

Mr. Greenman, reel three. Please continue with that incident.

So there was a ring at the door, and a man in civilian clothes called upstairs, Mr. Greenman. I said yes. Sir, can I have a word with you? I said, yes, please come upstairs.

So he came upstairs into our room. He says, tell me how does it come to be that you are-- first of all, tell me. He said, what are you, British or Dutch? I said, I'm British.

He said, well, how are you to walk as a free Englishman? I said, I'm waiting for papers from the Swiss consul so that we get-- we get interned as a British subject. So would you mind coming to the police-- alien police department?

I said yes. I jumped up and put my coat. And he said, not now-- tomorrow morning at half past 9:00. I said, I'll be there. Oh, you can imagine the night, what kind of a night we passed. Because at that time, people were taken out of their homes and never came back again.

Anyhow, I presented myself before half past 9:00 in the main office of the alien police-- police station in Rotterdam. I sat down there waiting, and in and out came German soldiers, SSers. And then at last I saw a man who I had seen before when I was registering before the war. His name is Inspector Roos, the chief inspector of the alien police, R-O-O-S.

He took me into a room, my back towards the door. And he sat there, and I was here. And he said, tell me, how do you come to be walking about here? I said, what do you mean? He says, what nationality are you?

I said, I'm British. I said, you know, I've been registering. He said, let me tell you something. I know you're British, but I'm not going up to the wall for you. I can only stamp you now as a Dutchman, a Dutch Jew.

He said, tell me, what did your father do during the '14-'18 war? My father was in the intelligence service in '14-'18 war when I was a nipper. I didn't know much about it. Slightly remember something, but '14-'18 war.

I said, I don't know. He said, you Jews always crawl around the questions when we ask you. Then I knew I had the wrong man in front of me. So he said, now you can go home. I came home at half past 12:00. Wife, child, old lady there crying and waiting. All right.

A few months after that, we were taken away. A ring at the door in the evening, round about 20 past 10:00, half past 10:00. Child was asleep. We were whispering.

Before you come to that, can you talk some more about your life in Rotterdam under the Germans?

Yes.

You wearing your yellow star were obvious, of course. How were you treated then by fellow Dutch people? I don't mean, these people in the high positions who appear to have been collaborators. I mean ordinary Dutch people. How was their attitude?

I got several examples of them. Let me think of one. I had friends who I used to see very often, very often. As a matter of fact, there's some was in the same singing class as myself. Of course, I went to the Academy of Singing to study singing. So did he.

I used to be home at their place often. One day, we visit, myself, my wife, and the child. We brought our cash to those people, all our cash to save.

Why? Well, we were sensing we got no help from anybody, so our turn would come to be taken away. And while I was there talking to them, the lady said, Mr. Greenman, if you should happen to go away, you bring your child to us. We will look after your child until you get back.

I said, well, that's very nice. When we got back home, we talked about it. We never would have done it. We never would have done it. We loved that child too much.

And as fate would have it, Some time later I went to the house, and I said you remember you asked, you told me you would look after our child. Oh, she said, we talked it over with my husband, and we'd rather not do that. OK.

Another occasion where I was living, I was living on the first floor. On the second floor, there were a husband and wife. He worked for the Spanish consul. She was a funny kind of woman. And on the king's birthday, I used to hang out the Union Jack in our street. That's the way I felt.

During the occupation, it was the king's birthday that day, Sunday. And I didn't put a Union Jack out. I was getting scared now. I didn't know which way to turn or what to turn. I was thinking of my wife and child, and I didn't trust the Germans whatsoever, if I even couldn't trust the police and all that.

So when I came down the stairs or up the stairs, the lady was just coming down. She said, oh, Mr. Greenman, no flag out today? It's the king's birthday. Oh, you're against us all right.

I said, I'm sorry, but the flag was dirty, and it's in the washing. I got out of it that way. I never trusted her again. Luckily, she moved away. I had better neighbor's coming in then, better neighbors who let me, listen to the radio BBC broadcast, the news, which I later brought around to my Jewish friends, and he was very kind to us.

Well, we didn't trust-- I didn't trust my people anymore, my friends. I had to be very careful with whom I went around. I remember there was a young man behind the bookstall on the market. And I used to go to him and tell the news of the BBC. Before the war I knew him, and we used to do business.

And then one day said, you've got to be careful. He is on the wrong side. So I didn't go to him no more.

Who said that?

Some other people who I knew, friends. Later on, I got to know that he was courting a fascist girl, and he was on her side. He's no more.

Other incidents, we were not allowed to get into the trams. So I walked miles to other little places around Rotterdam, see if I could earn something. My book trade was gone. I went from door to door, trying to sell remnants of silk, but only at Jewish doors. We were not to mix with non-Jews anymore.

Couldn't get into a tram. I said, no pictures, no parks, nothing. We were on our own.

How about food and shopping?

Food went-- right, we had coupons to buy food. There wasn't enough for this and not enough of that. So we only could get-- and we could only shop between certain hours that day. If you found yourself in a shop after a time and somebody gave you away, you went to a camp.

So I always tried to do the right things, in the background always my wife and child.

Did you have the same rationing coupons as non-Jewish Dutch people?

Yes, we did, the same ration.

How did you find that people whom you didn't know, such as shopkeepers, treated you?

I didn't take a lot of notice of that. We didn't-- there was no-- I don't think I came across shopkeepers who refused or

said anything. No, I think-- it could have happened in other towns that weren't bombed, but the Rotterdam people were full of hate at what Germans have done to their town.

Of course, only the fascist-minded people, and you never knew who they were. But on the whole, we didn't trust anybody anymore.

To what extent were you and your family still able to follow Jewish religious practices?

The synagogues were bombed. So we had our services in one another's homes. Already I didn't participate in services. I probably was in a quarrel with God to have those things done to us.

Others did attend services at rabbis' homes or whatever it was. I had some very Orthodox friends, Jewish friends. And one particular very Orthodox Jewish friend of mine living near us, who we used to visit every Sabbath, just have a chat, the wife and child, and I remember him coming to me one day on the street, walking to me. He said, I've just come from the rabbi, and he was informed by the German authority that the Jews wouldn't come to any harm.

I said, well, I hope you're right, but I can't think different. Well, this man was taken away with his wife and two of the three daughters. Never came back.

His third daughter wasn't home at the time. Third daughter went underground when she heard her family taken away. I found her after the war. She's still alive but is a very, very nervous person.

Other Jewish friends, one at a time, two at a time they went. I used to visit them during the day. Then I went around the next morning, and neighbors said they'd been taken away until the day came that we were taken away.

Before you tell me about that, were there occasions on which you would have been required to use the Heil Hitler greeting when meeting officials or seeing someone in the street?

No. I don't think we had to hail our hands. We didn't do that. But whenever we were out with our child in the pram or walking with the child and an SS used to put his hand on the little blonde baby as he passed by, I used to spit on the street in my way out of hate.

Did they respond?

No, we did it when they passed by, you see. Otherwise, we'd have been taken away or something like that.

Yeah.

But in the meantime, a lot of things were going on. People were rounded up from the streets and so on. We kept as much-- I kept as much as possible out of the hands of the Germans.

What did you know about what was happening to those people who were rounded up?

Well, come to think of it, they were taken to Westerbork. We heard they were taken to Westerbork. Or Vught or Amersfoort. There were three camps.

Amersfoort and Vught were concentration camps, but Westerbork was a camp where people passed through. We heard that people were sent away, but we never knew or thought that bad things were being done to them. The only thing is we hated to work for the Germans or to be sent away.

The least thing that in papers was said, listen you're not allowed to do or you will be sent to Mauthausen. And the word Mauthausen filled us with fear. Why? Well, we heard rumors, it were hard work and so on.

And now I come to think in my mind, I came home one afternoon from my walking around the town or visiting people.

And my wife had a funny look on her face. And I said, what's the matter? What's up?

She said, I've been talking to friends, and I heard that they were going to gas the people. We Jews are going to be gassed in the camps.

I said, don't be silly. Gassed? And I only thought that of a gas where you boil a kettle of water. I said, don't be silly. Why should they do that to us? We're healthy. We're young. We work.

Anyhow, she agreed somehow. She wasn't far from the truth, because we didn't know.

No, we know that now. But how had she heard that then?

She heard it from some people she used to visit. I don't know who. Probably something leaked out, but we didn't want to know. We didn't want to hear.

I remember listening before the war, before the invasion. On the radio, I heard somebody talk. He had been in a concentration camp, and he was willfully filled by tube in his stomach with water because he had stolen some food.

I remember hearing that, and I said, did you hear that? I don't believe him. It's a terrible thing. I don't think people would do that. You see, we didn't believe the bad things.

When one speaks to Germans who were in Germany at that time, as you know, they frequently say they knew nothing about the camps. So I'm very interested to know what it was you knew, what it was people could know.

Well, we did not know-- well, I did not know, and there's a lot of people, what was really going on in the camps. We absolutely thought we were going there to work. What could it be? Work in factories, on the fields? What could it be?

We had to go to work. The thought never came into our mind, where are those thousands of us going to? What kind of work? It never came into our minds.

To what extent did you know anything about resistance or underground movements?

None whatsoever.

Was this because you didn't really wish to, or you weren't able to find out?

I didn't know about underground. It come to my mind, someone said, can't you get away? How could I get away with a wife and child and an old lady? So it never came into my mind to resist in that way. And still I was backing, in the back of my mind, my British nationality papers. I thought I had this. That was an ace for me against the Germans.

The only thing I did was listen to the BBC news every evening.

This presumably was banned.

Yes, we had no radio. The Jews had to give up their radios. I remember staying in the queue with my radio, and the radios had to be playing. You couldn't give an old broken down one. I put mine down. I had to stand back, and I saw the hand pointing towards the BBC from the evening before. I'd forgotten to switch over.

And as the man, the policeman switched on, I took a step forward, and got hold of the thing, and turned it the other way. God knows what would it said "here's the BBC" or something like that. It saved me. That's what happened.

You had mentioned your upstairs neighbors listened to the BBC and let you listen. Were they allowed to listen to the BBC?

At that time, no. Well, you were not allowed to listen to the BBC in any case. But later on, the non-Jews also had to give up their radios. So they were without news. The only news they got then from the underground, I daresay, or buy papers and all that.

That's the only thing I did because this alien policeman, this inspector Roos, he told me, who are you mixing with with your friends? What do you do I says, I don't know anything. So--

And then the door opened behind me. And he looked up, and then the door closed again. And he talked again with me. It was the wrong man. After the war, if I can mention it now, I came to Holland for a holiday, and I stayed with my nephew, who also was in the Westerbork camp, but his life was saved because of the Canadians had cut the railways. They couldn't go out anymore.

And he told me during a meal, he said, uncle, a very good friend of yours has died. I said, who is it? He said Inspector Roos. I said, God love a duck. I says, that's the man who sent us away, who didn't want to cooperate with us. I would like to have told him what I thought of him.

And it was early evening, this was. I'm going. I'm going to the police station. I want to make sure. I took my passport. I went to the police station. I came in the department of alien police. There's a man sitting there, a detective, I daresay.

I showed him my passport. The pass has got a lot of gold on it, you know. I says, am I too late? It's gone 5:00. He said, no, come in.

I said, this is the first time I come into this place with a smile. He looked at me like I'm mad. He said, what do you mean?

I said I've just heard about half an hour ago that one of your officers had died, and I would like to have told him what I thought of him. He said, what's this then? Who is it?

The way they talk, the police. I said, it's Inspector Roos. He said, he went home half an hour ago. He's not dead. I said, is he? I said, oh, well, then the day will come when I see him.

He said, well, you tell me what it's all about. So I said to him that and that, and he told me he wasn't going up against the wall for me. And he was one of the causes killing my wife and child.

So I said, I'd like to see him. He said, well, he lives down there in Rotterdam. I said, I'll go and see him. I said, and there's another one I'm looking for. He said, who's that? I said Kurt Schlesinger from Westerbork camp.

Yes, you'll be telling me more about him later.

I did see Inspector Roos the next day. I went to his house. I rang the bell, and the woman next door, neighbor, she said, they're not in. They're on holiday. When are they coming back? The next day.

I went back again the next day. I knocked at the door, and a lady opened the door, big lady. Yes? I says, can I see Inspector Roos? Who are you? I said, I'm Mr. Greenman.

Well, then a man came behind, from behind her through the passage, and he looked. She says, a Mr. Greenman to you. He said, Greenman? Greenman?

I said, yes, inspector. There's only one Greenman in Rotterdam, and it is so. Oh, oh. Come in. She took me in, into his room. A lot of brass, his collection of brass.

So what can I do for you? I said, I come here to shoot you. Eh? What do you mean? I said, if I had a gun, I would shoot you. I said, because I'm in a temper.

Hey, what's it all about? He said, you can't take the law in your own hands. I says, you remember? I was called to your office, and we talked. And you said you wasn't going to put me up against the wall-- you weren't going to go up to the wall for me.

You knew I was British, but you let me go away. My wife and child, because of you they died. I couldn't help you, he said. I couldn't help you, he said. I helped other Jews, but I couldn't help you. He said, I myself, I went into prison because I helped Jews.

I said, your fault one of the people-- the cause of my wife's death. I talked to him for over an hour. I said, sir, if I had a gun, I would shoot you because that's the way I feel.

Well, you mustn't do that. You mustn't do that. Then I got up. He helped me put my coat on. He said, don't take the law in your own hands. Forget about us.

I says, I'll never forget, and I walked out. I'm not a murderer. And if I would have shot, I wouldn't have been sorry about it. And it's always been me. So also with [PERSONAL NAME], consul of Switzerland. He didn't help me. The man in the town hall in Rotterdam, he wasn't with me.

When you went back to the Dutch alien police on this post-war visit and you told them about Inspector Roos, what was their response?

Nothing, nothing. Nothing. Didn't say nothing. I only had his address, and I went to him.

Is he still alive?

I dare say I didn't hear that he died. You see, it hurts me very much to see those people. I'm so afraid that I will lose my temper and start using camp methods, kicking and hitting.

I would like to do it. I'd probably feel better for it. I would like to revenge my wife and child. I mustn't. So also with Kurt Schlesinger.

Before you tell me about your own deportation, still on the life under German occupation in Holland, to what extent did the Jewish community try to advise or help or organize Jewish people in Rotterdam?

Well, we had what we called the Joodse Raad. It was a council of Jews who were told by the Germans to form a committee and see that the Jews are registered so that we can send them to Westerbork and to Auschwitz. Often I thought that they were wrong, that they were not helping. But come to think of it, each one of them, like myself and many others, were holding on to a piece of straw for life.

They must have thought, we've got to do that job. We got to raise and send them away. The war might not last so long. And while I'm doing it, I'm alive. I'm here. Of course, in turn, they had to go as well.

Some of them said they were not doing what they ought to have done. They could have said, well, we don't do that. We're not cooperating. Then they would have been grabbed and sent sooner away, I dare say, by the Germans.

You see, to me, they were frightened, like we all were frightened, and that's why they did that job. You could say, well, why didn't they say no? I don't know. I probably would have had other people doing it.

But then again, my answer is, that's the beginning of the rope. But at the end of the rope, why didn't the Allies bomb the railways so that the trains couldn't go from Holland, from Belgium, from France?

Leon Greenman, reel four. You had a few more things to tell us about this period. Can you tell me about the airplane that was shot down?

Well, for one afternoon, the airplane-- a couple-- some airplanes came very low in across Rotterdam, and--

German planes.

German planes. No, no, English planes they were. English planes very low, they were. I didn't think they dropped bombs. I didn't. They were taking pictures or something.

And we were surprised because we heard the sound, and whoosh, very low. And then I rushed out on the street. I said to my wife, I'm going to have a look. They must have landed somewhere there.

So I walked down the turning and another turning, and yeah, then I heard it had come down in the Noordsingel. That's a small brook in Rotterdam just outside the main prison in Rotterdam.

It had been shot down or it had landed?

It was shot down. It landed. The pilot was dead, I heard. And I couldn't get very near to it because as I was trying to get near to it, a lot of people, a truck come along filled with SS soldiers. And I thought best not to push my way through but to get back home.

But now there's a memorial stone in front of the place. It got stuck in the mud, plane and all that. The pilot was wounded, as I said, killed. And there's only a stone memorial outside the spot where it came down. But other incidents in Rotterdam, there were several, you see. What can I think of?

You couldn't talk to anybody. You didn't trust them. You only went to visiting your Jewish people. I spent some hours with them, or they came to your home. For instance, I had Jewish friends not living far from me. They came to my home, and we played table billiards. And then I went to their home. We played cards. They were taken away before me.

We heard from time to time, nearly every day, acquaintances were taken away. We didn't see them anymore.

And this lack of trust and your relationship with the various Dutch people you've mentioned--

Yes.

Were you surprised by their behavior under German occupation? Or was it what you would expect?

Well their town, our town was wounded very much, and we were hurt. And I would say 9 out of 10 Dutchmen hated the Germans for it. The one must have been a co-operative or a fascist-minded.

But though you did explain they hated the Germans, they seem to have been hostile--

To the Jews.

Towards you. Or would the fact that you were an Englishman make it worse?

No, no. Not everybody knew about me. That was only the close friends in my circle knew that I was English, and I didn't notice any trouble in that way.

Well, I mixed as long as possible with the non-Jewish people as well. We went visiting them until we were not allowed to mix anymore with non-Jewish people.

And in the meantime, I was waiting for the actual papers from the British-- from the Swiss consul, which didn't arrive.

When would this have been that the British reconnaissance plane was shot down?

Well, I should say it was 19-- it wasn't a summer day. 1942, beginning '42, somewhere around April, May, I should say. Somewhere around that.

Tell me about the Allied bombing of Rotterdam.

Oh, the Allied bombing. That was a good thing, we thought. Because I remember I heard it on the-- we still had the radio then. Well, we heard it from other people, the bridge was bombed.

So I went out. It's a long way from where I lived. And then I imagined part of the bridge was slanted. It wasn't so. But it was medicine to me, you know. Oh, a little more in the middle, and the lot would have been gone. That's how we thought.

You mean it was bombed, but they hadn't succeeded.

No, the bomb-- the bomb must have just gone off it. Other incidents was the Allies were bombing Rotterdam, the part in Rotterdam where a school-- the school where the German SS were, the SS were living. And it was somewhere near a square, in another square friends were living of mine there.

Well, they started bombing about 8 o'clock. And I know we, myself, my wife, the old lady and child, we went downstairs and stood at the bottom near the stairs. So if the house would have been bombed, then we would have been in the street or something.

And we waited there, and it took hours before the bombing stopped. And we thought, well, I'll go out. I went outside the steps of the house, and people come and rushing through. I said, where's the bombing?

And they said there and there and there. I said, oh, well. I said to my wife, I must go and have a look. All my friends are living there. Something happened. I must help.

So I went. You're not allowed in the street at that time, but anyhow I went. It was around 12:00, and there he was. The son and father was nailing wooden planks up against the window. The glass was all smashed to pieces. They had missed. They had missed the school. School is still there.

I went by every time. I went by last week. And I said, oh, give us the hammer and give us the nails. I'll help you. And I got along the wood, and I was knocking. And a bit of glass that high fell into my-- see the scar here? Look.

A glass about a foot long.

Yes, stuck into it. Stuck into it. I pulled it out. I'm bleeding. And I went. I left him, and I went to the hospital. That hospital was partly bombed, partly was still there. And there's still a piece of the hospital standing there, the arch where I used to walk through.

And about half past 2:00 I could go after they cleaned it and bandaged it up. I like that because the Royal Air Force did this. I'm proud of it. I'm silly, but I'm thinking like that.

And that was that. What else was there? Oh, yes, laying in bed, and then the time when a thousand aeroplanes went out to Cologne. We were-- and we were listening, and it went on and on [BUZZING] all the time.

Our blessings were with them, really. Every time we thought, well, they must give in now, it's over, it's over. But it wasn't. And sometimes--

You had told me when you were in England in 1938, people were digging shelters in their gardens.

Yes.



What shelters did the Dutch people have? From what you've said, you didn't go to a shelter. You stayed in your house.

I stayed in my house, yes.

What about other people?

I don't think there were any, come to think of it now. Let's see. There must have been, but I didn't make use of it. When I came back from the camp, I was told that an American, some group of American planes had tried to bomb Rotterdam near a harbor, and the bombs came on the other side of it and killed about 300 people.

Whether they were in a dugout or-- I don't know. I don't think so. Never came into my thought to go into hiding. No. No.

What did the authorities do about the bombing?

Well, clean up. We had to clean up the dead people, cleaning up the rubble of the big bombardment of Rotterdam by the Jerrys. And when the Allies came, there was only a few houses broken down or here and there bombed.

I don't think it was really severe. Often I heard they bombed next to it or they didn't do enough and so on. Big things never happened. As long as I remember from '40 to '42, that's two years, about two years when I was still a free man.

I didn't-- I didn't hear of a lot of really that things came down. No. No, I can't think of big things. The harbors were bombed now and then, but not much.

With what sort of frequency was Rotterdam bombed?

What, by the Allies or--

Yes.

By the Allies?

I asked you that to know whether you were living every day thinking there were bombs or whether it was--

No. Now--

To you.

Now and then, now and then they were bombed. Say, two or three times a week when they flew over, there was the anti-aircraft, the Germans shooting up at them. And we expected the next morning to find a lot of damage done, but I couldn't find a lot of damage. I didn't go far from home.

Once or twice, but I didn't find a lot of damage. I remember going a little away from home, and I found an unexploded bomb as big as this table and half as high.

About five feet long and--

Yes, a tremendous big thing it was. It was laying there in the grass. It was supposed to have been dropped. It didn't go off. It's a very big thing. I don't know if it was real or not, but I stood next to it. I touched it.

Gosh, I mean, it can go off. Maybe it-- maybe it didn't go off. I didn't hear more about it.

Now, you have said that every day, practically every day you heard of friends or people you knew who were taken away.

Yes. Jewish friends had been taken away.

How had this come to happen? Were the Germans following a systematic pattern?

Well, the registration, first of all, they knew where you lived. So the Dutch cooperating with the Germans, they went from house to house, going to the address. Knocked at the door, took out whoever was there, their names and even it must have been if that a non-Jew was found there, if they were found there, a non-Jewish neighbor or something, they were taken away as well.

I remember when it happened to me. The upstairs neighbor, after I was talking loud to the people, we don't need to go, we don't want to go, we don't need to go because here's the papers of the consul. The two policemen there in black jackets, they said, you come along with us, and you can tell it all and show your papers to where we've taken you.

Then the neighbor downstairs must have heard and came down and looked in the doorway, and as he stood in the room, and they didn't say nothing. And I remember one of the coppers, he looked over my books, stack of books.

He must have taken a few out. And in the passage was a nice water painting of Rotterdam, 1912, painted 1912. And he said, oh, I'll have that. I said, well, you'd better leave it because I'm coming back. It's my stock. It's my business.

He said, well, when you come back. He said, if you come back, I'll give it back to you. I never saw it again. And I don't know the policeman. So those things were going on.

Were these Dutch police?

Dutch cooperating ones.

Yes. Go back, then, to tell the story about your deportation. This was in October 1942. Because people were disappearing all the time, you must have known it might happen to you. Did you and your wife make preparations?

Yes. We got a list from the Jewish Joodse Raad. Everybody got a list, and on the list was so much you've got to take along, all types of medicines, bandages, pills, tablets, blanket, and anything you can use for a cold country. You have to take it along.

The Germans were clever in this, because those thousands of Jews took that along with them. Can you imagine thousands of articles in medicine? When they arrived in Birkenau, they were killed, but the medicine went onto the table, and the people in the camp that were wounded by the work, prisoners, they had to be seen to buy the medicine.

So they used that medicine and things until there was no medicine anymore. So they very clever, that. So we were ready for it. We were ready because we felt it was hopeless. Nobody was helping us, even the British-- the Swiss consul was waiting for it.

So I got a last call-up, and we had to go. Yes, so this is how it happens. I get dressed. The baby was standing up in his cot. Didn't know what was going on. After all, half past 10:00.

This was at night.

At night.

The 8th of October, 1942.

We usually went to bed early. There was nothing else to do. We're still in bed, child together asleep. And then we fell asleep and wait for the next day. So that evening, we weren't quite asleep.

We were still talking, and the bell rang. I jumped out of bed, got onto the landing, pulled open the door. And two men stood there in the doorway, shining a torch. Greenman? Yes. And he stormed up the stairs. He said, get dressed. Come along with us.

And within seconds, they were in the room. I said, what for? Why? How? I surmised, of course, because I've heard it. I've seen it. So I said, I don't need to go. Look, there's all the letters from the consul, and I'm waiting for my passports. They didn't want to hear.

How did they identify themselves?

Well, they didn't. I guess they knew that we had already known. I had not seen a policeman go into a Jewish home and take the people out because they would have taken me as well. I have seen Jewish families who had only a paper. You got to present yourself there, and they had to walk there to assemble.

Yes, they came up and saw that we were dressed and taking our bundle and get into a coach. The coach went from street to street. It was getting off at half past 1:00, if I remember. The coach was full, about 40, 50 people in there. Pillowcases with stuff in it or whatever, blankets and all that.

And there was a young SS fellow, about 17, 18, big fellow. And when we arrived at the assembly part on the other side of the river in Rotterdam, a big, very big hut filled with many, many Jews.

So the coach stopped. Door opened, and we had to get out. German-- raus! So we got up, the old ones, the young ones, all had to get out. And he got hold of the luggage, threw it out. And my wife's standing with the baby, and I was standing there, and the old lady. And I told him myself, if you dare to touch my child, you're not finished yet, boy.

Luckily, he didn't touch us. We got out, and he threw our luggage out after us.

How much luggage did you have with you?

Well, we had each a blanket and a pillowcase with the medicines and whatever we had to take along-- bandages, so on.

Clothes?

Clothes, we had our best clothes on. We're going to a cold country, so we had our best clothes on. And it was October. We only were allowed to take so much, so much. No more. And it meant only carrying-- well we got with it--

Nappies and food for the baby?

Well, maybe a little food for the baby, and probably a nappy-- well, he's 2 and 1/2. I don't think he had nappies at 2 and 1/2. I don't think so. Because I remember we gave a load of nappies to friends of ours who was expecting a child. Yes.

So we got in there, in a big shed, and we waited. And there were a row of SSers behind desks standing. So I went up, and I showed them papers, I'm British, my birth certificate and papers from the consul. And they said, stand over there. Wait, wait, wait.

What can I do? Thousands of us, there were people I knew, people I didn't know. And then on the 10th, just the second day we were there, we were loaded into trains on way to Westerbork.

Well, we arrived at Hooghalen. Hooghalen is a little way, about a mile or so away from Westerbork camp.

Before you tell me about that, you were then two days at that reception center.

Yes.

As we call it.

Yes, reception. Yes.

What was going on then?

Well, not much. You had whatever you had with you, and people were sitting there with their head in their hands and all this sad-looking faces, children, families, and running about and then sitting down and trying to get some sleep or whatever it was. We didn't know what to do.

Did they have facilities for preparing meals?

No, no, no, no, not there.

Without beds?

No, you were not meant to be there a long time. Two or three days, and then you were sent on. Then you were sent on. Those who probably stayed on, like a nephew of mine who was a barber who stayed on, and he tried to cling on to life by shaving people, probably they brought something in to eat or something. But I wasn't there then. I wasn't there.

What sort of emotional atmosphere would there have been?

Terrible, terrible, to see the faces, sad. We couldn't help one another. I was just thinking about my British nationality. We couldn't do nothing about it. We couldn't get out. We couldn't escape.

How could I escape? I had a wife and child and an old lady with me. No, it was just a hopeless lot, a forsaken folk.

Did people try to escape?

Some of them did get out somehow. I daresay one or two. I didn't-- I didn't often hear it. When I got back, probably I heard one or two, but I don't know. I don't think so.

They must have been very clear in the head and all that to chance it so that the SS didn't you or something. But I didn't try those things.

Who were guarding you?

SS and Dutch police. Yeah.

Did they speak to you?

No, they didn't speak at this point. No, we were a forsaken lot. Forsaken. There's no one to help, no one to turn to. Just wait. Sit or lay and wait.

Well, the second day, we were pushed into trains. There were still trains then. And on our way to Westerbork, as I said.

Were you told where you were going?

No. We surmised. We thought. And we got at Hooghalen. Hooghalen has no rails for Hooghalen to Westerbork camp. About a mile long.

There was no rails. The rails were made while I was there. I see the men still fixing the rails. So later on, you could get with the train right near the camp. But when we come there, we had to walk through the mud, and it's pouring rain, pouring rain.

Imagine about 1,000 people there walking all by, old and young. Some couldn't even properly walk. Well, myself, my wife, and child-- my wife had the child. So I took her blanket and her things, and we walked until we got into the camp, into a shed. And you wait.

And then you registered there again. Your name goes on a card, and birth, religion. Well, they know your religion. And then you wait again. And then you're sorted out and get into a barrack.

And did you at this point bring up the subject of your British nationality?

Every time, every time. Born in London. So there were others-- British-Dutch, American-Dutch. And we were put at the beginning in a barrack for those double nationalities. So the English and Dutch went into one barrack.

Can you describe the Westerbork camp, please?

Well, at that time, it's a big piece of ground with wooden huts.

Were they made specially for the camp or were they already there, school or something?

Yes. Way back in 1934 or '33, when I told you I refused to sign the paper for the German Jews to come into Holland, the German Jews did come into Holland. And this camp was made for about 1,000 German Jews. So they fixed and built the barracks. Later on, they were the boss of us, and the Dutch Jews were into the barracks.

What had happened to the German Jews?

They were still there. They had very, very good positions, cooks in the kitchen, in the administration work, and so on. And already there was a hate because they were very bossy.

And as I read lately, lately why they were bad for us is because they thought when they came into Holland in 1934, '33, that they would have had a better life and organization and a better way than to live in barracks. So this time they turned the roles around. I remember there was fighting going on and cursing and bad words.

And--

Could you describe the layout of the camp?

Rows of-- rows of barracks. That's all I know. In between the barracks you could walk. There was a washing where a lot of the washing could be done. There was a small locomotive with train going through the camp for carrying things, baskets or whatever it was.

There was a kitchen, of course, where cooking was done for the prisoners. And we all had barracks, and we had one, two layers on top of one another. Those were iron bunks. Later on in the concentration camp were wooden bunks, but these were iron with a mattress and a cushion and a blanket.

Were they segregated by sex?

Yes, women and men were separated. My wife went with the women in the barrack, and then a little way you had the barrack for the men. After 9:00, half past 9:00, the men had to leave the barracks and leave the wives alone and get into their own barracks.

In the morning, you couldn't get in till about 10:00, half past 10:00 when the women had finished washing. Then you could mix. You mixed outside or inside a barrack.

I remained in my barrack, at the beginning. So we all sorted out then, and everybody's got to work, especially the men

have got to work.