

Irene Kirstein Watts - video transcription

But you see, I think the difficulty was, being—having moved countries, moved, acquired new language, but never being the same as the others.

That was very, very hard and people would take you in, but you, you, you would have to be so good and so well behaved and always learning new ways—it's not Jewish homes either—and always learning new ways of behaviour and new food.

And having in the back of your mind, if you don't behave very well, you know, if you don't please the people who have taken you in, you could be sent away.

[...]

After the war, it was decided that I should stay with the school and leave Wales and I was fostered in a home in London where I was—I mean I was treated horrendously. I was called 'Nazi' and 'spy' and not given enough to eat.

I mean, it was real mental abuse, which I think really quite scared me.

[...]

You had to work that much harder to be accepted. Those people paid lip service to being kind, but underneath there was always that, you know, you're different and with a name like Kirstein... I stopped even saying it. He said, 'What's your name?' I'd stand up and I'd spell it right off because you know that, that was a problem.

We're always different. And if somebody said to me, 'What's the hardest thing about surviving?', and to this day, I haven't really found a solution, is you don't know who you are and you don't know where you belong.

[...]

Even now if I talk to friends and they talk about their family life and how things were, I don't have any modes of comparison.

I brought up my children by, very much by trial and error because I didn't know what a real family life was like and I'm sure I made an incredible number of mistakes because I didn't know.