



THE STORY OF JACKY YOUNG (FORMERLY JONA JAKOB SPIEGEL)

Three months before our marriage [*my fiancée and I*] had to go along to the Jewish Board of Deputies with relevant documents for our marriage to take place in a synagogue. Together with my adopted mother and my fiancée's mother we went to the offices, whereupon my mother handed over the deed poll papers showing the change of our name [*from Yanofsky to Young*] and also the shortened version of my birth certificate....

[Officials insisted on seeing full documentary evidence of Jacky's birth and Jewish origins. The papers had been kept in a safe deposit box and had never been seen by Jacky]

...to my utter astonishment I saw that I had been in a concentration camp. My real name was Jona Jakob Spiegel and my mother's name had been Elsa Spiegel...I had been brought to England on a bomber. We all stood there dumbfounded and I became hysterical. I had heard about these terrible places and couldn't accept that I had been involved....

I asked my father where he had adopted me from. Reluctantly he said from a place called Lingfield.

I knew that there was a racecourse called Lingfield and one of my recurring dreams had been about a racecourse. Maybe there was a link. So one afternoon my fiancée and I went off to Lingfield. We found the local police station and I described the large house in my dreams. Lo and behold, we were told where to find it. Driving through the large gates and up the driveway my dream melted into reality. This house must have left a big impression on me. I could see the big pointed trees all the way down the large garden. We knocked on the front door and a young woman came out. When I explained to her why we had come she hastily invited us in and made us tea. She told us that the house was called Weir Courtney and that lots of children had been brought there in 1945. It was this event, our going to Weir Courtney that day, which was to be the opening of a lot more information to come, but I was going to have to wait another 17 years to get it....

From information later obtained from the United Restitution Office Jacky discovered the dates of his mother's and his own deportation from Vienna:

...mine to Terezin and hers to Minsk, from where she never returned. She had been a milliner. From the deportation dates we could work out that I had been taken away from her when I was five-and-a-half-months old....

Sometime later Jacky... saw that an exhibition of drawings and poetry from the Prague Museum was coming to the Swiss Cottage Library in London. These drawings had been preserved from Terezin. I visited the library together with my wife and children, and it was then that I found out that out of 15,000 children sent to Terezin, fewer than 100 survived. One of them was me!...

Four years ago I received a letter from two German ladies, who by some coincidence had heard about my visit to Weir Courtney 17 years earlier. Since they had been told that I was interested in my past, they thought they should contact me in order to give me some photographs and to tell me about the year I had spent with them when I had come to England...

I was thrilled and delighted at what they had to tell me, namely that I had been a very inquisitive little boy, I spoke both German and Czech and that it was their task to teach me and the five other youngest children English before going on to join the older children at Weir Courtney...

...Here I am, after 40 years, still trying to piece together the story of my missing years. I have one more task to perform and that is to go to Terezin...maybe this will release the tension in me...

