

Wolfgang Mueller

Tape 1 Side A

January 21, 1998

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Abstract

This tape begins with Wolfgang Mueller being born on March 10, 1919 in Hanover, Germany and ends when he goes to the US in 1936. His ancestors had lived in rural areas of Westphalia for centuries. They moved to Hanover when his father wanted to open a law practice. Wolfgang had a younger brother and an older sister. He attended a Folkshule for four years and then entered a gymnasium which he left when refused to make the Nazi salute, "Heil Hitler." He had learned about Nazism from Hitler's radio speeches and from Nazi posters in the neighborhood. The family was not religious but he attended B'nai B'rith camp and was Bar Mitzvah. In 1933 Wolfgang was sent to boarding school in England and in 1936 went alone to Albuquerque, New Mexico to live with a cousin. Upon arrival, the family is in mourning for the cousin but they agree to care for Wolfgang..

Tape two begins when Wolfgang arrives in Albuquerque when the family is mourning his uncle's recent death. He joins them at their mountain estate in New Mexico and then goes into the family business in the hardware clerical department and works himself up to salesman where he does some traveling. His sister arrives in the US and takes a physical therapist position in DC and soon she marries. His mother comes to visit his sister and, after Kristallnacht, receives a telegram from his father to remain in the US. By taking residence in Mexico, she is able to obtain a visa. Soon the father and brother go to England. Wolfgang gets drafted in 1941 and requests overseas duty where he becomes a translator. He arrives in England and enables his brother to take a ship to the US. Wolfgang believes that the average German did not want to kill Jews but did so since killing Jews was the program. The first concentration camp he saw was Nordhausen Concentration Camp in May 1945 where they found sick and dying people. He returned to the US and was discharged on January 11, 1947. The tape ends when he is choosing between his job as Manager of Tire Services in Las Vegas for \$100 a week or possibly seek a position as cab driver in DC where he might make \$100 as week.

The final tape begins when World War II ends and Wolfgang gets discharged from the service. He has the idea of becoming a writer but goes into the meat business with his brother-in-law. He marries an American and has two children. After they marry, he goes into the real estate business. Finally he becomes a partner in the fish business with his brother-in-law. He no longer fears people or taking risks. He has changed as no longer feels that being a Jew is a curse. Wolfgang says he is comfortable with traditional Judaism but observes it without rituals. He feels detached when he thinks of the concentration camp he viewed. He believes that his Holocaust experiences made him hard. His family including his granddaughter identify with Judaism and the Holocaust. They attended the dedication of the Holocaust Museum. Wolfgang

feels comfortable when he returns to German and attended a ceremony in honor of his grandmother.

Summary

- 00:00 Wolfgang Mueller was born on March 10, 1919 in Hanover, Germany. He has records dating back to his grandfather's grandfather, Carmen (?) Mueller who lived in Sturmanen (?) near Gazeler (?). Wolfgang's Hebrew name is Yitzchak after Carmen's son, Yitzchak. Wolfgang's mother, Ann Rosenthal came from the same part of Westphalia, Germany. Her descendant, Rabbi Hirsh Cohen took part in the conference for emancipation of the Jews when Napoleon came to West Germany in the early 19th century. Wolfgang's father was an attorney and moved to Hanover, the largest city of Westphalia to set up his practice. He was born in Partebon (?), a rural town. His family was in the feed and grain business for centuries. After his father was born in the 19th century, the Jews were emancipated and he could attend college. The family including his brother would often visit Newhouse where there were many cousins. Wolfgang's brother is Dr. Klaus Peter Mueller who is seven years younger and lives in Palo Alto, California. Wolfgang was born close to central Hanover and lived in a first floor luxurious apartment at #18 Ferberplatz near Listerplatz. Seventy-five percent of Hanover was destroyed during World War II but both this house and their next home is still standing.
- 05:00 Wolfgang's father was a professional and they were upper middle class. Both grandparents were wealthy merchants. The Jews in Germany were different from those in Eastern Europe as they were emancipated for 50 years and worked hard to become mainstream in the country. His father served as a soldier in World War I, went to Freiburg University where he belonged to a Jewish fraternity, and fought with sabers causing scars on his handsome face. They lived in a suburban neighborhood reminiscent of his current home. There is a great similarity in how he lived in Germany and how his grandchildren live here. When he was seven years old, the family moved to their second home at 11 Vermouten Strasse in Clayfield when his brother was born and at the time Wolfgang had whooping cough. He was taken out of school due to his illness and in the Fall of 1928 was cared for by his grandmother in Newhouse. They had a ping pong set in his new house and Wolfgang tried to play it. He would play with his trains under the dining room table. They had a Christmas tree with presents though identified themselves as Jewish with Bar Mitzvah. His mother would take him to the beach on the North Sea, to Norderoren (?) on the Frisian Islands. They would take a train to Emden and then a steamer (where he experienced seasickness) to the Island.
- 10:00 He spent time on the beach and believes that his good health is due to that experience. When he was older, he had non-Jewish friends. The neighborhood of his second home

was mixed with Jewish and non-Jewish. Their next-door neighbors were the Fonleidens (?). The father was a lawyer in the provincial government and the son was the same age as Wolfgang's sister, Gertrude, who was born in 1915, four years before him. She lives here in the US. At age six he was admitted to the Folkschuler and received a large cone-shaped bag of candy and all the new students had their picture taken. After four years, he went to a gymnasium, the Lichboux (?) School in the central part of the city after passing an entrance exam. Children in the lower class attend the Folkschuler for an additional three years and take up trades rather than attend a gymnasium. There were both Jews and non-Jews at the gymnasium.

15:00 Occasionally someone called him, "Jew" and he would beat up the child. Wolfgang was more interested in soccer and fusbball (?) than schoolwork. He spent most of his time making up teams. Most of the teams were working class and became Nazis later. Wolfgang was an avid reader. He belonged to the Boy Scouts, learned how to ski and other athletics including learning tennis at 10 or 11 at a clubhouse. There he associated with a better class of children but not necessarily Jewish. The family had a sedar but it was not as important to the children as Christmas. He attended synagogue with his father at the High Holidays. Later he attended Hebrew School and got ready for Bar Mitzvah. He saw Jewish children and was active in young people's synagogue activities. His father was president of B'nai B'rith in Hanover. Wolfgang was involved with Judaism and knew he was Jewish. He attended the B'nai B'rith Camp as a pre-teen and as a teenager. They had kosher food and sang Hatikva and other Jewish songs. He was not proud of being Jewish. As anti-Semitism became more virulent, Wolfgang thought it a curse to be Jewish and was envious of non-Jews.

20:00 Later at school in England, he made a good friend with a boy from Frankfurt with the same background. They would take walks on Sunday and talk about the Nazis taking over so they left home which made them afraid and cursed to be Jewish. His birthday is March 10th and he was Bar Mitzvah in Spring 1933. He will be 79 years old soon. Anti-Semitism became more evident with Hitler talking on the radio and Swastikas around so he left for England. Each morning in Germany the students had to say, "Good morning" to the teachers. After the Nazis took up, they were required to put their hand up and say, "Heil Hitler." He refused to do so and the principal, Dr. Hochrensted (?) called his father and told him to send Wolfgang away or he will get into trouble. Soon after he went to England. His father knew many people and had important clients including banks and big companies. His parents did not have a good marriage which put a strain on the family. This made it easy for Wolfgang to leave. His mother had a vision and wanted them to learn English. She knew English and French and was a difficult and unusual person. Wolfgang opposed her but he is alive today because of her.

25:00 In 1933 he was sent to England. He spoke German at home and learned French at school and some English at home which his parents tried to teach him but he was not interested.

He felt German. By having a Bar Mitzvah, he knew that he was Jewish and different from other Germans. He would go to an indoor pool with a friend and knew that Jews were not permitted there. They quickly put on their bathing trunks so no one would see they were Jewish as it was dangerous. At age 10 or 11 he was in the 3rd grade in 1929 or 1930 and there were kiosks or Litvaksoilers (?) on the corner with round corners upon which they hung posters. They were colorful, advertising soap powder or political posters. The Nazi posters were especially colorful with lots of writing that he would read and were decorated with swastikas. They said that the Jews were running the country so they had to get rid of them. One day as they were traveling by car he heard the radio report that the National Socialists had gained seats in the German parliament and he got scared but his father said it was all right. He felt traumatic, scary, that something threatening was out there but did not speak about it to friends or family. In January 1933 Hitler was Chancellor and Wolfgang was in England when the German parliament was burning.

- 30:00 The summer after his Bar Mitzvah, his parents thought they would save their first-born so started getting Wolfgang ready for England by teaching him English. He was taken out of school as he was uncomfortable to say, "Heil Hitler" as Hitler wanted to kill the Jews. The parents made arrangements through their former au pair to enroll Wolfgang in a boarding school in England. For Wolfgang, it was an exciting trip to go by boat and train by himself to London where he was picked up by a woman at Victoria Station. He had a flower in his lapel to be identified. His school was in Norwood, south of London. He thought it was just a vacation away from his parents. He learned English quickly as he had to use it when requesting food at the table in his boarding house. He also learned it by attending movies and walking around London. He walked alone from Norwood to the London Bridge so had to learn some English. After a month, his mother and sister came and enrolled him in school without telling his father. He attended the Ural Castle Boarding School in Surrey. Wolfgang accepted it and made friends there. It was exciting to live in a castle.
- 35:00 He became bosom friends with a Jewish boy from Palestine. Wolfgang was a good tennis player. At the boarding school there were only Jews. The non-Jews did not know the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish. He learned that people are the same all over. They all liked sports and girls although they spoke different languages. **Tape 1, Side B.** It was a military type school with uniforms, jogging cross-country in the morning which he enjoyed, cricket which he learned and soccer where he was goalie. He traveled all over England for soccer and learned English. He was not aware of the events of the time. Sometimes he returned to Germany on vacation. Two or three times he returned to Germany and pretended he was English as he could speak it by then. He knew it was dangerous for him to be in Germany. The Nazis had conditioned him to conduct himself in a way to stay out of trouble. He would speak English with his sister in a

restaurant and were waited on as they were thought to be foreigners, rather than Jews who were not allowed to enter. He kept busy in England and did not miss his siblings. His mother returned and removed him from Epson and put him into Cranbrook in Kent, a better school.

- 40:00 Wolfgang liked his father better as his mother made him do things. His father was easy to be around. When he was little, his father permitted him to play with his typewriter. His mother was more demanding. His father was very busy due to his connections. He was the focal point of the Jewish community. His father was able to get people out of concentration camps and obtain permits for those who needed them. His father did not want to leave Germany as he was needed there and he made lots of money. He knew the Chief of Police and the District Attorney and got along with everyone. He was intellectual and everyone liked him because he was down-to-earth. In 1938 the Director of Wolfgang's high school called his father because the Chief of Police had called that he must leave or he will be arrested. After Kristallnacht, his father called his cousin in Paris that he must leave immediately without his belongings. The cousin said to travel by boat and they will take care of him. The Blitzkrieg had occurred and the Parisian family was arrested. Wolfgang's father escaped being interned in England as he told them that he knew all the airports in Germany.
- 45:00 After Wolfgang heard the Nazis sing "Jeudenblude" (Jewish blood), he did not say, "Heil Hitler" as he did not want to be killed. His Jewish friends were Zionists. He was in the Boy Scouts at the Jewish Community Center where he learned about Palestine. His friend's brother left Germany by bicycle and went through Czechoslovakia and reached Palestine. Wolfgang's parents were just German, not Zionist. He did not talk politics with them. Things were according to what his father said. His mother did not agree and did things behind his back. When he was in Germany on vacation, his mother asked him to put money into an English bank. His father did not want to do that as it was illegal. Wolfgang put the money into his tennis racquet which he placed in his rucksack and was worried that the customs officer would find it but he didn't. When he reached England, Wolfgang hid the money for months before banking the few thousand dollars. He just stayed a short time on his trips to Germany and would tell stories about England and visit his relatives. He knew that bad things were happening in Germany and desired to return to England. He saw some restrictive signs on stores.
- 50:00 Jews were conditioned to restrictions. His grandmother remained in Germany until she was deported to the camps. She believed that Terezin was a good place. No one thought they would be slaughtered in the camps. Wolfgang was aware of discrimination and was skilled to deal with it. He got along and made believe that he was the same as the others. Now, as an adult he is strong, a right wing Jew who does not like Arafat (currently visiting the Museum). The Jews in Germany rationalized so much. His father was a reader and intellectual and knew about Jews and the Maccabees. He rationalized that all

would be all right so one must get along as Israel will not work. Wolfgang left England in 1936. The Nazis did not permit Marks be sent out of the country.

- 55:00 Therefore, Wolfgang's father had to make special arrangements to pay for Wolfgang's tuition. His father knew a man named Max Newhouse in American, a distant relative of his Wolfgang's mother who is the son of the Rabbi where his father attended cheder (Hebrew School). German Jews, unlike the Eastern European Jews, were not afraid of pogroms. Except for class discrimination, Wolfgang's father experienced no discrimination. Max Newhouse was President of his company in Albuquerque, New Mexico and took care of old ladies. He would send money to the old ladies and they sent it on to Wolfgang's school. His father told Wolfgang to write to Max and acknowledge the check and thank him. Max told Wolfgang to finish school and come to Albuquerque and go into his business. Wolfgang was 15 or 16 and excited to go so his parents sent him. His brother was younger and boys go before girls so Wolfgang's sister came a year later to the US. Next, Wolfgang's mother left and, finally, his father and brother left for the US. Wolfgang received a letter from Newhouse and went to his school and said he would like his certificate. He passed his exam in German, French, math, and English.
- 60:00 Chairman Osborne cooperated and took Wolfgang out of class and gave him a reading schedule for a month and he passed the exam and received his certificate. Usually, one needs to be 18 to acquire a certificate. Wolfgang's friend at Cranbrook was less athletic than him but they had an intellectual relationship agreeing that it was a curse to be a Jew. The boy's family was in the jewelry business in Frankfurt but Wolfgang has lost track of him. After Wolfgang passed his exam, he had to obtain a visa. Max had sent affidavits and his number was called and he went to the American Consulate in Hamburg. There was a "Look" magazine in the waiting room which had a double page of a white convertible Packard and Wolfgang said that is what he wanted. Wolfgang left early July '36 and his father kissed him and his mother was teary as he boarded his boat. His father gave him advice that since he did not go to college, he should get into business. Also, he told him not to lie to anyone as a liar must have a good memory and he is not that smart. It was not hard to say good-bye to his siblings. They all had dinner on board the "President Hardy."
- 65:00 His family waved to him as the boat left the dock and he went to his cabin. He was not sad but happy to be on his own, to prove himself. Wolfgang had a great time on the boat and had a girl friend who showed him New York. On his first night in New York, he felt like a millstone fell off his chest as he was free and had escaped. He must have had some knowledge of the events of the time though he was not worried about his family. He focused on being in America where there were ice cream sundaes, banana splits and gorgeous girls. He went to American Express and exchanged the coupon that his father had bought him for a ticket to Albuquerque. He made this exchange in good British English and was told for the same price he could fly to Chicago and get a Pullman there

to Albuquerque which would be quicker. Because he could not place all his luggage on the airplane, he had to send his luggage ahead. His relatives in New Mexico must have received a big bill for his luggage.

70:00 A man with white hair and bushy eyebrows sat near him on the plane and was frequently visited by a man with a typewriter. Wolfgang spoke to the man with white hair. They left the plane and three months later he saw John L. Lewis in the movies and realized that was the man he spoke to. When Wolfgang reached Chicago, he stayed at the Palmer Hotel and saw burlesque. He went to American Express and found out it would take several days by train to get to Albuquerque. It was very hot in Chicago. There was an election with Roosevelt running against Landon. It was even hotter when he got to Albuquerque that he thought he could fry an egg on the sidewalk. A cousin, Rudolf Dyer and a German man met him. Max Newhouse had died and they were in mourning. The family found a letter on Max's desk about Wolfgang and told him not worry, that they will take care of him.

74:00

Wolfgang Mueller

Tape 2 Side A

January 21, 1998

RG-50.106*0091.02.03

Abstract

This part begins when Wolfgang arrives in Albuquerque when the family is mourning his uncle's recent death. He joins them at their mountain estate in New Mexico and then goes into the family business in the hardware clerical department and works himself up to salesman where he does some traveling. His sister arrives in the US and takes a physical therapist position in DC and soon she marries. His mother comes to visit his sister and, after Kristallnacht, receives a telegram from his father to remain in the US. By taking residence in Mexico, she is able to obtain a visa. Soon the father and brother go to England. Wolfgang gets drafted in 1941 and requests overseas duty where he becomes a translator. He arrives in England and enables his brother to take a ship to the US. Wolfgang believes that the average German did not want to kill Jews but did so since killing Jews was the program. The first concentration camp he saw was Nordhausen Concentration Camp in May 1945 where they found sick and dying people. He returned to the US and was discharged on January 11, 1947. The tape ends when he is choosing between his job as Manager of Tire Services in Las Vegas for \$100 a week or possibly seek a position as cab driver in DC where he might make \$100 as week.

Summary

00:00 Wolfgang arrives on July 26, 1936 in Albuquerque when the family is in disarray due to the uncle's recent death from a heart attack at work. He stays with the family in their magnificent house and, as they are wealthy, they also have a home in the mountains near Pfalz Springs, New Mexico. After the period of mourning ends, they all go to this home. The family gets along easily with Wolfgang due to his fluent English, his talent in tennis and ability to ski. Wolfgang was driven to the mountains in a cute girl's car. He spent August and part of September there. He became friends with a Jewish cousin from Cincinnati who was his age. They took horses and a Mexican their age as their guide and camped in the mountains. It was an incredible summer. They played tennis on the court on their estate. They had separate cabins and all ate in a central area. He met young people from New York and other places. He had a ball. He thought that the US was the best place. Wolfgang forgot about Germany. He received some letters from his parents. His Uncle Heinrich who later died in a concentration camp wrote that he should marry Maxine but Wolfgang was not thinking of her. His cousin Rudolph placed him in the Hardware Department and he moved out of their home.

05:00 Wolfgang met an American boy who took him to wrestling matches, and they went drinking and on dates. He was working and he felt Americanized. First he worked as a clerk in the office and soon moved up. He dedicated himself to the job. His duty was to keep the prices in the Hardware catalog up-to-date. He would stay late Saturday night, make the changes on the mimeograph machine and send them out to the branches. He was promoted and given his own secretary. By the time the war started, he was a salesman, had his own car and his own apartment. As a salesman, he traveled using his own car. His sister arrived in the US but did not get as far as Albuquerque. She had studied exercise, massage and physical therapy. Her teacher in Hanover had a daughter, Margaret Goldman Green, two years older than her who lived in Washington, DC. She was given a package to give her. Margaret suggested she take a job at Emile's, a place like Elizabeth Arden, at 1747 Connecticut Avenue and she did so. Wolfgang's sister would go for coffee at a basement restaurant near DuPont Circle run by a German couple. The wife was from southern Germany and the husband had been a steward on the Hamburg Line. The wife had two brothers in a concentration camp for being racebreakers (?) (had German girl friends).

10:00 They had a kosher butcher shop, slaughtered meat, traded cattle and became cattle dealers. They came to the US. One, Bernie, got a job at Briggs making hot dogs starting at 2 A. M. About 11 PM he would go to his sister's restaurant and deliver orders and get tips. She told him there was a good-looking Jewish girl from Germany so he met Wolfgang's sister and they married. At the time of Kristallnacht, Wolfgang's mother was in DC visiting the sister. Then she went to Albuquerque and visited him. Wolfgang's father sent a telegram and told the mother to delay her return but she was on a Visitor's Visa. Hanover was burned and people were arrested. His father was traveling at the time of Kristallnacht. Wolfgang's 10-year-old brother saw a neighbor being dragged and beaten with a stick and thrown into a van. Immediately his brother told the father that they must leave. His brother never forgot the incident. Two years ago

Wolfgang and his brother went to Germany to a cemetery. They saw graves, one of a cousin who had taken care of his brother and died in a concentration camp. The cousin stayed with her mother instead of leaving. The following year, they received a call from Germany that they were dedicating a street to their grandmother in Noyhouse (?).

15:00 They, along with many cousins, attended the dedication and it was written up in the newspaper. The grandmother's family had been in the grain business a long time. The grandfather died before World War I. His grandmother was wealthy and had a son and an associate in the business. She would not leave and perished in Terezin and the son died in Auschwitz. Another son went to Bergen-Belsen and then to Auschwitz where he died. Their names are inscribed on the Holocaust memorial at Bonn. Wolfgang's brother took his son to the dedication. There was a Yom Ha Shoah (Day of Holocaust) service at the synagogue with a priest and no Rabbi. Wolfgang and others did the davening (praying). There were Germans present. A boy and a girl read the names and the ages of those who had died. It made him feel good. He receives literature from Hanover and other places who are writing a history of the Jews. The war started in '39, six weeks before Wolfgang's father and brother got to England. His mother remained in the US. They wrote a letter to Congress to get her a visa to remain but were not successful. Their cousin, Bernard Schuster, son of their grandmother's brothers, lived in El Paso, Texas. Wolfgang's mother went there and traveled to the consulate at Juarez, Mexico to apply for a visa number. She obtained an address in Mexico, stayed with cousin Bernard and once a month walked across the border to the consulate. The war started and Wolfgang was drafted. He visited his mother in El Paso.

20:00 He was drafted in '41, about 3 or 4 months before Pearl Harbor. He had already signed up for his first papers. He took his physical in Albuquerque and passed. At the physical he was told that he could have his number transferred to DC and go into the Army a month later. His mother had gotten a visa by then and was living with the sister in DC. Wolfgang had not seen his sister and brother-in-law. He quit his job, sold his car, packed his bags, bought gifts for his relatives and took the week-long bus trip to DC. He stopped in Kansas City where he had dealings with the Kansas City Steel Company from whom he had bought nails. They showed him a good time. He was little affected by Germany's attack on Poland as there was nothing for him to do though it was terrible. Since he was living in the US, he felt out of the European situation. Wolfgang dated Jewish girls and socialized with some Germans. He just wanted to be American. He only focused on his own life. He did not realize that the Germans were killing people until he was in Army intelligence.

25:00 Wolfgang felt fortunate that he was saved and able to get out of the Holocaust. He spent a week in New York. Was drafted into the Infantry and stationed at Ft. Lee and later to Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia. He was proud to wear the American uniform. He did not love regimentation but loved being a soldier where he made friends and had a great time. The attack on Pearl Harbor was announced on the radio when he was playing poker on his bunk. He had a full house but everyone left to listen to the radio. He was not concerned with the event, just

concerned with his good poker hand. That night everyone was crying as knew the war would start. He could not wait to get to Germany and kill Hitler. He had no fears. He heard Roosevelt speak. The next day he reported to the 1st Sgt. and was told to return his library books as he was shipping out that evening. He took a train to Florida where he was to work on air warnings. When the Japanese attacked Hawaii, no one paid attention to the warning. The Army decided to improve radar for the East Coast. Wolfgang was selected because his Form 20 indicated he had a high IQ.

30:00 He was placed in the Signal Corps which is part of the Air Corps and he applied for Officers Candidates School. Everyone seemed to be Ivy League and desired to become officers so he joined them. He marched out of the board and a red-neck captain found out he was from Germany. The next day he was sent to Jacksonville to be an MP as they did not want a German to work in the Signal Corps. Then Wolfgang volunteered for overseas duty. Since his English was good, no one thought him German. He was liked for his tennis ability. He had been stationed at a hotel in Tampa. He became a citizen at that time. From there he took a train to DC. March 23rd will be his 50th wedding anniversary. Then he went overseas on a troop ship where there was not much to do but gamble. He got lucky and won lots of money and when he reached England he used it to take out his entire outfit drinking. He could not wait to see his father and his brother in England. His father was living with a woman and his brother had been evacuated with the children and had just returned to school. Wolfgang arranged for his brother to get to the US. He took him to Cardin, Wales (shows a photo) where he put him on a boat to the US.

35:00 By the time Wolfgang returned home from the service, his brother was in the service. Wolfgang became a noncommissioned officer. He was a RAF liaison connected to the Air Corps and secured parts for American airplanes. He would go drinking at night. Then he was told to report to the ETO (European Theatre of Operations) Headquarters at Lorsch (?). They realized that he knew German and they needed an interpreter. Tape 2, Side B. Most of the interpreters were German Jews. This was Spring '45, after VE Day. Before that he was in England in the replacement parts depot for the Air Force. He was a Technical Sergeant with five stripes and did paperwork in London. Then he was ordered to intelligence at USAF Headquarters in technical intelligence. As a Tech Sergeant he commandeered transport to go anywhere he wanted.

40:00 He still had no knowledge of what happened to the Jews. He had a luxurious apartment at the West End of London where he enjoyed good conversations with others residing there and had good dates. The V2s were coming to London and took Paris. At his sister's apartment in DC he heard of the battle of Tubruk and was afraid that Hitler was taking over the whole world. He had an elated feeling when the English Army defeated Rommel at Tubruk as the Germans were finally stopped. Another big day was when he was in DC and he was visiting Congress when they passed voting rights. It had been terrible for Blacks and Jews. His current neighbors, the Spiegels, have numbers on their arms. Wolfgang helped in the B'nai B'rith project awarding \$100 citizenship prizes to urban children. Spiegel was opposed to do anything for the Blacks.

45:00 Wolfgang cannot understand their attitude. He believes that it is important to stand up for what is right and teaches that to his children. Discrimination against Blacks is terrible as this is a free country where it should not happen. Some people take their bosses attitude in fear they will lose their job. The average German did not want to kill Jews; even guards did not want to kill them. Since killing Jews was the program, that's what you did. When Wolfgang first saw animals slaughtered, he got sick but he got used to seeing it. To discriminate against anyone is terrible as everyone is an individual. Terrible things are still happening in Asia, Russia, South America and Africa. Wolfgang believes that the US is wonderful. After VE Day he got to Paris and visited relatives and gave them gifts from the PX. He was assigned as interpreter to the American engineers and officers who were sent to Germany to check out intelligence and technical things and arrest space scientists and others. He made many trips to Germany and saw the terrible conditions in the slave labor camps.

50:00 He went to the Nordhausen factory where they made V2 rockets. He went to Munich, Brunswick, Czechoslovakia, and Austria to interpret German, interpret documents and drive the jeep for the American officers. He told the Germans that he was Jewish. At the Rosenthal Factory in Czechoslovakia, he acted as secretary to obtain information. The Germans were making a lot of ceramics. The prime intelligence target was the intelligence that the Germans had on the Russians. He was at the Zeist works in Leipzig before the Russian Army arrived. Wolfgang interviewed the engineers who wanted to return with them before the Russians came. He viewed German cities destroyed, homeless people and children searching for food at garbage cans. There were DPs around the military posts. They were poor, desperate, dirty and smelly. He could not help them. The Eastern Europeans did not speak German. He was angry when he returned to the US as no one cared.

55:00 He saw so much misery. He was not angry at the German people. Wolfgang felt sorry so such devastation. People kowtowed to the Americans. The Rosenthal Factory wanted to give him a whole set of china and give him all their secrets. In '65 he was with his family in Germany at a gas station and the man who was filling up his gas was surprised that an American could speak such good German. Wolfgang informed him that he was a German Jew. When it was strictly business, he did not say that he was Jewish. Some of the technical words were hard to translate into English. If they were Nazi, he had to arrest them. Sometimes he talked to Germans who defended their position. Everyone said that they were just trying to get by. They put all the blame on Hitler. People just did what they were told. He had dinner with Dr. Offenburg in the '80s, a professor who was writing about Jewish families. He knew some of the Jews of Patabon (?) including his grandparents. He was a captain in the Vermacht. Wolfgang's niece asked him how is it possible that a country like Germany can do the destruction.

60:00 He responded that Hindenburg had cancer and that the country was a mess when Hitler came to power. They thought Hitler just a rabble rouser but he was ruthless. He had a Nazi friend who came in and clicked his heels and made the Nazi salute, "Heil Hitler" and said Hitler won't be there long and the man was shot. The power was orchestrated by Hitler. The people

were terrified. Nordhausen Concentration Camp had two rockets so the Air Force was interested. Wolfgang went with the engineers and they found sick people there. They arrived before the Infantry arrived. The place smelled. The people were in rags and some were dying. It was indescribable; no one could believe what they saw. Wolfgang felt that it could have happened to him. It was just like you see a homeless person on the street.

65:00 You don't speak to him. Neither did the prisoners speak to him. He was just there for an hour and did not go into the barracks. The work area was abandoned but they acquired documents in May '45. They saw stragglers in a field near Brunswick. The Germans left and the Americans arrived. There was no preparation to see this so no one expected to see it. Recently they found out that there were hundreds of concentration camps, not just a few. The Nazis had taken a village of farmers in Westphalia and resettled them in East Germany where they tried to create a super race. There were women there. It was endorsed by Goebbels. It was not a museum. There was a guardhouse. The prisoners were tortured. The Allies came and burned down most of it. His response to seeing these sights was similar to the other soldiers. He was different as he told his buddies in the Army that he knew what they were fighting for. His friends said no, they are the same. Wolfgang felt that the prisoners he saw were his people. The soldiers never talked about what they saw at the camps.

70:00 The military would not permit Wolfgang to go to Hanover as the Russians were there. He got to Hanover and Westphalia years later. He went home from Europe in '46. In the summer of '45 he was sent to England to translate German technical documents. He was able to spend some time with his father. He applied to be sent home. The translation center also had a section in Wright Field, Ohio so they sent him there. He was still a Technical Sergeant. He went by ship to New York where he saw Frank Sinatra at Times Square. When he reached Wright Field, he applied for discharge and they asked him to stay as a civilian translator for \$100 a week. He wanted to leave and be free. He was discharged on January 11, 1947. He went to DC and stayed with his mother and brother who was in the service.

75:00 He wore his uniform and hitched an airplane ride from National Airport to Albuquerque. He applied for his job as a veteran is entitled to get back his job. He became Manager of Tire Services in Las Vegas for \$100 a week. A man from DC said that he could make \$100 as a cab driver there so he thought he might do that instead.

Wolfgang Mueller

Tape 3 Side A

January 21, 1998

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Abstract

This final tape begins when World War II ends and Wolfgang gets discharged from the service. He has the idea of becoming a writer but goes into the meat business with his brother-in-law. He marries an American and has two children. After they marry, he goes into the real estate business. Finally he becomes a partner in the fish business with his brother-in-law. He no longer fears people or taking risks. He has changed as no longer feels that being a Jew is a curse. Wolfgang says he is comfortable with traditional Judaism but observes it without rituals. He feels detached when he thinks of the concentration camp he viewed. He believes that his Holocaust experiences made him hard. His family including his granddaughter identify with Judaism and the Holocaust. They attended the dedication of the Holocaust Museum. Wolfgang feels comfortable when he returns to German and attended a ceremony in honor of his grandmother.

Summary

00:00 This last part starts out after the war when Wolfgang gets discharged. He stops in Kansas City and visits his brother who is in the Army and they have their photo taken. Then he goes to DC. He arrives with the thought of becoming a writer or some fabulous career. His mother gives him names of people who can help with obtaining a job and he secures something small in real estate. His brother-in-law is in the meat business and rented his slaughter house to the Giant. Wolfgang gets a job with Giant unloading railcars. Soon the Giant does not need slaughter houses so Wolfgang goes to work for his brother-in-law. Wolfgang marries an American and she gives him a stronger Jewish feeling. He worked in the slaughter house until his children marry and goes into business for himself until '77. Then he goes into the real estate business. His son-in-law sold his partnership and agrees that he will not go into the meat business for ten years and goes into the fish business. Six years ago Wolfgang bought a fish business in partnership with him in Jessup, Maryland. Wolfgang does not feel the Holocaust affected him except he is now proud to be a Jew. He no longer feels that being a Jew is a curse. He feels that he will never feel afraid of anybody again.

05:00 It is a great feeling. He was never scared of going into business or losing business. He feels that he lives a great life. He feels comfortable in a traditional Jewish environment. He is modern without the rituals. His mother died January 10, 1970 and he lit the candle for her on the American anniversary rather than on the yahzeit (Hebrew anniversary) date as he acts according to his own wishes. He feels detached when he thinks of the smells and sights of the concentration camp. When his sister reads the grandmother's letters of life before the camp, she goes to pieces and does not want anything to do with Germany. He feels that the actions against the Jews were painful but it was something that happened and now you must deal with it. Terrible things happen to everyone – his mother dies, his father died. He tries to avoid personal suffering. He is hard. He does not feel that leaving home alone as a young teenager was as traumatic as his parent's marriage and he got away from them. Also, he feels that the trauma for the Jews in Germany toughened him and made him hard. He attended the Holocaust program at Frostburg College which his granddaughter has run for several years. A couple from Schindler's

list spoke and he dined with them. He found out they received \$5,000 for each speech with expenses paid and they do this frequently.

10:00 When his children were his age during the Holocaust, he was too busy making a living to think about old memories. When they went to Glen Echo, his children were furious that the Colored were not permitted to enter. His daughter is active in the Washington Hebrew Congregation and yells at the son-in-law who she thinks is a bigot. Wolfgang feels his children take after him. He feels that his political views were affected by his background. Wolfgang believes in freedom and opportunity and the American Constitution which he fought for. He has become more right wing since he is older. He is for Israel, for the right of Israelis to have a country and he supports it and the Holocaust Museum. His entire family contributes to the Holocaust Museum and attended its dedication. It was a rainy day and when he saw seven Presidents and their wives on the platform, he felt the Jews had won. For a long time, Wolfgang felt part of a lost cause but now things have turned around. He has no problems when he returns to Germany. His first trip was in '65 and he had some twinges. Another time he and his wife went to small towns and he had some twinges.

15:00 The last time he was in Germany, he met a man who has a bake shop and Wolfgang's grandfather sold flour to the man's grandfather. He visited him and saw him baking bread. They spoke in German and the man told of his travels and Wolfgang thanked him for attending the dedication. The man said he wanted to attend but his neighbors told him not to go but he did not care and went anyway. Wolfgang and the man hugged. Some Germans have guilt. Wolfgang no longer feels German but still likes German things like white wine, salami, and good service.