

You were just telling me about the food provided by the Americans.

Yes. I remember that I was wandering in one of the barracks, SS barracks. And there was an American soldier, tall fellow with an aluminum bucket in his hand in which he had some food he was going to throw away, the way he was walking and looking.

I went over to him. I said-- and I looked in his bucket. And I saw a piece of meat in there, a steak and some fried potatoes, a few potatoes. And I said, you're not going to throw that away, soldier, are you? I said, I haven't had a bit of meat for years.

He says, you want it? I said, yes. He said, yeah, then eat it. Sit down and eat it. He said, it's as tough as the sole of my shoe. I sat down, and I got a hold of it in my hands. And I ate it. I finished everything.

So he said, you want any more? I thought he was joking, and I said, yes. He said, well, come along then. And he took me to a kind of field kitchen. And I had a whole bucket full of fried potatoes. I ate them all.

That was their food, not the food for the prisoners?

That was their food. Meat-- chunks of meat.

How did your stomach react to having meat and potatoes after years?

Lucky, all right? Lucky, all right? Somehow-- and--

What about clothes?

Well, they gave me-- my uniform, my jacket, my striped uniform and trousers I put in a pillowcase with other things I collected. Pair of braces I saw laying on the ground, I took them home with me. I had some packets of Philip Morris cigarettes given to me by the Americans, a toothbrush given by the Americans. I collected them all and took them home. They are somewhere in the Wiener Library.

And as I'm now thinking, I was wandering around the camp. And I came to the ovens. In the ovens were parts of bodies, skeletons. There were bodies burnt. And outside, a little way from it, were heaps of bones, heaps of it. In a room like that, dealt into four parts, there were heaps of bones, of people that had been cremated in there.

And outside, further up, was a load of leather jackets from the SS and a load of straps. And it was an American soldier there with a gun watching it. And I went over to him. And I said, do you mind if I have one of those jackets? They stole my coat and everything what I had when I came into the camps.

He said, go on, and pick one for me as well. I said, but you're not going to shoot, are you? He said, I don't shoot. So I looked over the leather jackets, fit one on for myself. And I took another one to him. I said, and they took my strap. Can I have a strap? So I was allowed to take a strap.

I still got the leather coat at home. I've only wore it once or twice in civilian life. The leather strap is somewhere in the library, I think.

Does your leather coat have SS insignia?

No, no. It had brass buttons on it. I think it was brass buttons. I took it back to my barrack. And in the barrack was a young Polish Jew who was by trade a tailor. And I said, how much soup do you want if you can put half a dozen other buttons on? And this was in the evening when I came in. Of course, I was whispering to him because a lot of people were asleep.

And we were bartering about it-- four pints, two pints, one pint. I said, well, I'll give you two pints. He said, well, I've got no buttons. You look for the buttons.

The next day I went out, and I got myself into a barrack where there were heaps of clothing. I crawled over bales of clothing. And then I found several coats. And I looked for the buttons which I fancied then. And I took them off and brought them to the tailor. And he sewed the buttons on. And I gave him, I think, three or four tins of American rations for doing it. Yes.

What about medical care?

Well, medical care-- there wasn't much to do now in medical care. I heard that doctors were coming in from various countries, but I didn't have a doctor looking after me anymore, I don't think. No.

But what jumps into my mind, I was going to say-- it's slipping away. Some incident-- now, what was it? Well, slipped me. You better ask me. It slipped my mind. Might come back in a minute.

What were the American plans for sending the people from the camp back to wherever they ought to be?

Well--

I mean the prisoners.

Yes, well, several left the camp on their own way. I didn't somehow want to leave the camp somehow. I was wanting to go to Holland.

Well, there'd be no point surely for you to leave the camp. You didn't speak German very well. You had no money.

No. But, you see-- well, this is how it went. I wandered outside. I got my card then that I could leave the camp-- signed by the Americans, and a note signed by a Captain Jacobs, I think, that I was-- if there was an airplane, to fly me out to where I wanted to go.

So there was nothing more to do for me in the camp. And there was no need for me to hurry because the Americans said, you don't have to hurry. It's all right. But then I got a feeling I wanted to leave the camp.

And what were other people doing? Other prisoners, I mean.

Well, they were making their own way out of the camp. Probably some of them didn't wait for proper orders and all that. And some of them were taken care of by people coming from the various countries, from Holland, from Belgium, from France. But that didn't happen to me.

I got then my card. And I left the camp. And I was wandering around. And I got as far as Erfurt. Erfurt is not far from Buchenwald. It's an aerodrome. E-R-F-U-R-T, Erfurt. It's on the map.

And I saw the airplanes and the Americans coming in and taking off and coming in, like taxis, and a lot of petrol tanks unloading and loading. And I was wandering around there, taking my time.

And I went into one of the barracks where the American commander was. And I told him, I want to fly to Holland. I didn't want to go back to England yet. I wanted to first go to Holland, see what was there, news for me or what. And I sat down and talked to him and so on. And then he said, well, you make your own way. And if there's airplane going, find out by yourself.

And I wandered about all day there. And I was enjoying myself, seeing those airplanes coming in and out, and mixing with the American soldiers there, colored and uncolored, on the field, on the airport and in the barracks.

And then one evening I was walking. It was getting quite dark, and I was walking. I went into a barrack, and there were some Americans sitting around a table, at a table. And there was a bottle of wine in the middle of them. And I introduced myself. And we start talking.

And he says, we were just contemplating opening a bottle of wine. Would you like some? I said, well, please. Well, I probably didn't have a lot to eat that day. And I got some wine to drink. And we were still talking.

And then it was quite dark, and I wanted to make my way back to my barrack. So I was outside the barrack, walking along. And all of a sudden, from nowhere, an American soldier stood in front of me with a gun. And I had to stop. And he got hold of me and marched me into a barrack.

I had to sit down until the commander was called. I had seen this commander in the afternoon. They woke him out of his sleep. And he came into the barrack, and he looked. He said, you're the chap I spoke to this afternoon. He said, what are you still doing here? I said, well, I can't find an airplane to go. But I'm a little drunk.

So he said, sit down. And he was annoyed because I had woken him asleep. I sat down. And then he sent out for some British prisoners of war because the door opened a little while after that, and about a half a dozen British prisoners of war came in. They had been liberated by the Americans.

And he said, this chap here, he says he's a London fellow. And he's walking about all day here. Now he woke me up. And just see who he is.

So one of the fellows there, a London fellow, he talked to me. And he said, what about this and what about that, all places in London. I could answer because I knew. He says, you know, he's all right. Because they thought I was somebody else, see?

A spy?

Yeah, or an escaped somebody or other. Yeah, the American-- take him with you. And you're responsible for him. I don't want to see him again. So they took me to a barrack where the British soldiers were sleeping.

In Buchenwald?

In Buchenwald, in one of the barrack. No, a air fort.

Air fort?

Air fort.

Airdrome?

Airdrome-- one of the barracks there. Well, anyhow, barracks-- they were wooden sheds there. And they all lay down on the ground.

And I was drunk, must have been, because I was talking, and then I heard say, shut up. And this and that. And then I got a shoe thrown at me, a boot. And then I fell asleep.

And the next morning I woke up. I was quite all right then. And they were sharing out army rations. So I pulled myself back into a corner. Well, [INAUDIBLE] boys' rations. I'll find somewhere else something to eat. One of the other officers, come on you, here. I said, well, it's yours. He said, it's yours. So I had a tin of rations.

And then, in a half an hour's time, we went outside, and we stood there. And an airplane came in. And all the soldiers got into the airplane and went to England. And there I stood.

And then from nowhere, behind me a soldier said, you're the chap from last night. I took you to my commander's. I turned around. I said, yes. I said, I'm waiting for an airplane.

He said, you know, I would have shot you. I had called out twice to you, and you didn't stop. If you wouldn't stop the third time, I would have shot you because you were out that-and-that time, and the commander said nobody's allowed out at that time. I didn't know. [LAUGHS]

Well, then I wandered about. And I was outside air fort, must have been on the road. And I was again with the Americans. And I was looking for somebody to take me to-- oh, that must have been before I went air fort. I was wandering about and asking, are you going to an airport? I want to get to Holland. Who's flying to Holland? No, no, no.

Then a Jeep came along past me. And he said, you're the chap that's going-- wants to fly? I said, yes. I said, are you going? And he said, no. I'm not going, he said, but here's a lady who wants to talk to you, is from an English paper, a London paper. And did I tell you that already?

Not on the tape you didn't.

No?

No.

So it was Anne Matheson. And she got out of the Jeep and asked me several things. I'll tell you some, I said, but you must put my name and the address in London where I used to live so that my family, if they're in London, they can read and they know that I'm alive.

And she did that. Anne Matheson put the article in the Evening Standard on April 23 or 24. "The Barber of Buchenwald," she called it. Well, I wasn't a barber in Buchenwald. I must have mentioned to her that I earned a little bit of extra soup by shaving the people. "The Barber Of Buchenwald." And it went into the papers.

And really, a neighbor next to my brother, in the same turning, came rushing at my brother one evening, as he told me later on. He said, this and this, isn't this your brother, Leon Greenman? And then they knew I was alive. Well--

Before you left-- before you finally left, that is-- how were you and everyone else living in Buchenwald in the barracks? Were you still stacked in as tightly as you had been?

Yes. Well, you looked up your bunk, and you laid to sleep. I had my-- there were army rations which we had earned, which some of us had earned with singing and giving them a concert. We had these, so we didn't trouble about our soup, I don't think.

And somehow we were getting a happy feeling. Well, I got a happy feeling I'd be home, and I'd see my wife and child and my family again. So a lot of things you didn't think anymore about. You just wanted then get away.

But it was still the same wooden bunks with no blankets?

Oh, yes. That stayed till the very end, oh, yes. No alteration in that. No.

Recently you and I watched a video of a television program together, including Sidney Bernstein's film about the liberation of Belsen.

Yes.

And we saw scenes with the SS, I think, perhaps kapos, taking bodies to be cremated in big pits and so on, scenes after the British liberation. Was it like that at Buchenwald?

No.

People still died, though. What happened?

People still died, but I didn't see it. Only, as I mentioned, the ovens, there were half, or so good as finished, bodies into skeletons and the bones. I didn't see then. I didn't. Oh, there were people that had been-- they had died from dysentery and ill health, like Oscar Rothschild and a lot of the others. But I didn't look at that way anymore.

I didn't notice it anymore. It didn't come up. Somehow, I was out all day, mixing with the Americans, wandering around outside the barrack. And I got in late, when it was dark. So really, what was going on at that time in the barracks I didn't realize anymore.

But when the day came and I left Buchenwald, certainly Oscar Rothschild-- I said, I'm going home. He said, wait. I'm going to give you a letter. And he wrote a letter on a note. I still got it. It's in the Wiener Library. He wrote in there in German. Thanks very much for looking after me and friendship. And whenever you come to Groningen, come and see me. I'll never forget. Yeah, I took that with me.

And then I said cheerio, and I went. And I realized that a doctor would take care of him. The doctors or medical men would take care of him.

Well, it never come as far. He came back as far as Eindhoven. Of course, when I was back in Rotterdam the first few days, I wrote a letter to Groningen. And I wrote in there. And it came back to me. Oskar, I'm in Holland now. I'd like to come and see you. How are you? Something like that. A few days later, this came back with another letter. Oscar Rothschild had died in Eindhoven. He never came back.

How were you able to keep up with news at that point? The war was, of course, still going on for several weeks after your liberation.

Yes, well, I was still then in the camp, on the airport, air fort.

But where you were? You were in Germany, and Germany was still at war.

Yes, but we didn't see any-- we didn't see anyone but the Americans. But the Americans were fighting the Germans, of course. But we didn't know how far they were getting.

Were you near the fighting? I mean, was there gunfire, or was that elsewhere?

No, I didn't hear any gunfire. I didn't see any fighting going on in Buchenwald or near Buchenwald, no.

Did you know what was happening to the German command? For instance, did you know about Hitler's death?

No. No, none of that ever came through to us until after liberation.

Oh, yes. Well, his death was after liberation. But I wondered how the news came.

No, while I was in Buchenwald, I didn't hear that. I don't remember hearing anybody telling me that they had tried to assassinate Hitler. Probably in France, when I was later on in France, it could have gone through then.

You wanted to go to Holland to look people up, of course, and find your family and so on. But because the war wasn't over, how could this be possible?

I couldn't go. Let me get back to air fort. Then, at last, I found an airplane. The Americans were going to Paris-- not to Holland, but to Paris-- and I could go along.

Well, I got into that plane. And there were several American officers there. And I think one general was there. There were five and a lady American, a woman soldier. And they asked me about the camp. And I told them some of the things. And then we flew into Paris. And coming down then, we landed on the airport there, somewhere in France.

And I remember getting out of the airplane and American soldiers walking me to a canteen, I think. And there were trays of donuts laying there. And I looked at them, and I looked at him. He said, go on. So I picked one. And he said, go and put some in your pocket. So I put some in my pocket. I ate them all. Donuts-- a hole in it, you know?

Yes. Do you know the date you finally left?

Oh, this must have been the 25th, 26th of April. Yes. It can be looked up. The papers are in the Wiener Library, amongst my lot.

And then I sat there. And I was taken in a Jeep to I think it was the British consul or British embassy. I was led into a room. And this was, say, 7, 8 o'clock. And one side of the table was a man sitting, reading, telephone next to him. And I sat in chair opposite him.

And he never spoke a word to me, not one word. And I wasn't going to talk to him if he wasn't going to talk to me. So I was looking in front of me, and I was weighing him up. And I was thinking and waiting. The phone went once or twice. He answered it short, sat reading again. Then somebody came in, whispered to him. He went out.

I start looking for myself. Well, if this is England where I am, why don't he blooming well talk to me? After all that short hair, I didn't look the same at all.

And then about half past 12:00, he looked up, and he said, you hungry? I said, oh, you are talking? I said, I am hungry, yes. And I think it was the British consul, British embassy somebody, or some of those people. All right, he says, somebody's going to collect you. And you're going to a home. And you have something to eat and so on.

And yeah, car came along. I think it was a truck or something, or a Jeep.

How do you explain his behavior?

I don't know. He probably wanted to hear me talk or find out who I was or what I was. And I wasn't talking. He wasn't questioning me, so I wasn't talking. And I just kept calm.

And then we arrived at a home in Paris where they collect the-- where people were let in who had come from various camps, I realized, internees and other people, all nationalities. And there I was presented to the supervisor or attendant of the home. It was a house. It had a lot of rooms. And I was asked by him-- an Englishman, if I could-- he understand an Englishman-- if I was hungry and gave me something to eat.

And there I was eating again potatoes and greens and a few other things. But that was 1:00 in the morning. And then I was shown a room where I could go to bed. And I went to bed, and I slept.

The next morning I woke up late. Usually wake up early. Now it's late. So I woke up, went to the bathroom where I could have a wash, undressed-- naked, as usually I did in the camp-- dressed, and went down to the room where there were people sitting at tables eating.

I looked around. And I felt a bit shy and out of the way. Everybody was looking at me, and I didn't like it. Of course, they were looking at my short hair, what. And they also had been somewhere in camps. Not in concentration camps-- I think maybe internment camps.

So I went into a corner. I sat at a table. And an old lady came up to me. And she said, may I pour out your tea? And it was Louise White, Louise White from-- she lived near Richmond, in London. She had been a nurse, non-Jewish, a nurse. And she had been nursing an old lady in France right throughout the occupation. And she was from London, from

Richmond, she said. I think that way-- Richmond. And she had been a nurse. And she started talking to me. And she poured out my tea. And I felt happy.

And then she told me she was going to go the day after tomorrow. She's going to London. And I said, can you get word to my brothers who are in London? Tell them that you met me. I'm alive. And I hope to be home soon or later. She said, yes, I'll do that. And I said, I'm going now to the British embassy or consul, to find if I can get a passport and move about easier.

So I walked about 3/4 of an hour, if not longer, from where I was to the British embassy. And I wanted to have a passport. The man who I saw there, he said, come back in a little while. We left our address. We'll get to know, and there's no hurry. But you can't have a passport now. So I walked back. And I couldn't walk hardly. My feet were giving me away. Given away again.

So I got back to the home. And I saw this old lady. And I said, I've got a terrible pain in my foot. Can you put a bandage or something on it? She said, well, let's have a look. I took off my shoe and my sock, if I had a sock. I don't know. And she looked. And they were brown boots given to me by the Americans which they had found in the barracks of the SS, beautiful boots. I never had a pair like that since.

Oh, she said, you promise you go to the hospital. And the hospital wasn't far from their home. The hospital was in Levallois, rue Villiers. And I said, oh, I don't want to go into hospital. I don't want to. I said, if you can-- you're a sister, you're a nurse, you know-- just put a bandage around it, and I'll be all right. But she knew more than I knew. She said, well, if you're not going to the hospital, I'm not going to your brother's. So I took it literally. And then I said, all right, I'll go. So I went to the hospital.

Well, all right. So I promised I'd go to the hospital. And I went. I got into the British hospital in Levallois-Perret, Paris. I got in there. And there was a big man standing at a desk. I guess he was a former officer in the army, a man about 60 or more, big fellow. And he said, what do you want? I said, well, I got a bad foot, and I want to see a doctor. Sit down and wait. That's how he talked. So I sit down and wait for myself. He's talking like there is no difference, only wants to put up his hands and then-- the same as in the camp.

Anyhow, then I was let into a room. And I met Dr. Schwartz, Dr. Schwartz, S-C-H-W-A-R-T-Z, Schwartz.

A German?

He was an Englishman, Jewish. I sat down. And he asked me what was the matter. He asked me who I was. And I told him I came from the camps. I'd been in the camps, and I got a bad foot. My toe was aching. And I had an idea. My eyes were falling out of my-- dropping out of my head.

So he talked to me. And he told me that his parents didn't come back from the camps. They had been taken to the camps. And I sat talking to him. And then he had a look at my foot. He had a look at me. And of course, being a medical man, he knew what was wrong. And he said, would you like to come into the hospital?

I said, no, I don't want to go in the hospital. I had enough hospital in the camp. And I just want a bandage around my toe, and I'll go. He had a look. He said, well, I think it's better to come into the hospital. He said, one or two days, no more. So he talked me into it. And I said, can I have a bath? He said, you can have five baths if you like.

I said, well-- I said, I left some things in where I'm staying. I got a pillowcase with some so-called things from the camp and all that. So I went back, collected them, and took them back to the hospital. And then I was let into the ward. I was given a lovely bath and into bed. My pillowcase with my odds and ends in it went into some cupboard. And there I lay.

And next to me was a foreigner who had come from the camps. And opposite me was a man, an Englishman who had come from the camps. He was a car dealer in France, had been in the camps, came back, but was suffering from dysentery. I still got his card somewhere. He didn't live long. He died a few weeks. Malnutrition, I think it was.

And I was laying in bed the first night, and I couldn't get to sleep. I was hungry. So about 10 o'clock, the doctor came around from bed to bed, just an inspection if everything was all right. And he came to my bed. And he saw I wasn't asleep. He said, why aren't you asleep? What's the matter?

I said, I'm hungry. See, I didn't want to-- I felt too gentlemanlike not to say it. But if I didn't say it, I could not get asleep. Even now, every time before I go to bed in civilian life, I got to have something to eat before I go to bed or else I won't sleep.

He said, oh, you're the fellow from Buchenwald. I said, yes, Doctor. So he gave instructions to a French nurse there. And she came back with a tray with a glass of milk on it and some slices of bread. He said, I'll see you tomorrow morning. I ate that, and I fell asleep. They were lovely, those French nurses. There were also some English nurses, but they were a bit, do it or take it.

Anyhow, the next morning, doctor come around from bed to bed, examining. And then they put shields around my bed. And I had to go through examination from top to bottom and so on. And then he had a look at my foot. And he said nothing. I got my rations of food.

And then days went on. And it was the 9th of May when he brought in a French surgeon. And I had to lay in my bed, lay out in my bed. And the doctor said, I got a pin here. I'm going to just touch your toe. And I didn't understand French then, but Dr. Schwartz told me. And where you feel it, just call out. And they were examining my toes. And I called out, and sometimes I didn't.

Well, after a few minutes, he said-- I sat up, and he said-- they were talking to one another. And then Dr. Schwartz says, we have to amputate that toe because it's gangrene. No fear, I said, no! And I jumped out of bed. I said, I can walk with it, the same thing I did in the camps. God love it.

I said, no. I thought to myself. Hitler didn't get a bit off of me, and he's not going to get that. And he talked me into it. He said, well, if you don't do it now, in three months' time, you'll have to miss your foot. Well, what could I do? Say yes.

So I supposed to have been operated the following day or something. And they put it off because D-Day was coming on. That was the 11th, I think. Is it?

VE-Day, you mean.

VE-Day, yeah.

The end of the war?

Yes. So they put off the operation for a few days. And then they operated upon me.

How was the end of war treated in hospital?

Oh, well, everybody seemed happy. And there was one particular nurse there. She said her name was Daisy Fontaine. She came from Canada. And I fell in love with her. I was just out of the camp, and I fell in love with her. She had such a lovely personality. And she could play the piano.

And then later on, as the weeks went by, I got out of my bed. And I sang. And my first song was, "Oh, Danny Boy," I sang. And it went right through the passages. And they had to open the doors of the lady departments, where the lady patients were laying. And I had to come and sing there. And she was a lovely girl. But it didn't work out that way as I thought. Leon falls in love so quickly.

So I'd like to find her again because, see, I've got something to settle with her. She gave me a photograph from her. And she asked it back, and I didn't want to give it back. And now I don't know where she is.



Anyhow, I was laying in bed. I was operated upon. And I had, when necessary, double rations. And my strength was coming back.

They amputated your left big toe?

Yes, half of it went. And the skin-- as the doctor pointed out to me, the skin from underneath the toe, they took the toe away and then pulled it over what was remained and sewed it. So I've got a half a toe. And Daisy Fontaine called me Nine and Half Toes. [LAUGHS]

So that was done, and I laid in bed. And I was seen to. And it healed. I got better. The French nurses, they recommended me for being so brave with the operation. I could see everything what's going on. There was a big chrome light shining down. I could see the blood. I could see the hands of the doctor moving. I was quite interested. And they must have killed it locally, so I didn't feel nothing.

An anesthetic?

Anesthetic. Anyhow, they took fancy to me, the nurses there. They saw to me and all that. And the British nurses, the English nurses were a little bit harsher, telling the French nurses off in the night, this and that.

Anyhow, I got quicker back to my health. I remember telling the doctor one morning. Nurses are all around. And I want to speak to him myself. I said, I got my first wet dream. Oh, yeah, good. You're coming back to health, boy. That's good. I said, sure? Yes. Yeah.

So I got stronger, stronger. I was allowed to go into the garden, a nice garden behind the hospital, if it's still there, I dare say. And behind that, people living in the flats, they could see into the garden and talk to us. And I was walking in the garden with other patients. And people that lived in the flats came and see me and brought me in some jam and pieces of cake. And it became quite friendly. And I stayed with them after I left hospital. They're both dead now, those people.

Anyhow, so I was out of hospital then. But while I was in hospital, I was having food. And one day, this man at the door who I saw the first time I came in came upstairs. He had a uniform on. It was kind of-- not a soldier uniform, but he had some uniform on.

He said, where is your ration card? I'm, what are you talking about? He said, you're having our food here. Where's your ration card, coupons? So he made me understand that you had to have coupons for it. I didn't know about that. I'd just come out of the camps.

I said, well, I don't want your food. And I jumped out of bed. I said, give me my clothes, and I'll go. [LAUGHS] I was like that.

Well, then the nurse explained to him who I was. And then he backed off. [LAUGHS] I must mention those incidents because they stay with me.

Did they get you a ration card?

I dare say they kept it, I daresay, until I went out. I don't think I had a ration card. Or I take it and give it to the people where I stayed with to get the rations. I daresay like that it was. And those people where I stayed with had friends that came in. And we sat there, and we had to eat.

And I remember seeing other people, like the old lady or one of the gentlemen, one of the men in the streets, going into the dustbins behind the hotel and taking out there all steaks on top of one another, meat. And they took it away. One was looking at that dustbin. I tried to do this in camp-- grass and--

These were Parisians that were doing that?

Yes, yes. Those people were starving as well, you see. They were rationed. But I was staying where people were in business, and they probably could get black market and all that stuff. And they fed me well. And I had a lot of friends. And everybody--

This is the French family you stayed with?

French family, yes.

What was their name?

Gaston Pron, P-R-O-N. He died a couple of years ago. His wife died sooner, earlier. And I had a very good time there. They well looked after me. I went back once or twice to see them.

Could they speak English?

No, French.

You had said you didn't speak French.

Very few words, not many. And [LAUGHS] I couldn't make myself understood, but anyhow. There was another prisoner in Buchenwald, who I only met-- he says he met me in Buchenwald. I don't remember that. But I met him at the table when we were eating. He came in there.

His name was Roger Jones, J-O-N-E-S. And he gave me a razor. One day he came up with a razor, new razor, said, that's for you as a present. And he's talking in French. And with me he talked English and telling me what he was talking about, things in the camp. And all the French were listening, of course.

He stayed with the Pron family as well?

No, he came there as a friend, visiting. They must have known one another. And Daisy Fontaine came also once or twice.

Yeah, then comes the time that I get letters from my sister and my father-- the Red Cross. I had written to the Red Cross, or somebody for me had written to the Red Cross, asking about my father. And then I knew my father was back out of the camp, was still alive. He had come back from Westerbork after 11 or 12 months being there. And my stepmother was alive. But no news of my wife and child, nothing like that.

And then I got my passport, something like that, papers to leave France. And I said good-bye. And we got into a train who went very slowly and then through Belgium. That took a long, long time out of Belgium into Holland. And then we arrived at Eindhoven.

At Eindhoven, the Philips factory, we had to all get out there and stay there. We were examined by the doctors. And of course, the Dutchmen were all around me. And we were talking. And one of them said, we're going to escape tonight. We don't want to be kept here. So I said, well, don't escape. What's the trouble? He said, they're holding us here for our health. We're healthy, all right. But we weren't, of course.

So I went to one of the doctors. In Dutch, I said to him, we're contemplating leaving this place tonight. And I said, you can shoot of us, but we can't have any getting out. We want to get home.

So the doctor said, we're not going to shoot. But everybody who wants to go out can go, but you've got to sign a certificate that in your towns-- where are you going to? I said I was going to Rotterdam. You got to present it at the hospital and have your self seen to, your lungs and all that. Of course, they were afraid for some disease you had. And we did that. I was examined the next day. And I was okayed. But of course, I wasn't. Physically, I was not all right.

But this was before-- before I want to tell you now. I arrived in Rotterdam after a long time with train. And the old station was bombed away. There was nothing there. And I had to get to the place in Rotterdam where my father was.

And I got into a tram, I think. Yes. And very slowly we rode through the streets. And it was well dark when I arrived, 10 minutes away from my father's house. I got out of there, and I walked.

And I stopped some young fellow. I said, would you mind? I said, I've just arrived from outside. I've been in the camps. My father's expecting me. He lives there and there, that and that number. Go and tell him that his son will soon be at his place. And he did it. So I waited another 10 minutes. I didn't want to jump in there. And then I arrived.

Well, of course, Father was very thin. And the neighbors came down. And I went into the room. I remember seeing photographs, [SOBS] my wife and child.

And I must have gotten very sick. And they calmed me down and all that. And I pulled myself together. And then I went to sleep.

And I was up early in the morning, 5 o'clock, as I usually did in camp. Father was still in bed. What are you doing up so early? I said, well, I get up early, half-naked, washing myself and all that. I couldn't get out of the habit. I'm still not out of the habits. I still wash and all this.

Anyhow, so I got onto the streets. And I met an old lady friend on my way to an office where you could collect some money for those that came out of camp. And she said, did you see my husband? I said, your husband? I didn't know you were married. Yes, she said.

I said, well, where was he? He was in Auschwitz, but he hasn't come yet. I said, what does he look like? Well, then that name-- and a big fellow. I said, yes, I met him in Auschwitz. I said, I don't think he'll be coming home. Because this fellow-- way back, I told you about the Dutchman who said shave us first. We want to get out in the barrack. And I said no. The Pole, a Dutch-- the Pole and Dutch. I said, don't get no trouble with the kapo.

He was a tall Dutchman. And one day he was transported away from Auschwitz. And we never seen him again. And whispers when did they shot-- they shot him. The long, the tall Dutchman, [PERSONAL NAME]. That's what the whispers were. But I didn't know her husband properly yet. I said, I imagined that was her husband.

She says, well, come home and have a cup of tea. Of course, I knew her. I knew her parents. I knew her sisters. She's still alive, she is. And I came into her room, her sitting room. And on the sideboard was a big photograph. I said, I know him! So she says, well, that's my husband. Gosh, I said, if he hasn't come back yet, he might come back later on. But I knew he wouldn't come back.

Well, then I met other people had been in the camps, got friendly with. I went to the Hague and came back to Rotterdam. I stood outside my house where I'd lived. I rang the bell, and I said to the lady there who opened it, I said, I was living here before I went to the camp. I says, would you allow me to stay in the room [SOBS] where we had lived? Oh, yes.

So she took me upstairs and the room where I used to spend hours with my wife and Kitty, where the piano used to be. And they left me alone for a moment. But it was empty. It was no good to me. There was nothing more to hold me. So I thanked them, and I went out.

I stayed altogether about three weeks there. My father was thin. And what else could we do? I wrote away for milk for my father, which I could obtain coming back from the camps. They sent me a letter. As you are a British subject, we can't allow you to have milk. We only give milk to Dutch subjects. So the man behind that desk didn't know what he was talking about.

So I went to this office. I said, can you give us-- can you give me money for myself, my father and mother, enough for

the fare to England? We want to go to England. I said, well, I've got to stay here six months or a year. You've got to pay me every week money. And no need for that. So they gave us sufficient money to get back to London. And we arrived in London.

You, your father, and stepmother?

Yes, the three of us. There was nothing more. My sister didn't come back. And there was nothing more. Although I wasn't certain my wife and child nor my sister-- later on, yes, agree. Then we knew. But there was nothing more to hold me in Rotterdam at that time.

And we came to live in London. A little while we stayed with a brother. But there was too many of us there. It was only small house. My brother, who had been in the army for five years--

In the British Army?

British Army. He was living outside of London, in Bletchley. They were evacuated. The family had evacuated, and he was in the Army. My oldest brother had been in the 1418 war and was now in the Home Guard. So he was released from the Home Guard. And we stayed with him a little while.

My father got a flat in the East End of London. And I stayed there for a few days. I wanted to make my way to Lewes, near Brighton, where my in-laws were.

I think your other sister was also alive.

Who?

Your other sister.

Kitty, all the time, had been in England. And she was alive. But she was still outside London, living outside London. She had been a voluntary help, a nurse in hospital.

Why were your in-laws in Lewes? I thought they were Dutch.

No, my in-laws-- yes, they were-- well, he was Dutch, from Dutch descent, but British-born. He had several daughters born in England. And my wife was his stepdaughter. He married my wife's mother. My wife's mother and his first wife were sisters. His first wife died. And the stepmother, or my wife's mother, took over-- they got married-- and looked after the children, of which a child was born.

Well, I made up my mind to go to Lewes and tell my mother-in-law what had happened to us, the child and my wife and her mother, grandma, and so on. When a telegram arrived from my sister-in-law out of Bletchley, who knew that I was going to Lewes-- stop, Leon. Morry very ill. Morry was my brother who had been in the Army for five years. So I stopped in London. I didn't go to Lewes.

And about 11 o'clock, my sister-in-law arrived. And she told us that my brother had gone the evening before. At the back of the house, they had a lavatory. Had a heart attack, and they had to carry him indoors, and he died.

I found it such a shock. Instead of going to Bletchley, I rushed off to Bletchley. Instead of going to Lewes, I hurried back to Bletchley. And they had carried my brother's body into the police station there. And I went into the police station. I saw my brother. And I've seen hundreds in camp. But when it's your own, it's a little bit different.

And I took a promise that I would try to help his wife and four children, who were still young. The oldest was about 14. And then I went back to London. The body came back to London. And we buried my brother, who is now in East Ham, Marlow Road buried.

I didn't have a penny. I got 26 shillings from the British government to get my health back, which they increased a fortnight later to 35 shillings, and a few coupons. I couldn't live from that, to get back my house. Luckily, I wasn't smoking. I wasn't drinking. So I said, keep the 35 shillings. Give me enough coupons to get a decent coat and some shoes or something like that. And that's what I did. And then I went to work in the markets.

The sons and daughters of my brother who had just died, the oldest son was a very clever chap. Before my brother died, he had told me, my son wants to become a doctor. And I got no money to let him study. And I'd lost everything in Holland what I had, so I couldn't help him. And I remember that.

What could I do? Family on both sides, my sister-in-law and my family couldn't help me, had promised financial help which they didn't do after all. So I went on the markets and tried to earn a living in the markets. My first chance of facing the public was at Lewisham bombsite, where I worked, which my brother had done formerly, demonstrating hair curlers for ladies. But the oldest boy couldn't pass his exams as a doctor. This is interesting or not. Or not?

Yes, we'll just tie up.

One day, they were walking on the street. And they met a captain of the Army, who was a friend of her husband, had been very good to him. And he said, if there's anything I can do for you-- of course, your husband was a very good friend to me. How I can help you?

So she mentioned her son. He said, well, he can study with me and become a solicitor instead of a doctor. And he did this. And he's a very well-to-do solicitor at present. The family moved away. And I just went my own way.

You said that the first time you appeared in public, as it were, was that at the market in Lewisham. How did people react to you? I mean, people you didn't know?

That's right. I was very shy and really frightened to face them. So I worked talking. I never did face a crowd. And I don't know how it would have gone with my singing, but it all held together.

And later on I got more courage, and I did face the crowd. And they listened to me. And there was plenty of money about because people were buying. And that's how I happened to land in the markets instead of in a proper job or a proper businessman.