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My name is Robert K. Wagemann. I was born in Mannheim, Germany, in 1937, May 23rd. I live now in the United States in Fairfield, New Jersey, since 1963. My father, since he was completely neutral as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he did not vote for Hitler and did not take up arms. During the time when Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted in Germany, we had many times resolutions put before the people that the Nazi regime would not last but only God's Kingdom.

And my mom was also involved in that by distributing leaflets or resolutions. So my mom was – found herself once incarcerated when she was carrying me, due to her activities. And she was incarcerated in Mannheim, in the police building, in a roof chamber without water and without food. And only due to amnesty—it was, I believe, a birthday of Hitler—non-criminals were released. And so, therefore, since she was almost ready to give birth, she also received the amnesty and was released.

So a few days later she gave birth. And due to the fact that we had only a midwife and not the proper care, it was a breech birth, and my hip was destroyed during the process. And so now I had two strikes against me: being a son born to Witnesses and also having a defect. My mom and I were summoned to a part of the university clinic in Heidelberg in **Schriesheim**. There I was examined. And during the examination, my mom was sitting on the outside of the room. And she overheard the conversation that the doctors would do away with me, *abspritz* me, which means that they would give me a needle and put me to sleep.

My mom overheard the conversation and during lunchtime while the doctors were gone, she grabbed hold of me. We went down to the **Neckar** River into the high reeds, and there she put my clothes on. And from there on, we really went into hiding because now we knew that they really were after us. So we went to my father's father's house where we also stood *[sic]* until I started school.

And starting school was another encounter because the first day of school was like we were ordered to assemble in front of the schoolhouse and then singing. We were supposed to sing the national anthem and give the Hitler *gruß* or Hitler salute. And of course we—my parents, myself—we didn't do that. My mom and my father always taught me salvation only comes from our creator Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, and we never put trust in any man. So, naturally, I did not do the Hitler salute, nor did I sing the national anthem.

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And it was a small school. There must have been maybe 500 youngsters, and I was the only one not saluting and singing the national anthem, so immediately it was noticed. "Oh, Wagemann there, what's going on with him? Why isn't he doing like the rest is *[sic]* doing?"

“Oh, don’t you know they’re different. They’re Witnesses” or in those days they called them *Bibelforscher*, you know, like Bible Students. And, well, the next day the priest in the party uniform came, so did the mayor, and the policemen, and I forgot who else, and they wanted to pick me up. And when I remember back, standing in the courtyard in front of the school and not singing that national anthem and not giving the Hitler salute. And I could not do it because for the simple reason I said to myself, ‘What if Jehovah God and Jesus Christ look upon me now and I would do that? How would he feel?’ And so that gave me strength enough to stand up for what I was doing.

We also had a block ward in our city block, which is a person which belonged to the party, and he knew what was going on in this block. He knew if there were homosexuals, or gypsies, or any other undesirables. And we were, under the Hitler regime, the undesirables. But one other thing I have seen in those days—now it stands out vividly—we only had two religions in that little town: the Protestant and the Catholics. And here this priest comes in a party uniform, and he also went onto the pulpit and said, “To die for the Fatherland is a holy thing,” and recruited the youngsters right there in church.

And on one occasion my father took me bicycling on his bicycle, and we drove by a little Catholic church. It was on a Sunday morning, and there were all the weapons laying in front of the church. And people were standing around, and the Catholic priest was blessing the weapons.

In those days, yes, there were carried on meetings. But as a youngster, I did not realize that these were meetings. Of course, it was nice that once my father came home once in awhile, he took us then on Sunday out for bicycle tours. Little did I know that these were prearranged meetings where we met other Witnesses in the woods, and it was like a picnic. So they had something to eat and also something to read.

And brothers were stationed further apart, and if someone would come, they would whistle a song. And the literature would disappear under the covers, under where they were sitting, and so they were having a picnic. And once the people were gone again, they continued having their *Watchtower*. And those meetings, as time went on, became smaller and smaller and smaller, and why? Because many were arrested or even find themselves beheaded or otherwise destroyed.

I do not want to make myself look like a hero or of great importance. This is not what I want. What I would like to say is ... if we don’t get to know our Creator ... *[wiping tears from eyes]*

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What I would like to say is if we do not get to know our Creator, how will he ever get to know us? He has promised us life. Get a good understanding of what your Creator wants from you. Get to know him better that you can serve him, that you will receive the reward, which he has promised. May you always rely upon him because he’s the only source which will be able to help you.

We have to remember that this piece of history is one of the bloodiest pages in the book of history. And it should be made known to everyone who needs to know about it and especially to those who say, “Oh, how can such a thing happen?” or to such people who say it never happened. By having this brought into daylight and as a memorial, it is in front of our eyes of the human race.

And as long as this system exists like we have today where we have so much strife and unrighteousness and so on, we need to know about it in order that we remember, that it may never happen like this again. And only when we can talk to each other and say ‘Brother’ or ‘Sister’, maybe then we can look behind this and leave these things alone. But for now we need to know about it so that it may never happen again.

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