and I did receive that. And because my parents were German – from German origin - and I suffered in the war with the polio, I get a small pension from Germans... for my health – a health restitution.

RL: Was it difficult to get restitution?

RLachs: Oh Dutch restitution every body got. That was very easy. We had just to fill the form and it was well organised and very well done. The German one was very difficult. I had to go for medical examinations and it's a long time ago – witnesses - but eventually I did get it because it was a direct from the German regime that I caught it. There was an epidemic in this crèche and that's why I caught it. So they did recognise. I get a certain percentage because I'm - thank goodness - reasonable fit. I don't get 100% but I get about 50%.

RL: Have you come across other children who were in hiding?

RLachs: Yes.

Tape 3: 12 minutes 19 seconds

RL: And how did you find them?

RLachs: When I got married in England I got one day a phone call from a girl. She lived in The Hague and she was pregnant and she had to lay down, and had heard that I came from Amsterdam. And she phoned me and she said: 'I'm lying down because I'm pregnant. Will you come and see me? I know you're Dutch. Come and see me.' And we've been friends ever since.

RL: Was this a Jewish girl?

RLachs: Jewish girl, yes.

RL: Where did she live?

RLachs: In Broughton Park, in Stanley Road. So she has 5 children, they're all married now, live all over the world. But we always stayed friends. And I know Fulder - Helen Fulder - she was in camp. I know her. And I know Miriam Fulder; she was at school with me. She was the wife of the late Leo Fulder, the caterer; she was at school with me so I know her. I'm not particularly very close to her, but the other girl

from The Hague I go and see her because she's not very well. She had bypasses and she doesn't go out a lot.

RL: So you were in the same school Miriam Fulder?

RLachs: Yes, the same school.

RL: And did she survive in hiding?

RLachs: Yes.

RL: Yes. Are you involved in any organisations in England, any charities?

RLachs: B'nai B'rith. That's mainly what I'm involved in. I belong to the Mizrahi group and I support the Imuna – we go to Imuna, but I'm not a member because I work still a bit and I've never had all that much time. I've been President 3 times of B'nai B'rith so I put all my efforts in B'nai B'rith mainly and support other organisations. 'Belong to the ZCC and – I'm a member there.

RL: So you say you're a member of Mizrahi?

Tape 3: 14 minutes 39 seconds

RLachs: Yes.

RL: Is there a (GAP) Mizrahi group?

RLachs: No there isn't, but I pay subscription to London to the Mizrahi. And as I say I support Imuna when they have functions, but I'm not a member as such.

RL: And the B'nai B'rith group, which group is that?

RLachs: The Manchester B'nai B'rith.

RL: Right....right. What about refugee organisations?

RLachs: My husband is the Chairperson of the Manchester group so I go with him. They don't have really a membership; it's just a group and we pay subscription to London to the AGI to the paper. Yes we belong to that.

RL: And do you attend their meetings?

RLachs: Yes I do.

RL: Yeah. And is there any other body that you've belonged to over the years? Any other organisations?

RLachs: We go to the Historical Society, but were not members. We go to their lectures fairly often. No, this is mainly B'nai Brith we're both involved in.

Tape 3: 16 minutes 1 second

RL: Going back to your sense of belonging, and sense of identity...Tell me where you belong or identify with?

RLachs: It's difficult to say. I feel very Zionistic basically and I don't feel un- British but my priority is Israel I would say.

RL: How safe do you feel in Britain?

RLachs: At the moment I don't think I feel unsafe. Listen – the whole world is unsafe if you talk that way. I mean anything can happen anywhere. So I don't feel less safe in Britain than I would anywhere else.

RL: Have you ever experienced any anti-Semitism here?

RLachs: Not openly, no. Not really. I work – where I work in hospital there is one girl, she is a Muslim girl and she makes sometimes a few funny remarks but I just ignore it. In the time of Arafat you know...but I try not to encourage much because you can't talk to those people. They have a certain opinion and I have my opinion so we try not to talk politics at work, particularly not when she's there because she has quite strong views. They feel that the Palestinians are very deprived which they are in a way, but it's their own doing. But you can't...The Poor Palestinians they always talk about. You know...so I don't say too much.

Tape 3: 18 minutes 7 seconds

RL: And amongst the English?

RLachs: No, I don't feel...I don't think they care very much. I feel they're very aloof of it all. Because they live here. It's like us about the Irish. We don't feel really involved and I don't think the English feel really involved with Israel and the Muslims, you see? It's only when it strikes you personally that you feel that way.

RL: In terms of your Dutch background do you think you've got any kind of Dutch identity?

RLachs: I never tried too much...When I meet the Dutch girls we talk Dutch and we reminisce a bit but otherwise... I don't have too many alliances really because I've not much family. I've two...one second cousin and one cousin in Amsterdam and that's about it. So I don't feel that strong about Holland.

RL: Is there anything else that you think we've not touched upon that possibly we've missed in your story?

RLachs: No I don't really think there was anything else.

RL: Is there any message that you'd like to finish with?

RLachs: I'm afraid that we haven't – nobody has learned the lesson from the Holocaust, what's going on in the world doesn't show that anybody learned any

lessons. The only thing we can try to do is to educate the youth, but it seems to be very hard to do so because people think: 'It can't happen to us'. People think very personally, but I don't know. Anything can happen now. I'm not really quite sure. It's a shame that we live in such an unruly world where there is...people have no feelings for other people. Very cruel... We have a very cruel society I think. We were talking at work about the television programs - even those are cruel. People like to see people put in situations like in those 'Get me out of here' programmes where they have to do horrible things and people enjoy looking at this. I can't enjoy looking at those kinds of programs. But people must be feeling very cruel and can do anything to anybody. And it's difficult when you get older to understand the youth really. I think education is the only remedy. Try to educate people and make them realise that we're living in a very bad world this way.

RL: Thank you very much.

RLachs: That's it.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 35 seconds

End of Interview.

Photographs

Tape 3: 21 minutes 41 seconds

RLachs: This is my grandfather on my father's side. He was born in 1932 –

RL: -This was taken...

RLachs: This was taken in 1932. He was about 69 and he lived in Borken, Germany.

RL: And his name?

RLachs: And his name is Karl Ganz.

RLachs: This was my grandmother, Amalia Ganz. It was taken in the 1930s also in Borken, Germany.

RLachs: This was my brother Karl named after my grandfather, who was born in 1940 in Amsterdam.

RL: And this was taken?

RLachs: And this was taken while we were in hiding at Tante Anni and Om Wim, in Amsterdam.

RL: And the year?

RLachs: The year, 1943.

RLachs: This is me in 1938 in Hamburg. That was before we emigrated to Holland.

RL: And your full name?

RLachs: My name is Ruth Ganz.

RLachs: From left to right, this is myself and then next to me is Anni Van Leeuwarden a friend of Tante Anni and next to Anni is my brother Karl and then Tante Anni where we were hidden in the war. And we were on holiday in Bussen in Holland.

RL: And the date?

RLachs: It was about 1943.

RLachs: From left to right on this photo is Anni Van Leeuwarden, my brother and myself and uncle Wim. He was the husband of Tante Anni and he was the gentleman where I was in hiding in 1943, taken on a day-trip to Zandvoort.

RLachs: This is me at the age about 10 in Amsterdam.

RL: And the year?

RLachs: In the year 1946.

RLachs: These are my parents my mother's name is Susanne Ganz and my father's name is Ernst Ganz. It was taken on my civil wedding day on the 24th of August, 1962.

RL: In?

RLachs: In Amsterdam.

RLachs: This was my wedding day on the 24th of August 1962 in the synagogue in Amsterdam.

RL: And your husband?

RLachs: And my husband is called Werner Lachs

RLachs: This is my family in 1974. On the right in the back is Joanne Lachs and in the middle Martin Lachs and on the left, Sharon Lachs. And my husband Werner and me, Ruth. This was taken in our home in Manchester, Rothsay Road.

RLachs: This was our family outing in 19...no...1999? With the whole family. No the date I think is wrong. It was 2002, it was two years ago. It's us with the three children and their husbands and nine grandchildren, taken at Toxteth Park in Liverpool.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 13 seconds

End of Photographs.