**Frieda Laird – Life Before The War**

Frieda talks about her family background and her early education. She mentions that she lost her immediate relatives as a result of the Nazi regime.

INT: You’re unusual?

FL: Unusual.

INT: Do you think, do you think your complexion is so good because when you were a little girl you lived on a farm? Did you live on a farm?

FL: Yes I did. My grandfather had a farm.

INT: Oh what did you do on the farm?

FL: Well I used to watch… they had a maid, my granny, because she was actually a wee girl…from the country and she used to be very nice and good, you know. She was a lovely lady and I fair missed her when something happened to her.

FL: That’s not my usual writing. Hallheimer – E that’s an E. [Frieda writes her maiden name]

INT: Right ok.

INT: So your dad was called Samuel.

FL: Yes.

INT: And so, and what did he do? Was he working or…?

FL: My dad was a baker.

INT: Oh right.

FL: Yes and he used to bake the Matzahs as well.

INT: Gosh.

FL: There was a Matzah bakery in Haigerloch where we lived. And he used to help to bake them but he had his own wee baker’s place, you know. Baker’s….no a shop; it was just a small place where he done his baking in.

INT: [Looking at a photograph] And so that’s your father and obviously your mother wouldn’t be there.

FL: My mother’s not there, no.

INT: So.

FL: He wasn’t married then.

INT: No, he looks very young then.

FL: Aye.

INT: I would say he looks, what, about…? [Frieda looks again at the photographs of her family]

FL: They’re both young, both young.

INT: So that’s your father and who else? Who’s that?

FL: My uncle, he had a knitwear factory in Wiesbaden.

INT: And was your uncle younger than…?

FL: He’s a younger brother. He was a clever one. He went to the grammar school but my dad didn’t make it. But he was good with his hands.

INT: What was the age difference between your father and your uncle?

FL: I think about four or five years between them, you know. I don’t know. I don’t remember.

INT: And so what was your last name then? What was your name then at that time?

FL: Hallheimer

INT: Hallheimer.

FL: H-a-l-l-h-e-i-m-e-r

INT: Right and do you know when you were born? If you were 92 that…

FL: ’21. 1921.

INT: 1921. You honestly don’t look it. But I think, as Myrna said, it’s partly; it’s how you’ve taken care of your skin as well.

FL: I mean the life I’ve had I don’t know how I don’t look my age.

INT: So your dad worked in a bakery.

FL: Pardon?

INT: Your dad ran, worked in a bakery.

FL: Yes. But he was killed in a Concentration Camp.

INT: Right.

FL: And so was my mum. My gran as well…the whole family. [Only Frieda’s cousin and uncle survived and Frieda kept in contact with them in her later years].

INT: Do you know where they died?

FL: At the time I didn’t know. But it became knowledge then what happened. And that’s what happened and I had two brothers; they were the same.

INT: So, and were you living, when you said you lived on the farm, did you, were you all living on the farm with your grandparents? How did you come to be on the farm?

FL: My gran had the farm. My grandpa had died and she ran the farm for a while. We had employed… my gran employed… actually she lived with us and she ate at the table with us; she was like family, an orphan girl, Louise. She was a great pal of mine. She was very nice and good to me, you know. And I don’t know what happened after I left Germany. I corresponded with her for a while and then it stopped, I don’t know if she passed away or what happened. She had a daughter. She married in later life and she had a stepdaughter and I didn’t like her. I think it was jealousy because I was very fond of Louise; she helped to bring me up. My mother wasn’t keeping well. She had problems with her nerves and I think it was through Hitler because she was never like that until he was in power. I remember that. And she seemed to deteriorate quite quickly and I didn’t see much of her at all.

INT: And were you going to school at that time as well?

FL: Yes. I went to school and they threw me out because of my religion. I went to…I passed for grammar school in Crailsheim. C-r-a-i-l-s-heim. And I wasn’t allowed to continue my education. I was going to be a teacher of languages and I didn’t… wasn’t able to do that.

INT: What was your mother’s name?

FL: Julia.

FL: My father’s name was Sam.

INT: Did you go to…? I was going to ask; when you were in Germany did you ever go to the Synagogue? Or did you have any Jewish education?

FL: Yes I used to go with my gran to Synagogue. But I don’t know why I didn’t keep to the Jewish faith. It’s my fault.

INT: I think a lot happened to you, Frieda.

INT: Did you like going?

FL: I liked going but I’ll tell you what I didn’t like about, it’s Hebrew, They did everything, all the texts and everything was in Hebrew.

INT: You couldn’t understand it.

FL: I couldn’t understand it and I used to say to my gran;

“Why don’t they do it in German? Because after all we’re living here now and I don’t know Hebrew”.

INT: You didn’t get Hebrew?

FL: I went to school… the Jewish school for a wee while.

INT: Did you?

FL: It wasn’t a school; it was…what do you call it again?

INT: Cheder.

FL: They had sessions for Ivrit.

FL: That’s the language in Israel.

INT: Yes.

FL: Because I was thinking of going to Israel at the time.

INT: Were you? Oh right.

FL: But I don’t know why it fell through. I think I met my husband and… Whatever, I don’t know.

INT: Did your brothers have a Bar Mitzvah?

FL: Yes. I remember my eldest brother had one in Haigerloch …in Germany. And my youngest brother then…he was killed by the Nazis before that.

INT: So when it was your older brother’s Bar Mitzvah and you went to Shul, you went to the Synagogue and you said all your prayers…

FL: Yes it was a nice Synagogue in Haigerloch.

INT: Did you have a party after it?

FL: Oh yes… no really because Hitler was on at the time and it was just a quiet…

INT: You would keep it low profile?

FL: Uh huh, didn’t want to make it too public or anything because you lived a very quiet life.

INT: Did you go for lunch?

FL: No, we had our lunch in my gran’s house.

INT: In your grandma’s house. What did you eat? Can you remember?

FL: Well the main thing was always chicken, a goose. I remember we used to have goose at Christmas and, you know, Hanukkah and that was always the dinner then. It was very fat.

INT: And if it was a birthday, if you were celebrating a birthday did your mum or your grandma make something special for your birthday? A cake?

FL: Oh yes. She always was a great baker.

FL: Gugelhupf, aye. That was a round cake in a tin, you know.

INT: And has it got chocolate and vanilla?

FL: I always remember the Streuselkuchen.

INT: Oh Streuselkuchen.

FL: Aye that was the pastry with crumbs on top.

INT: With cinnamon?

FL: Sweet butter and cinnamon and all that.

INT: Cinnamon and sugar.

FL: I used to try and make it when I was…after I got married and it wasn’t successful.

INT: Was it not?

FL: I wasn’t good at it.

FL: That’s my grandpa and my gran, my dad and my uncle. [Frieda is looking at the photographs]

INT: Do you know when this was taken?

FL: He was the clever one… he owned a knitwear factory in Wiesbaden but my dad was a good baker.

INT: Do you think that was taken at someone’s Bar Mitzvah then? Do you think that was taken at a time of your dad or uncle’s Bar Mitzvah?

FL: I think it was my dad. Yes.

INT: Because that’s when you would have photographs.

INT: And what is this Frieda?

FL: That’s the Kindergarten, the two Sisters. I went to a Protestant Kindergarten in Germany.

INT: Right.

FL: And that’s me here.

INT: You haven’t really changed very much.

FL: Ach away you go. That’s me here.

INT: Very cute.

FL: There.

INT: I like the way everyone… You have your arms folded correctly but there’s one or two… So how come you went to a Protestant Kindergarten? Was that because it was close to where you were living?

FL: I don’t know why, because I think it was the only Kindergarten there. There was no Jewish influence there.

INT: Was there quite a lot of Jewish…not a lot of Jewish people living where you were living?

FL: No, very few. And I think that’s why. That’s the Sisters in the Kindergarten here.

INT: So were the Sisters nice?

FL: Pardon?

INT: Were the Sisters who ran the Kindergarten nice?

INT: Were they nice people?

FL: Oh very nice, very nice. They kept in contact with me for quite a long while.

INT: Really?

FL: After I left.

INT: Well that’s lovely. That’s very nice.

FL: Nice Sisters

INT: Janet looks like your grandma.

FL: I think so: I think so.

INT: Oh definitely. There’s a very strong resemblance.

INT: And Janet is…

INT: Frieda’s eldest daughter.

FL: My eldest daughter.

INT: She looks very much like your grandma there. You’ve got no photographs of your mother?

FL: No. My mother, she went mental through the Nazis.

INT: Did she?

FL: We never made it popular. Never liked folk to know.

INT: No. No they would keep it quiet.

FL: Aye.

INT: That would have been very difficult for you and your brothers.

FL: It was.

INT: Yes, yes.

FL: Because, you know, it’s not surprising because we lost our home…

INT: Did you?

FL: …Through it, yes. And my mother was very house proud. And I think it just all went for her. She wasn’t right.

She had to go into a home in Tübingen. And I missed her because she was a nice wee lady. She was quite small and slim and she seemed to change all at once.

INT: How old were you?

FL: I was about 8 or 9 or something.

INT: You were only a little girl.

FL: …she was like a second mother to me. Then we were good pals and then they were killed [Frieda’s brothers].

**Frieda Laird – Life During The War**

Frieda explains why she ended up in Scotland as a domestic servant. She tells the interviewers that she had intended to study languages but the Nazis ended her hopes of an education.

INT: So what age were you when… You said you were 18 when you came here. How did you leave Germany?

FL: Because of Hitler.

INT: But how did you, did you go on one of the…Because you would have been too old for the Kindertransport train. Did you come…?

FL: No I wasn’t… I wasn’t young enough for that. I was 18. I came to domestic service.

INT: Did you get a Visa?

FL: I had a… Yes you got a Visa to come over.

INT: Who helped you get the Visa?

FL: Do you know, I can’t remember now …who got it. I think it was the Jewish Refugee… What do you call it? Association.

INT: Yes, yes.

INT: And did you come to England first or did you come straight to Scotland?

FL: I came to Edinburgh.

INT: Oh right.

INT: How did you come?

FL: Oh do you know I can’t remember now.

INT: On a train do you think?

FL: Boat, by boat.

INT: A boat.

FL: I came from Hamburg to Leith.

INT: Hamburg to Leith?

FL: Uh huh that’s how and Leith is near Edinburgh isn’t it?

INT: That’s right, that’s right.

INT: That must have been quite a journey I think.

FL: It was right enough and I was sick I remember, quite seasick at the time.

INT: And was there anyone on the boat that you got friendly with?

FL: No, I don’t think so. I can’t remember now. I think I did, I think I got friendly with Gitta. She was a refugee herself. I can’t remember now.

INT: So when you came to Edinburgh, to Leith…

FL: Gitta Frei. Did you ever hear of her?

INT: Gitta?

FL: Frei. F-r-e-i.

INT: Gitta Frei? No, who was she?

FL: She was a Jewish girl too.

INT: And did she come to Edinburgh?

FL: She came to Edinburgh. She came on the boat with me and right enough we were friends after it, because she went into domestic service and so did I.

INT: And what, how did you, how did you find a house to go to, to be a domestic worker?

INT: The Quakers. And they were very much involved in helping young people to come over.

FL: They were very nice to me. Nice people.

INT: So before you left, you were 18.

FL: 18.

INT: And you weren’t going to school because you weren’t able to go to school but what were you doing? How were you earning a living in Germany before you left?

FL: I can’t remember now.

INT: Do you think you were… Because you’ve obviously got a talent for jewellery making so I just wondered whether you did…?

INT: So when you came over when you were 18, did you know any English before you came?

FL: No.

INT: Gosh how did you?…That must have been quite difficult.

FL: I had learned some French. I went to grammar school in Crailsheim, passed my exam but I wasn’t allowed to finish my education, being Jewish. And I think the French helped because there are certain French words are English, you know. I really was not bad at languages and I think that’s what I would have gone for if I had been allowed to finish my education.

INT: So you wouldn’t have stayed on the farm?

FL: No.

INT: And you wouldn’t have been a baker?

FL: No. No, no. I went to grammar school. I passed, in Crailsheim. Passed my exam and then because of the Nazis I only had two years education and then I was thrown out of school.

INT: And were… Your brother as well, did he have to leave as well?

FL: Pardon?

INT: Your younger brother, your brother, did he have to leave as well?

INT: Two brothers.

INT: Oh two brothers.

FL: They were killed in the camp.

INT: Were they older than you?

FL: Younger.

INT: Younger.

FL: Never saw them again. They disappeared. And my mother and my father was the same. Really, in a way, it’s been quite a tragic life. And then when I met anyone and they said they loved me I was quite taken in, and I was taken in.

FL: I didn’t mix with Jewish people at the time because where I lived at the time it…

INT: There weren’t any.

FL: I don’t know how it all came about.

**Frieda Laird – Immigration**

Frieda describes her life in Scotland and the difficulties and challenges she faced as a young, vulnerable woman. She mentions her marriage and the unreliability of her husband.

FL: Well, I don’t know, you see. I actually went away from my, not my religion, but I didn’t mix with Jewish people much.

INT: No, but it’s not about…

FL: You see in the… I mean; I haven’t really… It’s just the children I seem to live for.

INT: Yes.

INT: I think that’s the same as my mother-in-law. She felt very much the same and she didn’t mix with Jewish people either.

FL: No, you see I had one friend. She came from Austria. And, well, we used to go to different places together, you know, for a cup of coffee and that.

INT: But it’s not really about life in Scotland, it’s about life in the old country that Angela would be interested in. And you probably remember lots of things, when you were a little girl.

FL: I was 18 when I came over here.

FL: It’s a long time ago.

INT: It’s more of a chat. I mean I was also interested when you said that you went round with suitcases and were selling things. So what did you sell when you were in Glasgow? Did you say that you went round with two suitcases?

FL: Yes I used to sell things and I got them, the goods, I got them out of the wholesales in the Gorbals and I used to go round… I’d go to the, I went to the country like Johnstone outside Paisley and different places and sold them there where nobody really knew me.

INT: So that must have been quite interesting, did you travel by buses?

FL: I used to buy clothing and sold dresses and underwear and different things, you know, out the wholesalers and I sold jewellery. I made jewellery myself.

INT: That’s wonderful actually.

FL: I went to, I got the mounts and set the stones in and made my own jewellery. And seemingly they were quite nice because one gentleman, when I went to his house, to sell to his wife, you know, he said to me; ‘I’ll take you to the ‘… one of the, you know, that place in the town, I can’t remember now. It was…’

INT: One of the places where you can buy some of the stones?

FL: Yes, he said; ‘You should be able to sell them to the shops’. But the shops wouldn’t buy them because they get them wholesale themselves and things like that so I didn’t bother. I just sold them to friends, made a coffee afternoon. We had a coffee afternoon and I sold them to friends.

INT: But that’s a nice way of doing it actually. And I think it’s nice to see your friends wearing your jewellery.

FL: Yes it is. It was quite nice. And, well, I made brooches. I set brooches and necklaces, you know, pendants and…och, it’s quite a long while a go.

INT: So was that after you had your children?

FL: Because I had children and my husband left me with the 5 of them.

INT: Oh my goodness.

FL: And I had no folks of my own.

INT: Right.

FL: And I had to get on with it. So that’s what I done. I made jewellery first when they were sleeping at night; I got the mounts and the stones and that in Queen Street in a place.

FL: And I sold them round the doors in Johnstone and different places outside Glasgow. And I had a license for it right enough, a Pedlar’s License.

INT: Oh right.

FL: But, and I did quite well with them, you know. But it’s such a long while ago now. I’m forgetting quite a lot of it.

FL: I did that. Do you know I don’t remember. I must have done some work of some kind because I wouldn’t be idle, sitting about.

INT: No I’m sure not.

INT: When…

FL: I think I watched children. I learned to be a children’s nanny.

INT: Oh right.

FL: And if I had known I was going to have five of my own I wouldn’t have been that.

INT: But look at the training you got.

INT: Where did you learn to be a nanny….in Germany or in Edinburgh?

FL: It was in Edinburgh

INT: You weren’t well treated, you told me. Did you not go up north somewhere to Oban or somewhere near?

FL: Yes I was near there.

INT: And they didn’t treat you well?

FL: No.

INT: You hated it?

FL: I didn’t like it there. they weren’t nice. Not that I expected them to be nice to me being a servant but they were very cold and distant. And I just didn’t like it there you know. And I’m not so hard to please.

INT: No, and was Gitta Frei up with you in Oban? Was Gitta with you in Oban?

FL: No. No she wasn’t.

FL: And I remember I worked in Kelburn Castle for a while with two children.

INT: In Ayrshire? Kelburn Castle’s down in Ayrshire?

FL: Yes. I worked in there for a while.

INT: OK.

FL: I don’t know why I left it or why… I think I met my husband and I got married.

INT: Ah, I was going to ask you…

FL: Something like that.

FL: I met my mother-in-law through that lady with the baby linen shop and she kind of took an interest in me and then she introduced her son to me. I wish I’d never met him.

INT: What was his name?

FL: George. George Thomson.

INT: George Thomson.

INT: And I suppose once you got married, did you have your first child quite quickly then? Your eldest child…?

FL: My first child?

INT: Because you got married at 21.

FL: Yes.

INT: And did you stay at home to look after the children? Before George left did you stay at home?

FL: Yes I looked after the five children on my own.

INT: What did George do? What was George’s job?

FL: He was a joiner by trade.

INT: A joiner, right. Did he work…?

FL: And he worked on the Queen Elizabeth for a while.

INT: Oh right.

FL: He had some good jobs but he wasn’t a good man. He wasn’t a kind or good man. Just circumstances I think, when he asked me to marry him. Maybe he thought I had a lot of money or something, being Jewish, you know.

INT: But you were very pretty Frieda. You were very pretty.

INT: I think the fact that George came to see you so often. I think he was very taken with you. I think he did really like you.

FL: Oh aye he did right enough. Ach he was just… he was a…he could be very nice and he could be the opposite. I’ll tell you what it was with him – the drink.

FL: He was in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders when I met him and he was very smart in his uniform and he was very nice to me. He could be very nice and he could be the opposite when he had a drink, you know.

INT: When you married George where did you live?

FL: I think I lived in Paisley at the time with his mother for a while.

INT: Right. And then when the children came along did you get your own…?

FL: I got a house.

INT: And where was that?

FL: In Paisley.

INT: In Paisley.

FL: A four apartment.

INT: Right

FL: And…

INT: And then George would go out to work, I would imagine and you stayed to look after the children?

FL: Yes he was working but he was working away quite a lot. But I think he was a womanizer. I realise that now, but…

INT: And did you make friends when you were living in Paisley?

FL: Oh yes, I had one or two friends and one of them passed away and the other one. She went away to London.

And I quite liked living in Paisley, you know. I had a nice wee house and I made it as nice as I could. And my mother-in-law was quite nice, you know. She was all right. I got on all right with her.

INT: What happened after George left, did you still see your mother-in-law?

FL: Well because he was her son, and I didn’t bother her. I don’t know what I done after that. I worked and I never did anything that wasn’t right.

INT: No.

FL: I know that.

INT: Did she come to see your children after you and George split?

FL: No she never bothered about my children.

INT: Did she not?

FL: No.

INT: Oh dear.

FL: I could take them to her house right enough, you know, and she was nice enough to them there but she never came to visit.

INT: And did you ever hear about any cousins from Germany? Did you ever hear from any of the family?

FL: Well there was a cousin; one or two cousins there but I can’t remember their names now.

INT: Did they survive the war? Do you know if they…?

INT: And it must be nice that your children are quite close by you as well because I’m sure they come and visit you?

FL: Oh yes.

INT: A lot, which is lovely.

FL: My children are all right, you know.

INT: And it’s nice that you called one of your children Frieda as well.

FL: I know, my husband called her Frieda and I didn’t want it. And he says, “Why not? She’s yours and mine and why not?” Then Janet was after my sister-in-law. She was always quite nice to me, you know. She stayed in Paisley.

INT: Well I think you were very brave because you came over by yourself and I think that’s very brave.

FL: Well I had to go to domestic service and that lady right enough she was very nice, I always remember.

INT: Was that in Edinburgh?

FL: In Edinburgh.

INT: In Edinburgh.

FL: And do you know he tried to come funny with me one day.

INT: Oh?

FL: And I run a mile.

INT: I bet.

FL: I went into my room. I didn’t tell the lady because I didn’t want to do any harm to her marriage at the time. And even so, I was a young girl, you know.

INT: You were very young then.

FL: I said maybe she’ll not believe me. He was sitting in my bed and he had his trousers off. He was a major in the army.

INT: Is that why you think you decided to leave there? Did you then decide to leave and go and work somewhere else?

FL: I think so. That’s right.

INT: I think so.

FL: It was after that. She couldn’t believe it because I liked it there, you know, and I wouldn’t tell her.

INT: You had a lot of principles Frieda. It’s very admirable of you.

FL: Ach away, I didn’t tell you because of that. But I think some men, you know, and oh, he was one of these men, he pulled out the chair for her; he done everything for her and after that I watched men like that. She was such a nice lady too. She was nice looking and everything else. I don’t know what he wanted.

INT: He just wanted to take advantage of a young innocent girl.

FL: Ach.

INT: And see what he could get a way with.

FL: I hardly spoke to him after it. It took me all my time to talk to him. She must have been wondering what was wrong. And I’d tried not to let her know, you know, just in case. Not that I’d done anything it was just…I didn’t like him after that.

**Frieda Laird – Settling In**

Frieda describes how she met her husband and how she managed to make ends meet. She tells the interviewer that she is now Scottish.

INT: What age were you when you got married?

FL: 21.

INT: Gosh that’s quite, that’s quite young. And so how did you meet your husband?

FL: I met him through a lady. She had a baby linen shop and I was working with children at the time, a baby actually, and another child in Shawlands. She had a shop in Shawlands and I went in to buy something for the baby. It was the baby’s birthday and she, the lady said; “Are you from Germany?” I said, “Yes, I am”. And I didn’t like to tell them at the time because the war was on. She said, “Don’t worry telling, about telling me because I have a sister-in-law. She comes from Germany; she comes from Bavaria”.

I said, “Well I was from quite near there.” And she said, “If you like, I’ll take you to Paisley one day”. And she took a liking to me and asked me to her house in Shawlands. And then she took me to Paisley and I met the woman from Germany but I didn’t know what was her background or anything at the time. And she seemed to take a liking to me and took me out and visited me. I was in lodgings at the time and I remember I paid 4 shillings a week for my digs, 4 shillings.

INT: But that was probably still most of your money, I would imagine.

FL: It must be you know but…

INT: So if you were in lodgings but you were looking after the two children did you go every day?

FL: Daily, daily.

INT: You went daily. And where were your lodgings?

FL: Because I had had a job with a baby before it and I was up every night with the wee one and…Very hard work at the time and I said I’ll get another job. And I had two children to look after and they were older. It was quite a good job, you know, so…

INT: So you went to Paisley and you met the lady from Bavaria.

FL: My mother-in-law.

INT: Ah, she became your mother-in-law?

FL: I met her and she took a liking to me and invited me to her house and then I worked; I stayed in…There was a family Cohen, a Jewish family, and I worked for them. And do you know, outside Glasgow, I can’t remember now the place. Can’t remember. It will come to me later on.

INT: So you worked for the Cohen family?

FL: For the Cohen family, yes.

INT: And they had children?

FL: They were Jewish.

INT: Yes but how many children did they have?

FL: I think it was two, two, two boys.

INT: And did you live with them? Did you live in their house?

FL: No, I worked daily.

INT: Daily.

INT: That was when you were in the lodgings?

FL: Yes.

INT: So you went to Paisley and did your…

FL: I met my future mother-in-law, although I didn’t know it at the time. And she invited me back and she came to visit me and she brought her son with her. And I always remember I went for a walk with him to Cathkin Braes.

INT: Oh right.

FL: I stayed at the time near Rutherglen.

INT: Right, ah yes that’s a quite easy route to get there.

FL: I worked with that family Cohen.

INT: So you went to the Cathkin Braes, which is still, I have to say, is still where young couples go.

FL: Aye that’s right. That’s how I couldn’t get peace with him. He came every second day whenever he could. He was working but just came to see me all the time.

INT: And what age was he at that time? If you were twenty…

FL: He’d be about four years older.

INT: Right. So he was obviously very taken with you then?

FL: Well, he was taken with me. I wasn’t taken that much with him but I couldn’t get peace. He was after me all the time. I don’t know. But when I married him he took quite a lot of drink and he was very hard to suffer especially when I was expecting at the time. And I just put up with it, because I was on my own here, and when you’re on your own and no folks to guide you or anything, you just put up with an awful lot.

INT: And also if you had five children as well that would be…

FL: I seemed to… he only needed to look at me and I was pregnant. But I had an operation because I didn’t take my monthly and once I started to take it, it came very heavy and every time he looked at me I was pregnant.

INT: Am I right in remembering that when you started selling jewellery was it Mr Stakis?

FL: I used to go to Stakis’ place.

INT: Tell Angela how that came about.

INT: Stakis, the restaurant?

FL: Yes.

INT: Oh right. How did that happen?

FL: I used to go to the restaurant and sell stuff.

INT: I think you would have done quite well.

FL: He gave me permission. I asked for permission.

INT: But why did he give you permission?

FL: I don’t know.

INT: Because he had been a pedlar.

FL: Was he? I didn’t know that.

INT: His mother sent him over with lace.

FL: Lace?

INT: Yes.

FL: Imagine that.

INT: You told me that.

FL: I think something…that must have escaped my memory.

INT: Frieda told me that when she was struggling with selling the jewellery she was in West Nile Street and Stakis had opened up his first steak bar.

FL: Aye.

INT: This is what you…

FL: He done very well didn’t he?

INT: He did.

INT: And she went in to see if… and she spoke to a waiter, to see if she could sell to the customers. She really needed to sell, and the waiter said “oh…”

INT: But the waiter told her to come back and when she came back a wee while later this Reo Stakis was there. And they had a long conversation and he said; “You can come and sell your jewellery.”

FL: I had to go down to the dining room and lay out my things; whatever I was selling at the time.

INT: It was for the staff not the customers.

FL: For the staff…

INT: And he said that he came with lace that his late mother had made from Cyprus and he peddled it round the doors. And he had great admiration.

FL: He was a very nice man so he was, and so was she. They were both nice.

INT: I’m also very impressed that you have a very strong Scottish, Glasgow accent. You have no [German] accent at all.

FL: I know. I’m Scots now.

INT: Absolutely but since you learned English when you were 18…

FL: Yes.

INT: You have a very good…

FL: But I didn’t learn a lot of it at the time. I just… I had to come away from it and then it stopped. I was only learning it for about 8 months or so, the English. And then I came over here.

INT: Ah, so you learned a bit before you came?

FL: Yes, yes. It helped.

INT: And you obviously have an ear for languages.

FL: I like languages. I learned French for a while at grammar school. I went to grammar school in Crailsheim. I passed my exam and that’s what I wanted to do, teach languages. But I never got round to it; I’m useless.

INT: So when you learned English, before you came, did…

FL: No.

INT: When you said you learned a bit of English for about 8 months before you left Germany.

FL: Yes I learned it.

INT: Did you go to a class for that?

FL: An evening class.

INT: Right.

FL: It was an evening class and another lady, another woman went, a girl went. She came over with me and that was Gitta Frei.

INT: Ah, so Gitta came from a similar part?

FL: Aye she came on the boat over with me.

INT: That’s good. So you weren’t coming totally alone.

FL: I don’t know what actually happened to Gitta now. I think she died.

INT: Did she get married? Did Gitta get married?

FL: Married? I think so, yes. I saw her for quite a while then all at once it stopped and nobody could tell me what happened to her. I don’t know.

INT: Right.

FL: We were quite good friends you know. Just one of those things, I suppose.

INT: After the war did you get some compensation from the government?

FL: I did.

INT: Yes.

FL: I did get it and it was a great help because at that time I had my children and it was a help to me. Not an awful lot but whatever I got it helped, you know, because I wasn’t spoiled for money.

INT: No, not with five children to bring up.

INT: No. And so did you work most of the time as a pedlar?

FL: No. I went for a while and then I got married and had children, you know, and after I had, I think, my third child, I stopped it because it was too much for me, you know. And I wasn’t very well having that baby anyway. It was touch and go at the time. I was really quite ill. It was my kidneys and I’ve still got bother with them at times. But I just done what I could possibly do and I never done anything illegal or not clean because I wouldn’t have lived with a man if I hadn’t my ring on my finger. In these days you did that.

INT: No you didn’t, absolutely.

INT: Absolutely not. Frieda, thank you very much for speaking to me.

FL: Well…

INT: It was very interesting.

**Frieda Laird – Settling In**

Frieda describes how she met her husband and how she managed to make ends meet. She tells the interviewer that she is now Scottish.

INT: What age were you when you got married?

FL: 21.

INT: Gosh that’s quite, that’s quite young. And so how did you meet your husband?

FL: I met him through a lady. She had a baby linen shop and I was working with children at the time, a baby actually, and another child in Shawlands. She had a shop in Shawlands and I went in to buy something for the baby. It was the baby’s birthday and she, the lady said; “Are you from Germany?” I said, “Yes, I am”. And I didn’t like to tell them at the time because the war was on. She said, “Don’t worry telling, about telling me because I have a sister-in-law. She comes from Germany; she comes from Bavaria”.

I said, “Well I was from quite near there.” And she said, “If you like, I’ll take you to Paisley one day”. And she took a liking to me and asked me to her house in Shawlands. And then she took me to Paisley and I met the woman from Germany but I didn’t know what was her background or anything at the time. And she seemed to take a liking to me and took me out and visited me. I was in lodgings at the time and I remember I paid 4 shillings a week for my digs, 4 shillings.

INT: But that was probably still most of your money, I would imagine.

FL: It must be you know but…

INT: So if you were in lodgings but you were looking after the two children did you go every day?

FL: Daily, daily.

INT: You went daily. And where were your lodgings?

FL: Because I had had a job with a baby before it and I was up every night with the wee one and…Very hard work at the time and I said I’ll get another job. And I had two children to look after and they were older. It was quite a good job, you know, so…

INT: So you went to Paisley and you met the lady from Bavaria.

FL: My mother-in-law.

INT: Ah, she became your mother-in-law?

FL: I met her and she took a liking to me and invited me to her house and then I worked; I stayed in…There was a family Cohen, a Jewish family, and I worked for them. And do you know, outside Glasgow, I can’t remember now the place. Can’t remember. It will come to me later on.

INT: So you worked for the Cohen family?

FL: For the Cohen family, yes.

INT: And they had children?

FL: They were Jewish.

INT: Yes but how many children did they have?

FL: I think it was two, two, two boys.

INT: And did you live with them? Did you live in their house?

FL: No, I worked daily.

INT: Daily.

INT: That was when you were in the lodgings?

FL: Yes.

INT: So you went to Paisley and did your…

FL: I met my future mother-in-law, although I didn’t know it at the time. And she invited me back and she came to visit me and she brought her son with her. And I always remember I went for a walk with him to Cathkin Braes.

INT: Oh right.

FL: I stayed at the time near Rutherglen.

INT: Right, ah yes that’s a quite easy route to get there.

FL: I worked with that family Cohen.

INT: So you went to the Cathkin Braes, which is still, I have to say, is still where young couples go.

FL: Aye that’s right. That’s how I couldn’t get peace with him. He came every second day whenever he could. He was working but just came to see me all the time.

INT: And what age was he at that time? If you were twenty…

FL: He’d be about four years older.

INT: Right. So he was obviously very taken with you then?

FL: Well, he was taken with me. I wasn’t taken that much with him but I couldn’t get peace. He was after me all the time. I don’t know. But when I married him he took quite a lot of drink and he was very hard to suffer especially when I was expecting at the time. And I just put up with it, because I was on my own here, and when you’re on your own and no folks to guide you or anything, you just put up with an awful lot.

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INT: It was very interesting.

**Frieda Laird – Reflection On Life**

Frieda speaks with love and pride about her children. She mentions the terrible fate of her parents and brothers and the fact that, although her life was hard, it could have been much worse.

INT: I still never found out what age you were though, Frieda.

FL: Pardon?

INT: I still never found out what age you were.

FL: I was…

INT: What age you are just now.

FL: Oh well you’ll see it; you don’t need to find out. I’m beginning to age quite a lot now.

INT: Why don’t you tell, Frieda, what birthday you celebrated last Thursday? Tell her what age you were on your birthday.

FL: 92.

INT: Honestly you do not look 92. [The interview took place in 2013]

FL: Och, away, don’t flatter me.

INT: No, do you know why? It’s because you have a lovely complexion.

FL: Aye well, I just looked at myself the other day. I never look a lot in the mirror, and it’s a funny thing – I’m getting wrinkles on the one side and not on the other side, how’s that?

INT: I don’t know.

FL: But, well I don’t grudge my children because they’re good, nice children.

INT: Absolutely.

INT: So you’ve got a daughter called Frieda.

FL: Two daughters, Janet and Frieda.

INT: Oh right. OK

FL: And my sons, George, and Bobby and they’re all lovely children, thank God, and they’re all doing well. They’re all working hard. There’s none of them doctors or lawyers or anything but they’re doing all right.

INT: They’re a credit to you, yes.

FL: Well I tried my best but my life hasn’t been easy. But it could have been a lot worse, if I had been in a concentration camp, but lucky to escape that. When I think what my poor parents and my brothers came through, makes me very sad. I don’t know how people can be so cruel. I wouldn’t go a holiday over there now if you gave me a million dollars.

And I don’t know how I ever married George Thomson… Because she came from Germany and I don’t know what it was. And I wasn’t pregnant at the time.

INT: Maybe just because of the Germany, that still reminded you a wee bit.

FL: He went after me and after me. I couldn’t get peace from him. I worked up in Burnside and he came up there and I think that’s what it was. And he said; “I’ll make a nice home for you, you know. I’m a joiner I can do a lot of things and make it really lovely”. He was very persuasive.

INT: And as Frieda [Myrna] said, you were a very pretty girl as well.

FL: Pardon?

INT: You were a very pretty girl as well and I think he obviously really liked you.

FL: Maybe that’s all, he did, right enough, I think. He quite cared for me in his own way, until he had a drink. In the drink he was even worse; he was even more caring and I hated it. You know what like men are when they have a drink.