



Rudi's Story, Chapter 6

Do you feel when you look back, do you think your parents felt that this was home?

Oh yes. It was home because the German home was finished. Although we left in November '37 when things were not as hot as they became later, it was trauma to be in Germany and they were, and I and my sister were glad to get out and so Britain, Bradford became home straight away. That doesn't mean that there weren't difficulties, there were. But home it became immediately.

I can tell a little story about that. On the ship, the Deutschland as I mentioned, we were on it for 24 hours. On the morning of the day my father took us all to the back of the ship, the stern, and he had taken with him the keys to the flat where we lived because he had paid for the whole of that month and he wasn't going to let anybody get into the flat for the time that he'd paid for. Took the keys and threw them ceremoniously overboard into the wake of the ship and said "That's the end of Germany for us." It must have been a very moving moment for him.

But you as a family made a very good life here. When did you become naturalised?

Probably 1950 or thereabouts. I really can't remember. It was some years because there was a mass of applications for naturalisations and I suppose the Home Office was overwhelmed with paperwork and it took some time before this came to fruition. But that was a good moment as well.

And can you tell me a little bit about meeting your lovely wife?

Yes well I was, as I said before, I did my National Service in the Army after I qualified as a dentist having spent 6 months as a postgraduate student in London at the Eastman clinic. I then went into the – after I came out of the army I decided to spend a week or two travelling on the continent and I was stationed with the army in Austria. When I was interviewed for the army they said do I speak any languages, I said "yes, I speak German" so they sent me to Austria, well that was one thing the army did right. So I decided to go with the medical officer with whom I was stationed at the time to go to Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey on a long journey and back and all this by train and ship of course. And after a few months I gave a talk about my journey to the

synagogue here and this was reviewed in the then synagogue review and a young lady in London whom I'd met fleetingly, in fact her parents and my parents were quite friendly with one another, she saw this and thought that it would be a nice opportunity to meet me again [smiles] and invited me to give this talk, the same talk in London to the youth group that she belonged to in fact the B'nai B'rith youth group attached to the West London synagogue. And I went along there to give the talk and there was my future wife Marianne, whom I'd not met before, but she caught my eye and afterwards she came to me and said that she'd also been on the particular train that I had taken in Yugoslavia to Venice but that was that and I didn't know her name even. But my sister had been to this meeting and I had to ring her up and say "can you find out the name of this girl" which she did and the next time I was in London I rang up and said "would you like to come out to lunch with me" and she had forgotten all about me and had to ask "do I know you?" [smiles] and I said "Well I gave a talk". "Oh yes," she said, "I remember now". But she still wasn't quite sure, she was in fact going out with somebody else at the time and she put her hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone and said to her father "There's this boy who gave a talk a few weeks ago and he's asked me out to lunch, shall I go?" and he said "Well it'll be the middle of the day, nothing much can happen to you" so he said yes. So she came back on the phone and said "Yes I'll come". So we met at the Lyons Corner House in Leicester Square for lunch and then went to Windsor I think to see the castle and to a concert in the evening. That's how it started.

And how did Marianne take to Bradford?

Not very well initially. She had lived in the country when they came to England – she's from Germany as well – they lived in the country, in the west country, then moved to London so she was a Londoner really in her most formative years and thought that Bradford was a bit of a backwater. So she didn't take kindly to it but [laughs] she knew that I lived in Bradford so she knew what she was letting herself in for. I don't think she's ever got used to it even now. She certainly likes going to London, but she likes coming back to Bradford as well. But we've been married now 55 years I think it is so haven't done too badly.

We have four children and four spouses and eight grandchildren. Before Anthony was born – Anthony's the eldest – in 1959 we decided to change our name from Liebowitz to something a bit more Anglicised, Leavor, but we wanted to have it a bit special not just have it L E V E R but to have it L E A V O R which is fairly unique, like Liebowitz was. So although we always had to spell

our original name we still have to spell our new name because it's not spelt the normal way.

Can you tell me if you've ever encountered any anti-Semitism since you've been in this country?

Only one tiny episode but it's so small it's hardly worth mentioning but as you asked I will tell you. At the Grammar school a boy called me a Jew boy and I didn't like that. I went to the headmaster who happened to take one of the lessons so at the end of the lesson I went to him, I said "Excuse me sir, I want to report that one of the boys, I know who it was, called me a Jew boy and I didn't think that was right." And he said "Well you are aren't you?" [laughs] and that was his reply. So I had to leave that alone. That's the only experience I had of anti-Semitism. That was – the boy probably didn't think any more about it than saying you've got an ugly face or whatever.