

[0:00:00]

Robert Buckley: Today is November the 22nd, 1997. We're in Mastic, New York. And we're interviewing Mr. Albert. Would you please tell us your full name and where you were born and when?

Johann Albert: My full name is Johann Albert, but I generally use the short form Hans Albert. I was born in Kirchenlamitz, which is in Oberfranken. That means in the northern part of Germany—Bavaria, actually. And what was the next question?

Robert Buckley: And when were you born?

Johann Albert: November 14, 1914.

Robert Buckley: What was the biggest town that you were near? What was the biggest city?

Johann Albert: The biggest city was Hof, north of my city.

Robert Buckley: North of your city.

Johann Albert: Hof they call it.

Robert Buckley: Yeah. And what was the name of your mother and father?

Johann Albert: My father's name was Elias Albert, my mother's name Margaret Albert.

Robert Buckley: And how many brothers and sisters did you have and would you please tell us –

Johann Albert: I had one brother and one sister.

Robert Buckley: And could you tell us their names?

Johann Albert: Well, my brother's name was Fritz Albert. He was killed in Russia. My sister's name Elizabeth Albert. She died already.

Robert Buckley: Were they older than you or younger?

Johann Albert: I was the oldest.

Robert Buckley: What type of work did your father do in Germany?

Johann Albert: He was a stonemason.

Robert Buckley: Did he work on some of the public buildings?

Johann Albert: He worked on like gravestones, stairways, things like that.

Robert Buckley: Very good. And your mother? Did she do any type of work outside the home?

Johann Albert: Yeah, she worked outside the home. She helped some farmers.

Robert Buckley: Now, what was your religious background when you were growing up?

Johann Albert: I was born and raised as Lutheran.

Robert Buckley: Was your family very religious?

Johann Albert: Yes, my parents were very religious—Lutherans also.

Robert Buckley: Did your father – did he fight in the First World War?

Johann Albert: Well, he was – he served in a hospital.

Robert Buckley: OK. When you were growing up, your educational background, what was it? And what were your interests, your hobbies?

Johann Albert: Well, I went to school at age 6 years old until 13 years old, the regular school. And then we had – I go into high school. That was three years ending school. That's all.

Robert Buckley: And what was your interest in school? What particular areas of study did you enjoy?

Johann Albert: Well, I liked music for a while. I learned how to play the violin. And during the war, my violin was destroyed, so I couldn't use it anymore. I liked all kind of literature. I did read a lot. And I was interested in ancient culture and religion and scientific advancements.

Robert Buckley: What was it like during the Depression in Germany?

Johann Albert: It was very bad because after the First World War, the Allied forces tried to bring Germany back into agricultural state. It was an industrial state, so they could not support themselves. They had to import things in order to keep living. And that actually paved the way for Hitler to come to power. So they made a big mistake by

doing this, and that's why the Second World War started out, and Hitler took advantage of that.

Robert Buckley: What was it like in Germany when Hitler came to power? Do you remember in 1933? What was it like?

Johann Albert: That's right.

[0:05:00]

Robert Buckley: What was it like?

Johann Albert: Even before that, a couple of years before that, my father told me when Hitler will come to power, it will result in a police state. He told me that. He never liked Hitler anyway. My whole family didn't like him.

Robert Buckley: Now, you were from the northern part of Germany?

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: That's where most of the Protestants are from, right?

Johann Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And Hitler was from Bavaria from the Catholic South?

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: And when Hitler took over, do you remember what your father said or what the thinking was of the people in your community in '33?

Johann Albert: My father said: "When he comes to power, he will not last." He said: "This kind of a regime that he introduces is no good. Either I will experience the end of him or you will." And he surely experienced his end.

Robert Buckley: What did you begin to notice in Germany after Hitler took over? I've read where they began to take away the freedoms of people.

Johann Albert: Well, sure enough, he used various means to keep at least one family member into one of his party memberships. He created the SR, the SS, the Hitler young parties. And even the girls were invited some of his party organizations.

Robert Buckley: So this was part of his plan?

Johann Albert: That was his plan in order to keep the people under his control.

Robert Buckley: Is it true that you weren't even allowed to listen to the BBC, you know, outside information after he took over, in your particular area?

Johann Albert: Well, what he tried to do is to get rid of all opposition. That's what he tried to do. So, first of all, he put the political leaders in concentration camps: the Communist leaders, the Socialist leaders. And then after that, the Jewish people and also Jehovah's Witnesses.

Robert Buckley: So you heard about this then?

Johann Albert: I heard about this. But we never heard what was going on in the concentration camps. We never heard that.

Robert Buckley: But you heard they were being put into camps.

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: Did you know any Jewish people, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or some of the Gypsies perhaps in your area?

Johann Albert: Well, in my area in my small hometown there was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses and also in the surrounding cities not one. And only then after the war or during the wartime when the Russian army advanced to Germany, so people that were from East Prussia, East Germany, they run away from the Russian armies and came into Germany, and they were these so-called "refugees". And some of them came to our hometown, but they didn't go from house to house, fear of man, and even one of my colleagues. That was after the war.

Robert Buckley: Oh, after the war.

Johann Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: OK. Well, maybe we'll talk about that a little bit later.

Johann Albert: Later, right.

Robert Buckley: OK. We'll go back now to that period from 1933 to 1938. As Hitler gained more and more control, he set up his headquarters in Berlin, right?

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: Right. What began to happen in your town as the control of Hitler got tighter and tighter? Did they have a block captain—from what I have read, people who would sort of keep an eye on everybody in the community and so on?

Johann Albert: Yeah, that's the – that happened.

Robert Buckley: Did you know the person in your particular town who was in charge?

Johann Albert: No, I actually did not know.

Robert Buckley: How old were you in 1933 then if you were born in 1914? That would make you about 29? No, no.

Marsha Albert: 24?

Johann Albert: 1924, 1934 ... I was about 24 years old.

[0:10:00]

Robert Buckley: OK. Well, if you were born in 1914 ...

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: ... and Hitler came to power in '33.

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: So 1924, '34. You were 19 years old. Yeah, you were 19 years old. OK, very good. Now, were you involved at all in the Brown Shirts or anything of that nature?

Johann Albert: I belonged to a Christian organization for young Christians. It was connected with the Lutheran Church, but it acted separately. They tried to interpret the Bible according to their understanding. So I belonged to this group. Then when Hitler took over, then all such groups were actually taken over by the *Hitlerjugend*—what they called it there.

Robert Buckley: Now, in the churches when you went to church, did the clergymen encourage the spirit of nationalism, of supporting Hitler? Do you recall?

Johann Albert: Well, in our church, for example—our priest—he allowed that the SR went to the church with their flags and everything around about, all that. He allowed that. That means he supported it.

Robert Buckley: And what did you think of the German Swastika inside?

Johann Albert: Well, this was one thing I never liked. I knew there's something wrong with that church.

Robert Buckley: Was the minister of your particular church, was he a party member?

Johann Albert: I don't think so. I'm not sure, though, but I don't think he was because I talked to him on many occasions. He had every day when I was young, when I went to his school, we had two hours instruction from him. And I was the only one who asked him a lot of questions at that particular time. And then furthermore, when I see the war is coming, the Second World War, I went to him again, and I asked him what should I do now? I said it seems a war is coming, and they'll probably draft me, the enforcers. But I learned from you according to the Ten Commandments, it says "Thou shall not kill." And Jesus said that whoever takes a sword will be killed by the sword. Now explain to me what I should do.

"Well," he said, "you know you have to obey. If you don't, they put you on the wall and—bang—shoot you. And secondly," he said, "even in the scriptures it said that Christians should be obedient to the superior authorities. So you realize that the superior authorities are the governments. You realize that."

But God's Word is different. So, therefore, I said, "You mean I should go to war?"

"Well," he said, "you have to."

Since there were no Witnesses in my hometown, I couldn't ask anybody, so I had to rely on him. He was a very intelligent man. He had a doctor title. He was a doctor of theology and a doctor of philosophy, and he knew Greek very well. He could read Greek. And so I asked him – that was later on after the war, as I'll explain later.

Robert Buckley: Yeah, OK, very good. Now, what was the year that conscription started in Germany?

Johann Albert: 1939.

Robert Buckley: OK, for you it was 1939.

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: Yeah so what did you think? Let's go back to 1938 when Hitler annexed Austria? What went through your mind and what went through your father's mind when Hitler took over Austria?

Johann Albert: I was surprised that he got away with that and not only that. Not only he annexed Austria but also Czechoslovakia because Czechoslovakia, the majority were German people. And he also annexed the _____, which was German before also, so I was surprised that he got away with that.

[0:15:00]

Robert Buckley: So little by little now he was beginning to exercise his power.

Johann Albert: Sure, he did.

Robert Buckley: People were back to work evidently?

Johann Albert: Right. That's right. Everybody got work.

Robert Buckley: Were they building the Autobahn in your area?

Johann Albert: Yes, that's right.

Robert Buckley: Did your father happen to – since he was in that type of work, did he happen to do some of the work on the Autobahn?

Johann Albert: No, not directly on the Autobahn, no.

Robert Buckley: Now, when Hitler invades Poland in 1939, what does your family think and what do the people in your hometown think?

Johann Albert: Well, at that particular time, the people in **Tralley** didn't think much about that was what I noticed.

Robert Buckley: And your father, what all did he have to say?

Johann Albert: Well, like I said before, he never agreed what he did. He knew that Hitler was a violent man. He knew that, so he did not agree at all. Matter of fact, he told me: “What’s the matter with him? Why does he attack Jewish people? They were in the First World War. Now all the sudden he’s against them.” So he criticized everything he did.

Robert Buckley: Oh, is it true that the Jewish people even fought for the Kaiser during the First World War?

Johann Albert: Well, they probably did.

Robert Buckley: OK. Now, when were you conscripted?

Johann Albert: Well, first of all, I was conscripted before the First [*sic*] World War started in 1936 to 1938. I served there for two years in the armed forces—in the air force as a matter of fact, mostly.

Robert Buckley: OK and what type of work did you do in the air force?

Johann Albert: Well, I was in the communication type of work. We laid out lines, and we used the radio, and I had to learn the Morse code, things like that.

Robert Buckley: OK so then your required service was over in '38?

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: Then when were you – then when the war started in Poland, were you called back in?

Johann Albert: I kind of was called back in right away in October '39.

Robert Buckley: And in what part of the German military did you go into?

Johann Albert: At that particular time, the air force.

Robert Buckley: You went into the air force.

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: And we’ll take a look at some of your pictures at the end. I see we have a picture there. What did you do then in 1939, and where did you serve during the war?

Well, in '39 it started out with what is now called Czechoslovakia. Hitler took it over, and so I served there until Hitler invaded then France. So the France military had a big defense line, *militarhault* line they called it, all the big guns against Germany. But Hitler didn't go there. He went around to Netherland. He went through Netherland and attacked the line behind, so that's why he succeeded.

And, first of all, when he started out with the military advancement, he used the most modern weapons of destruction: the most modern airplanes, the most modern tanks, the most modern machine guns because the Allied forces had still the old ones. They acted like *duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh* machine gun. And his new ones *rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*, that fast so everything was advanced. That's why he succeeded.

Robert Buckley: So the other countries hadn't used – hadn't improved their –

Johann Albert: They didn't have these modern weapons.

Robert Buckley: They had weapons from World War I?

Johann Albert: That's it.

Robert Buckley: So then were you sent then to the front in France?

Johann Albert: And from there I was sent to France, and I was in France for two years. And then the situation got worse on the Russian front.

[0:20:00] And so they send some of us back to Germany to be sent either to Russia or to Africa Corps or to Sweden or so. So when we were – at that particular time, I was a sergeant already, and the sergeants do all the work. The officers just sign their name there. So I went to that sergeant there and told him, “Send me to Russia.”

He said, “What?” He said, “Why don’t you go back to France where you came from?”

“Well,” I said, “I’d like to see Russia.” I didn’t tell him why because I knew that sooner or later the Allied forces will invade France and a big war will start there. And I didn’t want to go to Africa because the English and the American U-boats were torpedoing German boats. So I figured out I’d better go to Russia.

And I was interested in that also because before the war, the Russians made a lot of propaganda. They called it Russia the “Red

Paradise,” where people have everything. So I wanted to see that if that was true. And from what I experienced, that was a lie. The people were very poor in Russia. I was in Russia – inside Russia for about 1,300 miles, and so I’d seen a lot in Russia.

I noticed that the German high command send three army corps to Russia: army corps north, army corps middle, army corps south. And that means that was a limited number. So we Germans were actually one German against perhaps 300 Russians. So I realized right away we cannot win that war. It’s impossible.

And furthermore, when I was in Russia the last year of the war approximately, in 1943, my commanding officer told me to shoot a Russian prisoner. That was against my principles. I never harmed anybody. So I told him I don’t shoot unarmed men. I knew to disobey a commanding officer I could be shot by myself, so I took that risk. And for one reason or another, that commanding office, he agreed with me to some extent or he admired my frankness. I never heard anything from him. He never punished me.

Robert Buckley: What was the talk when the German army went up to Stalingrad, the Battle of Stalingrad?

Johann Albert: Yes.

Robert Buckley: What was the attitude among the German troops when they couldn’t take it?

Johann Albert: Many soldiers realized that we will lose the war, including me. I realized that. I’d seen it for myself. And as long as was serv[ing] there on the Russian front—I was there for about two years—I never had a furlough. Some other guys told me, “Why don’t you take a furlough?” Because I could take one every half a year or at least one a year, and I never took one.

I didn’t tell them why. My reason was I take one when I see that the situation’s getting dangerous. Then, I take my furlough. And, sure enough, we had to go back every month about 20 miles, going back, keeping a straight line. And then we came to a position, which was very favorable for the France _____ around it.

[0:25:05] When I seen that, I went to my commanding officer and asked him for a furlough. I told him: “We are in a very good position here. When I come back, you will still be here.” I didn’t believe that. I just told him so. And I was already ready. I had packed my things to go right away in case he changes his mind.

Robert Buckley: So that was 1943 we're talking about.

Johann Albert: This was about 1943.

Robert Buckley: The German army was being pushed back.

Johann Albert: Yeah, we were pushed back slowly. So I got my papers. I went right away back. I sent one of my men. He drove me to the next highway. And there I stopped a truck, big truck, stopped him and sent my man back on 25th West. And there I came to that big river. My wife lived there, *niederrhein fluss*, a huge river over a mile wide. And German police boats patrolled that whole day.

So I went out from that truck and seen that German police boat passing by. So I waved him to pick me up, bring me to the next railroad station. So they brought me there, and they told me in three hours the last train will leave—three hours. In the meantime, they destroyed the railroad tracks so that the Russians couldn't use them.

Robert Buckley: So they also new that the Russians were advancing.

Johann Albert: They were advancing. They knew it, sure.

Robert Buckley: So they knew what was going to happen.

Johann Albert: That's right. They knew it.

Robert Buckley: Now, what was the time of year in 1943 at this time?

Johann Albert: That was during summertime. So I went on that train. It took me six days and nights to come home. And when I come home, I right away put on my big radio and listen to the news on the front. And, sure enough, the place which I left was overrode by Russian tanks. So after my furlough, I came back. I went back and every station, railroad station that is, there were big signs there. Men from this and this company or this or this division have to meet there and there, so I went there. I never seen any man from my company or my division—no more. They were all gone. Either they were captured or they were killed. So sometimes it's good to think in advance what you're doing *[laughs]*.

Robert Buckley: What was the attitude among the German soldiers on the Russian front? Were they concerned if they get captured by the Russians?

Johann Albert: Sure, they were all concerned. They knew it would be bad for them. They would be killed too right away or put in the camps.

Robert Buckley: Now, up to this time of 1943, had you heard of what was going on in the concentration camps then – by then?

Johann Albert: No, I still didn't hear anything.

Robert Buckley: In other words, you were there to fight a war and ...

Johann Albert: That's it. We were away, actually, from everything.

Robert Buckley: Now, OK, so now the war is beginning to be lost by Germany in '43. So what would happen to you and what was your rank at this time in the air force?

Johann Albert: I was a sergeant.

Robert Buckley: You were still sergeant at that time.

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: OK. Now what happened to you at this time? You were at the train station, and you didn't see any of your ...

Johann Albert: So we were actually outfitted for another company and until I was wounded there and was sent back to Germany by airplane. I was badly wounded.

Robert Buckley: And how did you get wounded?

Johann Albert: By Russian shrapnel—actually penetrated my neck and my ...
[gesturing behind head].

[0:30:00]

Robert Buckley: Your vertebrae?

Johann Albert: Right. And it was almost severed except by an eighth of an inch, so I was in a very bad situation. I lost my sense of balance. I couldn't remember anything. I was in the hospital for over half a year. In the beginning, they had to feed me everything. I shouldn't get out of bed, at all, but I did. I couldn't stand to have taken by nurses, everything, you know. So I went up during the evening, during the night and braced myself on the walls there, like I am now. So I did what I had to do, even though I shouldn't do it, but I survived.

Robert Buckley: While you were in the hospital, what was the talk among the doctors and the nurses about the progress of the war? Did you recall that at all? Did they talk about that?

Johann Albert: Well, didn't talk much about it because they all knew the war will be over, so they didn't talk much about it.

Robert Buckley: Of course, they had to be careful what they said anyway.

Johann Albert: Because they didn't trust anybody else. That's why.

Robert Buckley: Even yourself probably you had to be careful, right?

Johann Albert: Sure.

Robert Buckley: OK so then after six months, you're rehabilitated?

Johann Albert: That's right. And I went – they sent me to what they call the Ruhr Valley. They are there in a group for wounded soldiers in order to recover. And all of the sudden the Americans approached with their tanks and their planes and everything.

Robert Buckley: So that must be 1944 now, right?

Johann Albert: That was '44. And I went to the basement with some other young guys because Hitler put everybody in the armed forces—even young guys, 15 to 17 or so years old. These young kids didn't know anything.

Robert Buckley: I heard in one case of one of the victims saw a young man. He could hardly carry the rifle he was so young.

Johann Albert: So anyway, they went with me. They went with me in the basement down there. So then after a while, I heard the shooting starting. Then all of the sudden I heard German voices out there. And then later on, I heard American voices even though I didn't know the language, but I knew it must be American. And after a while, nothing. Then the people came back from – they were in someplace where they gathered together there. So the American soldiers told them to tell any German soldier to surrender. Otherwise, they will destroy the house.

So they told me that, so I said: "Don't worry about it. We go. We will not want you to lose your house." So we went there. The kids waived their handkerchief right away. I didn't do anything. I just

marched with them. So they put me on one of these cars there. They weren't actually army cars. They put me in with three American soldiers holding their guns on me. [Laughs] One man. Three watched me. So they brought me to a camp where they put all the German soldiers there, they captured.

[0:35:00] So then later on, all of us were sent back to France in a huge camp there, prisoner camp, a huge one with thousands of German soldiers.

Robert Buckley: And how was the treatment by the American soldiers at this time?

Johann Albert: This – well, the commander of that camp was Jewish, so naturally he hated the Germans. And he gave them so little – he gave us so little to eat, just a water soup so to speak and one slice of bread. So that means every day people died. So altogether in a month or so, thousands died so they investigated. What happened? And they figured out. They knew then. And that was that commander, so they replaced him, put another one in. Then we got a better ration, but so many had died already.

So I was in the camp for about, I would say, half a year. And since I was wounded so they sent me back in the first ones they released, so I come back then after being there for half a year; came back to Germany.

Robert Buckley: So how did you feel when the war finally ended?

Johann Albert: Oh, I was glad for that, very glad, because I never liked the war anyway. It was against my principles.

Robert Buckley: You were saying before that you went back to talk to the clergyman then?

Johann Albert: Yes. I went back to my priest and told him. I said, "Do you know what war means?" He looked at me. I said: "War is a slaughterhouse in case you don't know. People are getting slaughtered." Then after a little later then, I met this young guy in my place where I worked. So he said there is a righteous organization.

Robert Buckley: Excuse me one minute before we get into that aspect of it. How long were you in a prisoner-of-war camp?

Johann Albert: Half a year about?

Robert Buckley: Half a year and from when to when?

Johann Albert: It was from 1944 to around October '44.

Robert Buckley: OK so then you were released after that?

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: Did they have some type of a trial in connection with you or – ?

Johann Albert: No, not me. I was not a party member so couldn't – didn't have a trial.

Robert Buckley: I see, OK. So then you went to work after talking to the clergyman, and where did you work?

Johann Albert: I worked at the same factory my wife worked, rendering *porzellan fabrik*.

Robert Buckley: So what is that type of a job in the porcelain factory?

Johann Albert: I was a porcelain decorator. I decorated vases, all kinds of dishes.

Robert Buckley: That's fine artwork that you put on then?

Johann Albert: It's not fine work. I had to learn that for four years. Matter of fact, I started out and I was 13 years old in that factory. I was recommended by my teacher because I was a very good designer—matter of fact, the best of the class. So he recommended me to that owner, and he hired me because of that. And so I learned for four years, from 13 to 17, and then I got – and then after that, I got full paid so I – and I got a good payment. And then a year afterwards my father –

Robert Buckley: During those years you were in the army he paid you for that?

Johann Albert: No, I never got paid for it. You mean when I served in the armed forces did I get –

Robert Buckley: Oh year, you were paid in the army.

Johann Albert: I got paid for that during that time.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Johann Albert: So when I was about 18, my father lost his job. So I actually supported the whole family with my payment, what I got.

[0:40:00] So it was good in this sense that I had a good job.

Robert Buckley: OK so now you're working at the porcelain factory.

Johann Albert: Right.

Robert Buckley: And you met your wife.

Johann Albert: That's right.

Robert Buckley: And then you happened to meet somebody who told you about an organization?

Johann Albert: That's right. He said – that young man said, "There's a righteous organization." Well, the other guys laughed at him, but I approached him afterward.

I said, "What do you mean by a righteous organization?" I said: "I for myself never experienced that. But if you think there is one, every organization is governed by certain rules of conduct. So give me something. Then I'll let you know what I think about it." So he gave me the book *The Harp of God*.

Robert Buckley: And that was printed by who?

Johann Albert: By Brother Rutherford.

Robert Buckley: Oh, that's Watch Tower.

Johann Albert: By the Watch Tower Society. So I read it through the whole night, and then I gave it back in the morning and said: "That's it. That's the truth." I said, "Are there some more people here like you?" because before there was not one Witness yet. And like I said before, during the wartime then, the people that ran away from the Russians came back to Germany. They were classified as refugees. So they were sent to different towns, big towns, small towns, villages, whatever. And some were sent to our place. But they never went out and talked to the people.

So anyway, when I got that book, I told him – I said I think so I asked him, I said, "Are there more people like you?" So he told me that about a dozen people where they are meeting together. They had only a book study because, like my wife said, at that particular

time in Germany, the branch office was in the Eastern Germany taken over by the Communists. They took over everything. So there was no branch in Germany.

So the Swiss branch sent some German literature to the people who were interested in God's Word, to the congregations. They had only a limited number. They have to send two *Watchtowers* and two *Awake!*'s to a group until –

Robert Buckley: So this is just after the war.

Johann Albert: That was after the war, yeah.

Robert Buckley: Just after.

Johann Albert: So because in Switzerland they had three main languages. The biggest one was German, then French, then Italy – Italian. And so that's why the German [*sic*] branch was able to send some of the literature until Germans got back their branch office later on then. So that's why in the beginning we had just, like I said, a book study.

Robert Buckley: So you had to reorganize the work.

Johann Albert: So actually, yeah, I told these people, I said, "Why don't you go out and tell the people what you learn about God and his purpose?" And this young brother—he was a brother there. He was baptized for over a year already, but he never went out from house to house either.

Robert Buckley: Now you said tell about God's purpose. What do you mean by God's purpose?

Johann Albert: What I learned from that book, God's purpose was that the good news of the Kingdom should be preached in all the inhabited earth for the purpose of a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. That was God's purpose.

Robert Buckley: You mean the end of this world, the end of the earth?

Johann Albert: That's what I don't refer to the end of this world, this system too, so we had to prepare ourselves to live in God's new promised order.

Robert Buckley: You mean that the earth would be ...

Johann Albert: The earth according to God's will and promise, the earth will be transformed into a paradise condition, and people will live everlastingly.

Robert Buckley: The whole earth will be a paradise you're saying.

Johann Albert: That's right. So that's what I told him and the other ones. And so I arranged then after only three weeks or so, "Why don't we go out?" So I arranged it on Sunday morning so we went out and starting in my own hometown, which was a small town actually. Everybody knows everybody. So we went to the first door. He knocked at the door. Then he went behind me.

[0:45:00] I had to do the talking, so I talked what I learned. *[Laughs]* So to make it short, in about two years I helped to establish two congregations—one in my own hometown and one in the next bigger town—in just two years.

Robert Buckley: So evidently then, the people must've been fed up with the churches and their involvement with the war?

Johann Albert: Well, they realized that the churches did not preach what they should preach according to God's Word. They preached different ideas, and they were in harmony with the government all the time because in Germany the priests were paid by the government like if they were members of the government. That's why people had to pay a little tax from their paycheck in order to support the church, and many people didn't like that.

Robert Buckley: Did you ever talk to that clergyman again?

Johann Albert: Oh, sure. After I started with that book and so and was agreeing with it, I went back to him. And I told him some of the things the Bible said. I said, "First of all, why do you not use the so-called Old Testament?" That's what they called it—the Old Testament.

"Well," he said, "as Christians, we have the New Testament to the New Covenant. We don't need the old one anymore." That's how he explained it to me. And he said, "Furthermore, in the Christian Greek Scriptures, God's name is not even mentioned there." But it was true the Bible translators did not mention God's name anymore according to God's Word. So like the Jewish people, they did not mention God's name anymore because they were somehow afraid to use God's name.

What they experienced, how you have actually punished for not believing God's Word anymore, not living according to the Ten Commandments or the Mosaic Law. They rejected that. They worshiped pagan gods. And, therefore, they rejected the Almighty. So the same thing is taking place in Christendom. That's why they have these traditions.

Robert Buckley: So what did the clergyman say to you?

Johann Albert: So in a certain way he was actually – he finally said, “Well ...” He said: “I cannot tell the people about God's name, about God's Kingdom because according to our tradition, I cannot do that. Otherwise, I lose my job. I cannot say actually what the Bible says. I have to go according to the traditions of the church.” That's what he told me.

Robert Buckley: So when officially then did you become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Johann Albert: Right away. Right back there when I was baptized in '48.

Robert Buckley: So now you believed that you weren't go to war anymore as you had done before?

Johann Albert: That's right. I knew that war is no good at all. It never served its purpose. It is really harmful. Innocent people are getting killed and people – we are taught how to kill. So that's why after the war, that's why some people killed other people—because they learned it there.

Robert Buckley: Oh, they learned to kill in the military so they ...

Johann Albert: That's right. So they did the same in peacetime.

Robert Buckley: So then you met this beautiful young lady.

Johann Albert: I certainly did. I met her three times, actually, only three times. Then I asked her to marry me. And so even though we had to wait, like she said, we had to wait for a while.

Robert Buckley: What did she reveal to you that was –

Johann Albert: Well, she told me she was Jewish.

[0:50:00] I said, “Oh, to be – I don't care what anybody thinks about Jewish people.” I said: “They're people like everybody else. And it doesn't

matter to me if one is Jewish or not. So that's why I marry you—because I don't care what everyone else thinks.”

Robert Buckley: It sounds like you were determined.

Johann Albert: That's right. I had my own opinion already.

Robert Buckley: And so you have been an active Jehovah's Witness ever since?

Johann Albert: Ever since.

Robert Buckley: And you moved to the United States when?

Johann Albert: '51.

Robert Buckley: 1951. And what type of work did you do here in this country before you retired?

Johann Albert: Well, first of all, in the beginning, when we lived in California, I delivered furniture to the people because he had a furniture – Han had a furniture business, and so I delivered furniture for a while. And then later on, I got another job in a warehouse where they had frozen foods for the people back then because in California everything is frozen. So there was a big warehouse, and I worked there—very cold inside. Then we had a convention in Germany, an international convention in Munich, Germany. That was in 1977, so we went there.

Robert Buckley: Was it your first time?

Johann Albert: To attend the convention in Germany. That was not the first time. I was there before. But this time we attended the convention there in Munich, Germany. And then I visited – my mother was alive still there at that time. My father had died already. And we tried to get her with us, but she didn't want to leave Germany. So she stayed with my sister at that particular time and her family. And then ... what was the next question?

Robert Buckley: OK. Now, did anyone else – I wanted to find out did anybody else in your family become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Johann Albert: Oh, yes. My father did. My mother did. My sister did. All of them except my brother, who was killed. He would've accepted it, too.

Robert Buckley: Because of his attitude, right.

Johann Albert: I know his attitude.

Robert Buckley: What I'd like to do now is I'd like to take a picture of you and your wife together. So I'm going to turn the camera off a second. And maybe you can both stand up, and I'd just like to take a picture of you together. And then there are some pictures of his in the photo album.

[Camera shifts] Mr. and Mrs. Albert. We were very pleased this morning to have their two interviews on tape. And this is their beautiful home – show a little bit of their home here. And we also have a couple of people who here assisting. All right. And now we're going to stop and we're going to take a forward pictures of the photos.

[Camera shifts to photo album]

Robert Buckley: ... when he was in the military, right?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: OK. We got a few other pictures of him there?

Johann Albert: Oh, you have a picture handy?

Marsha Albert: That's Hans.

Robert Buckley: That's Hans there, OK. And when was that picture taken approximately?

Marsha Albert: This was taken in here, in Germany.

Robert Buckley: So that had to be right after the war probably.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, that's when we met, yeah, after the war.

Robert Buckley: OK. And who is this here?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, Hans ____.

Robert Buckley: OK. Once again, we'd like to thank you both very much for your presentation this morning. And, Mr. Albert, we want to thank you for your fine experience that you just gave. Thank you very much.

Johann Albert: You're very welcome.

[Video continues but audio ends at 0:54:57]