

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Walter Meyer

May 19-20, 2010

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PREFACE

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Transcribed by Andrea Wabeke, National Court Reporters Association.

WALTER MEYER

May 19-20, 2010

Question: So this the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Walter Meyer conducted by William Meineke, on May 19th, 2010 in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. So Herr Meyer, good morning.

Answer: Good morning to you.

Q: So could you tell me a little bit about your life, your -- your early -- the earliest you can remember?

A: Well, I was born in Kassel, which is very much in the center of Germany. My father worked for the Henschel Company, so that's pretty much the most important factory in Kassel. The Henschel were famous for making locomotives, and later on, they made the famous Henschel airplane. That's where I was, and my mother disliked Kassel very much. That's where the Lindenhessen (ph) lived there, very, very unpleasant people, mostly Protestant. I was the only Catholic, so they called me the Katholische Rattenschwanz.

Q: Catholic rattail?

A: Catholic rattail, and so then my father eventually secured a job as director of Feindliche Industrial Refrigeration Company in Dusseldorf, and so we moved there.

Q: How old were you?

A: When I was 11, maybe 12, and of course there was a change then, a different school, different environment. I joined the swimming club and became part of the Jungvolk, which is the early stage of the Hitler Youth, divided in Jungvolk, Hitler Youth and then of course the armed forces, and at 14, I joined -- or better said, I had to join the Hitler Youth, which was an organization from 14 to 18 and it was very much a premilitary preparation.

Q: Did you like the Hitler Youth, I mean what kind of activities did you do?

A: Oh, it was very nice. We liked it very much because we had, I -- oh, let me explain. The Hitler Youth was divided like the armed forces into Navy, Army and so on, Air Force, and as a swimmer, I joined the Navy and was trained to become an underwater demolition expert. So what we learned there was rather interesting, spent a lot of time in the water. Didn't have to go to church because services were generally on Sunday mornings purposely, traveled a lot to compete in other cities of Germany, camaraderie, nice friends, yes. And Nazis as such or the philosophy of national socialism didn't enter our brain very much; we were a little too young to understand all that. We saw more or less the victorious aspect of Germany, that means coming up with something new in the industry and designing a new airplane and being number one in this and so on, and eventually of course came the war. So the answer to your question was I liked it very much, yes, it was very enjoyable. It was like -- like in a way like somebody joining the Boy Scouts here.

Q: Well, what was the week like? So how often would you go to the Hitler Youth, what would you do in the Hitler Youth --

A: Every week.

Q: -- in a week? So once a week?

A: Yes, every week, Sunday, every week. Of course the coaching -- swimming coaching was three times a week but then Hitler Youth services was Sunday and there were holidays where we had to meet and march and sing and so on, yeah. So there were special meetings, let's say, on the 1st of May we would -- we would be driven to Nuremberg to march there with the flags and so on, you know, and I swam in Stuttgart. I swam in Breslau, I swam in Ried (ph) in Austria, so...

Q: What was your sport, what was your event?

A: I swam 100-meter breast stroke. At that time, shortly after I started, breast stroke was divided 100 strokes to swim butterfly and breast stroke, and butterfly didn't have a dolphin kick but it had a breast stroke kick, so there has been a quite an evolution in swimming.

Q: And you were successful?

A: Pardon?

Q: You were a successful swimmer?

A: Yeah, I was quite successful, yes, and then later on I became the goalie because the goalie of the German water polo team had a fatal accident so they were looking for one, and during a little training period, I played goalie and I was pretty good, so they asked me to stay. So I became the goalie of the water polo team, and that was more fun than anything, except we played a lot in -- outside and sometimes the water was about 14, 16, ice cold, ice cold. So, yeah, but it was enjoyable because it was a camaraderie and...

Q: Did you have classes in Nazi, you know --

A: We had classes, yes. We had classes and learned many things theoretically, others in practice, like the language of the flags and some Morse alphabet, et cetera, et cetera, those. Learned about Bruttoregistertonnen, what all that meant, the size of a ship and so on. The armed forces or the Hitler Youth equal to the armed forces was also divided into ranks, like the GI and the corporal and the -- and so on. So many of the guys I didn't like became lieutenants and captains and I had to salute them, and I didn't like that idea very much because I had absolutely no respect for them. I thought they were a bunch of sissies. So that brought upon the first resentment, the first problems and that --

Q: How about school?

A: School?

Q: What was school like?

A: Oh, well, school was of course corporal punishment. If you didn't behave, you had to wait until physical education class when you had nothing but your shorts on, bend over and there was a little bumble stick and so..

Q: Do you remember any teachers?

A: Huh?

Q: Do you remember any teachers from that time?

A: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh yes.

Q: Who, for example?

A: I had Dr. Bach (ph) was probably my favorite teacher. He eventually left because he was a reserve officer in World War I. He was a captain and so he stayed in the reserve and then left and that was -- that was bad because I missed him very much. He was the way a teacher is supposed to be.

Q: So how?

A: Yeah.

Q: So how is a teacher supposed to be?

A: Yeah, he taught well. He shared. He considered and expected students to listen to him, to obey, but he was fair in everything, so I was one of the top students while he was there.

Q: What subject did he teach?

A: What?

Q: What subject?

A: He taught German, German grammar and history. Yeah, I think that was it, but he was what is called a Klassenlehrer, that means the principal teacher, and besides that, and of course we had the biology teacher, the one who taught physics and chemistry, one who taught geography. And then as the teachers left because they had to join the Army, we had women teachers, and the poor ladies, we made their life so, so difficult. Oh God, I felt sorry for them.

Q: How did you make their lives difficult?

A: Well, I remember one day I brought home a little piece of reproduce but identical looking pile of dog poo poo, okay. And then another guy brought some kind of

phosphorous thing that stank like hell so we put this close to the pult (ph), you know, and then everybody in the classroom {Sniffing sounds} and then the teacher started {Sniffing sounds} and then she said oh, God, and then everybody laughed like hell. So things of that nature, you know, and...

Q: Did you have a best friend, did you have a pal?

A: Now, I don't know best friend. I had some Jewish friends, but I liked them mostly because when I went to their homes they had always an assortment of cookies. I mean Jewish mothers are very, very, very nice ladies. So yeah, I liked them, got along well with them.

Q: Were they in class with you?

A: Yeah.

Q: How were they treated in class?

A: Like everybody else, yeah. Things began to -- began to change after the Kristallnacht, that was a change, and then of course they had to wear the David Star and then, well, then --

Q: Can you describe how things changed?

A: Huh?

Q: Can you describe how things changed after Kristallnacht, do you remember any --

A: Well, we non-Jews were then taught, I think the biology teacher taught us what the typical Jew was like. He was only interested in making money. He could not be found in professions like farmer or work with his hands; businessman, money changer and so on. Then the physical attributes, their noses, flat feet and so on, we learned about that, and we were told then to stay away from them, to -- not to have any kind of association with them.

Q: How did your Jewish friends in the class react?

A: Huh?

Q: How did your Jewish friends who were in class with you, how did they react to that?

A: They were kind of the silent partners of -- of -- of -- of the geschenes (ph), things happened but they were kind of shaken or didn't know what to say or not to say.

Q: Do you think a lot of the boys believed -- believed what they were being told?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you believe what were you being told?

A: Something I didn't believe, I questioned it, because I had such a good experience with the freundlich and the frohliche and the families with whom I had a very nice contact, they were nice to me, so I said why, and I mean we had Jewish neighbors. So of course while this was going on, on the other hand, we got indoctrination in every way possible, newspapers, Sturmer, education, the teachers. I mean we were fed entire Judaism from left and right, and I assume that some -- some -- some youngsters probably asked themselves whether there was not something true about those things. My question was once when the persecution started, I helped once as an altar boy, and I didn't like the chaplain very much because he's always late, I had to wake him up, but one day I asked him, I said, why is there so much hatred? I mean Jesus was Jewish. It's there written on the cross, INRI, Jesus von Nazareth, Konig der Juden. Walter, you're not allowed to ask questions. You have to believe. So I felt that was rather stupid as anything I ever heard and -- but I didn't say anything, but I was dumbfounded, let's put it that way. And my father was extremely critical. My father was in World War I from the first day till the last day. He was in every major battle. He was wounded three times and he was very much anti Hitler, and he heard -- listened to the NBC or CBS, NBC, CBS -- CBS, and my uncle told him, be careful, they're going to catch you one of these days, you'll end up in a concentration camp.

Q: So BBC, yeah?

A: Huh?

Q: BBC?

A: BBC.

Q: British Broadcasting Corporation?

A: British, British, yeah. And so what this little Hitler, what he expects going to Russia, I mean he's going to bleed to death and all these poor young boys will be killed. So that was kind of my father's spiel, but he very soon, thanks to his knowledge of languages, in this case, French, he spoke French fluently, he became the liaison officer for the French heavy industry during the German occupation with headquarters in Lille, northern France, so I didn't see much of him. And I had lost my brother in mountain climbing. He fell to his death. So it was my mother and I, and then I didn't spend much time in school. I spent -- I mean much time at home. And a -- well, the day came when the school expelled me.

Q: Oh, why?

A: Because the windowsill of the old school building, there was a board, and from the all the rain throughout the years and years and years had become brittle, and you could pick it up. And I said oh, that would be wonderful to just let's it sail down, and so one of the classmates, I says said when somebody comes let me know. Somebody came. Well, that somebody was a teacher, he just walked by, and it ended on the back of his head and then of course went into 1,000 pieces, and I was called and Dr. Fettweiss (ph), he was the director, the principal. Nobody want to say anything, so we had these big lush eyebrows, and he went to one, did you do it? Did you do it? When he came to me, I broke down and I said yes, I did. So I was expelled and then I went to I think the first boarding school I went to -- or the first boarding school I went to was Switzerland, went to a very, very exclusive boarding school where --

Q: When was that?

A: At St. Gallen. When?

Q: When?

A: Well, that must have been, let's see, that must have been about '37, I'm pretty sure, and from _____+ and so on and so forth, and those were the kind, and my father was not that wealthy but there was somebody who liked me very much and felt that I needed -- I deserved special consideration, so I think he paid part of the school. So I went there for a year, but then I painted the walls and so on, and so they asked me to leave, so then I went to Bornheim.

Q: What, you painted the walls ____?

A: Yeah, I just -- they were -- they were blank walls, so I thought, well, I should bring a little color into the environment there. I was always very artistic, even as a kid. So well, my father had to pay to clean the walls, repaint them, and I left and I went to a school in Bornheim. I think I wrote about my school in Bornheim. You want me to go into that?

Q: Please.

A: The school was in the center of town. The school was -- where we slept was downtown and the school was a little out of town. So where we slept, it was an old building, like the buildings here in Washington, old stone building, three story. The upper stories where the director and his family lived and then the different floors were different rooms where the students lived. I lived with the son of a physician. He always had a little money. And the food was absolutely disgustingly terrible, and around Christmas time, upstairs, they were baking. And you can imagine the aroma going through the building, but the cookies were not made for us. So when I found a way, the director had gone I think to an opera or something like that. So I found my way in and emptied the cookies and distributed them throughout the school, and I said, well, I better

not be here when he comes back. So I told my roommate, I said come on, let's go. We were on the third floor. We put sheets together -- bed sheets, climbed out of the window, and then he said, I can't go on. Why? I can't do it to my father, he'll never forgive me. So we went in front of the door and waited for the director to come, and I took off. And then I didn't have -- I just a few marks, I didn't have enough to take the train. And I don't know, I have gypsy blood or something like that. I went down to the -- to the river and was successful in convincing one of the captains to take me on the barge, you know the barges that go down, and that was a very, very pleasant trip because the captain had his wife on the barge with him, and I helped her to hang up or to hang her clothes that she washed, and you could see her bra and underwear and everything was flowing there with the wind, colorful thing. Well, that's how I arrived in Dusseldorf, and when I came to my mother, she already had a letter from the director of the school. Why do you do that to us? Why can't you be different? Your father, what is he going to say? You don't have to tell him. Well, so I went back to the Dusseldorf school, Ignazio, and I think I was in the Obertertia, that's when I became involved in the Edelweisspiraten and found a lot of activities to dampen my adventurism.

Q: So what was your father's reaction to, you know, that whole story?

A: Well, he didn't know until he was told that I was arrested.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And as a matter of fact, he was called from France to come.

Q: When you were in the Internacht (ph), were you still part of the Hitler Youth, did you still take part in Hitler Youth activities?

A: Not in Switzerland of course there was a Hitler Youth, and in Bornheim -- in Bornheim, yes, but there was not much Hitler Youth, no, no.

Q: So by removing you from Dusseldorf they separated you from the Hitler Youth?

A: They separated us what?

Q: From the Hitler Youth.

A: Yeah, and I don't really know why we at any point in time have a Hitler Youth in Bornheim, and I'll have to think about it, really, but we did not, but when I came back to Dusseldorf, then of course I went back to Hitler Youth, and then my activities started with the Edelweisspiraten and that was a new adventure almost every day.

Q: Yeah, we heard you spent considerable time on the Edelweisspiraten, but I want to sort of explore school a little bit more.

So is there a teacher that you had that you -- that you detested?

A: That I had?

Q: That you detested, that you hated?

A: Oh, several I detested. As a matter of fact there was one -- there was one who would ask you a question which had two answers, kind of. If you answered A, he would hit you; if you answered B, he would hit you, so you couldn't please him. We called him a Nilpferd, a hippopotamus because he had one wooden foot, so when he came {making noises}, you could hear him come. And I told my father about it, and my father of course was absolutely sure that I deserved it, until one boy came to my home one day. I think father was in the hospital, so he came and had dinner with us, and my father asked him, he said, oh, no, he hits anybody, guilty or not guilty. So my father looked at me -- he was a very radical man. I'm very much like him in many ways, and he said, he hits you without a reason, you hit him back, you hear, you hear. So the word run through the class, Walter's going to hit him. Well, the next day he didn't hit me, and the next day he didn't hit me but then he hit me and I hit him back. I hit him back and I ran. I ran to the principal's office. I said I was crying, I hit the teacher, but he hit everybody ____+

My father had to come to school, and my father raised hell. The teacher was transferred to another place and so that was one of the -- one of the big incidents. Another thing, at that time, I became sexually very active at a very young age. I found these elderly ladies who -- who took a liking to me and taught me, which was so much more interesting than school, and, well, that's the way it went until January of 1943. Of course by that time, Germany was bombed. It was very much the center of the war and food was hard to come by. So in the evening I went to see my friends, the French prisoners of war that I met with my friends. We played pool and we talked to -- about what to do next. So we would hide their bicycles or -- see, there's a reflector on the fender of a bicycle on the back so that you see it when you drive behind them, and we would hang condoms on that thing and so things of that nature. And we got away with little things. We want to do something better, maybe just take one wheel out of the bicycle and leave the bicycle there with only one wheel or take the entire bicycle away, things like that. I always thought what are we going to do next, and we had a group and let's go maybe during the apple season, we would get together on our bikes. Of course we all had bikes. I had a racing bike. I would go to next town and put the bike against the tree, climb on the bike and then collect apples. Swimming in between -- well, until I was arrested and --

Q: So, again, we're going to get to that in great detail.

A: Yes.

Q: I wanted to ask you, you said food was getting scarce. Can you describe that a bit? What kind of things were available, what were you eating, how did that all work?

A: I don't know exactly when rationing started, but I believe that by '43 we had rationing cards and the black market began. My father was born in the Eiffel region close to the Belgium border, I mean next door to the Belgian border, and so we always -- he went there and came back with butter and schmaltz and eggs, and so that when he went to France of course we always had coffee and so we did not suffer. Ration cards alone was I think 50 Klonfleisch, or Fleischnon, or anything that's sausage or meat at 50 gramm per week and, very little in terms of fat, butter fat, whatever, that was rationed. So -- but the propaganda, in which the Germans probably became the masters in the world, was so that people were happy to sacrifice for the good of the country, so you didn't hear too many people bitch or cried or complain.

Q: My colleague, Ann Millen, said that when you were in the exhibit, The State of Deception exhibit, that you knew the KdF jingle. Can you sing it or hum it for us now?

A: Kraft durch Freude {singing}. They are big things, Kraft durch Freude, you know, excursions, all that was done for the people to enjoy, to -- and if you didn't feel good, well, the the doctor prescribed einnakur (ph) which they didn't sell anywhere in the world but in Germany I think, so you were allowed to spend three weeks in the Schwarzwald because everything paid for and oh...

Q: Did you ever go on vacation?

A: Yes, I was -- when I went on vacation, I was very anxious to get to my father's hometown, because I loved to be with animals. My great uncle -- oh, it's hard to believe, when I think about Germany so highly civilized and tremendous, advancement in industry and so on, well, the little town of Holoratz (ph) in the Schneeeifel, my grandmother, my father's mother, like most girls in the town, were sent down in the valley to work as a maid and possibly to find a husband. So my grandmother met my grandfather, and I think they went to the haystack together and my father became the result, and when the people realized that she was -- that my grandmother was pregnant, they threw stones at her until the priest of the town said may he who cast the first stone, you know. So then up in that old building, which was the house in which my father was born was building 1640, and it still stands, so up -- what a very poor area, 1890, poor period, and out of straw they built a mattress and that's where he was born, almost like Jesus Christ, and he loved it there. He was very happy, but to give you an idea what things were like, I asked my father one day, I said something that you remember that really had an impact on you? Yep. One day I was with a friend and we looked up the road, the **K**uhstrasse it's called because the cows were driven up there to go to pasture, and we saw the priest behind a tree peeing, and we looked at each other and we knew priests don't pee and we made it very clear they would not tell anybody because they would call us liars. So the holy men don't pee. And so in this little town you would see the blind obedience to the church, blind obedience to the Burgermeister, and so on. This

obedience was reflected all over Germany, whether it was the Kaiser or whether it was Hitler, it didn't make any difference. So it wasn't too difficult for somebody to take over and exploit this kind of sentiment, but I went there because I didn't have to brush my teeth in the morning. I didn't have to wash up. It was ideal. And I tell you, you had to take care of cows, the neighbor's cows and several cows got together and I had to take them together with the dog and a stick and I had to take them to a certain pasture, and the pastures had no fences, so I had to keep the cows from walking into the potato fields. Okay. That was my job. It was beautiful. My great aunt would make a head of bread about this size. I remember she would put it under her bosom and make a slice of it the size -- everything was homemade, homemade ham, homemade everything.

Q: So about two feet, two and a half feet?

A: Yep. And she made ciders for me to take home. Oh, it was so good, and I went there. And I remember there was a girl in the area also took care of some cows, that we became friends and we started -- spoke in Lorbeerblatt, whatever they are. It's a shrub.

Q: Laurel leaves?

A: Huh?

Q: Laurel leaves?

A: Laurel leaf, yeah, yeah, that's right. So {making noise} oh, it was beautiful, so I loved to be in there. I really loved to be there and I have been there many times even after the war.

Q: Did you know your grandfather?

A: Yes, I knew him. Hated his guts. He was a devout, stupid Catholic, stupid in the sense he didn't ask questions. He accepted and made it his own knowledge, but he was not very nice to my mother, and he kind of respected me because I didn't agree with him and I openly said so. I was a tough kid, and he died of diabetes, I think, and he wanted to see me. I said I don't want to see him, so I didn't go.

Q: What did he do for a living?

A: Huh?

Q: What did he do for a living, did he just run the farm?

A: No, no, he was -- he was Mannesmann (ph - correct), the famous German company, Mannesmann. Among other things they built seamless pipes and they had a plant in Helenta (ph), which was close to Holoratz (ph) and he would manage the horses and take those pipes to the railroad station, and they wanted him to take over the horses into sort of in the main plant, so that's how we got to Dusseldorf. And then after awhile, he was a

rather ambitious -- was in the army and then he joined the police force, and he made a name for himself, because he apprehended one of the most ferocious criminals at the time who had chopped up children and so. It was an atrocious thing. And then he was extremely strong. He looked a little bit like Khrushchev, a stocky old bull, and he would accompany prisoners because they would get extra pay for that, and then he built a beautiful home. So he was very ambitious and became a lieutenant and was known as the Polizeimeier, and we walked -- I had this chain here with a watch and walked, had no hair whatsoever. I mean it was just like, like bald headed old bull, and the kids saw him and said Polizeimeier, and they would disappear with their soccer balls and so on when he came. But there he was. His wife had died rather young, and then he had a housekeeper and I believe also his mistress. I don't know this, but I think so. So I saw him rather infrequently. I didn't like him. I liked my mother's father. Yeah, he was a kind old man.

Q: What did he do?

A: He was a roofer, a roofer for only cathedrals and churches, so I have a picture of him was high, high on the upper part of the town church, you see, and then as SA come, he was a forest ranger for a noble man, so he went hunting and so on. I used to see him with his long pipe, and he had the longest legs I ever seen, and he was able not only to put one leg under the other, he did one more curve and he did that. Opa, do it once -- one more time, and he did. Oh, I got a kick out of that, and he was actually the first one I did a drawing of with my fountain pen, and my teacher didn't believe that I had done it.

Q: Which teacher was that?

A: Huh?

Q: Which teacher, do you remember?

A: Yeah, but I don't remember his name, my art teacher. I'd say Johans, but I don't guarantee that that was right. And when he realized just I did it, then he took me to the Kunstakademie for Dusseldorf, which is one of the best known Kunstakademien in Europe. And there I was exposed to weird looking professors with beards, I mean they look like hippies but hippies in the '40s, and my first thing was to nacktzeichnen. That means draw nudes. Well, you know, at 11 or 12 years old, to see a naked lady in front of you, it rather left an impact on me and I don't know, I guess my pencil was a little shaking. I remember when I used my single little bit of ____+ Everything had to be done with a pencil. Well, that's where I had my first art instruction. I didn't last very long, I think three months or something like that. There was always something. Then -- then -- then my parents had a friend who was an opera singer and I was a happy guy. I always sang, and he heard my voice I think in the bathroom I was singing, and he said do you mind if I give a private lessons? No. And he was going to prepare me for the music conservatory

in Cologne. I had to go there. I had to sing Schubert's An die Musik {singing}. Oh, very difficult song. And they thought I was not quite good enough as a soloist, so I thought that I would be all right in the choir, and I didn't think that I -- I think I was too good for the choir, so I didn't stay there. So I had many interests. I had a problem that I was born with quite a few talents, none of them developed to the extreme, but I knew this and I knew this and I knew this and I knew a little of everything. I learned languages just like that. So I had a problem I want to be a movie star. I wanted to be locomotive driver. I wanted to be, you name it, so anyway. More questions, please.

Q: So what happened that you had to leave the Kunstakademi, do you remember?

A: When?

Q: No. What happened? Why did you leave the Kunstakademie? You said something happened.

A: Oh, just because. That was not -- that was -that was a volunteer thing. I went there in addition to school. Okay. So I just didn't like it. So I don't want to go back, and since my father was not at home, there was nobody who could handle me. See, my mom -- father handled me brutally, and my mother tried love but she was not quite strong enough, poor little woman, so...

Q: I think now would be a good time for a break, so...

A: All right.

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Interview with Walter Meyer. So Herr Meyer, you said over the break you had fun in the Jungvolk. Could you explain, please?

A: Yeah. The Jungvolk was very much like the Boy Scouts, little camping trips, and it would please me enormously that I became a drummer, and so I could show off with my drum and get a little attention that way, which I needed badly, and even my mother said would you show me again, drum a little bit. So I drummed and I sang. I was a happy little fellow. So the Jungvolk was, I would have to admit that it was a pleasure for a young boy to join the Jungvolk, and I repeat, it was just as enjoyable as it is my son to be part of the Boy Scouts.

Q: You had an opportunity to go to the Adolf Hitler Schule. What is an Adolf Hitler Schule. What does that entail?

A: Adolf Hitler Schule was a select -- I think there were two, maybe three out of Hitler school in Germany, and they were there to train, indoctrinate young men to become leaders, let's say, with some exaggeration, like the LBJ School of Public Affairs in Austin, Texas who will train people to become excellent in government administration.

This was a little similar, but only one sided, in other words, all under the umbrella of national socialism. And to enter there, you had to go through -- you would have to be highly recommended and you had to go through a preschool, through a screening process and so on. So I think my father didn't quite know what was involved, so I went to the, to the first esetapa **can't identify word** (ph), the first step of a screening school, passed that, and then my father got a letter which he had to sign and he refused to sign because he thought that was a little too much for a young man and he just did not agree. So he didn't sign, so I didn't go. So the Hitler school was maybe the equivalent, if you want to compare to going to a Jesuit school to become a priest, okay. It would be totally a one-sided education.

Q: I mean were you upset that you couldn't go?

A: Why my father didn't like it?

Q: Were you upset that you couldn't go?

A: Yes, I believe I was a little upset, but I don't think I took it too seriously. Yes, I was upset, but I was used to my father saying no to something that I wanted badly so...

Q: Did you experience any schooling in the Hitler Youth, any schooling in the Hitler Youth?

A: Not schooling per se. You had of course theoretical instructions in the branch. Let's say the Navy. You would learn about how ships operate, the size of ships and what you do in the Navy. So the theoretical part you would learn, and how to speak with flags and the different ranks, history of the navy, yes, but most of it was the practical aspect of it.

Q: Can you explain?

A: Yes. You would learn how to -- how to use breathing apparatus underwater. You would learn to connect magnetic bombs underwater and you would train to bomb ships underwater, ships that would be anchored in a port and --

Q: How did you react to that training, did you like it, hate it?

A: Yeah, it was interesting. It was adventurous, because you would swim with clothes on. You would swim with clothes and shoes on. I mean there were scenarios where you would think that you under pressure and you have a gun with you and how can you swim with all this weight and so on. So it was an interesting scenario, yes, and besides you would -- you would be treated as somewhat of a special guy. You were a prince. You were a little champion, you know.

Q: Explain.

A: Well, you were not just any ordinary guy, you were a super athlete.

Q: Explain -- explain how that worked in the Hitler Youth, being an athlete?

A: Well, were you treated with a little more respect like -- than an ordinary guy and...

Q: Now, you were talking about competition in the Hitler Youth. Can you explain how that works?

A: Yes. Before the Hitler Youth existed, swimmers or athletes in general would represent a club, let us say that I would swim for the swim club of Washington and we would have a big swim meet going on in Washington sponsored by the federation -- swimming federation and invite clubs from Philadelphia, from all around they would come and swim here. Well, the Hitler Youth took over, so now I would swim representing the Hitler Youth, Section 6 of Dusseldorf, swimming against the Hitler Youth, Section 9 of Frankfurt, and there whether different cities represented different sections of the Hitler Youth. So to find out who was the best swimmer in the Hitler Youth, okay, and it culminated in the Reichsjugendmeisterschaft, that means the youth championship in swimming.

Q: And you participated in that?

A: Yes, twice.

Q: How did you do?

A: I was third once and fourth once, so I was --

Q: So pretty high up?

A: Well, pretty high up. I was -- I was all right but I was not on top, and really I participated in the German championship, the open championship and I was third and that was pretty good, but you had to consider that some of the best swimmers were already in the Navy, so they didn't participate. So my competition was rather limited.

Q: Can you sum up your experience in the Hitler Youth but as a favor or a colleague, can you say it in Spanish?

A: {Speaking Spanish} 58:30. Les juventud hitlerisito pues eres una organization un poquito como los Boy Scouts, dividido lo mes moque, lo fuerzas armados, lo armado fuerzas eres, lo marina y por su puesto como matodar, y tuve que entrar en lo armada y hi un entrentor como especialista en colorer bombes bejo agua, y me divedi mucho porque cada dis ero algo interesante y aprende mucho de los barcos, de los uniformes, lo historie de la armada, los diferentes guerres. Y ...une orgulloro de mi mismo y de lo juventud hitleristo brewso companeros habis muy pocos que critica todo ero uno coso positive.

Q: Thank you. Let's turn to the edelweiss pirates. Can you tell me about them, how they were formed, how that worked.

A: The edelweiss pirates -- well, edelweiss is the flower that only grows up in the high mountains of the Alps. It's a pretty flower and it represents bravery, strength. My brother tried to pick edelweiss for his mother and fell to his death and they found him with edelweiss in his hands, so edelweiss in my family was something very special. A group in Berlin started the Edelweisspiraten, how did you hear about them?

A: News got around they were persecuted, as you would hear about saboteur and committed sabotage and so on, and that triggered an interest in we could do something like that. And there was enough hatred, disrespect for our leaders, and I'm talking about our immediate leaders, that means companions who now became lieutenants and captains and we had to respect and salute them and listen to them and obey them, and that was definitely against my nature. And I found quite a few comrades who, for adventurous reasons, for one reason or the other sided with me and said yeah, let's have some fun. So I have to emphasize that I was a little too young, even though after the war, we were considered political prisoners, but really, there was no real ideological reason because I didn't understand national socialism as I would understand it today. It was more of a movement based upon rebellious nature, protest against blind obedience, this sort of thing. So we formed a chapter in Dusseldorf and hoped that eventually we would establish contact with the Edelweisspiraten in Berlin, but we did not. So then we spent quite a bit of time thinking of what we could do to make their, in quote, their life more difficult.

Q: Who is the their?

A: Well, our leaders, the ones we hated, our captains and lieutenants and captains.

Q: In the Hitler Youth then?

A: Yeah, yes, yes.

Q: So how many of them were you?

A: Oh, we were about 12.

Q: So 12. Your group was 12, and you then, as a group, decided we can do this or that against the Hitler Youth?

A: Correct.

Q: So what are some of the -- some of the things that you thought up?

A: Ha, well, I told you before we would -- all the reflectors on the bicycles, on their bicycle, we could hang condoms there, and especially we would put them there in the

dark so they would not discover them right away and take them off. They would ride the bike and then somebody started laughing because they drove behind them. So we'd do that. Steal the bike. Deflate the tires, we would do that rather frequently, paint things on their -- put poo poo on the bike, whatever.

Q: Did you have other fun, did you do other things?

A: We would generally meet in what was called in Dusseldorf Cafe Meintz (ph). They had in the back, they had billiard room, so we'd play pool. That's where we had our meetings. What are we going to do next, and so fun, as I said I became interested in women, had an affair with our mail woman and looked for adventure of any sort, but in this particular framework, it was generally thinking about how can we make those stupid idiots' life a little more difficult.

Q: So does that mean you dropped out of the Hitler Youth?

A: Dropped out? That would have been impossible because it was obligatory to join. You had to have a qualified reason, like maybe losing one leg or something like that, that you couldn't do it, but as long as you were healthy and you didn't have Jewish blood for five generations, then you had to join.

Q: So how did that work, being a part of the Hitler Youth and rebelling against them at the same time? How did it work being part of the Hitler Youth and rebelling against them at the same time?

A: Ha. Well of course we tried to be as clandestine as possible, so on the surface, we were just very loyal members of the Hitler Youth and our movement was rather underground. Okay. So it was so it was what in Germany you call Schikane, based upon our dislike for authority.

Q: How did your parents react to this? Did they even know what you were doing?

A: They didn't know. They didn't. My father was in France so there was only my mother. I was the only one left. My brother had died. He died in '41. And so I was the only one left and she never knew what I was and sometimes I didn't come home at night, and the poor woman. Why are you -- I didn't know, I just -- I should have been born in west Texas on a big ranch.

Q: Do you remember their names, your friends in the edelweiss pirates?

A: Oh, there was -- yeah, there was Eddie Violent (ph) was one.

Q: Was he a good friend, Eddie Violent?

A: Yes, he still is. He's dying, but I talk to him once in awhile. He's still hanging in there.

Q: How did you meet him?

A: He was a neighbor.

Q: And how did you --

A: He's the one, Eddie, who took over -- who took over the Jewish bar. When I was arrested, Eddie knew him, so he went over and stayed -- for the rest of the war, he stayed with Eddie.

Q: So explain that. How did that happen? You're in the edelweiss pirates and you decide you're going to hide a Jewish boy?

A: Maybe -- maybe -- I don't know, maybe I should think a little more about what I did and how I did it, but maybe one of the things was that we did not enjoy the procedure of the Hitler Youth being helpful in the prosecution of Jews, which they were, and I had these friends, they didn't do any harm to anybody. They were nice kids and so on, and so we were very much interested in helping the underdog. So we considered the Jews underdogs. And so this one guy, when we knew they were being evacuated and sent to places, well, we didn't want him to go. I didn't know his parents, and so I just thought one day if you don't want to go, you can stay with me. And so he stayed with me for, oh, I don't know, I would say probably six months or eight months. And it was not broadcast in my family that he's a Jew. It was just he's a young man who needs a little help and can he stay with us? Yeah, he can sleep in my brother's bed, you see. And so in the apartment housing which we lived in, there were a total of six parties, ____+ . So they didn't know that he was a Jewish boy. It was not broadcast. He was just a friend. And so when I was arrested, then -- I believe that when I had a visit with -- from my mother, the question came out of what are we going to do with Hans Dieter (ph)? I said call Eddie Violent he's going to take care of him. So he took over. That was just one block from our house, and his situation was a little nicer because he lived a house. The house was his. Okay. So he had a little more freedom and who walked in his house. Okay. And he stayed with him for the rest of the war. What happened with him afterwards, I do not know, and I asked Eddie and he didn't know -- oh, yeah. He told me one day, he said guess what? You remember Hans? Yeah. He died.

Q: What was his name, Hans?

A: Hans Dieter Von Schwejk (ph).

Q: Von Schwejk?

A: But I don't know whether the parents ended up most likely in the concentration camp somewhere. I don't know details. I don't know what happened to him after the war, so...

Q: So your -- your friend, I mean he was in the edelweiss pirates with you. Did he have scathingly brilliant ideas?

A: Eddie, yeah, Eddie is extremely, extremely talented with his hands. He can build anything. I have to ship a stove. He built a stainless stove for me. I have to ship it, it's too damn heavy, but I have to ship it to the States sometime. So he would help us many if we want to break in somewhere, he would give us the key or the **Dietrich** it's called in Germany. It's kind of thing that fits any lock. So he would do things like that, and yeah, anything mechanical and so on, he would help. That was mostly his work. He was not a very athletic type. He was more the thinker and the doer.

Q: Was there anything else that you did because it was against policy of the Nazis?

A: I think what was more than anything was that you could not argue. You could not discuss. You had to accept whatever was said as the final truth, and I liked the idea of asking why and how and you couldn't. So that was a little against my nature of just accepting things blindly.

Q: So where did you get non-government information from? Where did you get that information?

A: From radio, BBC, from some foreign magazine. My father bought some home once in awhile, books.

Q: Tell me about the POWs.

A: The POW? Well, my father was a linguist, and as a little boy, he would see to it that I spoke French. So he would tell me in French, get me my slippers or good evening. And so I know my father or I knew my father only as pere, which is father in French. I never called him **Papi** or father, it's always pere. And so not too far from my home was a factory -- paper machine factory, and in the basement of the factory were French prisoners of war. And understand that there were quite a few factories where they put the prisoners in the bottom and made the enemy -- somehow made the enemy know that there were prisoners so they wouldn't bomb the factory and kill their own people. And so the lower windows had these had these iron bars, and through them I could see them and there was enough to shake hands or to give them something, so I went there once and practiced French. Bonsoir, mes amis. Comment ça va? And so -- Qu'est-ce que vous avez besoin? What do you need. I remember one gave me a little piece of wood and he had written down, when will the French prisoners of war be liberated? And I thought oh, God, I have no answer for this. I don't know. I felt a little bad that I didn't have an answer, but I brought them things to eat. I didn't have much, but I brought them a little bread or things. And then they gave me letters to send, and when my father came to town -- that was one thing about my dad. He was very much in favor of helping the underdog,

and you should see the testimony he got from French men after the war. It was very beautiful. And he became an immediate chief interpreter of the French military government because -- so anyway, I gave them the letters and he would see that the letters would go to their destination in France and I would get answers back, and so I was the middle man kind of. And yeah, I was -- I went there at least three times -- three times a week and somehow -- you know, in Germany, neighbors know what you're doing. I mean you cannot do anything without somebody knowing. Spitzel. They watch over you. So somehow my activities with the French prisoners of war became known, not to the point where they prosecuted me immediately or looked for me, but it became known. So that is what the judge brought up, and you know, from the police when I was arrested and went to the police pres -- first through polizei revier Polizeirevier, and then to the polizei presidio Polizeipräsidium and then the Gestapo until eventually I went to prison, but then things came up. You like French, huh? That's how it started. So I don't remember your last question.

Q: Well, I just asked you about the POWs, what your relationship with them --

A: Yeah, oh, yeah. The POWs. So those -- those -- that's my POWs. That's why I tried to help them with a little food here and there and take their letters and bring them mail from their families, and so they were happy to see me and I was happy to practice a little French with them.

Q: Did you experience the bombing of Düsseldorf at all?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Can you explain how that worked, what that process was?

A: Well, of course the siren, when it started, went {making noise} and then when it was over it would go {making noise}., monotone. Well, when it started, everybody would run as fast as possible into the basement or to the bunker. There were bunkers all over town, and then would you hear the bombs falling. Düsseldorf was destroyed 75 percent. So yeah, and in '43, it became a nightly affair. Düsseldorf or the vicinity was bombed. It's a very industrial city and very close to the rural region where all the steel industry of Germany is so...

Q: So I mean were you personally affected by the bombing?

A: By affected, you would wake up in the morning, and these houses over there didn't exist anymore, they were ruins and you would have to go a long way around to get where you wanted to go and things like that. And you heard that such and such family, they were killed during the bombardment. And I heard once this guy, believe it or not, he survived with his bed. He ended up in the other house across the street. Things like that.

And so, yeah, that's how I was affected, and we lived south of town, which was a residential area which was not heavily bombed.

Q: Did you hear about Volksschädlinge, public enemies, Volksschädlinge,?

A: Volksschädlinge, oh yeah, the Volks Schadlinge Volksschädlinge.

Q: Public enemies?

A: Of course in Düsseldorf and every major square you had several things. Once a week you had the farmers -- the farmer's market there, and then generally you had restrooms underneath, and then you had the Stürmer, and loudspeakers. When Hitler spoke of course, he would sit there and listen to the loudspeakers, and the Stürmer of course would bring out the newest in -- in what the Jews did, what they had done, what they did, how they behaved, how terrible they were and so on and so forth. Cartoons of Jews, picture of Jews, the Jewish barber accused of raping a customer and so on and so forth.

Q: I mean would you see people standing there reading them?

A: Oh, yeah, sure. You would stand there. It was up there. It was like a showcase with the newspaper filled the entire, you know, the page of a newspaper, filled the entire case. As a matter of fact, you have one in the -- in the -- in the holocaust museum. Yeah, it's a replica. It's perfect. That's -- that's it. Yeah, people would stand there, yeah, and read and they would read in front of the newspaper building. They put out not only Stürmer, but they put out the daily newspaper. So people stood there in line, but yeah, Stürmer, yeah, it was always something new, yeah.

Q: Did you hear about people taking property after a bombing?

A: Well, taking property was something that happened not infrequently. After Kristallnacht, it was a common thing, and of course -- of course after the Jews had no recourse. It was nothing they could do, whether they liked it or not. And I often wonder if the guy had not killed ____, what would have happened. Something else would have happened, I'm pretty sure but...so, so Stürmer, yeah, sure, people stood there. Some laughed because some of the cartoons were funny with the big noses and so on.

Q: Do you remember the day you were arrested?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: So tell me about that day. What was going on?

A: A friend of mine and I walked out of the pool room after we heard the siren. It was after an attack, a bomb attack. We walked outside and this is on the Kings Avenue. It's like Fifth Avenue. It's one of the well-known streets in the world, ____ in Berlin ____ in Düsseldorf, fancy stores, expensive stores. It's a very fashion city, Düsseldorf, and wide

avenues beautiful trees, parks and so on. Anyway, we walked out, and right next to the Cafe Meintz (ph) was a shoe store, and the shoes were just all over the place, so we didn't have to get into the store to get them. We picked them up on the street, and -- but it was dark. So it was cold. It was January, and I just stuffed a bunch of, I think five or six. I stuffed them in here and said let's go, and we went to the -- believe it or not, we went out to Adolf Hitler Platz. The lights went on and people came out of the bunker, and I looked at the shoes and I realized they were all lefties, and I thought golly. Well, an old lady came -- an elderly lady came. I said, would you like some shoes? Here, why don't I make you happy. I have my shoes. Oh, come on. I tried to persuade her, and I didn't see the policeman that was there. Hey, what do you have there? And I said nothing. Let me see. And I started running, and he whistled, and I think I made three blocks or something and there was a guy a big bear of a guy like you, and he opened his arms. He gave me a bear hug. Yep, and so I was taken to the polizei revier Polizeirevier, and from there I went to the polizei presidio Polizeiprasidium, headquarters. And then questions, questions, questions, and then because they felt that I was -- I think they felt that I should be interviewed by the Gestapo. So I went to the I think {?Prinzgelstrasse?} where the Gestapo was, and I had to undress and then examined me and they didn't -- oh, I have to make something clear so it makes more sense. I was born almost circumcised, which does happen. Instead of having the long foreskin -- I mean the head of the penis was sticking out a little bit. So when I started to masturbate and have fun sexually, it hurt, and so I told my father. He took me to the doctor, and I remember he said, I give you one mark if you don't scream. So I had to pull the skin back as far as it go, and he came with a long needle and {making noise}, and I got one mark. So but when the Rassenexperte (ph), ____+ he looked at me and said this is a Juden, and so they argued and looked at me and then they called somebody who was really a specialist and he looked at me and no, no, no, no. No, he's not Jewish at all, but I almost -- I almost became a Jew there for awhile. So from the Gestapo I was sent to prison, and then and then I went to court on April the 12th and from then it went on.

Q: So what went through your head when you were arrested, what were you thinking?

A: Through my head?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh, I was sure that at one point I would be released. If you had told me you're going to be locked up for the next two years.

End of File One

Beginning File Two

Q: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Walter Meyer, conducted by William Meinke on May 20th in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. This is part two of an interview that began yesterday, May 19th. So Herr Meyer, I'd like you -- yesterday, we finished with your arrest. Is there anything else you want to say about your arrest?

A: Well, I think -- I think we finished yesterday with a bear hug.

Q: Yes.

A: Right. So I couldn't run any longer. I had to surrender, and shortly thereafter, the policeman who wanted to arrest me in the first place, he caught up, took me and took me to the police station, and --

Q: Did he say anything to you?

A: Yeah, he was very angry to me, as a matter of fact, he got behind me an orfiager (ph), and they're going to teach you how to treat a German police officer, and so on, these words, and, oh, maybe an hour later, I was taken to the Polizeiprasidium, which would be equal to a police headquarters, and there they tried to get the documents together since mine is a rather common name where my parents live, the address, birth date, et cetera, et cetera, and when all that was done and I was asked what I had done and I played kind of innocent, I haven't done anything. Well, we will find out about you if you don't want to talk. So I was at the Polizeiprasidium and that's where interrogation continued, or let's say it started all over again, the same questions, and I gave the same answers, but then I realized they knew more than I knew about me, and when that verhör, that interrogation ended, I was taken to the Gestapo headquarters, and they then forgot the matter of the shoes very much. That was not even mentioned. They kind of wanted to hear about the Edelweisspiraten, my contact with French prisoners of war and my membership in the Hitler Youth and why I had done that, and one of them seemed to be a little -- what's the word I'm looking for? He didn't quite trust me. So I was asked to undress, and then they looked at my genitals -- genitals and one says, It's a Juden. This is a Jew. No, no. Yes, yes. Well, then they called someone who was more of an expert, and he didn't quite know what to do with me, and then they got a super experts, ehnrassenkundige (ph), and he looked at me and he realized that that no, I was not really circumcised, it was only half circumcision or something like that, and so I was able to get dressed again and one told me boy, you're lucky you got away with it. You're lucky you're not Jewish. And I got dressed again, and then all this took an hour, two hours. I don't know. And then I was driven to the prison, and the prison I was given prison clothing and I was taken to my cell, which was going to be my home for I guess about a month.

Q: Was that a youth facility or was that --

A: Oh, no, it was --

Q: An adult prison.

A: It was a regular prison, yeah, and I drove by there many times when I went to workout at the swim club. We drove by the prison many times. We made jokes. We call it the -- the -- it had a special name. We called coffee so-and-so, cafe so-and-so, and of course at that time I never dreamed that I would become an occupant of it. Well, I was in one cell. It was a small cell, with one window, and with a little effort I could look out of the window, at least a little part of it, and I saw a courtyard, and my neighbor next door, a young man, he yelled all day long, by all day long, *liebataten dieant* (ph), and God, it was horrible to listen, until his voice got really horse, *liebataten* (ph), and I heard that later on he ate his own feces and was taken to a state hospital. So well, in the morning, we were to take our *kübel*, we called it, it was a container out of ceramic container, big container and we had to take this one behind the other and go to the main section where we emptied it and rinsed it and then took it back, and in the meantime there, we were able to sit down a row of people and do our business, went back to the cell. And I think maybe the third or fourth day, I was asked to join a group, and we were supposed to sew buttons on tents for soldiers. We did that. Then I did another job with something like weeding. And then I have to emphasize this over and over again, that I tried every -- I mean I dreamed of escaping, and so I figured that if I don't eat for awhile I'm going to faint probably and they'd take me to a hospital and then from the hospital I can easily escape. So I didn't eat for ten days, and yeah, I kind of fainted, but instead of taken to the hospital, they whipped my butt, because they realized I did this not as an accident but purposely. So that didn't work. Well, I was in that prison until April the 12th when I was taken to the court, and that's where I saw -- after awhile I saw my parents for the first time. My father, my mother was there. They looked very stern. My mother was crying and my father had engaged the services of two attorneys that didn't do anything. I assumed the attorneys didn't really have much power. They had to say yes and no, and be very obedient to the judge who was the most powerful autocrat. And so then the ceremony began. Walter Meyer, stand up. You're Walter Meyer. Yeah. You're accused of plunder. That was the prosecuting attorney talking, and I don't know whether you're aware, but this automatically called for the death penalty, and one of the attorneys jumped and held my arm, and said that's not the last word. And, well, they narrated, *esplundern aktiviteten* the *Edelweisspiraten* forbid den know mitsa creeks fangen and so on.(ph) And then they rested their case, and then they excused themselves and went to have I assume a conference of some sort. And they came back, the judge then made it clear, said I cannot call this *plundern*. The most I can call it *einfacher Diebstahl*, simple theft, and I have even questions about that, but this young man needs a strong remedy. He obviously doesn't quite fit into into what our country needs and contact with the enemy destroying state property, all this. However, I have take in to consideration that he was an

outstanding athlete. I also consider that that he lost one brother and -- but I feel that I should give him a minimum or maximum penalty, which means that after one year of good conduct, he can join the armed forces, so he's got a chance. It all depends upon him. So it's one to four years. If he doesn't have good behavior then he has to stay for three years. Do you understand that? Yes, I understand. Okay. That was the end of the case. Then I was taken -- went back to the prison. Maybe three, four, five days later I was called, get dressed and I was taken to the railroad station, and from there, I went what is called a German auf transport. (ph) I went first to Cologne, stayed at the Klinger Priz prison, (ph) which was rather interesting because we were in cells that had to be vacated every so often, because from there you could look down at the courtyard where they would chop heads, okay and we were not supposed to see that. Well, we heard this - - the stotten clerk (ph) bim, bim, bim, bim. {making noises} So we had to move to the other side, and when the storm was over we went back, but that prison was so full of bugs -- red bugs. Oh, it was disgustingly dirty. But I was there maybe two days, three days. From there, I went to Coblenz. Coblenz to Frankfurt. Frankfurt then by bus to Butzbach, and from there we walked, that means a policeman and I. Policeman looked at me and said, look, let's not have any problems. Walk nicely next to me and we won't have any problem. Don't try to escape. Don't make my life difficult, okay. So he delivered to me to the Rockenberg youth prison.

Q: Before one more, Walter, do you think you can talk about the trial in Spanish?

A: Yes, of course.

Q: So do you want to start?

A: {speaking Spanish} (17:00) entre la corte...la puesa prosecutor y prosecutor lista comitado aver abrogado contacto con prisioneros de guerra frances que nuestros amigos juventud hitleristo destruyo propiedad del Estado equal termino entonces...palabra... I went back to the prison.

Q: So you arrived in the youth detention center, the jugendstrafanstalt in Buchenberg. So what did you see there, what did you -- what met you there?

A: What did I see in the jugendstrafanstalt?

Q: When you arrived, how did that work?

A: Well, first, I was impressed by -- sounds a little funny in prison setting, sounded beautiful, but this was a beautiful setup because it was not a prison per se, but it used to be a convent or cloister and the area was rather, rather attractive, and well, like in every prison, first you surrender the clothes you have, and they give you a prison uniform. They gave me a cell, which would be my home for awhile, and we had lessons there of geography and so on and so forth, I mean, not very considerable but maybe -- maybe

twice a week or maybe only once a week. I don't remember too well. And my neighbor - my neighbor in the cell there after, he was kind of a, like later in the concentration, in the capo, he was a privileged prisoners, his cell door was always open. He could walk in and out when he want to, and I found out that he had killed his father. But see killing your father was not as bad as helping French prisoners of war, something like that. Anyway in my cell, and then a week, two weeks later, then they found out that I hid -- I had more education than the rest of the prisoners. They were more of the lower echelon of society, so it was an elderly police employee who was the buyer. He would buy vegetables and things that the kitchen of the prison need, and they needed an assistant and he picked me. And as such of course I could have survived forever there and I would have gained quite a bit of weight because the food was at my disposal, and so I did that for awhile until I had the problem with my attempt to escape. Do you want me to go into that?

Q: Please.

A: Well, I was supposed to take control over certain things. That means I had -- I did a little bureaucracy, what we bought and so on, and nicely organized, and I was in the part of the prison that was the cloister at one time, very thick walls, but I found a little window where the bars, one bar was loose. I could take it out. I assume -- it was a convent, and so it was wear and tear over the years and years and years. So I figured that would be my chance to escape. And I wrote a little note to my father, whom I expected to visit, and a little map where he would have to expect me and so on. I mean it was nicely detailed, small letters. I folded that, put it in my pocket, and somehow, I don't know how, but I lost the little piece of paper and it was found and I was called before the warden.

Q: What made you think your father would help you?

A: I would climb out and he would be waiting with a car.

Q: Well, what made you think that your father would agree to that, that he would help? Did you believe your father would help?

A: Yeah.

Q: No question?

A: No question. No question. Oh, yes. And of course it was ideal because it was in France, so I would have disappeared in France, would have been ideal solution, but it didn't work that way. And so no more visits from then on. I went in the dungeon for 28 days and --

Q: What's the dungeon?

A: Well, the solitary cell for 28 days, *swalik en bot en vassel* (ph). So that was my first severe penalty, and after that I had two more like that. So I became an ordinary prisoner and oh, I -- I -- I, yes, and one day, I told one of the guards that I would like very much to work in the quarry and he was kind of a nice guy. I'll see what I can do. Okay. So I ended up in the quarry, which was about I would say 20 miles away from the prison, and a very, very large pit which had several levels. The levels were occupied by different, they were Russian prisoners, French prisoners, and we were on the top and there was a rail going up and one of the privileged prisoners controlled the brakes, that is he let the full lorries go down to the valley and brought an empty one up and we had to fill each lorry with, what, 12 lorries a day or we would get no food, and we -- the rail for the lorries then from the brake station were then two of the different niches where the prisoners worked, so I had this and another one had this and so on. And there was one prisoner who was quite a bit older than I and he obviously had some practice and he taught me how to pick, how to get a rock out. I never knew what was done with the rocks, what kind of mineral they were and they would grind them down there, but what it was for street construction, road construction, I don't know. Anyway there I worked and then of course we were not in the prison anymore. We had our barracks there. We had our own prison, you know, like in a concentration camp. We were a satellite -- satellite prison. The food was horrible, just watery soup, and if you didn't have your 12 lorries, you wouldn't get any food at all. The worst thing that ever happened was one of the guards was the most royal son of a bitch that I ever met, but we had -- to do our business, we had a pole sticking from one place to the other and a ditch underneath. We sit on the pole and shit in the ditch so to speak and this -- I had sawed half of the pole, and left it there of course. As the weight increased, it increased, suddenly it broke and we all ended up in the shit. And I assure you, I've worked in the country, I bread horses. I know what horses smell like. I know what cows smell like. I know what pigs smell like. Nothing worse than human shit, I mean... So then, of course (speaking German). So you try to get this shit off you and then you went, you don't have dry clothes and so that was an awful incident, and then --

Q: So why did you want to work in the quarry anyway, I mean that's hard work?

A: Because I always had in mind to escape, and I felt that being outside in nature there would be a chance, and so about close to Christmas '44, I was called before the warden. I said looks like that we as a prison authority, we are unable to do any good. You need something a little more severe, and I believe that the armed forces are probably the best *artznei*, (ph) the best, the best --

Q: Medicine?

A: The best medicine for you. Therefore, I consider sending you to join the armed forces. And I softly protested I think. After I had been in the dungeon twice already at

that time, I said I'm in no condition to satisfy the demands of the armed forces, so why don't you allow me to go home and recoupe a little bit and then I'll be more than happy to join the forces. I was excused and then as always, the other prisoners, you know, you walk one behind the other asked what happened? What happened? And I said well, they're trying to make cannon fodder out of me, and one of prisoners reported that he wanted to join the forces and they wouldn't let him, and I had a sense to do it, but I protested. I didn't want to become cannon fodder. I was called again. Did you say that? Yes, I did. All right. Thank you. And two days later I was transferred to the youth concentration camp.

Q: So we'll take a break.

A: Okay.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview