

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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REFUGEE VOICES: THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 70

NAME: HERBERT LAYTON

DATE: 12 AUGUST 2004

LOCATION: GLOUCESTER

INTERVIEWER: HELEN LLOYD

TAPE 1

HLloyd: This is an interview with Herbert Layton on 12 August 2004 in Gloucester and my name is Helen Lloyd.

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HLayton: Right, my name is Herbert Layton, it originally was Herbert Leopold Levy or Levi in English. I was born on 19th August 1919. Now then, the first thing to say about that date is that it was, I worked out when I was about middle aged, exactly nine months after armistice day, from which I have since taken it that my parents were celebrating that particular date. It was a good thing to do. I was the result.

HLloyd: Where were you born?

HLayton: I was born in Hamburg, in Germany, and in fact I was one of dissimilar twins, but unfortunately my brother died in January the following year - so he was only about five or six months old - of meningitis. There is little else I know about him except that a few years ago I did visit his grave in Hamburg alongside with the graves of other ancestors and family members buried there. Anyway, that's about my birth.

And then, perhaps I should say a word about my parents at this stage. My father, Bernard Levy, was born 5th July 1881. He would in fact have liked to go on the stage, but his father said to him, Bernard, there's no money in the arts, which is what you'd expect a Jewish father to say in those days. In those days, of course, children did as they were told and my father went into business. He was very successful, but in fact I think he regretted all his life that he didn't go on the stage, certainly he was a wonderful raconteur, a great entertainer, used to sing songs

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from the— this was only walking up and down, songs from the shows, the operettas. He could also draw very well and I have got some drawings he made at some family wedding together with some rhymes, lampooning his sister and other people. Anyway, he did eventually become what the Germans would call a *Kaufmann*, in fact he was the business manager of a couture company; it was one that was founded in Paris, Hersch AC, with a branch in Amsterdam, which still exists, and in Hamburg and in Dresden, but they all became independent eventually. My father managed the Hamburg branch and dressed the sort of hoi polloi ladies in Northern Germany, the *Fürst* of all this, the Countess of that, and all the rest of them, and clearly he had a flair for it, because he did very well. Also, a thing that I remember from my youth is that he travelled to Paris every spring to see what was called ‘the collection’. Coco Chanel and all the rest of them. And I remember - we had an enormous desk at home – him sitting at the desk when he came back and doing drawings with watercolours in Indian ink of the models he had seen. So much for my dad.

HLloyd: Do you know where your father’s parents came from? Hamburg?

HLayton: Yes, now, funnily enough I know little, or virtually nothing about my father’s father. In fact he died before I was born, though he lived to a very ripe old age, but certainly - I have seen his birth certificate - he came from Hamburg and his parents came from Hamburg and they were an old Hamburg Jewish family. His mother - now there is quite a story to that - her name was Arnfeld, her maiden name, I have got the Arnfelds’ family tree, which goes back for God knows how many generations, and they came from Bernburg in Germany. My great grandfather was the man who first either invented or constructed the little push carts the post offices used in those days, made of clay, two wheeled with two handles - I’ve got a picture somewhere and in fact I have got the menu of a celebration when they produced, probably the thousandth little cart from the Royal Prussian Post Office, and they did themselves well. Now, the Arnfelds were a hard, long living family. My grandmother Louise lived till she was 87. She had a collision with a kid on a scooter when she was 79, broke her femur and walked again without the aid of a stick within a year. Her last recorded words in this world were to a nurse who looked after her for the last two weeks of her life, to whom she is alleged to have said, You needn’t smile, my girl, I haven’t gone yet. And that is my grandmother down to a tee, the original iron lady. If you saw a photograph of her you would realise it, she ruled her family with an iron fist. Anyway, that was my grandmother. Funnily enough, just to sidetrack a little bit - but it is a proper family story - in 1938/39 I took lessons in commercial English from a gentleman who had lived in England but had also been commercially busy in Chicago. My parents thought, obviously rightly, that this might be useful to me one day. This chap some way along the road

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said to me, Oh Mr Levy, do you have a relative in Newcastle in England? I said, Not that I know. I said, Why? He said, In 1923 I met a gentleman in Newcastle and his voice was exactly the same as yours. Now, you must admit it is a bit unusual, so I said, What was his name? He said, Percy Arnfeld. I said, Good God, it can't be. So I went home and said, Dad, do we have a cousin in England, or relative in England? -Not that I know of, said he. -Percy Arnfeld? -Oh, good God, said he. He was the black sheep of the family. In 1905 they gave him £5, put him on a ship and got rid of him.

HLloyd: What do you know about your mother's family?

HLayton: Well, my mum was born on 16th March 1889, her maiden name was London, and in fact there are all sorts of stories about the Londons. There is certainly some Dutch background there, as is, too, my grandfather's wife - her maiden name was Heilburt - some of them, who originally came from Amsterdam, went to live in Altona, which is just outside Hamburg and converted to Judaism. They were Roman Catholic, from which I take it, though I have got no proof of it, that they were probably Spanish Jews going back 500 years who were of course kicked out of Spain and settled in Amsterdam. They moved from Amsterdam to Altona and reconverted to Judaism. At least that is my theory. Now, my grandfather's name was David Marcus London, his father's name was Marcus David London, known as David. His father's name was David Marcus London, etc. There is one story about the Londons which I think maybe should be preserved. Family legend has it that we are descendants of a legendary Rabbi, who was also known as the one-day king of Poland. Poland in those days - I am going back about 300 years - the kings were elected, and they were elected in the *Sejm*, that was the Polish parliament, by the nobles. But the constitution said they had to agree who was to be king when the old king died within a certain timespan and they couldn't agree, and in the end one of them said, I know a very clever Rabbi, let's call him and ask him for advice. So they called him, his name was Saul Katzenellenbogen. He eventually became known as Saul Wahl, *Wahl* being German for 'elected', or 'elector', and he answered quite simply, Gentlemen, I suggest you make me your king, and as soon as you agree who you really want I will resign. They did just that, within 24 hours they had agreed, of course, and he resigned. Known in history as the one-day king of Poland, and allegedly I am a descendant of his.

Back to my mum, I can't tell you a great deal about her. She lived for her husband as many women did in those days. She was a wonderful hostess. My parents gave great dinner parties. They went out a lot to theatre, restaurants, what have you, but she was always there to side [*sic*], said very little; I mean like me, like my son, he was an extrovert, runs in the family. So she used to sit there and say nothing, except of course he was over 6 feet tall and she barely made

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five. And one thing I do remember is that when we had company she always sat in a straight backed chair on the edge, absolutely straight upright, which I presume she thought made her look a little bit taller. You've heard about my father's business, well, my mother was always extremely well dressed. She was a walking advertisement for the

company. Other than that I can't really tell you a great deal about her, but that's my mother, and you have heard the background of the London family.

HLloyd: If your father wished that he had been on the stage, did he take you to the theatre a great deal when you were young?

HLayton: No, but he sent me! [laughs] No, yes, I was in fact in Germany of course, and they don't have pantomime, so I was taken to— they do a fairy tale on the stage, and I remember being taken to that when I was a youngster. But the first real visit on my own— I remember my father was very fond of opera and thanks to him and I— he said to me - I was maybe 15 or 16 - he said, they are showing *Carmen* at whatever theatre it was, I think the Hamburg State Opera, and he said, now *Carmen*, if you would like an introduction to opera, is one of the easy ones. And, if you go— he bought me the ticket, see if you like it. Well, I did, and I liked it and I have been an opera fan ever since. Then again there is a little come-back on that one. When the 8th Army got to Italy I had a few days off and I went to the opera in Taranto, and got myself a box for the price of a packet of fags as was in those days. And sat next to an Italian and that was *Carmen*, but he took it on board that this barbarian English gentleman needed educating, I wish I could have shut him up, I got a running commentary all through the opera. So much for *Carmen*. Yes, eventually I went to theatre to see plays. Funnily enough I did *Macbeth* at school which is still my favourite Shakespeare play.

HLloyd: Tell me about your schooling.

HLayton: Oh my God, I would be frowned upon today, I went to a prep school. I have since been told, and I am not surprised, that it was the best that Hamburg had to offer. I was lazy. But I made it well enough to be sent to, it was called Die Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums. 'Gelehrtenschule' was really 'academy', 'Johanneum' because the man who founded it was called Johannes, we say John. Or Germans of course say Hans, I don't know if you know but John and Hans both go back to Johannes. And the Germans, who in education made everything go into Latin, called it the Johanneum, and of course Latin was the first language to learn, English was the second language. And it was, as you gathered by now, very much a classical education. Greek mythology, languages, biology, zoology, chemistry, physics. Chemistry I couldn't get on with, physics was something I really took to. Had life continued to be normal, it was my aim to go to university

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and study physics with a particular slant towards electronics. Electronics fascinated me and in fact by the time I was 13 or thereabouts I used to build radios. That was my hobby, you could do that in those days, you could buy all the bits and put them together and it was very useful apart from being fascinated by it. It was a useful source of supplementing my pocket money, building radios for friends and relatives and so on. But of course Hitler spoilt my plan and there was [indistinct] to electronics but I am still very interested. And that really is it, there is not a great deal to say about education. I came bottom of the class in Latin.

HLloyd: Did you do Greek?

HLayton: Sorry?

HLloyd: Did you do Greek as well?

HLayton: Hitler saved me from that if I can put it like that. Yes, I got kicked out just before I got to that. But, strangely enough, in 1944 the army sent me to Greece. '45 the war was over and I stayed with my unit and spent two and a half years there. In fact I can do a fair bit of modern Greek but not the ancient Greek.

HLloyd: What about the German literature? Did you study much German literature?

HLayton: Oh yes. I had in fact— I had two extremely good teachers, one was my form master, Herr Professor Doctor Benno Dietrich. I was occasionally reminded of him when I saw *The Blue Angel*. He was an extremely good teacher, and he did German literature as well as German grammar. I didn't know anything about grammar, German, English or otherwise, I speak as I feel and if I get it wrong, so what! Certainly, my wife used to frequently correct me about split infinitives, nobody cares today. So, that was that, but there were two other notable teachers, one was the history master and here is the curious thing: he was a Nazi. After 1933 he used to come to school in his SA uniform, and he was an anti-Semite. Though, in fairness to him, he marked my work no different to anybody else's and I got so fascinated by history - there on the shelf somewhere is my exercise book from those days. Because he taught history not as to when whatever king came on the throne, but why, and social history, all of which is much more interesting. He is responsible for the fact that, to this day, I am fascinated by history. I am reading a book - you might have seen it there at the moment - which is about Tibetan history. Every programme that there is on television about history I will watch it or record it. What a funny contrast, here is a man, an utter Nazi, hater of Jews, and yet he is responsible for that.

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The other teacher noteworthy was my English teacher who was an Oxford graduate. He was a German but had studied at Oxford. So I learned to speak English, 'my dear, with a most frightful upper class accent, you know', which was fine till I came to England. I went to work on a farm, and the Kentish farm workers, I can tell you, polished that off within a week. I mean, I was teased, you can imagine and so the sooner I got rid of it the better. And the week after that I learned a few words that I hadn't been taught in school, which were supplemented by a few more when I joined the army. Education, well that was it, by the time I was 16 I got kicked out of school. And became a commercial apprentice.

HLloyd: Still at school, did you do music, art or sport?

HLayton: Well, in Germany in those days, if you went to that sort of school everything was compulsory. My music teacher called me a *Brummer*, because my singing was as my speaking, I couldn't have hit a note to save my life. But of course I learned to read music, I learned a bit of piano playing. Art, I was totally hopeless, I love art, I mean I have been to the Prado, I have been to the National Gallery, I have been to the Louvre. I love it, but I couldn't draw anything, again to save my life I couldn't draw or paint. So again, yes, there were two things I was reasonably good at, cross country running, because I was an absolute lightweight, and if you are a lightweight you don't use that much energy. And swimming. Why swimming I don't know, but they got so fed up trying to teach me they threw me in at the deep end. And I could swim. And I still go regularly to swim because I love doing it and what's more it helps to keep me fit, of course.

HLloyd: What did you do in your spare time when you were at school?

HLayton: [Laughs] What did I do? Can I tell you one other thing? I had a nickname at school, Tarzan. Two good reasons: again, because of my light weight I was good at climbing, and I could always— when it came to climbing the ropes in the gym, I was up there first. I was also the first one to grow hairs on my chest, so 'Tarzan' it was. Sorry, what was the question?

HLloyd: What did you do in your spare time?

HLayton: My spare time? Well, I built radios, for one thing. When I was 11 my father was a philatelist. He gave me a cigar box full of swaps and said, Herbert, have a look at this, if you are interested I will buy you an album. Well, Herbert was interested and I got an album, and I have been collecting stamps ever since. I specialise in German stamps, because that is such a tremendous wide field .

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[Door bell rings.]

Would you excuse me, I am sorry.

HLloyd: Did you have any brothers and sisters.

HLayton: Well, I told you about my twin brother earlier on. Yes, I did have a sister, seven years older than me. We never quite hit it off. I mean, boys always have a resentment against older sisters, particularly when in 1925 my parents went to Venice and took my sister and decided in those days a six year old boy was not regarded as old enough to travel. Now they travel at six months. And I was left at home. Left at home in charge of me was an aunt. And I resented it, and I resented it even more when I got a postcard from Venice showing my parents and my sister feeding the pigeons in St Mark's Square as they all do. I don't think I have ever forgotten it, and in revenge one day I bit the red nose off a rubber doll my sister was very fond of, and she never forgave me for

that, I think. And then, of course, when she got a bit older still, when my parents went out she was the babysitter, so it was not— I mean, she made it to England before I did and we reunited when I came here, but we built a relationship which was reasonable for a brother/sister relationship and after I got married and my wife and I had children, she was very good to them. But, it was never 100% and in 1952/53 she said the German government has passed restitution laws and I should get— she said she would pursue it, and it would be easier if she could pursue it for both of us and I said yes, and then in 1954 she came to us and said she was going to Germany for a few months. She had given up her job. She had a friend over there as well as cousins, because some of my cousins survived because they were only half Jewish. And she was going to pursue these claims for restitution and she would be back in a few months. Now then, what made me say it— but I said, Trude, if you go you won't come back. Oh, yes I will, no I will come back. And she went, and she didn't come back till a long time later she had to come back for medical reasons. That is a very sad story. But I think in her mind she thought she was going back to where she left off, and of course she wasn't. Apart from my cousin, her aunts and uncles were no longer there, her parents were no longer there, they died in Auschwitz. She became depressed; unfortunately the friend she knew was fond of a drop of brandy and she as well had a drop of brandy, and when she became more depressed it was another drop of brandy and within six months she was an alcoholic. Then she was pursued by people from whom she took alcohol, from whom she took money to buy alcohol. When she moved out of one digs they found eight or nine empty gin bottles under her bed. Then it turned out she bought them on the account of the people she lived with and it went from bad to worse. Then in 1958 - she sort of disappeared from time to time - in 1958 my cousin managed to track her down and I went over to Germany and between us we managed to persuade her to go to a private clinic. And they dried her out. Except of course it was successful

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only in the sense that she took no more alcohol. I brought her back to England in '59, at the end of the cure. But she was so depressed that after breakfast she'd lie down and not do a thing. So my wife and I came home to get dinner in the evening and then she'd have dinner and lie down again. She was absolutely, totally, utterly depressed and I am not sure whether the reason she died was anything to do with this, but my wife was home one day and they had lunch together and Trude suddenly vomited. But the thing that is in your throat that should regulate whether it is air or food that is going this way or that way didn't work, and the food that came back was pushed down into her lungs and she died within a few minutes. That was the unfortunate end of my sister. I don't think she ever was a terribly happy person. But you know there are people like that, whether she was always depressed, maybe she was. But depression wasn't recognised to the same degree in those days.

HLloyd: Were your parents quite learned people? Were they book readers?

HLayton: Well, my father certainly was, he was very learned. My father in fact - you asked me about ancient Greek - used to take me by the hand - we had a flat with a very

long corridor - and march up and down this corridor with me reciting, I think it was Homer, *The Iliad*, in Greek, something I can't do to this day, although I have read it in English. Yes, he was a very learned man, he certainly had what was known as a good education. He also spoke French, for business reasons, and for a reason I have never found out he also knew a bit of Czech. But where that came in I have no idea, but yes, certainly, books he read a great deal, he listened to the radio. I remember the first radio we ever had, yes, theatre, lectures, all sorts of things. My mother, I don't know. I have no idea about her education. I mean, you go back to the days when the education of girls didn't seem to matter that much. I mean she was quite clever, she was not lacking in brain, but how far it had been developed, by education, I have no idea. Certainly, my sister went to a grammar school. Yes, so much for education.

HLloyd: Did you have any domestic servants?

HLayton: Oh God, yes. [laughs] Well, we had a seven roomed flat. Part serviced, certainly the heating was provided, the hot water was provided, there was a chute for the rubbish and there was a dustbin that went straight to the cellar. We had a live-in maid too, again Hitler put the kybosh on that. Also we had a daily woman, I can't remember if she came every day of the week. But certainly my mother was queen of the household, but my mother did quite a lot of the cooking. She was a very good cook, she really was an extremely good cook, which is something these days, isn't it, something we have all forgotten how to do, I think.

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HLloyd: Did you keep a kosher household?

HLayton: No, I'll tell you my father's view of religion, which is identical to mine. My dad said, Look, when the ancient Jews, or Hebrews, came out of Egypt refrigeration had not been invented. Pork goes off quicker than anything else. Moses who was a clever operator took it on board that if he said to the assembled brethren, look chums, you mustn't eat pork, they would have said, who the hell are you to tell us what to eat. So he went up the mountain, and we all know about the burning bush, and he came down and he said, The Lord said you must not eat pork, so they obeyed him because the Lord said it, not him. Now since then, said my dad, they have invented refrigeration and so fine, and so we had pork, and so do I, for exactly the same reason. And for exactly the same reason I am afraid I am going to tell this to the Jewish community at large that I wasn't circumcised, because he said it was a hygienic method in the desert. Today we have showers, we don't need it. And so that was his attitude towards religion. I think he believed in God, he never talked a lot about it. And like so many other Jews, of course, he believed in assimilation, as they did in those days. To think the more they are like their neighbours the less there was a chance of anti-Semitism ever arising again: unfortunately he was wrong about that, as were thousands of others. Now, I remember him saying in 1938, oh, it will blow over, we have seen it before, it has come, it will go again but, alas, it didn't this time.

HLloyd: What was your mother's attitude towards religion?

HLayton: I've no idea. I couldn't tell you my mother's attitude on anything. Look, let me tell you something, the reason you asked me about my father's family, the reason I know nothing about his father and their family, he never talked about it, he never talked about religion, apart from the bit I told you. He never talked about politics. I would imagine he voted liberal, slightly to the right, but I don't know. He never talked about it. But I have no idea what his religious views were. He never talked, certainly to me, either to me or my sister, I think.

HLloyd: Did you ever go to the synagogue?

HLayton: No, except for my uncle's wedding. No, I don't remember ever being taken to the synagogue, but I do remember when my mother's brother got married. Again, my father's brother and his sister both married what the Germans called Aryans, what you now probably call Christians. My mother's brother - there was also a sister - but my mother's brother married a Jewish girl and they got married in Berlin. And I was taken to the synagogue there, and I was nine years old and I remember it was all new to me. And I never went to a synagogue again till I came to England. I have been to synagogues a

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time or three since then, I got married in a synagogue in fact, because my wife - for some peculiar reasons, because they are not regular synagogue goers, but my wife's family insisted, but it is very rare for me to go, I do go occasionally.

HLloyd: Were most of your parents' friends Jewish?

HLayton: Oh, yes, not all of them by any means, but I think most of them were, the ones I remember. My dad was very close - my father was not close to his brother or sister, his sister possibly because they lived elsewhere. His brother was a banker. Now, I think there is a little family quarrel here. He took his brother's advice about investments and lost a great deal of money, if not most of it, in the Wall Street crash. And so my father and his brother did not seem to hit it off too well, and I think that was the reason. Though again it is partly conjecture. My mother's brother my parents were very close to, they used to play bridge together, which was fine because my uncle had three children, they were a bit younger than me, with whom I used to play because I was taken along. They played on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, my uncle had a big garden, outside if the sun was there, and I played with my little cousins, and those are the three - that's the uncle who went to the United States - those are the three cousins that I still have in the United States, and up there is a photograph of my three cousins, their spouses, their children, about three apiece, their husbands or wives, their children, that picture shows me in the middle of 34 American cousins, now that is quite something. That was a family reunion that the youngest of the cousins organised on the outer banks of North Carolina, an occasion not to be forgotten, the background of that picture is the Atlantic Ocean.

HLloyd: Now, back in Hamburg, were most of your own friends Jewish when you were at school?

HLayton: No, because I went to an ordinary German school. Most of my friends were not. It was a mixed bag, I had some Jewish friends, of course, you know, funnily enough all my girlfriends were Jewish. But that was probably when I was 14 when Hitler came to power. I think it was a natural consequence of Hitler coming to power, but certainly my first girlfriend, Susan, was Jewish and that was a very innocent affair. I think I was about 15 and so was she. Of course by then I had joined a Jewish Sports Club, because by then Jews were no longer allowed to partake in other people's sports as it were. My next girlfriend was called Carmen that went to the sort of cuddling and kissing stage. Are you interested in this? I think I broke it up because she became a bit too possessive. And then the phone went late one night and there was nobody there, and then it went a night or two later, even later in the night, by the third time my dad got totally fed up, because he probably guessed that it had something to do with me. And at that time there was a German hit tune, and it was called *Nachts ging*

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das Telephon, das weiss ich schon, das kannst nur du sein. 'The telephone went at night, I knew at once it could only be you.' I typed it out and sent it to her and there were no more phone calls. My next girlfriend, of whom I have very fond memories, developed into a very torrid love affair. They talk about the 60s and sex as if it were something new, believe you me, it had been invented by the time I was 15, except of course you never talked about it. I think my parents might have guessed, but my brother was very tactful and he never said a word. But the one thing that I had in those days was a canoe, and I will tell you a story about that, there is a political story about that canoe, the Indian dugout with one paddle. I acquired a little mattress and lots of cushions, a wind-up gramophone and this was in the summer, of course, and I used to tie a bottle of beer on a bit of string and towed in the water to keep it nice and cool. Of course Hamburg had several rivers we used to go down the river, anchor under a willow tree and, you know, time passed very quickly. Now, I will tell you about the boat, because this is quite a story. This was 1938, Goebbels had banned swing, in fact I have a book here about the Hamburg swing youth, who in 1941 because they still listened to Ben Swing - records smuggled into Germany from Denmark, and I had some - were sent to concentration camps. Swing, according to Goebbels, was Jewish Negroid jazz, whatever that is, and I became extremely fond of the tune which was called 'Boo hoo, boo hoo you've got me crying for you'; and I went wild for that tune, and it was banned and I got the record smuggled in from Denmark which was not very far away, and I always played it on this canoe, on my little wind-up; and I bought some chrome letters, that high, BOO-HOO, with a hyphen, and I put it on both sides of the canoe. And the boat man was in the SA and he realised what I was doing, where I kept the boat, you see, kept begging me to take it off. What he was worried about was not the SA beating me up, he was worried about them beating him up and dragging him off to the Gestapo. I refused to take it off and they were still there in 1939 when I had to sell it. But I couldn't bring the record to England with me. I searched for it high and low, never found it, never heard it, it

vanished, till one day last summer I heard it on a programme, Sunday lunchtime, where Derek somebody plays golden oldies, and there it was, and I immediately switched off the radio, sat down and wrote a letter to the producer and said, please, please, please can I get a recording of this and I told them the story. And I had a very charming reply to say that was a lovely story you told us, we are very interested, and yes you can get the record from such and such a company, it is called American Sweet Swing, recorded by Guy Lombardo and now I have got it again, but only just. Which just shows if you wait long enough everything comes to he who waits.

HLloyd: Tell me how things changed in 1933.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 47 seconds

HLayton: Very slowly. Yes, the Germans were very clever about this. They took it on board if they'd done everything in 1933 that they did over the years till 1941 and the end of the war, even the Germans would probably have revolted, and certainly there would have been trade sanctions they couldn't have coped with. So it was very gentle. First they sacked the civil servants – well, that didn't make a tremendous impact. Then in '34/35 they sacked the Jewish teachers, except at Jewish schools, of course, and that didn't make a tremendous impression. German kids weren't chucked out of schools till about '36/37 and then they could go to Jewish schools. No great hardship, or so you kept thinking, well you can live with that. Then they banned sports clubs, then of course there was the Nuremberg laws, which made sexual intercourse between Jews and non-Jews an offence. And Jews were no longer allowed to have a live-in maid. And in '36 or '37 Jewish doctors were no longer allowed to treat non-Jews. A little turn of the screw every now and again. After the war broke out, Jews were no longer allowed to travel on trams, except on the rear platform, and eventually they were not allowed to do that, and eventually they had to get a permit from the police to travel on the train, etc etc. The screw was turned every few months just a bit more till we got to the Wannsee Conference and the extermination programme in 1941. That really is the way it was handled.

HLloyd: How did things change for you at school?

HLayton: Well, you may guess I can be persuasive. I had a very good relationship with a classmate who was extremely well built, I think his hobby was boxing. His father was a Social Democrat and he acted as an escort to me, always walked home with me, always walked to school with me, and him being that well built nobody ever – But Hamburg, I must admit, was not by any means the worst in Germany. Indeed, Hamburg, as far as the Jewish community was concerned, till Hitler really got dug in in 1939 treated the Jews – well you can't say nicely, but not nearly as badly – I remember in other towns in '34/35, there were notices on restaurants saying 'Jews not Welcome'. In Hamburg they didn't appear till 1938. I will tell you why. First, there were the docks in Hamburg, they were that bolshie, I mean the docks were known as the Red Docks: when Goering came to give a speech in 1934, the dockers booed him. It couldn't have happened anywhere else, the Hamburg government – because Hamburg then as it is now was a state in its own right – was Social Democrat, till the Nazis sacked them all and put their own people in.

Hamburg of course was in those days Europe's biggest trading port. The Hamburg people well knew they needed that trade to maintain their lifestyle and to maintain that they had to be nice to foreigners, and they couldn't let foreigners see how they were about to treat the Jews. So on the whole it wasn't nearly as bad as I gathered it was in other towns and in the countryside.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 49 seconds

HLloyd: Can you remember any changes in attitude among your fellow pupils or teachers or—

HLayton: Among teachers, yes, the SA man who suddenly turned up in uniform after '33. Many of them not— many of them were old enough to— I mean some who were probably still royalist. I mean, many must have been in their forties and fifties, the young ones were Nazis, as everybody was then, a few of us— yes, some of them got a bit nasty, but only verbally, nobody ever attacked me. I was bullied no more than the next pupil was probably bullied. I mean, everybody at school gets bullied occasionally, because either you are too thin or you are short sighted or some other reason. In my case, occasionally because I was Jewish, but no worse than Billy Bunter might have been bullied. They weren't that bad a gang.

HLloyd: How many Jewish children do you think there were in the school?

HLayton: No idea, I think there were four others in my class. In the school, probably fifty, sixty, something like that. Can I just say, there was one fellow who was extraordinarily lucky. He was born— when his mother was home, she was a German woman, a German Jewish woman, she was home from a visit to New York in 1920, for what reason I don't know. He was born on an English ship. In those days if you were born on English territory, including ships, you were British, and of course when 1935 came along he went to the British Consulate in Hamburg, got himself a British passport and he was off and away. Some people got to be lucky.

HLloyd: Can you remember any incidents on the streets in the 1930s?

HLayton: Again, not really, because— well, you know, the talk I give to Probus Clubs, called 'How to survive without really trying'? Survival is something I took on board, I think I probably took on at a very young age. If I thought I was going to run into trouble I'd change the route. Or I crossed the road. I kept out of the way of trouble, so I rarely met it, very rarely. I got shouted at two or three times, but nothing worse than that. If I ever saw the SA parading and singing their songs, I disappeared.

HLloyd: You said that your father wasn't really worried, he thought it would blow over.

HLayton: Yeah.

HLloyd: Did his attitude change at any point?

HLayton: I don't know really; the trouble has always been, my father talked very little. He did things, but he talked very little. I think he must have done, but by 1939 he was more concerned

Tape 1: 49 minutes 54 seconds

about his family, and mainly concerned about getting me out. If he was worried about himself, it certainly never came out. And as I say, he didn't talk about his own politics, he didn't talk about his view of the world. What little I know about his attitudes I gather from conversations he had with other people that I was listening in on. I regret that I know nothing about his father's ancestry. He never talked about it.

HLloyd: You said that you joined a Jewish sports club, so in a way you were becoming part of a Jewish community. Were you aware of people planning to leave?

HLayton: Oh yes, very much so, they trickled away one by one, the club got smaller. After '38, certainly, the club got smaller and smaller. I was— I should just tell you, I was captain of the handball team and I had a testimonial which the chairman of the club wrote to me when I left Germany to say I had been a good comrade and a good leader blah blah blah, and I have still got it. One thing I'm very sorry about, because I didn't know till it was too late - because he died a few years ago - that he had survived underground in Hamburg. I very much regret not having— who would have thought it, I knew nothing about it, and I learned when he died that he had been there all the time, and I wish I had met him again. *C'est la vie.*

HLloyd: Tell me what you did when you left school.

HLayton: I became a commercial apprentice, which was one of the few things open to me. You couldn't go to university, you couldn't get a job within factories. I became a commercial apprentice.

HLloyd: What year was this?

HLayton: 1936, I think. I think, if I remember rightly, I wouldn't swear to it now, I think I left school end of 1935 or early 1936, I became a commercial apprentice some time later on in '36. We had what is now called day release to go to a commercial college, where in fact I also did commercial English, I learned to type which is something that stood me in very good stead. What else I learned I can't remember. The firm I worked for was a metal wholesaler, so apart from— oh yes, bookkeeping I did at school, so apart from bookkeeping and correspondence I did learn something about metals and measurements and land pipes and iron pipes and all the rest of it, knowledge which never was of any great use to me afterwards. But I earned some money.

HLloyd: Was it a Jewish firm?

Tape 1: 52 minutes 58 seconds

HLayton: Oh yes, other people were no longer allowed to employ Jews. And then of course that firm was *gleichgeschaltet*, in other words it was taken away. I mean, they were paid a pittance. It was taken away from the owners and given to German people. And then, of course, I had to leave because they were no longer allowed to employ Jews. So, I was a commercial apprentice only for two years and a bit. And after that I didn't do any work, I did nothing, well I wouldn't say I did nothing, but I didn't do any paid work.

HLloyd: What did you do?

HLayton: Built radios. Certainly I did more for the sports club. No, swimming was out after '38, we were no longer allowed to go swimming either. Still, I kept myself occupied. The other thing I did, of course, was having built myself a radio powerful enough to receive the BBC I used to take down news that the Germans never got to hear of and circulate it amongst friends that I knew were— that they were Jewish was a foregone conclusion, but you had to be careful even then, some people are prone to talk, even when they know they shouldn't, but it got circulated to some people. And occasionally I got copies of *The Times* from a gentleman who lived nearby who worked at the British Consulate. The copies of *The Times* had the bits in that the censor had snipped out before it was on sale in Hamburg. But that's how I occupied my time. I was politically active. I belonged to an underground group of young socialists who, touch wood, were never discovered; mind, it was a very loose group and we really didn't do anything except talk. I mean, there was nothing else you could have done. We met, we talked and—

HLloyd: How did that come about since your parents were not socialists?

HLayton: I have no idea; nobody has ever asked me that question before. Possibly— I don't know, it probably— young people tend to be rebellious. In the *milieu* - sorry to use a French word, but there is no translation for it - in which my parents lived, they were all business people; they were all well-to-do people till the Nazis came along. I think it was a natural rebellion. You sided with the workers, I was occasionally taken to my father's business, and, you know, while my mother was being fitted for a new dress I would talk to the girls in the office or the girls who did the sewing and I got to know them, I think probably quite well. And then of course there was our daily woman. I played a lot, the flat where we lived had a— what would you call it these days, a janitor, whatever, a bloke whose domain was mostly in the cellar, firing the boilers. He had two boys, one a year younger than me, one a year older, and we played in the road. Whatever my parents were, they were not snobs, I played with— for want of a better phrase, I played with working-class children. Those were not the only two, but they were probably the main two. You pick things up, don't you, when you are 12,13,14. Oh yes, I became a Social Democrat then and joined the Labour

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Party in '49 and became a Councillor eventually and left the Labour Party two years ago when I could no longer stand Tony Blair. I am still the socialist he isn't.

TAPE 2

HLloyd: H Layton Tape Two. Can you tell me what your memories are of Kristallnacht.

HLayton: Yes, I walked straight into it, that's one occasion I walked straight into it. I mean my personal memory is that I think we had a feeling there was something about, or something going to happen, but certainly - I gather in some families somebody phoned somebody else and the news spread around - we hadn't heard of it, and I went out that morning to go to - I don't know where, but I went to one of Hamburg's underground railway trains and there were two SS men and since there was someone Jewish-looking, that was it. They arrested me and took me to a nearby police station and we were held there for some hours. And then they had been and arrested my father at his place at work and from there in the late afternoon/early evening we were all taken to Hamburg prison where they assembled - it must have been a few thousand, because Hamburg had a very large Jewish community and we were all put on a train and taken to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, where we arrived on a bitterly cold night, I should think it was around midnight, one o'clock in the morning and we were marched into the camp and lined up in front of the electrified wire and there we had to stand for I think it must have been something like 12 hours and we were not allowed to move. Whether you needed the loo or not didn't matter, if you needed the loo you had to do it where you were standing.

HLloyd: Were you with your father?

HLayton: Well, he was somewhere in the same block as it were and we finished up in the same block, it was called - the hut we all slept in - I think it housed 600. Lying on the floor on a little bit of straw and the only way they could get us all in - that was the following night - was for everyone to lie on their side in three rows, on our side one against the other like sardines in a box. And, yes, my dad was in the same hut, block, whatever you like to call it. And from there on we had to work. You were called out to parade on what was called the Appell Platz, to be counted, as soon as it was light. Largely unwashed because 600 people had five or ten minutes to share about 20 taps. So you had to do your ablutions in that time then you paraded and they counted you, and they counted you again and again and again till they got the numbers right and then you were marched off to work. To work meant you were - had in the meantime been given World War 1 soldiers' uniforms with a sort of button-down jacket, but you had to wear it back to front and they had a sort of tail, and you held the tail up like that, I don't know if the camera can take this on board, but it is in front of me anyway,

Tape 2: 3 minutes 51 seconds

and another prisoner would put a large boulder in it and you ran up the hill and dropped it and ran down the hill to get another, you ran up the hill with that. There was of course another trooper who started at the top of the hill and ran down the hill and ran up the hill without one. And so it was an everlasting chain, and that went on till lunchtime, when we were given 20 minutes and a little bit of watery soup and then we did it till dark. And then you fell in and you were marched back into camp and then you were counted again. That could take an hour, it could take two hours, and then eventually you got your evening meal which was more watery soup and a large chunk of very dry bread and you went to sleep and the next day that was it, day in, day out, day in, day out, time after time after time.

HLloyd: How old were you?

HLayton: In 1938 I was 19. I mean, fortunately I was fit. You gathered I was into sport and I kept myself fit. It was very much more difficult for the older people. My dad seemed to have kept fairly well, but some people didn't, of course. Again, survival, I talked to people who had knowledge of some things that I thought might be useful and I learned how to get a temperature and I learned how to fake illness and there was camp hospital - the one thing the Germans were frightened of, of course, was typhus. There was no medicine, you went into hospital and you either got better or you died. But there was some Jewish doctors who had charge of you and one or two Jewish nurses. So after three or four weeks I got myself into hospital, which gave me a bit of a rest, to take breath and gather your strength, and of course the temperature was gone in two or three days' time and I think from the fourth day I managed to put the thermometer in a cup of hot something when nobody was looking. You had to be careful with that sort of thing because the beatings were fearful. I mean they really were, if you survived a beating you really were made of hard material, so you exercised a little bit of caution, but after five days/six days it was obvious I was no longer ill. I went back to the old routine, as you might say. Then my dad was released on grounds of age, I mean, they still had some sort of- no, humanity's the wrong word, but you know what I mean. Then one day I was called into the office and the Camp Commandant said that if I would sign a form to say that I would be out of the country in six months, I would be released, but if I wasn't out of the country within six months I would be back in the concentration camp. Well, of course I signed, you would have to be stupid not to. Oh, excuse me. So I was given my clothing back, and everything I had in my pocket, down to the last halfpenny and my cigarette case - young men used to carry cigarette cases in those days. And because we were by then fairly hard up, I smoked my cigarettes half at a time, and it was there, on the- I mean, you know they'd logged it, as the police do when they arrest somebody, you know, "Three Marks and 25 pence, one pen, one pencil, one tie pin, whatever, one cigarette case, three ½ cigarettes".

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It said so there on the paper, and I had to check that there were three ½ cigarettes there and sign for them. But I was given a railway warrant to get me home. I went to Berlin

where we had cousins and spent the night with them. Of course, everybody would know where you had been because your hair was totally shorn off, and I hate wearing hats, so I didn't. And my cousins put me on the train to Hamburg the next day. Happy family reunion and that was that.

HLloyd: How long were you in Sachsenhausen?

HLayton: Oh, about three months, I think. Something like that.

HLloyd: Did you see people die from beatings?

HLayton: Oh yes, it was one of those things that you shut out of your mind unless somebody mentions it. Yes, I have seen people badly beaten and died as a result within a day, two, three days maybe. I also have seen people savaged by dogs. But it's like the army and the war, you tend to forget the real evil things you see in your life, if only because I think you probably couldn't live with them.

HLloyd: Your father was already back at home when you arrived home?

HLayton: Yeah. Fortunately he didn't suffer any— I mean he suffered, but no great damage physically, and as far as I am concerned no great damage mentally. I think I will come back to my grandmother and the Levy family. Not only did my grandmother live to be 87, but all my ancestry, some of them into the 90s, and that's three or four generations ago when the average lifespan was what, 50 or 60, so I think we are probably made of fairly tough stuff, I like to think I am, but who knows.

HLloyd: What did you do next?

HLayton: I haven't a clue! What did I do next?

HLloyd: What plans did you make to leave?

HLayton: Well, again, you see, you've got to go back to the pre-war family. Whatever was done, father did it, you didn't, and my father pulled whatever strings he could pull. My sister was already in England then, was she? Yes. Oh, hang on a minute, no, but she came to England soon after, and I think it was April, and she was commissioned by my father, and told, do what you possibly could, and she got in touch with what was generally known as Bloomsbury House. Bloomsbury House was where the Jewish Board of Deputies had

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their offices and the Jewish charities had their offices and the Jewish anything else had their offices.

Now, in those days, I should tell you there were two conditions for young people to come to England other than in domestic service that is how my sister came. She found a job as a domestic servant with a family who owned 2 chemist shops in Chislehurst. And, the conditions for boys to come in, since boys didn't usually come as live-in maids - I don't see why not, but it wasn't done in those days, was it. The condition was that you had to have a job to train, as a carpenter or an electrician or a builder or whatever, and also somebody to stand a guarantee of £100 to make sure you didn't become a charge on the state. Well, the people my sister lived with used to go on their holidays, which they spent on a farm in Broadstairs in Kent, and got in touch with the farmer to see if he would take on what you might call a farming apprentice, and the Jewish community found - I think it was Lord somebody or other, I don't remember his name, who gave the guarantee for £100 and so I got my visa. And so I left Hamburg on, I think it was 24th August, on the liner Washington, via Le Havre, to Southampton, where I think I arrived on 27th, and of course, as we all know, Hitler marched into Poland on 1st September. One of the earliest recollections I have is Chamberlain's speech on 3rd September when he said, 'Now a state of war exists between us and Germany'. So of course the man was a bit of a fool to believe what Hitler told him. We are back to what people can and cannot conceive, I think. As the greatest prime minister of the old school, he just could not conceive that a statesman, a prime minister, a president would tell him a lie, he just couldn't take that on board. Anyway, that is general history, nothing to do with me, but that was my arrival here, roughly.

HLloyd: Did your parents have any plans to leave themselves?

HLayton: No. Again it's a sad story, his brother, the banker, went to South America. Now I think his brother the banker made plans well in advance, and as a banker he knew how to get his money out. And I think being in banking he probably guessed more than my father did and, I would imagine, got a great deal of his money out to South America, where he lived till the war was over. As did his step - his daughter, oh, it is all so complicated. My uncle was married twice, his daughter was married twice, her second husband was also a banker, who also got his money out and also went to South America and I've been to visit him in Brazil, long story. The moment the war was over my uncle came back from Quito, in Ecuador, to London and besieged the Home Office for a permit to return to Germany, which he did in 1946, and carried on where he left off, back into the banking business. I have somewhere or other a copy of the Hamburg paper, with my uncle on the front page, to say it's his 80th birthday, as the oldest still working stockbroker on the Hamburg Exchange.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 3 seconds

HLloyd: What was his name?

HLayton: Alexander Levi. And I have an envelope somewhere, no I have a photograph of an envelope, which I got hold of because somebody featured it in a philatelic magazine because of the cancellation, an envelope from the 1920s which on the front has an imprint which says, 'Alexander Levi, Bankier'. Funny how these things turn up.

I also – can I divert for a moment, I have a postcard, which I found at a stamp fair, it says *Gebrüder*, that is ‘brothers’, Harpert, it was a postcard, but there was a commercial message on the other side. Now Harpert is not a very common name, but my father’s sister married Gustav Harpert. Now, I wondered if there was a connection, so I phoned his son who still lives in Germany - they were half Jewish and they escaped. I said Klaus, Gebrüder Harpert. He said, my dad’s firm, what about it? He said, well it was his firm till the late 1920s and then he separated from his brother and they did something else each. I said, well I have a postcard here that I found at a stamp fair, that I bought because of the stamp, and then discovered that it was addressed to Gebrüder Harpert, and there was a chuckle at the other end of the line, and I said, What’s the joke. He said, You don’t know about my father’s business? I said, No, You came to visit us, but we played as kids. And I’ll show you something in a minute, what he did for a living. He said, Well, Brothers Harpert manufactured French letters. I said, Oh, what a family I have got. And he said, Well, they gave it up, I think in 1928. He said, But I was taken when I was five to the factory and somebody being careless, I found one lying on the floor and no one would tell me what it is. Now when they came to visit, my cousins - children in those days - when the parents had coffee, *Kaffee und Kuchen* is the common phrase, ‘coffee and cake’, the children were given cocoa. Now, if you look up there, and I can get it down for the camera if you want to later on, is something that I have never seen anywhere else in the world. That mauve thing in the middle is a cocoa pot, one of the few things that survived. Anyway, so much about my uncle.

HLloyd: You have mentioned quite a lot of family heirlooms and documents and objects that you brought with you. Were you able to bring all those in August 1939?

HLayton: No, I didn’t bring them with me, in fact, I brought very few things with me. Because my father, I think by 1942, took it on board that his sister might survive, he left a number of things with her, for safe keeping. Strangely enough, see that little black tea trolley which I now use for my fax machine? That was my parents’, it comes to pieces, my aunt took it home with her. She returned it via my sister after the war. Various other odds and ends, parts of my father’s stamp collection, the documents I have mostly came from my American cousins, they are mostly to do with the London family.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 30 seconds

HLloyd: What about your school history book?

HLayton: That I brought with me, God knows why. But, I was interested in history, I was attached to that.

HLloyd: Were you stopped at all on the journey?

HLayton: No, I mean again, taking chances, I am an awful gambler. I mentioned my girlfriend earlier on, now when you left the country you had to submit to the Gestapo a list of things you were taking with you. You were not allowed to take new things, like

new coat, new dress, suit, whatever. And they sent a Gestapo agent to supervise the packing. And I roped in my girlfriend. Now I had an enormous stroke of fortune, I told you that, when I go back to my youth, my misspent youth, as I tell people. My parents had to give up their flat and were given one room in a Jewish old people's home. This was the start of creating ghettos. My uncle was more fortunate, he kept his flat, so I went to live with my uncle, because he had a seven room flat. My girlfriend lived with her mother - her father had died years ago - would you believe, in the flat above, upstairs. They were kicked out by the landlord, so mother and daughter also got a room with my uncle so, hey presto, I lived in the same flat as my girlfriend. Oh God, we could only pray that they went out as often as they possibly would and we had a wonderful time of it. Anyway, I drilled her that when the Gestapo aide came to supervise the packing she was there to distract him. Oh, would you like a coffee mister, and he would, and his back was turned, and she in fact lured him out of the room for a moment, out went the old coat and in went the new coat covered with a couple of old shirts. I mean looking back on it, it was totally stupid, had he turned back a moment too soon I would have finished up in a concentration camp, I wouldn't be here today. But, that's me, I take chances. So I did bring - I brought my own stamp collection and that certainly, to use an ill phrase, wasn't quite kosher, I don't know when that went in, but his back was turned taking a sip of coffee and in went my stamp collection. Mind you, I will also say this: I have an idea - I have got a shrewd knowledge, getting to know people and their attitudes very quickly - I have an idea he wasn't all that bothered, he was doing a job. I think he was doing a job not because he was anti-Jewish, or possibly because he was a Nazi, he probably came from the criminal police originally and did a job because that was his living. Anyway, I got away with blue murder and I brought some things with me.

HLloyd: And what happened to your girlfriend?

HLayton: She went to New York eventually. We lost touch. I think it was inevitable. If - I don't know, do you ever marry your first real love, I don't know. I haven't had that experience because, I mean, we were separated, one of them - to be quite honest, one of the reasons, I mean I don't give two hoots who knows

Tape 2: 22 minutes 0 second

about my private life, I've never been shy about that. One of the reasons we went at it like demented, [was] because we knew it was probably coming to an end soon. That somebody was going to split us up, a concentration camp, immigration, sudden death, whatever. No, I left before she did, but she and her mother managed, eventually like my uncle later did, and we did correspond.

HLloyd: Are you happy to name her as well?

HLayton: Her name was Vera. I think I'd like to leave it at that. I always have a [indistinct] these days, because as soon as I got here I learned an English song which was 'And the great big barrel came nearer and nearer and nearer and nearer to Vera', Music Hall and all that. Anyway we exchanged letters, and then I was interned, then I joined

the army. I think we still wrote once or twice, and then of course the army keeps moving you on and we eventually lost touch. I would quite like to know what happened to her, but I don't and to try and track down what happened to her in New York— I mean she'd be now - I've got to be careful here, I mean, I broke the law, didn't I - how many years younger than me, she was about five years younger than me, it was a little bit iffy that, my dad was worried. That is one thing he once said to me. Anyway, that's by the by. I mean, to track somebody down years later in New York would have been impossible. Let sleeping ghosts lie, I think.

HLloyd: How good was your English when you arrived in England?

HLayton: Well, my accent was absolutely fabulous, you know! Apart from that, it was pretty good. I got my— I thought it was very good actually, but I mean, fate has a way of showing you that you are not as good as you think you are sometimes, and I had several occasions in my life - I remember one of those when I said to my wife, do you think the speech I made was good, everybody else seemed to think it was fabulous, and she patted me on the back and she said, Darling, you are big headed enough as it is. I thought I knew English till I had a fractured skull and finished up in an army hospital. And that was another of my survivals, of course, because I didn't tell you earlier on - I did tell you my twin brother died - in fact, they thought it was me that was going to die, I was so weak when I was born they told my parents not to hold out too much hope, that was number one. Then I escaped from Germany, that was number two. Then I had a fractured skull, and the medical officer told my Commanding Officer, you'll bury him tomorrow, he won't live any longer than that, and I survived. And I was in a coma for four days, and he got rid of me, he didn't like the [inaudible] I think. He wheeled me to a larger medical unit, and I came round. The first thing I remember is that I was moved in on a trolley, the bloke alongside me said - I was just coming round, I was in no mood or ability to speak, but I could hear all of a sudden - and the chap said, What are you here for, mate? And he got no answer, and he asked again, and he still got no answer, and he turned to his neighbour in the next bed

Tape 2:25 minutes 30 seconds

and he said, Poor bugger doesn't even know what he's here for. The next morning there was a lady came round the ward, fortunately I was in the last bed she came to. I had no idea about matrons, I mean I hadn't been in any hospital, let alone an English one. She was dressed in a dark blue dress with an enormous white— what do they call them, what they wear on their head? She went from bed to bed, and she asked a question. Now I took it on board that before she came to me, if you said yes that was fine, if you said no, you got medicine. Then she came to me and she said, Have you moved your bowels this morning? I hadn't a clue what it meant, but I didn't want medicine so I said, Yes Ma'am. That was fine, she went away. It was five days before they discovered I was totally constipated, and by God they took their revenge. So my training—

HLloyd: So, we haven't really got you to the army yet. We have got you to a farm. Can you talk me through what happened between the farm and the army?

HLayton: Oh God, that's a very long story, because I was interned in between. Well, I worked on the farm. I hated it. I found it utterly boring, and as far as the farmer was concerned - I don't want to say anything bad about him, he did save my life: if he hadn't said yes, he would take a farming apprentice, I might never have got out of the country, and I will give him full credit for that - but from his point of view he was getting a bit of cheap labour. I had board and bed, or bed and board, and from that point of view I lived very well, I mean, farming food is good, and I learned to eat porridge like the Scots do, with salt, and I still do. But I was cheap labour, 5 shillings a week. And what did I do? I dug up potatoes all day, or I picked brussel sprouts all day, or whatever, and I was utterly bored with it. And, mind you, his wife was very good to me, she did subsidise me with cigarettes, Churchman's Number 1. They were a very good cigarette. Things like that, I got a bit on the side from her now and then, and let me say the food was excellent and you know, I can't complain except of boredom. I had also taken on board what I really wanted to do was to get into the army. So I went to Ramsgate where there was a recruiting office, and said, Please, I want to join the army. The fact that I was still technically a German didn't bother them. Though what they said was, What do you do now? - I work on a farm. They said, Go back to the farm, we need farmers, we need the grain. Soldiers we don't need at the moment. They never had no- I mean, the English army had no idea what warfare was going to be like. So I went back to the farm. Nothing I could do about it, till the government took a hand, because after France fell, and after the

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Dutch had got invaded and France fell, and there was all those horror stories about German paratroopers dressed as nuns. Typical of *The Sun* or *The Graphic*, it was then, or *The Daily Mirror*, nothing was ever true, I mean it was said after the war that there were stories made up. But of course the papers like *The Mirror* were only too happy to print anything that's made up, and probably paid someone £20,000 for it as well. And the government got a bit shaky. So all the so-called enemy aliens, refugee or otherwise, that lived in the coastal areas got interned, because they might be Fifth Columnists when the Germans invaded. What we would have done if the Germans had invaded, God only knows. But I was interned, and sent to Sandwich, and from Sandwich to Huyton, and from Huyton on a ship in August 1940 to a camp in Canada. It was a fairly eventful-eventless, journey. It was an eventful arrival. We sailed up the St Lawrence River to Quebec, and I looked at this- the St Lawrence River, the scenery round there is magnificent. It's an enormous river, and when we got to the quayside we took it on board there was Canadian soldiers lined up, bayonet fixed, there was coaches standing to take us to camp, there were police outriders with blue flashing lights. What the Canadians had been asked to do by the British government was to receive some prisoners of war. Well, there were some prisoners of war, because amongst the people they interned were some Germans who were not refugees. Strangely enough, the Germans didn't intern English people that lived in Germany till 1943, now that's something, isn't it. Well, anyway, they were kept separate on the ship, there were some German sailors and airmen, not many, and I mean, when the Canadians saw us, some of us were young and fit, yes, and some of

them were in their fifties, and some of them were disabled people and God knows what. I mean, it must have dawned on them very soon that prisoners of war we were not. And anyway they hiked us off to a camp and that was that. And meanwhile, back at the farm, as they say, in *The Guardian* in England - or the *Manchester Guardian* as it then was - started kicking up a fuss, about wasted manpower. They took it on board that some of the people, in fact, had tried to join the army; that there were scientists who would happily contribute to the war effort, there were engineers, ditto, ditto. And that was taken up by a number of MPs and hey presto, because the Canadians sent some very rude messages to the British government about prisoners of war etc., as you may imagine, the upshot of it all was that in January the Home Office sent over some civil servants to sort it all out. And anybody who wanted to volunteer for the army volunteered for the army.

HLloyd: January '41?

HLayton: January '41. So, in February '41, I boarded the *Georgic*, the Cunard's latest liner, the most modern, the fastest, which was in Nova Scotia, Halifax. Because she was a very fast liner she sailed all the way round the north of Iceland in February, early March because they reckoned she didn't need to sit in convoy because of her speed. Though she had a couple of little pom pom guns

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on the aft deck, just in case, although we never saw a U boat. But the north of Iceland tends to be a trifle rough in February. And where I have confirmation of what I have always suspected, that I don't get seasick. A number of other people didn't, a large number did. And since the ship had filled up not merely with fuel but with food in Canada, the breakfasts were of a sort that nobody in England could possibly have eaten, egg and bacon ad infinitum, porridge, marmalade, butter galore, it was paradise. It was in paradise compared to what the Canadians gave us in the camp because we got Canadian army rations. Not too bad. Of course, on that particular morning, there were 360 internees who volunteered for the army on board, and we were still being guarded by British soldiers, would you believe? I think 200 of them were hanging over the railings, you see, bringing up the breakfast they had never eaten anyway! And the stewards kept coming, would you like some more bacon, sir, another egg, because they had cooked for 300 and something people. It was out of this world. And then we got to the Irish Sea and got bombed by the German Stukka or something, but fortunately the ship wasn't hit. And then we arrived in Liverpool, got off the ship, where the police took one look at us and said, Hey, you're Germans and you are going to be interned. Or words to that effect, and we went straight onto another boat to the Isle of Man.

HLloyd: How long were you in the Isle of Man?

HLayton: Not very long, fortunately. News eventually filtered through and I went to the Camp Commandant and said I want to join the British army. Yes, he had something from the War Office about that and he looked it up and eventually I was sent for a medical. It was about June, I think, yeah, I must have been there for about three months by then, I

mean, the English civil service, like the army, work so slowly. Anyway, I was sent for a medical, I went before a medical board. For some reason, I don't know what, they decided I was totally unfit for service in the army, Category E. They wouldn't tell me why, although I heard somebody murmur about heart - I have several times recently been told by my doctor and others that my heart is as good as that of a young man, which I am very pleased about, so why they turned me down, I don't know. So, knowing how these things work in this country by then, I had sussed it out and I went to the Commandant and said, Please, Sir, I want to transfer to the Ramsey Camp - Ramsey also was on the Isle of Man. He said, Why, Levi? and I said, Well, I have a cousin there. A bare-faced lie, and I didn't think he would check up or even ask who, and he put me down for a transfer and I got my transfer. And to the Camp Commandant in Ramsey I said, Please, Sir, I want to join the army. I didn't tell him, of course, I'd already been turned down. Well, luck smiles on those deserve it occasionally, and I was sent for a medical; one medical officer fetched out of retirement was not at all happy about it. - Fit, he said. - Yes sir.

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-Sport? -I said, Swimming, sir. -Good, he said. -Jump up and down on that chair three times. I did. -Cough! I coughed. -A1. Out you go. I was in the army, A1.

HLloyd: You said that this was at the Ramsey Camp. What was the name of the camp you were at before?

HLayton: Douglas. Douglas being the capital of the Isle of Man. I would like to go back there one day. It is a lovely little place is the Isle of Man. Mind you, in Douglas - I was there, say, three month - I did join an outside working party and eventually set up a little business, since we worked on farms, to smuggle in- we were still being checked by British soldiers and to take anything out of or into the camp was strictly prohibited - but I did set up a little business bringing in eggs and bacon and things, which stood me in good stead so I had a little bit of money when I joined the army, unlike some other people. Ah, yes, then I was in the army.

HLloyd: What happened next?

HLayton: What happened next? I had a fractured skull, we have been over that bit. It was an exercise during training, it wasn't anything Jerry did to me, that came later, it was an accident with a Bren carrier or something, I don't know, I can't remember much about it. But of course you had to join the reconnaissance, you had a choice - sorry, I am going two years ahead of myself or thereabout - you had to join the Pioneer Corps, because although we could be trusted to join the army, we couldn't be trusted to fight the Germans or something. I don't know, don't ask me how the mind of these people work. Sometimes you wonder, but so we did very boring work. I learned to concrete, which has proved useful in later life, I could do a bit of bricklaying, which is another useful ability. And, we built the camp, where they are now talking about building a hostel for- now they call them asylum seekers, it was refugees in my days. Arne Court, I spent some time in Arne Court. Sorry, there were some funny stories going back in my mind, something that happened there, but I won't tell you, because it is exceedingly rude. And I went on leave,

as one did every three months, and I spent it back on the farm in Broadstairs. I went to London for three or four days, and in fact I— Now, you like good coffee? I joined the Eagle Club. Now, the Eagle Club was the club for American pilots who had volunteered to fly with the RAF before America came into the war. It was called the Eagle Club. The only place in London where during the war you could get a decent cup of coffee. So I chatted up a Yank and got myself an honorary member. Anyway, I missed the last train back to camp and I asked a Red Cap, a military policeman, where I could spend the night, and he said (this was in Victoria Station) -Round the corner, down Vauxhall Bridge

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breakfast for a shilling. That is a bargain in anybody's language, so I went; and there was a rather— I thought not a particularly handsome, but a good looking young lady who certainly sounded educated and interesting and somebody I might want to know a bit more, and I tried to chat her up and she wasn't having any, and so I got myself off to the canteen for a cup of tea, I think - the coffee was totally undrinkable - and I got chatting to another serviceman. Well, he was a coloured lad and, as one does, I said to him, where are you from, and he said he was from Bermuda. Oh, I said, I have never seen that cap badge before. It's presumably a Bermudan regiment. He said, No, it is a reconnaissance regiment. I said, Never heard of it. He said, No, it's a brand new outfit, they're looking for volunteers. I said, What do they do? He said, Armed reconnaissance, season [indistinct], home jobs and the odd operation behind enemy lines. I said, That's me, because a week or two before we had all learned, in the Pioneer Corps, that we could apply for a transfer to other regiments, so I took that very much on board; I mean you get a [indistinct] to stick your head at least part of the way above the parapet. The next morning I tried to chat up the same young lady, and I gathered she was there every Tuesday night, she was there one night a week. Well, that was useful knowledge. She wasn't having any, I went back to camp. Three months later I made sure that my leave started on a Monday, I was there on the Tuesday, and so was she. I didn't get anywhere, the following Tuesday I had to go back to camp, didn't I. And in the end I said, well, look, will you at least write to me, and she said, I will if you write to me first. And I said, Yeah, alright, give me your address. And I did, I wrote, and she wrote back. Three months later we got married. A few years later she told me she always made the same speech and I was the only one that wrote. Which I didn't think was a terribly kind thing to say, but there you go. It was 40 years of happy marriage, but unfortunately I lost her 17 years ago. Yes, we did— we were different, we were both terribly obstinate in some ways, at least according to my youngest daughter, whom I accused of being obstinate. One day she looked at me and said, Are you surprised with the parents I had? But we worked out a modus vivendi and we got on very happily, anyway that is a long story for much later. I went back to camp, I had been transferred to the reconnaissance regiment, did my initial training in Scarborough and then went on to Catterick Camp where my Commanding Officer was a chap you may have heard of. A brewer by the name of Sam Whitbread, and he was the master brewer, or a master brewer anyway, I haven't drunk his beer since. And I was singled out to be a potential officer, a PO, and we got an upside down corporal stripe, and this is why I got my voice trained by a regimental sergeant major from the Coldstream Guards. And going forward, from my political days in the

Council Chamber I can assure you, nobody but nobody has ever succeeded in shouting me down; one or two have tried, it doesn't work. Anyway, my voice was already pretty loud before, the disadvantage was that I had a one man business for many years and I could never answer the phone and say, Sorry, he's out. Because, they would damn well know I was lying. Anyway, I was a PO, and in fact I

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led my 'year', or whatever they called it, on the passing out parade, and I was the senior of the POs, and I led the whole parade, the other three led a squadron each, and I always think it's the loneliest job I have ever done in my life, you are marching across the barracks square, twenty paces in front of A squadron, you get to the corner of the square and you give 'left wheel', you get to the saluting base, so you give 'eyes right', and then you salute and, I mean, alright, you put forward the best of your voice but you consider the fact that they are twenty paces behind you, and you hope to God that they are still there. And you pray to God that they blooming well heard you, and are doing it, I mean, that you are in the ruddy [indistinct], you know. That was that, and then we went to— the six of us went to the War Office Selection Board, and the six of us got turned down. And old Whitbread was about as annoyed as I have ever seen anybody. He said, This is ridiculous, you are officer material. And of course it turned out, in my case and at least in two or three other cases, we got turned down because they offered me a commission in the infantry. I have had enough boredom in my life and I turned it down. So, anyway, he said, You go back to the War Selection Board, we need officers and you will accept whatever commission they offer you.

So I said, Sir, I want to be put on overseas draft, and he said, Why? I said, Look, I joined this army to get a gun in my hand to have a crack at the blooming Hun. Of course he knew my background from my files, obviously. And I said, I don't want to hang about here till the ruddy war is over. Well, he could see I meant it, and he said, Alright, I will put you on overseas draft. And I said, Well, thank you very much, sir. And he had me back two days later and said, The War Office suggests you should change your name. And I said, For God's sake why? And he said, Well, you are in a reconnaissance regiment, remember. And I said, So what? He said, You know what the second best chance is, don't you? I said, what is it? He said, Second best chance is that you are taken prisoner of war, and he said, Your best chance is— I need not tell you, do I? And I mean that was perfectly true, some reconnaissance regiments lost 30% of their men in Africa. So I said, Yes, I will change my name. He said, What do you want to be called? I said, Well, look, I am getting married in a week or two, so my wife to be might have a point of view on this. Can I phone her tonight? And I will tell you tomorrow. He grinned and he said, Fine. Then to [indistinct], I am awfully good at this, I go back for a moment, at this stage I remember a joke that used to be told, about an old lady who walked down

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Whitehall and said to the policeman, Excuse me, officer, whose side is the War Office on? And he most firmly said, Our side, madam! Anyway, so I phoned Phil, and I said, What do you want to be called? And she said, What do you mean? And I explained, and

she said, What do you think? Now, strangely enough, I said 'Lloyd', and she said, No, she wanted an English name not a Welsh one. Well, she was a Cockney born and bred, and why not, so I said, Well, what can you suggest? And she said, Mumble, mumble, mumble. So I said, Get a phone book, open it and I will stick a pin in it, and that is how I came to be Herbert Layton. I ditched the Leopold because I never liked it, went back to the old man in the morning and said, Herbert Layton, please and they took all my papers away and gave me a new set and Herbert Layton I became and I went on overseas draft.

Now, I don't know if you want to hear about this, but this had one come up, the fact they changed my name: that was after the war, my wife and I did discuss whether to change back to Herbert Levy or Levi in English. We debated it quite some time, but of course by then all my ex-army chums knew me as Bert Layton, I prefer Herbert but most people called me Bert, so what. My cousins still call me Herbert, thank God. And all the people my wife knew and her family and everybody else knew me as Herbert Layton. I said, Do I really want to spend the next two years to explain to 200 people why I am not who they thought I was. So we agreed to stick to Layton. Fine, I have no trouble with it, except for four or five years later, she said, Darling, we ought to take out life assurance. Life assurance, whatever for? I think even then I had the ambition to make the hundred, but anyway she said, Look, you could fall under the proverbial bus, and I will be saddled with the mortgage. £3-6-2d a month in those days, Oh God. I said, Yeah, all right. I think Margot was already born and we planned on having some more kids and so I went to see a fellow councillor, Donald McRow, who was an agent for one of the insurance companies. So I said, Mac, I want life assurance. He said, No hassle, you fill in a proposal form, we send it up to head office, and they tell you whether it is accepted or not and what the payment is. I said, Fine, and I filled it in. Two weeks later he phoned me up and said, Bert, I want your birth certificate. I said, Whatever for? He said, Life assurance is something you could be cheating. Well, that makes sense, so I dug it up. It didn't really hit me till I looked at it, of course not only was it in German, it was written in that beautiful old Gothic script, you know the one with all the corners on which no one can read. Even the Germans can't read it today. He said, I cannot read it.

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I said, You wouldn't. He said, Well, what am I going to do? Oh, he said, I'll send it up to head office and they might find someone to translate it. I will try and get rid of it. Three weeks later he phoned me up and said, It ain't yours. I said, Don't talk rubbish, Mac, of course it's mine. It doesn't have your name on it. He said, You had better come in and explain. I came in. He said, You changed your name. I said, Yes. He said, By deed poll? I said, No. By public advertisement? I said, No. He said, There is no other legal way of changing your name. I said, Yes, Barmy Council Instructions. I said, Army Council Instructions 2001 XXX 18. He said, Can I have a copy? I said, No. He said, Why not? I said, Well, look Mac, you are in politics, the same as I - although he was of the other party. I said, You know how fond the English institutions are of secrecy, I said, All Army Council Instructions are embargoed for 80 years. In 2022 you can have a copy. And to this day I can't prove who I am, but they accepted it, they wanted the premium, there was nothing else they could do. So, so much about changing my name. And then, as

I say, I got married in a synagogue in London, and I went on overseas draft, and within next to no time I was home from the 8th army.

HLloyd: What did you do in the 8th army?

HLayton: I joined the 4th reconnaissance regiment. It was as simple as that. I didn't see much of Africa, I got there too late for real action. I went to Italy and we fought our way up Italy till we get somewhere half way between Forli and Bologna. In October '44 they took us out of the line and sent us to Greece to reinvade that country, which we did with some landing craft. Just outside **Polios**, the 4th reconnaissance regiment, the British troops, were the first back in. We met virtually no opposition and as invasions go it was a bit of a doddle. It got quite interesting after that for a while. That was it, and I spent—I was then in Greece, from October or was it very early November, I think it was October '44 till I was demobbed in August '46.

HLloyd: You just skated over something by saying, it got quite interesting for a while. What did that mean?

HLayton: Oh, all sorts of things happened. First of all, of course, there was a civil war, in which we were supposed to keep the peace and disarm the combatants.

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A job we hated. But Churchill insisted, for God knows what reason, that the king should go back on the throne and then if they wanted they could have a plebiscite. The Greeks are highly political animals, well, I mean, if you go to the Greek countryside, I don't know what it is like now, but before the war and during the war, the men would sit in the café all day, it was the women who worked in the field, and the men had nothing to do all day and they played either chess or dominoes, they had their worry beads and they discussed politics. They were highly political people, and they took it on board as some of us did - but Churchill didn't - that once the king was back there would be no plebiscite, and he would go back to being the ruddy dictator he was before the war, and so they fought for the republic. Churchill wouldn't have it and we had to put it down, which we hated. They were our allies, they'd fought alongside us, in Italy there was a Greek regiment. But war is war, and soldiers do as they are told, alas, so that was a job that got quite interesting, particularly in a reconnaissance regiment. You do some intelligence work, I mean I did in particular as a German speaker in Italy. I used to listen in to the German radio nets and try and unravel their codes, which occasionally one was successful at. I certainly used to—the old man, the colonel gave me a great deal of a free hand and I got straight in touch with the major that commanded the SP batteries and gave him the coordinates for having a good shoot when the soup was brought up. The Germans had hot soup brought up to their troops and if we knew where and when it was coming I got the SP himself from the SP battery to have a shoot, I gave them the grid reference you see, and hopefully the Germans got no soup at all. Mind, they did things to us, they tried to break into our net and again it was my job to listen to the voice and decide, no, it wasn't a Geordie, and it wasn't a man of Kent, and it wasn't a man from

Sussex either, so ipso facto, it wasn't one of mine, it was one of the Germans. And they tried to mislead us. Whether I succeeded in misleading them with my German, I've no idea. Well, to a degree, as much as war can be, it was good fun at times. But back to Greece. It always stuck in my mind, we had in Italy liberated a pig. The British army is good at liberating, and the pig was being fattened for Christmas, and when we got marching orders to go to Greece, how were we going to get the pig there? Somebody had a bright idea, I mean my job in those days, let me just tell you, I was attached to Tac HQ - Tactical Headquarters of the regiment - which meant when I operated on the regimental net I was in charge of it, and so I knew everybody who mattered. Somebody said, can't we ask the adjutant, because the adjutant somewhere along the line had liberated a horse box and turned it into an office, would he lend us his horsebox to take the pig. So I ran to see the adjutant, and he was a good sport, they were all good sports in fact, and he said, Yes, as long as I get it back when you have cleaned it! He made a point of that, and I said, Fine. So we had the horse box and we put a pig in it and I wish I had a film, since you are making a film, of the fourth wacky regiment 'A' squadron of Tac HQ arriving on the shores of Greece. First ashore the assault troops, next ashore were two or three Bren Gun carriers, next ashore three armoured cars followed by

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another assault troop, followed by a horsebox with a pig in it! Anyway, on the 23rd of December I was detached for some reason from my radio operation duties. I think they were short of a few chaps. Now, in a reconnaissance regiment you had to be totally interchangeable. I was trained as a gunner, I was trained as a radio operator, I was trained as a driver, I was trained with the assault troops, I was trained in everything that you might conceivably have to do and I was detached from my radio, together with two other lads in the Bren gun, to sit on the top of the flat roof of the control tower of the local airstrip. As chance would have it - this small world - I met a man giving a talk only a year or so ago who was in the first fighter plane to land there when we were guarding it; anyway, during the night - it was a rotten night, it was cold and wet and miserable - somebody saw something move, so I said, Fire a few rounds at it, so they did, and we found a dead sheep the next morning. The next day being Christmas Eve, the sheep got slaughtered alongside the pig - well, it was already dead but it was skinned alongside the pig. We were the only troops, 'A' Squadron and Tac HQ, who had a Christmas dinner, because the army didn't get the rations there on time, because the rations division was there by then, the Black Watch and I don't know who else we had on board, they got no Christmas dinner, but we did, we had the pig, we had liberated some beer from a Greek brewery, of course, and some bottles of Retsina, no doubt.

HLloyd: And this was which year? Christmas—

HLayton: This was Christmas '44. The army caught up with it. We had the Christmas rations arrived in February, and some wit said, We can't call it our Christmas dinner, we had that, and, What can we call it? Well, the General commanding Land Force Greece was called General Scobie and it was called 'Scobie's Mess', and we had our second Christmas dinner.

TAPE 3

HLloyd: What did you do in 1945?

HLayton: Well, in 1945– well, the war in Europe was over in May 1945, the Greek Civil War was over virtually a few months later, after that of course we were just stationed in the country, provided communications, provided some services ‘In Aid of the Civil Authorities’ it is called, and very little else to do. I was very chuffed in a way, because having fallen heavily for Greek mythology in school and also Greek history, I had the opportunity to also go and see Corinth and Athens, of course; the Acropolis, been to the Oracle of Delphi, Apollo’s Temple there and Mount Parnassus and various other historic sites, which to me was absolutely wonderful. Besides, I learned a bit of Greek, I got on well with the Greeks. I developed a passion for olives, would you believe, because I didn’t like them before. Well, the usual things one does, we were fortunate, in June, July, August

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’45 we were stationed in Stillis, which is on the Aegean Sea, and we had a camp there, miles from any civilisation and we started to sort of organise the day so that we got up at 5 in the morning, did what had to be done by 12, had lunch, down to the beach at 2, there were 20 sun freaks, we used to strip off completely - there was nobody near - lie down on the beach in a row, the chap at the end was given a watch and a whistle, he would blow the whistle every 20 minutes, everybody turned over, so we tanned front and back, cancer of the skin hadn’t been heard of, and I am not likely to get it, I don’t think, because I spent hours and hours lying in the sun and I never even burn, I never even go red, I go brown. In fact I went so brown - I think it was the colour of Cadbury’s Milk Chocolate - my Commanding Officer threatened to post me to the Indian brigade and said, They won’t know any different, will they. So, we didn’t really do much work, we had to maintain checkpoints, to make sure arms weren’t smuggled from one side to the other, or in and out of the country or whatever. And from there we went on to Volos, and from Volos we went on to– in those days we used to– Salonika, the Greeks called it Thessaloniki, which was the second largest town. And from there we used to maintain controls along the Bulgarian border up to the Turkish border, because the government was afraid that the communists in Turkey might try to smuggle arms into Greece, which they never did, nor did the Yugoslavs, and this is the strange thing, to be political for a moment: when Churchill and Stalin drew that blue line on the map to say this is yours, this is mine, Stalin certainly kept his word, the Greek communists who staged the uprising never even got a bullet from the Russians, from the Bolsheviks, so Stalin kept his word in that respect, at least. But we nevertheless patrolled the borders, and one incident I remember, at times, when we stopped, oh God, Mia Kabala, right on the border, the only bit of civilisation - which to the British army means a pub - was on the other side of the border, and since the border was not controlled, I mean, it was a sheer drop down from the mountain, and the border was at the bottom of the mountain, and the

only way we could get to this pub on the Bulgarian side, which we did, was with mules to ride up the path: they went up the path. And all they ever had in this pub was ouzo and pickled eggs. There's a little story. But I mean, we didn't do very much, in fact, I mean on the whole we had a reasonably nice time of it and as I say, I learned things, and I learned a bit of Greek and made the best of it.

HLloyd: When did you leave Greece?

HLayton: August '46. I— after the war in Europe was over, our first fear was that we might be sent to Burma; touch wood, that didn't happen. Then, after a while the British government instituted two things, a leave scheme, so that troops abroad could get home for four weeks, and that was called LIAP, don't ask me what it means now, and the other scheme they instituted was a scheme for getting lads out of the army. As far as LIAP was concerned, I did a journey from Salonika to Athens, from Athens to Taranto, from Taranto by train to Milan, from

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Milan by train through Switzerland in two carriages to Calais, from Calais across the Channel home to Gloucester, where I arrived, much to my annoyance, the day after Boxing Day. I was met by my wife at the station and I had a wonderful four weeks and of course went back to base. But the thing is, we went back in the first stage, back to Dover, back to Calais. In Calais you were stuck always for four or five days waiting for a train. And, every draft had a number, 'Draft number 38', whatever, and of course they had a tannoy system it was called in that camp, so that the controller could announce from time to time, 'Draft number 21, report to the station in full kit in three hours time' or 'at 1500 hours' or whatever. And in between he played music. And that man who ran that radio was an absolute sadist, because the tune he played over and over again was a hit tune of the day, '*I wonder who's kissing her now*'. And that to play to troops on the way back from their wives I think was absolute, sheer sadism. Anyway, long journey back of course, through France, through Switzerland, no, we didn't go through Switzerland, this time we went down to Marseille, and got on a boat there, went all the way on a boat to Athens, and then from Athens by boat to Thessaloniki, one journey was done by truck, the other one by boat. Anyway, that really was Greece, you know, there is nothing particularly interesting to tell except personal things.

HLloyd: After the war, well in fact I ought to say perhaps, did you hear any news of your parents after you came to England?

HLayton: Yes— No— steady on— that is a very difficult question. Because really, I came to England twice. I came the first time, of course, in August '39.

HLloyd: And did you hear any news of your parents?

HLayton: Yes, I did, but I will come back to that in a minute, if I may. Because, I really did— I lived with a Scottish family, I saw very little of England, a few months later I was

interned, after Canada, Isle of Man, into the army, abroad, so I always think when I came home in August '46 I came to England for a second time, because it was only then I really learned something about the English and how they lived and what they did and how they behaved and social customs. I mean, I was an absolute pirate, always have been, always have been at heart, still am, but I mean if my wife and I were going out and there was a bus coming, she used to grab me by the collar and pull me back saying, they were here before you, you can't get on now. Well I said, there is a bus, I want to get on, you know. So, you have to learn things in a foreign country. So I arrived in England twice. Well, going back to '39, yes, originally I did hear from my parents, because I think I mentioned some cousins in Amsterdam, anyway there was a Dutch branch to the family, and what my father used to do was write to my cousin or cousins as there were a husband and wife before he was deported, and my cousin's name was Lene. Well she was called Lene, Carolene Dorothea. He used to write, Dear Lene,

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We are well, blah blah blah, so he was writing to her, and she used to put in another sheet of paper, copy it out and then say Dear Herbert, and so we evaded the German censorship and the English censorship, which worked very well till the Germans invaded the Netherlands. That put an end to that. When I was interned in Canada, I got letters through the Red Cross, now that was what, '40 now, my parents were not deported till 1942, I have in fact the Memorial Book over there issued by the City of Hamburg, listing all the Jews and others who were killed by the Nazis, and my parents are listed there. They were not deported till July '42, so I did occasionally get letters through the Red Cross, very occasionally. I mean, there was one in two or three months, and that went on almost till I went abroad, and then I didn't hear again. I think my sister heard, yes I did hear from my sister, my parents were deported in the first place to Theresienstadt which, you may know, was the camp that the Germans used as a showpiece, in fact quite a number of people survived there. Certainly my aunt, the one who went to America, had a sister who survived there, but that's by the by. My sister got two or three postcards: the thing that you were allowed to send from prison of war camps, which just said, 'I am well.' You know, it was preprinted, and that was all you were allowed to put. If you had said I am not well the Germans wouldn't have forwarded it anyway. So we knew they were alive in Theresienstadt in '43 and after a while that dried up. The rest, of course, we didn't find out till after the war. They were deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in October '44 and there as far as I can ascertain they went straight into the gas chambers. And that really is all I can tell you.

HLloyd: How did you find that out after the war?

HLayton: Red Cross. And the Germans also set up some— the Germans lodged all the documents appertaining to the Holocaust and other political shenanigans in — I forget, somewhere in Germany, which could be inspected by people, so between that and the Red Cross we sort of pieced it together. The fact that they were— I think we knew that they were deported, and this is one of the things that narks me really: fairly well near to the end of the war, but I don't think I could put it down to October some years after, but I

mean the Germans were so obsessed that of course they were still shifting people about weeks - two or three weeks - before the war was over. They were still killing Jews; they were still moving them to camps and from one camp to another: how somebody can be so totally obsessed is beyond me, but they were.

HLloyd: Now, you have talked about your marriage during the war. How much did you see your wife during the war?

HLayton: Four weeks at home in '45. Boxing Day was 26th– 27th December for about four weeks, so it would have been till 23rd January and I went back. Then I didn't see her again till August, end of August '46.

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HLloyd: And what was her social background?

HLayton: Well, she was an orphan by the time I met her, her father in fact died when she was five years old of pneumonia, to which there was no answer in 1924. She and I were born the same year, we were the same age. Her mother was an invalid, but her mother died just a little while before we met, but because her mother was an invalid, Phil and her brother Henry were brought up by aunts and uncles. Henry was with Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam lived in Hackney and was very much a Cockney. Phil was brought up by Auntie Min, Minnie, not Minnie really, what's the name? Miriam and Uncle Monty, Montague, but in fact she was the real aunt, he was the husband. Their name was Freshfield, and so she was brought up by an aunt and uncle. She was educated at the College for Girls in London, so she had a very good education. She was very good at drawing, but unfortunately gave it up. During the war she was a secretary at British Callenders Cables, and they had an office in Brewer Street off Regent Street.

HLloyd: And was she from a Jewish family?

HLayton: Oh yes, yes, very much so.

HLloyd: So that was really by chance, meeting her on the—

HLayton: Oh, it was totally by chance, I would have married the girl if she had been a Buddhist, Mohammedan, or whatever. As it so happens, she was Jewish. Whether it was total chance, or whether it was why we were attracted to one another, I have no idea, but her view of religion was pretty much the same as mine.

HLloyd: Had her family been practising more than yours?

HLayton: More than mine, yes, in fact some of them— I am still in touch with some of her cousins, and they do go to synagogue, or as it is called in Jewish circles, to *Shul*. I don't know if you know the origin of that word, it is German for 'school', and that is of course what the synagogue originally was, the word 'synagogue' is Greek and means

'community', end of lesson. Yes, they go on high days and holidays and bar mitzvahs and weddings and I have been invited to a good few, and most of my attendance at *Shul* was to see someone bar mitzvahed or bat mitzvahed or married or buried or whatever: hatched, matched and dispatched.

HLloyd: Had she been brought up with kosher foods?

HLayton: No, no, they didn't keep a kosher household. They were – no – But Uncle Mont – Auntie Min died fairly young.

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Uncle Mont married another woman sometime after, and she kept a kosher household, strictly kosher, I mean. I can get along with any– I like food any way, I mean I've no difficulty in eating any damn thing, I like it!

HLloyd: You said you came home to Gloucester. How had Gloucester become home?

HLayton: Wow! Take a deep breath. Let me have a drink. I didn't want Phil to stop in London; I took it on board that London could still be an iffy place. The V weapons hadn't started, but we had a feeling about that, and the odd German plane was still coming over, so I said, Look, darling, if you can possibly get out of London– Well, I mentioned her brother Henry: Henry had been apprenticed to a toolmaker. When war broke out, he was a toolmaker at BAF, British Acoustic Films, who made Aztec equipment for submarines, and were therefore extremely essential, who were located to Mitcheldean in the Forest of Dean. Forest of Dean is a foreign country between here and Wales if I can put it like that: they really are, they are totally different people, lovely people, I like 'em. Anyway, he married a local girl the week after Phil and I got married, and moved in with her people, so she moved into his digs, in Longhope, which is between Mitcheldean and Huntley, just out of Gloucester, so that's how we came to Gloucestershire in the first place. And I had in fact one more leave there, my embarkation leave, which was frightfully hot, in August, and we managed to get hold of a bottle of scotch, I mean scotch in those days was like gold, we couldn't get it [indistinct]. Well, how we managed to get hold of it I don't know - it was a bottle of VAT 69 - some of the things you remember. On my last day we crawled into a haystack on a blazing hot August day and demolished that bottle of whisky, all the way through, to try and drink ourselves into oblivion. Did it work? Did it ruddy hell! We came out of that haystack stone cold sober, what a waste of whisky! Anyway, she worked also at the same firm her brother worked at, but then was transferred because labour was conscripted to Gloucester Aircraft. To save herself the journey in and out from the Forest of Dean every day she found digs in Gloucester, and while I was in Greece she had the offer of a little house, and since she had enough money - she always said I married her for her money, which wasn't quite true - she only had enough for the deposit, but it was enough for the deposit. And of course, women were not allowed to sign legal documents in those days, they sent it out to Greece for me to sign, the mortgage and the deeds, with instructions from the solicitors that I had to find a witness, put my thumb on the seal, and say, 'I deliver this

my deed'. I said, who can I get for a witness; oh I will get my troop sergeant. He didn't have a clue what I was doing, he thought it was all strange mumbo jumbo, but we had a little home for me to come home to and she part furnished it.

But you asked me about coming to England, that was the first lesson. When I come home demobbed, in my demob suit - oh God, ghastly - she showed me round the

Tape 3: 19 minutes 50 seconds

house, this is your home now, wonderful, oh great, oh it's got a sitting room, it's got a little dining room, it's got a little kitchen, beautiful, upstairs, I looked at the bedroom, I said, what about heating? (I mean I was brought up in a country where there was central heating in every room and double glazing: the English had heard of neither in 1946!) She said, What do you mean, what do you want heating for? I said, It gets cold in the winter. There was a tiny little fireplace. I said that's not going to keep any - She said, You only light that if you're ill. What do you do in the winter? She said, Get under the blankets. Duvets hadn't been invented here, either. I thought, God, what a barbaric country I have come to! I mean, you get used to it, but, oh God, the moment I could, I moved to a house where there was central heating in the bloody bedroom, excuse my French, in the bedroom. I couldn't stand that. Then she'd have the window open. When I took her to America some years later, and we stayed with my cousins in the winter, she said, Isn't it hot in here, isn't it hot. I said, No, it's lovely. Duvets came into the family when I took her to Germany with the children, Michael, in fact- about the children, something you might like to know at this stage: we lost our first baby, she was born with a malformed heart and only lived for a few months and died, alas, a slow lingering death, very unfortunate.

HLloyd: Which year was that?

HLayton: That was- well she was born in '47, October '47 and died January '48. Then Michael was born in April '50, by that time we were getting in a hurry, so Judy was born in September '51. And that was it for the moment, I'll tell you the rest later. We took the kids to Germany when they were about five or six, thereabouts. My cousin who lived there found us digs with a lady in the suburb where she lived. When we arrived all these duvets- the Germans in the summer hang them out of the window to air them and they were hanging out of the window, you see. Michael and Judy said, What's that, mum? And mum, who was always quick off the mark with these things said, They're jumbos. And in my family duvets are still known as jumbos. I remember the first time I went to stay with Michael and his newly married wife, they said, Come and stay for a few days. I said, I will if you've got a jumbo. They said, Oh yes, we've got a jumbo on the spare bed.

HLloyd: Was it Hamburg that you went back to?

HLayton: Oh yes, I have been back a number of times.

HLloyd: Was that your first time back?

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HLayton: No, the first time was when I went to rescue my sister. That was in '54 and this was in '58, no, '59, they were a bit older, eight and nine.

HLloyd: How did you feel about Hamburg on both those visits?

HLayton: Well, unlike my sister, I took it on board that I was going back to something totally different. And I mean Hamburg, Hamburg had a firestorm, it was largely destroyed. Now, I have a very good German lady friend. She came to us as an au pair girl, oh God, many, many years ago. She has now got her own family and her son is 14 or 15 and their daughter is 13/14. 14 and 16 I think. She came as an au pair, we got on like a house on fire, in fact she was here staying with me, visiting me, only about three or four weeks ago. We're still in touch and we visit one another. She has got a great family. She said to me one day, what did I think about the Germans now. At that time I skirted round the question, because I really wanted to think about it myself. When she was here a few weeks ago, I said, I'll tell you now. I said, As far as I am concerned, it's like a disease, you lance the boil, you've got rid of the disease, and that's it, finished. The body is now healthy so you can re-establish the connection. And that is how I do it. I would have gone back to Germany after the war, it was Phil who couldn't stand the idea, and in the end she said, Look, you go if you want to, establish a home, I'll join you. And I thought then, well the girl's done three or four years without me as it is, as a young married couple I can't inflict that on her. Well, you've got to make choices in life sometime, I stayed. The reason I wanted to go back was only that I was more familiar with the civilisation as it were, but also I reckoned that someone who knew commercial English and could speak the language fluently could earn a lot of money. From that point of view I am probably sorry, I probably would have had a better— but who knows?

HLloyd: Well, what job did you do after the war?

HLayton: Good God, I spent a short while working as a mechanic at Gloucester Aircraft for their Hollingworth installation, that was the forerunners of computers. And then I worked at the Shire Hall in the County Treasurer's Department for seven years, and it drove me up the wall. Routine, nine to five, the same brown and green walls every day; colleagues, very nice people, but oh, so dull. And no responsibility: if you had a problem you took it to the next bloke up the ladder, and he probably took it to the next, and you were never allowed to make a decision. I couldn't stand it, well I stuck it for seven years while the kids were babies. I thought I could at least do that much for my family, and then I gave it up to go into selling and all my colleagues said, how can you possibly give it up, 30 years and you'll get a good pension. I said, Thirty years and I will be in a mental asylum. And so I went into selling and made my way and became a sales manager.

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HLloyd: What were you selling?

HLayton: All sorts of things. For several years I sold office systems. Pre-computer visual systems. They were tailor-made for accountants or progress managers, production managers, all those sorts of people. I was a consultant and eventually became an area manager there, which was very interesting, because it was problems, and I love problems. And if your next question is, how did you get into the entertainment business, I'll tell you the answer: through politics. And people always raise an eyebrow. Well, I got elected into the City Council in 1950. I was 30. Unheard of! Well, I mean, the average age of councillors— they were all retired, in their 60s, the Aldermen were in their 70s and 80s, half of them went to ruddy sleep in the afternoon, so the Town Clerk sent me a little form to tick what committees I would like to serve on. Me, well, an ambitious young whippersnapper of a politician, finance, planning, management, blah, blah, blah, a real bore. Boy, you are not experienced enough, you know. Amongst other things they put me on the entertainments committee: I didn't need experience, or so they said. Right, well, Gloucester ran a big carnival in those days, four weeks, later cut down to two weeks. It started from the wartime 'holiday at home' schemes, and this carnival had high wire acts and motor cycle stunt teams and clowns and children's acts on the stage and somebody who jumped off a high pole into a bucket of water, you know the sort of thing. I used to book it in fact in Birmingham for the tube festival. I fell in love with that, totally; again unheard of. By the time I was 37 I was the youngest chairman Gloucester ever had in its whole history, chairman of the entertainments committee. In those days there were no directors of entertainment any more than there were directors of anything else in local government, and certainly in entertainment the chairman did the work. And I used to go and see an agent who lived in Gloucester who provided outdoor acts. He was an eccentric because he always said, I am going to run this business till I am 80! He did exactly that and died two days after. My first thought was, where the heck am I going to get an act. I didn't know that there were any other entertainment agents in the country doing this sort of entertainment. Strippers, singers, yes, but stuntmen and the like— so I made some enquiries and, yes, there were two others actually, one in Nottingham and one in Sheffield. And it was then that it hit me, I always wanted my own business, partly because I love responsibility, partly because I love problems and I created those for myself, my wife would have told you. You know, apart from being an old bolshie I don't see why I shouldn't have all the money I earned. So I sent an intermediary to see the widow Yes, she'd be happy to get rid of it, and I went to see her, and we came to an arrangement, I didn't have any capital, but she was cut into the firm to have so much each year for so many years, which satisfied her and satisfied me, and that was it. The deed was done on the morning Helen was born. Helen came 11 years after Judy.

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HLloyd: So what year was that?

HLayton: That was 1962. And, egg on the face for my wife, because my wife was area manager for the Family Planning Association. Yeah, work that one out. And she became

pregnant, and the jokes you heard at the family planning clinics is nobody's business, as you can imagine, because it soon became obvious. She was a very small person, you know, small person, big tummy, how many months? Ah, poor Phil. Anyway, we had a flat which was right behind the maternity ward at that time. So I went out in the morning and bought the business. I didn't consult my woman, because I knew she was the cautious type and she would have said, Can you? Have you seen the— blah, blah, blah. How are we going to—? You know, etc. etc. By the time she had finished, the chance would have gone. And in any case I can't bear to think about things. I'll make a decision. As I said earlier on about not being an MP, ten seconds flat and it's made. There's no going back on it. So I saw what books there were. I talked to the— and I knew something about the business, I had done business with this man for years. And I decided to have it. Off I went, got home, found a note by the telephone, You've had a daughter. Right, out of the flat, down the stairs, across the road, where there was a florist, happily, bought an enormous bouquet of flowers - that is something else I should tell you in a minute - I went over to the maternity ward, kissed the wife, said all the right things, Well done, darling, congratulations, isn't she a beautiful baby. Liar, all newborn babies are as ugly as sin I think, face like a shrivelled potato. But that is by the by. And then of course I said in due course, I bought a business this morning. Oh God, that was the wrong thing to say, wasn't it. If she had had a gun handy she would have shot me! What are we going to live on? We have got another mouth to feed. I said, It will work out. Me, the eternal optimist. It did work out anyway.

HLloyd: How did it work out?

HLayton: Well, it made a bit of money, that's how it worked out. Well, it never made a fortune, it made enough to live on, now let me tell you why in fact, why I bought a large bouquet of flowers. If I have it in my pocket, money burns a hole in my pocket, I spend it. I always did. We had holidays on the Riviera, the next day the business was lousy and we had holidays in Weston super Mare, that was how it went. That is the way I like to live. Today of course it's the thing that you have a partnership, you consult your wife about everything. Well, I never saw my parents consulting, and we take our cues from how we grew up. I mean, when my father said we were going to so-and-so on holiday, we went to so-and-so on holiday; whether he and my mother had an argument in the bedroom the night before, I've no idea. But as far as I could see, my father decided what was to be done and that is how I grew up. And I would find it extremely difficult to live any other way. I don't think my wife liked it very much but she got used to it. I mean, it was the same with our au pair girl. Someone approached

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me in the car park, and said, Do you know anyone, Bert, who would have a German au pair girl? And I said, Yes, me. Without any hesitation. I went home, and told the wife, and she said, Where's she going to sleep? And I said, She'll share with Judy. You know, well, what will you have to pay her? I don't know, we'll find out, won't we, blah, blah. Anyway, that was Helen and the business. And yes, it worked out fine, I ran it till I was

75; as I say, I like problems. I didn't pay VAT for three years; everybody else who didn't pay for 3 months was hauled before the court. I wrote long letters full of apologies and then they bore with me till I paid it 3 years later, you know. My wife said one day, You know, darling, you're the same as your high wire act. I said, Why? She said, Well, all the high wire acts you use work without a safety net. I said, Right. She said, You're just the ruddy same, she said, you like to walk along the precipice and you half hope you fall on the wrong side. And I said, Yes. That's probably got me down to a tee. And whenever— I love problems, and whenever somebody phones and says, can you do this or can you do that, Yes. My secretary would have told you, I had a solar panel here [points to pate], because the moment I put the phone down, and I did things, and said, How the hell are we going to do this, my speech was always, if you want a blue camel with pink spots, you can have it. My secretary said, What are you going to do if somebody takes you up on that? I said, There is a garage next door. She said, What do you mean? I said, They sell spray paint. If they can afford to buy a camel I'll give them a pink and blue one, no hassle. Problems are there to be solved, it makes life interesting. I think probably you want to know about the business. I missed my chance to get my name in neon lights because of a stunt they wanted to put on for *Mary Poppins*. It was a wonderful stunt in Leicester Square with Mary Poppins sailing across Leicester Square in an umbrella, and I thought that really was going to make my name. Again I said, Yes, you see. But the police stopped it, and the only other one that comes to mind of real strange interest was a chap who phoned me up, who said, I'm getting married, can I hire a gnu? This was at the time of Flanders and Swann, or whatever. A gnother gnu? I wish I'd asked him, well I did ask him, what do you want a gnu for? And he said - he was obviously well to do - We are having the reception at Maxims in Soho. I said, Yes. He said, Well, I want a gnu to come in to present a bouquet to my mother-in-law after the best man has made his speech. I said, You're on. He said, Hang on a minute. What's it going to cost?

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I said, Couldn't tell you offhand, because (a) you've got to find a gnu and hire it, and there's specialised transport to hire. You have got to know the law in this business. London regulations say that any wild animals - a gnu is a wild animal - has to be accompanied by two minders, and then there is insurance. The best I can do for you is somewhere between £900 and £1,500. He said, that's alright. So I knew he had money anyway, so he got his gnu anyway. And he phoned me up when he came back from his honeymoon, sent a cheque, and said on the phone, It went wonderfully well. Thank you very much. And I wished to God I knew why. Anyway, you were asking— we were talking about my kids earlier on; as I say, Helen was not even an afterthought, she was an accident. It shouldn't happen to the secretary of the Family Planning Association, should it, but the wife was very worried - she was in her 40s - but it all went well, and I was overjoyed actually. Fathers are, I suppose. And of course the wife would say, yeyeyeyeyey. Anyway, I did my share. In fact, when Michael was born I used to bath him every night, because Phil, after Patsy died, was so worried about holding him firm enough that he used to howl his head off; when I bathed him it soon became evident that he didn't cry. So I bathed him and fed him when I came home in the evening. Yes,

Helen was, as I say, an afterthought, but she was quite a good looking young kid. Did tolerably well at school, but even then it became obvious, that there was a little—something different. She went to Belford, which was Gloucester's first comprehensive. At the time she found it difficult to put up with that her brother was a teacher there - about which she got teased of course. But I did notice when she came home, We had an English test today, Dad. - How did you do Helen? - Oh, terrible, absolutely awful, no good at all. And you said to her about five days later, Have you got your test results? With a sort of embarrassed smirk that children do so well she said, Yes. And I said, And? She said, 97%, second best in the class. And this happened every time she had a test or an exam. Unfortunately, in those days, you didn't recognise the symptoms. She did suffer and it didn't become obvious till many years later. She certainly suffered from depression that much we took on board by the time she left school. She suffered from a personality disorder, which was very sad, and eventually she was put on— I'll tell you what made it worse, she wanted to become a nurse. I think she might have coped with that, but there was no vacancy and she went and interviewed for a nurse in a mental hospital. And I said, Helen, no - by this time I could see. I said, Helen, wait a year, you have got nothing to lose, have a gap year. She said, No. She could never wait. And Helen signed on as a mental nurse and the stress was too much. It was absolutely stupid: as a student nurse, on the night shift, she was left in charge of a ward. Now that's totally wrong. And in the end she couldn't cope with it. And she was sent to a doctor, whom I knew actually, he was one of the city's medical officers, who first put her on beta blockers, and then told her that she must give up work, at least nursing. And she fought against that, and I said, Get a second opinion. And she went to see a consultant who said exactly the same. And from then on I

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am afraid it was downhill. The depression got worse, the disorders got worse, in the end she took an overdose of some prescribed drugs for which there was no antidote and that was— what, four or five years ago, and she died at the age of thirty six, '98, six years ago now.

HLloyd: What did your other two children do?

HLayton: Michael came to me when he left. Now this is funny, Michael went to grammar school; we didn't have comprehensives in those days. I mean, you will have taken on board that, politically, comprehensive was the thing for me and strangely enough, Helen, despite all her disabilities, went to a comprehensive, and at school did far better than her sister or her brother. Anyway, Michael went to a grammar school, left at 16. I can't remember if he had one 'O' level or 2, which for a grammar school is absolutely disastrous. His head's words ringing in his ears, who said, Layton, I wouldn't go in for further education, you're not cut out for it. So Layton came to me and said, Dad, can I come into your business? And I said, In principle, yes, but at the moment, no. It is like teaching someone to drive, you teach them all your own faults, so if you want to learn to be in business, take a commercial apprenticeship. It is probably one of the best things

he ever did, he took a commercial apprenticeship with a local factory, who put him through every office, through every workshop. By the time he had finished there five years later, Michael Layton could take an engine out of a car and put a new one in. He can do – I mean, he bought an old listed building in Coventry and is putting it to rights. He's put new guttering on himself. He has put new windows in himself. He has put half a new roof on himself. He has taken walls down and built them, he's done the plumbing and done the electric work, and the only thing he tells me he can't do is plastering. That's not bad. They also sent them for day release to the technical college, so he did bookkeeping and this and that and the other. But at the end of the five years he suddenly took it on board that he knew what he really wanted: teaching. So he went to college and then got a job at the school that Helen went to in Gloucester. And then went up a step or two in the career ladder and went to teach at a school in Lowestoft. From there he went to Norwich University and took his degree. Having taken a degree he got a job as a deputy head in Sheffield, which stood me in good stead, because by that time Helen and I - I was always very fond of walking - Helen and I would then have walked across Dartmoor and across Exmoor and the Brecon Beacons and God knows where. Michael phoned and said, Look, Dad, you want to come up here, North Derbyshire, wonderful walking country. I couldn't agree more. Helen and I walked all over North Derbyshire, I still do, occasionally – well, I'm down to two miles an hour. Fortunately I have friends there. Michael has since moved to Coventry. Well, he was a deputy head there and he became head at Coventry, he has just retired.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 42 seconds

HLloyd: Tell me about your daughter.

HLayton: Well, Judy was born 17 months after Michael. Originally, in fact, she lacked self assurance, but she found that. It is quite interesting: she went to a grammar school and left with as little qualifications as Michael, except she was very good at mathematics - again takes after her dad. I am quite good, it's one of my good subjects, but like me she is also very good at mental arithmetic. So she got a job at a firm of bookies, and became a settler, which is somebody who settles the bet - you know, someone who works out the 6 to 11 on or whatever it is, and then they sent her on a management course and she came home and - I hope she never sees this film - cried buckets full, because she said there were 90 men and how is she going to cope, is she going to make it. As the Americans say, I kicked ass! I told her not to be so bloody stupid and she had the brains and blooming well get on with it. Sorry, I can't stand people who – even my own daughter. She took my advice and passed the course, top of the thing, you know, and they turned her into an auditor-cum-security officer. She left them eventually and went to another firm, you know how it is. She worked for a few other firms and is now auditing something or other for Marks and Spencer, which she seems to quite like doing. But anyway, I think – she is, what – born in '51, she is 53. I think she is beginning to think about retiring. The sad history there is she married, lost her husband to cancer, married again four years ago. The first one wasn't very happy, the second marriage was extremely happy and they were a lovely couple, and two years later he died of cancer, again, another very sad story, but she – I am not saying

she got over it, but she learned to live with it, she made a life for herself and she's doing well.

HLloyd: Do your children consider themselves as Jewish?

HLayton: Yes, very much so.

HLloyd: Do they practise?

HLayton: No, they were brought up by me who didn't practise, no they don't. But something of interest for the record, in fact: in 1994, Michael said to me, Dad, it's 50 years. I knew immediately what he meant. He meant it's 50 years since the Russians liberated Auschwitz. And I've always thought of going there, but never quite made it, and Michael said, I am going to Auschwitz, and I said, Michael, I am coming with you. And we went together. And Judy, I don't know if you know about this Jewish custom, but Judy gave me a pebble, a little stone, to put on the memorial in Auschwitz, as Jews put a little pebble to say they have visited the grave. So, yes, they are both very conscious of being Jewish, which quite pleases me.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 47 seconds

HLloyd: What about your own identity? Do you consider yourself primarily Jewish, German, English?

HLayton: I can be English, German, Dutch, Israeli, or whatever you like. But if it comes down to detail, Jewish to me is a religion, yes, and if anyone asks me, I am Jewish, even if I only go to the synagogue once every two years. I am Jewish and proud of it. Apart from that I am British. I mightn't pass the Tebbit test. I might just go to a football match and cheer the Dutch or even the Germans, certainly I'd cheer the Israelis, but I am British. I got my naturalisation in 1948 and yes, I am very proud of it.

HLloyd: Just briefly, how long were you in local politics?

HLayton: Well, I joined the Labour Party in '48. They put me to stand in a ward, like they always do with the new one that they didn't think was a slightest chance to win. Me, of course I've got to work morning, noon and night like a proverbial— never mind, slave, and won it. And I was then on the council for 30 years; after that I became chairman of this, that and the other, entertainment to start with, eventually planning, finance, God knows what, eventually I became Leader of the Council. Though can I add, in those days they didn't get paid, my successor today gets £80,000 a year, but I did it for fun. I loved every minute of it. At the end of 30 years I suddenly felt I was sucked dry, I had no more new ideas and that was the time to take over. I love politics; I love the deviousness that a leader can use at times. And my opposite number, the Leader of the Opposition then, and the Leader of the Council later, with whom I am still good personal friends, who came to my 80th birthday party, will, I am sure, sign any document that says 'Herbert Layton is devious.'

HLloyd: And, finally, do you have any message for anyone in the future who might watch this video?

HLayton: That is very difficult, because you don't know what history will bring forth. I think the only message must be a very personal one. And that is, if someone knocks you down, get up, dust yourself down, get on with your life, always look forward, never look back, look back only perhaps to learn from history or to learn from your mistakes. But look forward, do things, don't stop, get on with it.

[Photographs]

That's a photograph of an oil painting actually. It is my great great great grandmother on my father's mother's side. Her name was Frederike Carr. She married a chap called Josef Arnfeld and my grandmother was a granddaughter of that woman, her name was Arnfeld. The oil painting as far as we know disappeared during the war.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 52 seconds

Now this is a photograph of Abraham Koppel and his wife. Taken soon after photography was invented, which was 1835. He was born - they were a Dutch couple - he was born in 1803, her name was Magdalena, usually called May, who was born in 1800, they were married on 5th June 1827 and they were the grandparents of my grandmother Hannah London née Heilburt, and she was my grandmother, so again they are my great great great grandparents.

Now, that is a photograph of my dad. It was taken on the balcony of the flat we lived in. The quilted jacket he was wearing there he called a smoking jacket. My father smoked a pipe most of the time but was also extremely fond of a good cigar, which was why he got cancer of the throat.

HLloyd: What was the address and when was it taken?

HLayton: I am not exactly sure of when it was taken. I would say about 1930, when he was about 50 years of age. In fact, there were photos of every member of the family taken on that balcony. It was part of a session which graced my mother and me, my sister, I have also got photographs of my cousins taken there.

HLloyd: And what was the address of the flat?

HLayton: The address was number 84, Seerichstrasse in Hamburg.

Now, that is a picture of my mother, taken in 1920, the year after I was born, certainly a very good looking lady. She was a very charming lady. Since my father was business manager of a business dealing with haute couture dresses, my mother was of course a walking advertisement for the company and was always extremely well dressed.

HLloyd: And where was that taken?

HLayton: That was taken in Hamburg.

That's a photograph of myself, taken in Athens while I was still in the army, obviously, in the winter of 1944/45: I know it was taken in the winter, because I'm wearing battery dress and not the khaki drill we wore in the summer, but that is about all I do remember.

That's a photograph of my wife Phil, actually her name was Rosa and she hated it. Her maiden name was Phillips and therefore 'Phil'. It's a studio shot that was taken after I went abroad during the war and, if for no other reason, you can tell because she's wearing my regimental badge as a brooch at her throat.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 20 seconds

Now, that is a real family shot. We were on our way to somebody's wedding. Taken about '54/55, I would imagine. Michael and Judy, very much as they then were and, indeed, Phil and I very much as we then were. I think, just a happy family photograph.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 46 seconds

HLloyd: In Gloucester?

HLayton: Yes, in Gloucester, yes indeed.

That is— now that is something a bit different. I was invited to go to America in 1998. I had been before, visiting my cousins, but one of them organised a family reunion of the London family, that's my mother's brother's family, in 1998, and invited me to join them. And there they are, my three original cousins, their husbands, their children, their husbands, their children, there is 33 in all of them, 34 including me in the middle.

HLloyd: Where was that taken?

HLayton: That was taken on the outer banks of North Carolina with the Atlantic ocean as a background.

HLloyd: 1998

HLayton: 1998, not far from the Wright Brothers' Museum.

Now that is the very latest of pictures, four years ago, when my daughter got married, and you have in the centre, of course, my daughter and her new husband, and you also have my son, my daughter-in-law, my two grandchildren, Keith's mother (my daughter's husband's mother), a couple of witnesses, I think, and last but not least, yours truly.

Tape 3: 56 minutes 18 seconds

END OF INTERVIEW