

TELLING OUR STORIES, FINDING OUR ROOTS ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM

Date of interview	22nd September 2020
Location of interview	Ockment Centre, Okehampton
Name of interviewee	Michal Brandstatter
Name of interviewer	Nicole Redfern
Length of interview	01:37:25
File format, storage format	WAV, hosted on Soundcloud. Digital copy obtainable from DDE.

Tags:

Israel ; France ; New Zealand ; America ; Travel ; Religion ; Identity ; Judaism ; Christianity ; Heritage ; Cultural Tradition ; Language ; Family ; Okehampton

Interviewee's wishes regarding use of interview

Michal would like to be notified of any uses of her interview in the future. Contact details can be provided by Devon Development Education.

Michal requested redactions to her transcript and audio file. These have been made / requested of audio editor. Michal also wishes to submit her own edited copy of her transcript for the website, for readability – due Jan 2021.

Interviewer's notes / any issues on recording

Michal breaks mid-sentence to check if the recording is ok [00:08:54 - 00:08:57].

Linked objects/photographs.

Michal opens the interview by discussing a family photograph, featuring herself, her cousin and her mother in their home in Herzliyya, Israel. She expresses that she is happy for a copy to be used for the website [00:05:19 - 00:05:30].

Key themes and topics covered in the interview

Theme / topic	Timecode on recording
Family History	[00:00:48 - 00:12:50]
Early Life in Israel	[00:12:56 - 00:15:40]
Early Life in Britain	[00:18:34 - 00:23:13]
Jewish Traditions and Personal Experience with Judaism	[00:23:13 - 00:37:39]
Finding Somewhere to Settle as a Young Adult	[00:37:39 - 00:52:49]
Settling in Okehampton	[00:52:49 - 01:12:04]
Finding Christianity and Its Differences to Judaism	[01:12:04 - 01:27:15]
Identity	[01:27:15 - 01:37:25]

Interview highlights

"I think my identity is Michal with a C." - [01:37:11 - 01:37:15]

Interview summary

Michal Brandstatter is a 55-year-old educator and photographer. She came to Okehampton 15 years ago, moved away two years ago, and has recently moved back after living in France and South Devon. Born in Israel, Michal moved to England at the age of 4, and has since lived in New Zealand and France, as well as studying in America. However, she has spent most of her life living in Devon, and wonders what that draw continues to be ...

She begins the interview by taking about a photograph, taken in her native Israel, of herself as a child with her cousin and mother [00:00:48 - 00:05:19]. She goes on to relate her family history, [00:05:37 - 00:12:50] including how her grandparents came to be in Israel, and her family's involvement in the film and theatre industries in Israel [00:07:44 - 00:08:42]. Within this, she also discusses her father's experience of growing up in a Kibbutz (a traditionally agriculture-based community in Israel) [00:08:57 - 00:09:32], and her mother's life and contrasting upbringing [00:09:45 - 00:12:31].

Michal then talks about her early life in Israel, which she left at the age of four [00:12:56 - 00:15:40]. This then leads her into describing a photograph she found from the beginning of her life in England, noting the differences in what she remembers of her childhoods in both Israel and Britain [00:15:29 - 00:18:34]. Michal describes arriving and settling in Britain, and both her memory and her mother's memory of how she made the shift from primarily speaking Hebrew to only speaking English [00:18:34 - 00:20:02].

She mentions briefly her memory of the journey from Israel to England [00:20:11 - 00:21:29], before summing up how she felt when she first arrived in Topsham, and some of the similarities and differences she found in her new life there [00:21:29 - 00:23:13].

Next, Michal talks at length about her experience with Judaism - both her own experience while growing up, and that of her family [00:23:13 - 00:37:39].

Then she recalls her four years living in New Zealand in her early twenties [00:37:39 - 00:40:29], and her subsequent year-long return to Israel, which ended part way through her pregnancy with her son [00:40:29 - 00:46:28]. Michal relates not feeling that she fit in in either Israel or England, and talks a little more about her family life [00:46:28 - 00:52:49].

The focus then moves to Michal's coming to Okehampton [00:52:49 - 00:58:26], and her settling in the town [00:58:26 - 01:00:23]. Michal has redacted a short section in this part of the interview. She continues by taking about her experience of becoming a Christian after moving to Okehampton for the first time [01:00:23 - 01:02:28]. Michal describes the difficulties of getting involved in the local Okehampton community [01:02:28 - 01:05:39], and her hopes for the town now that she is returning to it after living in France for a brief period [01:05:39 - 01:06:30].

She talks about life in Okehampton and how "it's really interesting how much it doesn't change and how much it does" [01:06:30 - 01:12:04]. This leads to her contrasting Okehampton with nearby Tiverton [01:10:30 - 01:11:06].

Interview summary

Michal then talks in detail about her journey in finding Christianity and how this differs from Judaism [01:12:04 - 01:27:15]. She also talks about what she considers to be her identity [01:27:15 - 01:31:12], and about her name, the spelling of which she has changed in the past, and which she will be changing again after her upcoming marriage [01:31:30 - 01:35:29]. Michal closes the interview by relating how her name is tied to her identity [01:35:29 - 01:37:25].