

This is a recording for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with Mr. Fritz Schonbach. The interviewer is Margaret Garrett on July 23, 1996, in Arlington, Virginia. Tape number two, side A. Mr. Schonbach, could you tell me about the beginning of your internment?

Yes. The actual mechanics of the thing where that apparently a large contingent of the CID, which is the equivalent of, I believe, of the FBI here, was sent out. And all the people who had been classified B-- and there was a distinction, actually. The people who had been classified B were interned in May. And the people who had been classified C, who were not to be interned at the time when the tribunals took place, were then subsequently interned in June and July.

So you were interned in May?

I was interned in May. I believe it was the 14th or 16th of May. Things had been leading up to it. The newspapers had been writing editorials. And it was something that I really expected. And I think many of us did expect. At the time, I was in school, I was in class, when the headmaster of that school came into the classroom. And the moment he entered the classroom, and he looked at me, I knew what was going on.

So he said, Mr. Schonbach, would you mind coming into my office? And in his office there were the two CID men. And they were like something out of a picture book. One wore-- I think he wore a bowler hat, and he wore a dark suit. And the other one was a sporty type with a trench coat and a cap. And they were sort of the ideal pair who would go and round up people.

And they asked me a few questions, who I was, and so on. And then they said, would you please accompany us? They took me in their car, their unmarked car, to the house which I shared with these other refugees. And one of them stayed with me. And he said, would you go to your room and please pack a few things, small suitcase, just for a couple of days?

And I took him literally, and I took few things. And then when he saw me take a pair of light shoes, he obviously had pity on me. He said, well, maybe you should take some heavier shoes, because it might be muddy in the place where you're going. So he helped me a little bit. But on the whole, the stuff I took was minimal.

And then they said, come with us. And they took me to a police station, where they already had a group of people, and more and more were coming. And they, again, interrogated us, and-- some minor questions. Eventually, we were shipped to a big stable, which was, I believe, the stable of one of the mounted guard regiments in London.

And was this is by truck, by train?

Well, the first transport, of course, was by unmarked car. But then it was by bus. And we spent the night in the stables. And there were still people coming in from the various gathering points. And it was rather sad and terrible, really, to see some of the people. We had some severely handicapped people.

The age groups were from 16 to 60. Anybody below 16 was spared. And anybody above 60, which to me was ancient, was also spared. So there were some elderly people and some people who were severely handicapped. In fact, I remember one young boy who was spastic-- his movements were very strange-- and some rather sick people too.

I believe that, later on, they made another selection and sort of sent some of the people back. But the first selection was rather gruesome to see some of the people being delivered into this holding camp at these barracks, these stables. It was actually a stable, I believe, a horse stable.

Anyway, in the morning, they loaded us onto buses. And we were guarded by members of some crack regiment, full uniform, rifles, and bayonet. And we were paraded, practically, through London. I think they took some very circuitous route through London, in order to show the population that they had caught those fifth columnists, as they called them, those spies, and they were taking them away. And there were big headlines in the papers, as I found out later.

And we ended up at a racecourse outside London, quite a well-known racecourse, Kempton Park. And at Kempton Park, we were put into-- Kempton Park was not really prepared. They were sort of half prepared for us. They had set up some field kitchens. And they gave us some blankets, I believe. And I don't remember things very well.

They gave us some palliasses, straw-filled mattresses, and put us up in the grandstand of the racecourse, where we spent, all together, I believe, a week or two, maybe three. And the whole place was surrounded by barbed wire. Of course, it had been abandoned as a racecourse. Racing, I think, was altogether abandoned at the beginning of the war.

The beginning of the war was a very traumatic time for everybody in Britain. As I said, people expected to be bombed. There were several bomb alarms. Nothing ever came of it, but, of course, you couldn't know that. You didn't know what Hitler had in store for Britain. So, anyway, we spent about, I don't know, one, two, three weeks, maybe-- I believe it was three weeks in Kempton Park, under heavy guard.

And there was some-- well, as far as I was concerned, it was a very mixed experience. I became a member of-- obviously, people form into groups in a situation like that-- and I became a member of a group of youngsters who were rather, how can I say, somewhat, I would say exuberant about it, because, first of all, we'd had this sword hanging over us. We knew we'd been interned.

A lot of them had been working as apprentices and weren't too happy with their jobs. And all of a sudden, there they were on a racecourse. It was in summer. It was June, I believe. The weather was very good. And there was nothing to do. We organized ourselves into, I don't know, we did some gymnastics. And I don't remember what else, just hanging out. And a lot of us were very happy. To me--

Were you one of the ones who was happy?

Well, it was a mixed thing, of course. Nobody wanted to be interned and to be suspected of being a Nazi spy. On the other hand, the way I remember it, and it's hard to recall it after, what, 50-odd years, but there was a feeling of relief-- the pressure, the dread of being interned and going to an internment camp, which we didn't know what internment camp was. In a way, I guess, at the back of our minds, we had concentration camps.

But this was a very so relaxed place. And the one, as I said, I joined a group of youngsters. And we tried to occupy ourselves. And one of us, a couple of us, were very good at gymnastics, what they call the floor exercises now out there in the Olympics. And they taught us to do somersaults and things like that.

And I don't know what else we did. We sang. I don't think I did any drawing. I didn't have any paper there. That was rather unfortunate. In any case, it was not a bad time. And above all, my real predominant-- the way I remember it now, that I was being socialized. In other words, I had been an only child, who had, of course, gone to school with other boys, but who had not really formed any great attachments to anybody.

And I had had no intimate friends, or very few. I was an only child, and it was a rather isolated existence. And then, all of a sudden, there was this community of youngsters. And we had one thing in common, and that was we were hungry. Apparently, those Army cooks, as is the tradition in many places-- rations weren't very big in England at the time, but I believe that a good percentage of the rations were being stolen by the Army cooks.

And what we eventually got was very small, a tin cup with rice, supposedly some bits of meat mixed in. But it was prison fare. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't sufficient. And all the young ones were hungry. I mean, that was something that we all had in common. So we said, what do we do? How can we get some money? Because there was a canteen. You could buy, I don't know, bread and jam, but you had to have money. And most of us had no money.

So we decided, we'll do some chores. And there were some elderly people who were completely helpless. I mean, they acted helpless. We'd say, oh, we'll get their laundry. We'll do their laundry. And we'll sweep around their bunks or whatever, their straw mattresses.

So we did that. And, of course, nobody had any idea how to do laundry. And I don't know what we used for soap. We

must have gotten some soap from somewhere. But I remember huge kettles with laundry stuffed into them, and the whole thing being boiled. That's all I remember, boiling stuff. I don't know how clean they got, but we boiled it. And they paid us.

The older people had probably been more provident, or they had more money. So we got a little bit of money and bought bread and jam, which we shared. It was a real community. And that was a good thing. It was a pleasant thing. And there were some friendships, some attachment formed in those first few weeks of internment.

Anyway, it was the time-- and I can't quite remember. The Germans were still-- I think the Allies were fighting in France. The Germans were victorious everywhere. And we had some news, I believe-- not direct, but I can't remember. There were some bulletins and something. There was one situation, which was really bad, when it was announced that-- a lot of our folks, of course, were married, and with their wives left behind-- when it was announced that the wives of B class internees had been interned.

That really put a tremendous pall on people. And there was actually a-- some people thought they might try to commit suicide or try to run at the wire and be shot by the guards. So I remember, we young ones who had no wives or anybody who had been interned, we formed guards, or we formed ourselves into watches, to see that nobody tried to commit suicide or ran against the wire.

Well, that subsided after a while. And I said, after two or three weeks, we were transported in buses and trains. First, by bus to a train, and then by train to a place near Manchester, I believe. It was the manufacturing area of Britain. And it was a cotton mill near Manchester. It was called Bury. And nobody seems to know it. It was probably a suburb of Manchester.

And it was an abandoned cotton mill, which had been abandoned about two years before, and left in a completely-- in its original state. There was machinery. There were belts that drove the machinery, long shafts. I don't know if you know the looks of old factories. They had shafts, and wheels, and then belts that went to the individual machines, and lots of debris on the floor, rags and so on.

It was an impossible place. And we were dumped there and given blanket and sleeping gear. And we decided that was really inhuman. We shouldn't we shouldn't be left there. And I think we also-- the food was as bad as in Kempton Park. In any case, somebody started to organize us. And he decided we should go on a hunger strike. So we went on a hunger strike.

And on top of that, there was a chimney, as part of this cotton mill. And somebody incredibly daring climbed up on the chimney during the night, got a hold of some whitewash, and painted on the chimney, we are refugees from the Nazis. So the population of the place, which had been very hostile-- we'd been marched through Berry, incidentally-- and the population had started to throw things at us. We were considered Nazis.

So the population, apparently, got a good look at this and realized that this was one horrible mistake. And some officers came. And it was clear that they were rather-- they rather regretted this move. And after a week, we were shipped out again, to our, what was considered the final destination, which was on the Isle of Man.

The Isle of Man had been a historical dumping ground for prisoners of war in the First World War. The Isle of Man, it was a summer resort for a lot of English people. And it consisted almost entirely of boarding houses. And somehow, the authorities had thrown out the owners of the boarding houses, or told them to go somewhere else, had surrounded a number of those places, groups of boarding houses, with barbed wire, and billeted us in the boarding houses-- two or three men to a room.

And that was a more permanent camp. And it was an idyllic place, of course. It was a summer resort, with the-- I was in and out of place, but 200 or 300 feet above the sea. And we had a magnificent view of the sea. And that's where we stayed for another about four weeks.

Again, rations were short, and we had to earn money to supplement our rations. But on the whole, it was a pleasant

place. Of course, the terrible downside was that by that time, the Germans had routed the British. And Dunkirk was part of the news. The British had retreated, had returned from the continent. And the Germans had completely conquered France.

So we knew about that. And we literally expected the guards outside our camp, or outside these barbed wire encampments, to be changed from British to Nazis. And we seriously thought that any day now, there might be SS men standing outside. So that was a terrible fear, of course. Other than that, we lived a very carefree life during those three weeks on the Isle of Man.

So what happened at the end of the three weeks?

At the end of the three weeks, there was a new order, ships, transports are going to Canada. You will all be sent to Canada. Groups formed of people who wanted to go to Canada. But after about three or four-- I'm not very clear on the exact timing of what happened, but the fact was that about three or four days after this happened-- after my, incidentally, my 20th birthday on the 1st of July, I believe it was on the 4th or 6th of July-- there came terrible news that a transport of people on their way to Canada had been torpedoed, and most people had drowned.

There were about 700 people lost on that transport-- British troops, guards, and internees. And that was a pretty bad shock for us, sort of dampened our enthusiasm for going away, for leaving Britain, being sent off somewhere else. However, the organizing of transports went on. And on the 9th of July, groups were formed again. People were asked to volunteer to go to Canada, or to go on a transport, as it happened.

And I was even-- I had no reason to not to go. I had no reason to go. In fact, I was quite happy to leave Britain, of course, because I thought I'd be safer. And I had nobody in Britain who I was in any way attached to. So people offered me money to take their place on the transport, whose name was on the transport. But I decided I wasn't going to volunteer for anything because you never know what happens. And it was sort of almost a feeling of-- it was almost a superstition. I don't volunteer for things.

So, eventually, I was put on one of those transports. And we were taken by motor launch to Liverpool on the 10th of July. And everybody had a little suitcase, coat, overcoat, or whatever. And we arrived in Liverpool. And there was this big ship with an opening, and the gangplank leading up to the ship. And the ship was called the Dunera.

Well, we didn't know what the Dunera was. As it happened, it became almost a part of the language, because the Dunera was a prison ship, and sending us to an unknown place, as we thought, Canada.

So anyway, they started to unload us, sent us up the gangplank, and the moment we went up there-- it was almost like a cattle transport-- the moment we got up there, there was a group of soldiers. And they ripped those suitcases from our hands, and put them in a heap, and started ripping them open with their bayonets, and going through the stuff.

Then, as we came closer, there was another group of soldiers inside the ship, and they started searching us, taking anything that was valuable-- wallets, watches, you name it, they took it. And anything that was useless to them, they threw in a heap. Anything that was useful, they pocketed.

So there was a second. And there was a third search. Then, finally-- I don't know-- by the time we got into the bottom of the ship, into the bottom hold, we had been thoroughly searched, and needless to say, the soldiers were not very friendly. They were rather rough with us.

We ended up in the hold of the ship. There were long tables. And it turned out later that this was a troop transport. So it was equipped for transporting large numbers of troops. There were long tables. And we're sitting along the tables. But, of course, they put in about twice or three times as many people into one of those holds, two or three times more than had been planned. And in the end, we were terribly, terribly crowded in there.

Then they handed out some-- oh, they told us where to get some-- god, I'm lapsing into German. I almost said HÃ¶ngenmatten, but what I meant was-- what do you call them?

Hammocks?

Hammocks. It's terrible, isn't it? They handed out some hammocks and some blankets, and that was about all. So in the end, by that time, it was late at night, people were-- I was lucky. I got a hammock, so that made it easier. But a lot of people were sleeping on the floor. Some people were sleeping on the tables. Some people were sleeping on the benches. We were crowded in there. And it was the lowest part of the ship. It was below the waterline, actually.

And the, how can I say, the physical necessities were taken care of by a number of buckets. That was all. Buckets were distributed. They were standing around. People had to do their business in a bucket. And those who needed to go to some kind of a toilet had to go across decks and down into another hold, where they actually had latrines and washrooms. So it was a very, very uncomfortable situation.

During the night, we took off and started to move. And we got into the Irish Sea, and the seas were very choppy right from the start. And most of us got sick almost immediately-- very sick.

Did you get sick?

Yes, I got very sick. We spent a day-- and I'm not even sure whether it was a day and a night or just a part of a day, before there was a tremendous bump against the side of the ship. And the engine stopped, and we said, that's it. The Irish Sea was a favorite place for the German submarines, which were at their best at that time. It was in July, 1940.

And we thought we'd been torpedoed, which we had, and we hadn't. Because the torpedo, as it turned out later, a torpedo had struck us, but hadn't exploded. So we heard this tremendous impact against the ship. The ship turned, stopped the engines, and within a very short time, officers came, or guards came to the top of the stairs and said, all is well. Nothing happened.

But that was a moment when almost everybody in those rooms-- and there must have been about 300 people in this small part of the ship that I was in-- thought we'd had it. We would drown like rats. Especially since we were aware of the disaster of the previous ship, which was called the Arandora Star. So we thought that was the end of us.

It never got that terrible again from then on, but it was a big scare we got. So we traveled for eight weeks. We traveled the shortest way to-- oh, we went west. Some of us were able to go on deck. And they had barbed wire fences. We were separated from the railing by barbed wire, but we were able to go on deck.

Some other parts of the ship with internees were not able to go on deck even. They just spent eight weeks underground. But we were able to go on deck. And we looked out, and we saw, we could tell we were going west, obviously to Canada. But what we didn't know that at night, we turned around and went south.

The only thing that we realized that after about a week, it got hotter. It got warm. That's not Canada. And after two weeks, we saw flying fish. Now, that is clearly tropical. And we realized the ship was going south to Africa. And from then on, we realized that the destination was Australia.

We traveled around the Cape, because-- the reason why we didn't go through the Suez Canal was that you needed a heavy escort, because it was very dangerous, and we didn't rate an escort. So we just had an escort for the first two days near Britain, near Ireland. And then we just went on our own. And we went south, ended up in a couple of African ports, where we took on water and food and whatever.

And the final stop in Africa was Cape Town, where some of the people were unloaded. There were-- well, that's another thing. Part of the internees on board ship were Nazis. They were dyed-in-the-wool Nazis. They were people who had been on a German ship that was promoting the cause of Hitler.

They had sent some ships to the South Atlantic, and into South America and Argentina. And the people on board ship, the crews of the ship, were hand-picked, good-looking, blonde, blue eyed Aryan Nazis, who were supposed to propagate

the Nazi creed in South America. Of course, it was a very fertile ground for that. All of South America was neutral at the time.

But as luck would have it, their ships were intercepted and sunk by the British Navy. And those Nazis were put on the Arandora Star, which was a ship that was torpedoed on its way to Canada. We had the survivors on board, together with a lot of Italian internees. So there was a whole section on board ship that had Nazis and Italians. And we had to go through that section to get to the latrines and the washrooms. But the relationship wasn't bad. We just sort of got along.

Were you able to do some drawing on the ship?

Yes. I did a number of drawings. And those drawings were really-- it was quite amazing. And if you ask anybody who was on my part of the ship, they really helped the morale, because what I did was, we had-- on those tables that we ate our food on and that we lived around and played cards on-- we had a few cards-- they had a board at the end of the table that said, this table is for 20 men and two officers.

And they are rather elegant wooden tablets. And the reverse side was empty. It was wood, it was nicely finished wood. And some of us, of course-- people get organized, and they want to do things. They want to teach, they want to learn, they want to play games. It's almost a natural thing you'll find that everywhere. And, of course, it had started in internment.

And in this new configuration of people, there were some who wanted to play chess, obviously. So no problem, they made chessmen out of bread. And, yeah, you can make chessmen out of anything, but I think the best chessmen were made out of bread. And chessboards, fine. They drew a chess board on those boards.

But of course, the boards were oblong, and the chess boards are square. So there was a lot of room around the chess boards. And I decided that that was my venue. And I did caricatures. Until then, I'd only done caricatures. That was my forte. And I wanted to be a caricaturist, especially as I was inspired by David Low, who was a famous British wartime cartoonist in London.

So I drew some cartoons, showing people being interned and getting aboard ship, fighting for their places on the latrines, and rather crude caricatures. But I understand that some people were really, really cheered up by this. They made the rounds. They were passed around.

And what about you? Did it help you to be able to--

Oh, obviously.

--drawings?

Obviously, it was a morale booster for me. I don't remember seeing any paper. What I do remember is that the last guard who searched me, threw my belongings on a heap, and there was a little stump of a pencil there, and when he wasn't looking, I dived for the heap, took that stump of a pencil, and pocketed it. And that was what I was able to draw with. And it was a great relief to me to be able to draw.

I did not sketch what I saw. I just wasn't used to-- I got into the habit of sketching much later when I went to art school. But I drew cartoons. I wanted to draw. And so that was-- actually, I think I had drawn some cartoons also in Bury, in that cotton mill. But I think they got away. Somebody took them, or somebody collected them.

Well, we're coming to the end of the tape, so we'll stop here.

Right.

Mr. Schonbach. Mr. Schonbach, you were talking about the voyage on the Dunera. Could you tell us more about that?

Yes. There were some interesting circumstances. I mentioned before that my first arrival in camp, and the fact that for the first time I was exposed to a large number of people, and there was certain socialization taking place, which was something new for me, an only child, rather spoiled, and somewhat lonely. And there was more of that on board ship. And, of course, we were in very close contact, since we were crowded into a space.

And, again, there were certain personal attachments formed. One of the most, I'd say, one of a number of people that I remember most vividly was what I considered an old man at the time. Obviously, as I said before, he couldn't have been over 60 because they didn't intern anybody over 60. But he was close on 60. To me, he was quite old.

And we became good friends. And he has really-- he did me a great service. Unfortunately, I lost sight of him, which was unavoidable, later on in Australia. But at the time, he sort of helped me reconcile myself to the fact of internment. And he taught me the virtue of patience.

He was a dentist, a Viennese dentist, who had been a prisoner of war of the Russians in the First World War. And he was interned in a prisoner of war camp in Russia for at least four years. So he had learned to be patient. And to him, this was no big deal. He obviously could take it very well.

And he was a strong aide. He helped me get over this time and to bear with it. And the other thing was that, obviously, each table-- and I don't know how many tables. There must have been at least 20 tables-- and each table formed a kind of community, around which we sat and ate around the tables. And somebody produced a pack of cards on my table. And we played bridge quite regularly, which was a great relief to most of us.

And this man was-- as I said, we played bridge, he and I, and two others. And although he was so much older than I, well, I guess he was some kind of a father figure for me. The third person in that was a, oh, fairly young German refugee, a Quaker, and highly intelligent and quite wonderful person. And, again, there was somebody I could look up to.

And the third person was someone practically the same age as myself. And we are still friends. He lives partly in Australia, partly here in the States, in Georgia. And we talk twice, three times a year. He just lost his wife, and also one of his sons. But Peter and I, we're of the same age more or less. We liked to play bridge. And we also, we were somewhat physically alike.

And Peter had a raincoat, which we shared, whenever I went on deck and was cold, because the passage from South Africa to Australia went through the, I don't know what the region is called, but it gets rather cold and stormy. And we shared that raincoat, and we shared a lot of things. And we became fast friends.

So, personally, it was a time of attachments and of finding good people. And the rest of the people on my table-- and that was another interesting thing-- were not Jews. They were non-Jews. They were political refugees. They were people who had left Germany because they were communists and socialists.

And some of them were actually laborers. They were real blue collar people. And one father and son I remember quite vividly. And they were a great source of relief, because some of them had been in German prisons, as political prisoners. And to them, this was, again, it was no big deal.

And as distinct from some of the Jewish internees on that ship, who were completely devastated by the fact, not only that they had been interned, and that they had been treated roughly by the soldiers, when in reality they should have been, well, at least treated as friends, but they had also lost a lot of personal belongings and papers.

And, really, it was very depressing. And you could see that some of the people were devastated. In fact, somebody jumped overboard, committed suicide. Whereas the people on my table, they took it rather lightly. Of course, it was part of their philosophy. They said, oh, the English, just capitalists, just like the Germans, no different. It was funny.

But the physical effect of it was that they were, it was just, oh, one more prison. What do you expect? And we're going to Australia. That's fine with us. So we had a good crowd there. And it made for an easier atmosphere.

In some instances, the atmosphere was charged. And, again, another victim who died on the voyage was somebody who died in a fight, in a fistfight. A young boy, and he got into an argument, and the boy knocked him out. And he was carried out. And we thought, well, he's just KO'd. But, no, he died of a heart attack.

So I was lucky. Again, personally, I felt that we had a good crowd there. And then, of course, when it dawned on us that we were going to Australia, well, it was OK with us. So, personally, it was-- And, of course, the drawings, and I was able to draw and cheer up some people.

And my friend, my older friend, the Austrian dentist and I, he was a heavy smoker, and I was a bit of a smoker, but I could do without. So what we did, I think I had some cigarettes or something, and we traded. The guards very soon became accustomed to us, and we started trading and buying things from them, smuggling things in.

He had to have his cigarettes. And he gave away his-- the people who guarded us or, I don't know, or the crew of the ship decided that we had to have lime juice and/or one apple a week to guard against scurvy. That seemed to be a routine thing on ships. So this a friend of mine was happy to trade in his lime juice or his apple for cigarettes. And I helped him conduct this trade, this barter.

So then, what happened when you landed in Australia?

Well, we were taken off the ship. And we were very relieved because the guards had been quite nasty. And we were put on a train with Australian guards. The Australian guards were older men, who were not active soldiers, who had been given guard duty. And they started, immediately almost, making friends with us.

And it was a very impressive thing to see how they put away their rifles and said, hey, this is ridiculous. Why would you be interned? Why would they take you? We told them we were Jewish, we were refugees. And they just immediately relaxed. And we traveled all night until we came to our camp, which was several hundred miles inland, Hay, in a sheep-- it was mostly sheep country. Or I don't know whether they grew anything there.

But it was sheep-- it was grazing country. And that's where they had put the internment camp. There were two big camps. They divided us in two, and put a thousand men in each camp. We traveled all night. And in the morning, we started marching-- it wasn't very far-- from the railroad station to the camp.

And that was a proper internment camp-- three rows of barbed wire, guard towers with searchlights, armed guards on the towers, armed guards around the camp. But even there, the camp commandant, who was a lieutenant, started talking to our representatives. We found representatives, and almost immediately organized ourselves into groups.

And they started talking to our representatives and found out our true identity and gave the orders, no armed guards in camp. Leave your rifles outside. If you go into camp, stay-- these are peaceful people. And that's how we spent the next, I don't know, nine months in this camp. And, of course, there, immediately, we became organized into groups of teachers and students. And somebody who was a teacher in one group became a student in another group.

And what about you? What was your role?

Well, I got together with two other youngsters. And almost immediately, we decided that this camp needed a camp newspaper. And the newspaper, we couldn't print anything. So what we decided to do was to type and handwrite the news. The other two boys were obviously aspiring journalists. And I was an aspiring cartoonist.

So I suppose I found paper fairly soon and drawing materials, and we formed a camp newspaper, which was put on a board and came out twice a week, I believe. It was called *Der Lager Spiegel*, which means *The Camp Mirror*. And it was a very-- people came and went at the date of publication, came and stood in front of it, and looked at it, and laughed at my cartoons, and read what there was to read.

And it was a satisfying occupation for quite a long time, for me. Other people did chores. They got paid minimal



amount. And after a while, I was able to order paper and art materials from Sydney through the camp authorities. And I started doing drawings, again, cartoons, reproductions of my cartoons, copies of my cartoons. And I had some rather devoted customers. And I started making money, selling my cartoons, selling the drawings.

What kinds of cartoons?

Well, you've seen *The Dunera Scandal*, the book that was published by an Australian journalist, long after the end of the war. And some of my cartoons were published in that book.

Could you describe what the cartoons were like?

Cartoons were topical events, what occupied us most. It's hard to remember. Well, somebody, for example, we were very much occupied, obviously, with our release. And we found out soon that the British government was trying to make amends for this horrible mistake which had been perpetrated. And they were sending a representative to Australia to negotiate with the Australian government to either release us or send us back to Britain.

In other words, there was action taking place there. And we were terribly, obviously, worried about this man. Who would he be? What would he do? When would he come? And these were subjects for my cartoons.

Now were they the cartoons that people bought in the camp?

No. Well, yes. Yeah. Some of the cartoons, also, were reminiscences of the ship, what happened on the ship, because on the ship itself I had no paper. Apart from those two boards or three boards that I did cartoons on, I had nothing. There was no permanent record. And I started providing a record of what had happened, how we had been interned, and what happened on the ship.

And there was, of course, a wealth of material-- how they chased us around the ship with bayonets, and what the soldiers, the guards, did to us, and then the arrival in camp, and then the first days in camp, the problems we had in camp, the enormous amount of flies. We were plagued by flies. There was no insect screen or anything those huts we lived in were half open. And I can't remember the different things, but there were a number of things.

And then, finally, what I did, I imagined myself a bird, and I flew over the camp and had these bird's-eye views of the camp. And they were very graphic, very distinct. I showed people playing soccer, people in their huts, and people in the kitchen and in the mess halls, and officers coming and inspecting us and counting us. And there was an enormous, a wealth of material. And those were the drawings, mainly, that I sold.

And one man in particular, who came from a wealthy German family and apparently managed to transfer quite large amounts to Australia-- there was no problem with that. I mean he'd had it in a London bank, and eventually it was transferred, and he opened a bank account. And he had a good amount of money there. And he became my permanent customer. And so I was able to buy more art materials, and extra food, and so on.

So you developed a little business.

I developed a little-- Yes, I did indeed. And the wonderful thing was, of course, five years ago when we met in Australia, this man had died rather young, but he had two sons. He himself had formed a rather large export-import business, well-known, and his two sons had taken over. And his two sons had also taken over my drawings, which they treasured. And they kept them safe. And one of his sons offered me as a present one of my own drawings, which I then brought back here.

But, yes, I developed a little business, and it kept me busy. So I didn't suffer from too much depression.

But you did still have some depression?

Oh god, yes. I mean, it was-- yes, a young person. I found-- in fact, Cyril Pearl, the author of that book, *The Dunera*

Scandal, found two views, and they were rather different views. Some people told him that they were rather sorry for the older people, people who were close to between 50 and 60 because it was harder for them. I found that it was much harder for us young ones.

Obviously, we suffered from many things-- a lack of freedom, the lack of sex, the fact that we were losing valuable time, and that we really felt that we should be fighting the Nazis. And so there were different views about this. But it was depressing, of course. We knew there was a war going on. We could not help. We couldn't do anything, and the injustice of it, and the fact that we should be utilized, which, eventually, we were, of course.

We were released, bit by bit. We were allowed to join the British forces, if we decided to go back, which I didn't. And as it turned out, two transports were sunk, and the people perished on their way back.

Before we get to that time, did you have any contact with your family while you were interned?

Well, yes, while I was interned, yes. Immediately, no. We were in our first internment camps in Britain at the racecourse on the Isle of Man. I believe we were given the standard prisoner-of-war letters, which were an ingeniously prepared paper, where allegedly you couldn't write in invisible ink, and it was a kind of-- I believe it had a certain layer of something on it, which prevented you from writing in invisible ink.

And we were given the opportunity to write short messages. And, eventually, my parents heard about me. But then, of course, came this long pause when we were on board ship. And I can't remember what they knew, as I found out later, when I joined them. They knew that we were on board a ship, but they didn't know any details.

And eventually in Australia then, of course, we were able to write to them and write proper letters. But it took a long time. And they were terribly, terribly worried, like hundreds of others too, of course-- relatives of people who were put on board ship and sent away.

Was that hard on you, to hear from your parents how worried they were?

No. Quite frankly, I was very-- I don't know what it was, but I-- While I was in Vienna, while I was a boy, I was very dependent. But I wanted to be independent. And in a way, I chafed under the sort of the way I was kept at home. It wasn't strict, but it was also not free. And I wanted freedom.

It was a strange thing. And it was a great relief when I left home. And that relief really lasted. I wanted to do things. I was adventurous. And it was a kind of adventure. I was glad my parents were out of Vienna because a lot of relatives didn't get out. And so I knew they were fine. They were doing their own thing.

But I did not-- no, it didn't worry me that they worried about me. That didn't worry me. I was on a great adventure. That's all. And I was able to do what I wanted to do.

And you were on your own.

I was on my own. It was very important. And I was able to do my drawing, my art. Of course, I had done it in Vienna. I was sort of doing cartoons in school and all that. But now, I knew it was my profession, and it would be my profession.

When did you realize that?

That's what I was going to do. That it would be my profession?

Yes.

I couldn't think of anything else.

I mean, when did you start? Or was it always true that you knew it would be your profession?

Always, always. I mean, I was under-- I felt, yeah, it was all right to be a whatever-- lawyer, engineer, or doctor-- but it wasn't me. I wanted to be an artist. And it's very strange. Or a cartoonist, as I thought then. Later on, I went to art school, and I got away from cartooning somewhat.

So in the camp, you were an artist?

In the camp, I was an artist. And I did, I believe, take some classes in certain things. But that's what I was doing. And later on, of course, when I was in the army, very soon after I joined up, I was able to publish some cartoons in the local newspaper. And that was it. That's what I always wanted to do.

So I mean, by that time, I was hooked. And when I got out of the army, I wanted to be a cartoonist. And, fortunately, people said, look, you have things to learn. I said, me learn, no. I know it all. Well, as it turned out, good sense prevailed, and I went to art school. And I realized that I knew very little. So my three years of art school were a great blessing.

Let's go back to when you got out of the camp, how that came about.

Well, first, the people who volunteered for the British army, which was strictly auxiliary work-- Pioneer Corps, it was called-- they knew that they would not be, at least immediately, allowed to join the regular forces. I mean, we were still under a shadow, let's say.

But the British had enough sense to realize that this was a waste of good manpower. It was a waste of talent. It was an injustice. We sent those people away. We should have known better. So anyway, those people who wanted to join the forces, and who had relatives in Britain, volunteered to go back. And several transports went back to Britain.

I decided that this was not for me because it was dangerous, and I had nobody there. And I had no particular desire to go back to Britain when I was in Australia, and I would much rather stay in Australia. That was exciting. So we stayed. We didn't go back. And then, of course, finally, the Australian government said, yes, all right, you can join the Australian forces, in the same capacity, auxiliary troops, et cetera. But you can join. Do you want to volunteer?

And that's when a lot of us said, this is blackmail. What's the alternative? Stay in camp, rot? And I was seriously considering not volunteering. In fact, I said, no, I won't go. And that is when my good friend Dr. Scharf, the dentist, came in. And I went to him, desperate, because by that time, it became a very burning question. Should I volunteer or not?

And I went to him, and I said, what do I do? And he just laughed. He said, you damn fool. What's your worry, he said. If I were your age and in good health, I mean, I wouldn't consider it twice. You want to rot in camp? You're crazy. Go, go for it. And I did. And that was really the decisive factor.

I don't know how long I would have held out. I know of some youngsters who were younger than I who held out throughout the war, practically. And eventually, they had to be kicked out because the camp was being abandoned. And they had to kick them out of there, go, go, do something. They realized that these were not dangerous people. There's no reason to keep them, to hold them.

But I was glad I went when I went, of course, because it was at the beginning of the formation of our unit, of our military unit. And it was the thing to do. And my friends all went and joined the army. But I volunteered, after I had talked it over and found that there was no reason not to volunteer.

Now, this was called the Pioneer Corps?

No. In England, it was the Pioneer Corps. In Australia, it was called the Labor Corps.

Labor Corps.

Labor Corps.

And this was auxiliary to the army?

No weapons, nothing. It was an auxiliary unit. What would you call it here? Well, you don't have that here, because everybody in the US Army is armed. We weren't armed. We weren't given any arms. And we were strictly a labor unit. They had three-- we were part of a battalion. The labor company, our company, was strictly ex-internees-- German and Jewish refugees.

Another one was composed of Greeks, who apparently had not been naturalized and-- mostly Greeks. And then there was a third one, I don't remember. But we formed a labor battalion, three companies. And each company had 500 people, I think. And then there were platoons and so on. We were a proper military unit. And it was an interesting unit because the Australian authorities-- the Southern Command, to be specific, in Melbourne-- still were very suspicious of us. That's why they didn't give us any weapons.

In fact, we were sent down to the docks to load and unload ammunition. And that was stopped very soon because it was also considered too dangerous, too risky, to let these people handle ammunitions. But the funny thing was that they put in charge of us a captain of the Australian army, who was a veteran of the first war, a magnificent man, who was half-Maori New Zealand native. And he looked it, and he acted it.

He was 60 or so, and beautifully built, and beautiful looking, and with an English diction that you wouldn't believe. It was like the stage. And he referred to us as, we Jews, which was hilarious. The man was half-Maori and half-English. But he took such interest in us, and he was so sympathetic to us. And he considered himself a little Napoleon.

He knew the personal history of as many people as he could accommodate in his memory. And he picked me out. And on one occasion, we were working in some filthy place, and he came down and inspected the troops. And he said, Frederic, come here-- he called us by our first name, not Private Schonbach, no. He said, how are your folks in South America? This kind of thing. I couldn't believe it. And that's the kind of person he was.

And as I said, he said, we Jews have to do this, that, and the other. And he tried and succeeded in making a very good unit of this company. We started out like a bunch of nothing, had no military discipline at all. We never went through any kind of boot camp or anything. The first day, we came, we joined the unit, we got our uniforms. We were sent out to do some loading and unloading of goods. And that's what we did, essentially, for four years, or three years.

But this man took it onto himself to make a proper military unit out of us. And he actually put us on parade and on marches in some of the places where we were stationed. It was a remarkable thing.

And how did you feel about being made into--

I mean, we felt very good because it was the next best thing to being a part of the active proper forces that were sent abroad to fight. We were not a fighting unit, but we were aware. And a lot of the work we did was absolutely necessary because the Australian railroad system was sadly deficient. They had three railway gauges of different sizes.

They had bought their rolling stock from different European nations after the First World War, I think. And there was a break of gauge at the border of New South Wales and Victoria. And the only thing you could ship goods up North to help the troops was