**Joe Cent – Life Before The War**

Joe speaks about his parents and discusses the problems his father had in the 1920s because he was Jewish in Poland.

**Read the Transcript**

INT: Today is the 15th of August [2012] and I’m here with Angela to interview Joe. I’ll begin Joe by asking you when and where you were born and what was your name at birth?

J.C: I was born in France in the town of Valenciennes on the 20th of March 1937 and my certificate of birth has me as Joseph Samuel Centnerszwer.

INT: Thanks. You were obviously very young; are you able to tell us a little about your family life before you came to Britain?

J.C: Not really. My mother had a hairdressing salon and my father was an engineer, a locomotive designer, and worked in various companies in the north of France. He had studied in Poland and finishing his studies he had come to France and studied in Paris and when he finished he sent for my mother from Warsaw and they got married in 1927 in Paris.

INT: Had she been in Paris or in France for a long time?

J.C: She went in 1927 when my father finished his studies in Paris in the Sorbonne, when he had finished.

INT: Right.

J.C: But my father started off studying in Warsaw at the Polytechnic and he was there in a time when Jewish students only sat in the one row on the left, you know.

INT: Is that right? In a segregated way?

J.C: Aha yes. When he finished his studies he was offered work there and he could have stayed in Poland but he was told that he would have to become Catholic and even though he was not, you know, following any Jewish religion I think he was a bit thrawn and decided it was not for him. And he got the opportunity of a scholarship to Sorbonne to do engineering and mathematics and physics and he went and never went back.

He had no intention of ever going back to Poland so as soon as he could, when he finished his studies he sent for my mother and they got married.

INT: Yet he did have to serve in the Polish army.

J.C: He did.

INT: He couldn’t avoid that.

J.C: Oh yes,

**Joe Cent – Life During The War**

Joe talks about his father’s military career. He explains why a chance encounter brought him and his mother to Scotland.

INT: So how was it you came here to Scotland? What happened?

J.C: My father had been in the military cadets which was part of university life in Warsaw during the 1921 attacks by the Soviet Union on Poland, when Lenin tried to capture, to take back countries that had come under the Tsarist Russian domain if you like, and Lenin tried to recapture barrier/buffer states like the Baltic States and Poland and bring them back into the Russian sphere, the Soviet sphere.

And so my father fought in 1920 as a cadet from university. So when war broke out in France there were many Polish workers working in France in the mines and the factories and my father was called up and, called up by the Polish forces, and it was with the Polish army, who didn’t capitulate at the same time as the French, but escaped and came to England.

INT: Right.

J.C: 1940.

INT: In 1940.

J.C: The 26th of June 1940 we landed in Plymouth on a Polish troop ship.

INT: I see and what happened then?

J.C: Well the Polish army went off to wherever the army was sent, [Joe explained his father was sent to Tentsmuir-Leuchars, to build defences against possible invasion from Norway] and any civilians who were with the Polish army, like my mother and myself, were billeted. The government had organised homes for us where people had room in their home. They determined who had room and they would have to give up a room for somebody who came with the army.

INT: I see. And your father, did he stay with the army group?

J.C: Yes he was away and we ended up in London in the home of a Jewish lady. My mother of course couldn’t speak English.

INT: Right.

J.C: And I was only three; I think I was just speaking French then.

INT: That must have been very frightening.

INT: So who decided that your mother should leave France? Was it…?

J.C: Ah, that was chance. My father had rented a property in the south of France when, somewhere around the outbreak of the war, for us to… for us to go and hide away because we were living so close to the Belgian border and Germany.

And when my father was called up we all escaped to Paris in a van with other families, other Jewish families.

And in Paris when the army was… I mean I’m guessing because a lot of it I don’t know…. but the army seemed to form up in Paris to go, to escape by rail. And my father was saying goodbye to my mother and me and he was sending her off to this safe place somewhere in the south of France when a Polish officer approached him and said, ‘Why are you saying goodbye to your wife and child? Get them on the train. We’re leaving the country. Get on this train!’

And my father, who did speak French, was in the locomotive forcing the driver to run the train, because by that time the Germans were already in the north of France.

And the train went down towards Biarritz to Saint Jean de Luz where there were two Polish liners, the Batory and the Sobieski, and on the night of the 21st/22nd June 1940, fishing boats were taking the Polish army out to the ships because Saint Jean de Luz is just a small fishing port and the boats were too big to come in. And we were ferried out. No luggage; any luggage that we had had to be thrown into the sea and so we came with nothing.

INT: So would there have been other families then?

J.C: Yes there were and we, my parents kept connections with other families.

INT: Is that right?

J.C: Yes and I still know one lady in Woking.

[The lady was called Giselle Zafraniec and married Alan Segar] who is the same age as me, whose parents came at exactly the same time.

INT: And yet you’re here in Scotland so what happened?

J.C: Yes well the Polish army came up to Scotland to defend the eastern seaboard from invasion from Norway and so my father managed to get us moved up too. So we lived in billets all over the east of Scotland: Lossiemouth, Elgin, Dundee, different places, Falkirk. In fact near the end of the war we were in the west, in Kilwinning in Irvine. We moved all over the place.

J.C. He was a Polish citizen. They were, they applied for French citizenship and I’ve got a date for that. I think it was July, it was July 1939 they were applying for French citizenship.

INT: So they must have realised that trouble was on its way at that point?

J.C: Well they didn’t want to go back to Poland.

INT: Right.

J.C: And I think they wanted to make their life in France. And I don’t think it had much to do with the rise of Nazism at that stage. I don’t know. I have no idea.

INT: So do you think they ended up staying here because he got work here?

J.C: Well yes.

INT: Or did he always intend to?

J.C: Well yes, he was …as soon as, even before the war ended he was offered work at NB Loco in Springburn because we were staying, our last billet was, after the war, in Glasgow. And we were staying in the same flat as the chief draughtsman of NB Loco.

INT: Did many of your… Did you know what happened to your other relatives? To your cousins or…?

J.C: Yes, my father had a brother who ended up in Australia.

He and his family escaped east when the Germans invaded Poland, so from Warsaw he went to Eastern Poland and then two weeks later the Russians of course invaded Poland so he was deported to a camp with his wife and daughter. And we know of other people who suffered a similar fate; by escaping from the Germans they then fell into the hands of the Soviets. The Soviets…at least the Soviets didn’t discriminate; everybody was just shipped off to slave labour in Siberia. And then when it was decided that Poland was fighting with the Soviet Union, in other words when Hitler attacked Stalin, the circumstances changed and a lot of people were released from the labour camps and my father’s brother’s family came out through Georgia and what was Persia then.

They ended up in a displaced persons camp in France where my cousin met her husband and they all got on to some ship going to Australia. And my father at one stage, when he had found them (he had started looking through the Red Cross and things like that) was looking for work in Australia before he got work in Glasgow.

INT: I see

INT: So I was going to ask when you said about your mother, I’m going back a wee bit, when you said about your mother buying fruit were you aware that your diet was different from other people? With your mother having been in France for so long and also having come originally from Poland as well?

J.C: Yes, Polish food, yes my diet was different.

INT: So your friends would have thought that was exotic as well?

J.C: Well I don’t know, I couldn’t tell you.

**Joe Cent – Settling In**

Joe talks about his early life in Scotland and his mother’s desire ‘to blend in’. He also describes his education and varied career.

INT: You wouldn’t have had any contact with other Jewish families would you?

J.C: No, not much. No, no.

INT: I see that’s very interesting. And then what happened? You were educated here in Scotland?

J.C: Oh yes completely. And my father then got British citizenship. After the war, of course, the Polish soldiers didn’t want to go back to communist Poland. And I could give you [the date] my father, when we became British… 1949, the 30th of August, 1949, we became British subjects.

INT: But you would have known nothing else apart from Scotland.

J.C: No, no and of course I was… I learned English before my mother and so when we went shopping, by four I would take my mother to the shops, and at four and a half I started school in Dundee. I went to a lot of different schools as we moved, a lot of primary schools, during the course of the war. I don’t think it did my education any good.

INT: It probably didn’t.

J.C: No.

INT: And did your mother learn English?

J.C: Never properly.

INT: Right.

J.C: Never completely, no.

INT: But she was…

J.C: But she could speak French, Polish, Russian, you know.

INT: Right, just not English. And then after school what happened?

J.C: Well my father died while I was still at school and the company he worked for, North British Locomotive Company in Springburn, agreed to take me on as an apprentice and I became an engineering apprentice and completed my apprenticeship and, you know, studies at evening classes etc.

And I finished up in the drawing office as a draughtsman and I worked there until the company started slowly sinking. I then decided to become a teacher, went to Jordanhill, was accepted by Jordanhill and I became a teacher of technical subjects. And I worked in various Glasgow schools, working my way up, finishing as head of department in Govan High School, and I retired at fifty.

INT: Out of choice?

J.C: I was, I had the opportunity and I couldn’t afford to stay; I got a good deal.

INT: There was a stage I think when they were…

J.C: Wonderful. I got ten years onto my twenty-five.

INT: Very good.

INT: That’s very good.

J.C: The maximum is forty so I thought I’ll never get a chance like this again. Plus a lump sum, plus a pension.

INT: Yes.

J.C: So I’ve had a pension since I was 50.

INT: Well that was very good. It was indeed.

J.C: But I didn’t stop work.

INT: What did you do after that?

J.C: Another career. Well I went back into engineering in the hi-fi industry. I worked on a computer drafting system for a well-known hi-fi company in the south side of Glasgow.

J.C: Anyway it didn’t quite work out as planned and after just over 3 years we parted company. And the Berlin Wall had collapsed and I saw an advert for a company who was taking Americans around Europe, groups of American students/young people and because of the possibility of travelling Russia and these other former Soviet States they were looking for people with the languages and experience in travel.

And I had travelled to many of these countries as a student when I got involved in student exchanges through the Scottish Union of Students and the British Council.

INT: And did you speak Polish?

J.C: I did.

INT: Ah

J.C: Oh yes and Russian.

INT: I see, speaking to your mother in those languages?

J.C: Polish, yes. No, my mother and father used to speak Russian if they didn’t want me to understand.

INT: Which was a very good way for you to learn.

J.C: As an adult, I learned Russian.

INT: Oh right.

INT: And Polish as a child?

J.C: Polish as a child. And I had to relearn French so I’m fluent in French, Polish and Russian.

INT: And did French come more easily do you think because it had been in your?…

J.C: Not at school. When I left school I learned French.

INT: I see.

J.C: I thought the school system was dreadful. That a French born person could fail a French exam in 3rd Year…it was a reflection on the school. However, I wasn’t a great pupil I suppose. Anyway I’ve made up for it….So…

INT: Sorry, I was going to ask you, where did you learn Russian?

J.C: At evening classes at university.

INT: My goodness.

INT: And so…

J.C: That was way back in the 60s.

INT: We interrupted you. You then became…?

J.C: A tour manager.

INT: Oh.

J.C: Yeah, with student groups and then adult groups.

INT: And that meant you actually took them.

J.C: And I specialised in former Communist countries.

INT: I see.

J.C: But I travelled all over Europe. I travelled everywhere by rail, ship, plane, bus; lots of things.

INT: That must have been very interesting.

J.C: Wonderful. So I worked at that for fifteen years and I only gave that up in 2005 because by that time my wife had fully retired and so we travel together now.

INT: Excellent.

INT: What’s your favourite place to visit?

J.C: Well, France really. I always feel at home there and like the style. When I was teaching I had thought I might like to retire to France but then I got this tourism job and I was working until sixty-eight, you know, and I forgot all about retiring anywhere.

INT: And you mentioned your wife, how did you meet her?

J.C: I met her in Glasgow when…It was a Valentine’s thing in 1960s, mid 60s, some kind of computer dating. Not for marriage, just for dating. And for your pound you got six phone numbers. I got six phone numbers; she was one of the phone numbers.

INT: Number one?

J.C: No she wasn’t number one but she is now!

INT: So after your father died did your mother, was she working or?

J.C: Yes she worked for a short time as a dinner lady, you know at school lunches. She also made lampshades, and that was silk lampshades.

INT: Oh beautiful.

J.C: She bought frames and binding and she made them by hand. And I’ve got one downstairs.

INT: She probably taught herself how to do that I would imagine?

J.C: Yes and so she had a lot. She could talk and she was very French in her manners and dress and managed to have a lot of nice customers who liked these nice things and paid for them.

INT: Right.

J.C: When the war ended we were living in Irvine and my father was headhunted. They were looking for engineers at NB Loco and he was offered a job.

But he couldn’t take a job as long as he was in the army but the army released him and NB Loco just paid his train fare into [work] because the war had ended, they were just sitting in barracks. So he would travel to Glasgow every day from Irvine and they paid his fare but they didn’t pay him a salary because he was still in the army. But as soon as he was demobbed, yes, he got a salary and he got two rooms in a flat in Alexander Parade, top floor, that we shared with the chief draughtsman and his family.

INT: You must have been, your family must have been quite exotic for the rest of the people.

J.C: Yes, yes.

INT: In that sort of world. Is that not true?

J.C: Well what happened in Alexandra Parade was, after the war, my mother went out and bought fruit and Mrs Fett, the chief draughtsman’s wife, when she saw that my mother had bought fruit she said ‘Is somebody sick?’ They didn’t eat fruit.

INT: That’s interesting. But were you ever aware that you were unusual, that you weren’t just the same as everybody else?

J.C: Well yes I knew because we had mixed with Jewish people but I was also aware that my mother was trying to make me blend in so when the boys, the two Fett boys in Alexandra Parade went to Sunday School, I went to Sunday School, you know.

I had to blend in. Because they had, they knew what was happening to Jews and they didn’t know whether, what was going to happen. The war had just ended. There was always this hiding, hiding.

INT: Yes.

J.C: Mentality I think.

INT: And did that continue later do you think for them?

J.C: No, no I don’t think so, no.

INT: Just nearer the time. I’m surprised in one way that they spoke to you in Polish or Russian.

J.C: They spoke Polish at home.

INT: I suppose they had no other…

J.C: At that time it was odd, nowadays of course everybody speaks Polish if you walk down to Partick. But if you spoke Polish in the street people stopped to look but they wouldn’t do that now.

INT: I’m sure that’s true.

**Joe Cent – Integration**

Joe tells the interviewer what he discovered about the rest of his parents’ family. He mentions continuing [anti-Semitism](https://gatheringthevoices.com/glossary/anti-semitism/) in Europe. Then he describes his last, and favourite, career change.

J.C: [Joe is asked about the fate of the rest of his family].

…because I found letters. I’ve got a lot of letters that I’m going through. It’s very difficult. It’s handwritten letters in Polish. So I’m working my way through some of these. But he had a, my father had a sister who disappeared in Warsaw. My mother had two brothers. The younger brother got married to a Communist and they went to the Soviet Union before the war; disappeared.

The older brother was last seen in the ghetto. He’d be a young man fighting in the ghetto. There were some second cousins and things. I have discovered a second cousin in Warsaw, who is my age. She had to work until she was about seventy. A professor in nuclear physics at Warsaw University, who was brought up with her brother by her mother, the father had been murdered, and didn’t know she was Jewish. They had false papers, a different name, Bernardski…name, a good Polish name…They hid in a village… They had been brought up as Catholics; the mother brought the two children up as Catholics.

INT: How did she find out then in the end?

J.C: At University she found out, after she had graduated. She found out because there was some professor who had the name Centnerszwer who was on a plaque that had opened, he was some… I don’t know… I’ve got a photo of the plaque. He was some famous person there at the university and had this name that she’d come across in the family and her mother would never tell her but then it all, she had to, it all came out. But she had to not tell anyone that she was Jewish because of, you know, what it’s like in Poland today, it’s not changed a great deal. There are big inroads and officially, of course, there is no [anti-Semitism](https://gatheringthevoices.com/glossary/anti-semitism/). But I came across it a lot because I was working with Americans as a tour manager and I came from Scotland.

It’s funny, people in a lot of countries don’t, they think if you come from Scotland there’s no way you can be Jewish. So I learned a lot. I mean I worked in Austria that was worse than Germany for [anti-Semitism](https://gatheringthevoices.com/glossary/anti-semitism/).

INT: You’ve certainly had a lot of varied jobs so which job do you think was your..?

J.C: Oh the last one.

INT: The last one? Absolutely.

INT: That was your favourite one.

J.C: I mean I was travelling on the QE2 several times, you know. I was on the Mediterranean cruise, Panama cruise; I was travelling on trains across Russia, bus tours, boats;

I did river cruises in Russia on cruise boats that went up the canals from Moscow to St Petersburg. I was travelling, meeting; I was always with people who were… Americans on holiday – great people. We were always having a great time.

INT: And having all those languages, it must have been much easier?

J.C: Well yes, well the Russian was the best because I got so much work. They needed a lot of Russian speakers. And tourists needed me more than if, say, I was in Ireland… Because I did tours everywhere just, you know, for a break. You can’t do Russia all the time; you would die! The longer I was with the company the more choice I had over what I did.

But in Russia, the tourists, they couldn’t speak the language, they couldn’t read the signs but I could do that; they relied on me. I was important. It was very nice. I got paid tips and made a lot of friends. And we’re just back from America staying with a big reunion of people who were on some of my tours, in fact, my first tour group ever in 1991.

INT: That’s marvellous.

INT: Fantastic.

J.C: We travel all over America. I have friends everywhere.

INT: It just shows you.

J.C: And I had never been to America before in my life until I started working with Americans.

INT: And you managed just by going to university to learn to speak Russian well enough to do that?

J.C: I did. I’ll tell you my first Russian course was with a friend of mine, who is now in Australia, and he worked at the city…there was a city college in Cathedral Street, I don’t know what they call it now.

INT: The College of Commerce.

J.C: Yes that’s it. Well he did a class there and I went to his class and I came out with an O-Grade.

That’s the only O-Grade/O-Level I ever achieved and from there I went to Glasgow University evening classes and it was a Professor Beermann, who was Estonian, who did language and literature and I got into a bit more there.

INT: It’s very impressive.

J.C: And in doing student exchanges and then going to work in Russia. I mean I worked for fifteen years in Russia.

INT: Do you think your Polish helped you? Did that make it easier for you to learn it?

J.C: Yes, Slav, because I speak a bit of Czech as well.

In fact I used to speak quite a lot of Czech but I don’t have the chance. Yes, very similar. There are all Slav based, old Slavonic or whatever you call it. But I mean I’m, I don’t, I can’t discuss anything to any great depth.

INT: Most people can’t even in their own language.

J.C: You know, uh huh, you know with a lot of these languages, I’m good, I’m fluent in conversation and everything, I’m OK. And I keep up my French, there’s a Franco-Scottish Society I’m on the committee. I keep up my French there.

INT: You said that you were held back by your primary education but it doesn’t really sound as if you were.

J.C: Oh I don’t…I was going from school to school where they did different things, where in one school you are printing and the next school you are writing. My writing to this day is not very nice.

INT: And does your wife speak languages as well?

J.C: No. She’s tried everything. She’s tried them all.

INT: And did she manage to come with you on some of your trips?

J.C: She’s…In fifteen years she only was allowed to come on two.

INT: Gosh that’s quite a lot, not a lot I mean…

J.C: They don’t, they don’t like it.

INT: Right.

J.C: First of all I must have been the oldest tour manager they had. It’s a young person’s, single person’s job, and they didn’t want a tour manager taking a partner because they felt it would, it would detract from their work if they had a partner. Whereas in actual fact when I took my wife she was extremely helpful and sociable of course, and conversant, you know, an intelligent, educated woman was very helpful. So she came on a Mediterranean cruise with me. She got a free trip there as long as she shared my cabin, and I had a single cabin!

INT: Oh dear!

J.C: But I had a bunk. So I could sleep on the bunk. And then she came on one of my Russian river cruises. They were good. They are the best way to see Russia. You get on the boat in Moscow and you do all your tours of Moscow from the boat and then the boat goes up and everywhere it stops, a different day, a different town.

INT: You must have….

J.C: A different city.

INT: You must have had to learn about all these places as well?

J.C: Well you had a guide. No, I wasn’t a guide.

INT: You weren’t the guide?

J.C: No. So I would have a guide with me.

INT: Oh I see.

J.C: When you arrived in Yaroslavl there was a guide waiting for you.

INT: I see and did that guide speak English?

J.C: Yes.

INT: Yes.

J.C: Oh yes.

INT: But you were there to help them, when he wasn’t there?

J.C: I was there. I had to know something about everywhere but not to the same detail that a guide would. I had to know everything because I had to know everything about Europe; I was everywhere.

INT: That’s marvellous.

INT: And also you would have to take care of people as well.

J.C: Well you… Listen …had to. Illnesses and you know, you had people losing things and getting their pockets picked. I had all these problems to deal with yes but generally it was all very interesting.

**Joe Cent – Reflection On Life**

Joe talks about his feelings about identity – Jewish, Polish and Scottish. He discusses family and, finally, his enthusiasm for the Citroen 2CV.

INT: Of course. I wondered…you were obviously separated from the Jewish world very early on.

J.C: Yes.

INT: Did you ever come back towards it?

J.C: Yes I did when my father died. Yeah… But I did it for my mother I think. I just accepted it and did it but it faded.

INT: So you didn’t get involved with any of the various other refugees that came out?

J.C: No, no.

INT: I suppose your history was very different from everybody else’s really.

J.C: Well I don’t know, because I didn’t know. I certainly do remember when I was a boy, my parents, who had lots of friends who had horrendous wartime experiences, and we would visit them, either socially or at some festival or something, maybe Pesach or something, but not especially. My parents had not been religious and they didn’t have a Jewish wedding; it was a civil wedding in Paris and there wasn’t…I didn’t receive a Jewish education.

INT: And they really weren’t part of that core group.

J.C: No, no.

INT: That had come over together and so on.

INT: If you look back now on your time here in Scotland what would you say were the highest points in those years?

J.C: I suppose getting married and having two sons must be a big thing, especially when I realise how fortunate I’ve been. I mean we lost absolutely everything. There was nothing left you know. My parents had a home and a business – my mother had a business- and we lost everything. But we were alive. And I think the fact that I’m comfortably off here and I’ve had a, I’ve had a good life. It was hard at the beginning for my mother and myself; it was very hard because I didn’t go out a lot. I didn’t have any money. I didn’t have any teens; I didn’t go out.

My father had got a house from the company. The company bought three big houses in the West End, which they divided up, and they rented out to senior employees and then laterally sold them off and my father bought a flat. But because he was in poor health from the military, from the army, he got some kidney disease in the army and was very unhealthy; he couldn’t get the insurance that went with a mortgage, which meant that, when he died, we had to find money to pay the mortgage. My mother had her widow’s pension and she had work from making lampshades and I was earning. I started off (I can find a payslip or something) at £2.35 pence or something… £2, three and sixpence it was, my first week’s pay for forty-four hours, you know.

I wasn’t contributing a huge amount; we had no money! And my clothes came from parcels from America. My mother had some cousin or somebody in America that sent them and she would get the clothes altered. And when you went – if you went out at night, whether you’re going with boys from Springburn or whether you’re going with boys from Garnethill Shul, I didn’t have a suit. I didn’t go. I just didn’t go places. So it was hard. Anyway it’s all turned now and went pretty good now.

INT: And how long did your mother live until?

J.C: 1984

INT: Right.

J.C: I think it was but I’d have to look it up, I’d need to look it up. My father died in ‘53 aged fifty-five…‘84, she died aged eighty-five.

INT: And did she really remain isolated from other Polish people here in Glasgow?

J.C: No she went to the Polish club.

INT: Right.

J.C: The Sikorski. But she wasn’t accepted as a Polish person because she was Jewish.

INT: Right.

J.C: She had a very good friend, and my mother was like a Polish patriot, if you like, and brought me up like that, and yet her good friend, her really good friend, told her one day, ‘But you’re not Polish, you’re Jewish’.

Now, I mean you can trace our families back to the 1700s. I’ve managed to trace them back to then. And they were all in publishing, medicine; they were all educated. But not Polish…

INT: That’s interesting. But yet she still continued going to the Polish club?

J.C: Yes she did. Well she was good and jolly and she had a lot of friends there. And I’ll tell you an interesting thing that happened to me.

I went to a funeral of a friend of mine, a Polish girl who got me involved in the Scottish Union of Students and the British Council and travelling on student exchanges. And she was a real live wire. Gromek, Eva Gromek her name was. Anyway Eva wasn’t a well person and she died quite young and I went to her funeral, oh a decade ago it must have been, and there was a wee reception afterwards, a wee sort of wake in the Polish club, in the Sikorski, and there were people there and I was chatting to people I didn’t know, women, and I was speaking Polish of course; everybody was speaking Polish. And they were saying, ‘Why don’t you join the club?’ and I was saying ‘Ach, I don’t fancy it’.

I mean when my mother was a member I did go and I remember doing a slide show presentation of travels in Poland, you know, the Communist times. These Poles never went there and I had been in Communist times and I showed them things. I don’t know whether they believed what they saw, but there you are.

And you know ‘You should join’ and I said ‘Ach I know. But I used to come here when my mum was a member.’

‘Was your mother a member?’

‘Yes my mother was a member’

‘What was her name?’ and I said Cent…

Where is she buried?’

I said ‘Out at Glenduffhill’. But there is a Catholic cemetery there as well.

I said, ‘Oh she’s out there.’

‘Oh I’ve never seen that name on a stone?’

I said, ‘Oh, she’s in the Jewish cemetery.’

‘Oh…’

That was it. No more, ‘You should come and join the club’. The conversation finished. That’s here in Glasgow.

INT: That’s here in Glasgow. And do you think of yourself still as Jewish as you ever were?

J.C: You must be. There’s no doubt about that and it’s got nothing to do with religion. Ethnic, call it what you will, there’s names for it. I’ll wear a kilt but I’m not Scots, I know. When I work in Scotland, I wear a kilt as a tour manager. You know…Why not?

INT: Absolutely.

J.C: I mean most of the Scots who wear a kilt aren’t, shouldn’t be wearing it anyway either.

INT: So do your sons, do they still live in Glasgow?

J.C: No, one does and one lives in Dubai and both have ‘married out’.

But they never had Jewish company here. There’s no Jews here. Anyway one has married a Catholic girl and they’ve got three children, the second one just started school today.

INT: Oh lovely.

J.C: So we see them regularly. And the other one is in Dubai and he’s married a Filipino, beautiful girl, who was working for him and now he’s working for her. And they’ve got a little girl. So they both have their own internet businesses and both doing OK.

INT: So do you, have you been to Dubai then?

INT: Very good.

J.C: He says ‘Where do you want to go?’

INT: That’s very nice.

J.C: It’s lovely.

INT: So is there any country you haven’t been to then?

J.C: Well there’s a few yes. We’ve been to a lot of places and quite often it’s because of a person. Like, we’ve been to Korea and we went to Vietnam. And then Zara wanted to go to India and Nepal so we went trekking in Nepal. We just… wherever. So our son does the long haul and we do all the internal.

INT: Excellent. That’s how it should be.

J.C: It’s pretty good. He’s good to us.

INT: I’m sure you were very good to him as he grew up as well.

J.C: A good boy.

INT: And the final question, I wanted to ask is you have an amazing collection of the CVs…

J.C: Well the (Citroen) 2CV.

INT: You got an award for it as well.

J.C: Well I’ve got a few things. I’ve got two 2CVs. I can take them apart right down to the chassis and rebuild, which I have done.

I’ve done it for other people and I’ve done it for myself. I don’t do it now. I’ve had 2CVs since 1970. I’ve travelled all over Europe with 2CVs, and the boys learned to drive in a 2CV and their first cars were 2CVs.

INT: Do you think that’s your French background coming out?

J.C: I don’t know. It’s just it’s an interesting car and it’s easy to work on. So 2CV is a feature in our family.

INT: Well I can say that we’ve both thoroughly enjoyed speaking to you.