

--more prefabricated classrooms.

So literally overnight, thousands of kids are-- leave London to go to the--

Train stations were full of kids. And the women's voluntary service were all in charge of this. Was amazing when we got to that little place where we went to, they were expecting us. There was a woman there guiding us up and down the street. And she knew every house, how many people were in that house. If there were any spare bedrooms, she would know about it. And so she would knock on the door and then deposit children.

The door she knocked on for us, a woman came out. And she said, well, you've got a choice. You can have either two evacuees, or two soldiers, or a family that's being evacuated from England-- from London. So she took the lesser of the three evils, two evacuees.

So she was really-- it was random that you ended up in that particular home.

Yeah, yeah.

It was random, OK.

And she-- then she said to them, oh, I'd better tell you-- these are also refugees, Jewish refugees from Austria. So this woman bristled. And she said, I don't know much care for Jews. Nevertheless, she took us in. And she made it pretty plain that she did not like to have Jews there. And it was-- she was a young woman in her 20s. So it couldn't be easy for somebody at that age suddenly to have two children to take care of.

But she made sure it wasn't going to be pleasant. I wasn't allowed in that house, except when it was time to eat or time to go to sleep. The rest of the time, I had to be out. And of course, English weather being what it is, I was-- a lot of the time, I would-- there was a little shopping strip down the-- near us. I would shelter in there, in those doorways there, and asking people the time so I wouldn't be late home. But that's how that was.

So you were allowed in their house only at meal time and to sleep?

Yeah.

That was it.

And well, after-- in the morning, it would-- my day would start off taking that dog you saw in the picture, a little dog-- taking him for a walk with a mile or so to a particular place and back. And then when I came home from school, take him out again. And that was it.

That was it. What was it like for Ruth?

Well, she went to high school. And she had a good friend there. And she spent most of her time with that friend.

Were you able to resume school at that time? Well, you told us got crowded into-- part-time in the classroom.

Yeah.

Were you able to make friends? Do you remember that?

Yeah. Once, this-- I was telling you, when I went there was September 1, Friday. Sunday, the war was declared. England declared war on Germany. And by that time, it seemed like language was not a problem anymore for me. I don't know. I'm sure I had a very limited vocabulary. But it didn't seem to be a problem for me.

And you would-- how long did you stay with this family?

Three and a half years.

Three and a half years under the circumstances that you've just described to us. Wow. And at about age 14, I think, is when you left their household and returned to London. Tell us why and how you did.

That was at school-leaving age, 14. Unless you were slated to go on to high school or further education, you left at 14. Excuse me.

So in effect, Freddie, you left to return to London to find work age 14.

I had to find a job.

You had to find a job. Were you able to go back to the Griggs?

Yeah, no. His wife had actually died. She died in the beginning of the war. And he was on war work, constantly on the trains. My sister was home. She was taking care of her house and doing everything. And as a 17-year-old, she had a full plate. And I came home one day. And Mr. Griggs was talking to his brother.

The object of their discussion was me, what kind of job I should be looking for. They were both staunch union workers types. And so I remember, his brother said, newspapers, printing-- doesn't matter what the situation is in the country. There's always a need for newspapers. So the next morning, I took myself down to Fleet Street. That's a street in London where all the newspapers offices have offices. And also, some of the big publishing newspapers have their facilities there.

So I didn't know what I was going to look for, what I could do. But I went down there. And I stood outside the Daily Telegraph building. They had big picture windows and-- with photographs that would be appearing in newspapers. So while I stood there, a boy came and stood next to me. And he was one of these pageboy uniforms, with the brass buttons and the little cheese cap. I could just read "Telegraph" on the side.

So I said, what's it like working for the Telegraph? He said, oh, it's a great company and wonderful. And are you looking for a job? I said, as a matter of fact, I am. He said, well, the head office isn't here. It's in Cannon Street. I'm going there now. If you come with me, I'll introduce you. So I said, OK.

So I went with him. And we went to Cannon Street. And there is a big brass plaque. And I could read, "Telegraph," and went upstairs. And there was a waiting room. There was a coffee table there with a number of newspapers on there, and the Daily Telegraph. And he told me to wait there. So I waited there.

And presently, a man came out. And he said, I understand you're looking for a job. I said, yes. He said, what do you want work in? So I said, printing. So I said, how did you know we do printing? I thought this was either the dumbest question or a real trick question. So I said, well, everybody knows that. He said, well, come on in. And he said-- sat me down and asked me a number of questions.

And he said, well, we don't do our printing here in London. We do it in Tring, about 30 miles outside London. To me, that seemed very logical because it didn't matter how bad the air raid was the night before, the newspapers were always there first thing in the morning. So that's how they do it. So anyway, he gave me a ticket. And he told me to be at the Euston Station at 8 o'clock in the morning to get the train to Tring.

And weekends, I could come home. They would give me tickets for that. And that would be it. Somebody would take care of my needs in Tring as far as where to stay, and food, and all that sort of thing. So I came home and told them I'd got a job with the newspaper. And I'm going to be living out in Tring. And it was-- they thought it was kind of remarkable. Here, I've just went a few hours. And I came back--

Working for a newspaper.

Yeah. And so at 8 o'clock on Monday morning, I was at the train. And anybody I saw with a Mackintosh, I thought it must be a reporter, or a journalist, or someone. Anyway, we got to Tring. And I got out. A whole bunch of people got out there. And there was a bus waiting to get-- take us up on top of the hill to little-- this-- to the village.

And when I got off, there was a woman, Ms. Fry. She was the one that handles all the people there as far as accommodation and all that. So she'd already made arrangements for me to stay with some-- at some farmhouse, where their son was in the army. And they had a spare bedroom. And so they had to report to Mr. Carter. And he took me to a-- was a big barn. The barn was bigger than this area and two levels.

So I went there and reported to him. And so I'm looking around. I see little machines chugging away, doing something. But I kept looking for these big presses that print the newspapers. Finally, I couldn't hold it back. I said, where do they print the papers? They said, what papers? I said, the Daily Telegraph, of course. He said, you thought this was the Daily Telegraph? He burst out laughing. He said, no, this is the Exchange Telegraph. We print stock reports, financial kind of documents. And that's what these machines were doing there.

And so you ended up going to work there. That was the end of your career as a journalist at that point.

It was actually very good because the older boys, as soon as they become 18, they go into the military. So it means that they put you through all the paces of photography, plate-making, printing, the whole thing. And so I had a good education there. And there were other boys, about half a dozen boys my age or a little bit older than me. And we became like a family there.

Freddie, when the war ended, you were 16 years of age, and Ruth 19. What did you do once the war was over?

Well, I moved back with the Exchange Telegraph to London. They took on facilities in Leicester Square. And shortly after that, my guardian retired. And it's amazing, the whole four years of the war, he was every day on the footplate of these big engines, rattling away, and somehow, managed to keep going. And as soon as he came and retired, he became sick. Excuse me. And he didn't actually last very long. He died.

Then his two children, and my sister, and I were on our own. His kids had family to go to. We had to find a place for ourselves. Now, through Lily, that girl that stayed with us and went to Wales-- and my sister was in touch with her. She knew some people in where she lived in Wales. And they made arrangements for us to go to Manchester and stay with people there.

So we moved up to Manchester. And this time, we went together. But we saw each other frequently. And it was first-- at first, I was not very in favor of moving out of London. I felt very comfortable and at home in London. And Manchester, where these people speak in funny Mancunian accents, didn't appeal to me.

But actually, turns out, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. There was a wonderful, warm environment. I joined a youth group, a Zionist youth group, made lots of friends there, and found a job in doing this kind of printing. I knew the whole ropes, more than most of the people did who had those little machines. And so things went pretty well.

You mentioned you joined the Zionist youth group. During that whole period during the war, you really, I think, had almost no connection with your Jewish faith, or even with other Jews, right?

No, no, none whatsoever.

None whatsoever.

And nobody ever tried to convert me, either. It's actually-- English people are not particularly churchgoing-- I mean, not like in America. All the people I knew that-- nobody ever went to shul. And my guardian used to say, the only time they'll ever get me in church is feet first, which is exactly what happened.

You became a British citizen about that time.

Yeah.

How did that happen?

The British government realized that, after the war, they had thousands of kids on their hands who had nowhere to go. They had no homes left, no family left. And they offered them citizenship. So I guess, somebody contacted me. All I had to do was go to an office in downtown in Manchester and sign a paper. And that was it.

I was an English citizen, with all the privileges and also obligations. In the case of a boy, it meant that when you become 18, you get called up for the military, which is something I actually looked forward to because all my friends had gone in. And so that was it-- could get a passport, could travel.

So you did get drafted.

Yeah.

But then you made the decision to go to Israel. Tell us about that.

Well, what happens is you get drafted. You go down. You have a medical, do some tests, and all that. And I was A1. And they sent me home. And they said, go home. And in due course, you'll be notified where to report. So I went home. And then after a short while-- was, I guess, May the 15th or so-- the state of Israel declared and immediately attacked by surrounding Arab countries. So I thought, this is crazy for me to go in the British Army now. I should be joining the Israeli Army. And these youth movements had a sort of an underground-- what's the word?

Kind of an underground network for recruiting?

Network for people wanted to join up. So I contacted them. And they accepted me. And so off I went to Israel.

Tell us about the Israeli man who recruited you and what instructions you got about-- yeah.

Yeah, they had it so you sent from Manchester-- you sent to in a place in London. I went to this place in London up on a loft in some building in Oxford Street. And so the guy took a corner of a newspaper, tore off a piece, started writing something in Hebrew, and rolled it into a ball, gave it to them, gave it to me, and said, when you get to Paris, give this to the person where you're going to meet. That was my introduction.

Then he told me, the address of the place. I still remember-- 83 Rue de la Grande Armée. He said, say this to yourself many times till you remember it. And when you get to Paris-- he gave me some francs-- he said, go jump in a taxi and say that to them. And they'll take you to the right address. And this is exactly what happened.

And I thought I was going to have a lot of awkward questions, like when I go through immigration to get on the boat. Nobody asked me anything. The guy at the immigration there said, going on holiday? So I said, yes. Said-- pat on the back, have a great time. And I thought I was doing something like a spy, with all kinds of things conjured up in my imagination. But everything went very easily.

Well, weren't you even given the name of a-- traveling in the name of a deceased person?

No, that was when I got onto the ship in--

Oh, when you got onto the ship. OK.

--in Marseille. Yeah, that was because of the troops that was in place at the time. They weren't allowed to have regular

immigrations. So I was given the name of somebody to remember and then walk on the ship with that.

When you got to Israel, you had this-- an amazing encounter with a cousin.

Oh, yeah.

Will you tell us about that?

I was with a group of Moroccan Jews. They were all speaking Arabic. Now, maybe they were just having a regular conversation. But to me, it sounded like they were about to get into a brawl. They treated me fine.

But I was so anxious to hear somebody speak English that in the morning, coming out from breakfast, I saw one guy standing around in the square there. And he was neatly dressed. He looked like me. And I thought, I bet he speaks English. So I went up to talk to him.

And before I could say to him, he turned to me and said, Freddie? I said, yes. He said, my cousin, he came to look for me. Actually, he does look like me. And so he had heard from a family member who was working for the Jewish Agency, going through lists of all the people who had just arrived and came across my name. And so since they knew him, they said, could this be a relative? So he said, yeah, it's my cousin.

So he came. He found out where I was. He came to the camp. And he asked for me to get leave for four days, which they gave me. And so I went home to his home and met my new cousins that-- I remembered them in Vienna. But they left early. And so we joined up.

And of course, Freddie, after you served in Israel-- and meanwhile, back in England, you had been inducted into the British Army.

That's right. I kept getting--

But you weren't there.

--I kept getting notices. And I was living from-- with my sister. And the police came there looking for me. So she finally told them where I was. So they left her alone. But as soon as I came back to England.

And that's why-- so then you returned to England. OK.

Yeah. Yeah, I knew I had to go back to do this. So I went back to England. And the immigration, they said, you know you're wanted by the army? I said, yes, that's why I'm here. So they said, OK, when you get home, go to the police station, and report, and tell them you're there, which was very good because they could have put me in irons and done something. But they were very trusting.

And so I went back. And about two weeks later, I was given a-- I got my orders where to report-- a big army camp in Yorkshire. And so I reported there. When I got there, they also knew everything about me. And there was one of the last regiments that left Palestine, and came back to England, and became a training regiment. And so they were very interested in what I could tell them about Israel at the time because they were stationed there for a few years.

But my experiences in the army was very good. I was immediately after basic training sent to Germany. And I was in a armored corps regiment, a tank regiment. And I spent two years there. And it was actually quite a rewarding experience.

Freddie, you recently obtained some information from what's known as the International Tracing Service archive that materials were recently opened up to the museum to be available to them. Tell us what you learned fairly recently.

Among-- my voice, I'm sorry. Among-- I have Bell's palsy. And that makes it difficult for me to speak. I work out in International Tracing Service. And one of the things I did on one occasion was to assemble lists-- excuse me-- simple

self.

Take your time. We're good.

And I was actually assembling this deportation list from Vienna, which were all very meticulously typed out. And as I was going down the list alphabetically, I came to my name. And I saw my-- oh, thanks.

Thank you.

--the name of my father, my mother, my uncle, his wife, my cousin-- the one that you saw standing behind me on a bike-- all the deportation notices. My family was being deported to Minsk. Yeah. I knew what happens when they get there. As soon as they go to Minsk, they're taken by truck to a place called Trostenets, which is about seven miles north of Minsk. And there, as soon as they arrive, they have these big trenches and they're already dug. And they shoot everybody and throw them in the trenches. And I knew that this is what happened to my family.

And up until that point, you did not know what had happened to them exactly.

I didn't know the detail. I knew they didn't survive. But I didn't know exactly what happened.

I'm going to ask you just one more question because I know it's probably a good time for us to stop. I know that talking about your parents is just so difficult for you. But you've told me about the influence your father had on you, that the self-confidence that you've had throughout your life comes from your dad. And I'll just preface it by saying that the very first time I met Freddie in his house, he showed me a room that he'd built-- I mean, completely built the wiring, the interior work, everything. And he said, my dad taught me all this. And so just say a little bit about that.

He taught me how to make the best of life and how to be able to do things. Now, he didn't do any of these things. But I used to-- I built a swimming pool, a in-ground swimming pool. I used to rebuild car engines. And I don't know where that I got the confidence. I think it was just to fit it here. I jumped in and do these things. But somehow, I managed to do them.

And I've always liked building. So I built rooms in the house. But then afterwards, this big addition, it's not right to say I built everything. I had a contractor do what they called a shell construction. So he built the shell, and the foundations, and all that-- and the roof. But inside, I did everything else-- the insulation, drywall, the electrical, and all that. And it looks pretty good.

Well, everything I saw was your handiwork. Of course, after serving in the British Army, you would return to Israel again. And you would join the Israeli Merchant Marine as a sealer.

While I was in Israel, I decided, I wanted to live there. I didn't know what could I do. I didn't speak the language, didn't have a profession, didn't have any money. And I happened, by chance, to meet somebody who seemed to be having the time of his life. And he was in the Merchant Navy. So I said, this is it. This is it. So I went to Haifa to the shipping office. And I said to them, if I graduate from Merchant Marine--