

Greenman, reel 1. Mr. Greenman, if we could start with a bit of your family background, which I think is important to the story. I believe your grandfather was a Dutchman.

Yes, he was. He was born in Amsterdam and his name was Joseph Groenteman, which, translated, means "greengrocer." But at the time of him living in London and registering, they couldn't find a translation. And the name Groen is green, so he became Joseph Greenman.

What was he doing in London?

He was doing several trades. I think he was from, what father used to mention it, making wooden cases for transporting things for a firm, and so on. He's probably been in various trades. Of course, he also traveled to America and back to Holland, and from Holland to England and England to America, all over the place like that. So I've got a family in America and I've got a family in England and in Holland.

I understand, though, you were actually born in England, as were your parents. You went to Holland at a very young age.

Yes. I was born in 1910, and probably two months later it would have been 1911. We went to Holland. Grandfather went to Holland and grandmother. And at that time, the children followed their parents, and so I came to live in Rotterdam.

What was your father doing in Rotterdam?

For trade, he was in a cigar-making trade and a diamond-polishing trade. Later on, as I can remember, he was someone who went to the ships and got the sailors into shops for new clothing. So he was really a salesman on the ships, out of the shops, if I can remember that.

The reason that you went to the camps, as you did later on, was because you and your family were Jewish. Can you tell me a bit about the nature of your family Judaism?

Well, I can remember that, as a youngster, I went to Hebrew school, right up to my 13th birthday. And I remember, on the doorpost in our room, there was hanging a little bag with the so-called holy straps and a little box attached to it, which contained part of the holy Scripture, which, according to my father, was property of my grandfather. My grandfather was a very Orthodox Jew.

I also remember that my father used to say the Hebrew prayers before food and after food, and we children were not allowed to leave the table until the prayer was finished. And to us, it seemed a long prayer. Father also mentioned once to me that it was no good to light any fire on the Sabbath, and mother was cold. Well, grandmother was cold and he lit a fire for her.

And when grandfather came home, he got a little bit of a good hiding because he had done that. So grandfather stood very near to God. So was I later on, but unfortunately, I've forgotten my Hebrew. I'm still, of course, very much a Jew. I've stood near death and I know God was always with me. But I don't feel to be an Orthodox Jew. I fear Him. I love Him. I argue with Him. And I thank Him, whatever God may be.

You returned to London from Holland as a young man in the trade of hairdresser, I believe, when you were 18 or so. Can you tell me what life was like in the East End of London for you-- not as a hairdresser, but as a Jew, what you saw of antisemitism?

Well, I remember, before I was 18, I also had visited London once or twice on a holiday with my brother. They used to come over from England, for a holiday, to Holland, and they used to take me back once or twice. Of course, I felt terribly patriotic about the King and anything to do with England.

So when I got into London and I was courting my wife, I went into the hairdressing and I did not experience any antisemitism, because as I'm just thinking now, most of those shops were run by Jewish owners. No, I don't think I met then antisemitism.

There was, of course, a large Jewish community in the East End at that point.

Yes, there was. Now, we're talking about, I remember later on in 1932 or '34, something like that, I remember the marching of the fascists down to East London. But I was not in London. I was living in Brighton. Although I'd heard Mosley talk in Goldson Street outside Brooks Tea Factory, but I was too young to understand politics.

What can you remember about that Mosley's session?

We were shouting and talking and he had a large crowd of people around him. I don't remember much what he said. I didn't stay long, I think. They were hustling and arguing. That's what I remember of Mosley, although I have now in my possession-- some time ago I found a '78 record of Mosley, in which he talks about our empire and how greater he would make England.

What did you think of that?

Well, when I bought it, this was after the war, and I've listened to it once or twice. Miscalculated. Miscalculated entirely because I don't think we've got an empire anymore, not in that sense.

No, quite.

But of course, I've met antisemitism since then when I got back from the camps, without a penny in my pocket. And I lost my dear brother, who had been a market salesman, and he left a wife and four children. And no one was there to help us. People promised a lot of things to do for us, but no one did.

And I started off on the market. And I remember one of the first pitches I got, given to me by the inspector of the market. I think it was in Finsbury Square, somewhere there. And I put my little suitcase down and it happened to be next to a store who sold greens and fruit. And the old gentleman behind it said to me, boy, what are you doing there? I said, well, I got a trade here. He said-- well, in different words, he said, get back to Palestine.

So I felt rather funny about it. I've just come from hell and now they're starting on me again here. That's what I thought. Although in the camps, one day I saw in the distance a British prisoner of war, and I somehow told my kapo, can I get to the toilets? He said, go and hurry up. So I got inside the toilet, where the soldier found himself. And as he was coming out, I stopped him.

I said, hello, soldier. I said, I'm from London. I said, I'm a prisoner here, et cetera, et cetera. Perhaps you can spare a cigarette or two, which would buy me some soup in the camps. So he listened a little bit to my story. And then he said, you and I are a prisoner here, and way back in England, the Jews are black marketeering. I said, but I got two brothers in the war. And he walked out. That hurt me as well, coming from a British soldier.

Well, antisemitism, my dear, in 1983-- that's very recently, isn't it? I've got it on paper-- I found myself in Romford Market, buying some greens and fruits, and to hurry back home because I had an appointment in the afternoon. Between all those thousands of stores over there, I had to pass between two stores, one with fruit. And as I pass by, a tall fellow-- about 17 or 18 maybe, he was two heads taller than me. And he leaned over and he did as if he was sickening over my head.

I stopped my trolley and I turned around and I said, what's the matter? You're not well? He said, you're a Jew, aren't you? I said, yes. And with that, from behind the stall, I dare say his mate, he said, the Jews are always circumcised, aren't they? I said, yes. So what about it? Then all of a sudden, it struck me. They must have been members of the National Front. I said, I've got no time here, but I'll come back one day and I'll tell you things. And I walked away. That took me a couple of days to forget that. That was as recently as 1983.

Yes. Talking about the late '20s and early '30s, are there examples of antisemitism in Britain? From what you've told me a few minutes ago, it sounds as if there generally were not.

I didn't experience a lot then. No, I can't think of incidents. Well, maybe I heard my little cousin, my little niece come home from school. She was crying. And then she told her mother they called her a little Jew in school. I comforted her. And I guess at that time, I had no knowledge at all about politics. I was trying to get on in the world. And one thing I know, I was proud of England and I always wanted to get to England.

What sort of political persuasion would you and your family have held at this time?

I know father always told me about labor, voting labor. And I daresay I did vote labor most of the time when I was old enough to vote labor. But I had no idea that I had right to a Dutch nationality until I was nearly taken away to the camp. I had to have papers to prove that I was British.

Yes. Still going back, before the war, you were living in Britain then at the time of Hitler's rise in Germany. What did you know about that?

Well, Hitler, I didn't give it a lot of thought while I was in England, I don't think. I don't think so. I was still in Holland. I must have still been in Holland sometime when Hitler came to be head of Germany, I think.

He was elected in 1933.

1933. 1933. Before that, I didn't listen a lot. I didn't hear a lot. I didn't take a lot of notice. I do remember that shortly after that-- and this must have been, of course, in 1940 and '39, when I was in Holland-- we listened to the radio. And I heard him shout and he was applauded and all that.

And now it's come into my mind, in 1934, my sister and myself found myself at my parents'. And see, we were talking about the war and arguing about the war. And she said, Hitler's going to lose it. He's going to lose it. I said, of course he's going to lose it, but what's going to happen in between liberation and now? We both were right. A lot of things happened. That's how I saw it. Then I was handed-- on the street, they were collecting signatures of Jewish and non-Jewish people to let the German-Jews into Holland, because they were being done wrong to in Germany.

This is before the war, you mean?

Yes, just before the war. 1934, '33. '34 it must have been. And I refused to sign that list. I said, it's not the Jews that should come out of Germany. It's the man Hitler and his lot. They should come out of Germany. Then the Jews can live there, the Germans, and the German people will have peace. That's how I thought. Again, it proves right after the war, my way of thinking.

Hitler started his anti-Jewish laws, and so on, fairly early on, well before the war. Did you travel in Germany at all?

No. No, I didn't travel to Germany. I said no-- I must have been about maybe eight or 10 years old. Mother had gone to Germany. I dare say there was a kind of a row or something between father and mother, stepmother.

I thought your mother had died.

My second mother, stepmother, who he married, the housekeeper, she was non-Jewish. And somehow, we had a bit of strict life. And I dare say a quarrel started and she left home for Germany, where her parents were living in Oberhausen. And father went after her, and he took me along, but I must have been very young and very ignorant to remember anything about those things. Well, she came back again and life went on as before. That's the only time I went to Germany. After the war and I came back from the camps, I did once go to Germany. I was working in show business as a singer and the cabaret was taking place near Enschede in [NON-ENGLISH].

I believe you married in 1935. Could you tell me about your wife?

Yes. Before we got married? There was a need for a Jewish youth club in Rotterdam, and so I became a member of the eight or 12 ladies and gentlemen. And we made a club, which grew very quick to over 100 members. And once a month, we used to give a program of music, singing, and acting sketches, and dancing.

One of the ladies in the committee, she said, I've got a friend coming over from Holland, a nice girl. I would like her to meet you, knowing you were so proud of England. So I said, yes, all right. That evening, or some evening later on, there was a program of singing and music, and it was my turn to do my singing.

And while I was on my second song, I think the door opened near the stage and in walked a charming young lady. I went on singing, and when I finished, later on in the evening, I was introduced to the lady who walked through the doors, not knowing that's going to be my wife. Well, she was on holiday in Holland for a month or two months, staying with her grandmother.

And it was our duty, members of the committee, to see that the girls got home safely in the evening. So the men took eight or 10 or more girls to hand and walked them to the homes. And in my case, I saw all the girls home. And the last one happened to be my young lady.

And I took her to her home, saw that she got inside, locked the door, and said, good night. After our marriage, she told me that she told her grandma, Ma, Grandma, this is the first time that a boy takes me home and doesn't demand a kiss. Later on she said, when I heard you singing, I knew you were going to be my husband.

[CHUCKLES]

Well, that's part of my pre-marriage life. Then, of course, I went to England. She was living in England and I went to England. I was a hairdresser. And I lived a little while in the home of my wife-to-be. Later on I went into lodgings nearby.

This is in East London?

In East London. We were living down in Golders Green, but I was working in East London. Then my father-in-law said, I'm going to put up some money, he says, and we're going to see to it that you get your own saloon. Of course, you must make a living before you get married. I said, I don't want any money printing up our work until I got sufficient, and then we'll get married. And that's what happened.

So you were married to Elsie Van Dam in 1935.

Yes.

Then continue the story. It was back to Holland at that point.

Yes. We got married on the 7th and we went for our honeymoon to Holland, to her grandmother. And we stayed at her grandmother's. She was her grandmother's angel. I went backwards and forwards through London, doing my antiquarian book business, and my business was growing. We had, where we lived, a large attic above the rooms where we were living, and I start making room there for the stock of books. Later on, we moved away from there to a bigger house, bigger rooms, and I start buying and selling first-class books, if I may say. And that's how the business grew.

Why did you and your wife decide to settle in Holland instead of England?

Well, it was, more or less, a want and a need of the grandmother. She and I became under her influence. I didn't like it very much, but I agreed and we stayed on. She was a woman nearing 80 years, over 80 years. A bit of a cook, kind, and all that, but we had to be home in time, not too late.

Even when you were married?

Yes. She didn't mean any harm, but that's how the lady was brought up. And remember, my wife, as a child, lost-- not lost her father, but her father and mother were divorced. So the mother and the grandmother took jolly good care of the child since she was about a couple of years old. So that grew and grew until she was old enough.

Anyhow, then came the signs of war. I found myself in London.

What were these signs of war?

Well, whispers and probably little pieces in paper that war was coming. I didn't believe it. I didn't know what war was. And this seemed like I've been asleep. I remember reading of two men, British men, who were caught in Germany. And I think one of the man's name was Best or something. This only slightly-- I was interested because they were English. I think they were spying or they landed somewhere in Germany and they were caught.

I didn't take any further notice. So life went on and I went to London, to and fro. But that particular time, I found myself in London and I saw people digging already dugouts in the streets. I didn't quite understand. Then I saw them queuing up for gas masks, and I just joined a queue and I got my gas mask.

This would have been 1938?

Yes. So I became panicky. And the same evening, I went back to Holland with the idea of getting my wife out of Holland, and probably the old lady. Well, when I got in, the radio was on and the news, and there I heard Chamberlain announcing that he had seen Hitler and there wouldn't be any war between England and Germany. So I must have fallen asleep again because I said, all right. We won't go tomorrow, or whatever it is. We're going six months' time. So life went on again.

My wife told me that I promised that we would have a child. I said, we better not have a child because I still think we're going to have a war. I don't know why, but I feel it. Well, she said, you promised a child. I said, OK then, we'll have a child. Just like that and nine months later the child was born, a boy.

But that was already during the wartime when he was born, 1940.

1940, but nine months earlier was still '39, wasn't it?

Yes. Yes.

Well, there you are. He was born on the 17th March, 17th of March. There was still no invasion.

But before we get to 1940, of course, Chamberlain's Peace, or whatever you may call it, didn't last. What happened to you when war was declared in September 1939?

Oh. Well, I was still in Holland, thinking what should we do? We can't leave the old lady. And I didn't know where to turn or what to do. I went to the British Consul, I remember, in Rotterdam. And I said, what's going on? What rumors are there? Well, we can't tell you that.

They said to me, you can leave now on the A or you can leave on the B, which means in a few weeks' time, or on the C when we leave, when the staff of the Consul leaves. I said, all right, I'll leave when the staff leaves. Because the way I was thinking, I've got rooms full of books stuck, there's an old lady, and my wife is pregnant. So I put my trust in the British Consul.

Then when the child was born in 1940, 17th of March, I went to the Consul. I had registered there. No one still told me about the danger. So the child was born. March, April, May. On the 10th of May, the first bombs fell on Rotterdam. We were living near a hospital. I remember, I think it was on a Sunday morning. I was standing, looking out through the

curtains outside, looking out.

Mr. Greenman, reel 2.

So on the 10th of May-- I think it was a Sunday morning-- the first bombs were dropping near our home. In our neighborhood, there was a hospital, St. Francis Hospital. The first bombs landed on that. Although, later on, I heard that there was a Red Cross painted on the roofs, it didn't make any difference. I looked out through the window, lifted the curtain. And I saw about four or five airplanes circling around in a circle and letting the bombs drop.

Could you identify the planes? I mean, did you know they were German?

Oh. I didn't know, but I expected. I expected they were German, because rumors had that they were dropping parachutes, and so on, near the river in Rotterdam. And already rumors that you couldn't trust anybody, so I took it for granted that it was German. Who else could it be to bomb Rotterdam?

Yes, I remember that I heard something fall behind me and I turned around. My wife had been just busy bathing the child, and it slipped out of her soapy fingers on to the floor. I didn't say a word. I picked it up and handed it back into her hands. And I looked at her. We both couldn't say nothing. Then we said, well, it's real. It's real. What can we do? So that was at the beginning of the war.

Can you tell me about the scene in Rotterdam after the bombing?

The big bombings took place on the 14th of May, on the 14th of May. Of course, days before-- they say the 10th, 11th, 12th, and the 13th-- we heard of parachute chutes being dropped and Germans occupying the bridges in Rotterdam and what was going on, but we were too far away to go anywhere. And I wasn't really-- why should I leave my wife and child and the old lady alone just to be inquisitive? And anything could have happened, so I didn't go far to wonder. Although on the morning of the 14th, I went shopping. I had to do some shopping for the wife.

And I found myself then in the house of a friend of mine, a bookbinder in [NON-ENGLISH]. And I was watching him binding some books. I was learning a little bit by watching. And we were talking about the war and we didn't know what was going to happen, and this and that. Then it must have been about half past 1:00. All of a sudden we heard a tremendous crash. The bombs were falling.

We rushed into his shop, because his shop was built to his house. And we looked through the window and we saw smoke coming from behind the houses. And then we said to one another, it must have been the paper factory, which was in that street. The bombing went on for a little while, and when it stopped, planes were circling and shooting in the streets.

I said, I've got to get home. So I rushed out of the shop and took cover, walking from side to side. And where I walked, the airplanes were flying and shooting people down. I saw people laying in the streets. And halfway, I met a friend of mine who came towards me, crying and shouting out, my wife. My child. My child. I said, go home. Go home. I said, I'm going home as well. I hope they're all right.

Anyhow, I got through that and I got home, and I found my wife and child and grandmother in the center rooms of the house. They were crying, of course, and afraid. I comforted them. And then life went on again. I went out to my father's, and I saw Dutch soldiers walking the street, not knowing what to do without guns.

I found my father's place. No one at home. Part of the streets were burning. And I rushed back to our house, looking all over the place, if I could find my father or mother. People were rushing to and fro, laying in the grass, because we had a little, small park near where we lived. And after searching for hours there, I found my mother and father-- without a coat on, just a waistcoat, his head between his hands, in his hands, laying in the grass, sitting in the grass.

And I talked to them and I took them home to my place. And he had no time to get anything out of the home, so I rushed out again and I found a kind of a car, a trolley or something, a burrow. And I went with that to the house, trying to save

things. And I found some portraits of grandfather and grandmother and a few odds and ends. I don't remember why or what, things probably of no value.

What condition was the house in?

It had been shaken not directly by a bomb, but it was kind of crumbling. But nearby houses were burning. So I went out again and I found also in the house a kind of paraffin jug, in which this contained paraffin, which you could pour out. I took that along with me.

Anyhow, when I got home, I did fetch many things. We all were upset. We couldn't understand, really. The shock was too big for most of us. We passed the night. There was no water, no electricity, no gas. And a lot of things happened then. We didn't know what to do exactly. I remember we boiled some water on a candle. We fixed up a candle, standing with something over it, a little bucket of water. Silly things, really, but we couldn't do different.

Well, the next morning, I went out. And where I walked yesterday, the day before, there was nothing but hot ashes. I was walking on hot ashes. The houses were no more, like hot pillars, gray ash, hot pillars. They were standing, smoking from street to street.

The main street, the high street, was about a kilometer in length, from beginning to end and all around, which is finished. I couldn't understand. I remember going right to the very end, which had a windmill, an old windmill from the 1700s or something. That's the only thing that stood there, and I saw an SS soldier taking a picture of it.

I walked back and I found myself in a spot where I could see the street where I had been living when I was a child. I could see right across. There was no more streets. The house where my sister had been staying was no more. It was all ashes. I could see a long, long way across Rotterdam.

Well, I went back home. My sister hadn't turned up yet. I went out again to find my sister. She turned up the next day. She had went with people to The Hague to find cover. That was the bombing of Rotterdam. Yes.

What were you and your family or friends saying about the Dutch government and Dutch armed forces at this time?

The government was gone. Why did she go? Later on, we couldn't sing different, but probably it was a good thing that they went. Rumors that the Dutch soldiers, they had been fighting and it caused a lot of casualties of the Germans in one part of Holland. In Grebbelinie-- a lot of Germans must have been killed there. The Grebbelinie-- G-R-E-E-B-B-- no, G-R-E-B-B-E-L-I-N-I-E.

Thank you.

I went out again and Rotterdam was burning. And the street, the station near, three minutes' walk from our house, was a light. And the flames were coming towards the street behind us, and that street would have gone. Our street would have gone. So some men running through the street called out to volunteers and we had to get all the curtains off the houses.

The windows were all smashed and the curtains were burning. We had to pull them down as best as we could, put wooden boards up against the windows. Stopped the flames coming into it. Luckily, the wind turned and that street was saved and our street was saved and the rest. I turned the other way, and the center of Rotterdam finished, all burned. I remember seeing people laying in the road bleeding. I couldn't do nothing. I couldn't do nothing. My sister turned up the next day.

With the fairly easy capitulation of the Dutch government and Dutch Army, was this level of bombing necessary?

Well, they said it was a mistake. What we heard was the order not to bomb, because Holland is capitulated, came too long. The pilots didn't get that message, so they dropped their bombs. That's what they said. But I think it was just like when they had bombed Warsaw. They went ahead and just frightened us. So we had to capitulate.

Now, could you talk about life in Rotterdam, in that early period after the bombing?

After the bombing? Life at my home wasn't actually at peace 'cause mother and father wanted to live on their own again. It's no good families living one another, so they went out trying. And they did find a way giving out a house to live. So peace returned to our home. We still went up and visited my father several times a week, of course. We understood the situation.

Then I remember walking the street. And there must have been, probably right after the bombing, the next day or so, a column of German motorized soldiers coming in. Right near where I was walking, they stopped, and I remember looking in. A big fellow, man about 35, 40 maybe. Very strongly dressed in his uniform, everything. Strong and heavy, that's what I imagined. It must have been so. And I walked away. Already I began to feel a hate for ruining our city.

Well, I could not trade in my antiquarian books anymore. Shops where we used to go and sell and buy, they were bombed away. The German regulations came in force. And there we were. We were not allowed to leave the town. We were not allowed to go into a cafe.

You mean because you were Jewish or because you were Dutch?

Yes, Jewish. Anti-Jewish laws came in. Now, only because we were Jews, we had to register at the town hall. And I had a lot of Jewish friends, because of probably a Jewish club we had made. So I felt, as a Jew, to be with my Jewish friends.

And I had been waiting for the Consul. This all comes down to my mind. I've been waiting for the Consul. I didn't get any reply from the Consul at all to get away. This was just before the bombing of Rotterdam.

The British Consul?

British Consul I went there and I found the house closed and nothing, nobody there. So we were trapped. I still don't understand why they didn't let us know that they were going to go.

What do you think about that? Do you think they forgot because of the panic? Or do you think they couldn't be bothered?

Well, it's one of those three things, which, when I come to think of it, I didn't think of-- well, directly I thought, what could have happened? The house was there. It wasn't bombed, but nobody inside. I thought, well, the world is not fair. Later on, I thought to myself, well, they must have not wanted to have done it or forgotten it, or what it was. There must have been time. I don't know why they didn't do it. I don't know. Anyhow, as it was, so the Germans made their anti-Jewish laws.

You told me about registering you and your Jewish friends.

Yes.

Was there a possibility that you and your friends may have discussed of not registering? If you didn't turn up, how would they know?

Well, it's like this, which we don't have in England, but everybody, Jew or non-Jew, everybody who lives in Holland, comes to live there, has got to register. When he moves to the door next door, the house next door, he's got a register where he's going to. So you can always find those people. In England, it's not so. It would have been a good thing if they were.

So comes the registration. The Jews have got to register and get their identity card. So I goes to the town hall. They look in the card index and they find that I got a sign a form. I got four Jewish grandparents, two on my mother's side, two on my father's side.



Ah, you're a full Jew then. Registered. You get an identity card with a J on it. So in the street, anybody asked for your identity card, you take it. Show it that you're a Jew, otherwise you won't have it. If you had two parents or if you had three non-Jewish parents, you there were 3/4, but you were still having a J on your identity card. If you had two Jewish grandparents, there was a possibility that you were exempt from various things or being deported.

But in my case I had four, so we had to register and we had to have our yellow David Star. We have to buy these. They are about five pence or six pence at a time. And we have to sew these on our coats and our jackets and pullovers so that outside people could see you were a Jew.

Did they know themselves that you had four Jewish grandparents or did they only know that because you told them?

It could have been that I filled in a form and told them. On the other hand, they could have looked it up and found out. Some of us, later on after the war, heard some of the Jewish people didn't register and went into hiding and they couldn't find him, unless they did find people who went underground. They are no more. But some of them who did went to hiding didn't register.

But I was banking on my British nationality, so I was fighting the Germans in my own way. I was in contact with the Swiss Consul in Amsterdam, who was then taking care of the business for the British subjects in Holland, because I had got a call-up to go and work for the Germans, to a work camp for the Germans. I didn't want to.

When would this have been?

1941, around about that. Quite early.

Had you previously had a call-up for the British or Dutch Army?

No. I didn't have a call-up with the British Army. I was always thinking I wish that the English would land in Holland and then I could go back to them and join them. It never happened. But I didn't join a Dutch Army because-- I got a paper in my pocket. But I had a paper which said, "owing to Leon Greenman's British nationality, he's not to join the Dutch Army." I don't think I would have joined the Dutch Army because I have a brother who went from Holland to escape from joining the Dutch Army. He joined the army. My other brother was, as I told you, in the first war.

With the British Army.

The British Army.

Why didn't you and your brother wish to join the Dutch Army?

We felt patriotic, English.

Yeah.

It's really silly. Not silly, but I always had a feeling as a child. I was always talking about England. And I wasn't going to join the Dutch Army.

Now, you told me about the registration.

Oh, yes.

And the yellow stars, which you had. And your wife and son also had them, and the baby?

Yes. Had to be sewn on their clothes.

How did that feel wearing that?

Well, it was a kind of insult. What shall I say? Why should we have to show the outside world that we're Jewish by wearing a star? A question, why? And then you thought, well, I'm a Jew, so what do you want? What do you want to do about it? I wasn't the only one. And I was really proud to do it because I had a large Jewish circle of friends with me.

I could have not worn that star, for an incident jumps into my mind now. I made a lot of trouble by not wanting to work for the Germans in the camp. I wrote to the Swiss Consul in 1942-- I still have the letters-- asking for their protection and to give me passports so that I could be interned, et cetera, et cetera. And then I had to have permission from the German and Dutch officials to leave Rotterdam and to go to Amsterdam.

I went to Amsterdam, got into the Consul. I was waiting there. It was very busy. I went into a room. In that room was a Ms. Jansen. And she looked at me. I said, I'm Leon Greenman. Jansen is spelled J-A-N-S-E-N, Jansen. and I said, I'm Leon Greenman and I've been writing so often and I can't get no proper papers or passports from you. And she said, you need not wear the star. You can take that off.

I said, I know I don't need it because of my British nationality, but things might happen. I want to be true to my Jewish friends. At the same time, I feel safe because my British nationality. But why don't I get proper papers from you? She said, you can leave that off if you like, but inside is a Consul and you'll be let in in a moment. And when I got inside in front of the Consul, Mr. Prodilier-- you want to put his name down? Yes. P-R-O-D-I-L-I-E-R. Prodilier, the Swiss consulate at that time. I stood before him with my father. Father had also sent forms for passports. And he had a bundle like that on his desk.

A big pile.

Everyone was the same, photographs and forms. And there was my form of photographs I'd sent eight days before. I said, look, sir. I sent this eight days before and I've been writing to you and now they're still on your desk. It's very urgent. It'll be all right. He smacked, closed the lot, and I could go. No help.

I've got to go right back for a moment in Rotterdam again because the Jews were rushing to and fro an office where they could make photocopies of papers. We Jews were fighting for our lives. We had to have proof the Germans and the Dutch were cooperating with the Germans. Had to have proof. Papers. Papers. Also I had to have papers.

I had a friend who used to play the piano for us when we were rehearsing our songs. And he was working for a firm who had the right to go into the town hall and seek up cards of people, business, or whatever it may be. I said to him, could you do me a favor? I said, there is somewhere in our cards something which my father had told British Consul.

I said, if you can do that favor, get that card out, let me see it. Said, I'll do that. So he went into the town hall and I waited at the side. And he came to the desk and said, yeah. And on there was my father's name. And on there in pencil, on the edges, "Barnard Greenman declares, in front of the British Consul that all his children are British subjects, 1923."

He had to put it back. They were asked-- one of the people there in the town hall, Mr. de Groot-- G-R-O-O-T. Mr. de Groot. D-E in front of it, small d. Groot. He was one of the people in that department in the town hall. I could never get hold of him again. I asked him, I said, get that card and read on there we are English, and I want you to give me papers. To the effect, I was fighting for my wife and my child and my own life.

Is this an example of collaboration with the Germans or is it just an example of incompetence?

I'll give you another example. Whenever we came from England to Holland, we had to register alien police. My father did so. I did so. My wife did so. We have to show our passports, and then the thing went entrance, right? We did this every time. One evening, we were having dinner at home-- my wife, grandmother, child, and myself-- when there was a ring at the door. We opened.