**Leo Metzstein – Life Before The War**

INT: Today is the 26th of July 2013 and we’re here to interview Leo Metzstein. Leo, can I begin by asking you when you were born? Where were you born? And were you always called Leo Metzstein?

LM: Yes I was born on the 27th of July 1932 in Berlin and I was always named Leo Metzstein, no question about that. I can’t think of anything else to tell you other than the street I was born, but that’s not important. But we did live around the corner from a Nazi pub which was actually quite good. We lived in a basement what we people would call ‘garden flats’ but it was a basement no question about it. And that indirectly, I think, saved our lives, maybe not our lives so much, but it saved us being harassed by gangs because we went downstairs into our house. We were not a main door, off the road where you would stand and have to open with a key. We actually walked down steps into a basement. So that’s where we were born.

INT: And why was it good for you that there was a Nazi pub nearby?

LM: Well it’s kept the… as far as my mother used to say there was a Nazi pub round the corner where they congregated and I think the amount of drink that was going on and everything they would just disappear after their drinking and disappear to their own homes. It was a meeting place for them I would think. But remember I was only, at that time I was one, in ’32 I was born, by the time 1933 came along one, and ’39 I was 6. But I was just hearing stories and seeing things. It’s nothing much.

INT: And were you an only child?

LM: No, no I was one of five. There are two girls and three boys; and my sister Liebe, who changed her name to Lee, went to America. My brother Joseph, he just changed it to Joe, which was quite normal. There were the twins, Isi and Jenny were twins. And I was the last one, there was four years between Isi and Jenny and I and that was 1932 when I was born.

INT: You were of course very young when the Nazis gained power. Do you have any memories from that period before you came here to Scotland?

LM: I do have memories. I would think, I went to school, I suppose at the time you would be just walking the streets, I’m not, I don’t think people were as, as concerned about paedophiles as they seem to be today. But I remember walking the streets and going to school myself, and also running home from school because my mother said “don’t walk, just when you, when you go anywhere, just run. You don’t want to be observed by anybody”. But according to my mother I was blonde and blue eyed and I wasn’t going to be taken for a dark, Jewish styled person like my brothers were. They were dark and very obviously, I would think, Jewish. I don’t remember much, except; I have a vague memory somewhere in the back of my head about parades, flags but that would just be seen. I don’t think they were in our street so much, it would be in the main roads. We lived in Blumenstraße which was quite a main road at the time but I don’t think there would be many parades up and down I would say. Anyway if there was a parade I would probably sneak out to see it and then I’d be pulled back, I wouldn’t be allowed to wander the streets.

INT: Was it the local primary school you went to? Or was it…

LM: It was a Jewish school I believe and there was, they finally burned the school down I believe and then they opened, partially, a bit of it so I may have gone back to school for a little while.

INT: And it was the Nazis who burned it down then?

LM: Oh yes, it was all part of 1939 Kristallnacht, this and that. They decided that Jewish schools were not necessary, Jewish people were not necessary so why give them special schools? But I believe, hearing from my brothers, that they did open up one or two others, maybe they just felt difficult, I think they felt guilty, but I think they, they opened up a few schools.

INT: And you obviously managed to escape, what happened? How did you get here?

LM: Oh that’s a long story which neither of my sisters or my mother or anybody really talked about but it was a fairly organised arrangement which we didn’t realise. And my sister only heard about it either at work or when she was with other girls that one day, there’s a lot of things going on about Jewish people, Jewish children, ten thousand children are going to be allowed. This is a very strange thing, allowed, I didn’t think we were stopped from going anywhere, but suddenly ‘allowed’ to leave Germany.

INT: And this was as part of the Kindertransport?

LM: Yes. My sister came back apparently from the house, although she was very slow with any information and so was my mother, they just never spoke about anything. But apparently I heard later that she heard that you have to go somewhere and, and present yourself and say who is there that’s under 17 or under 16, who’s over six? And this all happened, I was still only 4, 5, 6 years old and I didn’t hear till later that that’s what happened. You were to go somewhere, get a form, someone will deal with the Jewish Refugee Committee, the Quakers the…I honestly don’t know and my sister was not very forthcoming with information. But, she was fifteen, she organised the whole thing to the point where if my mother hadn’t moved, which was the case, my mother was very slow in thinking that anything would ever happen; “No they’re friends of ours” she would say, “Look Mr thingummy across the road, he knows us well”. And my sister said “If you don’t move yourself, I’m killing myself”. And she would have, she would have, she was going to throw herself off a bridge she told me.

INT: So she understood how dangerous things were?

LM: At fourteen or fifteen she understood everything but she never spoke about it. The main thing was to get three of us ready. Joe was already past the age where he could go to Kindertransport, or verging on the age, and he had to get smuggled out. He was told one day “come to ‘so and so’ and ‘so and so'” with a wee bundle, bit of bread or something and he got on the train and he went through. But Isi, Jenny and I were different. We were registered below 17 and there was a lot of work to get us out of Berlin. All sorts of committees must have been involved, you had to make sure that my mother didn’t owe any taxes or, or rent or, and finally it was a horrendous departure, I just…

INT: And your father, was he deceased by this time?

LM: My father was, I reckon he was instrumental because there was a lot of Communist Jewish people around Berlin at the time. He may have been a Communist, he may have talked in places, I don’t know. All we know is that he was 35 when he was found in a field and obviously had tried to escape gangs or, or being harassed. He was a very Jewish looking and he…probably anti Nazi of course, being Jewish he would see what was going on. But this was already 1933 and he was killed, I say “killed” in inverted commas, he was, couldn’t go home. He wouldn’t go home because they were watching everything apparently, that was already 1933. People don’t believe that 1933 it started but apparently as soon as Hitler became Chancellor everything changed. People were being hit in the street and harassed and even imprisoned. I think they even started certain concentration camps just to get people out of the cities. And at 35 he was found in a field, went to the hospital, and my brother has got conflicting reports of what he told me or my sister told me; he had an allergy of some description. He was found in a field, taken to hospital, and died. Aged 35.

INT: So you think probably they pretended he’d had an allergic reaction? And that was an excuse?

LM: It’s a very strange thing in 1935 to talk about allergies and you know, you don’t, we didn’t know about these things a lot of the time but he certainly was… He may have had a cough, I don’t know, but it wouldn’t do him any good sitting in a field, not eating, you know. And he would come to the window, definitely my mother told me this. He would come to the window, knock at the window, she would give him some bread or something and he’d be away. So I don’t remember him because I was just one when he died.

INT: So, if your father was in hiding, what income was coming into the house? How did your mother cope?

LM: Well that’s a good question because the only way I think she could have coped would be to get social security and at that time the lorries would come round, I don’t know how it was arranged, but the lorries would come round and pick up all the Jewish women in the streets, wherever it was and they would go to hospitals and hostels and prisons and peeling potatoes, washing. And I think that is the way she got money because my mother, my father had no money. He was a handler like Steptoe and Son. We had a horse and cart and so I don’t know where she would get her money. Never explained, my mother never explained anything, never told. Maybe I didn’t ask the right questions.

INT: Maybe it was too difficult for her to remember?

LM: Yes and too painful to remember what happened. The people were just treated very badly but in the same time we must have had enough food to eat and she worked hard probably to earn a few pennies.

INT: So she sent three of you out as part of the Kindertransport. Did she manage to escape as well?

LM: Yes she managed to escape but it was a very similar arrangement as to the, to the children’s transport except you had to have a sponsor. And in this particular case it was a family in Dorset who decided that they, I think their reasons were much more honourable than just wanting a cook and a maid. I think they wanted to save a couple of people. So there must have been some sort of organisation in Berlin or certainly in Britain to say ‘look, there are other people out there, can you take…?’ and they did, they took my mother as a cook and my sister as a maid and they stayed, they got taken over. At that time I think we had to have a £50 guarantee as children but I don’t know what they gave for my mother and sister. All I know is that by the time they came, seven days or so before the war started, August the 20th I think it was, they were safe. So that was all our family were now in Britain and my father of course died in Germany.

**Leo Metzstein – Life During The War**

INT: And how did you come? Was it a train and boat or…?

LM: Well yes it was a very strange arrangement. I’d never been out of the street you might say and suddenly we’re told, I remember this my mother said “C’mon, we’re going” and I had a wee parcel or something and my sister Leie and my mother and Jenny. And Jenny and I were the two who were going and I had a wee parcel and it was about 5/6 o’clock in the morning and I remember it because she said; “keep to the… don’t go out onto the pavements, keep to the side of the buildings.” I remember quite distinctly walking through the quiet streets. We get to this massive station, which of course seems huge to me, massive station and the hundreds of people milling around but never getting on to the platform, just standing at the barrier. And then the next thing I remember was, quite vividly, whoever was on the platform taking us I don’t remember that. All I remember, taking Jenny’s hand and we’re walking down the platform and… See it was a big adventure, I mean, you know, my mother would have been, would have been terrorised so she thought to send her child away like that, two children.

INT: And your brother Isi wasn’t with you at that time?

LM: Isi, Isi went earlier on a different Kindertransport.

INT: I see

LM: It was Jenny and I who actually just shook hands, took hands and then went on to the train. And, and after that it’s just a huge adventure. The train went through, out of Germany. I remember stopping at some stations maybe, I remember vaguely guards coming on, searching, looking for bits and pieces of anything that you may have tried to sneak out. And then, the next thing, we must have been overnight to Holland. And Holland, all the way through Holland to Hook of Holland and again it must have been an adventure but I’m sure I cried most of the time, and so did Jenny. And then, once again we’re in Holland and suddenly we’re on a boat, again a memory. And then we get to Harwich, and at Harwich again we’re taken off the boat and we go to London. Well, that was another adventure. It was a train, a train, a boat, a train; I mean it was huge.

INT: And of course neither of you spoke any English?

LM: Not a word, not a word. And, the…but an amazing thing happened. My brother Joe who had been secreted out in 1938, or early ’39, was already working in a factory in London. And when, obviously, most people, a lot of people started to get to know about what’s happening in Germany, people were coming in. The foreman knew Joe and spoke to Joe and said; “Joe, go to the station, your brother and sister are coming off the boat or the train”. And lo and behold Joe was standing at the platform waiting for us which was an incredible… I mean for me it was marvellous. And we went for a cup of tea, the most normal thing you do in London, Lyons Corner House. And then the next thing we’re in a hostel somewhere and why were we in the hostel? Because the fare for the rail fare to Glasgow hadn’t arrived. Two weeks we sat in the hostel waiting for £2 each or something. So we’re in the hostel and I don’t remember the hostel except the disinfectant smell, which was just horrible. We must have been looked after quite well. Oh by the way, the Quakers took us onto the platform, that’s got to be mentioned because they were the only people allowed on the platform apparently. No one else.

INT: In Germany?

LM: The Quakers, yes. And then we went by train to Glasgow.

INT: And why Glasgow?

LM: I don’t know except that the two, the families that had taken Isi in earlier lived in Clydebank, and the family that was going to take Jenny lived in Hardgate, which was 20 miles from Glasgow or maybe less. And I was sent to Kilmarnock on my own. So there I was again on a train, with somebody I don’t know. They may have met me in Glasgow, I don’t know. I would think someone must have met me in Glasgow, took me to Kilmarnock. So the point I’m trying to make is that I was separated from five different people at the same, you know one after another each for a few days, a few hours. And then I found myself suddenly in Kilmarnock with a big family; four girls and a boy, mother and father, nice house, nice people. Incidentally, they were conscientious objectors but were also Quakers and they were wonderful to me. And how they took in another child when they already had a full house I don’t know, but obviously they had big hearts.

INT: And were you there for a long time?

LM: I was calculating the other day how long I was there. I arrived in July or August the 4th or 5th or maybe even the 10th. And I remember a Christmas so I must have gone at least 9 months there, 6-9 months. And then 1-2-3, my mother comes to visit once, because she had come up from Dorset. She was very smart my mother, they took her away from Dorset because she, the British thought that she would be signalling submarines on the Channel. So they took aliens away from the Channel and moved them into London and then my mother through the Refugee Committee got a job in Largs.

INT: To follow her children?

LM: Correct, she was very smart about that. And Lee stayed in London, my mother cooked in Largs. And, so I was in Kilmarnock for about 8-9 months, learned to speak English, everything, every word. And then my mother came to visit me round about 6…It was after Christmas. And I was frightened of her because she couldn’t speak English and I could no longer speak German. I’d lost everything just like that.

INT: That’s remarkable. Have you still lost German?

LM: No I’ve…

INT: Did it come back?

LM: German is coming back, bits and pieces of things. When I need to know I can do it. When I can listen to the news I can do it. But I was hiding behind the women’s skirts because my mother was a stranger. I mean I hardly knew her in Berlin, I mean I was only… She was out working all the time so I was just growing up. And I hardly knew her when I saw her. It was quite a sad visit. I think it was then my mother decided that I’m taking my child away from here, he’s not going to be Jewish for long because I was already sitting in a big house with a swing and a big garden and we came out of a basement flat, it was, “I’m not going to let my son get used to this”. So she took me away and put me in a hostel for 4 years.

INT: Oh, and you must have been upset by that?

LM: Well, it wasn’t too bad really because Isi and Jenny were also there. The Refugee Committee had decided that there were too many children dispersed round Scotland. So they either bought or rented a big house in Skelmorlie near Largs and they managed to bring a lot of children including my sister, Isi, and Jenny and myself to Skelmorlie, where we lived more or less the duration of the war.

INT: And who looked after you there? Did they have special staff looking after you? Or…?

LM: Well I wouldn’t call them staff, I would call them… They were terrible to us, they didn’t treat us terribly well. The food that they gave us was virtually non-existent although there was money, plenty money but we didn’t see much of it. And my sister Jenny, who has just gone back to New York, although she won’t talk about it either, she said the food was terrible, terrible. But I don’t know, we were, we were alive. It didn’t, it didn’t really matter the food wasn’t special, it was food and they looked after us for about 3 and a half/4 years. And then we were sent away from there, the WAFS…

INT: I was just going to ask, when you were all living together, so would they send you all en masse to the local school?

LM: No

INT: Or did someone come and teach you?

LM: I was still only, I was still only…when we arrived in Skelmorlie I was still only 7. So there were a couple of other young boys there and we went to the local school. As far as I remember we went to the local school. Went to Kilmarnock, and then, Kilmarnock I was at the local school learning English and then from Kilmarnock to Skermorlie we went to the local Skermorlie school. But Isi and Jenny, you must… I was already 7/8, they were 12 and 13, they went to Greenock High School.

INT: So it just depended on your age where you went?

LM: Correct. And they were bussed to Greenock every morning and back at night as far as I remember. We went to the local school.

INT: How many children would you say were living in the hostel?

LM: About, I believe it was about 30. And they had come from all over Europe apparently, they weren’t all from Berlin. And girls were kept separate from the boys, I’m not so sure how long for in the evenings but they certainly were sleeping separately. But it was packed, the house was busy, busy. And I had no recollections of the house but a friend of mine recently sent me some photographs of Birkenward which was quite unusual, suddenly to see the house, a beautiful sandstone building. And we’ve been there but the wall, I don’t know if there was a wall in the garden, but when I saw it I remember me swinging in the garden. And they had nasturtiums in the garden, which I hate.

INT: And did your mother come and visit you there?

LM: My mother had this job in Largs, she was very, very clever. And she used to walk or get a bus from Largs which was 5 miles and she used to hide round the bushes. You weren’t allowed to visit all the time. You couldn’t just suddenly bring up your parents at different times. My mother sneaked in and she would come, go to the gate, maybe hide behind a bush and someone, she would say to somebody walking ‘I’m here’ …..and we would go and she would give us a piece of bread, sweet and sour bread or something which she had and then she was away. But there was no formal visits like, How are my children doing here? Like you would, like teachers, going to see a teacher’s night.

INT: And they probably were worried if they let parents come too often that you’d get…

LM: You’d get homesick.

INT: A willing, desirous of leaving.

LM: Well their idea I think was to keep us safe and together. That must have been what the, what the Refugee Committee said. “This is what your job is, keep them here”, but the strange thing is we were right on the flight path of all the bombers going to Clydebank so it really wasn’t that safe. But on the other hand it was safe, we were safe.

**Leo Metzstein – Settling In**

INT: And how was it that you then left? What happened after the four and a half years?

LM: Ah what happened was they needed the house for some reason for WAAC’s, or RAAC’S or one of the women’s naval organisations and they found another place in Castle Douglas, Ernespie house, which was an old hotel. It’s been reverted, it’s back to a hotel again I believe, we were …. visited it. And it’s Ernespie house, we were there more or less 4 or 5 months. But they kept on taking children away as they were getting older, my mother would take Jenny away, Isi was already away in a hostel in Garnethill, He went to a hostel in Garnethill. And Jenny would be with my mother and I would be in the hostel, maybe one of the last to leave. And then I would go, my mother had rented premises in, would you believe, a people called Bernard and Myrna was, it was her grandparents or her aunts and uncles they took us in.

INT: That’s the AJR social worker?

LM: In Ledard Road, we lived there for a while and she wouldn’t remember it. But that’s where we lived, and then a miracle. My mother got a job in Geneens.

INT: And tell, remind us please what Geneens is.

LM: Janine’s was the biggest and best Jewish restaurant and I believe it was a bedsit or a hotel.

INT: Apparently it was a hotel and apparently they also used to have quite well known singers would come and stay in the hotel as well.

LM: Right, right. Well what happened was my mother got a job there as a cook. My mother was a first class cook but not from any menu, it was all from her head. So she was a cook there and they loved her and one day Alex Silverstein came into the kitchen, he says, “I’ve got to meet the cook”, he says, “I’ve got to meet the cook”. So Mrs Geneen said. “Come and meet Mrs Metzstein, Mrs Metzstein’s got a bit of a problem, she’s got 5 children, nowhere to live, can you help?”. He had a big furniture shop in Great Western Road, burned down incidentally, above the shop was a huge empty flat. He says, “I’ve got the very place for you”. He said “I want someone to live in the flat because it’s vulnerable, it’s always empty flat”. He says “I’ll give you the flat, a pound a week, bring your children” and we all lived, except Lee, who stayed in London, we all lived in Great Western Road for years and years and years.

INT: That was very fortunate.

LM: That was, that was a very nice fellow that, that gave us that flat. Mrs Geneen was instigating that, very kind of her.

INT: And so it was. And then you must have then gone to school here in Glasgow?

LM: Yes. I went to school, I went to… Unfortunately I had a rather bad beginning at school. I didn’t, I didn’t persevere, it may have been my starting was bad, English? I don’t know. I’m not going to make excuses for a lack of interest in education. But at the same time I found the streets more exciting, playing with the other children and in these days you’d just go out and you played. You didn’t worry and came home late at night.

And the school, my first school I went to was Battlefield, which was ok except I didn’t do terribly well there. One of the teachers used to call me, when he wanted my attention, he called me “Berlin!”, that’s what he used to call me. Yes, I know it wouldn’t be allowed today, but he called me, and I was quite, you know, sort of… Anyway I went to school there for a while but I didn’t do terribly well in my, I failed the qualifying by one mark and ‘Bob’s your uncle’ you’re in a senior, a junior secondary school, which happened to me. So instead of getting languages or science I got metalwork. You know that’s, this was the dividing factor, one mark, is he not good enough for this? I was but I didn’t stick in and the teachers weren’t that careful. Then I went to St George… Then we got the flat in Great Western Road, I went to the local school called the St George’s Road, nice enough school, but it was a junior secondary. And a pal of mine who had 120 out of 120 went to Queen’s Park or Woodside, which was the…. the Senior Secondary School. So I lost out on that but it was probably my own fault or maybe not enough encouragement from my mother, I don’t know. She worked so hard, everyday.

INT: Of course, and this system was unfair at the time so the system was so unfair.

LM: Well, it was a cut and dried arrangement, you… I don’t even remember teachers saying to me; “This is rubbish, you know the answer to this, why you writing that?” and I can only assume that it was for nerves and the teacher had 56 in his class. How was he going to deal with one little boy?

INT: So, once you left school then did you get a job at once?

LM: Yeah, I left school in July, well June at the end of June, 19… I was 13/14, 14, 1946. We spent the last 6 months of the war either at Bernard’s house or then Great Western Road. And I was 15 on the 27th of July and my mother said “Right, a job”. I had no idea what I wanted to do, so my sister and I, she took me, Lee for some reason was in Glasgow, she may have been coming to visit or what. She said “C’mon, I’ll go with you to the Labour Exchange”, and I went to the Labour Exchange and she said; “This boy’s handy with his hands”, that is the amount of metalwork I did at school, must have been really good, and she said; “I want this boy to get something”. And…In fact I must tell you something that my sister and brother don’t remember, I stuttered. I really had quite a bad stutter. Now they don’t recall. It means then I didn’t speak when I was with their company. But I certainly stuttered I remember that. My sister said; “Get this boy a job” So I got a job in an engineering place in Glasgow. Oh, it was horrendous, it was cleaning, what are these dials, they have dredgers on the Clyde and every so often the dials get so filthy that they take them off, valves and dials and they gave them to this company that I was with. So you… it was horrendous. No safety nets, no nothing and you had to just set this dial on a vice and get a bit of sandpaper and just let the vice run and the sandpaper would take off the muck and I said: “Any masks?” “What? masks?, you’re lucky to have a cup for your tea!”, you know that sort of thing. Anyway I left after a few months, it was horrendous.

INT: Do you remember how much you got paid for doing that?

LM: 19/6 a week. And I gave my mother sixpence, it was a pound. And I got sixpence and she got 19 she wanted… I wanted it the other way but she wanted the 19 and 6. So I got sixpence and I think I spent it all in the one shop. I don’t know but I think at the wage. Anyway, then, then I decided that I couldn’t stay there and here we go again with Mr Silverstein. He went in again and my mother said to him; “Can you find a job for my boy?” He says; “How about upholstery?” Now upholstery, I was good with my hands, and I quite enjoyed upholstery and I did my 5 years’ apprenticeship. And my brother Isi was also part of the Silverstein saga because he needed a job and Silverstein, Alex Silverstein, had a linoleum shop in the East End near the Barras and Isi was sent there for a while tying carpets and linoleum and he wanted to be an architect, so that followed on, it’s a different story that I don’t know all about. All I know is I became an upholsterer at… and then after that I left, hated it, putting tacks in your mouth, after a while I gave it up. And I’ve done so many things since.

INT: So you didn’t actually practice once you had passed your apprenticeship?

LM: No. When I passed my apprenticeship I decided it was time to leave that business. It was not controlled in any way, there were no safety features, there was no…, in fact, there was a huge fire where three of my pals had been burned in, John, what’s the name of that street, near the Gallowgate…, near the Clyde, there was a big fire, upholstery fire, the windows were all barred and these guys were burned to death. And it was just like the way we were, there was straw everywhere, there was nobody swept up. So I said no…, I did all sorts of things.

INT: And quite rightly so, did you find a cleaner job after that?

LM: I found a cleaner job, I did, I must have found lots of other jobs because at 15, it was, by that time I was 20 something 1. And, 21 oh my god what did I do then? So many things…

INT: Did you find that, your background, you mentioned being called ‘Berlin’ at school. Did you find that your Jewish background held you back or made a difference?

LM: Nobody knew, nobody knew what Jewish meant. Nobody had, no one ever, the teacher never once realised that here was a boy sitting in the back of the class who had gone through some sort of trauma, maybe we’ll get him to speak…Not a word, he never… Apart from the fact he knew where I came from but that was all. No one mentioned Jewish or anything.

INT: And once you were at work, did it make any difference?

LM: Not at all except there were some Jewish upholsterers there. Upholstery seemed to have been quite a thing; tailor, upholstery, furriers, jewellers and there were a lot of Jewish workers, three of them were burned.

INT: So what did you do for socialising then? So you are a young man of 21…?

LM: In the West end of Glasgow?

INT: In the West end of Glasgow.

LM: There was nothing because the West end of Glasgow was inhabited by some very rich Jewish people. The west end was, at that time, the area and if I wanted anything to do with Jewish people I had to go to Turriff Street and play badminton or table tennis there, which I did. And I’d also learn my Bar Mitzvah in Turriff Street. And, but that was, there was no, apart from me playing in the street and playing snooker and football with the local people, there was no… played badminton and all that, but mostly mixing with non-Jewish people.

INT: And so, what age were you when, when you met your wife?

LM: Now I played table tennis at Maccabi and she was playing table tennis there and we met and we married when I was 24. So that was about 2 years. Is that what you were meaning with the…? We got married, and 24, and when I was 26 my son was born, Frank. And there was all sorts of jobs, loads of things I did.

INT: Tell us a little about Turriff Street. What was that exactly?

LM: It was a large corrugated style shed but there was a, there was a religious side to it because they gave classes. I had to go there for my Bar Mitzvah and that’s where I learned. And there was also a little hall for table tennis and I don’t remember any social events there but the social events took place at South Portland Street.

INT: That’s where the Jewish Institute was?

LM: The Jewish Institute. I went there, as soon as I was old enough I went to the Jewish Institute to listen to music which was good, Harry Margolis and various other bands.

INT: And did you…

INT: And of course I was just going to say and Harry Margolis is still, still going strong and still performing.

LM: Yes, he’s amazing, he’s amazing. I saw his documentary, he’s an amazing man.

INT: So did you feel really that you were a Glasgow boy by that time?

LM: I was a Scottish person, yes, no question about it. Born, although the people in Glasgow thought I was quite well spoken, you know. I was not a Glasgow boy but I lived in Glasgow and never ever took up the accent.

INT: Yes, but you no longer thought that you’d been German at one point or…?

LM: No, no, no I’ve just tried to forget being German although Margaret [Leo’s partner] and I have been down to… we went to Berlin to see my father’s grave. And we saw that, but I’ve never been back to, to Germany.

INT: So your son, Frank, lives in London?

LM: Yes. He lives in London, he’s…he was a, an optician. He’s now retired and he’s happily living in London doing nothing.

INT: Quite right.

LM: But everything. Everything he does is great fun, but nothing to do with work hardly or…

INT: Sounds excellent.

**Leo Metzstein – Reflection On Life**

INT: If you look back now on your time in Scotland, what would you say are the high points in your life?

LM: Well one of the highest points, definitely, about 30 odd years ago I used to go dancing, not dancing, I was no dancer, I liked traditional jazz and there was only one place that I knew of that had traditional jazz, that was in Eaglesham, the Eglinton Arms and I used to go there. And it wasn’t honestly in mind to find women companionship, I went there really for the jazz to begin with. And I went there regularly, quite often, and one day I see Margaret there and we get talking and it just went from there. She was a very nice person, I was already, I was already not living with my second wife and so there was, you know, not really… and Margaret and I have been together now for 30 odd years and we’ve had a really happy life. At least I’m very happy, I have to ask her one day.

INT: I think Margaret looks very happy as well.

INT: She certainly does.

LM: It’s been a nice life we’ve had and we’ve had a nice lot of grandchildren. I accepted Margaret’s grandchildren are my grandchildren. And I’ve got 2 other children from my second marriage living in Glasgow, and 4 grandchildren. So I’ve had a had a good run.

INT: That’s lovely

LM: By the way, just to tell you another job that I did. I worked for 5 years with my father in law, we had a very big nursery, a plant nursery, in Carluke. I worked there for 5 years hoping to take over the business one day but it was not to be and I therefore just, finally I split with my first wife whose father it was who owned the nursery and left that, did something else after 5 years. Oh I had a couple of shops, fruit shops.

INT: And I was also going to ask you about lows in your life, am I right in assuming that, obviously the lowest time was your very early childhood?

LM: I would think so, the more I think deeper into it, I’m really quite a sad person sometimes. When I think of the number of times I had to say cheerio to people, you know, I could be quite… And I don’t know, I’ve talked to people, the Hamilton Advertiser had a huge double page spread for me, and people have said to me; “I wouldn’t let my child go to the corner shop, and here was your mother sending you away”, but she had no alternative, they were saving our lives. So they sent us away; “just go, go I don’t know if I’ll ever see you again but go”. That was a very low point.

And a couple of low points, leaving, leaving Jenny, in Glasgow we were separated again, London we were separated from Joe. I’ve had a lot of separations in my, in my life. These were low, low points. And then separated again in the hostel, the other two went away, I was left alone, it was sad, it was a sad time.

INT: It must have made you a stronger person?

LM: I don’t know, I think, I think I’m quite a strong person but in relation to other people, maybe I’m just quite normal. I’ve dealt with a few things I would think, I’m not looking for sympathy, but I’ve dealt with probably more than most people will have to deal with and I think I’ve came out quite normal.

INT: I think…

LM: What normal is…

INT: I think you’re very normal and we thoroughly enjoyed speaking to you.

INT: Thank you very much, it’s been extremely interesting.

LM: Thank you ladies.

INT: And I would say that definitely you are more than normal, super normal.

LM: Uh huh, I’ve tried to be. Thanks a lot.

INT: Thank you.