



UKHMF TESTIMONY TRANSCRIPT – KAROLA BERNEY

[Rt. 1hr 36 mins. Artefacts 12' 35"]

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00:00:00:00

Karola Berney

My name is Karola Berney. I was born the twenty-first of November 1919. I left Germany from Frankfurt to London. I arrived on the fifteenth of August 1939.

[fade to black and back up]

00:00:23:20

Interviewer

So the first question I have for you is, have you ever recorded your testimony before, about your story? Have you ever spoken with anybody?

00:00:30:09

Karola Berney

No, never.

00:00:31:07

Interviewer

Why not?

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Karola Berney

I think, I always thought, er, so many people have the same kind of stories, you know, who came as refugees here and so on, so I never told anybody really, about anything like this. Even to, to my niece, when we were younger, never spoke much of that family and so on, she only, I only told her about a family, how they live and so on. But I never used to speak anything to strangers about it.

00:01:07:22

Interviewer

Do you find it difficult to remember that period of your life?

00:01:12:15

Karola Berney

No, no, no, I remember it, nearly all periods of my life, since I was, I don't know, go back hundred years nearly *[Laughs]*

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Interviewer

It is nearly a hundred years isn't it? I can't quite believe it.

00:01:27:23

Karola Berney

Yes, yes.

00:01:30:13

Interviewer

Quite amazing and you've got such clear memories of everything which is, which is very, very helpful for us as well, so thank you very much. Um, was it difficult for you to decide to come and speak to me today, or did you think, yes actually I, I really



want to?

00:01:47:09

Karola Berney

I didn't given it much thought really. My niece, when she seen the letter, open [?] my letters on the table, when these come she said, oh what have you got there? So I showed her this, so she said, oh, you should do it. I, I don't really feel like it, she say, yes you ought to, to the people, to remember everything that went on during the war and so on, about the Jewish people and so on. So I said, okay, but I, I didn't make much, it was my niece's choice really.

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Interviewer

Well, Im very grateful to your neice for everything, because she clearly looks after you so well, and supports you in so many ways.

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Karola Berney

Absolutly, yes im very lucky

00:02:30:05

Interviewer

But the way that she judged that letter, is absolutely right isn't it? Do you feel there is a sense of responsibility?

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Karola Berney

Yes, yes, yes, she knows everything. I mean, I often talk to her about her parents and grandparents and so on, and she, she's very interested. She really, she wanted her daughter to write a book about our family, but her daughter wasn't so interested, so she started really writing something, which is very good, but I think she's started off,

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Interviewer

It's a big journey to, to record isn't it? Your family journey, um. Can I ask, um, how important you think it is, for people like you, to share their stories so that generations like mine and to come can, can understand?

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Karola Berney

Yes because it's a different, er, story to everybody, I mean, to... for today's life and so on and people used to work so hard and, and, er, I don't know.

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Interviewer

But your generation went through so much didn't they?

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Karola Berney

Yes.

00:03:45:17

Interviewer

And there are lots of lessons to learn from what happened in that period of history?

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Karola Berney

Yes, yes. But when I was, er, younger, in school even, when I started school, it was not so much, er, against Jewish people, this only came out later on, when I was about 12 or 13 or so on. But otherwise, it was just normal, you know, you,

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As a child I le, I lived a normal life, but of course, my parents, they had a bakery.

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After, er, Hitler came into power, lots of people didn't come anymore to, er, buy bread or went to different things. So eventually my father had to sell the business, I mean, he was forced more or less to sell the business. And, er, but we still, then we had to go and move into a flat which we weren't used to, because before where we lived, it was a big house and the bakery, it was like a house and bakery where we lived, very shock for us. And they, the bakery was in the back there and, er, but they had, after this, my father had to sell the, the business and we had to move into a flat, cause which was a lot of difference to having your whole house.

00:05:29:02

[Interjected by Karola]

Interviewer

Of course, we'll talk about this in a moment Karola. Can I just ask you a couple of other general questions. Because you were Jewish, as a family, um, you were targeted weren't you? And the Nazis had a massive impact on your life?

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Karola Berney

Of course.

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Interviewer

So, so how do you feel towards Nazi Germany?

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Karola Berney

Terrible, I could, I couldn't, I'll never forget and I can't forgive the German people altogether what they did to us. Cause, first of all, they took our youth away and you know, a happy childhood you had and you're bitter, not bitter about it, but you're, you, seeing now, you missed a lot as a child and as a teenager and so on, cause you couldn't do lots of things.

00:06:30:01



You even couldn't go to cinema or to opera or something or concert, you missed all those kinds of things. You were, people could do, if you were not Jewish and just quite a lot of your friends, you were at school with, but then you, you had Jewish friends really.

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Interviewer

So let's talk about that a bit more, in terms of how you feel towards Nazis. Do you forgive?

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Karola Berney

No, I can't forgive, I couldn't forgive, no definitely not. I, I, I can't see how people could be so cruel, educated people and everything like this, to, how they, no, I couldn't forgive them. But nowadays even, if I see, I don't mind young German people, I, but if a person well, not so many my age any more, but say when I was about 60 or 70 or so on, I wouldn't associate with anybody German or so on, although I had some German old friends who sometimes came and visit me in England and so on. And, and the whole thing I couldn't forgive, definitely not, not what they did to my family.

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I mean, they took everybody away from our family, uncles and aunts and, especially my grandmother, she was 90 years old and they, they took her to camp, to camp, they sent her to Vichy France, and my aunt and uncle with her and after this, my uncle became blind apparently and they sent my uncle and aunt and other relations near some, near Paris somewhere and then from there, they sent them to the concentration camp. But as my grandmother was nearly 84 by, 94 by then, there was a convent nearby and they took her in and looked after her, till she died, soon afterwards. By that time she was 94 and I can't forgive, [*cries*] sorry, I can't forget about it this. My grandmother also, she was really a very strong woman, but she was very, like, I never called her grandmother, I always called her mama, and I couldn't forgive that they sent that old lady to camp like this.

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From one day to the next, in the evening somebody came along and say, you have to be at tomorrow morning, 8 o'clock in the *Burgermeister*, it was *Burgermeister* in the house and the *Burgermeister*, you're going away. So she had to pack a suitcase and all go, my grandmother she was 90 then, she couldn't go on that lorry, so somebody picked, just picked her up and threw her in it, I just can't forgive it. And all the other people, relations that were, I mean, they were all working that day, they were cattle dealers and they had a lot of, er, ground, you know, to feed the cattle all the time, it was, they came and go when. So they had to work very hard, always did work very hard. But, er, things like this, I, you'll never forget and it's always in the back of your mind. I couldn't forgive the Germans, definitely not.

00:10:47:03

Interviewer [*talking over each other*]

I can completely understand, cause clearly you had a very loving family and clearly



you loved your grandmother, your mama,

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Karola Berney

But I loved them all, because we were a very close family, we're only a very small family, it was only my sister and I, then there was a, I had a cousin in Berlin, a really small family, everybody, so we were quite close.

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Interviewer

And I guess now that you've, you are beyond the age that your grandmother was at the time?

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Karola Berney

Yes.

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Interviewer

You can imagine how frightening it must be for her, or must have been for her?

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Karola Berney

Absolutely, absolutely, that's why it hurts me most of all, cause to be, to be cruel to some old person like this, and she was a very respected lady in, in a village where they lived, you know. She had a beautiful house, cause all her children also, you know, every day was something new, they tried to modernize it and so on and she always had loads of people there. I don't know.

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Interviewer

Do you remember saying goodbye to her before she was taken away?

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Karola Berney

Yes about, two or three days before I went with my, cause we didn't live together, we lived in Offenbach near Frankfurt and, um, she lived near [?]. It was quite a few hours journey, yes I went there to say goodbye to her and, er, and one day before, er, I went, my uncle who lived with my grandmother, he wasn't there when I went to say goodbye to her, so he and a cousin came to Offenbach where we lived to say goodbye.

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The cousin also went to the camp then, they all went toge, from the same village, all the Jewish people on the same day, there came a lorry and they picked them up and took them to Vichy France and the journey took about three or four days to drive there and it was right on Ital, Spanish border in the Pyrenees and it was terribly cold apparently. I had some leathers which are my aunt's from the camp there and she describes how they would need some things and so on and



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we couldn't do much, my sister and I, because we came here on a domestic permit and we didn't earn any money not much money, you know. The only things we had were the clothes we stood up in and my sister was lucky, she came here about nine months before me and she was allowed to take some linen and some cutlery and things like this. But when I came, nine months later, I only could take a suitcase with some clothes in. It was funny because, er, everybody said, those two rich girls, because we were very well dressed always. Only sometimes I had shoes, holes in the bottom of my shoes, couldn't buy new shoes or have them repaired even, but that was nothing really.

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Interviewer

Before we go through everything in detail, so you can't forgive and you can't forget?

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Karola Berney

No, never.

00:14:43:11

Interviewer

And how important is it, do you think, to share your story, so that other people can understand what happened?

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Karola Berney

If they, if they can take it in that, what life we were living, especially with losing all our family, maybe makes it more tolerant to what, teach them, people are all the same really. Good and bad people, we are all, all religions and so on, people should understand what other people went through and should be happy how they can live now, with everything, I don't know.

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Interviewer

I think what you're saying is, is very, very powerful, because you have such a unique perspective on what happened at that period and the technology that we're using with the cameras enables you to speak to generations and generations and generations to come. And so, you have a message of tolerance do you and understanding? What would your message be to generations to come, who can listen to you sitting here today, talking about that period.

00:16:04:03

Karola Berney

I should think there should be tolerant of people, let people live their own life and, and try to be understand other people's lifestyle and be more tolerant really. I don't know. I don't know really. I just think people should understand what people had to go through and try and not be peaceful and, er, tolerant over, to other people.

00:16:43:24



Interviewer

When you look at the news now and you see what's happening in the political climate around, does it make you depressed that you feel like things are happening again? Or do you feel like we have learnt some lessons and that we've changed our behaviour?

00:16:59:13

Karola Berney

I don't think people changed their behaviour and they should learn that everybody's, er, they should try to understand people in their lifestyle and things like this. Cause, if you're brought up in a different lifestyle, you have different, er, outlooks, but if you, you must understand that everybody's the same, everybody has their own lifestyle and not interfere with them. Just let them live the life as they choose, I don't know, I really.

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Interviewer

That's a perfect answer and it's very important and it's a message that we hear again and again.

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Karola Berney

Yes, try to be tolerant to everybody really and understand. I mean, we come all from different, er, countries and so on, you all have different lifestyle, but people should understand it, I don't know.

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Interviewer

And when you sit back from where you are now and you look back at that point in your life when everything changed because you were Jewish, you must just think, I can't believe that that happened in my life. You must be so angry still?

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Karola Berney

I'm not angry anymore, I accepted it, but I hope it will never happen to anybody again, cause the terrible, you missed out on so many things when you were young and didn't understand as well. I don't know.

00:18:37:16

Interviewer

So those are the general questions, er, Karola, maybe come back to some of them later on. But let's now work through your life, from the beginning, from, from when you first, um, were born, is it in Offenbach is this where you were born?

00:18:54:16

Karola Berney

Yes.

00:18:55:06



Interviewer

In 1919?

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Karola Berney

That's right.

00:18:57:01

Interviewer

So can you talk about the kind of family that you had, you said you were quite a well off family, quite wealthy?

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Karola Berney

Yes. Yes.

00:19:03:18

Interviewer

Can you tell me about your family?

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Karola Berney

Well my mother came from, I don't know how my mother and my father met really, but, er, I think my, my grandmother first, I don't think she was too keen that my mother, or she didn't know my father, I don't know, I think they met somewhere and my mother was on holiday, which, at relations. And, er, tell you the truth, people didn't speak so much about their parents, how they met or things like this. People parents always said that the children they don't, they never, I never know how they met, I know that they're, I think she was somewhere on holiday and she met him and then eventually they got married. They got married in Heidleberg she told me and, er,

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Interviewer

And what was your family like? Was it very close? Was it a formal family? Were you an observant family?

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Karola Berney

A what?

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Interviewer

Observant? Were you very observant?

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Karola Berney

No, no we were not, my mother was very observant, but after she got married, my father wasn't so observant. She went on to synagogues on Jewish holidays as well, but they didn't go every week or so on. My mother was used to go every week when



she, before she was married, but cause they were very, my mother's family, they were very observant. I mean [?] every day and so my mother's family. My father,

00:21:00:07 *[Interjected by Karola]*

Interviewer

Okay. Um, and it was just you and your sister wasn't it? And your mum and dad? So there was four of you? And were you very close as a family? Were your parents very loving?

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Karola Berney

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

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Interviewer

What was your house like? Can you describe where you lived?

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Karola Berney

Well, when I, because I must tell you this, after First World War broke out, my father had to go apparently in the Army and then part of the time my mother lived in *[Stuckton?]* where my grandmother lived, but they still had a house and a business. And, er, I spent, my sister also, my mother and my sister quite some time to my grandmother's place instead living alone and, er, after the war when my father came back after the war, she, of course, she lived permanently in the house again. And, er, she lived in the house until we had to sell it, about, until about 1933 from, she must have been married maybe 1900, 19, about 1910, they must have been married, I have their birth certificates at home.

00:22:41:15 *[Interjected by Karola]*

Interviewer

Don't worry, we'll have a look at that later, but your father fought for Germany in the First World War didn't he? So he was a very patriotic man?

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Karola Berney

Er, he wasn't patriotic, he was, he was called up, they had to go in the Army in the First World War yes and he had an Iron Cross as well, I don't know what for.

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Interviewer

So let's talk about you being at school, because while you were, were at school, the Nazis came to power didn't they?

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Karola Berney

That's right.

00:23:10:07

Interviewer



Do you remember that?

00:23:11:19

Karola Berney

I can't remember when they came right, there were a lot of demonstrations, Nazi demonstrations and they had through the towns and, er, burning torches and so on. But people are starting not being so friendly any more, not straight away, but, you know, gradually. Even if you had Christian friends, especially where we lived in town, it was a small town, they distanced themselves from the Jewish people. And then they started lots of things, er, don't buy Jewish, don't, er, people still carried on in the beginning with their usual jobs, but then lots of people, when they were close to Christian families, they couldn't work there anymore. And actually, people didn't, if they could help it, don't buy, didn't buy any more Jewish shops.

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Interviewer

So the climate definitely changed? And that had an impact on your family because of the bakery didn't it?

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Karola Berney

Yes, yes.

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Interviewer

So what happened to the bakery then?

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Karola Berney

Eventually it wasn't worth while doing the work anymore, most people didn't come anymore, they went elsewhere.

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Interviewer

And do you remember imagining or worrying about what that meant for your family? And what your father told you about that?

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Karola Berney

They didn't tell us very much, he didn't tell me very much because people didn't tell their children so many things, you know, they want to, more or less shield them from bad news and things like this. They didn't say that business was bad or anything, or they didn't feel well or something, people didn't tell the children so much, you can't do this or that. But eventually you couldn't er, go to sometimes to cinema or, when you used to go out for a walk, people used to, the men used to lift their head when they see the lady they know and so on. People didn't start making conversations with Jews so much anymore.

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Interviewer



It had a direct impact on you didn't it? Because you weren't able to go to school?

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Karola Berney

Well, um, I could go to school till I was 14, when I was 14 I had to leave school, cause it was the law. Every child has to go to school till 14, but then I could go further education, but Jewish children had to leave at 14. The school year ended in April, I was 14 in November so it was a few more months, months till, er, until I had to leave school.

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Interviewer

And then what did you do?

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Karola Berney

I didn't do anything. My parents tried to get me to a higher school, another school, nobody would take me. I didn't do anything, just stayed at home, went to my grandmother, went to some nothing.

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And then my aunt and uncle of mine, he lived in Mannheim and he had a paint factory and, um, he, and he supplied the, lots of the schools and, er, prison and hospitals with paints and he had an influence so he got, he was able to get me school, er, a place in a school in Mannheim, like, er, like typing and shorthand and things like that. And I went to that school, so I supposed to be there for two years and, er, the most the teachers were very nice, but the main teacher of my class, he was very nasty and I was very terrified of him, cause in the morning, I was the only Jewish girl there and everybody stood up and Heil Hitler and so on and then, of an evening, nearly every day, I had to stay late because I did this wrong, I did that wrong and, er, especially, we also had chess lessons, I couldn't take the chess lessons in at all. But weekends I went to Offenbach to my parents, but during the week I stayed in Mannheim. And, er, one weekend, after about six months there, I, er, I also went to home to my parents and I should have been back Sunday night and I came back Monday morning and my uncle was very cross, I said, can you give me an excuse and he said, no, I won't give you an excuse at all, you back into school and I, I was terrified. So I said, I'm not going back to school, I went to friends from Mannheim, er, I said, can you lend me some money, I want to go to my grandmo... I want to go to my grandmother. So they lent me some money, I, I didn't go to school, I went to my grandmother, it was about three or four hours by train and of course, my uncle, every afternoon he sent his chauffeur to pick me up from school at four o'clock or five o'clock, I can't remember. So of course, he tried to pick me up and I wasn't there, so my uncle phoned all friends I had round there and then he phoned my grandmother and she said, I'm there with her, so that was the end of my schooling.

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Interviewer

But you clearly felt singled out and very picked on, because you were the only Jewish girl there?



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Karola Berney

Yes.

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Interviewer

What was your sister doing at this point?

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Karola Berney

She was, she went to college, she wanted to be a solicitor, I don't know, you see, there's a lot of difference between, she was seven years older than me. I was, how old, I was a little child, so she was the big sister, so I don't know much, she tried... she went to college for some time, she wanted to be a solicitor and I don't know eventually she left, she didn't want to continue. She didn't do much there.

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Interviewer

No problem. We're now going to talk about Kristallnacht, you were 18 years old when that happened, so clearly you've got a very good memory?

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Karola Berney

Very good memory.

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Interviewer

Can you describe what you saw?

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Karola Berney

Yes. Well my father was at home, so he said, her, he heard about a Kristallnacht and his cousin lived in Frankfurt. Frankfurt and Offenbach is very close, it's just about 20 minutes by tram it used to take. He said, I'm going to Frankfurt and see how my cousin is. So he went, he went about mid morning or so on, lunchtime or so on, he went to Frankfurt and usually, if he went out, he usually been home by about five o'clock or so on and that was that and when he didn't come home, my mother said, I wonder where papa is? So my sister says, she's going to Frankfurt where he went and she took me with her. I was already 18, no, no, no, yes, I think I can't remember. Anyhow, we went to Frankfurt, we went to where the cousin lived, he was, he had a men's tailoring business. So we went there and we went there and some of the people who worked for him were still there, so said, have you seen my father? So he said, yes he was here, but the police came to pick up the boss?, my father's and while, while he was there, so the men who came to, to Gestapo or something to take him, they said to my father, are you Jew as well? So my father said, yes, so they said, you better come with us. So they took the men away, that's it.

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So they told and on the way home of course, we want, we want to go home to let my



mother know exactly what happened. So we had to pass the synagogue and it was in flames in Frankfurt. And of course, lots of people said, some people throw books in, you know, Jewish books or something, I don't know what books they were at the time. So we went back home and, er, cause when my mother was agitated and my sister said, I'm going to the police and ask if they know anything about it. We were very well known so my sister went there, we went there and they said, no, this is Hessen and Frankfurt don't what Hessen was anymore. Frankfurt was not Hessen it was a different, I can't remember what that Frankfurt was, cause you have different districts like here, Lancashire, Yorkshire and so on. Offenbach was, only was, just over the bridge more or less, it was Frankfurt. So we know your father wasn't on the list for Offenbach and we don't know what they do in Frankfurt.

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So eventually we had a note that my father was taken to Buchenwald so my mother sent him a couple of suits and some nice shirts, didn't know what Buchenwald was and then, er, we, we tried to get him released or something. So it was a notice somewhere, can't remember where, that if you went in First World, in the war, you might be released if you can have a photograph of the person and so on. So we sent it back, I don't know where, my sister went, er, and did all those things. She got a copy of the medal he had, my father had how long he was in the Army and after three months finally they released him from Buchenwald and he came home. He came of course, he was absolutely, I had never seen my father, crying all my life before, he was terribly depressed and he came back in rag and string, stinking and God knows what. He was really very, very down and out, thank goodness he, he came over that and very, very happy he was released really. He didn't seem to be taken again later on.

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Interviewer

Yes it was extraordinary that he came home, wasn't it? Let's just, again, just to ask you about the Kristallnacht, because that memory of the synagogue burning, must have been very, very traumatic?

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Karola Berney

Of course it was terrible, but because you, er, you hear, you heard people around you, lots of Jewish people also stood round that, you know, and they couldn't do anything, cause the Gestapo was, you couldn't do anything to try and save or anything.

[Cut for Direction]

00:36:28:03

Karola Berney

I can't tell you the thing, scared, horrified and you couldn't help anything and couldn't do anything. And nobody was there to try to, to, er, to stop the fire and so on, we just had to stand there and we went, we left again because we were horrified and wanted to go home to see my mother, cause she didn't know, more concerned really about my father than this thing, er, in, I don't know what.



00:37:04:21

Interviewer

But it's an astonishing, a horrifying memory to be able to see a synagogue burning?

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Karola Berney

You can't, you couldn't believe it. It was unbelievable, first of all, you didn't think somebody put fire to it, somebody tried to burn it, at first it was, you know, just accident of the, of fire. I could see fire, a house fire or something like this, cause, you didn't see being, when we came there it was already burning everywhere, you couldn't imagine what it was. The only thing you could imagine was, nobody was there to, to try to, to finish the fire or try to help anybody. Nobody was there to help, it was just hopeless.

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Interviewer

Yes I guess its that feeling of hopelessness, isn't it? That no one is there to help.

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Karola Berney

No, nobody there, you just have to see something, you walked away, you just want to go away and forget about it and go home. I don't know what my sister thought, I, I just want to go home, you know, not to see anymore. I can't remember even how we got home.

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Interviewer

Very traumatic to see that.

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Karola Berney

Yes, it's terrible. I can't, I can't explain the feeling you have like this, to see something like this. You see, you didn't think there were people inside really, it just thought somebody was trying to, to put a fire out.

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Interviewer

Eventually and I'm sure, as a consequence of what happened on Kristallnacht, you decided to leave didn't you?

00:39:15:15

Karola Berney

I didn't decide to leave, my parents want us to leave, but it was very difficult to, to leave. You see, my sister didn't have a profession or anything or so on, so you only could come as a domestic here, if you were over 17. So that we, we applied to get the job here in England or something for my sister first and a cousin or a relation, she was in England here. She was a dentist I remember, but she came here to England as a domestic servant and she, er, my aunt talk to her something and she find a job for my sister as a domestic servant in England and my sister left before me, that was in 1938.



00:40:24:17

Interviewer

It must have been very hard?

00:40:26:09

Karola Berney

No, my sister came to England in 1939, in, er, February 1939.

00:40:33:24

Interviewer

But quite an astonishing, um, fall really, because your family had had such high standing in the Jewish community and then to come over to England as a domestic servant, must have been very hard?

00:40:46:00

Karola Berney

It was very hard, but all the people that we knew, nearly all, if they were over 18, that just applied somewhere as a domestic servant, otherwise you couldn't come here, unless you had money in England. But some people that, you see all my family all lived in Germany all the time, they were in Germany such a long time they didn't have many relations and it was a small family. So it was quite difficult, this was, it was more difficult for all the people that came here to England, if you didn't have any money outside Germany.

00:41:37:12

Interviewer

What about packing? There's a very interesting story about you packing your bags to come to England?

00:41:43:13

Karola Berney

My packing, it was my sister's packing, because when I came, I only had a suitcase, but my sister could take more things like, er, from a dowry and so on, er, linen and tablecloths and, er, some cut glass and some things. They had, could have a big, er, not a postbox you know, big thing made in wooden box and put it all, put all the things which she was allowed to take, like, linen and things and clothes. And she had a, she had a special box, my mother had a box made for my sister to put all her clothes in and things which she should think, to sell down here in England. And there was a packer and men from the Gestapo there, the Gestapo see that she only put things in that box, which was allowed, but he was quite, er, reasonable. He went out, my mother ask him, would you like a drink or something, she took him out of the room while the men was packing. In the meantime, she told him whatever there is to pack, the man who packed, cause he was, he didn't care what he was packing, he only was there to pack. But the Gestapo man was there all, all the time. But my mother managed to offer im a drink, a coffee and so on, to come out and have that, so the man quite able to put more things in that big box as it was.

[Cut for card change]



00:43:36:09

Interviewer

When you eventually left did you think it was permanent or did you think it was a temporary?

00:43:41:07

Karola Berney

No, was only temporary. After maybe a few months or so, I didn't think it was my life and life begins again. No, I never saw this.

00:43:57:09

Interviewer

And if you had known that you wouldn't really be back?

00:44:00

Karola Berney

It never occurred to me I never would be back and I wouldn't see my parents any more. I thought maybe they would come eventually or something. I don't know. I just didn't think it was permanent. I just thought for a few months perhaps.

00:44:20:13

Interviewer

So, tell me about the departure, who took you to the station, how did you go?

00:44:25:08

Karola Berney

My father took to Frankfurt station, my mother she was too upset. Yes, just my father took me. Put me on the train, said goodbye and so on, shook my hand, kissed my, I put my head down from the wind, and he kissed my head. It's the last time. I, er, no, no, no, it's just stupid. It's the last thing and just was another journey for me. You know, when you're young you forget things and it wasn't, not a huge Jewish [?].

00:45:23:22

No, but we amused themselves on the journey. It went via Belgium, Belgium and out of the headed two hours hold up in Belgium. It was just like any other journey to go on. I came out of the station, walked along, and straight away I met two friends from Frankfurt I had. In the station there also went somewhere I don't know where, maybe they got a plane to America or South America. Anyhow they also left Germany that day so it was like, you know, in a way it was good, because we forgot all the things that you emigrated, didn't even thing emigrated was just thinking go away for a few months or so.

00:46:27:16

Coming to England, er, I've never been to; I'd never been out of Germany before. And, er, my sister was here already and she came to the station to see me and I had an uncle he was on board to Cuba and the boat couldn't land in Cuba so he came back to Europe again. And, er, 'cause in Cuba there was a change of government and they didn't take any more refugees on, so he had to go. The captain of the boat was asked for him to turn government to come back to Germany and the captain of



the boat didn't, didn't want to go back any more, so they first went to America. Americans didn't want to know anything about refugees, so they fired some, er, guns to the ship you to come there. So, the captain had, er, orders from Germany to bring, to come back 'cause, so by the, he didn't want to go back with all those refugees, and nearly all refugees on that boat, some people commit suicide. But, my uncle and the, the, the, ship went a different, first it went to France to take some, to be able to take some people. England took some people and my uncle was amongst them and his son they came to England.

00:48:13:10

So that uncle and my sister came and met me at Victoria Station. And my n, my sister got me a job somewhere in Finsbury Park as a maid. And I was ignorant. and I couldn't even, I never even could make a cup of coffee. Anyhow, I hated that place. My sister came to see me it was quite a big house and family and I don't know, she said, oh you can't stay here.

00:48:54:03

So, she took me back and a friend of hers said I can stay in her room for a little while, because my sister had a job as a maid somewhere so she couldn't take me anywhere. I stayed with that girl a few days, couple of weeks or so, was in Upper Berkeley Street. She had a, a, quite a big room there and the kitchenette I stayed there. But, then I, I, had to earn some money. Then there was Bloomsbury House there, people said go to Bloomsbury House they will help you. I went there, I waited a long time. Then there's, the way they spoke to you it wasn't very nice. You know, not Sympathetic, sympathetic or something. I felt like a *schnorrer* I said I'm not going there any more. I had to have some money. I had a little bit of jewellery from my mother so I found a pawn broker off Oxford Street, it was Woolworth on the side street just round the corner there. You wouldn't know that there was little pawn shop so we went there my sister and I. At first we went past a few times up and down. We were a bit scared to go in there. So, we had some jewellery so he said yes, so he said can I see your passport and so on. And you had to have your identity papers from the Government here. And I showed it. So they said we'll lend you some money on there. So we did, but we told him we don't want to sell it.

00:50:50:03

So I had to pay every month or ever week so much, er, rent, or whatever it was. And then I said I may have to do some job and somebody told me there's a little, er, factory and they're looking for someone. Can I sew? So, I said yes, I can sew; I did quite a lot of needlework at home. So, it was a little factory that make ladies blouses, so they said can I can I make button holes by hand, you know. They didn't have the machines then to make button holes.

00:51:28:14

So I was there, I did all the button holes for all the things all the time. And I earned twenty-five shillings a week. And, er, then my sister lost her job as well.

00:51:47:09

So we took a furnished room, it was seventeen shillings a week. I earned twenty-five shillings a week. So one, I got paid on the Thursday and my sister met me and we went to Woolworths and had fish and chips. That was, maybe a shilling each. So,



for the rest of the money only about five or six shillings left then after we paid the rent, but there was a market, we bought some food and they had like a gas cooker and we cooked our meals on there. My sister did, I couldn't even cook a potato. I learned quickly. And, er, then I, I was there quite a long time doing that job. And it wasn't, the room we rented was not a very nice room, it was like a basement. And one day a friend of mine came to visit us. They said oh that's a terrible place. You should have somewhere else and she said, oh I have a friend here. He has a, he bought like a boarding house, again in Upper Berkeley Street. I'll ask him if you can have a room there. So, she asked him.

00:53:17:05

So we moved there to Upper Berkeley Street, it was a lovely little room. You know, two divans and my mother also when we had that crate for my sister she put two lovely eiderdowns in there. We put the eiderdowns on the bed and rolled them up and it looked more like a sitting bed sitting room then. And there was a girl a nice girl living in the house, and educated girl. But she could do dress making and she didn't, she always was busy doing clothes for, for people, you know, all for refugee people, there always refugees in that house in the boarding house. It wasn't a boarding house, just a flat let, not a flat let house you say nowadays, just furnished rooms in there, but it was really nice at the time. And, er, we, what was I saying. There was an Austrian girl, Ester, was her name. And she was very lovely girl and she did some dress making. So I said do you get paid for that, so she said, no but I know that all young girls they want to be a bit fashionable and I alter their clothes. So, I said you must pay, you must ask them for some money or this. So, she said, oh I really can't. So, I asked where I worked, I said a friend of mine she's very good in needlework, she can do dress making as well, she wasn't a good dress maker. Anyhow she had, she had a job then, she was very pleased. And, er, we worked there quite sometime. And in the meantime my sister became pregnant and her baby was due soon again. And she was evacuated to Guildford somewhere until she had her baby. So while she was there we said we can't take [?], in the furnished room, we find a flat. So, Ester said find a flat and I'm living with you, we're living altogether.

00:55:51:00

So, I don't know how we find it, but we went to some agent and they gave us a flat in Upper Berkeley Street and it was, I'll think of the name now. Anyhow, when that, it was a lovely furnished flat, lovely er, Chinese carpet, beautiful silk. They went to the country they wanted to get somebody nice to live in the flat. I don't why they let two young girls rent a flat that was five pounds, three pounds a week.

00:56:29:14

Interviewer

That's amazing. And it was, it was about time that your luck slightly changed wasn't it after everything that you'd been through. Um, before we go on a little bit further Karola can I just ask you about the jewellery, did you ever get it back, you mother's jewellery?

00:56:43:04

Karola Berney

Yes, we did. Yes we did get it back. But, eventually we did have to sell it because I



mean we needed more money because we had to baby to look after. And, er, want a place where there's a garden 'cause we didn't have a pram and you couldn't buy any prams. Eventually we did get a little pram. And, she, we want her to be in the, be out in the open air and so on.

00:57:20:15

Interviewer

I understand. Um, and then at the risk of upsetting you again, um, can we return to the departure of when you said goodbye. So, do you remember saying goodbye to your mother, I know she didn't come to the station.

00:57:34:07

Karola Berney

Can't remember. See she was in tears all the time. I don't, I can't remember what she said to me. I really not. And my father insisted she isn't coming to the station. She wanted to go but she was too upset. I don't know what she said.

00:58:08:00

Interviewer

And then when your father said goodbye to you do you remember what he said to you?

00:58:15:16

Karola Berney

See you soon again. I don't know I was too upset by that time, you know. I don't know. Be good girl. I don't know, I don't know what he said. I can't think. I know he was upset as well. I don't know.

00:58:51:02

Interviewer

You must have gone over that departure many times in your mind over the years since?

00:58:58:03

Karola Berney

I, I, never went over what I said or anything like that. It was just goodbye. I must tell you when I, that when I first came to England if somebody would have told me go back to Germany I would have gone straight to the station and go home.

00:59:19:08

Interviewer

Because you missed your family so much?

00:59:20:11

Karola Berney

Of course. I, no matter what I would, for some time afterwards I wish I would have gone back. Because you're lonely, you don't speak the language, you have no family to talk to. We were very close family actually. I suppose everybody is a close family. Most people have close family. And I missed my parents and my grandmother and my aunts. Whenever I had school holidays and things the first



thing I did went on the train to my grandmother. It was my, my all holidays always there. I can't remember what my parents said to me, I suppose I was traumatised or something I don't know [pause] I'm sorry, I.

11:00:30:18

Interviewer

Did you ever see them again?

11:00:33:07

Karola Berney

Pardon?

11:00:33:16

Interviewer

Did you ever see them again?

11:00:35:03

Karola Berney

Never, never, never, never. I never saw thought it would be so, I just though maybe a year or so I would be away from them. I never thought it would be permanent thing. [pause] And then you, you know, you have when you like this you have worries how, how to manage things, how to, how to, to, do any work. How to earn a living. People never thought of anything that, you had to work that was your main thing to do some to earn your living.

11:01:20:21

Interviewer

What happened to your family, can you tell me what happened to each one of them?

11:01:26:04

Karola Berney

Well, my parents where they lived 'cause after we first sold the business they lived in a flat which wasn't very nice. Then we looked for another flat or lots of places you couldn't rent either. We had a quite nice flat. And they wrote to me one day I think I must have the letter somewhere they had all the Jewish people had to leave out of, leave from where there live and live in a certain street in Offenbach all the Jewish people.

11:02:06:05

And then after that we had a letter they have to leave Germany, they have to go to leave Germany. I don't know what they said now. To tell you the truth I only read the letters once when I first came I never read them again. My sister read them. They never, 1942 they had to leave Germany.

11:02:39:11

First they have to leave, it was 1940 or 41 when they had to leave their flat. And all the Jewish people had to live in a certain street. I don't know that. They had to share flats or rooms or something they didn't go into detail so, of course, all the mail was sorted through Swiss Red Cross or something and was censored. But before



that there was also in Germany in 1940, 39 already. Beginning 1939 my sister had a friend. Her friend in the family came from Poland originally and lived in Offenbach. I think they were, er, er, handbag manufacturers and they had no, just one or two days earlier they all have to leave Germany now and they send them to, they would send them to Italy. Never anybody heard anything more.

11:04:00:13

And my mother and a few other Jewish women quickly went to the butcher and bakers and so on and bought some food and took it to the stations for the people when they left Germany. It was from one day to the next, the Polish people all had to leave.

11:04:18:24

Interviewer

But, again, what, what, happened specifically to your father, to your mother, to your aunt and to your grandmother?

11:04:27:10

Karola Berney

Well, my father and mother they had, as I said they had to leave the flat where they lived for a few years and moved to all in I think it was Dormanstrasse or something. All the Jewish people had to live in that certain street. That was in 1940 already.

11:04:52:06

And then 1942 they were all were deported to Auschwitz or Theresienstadt or things like this.

11:05:02:09

And my grandmother they had to leave earlier, my grandmother was deported already in 1940. They came to look, they told the day before they all have to leave their houses and just going to take a suitcase which they could carry. So, they, they, had to go to Bergemeister and there were lorries waiting for them to take them away. And one of the Jewish men he had to work somewhere in a different town and different village do some building work, so he had to wait in that lorry till he came back from work that evening. And they went off to for about three or four days the journey from where they lived to Vichy France. It was, there were only six families in that village, six Jewish families in that village. There were all quite, er, they all had nice houses. And they were quite not prosperous but they were, you know, I don't know how to explain it, but they all had nice houses and all the children were well educated. I just saw Freida yesterday 'cause she found some letters my aunt wrote, so he said what lovely handwriting. So I said well they all were educated. The only person who went to local school was my, my mother because she was the oldest one. But, all the other ones they were all went, all to, to, good schools afterwards.

11:06:51:08

Interviewer

In the time that you were in England with your sister and your parents were taken away there's about two, is it two years that they were still alive. Did they write to you often? Did you have much contact?



11:07:02:14

Karola Berney

No I didn't have much contact because I only came two weeks before the war and then it was difficult to write letters. If, if you wrote letters I think lots of, of time they didn't get the letters you know.

11:07:18:19

Interviewer

Is there anything that you wished that you said to your parents before you left, that you didn't have a chance to?

11:07:25:07

Karola Berney

No, I didn't think of, I was upset, I know she didn't want to go because they said I like it and you know, you'll have a nice time. Life there and so on. I didn't think it would be forever. I thought it's just a few months. No. [*Long pause*] I was more really as much as my parents house, as my grandmothers house. Every one or two weeks I went to my grandmother and my aunt and uncle and then there were some cousins there as well. And, it was a very close family especially as they were not such a big family.

11:08:23:02

Interviewer

And when you describe your family like that and how loving it was and your relationship with your grandmother was very, very, special wasn't it?

11:08:29:24

Karola Berney

Absolutely.

11:08:31:00

Interviewer

So, so, so, strong.

11:08:32:21

Karola Berney

It's like when I was small I lived more with my grandmother than my parents 'cause they were especially after my father, er, before my father came out of the army. They wanted some time together and so on.

11:08:51:11

Interviewer

But I can understand why at the beginning at this interview you just, you can't forgive, you can't forget because you loved them so much and their life was taken and they were taken from you because they were Jewish?

11:09:03:03

Karola Berney

Yes, yes, and they were such good people. I never know my father or my mother



saying a bad word about anybody. My mother was very helpful always so was my, my father was very was a gentleman.

11:09:21:08

Interviewer

And your grandmother was very vulnerable? She was very vulnerable, she was very old?

11:09:28:06

Karola Berney

Yes. She didn't seem old to me. Whenever I go there always walk with her, she did her little garden, a vegetable garden, as long as I can remember there was sometimes a little vegetable garden there and at the bottom was a little stream. Fetch some water for her to, to, water the flowers, not the, she didn't have many flowers, all vegetables there.

11:10:03:21

Interviewer

Has, has the pain of losing them got easier over the years or is it still just as raw?

01:10:12:12

Karola Berney

No, it's got easier over the years. Because we have other interests and so on. But, you can't forget it, it is always in the back of your mind. Now, I sit at home, I sit at home and look, I have a nice garden, I have a lovely...I don't deserve it. They had to leave everything behind all of a sudden from one day to the next. So, I am lucky. I wish I could have done something for them. You know, when we joined, when I joined the army I either had to go in a factory or something and the army for women's came in.

01:11:01:24

So, if I joined the army maybe I can get a job somewhere in the army to go abroad and help them, so I wondered if I could do this. I said to my sister where I worked the closed down. So I said do you know what I join the army. If you joined the army I go as well. I said how about Freda. So, Ester our friend, she said I'll look after, I'll look after Freda while you go away.

01:11:36:06

Interviewer

I want to talk about that in a minute but you just said something that was very, um, touching. You said sometimes you look at your garden now, tell me that?

01:11:46:24

Karola Berney

I'm so lucky having all this and then my poor parents and grandmother had to leave their house one minute and go where they'd never been before, leave everything behind. How can God be so cruel to do something like this to such good people? This always in my mind. Really. Anyway, so my grandmother's all the Jewish people there were so religious you know. They kept everything they wouldn't go, er, travel on the Shabbat, they kept Friday night Shabbat, make Kiddush all the time.



Go to the synagogue every day. I don't know how God could be so cruel to them, let something happen to them. Something like has happened to me I would deserve it more because I, I, I, don't care what I'm eating and things like that. They really took such good people, I never I never in a million years could be like this. [Pause] See why, why do I have all of this. I have nice house but they, they had to leave everything there. I mean especially as they were not used to anything like that and I can't tell you how good they were. All the Jewish people there, never was a bad word. And we were religious as well you know, it was no difference before. Very respected in that village they respected the Jewish people, they have a lovely Jewish cemetery and you can see it's over three hundred years the gravestones and they maintained the Jewish synagogue till today. Whenever we have been to Germany we always go to the graveyard and it's very well kept the Jewish cemetery there. It's at bit out of town. But, any help really whether good people or not they had the same fate like everybody else. I don't know.

01:15:13:08

Interviewer

It's impossible to make sense of it isn't it?

01:15:15:13

Karola Berney

Yes. [pause] But things you never forget things like that you know. I never talk anything like this with anybody else really. My niece knows yes.

01:15:54:00

Interviewer

It's very hard to remember all of those, those sadnesses.

01:15:59:17

Karola Berney

Yes, you remember sometimes more than the good things really. But, years you adapt yourself to everything. You don't forget but you get used to a different life.

01:16:41:13

Interviewer

And what you were saying is, is, how complex and difficult it must feel that, that you were saved and they weren't?

01:16:50:13

Karola Berney

Did what?

01:16:51:20

Interviewer

That it's, it's just, there's no sense to the fact that you were saved and they weren't?

01:16:56:19

Karola Berney

That's right, yes. I don't know why. I don't know. If I would have known I don't think I would have ever left. Of course, it's the time that they would have needed me and



my sister more than anything is being all by themselves. My mother was not very worldly really. She was always a smart dressed but, er, she wasn't so good at the, I don't know.

01:17:35:23

Interviewer

But, for them to know that you were safe would have been the greatest comfort?

01:17:40:20

Karola Berney

Of, of course, yes. It was more heart breaking I think for them than for me when I left. I was young and stupid. It helps to, it must have been terrible for them. I think even if I think of my dog I would be upset. So, how, how, must they be if they lose one of your children, or two of your children. I mean you know as well, if your dog something would happen to him, God knows how upset you are. And so, it must have been terrible for them. And then having these all the time leaving their houses and leave everything behind. Everything was taken from them.

01:18:35:15

And then going and just off on, er, wagons, being sent God knows where. And there were such modest people, and I think all the people, the women had to undress to naked and put their clothes away, you're going to the, for a shower. Nobody would have needed a shower of Jewish people, that's terrible. I, I, think how, they were so modest. All those girls, the women cousins and so on, to undress in front of other people, put their clothes, the humiliation that they had suffered. I don't think anybody could imagine this really. It often goes through my mind all those things.

01:19:41:22

And they didn't deserve it. They were such hard working people and kind and I don't know. And I never could help them anything. Or my sister. Once or twice we were able to send them a few shillings. It was nothing we didn't earn much. We couldn't send anything.

01:20:14:21

That really also was part of the reason I want to go and join the army I said maybe they will send me abroad and I can send something to them from there. But, it didn't help much.

01:20:32:09

Interviewer

How often to do you remember them? How often do you think about these things that we're talking about now?

01:20:38:08

Karola Berney

I re, I think nearly every day. I think always of them. In the back of my mind it's always with me. More so since I'm older. When I was young not so much. Yes. I always did that way. As you're older you think of much more of what happened to them and you think well why did they suffer like that. Especially if you know you couldn't do anything, you didn't do anything. I often thought



01:21:40:10

I really joined the army I thought maybe I was, you read about people go abroad and can help something or someone. I, I, have said maybe I wouldn't have joined the army if I wouldn't have thought I could do something.

01:22:02:23

Interviewer

So, Karola, do you say that the older that you get the harder it is?

01:22:08:19

Karola Berney

Yes, because when you are young you have other things, you have to make a living and you have other things, worries you know. Enjoy yourself sometimes have boyfriends and so, but, I think more time now you think more about it. That's the only thing I'm so lucky, I've got a lovely niece and, er, I have a nice house and a lovely dog. And I don't deserve all that. I don't know. Whatever you want, if you want to know something.

01:22:57:06

Interviewer

I'm so sorry, I feel so sad to make you so upset.

01:23:03:00

Karola Berney

No you don't make me upset. It's just sometimes you think about. I'm not a, I'm really not upset person like, I hardly ever cry. Hardly ever.

01:23:19:02 *[Interjected by Karola]*

Interviewer

But it's so important to share your experiences because that makes it very real for other people so that they can understand what really happened. And it wasn't just at that moment in history, it was for the generations and for decades later that it affected you?

01:23:33:21

Karola Berney

Yes, I mean all young people in that regime took all the life away of young people. Not say the life actually, the, they couldn't do anything, they couldn't be teenagers, they couldn't be, you know. You could mix with different people and so on. It's not only, er, the family that took a lot of life away of young people. The fun of being young and so on.

01:24:13:22

Interviewer

So, let's talk a little bit about you joining the army.

[Cut for card camera]

01:24:18:04



So tell me why you were obviously very, very determined to join the Army, why did you decide to join the Army?

01:24:24:18

Karola Berney

Because I thought I can help the people I knew where they were. My grandmother and my aunts and cousins where, that they were sent to Vichy France. Because in 1941 already they, they send them, not, end of 1940 or beginning of 1940, they send them already to Vichy France because they lived, where they lived was Baden, the the town and they wanted to be the first to be Judenrein, clean of Jews that district, **Baden-Württemberg**. That's like Lancaster and Lancashire and things like that. That was the district they prided themselves to be first rid of the Jews and they send them to Vichy France. And that was, er, near the Pyrenees, right in the mountains, they came there and it was all, old Army barracks, no. no roof on it, nothing there they sent four people and each one was over 50 years old. [?] was the oldest but some were about 70/75/80. Only my aunts and uncle and cousins were about . the oldest were nearly 50 years old.

01:26:05:17

Interviewer

And what was your role in the Army when you joined the Army?

01:26:09:10

Karola Berney

Well first we, we did different things. First we joined , when we joined the Army we were sending the stores and we, we gave the new recruits new uniforms. First of all we had some Army training you know, it was some lectures and so on. And with the lectures it was such a nice day after some time, the sun was shining and instead of going to lectures my sister and I used to go behind the lecture room and sit in the sun. And then [*laughs*] and when they all came out and we followed, we followed them back again where we should've been. And then, er, we, we got jobs in the clothing department, new recruits came in and we issued them with new uniform which took quite a long time.

01:27:12:21

Interviewer

And then after the war I'm fast forwarding a little bit, you ended up taking a job in Germany didn't you? What did you do there?

01:27:19:05

Karola Berney

Yes.

01:27:21:14

Karola Berney

That was, civilian control commission, we were civilian employees but under the Americans, we wore American uniform. The department I was in we were monitoring telephone calls from suspected Nazis. We all had a list from certain people, the telephone number, when somebody phoned with telephone numbers, before the telephone rung in their house we had the, that telephone call, we listened to it. We



had tape recorders but the tape recorders at that time were very bad. So we, we had to get the, whatever they said if we thought something suspicious we had to report on it, their conversation and, er, then I send forward to higher levels.

01:28:34:02

Interviewer

What did it feel like to be back in Germany at that point? It must've felt very confusing?

01:28:39:09

Karola Berney

Terrible, terrible. First of all we didn't mix with German people because we all had the, the American Government had a lot of buildings converted into two bedroom flats which we all, not German people lived there. We all had, er, two people shared a flat with two, two rooms, kitchen, bathroom. There were quite a few hundred people there, I really didn't want the job I wanted to go, get the same thing for English but, er, English [*pretty?*] they all say the same kind of outfit like this. And then nobody could advise me if I could get a job there.

01:29:27:23

So somebody said, oh the American, er, troops have a place in Selfridges, they have floor from Selfridges which they have offices, go there they are looking for a German people to get a job. So I went there and they interviewed me there and give me some tests which I know, which I didn't know much about America anyhow. And the next day they phoned and asked for a job, and they said well we'll let you know. So the next day they phoned me say, when can you start work? I said two weeks time, so I, you know, I just came out of the Army and after two weeks I had a job. And I was pleased because the English I found out, only wanted to pay £12 a week and the Americans paid me £25 a week, that was a lot money then in 1945, 1946. So I took the job with the Americans and then I had no idea what we were going to do 'cause it was, er, civilian control commissioner, CCD it was called, Civilian Control Commission, no Civilian Control Department. So we, we, er, monitored the phone calls from the suspicious people, there were quite a few of us and we, but sometimes we went to different towns so what, whatever, if something, if we saw something that was suspicious or we couldn't understand really 'cause, we made a report and then [?].

01:31:31:08

Interviewer

Okay, I'm going to fast forward again because you then came back to the UK, you became a British Citizen?

01:31:37:05

Karola Berney

Yes.

01:31:37:10

Interviewer

What did that feel to you?



01:31:39:14

Karola Berney

I was, er, very pleased. When I first came to England after some time I burnt my German passport, I didn't want to be, and you see when we came it's not like now, people didn't want to hear German spoken even it was very bad, you start speaking English straightaway.

01:32:03:05

Interviewer

What did you do to your German passport?

01:32:05:14

Karola Berney

I burned it.

01:32:06:17

Interviewer

Why?

01:32:08:04

Karola Berney

I didn't want to be German anymore. When I heard, you know, that they sending people to camps and so on.

01:32:22:23

Interviewer

So you were ashamed to be German?

01:32:23:03

Karola Berney

Yeah, I didn't, yes I didn't want to be German anymore.

01:32:27:10

Interviewer

And how do you feel towards Germans now when you hear Germans speaking and you meet German people?

01:32:34:07

Karola Berney

I don't mind, I don't, well now I don't, there are not many Germans my age left but since about 28 years ago I didn't want, I didn't want to speak to people the same age as me because they, they very obviously were Nazis or in the Hitler Youth or, you know, no. But I don't mind, I had some from, er, friends from, sometimes the children came here. A few times they stayed with me, I didn't mind the young people. But the people who were my age I ignored as much as possible. I had a few friends still who wrote to me all the time especially from my [?] village. And sometimes their children came to visit me.

01:33:33:16

Interviewer



I feel very upset that I've made you cry so much.

01:33:36:16

Karola Berney

You didn't really.

01:33:37:09

Interviewer

And I'm sorry about that.

01:33:39:08

Karola Berney

No, that's nothing.

01:33:40:03

Interviewer

But I really mean because it's so painful to relive all of those memories but to share with them us is such a brave thing to do and I want to say thank you very much to you.

01:33:49:23

Karola Berney

That's nothing, if it would help anything I only would be too pleased.

01:33:55:14

Interviewer

Now that we have spoken, how, how do you feel about the conversation that we've had?

01:34:02:12

Karola Berney

I feel very good about it, I hope it will help somebody to, to understand what people had to suffer for nothing, really. Just for being a Jew or something, I mean, we weren't any worse than anybody else or not any better, a person is a person and if I couldn't be it in all countries and all religion and I think people must think of them and be tolerant, it could happen to them as well I advise.

01:34:44:08

Karola Berney

I mean, all, I never, but I never thought German people could be like that, so cruel, especially as they're so, they're supposed to be educated and wealthy to be, they must be like brain washed or something. It's, that's what I can't understand how people could be like that, to other people. I don't know.

01:35:23:03

Interviewer

Is there anything else that you want to say?

01:35:26:02



Karola Berney

Not really, I think it is very nice of you to do a job like this, to help people, to help all the, to let other people understand what one can go through. To other, mean nothing to some people you know, what people had to suffer but it's awful to have fear, thinking something, your family has been destroyed like this.

01:36:03:09

Karola Berney

I don't know. If it helps anything that what I said, I hope it will, it's something good I could, could do once in a while, I hope.

01:36:23:01

Interviewer

Is there a final thing that you would like to say in honour of your family?

01:36:28:05

Karola Berney

I only say that they're such good people and they were helpful always, and they were so hard working. I think and everybody says of their family, to me they were lovely, something you only have once in a lifetime. That's all.

ARTEFACTS

ARTEFACT 1: Scan of photograph of her grandparents

01:36:57:10

Karola Berney o/o/v

Oh this is very, very old picture [...] – must be 150 to 200 years old that photograph. It's [...] My grandmother's parents. I don't think anybody else has a photograph that old. [...] These are my great grandparents, of course I never knew them.

ARTEFACT 2: scan of a photograph of her grandmother's house

01:37:18:08

Karola Berney

This is the house my [...] grandmother lived in there, it was a very large house really, but my grandmother, daughter, err, and son also lived in there. [...] they're red cattle dealers but they had [...] a lot of properties [...] near there. Of course they had to feed all the cattle when it came, [...] it was a very nice big house, [...] my grandmother lived in there [...] since she was married which must be at least 200 years old the house maybe, older [...] It was a village, it doesn't exist anymore. It was called [?]. now it's [?] because the two villages combined now [...]

ARTEFACT 3: scan of a photograph of a synagogue

01:38:07:15

Karola Berney

Oh, this was the synagogue in [?], it was a only a small [...] community only three – six families lived there and they were all very, very religious. [...] Not ultra-Orthodox but very religious. Of course they kept all their Saturdays, they wouldn't even switch



a light on a Saturday or, lit a fire or anything. Also take, every Saturday to synagogue and make *kiddush* on a Saturday. I don't know if you know what *kiddush* or men [?] every morning before they did their work looking after [...] the stables and the cows, after this they [?] and then they had their breakfast. That picture was taken in 1965 because it [...] wasn't like that of course, it was well-looked after and so on it was very nice inside. but they destroyed it, the Nazis destroyed all the synagogues Where they could do it.

ARTEFACT 4: scan of photograph of parents

01:39:26:20

Karola Berney

This is my parents [...] I don't know if were they engaged or married already I don't know I wasn't there [*chuckles*]. But it's not a very good photograph but it must be very old by now. Must be 120 years old [...] I should think they were married by then, didn't stand so close together.

ARTEFACT 5: a cookery book

01:39:52:12

Karola Berney iv

This is my best cookery book when we left Germany. My mother gave it to my sister because we, my sister and I we both couldn't do any cooking or anything, we only came here as a domestics so she gave us err, her cookery book to – and as you can see its very well-used. Cause my sister and I we used it practically daily. So, but can't show you more it's all written in German. But it was very helpful. So if people have to go somewhere quickly I would advise them to take a cookery book as well. That's about all but as you can see, whatever you want to cook it's in there or bake. And we did quite well out of it.

ARTEFACT 6: scan of a photograph of Karola's cousin

01:40:54:03

Karola Berney

Well this is another story, this is a cousin of mine. [...], he went with his father to Cuba because his father was in concentration camp they would [...] release the father from concentration camp and they [...] took a ship to err, Cuba and he took his son with him. When the people land wanted to land in Cuba there was a change of government and they wouldn't allow any more refugees into Cuba so the captain of the ship had orders from Germany to return to Germany with all the people on board When, err, when they had to return to Germany the captain of the ship was sorry for the people and tried to find a country who would take them. They went first when he – went first to America and asked president will they take some Jewish people and they said no and as for the, err, sent some warning shots to the ship so the captain of the boat came back to Europe but before he went to Germany he went to France and Belgium and ger-England and asked the people – the countries to take these refugees. France and Holland and Belgium and England took some refugees and my uncle was amongst them.

01:42:26:17

Karola Berney o/o/v

K Housen[SP], Hermann K Housen[SP]. His son was Carl- Carl K Housen[SP]. So they both came to England and he settled there, only the uncle died soon afterwards



because he was in concentration camp before and err, he must have caught an illness there after some time, few months died. And the son went to live in America. When he came to America, they had a war with Korea and he was sent, the son was sent to – in the army and he had to go and fight in Korea. That's the photograph of it. And he came, when he was released, president Truman, he was one of the first ones to be released from Korea, president Truman was there to greet the first people who came back from that war. So that is him.

ARTEFACT 7: Napkins & cutlery

01:43:31:19

Karola Berney

This is still some err, t-table napkins. My, which my mother used at home which she put quickly in the luggage my sister took because my sister had like a big crate where she put, err, when she came to England, put some, err, linen and cutlery and things in. and things which my sister – my mother thought she will need one day in England. So she put some tablecloths, serviettes, and cutlery, you know which my mother's initials still in it.

[sound cut only]

01:44:27:11

Karola Berney

MB. My mother's married name, Berney but she had some with FB as well in before she was err, oh, she had some with FK, her maiden name but those were after she was married already.

ARTEFACT 8: scan of a photograph

01:44:53:05

Karola Berney

This is my uncle [...] who was in the Cuba, to go to Cuba and couldn't land and he landed here in England and, [...]also 1939

ARTEFACT 9: Karola's handbag

01:45:03:00

Karola Berney

This is the handbag I, my mother brought for me before I came to England, to have a nice handbag. And I kept it all those years. Btu I use to use it quite often but it's a bit tatty now. I don't use it anymore now but I used it when I first came here and it was very useful. That's why I brought it, you know, sometimes things you never throw away and other times you throw it away as soon as you finish with it. But I kept this all the time.

ARTEFACT 10: Scan of photograph of her sister in Army uniform

01:45:46:23

Karola Berney

This is my sister when she was in the army, but she only stayed in the army maybe a year, 'cause then my niece her daughter wasn't very well. So she asked for a



discharge from the army.

ARTEFACT 11: Army service book [& scan of pages inside]

01:46:01:20

Karola Berney o/o/v

Oh, this is a service book from the Army ...] I was all different things, sometimes I did office work, when I first started the army I was [...] there to give out the uniforms for the people.

Karola Berney iv

Mostly I gave the slim ones uniforms for the big people and small, small uniforms err, big, big uniforms for the small people and I always mixed them up because my English was so bad then. But anyhow, they'd always look nice after they had uniforms on.

ARTEFACT 12-17 scans of correspondence with her aunt [and two scans of the reverse of the correspondence]

01:46:44:18

Karola Berney

Yes, err, this is a letter I had from my aunt who were in a concentration camp [...] in Vichy France [...] from 1940 to 1942. They were deported there from their village which was [?] and sent there cause where they lived [...] [?] was the first district in Germany who wanted to be Judenrein, I don't know if you know what Judenrein means? Free of Jews. They were deported in 1940 from one day to the next they were sent to, to Vichy France. When they came there, there was just an old army barracks with n flooring or roof [...] they were all over sixty years over fifty or sixty years old. And afterwards they went to different concentration camps in Germany – in [inaudible] Poland and err, murdered there [...] they only were allowed to send one, one letter a month, you know, from concentration camp when they were in France. From Auschwitz and Berg – and the other place they couldn't send any letters at all. But that was while they were still in France they could send letters through the [inaudible]. That's the worst thing they could have done.

ARTEFACT 18: scan of photograph of Royal Army Service Corps

Karola Berney

01:48:27:10

This is me in the photograph [...] Royal Army Service Corps [...] You can hardly see me I'm so small. I think I was always the smallest one.

ARTEFACTS 19 – 27 Unidentified photographs

No commentary