

Return to London

Title 24

Crossing the North Atlantic during World War I and II, meant either a voyage in convoy at the speed of the slowest ship, or in a very fast ship, zig-zagging all the way. Our voyage to Canada was fast, the return slow and fortunately uneventful, being first escorted by Canadian destroyers and later by flying boats of the RAF. In order to earn a little pocket money for cigarettes, I joined the crew of the *SS Thysville* as 'Volunteer Cabin Steward' from 17 December 1940 to 11 January 1941, a total of 25 days. The Master, E.H. Powell certified: "Conduct: Very Good—Ability: Very Good."

As some internees had preferred to remain on the American side of the Atlantic, those of us who braved the attack of German U-boats, were at first envious of our American friends. England in January 1941 was certainly not a very welcoming choice for anyone's future. Fuel and food were severely rationed, a universal black-out was in force and the *Luftwaffe* had resumed its air attacks on London with nightly air raids. It was particularly sad for me, as only then did I learn the full details of my father's death.

I had a girl friend, Sue Donahue, who had written me a few letters during internment, and who lived in London's Portland Place where her American Dentist father had a large house. She was of Irish descent and a Roman Catholic, so I never considered marriage, although we were both very fond of each other. She was studying medicine and as her chemistry knowledge was rather weak, I coached her twice a week in the evening and was often asked to stay for supper.

Later, when the war continued to look bad for England and after her father had died, she returned to the USA, where she medically qualified and took up a successful career as a pathologist. At the time of my return from internment, she was my 'nearest and dearest'. Sue and I remained good friends during our lives, we wrote letters from time to time, and whenever I was in the USA, I visited her at her Staten Island home near New York. When she died in 1975, she kindly remembered me in her will and this allowed me to print and publish the first anthology of my Editorials *Interdisciplinary Thoughts I* in 1986.

I had of course other friends apart from Sue, some were my father's, others my own. They all took pity on me, something I did not like, as I was determined, now that I was fully qualified as a Ph D in chemistry, to make my own way and earn my living. The only ones who really helped were George and Marie-Thé Wassermann, refugees from Berlin who had been patients of my father's. He was the son of the well-known Berlin Banker and as such well-connected internationally.