



My Story

Ruth Grant



These are Ruth's words. This is her story.

'My Story' is an initiative of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR). More information at
www.ajrmystory.org.uk
www.ajr.org.uk

Ruth Grant was visited by AJR volunteer Ros Cohn to share her story.
Thanks also to AJR volunteers Bett Demby, Charlotte Griffiths and
Lauren Rosenstone for their editing skills.

Portrait photography by Naomi Kaye

© The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) May 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR).

First published May 2020

Designed by: Berenice Smith, MA

Produced by: Naomi Kaye

Printed in Great Britain by BookPrintingUK

The authors, editor and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce any copyright material in this book. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

My Story

Ruth Grant

"I did not feel too sad to be leaving my parents, but of course they were extremely upset. I was looking forward to seeing my brother in England. I had a vision of England as a little island with a tree in the middle and my brother was sitting under it. It is strange how my mind as a child worked. It did not even occur to me that I would never see my parents again."



Contents

06	Life in Cologne	30	Our own home
10	<i>Kristallnacht</i>	33	Moving to Australia
12	<i>The Kindertransport</i>	36	Moving back home
14	Life in London	41	Losing Jim
16	Moving to Brighton	42	My family, post-war
17	Enemy aliens	43	Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren
18	The Blitz		
20	Life in Yorkshire	45	Returning to Cologne
23	Working life	49	These days
27	Jim	50	My story
28	Our wedding	51	My advice

Life in Cologne

I WAS BORN on 4 August 1928, in Cologne. I lived in the Ehrenfeld suburb of Cologne with my parents and older brother, Bert.

Our family owned a big house that had been converted into three flats. We lived in one, whilst my Aunt Gerta, Uncle Albert and cousin, Eva, lived in the neighbouring flat. Eva's mother was my mother's sister and her father was my father's brother, as two brothers had married two sisters!

The flat on street level housed my parents' gentleman's outfitters shop, called, 'Salmang,' where they both worked. I had a nanny, Anna Esser, whom I adored. She carried out all the household chores while my mother was working.

In 1934, when I was five years old, the Nazis confiscated our house and shop and forced us to move into a flat that was a five minute walk away. We lived with my grandmother who passed away soon after. I have since learned that we were actually moved into a type of ghetto; an area where they relocated all the Jews from the various suburbs of Cologne.

Although our new flat was modern with central heating and hot water, it was not big enough to accommodate all of us. Eva and I had to share a bedroom, which I thought was wonderful! I never sensed any feelings of anxiety from my family, despite what was happening around us. I was so young that I just accepted we had moved to a new flat. ■

“ I have since learned that we were actually moved into a type of ghetto; an area where they relocated all the Jews from the various suburbs of Cologne. ”



First day of school, aged five



My mother, Henny



My father, Max



Taken in Cologne. Eva is on the right, I am in the middle

Kristallnacht

I REMEMBER THE morning after *Kristallnacht* in November, 1938. I could tell my parents were anxious. The atmosphere was tense but I couldn't fully understand what was going on, as I was only 10 at the time. My father said he would check if the rabbi was safe but when he reached his house he found the synagogue, next door, on fire. .

My parents told me to stay in my bedroom. As I looked through my window, I saw books being thrown out of the house of a Jewish family who lived across the road. These books made up a big bonfire in the middle of the street. It was frightening to see this happening. My parents told me to grab my coat. We were leaving for our cousin's house in Düren.

We planned to meet my aunt, uncle and Eva outside the train station in Cologne. When we arrived, my aunt and Eva were both crying. My uncle had been taken away. The SS had been searching for my father whose details they had after confiscating his shop. It was bad luck that my Uncle Albert was at home at this time as he was often travelling to Spain as a button and lace salesman.

We were all worried about my uncle; there was no information about what had happened to him. On arriving in Düren, we soon discovered our relations had been taken away. We only stayed one night and then decided to make our way back home.

In the flat below us had lived a young couple who kept tropical fish. They weren't at home when we returned but all of their plant pots and the fish tanks had been smashed and the fish were dead on the floor. That was a terrible sight.

Our flat hadn't been touched; everything was as we left it, but of course my uncle was missing.

My uncle had been imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp and the only way to have him released was with an exit visa. At this time, if prisoners paid enough money they would receive the relevant visa for release. When my aunt found out where he was, she managed to obtain a visa for my uncle to escape to Shanghai. This enabled his release from the camp, although he did not intend to travel to China.



On my arrival to England in 1939, aged 10

Suddenly, he arrived back home looking ghastly. Sometime later a man arrived at the flat and my uncle left with him to attempt an escape into Holland, but he was caught and interned in a camp for illegal immigrants.

As a 19 year old, my brother also attempted to escape over the border of Holland and failed. He was lucky to make it back home safely. Eventually he was able to arrange sponsorship with the Quakers in England. The only details I know of these arrangements was a flight from Cologne to England was organised for him. I was upset when he left as I was extremely fond of my brother. I enjoyed the time we spent together when I was growing up. ■

The Kindertransport

MY MOTHER HAD a cousin, Otto Hartog, who was an optical surgeon in London. He sponsored Eva and myself to travel to England. Our headmaster, who was also a rabbi, arranged the *Kindertransport* for both of us to travel from Cologne. I can remember shopping for clothes to take with me to England before I left.

The scenes at the railway station on 20 April 1939, were quite traumatic. Only children were allowed on the platform to board the train, so we had to say goodbye to our parents on the forecourt. I did not feel too sad to be leaving my parents, but of course they were extremely upset.

I was looking forward to seeing my brother in England. I had a vision of England as a little island with a tree in the middle and my brother was sitting under it. It is strange how my mind as a child worked. It did not even occur to me that I would never see my parents again.

I boarded the train, which was packed full of children ranging from three to 15 years old. Our school headmaster came along too as an escort for our journey. We were each given a name tag to wear around our neck, which had an official stamp on it. As we set off on our journey I felt on edge but excited at the same time.

As we reached the border of Holland, the train stopped. The SA and SS boarded the train. The SA dressed in brown uniforms while the SS wore black and were more terrifying. As they marched up and down the carriages, one of the soldiers took the coral necklace I was wearing, which really upset me. I did not understand what was happening, but it was a comfort to have Eva with me, who I looked up to as she was two years older.

“I had a vision of England as a little island with a tree in the middle and my brother was sitting under it.”

During his internment in the camp on the border of Holland, my uncle received a letter from my aunt. She explained the Kindertransport journey that Eva and myself were due to make. Miraculously, en route, the authorities allowed him to board our train and he travelled with us until we reached our next stop. Later on when Eva and I were in Brighton, we found out he had managed to reach England, along with my aunt, just before war broke out.

The next thing I remember, the train stopped and Dutch people boarded with sandwiches and milk. We journeyed on to the Hook of Holland where we disembarked the train in the darkness of night. We had no idea that we were about to board a boat bound for England. Eva and I were given a cabin to share and were soon awoken, early in the morning by a steward delivering us tea and biscuits. The tea had milk in it, which I had never experienced before. We would always have lemon in our tea in Germany. Once we were dressed, we were marched up to the top deck for a health check. ■

“We journeyed on to the Hook of Holland where we disembarked the train in the darkness of night. We had no idea that we were about to board a boat bound for England.”

Life in London

WHEN WE DISEMBARKED the ship, we caught a train at Harwich which took us to Liverpool Street Station in London. Everyone waited in a room and our names were called out by the people who had sponsored us. My Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Otto Hartog (my mother's cousin) came to pick Eva and me up. I had never met them before. My brother was also with them and it was very emotional to see him again. My aunt and uncle took us to their home in Northwood and my brother returned to Guildford where he was living with a Quaker family. My aunt and uncle had two sons were away from home; at boarding school. I can't remember how long I was with them; time begins to become a little bit blurred, it all barely seems real.

Eva was sent to a boarding school in Potters Bar, which I couldn't attend as I was too young. That was difficult for me, as I was used to living with Eva. I stayed with my Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Otto for only a few days and was then sent to live with a Jewish family named Grade in Preston Road, in a suburb of London. Mr Grade was a taxi driver and they had two children; a daughter older than me and a son younger than me. I was with them for around six months.

I was so homesick; I felt deserted and couldn't explain how I felt to anyone. This must have been a problem for the Grades. They were a Jewish family but didn't speak German and I didn't speak English. My mother had tried to encourage me to learn English when I was growing up. Before the war she taught English to Jewish people who were emigrating to England and America. I wasn't interested in learning a new language at the time and now found myself relying on the use of hand signs to communicate with Mr and Mrs Grade.

I didn't have Eva with me and my brother was in Guildford where he was studying to be an optical technician. The Grades had a telephone however, so I could call Bert, and up until the war broke out in September 1939, I could call my mother and father too. I would spend my school holidays with Eva in Northwood at Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Otto's house.

I went to school whilst staying with the Grades but initially my English was extremely poor. All the kids made a fuss of me as I was the only refugee at the school. They were fascinated by me and always wanted me to translate things from English into German for them. I didn't actually enjoy this time

at school but children adapt and I had to learn English to communicate properly. It's amazing how quickly a child of 10 years old picks up another language. I wouldn't say I was unhappy; it was just another experience.

My brother's birthday was on 3 September. We had arranged that he would come to Preston Road to visit me as I had bought him a present. I went to the station on my own to meet him. I waited but he didn't show up. I went back to the house in floods of tears and then heard the announcement that war had broken out. ■

4671 162

4 29 44.

This document of identity is issued with the approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for educational purposes under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children. ^{us,}

THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA.

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.


Name LEUFER, Ruth

Sex Female Date of Birth 4-8-28.

Place KÖLN.

Full Names and Address of Parents

LEUFER, Max & Hanni,
265 Venloerstrasse
KÖLN-EHRENFELD.

A small, square, black and white portrait of a young woman with dark hair, looking slightly to the left. It is a standard passport-style photograph.

My identity card

Moving to Brighton

AFTER WAR HAD been announced there was panic everywhere. Everything closed. I was so upset because I couldn't contact my parents anymore. Mr and Mrs Grade evacuated with us three children to Somerset for a few weeks. They then returned to their home and I was moved to a hostel in Brighton. The school that Eva attended was closed and we both ended up being moved to Brighton together.

About 10 of us stayed in a hostel in Brighton. It was a large house behind one of the big hotels on the sea front. I don't remember the date when we moved in but what I do remember very well was that my bedroom overlooked the conservatory at the back of the hotel. The band leader, Joe Loss used to play there and beautifully dressed people would dance. Instead of going to bed, I would sit by the window listening to the music and would watch the dancing in the conservatory below.

The hostel in Brighton had an Austrian cook and she was fantastic. I've always enjoyed my food so her cooking was a highlight. She made some wonderful puddings. Austrian food was different to the German food I was used to back at home. I also remember loving Rowntree's Fruit Gums and I used to spend my pocket money on them. The orange ones were my favourite flavour. It is funny how silly things stick in my mind.

I had tonsillitis while I was in Brighton. My doctor was German and had to pass his exams in England in order to practice medicine here. He and his English colleague came to see me and whisked me away to the outskirts of London to have my tonsils removed. I was there for two weeks on my own. They made a great big fuss of me in the hospital and I was quite happy. By that time I think my English had improved enough to be able to communicate properly. ■

Enemy aliens

AROUND THIS TIME, the government decided to move all ‘enemy aliens’ away from the coast, as they suspected them of spying and sending messages to the Germans. My brother, Bert was considered an enemy alien and put on a ship called the Dunera, which sailed to Australia. I’m unsure how long he was in Australia for, but it must have been more than a year.

When Bert was in Australia he was treated like a prisoner of war. The Red Cross would send letters back and forth from Germany. He received a letter from my mother and she signed it *Witwe*, which means widow. This is how we found out that our father had died. We didn’t know exactly where the letter from my mother was written but we found out later that it was from a camp near Prague. After the war we found out that my mother and father has been sent to Theresienstadt ghetto where my father died and from where my mother was deported to Auschwitz.

Eva and I had to leave Brighton, as we weren’t allowed to stay on the coast. Uncle Albert was sent to the Isle of Man, as he was also considered to be an enemy alien. Aunt Gerta managed to stay in London. Eva and I went to stay with her in Clydesdale Road in Notting Hill Gate. I don’t know why that address sticks in my mind, but it does! ■

“My brother was considereed an enemy alien and was put on a ship called the Dunera, which sailed to Australia. I’m unsure how long he was in Australia for, but it must have been more than a year.”

The Blitz

AFTER THE BLITZ began and the bombing was at its worst, Eva and another lady who lived in our block of flats became nervous and decided they didn't want to stay in the flat overnight. We all decided to go to the underground station in Notting Hill, which was one of the deepest in London. We repeated this for three nights, leaving the house at five o'clock in the evening and not returning until six or seven the next morning. We took our blankets and pillows and slept on the platform. There were hundreds of us sleeping there. The trains were still running so you had to arrive early to get a space. There was always a guard on duty to make sure we didn't block people from using the trains. I'm not a nervous person but the whole situation was dreadful.

After three nights we'd had enough. We went to the basement of our house where an Irish family lived and slept on the floor in their flat overnight. Eva used to sleep under the table! Everyone who lived in the flats above congregated in this Irish family's basement flat. It's amazing how people opened their homes. Everyone was doing the best they could.

We still went to school in the mornings and I remember comparing the shrapnel we had picked up from the road on the way to school after the overnight bombing. If the sirens sounded while we were at school we had to rush down into the basement. There were no lessons. It was impossible to teach children en masse in a basement so we played cards and sang songs. Eventually, my aunt decided that London was not safe for us to stay any longer and made arrangements for us to leave. ■



Eva, 1945 in Leeds

Life in Yorkshire

WE MOVED TO York as my aunt already knew someone who had left London to go to Yorkshire. By this time we spoke to each other in English. The authorities warned us to never speak German in public but we didn't want to speak German anymore anyway.

I went to school in York, but a different one to Eva as she was older. There was one particular teacher who helped me. I had to pass an exam to obtain a place in middle school. During the test, he sat next to me, correcting my answers when I struggled. I do not know if I would have managed on my own but nevertheless, I secured a place at a highly regarded school. It was the only school I attended in England where I actually learned something. I had to wear a uniform, of which I was extremely proud. I'm not sure how my aunt managed to obtain the uniforms for both Eva and myself, but I was extremely pleased with my velour hat.

I was really very happy in York. I loved my Aunt Gerta, whom I knew nearly as well as my mother, and Eva and I looked upon each other as sisters.

Learning English had been a gradual thing and didn't happen overnight. I remember Eva and I walking on the walls around the city of York, testing each other's pronunciation of 'th' by exchanging sentences with the word 'the' in them. I think by that time I must have been getting pretty good at English and we began to express ourselves properly.

Following the realisation that all the young refugees were anything but enemy aliens, my brother was allowed to return to England and joined the Forces. He was seconded into the Pioneer Corps to begin with. He was soon promoted to sergeant in the Tank Corps, at which point he used to write to me. He went through Holland, Belgium and into Germany as a tank gunner. Again, we knew it was dangerous but somehow or other we put that out of our minds.

Uncle Albert was released from the Isle of Man after around two years and he came to join us in York in 1941. When he arrived there was no work for him, so he and my aunt decided to move to Leeds. There was a large Jewish community there and it was easier to find work. My uncle found a job at the Jubilee Hall on Chapeltown Road. My aunt began working in a dress shop as an alteration seamstress and Eva trained to be a sewing machinist. Although my aunt, uncle and Eva were now living in Leeds



During my brother's leave from the Army, 1942

I ended up in a hostel in Harrogate. I'm not sure why I didn't live with them. It might have been difficult to find accommodation for four of us, but I could visit them at weekends. Home Guards from the nearby station protected the school at night and they would eat what was baked in school during the day. I never felt happy there – I missed my family.

In Harrogate I became particularly good friends with Ina. She was adopted and also lived in Leeds so we would catch the bus together to see our respective families. We had to walk back to the hostel for lunch during the day, as the school did not provide kosher meals. We were very fit and healthy. The school was pretty hopeless though. The only thing I learned there was how to bake scones. At this point, my brother obtained leave from the army and came to see me in Leeds. It was very emotional seeing him again. I remember hearing him singing '*Lady Be Good*' in the bathroom. Isn't it daft the things I remember? While in Australia he had made a friend, Len, who he brought with him to visit us in Leeds. Len was originally from Hamburg and knew nobody in England. This was the first time Len met Eva. They eventually ended up getting married. ■



Children of the North Grove House Hostel, Leeds, 1940

Working life

I WENT TO school until I was 14 and then had to start work, which is what most of us were expected to do at that age back then. This is when I went back to live with my aunt, uncle and Eva in the Harehills district of Leeds. They had managed to rent a little house. I had to find a job and was given the choice of either needlework at Burtons clothing factory, or hairdressing. I had no desire of working in a factory; in fact I really wanted to train as a nurse but at 15 I was too young, so I chose hairdressing.

I took a position at a small salon on Chapeltown Road. I only lasted a few months until I decided to apply and was accepted at Lewis' Department Store as an apprentice hairdresser where I worked for about a year. Following that

I moved to the Co-op, which had a very good hairdressing department. It was a huge department store at the bottom end of Albion Street and was an influential establishment in Leeds, with a very well-respected camera shop and jewellers. I started off sweeping the floors and observing the other hairdressers. I was given wigs to practice on and slowly began to build up my skills. I experienced an unhappy time there though due to my manager's attitude towards me. She always seemed to have a problem with me and would accuse me of stealing all sorts of items from the shop. It became clear to me and my colleagues that she was targeting me because I was Jewish. My colleagues were very supportive and insisted that I should report her. I decided to pluck up the courage to report her to the head of department. Soon after that the manager left. Whether she was sacked or left of her own accord, I do not know. The new manager was a very nice man which was a relief.

One day, on my way to work at the Co-op, I walked passed the pet shop at the bottom of the Grand Arcade. An adorable little face was looking through the window at me. I just could not resist this lovely little terrier puppy and found myself buying her. I named her Sandy and carried her out the shop in a little box. She spent that day at the hairdressers with me. When I took her home at the end of the day Aunt Gerta was not impressed and told me that I would have to look after her myself. However, I left



Sandy

her at home when I went to work and my aunt grew attached to her. When I married and moved out I ended up leaving Sandy with my aunt and uncle as they could not bear to be parted.

When I was 17 I tried to apply for nurses' training but I was told that I had to wait until I was 17 and a half, so I got married instead!

Once I married, I decided to join a little salon closer to home. Hyman's was on Chapeltown Road and run by a Jewish man. I also learned manicuring although it was difficult to get hold of supplies like nail files during the war. I didn't really care for hairdressing but I made friends there. During the summer we would go to the open-air swimming pool in Roundhay, which was lovely.

I belonged to a group of friends, all of us were refugees of varying ages, who used to spend time together. I was one of the younger ones. We tended to group together because of our similar experiences and we met on most weekends. There was a house in Brunswick Square where we sometimes met. We used to walk there and back; we couldn't afford to take the tram. At that age I could walk for miles and think nothing of it. We mostly met in one another's houses though and spent time talking together. We just enjoyed each other's company. ■



Aunt and Uncle in their garden with
Eva's son Ralph and Sandy the dog

42991

551

This document of identity is issued with the approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for educational purposes under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children.

2172

THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA.

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.

Name GRATZ, Günter

Sex male Date of Birth 24.3.23

Place Breslau

Full Names and Address of Parents

41 Viktoriastrasse
Breslau



42991

Jim's identity card

Jim

ONE BANK HOLIDAY when I was 15, about 20 of us arranged to go camping on the outskirts of Tadcaster for a long weekend. We had sleeping bags, blankets and pillows and slept in a barn which we shared with a litter of piglets. During the day we would hold races and play games. Most of the girls came from the Harrogate hostel and most of the boys came from the equivalent hostel in Leeds. That is where I first met Jim.

Jim was 20, five years older than me and he asked me to meet up with him one evening and at the cinema on Chapeltown Road. That's where our romance started.



The only photo Jim had of his parents with his brother, Kurt, taken in Breslau

Jim had come to England on the *Kindertransport* when he was 15. His real name was Günter but was given the nickname, Jim, in his childhood after resembling the German cartoonist, 'Jim' and it stuck. He came from Breslau, which is now in Poland. His brother, Kurt, was two years older than him, which meant he was one year too old to have been accepted to travel on the *Kindertransport*. Jim's mother, Frida Louise, father, Oskar and brother, Kurt all perished. He knew nobody when he arrived in England. He was 17 when he left the Leeds hostel and moved in with a foster family in Harehills. He worked from seven in the morning until seven at night in an aircraft factory. ■

Our wedding

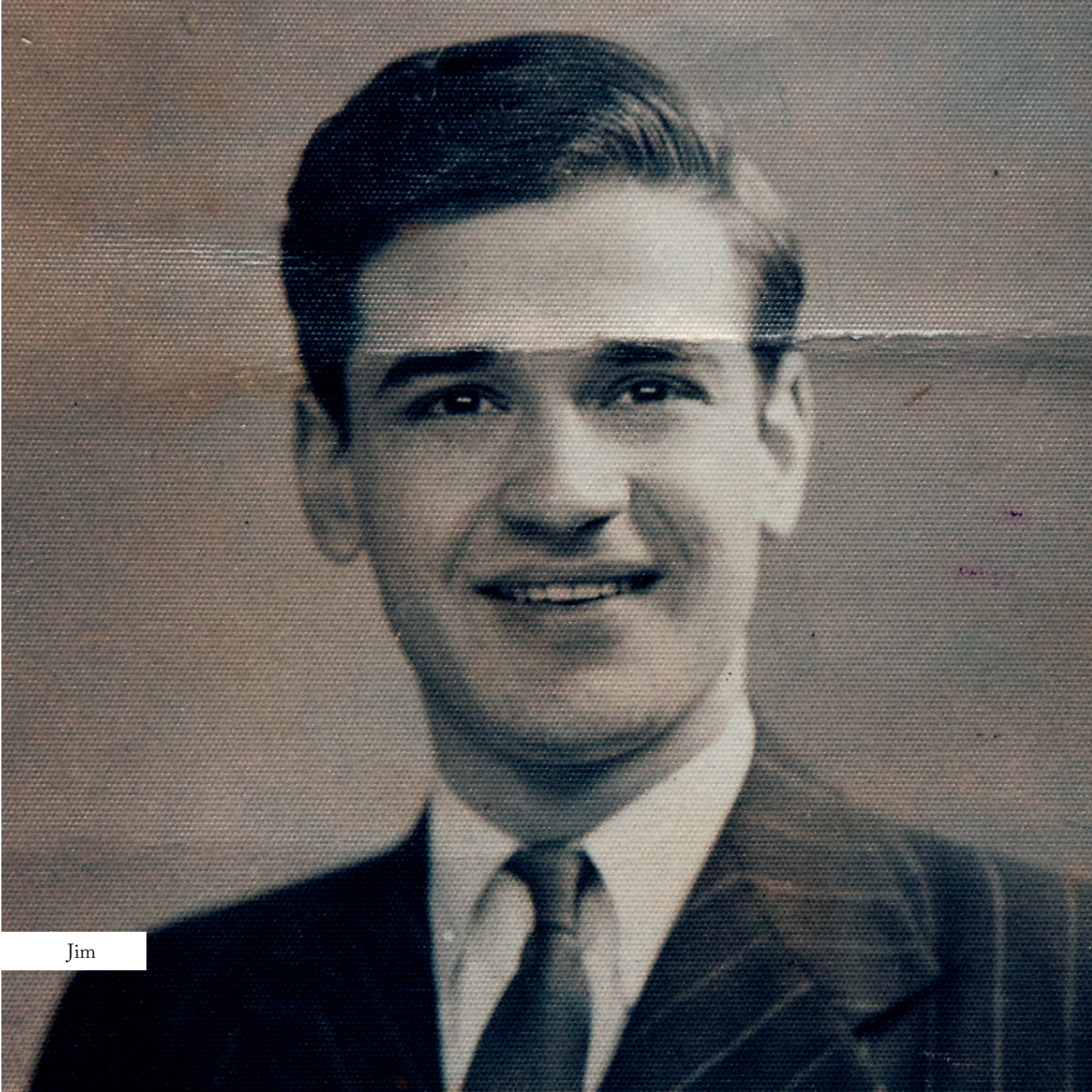
IN DECEMBER 1945, Jim and I married. I was 17 and he was 22. We had a problem obtaining our marriage license. As we had both arrived in England as minors we had been assigned to an official guardian. I can't remember his name but he was the guardian for all the refugees, on behalf of the Jewish Refugees Committee. He refused to give his permission for me to get married because he thought I was too young, but he didn't even know me!

We had already booked the wedding and were eager to have our marriage license approved. We paid a visit to the Jewish Refugees Committee office. It was located behind the BBC in a detached house on the outskirts of Leeds, opposite the university buildings. Our persistence paid off and a few months later, we received our license.

We were married in Chapeltown, where I became Mrs Gratz.. We later decided to change our surname to Grant to give our family an English name. Our wedding was very small and I think we only had about 10 guests. I was very proud of one particular present and still use it; a bread board and a bread knife. It was a gift from our doctor at the time, Dr Schindler and his wife. They were close friends of my aunt which was why they were invited to the wedding. People's expectations for wedding presents are now slightly different but, of course, this was war time.

After the ceremony, my aunt held a little tea party for us. Somebody baked an eggless cake for us, as we were rationed to one egg per week. Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Otto invited us to London for our honeymoon. We stayed with them for a week and had a lovely time. They really spoiled us.

Jim and I were looking forward to seeing our wedding photos which had been taken by Jim's best man, Joe Feiweles. A few days later we learned that Joe had forgotten to put film in the camera. Disappointingly we were left with no wedding day photographs! ■



Jim

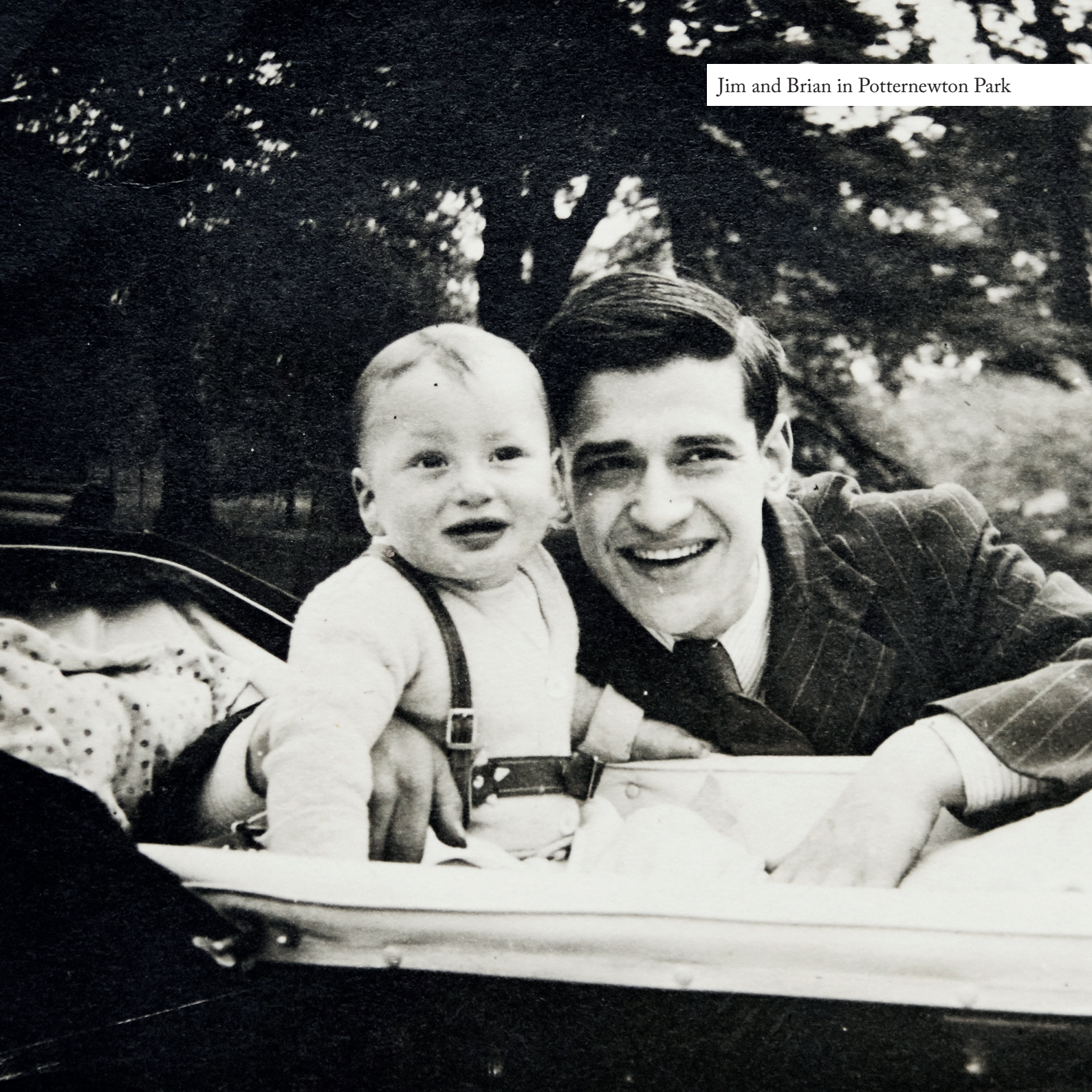
Our own home

OUR FIRST HOME was on Hillcrest View in Chapeltown and consisted of one bedroom and a sitting room in a house, which we rented from a couple of sisters. In 1946 our son Brian was born just before I was 18. We couldn't stay in that small place with a baby, so we found two rooms to rent on Cowper Street. We lived there until Brian was about 18 months. He slept in a little attic room and we lived in an old billiards room, which had been converted into a bedsit. Brian still remembers the attic window in his bedroom. There was a cooker, a sink and a fireplace. It was a reasonable size but was right up at the top of the house. In those days I could run up and down the stairs and it didn't worry me! By this time, Eva was married to Len and they had a son called Ralph. Ralph and Brian were five weeks apart in age so we spent as much time as we could with each other. We would walk around Potternewton and Roundhay Parks together.

My Aunt Gerta and Uncle Albert were now the live-in caretakers at Zion House on Chapeltown Road and Eva and Len lived with them. They decided to buy a house that was split into two flats, one for them and one for Eva and Len. They offered Jim and me the opportunity to move into Zion House, which was brilliant!

Zion House was large. It had a synagogue on the ground floor and there were offices and meeting rooms on the first floor. We had the top flat and the downstairs kitchen. It was hard work, but we stayed for quite a number of years and were able to save a little bit of money because we lived there rent free. We earned one pound per week plus money for electricity and coal for the fire. We had to keep the house clean and serve the office staff with tea and coffee during the day which kept me busy. Jackie was born in 1949. I did my work in the mornings and when Jim came home from work, he would help with the cleaning of the house once the children were in bed. We were young and capable and we managed. ■

Jim and Brian in Potternewton Park





After our return to Leeds

Moving to Australia

WE MOVED TO Australia in 1951 and remained there for about three years. Passage to Australia was on offer for £10 to people who had a career which would benefit the country. Being a tool maker, Jim's knowledge was what they wanted. We had also considered the opportunity to immigrate to Israel and live on a kibbutz but it didn't work out; the kibbutz wanted to open a factory but they lacked the finances to do it. We had nothing to lose so we sold our little bits of furniture, packed up and off we went to Australia. By this time Brian had just turned four and Jackie was one.

We left from Tilbury Docks in London on a boat called 'The Ranchey'. All our possessions were in three or four suitcases in the hold of the ship. The journey took five and a half weeks. It was a lovely boat and had originally been a cruise ship, but during the war it had been converted into an army boat. Some of the rooms had been turned into dormitories. We were well looked after. The boat was full of immigrants; most of them were families.

When we arrived in Australia we were housed initially in a camp in the Blue Mountains. We lived in a hut, but only for a matter of days while they sorted out where Jim's qualifications would be of the most use. He was given two choices: Ford Cars or the International Harvester, which was a manufacturer of tractors and machinery for farmers. Both of these jobs were located in Geelong, which is a lovely seaside town in Victoria. Jim chose the International Harvester role and was appointed as supervisor. He settled in well and enjoyed his job. Naturally some Australian nationals concerned that the English people arriving and were being given supervisor roles ahead of them. However, this was the early 1950s and education standards for locals weren't quite the same as those held by the English apprentices, so naturally they chose the men who had the knowledge.

The hostel where we were staying comprised of Nissen huts which were divided into two with three rooms in each side. There was a sitting room and two bedrooms. The laundry room along with bathrooms and shower rooms were in another hut. Everyone was English in the hostel and I made friends there. One couple became good friends, Ted and Mary. Ted was also an engineer and Mary ran the nursery in the hostel. They eventually moved to Perth with their family and we continued our friendship from a distance.



In Australia with Jackie and Brian

I tried my hand at a variety of jobs including working in the storerooms at the International Harvester. When we were not working, Jim and I used to sit at the side of the harbour together, where the boats would arrive from England with machinery parts for the factory.

Brian would have been five and Jackie two years old. They both adapted well, and took everything in their stride, although Brian wasn't too happy at school due to the strict rules. Children were hit with a ruler if they didn't do what they were told. The cane was also used in England at the time as it was commonplace in schools in those days.

We attempted to buy a home in Melbourne. We were shown a house in the Dandelion Hills but I wanted to live in a Jewish community so that the children could have some sort of Jewish education. Living there would have meant needing a car each to drive to the station to get both of the children to school but we could not afford it.

I enjoyed our life but the climate didn't agree with me. In the summer when it was very hot I would just faint! It then turned very cold in the winter. I had not even brought a coat with me, as I thought it would have always been hot in Australia. I became homesick and after about 18 months, I told Jim that I wanted to go back to England. He agreed but we had to stay in Australia for a total of three years, otherwise we would have had to repay the cost of the outward journey. Once we reached three years, we made arrangements to leave.

The journey home from Melbourne cost us £90. Compared to today that sounds very reasonable, considering the length of the journey and the wonderful food we were served every day. It was an Italian ship and although not elaborate, it had a nursery and a swimming pool, on board. There was a mix of married couples and single people who had all decided Australia was not for them. Australia didn't seem as close as it does now that we have access to aeroplanes. After six weeks we finally arrived at Tilbury in England. ■

Moving back home

WHEN WE ARRIVED back in England, my aunt and uncle had managed to find us a flat in Leeds. We had not taken our names off the waiting list for a council house when we'd left for Australia and after about three months of being back in Leeds we were allocated one. I'm not sure whether Jim left our names on the list deliberately or by accident, although I have a feeling it could have been deliberate. We lived in the council house for around two years before we bought our first house in Oakwood.

I took on a job that allowed me to work from home so I could be around in the afternoon when the children returned from school. This gave me the time to carry out the household duties which took a lot longer than they do now. I had to shop for food every day as we didn't have the mod-cons of the fridge freezer and without a washing machine, I had to wash our clothes by hand.

I worked for a firm that made material lampshades designed by the artist Willie Turr. He would deliver the frames and material to me at home. I would wind the tape around the frames in the evening and then sewed them the next day. Every few days, he would collect the completed lamp shades and I never had to leave the house. Some shades were made to order and sometimes I would introduce new designs which would be used for display. There were other ladies who worked in the same role, from their own homes too. I continued this for about three or four years, until I had Andrew in 1958.

Jim was working for Pfaff at the time, a German sewing machine firm, and I was approached to translate a booklet for them from German to English. I had a good dictionary which helped, and a very old-fashioned typewriter. The pay was good, but once Andrew was born I gave up both of my jobs. For a while I didn't work at all, as I had my hands full with two children at school and a baby.

We sold the Oakwood house in 1962 and bought the house in which I still live! Around this time, Brian was looking for work after finishing college, Jackie was in high school and Andrew was four years old.



Jackie and Andrew

Housework was still my foremost task. I think I had a fridge by this time but I still didn't have a freezer. I did however have a twin tub. It was a washing machine with a washer on one side and a spinner on the other, which meant I didn't need a wringer anymore.

Around this time Pfaff was sold and Jim was made redundant. We had friends who owned a furniture company, Bridgecraft, and they needed someone to manage customer service and complaints. Jim became a self-employed complaints manager and an expert in three-piece suites. He would travel all over the country reviewing customers' complaints and he would then assess the validity and write up a report. He represented people in court if they needed an expert in that field. In another life Jim had always wanted to be either a solicitor or a journalist, he could write the most fantastic official letters. However, he loved this job especially travelling everywhere by train.

By the time Andrew was old enough for me to think about going back to work, I was 42. I decided to approach the hospital to see if I could finally begin the nurse training I had always dreamed of, but was told I was now too old. They only accepted people up to the age of 40. I went from being too young to being too old. I never did fulfil my ambition to be a nurse.

For around 20 years, up until the age of retirement at 62, I was a supervisor in a school playground close to where we still live. I supervised the children whilst they had their lunch. It was a superb job. I loved it, and it gave me time at home to be a mother too. ■



On our Silver wedding anniversary

Just the two of us



Losing Jim

JIM BECAME ILL when he was 81, following an operation for an embolism which went wrong. One of his kidneys failed. They told me it would kill him eventually. I had to make the dining room into a bedroom for him when he was discharged from hospital. Nurses came every day to dress his wounds as he had come home with terrible bedsores. He had a year of hell, as did I. He was in terrible pain and it was a year none of us want to remember.

He needed to have someone sit with him during the night while I slept, as well as someone during the day if I needed to go shopping. He deteriorated, mentally as well as physically. The doctors were wonderful. One particular doctor came every Thursday and recommended I take a break. She arranged for Jim to be taken to St Gemma's Hospice to give me some respite, but he never returned home. Within five days he had died, which was in many ways a blessing. His life was not worth living anymore.



Jim

He died in July 2005 and it would have been our Diamond wedding anniversary that December. We had been married for just short of 60 years. People used to say, before we got married, that it wouldn't last because I was far too young. But Jim was a calm person, very thorough and we did alright! I look at 17 year olds today, like my granddaughters and they are children! But our lives were not normal, we had to grow up quickly and we were adults by the time we were 17. ■

My family, post-war

AFTER THE WAR my brother Bert and I realised that the chances of our mother having survived was unlikely. Some of the youngsters survived but our mother would have been in her fifties. I visited to the Jewish Refugee Committee office to view the lists of people who had survived the war, those who were in camps, ill or deceased. I found my mother on the deceased list. We were prepared for this news because we had not heard anything from her since the end of the war. We had an idea that this is what we would discover, but to satisfy ourselves we wanted to see the list. We didn't really expect anything cheerful out of it. I've never wanted to know which camp she ended up in.

After the war, my Aunt Dorothy reflected and questioned how she could have possibly done what she did to a 10-year-old child. She was referring to placing me with strangers, the Grade family. Jim and I always kept in touch with Uncle Otto and Aunt Dorothy – we often visited them in the holidays. Without Otto and Dorothy I might not have been here. They had to pay £50 to sponsor me and then pay 17 shillings and sixpence a week to whoever was looking after me. I only found this out 20 years ago.

Bert had been an interpreter for the British Army whilst posted in Germany. He got married and had four children; three sons and one daughter. He later worked in an office until he died from thrombosis following an operation when he was only 62. ■



A poster of my cousin Eva hangs in the Jewish school, Jawne-Schülerin in Cologne. It states she emigrated to America but she actually lived in Leeds!

Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

I HAVE FOUR grandsons and four granddaughters along with four great-grandchildren; three girls and a boy. When we all get together, as we did for my 90th birthday, it is very noisy! They have all done very well, I can't fault them.

Brian studied teaching and taught English and Art. He lived in Birmingham for about 20 years and now at the age of 72, Brian and his wife Amanda, have four sons between them and moved to a 200-year-old cottage in Lincolnshire about a year ago.

Jackie was an excellent cook – she definitely takes after me. She went to catering college in Leeds and qualified when she was 18. She became the head of catering in Allerton Grange School at the age of 19. She had to cater for over 1000 students and teachers. Her biggest challenge were her older members of staff, who found it difficult having a much younger boss. She married David and they have two daughters.

Andrew graduated in a technical, computing subject and works in IT as an Application Engineer. He is married to Jane and has two daughters. They live on the outskirts of Worksop.

The hardest part of getting old is losing all my friends and family one by one. I can't share memories. There is no-one left to whom I can say: "Do you remember?" But that's life, you have to take it how it comes and I count my blessings. I'm happy to still be here. I'm in touch with the children and my grandchildren keep in contact.

Now I'm older, I realise that I didn't know my parents. As a child I just see them as parents and didn't see them as people in their own right. I have no idea of their opinions or beliefs on anything. It makes me feel sad, that I only knew them as a 10-year-old child.

My ideas of the world were fashioned by my aunt and uncle, my cousin and my brother. I never had that from my mother and father. However, I remember them being wonderful parents. I remember sitting on my father's lap and him telling me tales and jokes. I also remember taking my pillow and going to sleep in their bed between the two of them. When I was ill, which I was regularly with tonsillitis, they gave me treats like marzipan. I remember that we always had Friday night dinner together as a family. ■



Brian, Jackie and Andrew

Returning to Cologne

A YEAR OR so ago, I was invited to Cologne to witness the unveiling of a Stolperstein at my family's former home. This is translated as a 'stumbling block' which is a concrete cube, bearing a brass plate and inscribed with the name and life dates of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution. The stones were sunk into the original pavement outside the house that we were forced to leave.

I couldn't face going myself but eight of my family made the journey. My children and grandchildren visited the places that I had always told them about. They discovered information which I did not know, such as the house we were forced to move into was actually a Jewish ghetto.

Our house faced a small square, with a church at the end of it. I remember looking out of the window and watching the children coming out of the church, all dressed in white. I thought it was wonderful. It was my dream to be on the other side of the road, dressed in white with them all. My family said I couldn't possibly remember that but I remember it as clearly as if it happened yesterday. It's amazing what memories I have kept from a young age. On their trip to Cologne my family found that church and the building where my house once stood. ■



The church view from my bedroom window



The memorial outside the site of my former school, Jawne-Schulerin, remembering the 1,100 children from Cologne who were murdered along with the rescue of 130 Jewish children



My childhood home once stood above this low corner building



Stolpersteine representing my parents, brother and I are sunken into the pavement outside my family home in Cologne





These Days

ON A MONDAY I go to 'Knit and Natter'. I spend a lot of time knitting for charity. The knitted items go to three Jewish nurseries in Israel. I knit blankets, jumpers, hats, scarves, and dolls. I also knit cute little teddies. One teddy will take me two or three nights. I never knit anything for myself because I don't need it and yarn is so expensive. It's cheaper for me to buy something ready-made rather than knit it myself.

On a Wednesday a neighbour takes me to an embroidery class and Jackie and David come to my house every Tuesday, so I cook a meal for them. Thursday is open to any visitors and Friday is my shopping afternoon. Saturday and Sunday are either for quiet times or for seeing visitors. I have spent many hours tending to my garden and you can still find me with the hoe on a nice day, organising my plants and shrubs but I tend to rely more on my gardener now. ■

With my children today

My story

I HAVE BEEN asked to tell my story before but I can't tell it in front of a crowd. I'm fine on a one-to-one basis but in front of a crowd I become emotional. It isn't easy to go back to the beginning.

Last night my brother was in my dreams. I've also dreamt about Eva and my aunt and uncle. It isn't a conscious thing; I hadn't dreamt about them until I started telling my story. The brain is a funny thing, it has no connection to the past but the people are still there.

I didn't burden my children with my story until they were in their mid to late teens. I didn't want to weigh them down with my feelings. They told me when they were adults that they didn't want to ask Jim and I anything about our history because they thought it would upset us. They knew the background but they weren't aware of the details. They all have some sort of anti-German feeling. Obviously, Jim and I have unintentionally passed this on, but of course I don't have anything against the Germans of today. I don't hold them responsible. However, I've never been back to Germany; not even for the unveiling of the Stolpersteine. I couldn't see a purpose. Why go back to a memory that I can do without? I'd rather go to the Yorkshire Dales!

The children asked why we didn't teach them German when they were young. I couldn't do it, even now I don't like to hear it. I can speak German like a 10-year-old but I can't properly express myself. I haven't really heard it since leaving Germany and I can hardly understand it when I listen to others speaking it. There are many different accents and dialects and modern German is completely different. If I read a letter, I can get the gist of it. I become rather uncomfortable if someone says to me that I'm German. I am not. I have a British passport and English standards. I have no connection with Germany. ■

My advice

IF I COULD give any advice to people, I would say be tolerant of other people's views and beliefs. Do not judge. Everybody is a human being. One of my grandsons married a South African. My other grandson married a Filipino. I have taught all of my family that everybody is a human being, irrespective of their religion and race. Everyone has the same feelings, the same ambitions and the same needs. ■





All the family celebrating my 90th birthday, 2018



About the AJR

Founded in 1941 by Jewish refugees from Central Europe, The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) is the national charity representing and supporting Holocaust refugees and survivors living in Great Britain. Primarily delivering social, welfare and care services, the AJR has a nationwide network of regional groups offering members a unique opportunity to socialise in their local area. Members receive support from volunteers and can obtain advice and assistance on welfare rights as well as on Holocaust reparations.

The AJR is committed to the education of future generations about the Holocaust and is now the UK's largest benefactor of education and memorialisation programmes and projects which promote teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

About 70,000 refugees, including approximately 10,000 children on the *Kindertransport*, arrived in Great Britain from Nazi-occupied Europe in the 1930s. The AJR extends membership to anyone who fled a Nazi-occupied country as a Jewish refugee or who arrived in Great Britain as a Holocaust survivor. We also welcome the descendants and spouses of the refugees as members.

