**Alice Malcolm - Before The War**

INT: Alice Malcolm, in her house in Giffnock on Tuesday the 11th of March and you’re going to tell me your name, your age…

AM: 2014.

INT: 2014. You’re going to tell me your name and your age and then we are going to, basically, talk about your life story. So go for it.

AM: Very good, very good. I am, as declared, Mrs Alice Malcolm and I am eighty-nine and I hope to celebrate my ninetieth birthday in August.

INT: OK. So basically I’m going to ask you to just talk through your life story and I will prompt you if you stop. So start at the beginning; tell me about…Tell me about growing up, tell me about your family, your background, where it all started?

AM: Well I was born in Vienna, my mother was Viennese, my father came from Istanbul, Turkey, and unfortunately my father died young and my mother was a very young widow. And in those days young… woman didn’t work but my mother had to work. She was extremely talented and very beautiful, and so she had various jobs. I went to the same school as where my mother went. In 1936 I was twelve and Hitler’s Nazi regime was raging in Germany. Everybody in Austria was worried. Well my mother at that time was working in a political office, which was Social Democratic (it would be called here now) and she was called by her boss into the office with windows and doors closed and locked.

Basically she was told that, although on the front their office was still democratic, they were already taken over by the Germans and he would have to dismiss her at once and if she did not leave Austria within the week, or yesterday if possible, both she and he would be dead meat. He declared that he would destroy all records of her having worked there because she was Jewish and he understood that she was a widow. I came home from school that day, not to home because I always went to the business which my grandmother ran, and my mother to my surprise was sitting there, telling my grandmother what I have just said. So…Mum took me, snow white in the face as she was then, by the hand to buy an international newspaper, I think it was The London Times, and from there we went [to see] an English teacher to whom she said, “Find me a job at once.

The only way I can get out of here is by going into domestic service in England. ” He did and when we left there we went to a photographer to get these passport photos. I was inwardly shaking. The only idea that I had, that I was going to be on my own, no mother and no father. But I was already living with my grandmother. My mother left very, very quickly and I continued at school[in Vienna] for two more years.

INT: Wow.

AM: Nobody knew that Hitler was coming in 1938. However, I was in a class of forty [students]; twenty of us were Jewish. We normally didn’t really mix very well with the non-Jewish girls and they didn’t mix well with us, but we were not with ‘pistols at the ready’ [so to speak].

Well, from there on I start my life that you want to know now. I just continued at school and corresponded with my mother. She obviously was not expected, or wanted, to come back, but she was a heroine. She [only] came back [once] to warn her own friends and my friends’ parents if they had any relatives to let the children go.

INT: Wow.

AM: We were not allowed to see her; she did not live at home because we didn’t know [which civilians were already part of the Nazi party]. I found out later that my grandmother’s next-door neighbour came out the day Hitler marched in, in full SS uniform.

INT: Wow.

AM: His mother was a friend of my grandmother’s; they both came from the same village. But we didn’t know until that day that her son [had joined the Nazi party]. And I wonder whether she [his mother] even was aware of it. However, that was it. 1938 came; the shock to me was so severe. My brother was not [living] with my grandmother and me at that time and when he came the following morning he said, asked me, what had happened to me. I said “Nothing. I was in the house with Grandmother”, who had earphones and turned pure white when Schuschnigg, who was the President of Austria, announced on the radio, “God Bless Austria, you are now being taken over by the Nazi regime.” And poof! I heard the bang through the earphones. They shot him because of what he said. [Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg, the man who had defied Hitler, was arrested by the Gestapo and spent several years in a variety of Nazi concentration camps including Dachau and Sachsenhausen.] My brother said…

INT: And she turned white?

AM: Yes.

INT: Her hair? Or her…?

AM: No…she was…

INT: Her face.

AM: She turned…She had high colour but she was in bed with the earphones. Now, my brother said, “Go to the mirror and see what happened to you.” I went to the mirror and I saw…My cat-green eyes, that everybody remarked on, had changed colour. I didn’t realise the depth of the shock that I personally received. But we carried on going to school, coming home and taking the remarks we got from other pupils. Then…

INT: Remarks like what?

AM: “Don’t speak to me,” “Just don’t associate…”

INT: Wow.

AM: There was one little girl; she was very small, and she was the baker’s daughter. She was very ill, she had broken glands, mumps had broken through, and she was very sweet and she sort of whispered to me, “You can still come and buy cakes.” But, as for the rest… we knew we had to get out. The very next day I saw what nobody should see, let alone a child.

The worst…adult men with hats and coats, in particular Jewish looking men, religious people, climbing monuments with a toothbrush in their hand and they had to scrub the top of the monuments with a toothbrush and heaven help them if it wasn’t done properly. I stood only for a minute and then ran away…but what did I run into?…Across the road from where we lived with my grandmother then, was a leather shop. The man who owned the shop hung himself with his leather. And various other things… When the bad weather came along I found out that I couldn’t skate anymore. With the shock I lost my balance, not just the colour of my eyes. At school I was very wiry. I could swing off the monkey rings whether there was a safety net or not. I could run on the planks whether they were high or low. [Suddenly] I had no balance; I could do none of it anymore and it never, ever came back.

The way things were, not pleasant to say the least, I wrote a letter to my mother and I said, “If I don’t get out of here quickly I will never get out.” My brother didn’t live with us because it was obvious that men were taken away very quickly and people actually said that the Austrians went mad like the Germans never did.

INT: Wow.

AM: The Germans did things by strategy; the Austrians just let their wrath go wherever. There were some that were helpful, like my grandmother did…sold jewellery, put it into pawn, beautiful linen that she had and she traded that for food for us. You can ask me what you want to know…I can’t carry on unless you ask me.

INT: So tell me a bit about your Jewish life in Austria before all this.

AM: Oh, well I lived very near to the Reform Synagogue that was called Tempelgasse and the beadle, the Shamash of the Orthodox Synagogue, which was in the third district and we lived in the second district, the orthodox Synagogue beadle always invited me because his daughter bore the same name as me, Alice, and we were friends. So he always invited me. But Jewish life was what I made myself. School was seven days but on the Saturday we went in the mornings and to the temple in the afternoons. And the Reform temple was filled to capacity with children because many schools had you come in from eight to one.

INT: But you, did you have Hanukkahs and Shabbat candles and things like that?

AM: When we could afford it because we didn’t have much money.

INT: Right.

AM: And we didn’t have much of anything. My grandmother traded for us to be kept alive and was as cheerful as she could be and cheered us up.

Alice describes what happened to her mother once she arrived in Britain. She goes on to talk about her own journey to this country and some of her early experiences here.

INT: Right, so tell me… so the two next things then are, if you can bear it, what became of your grandmother and then your journey to Britain.

AM: Well my mother went to an office in London. She was…when she first came to London, into domestic service, into the post that was arranged for her to have; the only way that she could get an entrance permit because it was quotas; Britain took in people by quota number. And she eventually got permission from the office, which was called the Inter-Aid Jewish Office for Children.

INT: The what? The Inter…?

AM: Inter-Aid

INT: Inter-Aid, all right.

AM: Jewish Office for Children. She eventually managed to get a permit for me to come.

INT: Right.

AM: But before that…during that time, sometime, the people she was working for turned out to be British Nazis.

INT: Wow.

AM: And she had a very, very bad time there. On the point of collapse she went/had the good sense to go, but she didn’t speak English, to go into an agent and ask for another job. She was sent to Northwood in Middlesex to Scottish people, which was wonderful.

The gentleman was not Scottish but the lady was. So I eventually got a permit in 1938 at the end of my school year and packed a small trunk, mistakenly with books from school. And my grandmother gave me a cushion to sit in the corridor train, which was third class.

INT: Yeah.

AM: And a bottle of water because the Viennese water was rated very high, and a little beret, crocheted beret, for my mother. That’s all I had, that we could afford to bring. So Mummy was working for the people in Northwood and I arrived…My uncle, my mother’s brother, took me to the station [in Vienna]. That was the [last I saw of him, for decades], with an SS man on either side of him.

It was an ordinary civilian train; Nazis were on it in uniform, civilians were on it – you didn’t know who was who but you could tell the refugees somehow, because other people were coming on domestic services as well. I was very happy to think I was going to see my mother and I had taken my curlers with me. I thought ahead and the hat I was wearing I had taped so that I could keep the curlers in and keep the hat on top. When we got to the border of Austria and Germany the train was stopped and any Jewish, every Jewish person was hauled out. They came in and took you out and a lot of people had permits but a lot of people didn’t. Those with permits, I think most of them, were allowed back on the train. It depended, I suppose, on what they considered, but when everybody was hauled out I stayed put. When they said “Aus!” I was deaf. And I supposed I looked a little bit mad.

INT: With your curlers!

AM: And very small, insignificant. That I was not taken out, so I stayed put. Wherever the train was going I was in it.

INT: Wow.

AM: Those who came back were going the same way as me but I didn’t really know that. It was night time, time [to put in] your curlers and go to sleep. Sleep evaded me, as it had for me for a long time. There were various ships; I didn’t know which one was shouting, “We’re leaving!”…in French. I had a smattering of French. When I finally decided I couldn’t shut the case, I’ll go onto a ship. I went on the ship…what do you call that man that stands like…?

INT: Like a purser or something?

AM: Yeah, he saw my permit and said “We are just leaving, get off quick! You are on the wrong ship!” .“Which way shall I go?” I was able to say that in French, and he pointed me back, not where I’d walked on, but back. And I was on the English ship. I didn’t know anybody; I didn’t know whether I should stay where I was standing, you know. They shut the gates and shoved me in. The ship was full to capacity and off we went. I was expecting and hoping that my mother would meet me in Dover. It was not a long sail; it was a very short sail. But when the ship stopped it was Dover and people were shouting; they were coming, they were going, they were getting off the ship and somebody was shouting – “Alice Levi! Alice Levi!, Levi Alice!” But my grandmother had told me “You don’t speak to anyone. And even when you are eventually settled in your new home never discuss politics, never say what happened. ”

INT: Wow.

AM: So I stayed schtum [silent]. They called me but I didn’t [answer] I am Alice, I am Alice. I didn’t know I was Levi. I was Levi. So everybody got off except me! When I eventually got off and there…at the port was my mother with the same friend who had been calling me, but I didn’t know! She was consoling her that I will be there somewhere. But she was afraid that I hadn’t arrived and she was consoling her. And then when I got off and she was there with her friend who was my… whom I always knew her as ‘Auntie [Monica]. It was her friend; my mother got her out on one of the occasions when she came home. Again, on the domestic permit.

INT: OK, here’s a question. How on earth in those days, because I’m so used to mobile phones and the internet, how on earth could your mother have possibly known which train you were going to be able to get?

AM: [Through] my grandmother, I found out afterwards.

INT: Right.

AM: My mother was so upset that she sent a telegram to my grandmother, who sent a telegram back (poor soul, count the pennies she spent on a telegram) to say I had left.

INT: Right, right.

AM: More than that she didn’t know.

INT: So she was just waiting for each boat? Wow. OK, so from Dover to Scotland? That’s a long story. Dover to London first?

AM: I was… yes my mother was allowed to bring me to her new employers who was, the lady was from Glasgow and the gentleman was English. Now I was allowed to stay with her.

INT: The North West…?

AM: Western Polytechnic.

INT: North Western Polytechnic in Kentish Town, yes.

AM: In Kentish Town. But I was to live in digs in Kensal Rise.

INT: Right.

AM: That lady was doing/taking in refugee children and the Committee paid for us. It was eking out her livelihood in London.

INT: Yes.

AM: She was from Manchester. So this was [the beginning of ] me hearing different [British] accents.

INT: Right.

AM: But I was sent to her from my mother’s employer with a carload of roses from their garden.

INT: Aww.

AM: And when my mother introduced me to that Scottish lady I kept shaking her hand because I didn’t know it wasn’t custom to kiss a lady’s hand. The lady was laughing. Until my mother said to me in German: “That’s enough”.

**Alice Malcolm – Life During The War**

Alice describes her education. Then she speaks about the difficulties she met because she was a Jewish Refugee. We learn about her experiences as a kitchen maid in a stately home.

AM: So I went to school [in England]. I was not at school for very long, when the war broke out . In those days people selling papers were running round the streets, ‘Austria is Germany’; ‘Austria in the war with Britain’; ‘Britain is at War’ – I was terribly upset. What’s going to happen to my Grandmother?  I was already in bed in my digs and I ran into the street as I was, in my nightdress, there again I got told off. Not often I got told off but I did get told off – “How dare you come out here in that. Get back in there!”

That was my landlady, she meant well. It was a Jewish lady and she entertained a lady who had come also from Vienna and had nobody to go to and she used to invite her to sit by the fireside on her half day. And she ordered me to get back. I was very upset, very upset.

Well not immediately, immediately school continued in London. Gasmasks were handed out. My headmistress took a liking to me right from the start. Her name was Gertrude Armstrong. She supervised. I was to get a uniform like all the others. I guess she sent the bill to the office, I don’t know that. But I had a uniform with my badge, of which I was very proud. I had a velour hat to match my uniform in the winter and a panama hat for the summer; little white gloves and a blue gingham dress in the summer. And at the weekend on Saturday I went to look for a synagogue, from Kendal Rise I walked to the next district.

I think, I’m not sure, but I think it was called Queens Park, and I saw a synagogue. I went in, went up to the gallery. It was not very busy so I sat in the front row and looked around and on the side gallery I saw one of my Viennese classmates. I was ecstatic inside myself, waited for the service to finish and then singled her out. Her name was Erika Neumann and she told me that she was with a nice, young Jewish couple and she told me to follow her home and I would be able to visit her then. Well I followed her home, it was not terribly far from my digs, and another day, I think it was…it wasn’t on the Sunday, on Sunday I used to visit my mother. But when I did go, the lady who, I think they adopted her…

INT: Yes.

AM: She came to the door and said I had never to come again because she is now a London girl and she is not to speak German or have anything to do with me or anyone from the past. She is now their daughter. I did not attempt to find her. It was by chance, but from that day on I never attempted to find anyone.

AM: I did go to the office that helped my mother to bring me to try and bring my grandmother over but they said they have so many children to rescue that there was no chance. Well…The Blitz started in London and we had to be evacuated. I don’t know how it came about but I was to go to Luton with a few of my classmates. One of them was a cockney girl, Susan, with rosy cheeks, small (I was also small) and we sort of sat together, but my English was not very good yet. However, we arrived. I don’t know what happened to my case that I brought from Austria; I have no idea what happened to any of my things.

I think I rescued one of the books, or two of the books, but I don’t know what happened to anything else. Anyway, we arrived in Luton and each class had their own teacher whose responsibility seemed to be to get the pupils accommodated somewhere. Mrs Titwood was my head teacher and I was put into a house, a little house. It became evening. We had something for high tea and we were put to the bedroom. We had to share a double bed. The lady sat, knelt at the side of Susan’s bed, gave her an apple to eat, to clean her teeth with, and said to Susan “Repeat after me” and it was the Lord’s Prayer, which was said at school. Then she came to me, gave me the apple, and said, “Alice, you repeat after me now.” Upon which I said, “Thank you very much but I am Jewish.” “What? No Jew shall have shelter in my house!”

INT: Wow.

AM: “In the morning you are out!” And so I was. I’d only a little case and my…what do you call it…? The gas bag.

INT: Gas mask.

AM: Gas mask. Mrs Titwood came and said, “I’ve been informed of what took place and I’ve been trying all morning to find you accommodation but because you’re Jewish I had great difficulty.”

INT: And she told you that? Lovely.

AM: She had to tell me because there was a small Jewish community but they wouldn’t have me either.

INT: Tell us about that.

AM: It may be that it was a second home to them, that they had just taken it on to escape from London. Because people from London travelled to Luton and they had businesses in London or jobs or whatever.

INT: Yeah.

AM: Anyway, she said, “I have only just found a home for you. You are the only person they are going to take in as a result of what I’ve told them.” The name was Alcorn – A-L-C-O-R-N. They had one little daughter called Pamela. Wouldn’t it be nice if I met her? And they were lovely people. The gentleman worked for a biscuit company and they were absolutely lovely to me. Unfortunately the lady suffered from arthritis and she was only a young woman, pretty lady, but I was allowed to help her in the kitchen.

School only took place once a week, which we shared with the high school in Luton. We met every day under the bandstand in the park and often got soaked but this once a week was most interesting because it was not to learn anything but it was art.

INT: Right.

AM: And there was another Jewish girl in my school in London who was evacuated but she was not in my class and she was a lovely featured girl and she was this day made the model to sit in the art class and we had to draw her, and mine won the prize. I was so thrilled with that, Ingrid her name was, she was German and she didn’t last. I don’t know whether her parents took her back to London or what but she did not last. It was not a very happy time.

We were knitting there. I knitted a pair of gloves and it was so cold that I was shrivelled up and the knitting was so tight that I’ve disliked knitting ever since. I still hunch my shoulders if I try to knit. I don’t know how or why but somehow it came about that my headmistress had been in touch with my teacher and had said to her that I…camps were being organised for refugees; they were called ‘aliens’, ‘friendly aliens’ and she thought that I would have to go into one of those camps. Although it was not legal until a certain age, but they didn’t know what to do with me so they thought I would have to go there. So the headmistress found a type of people, Admiral and Lady Meade-Featherstonhaugh. Featherstonhaugh, in an estate in Petersfield. The estate is now on view to the public – it’s called Uppark, U-P-P-A-R-K. Because it’s on view, Adrian [my son] told me because he wanted to take me, I said “No way”.

Well I was taken in to be a kitchen maid. Now, they entertained the Queen and I could look out from the basement and see the Queen Mother and all the nobility. The men used to come into the kitchen with rabbits to be cooked, skinned and cooked for their dogs. I learned how to skin a rabbit because I was a kitchen maid and I was to be a help to the chef and the assistant chef who was a Hungarian lady called Veronica Klaus. She was not Jewish; she was a very staunch Catholic. I have never yet met the chef because he was permanently drunk and never, ever showed up and so it fell upon Veronica to do all the cooking and entertaining for the nobility and on me to do all the cleaning of the vegetables as well as the scrubbing of the corridors.

I used to get up at six in the morning to do the cleaning of the corridors, which housed the troops on their way. And they had nowhere to go, there was no toilets or anything for them and I had to clean that up before I started cleaning the vegetables for everybody. The plus was that Lady Meade sometimes asked me upstairs to find out different things about me; she was interested. When I cut myself and it went septic she took me to the doctor. She had me registered so I wouldn’t have to go into one of the refugee camps. And Veronica always gave me double helpings of food and I put on weight. But when it came to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I hadn’t seen a Jewish face in a long, long time. I wrote to the committee and said that I would like to attend a service. Where could I find such a thing? The answer came back, everything was done by letters; there was no phones, or there were phones but not for me.

INT: Yeah.

AM: And she had written to tell me that somebody would meet me in Petersfield because Uppark is in the country, beyond the village. Petersfield was the nearest town and she told me where to go in Petersfield. Of course I was getting paid so I had money for a bus but the butler said he would take me. Little did I know I would be pillion riding on a motorbike! I hung onto him, hung my arms round his waist for dear life! Down the hill, up the dale, and then he just drove away. I met that lady and she was not Jewish and she took me to a Jewish house where the service was to take place.

INT: Oh right.

AM: There were not many people, enough to fill a little house and I looked towards the back and there was a kitchen. I heard somebody groaning and I went in and it was a young woman pregnant. I didn’t know anything about what to do in a case like that but I was willing…Now, in later years I found out the lady was the sister of who became the Rabbi’s wife in Giffnock.

INT: Ah right.

AM: How’s that? And then I went in to the hall, into the service, which upset me terribly… Not for myself but because of the woman who was there sobbing, sobbing. Her little boy had just been killed by an accident in the street.

I thought my problems were none at all. Anyway, I stayed and they said, “You cannot go back because it’s Yom Kippur” – that was Yom Kippur, “You stay here.” And I shared room with…woman I shared a bed with who became…Rebbetzin [Rabbi’s wife] Rubinstein.

**Alice Malcolm – Integration**

Alice explains how she came to live in Glasgow. She then talks about her career in nursing. Finally she describes meeting her husband and tells the interviewer about her family.

AM: Well I stayed there in domestic service for a while. In that… during that time the people my mother was working for in Northwood, the lady being Scottish, said to my mother, “You can stay here and get another job or whatever or you can come with us to Scotland.” Well they had been very, very good to my mother and me because I was allowed to visit her every Sunday and she was allowed to wash my uniform together when she did their laundry so I was always spotless at school. And she [my mother]went with them to Glasgow. So one day again I wrote a letter to my mother and said, ‘I would like to be where you are. Can you find a way?’ And there was such an office for refugees in Glasgow, Pollokshields. And she wrote back to me.

‘Yes you can but you would have to work in the same position as elsewhere but here.’ So I thanked the people and left, with my little case, on my own to London. I took a train from London and looked out the window as we approached Glasgow, it was a long journey in those days and everything looked so black. The buildings were very, very dirty from soot and smoke. Yes, it looked quite depressing really. I don’t know how I never noticed anything like that in Vienna. I don’t know. I suppose I was more aware then. Well, I think I said that…yes my mum’s employers were very kind to me and I was able to stay there, to come to visit on a Sunday, unless mum sometimes came to London.

INT: But you had moved to Glasgow by then?

AM: Yeah but this is in Glasgow, yes.

INT: Oh I see, right.

AM: Yes. It was still the same people, yes. What do you want from me?

INT: So tell me about what happened when you came to Glasgow? What work did you do? Were you studying? This was still wartime wasn’t it?

AM: Oh yes it was very much wartime. When I went to see Miss Lehman, who was the secretary in the Pollokshields Office for Refugees, she said I would have, I would have to go into essential work. which is munitions factory work or… she couldn’t really say what I could do.

And I said, well “I was at school being trained, or getting training, to become a chef.” But of course rationing – there was no food to cook anything with. But the other trades that were being taught were nursing, millinery and tailoring. She said, “The only thing that I could offer you of that lot is nursing because it is essential.” And I said “Well, I would like that.” She said, “It is being treated as if you were in the army so I suggest that you don’t go for training but that you go into a nursing home just as a help.” I had time… six months before I would be eighteen by that time…no I was seventeen when I came. So at seventeen when I came to Glasgow I needed a job for pocket money and I was asked to be a nanny to a little boy who is, who was Seymour…what was his name now? Diane Wolfson’s cousin…?

INT: Wow.

AM: And I was his nanny for several months. Seymour Gordon. And then I applied for several nursing homes and the one that I was recommended to I had to have two recommendations and I got one from the other Jewish lady who was a nurse in Clarkston, was Mrs Livingstone, and I got one from a doctor who knew my mother from Vienna and he was a doctor in Stobhill Hospital by that time. So I had recommendations from Mrs Livingstone and Dr. Horowitz. That was medical recommendations and I went to present myself in a place that was a women’s hospital and maternity called Redlands, in the West End. And I was employed; I was employed.

INT: Yay.

AM: Well I didn’t know anything about anything but I became very familiar with all sorts of medical terms. I was…my first job was in the nursing home…the maternity, the maternity home.

INT: Yeah.

AM: On night duty. I was to stay behind a senior nurse called Taylor who was very Glaswegian Scottish, and I couldn’t understand a word she said so instead of being like I was to you, in saying you garble too quick, I said “Would you please teach me Scottish?” and she said “I’ll larn you Scottish, lass”.

INT: That’s nice.

AM: And she taught me some terrible words and I didn’t know they were terrible words. And she told me what I had to do and instructed me to follow her into the bathroom, which was a slunge [a sink with an open waste-pipe] with a big sink and a big basket of soiled baby’s nappies. And there was a huge toilet brush. “Switch on the cold tap” and she said it in Glasgow bad words what I had to do. I’ll say it in nice…the same words but not in the Glasgow way. She said “You slunge the shite off the nappies.” Only she didn’t say it like that!

And I am learning the Scottish twang and repeating it with every nappy so it would stay in my mind and the door opened and the night supervisor came and she said “Nurse!” I was already being called nurse, I was so proud of myself, seventeen.

“What are you doing?” And I’d practised this, the way she said it – “I am slunging the shite aff the nappies!” And she turned purple and couldn’t find anybody else to interview. Everybody disappeared, they were all laughing, disappeared. And that was the first Scottish word that I learned! Well I stayed there and I visited Nurse Livingstone and one of the patients that was in the…not in the maternity but in the hospital side of the home, was a beautiful lady who had the most beautiful pale blue nightdress with matching dressing gown. She was blonde with blue eyes and most unusual features and her name was Esther Green. I got to know her because she observed me. Unbeknownst to me I was doing whatever anybody asked me. I didn’t know what my duties were and what they weren’t so whatever anybody asked me I did.

So I ended up doing everybody’s duties and they were having a lovely coffee or tea in the room. And one day this lady, and I had work to do with these people, they were ill and they needed their dressings and things seen to, you know, and one day she said to me “You’re a Jewish girl, aren’t you?” She was Esther Green, she said “I’m also Jewish.” I couldn’t believe it, she was blonde. Oh I admired her negligee with her dressing gown “Don’t be mad,” she said “I did it myself.”

INT: Yeah.

AM: “I’m a designer and dressmaker.” She said, “I’d like you to visit me.” Everybody asked me to visit them and I said yes to everybody and I knew I wouldn’t go to anybody.

So one day she was ready to go home and she was going to give me her address and I said, “That’s very kind of you but thank God I have a mother here and when I have time off I go to see my mother.” She said, “You can bring your mother and I’ll make you a dress.”

INT: Wow.

AM: The deal, that was the deal! I would come and thereby developed the most wonderful relationship. We called ourselves cousins eventually.

INT: Wow.

AM: Because her mother and my mother found a connection through the Sephardi side of my family.

INT: Right.

AM: We never really found a solid confirmation of it but it appears and whether that had happened or not we were fond of each other and I had a most wonderful relationship with that family. They had one son with whom I’m friends to this day.

INT: Wow.

AM: He lives in Bournemouth and he says I am the only one who can talk to him about his time here.

INT: Yeah.

AM: Because he was only eight years old then. And he’s pushing eighty now.

INT: So we will do a fast forward now I think? We do the edited highlights…

AM: Nurse Livingstone suggested I don’t stay in  Redlands but that I apply for training if I like nursing. I said, “I love it, I love the patients but I don’t like all the way the sisters are treating me.” There was one or two who were real anti-Semitic and when there was a Jewish doctor in charge of a ward Nurse Livingstone said to me  “Tell him in Yiddish ‘Anti-Semitic’ and he’ll give her a hard time”! But I didn’t do that, no, no. So I applied and eventually I got my papers and when I was eighteen I started training but it was not quite without hassle because the matron from Redlands was very peeved and she was short of staff and I was a wonderful worker because I did everything everybody told me. Run three upstairs,  three downstairs; go to the next block and attend to twenty or thirty patients; took no time off.

While I was in Redlands I took ill as a result of that, because one of the maids stole my Wellingtons. I had only one pair of shoes for the street, one pair of shoes for working and one pair of Wellingtons and she stole my Wellingtons and when I went to see my mother I had to wait in the snow with my legs bare and I developed a very nasty rheumatism with bad sores. I had to be hospitalised then. However, I got better and started my nurses training in Stobhill.

INT: But you were going to say that the lady didn’t want you to go because you were such a good…?

AM: Yes she didn’t want me to go. She said “I’ll give you a bad reference and you’ll not get in.”

INT: Ha!

AM: I just smiled; I had a reference from Dr. Horowitz. Now I had to go – this is funny, so I’ll put it in. I had to go for an interview with the matron who came from the Orkneys – her name was Miss Tulloch. She had a long blue gown. Her veil was right at her eyebrows and her sleeves were down to her wrists. Dark brown eyes and she had a deep voice like a man and she gave a frightening appearance to the poor little thing that I was. But I had to go for an interview and I said to Dr. Horowitz, Sol as I knew him, “What should I say to her that’ll give me favour?” He said, “You come from Vienna, just schmooze her” So I did that and she laughed; she knew I was schmoozing her. She said, “Oh you are very continental, nurse”. Ha ha! But I did well there. I did my general and my midwifery.

INT: Which hospital was that?

AM: Stobhill. All the hospitals are being closed.

INT: General nursing and midwifery.

AM: And midwifery with anaesthetics, which you were obliged to take anyway but I took it. It didn’t help you but everybody took it. And then into a nursing home as a Sister’s post, met my husband to be then at a dance when he was in naval uniform. We fell in love and got married.

There’s one thing I missed out of the whole story and it annoys me. That my brother… my mother worked for her employers for very little if they would put up £100 to save my brother’s life, and they did. And she did and I helped. And my brother came one day during the war.

INT: Wow, during the war he managed to get out?

AM: I worked in Milton Nursing Home and there’s still a lady alive who calls me Sister Levi.

INT: Wow.

AM: And she comes to the Jewish Care.

INT: Yes, oh right.

AM: And unfortunately like me she has very poor sight and, yes, because I have made it to this age.

INT: Yes.

AM: So a lot of people here were my children that I helped to bring into the world.

INT: Wow. So because you were a midwife there were a lot of Jewish families that you did…

AM: And because I worked in the Southside then.

INT: Yes.

AM: So a lot of people knew me and all the doctors on the Southside knew Sister Levi.

INT: So you were always Sister Levi? Even when you got married or did you stop nursing when you got married?

AM: No I didn’t stop.

INT: OK, but you didn’t change your name?

AM: No. What I stopped was doing midwifery then and I worked in the Victoria  in Gynaecology because I had worked in Redlands so therefore midwifery and woman’s troubles I knew well.

INT: Yes

AM: And that’s how I met Esther because I knew woman’s troubles.

INT: Ok so then you had two children…

AM: Yes, yes but that doesn’t…

INT: You can still name your children in the tape. They’re going to listen.

AM: I see, oh well yes. We got married and my husband was a Naval officer, in the merchant Navy, and he had to ‘swallow the anchor’ because I didn’t want to be a wife without a husband.

It’s hard ‘swallowing the anchor’; it was very hard for him. He liked being at sea. It was not only a wartime job for him; he stayed on after the war. But when we got married he worked for his father, which was a Naval and Gents outfitters.

INT: Yes

AM: Of course he knew all the ranks and he knew a lot of the world. We had a son first, bless him, and a daughter later, bless her, and they are now almost pensioners like me.

**Alice Malcolm – Reflection On Life**

Alice talks about the kindness of Glasgow people and her happiness in Scotland.

AM: So I have enjoyed my new country.

INT: Yes.

AM: I have never lost my foreign accent because when I was evacuated I was in with so many different accents I copied them all. In the end I stayed in Scotland and I copied the Highland girls’ accents but as I’ve no contact with them out comes my mother’s accent. That can’t be a bad thing. I think it’s the best country in Europe for me.

INT: Why’s that?

AM: Scotland?

INT: Yes.

AM: Because they’re wholesome people. Unfortunately I have very poor sight but I like to be independent. I take my life in my hands when I go out but when somebody sees that I’m struggling to go on a bus or crossing a road they help me. Some people just grab me and I am afraid of who it might be but others say, “May I help you?” I don’t think I would find that anywhere. In other countries people are afraid to speak to strangers. I can only say good things. I’ve made good friends here Unfortunately many of them are no longer here, and I’m still making friends.

INT: It’s a good reason to make friends with people younger than you isn’t it?

AM: Yes, well that’s more difficult because the younger people today don’t want the older. A generation ago; 60s, 70s, yes. But not today. They’re being re-educated now.

INT: So is there any final things that you want to say before we turn this off?

AM: I said that I’m happy in the country here?

INT: Yes. You said all that.

AM: But I’m sad that my family is not here. I am now here alone. One is in New York where I have four grandsons and one is in Cambridge, who has never found a Scottish lass yet.

INT: Yes, Ok so thank you very much for your time.

AM: I would like to hear it. Thank you for coming.