

Transcribed by **Mary Lou Iandoli**

TITLE- Sieglinde Klose

DATE- December 12, 1992

SOURCE- JW

SOUND- Clear; excellent

IMAGE- Clear; in color

DURATION- 1 hour 50 minutes; only 1 tape

LANGUAGE- English with German accent

NOTES- Mrs. Klose is a Jehovah's Witness who currently resides in Arlington, Virginia. Her explanations can be confusing and roundabout at times.

1:00 Sieglinde Klose was born in 1915. She had one brother and two sisters. Her parents were Hans and Clara Fisher of Berlin and Leipzig, respectively. Her father was born in 1888, and her mother was born in 1885. Her father worked in car factories and was very interested in engineering and the automobile. He also ran a driving school in Berlin.

2:19 Education was very important in the Fisher family, and Mr. Fisher stressed learning of history, geography, languages, poetry, etc. They lived in a Lutheran neighborhood, but they had no religion. Mr. Fisher left the Church because he was disappointed. The children were told they could decide upon their own religion. Politically, after World War I, Sieglinde's father was very right wing. He was very nationalistic and spoke of the "great German race".

5:18 Sieglinde grew up in Berlin. She was very broad-minded and curious. She finished a very strict and demanding high school in Berlin at age 16. She continued her education by attending business school for two years.

6:35 At the end of the 20's, there was unrest in Europe. There were political upheavals in Berlin. When the Nazis got strong in 1930, Sieglinde's father joined the party. He was an early member so he had special status. These early members were known as "old party members". At the time, Berlin and Hamburg had a lot of Socialists and Communists. Thus, Sieglinde and her sisters were often taunted by the Communists as "Nazi girls".

9:02 At this time, there was also high unemployment, scarce food, homeless families. Thus, Hitler earned many followers because people were desperate. There were battles in the streets between the Reds (Communists and Socialists) and the Rights (Nazis and German Nationals) that involved knives and rocks and sticks. There were many wounded SA men.

11:15 At age 14, Sieglinde chose to join the Prussian Evangelical Church, otherwise known as the Lutheran Church.

11:37 In 1933, she graduated business school. Hitler was gaining more power as he spoke at assemblies in the Sports Palace. Her father would tell her that Hitler was the savior and would solve all their problems. While Sieglinde looked for a job, she found that there were very few available. The only way she got a job was through her father's connections.

14:52 Sieglinde was hired by Dr. Putzi Hanschtinger (ph), who became Hitler's Foreign Press Chief. [She shows a picture of him.] Hanschtinger (ph) was not

a party member in the beginning. He was introduced to Hitler by an American diplomat in Munich. He helped Hitler when he was arrested by hiding him and giving him money. It was from here in Munich that Hitler started and spread his Nazi movement.

18:25 Sieglinde was never a party member. When she was interviewed by Hanschtinger (ph), he did not ask her if she belonged to the party. He only asked her religion. He treated her very well and protected her.

19:54 By 1933, Germany was cut off from the rest of the world. Her job allowed her to keep correspondence with foreign countries. Thus, she learned about the world's view of Germany and the Nazis. [She corresponded with an American, Knickerbocker, and with AP writers.]

21:03 Dr. Hanschtinger (ph) was Harvard educated and had many connections to important people in the U.S. and England. He was shocked when he found out that Hitler had purged his party by arresting and murdering close party members. He realized that Hitler was not to be trusted.

23:33 Sieglinde never met Hitler. He had banned labor unions, arrested political people, and dissolved all other parties to give himself total power. This made her uneasy. He became a dictator so soon and no one could oppose him.

26:10 The newspapers were full of propaganda. The "DNA" gave the same information to all the newspapers so that there was little variation. There was no way for the German people to hear the other side. Sieglinde learned things through her work by reading letters from foreign correspondence and when her boss dictated letters to her. Hitler held a luncheon everyday that only privileged people in the party could attend. Sieglinde's boss eventually lost her invitation because he brought news from the outside world to the luncheons. He would question Hitler looking for explanations from what he heard from foreigners. Hitler was "insulated" to a certain degree, and he did not want to hear others opinions. He talked down to anyone that questioned him.

29:52 By 1933, mail to the outside world began to be censored and opened. The outside world, however, learned about the concentration camps before Germany. Within 3 to 4 months, Sieglinde knew they were on "a course of disaster", and she did not know how it would end.

31:35 Between 1933-34, Sieglinde ignored much of what was going on around her, as many Germans did. She wanted to enjoy life and political activities around her.

35:20 At the Olympics in 1936, Hitler snubbed Jesse Owens, a multi-medal winner, by not shaking his hand or acknowledging him because he was black. Hitler was a racist, and this bothered Sieglinde. She stopped going to see The Games because fo this. After the Olympics, many things changed. Dr. Hanschtinger (ph) was no longer admitted to Hitler's luncheons. There were budget cuts that made things even more difficult. In February, 1937, Sieglinde's boss was summoned by Captain Vedamine (ph). When he returned from his meeting, he sensed something bad was going to happen and told Sieglinde to be careful.

39:47 Soon after that meeting, Dr. Hanschtinger (ph) was sent out of the country. The pilot of his plane had a letter that, after leaving Germany, he was to read the instructions. It told him to take Hasnchtinger to Spain where

there was a civil war going on. (Later, Sieglinde found out that Spain was to be the testing ground for WWII). If Hanschtinger had been taken there and parachuted, he would have been recognized and killed. Thus, Hitler would not have to do it. Fortunately, the plane malfunctioned and it landed before reaching Spain. He was able to escape on a train to Switzerland and, ultimately, to England. Hitler kept Hanschtinger's office open for a while so that his presumed death in Spain would look like an accident. A few months later, the office was closed, and Sieglinde had to look for a new job. The Secret Police would follow her from then on.

44:25 Later in 1937, she met her old boss in England. She told him about the things that were happening and told him never to come back to Germany.

46:34 In 1938, Sieglinde went to Prague. Upon her return, she was interrogated by the secret service. They wanted to know if she had been in touch with Hanschtinger. She denied that she ever was, and they told her that he would be arrested if he ever returned to Germany.

49:20 In 1936, they had a supposed vote. She avoided it because she did not support Hitler in any way. She proudly says that she never gave him her vote or support. She learned quickly that she could not trust anyone with her views. She had to test people before saying anything.

51:55 In 1938, the Gestapo removed the Jews. On September 1, 1939, Hitler spoke and announced the invasion of Poland. Sieglinde was saddened. She had had an idea that something was happening since her boyfriend, a Naval officer, was instructed not to leave his station.

56:52 Sieglinde's father's support of Hitler bothered her. She could not bring herself to say, "Hail, Hitler". She heard on the radio that 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested for refusing to salute Hitler. They were put into concentration camps. She was inspired by their courage and became curious about their group.

62:14 Sieglinde's father disowned her and told her that if she expressed her views again, he would send her to be politically educated in a concentration camp. People like her father were said to be "200% Nazi". She would listen to the radio to see how the war was going. However, she knew to always turn the dial back to the Berlin station. This was because the police would check household radios, and if they found that they had been listening to the news, there was capital punishment. There were spies everywhere.

65:50 In 1942, Sieglinde went to rejoin the Church so that she could get married in the Church. She was shocked to see that the priest wore a swastika. She asked him if there would ever be religious freedom under Hitler. He would not answer her directly. She was sad to see that the Churches had turned to support Hitler.

70:00 Sieglinde got married to the Naval officer. The military was to be neutral - they could not vote, etc. Her husband was fighting for Hitler, but he allowed Sieglinde to express her opinions against him.

72:35 She had a baby boy in 1943. Berlin was already evacuated. There was a conscription to work, so she had to report to the labor office at all times.

She had a choice to work for the local fire department or in a firearms factory. She chose the fire department so that she would not give anything towards the war or Hitler.

74:20 Even when the Allies were winning, the German fighters did not give up because they had nothing else to do but fight. When the Yalta Conference divided Germany into blocks, Sieglinde was unfortunately on the wrong side - the east side. They took the brunt of the Russian anger.

76:29 With the help of a British soldier, Sieglinde and her sister escaped with their babies across the demarkation line via the POW train. No Germans were supposed to get on this train, but she faked it by speaking English.

81:54 When they crossed into British soil, Sieglinde told the British officer that they were German. He was shocked, but he asked her to tell him about the conditions where she had been. She told him that there were waves of suicides.

84:24 They reached Hamburg where she found her husband. They started their lives over in the aftermath of the war. In 1948, a Jehovah's Witness came to her door, and she became interested in their spiritual ideas. She learned of hope and courage, and she began to attend their meetings.

88:50 Sieglinde joined them because of two things: they did not teach belief of the Trinity (this was illogical to her), and they taught that her dead mother would be resurrected and Sieglinde would see her again.

92:15 Sieglinde used to think that death was a punishment from God. Jehovah's Witnesses taught her that death was an inevitable end to life. She speaks of a brother named Kuklida (ph) that had been at Auschwitz for 9 years, and then, when the Communists banned Jehovah's Witnesses in 1950, he was imprisoned for two and a half more years. She also mentions Annette Rubinose (ph) who was also at Auschwitz. This woman told Sieglinde stories of their work in the fields there.

99:03 Her husband never became a JW because he was still involved in the military. Her father respected her decision to become a JW, and he agreed that the JW were unjustly persecuted because they posed no threat to government, etc. Sieglinde appreciated her father's respect and believes that a person's free will must always be respected.

101:00 Her son, Hans Henning Klose is a "pioneer", a full-time JW minister.

At this point, Sieglinde shows numerous photos.

108:19 Sieglinde Klose is happy that the museum is underway. She is pleased that everyone will now have one place to get all the information they want about the Holocaust.

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