

-TITLE-CHARLOTTE MUELLER  
-I\_DATE-JULY 20, 1991  
-SOURCE-JEHOVAH WITNESS  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-  
-DURATION-  
-LANGUAGES-  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

Charlotte Mueller was born September 25, 1912 in Siebenlehn (E. Germany ). Both parents were born in same area. her father was a metallurgical engineer. She was the second oldest in her family of origin, having one older sister, three younger sisters, and one younger brother. She had an elementary education, followed eventually by three yrs of vocational education, where she learned shorthand., as did her sister. The Watchtower issues were use as exercise books.

.06 Both parents became J.W.'s in 1925. At that time there was no special J.W.'s education available for children. However she saw a "photo drama" of the creation (a black and white silent "movie", i.e. sideshow) made for J.W.'s

.08 Her parents prior religious origin was Protestant (Evangelisch); but they did not attend service. Charlotte characterizes her father as Free thinker, in search of the Truth. When he had found it, he talked to family and friends about same. Her father did not serve during WWI.

.10 Asked about the community in 1933, Charlotte responds that it was a very exciting period, with many political movements: communism, socialism, and other radical groups, especially in Chemnitz, which for a long time had been a center for political movements. She states that as a young person she was very observant of social and historical trends.

.12 There were J.W.'s communities in Chemnitz. Dresden and Leipzig. The J.W.'s Yearbook of 1974 lists many people she knew.

.14 Asked about J.W.'s apprehension re Hitler's ascent to power, she responds affirmatively. She knew that the unions, operating in the factory where she was employed, were taken over by the German Arbeitsfront, an organization which was part of the NSB. She was urged to join the Arbeitsfront; she refused.

.17 In 1943 J.W.'s were banned. Some J.W.'s immediately lost their jobs. However, in Maagdenburg, headquarters of the J.W.'s the legal department was effective in helping J.W.s.

.18 She was arrested in August 1936 by the Gestapo for copying and distributing the Watchtower. She had met the man, who arrested her one year earlier. he had pretended to be a J.W. She had always been suspicious of him.

.23 She shows a photograph of her J.W.'s partner in Bible teaching. In 1936 a J.W.'s Congress was scheduled to take place in Brussels, but in the event it did not. instead she and her partner spent some time in a pioneer house in Utrecht, a residence for J.W.'s There they asked for facilitation in sending her and her partner to a Congress in Luzern. The J.W.'s did send visas for her and her partner, but their visas were mixed up. Gestapo took away her passport. She was keenly aware that something had gone awry.

.27 Immediately upon her arrest in August 1936 she was imprisoned. Twenty three J.W.'s brothers and one J.W. sister were arrested at the same time. A trial ensued for all of them. She did not consider the trial to be fair. The men were interrogated first. All of them received a five year sentence (maximum); She received a two year sentence. She considered the sentence wrong, because she had affirmed the Truth. The sentence actually helped her to be even more determined to stand for the truth.

.33 Had she noticed arrest of Jews or Gypsies in 1936 or 1937?  
No, only later on did she become aware of their arrests.

.34 She was imprisoned in the city of Gottbus (spelling ??). From there she was sent to perform agricultural labor. She was part of a work commando of 15 people. Of theses 50% were criminal prisoners. It was quickly observed that the behavior on the part of the J.W.'s was different, with the result that the farmers, for who they worked, treated them well and gave them extra food.

.37 Her prison sentence was up 8/23/38. However, upon leaving the prison, she was immediately picked up by the Gestapo, who took her back to Chemnitz for another hearing, at which a new Gestapo officer presided, but her original hearing officer was present as well. The latter stated out loud that he was sure that she had not changed her attitude. She thought that he was quite right; her attitude and belief had not changed.

.40 Interviewer asked whether there weren't any German laws to protect citizens? Charlotte's answer: The German Nazis had their laws, which viewed J.W.'s as worse than Communists.

.41 She was given a new Commissar for the interrogation. He asked her to sign a document renouncing her faith. Upon her refusal he became outraged, and grabbed her, dragged her up to another floor, where sh was placed on a chair. She thought at that moment that it was the electric chair, but it was used to take a picture of her.

.45 Question: How could she be treated that way> Answer:  
Because he was unable to make her change her mind.

.47 in September 1938 she started serving her second sentence (length of sentence either was not reported, or I failed to catch it.) In the concentration camp of Lichtenberg. Treatment there was tolerable. She was able to wear her own clothes. There were no work assignments. Prisoners could receive packages.

.50 She was moved from Lichtenberg to Ravensbruck in May 1939. There prisoners did have work assignments. When she and two other J.W.'s refused in putting up decorations to celebrate Hitler's birthday, they were placed in punishment cells, where they were to remain for three weeks. Punishment cells were totally dark. They were given one slice of dark bread and coffee every three days. Every 4th day the prisoners were taken outside for 15 minutes. (It is to be noted that the interviewee's facial expressions on reporting those three weeks reflect a still very vivid agony.)

.52 She was taken out of her punishment cell two hours earlier than the other two J.W.s. When she was being moved to the regular part of the concentration camp, she saw her own (blood) sister, who was also an inmate. The woman guard in charge deliberately separated the two sisters. Charlotte was sent to the block housing elderly woman.

.53 Asked about her feelings on seeing her own sister. Charlotte responds that she experienced feelings of joy, because she and her sister were united in the Truth. She and her sister had the same disposition: they were fighters.

.54 As the first one up from the dark punishment cell, (her cell had been needed for another prisoner), the guard told her that she would have to "pay" for this. Charlotte stated that she was actually glad, because this meant that her enemy had given her warning.

.56 At the time of her arrival in Ravensbruck, she noticed that the first block was filled with political prisoners. The second block was reserved for J.W.'s. At the time of her arrival she was the youngest of the J.W.'s. Charlotte returns to the statement that she and her natural sister were separated by the guard.

.58 Work assignments: They had to knit for the German soldiers and other services. When they refused they were deprived of food. One of their standard refusals was that of giving blood, to be used for blood transfusions for soldiers. All these constituted questions of conscience, and they had to figure out what kind of compromises to make with their consciences.

1.00 Did their bodies change without proper food? Yes they lost lots of weight, so that most looked like skeletons with skin. She herself kept a lot of energy, and was thus able to help other

J.W.'s who were not as strong.

1.03 The J.W.'s were mutually supportive and well organized. They insisted on discipline and cleanliness. One day they were commanded to wash the German flag. Charlotte refused. This led to severe punishment. She was removed to the "punishment" barrack, where she was to remain for one full year. The atmosphere in the barrack was very bad. It was primarily filled with criminals. It was there, also, that she met Jews for the first time.

1.05 How did she survive? She felt sustained by her faith. She refused to give in. Eventually she managed to obtain copies of the Watchtower. Among her barracks mates was one elderly J.W. Eventually she was asked to organize this terrible barrack; she managed to impose discipline and have the barracks cleaned. She also managed to get inmates to attend to the ill.

1.10 The usual term for the punishment barrack was three months, but she was left there for a full year. In 1942 a general relaxation of the rules stated.

1.11 When released from the punishment barracks she was given a new work assignment. She became housekeeper in the household of the SS officer in charge of food provisions for the whole camp. In the camp he was a tough guy. However, at home he was fair, and there were general orders not to be so mean any more to the J.W.'s. During the remaining years, she was quite well treated, receiving extra food and clothing.

1.13 At the end of the war, when the Allied bombing increased, she was forced to flee with the family she had been serving. She was warned that if she tried to escape, she would be shot. During the flight from the camp, the SS officer changed into a Red Cross uniform. However, the Americans arrested the SS officer at 1.17 Neuenstadt. He had asked Charlotte to stay with his wife and children. Charlotte realized that she had no further obligation to them. She saw her chance to get away. She was almost arrested by the American, who first thought that she was cooperating with the SS. On leaving the SS family behind, she escaped into a little town. There she met up with two male J.W.'s, who told her about the Death march out of Sachsenhausen to Schwerin. The three together walked (25 km) to Schwerin.

1.21 She was able to travel by train (riding on the roof of one of the cars) from Schwerin to Chemnitz. In 1945 Brother Francke (sp?) had taken over J.W.'s leadership in West Germany.

1.23 Back in Chemnitz, she found that her parental home had been leveled by bombardments. She had some sense of where the house was supposed to be, and she recognized shambles of what had been a garden shed. There she was reunited with her mother and her sister.

1.25 Asked about her emotions of the reunion, Charlotte's response is that those are indescribable. Her sister, who had been imprisoned, had been released from the camp in 1942. Due to her own and sister's ware time imprisonments, they were provided with some minimal "housing": essentially a shed, with straw mattresses: "not so different from the concentration camp."

1.28 Both her father and her oldest sister had been imprisoned in 1936. Both were freed in 1942, i.e. the entire family survived.

1.30 What is her response to the claim that the Holocaust was an exaggeration? Charlotte's response is a vehement NO> Young people must learn of the persecutions of the Christians (as Jesus Christ was persecuted). They must learn of the abrogation of religious and political freedom, must learn the under Hitler's regime the suppression of freedom was worst.

Post War She was determined to remain an active J.W. in the spring of 1946 she moved to Maagenburg, where she was to remain until 1951, actively engaging in J.W. activities. In 1951 J.W. were banned in East Germany. The government tried to provoke the J.W.'s, gardens. Life for the J.W.'s became increasingly difficult. Some J.W.'s moved to Berlin, others to West Germany. Male J.W.'s were arrested, female J.W.s were sent away from the J.W.'s community in which they had lived.

1.35 As soon as Charlotte had been forced to leave the J.W.'s community in Maagdenburg. She became very active again: She acted as a courier, carrying J.W.'s literature from Berlin to East Germany.

Having thus "courted" arrest, she was indeed arrested as a railway station, while she and male J.W. were working together. At the trial the presiding judge told her that she had served 9 yrs against the War, but that now she was opposed to peace, and sentenced her to a term of 8 yrs in prison.

1.36 She was imprisoned in Waldheim, and subsequently in Halle. Her work assignment consisted of sewing, i.e. sewing buttons on uniforms for East Germans. Those who refused were sent to "special arrest". She explained that she was not refusing work, but only refusing to work on uniforms.

1.40 Her first woman guard helped the J.W.s, by providing a Bible and handing out extra food rations. Copies of the Watchtower were smuggled into prison via packages mailed to her by her father.

1.43 Another prison guard asked her for explanations of the J.W.'s faith. After Stalin's death the guards were told to treat the J.W.'s well.

1.45 The interviewer at t his point asks Charlotte, why her eyes are still "sparkling." (Please note that this interviewee throughout the entire interview manifests a quite remarkable vivacity, remaining level-headed, conveying a sense of optimism, conveying intensity of belief.) Charlotte responds that once having learned the Truth, she never found any reason to not believe in the Truth. She makes an eloquent speech for J.W.'s belief.

1.50 She served total of 6 yrs in East German and Russian prisons, (not specified), instead of 8 yrs. She was released two yrs early due to serious illness (not specified).

The last 7-10 minutes of t his interview are devoted to the display of many documents, and newspaper clippings. Unfortunately explanation of these cannot be heard, the audio part of the tape failing.

The tape then shows a number of people (women) who appear to the Charlotte's relatives and or J.W.'s colleagues.  
.END.