



UKHMF TESTIMONY TRANSCRIPT – MARGIT COHEN

[Testimony: 1hr 47 mins. Artefacts: 5’ 33”]

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10:00:00:00

Margit

My name is Margit Cohen. I came over to England on the Kindertransport in 1938. My age was then 16.

[fade to black and back up]

10:00:16:07

Interviewer

So, can I start by asking you, have you ever recorded your testimony before? Have you ever given an interview?

10:00:20:19

Margit *[talking over Interviewer]*

No, no

10:00:23:23

Interviewer

Have you ever told your family your story?

10:00:28:09

Margit

You will have to ask my son, because I don't know. I don't think so. Because I felt, if I suffer, why should they? It must sort of linger down the line, and what for?

10:00:43:19

Interviewer

So, did you make a conscious decision then not to share?

10:00:46:20

Margit

No, because it should be told, not that I believe that it will stop it happening again. Because the world is going down the drain, as far as I can see it, but you try.

10:01:02:50

Interviewer

Now you have decided to tell your story to us, what made you decide to give your testimony today?

10:01:08:24

Margit

I have not the faintest idea. Somebody very nice came and asked me would I do it, and I said well of course I would, it should be known. It shouldn't be forgotten if it's going to be repeated ever again. Things do have a way of coming up every so often.

10:01:29:24

Interviewer

You're right and that's why it's so important that we do hear from people like you,



and to hear your story. But I am just surprised that you have never spoken to anybody in detail before?

10:01:43:14

Margit

The only people who are concerned about it are my two sons. And really and truly I didn't feel they should suffer like I have suffered.

10:01:56:19

Interviewer

Did they ever ask you very much about your past?

10:02:00:22

Margit

Not that I remember.

10:02:03:05

Interviewer

It's very hard for children because you don't know whether or not to push a parent and try and understand [*talk over each other*]

10:02:10:00

Margit

I was a widow and it all fell on my shoulders and I didn't want to do the wrong thing.

10:02:20:02

Interviewer

You have had a very hard life in lots of different ways, haven't you? We'll go through all of that in a minute's time. Um, we'll come back to this question, but why do you think, you have already slightly answered this, but why do you think it's important for people to understand what happened to you?

10:02:37:15

Margit

Maybe they have enough compassion and not let it. But on the other hand, you hear everything going on, and you feel very disheartened that all these things can happen again.

10:02:51:21

Interviewer

OK

10:02:52:14

Margit

People have gone more, the feeling of them is more gone. They don't feel with other people as they used to. It's a [*different?*] life. And I am not religious because I feel if there was something in the way of religion it could have been stopped.

10:03:22:02

Interviewer

That is a very common feeling isn't it, that people lose any kind of faith that they had because of the experiences that they went through. Well, you are obviously a very strong woman because you have had a lot of success in your life since what happened to you when you were younger, but let's start from the beginning now and talk about your childhood, and talk about what kind of family you came from, because you came from a very loved family didn't you?

10:03:47:11

Margit

My, my, one of my grandmothers had 8 children. so it was not only a loved family, it was a huge family. And I was engulfed in that and we used to meet every week. Now I think back on it I was [*Yiddish word*] do you know what *schlep* means?

10:04:15:24

Interviewer

Schlepped? Dragged around everywhere.

10:04:18:21

Margit

I was dragged every week to my grandmothers and grandfather. And that was like an Amen in the prayer that every week I had to go to my grandmother, that's gone completely. People haven't got time to do the family affairs as they used to.

10:04:42:01

Interviewer

Well, you were a very treasured little child, weren't you? You were an only child, was that right? [*talking over each other*]

10:04:45:05

Margit

I was an only child

10:04:47:02

Interviewer

So, tell me about your parents, Richard and Anna. What did they do?

10:04:53:14

Margit

My father was an electrician and he did government jobs and warehouses and big establishments. Do the electric installation when they were built and things like that. And common, what do you call it when the government builds flats?

10:05:14:14

Interviewer

Council housing of some sort?

10:05:16:09

Margit

Yes council housing, he would do that. He was a very good electrician. I remember

that he was trained by a firm called Siemens & Halske, which was a German, on the top, electricians. And I remember as a child, I used to help him. I can remember it now; I must have been very very young. 3-4 years old. They used to have fuse boxes in the big buildings, and they were made of marble with holes put in it, where the fuses was to go in. He would put these things in and I would sit on the table behind him and put the nuts in. They were called nut-screws.

10:06:15:02

Interviewer

How lovely that you have got such clear memories of when you were so young
[*talking over each other*]

10:06:17:13

Margit

I can see myself now sitting on that table with him on one side and me on the other side putting the tops on.

10:06:25:08

Interviewer

Amazing. So this was in Vienna wasn't it? Where you were born, you were born in Vienna and so The language that you spoke at home was German?

10:06:34:12

Margit:

Yes, my mother was Czech and she spoke Czech as well, and my Grandmother was Czech.

10:06:40:06

Interviewer

And later on in life you also spoke French is that right?

10:06:43:04

Margit

I was taught French. I didn't, I didn't learn Czech. It is a very difficult Slavic language. But I had a French Madam come every afternoon, to take me out to the park and to teach me French. Then I came to England.

10:07:04:17

Interviewer

You speak about a very loving family life, that you were very [*talk over each other*]

10:07:09:23

Margit

I was an only child. I don't think I was spoilt rotten. My grandmother lived with us, which is nothing that people do nowadays like they used to. It's a, a different century.

10:07:29:10

Interviewer

So it was your mother, your father and your grandmother. And what was the atmosphere like at home?

10:07:37:01

Margit

Well, my father thought my grandmother couldn't do no wrong. It was very funny because whenever there was an argument, my grandmother had her say. Not his mother, my mother's mother. They loved each other. They were hard working people. Nothing came from heaven; it came from hard work.

10:08:09:16

Interviewer

Were you a very observant family. Did you feel you were part of a big Jewish community in Vienna?

10:08:15:23

Margit

I had a girlfriend, my best girlfriend, there were 3 of us, 4 of us. 4 girls from the same school, and one girl, her parents were extradited from Poland. So, the parents couldn't speak German but the girl did and she was my best friend. And then I had another girl and she lost her father. That's a funny story because, she lost her father when I was there, and she immigrated to Brazil and she became a nun. It's one way I suppose of fighting back your anger.

10:09:08:02

Interviewer

What's amazing – and we're going to go through your story now in detail - that you have such clear memories, don't you, of growing up. Your memory is very sharp.

10:09:17:01

Margit

Yes. I can remember from the year dot. I can't remember what I had for breakfast,

10:09:24:11

Interviewer

But everything that you remember in your past is very clear in your mind. Um, so let's talk about the lead up to war. At this time you were about six or seven, weren't you?. Let's talk about that age - 6 or 7 until you were 14 - that period of history: 1928 to 1936. I know it's a bit of a big span. We were talking about the Jewish community; do you remember feeling any antisemitism at all as you were growing up?

10:10:02:18

Margit

I don't think I did,

10:10:04:11

Interviewer

Nothing?

10:10:06:12

Margit

I went to high school. I always had friends, so maybe it's something in me, I don't

know. I always had friends.

10:10:22:18

Interviewer

Do you remember feeling Jewish?

10:10:29:03

Margit

No I don't think so. I did have a ver Polish immigrant as a best girlfriend. But otherwise it wasn't a matter of being known as a Jewish girl. I only remember one incident when I went to high school and the first day, the teacher was telling us had to go to a religious session before they started in the morning. It must have been the teacher because I can't remember that, but the teacher saying that before the lessons everybody has to go to the religious 'do' or whatever it is. And she said, the Christians go over there, the Protestants go over there, and the Jewish go over there. And I got up and she said, "not you".

10:11:38:04

Interviewer

So, they didn't perceive you to be Jewish?

10:11:38;16

Margit

They didn't think I was Jewish.

10:11:47:01

Interviewer

I have a note here that someone once spat on you because they said you were a Jew?

10:11:53:16

Margit

That was the, when we moved from that flat. It was in the infant school. I had to go about 5 minutes' walk from our flat to that school, and I remember having a navy like a duffle coat, it was winter. And going to school and somebody spat at me and called me Jew. I was about 7 years old. It was out of this; I remember it like I remember in the same time standing in our flat's window and seeing the Graf Zeppelin at night going over Vienna. I can see it now.

10:12:56:08

Interviewer

When that person spat at you and said that you were a Jew. Do you remember how that made you feel. I know you were very young.?

10:13:06:14

Margit

No, not, not, eh, knowingly anti so- and-so really, but I remember that they spat at me. I had a navy blue -they have them here now, the very thick man's coats, what do you call it Crombie? I had a coat like that. I went to school, and this other kid, he was only a kid as well, spat at me.

10:13:37:13

Interviewer

That's your first experience of antisemitism I guess, or one that you can remember?

10:13:41:09

Margit

It was the first time, but I didn't really appreciate what it was.

10:13:52:02

Interviewer

Well you were so young weren't you. How could you possibly understand.

10:14:00:19

Margit

It didn't occur in school. A part of it, you know how in infant school there were walks and the Catholic priests that took us for a walk in the morning. And they always held my hand. I was the pet.

10:14:21:09

Interviewer

[Laughs]

10:14:23:04 [interrupting Interviewer]

Margit

I don't remember that

10:14:24:15

Interviewer

Let's talk about your relationship with your parents because you had a very close bond didn't you, particularly with your mother?

10:14:31:03

Margit

Yes. My father, father was a very busy man. And as, as, it was my mother really who nurtured me, although my father would be very, not learning, teaching and would make conversation. I was the only child but they were very busy people. I always had, I always had a French mistress and the schoolteacher came in the afternoon to take me to the park, and I had a nurse maid called [Caitlin?], and I had a very, very close relationship to her. I remember going with my 2 aunts on a holiday, in I remember that, in a train. It's called, a place on the Danube out of Vienna and I was crying. And I said "my [Caitlin?], my [Caitlin?], I want my [Caitlin!]" and the other people said, "Is she crying for her Mother?" No, she said "the maid." I remember that.

10:15:51:04

Interviewer

Tell me about your relationship with you mother. So, you had a very close relationship with your general family and your maid but what about your mother?

10:16:02:13

Margit

My mother was, we had a shop. She was organizing the shop and working there, which was on the ground floor and we lived on the second floor. And my father was working outside, he was an electrician. He supervised all this gang all over the place, So, and I had a dog. The dog was my best friend, so I loved dogs. So I was fully occupied. My schoolteacher from infant school came to us in the afternoon to take me to the park. And I also had this French madame to teach me French and I remember her, she used to wear a toque. A toque is one of those boxes things. And she used to come in the afternoon and she used to take her cloak off downstairs because it was a flat house, we lived on the second floor. But she took the toque off, her veil off, I can see her now, and put the cloak over her arm and then she came up the stairs. My memory from very, very early is very good.

10:17:36:12

Interviewer

Very good.

10:17:37:15

Margit

Don't ask me what I had for breakfast.

10:17:39:04

Interviewer

Well, we'll come to that at the end maybe. Um, what did you used to do with your mother, what kind of activities did you do together?

10:17:47:21

Margit

Activities? Very little. Well, we used to walk. We had a dog and we used to take the dog for a walk. And I also had my grandmother living with us. So I was, I have a French Governess who came in the afternoon and my schoolteacher came to take me to the park. I was, I was surrounded with people.

10:18:17:00

Interviewer

You were very busy, weren't you, from a very young age. And your interest in fashion - because I can see from everything that you are wearing today - did that come from your mother? Did you use to plan wardrobes together No? [*talking over each other*]

10:18:30:06

Margit

My mother was in comparison to me very simple person. I'm a, I'm a, I don't really know where I got it from.

10:18:41:07

Interviewer

Was it one of your aunts that you used to do lots of sewing with before you go on holiday?

10:18:47:01

Margit

Yes, she was a dress maker. A very good one. I remember her having a, what's called a credenza, which is a sideboard with an overmantle [*reaches up and accidentally hits the mic.*]

10:19:00:22

Interviewer

Don't worry

10:19:01:08

Margit

Excuse me. Sideboard with an overmantle. So, I can't remember what I was going to say.

10:19:13:01

Interviewer

[*Laughs*] Ok, don't worry about it. We were just talking about your auntie. Let's move on now and talk about your family life a little bit more and about your Jewish identity as a family or not. Did you used to go to Synagogue? Did you used to keep the Shabbat?

10:19:29:10

Margit

Not till I was about 14. I used to have a, a very religious girlfriend. But it was it 14 when I sort of found in the gymnasium. Gymnasium is it called? What do you call it Upper?

10:19:49:06

Interviewer

Secondary school?

10:19:50:24

Margit

Secondary, but there's a, a big, one of the big more exclusive

10:19:55:22

Interviewer

Oh, OK. A private, in some ways private school? [*talking over each other*]

10:19:57:24

Margit

No, it wasn't private but there was two stages for the, for the people who had it and for the people who had extra. Extra more brains or something, I don't know. And I fell for this young man. I remember I went to synagogue on a Saturday because he was going to synagogue. I remember that.

10:20:29:08

Interviewer

Yes I read that, that you didn't go to the synagogue but it was only because there was quite an attractive young man that you decided to go to the synagogue Is that right? But your family didn't go to synagogue?

10:20:40:03

Margit

They had, they couldn't because in Vienna to be in this sort of religious sphere, you had to be in the second district because the shops were closed there. But otherwise everything was a mixture.

10:21:01:21

Interviewer

Ok. Let's move forward a little bit now, when you were kind of like a teenager. Just before you went on the Kindertransport. And let's talk a bit about your life then. What sort of things did you enjoy doing? Do you remember very much about that time?

10:21:15:24

Margit

Oh, my Mother and Father made sure I was well occupied. I went to rhythmic dancing. I went to acrobatics. I went to sports in the Maccabi, we had a Maccabi, and In the winter I went skating or skiing. I was well occupied.

10:21:43:08

Interviewer

They kept you very busy.

10:21:44:22

Margit

Yes.

10:21:46:09

Interviewer

And then during you teenage years, Anschluss happened didn't it, and Vienna was annexed. Do you remember that happening?

10:21:54:18

Margit

Yes, I do remem. I do and I don't. I remember it happening but I don't remember what happened exactly, except for one thing. We had a very big flat above the shop on the second floor, and er, they confiscated people's flats, and put every family in one of our rooms. And they had my grandmother, me, my father. We had 5 rooms to live in and to sleep in. They put Jewish people out of their rooms and put one family in every one of those rooms. I remember that. I

10:22:52:18

Interviewer

But suddenly your family home became a bit more of a hostel of some kind. That must have felt very strange for you.?

10:23:01:18

Margit

It was a nightmare really. It was, number one you had to concentrate on other room, and that wasn't funny. And, er, people used to come in and out. It was always strangers around.

10:23:22:14

Interviewer

And yet it was your family home.

10:23:26:17

Margit

Yes. Family flat it was. We had my grandmother, my room and my, my parent's room and the maid's. We had 4 bedrooms in that place, occupied.

10:23:40:21

Interviewer

And then how many people were suddenly living there would you say?

10:23:43:15

Margit

Oh, millions as far as I was concerned. Every room had a family, it was like a thoroughfare. We only had 1 bathroom and a, and a separate toilet as well.

10:24:02:07

Interviewer

By this stage,

10:24:03:07

Margit

And that was really very, very [pause] I remember next door to us was a dentist surgery. And on the 1st floor was a doctor, lived a doctor with a surgery so they were in and out. And I remember one thing, we had a little Dachshund, my little friend. And they had to get rid of him because whenever somebody went on the stairs he would yap. That was nerve-racking because the Gestapo used to go in and out like a mad.

10:24:46:06

Interviewer

And That daschund you said was the first casualty of the Nazis as far as you were concerned? That must have broken your heart to say goodbye to your dog?

10:24:55:09

Margit

The dog was even to our maids, and it did. It was a miniature dachshund. I had one before and I was on holiday, when got the disease *stuttgarter hundeseuche* it was called. I had, I had to put him to sleep and I was crying my eyes out. They called me Mrs. Foxy. Miss Foxy in my, my friendships.

10:25:37:00

Interviewer

Friendship circle. So, let's talk about um how that felt. Just before you were sixteen you were living in your family home but with lots of other families. You were educated so you must have known what Anschluss must have meant was going on in the wider countries of Europe? *[talking over each other]*

10:25:57:11

Margit

My father put an advert in the London *Times*, for somebody to send me an affidavit and somebody did.

10:26:08:13

Interviewer

Ok. that's the Kindertransport and we'll come to that in a minute. Can you remember what your parents told you about what was happening in the whole of Europe? Were you aware of what the Nazis were doing and what Hitler was doing?

10:26:21:07

Margit

Yes up to a point. I remember my father having an argument with my aunt's husband. They said sell everything and get out. Oh, it won't happen to us. They lived in Czechoslovakia which is the next country and they didn't think it would happen to them, but they both perished in Theresienstadt. It was unbelievable. It. It people. I know that the fellow who had a shop across the road, he was alright. He was the one that took my father's camera and kept it during the war and gave it to me after. And we had next door a very religious Catholic woman, with a butcher shop. It was very well known in Vienna - that particular one - and she was a right. She used to, what we call *[shippez?]*. I think, I can't remember being rationed, but I know that she always gave my mother a little parcel. It, it was such a peculiar situation. I couldn't really understand it.

10:27:54:07

Interviewer

I think it's hard even now to understand what was happening *[talking over each other]* it was so hard to understand. So you had a bit of information but you weren't one hundred percent sure of what was going on. Did your parents protect you from what was happening or were they honest with you?

10:28:09:12

Margit

Everybody was scared. I don't think that they were explaining things because there was no explanation to it. I mean, my father had a very best friend - he lost a leg in the war fighting for the Austrians - and when the Nazis came because he was Jewish they took him out of his flat and made him scrub the streets with one leg, the pavements. How can you put this together? Unbelievable.

10:28:58:04

Interviewer

So you were starting to see terrible things happen around you. You'd had a big change in your home life. What about your school?

10:29:06:04

Margit

Jewish girls don't need education. No education that has all finished. I can't remember, I didn't go to school anymore, every room had a family in it. All these things happened but, I remember my grandmother saying this is madness. She never lived to, to see the madness go to the end because she died soon after.

10:29:45:23

Interviewer

It was a madness, wasn't it? Let's talk about your father and his business. You said before that he was very successful and that he was very busy. What happened to his business?

10:29:54:17

Margit

That was confiscated. They grab it, you get out, nothing to do with you anymore, this is ours.

10:30:15:00

Interviewer

So every pillar of your life that you knew about, that had kept you together as a family was slowly being dismantled. Do you remember how that felt?

10:30:27:02

Margit

There were too many things at, going on at once, it wasn't just you it was your next-door neighbor. It was your family across the road. It was a family in the next town. You, you, it was like a mad house. I remember my father being, two Gestapo men came to our house to take my father away. Maybe to a concentration camp, but who is to know. I got my coat on and my mother gave me some money and I went with them. Not in the group, I was running behind to go to the street cars, and go in. They say what are you doing here? I say I am just going on the streetcar. You had to know where they took people to. To see if they can do something about it. It, it, a police state I would call it.

10:31:38:08

Interviewer

So this was a point when your father was arrested. He ended up coming home didn't he, after that? But what you are saying is that your Mother said, please do and find out what's happening, because she wasn't sure where your father was going, is that right? So you followed them?

10:31:51:01

Margit

You were hoping that if you know where they took them, or locked them up to, that you may find somebody who would for money let them out again, but this didn't happen very often. All I can I remember, these two men taking my father on the underground, and me, me behind them, and I knew where they took him, and that was a good thing because you may have. I can't remember what happened but he came home from there. Because some people they took from there to the

concentration camp.

10:32:37:09

Interviewer

So your mother sent you after him to just see where he was going?

10:32:41:16

Margit

See where, where they took him to

10:32:43:23

Interviewer

That was a very dangerous mission for you wasn't it?

10:32:46:12

Margit

It was on the underground. I was only 14, 15, 16, 15.

10:32:54:02

Interviewer

At that point were you forced to wear a yellow star? What was your identification?

10:32:58:03

Margit *[talking over interviewer]*

I never lived with a yellow star. A friend of ours took my mother, in with made to live with him. And, and he, my dad was all, if there was a knock at the door she had to go down the cellar. This sort of thing. It, it it was unbelievable. The people that could of, did help you. They were frightened to do it because they would grab them as well.

[cut for card change]

10:33:38:13

Interviewer

do you remember, we were talking about, it was just at Anschluss and how your life and everything around you had just kind of fallen away and there was a lot of chaos around, and you were a very young lady at this stage and you were being used,

10:33:51:17

Margit

I was a child really.

10:33:54:07

Interviewer

You were a child really, your right. But um, yes you,

10:33:57:10

Margit

At that time, now girls of 16 are women. At that time they were children.

10:34:04:08

Interviewer

Yes well that's the way it should be isn't it? So you said you were going to tell me a story about how you were used to carry things around. Can you tell me that story?

10:34:13:14

Margit

They carry?

10:34:15:07

Interviewer

You said, um, that you used to fetch other families' furniture and clear out flats and you felt you used a little bit like a donkey [*talking over each other*]

10:34:22:00

Margit

Yes, they used us as carriers. Because we had a very big flat so they put the family and they used us to carry the chairs from goodness knows where to our flat, to put them in. I remember that.

10:34:40:02

Interviewer

So you made yourself as useful as you could?

10:34:43:07

Margit

No. I was forced.

10:34:44:24

Interviewer

You were forced. By your family, or by the Nazis?

10:34:48:13

Margit

No! By the Gestapo.

10:34:52:10

Interviewer

Tell me what they used to do to you?

10:34:57:12

Margit

Physically not very much but they did ask us, like I said put the family, they took the flats from them and made us carry furniture, to our one room and they had, 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms, 5. We had 5 rooms, a maid room, a bathroom, and a, hall. And they put the family in each one of the main rooms, or the kitchen.

10:35:46:07

Interviewer

You were living under a lot of restrictions in those days weren't you? How did it feel?

[cut for camera]

10:35:51:01

Margit

They didn't sort of, they made people crowded. It wasn't like a, like it wasn't hotel even, because they didn't have bathroom, didn't have toilet, everything was sort of make do. There's only one kitchen, and everybody was, it was like a mad house.

10:36:21:12

Interviewer

And everybody was living in fear of the Gestapo at the time, weren't they? Can you tell me about that a bit? What did you think of the Gestapo?

10:36:32:08

Margit

Scared stiff, because if they could come in and arrest somebody. Where they took them nobody knew. That's how I got into difficulty when I followed my father, but then at least I knew where they took him to.

10:36:54:02

Interviewer

What about your wider family, because your auntie had married a non-Jew hadn't she? *[talks over interviewer]*

10:36:58:21

Margit

She survived the whole caboodle. She came here to England after the war because her daughter was here. That was, and she only survived because she was married to a non-Jewish fellow.

10:37:16:01

Interviewer

Was this Greta and Ella?

10:37:18:20

Margit

No. Greta and Ella came here before the war, as domestics.

10:37:21:20

Interviewer

I see. OK. So everybody made their own way as much they could?

10:37:26:24

Margit

Anything to get out, but you, you couldn't just go. My father tried three times to get to France and he was arrested because he wanted to go illegally. I am not very keen on the French. They are peculiar.

10:37:51:07

Interviewer

So your family were desperate to try and find a way out of Vienna?

10:37:55:12

Margit

Absolutely. Funny, I remember as if it were yesterday. My Aunt was married to a Czech fellow and she lived in Czechoslovakia and she came to visit us and my father said, "sell everything get out, get out." "It won't happen to us." They both died in Theresienstadt. You can't imagine the nightmare it was. I can't remember, I can't visualise it myself now. How did they manage it all, these things? Maybe some of them were,

10:30:45:04

Margit

There was quite a lot of antisemitism I must admit and Vienna had a district where most Jewish people lived that came from Poland and Russia. So that was one little thing. But otherwise it was amicable till, till Hitler came and started a commotion like that.

[cut]

Interviewer

Um, we were talking about your family's desperation to try and get out and to escape and your father tried a number of times and he kept being returned and then they focused on you didn't they, what did they do to try and give you some kind of sanctuary? What did they do to try and give you some safety? How did they try and find safety for you?

10:39:34:14

Margit

My father put a, a advert into the London - what do you call it? - *Times*, for somebody to give me, to send me affidavit so I could come out, and somebody and a lady wrote I had a few letters but I picked this, picked this one up, it was a lady who was a secretary to a Mr McNeil who was a paper merchant in London and he sent me a permit was it a permit yes a permit to come to him but that wasn't a very successful thing but the lady who was a secretary she was an angel.

10:40:27:08

Interviewer

That was Miss Davis. Is that right?

10:40:29:08

Margit

Miss Davis, yes. [*interjects below*]

10:40:31:12

Interviewer

So, um, you had a number of people who responded to the advert in *The Times*, how did you choose? I think there were 15 people weren't they who said they would give you some kind of affidavit How did you choose who to go to?

10:40:43:02

Margit

That, that is a question, you just do and think and this maybe that one maybe that one, well I fell for this, this lady and she used to be the secretary for a paper merchant in London. And she became a golden, a golden relative, relative, and she lived in Cricklewood, and she and this is where I went.

10:41:14:19

Interviewer

So how did you prepare? Before you went we're gonna come to talk about the Kindertransport now, but before you were on the train do you remember how you prepared for it what your family told you what to expect or how you how you emotionally prepared yourself?

10:41:28:23

Margit

Emotionally it was a belief that if I got over here, over to England I would be able to help arrange something, because my aunt was already in London and she made a friend in Harrow Road, hairdressers called Enfield - can't remember the name - and they were going to give send my father a guarantee he had to have a guarantee and that's how I how I got to London. Well how'd I get to MacNeil's? That was that that was my father that were picked that out from a bunch of letters. You know you get a few letters for this purposes.

10:42:41:12

Interviewer

So, apart from finding you safety they were also hoping that you would then then be able to help your parents escape as well. Ok. So we are talking about 1938 now and you were, about 16 at this time weren't you? It was around this time of year that you started preparing to leave wasn't it, just before Christmas. Do you remember much about that time?

10:42:55:13

Margit

I remember my parents taking me to the train station, and I can see them now waving goodbye and that was the last I saw them. And I came to England and to this aunt aunt I used to call her auntie May and she was an angel she was but unfortunately the people who sent me there, the affidavit to come they were newly married elderly people and the woman had a son and the new husband got very fond of me so she was scared that if he goes, that I would get something of her fortune. And I remember arriving at - they lived in Twyford near London - and I remember arriving in the evening, and the next morning she gave me a bucket of cold water to wash the car. I remember that. And it was a funny house as well it had a, it was a like a bungalow, with a veranda all the way round open and that's where I had a bed. It was very cold as well.

10:44:33:14

Interviewer

Margit, we'll talk about that again in a moment's time, but can we just talk about

preparing to go on the Kindertransport because that must have been very hard saying goodbye to your parents, preparing to know that you may not see them again - although you didn't know that at the time.

10:44:46:11

Margit [*interrupting interviewer*]

I, I, they talked me into that if you go there and you can meet people and you would be able to do something.

10:44:59:08

Interviewer

Do you remember your last night at your home?

10:45:03:03

Margit

No, I couldn't. Well we left in the eve, We left at midnight I think.

10:45:12:05

Interviewer

Yes, I think, look, it was very short notice that you suddenly had to go wasn't it? But you've told somebody here about that your mother prepared you a last meal, and you sat together can you remember that?

10:45:25:50

Margit

Yes.

10:45:27:20

Interviewer

Can you tell me about it?

10:45:29:22

Margit

Well we sat. We had, we had one room and my mother said I'd like to cook you something nice, what would you like? and I, and I wanted a steak. I can't remember eating it but, I'm sure she did. I can't remember that.

10:45:50:06

Interviewer

You must have been so apprehensive and anxious about what was to come?

10:45:56:00

Margit

I think you didn't think very far, you thought if I get out I may be able to do something, I may be able to get some friends of my aunt to send them an affidavit to get out. It, it, you lived in hope and died in despair. It was a gamble from the minute go.

10:46:22:40

Interviewer

So your mother prepared you the steak and you can't remember eating it, but you know that she did it for you, she must have been and your father must have been absolutely desperate to have sent you.

10:46:34:08

Margit

I was the only child and they must have been, but I thought he told me that if I go, I may be able to seize the, from here get them which of course I didn't. there was another thing, I don't know whether it was Woburn house or Bloomsbury House but the how was it? they sent a form to be filled in, to somebody called Entfield in Harrow Road - I remember that - to send a permit to give him permission to get my parents out, that letter was when I came to England, I went to this the the Woburn house - I don't know if it was Woburn or Bloomsbury - and I told him all my story, and they went to have a look and I found out they sent a letter to get this going to the wrong address, and it came back and they never bothered. And that's stuck to me for the whole of my life. That people never realised what they'd done.

10:48:06:03

Interviewer

Um. I understand that.

10:48:09:05

Margit

Do you know what [*beshert?*] is? [*Beshert?*] is meant to be. [*Besert?*] is [*beshert?*] and that's what it was a letter to the wrong address.

10:48:23:05

Interviewer

How heartbreaking.

10:48:25:14

Margit

I didn't find out until much later though.

10:48;28:02

Interviewer

Um. Margit let's talk about the night of your departure. You ended up in a train station at midnight. Can you, can you, describe to us what that felt like and what you can remember around you?

10:48:39:12

Margit

I'll tell, I'll you there were lots of people, I couldn't tell you numbers, but I remember lots of people in the same boat, and there was a train and they were saying goodbye to their kids to go on the train to be sent off, and I can see my mother and father there now, it it was you lived in – it wasn't fear, it was the end of of a, of a years of loving and kindness, chopped like that. There were loads of kids going on this train. I remember seeing them standing there, amongst other parents of course and that was the last I saw of them. And we went to Dovercourt. A camp. We went to Harwich, and from Harwich to Dover Dovercourt not Dover.

10:50:02:18

Interviewer

Yes. Don't worry we'll talk about that in a minute. Do you remember any, what you were wearing Margit, and do you remember?

10:50:09:04

Margit

Yes I do remember, a coat.

10:50:11:03

Interviewer

You had a number didn't you?

10:50:11:24

Margit

I had a, had a dark a, bottle green, a bouclé, a sort of a for a winter coat. With a beaver collar. My winter coat. I remember that.

10:50:29:21

Interviewer

And did you have a number?

10:50:31:23

Margit

Yes, 57. I, it was a card like that. A grey card, very heavy, a card cardboard, with a 57 on it I remember because I went a couple of years to a holiday camp with school and my number was 57 and I thought what a funny thing and I said 57 and that.

10:51:05:06

Interviewer

That was a card around your neck with your number 57. Do you remember what your parents said to you as you said goodbye?

10:51:12:10

Margit

No. There was so much going on, and, and I can't even think what I thought. It was just saying goodbye. And I didn't think I would see them or not see them, I could get them out or not get them out, it was a, a, like pressed together. A nightmare and then we went on this darn train.

10:51:43:04

Interviewer

Do you remember anything about any of the other children? How old they were? Whether they were upset?

10:51:46:21

Margit *[interrupts interviewer]*

There were little ones as well. I, they were, they, it was a whole train load full of children. A, a few grown-ups, I can't think there were many, 2-3 perhaps in that

particular area. And I said goodbye and I waved and got on the train, and that was it, it it I sat down and I didn't know what happened, you just it you couldn't take it in. I mean ,a, the beginning of a of a of a nightmare because I never saw them again.

10:52:43:23

Interviewer

That must be very hard to look back on, that night of your life; where there was so much emotion in that one departure and yet you didn't even know that?

10:52:55:02

Margit

That's right. There were a few grown-ups, I remember, I remember loads of kids and I was on the elderly side; because I was 16 but there were kids, littles.

10:53:16:05

Interviewer

Did you help look after them?

10:53:18:10

Margit

There were, there were people who were supervising, but everyone had their head full with saying goodbye. It, it, I remember going through Köln on the train. Why I remember Köln I don't know but I remember that we were going all night long and we were passing going through Köln.

10:53:48:21

Interviewer

When you were on the Kindertransport what you were able to take with you? You had one suitcase didn't you and there wasn't very much in it. What was in it?

10:53:57:23

Margit

I don't really remember. Clothes mostly but I had a tube of toothpaste. Jewellery I had.

10:54:14:01

Interviewer

What was in the tube of toothpaste?

10:54:16:10

Margit

A diamond ring.

10:54:18:02

Interviewer

Can you tell me that story again, so if you say 'one thing I had was...'

10:54:23:05

Margit

Well, it was my father gave it to my mother some years ago. It was a big ring - my

daughter in law has it - and I opened up the back of it, the toothpaste, and stuffed it in and closed it again. And I was praying very hard, and it works. That's the only jewellery I had.

10:54:55:03

Interviewer

What else did you have in terms of possessions that remind you of your family?

10:55:01:15

Margit

Photographs, nothing tangible, a memory, a very long memory. If it's one gift I have got, I can remember, from being so little. That is a miracle to me. I remember, I remember now with my mother going to Italy on holiday and the hotel. I think I have got more than a memory; I must find out that. How people can think back. I can think back from being 3 years old. Yes that holiday in Italy, I remember it now. I remember the hotel. I remember just the beach way. Yeah, memory.

10:56:20:01

Interviewer

Would you say that's the most precious thing you have?

10:56:26:19

Margit

How can you say what's precious? Especially if it's a good memory, that's precious. Something nice, and to forget the ugly things that happened to you in life. And do you know something? Computers [*tuts*]

10:57:03:11

Interviewer

You're not very keen? Technology, no? You don't want to work this camera, no?

10:57:10:22

Margit

No. This is it, this is the miracle, I don't need this, I got it in here [*gesturing to camera equipment and then forehead*].

10:57:18:01

Interviewer [*interrupting Margit*]

You got it in your mind.

10:57:18:22

Margit

It's fantastic, really, when you come to think what your little head can hold

10:57:28:06

Interviewer

Well not everybody's mind can hold as much memory as yours.

10:57:32:23

Margit

Maybe they don't have anything to memorise.

10:57:37:08

Interviewer

To say goodbye to you - for your parents - must have been the hardest thing, you were there only child, and they adored you and yet they were putting you on a train to a country where you couldn't speak the language, and you didn't know who you were going to for refuge, that must have been terrible for them as well.

10:57:56:10

Margit

Terrible, as a nightmare. It, it you're there is so much feeling involved that you, you don't know what you feel anymore, it's just like pressing you together into a agony. I remember going on the ship, and I was, we had a little cabins. I remember it was stifling the atmosphere and I wanted to get some fresh air and I remember getting out of my cabin and there was a huge - I mean a huge room - it must have been the dining room or the ball room I don't know, and I went to from one end and the ship was going like that, and I was stood at that corner I went from one corner, I need some fresh air - I wasn't supposed to have done that - anyway the ship the ship went that way and I flew across the whole area. Like a nightmare. I ended up from that corner to that corner. I remember that very, very. How I got back again I don't know,

10:59:17:16

Interviewer

But it's what had happened to your life isn't it? Your life had just turned upside down. You didn't know where you were and who was in control.

10:59:25:03

Margit

Then I remember that we had to go to be examined by a doctor,

10:59:32:06

Interviewer

So this is when you arrived. so that was your journey so first of all you were on a train then you went on a boat didn't you - from the Hook of Holland - then you arrived was it in Harwich? Do you remember where you arrived in England? What happened where you arrived at Dovercourt. Were you examined?

10:59:46:11

Margit

At the Dovercourt I went to, *[interrupted by interviewer]*

10:59:48:03

Interviewer

And Dovercourt was the camp wasn't it? *[talk over each other]*

10:59:49:18

Margit

Yeah.

10:59:52:02

Interviewer

OK. *[talk over each other]* Ok. Look. I think you went to Harwich, yeah, I think so. What happened when you arrived at Dovercourt holiday camp? Were you examined?

11:00:01:01

Margit

That was a holiday camp. Huge holiday, like a Butlins and we were put into little huts on the,, on the sand, on the, where the sea comes in this this little huts what they call it, er, chalets, on the coast.

11:00:27:16

Interviewer

What happened to you next?

11:00:30:10

Margit

On the coast. I stayed there. Then I went to the,

11:00:39:20

Interviewer

Well let's, let's just go back a bit because when you were put there you were given a medical examination weren't you. What happened to you?

11:00:47:10

Margit

There where on the boat?

11:00:48:17

Interviewer

When you arrived at the holiday camp, did you, were you given an examination?

11:00:52:05

Margit

No.

11:00:53:01

Interviewer

No. Oh, OK

11:00:53:14

Margit

No.

11:00:55:17

Interviewer

Alright

11:00:56:09

Margit

It was, we were put in these little huts. What do you call it, chalets on the beach. In January.

11:01:09:02

Interviewer

It was cold wasn't it?

11:01:11:24

Margit

I remember, to get warm they had to have hot water so in the evening we had a hot bath, put on, put my nightie and my winter coat and I went to bed, but in the morning when you went on like that on the blanket, it was soaking wet. I remember that. But how it was the atmosphere so it was how it works I don't know. But I remember the blanket was soaking wet.

11:01:50:08

Interviewer

It must have been a very difficult time, having said goodbye to your family in a strange country, not speaking the language.

11:01:59:00

Margit

I don't know, I don't know how we got on with the language. Couldn't speak English. There must have been carers. I know they taught us a song, 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', that's how we learnt English. And I remember that people came, to look at all these kids, and 'I think I like that one, and I like that one' you know business, and I thought that was terrible. It was like, like animals going into a dog's home. I rather like that dog, no perhaps I will have that one, that's how I compared it. And I remember them teaching us. 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' I remember that. I can't remember when I got away from there, to be taken to the guarantor.

11:03:18:11

Interviewer *[with interjections from Margit]*

I think you were there for about two or three weeks, weren't you, and then you were taken away to meet your guarantor and your sponsors, and that's when you met Miss Davis who you said was an angel. But you didn't stay with her did you unfortunately?

11:03:31:09

Margit

No. She was a the secretary to that one I went to and she had a sister. Mrs Harrison and her sister a. Let me think this out. Her sister had a daughter married to a fellow, who did Kew gardens.

11:04:02:16

Interviewer

Right. OK um,

11:04:05:11

Margit

And the other daughter was married to an RA and lived on the, on the Thames. Had a nice house right on the Thames. There was the Thames. There was a roadway and they lived in the house on the roadway I remember that But I don't know whether it was this way or that way.

11:04:31:19

Interviewer

OK. Don't worry. Um, but you've explained that Mr and Mrs McNeil weren't very nice to you, particularly her.

11:04:41:23

Margit

He was very nice to me,

11:04:43:09

Interviewer

Yeah, but not her.

11:04:45:01

Margit

but she was, like I said, she was his second wife, and she though he was getting too fond of me, he gave me half a crown a week pocket money and I spent it on, wrote to my mother every day; and that she didn't approve of ether. I lived in a, it was a they had a bungalow and a sort of, living accommodation separate. With a terrace all the way around. Not a big terrace a small terrace. I had a bedroom there. No door. Open air. Winter.

11:05:28:09

Interviewer

Margit, what you said earlier on was, um, that nowadays 16 children are quite grown up, aren't they they are young ladies at 16 in those days you were still a child. But you were forced to grow up very, very quickly weren't you?

11:05:42:18

Margit

I don't remember growing up. I remember being, going to this place, and her putting a bucket of cold water in my hands the next morning and to wash the car, and I remember that and I felt very sorry for myself, and I lived on this open balcony thing of this house and I had a candle and and I and I it was so cold I had a scarf around and when I blow the candle out this caught fire. Oh dear! So I had this scarf with a thick.

11:06:29:18

Interviewer

But you missed your parents, all the time.

11:06:32:18

Margit

I grew up very quickly, from a child to a, a woman. No, I wasn't a woman I was still a child, I just had to I had to find solutions to so many things.

11:06:49:01

Interviewer

You wrote to your mother did you say? Every single day? What did you tell her in the letters?

11:06:56:12

Margit

I haven't got the faintest idea. I know one thing, I missed them. That was, that was the bad bits and I had half a crown pocket money; I don't know how much the stamps were at the time but it went in stamps.

11:07:18:16

Interviewer

Did you ever hear from them?

11:07:20:21

Margit

Yes. I had, I had the Red Cross messages, 25 words,

[cut for direction]

so that was alright. I think, didn't stay there very long, oh yes I remember that bungalow on the River Thames and the police came, we had to evacuate it, because the Thames was going over. So a flood as well. Not only, not only were the people not looking after for us, he *[points upwards to 'God']* wasn't looking after us.

11:07:58:19

Interviewer

Do you remember what the Red Cross message from your parents said. You said it was just 25 words? It must have meant so much to you to receive news from your parents.

11:08:07:04

Margit

Haven't got a clue,

11:08:08:19

Interviewer

But you remember receiving a letter from them?

11:08:11:10

Margit

but that was the only messages I got.

11:08:14:16

Interviewer

Do you remember how often you heard from your parents?

11:08:20:02

Margit

No. Not very often but I did have them. I can't remember how often.

11:08:26:18

Interviewer

But you knew that they were trying to reach you. In your heart you knew they were missing you as much as you were missing them.

11:08:32:16

Margit

That's right. From there I went back, I went to London.

11:08:42:13

Interviewer

You went to stay with auntie May didn't you? Was that better?

11:08:49:03

Margit

Auntie May was an angel to me, and er

11:08:52:15

Interviewer

And this was Miss Davis's sister? Is that right?

11:08:56:02

Margit

Mrs Harrison. He was, he is the one who did Kew Gardens.

11:09:01:16

Interviewer

I see. OK, but she gave you more comfort?

11:09:07:04

Margit

She taught me English. I took it every day I had to go upstairs. I had a room downstairs and she lived upstairs in a flat,. I had to go upstairs and she would teach me a little English, teach me English with *Little Women* so that was and she was a very, very kind person and she lived with her sister there, and that was in, er, Cricklewood.

[cut for camera]

11:09:45:16

Interviewer

When war was declared? Do you remember that moment?

11:09:50:22

Margit

I know exactly where I stood, in St Gabriel's Road Cricklewood. On the corner and the bells were going. And I thought they were taken being from underneath me.

11:10:13:13

Interviewer

That must have been such a frightening time because although you were safe, your family was not.

11:10:21:19

Margit

I thought that was the end of it. I remember the spot I stood on. And the bells going. You know something? That's a very good computer.

11:10:41:24

Interviewer

OK, and and there was one night when you were, erm, reading and you heard a car drive up to the house. Can you tell me about that?

11:10:50:24

Margit

I was, I was, downstairs I had a bedroom downstairs and I was just in bed and I heard trap, trap, trap, trap, it was exactly like the Gestapo coming. I must have been half asleep, and it was Aunt May's nephew who brought me a suitcase that my mother sent. How, I don't remember, how it came into his hands but any way he bought this suitcase and this trap, trap, trap, I, I, I, jumped down, got my clothes and I was scared stiff, I thought it was the Gestapo coming. I remember that and it was just this suitcase they brought.

11:11:41:10

Interviewer

What was in the suitcase?

11:11:43:09

Margit

Some clothes and some things that I managed to, to make before, I can't even remember what it was. But auntie May got a letter to say that they would take me away from her and take me in South of Southern England somewhere in a laundry to teach me the laundry. Did they tell you that before? Well, that was. And this suitcase was and I told her what my mother sent me and she said laundry? Not on your nelly. And she dragged me to, to either Woburn House or the other one, and er Bloomsbury House that's it, and she said that's gifted girl. She's not going to do no laundry. That's how I came to a camp. I thought it was near Tunbridge Wells. I thought that it, It was a big house and it was loads of us kids.

11:13:03:03

Interviewer

At this point did you know what had happened to your family?

11:13:07:17

Margit

No.

11:13:08:24

Interviewer

When did you find out?

11:08:27:11

Margit

Aye, aye, aye! I don't even remember now. I know my mother had found refuge with a friend of ours, non-Jewish. His wife was in England, and my mother went to live with him. He, he hid her but it got to a point where, it was impossible to hide them anymore, because every time the door went she had to run into the cellar. This sort of business, so I don't know how long that lasted. That's when she went to Budapest of all places - I don't know why when or - and what I, I, don't know if I imagine it or if I knew it but I remember a route march from Budapest that is where she disappeared.

11:14:26:06

Interviewer

And do you know what happened then?

11:14:28:03

Margit

No

11:14:29:16

Interviewer

You have no record of the rest of her life? [*Margit interjects*]

11:14:33:16

Margit

No, no. I would rather in my mind I feel that, that they took them wherever and if they fell by the wayside, they left them to die. This is the impression I have.

11:14:51:17

Interviewer

And your father?

11:14:53:18

Margit

My father went illegally to France, and he was in Paris working and as the Germans came down, he went to Marseilles and that's where they caught him then. And that's the last I heard of him.

11:15:13:06

Interviewer

So you don't know how either of them died.

11:15:15:13

Margit

No

11:15:16:23

Interviewer

Does that make it harder or easier to not know how they died?

11:15:22:22

Margit

It, your imagination can run riot. So it's better not to think. I know he worked in Paris as electrician. And then when the Nazis came along to go down he went to Marseilles. I believe there is a plaque in Marseilles. I am not sure. A plaque in Marseilles somewhere where they have got these names of the people, who, there caught there. But I never. What does it matter now anyway? If he disappeared he's disappeared?

11:16:09:02

Interviewer

All these years later, is it harder to come to terms with what happened to them or easier?

11:16:18:14

Margit

It's like a, like a big hump on your shoulder. It's heavy and it's, you think about it then you forget about it for a few days again, then it's there again. You never lose it. And hopefully I don't know, it's a hope that sooner or later, wherever they are I join them. In Yiddish we say it's *meshugas*, a madness. I thought, I thought there is more than a body there is a soul. What happens to the soul?

11:17:16:23

Interviewer

And you believe that you'll be re-connected with them?

11:17:19:19

Margit

I'm hoping. Don't know, so we're trying to hope.

11:17:31:13

Interviewer

You were telling me, before we started the interview, you have a light that burns, or is alight for your family, your mother? [*talking over each other*]

11:17:41:17

Interviewer

You tell me that you have a light always,

11:17:44:03

Margit

Oh yes, it, it's, it's like a candle. In reality you light it every when you know when they died, on the day of death but I have got one of those lights all the time. It's lit all the

time. And I say hello in the morning and I say goodnight. A mother is a mother and it doesn't leave you. I am hoping - I'm not religious - but I think there is more to you than just a body. And I hope that that more will join her maybe.

11:18:44:10

Interviewer

I believe that too, so I hope so too. But you're right when you become a mother you understand that connection and how much she must have loved you to let you go?

11:18:55:07

Margit

Yes, yes you can have any relationships you like but a mother is a mother. In most cases I know on the television they show mothers that aren't mothers in my eyes but that's not true.

11:19:20:08

Interviewer

What are your best memories of your parents?

11:19:31:06

Margit

We're, as a family we were very close. We used to meet, the family used to meet in the summer every Sunday, for a walk in the Vienna woods, and have lunch somewhere. I remember my grandmothers very well. I had 2 aunts in England, one in Australia but she came back to England. She was a milliner, a very good one, she used to make very good fashion hats. She worked for a Mrs Morgan in Wilmslow. My other two aunts they came over as domestics in Dorset. A lady in Dorset. My father went as electrician in Paris and then to Marseilles. Who else went off? I had a, a cousin here and her parents, because her father was not Jewish, they came over and they lived in Manchester; but the whole family was all over.

11:21:10:11

Interviewer

Um, and what's hard is because you were such a loving, close family to suddenly be so dispersed, and to not know what happened to so much of your family, must make you feel very sad.

11:21:22:06

Margit

It is very sad. It, it, it, it's a disappearance act you can't even say oh well I know where they are where the bodies or anything. There is nothing. It's just that you remember the good things, and, and you like I say I have got that light burning all the time because I think I say, I say hello and goodnight to it hoping that if there is somebody it should be there and, I think a mother is the closest thing you can ever have ever.

11:22:22:19

Interviewer

I agree with you. That must have been very hard because you then had to go on and make a life for yourself. You met your husband didn't you? You moved around a lot;

you ended up in Wales and all over the place and then you met Lionel. Tell me about that?

11:22:38:16

Margit

How I met him?

11:22:42:00

Interviewer

Well your marriage, and sadly it didn't last very long because he died?

11:22:48:07

Margit

No, I think eight years or so [*talking over interviewer*] Eight years.

11:22:52:02

Margit

I felt like persecuted. Two little boys and a husband. I could have got remarried but nobody wanted my kids.

11:23:07:11

Interviewer

Well they didn't not want them they wanted to send them to boarding school. Isn't that right? And you weren't going to let that happen and I admire you for that because they were the only things you had left.

11:23:17:18

Margit

That is the only thing I had left, and I wouldn't like my kids to have no family. I mean you can't discard your relationships. It's impossible.

11:23:33:09

Interviewer

But then Lionel died, that must have been intolerable. You lost your parents. You had been through so much, and suddenly your husband.

11:23:41:00

Margit

Yeah. If I wouldn't have had my kids I would have taken my life. I must admit, I thought of killing them and then killing myself. But I couldn't kill them. How can you do that?

11:23:58:08

Interviewer

But shows how desperate you were.

11:24:00:14

Margit

Yes, I was desperate. It's something unbelievable that this should happen. Why was I hit? I never did anybody any wrong. It wasn't a punishment. Well it was a

punishment but not something I deserved. I always used to say, If you can't do good do nought, but don't do bad, which I still believe in.

11:24:36:14

Interviewer

How do you feel toward the Nazis and the people that made the rules and regulations that changed your life?

11:24:45:18

Margit

I wouldn't waste my emotions on it because that, and I hope that one day, they will realise what they have done. I don't know about that well my father. Did I tell you about my father's best friend who lost a leg in the war?

11:25:12:18

Interviewer

Yes you did and he had to clean the streets. *[Margit interrupting]*

11:25:14:11

Margit

This is the, this is what gets me that this should happen. Things like that. That people have no feelings, and hatred is such a bad thing, and you must hate somebody that would do things like that. Well, why what for? I think there is so much good to be done. Why do bad?

11:25:45:17

Interviewer

So, to ask that question again, how do you feel toward the Nazis do you hate them or to you forgive what they did?

11:25:52:21

Margit

I never forgive them. Never. I don't even hate them because they are not worth my hate. I just don't want to know them. I didn't know any really. No when I come to think of it I don't know them. But as a, as a, they are not worth the hate I will say that.

11:26:27:23

Interviewer

There are a group of people that suggest the Holocaust didn't ever happen and that it was made up, what do you say to people like that?

11:26:35:06

Margit

I have never met anybody because I would spit in their eye, and really I wouldn't like to meet them. I can't understand people, I can't understand a human being so, so involved in anything like that. A nightmare. And you see the televisions now with the things are going on now with the hatred from this, and the hatred why don't they turn over and do their loving? Why hate? Why hate?

[cut for card change]

11:27:18:24

Interviewer

After you met Lionel, you moved around and you worked as a seamstress didn't you for a little bit, then you worked in Martins. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

11:27:27:21

Margit

After with Lionel dead?

11:27:29:22

Interviewer

Before that,

11:27:31:01

Margit

Before that. Before that I wasn't working.

11:27:34:01

Interviewer

You weren't working? Okay. But you were in Wales for a little bit weren't you, and you moved around?

11:27:40:12

Margit

That was all before. I was, I was in Wales with Treforest Trading Estate. Oh, I had it cushy there. I was the only girl that could speak English in all these foreigners. I used to be a translator.

11:28:01:00

Interviewer

But just so that we've got a record of what happened to you, could you just say, a little bit about - when you came to England - where you moved and what jobs that you did?

11:28:14:16

Margit

I worked for a, wait a minute. How do, I came to England, I came down to auntie May and I had a job in Wigmore St. with a lady Alison Delabarre Carlton. And funny enough her sister I saw a few months ago. How she found me I have not a clue. Because this is a long time. How did I get to her? I think it was through the Jewish Open House or something. Because they wanted to send me to a laundry and aunty May said no. And then they found me the job in Widmore St. and there, where I'd go from there? Treforest I think.

11:29:15:04

Interviewer

Where did you meet Lionel?

11:29:18:22

Margit

I met; he picked me up. My cousin was married to his brother. And I lived in Wales then and I came back on my 21st birthday. I've got to spend it somewhere, I decided to spend it in Manchester with my cousin. He picked me up on rail, Piccadilly station. Did I tell you that? He came with a broken-down fish lorry, because they were making [sort of pickles and things; and he came from Smithfields Market in this old fish lorry, to Piccadilly station to pick me up. He didn't know me from Adam and he went down the [Brue?] He came to Piccadilly Gardens and he looked at me and said I'm going to marry you. I said you're mad. I did.

11:30:23:05

Interviewer

So that was on your 21st birthday? It was a blind date? And he said he was going to marry you on that day?

11:30:27:20

Margit *[interrupting Interviewer]*

It wasn't a blind date. His brother told him to pick me up. His wife's cousin. I lived in Merthyr Tydfil in Porth of all places. Porth I lived. There I lived with a sister of Trevor Davis, the tenor in the Sadlers Wells opera. I have met some very, very, very posh people. Somewhere or another, I've been around.

11:31:08:03

Interviewer

Okay, so now we're going to talk a little bit about your life now, and the fact that you've got a lovely big family. You got through the hardest times when Lionel died. and you somehow managed to find a way through because you are a very strong woman. Now they have their own family and you are at the head of it.

11:31:28:01

Margit

You would think so. I don't hardly see them. They are running around from one place to another, looking at their grandchildren. My son, he has just been to America, then he's going to Tel Aviv. All their families are not in England. So they have to run around and I am sitting here.

11:31:48:18

Interviewer

Somehow it makes sense of everything that you've got your own family is that right?

11:31:54:02

Margit

Well, that's the only thing I have got. it doesn't go any further really. I had an aunt. My mother's, father's sister who used to live in Manchester. She died now, there is no one left.

11:32:25:06

Interviewer

You said, when the camera wasn't rolling, that you feel like you've have had a very,

very hard life?

11:32:33:07

Margit

Yes I did, because I, I had no help. I have got no brothers, no sisters, no parents, no in-laws really. Because my husband was a, that was another thing. My husband was a partner of a firm in Manchester and when he died I didn't know that a partnership dies. In other words his share of the business was non-existent. So that was that.

11:33:22:22

Interviewer

So how did you cope? What, what do you think has brought you through all the difficulties that you've dealt with in your life?

11:33:29:24

Margit

You know, I have never thought, never thought about it. You have to get up and get going. I am a fighter. I want, when something needs doing it needs doing. I know I wasn't a very popular sister-in-law; I don't know why. Can't tell you. Because there were five brothers, but they weren't particularly involved in each other either.

11:34:15:10

Interviewer

You said earlier on, abo - I was talking about your scarf – about you making things. Can you tell me about that? You used to make things because you had no other choice isn't that right?

11:34:24:09

Margit

That's right. If I couldn't make it they didn't have it. I told you about the fireplace didn't I? I didn't tell you about the fireplace? I bought a mansion. I lived in a bungalow. And I found out that I couldn't afford the bungalow. I would have to buy a big-ish house and make it into flats. Then I would live in them and be rent-free. I can't remember for the life of me, the kids don't remember either. I bought Lord Derby's mansion in Wakefield and I turned it into flats, and that's where I made a fireplace with Derby's stones. I saw someone taking a wall down in Salford. It was a matter of get on with it.

11:35:36:18

Interviewer

How much of your story have you shared with your grandchildren? Have they asked you about that period in your life?

11:35:41:18

Margit *[interrupts interviewer]*

They've got their own interests. I don't think, It's a story to me. It's not a story to them. They have their own friends, they have their own family, and they're swishing around all-over the place. But they don't know me really very well.

11:36:13:06

Interviewer

Does that make you sad?

11:36:15:09

Margit

Yes and no. Yes because they, they don't know me, I feel. They are always busy, busy busy. I think I have got a lot to give them, if they would have time to listen.

11:36:45:03

Interviewer

Well, one of the reasons for recording your story is to record what happened in that period of history. And I guess that's part of it, helping people to understand. And hoping that it won't ever happen again.

11:36:59:23

Margit

Exactly, I'll tell, but I am not very sure about that. I think people, are getting, money is the evil of it all. Because they think they have to make money. Money, you can't take it with you and if you have a full tummy you can't eat any more. It's, it's a matter of a limit.

11:37:36:03

Interviewer

But you obviously decided to record your testimony today because you wanted people to understand what had happened to you and to all of your friends and family in that period of history. Why do you think it is important that we know?

11:37:50:07

Margit

That they got?

11:37:52:07

Interviewer

Why is it important that we understand what happened to you?

11:37:57:13

Margit

Maybe to learn something. Were maybe I had made the wrong decision. Maybe they would have made the right decisions?

11:38:09:02

Interviewer

But nothing that happened to you because you made the wrong decision, is it? Because you were just unlucky because you were Jewish and because Hitler came along.

11:38:20:12

Margit

I, I, I had an awful lot of very good friends always. It's amazing, I was saying the other day, I bought up a mansion in Wakefield to reduce my rent. And er - I had no

money - I went to the bank manager at the time, and I said, I told him I want that house and I wanted to do that and that with it. And he said, said "When is your lunchtime tomorrow?" And I told him, meet you there at that house. And they came to see, meet me at my lunchtime. They said, "I'll lend me the money", I mean it sounds like a fairly-tale, but it happened. I was, I think I was enthusiastic. I make it go. I make it do.

11:39:36:15

Interviewer

And that strength of character has seen you through hasn't it? Do you feel that everything you've had to deal with is getting easier as you get older, or more difficult?

11:39:47:01

Margit

I don't have to do it anymore.

11:39:49:02

Interviewer

But I'm just thinking about the, the sadness that you've had in your life. Are you coming to terms with it more, now that you're getting older, or is it more difficult to understand?

11:40:01:00

Margit

I think I can understand it now, because you, I was always full of imagination. A go-getter. And if you haven't got it, do something about it. That house in Wakefield, somebody said - I can't remember who it was - they said you have got dry rot down in the cellar, in the corner. So I found out that dry rot you kill with fire. I got a blowlamp

11:40:44:10

Interviewer

Oh. OK, that was a bit dangerous.

11:40:45:21

Margit

and the next thing that there had fire brigade.

11:40:49:00

Interviewer

[Laughs] Yeah, I thought that's where that story might end.

11:40:52:03

Margit

And things like that. Stupid. Sometimes stupid.

11:40:54:19

Interviewer

You're a very strong lady. Margit, before we finish, um, I just wanted to give you the

chance to say something to your great, great, great, great, great grandchildren, who will never have the chance to meet you, about the lessons that could have been learnt, by your experience and your life? Is there a message you have to anybody?

11:41:16:20

Margit

Don't sit down and wait for miracles because there aren't any. You have to get up and get going. Sometimes it's hard and sometimes not so hard but do something. Don't sit there looking.

11:41:34:08

Interviewer

What about a message, with regard to hatred and prejudice?

11:41:39:09

Margit

What, what, what is the use of using emotions - or anything else for that matter - for bad. Use it for good. There is so many things you can do. A little bit goes a long way. Except for Hitler I can't remember hating anybody. Even if something has gone wrong, I would say "well they just don't understand". They learn. You don't need to hate anybody. You don't have to love everybody but treat them as a human being.

11:42:41:21

Interviewer

When you see what's happening in the world now, do you feel like we've learnt lessons from the period of history you lived through? Or not?

11:42:49:05

Interviewer

No, no. As a world have we learned anything? *[talking over each other]*

11:42:54:03

Margit

People, people, has a lot of selfish people. If you, if you can't do anything good do nought but don't do anything bad. That's my motto.

11:43:15:10

Interviewer

Is there anything else you would like to tell me Margit, about your life that we haven't covered?

11:43:22:16

Margit

I think we; I wouldn't know. I've lived a very full life because I had to. I had no time to sit down and a, and sort of perceive what was going on. I had to get up and get going. I think I was always very active, and I always had a lot of friends, and I appreciate friends.

11:44:07:07

Interviewer

You had so much to cope with in your life you just had to use your self-esteem to keep you going.

11:44:13:19

Margit

You have to because, people don't volunteer - as a rule - unless you know them. Just make friends, we're, I think I still. I don't think I have got anybody there who hates me.

11:44:36:09

Interviewer

I can't imagine anybody could hate you. [*Chuckles*] It's not possible. It's not possible.
[Cut for card change]

11:44:42:18

Interviewer

Have you ever been back to Vienna to visit the places you were with your family and your Mum and your Dad?

11:44:50:12

Margit

I have been back to Vienna because I had to attend to some business, and no. Something funny happened to me. I went to a solicitors and going back I was going to go to where I used to live, and I went into a tram. And I said I am going to see this husband and wife; I don't know where they live but the fellow that took over their shop will know. So I go in there, I sat on the tram and the next stop, these 2 people walked onto the tram. In Vienna with 2 million people. Is that not funny?

11:45:47:17

Interviewer

Who was it? Was it that couple?

11:45:49:02

Margit

Yes, it was like a miracle. I was going to that place where they had a shop, to find out where they live. Vienna has got a ring road on the tram and I was going to get off at the next stop to change trams. And the next stop they get on the train, on the tram. It is uncanny

11:46:25:16

Interviewer

That was extraordinary wasn't it. One last thing, I know we've talked about the number 57. Does that feel like a lucky number for you, or an unlucky number?

11:46:36:05

Margit

I like 57 – the other lucky number for me is 2. I was born on the 2nd of the 2nd, 22. 2 and 57 are my numbers. I'm not selling them.

11:47:02:09

Interviewer

No you're not selling them. But 57, when you were number 57 on the Kindertransport, that was your chance for freedom?

11:47:09:20

Margit

I went on a holiday from school, they had, we went on holiday, a group of girls, and I had been given 57 and blow me I got onto the train as 57 again. So 57 belongs to me plus the 2. It makes you think doesn't it? There are so many numbers, why? Coincidences are funny things.

ARTEFACTS

ARTEFACT 1: scan of photograph of Margit with her mother

11:47:48:06

Margit

Oh, that is my mother and me [...] How old would I be there? About 3? Three-ish I would say.

ARTEFACT 2: scan of photograph of family electrical goods shop

11:48:00:23

Margit

that is the first shop they had, [...] that I remember [...] We used to live upstairs there. [...] We moved into a much bigger one, higher up the street [...] It was confiscated by the Nazis. [...] It was about 100 yards from the one we took over [...] I can't see the people who it is. I think it is probably my grandmother and my mother [...]

ARTEFACT 3: scan of Margit and her dog

11:48:34:11

Margit o/o/v

That's, er, my terrier dog and me. I was about 10 perhaps,

11:48:43:22

Margit iv

oh 8. The date on it.

11:48:56:13

Margit o/o/v

I was on holiday and that dog was taken ill. And they had to destroy it, I was crying and crying they called me Mrs. Foxy. So, I became Mrs. Foxy.

ARTEFACT 4: scan of photograph of Margit's father

12:59:52:00

Margit

That's my wedding day and I was 21 [...] I said I wouldn't get married religiously, until my parents came over and they never came, so he is not really religious married to me. [...] He was a lovely man. Aye, aye, aye. Memories are made of this.

11:49:50:02

ARTEFACT 5 : scan of a photograph of family group [undated, c. WW1?]

No commentary

11:49:54:17

ARTEFACT 6 : scan of a photograph of a soldier with a rifle

No commentary

11:49:59:18

ARTEFACT 7: scan of a photograph of a family on a beach

No commentary

11:50:04:19

ARTEFACT 8: scan of a photograph of a family on a beach [different faces]

No commentary

11:50:09:20

ARTEFACT 9: scan of a photograph of a man and woman on a staircase

No commentary

11:50:14:21

ARTEFACT 10: scan of a photograph of a woman against an ornate curtain [thin format]

No commentary

11:50:19:22

ARTEFACT 11: scan of a photograph of a woman against a photographic background. She is holding flowers

No commentary

11:50:24:23

ARTEFACT 12: scan of a photograph of three women, two men in a forest

No commentary

11:50:29:24

ARTEFACT 13: scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Mother's mother' [detail of Artefact 12]

No commentary

11:50:35:00

ARTEFACT 14: scan of a photograph of 'Mother's mother' and two other women

No commentary

11:50:40:01

ARTEFACT 15: scan of a photograph identified on j-peg as 'Mother'

No commentary

11:50:45:02

ARTEFACT 16: scan of a photograph of mother slightly older than in Artefact 13 [supposition]

No commentary

11:50:50:03

ARTEFACT 17: scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Mother as a nurse' [the figure on the left]

No commentary

11:50:55:04

ARTEFACT 18: scan of a photograph of Margit [?] as a baby.

No commentary

11:51:00:05

ARTEFACT 19: scan of a photograph of Margit [?] as a toddler.

No commentary

11:51:05:06

ARTEFACT 20: scan of a photograph of Margit [?] as a child seated holding a doll

No commentary

11:51:10:07

ARTEFACT 21: scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as Margit and her cousin Trude.

No commentary

11:51:15:08

ARTEFACT 22: scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Margit and Ella's wedding 10-11-1929'

No commentary

11:51:20:09

ARTEFACT 23: scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Sadie'

No commentary

11:51:21:10

ARTEFACT 24: scan of a photograph of Margit [?] and a relation or friend

No commentary

11:51:30:11

ARTEFACT 25: scan of a photograph of a country house

No commentary

11:51:35:12

ARTEFACT 26: scan of a photograph of a chapel in a wood

No commentary

11:51:40:13

ARTEFACT 27: scan of a photograph of a windmill

No commentary

11:51:45:14

ARTEFACT 28: scan of a photograph of shell damage to the outside of a building that has German lettering on it

No commentary

11:51:50:15

ARTEFACT 29: scan of a photograph of a damaged interior

No commentary

11:51:55:16

ARTEFACT 30: scan of a photograph of a piano by a window in the same room as Artefact 29

No commentary

11:51:22:17

ARTEFACT 31: scan of a close-up photograph of the damaged piano

No commentary

11:52:05:18

ARTEFACT 32: scan of a photograph of a damaged wardrobe

No commentary

11:52:10:19

ARTEFACT 33 : scan of a close-up photograph of a damaged window

No commentary

11:52:15:20

ARTEFACT 34 : scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Selma & Margit'

No commentary

11:52:20:21

ARTEFACT 35 : scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Camp'

No commentary

11:52:25:22

ARTEFACT 36 : scan of a photograph of two women and a man

No commentary

11:52:30:23

ARTEFACT 37 : scan of a photograph of two women and two children, one carrying a doll.

No commentary

11:52:35:24

ARTEFACT 38 : scan of a photograph of Margit & Lionel with one of their two sons as a baby

No commentary

11:52:41:00

ARTEFACT 39 : scan of a photograph of one of Margit's two sons as a toddler

No commentary

11:52:46:01

ARTEFACT 40 : scan of another photograph of one of Margit's two sons as a toddler

No commentary

11:52:51:02

ARTEFACT 41 : scan of a photograph of Margit & Lionel with one of their two sons as a toddler in a pram

No commentary

11:52:56:03

ARTEFACT 42 : scan of a close-up photograph of one of Margit's two sons in a pram

No commentary

11:53:01:04

ARTEFACT 43: scan of a photograph of Margit's two sons sitting on a doorstep

No commentary

11:53:06:05

ARTEFACT 44: scan of a photograph of a couple getting married [one of her sons?]

No commentary

11:53:11:06

ARTEFACT 45 : scan of a photograph of a man leading a bride down the aisle

No commentary

11:53:16:07

ARTEFACT 46 : scan of a photograph identified on the j-peg as 'Kindertransport event'

No commentary

Caption:

On life in Vienna under the Nazis

11:53:26:24

Interviewer

When you were walking around with your Polish friend and you were worried about the Nazis. You always used to take the jewels with you, because you were dressed and they thought you were Jewish or not Jewish? Can you tell me that story?



11:53:38:20

Margit

They didn't think I was Jewish because young people then had the blouse on, beige blouse on and the dark trousers, and we dressed exactly the same but with our hands in our pocket with the jewellery.

11:53:56:24

Interviewer

Why did you take your jewellery with you?

11:53:59:01

Margit

Because if it was in the house the Nazis came and they took it. So the two of us were going walking like good German girls in their uniform, with a pocket full of jewellery. She went to Israel.