

JOHANNES HAMMANN

Born 09/24/33 in Brandenburg (?) Germany. Parents Walter (b.1904) and Ortelia (Plaunover—b. 1902). Father baptized into Jehovah's Witnesses 1923 after being a Protestant. He felt strongly about spreading the word of the Bible and about the Kingdom of Hope. Father taken by Germans from his workplace ~1937 and sent to a political prison in Dusseldorf for having forbidden meetings of Witnesses' Bible students. Initially sentenced to 2 ¼ years but refused to accept the Nazi government. Sent to work camps in Amslandmore, Walsum and Nyselstrom and a penitentiary in Lingen. He remained sincere in his beliefs despite beatings by SS guards. Eventually sent to Sachsenhausen with his brother in law, Dietrich Mindermann who died. Imprisoned with other Witnesses who were considered "dangerous." One Witness, August Dickman, shot in front of others as an example to urge others to renounce faith. None did. Father's older brother, Otto there as well. Put on death march near end of the war to Schwerlin with 230 other Witnesses. SS guards initially fled but later returned and shot a number of prisoners. Prisoners forced to pull wagon load of jewels and gold teeth. In the meantime, Hamann's mother remained free. Johannes was sent by his mother to an aunt in Bavaria and his brother to another Witness. Johannes was selected by Nazis to become a Hitler Youth because of his Aryan appearance but his mother came and got him. Mother, brother and Johannes went to Thuringia which later was in E. Germany. Father went to Weisserbackland in W. Germany and rest of family had to sneak across the border between the 2 Germanies. Father's other brother, Hans died in Sachsenhausen while Otto was later arrested by the E. Germans and imprisoned for 10 years for religious activities. Johannes spent several years as a full time Witness missionary while father served as a circuit overseer forming new congregations.