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Interview Transcript Title Page

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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 75

NAME: PROFESSOR JOHN SUBAK-SHARPE

DATE: 5 OCTOBER 2004

LOCATION: GLASGOW

INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 26 seconds

AG: First of all, Professor Subak-Sharpe, I would like to say thank you very much indeed for agreeing to do the interview for the AJR's programme of filmed interviews. Could I just ask you to state for the tape first of all your name at birth?

JSS: My name at birth was Herbert Subak, just Subak itself.

AG: And where were you born?

JSS: I was born in Vienna and lived in Vienna in the Paracelsusgasse**,** in the third district of Vienna, and in fact virtually all my life in Vienna was in that particular flat.

AG: And when were you born?

JSS: I was born on 14th February, that's Saint Valentine's Day, of 1924.

AG Right, thank you. I'd like to start by asking you about your family background, about the sort of home you came from and your parents, or indeed grandparents. Can we start with your father? What was his name and what sort of man was he?

JSS: My father was an engineer, Ingenieur Robert Subak. He was actually born in Trebic, which is now on the Czech side of the border, but was then in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was born in 1879 and he studied in Vienna, studied as a civil engineer, he qualified in this. He was also a so-called 'Einjähriger Freiwilliger', served in the army, the Austrian Army. He served all his time in the Ulanenregiment, this is a cavalry regiment, of course. He served throughout the war from 1914 to 1918. In fact, I have still got the document showing that he was demobilised. He won one or two medals during that time. So he was quite a-, a pretty unusual soldier, at least unusual by my standards.

Tape 1: 3 minutes 0 second

JSS: He married after the First World War, in 1919, in December 1919, and he married my mother, who was the daughter of a rather eminent Viennese advocate, or shall I say, barrister equivalent. And she had three brothers, all of whom also went into the Austrian Army, all of whom were also officers. The one was killed during the war and two of them survived. Of these, I won't say any more about them, one of them managed to get to England after the so-called Anschluss, having a very difficult time; the other got out or thought he got out, initially into Czechoslovakia and then Hungary, but then in Hungary was caught and killed. Both my parents were killed by the Germans in 1941, in January 1941, and they were sent to Riga and I understand shot there.

AG: What was your mother's name and maiden name?

JSS: Her maiden name was Nelly Brühl and, in fact, my maternal grandfather was the Brühl family and, in fact, my maternal grandfather actually died before Hitler got into Vienna and is buried there.

AG: Where did that family come from?

JSS: The family to the best of my knowledge, well, they were from Vienna, but my grandmother, as far as I understand it, came from some part of Poland, but I have no very good knowledge from that part of the background. But, as I may show you later, we have a very extensive pedigree, so to speak, that my wife and several of my relatives worked through, which goes back to the beginning of the Subaks, anyway.

Tape 1: 5 minutes 33 seconds

AG: How far back can you trace it?

JSS: It can be traced back until the names were given to Subaks. We will see a bit later, if you wish

AG: Would that be the Emperor Joseph when names were given?

JSS: I wish I could give you a response.

AG: Hah, we will see anyway.

JSS: You'll see that, the exact date, you will see it I am sure.

AG: That's interesting. What sort of man was your father? How do you remember him?

JSS: My father was really quite a serious man, he was an engineer of course, but there was very little work eventually in Vienna. Going back into a little more detail now, my father and his brother, his younger brother, Ernst, who also lived in the Paracelsusgasse, one floor below us, they were very close throughout their lives. Initially they had been 'Gutspächter' in Petronell, that is Carnuntum today, which is on the border between Slovakia and Austria now, which is the biggest Roman

settlement there was, and still is very well preserved and can show you some evidence of this. Now, they had been very well-to-do, or at least pretty well-to-do. However, after they - they both were officers in the army - but after they came out, they had what appeared to them very wonderful offers for the 'Gutspächter' business they had, which was-. The 'Gut' belonged to Graf Traun**,** they sold it. And of course then inflation took the whole of that away, so that they were in more reduced circumstances, certainly after 1925 and 1926, at the time when we were born. And probably, to some extent, this is probably true for my mother's family, so we were reasonably well off, obviously middle-class, but not really wealthy. Now he then did various things, he sold things called 'Regenanlagen', which means- because with the long connection with farming - which was sprinkle systems, taking water from the Danube and sprinkling it over fields, so that these fields could bear more reliable crops than they would otherwise have done. He was an astonishing man in one other sense: he was an engineer, who hardly ever used his slide rule; he did most of the work by mental arithmetic. He was a very good mathematician and taught us children several tricks. My mother was very much involved in our education too and made sure, more than my father, that we did quite well in various-, and completed our various tasks at school and particularly at Gymnasium.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 40 seconds

AG: Was sort of woman was your mother?

JSS: She was a very vibrant sort of person, she was an excellent singer, we had a very large grand piano, which she constantly used and we, her children, to her great disappointment, showed absolutely no aptitude for music. In fact, she did employ a piano teacher, who after 2 or 3 weeks, told her: "Mrs Subak, it's a waste of your money and my time to teach these boys the piano." She had a very large circle of friends, she had a very fine singing voice, as far as I can judge it, but also using the judgment from other people. She was an accomplished cordon bleu cook, although we had a 'Dienstmädchen', we had a girl living in, who looked after most of the cleaning of the house. During the First World War she had been a voluntary nurse, so she had been nursing,

Tape 1: 11 minutes 0 seconds

AG: Nursing wounded soldiers?

JSS: Yes, nursing wounded soldiers.

AG: You said that your mother had a large circle of friends. Would these have been mainly Jewish?

JSS: Mainly Jewish, yes, not totally, but mainly Jewish. We were not a religious family, except that my father took us probably twice or three times a year for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah to the synagogue.

AG: Do you remember which one?

JSS: Well, then we went to the Seitenstetten. But that was not the normal synagogue that I had as a boy. We had to go on Saturdays, most Saturdays, to a very small local synagogue, which the teacher, the religious teacher, in my Gymnasium, Dr. Kupfer, he was the Rabbi there, he was a Rabbi, and so we had to make appearance there. Although I learnt not very much, it was still an interesting period of my time. As far as I know, that particular little synagogue was burnt later on when it came to the Kristallnacht. As far as I know, the Seitenstetten Synagogue was not, as there were too many other important buildings that the Nazis regarded as important, otherwise that would have been in danger.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 39 seconds

AG: Did you keep any Jewish holidays and rituals at home? Did you have Friday evenings?

JSS: No, we virtually never had Friday evenings that I remember. I do remember that we-, except Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, in fact, even I tried to fast at one stage, for a very short period of time, but in addition to this, Passover was also kept later, when we were a little older. The family, my father's family, was quite prominent in Trebic and graves are still there and apparently the family is the Levy family and so there was a tradition but the tradition seemed to be doubt.

AG: What sort of people did your parents mix with in social circles? Were they musical like your mother? What sort of friends?

JSS: Certainly some were musical, many were related to her brothers or were friends of her own. She was also an outstandingly good bridge player, she forced also my father to play bridge although he was not nearly of that standard, so there was a bridge circle, which was quite-, which was very active, two or three times a week I think they played. But it was not match bridge, as far as I know, but it was a certain type of bridge.

Tape 1: 14 minutes 25 seconds

AG: And I haven't asked you yet whether you have any brothers and sisters?

JSS: I have one brother, one living brother, he came out on the 'Kindertransport' with me, his name is Gerald, it started as Gerhard Subak, but now he is called Gerald Subak-Sharpe, like I am called John Herbert Subak-Sharpe, although I started as Herbert Subak. Gerald, you will hear a bit later about that, but Gerald is now in the United States and he is a Professor of Electrical Engineering in City College there. He is still teaching, although he is now 79, which is incredible, in my view. He also was in the army incidentally but, then again, that will come out later. In addition to, my brother and I were close, but, in addition to my brother, there was a sister, but the sister was born in 1921, I think, and she-, sorry in December 1920 I think. She died as an 18 month-old, apparently of parentitis, and that was a very sore spot with my mother. So I never knew my sister at all, she is buried in Vienna. I should perhaps say that my uncle, who lived in the same house, had two children, a daughter, who is now also in the States, but she was 11 years older than I, so I hardly got to know her very

well, but in addition they had a son, who is also in the States, he is in Chicago now, but he took a great deal of interest in us and it was almost like an elder brother.

Tape 1: 16 minutes 35 seconds

AG: What was his name?

JSS: Hans Subak, Karl-Hans Subak, and he is in the States.

AG: What sort of house or flat did you live in? How do you remember it?

JSS: The flat was, I'll tell you a little bit about that in a moment, first of all, the flat is almost back-to-back with what is now the Hundertwasserhaus, so it is very elegant, also opposite it was elegant. That whole district was not apparently destroyed and it is really very well preserved.

AG: You said it was the third 'Bezirk'?

JSS: Der dritte Bezirk, Landstrasse, Hauptstrasse. Yes, but the Paracelsusgasse, goes off the Löwengasse, and it is not very far from the Weissgerberlände and the Rotundenbrücke, if you happen to know that area.

AG: Yes, as it happens, I do. Yes, so it is a fairly affluent area?

JSS: Yes, it is a reasonably affluent area, yes, but I was not particularly conscious that it should be affluent at that time.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 52 seconds

AG: Could you describe the family flat a little?

JSS: With some difficulty. The flat itself was full of old paintings and pictures, my mother and my father were very interested in these, and they had bought some. None of them were as-, how I would regard as outstandingly valuable by today's standard, but they were very interesting pictures, some of which I still remember, others I hardly remember at all. In addition, the flat was very nicely carpeted; it was mainly what we called Persian carpets. So Iranian, by today's standard, there was a 'Herrenzimmer', which my father used, and my father smoked quite a lot of cigars, and there was usually cigar smoke there and then there was a main salon, where they entertained, and other rooms, bathrooms etc., and then there was a maid's annex there and I also remember a very small balcony that went to the back, into the 'Hof", but with no particular consequence. But, as I say, my uncle lived one floor below, but on the other side. So they were not one on top of the other but just one level separated by a staircase. And the house had a lift.

Tape 1: 19 minutes 47 seconds

AG: Oh! That's unusual.

JSS: Yes, well, not that, well reasonably so, but not that unusual in Vienna. There were quite a lot of books, many of which unfortunately I never read, should have done. I am not completely sure what else to tell you there. The 'Herrenzimmer', for example, had leather armchairs and so on, but so what?

AG: Yes. What about the neighbours? Do you have any recollections about the neighbours?

JSS: One neighbour opposite us was the Waldmanns. They didn't have young children, I think they had children, but they were already grown up. We were on good terms but not especially close to them. In fact, in the house itself, except the two brothers and their wives, there was no real very close relationship. The house belonged to a Frau Lederer, who was also Jewish, they were friendly, but that was all there was. I am trying to think what else would be relevant here, but I am not sure what, my parents, that is both my father and my uncle, owned a house, but it was in a different part of Vienna.

AG: Which part? Which part is that?

JSS: I could look this up, because eventually they had to sell it, my uncle had sold his part, and my father had not quite sold it, and I have got a piece of paper that shows that, although he was forced to sell, he was never paid: "Nach Riga abgereist. Er hat sich noch nicht gemeldet." So, that is the last piece of paper that the Viennese found and it is now in my possession.

Tape 1: 22 minutes 11 seconds

AG: Turning to you now, I would like to ask you about your early childhood memories. Do you have memories?

JSS: I have some very early childhood memories. Some of which are a little stupid, but I will give them to you just the same. The earliest - the problem is, is this really your earliest memory or is it that it has been told again and again? Apparently, my father had been riding, my father was an accomplished horseman, although later he didn't do this very much, he had been out, away riding, and came back, and his boots, and apparently - that I think I remember it - we were on the third floor and the window was open and I came into my mother and said: "Schuhe, Fenster, bum, bum." And I had thrown the boots out of the window. And my mother looked down and there was a taxi man who was waving this. Fortunately, nothing serious happened. Other memories are very vague, very early ones. Over the summer, one used to go into the country, and this was at Strobl, and being in the lake and having little fishes biting at your leg, and this was perhaps the only earliest genuine, personal memory that I would remember. Then, I was very fair and blond, you won't believe that now, I had curly hair and I hated the fact that very frequently some of the lady-friends would stroke my hair and would wish they had that hair, which is a stupid memory. Other more interesting memories are that over the weekends, particularly with my mother, but often with my father if he had the time as well, we used to go on 'Ausflüge', we used to go on visits into the surrounding countryside. And Vienna of course is surrounded by very nice country. And so we did quite a lot of walking and, during the summer holidays, my mother and I, and to some extent more reluctantly my brother,

used to climb and so I climbed the Schneeberg, for example, when I was about eight years old and enjoyed that. And so - these are really not such interesting memories - very often we shared some of these summer vacations with friends, with particular friends of my mother, he was a bank manager, sorry, he was a bank director, and pretty high up in the 'Kreditanstalt', and his wife was a very good friend of my mothers. They had two daughters, one was about the same age, really the same age of my cousin, so we had little to do with her because she was already a young lady, so to speak, where as the younger daughter was the age of my brother and Gerard and we were very good friends. They often came to us and we went to them.

AG: Where did they live?

JSS: They lived in quite a different district. Now, unfortunately, I can't quite remember the address. I think it was in the fifth district, but I am not absolutely sure. Their name was Fürst, which was surprising because my father's mother's family, she was born as a Fürst, but totally unrelated.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 30 seconds

AG: You mentioned that you went on holiday. What sort of places did your family go to on summer holidays?

JSS: For example, we went to Waldeck, that was near the Schneeberg; as I say, Ischl, Strobl, but then later near the Attasee, I just wonder what the name of that particular-? Unterach, I think, or near Unterach. This was really in small pensions where we could do what we wanted to do. Usually, what was important that there would be the possibility of swimming. Because I took to swimming very early, my brother didn't as a matter of fact, and so that was quite an important aspect. My mother also liked swimming.

AG: What about school? What was your first school?

JSS: My first school was a Volksschule in the Hernisgasse and that was very close to where my grandparents lived, Grandfather Brühl and so on, but that, as far as I know, doesn't have very much to do with it. It was within walking distance from where we lived, although on the other side of a major road. And then I passed 10 ½, I suppose the 10 year exam, and got into the Gymnasium. The Gymnasium I remember, considerably closer of course, and the Gymnasium was the Kundmann Gymnasium. My father had a classical education, but, in addition, my mother's brothers, and even her father, had all gone to the Kundmanngasse Gymnasium. Felix, who was killed in the war, is still on the memorial tablet that they have there.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 44 seconds

AG: Was that the Gymnasium for the third 'Bezirk'?

JSS: It was one of them. 'Humanistische' meant that you had to learn Latin and Greek, and my Greek is totally gone and my Latin isn't very much better, whereas the 'Realgymnasium' did more modern languages. I voluntarily took a modern language, which is also totally gone, which was Italian. I took it while there. I went through the

first four years there and because then we were thrown out, and I can tell you that in more detail. My brother also went to the Gymnasium initially.

AG: At the "Volksschule" and at the Gymnasium, were there other Jewish people, also in the classes?

JSS: Yes, not many, but there were. I don't really remember about the Hernisgasse, the elementary school, I am sure there were, but I don't, I can't remember any of the names. At the Gymnasium, in my class, there were at least 5 or 6 Jewish boys, some of whom I remember in some details, some of whom I only vaguely knew. The Gymnasium class, after the first year, which was very big, which was 60, so everybody was there, we were divided into two then. The so-called A class was all Catholics. I don't know why this was, but there were no Jewish boys, nor, as far as I know, were there any of the Protestant boys in there, or those that called themselves 'gottgläubig'. But, in the so-called B-class, there were all the Jewish boys and there were quite a number of Protestant boys and there were also Catholic boys, because Austria is a Catholic country, so they were by far the majority, so I had friends particularly in the B-class. In the A-class, which was kept separately from us, I had relatively little contact, certainly little contact that I remember.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 21 seconds

AG: Did the Jewish boys stick together? Or did you make particular friendships with the Jewish boys?

JSS: There was one who lived fairly close to us, Harry Schein, and, because he lived close, we had known him before. He was a friend. There with other boys, there was one who was very small, on whom other people picked, his name was Herschan and, although he was not a particular personal friend, I had a lot of fighting as a kid to do because I resented bitterly that some of the other people picked on him. So, he became, as I said, not a real close friend in any other way, we had no personal interest together. [Interruption -bell ringing] I am afraid that I will have to go to that. Can I just get up for a moment?

Tape 1: 32 minutes 40 seconds

AG: Yes, just continuing on.

JSS: Well, we were talking about the Jewish boys there.

AG: Yes

JSS: There were other personal friends that were non-Jewish that I had, particularly the people who sit next to me because we were not segregated there. They became quite personal friends in the school itself. And I have contact with one of them even today, although he had absolutely no Jewish blood in him. His name was Josef Landgraf, he actually-. After we had been kicked out of the school itself, later, he was anti-Nazi and he distributed leaflets with another of my friends who, with two others of my friends and some other who I didn't know, they were caught, they had a big trial. Josef Landgraf was condemned to death.

Tape 1: 33 minutes 59 seconds

AG: Good heavens, for distributing leaflets?

JSS: And spent 409 days - because he was just writing this up - in the death cell, before he got out of it, which has lifelong affected him. As I say, I am in contact with him. The other two, Igalfy, Ludwig Igalfy, he was given eight years but he-. Both these are still alive. And the third one, who apparently for some reason was not caught in this particular one, Günther Hamann, actually became a professor in Vienna and he has died since then. His wife is an eminent historian.

AG: Brigitte Hamann?

JSS: Yes, she was his wife.

AG: Ah.

JSS: She is, yes.

AG: I know of her.

JSS: I have books; you can look at that if you want. I wonder if I have answered-?

AG: I think you have, yes. I was just trying to find out what your relations were.

JSS: One of my best friends was a boy called Zuckriegel, who came from a peasant family outside, peasant is the wrong word, farming family, outside, and I used to bring him home to have lunch with us at times. But he was subsequently killed in the war and would have been a wonderful physician, physicist, beg your pardon.

Tape 1: 35 minutes 47 seconds

AG: I was going to ask you about that, whether your academic gifts began to make themselves noticeable at the Gymnasium?

JSS: I was not an outstanding-, I was always very good at most things there, but I was not outstanding, they called it 'Vorzugsschüler'. Okay, I was a 'Vorzugschüler', certainly in my first year, possibly in my second, I don't remember. But then I was, except in the last year when I suddenly got some 'genügend', I always had 'sehr guts' and 'guts'. But part of it was due also to the pressure put on me by my parents to make sure that we did our job. There is something amusing if you want me to tell you about it.

AG: Please, please.

JSS: As I say, my father, although he hadn't touched any Latin book for 50 years certainly, was once slightly angry at the fact that my interest in Latin was so little. So, when I came home and the next day I was going to have a 'Schularbeit'- that means be tested - he wrote out a copy of Caesar's 'De Bello Gallico' at the fourth, I think it

was the fourth chapter, way away from what I did. And he said: "Right, translate!" So he started and he spent perhaps an hour with me and I had to translate and he corrected it. Believe it or not, the next day in the 'Schularbeit' came a piece that started one paragraph in, but one paragraph beyond that.

AG: Wow!

JSS: So, I got splendid marks, which is really a joke, splendid marks for the first part and then all the mistakes turned out afterwards. And our teacher, Professor Varis, said: "If I didn't know who was sitting around you, I would have thought you copied it." So it was the best exam I took. And this gives you some ideas of my father's abilities and his type of character.

Tape 1: 38 minutes 28 seconds

JSS: Sorry for this diversion.

AG: No, not at all, it is a really nice one. What were the teachers like? What were your memories of the teachers?

JSS: It is an interesting question. Most of the teachers, as far as I could tell at the time, treated us all very similar. So I was not aware of the fact that, despite of everything else, two of them, they were illegal Nazis. Because that came out after the so-called Anschluss and they had their special badge, which they-. One had been the history and geography teacher, but what particularly amazed me - he had actually lost an arm in the first war - what amazed me that this man, who had never certainly showed any antagonism obvious to me, was such a radical Nazi. But of course you cannot tell whether he really knew what was going to happen. The other was the singing teacher, believe it or not, and, as I had no talent whatever, all he had said to me was: "Just open your mouth, but no noise and you will be okay" and so I got always a good in singing, although I had no voice. So, I cannot personally complain about these teachers, although I later found out that one or two may have been quite strong Nazis. And there were also a few boys in my class, who were illegal. But, of those, I knew they were anti-Jewish, there was no doubt about one or two of them, they were not friends, and they knew not to try and form any sort of relationship with us. At the same time, they were not rabidly anti-Jewish that I became aware of.

Tape 1: 40 minutes 36 seconds

JSS: My wife is there now.

AG: Can we stop?

AG: Starting again after the interruption, I was going to ask you whether you'd been aware of or experienced any anti-Semitism before the Anschluss in Vienna?

JSS: Yes, some, but very little personally. You've got to remember I was blonde, I was not at all a Jewish-looking boy and probably I would have escaped a lot of problems that other people had. There were always a little graffiti somewhere, but not against me, not that we could see. There were also socialist graffiti. There was, I

remember things stuck up when Hitler killed so many of the SA, there were lots of I would call it small placards that were stuck up, naming these individual people. So one was aware that there was a political situation there, but quite frankly, as children, we were not really involved, nor was I involved in some of the strong Zionist Jewish activities of some of the children, because my parents were not Zionists, they were not anti- but they were not really involved. My father was a monarchist, if anything, and so their attitude was really you're an Austrian, you live like that.

AG: Would you say they were patriotic Austrians?

JSS: Patriotic in so far as they rarely discussed these matters. My father read the 'Neue Freie Presse' and so. But there was quite a lot of involvement, Jewish jokes were quite frequent at home and a few Yiddish terms. Although we didn't speak Yiddish, they were familiar to my father and his brother and therefore they brought these out and we learnt them.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 0 second

AG: Do you remember them?

JSS: Some were probably personal. I don't really remember much, but, by saying that, I don't remember what they really meant some of them. But if something unusual happened it was called a 'bochte', whatever that means. I don't think I should go into that word and somebody was a 'nebbich'. Okay, that is, but I don't remember many of these. And certainly much later when we came to England and somebody tried to speak Yiddish to us and found out that we didn't understand it, I became fully aware that what I thought I knew something about …Jewish jokes.

AG: Do you remember any of the political conditions in Austria? I mean, for example, the so-called Socialist Uprising in February 1934?

JSS: Yes, I was 10 years old, so just. Of course, I was aware that there was a civil war going on. It was not in our district when we heard some artillery fire, although I am not sure that as a child I really understood what that entailed. There were photographs of people of the Marxist, the Karl Marx Hof, being shelled and so on. I must say, I, as a boy, didn't really understand everything anyway. My sympathies were on their side, they were not-, and I was aware of the fact, although I didn't fully understand what their position was, there was, on the one hand, the 'Heimwehr'. One was always aware that there were political infighting in Austria. And occasionally, when we were in the country, you saw Nazi symbols out, but until the Anschluss, which I of course managed to almost miss, one didn't really feel too bad about it. Near the Anschluss time, of course, there were times when it looked like the Germans were going to get over the border, from what one heard ones parent's say, one became very conscious that this was a difficult time and one became more politically aware.

Tape 1: 45 minutes 50 seconds

AG: When would that be from?

JSS: That would be the end of ’37-’38. Oh, and when Dollfuss was shot, that became aware, but then that quietened down, and one became aware that Schuschnigg was trying to keep Austria as an independent country.

AG: You were, by this stage, by ’37, a young teenager. What sort of interests did you have or were developing?

JSS: This is fairly different: first of all, I was quite a good swimmer, I was in the scouts, so I was swimming also for the scouts but not very successfully, I just managed to get into the team I think and so on; I did a bit of skiing, of course, but, again, I was not outstanding. My cousin was much better at this and I really did it a little late. My uncle was an outstanding skier, Brühl, and he was also an outstanding swimmer, so he was involved in the ‘Rettungsschwimmklub’. And he saved some people in the Danube, so he was at one stage, as far as I can know, Vice President or President of the ‘Rettungsschwimmklub’. He was also more politically active in that he was in the ‘Jüdische Frontkämpfer’, which my father, although he was a ‘Jüdischer Frontkämpfer’, as far as I know, did not join. If he joined them, I am not aware of it. Other interests: I played football, again not outstandingly well, and did all the things that boys did. Although Gerda Fürst came to us all the time, I had relatively little interest, at that stage, in girls, just began then but not ---.

AG: Yes. Did you have any cultural interests or did your parents try and foster any cultural interests in you?

JSS: I think they tried to interest me, particularly in some of the paintings, but again I had no talent for painting and so I-. My drawing was relatively pure, poor, not pure. So I had-. I cannot claim that I showed any inclination of doing anything particularly well at that stage.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 45 seconds

AG: Would you like to say anything about your brother? He was, what, two years younger than you?

JSS: No, 16 months. He was much the same. We grew up very close together. We used to do quite a bit of fighting between us, as brothers would do. At the same time, we were quite close together. Many of his friends were also friends of mine, or well known to me. He was, at that stage, scholastic but not particularly gifted. He got by and I mean, I really cannot stress that this was so, it was clear that we were going to become and take on some profession but it was not clear which profession. I guess I might of become a medical doctor, although that was not clear. I showed no aptitude or interest in becoming an engineer like my father, although Gerald showed interest in engineering, even at that stage, although not in anyway outstanding. Although, don’t forget, he would be 12 or 13 at that time and no it would be quite wrong to suggest that we showed that much promise.

Tape 1: 50 minutes 28 seconds

AG: I was wondering if we could actually now move on to the Anschluss and perhaps you could tell me your memories of the time either side of the Anschluss.

JSS: Well, just before the Anschluss, it became very agitated and I became quite involved. However, typically for me, I developed a terrible pain in my stomach, in my-, it was appendicitis, I didn't know. In fact, it got very, very close to getting out of hand. So, at the time when Hitler marched in, just then, the day before or two days before, I was operated on, so I was in hospital at that time. The person who operated on me, I did not know this, although I remembered it that I had been given ether at that time, believe it or not, but I did not know that it was a friend of my mothers from many years ago, Dr. Gold. The operation was successful but it took at least 7 days or so in hospital to recover from this. So I remember pain and I remember being there and I remember hearing the German planes overhead but I didn't really see. But, by the time I came out and then I had to recuperate for a few days, I missed what was probably a very important thing to see. By the time I got back into my school, my class, the boys were wearing badges: some of them had swastikas, some were still under the illusion that they could get away, some of them were socialists, with the three arrows – they, I am afraid, that was a terrible mistake on their part, because what happened afterwards is that the Nazis took over. So that I remember - the class at school. We were now segregated from the others, that means that we were still in the same class but the Jewish boys, as far as I remember, sat together, in case we were to contaminate our 'Nebenmann' by being Jewish. Of course the 'Nebenmanns' had nothing to do with that, they were not in anyway wanting this, but this is what happened. Certainly my 'Nebenmann' was never of these Nazis. And then, and that now I understand from elsewhere, apparently, on 28th April, a telephone order came to our director that the Jewish children would be thrown out of the school and they had to go to a different Gymnasium, which was in the Zirkusgasse in the Second District. So we had to go out in the middle of the day from the school and I remember the staircase was lined with boys from different classes and so on.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 0 second

JSS: As far as I know, none of my class actually participated in this, but some of the other classes were really strongly anti-Semitic, so we had to go through this situation. Nobody touched me but they hit some of the other kids that I know. Then we had to go, to leave this Gymnasium, and we were transferred to the Zirkusgasse. I don't quite remember how I got there. So, I remember being in the Zirkusgasse, but the times were such that learning came almost to an abrupt stop. Now, I continued and my end certificate means that I still passed through everything, but of course my major marks went all down at least one grade for this last semester. But the Zirkusgasse only, I think we were only there for two months.

AG: What was that like being in the Second District, in the Zirkusgasse? It must have been quite different?

JSS: It was different, but one was so aware of what was happening outside and suddenly you had to become aware of what was happening. People in SA and SS uniform began to appear; all sorts of things started to be forbidden; 'Kauft nicht bei Juden!' appeared all over some of the small Jewish shops; some big windows were smashed and it didn't happen immediately to us, but very, very close, and you could see, you could walk along, you could see that people were being harassed, particularly elderly Jewish-looking people. And, again, I was never really personally harassed that

I remember, maybe I was but I would not remember this. It was a very unpleasant time, and of course the parents became more and more concerned, in fact, became very concerned, but my father felt that this madness couldn't continue, which was a pity. Maybe if he had been differently-, or had a different past, he might of become aware of this a little earlier on, but in the same way, really worried and then everything degenerated.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 57 seconds

AG: How did you see events affecting your parents in their life?

JSS: I think they became very, very worried and particularly the moment 'Kristallnacht' came and most Jewish shops were-, some were looted, some the windows smashed; synagogues, some were burnt; a lot of people, some people, disappeared; also, some of my parents' friends came and said goodbye and disappeared and there was never very much warning before that that was what they were going to do, so everybody was anxious about their own situation. My mother and father wrote to people they knew in other countries and also relatives. We were related to Dorle Ornstein, who was very wealthy somewhere in Argentine or in South America somewhere, and they had a cousin in England, the name was Singer, Paul Singer, the Paul might not be right. But none of this worked at all and some of them wrote back that they are trying and they have got many 'Eisen im Feuer' - I remember my mother hopefully saying this, but they didn't do anything these people. But then, out of the blue, my mother - they were now, after the 'Kristallnacht', they were very concerned - heard about Mr. Musikant, whom we didn't know, and that he had something to do with 'Kindertransport'.

Tape 1: 59 minutes 5 seconds

AG: Before we get onto the 'Kindertransport', we are going to have stop because the tape is coming to an end.

TAPE 2
Tape 2: 0 minute 5 seconds

AG: Before we get onto the 'Kindertransport' I'd just like to take you back to where we left you educationally, as it were, that was in the Zirkusgasse, that is where you said you spent a couple of months. That would take us into the summer of '38. What did you do between then and when you left in January '39?

JSS: Well, first of all, particularly during the summer, as such, of course, there was no question of going into the country and having a holiday in the country and so on. And, of course, we had now mainly Jewish friends, although, to their great credit, I must say, people, like my colleague, Igalfy, he actually visited us in our house after the Anschluss, which was quite a courageous thing for him to do. I don't remember any of the others but there may well have been. The family situation had become quite difficult. My grandmother - I have two grandmothers who were alive then - but my grandmother, Brühl, who was a widow, became more and more concerned, agitated, couldn't understand how things could happen, and she spent a lot of time in our house now, and of course much of her conversation with her daughter, my mother, was in

French, which we did not understand, so anyway, as soon as they wanted to discuss something serious they went into French. Putting that aside, we, as children, had our friends, we couldn't do very much, we began to play cards and other games in the house itself and much of time was wasted in this way, in the house playing bridge, which I learnt there, which we as kids learnt to play quite reasonably. We became more and more conscious of the political situation that was happening. We saw what was happening around us and became ourselves quite concerned. We did not quite know now what we could do, what we should do, but it was clear then that I, at least, could not continue because they were not allowed to go into the higher Gymnasium classes. So advice came, and I don't know where the advice came from, possibly from my Aunt Mitzi, but I am not sure, that we should learn some sort of trade, so that, when we went out, we should be able to do whatever, earn a living. So I learnt, that's wrong, I was exposed to working with leather, making ladies' handbags, leather handbags, and making leather belts and so on, and the man who taught obviously knew what he was doing.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 30 seconds

I had absolutely no talent for working with leather, but for some weeks I spent time there, which was in a different part of Vienna, learning how to handle leather. I successfully made one belt, which somebody bought just for the sake of keeping the kid quiet and one handbag and that's all I remember. It was clearly not a profession in which I could ever go. Otherwise really a lot of time really wasted getting more and more involved, discussing things with parents and other grown ups, and becoming conscious of the fact that life in Austria would be intolerable and one had to get out. I spent a lot of time on our, my brother too, on our stamp collection, we became quite serious about that. My uncle actually was a very serious collector, with a vast collection, but he didn't really encourage us in any way there. Occasionally gave us some pretty stamps and that was about all. Really it is almost a blank period at the back of my mind. One saw the parents getting more agitated, more worried, particularly grandmother was getting more worried, then they came and spent more and more time in our house, even eventually they lived in our house, in our flat. I don't really think that I can now cast back my mind and honestly give you any more interesting things. We went for walks. The Prater was no longer a place where we could go and play football and so on.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 54 seconds

We played a little football with friends in the street, there is the Rudolf von Alt Platz, which is very close to us, so we played a little there. I spent some time riding round on my bicycle and we became very proficient in doing some acrobatics with the bicycle, as kids do, but there isn't really a great deal more that I can say that would show some useful application of our minds to this situation.

AG: Could your father continue to work?

JSS: No.

AG: So how did your family-?

JSS: He spent quite a lot of time, he talked to his friends and other people occasionally at home in the 'Herrenzimmer', but we weren't in on this, and often they

went either to the friend's place or he went to the coffee house and so did probably my mother, to her friends. We were not really normally part of this, except to the Fürsts, because they had children. We came and then we went into a different room and we didn't really participate in the discussions there. You see, the parents didn't really know what could be done. It became more and more desperate about this and so they avoided getting the children involved in a desperate situation, as far as I could see. I am rationalising now.

Tape 2: 7 minutes 40 seconds

AG: Going forward now a little bit, what are your memories of the 'Kristallnacht' itself?

JSS: I was at a friend, at another Jewish friend, Ullmann, his father lived fairly close, he was friendly with my brother, of a similar age. And his father was a sports journalist, as far as I know, or at least involved in this type of work duty. And being there, hearing on the radio what was happening, but we ourselves, in our district, except the next day, we were not involved. My parents were at home, as far as I know, and again they were not involved. I know, even beforehand, my father got rid of some of his, he still had his army revolver, of course this was all strictly forbidden, so he got somebody to take it away, first of all to unload it and then get it away. It was so long since he had handled it, so he found he had to get it away. I don't know whether his uniforms, he still had some uniforms there, I don't know whether he got rid of those too or not.

Tape 2: 9 minutes 10 seconds

AG: What did you see on the day following the 'Kristallnacht'?

JSS: Well, broken glass, shops shut, people in, many in SA uniform. I don't remember SS uniform outside shops, standing there to prevent anybody going in, as customers, into these shops. I saw, of course, elderly people, some women, but mainly elderly men, being harassed, being pushed by yobs, not necessarily all in uniform, I must say; people surrounded, surrounding, elderly Jewish people, they were almost all elderly, and one or two middle-age women, scrubbing the pavement, you know how the pavements, they are really still cobbles. I remember that. We didn't get too-, we walked by, because we were ourselves afraid, so we didn't stand around in this situation. But, as I said, because we were blond and didn't look particularly Jewish or Jewish at all, we-, I, personally was not harassed.

AG: But you saw people, Jewish people, being forced to scrub the pavement?

JSS: Sure, yes. But that was not unusual in Vienna. My parents, as far as I know, were not, but my parents, my father, would not have told me. And, of course, there was the Stadtpark and so on and 'Nicht für Juden', you couldn't avoid seeing that, and a lot of slogans appeared, graffiti and slogans. And I had to run errands. Now, as I say, I was not harassed, but there were two errands, two types of errands, that I remember very well, one was an ancient uncle of-, not related to me but related to my cousin, had now come to live with my cousin's grandmother, on his mother's side. They lived with my aunt below. He found it difficult to understand what was

happening. He wanted me to go out and fetch some beer from some local 'Gasthof', which I did. At any time when he felt like that, he asked for me, he sent for me, and I had to go and do that.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 26 seconds

But, as I say, I wasn't Jewish-looking, so I had no particular difficulty. I resented it because I was being used as a little serf there. Now that is one memory. I've forgotten, you wanted to know-?

AG: I think you have answered by question. The next question what you-.

JSS: Oh, one other thing I should say.

AG: Please.

JSS: My cousin, with whom I was very close, had something else to do, I don't know what it was, and he asked me would I go to the American Consulate and get him a quota number. We were very close and I did and I got him his quota number. Later he was furious that he hadn't gone himself because he thought that I might have not gone and got the quota number, but I did, and he eventually was able to use that to emigrate. But I did just what any other relative would do. The other thing I remember is going with my father and my uncle to the 'Kultusgemeinde', Israeli institute, 'Kultusgemeinde', because they were trying to do something there. My grandfather, who was dead by then, on the Subak side, had married a second time, he'd married an opera singer. They were Jewish, and they had one child, who was an uncle of mine, but who was only just a little older than my female cousin, Hans' sister. And they tried to get him a-, to help him to emigrate, and they succeeded in that. And I remember going with them to the Kultus and I remember being there, this is sort of more important because most of the other activities were unimportant and haven't left much stamp in my mind.

Tape 2: 14 minutes 55 seconds

AG: What was the attitude of the ordinary Viennese passers-by when they saw Jews being forced to scrub the streets? How did they react?

JSS: I think the majority probably walked by and some of them enjoyed that and stood around and cheered and whatever, but not too many that I saw. Of course, there were always uniformed people there, who made sure that these Jewish people did that. I think other people will have much more interesting memories of this period, possibly even if they were a little older, they would have noted that.

AG: I'd like to move on now. You mentioned just before the end of the previous tape that, through contact, I think you mentioned the Hemmler's account, that your parents came to hear about the 'Kindertransport' to Great Britain. Can you tell me about how that developed?

JSS: I can tell you about how that developed but, to my great regret, I do not remember. I may have met Musikant once at the-, Musikant did not apparently know the Peskins well. Musikant obviously was anxious to make contact with wealthy

Jewish people in London and in Britain and to interest them to guarantee a child and get the children out. Obviously, he was far more aware than certainly I would have been and many other people of the great danger that would occur there. I don't know how my mother got hold of his address. As far as I know, she never met him. He was, as far as I know, she had written, and she wrote to him, and he wrote back, apparently asking for photographs, which we sent, photographs of myself and we specially went to have decent photographs taken, which you can see later, also for my parents. And these photographs were sent to him and he apparently, at some party, interested David and Dorothy Peskin to stand as guarantee. As far as I know, although I did not know that at that time well, they had to make a guarantee of £50 per child, so that the child would not be a nuisance, a problem, for the government here. And, to my astonishment and to my surprise then, suddenly, it must have been after the 'Kristallnacht', he wrote back saying he had found these people. My mother wrote to them also, they didn't speak any German, he spoke Yiddish, but my parents didn't, but the contact was there. My mother spoke some English, but not very much, and I should have said that we children had an Indian boy that my mother and father engaged, who taught us some English, not very much.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 38 seconds

But some English. But going back to that: and then Musikant, as I say, appears to have seen us once, once when we were there, but he was not a close friend of the Peskins, it must have been at a big party or so. To my deep regret, I have never really personally thanked Musikant. Much, much later I saw an obituary of a man, of a musician, whose name was Musikant, whose brother had died, and the brother was still alive, and I wrote to this one, but he said he wasn't related in any way to this Musikant and so the trail went cold.

AG: What sorts of people were the Peskins?

JSS: Peskin, he himself was in the veneer business. They were very wealthy. The whole family was a very wealthy family. He lived in Park Royal - Park Royal has changed completely since then - at that time in 61 Alderley Road. And they had a big house; they had a big garden; they even had a tennis court in the garden; they had two dogs - one was a German Alsatian and the other was a German Dachshund, believe it or not; they had no children and, apparently, and I learnt it from re-reading some of the letters, they also had some sort of parakeet, but I don't remember that personally. Now, he was in the veneer business; Dorothy was not, as far as I know, engaged in anything, except in keeping the house, being a lady, who met all sorts of other people, had a big circle of friends.

Tape 2: 20 minutes 47 seconds

His brother, he and his brother, he had two brothers and a sister: the sister had gone onto the stage at some time, but was married and retired from that, she was a very beautiful woman; his younger brother - he was the eldest brother, David Peskin - his younger brother, middle brother, Sam, was also married and had children, in this case, and he took in two, he guaranteed also for two children, as far as I know, who I have met, but not at that time very often and his youngest brother was unmarried at that time and subsequently I met him. But his mother was still alive, at that time, and she loved children, so she had all her grandchildren - also from her daughter's children - grandchildren there, and she had-. And we were invited to some of these dos and we

went to these dos. I said they were wealthy, if I tell you that they had television in 1939, a set, a very elegant set, mind you the screen was very small, it gives you some idea.

Tape 2: 22 minutes 24 seconds

AG: Am I right in saying that they were descendants of Jews who had come over from Tsarist Russia round the turn of the century?

JSS: Oh yes, absolutely, and the mother's spoke with a very broken Russian accent. The father, as far as I know, was dead, but I am not sure. I think she was divorced, but, by that time, he was dead.
[Interruption]
So there. Then a very elegant house: it stood alone, now this Alderley Road has gone completely different. And they took us by car, very occasionally, and the dogs into the country, I don't know where exactly, but they took us into some country. As I say, they took as from time to time to their sister or brother. Her family was different, and, although I met her brother and her sister later, they were not really part of the really Jewish set-up.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 55 seconds

AG: Could we just go back to Vienna? Now, I mean, your mother, your parents, had made this contact with the Peskins. Could you describe your preparations for departure?

JSS: It was all very, very quick. The 'Kindertrasport', we heard we could go on the 'Kindertransport', I don't remember how much time we had, probably 10 days, a fortnight on the outside, and my parents made quite sure that we had what they regarded as reasonably good clothing, We bought some things, my mother stitched into all the clothing all the names for us, we were taken around to all our relatives, who we had hardly seen, to say goodbye and it was suddenly-. Everything went very, very rapidly, almost so rapidly that we didn't appreciate what a huge event this was really going to be. The things were got together, some things were sent later after we were gone. My parents heard that we had to be at a particular time at the station.

Tape 2: 25 minutes 20 seconds

AG: Which station?

JSS: I wish I could be absolutely certain whether it was the Westbahnhof but that the train, I am sure the train took us first through Germany.

AGL Could you describe the actual departure?

JSS: I will do that. I merely wanted to say, and then into Holland, so it was the Westbahnhof. It was very late at night; we were only allowed one 'Koffer', suitcase; we went to the station. My mother, my father, lots of other parents and children were there. There was also, as far as I remember, uniformed German Nazis there, we ourselves, also my grandmother was there. My grandmother was terribly agitated,

Grandmother Brühl, she in any case could get very easily hysterical. She became very agitated and said that she would never see the children again and of course she was right afterwards. My parents were also very worried but they tried to keep that, as far as I could see, so that we wouldn't be so conscious of what was happening. They had hoped they would get out and that it would only be a separation for a short time. They were of course wrong. We never saw them again. Once later, at my birthday, so we would have been a month in England at that time, we had a phone call, they managed to get a phone call booked somehow, very short phone call that was a birthday present. The situation had become very difficult in Vienna itself beforehand. For example, I remember, because there was no income of course and money became very tight, they sold the grand piano for a pittance, for absolutely nothing, and then they probably began to sell some of the paintings, but I am not, I don't remember actually which things were sold just to keep alive.

Tape 2: 28 minutes 2 seconds

AG: Do you remember your parting from your parents?

JSS: Yes, at the station, as I said, at the station, as I told you, about the grandmother. Both my father and my mother kept on kissing us and told us how to behave, what we should do, that we should be very-, brush our hair and that sort of thing, and be very polite and not be so 'schlampig', as they said, not to leave our clothes on the floor, they had to be folded and they had to be put neatly on a chair, the way that parents fuss, and of course to write as soon as we got there, and to write very frequently, and they knew that neither of us were very keen writing but to write clearly, if we could. What can I say? You had the most agitated parents and our parents were even more agitated there. And to see so many and to see them all packed into a train. And in the train itself, we could just sit with people we did not know. As it happens, I know that one girl, who we did know, only vaguely from one of the vacations, was on the same train, but I don't think we met her even on the train. I don't know how many children were on the train but it must have been hundreds and, once they were in a different compartment you would not see them. And then I remember going out and waving and seeing them disappearing in the distance and, when I say disappearing, there were so many other people, you lost sight of them fairly quickly and I only feel very sorry that I was not more conscious of the importance of what was happening. To us now this became quite an adventure, in a way. Then the train rumbled into Germany and rumbled then towards the frontier and then the SS went through the train, but-, actually some of children they took some things off, they didn't take anything off me.

Tape 2: 30 minutes 42 seconds

But what could they have taken off, we didn't really have anything that was worth taking, and then I remember the train stopping again for quite a long time on the border, more SS, and then moving on, and then suddenly being in Holland and quite different.

AG: In what way was it different?

JSS: Well, as soon as we got through, first of all, now a different uniform, they didn't bother us and there were Dutch ladies on the, I don't remember whether it was

a station, but, wherever the train first stopped, they had all paper bags, in which there were all sorts of goodies for us children. And I mean we had nothing: 10 shillings, we had 10 English shillings we were allowed to take out and that is about the sum total of money we were allowed; we had no passports; we had, you'll see that later, we had a document, which had our photo on it and we had no address put on it, at that time, maybe later that was done. All I remember, but, when I say remember, because I have seen it since and so on, it said on the back of it that we were allowed to enter on condition that we would take no employment, paid or unpaid, whilst in the UK. That didn't work out. Those ladies were very kind, they were obviously very motherly, and assured us that we were fine. The train rumbled on then and went on to Hook of Holland, we were told to disembark, it was evening now, this had taken quite a long time, because really by the time we got to England it was 12th and we left on 10th of January. We went to Hook of Holland, we were embarked there and somewhere in the depths of that ship I, it was all nice, but absolutely new to me I had never been near to the sea

Tape 2: 33 minutes 24 seconds

and I didn't see much of the sea either because we were in harbour. We just saw water, it was dark already by then, as far as I remember, and then we were told to go to the cabin, as far as possible. I don't remember whether we were given a meal but I think whatever food we had with us, which the ladies had provided, we consumed at that time and then the next morning we were in Harwich and in Harwich we got off. We didn't see much of the sea. We just saw part of the harbour and we were divided in two lots, as far as I remember. Those that went on to be met at Liverpool St. Station and that is what is happened to my brother and myself and those who went to probably one of the camps, which we had more or less expected to go to, but didn't - because we had we had learnt from a previous transport that the children had gone to a camp, as far as I know, in Kent, but we didn't experience that.

Tape 2: 34 minutes 47 seconds

AG: So what happened to you, you went on to Liverpool St. What was that like? What were your impressions of the country?

JSS: It wasn't so much an impression, at that time. We got to Liverpool St and this took quite a long time and, don't forget, it was winter and it was getting dark. In fact, as far as I remember, it was already dark, but my memory might not be quite correct. In the station itself, we were standing around, we had labels around our necks, and then a young lady came, the lady was from the Refugee Children's Movement, as far as I am aware, but it could've have been some other, whatever the organisation was that was actually responsible for that, and when she saw our labels, she took us, so we weren't there very long standing around, a little while, and other people were beginning to disappear, but not very long. And then she took us and took us to the Peskins, who were waiting there. And they introduced us to them, and we were introduced to Dorothy and David Peskin, and then the girl left and we were now holding a case with the Peskins. They also were a little fry at that stage, saw these boys, of course we were dressed totally unsuitably in 'Steierische Jacke' and so on, very clean and so on, but not excellent English. We of course made a bow and clicked our heels, which was not at all what was either expected or wanted. I was told later on that we don't do that here. And so they took us to the car, they said we would drive

there, they'd show us the room they had prepared, and we would have something to eat, I don't remember what we ate, and we would go to bed. Then, the next day, they spent quite a lot of time with us and made us familiar with it.
Tape 2: 37 minutes 21 seconds

There was also a play-room, which they had prepared, which really was a room with a few toys in it they had either used for other purposes - one was a type of small billiards thing - and there were books there, but, at this stage - there were some Pelican or Penguin books - very useful, but we couldn't immediately take to them. They had no children and they were not used to children and it was a learning curve for them, as well as for us.

AG: What sort of age were they?

JSS: They were in their forties or just about forty. I think just about forty is probably correct. I may do them injustice, they may have been in their late thirties, but I think forty. They were well-to-do, as I say. They were-. She was tall, taller than her husband and she was a chain smoker, which surprised me. I mean, my mother smoked, but not like that, and but she had always been-, I mean that was part of the house.

AG: How did you settle in, you and your brother, in these new surroundings?

JSS: With some difficulty, I suppose. The first problem was that there was nobody young to interact with. He, David, was of course a working man, he went into the City in London, he had his veneer business, and he and his brother worked on that, and we only saw him when he came back late at night, and when he came back, he and his wife had their meal together. We had an earlier meal because the time when he came back was variable and he was usually very tired. He sat by, and fell asleep almost, by the armchair. Now I can understand that: this man worked enormously hard, a very, very intelligent man, now he was not a university man, he had never been, but he would have certainly been a star there; he had been to public school of course and then went over to the business,
Tape 2: 40 minutes 10 seconds

which was really their fathers, the family business, which he then took over and he was really there the managing director and ran it with his brother. And he was also, to some extent, responsible, as the eldest son, for the family itself. But he took certainly notice of us, he found us, at times, amusing and then, at times, perhaps not so amusing. We ate most of the meals, not all, separately as kids, and Dorothy got the meals for us and we were unused to much of the food, which was there.

AG: What did you make of British food?

JSS: Well, fortunately, I will say this: they didn't have porridge, which I detest and always have detested, but they had some sort of cornflakes, which was fine; then, she had-, the house was kosher, which we were not used to, so there was eggs yes, but no bacon and so on, but occasionally there were some kosher sausages, and there was English mustard, which I had never tasted before and I thought it was the same as 'Senf', which was a big mistake and the first time I took it, I never made that mistake

again, although I like English mustard now. And those are the sort of stupid things that I remember. There was fruit; there was grapefruit, which we were not used to. We had oranges, yes, and so on, even pineapple, but grapefruit we, at home, never, never had had. We enjoyed but it was not breakfast food. Toast was also something that we were not so used to but one very quickly became used to it.

Tape 2: 42 minutes 18 seconds

AG: And were you sent to school?

JSS: This is a very interesting part, first of all, because they had no real knowledge of how to treat kids, they tried to get advice, and they sent us-. And we were doing nothing for a little while, not for very long, a little while, we had to amuse ourselves. And, don't forget, this was January, beginning of February, it was not the best weather, you couldn't spend a lot of time in the garden and so on, that we enjoyed enormously. They sent us to a man to assess us, he was in Bloomsbury somewhere, I think he was a child psychologist, but he may have been a general psychologist , I do not know, he was a man who, in my opinion at least, my opinion now and so on, had been educated beyond his intellectual capacity. He tried to speak to me in Latin. Now, I had done Latin, but I had never done colloquial Latin. I could translate the 'Bello Gallico Italia es domnis divisi in partes tres' and so on, I could do some of this, but I certainly couldn't speak. And he came to the conclusion that we really were not a good investment for education. Okay, that was his view, and so we came back and we went to a little school in Ealing afterward, I think it was Ealing Grammar, a little Ealing grammar school, it was certainly nothing very special, which is a deep regret to me now, because my whole career would have been different, but it might have been much worse, if I had been sent to a really good school. In this school, we of course were put into a class with children younger than we, we didn't speak English. Now three subjects I found entirely different, one was English of course, we had to learn; History was totally different, how History is taught in Austria and was taught here is chalk and cheese and Geography was taught entirely different as their Geography was centred on England and the colonies.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 17 seconds

Mathematics was way below my level that I had already achieved. And so I cannot say that I very much enjoyed or learnt very much in that school. I became different; I must have been a very difficult boy. I had seen a lot, you see, in Vienna. I tried to tell the grown ups that, I tried to tell it to them that, for example, when they asked me at the parties and so on, and I found the atmosphere, at least in these very comfortably off Jewish families, they found it difficult to believe that what we were saying was true. They found it difficult to believe that we had seen, for example, air raid shelters being built on ground, and that was for a purpose that is in Vienna itself. And what we had seen in the streets, etc. And so I was determined, I was very disillusioned with academia, and I was determined I wanted to study some useful subject like agriculture, 'Landwirtschaft', and so on. Now that was probably because I knew that my father and my uncle had run a big estate there. However, the upshot of it was - I must have been quite difficult, my brother was younger and was probably a bit more pliable than I at that time - and they finally decided, 'Okay, let him learn agriculture the hard way'. They didn't tell me that, but they took me to a farm, I don't know where they got the name from, in Nottingham, nothing Jewish whatever at all, a

farmer called Buxton, who-, and I was left there, I was left there as a boy, and I was a farmer's boy. Now initially ---

Tape 2: 47 minutes 30 seconds

AG: When was this? How soon after you -?

JSS: This must have been May, in May, so we had been there-. Maybe it was April, end of April. I don't have the exact date, so that I could reliably say.

AG: No, no, it's alright.

JSS: What I can tell you is that, initially, I was treated not too badly. It was then when he suddenly realised that I was totally on my own, I got letters from my brother, and occasional letters, but the Peskins now were remote and not particularly interested. They probably felt, 'OK, so let him stew in his own juice', which I understand. I must have been quite a difficult boy at that time. So then I became suddenly treated like a serf. And I stayed in that farm, and I had contact with my brother, as I say, and I also had some contact with my uncle, who, don't forget, had been a barrister before, but who was now a butler to a family to a gentlemen farmer in Warwickshire. My uncle and his wife, whom he married in England at that time, but she was Austrian, were there. She was there as a cook and maid. She had been actually, earlier, and I don't want to discuss this in too much detail, she had been our maid at one stage and so on, but my uncle had been married, and then he got divorced and he married Georgina, who is a very fine and beautiful woman, very fine person. In fact, she was responsible in helping him to get over, so that he could get over there and get out of Austria. So my uncle took interest in me and he was in letter contact with me.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 53 seconds

So it got worse at the farm, once he realised, once the farmer realised, that I was on my own. I was really treated very, very poorly. He had a wife and children, they really exploited me in as much as they could.

AG: In what sort of way?

JSS: First of all, we were three times a day milking, so I had to get up about five o'clock in the morning, but that is not unusual for a farmer, bring the cows in and help with the milking, then continue until all sorts of jobs until midday. They were milking three times a day and midday milking, which was probably round about 1 to 2 o'clock, I was again involved in this. Then I had a short period of freedom, maybe two hours, in the afternoon, between, say, 4 and 6 probably. And then we did the third milking. And that was day in day out, Saturday, Sunday. That was one thing, but, in addition to this, I had to really, I had to feed what they didn't, what was left over when they had their meals. I had no particular close contacts with people. It was difficult. I ran away from that farm eventually.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 0 second

AG: Were you paid at all?

JSS: I was paid three shillings a week. I couldn't keep myself on this, so my clothes began to fall to bits, and so on, particularly in the winter of '39-'40, which was a very severe winter, I-. The pair of Wellingtons that I had had big holes in them, I had to put paper inside to keep at least some of the contact between my feet and the ground, the frozen ground. It was difficult.

AG: How long was it before you ran away?

JSS: Nearly, it was nearly, it must have been 11 months. When I say I ran away, I will tell you how I ran away. My uncle got very, very concerned when he-, because I was in contact with him. And he persuaded the Thwaites, which was the family for whom he was butler and so on - as I say, they were gentlemen, they dressed for dinner, they were quite different - to help me to get out and I was invited to my uncle's for Easter. So, at Easter, I left, but half of my things I had left behind in there and I never went back to there. I went at Easter. When Mrs. Thwaite saw how bedraggled I was and so on, she was quite disgusted. First of all, she took me- not with me, but that I had been allowed to get to this state - she took me to Foster Brothers was the shop and bought me new clothing and sent the bill to the Peskins.
Tape 2: 53 minutes 41 seconds

She would have paid the bill anyway, but I think she felt very bad about this. However, in addition, they themselves didn't have room at the farm at that time, so they decided to get me on to-, to try to help me to go somewhere else. And they had a friend, who was Major General Mott, at Hastings, who had a very small farm. He didn't really need anybody, except over the summer, so, for a few months. And I went then there and I was very well treated there. I mean, the General wasn't very interested in this kid, except, I can't say anything other than positive about this, I was well allowed to do what I liked. They tried to introduce me to some other children and to the local vicar. And I only remember he and his daughters, I guess, and his wife, they were all knitting, and I couldn't believe to see a grown-up man knitting, but then they gave me a cup of tea and so on. So I was there and by that time I was now 16, and at that time the Jewish refugees were interviewed.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 27 seconds

AG: Oh yes, before we come on to that, I'd just like to ask you one thing, that is, while you were at the first farm, the war must have broken out-.

JSS: Yes.

AG: And had you had contact with your parents before the war?

JSS: Oh, yes, I had contact with my parents in letters until the war broke out. They became more infrequent. At least, we didn't write nearly as much and, as you can imagine, I didn't really want them to know even how bad things were for me. My brother probably wrote more than I did and then we got a few letters at very rare intervals, as far as I remember, and these letters came via Hungary probably and Yugoslavia and probably also Italy, as far as I remember, and we did not know the people from whom they came and these people forwarded the letters then to us.

Initially, my mother used to put in one of those 'Retourscheins' into the letter, to make sure that we wrote, so that we didn't cost anything financially to the Peskins for sending the letters back, but I think that they were discontinued, these 'Retourscheins', they were international, I don't know about them? A little bit of paper, which entitled you to get a stamp to get it ---

AG: I understand, yes.

JSS: So we did get some information. The last letter that I remember, and, unfortunately, they became quite desperate and the situation was desperately bad, and my cousin told me that he had a letter a few days before his parents were sent, his parents were sent a little later than mine, they were deported to Izpika, whereas mine were sent to Riga,

Tape 2: 57 minutes 57 seconds

and that letter of Hans, that Hans got, said that Uncle Robert and Aunt Nelly have, I don't know whether he said transport, I don't know what it is, to Riga, have gone to Riga. Now, Hans, who had been to Riga before, but on his way, escaping, thought that everything would be fine now, because he had been to Riga and he knew it. He told me that on the telephone.

AG: Well, the tape is about to come to an end, so perhaps we could break there.

JSS: Surely.

TAPE 3
Tape 3: 0 minute 7 seconds

AG: We were just in the middle of your farming career, at the early parts of the war. I think you'd told me you went from the first farm, where they treated you so badly, on to the sort of gentleman farmer. How did things go on from there?

JSS: Let me try to do it fairly briefly. At Major General Mott there was no problem at all, things were very good and very well, the only thing that is perhaps of special interest here is that that was the time when people were being interned and interviewed.

AG: Yes.

JSS: I had reached 16 and so I went before a panel and Major General Mott sent a little note with me, to what extent this may have been helpful or not, I cannot tell.

AG: Where was the tribunal?

JSS: In Leamington Spa. And to what extent that helped I can't say, but I am sure it did help. In any case, they decided I was no problem at all, so I was never interned. My Uncle Walter was interned and he went to the Isle of Man and then later, when he was released, he worked in Coventry on munitions.

AG: And do you remember anything about the tribunal at all?

JSS: Not really, I answered some of the questions quite honestly. After a short time, they probably lost interest in me, but afterwards I remember seeing some quite agitated individuals, much older than me, usually in their thirties or forties and several of those were undoubtedly interned, but I didn't know them personally.

Tape 3: 2 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Did you stay long at Major General Mott's?

JSS: As I said, until the harvest was in, and then he, I assume it was he, initially, made a connection, so that I went to a farm in Leicestershire. That farmer's name was Hiddeley, he was young, a young farmer, bit miserly but otherwise quite interesting and ambitious. And he and his wife, they had no children, and I spent a year there. And from there, I'm beginning to get now wages that were wages, I think I got up to 15 shillings a week, which was quite something for me, and I could-. I was always living with families in these situations and then, subsequently, I found myself another place, also in Leicestershire, in a place called White Gables, and there, this is quite interesting: they had one man with whom I couldn't get on, which doesn't matter to this story, but the farmer himself was very tall, they also had no children, he was a coward and at that time there was quite a bit of bombing going on, and White Gables stood out, so he left this other chap and myself in the farm and he, as soon as the alarm went, he went off, he and his wife, to a cottage, which was about ¾ of a mile away. This is the sort of thing one remembers and there were one or two other incidents like that. And then I was, I didn't like this coward, I must tell you, because every time you heard a raiding plane, they were off. And I had an argument with him at one stage, not very serious, but I decided I wanted to leave. And, at that time, Mr Thwaite had lost one of his people, so he had a position, and they drove all the way over to ask me whether, because they had heard that I might be available, they drove over, which was unusual in the war when petrol was rationed, but he, being a farmer-. And the long and short of this is that I went to the Thwaites and again, as family, I used to play bridge with them at night, for example, but I worked perfectly as a farm worker, particular running more or less his dairy there.

Tape 3: 5 minutes 14 seconds

By then I was very skilled, there is no doubt about it. And there the opportunity arrived for people like myself to join the forces, to join the fighting forces as opposed to the Pioneer Corps. Now, my brother, this was at the end of '43 and at the beginning of '44, I think January of '44, my brother, although he is younger than I, he preceded me and he went into the forces and he went into Mary Hill, Glasgow, and then from there to the Royal Warwicks. And he stayed. I'll come back to him in a minute. Now, I had more difficulty because as a farmer I was in a reserved occupation when I volunteered. Finally, they decided: "Are you a hay cutter?" And I said I can cut hay, which I had done quite a bit, so they put me down as a hay cutter and that way, in May '44, I volunteered for the forces. I think, although I haven't the dates exactly right now, that I was called up few weeks later to go to Glasgow, despite of the fact that I was really in Warwickshire, to Glasgow Mary Hill Barracks. And I had six weeks infantry training in Mary Hill barracks. Subsequently, because Mrs Thwaite's first husband had been a colonel of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry, she suggested that was a good regiment to join. And, don't forget that I would only join of course

anything as a Private, there being nothing lower than that that you could join. And so I put it down the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and from Glasgow, I went down there into Colchester, which was a Buzzbomb Alley at that time that really was Buzzbomb Alley. And in my next stage of infantry training there,
Tape 3: 7 minutes 43 seconds

being light infantry, I learnt to walk fairly fast, which, unfortunately now that I am much older, has disappeared. However, the opportunity came, just at the time of August, September, I think, 1944, to volunteer and we were asked any volunteers for the Commandoes or the Parachute Regiment, so I put my name forward for both and the paras sent for me first. So from there, I went- this was just at the time immediately after Arnhem - I think that I was sent for and went to Chesterfield and then went for physical training, in other words they wanted to know whether you had it in you to do what you had to do. Nowadays, they do several months, but you had to do it fairly quickly there. And then to Ringway, to learn parachuting on to Tatton Park and then, when that was finished, once you had passed and got your wings, you were sent to reconstitute the Third Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, which had been decimated or almost annihilated at Arnhem. Now, I did nothing of great interest. I stood by several-. Incidentally, we were stationed in Mayton Malbury**.** I really-. Although we stood by many times to jump into Norway and other places, we actually were never really used and VE-Day came and now we were being switched to go to the Far East.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 50 seconds

AG: Before we go so far into the war, there are one or two things which I would like to catch up on. The first thing I would like to ask you is whether you, after all you were a stateless enemy alien, whether this was at all a problem or whether you encountered any hostility or difficulty in your military career as it were?

JSS: I never encountered any particular difficulties at this point at all. You can ask me later, when I come to the post-Palestine thing.

AG: Ah, yes.

JSS: But at that time we were just part of it, I actually was put, because they suddenly discovered that I spoke German, put into the Intelligence section of the battalion and was in that for quite a considerable time, but, as I say, once the war in Europe ended, we were going to go now to drop onto Japan. Hang on a second, we know about that. We were issued jungle green and we were beginning in the intelligence section. We had to learn something about Japanese maps, which were totally indecipherable for me, at least to identify the various regiments, which might be identifiable on the map. However, our sea-born party had already gone out to India, however, we were then diverted to Palestine. So, this was the last place that I, at that stage, expected to go. After this diversion took place, we were sent to Haifa; we landed in Haifa by ship and then, from Haifa, we were transported to Gaza, so I spent a few weeks in Gaza and then from there I went to Tel Litwinski**.**
Tape 3: 12 minutes 0 second

And it became clear, which is more central there, it became clear that Ernest Bevan's policy was not only anti-Semitic, but very much pro-Arab and anti-Jewish, and so the

decision was made, I don't know where, to take the Jewish boys, which up to this point were just part of the regiment in every way, out of the unit and up to Egypt. So we were sent out, and we didn't have much say in this, and we were sent out to Egypt. From memory now, I think there were 5 or 6 of us in my battalion, which is really quite a good proportion, but that is vague, because we were soldiers, we were not particularly interested in who is who. I knew there was another one, who actually came from Glasgow, who was Jewish, who was in the Intelligence section, but I didn't know some of the others very well. So we went to Egypt, we were deployed here in a POW camp at El-Daba, which is one station away from El-Alamein, and we were trying to screen these German prisoners of war, some of whom still believed the war was on, although the war had long finished. One part of my job was also looking for war criminals and if you want I will show you one little bit of stuff, I'll show it to you later, of an SS guard whom-, and I was there as an interpreter and I also then tried to identify some of the people. I'll say all this work was really wasted because nothing happened to them. The British policy was more inclined to become now very much anti-communist, there were communist problems in Greece, and so that occupied most of the time, but not my time, my time was really in that - identifying and screening some of the prisoners of war.

Tape 3: 14 minutes 24 seconds

AG: How did you feel about coming into contact with German soldiers?

JSS: I can tell you that, first of all, I was the only man at that time, as far as I know, with a red beret in there, identifiable as a Para. I felt I had to do this job as honestly and as clearly as I could and so I had to be absolutely fair in what I did and I think I always was. I had some German staff as well. That means they were classified into As, Bs, Cs and C+s. C+ was the hardest of hard core Nazis, identified as such, C were Nazis, B were people about whom nobody had found anything and who were indifferent, and probably most of them were, and A were those, relatively fewer individuals, who quite clearly were anti-Nazi. Now, you might ask how did they identify some? These prisoners came mainly from the Fijian Islands and also from the whole of that coast, from the various regiments stationed there. Now, on the Fijian Islands there was the 999 division of the Germans, which was the 'Strafdivision', which was all ex-prisoners, their prisoners, and ex-concentration camp people and they, of course, they were put into a special case. Some of them, many of them, were As. They were put into a special case particularly by somebody who had previously looked after the prisoners, who felt they were mainly communists and socialists and he was probably very conservative and felt that they were a real danger.

Tape 3: 16 minutes 34 seconds

I got to know one or two of them, but not particularly, because, as I say, I had to be absolutely fair as possible. So I always had two or three German clerks. If I interviewed or interrogated people, I had these with me and occasionally of course the officer, who was overall in charge. And, at that stage, I was a sergeant, and so the giddy heights of my army career finished as a more substantive sergeant, that is by the way. So from there, El-Daba, which, as I say, was in the desert itself, we then went to- the British withdrew and closed these POW camps - and went into Great Bitterlake area, the two places Fayid and Farnawa. So from 307, the POW camp in El-Daba, I went to 380, which was in the Great Bitterlake area. By this time, most of the

prisoners really accepted that the war really had been over and some of them were shipped back, but my number was not quite up. Incidentally, I had been on one leave, coming back to Britain and back again. But the numbers, my number eventually came up: in September, 1947, I was discharged, well, more or less discharged, because they gave me leave, final terminal leave and then I was put into Class Z reserve. I never heard very much about them. I came back to the depot in York. There is a funny story but I don't think we have time for that at the moment. And I was discharged to try and start living as a civilian. Now, I should have said that, whilst I was particularly in the Great Bitterlake area, most of my colleagues during afternoon siestas and so on either drank or went and played cards or whatever, but I had begun to feel very strongly I ought to get my education back to something that resembled normal, so I paid some prisoners, who had been academics, to teach me some math, physics and a little biology. I had forgotten most of this.

Tape 3: 19 minutes 34 seconds

So in the afternoon, when most of them were doing something else, I spent a few hours trying to get my education reasonably up-to-date, so that I could get back and go to university. And in 1947 when I was discharged and my brother was also discharged slightly before me, when we were discharged, he got a letter from the Refugee Children's Movement, which informed us what had happened, as far as they could tell to our parents, because we were desperate to try and find what there was. Now, to make it very quick, when we both stayed together on discharge in Birmingham, in the Birmingham area, with other refugee children, who had never been out there, there was a lady, a Mrs. Miller, who was actually taking in these children but we were put into contact here. He went to Birmingham City College and I went to Aston Technical College to catch up on our education. And I tried to pile up some examinations, because what I had done in Vienna, which was, after all, nine years old, was not acceptable. So I piled up some exams and took exams and, first of all, took the totally irrelevant one, which was the Civil Service Commission. And then I took London Matriculation. I worked pretty hard, so I got a first division in London.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 20 seconds

But none of that would have helped us except that ex-service people could do a matriculate into a particular university, mature matriculation they called it. My brother and I passed that and so we both had to be offered a place in the university. Now, my brother had in-between already taken his intermediate, which I hadn't. I hadn't got, as I said, a matriculation. So he was offered by the admissions tutor to Birmingham University a year below where he expected to start and he was also offered a different type of engineering, and so he refused that and went to University College London then to do Electrical Engineering. I was offered Mining Engineering, which was not a field in which I was particularly interested and so I refused that and finally, as a last resort, I was offered to do botany, which I then ultimately accepted. But the admissions tutor, Dr Ibbs, told us, "You would both of you would have been much better off if you had failed". This shows again a man who knew exactly what he was talking about, because both of us in our own different subjects finished off with First Class Honours. Putting that aside, I didn't really want to do botany, but what I would like to do, Agricultural Botany wasn't really available. And in my second year, I was quite inspired by lectures by Professor Kenneth Mather in Genetics. And, to cut a long story short, I decided that I would be quite interested and I accepted the offer to switch to Genetics, which was quite a new subject at that time, and so I eventually

graduated in Genetics and then again with a good degree. I got an ANC scholarship subsequently and from that onwards my academic career really started.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 1 second

AG: Where were you living all this time?

JSS: In Birmingham initially, as I say, we were living in Radnor Road. When my brother left and when I was accepted to Birmingham University, which was now 1948, he went his way. Incidentally, we had shared his FFDS grant. Because I had been farming, I was not accepted, despite the fact I'd served and so on, I did not get a grant. I then got a grant after my first year from Birmingham City Council to whom I am really grateful, who, although I must have been an exception, treated me very well and, although it was not very much definitely, but it allowed me to live. Ultimately, while I had been out in the desert, there was not much to spend any money on, so I had saved a little money. And I think I had a total of £90 or so, which I had saved when I came back, but I don't think that this is of relevance here at all. Once I was at the university I went to, in a cottage I lived, with a Mrs Hearlstone in Woodford Avenue, and that was digs, which I shared. There were two other people there, she had three of the students in digs. And while I was an undergraduate, until I graduated, I stayed there, and then subsequently, as a post-graduate for the two years, in a couple of different places. There are amusing stories that could be told but that is wasting time.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 56 seconds

After two years I was still, two years into my PhD, I had the opportunity to become an, it called itself assistant lecturer, in Glasgow with Pontekova, so I became an assistant there and wrote my thesis later. I continued to work on my thesis and I got my PhD in '52 from Birmingham, but, as I say, I was lecturing in Glasgow. And from there I then went to start the Genetics Department, this would be in 1956, in the Foot and Mouth Disease Research Institute in Pirbright.

AG: That's a pretty amazing transformation. You came back as an almost uneducated ex-soldier in '47, in nine years you are starting an institute for, well…

JSS: This is not an institute; this is just a small section.

AG: Yes, but even so. Just to go back a bit to the social side of your life. How were you accepted by and treated by the other students around you?

JSS: First of all, on the whole absolutely fine, one or two exceptions, but-. You make friends at university, particularly amongst undergraduates. The circle, which was a pretty large circle that I had, was absolutely fine, never had any problem at all, they took me as I was. I was ex-service, most of them, many of them were ex-service, and that was all they were interested in. The girls, of course, were not ex-service, but I never felt that I had any problem. Of course I have an accent, which got worse as I got older, but they accepted me as I was. I was relatively bright, so I had a nice circle of friends. Not only that, there was the Bridge Club, I was actually quite active in that; I was active politically, I was a liberal, so I was in the Liberal Society,

Tape 3: 28 minutes 30 seconds

I was in the Stoats, the Stoats is a mountaineering club, their mountaineering club from Birmingham, so I was a member in that. Of course, I had virtually no money. One amusing thing that I may tell you here: a life-long friend since then, who became a mathematician, Michael, Michael David, and I we shared the digs there. His father was in charge of Customs and Excise in Exeter. Now, hang on a second, but because we had so little time and I was doing chemistry amongst other things, and we could hardly afford a glass of beer, so we bought a glass of beer each and I re-distilled some absolute alcohol, which we put into these beer glasses and this gave us a pretty good drink. And people didn't believe that we were doing that, until one of the people who didn't believe it, I asked him to hold the glass and I poured in the absolute alcohol, which was really in there and, of course, it is an exothermic reaction, so the glass became warm, and then he believed me. Anyway, that is by the way, just a little anecdote.

Tape 3: 29 minutes 51 seconds

AG: It occurred to me while I was asking you that question, I haven't asked you really whether you had encountered any hostility earlier in your life in exile, when you were just a boy.

JSS: The hostility, the only hostility I really found was, first of all, when I went to Leab, this was monthly from the Middle East, coming home and then going back again to the Middle East. Now, I had now been in the POW camp on extra-regimental duties. I found some people from my regiment; one particular that I remember was also going on leave. Now, at that time, I had become a corporal and so I came home as a corporal. Now, there was no doubt whatever about the hostility, they were anti-Jewish, they had been employed in this, but they couldn't do very much about it. So I really here, for the first time, I recognised that these were no longer your army Paras, not that this man had ever been a Para. So, while I was away in, I think this was in Toulon, coming back, they stole some of my things out of my luggage and I have no doubt whatever that they felt, "this bloody Jew, doesn't need this". But otherwise I cannot really say that I encountered any obvious anti-Jewish activity at any time from my fellow soldiers.

Tape 3: 32 minutes 0 second

AG: This presumably was connected to their experiences in Palestine.

JSS: I am sure. And also the government policy was certainly anti-Jewish and you may remember that Bevan had said he staked his reputation on solving the problem. Well, he didn't solve any problem there at all, but it gives you some idea.

AG: Did you ever encounter any hostility, and I am thinking especially of the war years, on account of your Austrian or German, Austria had been swallowed up in Germany, because you were seen as a German? I mean, people might not have known that you were Jewish, but they would have heard you speak with a foreign accent.

JSS: Don't forget, I was on a farm, and usually you are pretty isolated, except for the little village near where you were. Don't forget, I was not in the city or anything,

so people knew of me, so they must of heard about me, before they met me. I cannot honestly say that I can recall ever really having been particularly either ostracised, well I wouldn't have noticed if I had been ostracised, or being singled out.

AG: You must have been quite a rarity in some of these small farming communities that had probably never seen an Austrian Jew before or a German speaker?

JSS: Well, that is undoubtedly correct, but when I was in Hiddeley or with Smith, it was all work. There was little time away and what little time in the afternoons I had, when I had some, the one thing I was allowed to do in the farming that I did, was to go shooting rabbits, because that provided meat, and pigeons, go shooting pigeons or rabbits. So that was one of my main activities there. To what extent I was regarded as an oddity is again very difficult for me to judge because my interaction was with a relatively small number of people.

Tape 3: 34 minutes 24 seconds

AG: Going back to where we left off, one question I haven't yet asked you is how you met your wife?

JSS: I was going to come to that. That was quite an interesting situation. As I say, in Birmingham, particularly in my first year, I was trying to work pretty hard, so I spent quite a bit of time in the library, in the Birmingham Central Library, and the occasion occurred when I was working and trying desperately to become familiar with the intricacies of the calculus. And I was reading there and two girls came in to the library and settled behind me, one was a red-head, the other was blonde, and they started chatting and chatted and chatted, so finally I turned round and said, "For goodness sake, shut up". And that's how I met my wife, the redhead.

AG: Could you tell me for the tape-?

JSS: Then not very much happened after that for quite a while. Several years later, she was at a different college to mine, where my brother was, which was different to mine, and then later I got to know her again. She had heard that I needed some dissecting instruments, which she no longer needed, so she very kindly provided this and then it started from there. We began to go out. I was already in my pre-final year, I think, at that time and then that's how it went.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 13 seconds

AG: Could you just for the tape tell us your wife's name?

JSS: Barbara, my wife was Barbara Morris, her mother was Mrs. Florence Morris and she ran a nursing home, she was the Matron of a nursing home, and Barbara, at that stage, was a trainee nurse, afterwards, when we later met. Now, if you say did I ever encounter any anti-Semitism, well, at least, anti-me! Her mother was certainly anti-me, and she certainly tried her best to dissuade her daughter to become involved with me. And, in fact, when we got married, her mother gave us, her wedding present to us, mainly Barbara, was a huge silver tray and she said, and I can show you later, that will come in handy when your marriage goes to pot. And that is 51 years ago. She

eventually got used to the fact. I, at least initially, felt I was ready to substitute her as a very close part, but this would never have been possible. She was the only surviving daughter anyway, Barbara, and she had a very hard time. Her mother could reduce her to tears in 10 seconds or less.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 6 seconds

AG: What sort of background did your wife come from?

JSS: Her mother was separated, so Barbara hardly ever knew her father at all, very vague recollections she had, but they were separated. Her mother came also from farming stock, but on the English-Welsh border there, but that was forgotten. She was a state-registered nurse, had become a Matron, and she had her own nursing home, she was pretty well-to-do, from this point-of-view. Barbara was becoming a nurse, she went to QE, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Birmingham and eventually qualified from that. There was no real social life at Mrs Morris. I mean, from time to time, she had accepted that I was very close to Barbara, and so, from time to time, I was invited to tea or so, that I recollect. And then later, when we got married, as I say, she was unhappy, but it was at her nursing home, she had a big place there and a big garden, and she erected a tent, a marquee, there, and did the catering for us. Because she didn't expect it to last anyway.

AG: Where were you actually married?

JSS: We were married initially because, to me, I felt, although I was not religious, I was certainly not a Christian, I wanted to be married in either a synagogue - I couldn't get one to marry me to a non-Jewess - and so we were married in the morning in the registry office in Birmingham, and, as Barbara had been brought up, although she was not terribly religious, she has been brought up as a Protestant, she went to the-, we were then in the afternoon married in the local church there. Barbara had previously, as I say, she didn't get on that well with her mother, but, as I say, her mother had put her into public school because she was in the way, I assume, in the nursing home. Barbara had been to the Abbey at Malvern, and that is where she had her school, it was a very good school, there is no question about it, so she came home from time to time.

Tape 3: 41 minutes 7 seconds

AG: Were you by this time a British subject?

JSS: Oh yes, on leaving the army, just before, just at the time where I was being de-mobbed, I was naturalised, that means I had to go and see--- and I have got some document that is signed by the man, was signed by Maxwell, at the time. An army officer had to take my oath of allegiance, which again-. I got the document and I was naturalised in 1947.

AG: Were there any problems with that?

JSS: None whatsoever.

AG: So you went to a-.

JSS: Don't forget, I had served.

AG: Of course.

JSS: a) I had been in the army and b) I had been in the country since 1939. Absolutely, I don't recall any problem, difficulty or anything.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 7 seconds

AG: And what about changing your name? Or adding the Sharpe on?

JSS: Now this is something I should have mentioned earlier. When I joined up, my brother had joined earlier, as I said, both of us, it was suggested, we should change our name to an English name or a British name, in case we were either killed or captured and - at that time we thought our parents were still alive - and so that no reprisals could be taken on our parents. So my brother had picked the name Sharpe, as far as I know out of the telephone directory in Glasgow. He wanted something that began with 'S', similar. And so he was Sharpe and he-. As I say, he joined the Royal Warwicks, then he went to --- he actually had a matriculation by that time. His life was rather different to mine, possibly slightly easier. And he then went to Otur and he became a Lieutenant in the Royal Warwicks and that was quite a separate career. He also went to the Middle East, in fact, at one stage he and I met in the King David Hotel, believe it or not, in Palestine, I think two months before it was blown up. We met there on leave, together in Mafte, he was a Lieutenant and I was at that time, well, an NCO. That made no difference, I was in the Paras. Again, there were some amusing things, but I don't want to waste time.

AG: And so how did he and you go about changing your names?

JSS: Well, no this was accepted immediately, and I then also chose Sharpe, because several other Jewish boys chose, one chose Barr and another chose the name that I remember Stirling, I don't even remember first, I don't remember what there original names were, but they were all Austrian or German-Jewish names. And so I went through my army career as Sharpe. When I came out, everybody was used to it and for a while even at university I continued it but, before getting married, I decided to take my own name back into the name. So it became Subak-Sharpe and that was by deed of poll, so I had to do this by deed of poll.

Tape 3: 45 minutes 12 seconds

Which was no problem, there was no deed of poll to go from Subak to Sharpe, but to go back from Sharpe to Subak-Sharpe, I had to do it by deed of poll. And that's how I got married and we were married as Subak-Sharpe, so Barbara has never been Barbara Sharpe, not without the Subak.

AG: I am not sure whether I asked you what year you got married and I should have done.

JSS: We were in 1953; I was a first year PhD student at that time, in August, 23rd August 1953.

AG: So where did you then go and live?

JSS: Well, I mentioned to you that Barbara's mother had a nursing home, and so she had a couple of houses that were attached to it and, when I say houses, they were fairly primitive, but small independent houses, right next to it, and we were given the ability to go into one of these small houses and we stayed there until I went to Glasgow. We stayed there a year, in Greenland Road it was called. We were married. As I said to you, well, I haven't said it to you yet, as an engagement present before I had given Barbara a Siamese cat, that was what she wanted, and so the cat was with us and she also had previously a little miniature Dachs, so there were the four of us, that is the cat, the miniature Dachs, which unfortunately died a little bit later, and Barbara and I stayed in that house. There was nobody else in that house.

AG: Can I just pause?

JSS: So, Barbara and I, as I said, married, stayed in Birmingham for one year, and I was now at the end of my second year and the opportunity came to go for a position as an Assistant Lecturer or the equivalent of an Assistant Lecturer provided I continued my research. My research at that time was on fungi, and particularly on two things, which won't mean too much to you. I worked on Heterothallic Ascomysis. I became interested in extra nuclear inheritants, although my initial problem was to examine the situation when two different nuclei occupy the same space, so I really wrote two theses simultaneously.

Tape 3: 48 minutes 26 seconds

JSS: Well, it had to be done. One problem I solved myself and the other was the problem I had been saddled with initially. I was not very happy in Birmingham because, just purely not happy with the department, the way things went in the department. Most of the interest in the department, at that time, was very much on certain sophisticated statistical problems, which I had to learn, but that was not my real interest. The opportunity came for a couple of lecturers; one was in Sheffield and the other in Glasgow. I actually went to interview for both. When I went to Sheffield, I was impressed by the fact that the yellow tulips were all grey, before you could even see that they were tulips, at that time. Remember, this was 1954. I enjoyed my interview with then Dr. Pontekovas, since then Professor Pontekovas, who was the geneticist in Glasgow. He offered me the position. I accepted that, so I went there. I was allowed a totally free hand to work on my own project, although it didn't quite fit in with the work in the institute, which was working on another aspidilgus, another fungus, related fungus. And that went very well and I completed my PhD. At that time, Barbara was, we are now back in 1956, Barbara was expecting our first and eldest son, who was actually born in Glasgow still. And the opportunity arose and Pontes said, he considered I should take this position to start, and this really means start from scratch, a genetics section in Pirbright in the Foot and Mouth Disease Institute, although it had a slightly different name at the time, in Pirbright, the only place where this could be done.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 59 seconds

Well, I was very dubious about doing that and I said I know nothing about viruses and I know nothing about animals. At that time, I was working with fungi, and he said, "But you do know something about genetics, so try it". So I went down for an interview there and the interview, it was obvious he had written to the director there, the director had also interviewed me first in London. And I was not prepared, at that stage, to commit myself and then I went to interview and part of the interview was quite amusing. And, first of all, a new house would go with this, so that part was, in so-called Officers Row in Bullswater Common, a really nice rural situation. All the work had to be done behind the wire, that is you were isolated, and the deputy director took me round to have a look at this, and everything was apparently isolated. And you had to go through a bath house, a shower, got new clothes, and then you were inside the so-called wire and you could work there. And while he talked to me and, on the outside of course, suddenly a cat came out and shot over the wire and shot in. and he had just said me how secure everything was and I said, "I see". And he looked at me and laughed. Anyway, I accepted this position.

Tape 3: 52 minutes 54 seconds

AG: Was this, at Pirbright, was this with the Military Defence?

JSS: No, no, not defence. It was the Ministry of Agriculture. Foot and Mouth Disease was really, at that time, there were a number of outbreaks, it was an interesting set of problems, they had identified the different types and different types of Foot and Mouth Disease. These types, they are all Foot and Mouth Disease, but they don't, there is no interrelationship. Three are European, three are South African, and one is Pakistani in origin, but initially they were isolated. And they provided a huge problem for the UK and so they'd been working there for many years on Foot and Mouth Disease and then finally they decided they ought to study the genetics. Brooksby, who was the deputy director, obviously knew Pontekovas for some time and then asked him if he could recommend some people, so Pontekovas recommended me and also another a colleague of mine, who was a PhD from Cambridge, who was mainly interested in Scientology at that time. Both of us went down for an interview, totally separate, but I was offered the position and I am afraid my other colleague, Schumann, who I knew reasonably well, wasn't even heard. The last time I spoke to him, he is dead now, he said that he still hadn't heard from Pirbright and that is 40 years later.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 50 seconds

AG: So you moved down-?

JSS: Well, there was a house with it and we now had a baby.

AG: When was your son born? What was his name?

JSS: My son's name is Robert, after my father, he was called Robert, and Robert was born in Redlands here, in the nursing home, and he was - we dipped his feet into Loch Lomond before we left to go down to Pirbright - so he was really just 6 weeks old, or less than that, when we went down there. In Pirbright, we had a house with it,

a little house, our own, in that row in Bullswater Common, and our neighbours were mainly vets, veterinarians. There was a chemist and a physicist as well but almost all the others that I remember there, and they became pretty good friends, they were vets, and we stayed there for four and a half years. And you asked about the employer, who was really the Agricultural Research Council, so I was already on the permanent staff of the ARC. Perhaps one interesting point that you might find amusing and that is: from time to time, the governing body came down to visit us and the governing body, at that time, the time I am discussing, after I have been there for about three years, was headed by Lord Rothschild, who was the secretary of the RAC at that time. So they wanted to see what work was going on at that time and those of us who were Heads of these small sections had to give demonstrations and we were strictly instructed that they should only take 20 minutes or so. I had done some mutagenesis studies on Foot and Mouth Disease, so I had a few quite interesting things. Anyway, I didn't know Lord Rothschild. There were about 13 or 14 people all round visiting and I tried to identify Lord Rothschild. And I expected him to look like a Jewish banker and I looked and there was indeed somebody there that looked very much like that, and so I felt comfortable I'd identified him and when I had done my spiel, my discussion, they went away, except for one rather big man, tallish man, who wanted to hear a little more about what I was doing and how I was doing it, so I tried to shoo him out, I said I have to send you. But he said, "You must visit me in Cambridge and give us a talk". So I said, "I would love to, but what is your name?" And he looked at me and he said, "The name is Rothschild". I felt so stupid that I never took up the invitation.

AG: We will have to stop there and change the tape.

TAPE 4
Tape 4: 0 minute 7 seconds

AG: Could you tell me something about the rest of your time at Pirbright and how your career then developed afterwards?

JSS: Well, in Pirbirght I worked almost exclusively on mutagenesis studies and other studies with the Foot and Mouth Disease virus. At that time, I had been persuaded to go there, assuming that a lot of work could be done with the virus and tissue culture, but when I got there I found out that what I had been told about working tissues culture was not really nearly as advanced or nearly as repeatable, at that time, as I had hoped. It was all done in fresh kidney cultures. There were no permanent lines initially, so I had to find some other ways of doing it and a lot of my work was done on mice, and I don't want to go into too much detail. Except, to do this manipulation, even within the wire, you still had to go into even more protective buildings, because Foot and Mouth Disease is a very, very infectious virus. So a lot of my work was done there, in this way. I got a lot of interesting mutants in the virus itself and I then had an invitation to go to Glasgow to the Institute of Virology there. I had become a virologist as well as geneticist, at that time, but my whole background was really classical genetics and I had an invitation from Professor Stoker, who had just started there, to give a lecture there about my work. So, I had not really met him, I had seen him before at various scientific meetings that I had attended, but didn't know him at all. And, when I came up here, I had the flu, I was really unwell, but, to cut a long story short, the next morning because I stayed, I have even forgotten where I

stayed, probably in a hotel here. And when then he said he didn't want to beat about the bush, he was going to offer me a job, I wasn't even looking for a job at that time, and I was really quite surprised. However, I told him that I had arranged a visit to California, at that time, to do a sabbatical there, and I was committed more or less.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 11 seconds

AG: Which institute?

JSS: California Institute of Technology, it was the top at that time and it changed my life, even the few months that I did there, when I did go. But, to cut a long story short, he said that he would see what he could do. I had to change from a permanent position in the Agriculture Research Council's scientific scale, I was by then an SSO, and it was expected, recommended, to become a PSO that is a principle scientist. And he said that he would see what he could do and then he old me it was fine, my first 6 months, so to speak, 6 or 7 months could be in California, but I would already be in the ARC, and then I would come back from there to Glasgow. Now, the people down in Pirbright were really quite surprised or disappointed that I should accept another position and so they stopped my promotion, which was just about to come through, but, at the same time, they asked me to find another geneticist and to identify my successor, which I did. I went then from Pirbright to Caltech and I worked there in the laboratory of Renato Dulbecco, who is a Nobel Prize winner. He was a Nobel Prize winner, subsequently, I mean, he had done some of the work, which gave him the Nobel Prize, but it hadn't been awarded at that time. And he was clearly on very good terms with Pontekova and Pontekova must have said something to allow me to get that possibility. It was a very interesting possibility because it changed my attitude to science completely. I was probably rather stuck in the British way of academic at that time. And here, to all his staff he was Renato, whereas in Pirbirght you were Dr. Sharpe and Dr. Brooksby, or whatever it was. And he had a wonderful way of introducing you to his type of virology, which was very much the beginnings of molecular virology.

Tape 4: 6 minutes 3 seconds

I learnt to use biochemical techniques, which I had previously not been able to even understand and use. I was in the same lab of several other people who were outstandingly good scientists. And I really had to learn very fast to get their respect and I really worked about 16 hours a day and often all night through to get my work done. So I did a lot of work in relatively few months, which was very important because it gave me the respect of people there who were really eminent in the field. I don't want to drop names, but -.

AG: Tell me one or two, please.

JSS: One other person, there was Max Delbrück, another Nobel Prize winner, who was in a lab one floor below us in the building, in the Caltech building, in which I was. I won't drop these names. I will just leave it at that. They were sufficiently interested in the way I worked in order to allow me to use their centrifuges at times. I got the nickname of Three-Sprinkle John because I had three sprinkles, there was only one in each place, going at the same time, to try and get some of the results. But much of it was really wasted because today this is all irrelevant. Anyway, I did reasonably

well there but we were on an English or a British salary. We were very, very poor. And my wife wrote the other day on a piece of paper that is the poorest she has ever been in her whole life, up there on a British fellowship salary. When Renato Dulbecco found out how poor we were, by then we were already, we couldn't manage much longer, so Barbara and the children were going to come back then, our daughter was born too, she was still born when we were in Pirbright, so the little kids were too much in the house that we had rented, so Barbara was about to go back and then suddenly I got an enormous extra boost to my salary. I enjoyed that but it was really too late for the family. And then we came back.

Tape 4: 9 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Can I just ask you about your daughter? When was she born? What's her name?

JSS: She was Anne, Anne Barbara, and she was born in 1959. And she is, just briefly, I wouldn't like not to discuss her, she's now of course a married woman with two children, two grandchildren there. To go back to this, I then came back to Glasgow and I had my own choice of which virus systems to work in. Of course, Foot and Mouth Disease was out because you could only work in Pirbright over there. So, two systems were in major use, one was the work that Stoker in particular was interested in, and that was the Polyoma Virus, which is a DNA tumour virus, there are Polyoma Viruses and there are RNA viruses; the other was Herpes Simplex Virus and the person, who was mainly interested in that, was Peter Wilde there, who later became Professor in Birmingham and then Professor in Cambridge. So I opted for Herpes Simplex Virus, to do the genetics of it, and I started on the genetics there. I am a person who usually works on or used to work on several problems that I regarded as major problems, so I started on what really turned out to be four major problems all at the same time, which I wouldn't allow a PhD student of mine to do, and which was possibly a mistake because it meant you only had limited time on each of these.

Tape 4: 11 minutes 18 seconds

However, I was fortunate and they all, at least three of them, worked out just to give really promising and sound results at the same time. They are totally unrelated problems. One was an analysis of DNA, Deoxyribonucleic Acid, and particularly the Neris Navel analysis, and I worked out the general design of these DNAs, which has evolutionary interest, but it was a personal interest of mine, using various different organisms. The other was to look at the genetics of Herpex Simplex Virus. I started getting the initial mutants and now using particularly temperature-sensitive mutants, if you want me to I can discuss this, but you would probably I rather not. And the third was really some cell-genetic problems and I did quite well with this and I discovered also with the cells, cell genetics, some phenomenon that I called then-. Let me explain what this thing is, I wanted to know what happens when different genetic cells interact with one another, and so I looked, I tried to get mutants that could not incorporate a particular biochemical and other mutants, which could not incorporate another biochemical. We know exactly why they couldn't and what happened when they came into contact and, of course, to study that, you really needed to use radioactivity. And you had to use radioactivity in such a way that the molecules could only get into the cell intact, retaining its radioactivity, through some intimate contact between the cells and not through the medium, in other words, not from one cell to

another, and this worked. And that really interested and excited me and some other people and that is just one of the projects.
Tape 4: 14 minutes 2 seconds

Now, as far as the genetics of Herpes was, that also worked and the label sells. I published very little, to be honest. I never liked publishing something until I found that it was sufficiently well worked out for me to really publish about the system. Whereas I tried to hand over, do the initial work, and then hand over to a PhD student, or to one of the fellows, who was working with me, to elaborate this work. And this really did, it got a lot of work done, but my own contribution was initiating most of these things, except metabolic co-operation, that really was something that I had worked out. I had two colleagues there but they took a relatively minor part in it. One was my assistant in my lab and the other was a bio-chemist who knew how to develop and identify radio-active emissions on films, which at that time I wasn't very familiar with. So I called it metabolic co-operation and there is a very funny thing about it, and, as I said, I worked it out, it is a beautiful system. I sent it, I sent the publication to Dulbecco, simply because he was in the National Academy of Sciences and this would get into interesting an interesting publication. Now, he-. First of all, in our office downstairs, one of the clerks, who sent it off, felt it was too expensive to send it, so she sent it to California by sea mail, so it took four months to get there. When Renato got it, he didn't believe the work, so he tried to repeat it with his cells. Now, unfortunately, the system he used at that time is a system that doesn't work with this particular way, so he was reasonably, he was quite unhappy, it was only later when he used similar cells that he suddenly realised what that was and it came back then. But the publication was delayed by at least a year, purely even to be probably submitted. But it was beautiful, in my opinion, quite a good piece of work.
Tape 4: 17 minutes 3 seconds

Now I don't want to elaborate on this. Meanwhile, apart from my research in Glasgow, I was on the MIC staff. Stoker clearly was sufficiently impressed to suggest that I should be promoted now to senior grade, which is really equivalent, readership equivalent, so I was financially quite well-off.

AG: Which year is this?

JSS: This would be, it certainly would be within two years from my coming back from California. 1961.

AG: '62?

JSS: '63, I think '63, but, it must be '63, at the latest '64, but I think '63.

AG: Go ahead.

JSS: So things were working here quite well, I felt that I was after all a geneticist and I was in the Genetics Society and I had been put on the committee for a little time, I don't really remember exactly when I went on the committee, but then I became the Junior Secretary of the Genetics Society, and then the Senior Secretary. These are three-year stints each time and finally they slough you off to become a Vice President, which is, well, that's nothing, I actually became a trustee and the

trusteeship has finished only very recently. So, although I am really a molecular virologist, now I have held, I have given quite a bit of time largely to the Genetics Society, although less and less in the last 20 years or so. So that was a side issue. So, meanwhile Stoker in 1967, no let me put it differently, even in '66, Stoker was offered a Chair in Oxford at that time, now he more or less accepted this, and he suggested some of his senior people, of which I was one. And two others were as well, the senior people who were most important to him would come with him and go there, which sounded fine initially, but then we found out that there would be really very little advantage. We would have no more space, laboratory space, than we had had in Glasgow and really financially upsetting, getting into a new position, buying a new house in Oxford, where everything was more expensive than in Glasgow. The long and short of it is that the three key people that he wanted to take with him said that they did not want the upset, so Stoker turned the Chair down, but he felt he learnt a lesson from that, very much.

Tape 4: 20 minutes 50 seconds

About a year and a half later, he was offered the Research Directorship of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. Now that is going into cancer research per se, not just cancer viruses and so on, and this time he accepted. He sent those of us, who were lucky to be key, it was the same three as before, a very, very interesting and exciting officer. Meanwhile the MRC had come, the Medical Research Council, the secretary and some of his most important colleagues on the council came to interview us here. They wanted to know what interested us and we each had to give a discussion of what research you had done, and, as I said to you a little earlier, I had been very fortunate that some of my work had just begun to pay off. Anyway, the long and short of this is that there was intense speculation, this was in 1967, yes, in May/June 1967, there was intense speculation here on what would happen here and who would take over and so on. And I am not a political animal in any way, I don't really interact in political situations and I am probably far too brisk in my treatment. So I decided that one must get out of this atmosphere of constant rumours that happened here and meanwhile Jay Seegmiller, in California, also had, sorry not in California, in Washington, had read my paper on metabolic co-operation. He had visited in the institute here, come over to see what this work was about. He was working on Legionnaire's Disease at the time, which used the same biochemical, or similar biochemical system, to the system that I had been working out on myself. So he asked me whether I would be interested to spend two or three months with him in NIH and I wanted to get out of this atmosphere, so I became a visiting professor, and got out, visiting professor in NIH, in Seegmiller's department, and two or three colleagues from there came together with me, and we published some works, and we found that the system did work in tissue culture using Legionnaire's Disease.

Tape 4: 24 minutes 12 seconds

But, putting that aside, Barbara was on her own here with the kids because it really couldn't work out that way, so it was really a pretty miserable and difficult time for both of us. The secretary of the MRC meanwhile, or beforehand in June, as I say, interviewed all those of us, we all had to give talks, that were the senior people in the institute, and I then got a letter asking me to come back and offering me the Directorship of the Institute, to be interviewed, the Directorship of the Institute and the Chair of Virology. Now, when I came back, that was in January, it was bitterly cold, I flew back in January 1968. When I got back here, somebody in the university,

I actually know who it is, but it doesn't really matter, had made some complaint that he should have been consulted as well. He was another professor. And so there was a letter that your interview with the principal of the university is off now. So I came back and that is my greeting. My wife gave me this letter, so I went to bed to sleep, I had just flown back from there. To cut a long story short, a few days later, I was now back and there was no point going immediately. A few days later, there came a phone call from the principal, saying that could I come for an interview, the interview was now on again. I believe, I know now, that the person, who had objected, had come back and had put some questions to him that he would put to me. They were irrelevant. Anyway, I had this interview and I think it was around 20th January. So I had been back 20 days, or whatever, and I was now offered these two positions simultaneously. I would be Honorary Director of the MRC unit, which was much, much larger than the university department, and the Chair. And possibly slightly foolishly I accepted that and I then held that position for 26 ½ years.

AG: Goodness!

Tape 4: 27 minutes and 20 seconds

JSS: And the size of the institute grew, but it took me essentially, after a fairly short time, in years a fairly short time, it took me out of actually the lab, which I loved, and that's why I regretted it. I think I should have stayed in the lab. I had now to a) administer, initiate things, provide a lot of possible, potential projects that were worthwhile for other people to exploit and you don't get the same fun out of that.

AG: How many people did the institute grow to have?

JSS: Well, it was totally denuded, because most of the other people, now that the Chair has been filled; most of the people went with Stoker down to London. I knew that, I mean, I have a charming letter from him in which he tells me how important it is for him that I come with him, but he understood that, once I had the directorship offered, I would probably accept it. So, I had to re-populate. For the first few months, there were only 2 or 3 scientists that I could, I had to-. And don't forget, Michael had had, and I don't blame him at all for this, he had had nine months or longer to identify scientists he wanted and offer them jobs, so he had picked a few. So I had to use my knowledge of who was who in the field, particularly pick junior people, who I thought had promise and were likely to really grow into sound scientists. Although I had no training for this really, I seem to have been reasonably successful. So then slowly the numbers increased and an institute like that is run on the scientists themselves, the professionals, and some are from the university, some are MRC, but the MRC unit is much bigger than the university. And then you have visiting fellows or fellows, who are there for short-term appointments, that are post-docs, then you have PhD students. You have technical assistants and the technicians are themselves able to do the work with individual scientists. Then you have all the people, who are responsible to keep the institute, the logistics of the institute, going. So it is big. The total number, at the time when I retired, was 162.

Tape 4: 30 minutes 24 seconds

But they were not all scientists; the scientists were much fewer than that. And, perhaps I should say this; I am not medical, so I was suddenly responsible in the MRC

unit, but in addition to this, I had two medical staff, that I had inherited from Michael because they didn't offer them jobs. But they were good, very good people. So subsequently I had to be responsible for them. Now I was at this stage the professor, they were senior lecturers. Their salary was considerably higher than my salary, even at that particular point. So I suddenly realised how different it was, although they worked just the same as some of their other colleagues here. The other people who were here were scientists of various types.

[Interruption]

AG: I was going to ask you if, amongst the people, who were under your tutelage as it were, you had any people who made eminent careers themselves subsequently? Anybody you would like to mention?

JSS: Yes, there are quite a few, in fact, really all over the world some of them. There are some who have made a good career in the States particularly, some in the UK. Both people who were PhD students, and one of them at least I will mention to you in a minute, some of whom came to me as young post-docs, who have done extremely well and they are in senior positions, some in professorial positions as well. Perhaps an outstanding person is Dr., Professor Moira Brand now, she came as a young graduate student from Belfast, from one of my colleagues previously here. And she took her PhD in the institute. I was actually involved in her personal PhD supervision. She has done extremely well. She is now not only a professor, she was at the Southern General in the Neurology Department. She is involved in industry now, in that she has started with other people a small industrial firm. I have nothing to do with it. She produced certain structures, mainly using molecular genetics techniques, which are very, very promising, and these are now living organisms or potentially living viruses, which can multiply in tumour cells, but not apparently damage or multiply in other cells. These are brain cells I am talking about.
Tape 4: 34 minutes 14 seconds

So she now has-. This is the start of a very exciting piece of work. In addition, this has given her prominence in an area, which is really not related any more, except that this is to do with what she did purely with me. She is now the chairman of SHERT, these are the people, SHERT is Scottish Health Endowment Trust, SHERT, not with an "I" but with an "E". And they are the people, who actually provided the money that build the institute into which Stoker went. Although there has virtually been no close relationship since then. And so she has held this important position now for, as far as I know, two or three years. So she is an outstanding success. There are a number of others. In fact, the people who now head the institute, I've retired now 10 years ago, the people who are heading it, one of them is Duncan McGill, he was one of the senior people there. He is now the Director of the MRC Unit and an Honorary Professor at the university. Richard Elliot, who came back to us, and who is now a Professor in the university; Barclay Clements, who is also a Professor at the university. There are other people, who went to the States, John, or Ian, Hay, as he's known to most of us, although John seems to have been his Christian name, he went to the States. He was in the institute for a while. He was a colleague even before I got the Chair. He then came to me. He is now a senior Professor, in fact the senior Professor and Chairman in Buffalo, in the States. There are others. To answer your question, I have not made a list, but there are quite a lot of them, and it is sometimes

quite gratifying, or it was to me when I had to give a lecture in, let us say in NIH, to suddenly afterwards to have 5 or 6 people from the audience come up to me and they were my previous PhD students.

Tape 4: 37 minutes 17 seconds

AG: And you yourself, I understand, have received several distinctions. Could you, would you like to tell me some of those prizes, medals and other distinctions?

JSS: Well, I got a letter from the Prime Minister at that time. I should start this differently. I worked on, I did one or two bits of work that were more national than anything else. One was I was a member of the Ashby Committee, when genetic manipulation first became possible. There was a small committee. I was really very, very surprised that I was picked to go onto this. But very senior people in the world, to analyse what the potential was of the new technology that seemed to be available.

AG: When was this approximately?

JSS: 1974, ’73 or ’74, I think. I can find that out more exactly.

AG: That’s fine.

JSS: And I was a member of this. Because I had some pretty special knowledge, probably quite useful, subsequently they had recommended that the technology should be further studied, you know there had been a letter asking for a moratorium on genetic manipulation altogether, and they actually decided that this needs more thought and it had considerable potential, which is very true, too. So, subsequently, Shirley Williams was at that time the minister responsible, and appointed a committee that called itself GMAG, Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group, which was headed by Gordon Wostenholm, who was a very wise overall chairman of this, although he was not involved in this type of work. But he was clearly the right type of person to put into such a committee, such a group. The group consisted of scientists, of which I was nominated one. It consisted of a couple of industrialists, it consisted of the unions, representatives of the unions, and one or two outside people, who represented the general public, I suppose. And this sat for several years to identify what should be done. We had wasted a lot of time on that committee, I must say, I think 4 ½ years on that, because it took a lot of time, there was an enormous amount of paperwork that had to be got through and read, to give advice on and to present from time to time before the whole group, to identify whether some piece of work should be done or should not be done and under what conditions it should be done.

Tape 4: 41 minutes 1 second

In that group, I then, when it became clear that we were positive, that the work should be done in the UK, I then became Chairman of the Safe Vectors Subcommittee. In other words, identifying particular vectors that could be used to move genes from one to another, without being any danger. That again involved quite a lot of people. Everybody knows about what the final situation for the GMAG was. I felt, after four years, 4 ½ years, that my work was really done. We had got out conditions under which you could work, ways of analysing risk assessment and so on. And I felt, as a scientist, there was really no longer any point in my spending so much of my time on

this type of work. So I and I think Peter Walker and maybe one other person of the scientists, at that point, resigned to get back to our normal work and let the other people continue and this then continued.

AG: But you were going to tell me about what you received from the Prime Minister?

JSS: Oh, yes, right, ok, sorry. Much later, well, some time later, I received a letter, from his office, saying that the Prime Minister has it in mind to recommend you for the award of the CBE, but before taking any further steps, he needs to know whether this is acceptable to you.

AG: Who was the Prime Minister at that stage? Callaghan?

JSS: No, no this is much later, this is ’90, it was ---

AG: Margaret Thatcher?

JSS: No, it was her successor, I am afraid.

AG: Oh, John Major? Oh, gosh, I got the timescale quite wrong. Yes.

AG: Yes, this was much later. I am sure that my main reason is not that, although that was possibly known, but probably the work I’d done at MRC. And I am almost certain that the initiator and I don’t know who the initiator is or why it was initiated, but I am pretty certain that the initiation must have come from the Medical Research Council.

Tape 4: 43 minutes 54 seconds

AG: So you were awarded a CBE?

JSS: I got a CBE.

AG: In which year were you-?

JSS: I think the CBE was in ’91. I’ll need to check that, old men forget.

AG: We’ll take a picture of the insignia? Any other distinctions that you care to mention?

JSS: Well, also the Biochemical Society, again this was a recommendation, but I think, here I know that one of my colleagues, who came on many of the courses that I ran to initiate people, very, very early on, and Michael Stoker, my predecessor, had recommended me to them. So I was awarded a Ciba medal, which is once every year. It is from the Biochemical Society. Other things are more funny in a way.

AG: When were you awarded the Ciba Medal?

JSS: I think it was ’93.

AG: Sorry, go on.

JSS: Much earlier, but I can't give you the exact date, I was asked at one stage, there were four people asked and I was one of them, one in the States, well, it doesn't matter who they were, one German, one in the States, one in the UK and one other. We were asked to referee and recommend the next Professor of Virology in Helsinki, in Finland. Foolishly, I accepted this invitation. The first thing that they sent me is-, there were two huge boxes, with the names of the people, there were nine candidates for that, and there were over 600 papers that I had to look at. An immense task! One of them had written over 300 of these papers. It was quite enormous. These were the papers in English at least. Anyway, it was an enormous task and it was rather peculiar in other ways. I said that, of the candidates, there are some that I know personally for some time and there are others that I don't know personally, could I please have a copy of their CVs? So they said the Senate, their Senate, does not provide that information, for reasons that only the Senate knows. So I said that it was very unfair to the people who one doesn't know personally. However, it took me a year and a half to get through all this, and the others too, because in-between the chairman in Finland died and they put in another chairman. Anyway, I did the task and so they sent me a little medal. They sent quite a nice remuneration, one of the few remunerations that I got. But they sent me a bronze, at least I think it is bronze, for that. It is irrelevant.
Tape 4: 47 minutes 30 seconds

If you do science, you should do it for the sheer fun of it and not for medals of distinction.

AG: Have you been on any other important committees or held any other important positions or offices that you would want to mention?

JSS: Well, yes, first of all, back in 1969 I think, I was elected on EMBO, that is the European Molecular Biology Organisation. This is perhaps one of the most important organisations in our type of science at all. And there, after a while, I was put onto a committee, the course and workshop committee, and on the course and workshop committee, I then became the chairman of it after one year and I was the chairman of that course and workshop committee, as far as I can remember, for three years. That was really the maximum there. That was very important because it identified international courses that could and should be run and also workshops. Workshops is perhaps a term, which may not be so familiar to you, it really means a get-together of the key people in that particular area to intensely discuss the whole matter of that particular set of problems. In my opinion, very important. Now, I personally have run quite a few of these, some of these courses, but not while I was chairman. I mean, earlier, that is probably why they put me on to it. And I also ran some of the workshops and I usually found that when I invited some of the people onto a course or workshop and I didn't have many people that I can remember that anybody has refused that. I ran also a meeting for the Ciba Foundation many, many years ago. I called it the Strategy of the Viral Genome and that was there. They had money. So I had the opportunity to bring people from all over the world to it and people, who were really leading in there field. It was a very interesting, very early one. As I say, I ran quite a lot of these courses and workshops. The courses were always practical that I ran. So I started off, with my staff, without my staff I couldn't have done that, so we

started a lot of people on very international, always international, on a career in different countries. And they really came from all, largely Europe, but some Americans too that came to it. Being EMBO that controlled it, it was meant to be European Molecular Biology.

Tape 4: 50 minutes 34 seconds

Then I was what you might call a hatchet man for EMBO, for interviewing candidates for long-term and short-term fellowships. This is, every member, sooner or later, has to do this particular job. In the MRC itself, I was on TAP that is the Training Awards Panels. So initially I was on it again for one year and then I became its chairman for three years. And that was very important because you had to go through the people, who applied for fellowships and studentships, but it is mainly the fellowships that are important. And there were always an enormously larger number that applied and you really had to pick out the best of them. And that again, throughout this time, mostly throughout the British Isles, although a few of them applied for fellowships that would be abroad, particularly in the United States. And then, for a short time, or the normal stint, three or four years, I was on the Cell Board of the Medical Research Council. Those are some of the major things that immediately spring to mind, but no doubt quite a few other things will come later. The other thing is I almost, once or twice a year, usually twice but sometimes even three times a year, I went to the States to give research seminars and lectures. I was frequently invited to Cold Spring Harbour and, in fact, I was one of the organisers of the Cold Spring Harbour meetings. I also participated early on, before I became a professor here, in the Cold Spring Harbour Symposium, to make a contribution there. That is a really quite interesting and valuable activity. Within the Herpes Virus community, which is international of course, I organised two meetings in the UK and was co-organiser of one meeting, incidentally in Oxford, and one in Scotland here and co-organised one other meeting in the States. They occur annually and, since then the Herpes community have embarrassed me to some extent, because I should be dead before this, because they have got an annual John Subak-Sharpe Lecture at this international Herpes Virus meeting.

Tape 4: 53 minutes 44 seconds

They were very kind to me when I retired and Barbara was very ill at that time and so I wasn't even sure if we could go there and we went to a meeting in Vancouver, when they initiated this John Subak-Sharpe Lecture, but in addition to that they presented me with a whistle.

AG: A whistle? Why a whistle?

JSS: Because it is a golden whistle and it was a custom actually started many years previously with Peter Wilde that a workshop would be started with a whistle blow. He had initially a British policeman's whistle and, at the end of it, he blew a whistle and that was the end of it. The whistle that he gave me is in an American model, which is totally different, but I have felt that they were very kind to me and very kind to my wife when I, just before I retired. And then the university laid on a symposium, which was part of a bigger symposium, which was going to be held here and my staff did me a special meeting. They didn't want to be part of the university one, so the MRC staff did their own thing.

AG: That is very good.

JSS: And I think, at that point, they had collected the money that gave rise to the annual lecture. I think it must run out fairly soon. It has been going on for quite a few years. I have nothing to do with it.

AG: Well, that is very impressive. Perhaps I could catch up with the other part of your life, which we haven't really covered, which is your family life. Now you told me about the birth of your first son, Robert, and your first daughter, Anne, but you have one more?

JSS: I have one more. Now there is three years between Robert and Anne, we would have had a fourth child, but, unfortunately, Barbara lost it. It is interesting; we were actually going on a holiday trip into, over the Grossglockner. Barbara and the children almost certainly had, although it wasn't discussed, had whooping cough, so she had a miscarriage there. Now, subsequently we had a younger son.

AG: What is his name? When-?

AG: His name is Ian.

Tape 4: 57 minutes 0 second

JSS: I'll speak to them very quickly in a moment. But Ian was born 11 years after Anne and 14 years after Robert. When he was a kid, he was brought up, but he felt he was the same as all the other adults around him, you see, but only smaller and this was quite an interesting-.

AG: And where did you educate your children?

JSS: Well, Robert, at that time we were really very, very poor, don't forget, Robert went to Glasgow Academy, largely because I didn't expect to be in Glasgow for any particular length of time, and it was important the children's education should be not interrupted into a totally different street. So they went to Glasgow Academy, which was fee-paying, or he went, simply and solely because that would allow him to go into an equivalent sort of school in England, where I expected to go to some other appointment, which never really happened. Anne went to Laura Banks School, again privately educated, although we were just about able to afford that. Ian was different. Ian also went to Glasgow Academy initially, but I was on a sabbatical in Cambridge when Ian-.

AG: Just tell me the school that he went to because the tape is about to run out.

JSS: Ian went for a short time, as a scholar, as a sixth form scholar, to Shrovesbury, and from there to Cambridge.

AG: Right, we will have to just break there because the tape is going to run out.

TAPE 5
Tape 5: 0 minute 11 seconds

AG: Yes, going back to your children, how have their lives and careers developed?

JSS: Right, well, taking Robert first, Robert went through Glasgow Academy, he did excellent Highers, and I very foolishly, as fathers do, he was only 16 when he got his Highers, so he was advised by me to do more maths, more chemistry, more physics, to prepare him for a future academic life. This didn't go down very well at all, he wasted really the first year, hardly improving, now taking A'Levels, hardly improving on the Highers that he already got. He already got entry into the Glasgow Medical School. He went to the Glasgow Medical School and he graduated in Medicine, and from Glasgow he began to specialise in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He did well in this. He then went to Hereford. He did his post-graduate work in various different places in Wales, in particular, also in Liverpool earlier, at the Versackerlin in Liverpool, for example, and then Wales. He met his future wife in Wales, she was, as far as I know, I think it was a ward sister, by the names of Jenny Jones.

AG: Presumably she is Welsh?

JSS: She is Welsh, very much so. And they got married there. He had the opportunity then, as he became more senior, to become a consultant in Hereford. And he is a consultant there and has been for the last 10 years.

AG: An obstetrician?

JSS: An obstetrician gynaecologist. I think the gynaecology is the more important part, but that's so far from my own subject that I think that I can just make the comment as I understand it.

AG: Does he have family?

JSS: He has family. He has a daughter and a son. Katie, the daughter, is now at school. She is being educated in Hereford at a small private school. The son, Tom, who is only just beginning his schooling, is, however, at Hereford Cathedral School. But he is going through a permanent difficult stage as a child.

Tape 5: 3 minutes 13 seconds

JSS: But he is fine, except that he I think feels jealous of his sister.

AG: And your daughter?

JSS: My daughter, Anne, married. Sorry, first of all, she is dyslexic and so she has had problems, particularly with spelling and so on, which has been a difficulty for her. But she has been a very hard worker. She is qualified as a nurse, so she is qualified, and she then went on to try to qualify, and did qualify, as a health visitor. So, until last year, she has been essentially a health visitor, despite the fact that she has two children, which I'll come to in a moment. She is doing some lecturing now and she wants to go into that full-time. How this will work out is difficult for me to say. Her husband is a teacher, a senior teacher, in technical subjects, and they are living in

Motherwell. The two children are now both at the school where the father had been, but where also some of my colleagues had been in Motherwell. It is Deelle High School.

AG: What is her husband's name?

JSS: Harry Morton, she is now Mrs. Morton.

AG: He is presumably Scots?

JSS: He is Scots, very much so.

AG: Yes.

JSS: He is very fond of rugger, so are his brothers. And the son, David, is a rugger enthusiast at the moment. But he is very small and Anne, our daughter, is also small. Hopefully they will grow a bit more.

AG: And the daughter's name, your granddaughter?

JSS: Jill. She is, unlike her grandfather, very musical, which is quite a joy. She is very tiny, as I said, but she is very talented. She is particularly interested in the arts. None of my children or grandchildren want to become scientists, as far as I know.
Tape 5: 6 minutes 6 seconds

And that is possibly an important thing. Nor would I particularly recommend it. I did recommend that if they wanted to do science that they should do medicine first, particularly after my own experience. And both my sons have done that. So that is the daughter at the moment. And my youngest son went to Glasgow Academy and then he got a sixth-year scholarship, for which he had to compete, for Shrovesbury. There he had to be a scholar. In other words, all the other boys had been there for a long time, but he was the scholar that came in, so he had to show that he really could do something and that was probably very good for him. He worked very hard and he did well in his-, he had done quite well on his Highers here in Glasgow, but he also did extremely well in his A'levels. I was there at the time just before he had to make up his mind. I was on a sabbatical in Cambridge itself, a six months sabbatical. I had not really taken many sabbaticals. I should have done. And he got a taste for Cambridge and so he applied to Queens and he was accepted to Queens, but they sent him for a year's-, a year when he would travel and do other things. That also did him some good, but he started slightly later, as a consequence, than his brother did. He did very well in Cambridge as an undergraduate. He took also an intercalated degree in Essential Immunology.

AG: What was his main subject? Medicine?

JSS: Medicine, this is pre-clinical medicine he did there. His he then did his clinical years in London, St. Georges, and he qualified in Medicine. Subsequently, he did stints in various other places, but he became interested, very early and to my great surprise, in ophthalmology. And he was encouraged by a neighbour of mine, who was an eminent ophthalmologist, he became actually a president of the college later, who

also encouraged him. So he is becoming an ophthalmologist, he did quite well. He is now quite senior, he has been accepted for a registrarship that is in line with a consultancy and he has got two more years to spend at Moorfields, which he has just started, I think, in March. He is at the moment at another hospital. The Moorfields people sent them out into different hospitals first. So he is doing well. He met another doctor, a charming Spanish girl, so he is married, subsequently they are married. Olga Hernando Bolivar, I think is the full name. They got married and they now have a little daughter. Olga is still working as a GP near Teddington. They are living in Teddington at the moment, which means Ian has a lot of travelling to do. He also runs half marathons, he is very sporty as well. Quite interesting how much more talent my children than their father.

Tape 5: 10 minutes 20 seconds

AG: What is the little girl's name? Their daughter?

JSS: Sophie.

AG: It sounds to me that none of your children's partners have any Jewish element?

JSS: They don't. I regret that but-.

AG: One is Spanish, she must be a Catholic.

JSS: She is not very religious, as far as I know, religion does not have a very great part, although they were married in a Catholic Church by a Catholic priest, but he knew exactly Ian's background and he knew my background. And it was really very nice; they were married in Zaragossa, where she comes from.

AG: I was just thinking that-.

JSS: My whole family came to that wedding.

AG: I was just thinking that you've got one Catholic daughter in-law, you've got your son-in-law-.

JSS: This is Church of Scotland

AG: Church of Scotland. What about the Welsh nurse?

JSS: I don't know how religious she is.

AG: Is she Welsh Methodist?

JSS: Well, I think so. But I am not absolutely certain. Nor do I know whether they give much religious instruction. And, to be honest, I am quite ignorant of my own religion or, shall I say, I was born a Jew and I will die a Jew and I will regard it as absolute hypocrisy on my part to do anything else. But I found it very difficult to try to believe in all the mumbo jumbo that particularly the orthodox, maybe I shouldn't

say this on this tape, but I have to be honest, if anything I am now-, I am not an atheist, I am an agnostic I think, but I am a Jewish agnostic.

AG: We are coming to the end of the interview and I would like to ask you how you manage in retirement after such a busy life? You seem very happy and contented.

JSS: Well, I manage, but for a while I thought I could carry on and go back into the lab and work. This was not really possible although I got a small lab in a neighbouring department in the genetics department in Glasgow. It was quite clear if I stayed and became very much involved in the institute it would be difficult for the loyalty of the people. Don't forget, everybody had been appointed by me, including all the PhD students, even by that time they had been interviewed for them to transfer their loyalty to my successor. My own predecessor had told me that I would not see him, except privately elsewhere, once I had taken over, because loyalty has to be transferred and he was absolutely right in this. And so I found that difficult. But the greatest difficulty was I think even the type of help that I would have depended on, in terms of consumables and so on, in other words tissue culture and so on,
Tape 5: 14 minutes 0 second

were not really offered in any way by my successor, so I cut myself off. When I say I cut myself off, I am welcome to go into there and people are very friendly and some of the people are very close friends, although, after ten years, one or two of them have themselves retired. But my relationship to the institute is simply I go in, get my mail from time to time, may chat to some of the people, but I keep out of the way, because many of the things that have been initiated-. Because I had been on a very good new project when I started, which was discontinued by my successor, who switched into different virus fields and you can't do that and carry on. Now I play a little mediocre bridge these days, spend quite a lot of time at home doing quite a bit of reading, although my reading of my own subject is now getting fairly out-of-date. Because unless you are actually practicing the new technologies that you have to master, you cannot really appreciate what is really hard evidence and what is soft evidence, if you don't know from personal experience the reliability of a particular technique. And I think every scientist needs to know when he should no longer regard himself as what he was.

AG: One other thing ---

JSS: And of course I should say that my wife has been very ill, in the year before I retired, she got a pancreatic abscess, followed by major rooftop surgery. She lost a third of her pancreas, she was nil-by-mouth for months on end. I spent a lot of time there and, although she has fortunately recovered, it has quite a lot of after-effects and she is not able to do many of the things she could do before. When I retired, she was actually temporarily in a wheelchair and she came to my seminar that was given by the university for me, she came to the presentation in a wheelchair. Fortunately, all that is gone, but it has changed my life. I worked very hard on my own job, perhaps too hard, ignoring my family, but I don't ignore them now.

Tape 5: 17 minutes 12 seconds

AG: One other question, coming to the conclusion, I'd like to ask you is how you see yourself in terms of national identity or group identity. Do you see yourself as British, Scottish, Jewish, Austrian-Jewish or how would you describe yourself?

JSS: I am a wandering Jew. I am a Jew, first and foremost. I have no loyalty, it took me a long time to even speak to some of the Germans or Austrians, except those that I know were absolutely OK. It took me a long time. I forgot to mention this, I was put on the advisory board of the Deutsche Krebsforschungszentrum, and I was on that for quite a few years, but that was advisory, scientific advisory, and, although I did not necessarily like many of the German and Germanic ways they had there, it was trying to help people who had cancer. It's on the scientific side, so this was the type of interaction I had. I have very few German friends, or even that I regard as friends, though one or two of them may regard me as friend in a different way. They don't know quite enough about my background. I have some Austrian friends, in particular those where I know they were anti-Nazi, were very much involved, or helped my parents during the very difficult time there, but I certainly don't regard myself as a Austrian any more. Nor do I regard myself, although I have lived now a very large part of my life in Scotland, as a Scot. You can't become a Scot. I certainly feel at home in Scotland but that is a different matter altogether. I am not English either. My wife is English but we are not typical of anything. We are wandering Jews, or semi-wandering Jews.

Tape 5: 19 minutes 25 seconds

AG: Have you been back to Vienna?

JSS: I have been back to Vienna a number of times. The first time, I think, was immediately after I came back from the army, I still remember my army clothes, to go to Vienna to see what I could find, what happened and so on, with my brother. And it was really very difficult and it was a very difficult time and really we achieved very little. And I was very, very angry and it took me years to get over the anger of what had happened. This is really a fault in my character. It was very hard, it was very hard to go, for example, to the Paracelsusgasse where we lived and try to go into our flat and to see, first of all, the Nazi who had been in my flat was no longer there, but it was very difficult to go into the house and see things. And of course the Viennese authorities I didn't trust and quite rightly so. And they were mainly interested at the time in Communist demonstrations that were going on there. So my brother and I spent a little time, we did see one or two people, who had kept some things from my parents. And so a few of the things that we got from them, a few are still left and that is why I have some of the pictures and some of the documents of my parents because these very good people, who probably risked their lives as well, held this. In addition, while I was there, I don't know how they got to know this, one or two people came specifically to see us, including one of the 'Dienstmädchen' that we had, who wanted to see who she regarded as 'her boys' still. That also made things very difficult. Because we were so small, our memory was quite different no doubt to her memory. Then, subsequently, my cousin came over a number of times, my cousin was in the US army and he was in the US Intelligence and he was actually back in Vienna before me and that is a different story and I don't want to go into the details of it.

Tape 5: 22 minutes 10 seconds

But he had done well in the States and he used to invite my wife and also my children and me to go for holidays, in Switzerland mainly. Once or twice we went to some excursions to Austria, particularly near the Bodensee, I remember. And as time progressed, we then went back again to see some of the people who had been very good. And we now have very good friends. As I say, we went to see the school colleagues of mine and one of them, who was not caught, did very well, but that is very fortunate, this is Günther Hamann, he became the Professor of History. Josef Landgraf was really fairly shattered by his experience. He became a musician, he is very musical amongst other, he is married and he has got one son, but-. His father was an innkeeper. And he is a good, close friend, simply I respect this man enormously. Igalfy is also a good friend but he is more academic, he always was more academic, and, as I say, he got eight years and he is a genealogist. Now that has nothing to do with genetics.

AG: No, I know.

JSS: So, I was invited back to the 50th anniversary of their Matura. Now, I didn't do Matura there because, of course, we were kicked out. And I and one other, which is Harry Schein, another Jewish boy, were invited and so we went there for the 50th anniversary of their Matura, as people who were their school colleagues. And I met a number of these, some of whom I vaguely knew and some of whom I knew reasonably well from before. They had all done now, at this stage, very well. Hamann was ill at the time, his wife was there, so I met her, Brigitte Hamann, as well there. And, as I say, Harry Schein was there. I hope that gives you much of-. And some of them, sorry, particularly of the family that had kept the documents and the goods of my parents, their children came over here and my children, to learn a bit of German, went over there, particularly Robert and Anne when they were young.

Tape 5: 25 minutes 29 seconds

AG: My last question would be if your video copy of this is seen by members of your family and other people, I wondered if you had any particular message or anything that you would like to grandchildren or family members, anything that you would like to say that you have learnt through your life?

JSS: God, what a task!

AG: Just anything that you might like to say?

JSS: I think that it is very difficult to do this going into platitudes and that I don't want to do. What I would say is you have to be true to yourself. You don't do anything that you yourself feel might lose your own self-respect and that is terribly important. You must keep your own self-respect. That means also you have to work hard and you don't do unto any other people what you would not want to have done to you. At the same time, let them respect you for what you are and not for what they believe that you might be. I don't know what else that I could do. Don't do what your grandfather, if that is whom it is addressed to, that you spend so much time on your work that you neglect partly your family because once you have done that you can't get it back. You can't spend the time with your children, that are now grown-up, it is not the same, you can spend a lot of time with them, but it is not the same as when

they are really, really small and growing up and need reassurance. And don't trust politicians.

AG: Right, on that note I think I'll say-.

JSS: I should finish, as I sometimes finish my lectures, all good things come to an end, except the sausage that comes to two ends.

AG: Right! Well, John Subak-Sharpe, thank you very much indeed for giving up your time and doing this interview with us.

JSS: It was a pleasure, although at times it made me feel fairly hard. I have given, for example, a few lectures, I was persuaded to, in Vienna, to the Gymnasium class, and I found that particularly hard. And the friends, these friend that invited me, who are teachers, specifically wanted me to speak to the 14-year olds, who were my age. And the other time it was Matura candidates.

Tape 5: 29 minutes 9 seconds

End of Interview

Photographs

Photo 1

AG: Who are the people in this photograph please?

JSS: On the left, is Kaiser Karl, the Emperor of Austria. On the right is my father being decorated by him. The other two officers there are unknown to me.

AG: And when was it taken?

JSS: I think it must have been taken in 1917, certainly after 1916, because Karl didn't become Emperor until '16.

AG: Do you know where it was taken?

JSS: Unfortunately, I have no idea at all. Probably in Italy, but it is in the field, this is not the normal way of decorating people, you usually go into some sort of palace. This clearly isn't a palace.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 2

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

JSS: This is my father and my mother, probably at the time that they got married, or very shortly after their marriage.

AG: Where was it taken?

JSS: Frankly, I do not know. At the time, I didn't exist, but it was probably in a studio in Vienna.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 3

AG: What is this document?

JSS: This document allowed me, and my brother had a similar one, to get onto the 'Kindertransport' and come to Britain. It is me, at that time still 14 years old, but already at the time when Hitler was well established in Vienna.

AG: When was it issued?

JSS: It must have been issued some time either just before we went onto the 'Kindertransport' in January 1939 or late in 1938.

AG: And where was it issued?

JSS: Vienna

AG: Thank you very much.

Tape 5: 31 minutes 29 seconds

Photo 4

AG: Who are the people in this photograph please?

JSS: It is my brother in the shorts and myself on the day on which we arrived on the farm in Nottinghamshire and, as you see, I am not really properly dressed as a farm worker.

AG: When was that? When did you arrive?

JSS: This was April to May; I am not sure for the exact date, in 1939.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 5

AG: Who is the person in this photograph?

JSS: This is a photograph of myself, relatively shortly after getting my wings and joining the Parachute Regiment.

AG: When approximately was it taken?

JSS: This was in 1944 and probably in November 1944. It could be slightly later or slightly earlier, I am not sure.

AG: Where is it taken?

JSS: To be honest, I am not sure. I think it was at the studio.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 6

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

JSS: This is myself and my bride on our wedding day.

AG: And when was your wedding day?

JSS: It was 23rd August, 1953. I think it was the 22nd August, 1953.
Cut it, can you cut it?

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

JSS: This is myself and my wife on our wedding day, on 23rd August, 1953.

AG: And where were you married?

JSS: We were married twice, first at the registry office in the morning and in the afternoon, we were married at Barbara's church and this photograph is actually taken in the garden of her mother's house.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 7

AG: Who are the people in this photograph?

JSS: That is Queen Elizabeth II and myself at Buckingham Palace.

AG: And what is going on here?

JSS: The Queen has hung the insignia of the CBE round my neck and is just about to shake my hand.

AG: And when were you invested with the CBE?

JSS: This is in 1991.

AG: Thank you very much.

Photo 8

AG: Who are the people in this photograph, please?

JSS: It is my wife and myself, my three children, their spouses, and the grandchildren, who have since increased by one.

AG: And when was this taken?

JSS: This is about four, five years ago. It was taken five years ago, in winter, in January. At the time when my daughter, who is in the centre here, had her fortieth birthday.

AG: And where is this taken?

JSS: This is in a studio in Glasgow.

AG: Right.

JSS: They all came up for it.

AG: Thank you very much.