

## **Summary of Oral History: John Wood**

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**This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [03/2022]**

John Wood discusses his father, Leonard Berney (deceased), who was the first British officer to liberate Bergen-Belsen. Wood describes: his father being there on the first day of liberation; his encountering the horrors of many dead and skeletal survivors who had no food or water for days; an enormous German barracks that they converted to a hospital; working out the complications involved in repatriating survivors; his father not talking about his experiences until Wood was about fifteen; his father then speaking extensively in lectures and documentary films, including one titled "Night Will Fall" and another titled "No Asylum" (about Ann Frank, who died in Belsen), and authoring a book titled "Liberating Belsen"; his father being born in 1920 to well to do parents; receiving an officer commission just before the war; his decision to speak publicly being a response to Holocaust deniers; being reluctant to develop postwar relationships with Belsen survivors; having to triage Belsen survivors, leaving some to die; participating in the Belsen trials where he testified that even as inmates were starving, the Germans hoarded large stores of food. [N.B. Interview stops abruptly, mid-sentence.]