Holocaust Survivor Testimony – RUTH DAVID

10:00:00:00
Ruth David
My name is Ruth David. I was born in Germany in 1929, not a good place to be born as I experienced the whole of the Nazi time there. I came to England with the Kindertransport, which really saved my life; and I had my children in England, and they and I continue to think of England as our natural home.

10:00:39:22
Interviewer
Okay, um, so when and where were you born, and tell me a little bit about your family?

10:00:45:15
Ruth David
Yes. I was born in Frankfurt. That was our nearest city, but we actually lived in the country. Er, we lived in a part of Germany called the Odenwald, which is a minor version of the Schwarzwald, the Black Forest and in a place that nobody's ever heard of in England, and very few people in Germany. It was called Fränkisch-Crumbach. Crumbach means the crooked stream and this is where we lived.
My family, I think, had lived there since 1700 and something and were recognised as good citizens.

10:01:29:07
There were not many Jewish families in Fränkisch-Crumbach and um, finally most people did get out, but we somehow didn't. There were difficulties for us, where immigration was concerned, and um, the Burgermeister of Frankisch-Crumbach, the mayor, became quite an enemy of my father. This is natural. He was a Nazi and the local chief of the Nazis,

10:03:36:18
Interviewer
Were you a religious family?

10:03:39:13
Ruth David
Not specially. I think my father was brought us, as many villagers were, to be reasonably Orthodox. My mother came from quite a different background. She came from the city. She was born in Mannheim and had studied at various universities. In Germany, in those days, it was the, she was born in 1892, therefore she would be a student round about, just before the First World War, and not many women went to university in Germany in those days. They started much earlier in England, but in Germany that was about the time that women started, and there was no objection to Jewish students in those days, and she studied at Jena, Heidelberg, Frankfurt and Berlin, because it was the time when one was rather peripatetic in one's
studies.

10:04:34:13
And um, she came from a family that knew the family was Jewish, but they weren't practising and I think my mother wasn't interested in anything religious, until the Nazi forces were really very unpleasant, and she thought, well, this was perhaps the time to show that she was Jewish, and so I think we, for instance, um, ate kosher, but this wasn't easy because, um, the meat had to be brought in from somewhere and so we only had it once a week; but um, it, it was a fairly plain living kind of existence.

10:05:21:03
Although my father had been one of the important people in the villages, in the village. He, um, er, employed, particularly a lot of women, and it was the first time local women were paid, because the local women, were peasant women, had always worked, er, in the fields and had been the wives and daughters and, er, mothers of the men, therefore th, they deserved no pay. They were just non paid, and my father did pay and he was the first man in the area to give um, to pay insurance for their future pensions.

10:06:08:11
So when I went back for the first time, many, many years later, I didn't go back, I left Germany in er, 39, in June 39,

and I think my first visit back was in about 1957, so that's many years later, and it was then that people told me how they had a pension through my father. Which of course my father never had.

10:06:33:16
Interviewer
What an extraordinary man he must have been.

10:06:35:08
Ruth David
Yes, I think so. He was, he brought electricity to the village. The village had no electricity. He was responsible for that. He was on the local council - I don't know why or how -but he was a member of the local council, and he um, did good things. Electricity was one of them, and the other was he built a whole estate for people who worked for him, but also for other people, and that estate is still there. Seems very good and nice houses. Admittedly they're far more modernised than they were in those day, and I think he did quite a lot really, and was well regarded.

10:07:14:09
Interviewer
Tell me about your brothers and sisters because you were part of a very big family weren't you Ruth?

10:07:19:02
Ruth David
Yes, we were a big family. My father had had a first wife, who died of a failed gallbladder operation and she had left three children. The eldest was Annie, whom I think I haven't mentioned in my book. Um, she, when my mother married my father, as a second wife, after that death, my mother had never been to the village before and didn't know what it was like to live in a fairly primitive country area, and the daughter Annie was already ill, with TB, and um, a lot of money was spent to cure her. I think she was sent to Switzerland, which is what one did in those days for TB, but TB was usually fatal, and she died, and then, and I remember her only vaguely. My brothers and sisters dispute this. Say I'm lying. I'm not. I saw her on her deathbed. I was taken to see her when she was dying, and I remember that quite, quite clearly, and that's the only time I remember seeing her. Perhaps somebody took me to see this dying girl, or perhaps she wanted to see me. I don't remember her otherwise, at all, but there were lots of pictures about, for, of her, in the house.

10:08:43:07
And then I had the two older brothers, from that marriage. We were step
er, what do you call it? Step brothers and sisters. We never looked on it like that. We were a complete family and I think they were very fond of my mother and she of them; so I don't think there was any problem there at all, and

10:09:05:03
um, the eldest brother eventually managed to emigrate to the United States.
10:09:12:11
The fir, the second brother had gone to Argentina, and that was in May 1938, so
he did not have to go through the awful time of the November pogrom, in um, in November 38.

10:09:24:21
But um, my eldest brother should have been going to the United States just at that point.

10:09:33:12
We hoped, when we realised we weren't getting to the, to Argentina, we had relatives in the States who were willing to guarantee for our coming there, and Ernest, the eldest brother, was supposed to go first, to the United States. He had his ticket and then this pogrom happened and he and my father were arrested that night and taken to the local prison and from there to Buchenwald, and um, when, in Buchenwald they discovered that Ernest had a ticket in his

pocket, to the States they kept him only about two weeks and let him come back. With, on the condition that he left Germany at once, and so he did. He came sort of overnight, back to the village, and the next morning he left for Holland, for a boat at Rotterdam I think, to the United States, but he had had that time in Buchenwald.

10:10:30:11
The elder, the older two brothers died very young. When I say very young, Ernest was 59 and Werner was 63. To me that is now very young at my age, and I

10:12:06:05
Ruth David
We did. Mina, Mina was the last. Yes we did have domestic staff. I think in the old days it was two live in domestic staff, but not in my day. In my day it was only Mina, whom I worshipped and adored, and she had to leave us, because, um, Aryans weren't allowed to live with Jews any longer. She was a very brave woman.

10:12:30:16
We moved eventually from, after the pogromnacht we mo, moved from Frankisch-Crumbach to Mannheim because it wasn't safe anymore, to be in the village where everybody knew us, and um, Mina came back to us in Mannheim, against all the rules and the laws, to help us. She was wonderful.

10:12:51:02
Interviewer
[*partly spoken over Ruth*] She was a very special lady.

10:12:52:14
Ruth David
Yes, she was.

10:18:11:23
Interviewer
Um, I'm just trying to imagine what it must have felt like, for your family. You talked about your father, who was obviously quite, um, a ground breaker within your village.

10:18:23:23
Ruth David
Yes.

10:18:24:14
Interviewer
He was very respected by everybody. He'd given people opportunities that,

10:18:28:11
Ruth David
That's right, yes.

10:18:29:03
Interviewer
He, that they wouldn't have had without him, and then suddenly the tide had turned and he was becoming an outcast.

10:18:36:18
Ruth David
Yes.

10:18:36:14

Interviewer
And that was a, a very interesting,

10:18:38:10
Ruth David
That was shocking. It was very shocking that this happened, because I didn't see how and why this should happen. Well, I knew that Judaism was a religion. I knew that Mina was Catholic and there were very few Catholics in the village in those days. Now it's quite mixed but it was a Protestant village and um, I k, I knew what a religion was but er, I can't say that I knew too much about Judaism or [*talk over each other*] anything else.

10:19:11:14
Interviewer
Do you feel like your parents sheltered you at this point then? From the,

10:19:14:00
Ruth David
Oh I'm sure. I'm absolutely sure they did and I think they went on doing that even in their letters to us, eventually. Er, I've seen letters, other peoples letters, where parents describe how hideous their conditions are. Mine never did that, even when they were in the camps. They, because later there were sent to French concentration camps.

10:19:36:21
Interviewer
Let's talk about Mina.

10:19:38:20
Ruth David
Mina.

10:19:39:10
Interviewer
She obviously means so much to you.

10:19:40:23
Ruth David
She did, yes.

101:9:42:13
Interviewer
She helped your family, and helped you grow up?

10:19:45:01
Ruth David
Yes, and I was Mina's favourite, which the others resented, and the reason for that was that my brother, Michael, was born 364 days after me, so somebody had to look after me as a one year old, and it was Mina; and so I was devoted to her and she to me. And er, she spoiled me, and do you know my older brothers and sisters remember that 40 years later, how, what a spoiled brat I was. [*Laughs*].

10:20:21:15
Interviewer
I'm sure you weren't at all, but she was like your mother in many ways?

10:20:24:14
Ruth David

Yes. Yes.

10:20:26:07
Interviewer
And she was obviously an amazing woman as well, because she was a Roman Catholic wasn't she?

10:20:31:21
Ruth David
She was, yes.

10:20:32:16
Interviewer
And yet she put her own life,

10:20:34:18
Ruth David
Yes.

10:20:34:18
Interviewer
In many ways, at risk to be with you.

10:20:35:17
Ruth David
Oh she did. I mean the first time they came to get her, to take her away from us, she cursed at them in no uncertain manner. Swore and cursed and told them to get out of here, and um, and they did. They were scared of her, but the next time they came she had to go, because father said he would be in trouble if um, if he, if she didn't leave us, mmm.

10:21:03:13
Interviewer
She was trying to protect you.

10:21:04:16
Ruth David
Yes, yes.

10:21:05:15
Interviewer
Did you see her after that?

10:21:07:06
Ruth David
I saw her only once.

10:21:10:00
Interviewer
Tell me.

10:21:34:03
Ruth David
In um, 1957, when I still hadn't been back to Germany I think I, um, I was staying with English friends in Cologne. My best friend at college, at, at university here in London, had moved to Cologne and had invited me and I said, "well I didn't much want to come to Germany but you persuaded me," and she knew that I was looking for Mina, and I knew Mina lived in Dusseldorf - was working there - and they found her, and so that was quite an experience. I went to see her and um, um, I came to the hotel where she was working, which we found quite easily, and the hotel owner would

not let her come to see me ,un, this is German order. I'm sorry to say that rudely, until she had finished washing the dishes, and so we couldn't meet until then.

10:22:42:16
Ruth David
And so we went up to her little room. We just cried.

10:22:54:16
Ruth David
And then she gave me something that my mother had given her. When my parents were deported from Mannheim in October '40, Mina turned up. I don't know how she knew. Nobody knows, and said she wanted to go with them. That of course was impossible, and um, and my mother gave her a whole file of letters and those are the letters in my book, of the, the, what do I call it? The Lifelines, and if I hadn't had those letters I, I wouldn't have known, you know, how those first years of the war w, had been. Th, she kept copies of the letters that came in and also that she had sent out, so these were her letters, and um, [*blowing nose*], having my mother's letters; and so I had that and said goodbye to Mina and I never saw her again because she died; and I did go with a friend to a cemetery in Dusseldorf, no, it was in another place on the Rhine, that she had moved to, [*Neider Bresig?*], and a friend came with me, to look for her grave, but we couldn't find it. It was a huge cemetery and nobody could help us, so.

10:24:29:13
Interviewer
But she obviously knew how much you meant..

10:24:31:11
Ruth David
Yes.

10:24:32:02
Interviewer
To her and the other way round. She knew how much you loved her.

10:24:35:02
Ruth David
Yeah.

10:24:38:00
Interviewer
She was an angel in your family

10:24:40:00
Ruth David
Yes

10:24:41:19
Interviewer
Er, I'm assuming that the progrom you're talking about in November is known as Kristallnacht.

10:24:47:03
Ruth David
Kristallnacht. Um, and that's an interesting title because, er, so much glass was broken that night, so much crystal and glass in everybody's homes. It was an official attack which Goebbels had organized. He was the Minister for Propaganda, and that sort of thing, and, he had announced that there would be this attack on Jews because, do I tell you that story? Because, um, a young man who had fled to France from Germany, whose parents were Polish Jews. Er, they had been, um, arrested in, quite early on in October '38 and, um, dumped at the Polish border. The Poles didn't want them. And they, but they weren't allow, they weren't allowed into Poland and the Germans wouldn't have

them back. So, I don't know what happen, happened
to them in the end, they were stuck there. And those who knew that their families had gone there were very anxious, as was this young man whose parents had been sent there, he was in Paris. And he went to the German Embassy to ask for help. And what did they do? They mocked him. And so he went back with a gun and shot someone. Then obviously it's a crime. And curiously enough, this boy survived and he survived the whole war, in prison. I don't know why they didn't kill him when you think of the numbers killed. It's quite an extraordinary thing that they didn't. I think it was an accident.

10:26:18:03
Ruth David
And, um, and as a punishment because this was a world plot, no, it was a plot organised by Jews worldwide according to German ideas. This, er, murder in Paris from this one young man. Nobody of course had known about it. And, we certainly didn't. And, er, and that was the sign for the attack.

10:26:43:16
Now the attack was called Kristallnacht because so much glass was
broken.

10:26:49:03
The Germans themselves now, and I admire them for it, re, refused to use that word, they say it sounds too good and they call the pogrom. Now, pogrom as you know is the Russian word meaning an attack on Jews. And, er, it's now called Po, Pogromnacht. And certainly it happened at night.

10:27:09:00
And it happened to us in Fränkisch-Crumbach, it happened to us a day later, than everywhere else. Because news hadn't got through.

10:27:17:05
Interviewer
What happened?

10:27:18:22
Ruth David
Um, well our house was attacked at night. We heard somebody, about ten o'clock I suppose at night. Um, we heard somebody, um, smash the door in with an axe, the front door. And all the lights went out because something had been destroyed. And, heard, we lived at that point with an old Aunt and an Uncle who had always lived in Fränkisch-Crumbach. Never married, both were, well the Aunt was mentally somewhat handicapped. But she, she managed her life quite well. And the Uncle was physically handicapped, he had, um, been born at birth, I mean before the birth sorry, sorry about that stupid remark. He had been born, er, with his legs, um, not really properly in the sockets. Nowadays this can be very easily repaired at birth but
He was lame all his life and had to swing himself around on crutches. Which he did and was a very bright man. I don't know that he never went to university, he must have gone locally to school. And, but he had a huge library and had read everything and had,was clever. He had made himself a wheelchair that could go up the stairs. I don't know how he'd done it but he had. And so, he and, er, the Aunt, who as I say brother and sister, had lived together all the years and the Aunt had looked after him extremely well.

10:28:57:18
Interviewer
Is this Aunt Ida?

10:28:58:14
Ruth David
Ida. Yes. And he was Uncle Gustav. And, um, he tried to get up. Er, we, we rushed, Hannah and I heard this noise and we rushed to his bedroom which was near ours. And, um, he was trying to get up. And we discovered later he'd been thrown down the stairs in his wheelchair, which had smashed. And Aunt Ida had been beaten and screamed and apparently these screams are still remembered in the village today. And, um, father and my eldest brother who

was with us, Ernest. Were taken to the local prison, as I think I mentioned before. And, um, for one night and then the next day to Buchenwald, we didn't know where they'd gone, but we heard eventually.
And Ernest came back after two weeks. But the house was completely, completely smashed up, every bit of china and the beds and curtains had been slashed and feathers all over the place.

10:30:08:05
Hannah and mother and I must have cleared it all up because we had no other help. I do not remember the clearing up. I remember what it looked like. We had...in those days you didn't have freezers, you preserved fruit and vegetables for the winter, in glass jars. I think the English term is Kilner jars. And everyone of those jars had been smashed on the stone floor of the kitchen and broken. So that, I remember there was just this oozing of fruit and vegetables amongst all the broken crockery and glass, china. And we must have cleared it up and I can't remember that. And yet I remember the scene very well. The broken mess
that we discovered.

10:30:53:23
Hannah and I had to fled downstairs after waking Uncle Gustav. We had been terrified of what was going on in the house. And downstairs there was a large garage where my father's car was and we hid ourselves in the car. And didn't come back in until all the noise had subsided, it took them many hours.
And, um, there we found mother in amongst all that broken mess . And, um, Aunt Ida sobbing. And, er, and father and Ernest gone, they had been taken away. But she, she told us they would soon be back. I mean she couldn't have known anything about it at all. But she comforted us.
And the next few weeks I think we were just stuck inside the house, I think somebody helped us by bringing milk or something. I don't, I don't know who helped us. But we had some food

10:32:00:13
and it was then that the Baroness, this wonderful lady, who had great courage. And as I say one of the few Catholics in the village. She sent round a basket for, when my father came back from Buchenwald, because that must have been talked about in the village, that father was back. But we don't know what the villagers talked about. We didn't see people. And the shops all had notices on them saying Jews were forbidden entrance. So, how we got food I don't know and we weren't told in case we babbled I suppose, you know. Nobody was to find out how we had anything. And, um, er, so the, as I say the Baroness sent around a basket of fr, fruit, bread, wine - and I think bread and wine is quite significant - as a gesture. And I'm sure, it may have done father good, he looked dreadful when he came back. I mean I, I didn't want to go near him, he looked so small and shrunk. And with wounds on his head, awful.

10:33:11:24
Interviewer
You remember that basket arriving?

10:33:13:07
Ruth David
Yes.

10:33:14:15
Interviewer
And what that meant to all of you, that somebody was reaching out to you?

10:33:17:21
Ruth David
Yes.

10:33:18:11
Interviewer
Despite the fact that you were feeling,

10:33:19:17

Ruth David
[*Talking over each other*] That, that was wonderful. I've never forgotten that. I tried to write to her many years later to thank her. But by then she was dead and I think her nephew had taken over and I never heard back, you know. But it was wonderful.

10:33:37:01
Interviewer
So at this point, your family wanted to leave more than anything.

10:37:18:08
Interviewer
And they were desperate for you to all stay together. But it wasn't possible.

10:37:21:06
Ruth David
[*Talking over each other*] Well they did want us to keep in touch and stay together. Um, they didn't want to send their children away but by the time, after the Pogromnacht, after November.

10:37:35:08
Um, mother must have heard about the Kindertransport to England. And without telling us she put Hannah's and my name down, my older sister Hannah, um, she was, she was three and a half years older than I. And, um, I wasn't told. I don't think Hannah was told either. And then I discovered with a few day's notice that I was to go off on my own. What she didn't tell me was, what my parents didn't tell me at the time, I thought it was totally unfair, why should I leave when Hannah older than I wasn't leaving? She didn't tell me about Hannah because she hoped Hannah would still be able to go. There was some error made by a committee in London that was looking after the Kindertransport. Her name had been left off accidentally. And she did eventually get out in August, days before the war broke out.

10:38:34:07
Interviewer
We'll talk about your experience on the Kindertransport in a moment's time. But can you, so we already know your eldest brother was in Argentina. Your second brother was in North America. And, and how, what happened to the rest of the children?

10:38:46:20
Ruth David
[*Talking over each other*] Well the rest of us, we, we moved to Mannheim because, um, we couldn't live any longer in the village where everybody knew us, where we couldn't shop. Where we couldn't go to school. Er, because our school had been destroyed in that night, the one in Hochse that I was mentioning and the one that was 20 miles away. And mother, I, I suppose they needed money desperately. And mother tried to find a job in Mannheim. And the reason for choosing Mannheim was that she was born there. Er, her parents lived in Mannheim until she was 13 when they moved to Frankfurt. So I only associated my grandmother, my mother's mother with Frankfurt. Mannheim was new to me, but I knew we had relatives
there.

10:39:35:07
And, um, um, through knowing people she got a job in Mannheim and this job was, there was still in Mannheim the only Jewish orphanage that was left in south west Germany was in Mannheim and she got the job of looking after the children in the orphanage. And that was very useful because there was plenty of room for us children too. Her four younger children. And for my father who was in a sad state after Buchenwald.

10:40:09:14
And she got this job and for us actually there was school, there was one Jewish school left in Mannheim and we could go to school. We weren't allowed to leave the house as a mob, we had to go as individuals more or less. So that we wouldn't be too obvious. And there were notices on the shops saying, ‘Jews weren't allowed in.’ And mother did occasionally send me to buy something and I hated going somewhere. And she said, "they don't know who you

are, just go." And of course they didn't know who I was, as a child shopping for a pound of potatoes or whatever, you know. And, um, and then I went to school quite gladly there. It was a small school because there weren't that many people, Jewish people left in Mannheim either. They'd all tried to immigrate. But we had our school. And I could speak the local dialect, not of Mannheim but of the place where I had lived, of the Odenwald or Fränkisch-Crumbach. And the children laughed at me because I had a country dialect. They thought that was very funny. They called me [*die Ruth von lande?*] Ruth's come in from the country. [*Laughs*] And, but that made life a bit easier for us. But it was then that we discovered mother had plans to send us to England. Because she must have heard about this movement of the Kindertransport. And we should have come together and we didn't.

10:42:10:24
Interviewer
So you found yourself on the Kindertransport. Do you remember how you were told about where you were going? Or any of the details of the journey.

10:42:16:12
Ruth David
[*Talking over each other*] Just a few nights before I went away they told me and I made no end of a fuss. I screamed and yelled and said I wasn't going, it wasn't fair. Because Hannah wasn't going. But I don't know why they never told me that Hannah should have gone. I don't, I, I don't understand that.

10:42:34:13
Ruth David
They, they must have been totally aware, per, perhaps they were just hoping against hope that Hannah would go with me at the last moment, but she didn't. And, um, they were allowed this, we were living in Mannheim.
In Frankfurt I think parents weren't allowed to come to the station with their children because it would look too awful for them. To see weeping parents. But in Mannheim, which was a much smaller place, the Kindertransports only went from the large cities. Frankfurt, Vienna, Hamburg, Berlin, um, Nietzsche, Cologne. But not from little towns like Mannheim. And so they weren't allowed to come to Mannheim, to, to Frankfurt where I was going from. But they could put me on a train in Mannheim and say goodbye to me in Mannheim, on the station, that was allowed. It was the last time I saw them. [*Cries*]

10:43:43:10
Ruth David
And I travelled with three or four other children, whom I didn't know from Mannheim, we, we'd gathered at the station. And mother, I was ten, mother asked a boy of 13 to look after me. [*Cries*] And I could see by his face that's the last thing he wanted to do. [*laughs*] And it was quite wrong of mother to ask him and he certainly took no interest in me, why should he? But I managed because, um, in, we arrived in Frankfurt and it was fairly obvious where all those other 200 children were. You could hear the noise and you could see the platform and I, I went there and I just got on the train.

10:44:24:04
Interviewer
Do you remember anything about what you were wearing? What you had in your suitcase? Do you remember any of the [*talk over each other*]

10:44:28:01
Ruth David
[*Talking over each other*] You know funnily enough, it's funny that you should say that because I had a hat for the first time in my life. A straw hat. Why mother bothered to give me a hat we'd never, we'd worn caps in the winter, woollen caps and berets. Never worn, I'd never seen a hat before, you know. [*Laughs*]

10:44:48:04
And it was navy blue straw with a red ribbon I think. And um, yes I wasn't used to having anything as fancy as that. And we went through, very pretty country, I knew we were going to go along the Rhine. And I was glad to see places on the Rhine, which I'd never seen before, and I'd heard about the vineyards which run up the hills, next to the Rhine, and that intrigued me quite a lot. But, I didn't, I don't think I spoke to anyone else in the compartment. We

were all children, and um, I think I had sandwiches with me, which I did eat.

And we arrived in the dark, at the Hook of Holland. Yes, and Dutch ladies came and brought us oranges to eat. Now, oranges were something of a luxury in those days, certainly in Germany they were. And I think gave us a drink, which we thought very nice of them.

Because German officials had come through the, um, train and asked whether we had any valuables. Well I certainly didn't. And um, I think mother would not have been foolish enough to give me anything to take that was valuable in case I was in trouble about it. We were allowed to take I think, five marks or two marks in money, but it seemed no point in having any money either, I didn't need it.

And um, we arrived at the Hook of Holland in the dark, and I'd never seen the sea before, but I couldn't see it because it was dark. And I did see a ship, and I don't know that I'd ever seen a ship before either. Not, well, I'd seen boats on the Main and the Rhine, but not really a ship.

I'd never been to the seaside in Germany. I mean, we didn't have holidays, and it wasn't the sort of time when one took children away.

And I got on board, and I just stood there and cried, and some sailor picked me up, and put me in a cabin, and um, and he spoke kindly to me, and I knew this was this language that I would never understand. Terrible language. Sounded quite ghastly.

10:47:40:13
And um, I remember waking up, and we were in Harwich, and I still didn't see the sea, because we were in a sort of bay, or in a dock, I'm not sure which. And I knew I hadn't seen the sea. And um, that was disappointing, and then by train, oh yes, and then I left my suitcase standing on the platform, and suddenly somebody found it and yelled out, and it was me. And um, I had to go and get it.

And um, were taken to London, Liverpool Street Station, which I must tell you was the ugliest, dirtiest, filthiest place that I'd ever seen. East London in those days, was just covered in soot, and smoke. The smoke came from the west and brought all the soot over. And East London was very dirty. Nobody can understand that today, because things have changed completely, with different kinds of heating and so on.

10:48:57:06
And, er, we were taken to a big hall there, and then I saw how many children we were. We must have been about 200, because that was the usual number for a Kindertransport, but to me it seemed like thousands. And names were called out.
People had come to fetch the children, and I knew my name wouldn't be called out. That nobody would fetch me. I was, I was quite pessimistic,

and I was one of the first names to be called. And a lovely elderly lady, Anna Jacobson, collected me. I think she and her sister had been responsible for guaranteeing that I should come to England. Everybody had to have a guarantor. You've heard this a thousand times, I expect. Um. Had to pay £50 for them to put down in case you became a nuisance once you were in England, and this money would cover all your sins. £50 was a lot of money then, when people were earning ten, £2 a week for their wages, you know, and I think they done that.

And my mother knew Anna Jacobson and her sister Rosie, um, er, during the First
World War in Germany. My mother was either studying or working in Berlin, and refugees had come in from Russia, and including those two sisters. And my mother, sort of, helped to look after them, and then they moved on eventually to England, but mother always stayed in touch with them.

And it was Anna, the oldest sister, who came to meet me at Liverpool Street, and
she could speak some German which was nice. And she took me on a big, red London bus. Now, I'd never seen such a big bus before, because double-decker buses didn't exist in the rest of Europe. They were only in England. And, um, I wrote home about it eventually, saying, “I, I went on a bus that had two storeys.” [*Laughs*]. Because I didn't know the word, ‘decker’ or whatever, you know. So two, a two, two storey bus, as if it were a house, and, and that was very exciting to be on that bus. And it was a long way from Liverpool Street to Chalk Farm, where these people lived in a block of flats.

10:51:37:22
Now I'd never seen such a block of flats before. If you know London, a, at all, those flats are called Eton Rise and Eton Hall and Eton Court, and that's where they lived. I think some of them were bombed during the war, but they're still there, and they lived at Eton Hall. And it was the first time I saw an indoor lift, and spent a lot of time going up and down, and up and down in a lift, because it was allowed. You could do that. My father had lifts in the factory, but these were only for tobacco packing cases and things. Um, er, and that there was a big notice on the lift saying, 'Not

for human, um, er, use.' And so my brother and I used to go secretly in those lifts. You had to pull them on ropes and pull each other up and down, but it was strictly forbidden. Forbidden by my father as well. He wouldn't allowed us to do that, but we did it.

10:52:41:03
Interviewer
Io, were they repaying a debt? Your mother had helped them.

Er, I was in fact travelling with another child. Er, the, the Jacobson's knew that they, they had to meet someone, somewhere, at Kings Cross, who's going to be travelling with us. They didn't let us travel on our own, because this girl who was also travelling, Stella [*Schipper?*] from Vienna, she was a little bit younger than I. She was not yet ten, and I was the big girl of ten. And this lady, who couldn't speak any German, was with us, and she spoke to us in English, and I knew more and more what a barbarous language it was, and, um, she stayed with us. And I recognised York, because my aunt had moved a few months earlier to York, and I didn't know any of the other names. I saw a lot of adverts, which I didn't understand. In those days, there were so many station adverts. And, um, arrived at Newcastle. We were fetched by somebody who had a car; somebody from the committee in Newcastle. There was this small Jewish committee in Newcastle that had set up the hostel in Tynemouth for us. They thought they would do it for six months to a year, and they were prepared to do that. But, of course, war came and they had to do it for nearly getting on for seven years, and I think it must have been very hard on them, financially, because these were not super rich people. They were good people and kind people, and they were wonderful, the, this committee.

Did you hear from your family?

11:04:39:21
Ruth David
Yes. Er. My parents were marvellous in trying to, I mean, um, they must have spent most of their time writing to their children, if any spare time that they had. Because there was a letter for me from my parents when I got to London. There was one for me as soon as I got to Tynemouth. And then they wrote, I think, twice a week until the war broke out.
And then of course, for a time, we didn't hear anything, because letter's could not pass between enemy countries. And, um, er, but my parents, like other parents also, did something that was illegal. They sent letters to neutral countries. To people whom they knew in neuc, neutral countries and those people sent them onto England.

11:05:33:01
Now in my case, the neutral country, the first one was Holland,
where my sister had an older, a friend, exactly her age. Er. This was a girl of 14, who was so responsible that she sent on our letters to us in England, er, the letters my parents sent and the other way on. How she got money for the stamps, because mother couldn't send any money there. It was impossible. Nor could she send stamps. And, um, not that they had any money - or not much. And, er, but those letters came. Some got lost, obviously, after the war started. And we don't know how many letters got lost, but I've still got quite a lot of letters and think I had more letters than anybody else.

What did those letters say to you?

11:14:34:23
Ruth David
Right. Er, we went to Windermere, and I much preferred that to Tynemouth. We went to school there, which I loved. The school was one of the old fashioned kind, a church of England school, next to the church, where the vicar came in and taught us religious education every morning. Um. They said the Jewish children needn't come to that, and we were busy pouring milk for all the others. The milk was delivered in a, this is when school milk started. The milk was delivered from a local farm in a churn. We had to bring our own cups and to clean every jug, and so on, that was used for the milk. And we had to boil water on a gas ring, because that was all we had in the school for boiling water. And, er, it was a very old-fashioned little
place. We had gas light. There was no electricity in the place, and I won't tell you what the lavatories were like and, um, but awful. I trained myself not [*laughs*] to use them. And, um, er, the people were so, the, the staff were wonderful to us.

11:15:41:03
Interviewer
By this stage, had you learnt the barbaric language [*talking over each other*]

11:15:43:08
Ruth David
No, [*talking over each other*] not much. Well, I'd learned it, but not brilliantly. Yes, I had learned it, but I was better at arithmetic and things, than English. And, yes, we, we had learned quite a lot, and we fitted in. And the children were nice to us, but they had a whole school dumped on them from the north-east coast, from South Shields. And so, this poor school had to manage with two schools in it, um, with two head mistresses, who, I don't know how they survived, and two lots of staff. And it wasn't easy, but they were good to us children, and kinder than they were to us in the hostel. The hostel started, got more difficult every year, because those women didn't intend to do this job forever, but in wartime, they had to stay where they were. As enemy aliens, they could not move either and get new jobs. And so, er, they went on looking after us, but, er, we found it harder.

11:20:26:17
Ruth David
And I, um, the head mistress of the junior school, of the primary school, up to 14, had said I ought to be at a grammar school, and she took me around. There was only two grammar schools in West Mullen. She took me to one, to one in Kendal and to one in Ambleside, and they both said they couldn't make an exception for an enemy child. So I couldn't, they said it wouldn't be fair. So I couldn't go to the grammar school.

11:20:56:00
And then the Jacobson's in London said they were willing to pay fees for me at a private school. And this was a small private school in Windermere, um, run on a shoe string, and they never put up their fees. Their fees were £10 a term, which wasn't much even in those days. £30 a year, and the Jacobson's paid that for me.

11:21:20:19
And I went by bicycle to school; it was about five, five and half miles each way. And in the winter, sometimes quite difficult in snow. And, um, but the matrons got very fed up with me because I was an exception. I was the only child still at school, when all the others were working. I'd, I worked in the hostel. I spent every evening doing the dishes and doing the potatoes and doing ironing and so on. I had a lot of work to do. I hardly had time to do my homework, but the school was very nice about that, they understood that. And, um, but I was constantly in trouble, because I was helping all day and I wasn't earning. And so, on my, was it 16th or 17th birthday, they said I had either to leave the school or to leave the hostel, andI had no choice. I had to leave the school. And I told the school, and they were horrified, and said I could live with them. And so, I was expelled from the hostel and lived in the school, and that was very nice for me. I mean, I felt I was an intruder in someways, and I was, you know, but they were good to me, and I was able to go on then.

11:22:41:14
And they took me onto A level, to highers, and I got scholarship to London University, on the intercollegiate scholarship exam, and fortunately, because that would pay my fees you see, because I had no money.

11:22:58:09
And, er, meanwhile, my brother in Amer, in North America, had tried to do what he had promised my parents, to gather us together. And, er, and my visa came just about the time my scholarship came, and I said I would not go to the States. I would take the scholarship and come later.
And my sister, Hannah, who was in the south of England, took the visa and went to the States at that time, in '47, but I didn't. In '47, I went to university. And then I never did go to the States. I visited. But I felt after I'd finished my degree, well, I, I'd gained a lot in England; I ought to teach in England and taught languages. Hm.

11:33:45:04
Interviewer
But we all need to learn from your experiences, and that's why this testimony is so important. Don't you think?

11:33:55:01
Ruth David
Yes, yes, and I'm glad you are doing it.

11:33:59:16
Interviewer
What do you feel are the biggest lessons that we should learn from that period of history?

11:34:13:10
Ruth David
I think, we should learn that we are all people together, in one big lot. And we still have a lot to learn. How to get on with people that we don't know. Or, people who are less well educated than we are, and who may know less than we do. And I think one of the only things I've learned is that in the end it comes to education, and I also know that education takes an incredibly long time. [*pause*] We learn very slowly.

11:35:08:00
Interviewer
As a culture, do you feel that we have learned something?

11:35:11:21
Ruth David
Yes. I think so.