**Dorothea Brander – Life Before The War**

Dorothea was born in Berlin in 1924. Her father was a Chemist and worked for a company that produced toothpaste and later poison gas. The family lived in a company owned flat.

INT: Today is January the 22nd 2014 and I’m here to interview Dorothea Brander. Dorothea, can I begin by asking you where you were born and what was your name at birth?

DB: I was born in Berlin in, on the Kurfürstendamm, corner of Joachim Friedrichstraße and the house was bombed, it exists no longer. That was in 1924 and my parents were staying with my aunt and uncle, who were called Weissman and the doctor who delivered me was called Michaelis.

INT: And what was your name at birth?

DB: Dorothea Charlotte.

INT: Surname?

DB: Mertzbacher.

INT: And were they an orthodox Jewish family?

DB: No, my family was never orthodox. They were certainly Jewish, but not orthodox.

INT: Right. You were old enough in 1933, I suppose, to remember the coming of the Nazis. What do you remember from that time?

DB: Yes I do remember it very well because my father worked for the Auergesellschaft, which was a factory which was producing all sorts of things. They started with light bulbs and then went on to chemicals and my father was involved in poison gas.

INT: So he was a chemist?

DB: He was a chemist but he also, they made toothpaste called ‘Doramat’.

INT: Doramat. It was very wide ranging what they produced.

DB: That’s right.

INT: And your father, did he concentrate on poison gas? Was that his field?

DB: Well that was the thing he was mainly involved in. I think at the time it was thought that that would be for coal mines.

INT: To identify the gas you mean?

DB: I’m not sure.

INT: Right.

DB: No.

INT: And your family, was it just you and your parents?

DB: And my brother, three years older than me. And we went to the, what was called the Realgymnasium eventually. First to the Volksschule, the folk school in Germany, and then to the Realgymnasium which was very near our house.

INT: And when Hitler came to power did your father have problems with his job? Or did he keep his job at first?

DB: No he didn’t have any problems. I think because they knew very well that the poison gas he was involved in would be helpful to Hitler’s cause. We didn’t have any problems although we lived right across from the factory in a house which belonged to the factory. And we had good… my father had very good colleagues, one Austrian colleague Dr. Harness and his family who also lived in the same house and she was Jewish. The other people in the house were not Jewish.

INT: So you would have had just a flat in this house?

DB: We had a flat, yes.

INT: To the company.

DB: We had a company flat, that’s right. And the strange thing was we had the first anti air raid shelter in the whole of Germany so there is a picture of me sitting as a child in the anti air raid shelter.

INT: How early was that?

DB: I must have been about 5 or 6.

INT: I see.

DB: At that time.

INT: And is that because the company was concerned for its employees?

DB: No that was because of what they were manufacturing I think.

INT: Ah, I see.

DB: In retrospect that’s what I think.

INT: And then what happened? Your father was able to keep his job?

DB: He was in his job and then eventually they asked him if he would like to start the factory in Turkey making gas masks. So he went to Istanbul to have a look to see what was going to be involved and when he came back he said it looks like a good idea to emigrate to Turkey. We could have gone to Paris but he rejected that, which in retrospect seems fortunate.

INT: Very much so. Do you think he was looking for somewhere else to go because he recognised …

DB: Oh yes

INT: … the dangers…

DB: Yes, yes. Of course.

INT: …that were there.

DB: Yes. Of course. Yes.

INT: So it wasn’t anything to do with the factory that was sending him?

DB: No.

INT: He was, he was, recognising what was happening.

DB: The man who was the president of the factory was a very benevolent man and a very good person as it turned out, who looked after my father always.

INT: So it was his idea that your father look for somewhere in Turkey?

DB: Yes, yes.

**Dorothea Brander – Immigration**

Dorothea met her husband Donald who worked for the British Consul. They married on VE Day. Her parents were helped by Kissinger’s family to emigrate to America. Dorothea also explain what happened to her brother and her journey to Britain.

INT: And did he  [ Her father] remain there and your mother, for the rest of their lives?

DB: Oh no, no.

INT: What happened?

DB: First of all, my…well my brother, after he finished, he got a job at a, at a school in Ankara which was partly paid for by the Americans I think. A sort of college but school, you know, for children and he was teaching physics there. And then he applied for a grant to go to America through the…what was it called? The Jewish organisation in Boston, oh God I can’t remember the name of it…anyway it’s all in a big book. And they, they gave him a grant to come to America so he went to America, to this Jewish organisation in Boston and he lived with a rabbi and his family and his job was to keep an eye on the rabbi’s boys. I think he had two boys and he was supposed to look after them as well as, of course, going to university and starting to study for his PhD, which he did at Harvard.

INT: What year would this have been?

DB: Oh…I don’t…

INT: Was it after the war or..?

DB: That was…that was after the war, yes. Just after the war I think.

INT: And the rest of you were still in Ankara?

DB: We were in Ankara and there’s a lot in between, I’ll have to be telling you. But in the meantime…well I met Donald and he was with the British Council and…

INT: And he was from Scotland originally?

DB: Yes he came from Glasgow and…But there’s a big story in between.

INT: Tell me.

DB: Because during the war the Turks interned the Nazis in, in Turkey. But not only…the Nazis mostly went back to Germany anyway but anybody who…anybody who was not Jewish was interned in concentration camps and the concentration camps weren’t like other places. The people were just sent to Turkish villages and it was two different villages they were sent to. The ones who were questionably Nazis were sent to one place and the ones who were not Nazis were sent to another village. And my brother at that time was very much the go between because the Turks interned them in this village but they didn’t give them any money or anything, they just said ‘You just live in that village and that’s it.’ So, of course, they didn’t have any money to live and the ‘B Colony’, the mostly Jewish people, gathered money to keep them. So my brother was the one who had to go every month with the money to this village so that, you know, they could subsist.

INT: And did the Jewish community look after the Nazi village as well?

DB: No, no.

INT: Just the…No. I wouldn’t have thought so.

DB: They didn’t, except maybe by default.

INT: By accident.

DB: Yes.

INT: Right.

DB: And that did happen.

INT: So it was the non-political Germans they were looking after.

DB: That’s right, that’s right. No, some of them very political because they were Germans who were looking to going back to Germany after the war if Germany was defeated.

INT: So non-fascist Germans.

DB: Exactly, exactly.

INT: And why was it, why was your brother involved in that?

DB: Well because he didn’t have that much to do, just…except being a bit of a teacher in the schools sometimes and also he had a very good friend there, several good friends, and so had my mother. So my mother, she used to be the one who gathered the money together.

INT: I see.

DB: And then my brother went and…sometimes he had to sew the money into his coat seam or something because Turks, they were completely ignorant of what to do really. So anyway he took the money.

And then one time…by this time I knew Donald and Donald said ‘Oh I’ll come with you to this village and see what’s going on there’. So he came with me and we went to see our friends and we got engaged there in this village.

INT: And that was after the war or..?

DB: Well…

INT: Just near the end?

DB: Just about the end of the war I suppose, yes, yes. When did the war end? 40?..

INT:’45.

DB:’45, well it must have been after the war. No because we went out and it all happened very close together.

INT: Just before the end of the war.

DB: Anyway we got engaged there, there are some photographs, and then I had to get ready really to go with him back to Britain.

INT: You must have had English as well then?

DB: Oh yes

INT: Did you learn to speak English?

DB: Yes, oh yes I spoke very good English. I learned English all from this very good teacher.

INT: I see.

DB: And also I had another pretty clueless boyfriend that I learned some English from but I didn’t like him much.

And yes I learned from… this lady taught us English and French and she was amazing, I mean she could teach you anything you wanted. If you said you want to learn Spanish tomorrow she would try to teach you that. But English certainly I spoke perfectly by this time.

INT: And so when you left Turkey with Donald did your parents come with you?

DB: No, no, no, no. My parents couldn’t come with me. They stayed there another year, I think, after that and then a former colleague of my father’s, from Germany, but a Jewish guy who was in the same, worked in the same factory as him, he had emigrated to America and he helped my father to emigrate to the States. You know, you had to get the…whatever, permit or something. And at that point Kissinger’s family were involved as well and they all knew each other. My father got a wee job in New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey.

For him it was a pretty miserable kind of job making paints, but still it was work. And so they went to live in New Jersey in a tiny little flat and later on, a year or so later I went to visit them with my, by this time I had two kids and I went back to visit them. But that’s all, you know, a bit later.

INT: Right. So tell me about you and Donald, did you come straight to Scotland?

DB: No, no. We went, we went on honeymoon or we were supposed to. We got married on V.E Day which was a bit funny and there wasn’t anybody around to sign the register on that day, of course they were all busy getting the champagne ready. So in actual fact our wedding certificate was signed in the British Embassy, on the stair I remember, and one of the consuls was a very good old friend of ours, he signed our marriage certificate on the stair to the party.

So then of course we took part in the victory party and a friend lent me a ball gown and we went to this do after having had a party in my family’s house, smaller party. And I remember my brother, he was still there then, he made a drink but we didn’t have any receptacle big enough so he said ‘Ok I’ll scrub out the bath and I’ll just make it in the bath’ and he did. It was very…it was fine. There were about, I think, eighty people in our flat which wasn’t very big but all our neighbours and friends came, you know.

INT: And how old were you and Donald?

DB: Well Donald was much older than me.

I was just eighteen I suppose, eighteen I must have been yes and Donald was forty, maybe forty-one or something. He was born in 1906, whatever that made him, and I was born in ’24 so there was a big difference in age between us. Anyway, we went to the Embassy party and then I got, well I had now the British passport so I could get out of Turkey. And we had to go in a, it was a tiny sort of plane, I think air force maybe, but I remember we sat just on sacks or something, there weren’t any seats properly, to Cyprus. And that was supposed to be our honeymoon in Cyprus. Well I didn’t ever like Cyprus very well, I think I didn’t like islands, it was too small you know? Anyway we went there and stayed in the Dome Hotel in Kyrenia. Donald…where did he meet those friends? One very good friend, she was the nurse in the hospital in Cyprus and she was from, I think she may have been Scottish, I can’t remember now and then there was the army doctor there and Donald had very good friends, a Russian, a White Russian couple whom he had met before, he had been in Cyprus before then on a visit.

And they were very, very nice to us and, in fact, he was a weaver, this Russian guy, and he gave us a lovely rug as a wedding present which I still have you know, hand woven beautiful rug. And they were very, very nice to us. So we were there for three weeks in Cyprus and then they said, well you better go to Cairo now where you can get transport back to Britain, and we did that. So again in this little plane we went to Cairo and I have a very good memory. I liked it a lot in Cairo, you know, it was very nice. We were treated very well and I remember we had a black man, he was sort of lying outside your hotel door always just waiting for your orders and he was from the…Sudan, a Sudanese, very nice. And you could look out of the hotel window and there was a screen cinema. So all you had to do was sit on your balcony and watch the cinema. It was really luxury as far as I was concerned and then there was, what was called the Gezira Club which was mainly for foreigners, mainly British people.

So we would go there every day and there was a swimming pool and we had quite a lot of friends there, you know, British Council people who were waiting like us. And so we went swimming every day and there were great big lovely meals there. It was very comfortable, very nice. And then they said ‘Oh there’s the last convoy of the war is just about to come to Cairo so you can go back to Britain on that’ so we said ‘Ok’. And that was awful. You were in the officer’s and…women were in the officer’s quarters which was just bunks, you know and the men had to sleep on deck, just find anywhere they could. So I didn’t even see Donald very often, I mean I was just in the bunk there and fortunately I had one very good friend who was sort of sleeping not far from me but it was not good, it was pretty horrendous.

INT: And it was a long journey? How long would it have taken you?

DB: Yes we were on that boat, I think, for about two or three weeks.

INT: Goodness.

DB**:** Quite long.

**Dorothea Brander – Settling In**

Dorothea arrived in Britain as a young bride. She moved in with her parents in law in Glasgow.

INT: And were you excited to be going to Britain?

DB: Well yes I was glad.

INT: Or were you worried about it?

DB: Well sure I was worried because I didn’t have a clue what was going on and Donald hadn’t told me quite the truth either. He had said ‘Oh, we are going to be on a farm and everything will be fine’, you know. And then it turned out it wasn’t really true, his parents were in Glasgow and he didn’t like to tell me that and later on I understood why. But at that time I couldn’t understand why he would be telling me something that wasn’t true so…but that kind of put a kibosh on it a bit. But anyway we got into Liverpool and, well, I thought Liverpool was lovely, you know. The red fences, the white houses, the green grass.

I said what a lovely place this is, you know, very nice. We disembarked and went straight to the station to get the train and when we got on to the train the man said the bomb has just been dropped on Hiroshima, the war is over. So in a way of course that was great news, we were glad the war was over but what was waiting for us… And me of course in the first few weeks of pregnancy, you know, I don’t think I felt that well. Anyway we got on the train and we got to Glasgow and there was Donald’s father and mother at the station waiting for us and I couldn’t understand a word of what his father was saying because he was an Aberdonian and of course he spoke with a very, very heavy accent. So, and then his mother was OK, I could hear what she was saying but I thought to myself ‘Oh what are these people thinking who I am?’. You know, they have probably never seen a Jew in their life. So that wasn’t very good.

INT: And do you think they were worried for their son bringing this…?

DB: Well they were very glad to see him I’m sure, you know, come back from the war, you know, and he brought this girl which they didn’t know anything about except that she was originally German, Jewish didn’t mean anything to them much I didn’t think. So it was very odd really but I must say they were wonderful when I think back on it, you know how they accepted me. Anyway, we went to their place and that, again, I mean they lived in a very working class area of Glasgow which I wasn’t used to. I mean I was used to, kind of, not posh but middle class, and theirs was definitely not middle class but very working class.

INT: And is that why Donald had not told you that?

DB: I think that’s right.

Anyway in Glasgow he seemed to know everybody. I thought how come you know everybody? You know. We’d be out in the street – “Oh Donald it’s you! …’And it turned out because he was a ‘Glasgow Blue’, you know what that means?

INT: No.

DB: That means that you’ve excelled in some sport. And Donald was a runner and he was really well known in Glasgow because he was top notch runner. I didn’t understand that really very well, but anyway…So he wanted to introduce me to all sorts of friends and some were more friendly than others, you know. There were quite a few who understood exactly where I came from and who I was and others didn’t have a clue. And the other thing was of course there wasn’t any food then, there was rationing and I was used to the fleshpots you know. We never had much rationing.

INT: And

DB: One egg a fortnight I think it was.

INT: And unlike Liverpool you were not very impressed with Glasgow?

DB: No I was not impressed with Glasgow at all. And, but you know, what could I do anyway? And I had a very nice sister-in-law who was, she was very nice to me and she had two children, one of whom I’m still in touch with, she lives in Glasgow…and actually her brother too, I still know.

INT: And did you live with your parents-in-law?

DB: Yes we had to. There wasn’t anywhere else to go and they made us very…I mean for them it was very welcoming, you know, they were fine really. It was just me it struck as being very odd. So we stayed with them and of course there was clothes rationing and Donald insisted on buying me maternity clothes and I wasn’t very happy about that.

And we had to go out to … it was Fuller’s Tea Room every day because I was so hungry. In Fuller’s it wasn’t rationed, you could have cakes and scones and things so we went every day, we went to Fuller’s to eat.

INT: And did Donald have a job at this point?

DB: Well no because he’d left the British Council and he was looking for work and he was very interested in the Food and Agricultural Organisation but couldn’t get a job there. He had a lot of high ranking friends, you know, who would look for him but nothing turned up really and in the mean time I was getting nearer and nearer the child’s birth and he said ‘No, never worry. We’ll just have to go to Arran, to the country, you know. And I’ll be able to work there on a farm.” I said “OK”.

But in the meantime, of course, I had to have this child. He took me to the most expensive gynaecologist in Glasgow because that was an old friend of his and the baby was born under a full anaesthetic. I don’t remember a thing about the birth because this was such a posh gynaecologist. And then I said well wait a minute, and I had always friends in London because, you know, old friends from Germany and my mother’s friends and family because a lot of my family were in England so I could always go to London and kind of escape. I said “Wait a minute. My Turkish is perfect. I’ll apply to the BBC for a job”. You know, get a job as a…as somebody there. And I was having this baby and I wrote to the BBC and they said “Oh yes, come at once, we need somebody very badly!” you know. I thought well I’ll have to tell them the truth. How can I go with a baby that’s just two weeks old? I really can’t do it.

So that was a bit of a washout but at least I felt well I could be used somewhere. And I had to say “No I can’t do it”, you know. And then we went to Arran and these friends of Donald’s who owned a big farm in Arran were very, very good to us. They took us in and we lived with them for Kirsteen to sort of get out of the very first baby stage and, oh they were very good. And of course there was more food, you know. There was an egg almost every day and porridge, I had to learn to eat porridge. But there was plenty of food really, cream and everything, you know?

INT: And did they accept that you were German and Jewish?

DB: They were more accepting…Well I think they did understand it a bit better, you know. Who I was and what I was. And in any case they were very, very kind to me, very kind and they had a land girl and children about the same age as me so it was much more interesting for me.

And eventually we lived in a cottage there with a little old lady who thought it was very strange that I didn’t know anything about how to light the, the Rayburn cooker and a lot of difficulties but in spite of that…And the doctor, he was awful! I said “Well I’ll have to get Kirsteen vaccinated.” You know, they didn’t do all of this I don’t think. I said “I want her vaccinated” and he gave her a great big thing and I kind of argued with him. But I was, got very friendly with the butcher’s wife, she was a very nice lady and she had a child about the same age as Kirsteen so, you know, I made friends.

INT: Did you feel any desire to find out if there were other people similar to you in, anywhere in Scotland?

DB: No, not at that time.

INT: Not at that time.

DB: No, no. Not at all. I just tried to fit in the best I could really. Well, what else? And then the British Council said “Well you could come back to us if you are willing to go to a…” What did they call it? Groningen I think. We said “What’s Groningen? Where’s Groningen?” And it turns out of course Groningen is in Holland but that wasn’t what they meant, they said Göttingen.

INT: In Germany?

DB: In Germany. And so we said “OK”. So that’s when we went to Germany and that was, of course, strange for me, you know.

INT: And were you quite happy to do that?

DB: Because, I suppose, it was pretty close, the war has only just finished and it’s strange that they should want to send me there having been a German originally. And they said “Oh it doesn’t matter”.

And of course, in those days you see, you were more part of the army than of your own…

INT: So were you going more as part of the military rather than the British Council?

DB: No, the British Council. It was definitely the British Council but we did all the, we got all the facilities that the military had.

INT: I see.

DB: I mean like housing and the N.A.A.F.I you know, we could shop and everything was just like military. But I thought, well Alison, then Alison…when was she born? Wait a minute, I’m leaving out something I’m sure…yeah. No, because Alison was born in Edinburgh after…wait a minute there is a bit missing here…where did we go first? Did we go to Bratislava first? Maybe it was…

INT: Yes I think you said you went to Bratislava first.

DB: Yes it was, God I’m getting it muddled up.

INT: Yes it’s alright, you are getting tired.

DB: Yes I’m sure that’s right. We went to Bratislava and we stayed there for four years. But in the end Donald was shot at by a Hungarian and that’s why I don’t like Hungarians even now.

INT: And why was he shot?

DB: Well God knows but I think they suspected that he was a spy because at that time we could go to Vienna quite easily. You know, it was just…you went to Vienna just like you are going from here to Glasgow; it was very near.

INT: Right.

DB: And it was just before Christmas so Donald decided he would just pay a visit to Vienna and get some Christmas shopping done.

And when he came back I was actually in the kitchen baking Christmas biscuits, you know, and we had a little dog and suddenly I heard the dog running away to the door and I thought ‘What’s going on?’. I was alone with the children, they were asleep, and when I went to the door there was a guy with…having a gun in his hand and had shot Donald. And Donald was just dragging himself back into the house and he said “You’ve got to do a tourniquet.” I didn’t have a notion what a tourniquet is but I soon found out and then I immediately phoned up a friend of ours, a surgeon, Slovak, and told him that Donald had been shot. “Oh” he said “I’ll send an ambulance right away.”

They took him to the hospital and dealt with him as best he could but he said “There’s a bullet in his groin really and I can’t remove that, it’s too dangerous.” You know. Very, very nice man; a good old friend.

And then the consul, he lived very near us so I phoned him and he came up straight away and stayed with me and… well Donald was in hospital there for a fortnight.

INT: And the man who…

DB: The Hungarian.

INT: This Hungarian, he ran away?

DB: Well, of course, he ran off but I recognised him. I knew that he was coming to our house to the woman who lived below us, like a soup kitchen, you know, eating every day. So they said “Oh we’ll have to have a parade and bring all the guys and let you see which one.”

I pointed him out straight away – I knew. So…then there were all sorts of funny things like…well I said, you know, “I can’t stay by myself in this house, it’s so dangerous.” And they said “No, no, we’ll send some guards for you.”

When I went out in the night to the loo I discovered that it was soldiers, you know, and there were Russian books. “What are you reading?” I said and when they showed me it was Russian I thought… God, I said to the police “I don’t want Russian soldiers outside my door, you know, you have to take them away.” And they said “No, no, we’ll send police.”

So then they sent police and then in the end… and this was only at Christmas and we had a very good colleague/friends who lived in a tiny flat with two children and they said “Oh you just have to come to us, you know, for Christmas, we can’t leave you here.” So I went with the kids, with Kirsten and Keith and they had two small children and in this tiny flat and we spent Christmas there. And then…oh I’m probably leaving things out. The ambassador from Prague decided he would come down and see what was going on, you know.

So he came and I had to give them a big dinner and British council people, and they all said “Well you can’t stay here, you have to go home.”

And so we had to up sticks and I had to pack up everything and we went back to Britain.

INT: And Donald still had the bullet in him?

DB: Yes he still had the bullet and when we got to…then they said “Don’t talk to anybody. When you get to London there will be, the press will be there…don’t talk to them. Just forget about it, just go on.”

So then we went on and of course when we got to Glasgow the bloomin’ press had been to Donald’s mother and told her, of course she was terrified at what had happened, poor thing. But where was his father? Had he died in the meantime? I don’t think his father was there. Anyway…So that was pretty bad, really bad. But anyway, the British Council said “OK, you can’t go abroad now, you’ve got to stay put.”

Luckily when he went to the hospital, I mean Donald had friends everywhere, the main surgeon in the hospital in Glasgow was an old chum of his. So he said “Oh I’ll remove that bullet.” It was in his groin and he took it out and then Donald recovered and…so what did we do after that? Well we went back to Arran, where we had the friends.

INT: A safer place.

DB: A safer place! And yeah…Alison was a baby and then on the farm we said “Well we’ll not stay in the house”. So we camped, with Alison. Oh no, when Alison was born that was terrible too. Well I was pregnant then with Alison and went to the hospital and that was terrible. Keith was an awfully cheeky boy when he was little, you know, and after all sorts of stories about that, you know, he climbed out on the roof and I had to beg him to come back in again because he could have fallen over the side.

And then we were invited to a cousin of Donald’s who lived in Edinburgh and we went to this very nice tea party with all his cousins and aunties and everybody and Keith, he was two then, he said to the people “Well, of course…” he said “I came out of my Mummy’s tummy.” He was born in Bratislava, you see. “But I think this one will come out of my Daddy’s”. Haha! He thought, you know, I’d done enough!

INT: Yes, absolutely.

DB: Oh he was funny. And so I went to hospital to have Alison.

INT: In Glasgow?

DB: In Edinburgh, we were by this time and we lived already in the flat that we lived until we came to this one, so we haven’t lived in many different houses, which was right on top of a tenement building in Edinburgh, a very nice flat.

And it was very difficult to get any help but I had a Czech girl at one point and then I had a Danish au pair girl and she was completely really cuckoo so I phoned her father one day, I said “I can’t cope with this anymore, you’ll have to get Annie back, it’s really…”

“But that’s why we sent her to you!” Haha!

Well I said “I don’t want her”.

Anyway, Alison was born and she was…it, the birth, was not particularly difficult or anything but immediately…I had a very nice, young doctor girl and she, after Alison was born she came to me and she said, you know, “I’ve got sad news. Alison was born with a blood disease and we had to change her blood completely so you can’t nurse her, you can’t even go and see her.”

And then Donald came and they would let him see her and then the big white chief came from the hospital and he stood at my bedside, and I’ll never forget this, he said to me “Does the woman know?” and luckily this young doctor was there, “Yes”, she said, “of course I told her all about it.”

So that was OK. So amazingly within a week Alison was OK, you know, they really took good care of her there and completely changed her blood and we went back home. So then she grew up into a very jolly, nice baby and Donald was very good. We had this great big pram and we lived on the top floor of the building and he would take this pram down every day. But, you know, that was two years we were there at this building and actually an old friend of Kirsten’s, she’s just coming in a few days to see us, she’s always been a friend, you know, we’ve made lots of connections and friends.

**Dorothea Brander – Integration**

Dorothea travelled with her husband who worked for the British Council. She lived for a time in Otto Hahn’s house (he received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1944)

INT: And he was still working with the British Council?

DB: He was still with the British Council. He had a very good job, he was Director of what was called ‘International House’ and it was a place where students could come from all over the world and learn English and speak English. And there was like a lovely café and he made lots of friends in Edinburgh, got to know a lot of painters and poets and all kinds of people to do with the festival. He was very…I envied him a bit. Here I was stuck with the kids and he was sitting in Princes Street in this nice place. So he was there for two years and then they said “Well it’s time you moved on.” And that’s when we moved to Gottingen.

INT: Right.

DB: Right. So in Gottingen I said, well Alison, she was two by this time, “She better just go to a nursery school” and the only option really was a German one so she grew up speaking German really.

INT: And the other two?

DB: And the other two went to a British Army School; there was a British Army School.

INT: Right.

DB: And Keith, awkward as ever, he said “I don’t like that teacher. I am not going to school.” Haha! And he didn’t for about three months, I think, he just lay on the floor. “I’m not going to that one, I don’t like the teacher”. And he just didn’t go! Until luckily the teacher was moved and then he was alright.

INT: And how long were you in Gottingen?

DB: We were there for four years and of course we got friendly with the army people and there was the N.A.A.F.I to do the shopping and Alison, we had a little Dackel [dachshund dog] and one day Alison just walked out and then a workman came to our door, he said “You know, we’ve just seen this little girl with a Dackel walking across the road into the park.”

Well that was Alison, she was very independent. And then we had pretty awful…the… you know, the houses were all owned by Germans or Nazis and they took them away from them and put people like us and army people in them. And the people who owned our house were pretty awful so they, in the end we said we really want to move from there and across the road from us lived Otto Hahn, the man, you know, the German physicist, who became… he was really instrumental in working out the bomb for the Germans, a physicist, a very famous physicist. And Keith was very friendly with his wife, he used to go over there and she always would talk to him and give him cups of tea and things. So they said “Oh you could move to our house.” And that was just round the corner, another very nice house, so we did that. We lived in their house for a long time.

INT: In a separate flat?

DB: No we had the whole house.

INT: Right.

DB: They just had a flat because there was only the two of them, you know, they said “Well that’s fine.”

INT: Right.

DB: And…and we lived among other quite famous physicists and people you know, got to know them. And Donald worked in the university, didn’t like his boss very much, he wasn’t very nice but he had a very nice assistant, nice lady. Some nice people and some not so nice people and I got to know some people and…and there was a very, very good German theatre, well at that time it was the best theatre in Germany, in Gottingen.

INT: And was it more difficult for you because you had been a Jewish refugee?

DB: It’s hard to say really because we were so much among the British company now, you know. I had a…I mean this old lady, she was a German, there were German friends but they understood, you know, where I came from and who I was. So it was both good and bad, some of it was not so good, some of it was fine. But and then of course I did have German friends, I mean from before. So I went to see them in Munich, old relations, and…there’s so much you know, I can’t tell you it all.

INT: Of course not.

DB: An awful lot.

INT: And I believe you then ended up in Iceland, is that right?

DB: Ah but not much… quite a lot later than that. I mean from Germany we moved to Persia, to Tehran, and…

INT: Again with the British Council?

DB: Yes, yes, and that was not always good. But Donald didn’t like it because he thought it was like a factory. So many people wanting to learn English, he had these thousands on the street waiting to sign up for the classes, you know, and he was really getting terribly fed up with it, didn’t like it. We had a very nice villa which we rented from actually Jewish people. It was Persian Jewish people who had emigrated to Switzerland and we rented their house. So we had a very nice house with a swimming pool, a dog and a bit of a glaiket lady/servant who just sat at the door awaiting for orders, you know. And she was what they called Turki, she was Turkish really, and that’s why we had her because I could speak to her in Turkish. But then one time, we had Jewish friends, very good Jewish friends who worked for the Jewish Alliance and one summer we left them with the maid and he was a doctor and he said “You better get rid of her, she’s got TB”!

INT: Oh dear.

DB: I said “Oh I didn’t know that.”

So they fed her penicillin and, you know, all kinds of things like that. And then in between I said I must go and see my folks in America so I managed to go with Alison. You know I’d already gone with Kirsten and Keith before but this time…was it from Persia? No it wasn’t from Persia, it was from Italy…Anyway we stayed in Persia for two years and then had to leave really. It just was unbearable. There was so much antagonism you know.

INT: Towards the British?

DB: Towards the British. And we were moved. But the children in Persia went to a German school because it was the only one that really looked after the children properly.

All the others you couldn’t be sure that they wouldn’t be abducted by some people or something. So they went to the German school and one time Adenauer came and, you know it was the photographs of Adenauer with Alison dancing for him. But they were good, you see, they looked after the kids properly. So, of course, when we went to Italy I said “Oh well that’s OK, there’s a German school here in Milan.” You know, the kids can just go there. And that’s what they did, they went to the German school and by this time I had already been to America with Kirsten and Keith, although I won’t tell you all that story, but this time I said “I better go with Alison.”

So we took the liner, ocean liner, and went to America, Alison and I and I said “Oh this is a good chance for Alison to get to, to go to an English speaking school. So when I took her there the teacher didn’t like her, she said “Oh she’s no good. She’s far behind in age.” And, you know, she was awful.

INT: Because you were going to stay a bit with your parents?

DB: Well about two months or something.

INT: Right.

DB: Just paying a visit. And…So poor Alison, she really had a bad time there in America, not very good. But I had lots of friends there, you know, both relatives and friends and we had quite a good time. And then on the way back again on the Italian liner I met two very nice ladies, English, and they were very good with Alison, really kind you know, and when I got back to Italy of course there was Donald and he had looked after the kids with the help of our cook, Italian cook. And she was a very good lady, she came from the country, she was a real country lady and the kids had had a wonderful time, Donald looked after them really well, took them skiing and all kinds of things.

They were asked to join a television programme which came up every week I think where they had to be an English speaking family so that was Donald and the wife of the British Council boss in Milan, and Keith; they made up the family and…haha! They were on the television and they got paid very well for this programme, just fun really. So that was fine and we had a wonderful flat right in the centre of Milan and then Keith went on the bus to school and the bus was on a circular road in Milan, you know, and so sometimes the, the conductor would look after Keith and sometimes he wouldn’t let him off at the school, he said “You haven’t done enough Italian yet, you have to stay on the bus.”! Keith didn’t mind, he stayed on the bus. But he went to the German school in Milan, which was a very good school and…but we were only there for two years? Two years I think. Not long anyway. And made friends outside Milan and even now Kirsten says to me “Oh you abandoned me there in the children’s home that I didn’t want to go to”, you know.

And Alison went to a children’s home, she was a bit better about it.

INT: Why were they in a children’s home?

DB: Well, you know, we had so much to do in Milan. There was so much going on that I thought, well they’re better out of the way in the countryside and it’s nice in the mountains and…

INT: Oh you mean a kind of boarding school?

DB: No they were just children’s homes really.

INT: Right.

DB: And the school that Kirsteen and Keith had to go to was part of their proper school and they just had camps you know.

INT: I see.

DB: So I thought, well, that’ll be alright – no, no… I had to fetch Keith back, he wasn’t happy and Kirsteen now says she wasn’t happy there either but she didn’t say anything.

INT: Was that in the summer holidays?

DB: Not really no. It was sort of school camps.

INT: I see.

DB: And so…well after that, then we came back. That’s when we went to Iceland and of course going to Iceland meant I couldn’t take the kids because, well I didn’t want to have to put them in an Icelandic school. We did take Alison with us for a year and tried to teach her ourselves, that is a special…

INT: Home teaching.

DB: Yes, I forget what it’s called. But it didn’t work really terribly well.

And the kids by this time now went to Dollar because I said “if they have to go a boarding school I’d like them to be together” and Dollar, of course, is a coeducational school and Donald happened to know the headmaster from times past, teachers all know each other. And that turned out to be quite a bad choice in a way because…what happened? He got chucked out this man. Did the school go on fire or something…? There were problems.

INT: Problems

DB: But anyway, they were at the school and they were allowed to come…every holiday the British Council paid for the kids to come to Iceland to visit us and they did that and they had a very nice time in Iceland, you know. All got friendly especially with the British and American Embassy and the woman, the, well, girl then, who was the same age as them at the American Embassy, they’re still friendly over here now because she is now married to a Scotsman and she won’t go back to America, she lives here.

So they still see her and they still, they still know the British Ambassadors kids and you know, its all been fine really in a way, difficult in some other ways but there are connections.

INT: And during all this time were you just a mum at home or did you do anything yourself ?

DB: I would be, well I was by this time back in Edinburgh and so I thought well what am I going to do? I’m not going to sit here fiddling so I looked up the paper, I looked at The Times and I thought what’s important? you know? What jobs are there for somebody my age?

INT: How old were you back then?

DB: Well I was forty-something.

INT: Right.

DB: And it was either chiropody or social work.

INT: Right.

DB: I thought chiropody, poking in people’s feet, I don’t fancy that. I’ll see what social work will be about. So I applied here to Moray House and they looked at me and they said “Well you’re OK but you haven’t got any experience.” I said “What are you looking for?! What more experience could I have?” I thought I had plenty. Maybe not exactly social work but, you know…

INT: Of life.

DB: Of life, that’s right. They said “Well that’s not right. We need social work experience.” So they put me together with a very nice man who took me on as a sort of…

INT: Apprentice I suppose?

DB: Supervised me really.

He took me and he put me together with a very nice Jewish lady who was just a year ahead of me and she took me on as a kind of, well, anyway helper and she worked in clinics and I worked with her for a year. And then I went back again and I said “Now I’ve done that, you know, am I alright to start on the course?” And I did, that’s then when I started a Social Work course here at Moray House and did two years and qualified and started working as a social worker.

INT: And what, what were you doing as a social worker? Who were you working with?

DB: Well I first worked for, out in the country, for a country practice and after two years I started working in Edinburgh. But again mostly out in the country.

INT: And Donald, was he retired by this time?

DB: No, no, no, he was in Iceland.

INT: Oh you left him behind in Iceland?

DB: Yes, oh yes.

INT: I didn’t realise that.

DB: But not that long …he wasn’t…he came back to…but not the same time as me, I think he stayed longer.

INT: Right.

DB: I’m not telling you…No he came back and he said “Well I’ll teach”, that’s right. So the job he got was in Dunfermline so he had to cross over on the bridge every day.

INT: Right.

DB: And after a year he thought “I can’t be bothered with that anymore.” And he got a job at the Blind School and of course he didn’t have a clue about teaching blind people but they said “Well you’ll have to do a course.”

In Wiltshire or somewhere there’s a college for teaching of the blind and Donald did that. He did a course, he went and qualified and they liked him a lot. The kids loved him in the Blind School, he was there for years and years and years until really late on when he shouldn’t have been teaching anymore but they said “Oh it doesn’t matter. Just come and take the kids.” You know, and he did that until he was in his eighties.

INT: Oh I see.

DB: Yes he was in the Blind School for many, many years. They still know him there.

INT: Of course.

DB: He’d go swimming there and they were very nice to him. That’s right, I nearly forgot. Yeah. He worked.

**Dorothea Brander – Reflection On Life**

NT: If you look back now on your time here in Scotland what would you say were the high points of your life here?

DB: That’s very difficult to say.

INT: Your family I assume?

DB: Yes I think…I don’t think I can really say.

INT: Right.

DB: I mean I suppose it was my time as a social worker I enjoyed. Some of it, not all of it. Yeah, I mean it was difficult always with the children. They were at different stages, doing different things and I can’t say that that was always my best time, seeing…And then of course…well Kirsteen and Jude they met each other here at the University, they were students together and they got married here, so that was nice.

Alison on the other hand, had a very hard time. I mean, she went to work in… near Liverpool and she’s always had a hard time Alison. And then she went to live in Ireland and of course that was very worrying because she was, they were…She was working in…what’s that place called in the west? Where there was lots of trouble and she was working for a firm in…I always think it’s the guy who made the farmers jackets, farmers’ tweeds.

INT: Burberry?

DB: Pardon?

INT: Burberry?

DB: No.

INT: No?

DB: No, no. What’s his name worked for Burberry I think, her husband. No she worked in the South, she had to go over the border every day, she had to drive through the police, you know, with a shaky…she had a terrible car. She had to hold the car door shut and go over the…but the police got to know her of course. And then she worked for this guy who was making farmers jackets, beautiful tweeds and she was designing the tweeds. So she had a very good job but it was dodgy, you know, difficult. And then she went back, of course she had a kid and took him back and they had a hard time in Ireland.

INT: And how important would you say Judaism has been in your life? Was it of any significance after you left Germany?

DB: How significant was what?

INT: Was being Jewish? Starting in a Jewish world and leaving it as you did?

DB: It’s never, ever bothered me, being Jewish I mean. Sure, I mean I’m very aware that I would never deny it but it hasn’t ever been a…any trouble to me.

INT: And do you think of yourself now as Scottish or German or…? You’ve been to so many places?

DB: International, ha ha.

INT: International?

DB: Yes, international, I wouldn’t particularly ascribe any nationality to myself, I don’t think. If anything probably now a bit German but not when I hear the terrible stories that people have to tell then I think “Oh God, that wasn’t me”. I’m very lucky to have got away from it but… you know. And I still do have one friend definitely and the other one I don’t know if is still alive, friends who were babies with me in the same house in Germany and we still correspond and I know that one of the husbands was a Nazi, the other one I don’t think so.

But they’ve always kept in touch, all through the years, which I think is probably quite unusual.

INT: Yes. Well, thank you Dorothea, that was fascinating.

DB: I don’t know, maybe too long!