Interview with Herr Rolf KREISCH, conducted by Susanne Rupp on May 17, 1999.

(Tape ¼)

I: As I have already told you, we are establishing an archive of testimony we think is especially interesting from people who witnessed the events during the years 1933 to 1945. And I would ask you to tell me your life story and all the experiences which you think are important. Take as much time as you want and I will initially not interrupt but rather make notes, review them and then later will come back to the topics later.

P: Okay, interrupt me if you think that something doesn't belong in the interview. I was born on the 23rd of July, 1927, and concerning my parents I have to go back in time. My father was of the 1896 generation, became a soldier in 1914, and was discharged as an officer from the then called the Reichswehr (trans. note: the Prussian armed forces). Thereafter he had no job and like many officers then went to the Reichsbank. In 1925 he married into a family which owned an excavation company in Pomerania. My mother came from Niederlausitz. Her parents had a construction company, a comparatively large construction company in which my father entered in 1925 as the chief. I was born in 1927. My father was, as they say, loyal to the Kaiser. That means he entered the First World War and was more loyal to the Kaiser and then disappointed about events then rather than for the National Socialists. I was brought up in a small town of 20,000 inhabitants and lived there until 1942. A sister was born after me and I had a wonderful childhood. My father was a passionate hunter and felt closer at that time to the military than to business. That resulted in his becoming a soldier in 1939 and remained so until 1945 when he was killed in action. I entered grade school (Volksschule) at that time in 1933. In 1933 the situation in small towns was characterized by great, I want to say, comparatively great poverty. This small town was oriented to agriculture; there was no industry there. And the first memories I had at school were that one was confronted with many poor children. In winter many children could not come to school because mainly they didn't have any shoes. In the spring and summer they ran around in wooden clogs and in winter there weren't any shoes. Also there were children who didn't have any food for a snack; you say for breakfast today. So it was a time when I was confronted for the first time with a certain poverty, whereas in my parent's home a certain higher living standard was the case. We had servants; so until my ninth year I was more or less raised by a nanny. My mother went on many trips with my father. My father was responsible for two hunting ranges at the time, and we lived in very comfortable circumstances. At grade school it struck me for the first time that there were also people who although not starving were still poor. That was particularly apparent in 1938 when I entered high school (Gymnasium). Many of my former classmates had wanted to continue at a higher level but couldn't because the tuition there would cost twenty marks a month. At junior high school (Mittelschule) it cost 13 marks and many families couldn't afford that either. It meant that if a boy, a human being, a child wanted to learn, he couldn't because his parents simply were not in the position to afford the tuition. That is a very bitter experience you had to go through. And in my parents' business, as I said, a street construction company, they constructed streets, airports and autobahns and so forth. In 1938 they had approximately 4000 employees. And there I also got to see considerable

poverty because on Fridays the workers received their pay envelopes; then some of them went to the nearest taverns and turned the pay into beer and alcoholic shots And then their families really had nothing to eat for the week (emphasizes). So those were the private impressions I had collected as a child until my tenth birthday. After my tenth year, 1937, I now had more or less outgrown my childhood or pre-childhood as they called it. So I no longer had a nanny and then was in the Jungvolk (trans. note: comparable to our Cub's Scouts) or the Hitlerjugend (trans. note: comparable to our Boy Scouts) respectively which became a state organizations in 1937 so that every boy had to join this organization. It was voluntary more or less until 1937. You had to stay in the Jungvolk until you were fourteen and then with the fourteenth birthday you were put in the so-called Hitlerjugend. It gave us children naturally a strong, marked, motivation for to succeed. You could become a leader, you could get a sports award, and, in short, I was an enthusiastic participant in this organization. I had a certain ambition there, a certain roll to play without being helped by my parents because National Socialism didn't in fact make much sense to my father because he felt more loyalty to the Kaiser's Empire and even if the Kaiser was no longer there, or had respectively abandoned his people, and that I had certain options, he saw that with some satisfaction that I had especially committed myself. In this Jungvolk there was, were very many possibilities offered, so that you could take courses and so forth and as I have said, ambition was particularly very strongly encouraged. So I entered the Gymnasium (high school) in -37, in Neustettin. And then began the time when we concentrated on sports and as I said, tried to become active in this Jungvolk or this movement. In my hometown there were water sports. That meant a lot of rowing; there were two rowing clubs, one at the school and another, at a so-called gymnastics club. And we spent all our free time more or less on the water whether in regattas with.., I was strongly involved in the rowing club or societies. That continued until 1941. The war began in 1939, which affected us at first in Pomerania and beyond because the invasion of the Reichswehr, the Wehrmacht started from there to the Polish border. That was approximately 80 to 100 kilometers from us and we children watched the Polish campaign naturally very intensively. It lasted 18 days and then the victorious Wehrmacht arrived and there was peace for a while until the campaign against France. My father was called to active duty in 1939 although he could have been excused because his business, my father's construction firm, was a so-called war industry but he wanted to serve again as an officer. In the meantime my father had become a captain and a short time later a major and spent the whole war until the invasion working for the general staff which was very satisfying for him because at that time there were no reserve officers in the various staffs, only mostly active duty officers. In my hometown we were scarcely affected by the war until 1944. There had been no air attacks. Enemy bombers never came beyond Stettin. Neustettin lies 120 kilometers east of Stettin. We had enough food to eat because we had contact with peasants and farm owners because of my father's business and his passion for hunting. So we didn't lack the food basics such as butter, eggs and so forth, so the war years passed routinely and naturally until 1944. The time when your thoughts go beyond what you thought (laughs for a short time out loud) as a small child is shown by how we were strongly influenced by National Socialism. At first there appeared National Socialism's distaste for the church. In Neustettin about twenty per cent of the population were Catholics, 80 per cent Protestants. My father was Catholic because of his family was from the Rhineland; my

mother was a Protestant. I myself was baptized Catholic. We were then told in classes that the church was worthless, that everything had been Jewish before and so forth. There is no God or respectively the teachings of Christ are all lies. That actually resulted in some of my fellow pupils protesting. The protests took the form of going to church. The protests were not very obvious but after they told us not to go to church we believed it was a sign from God, it's not so and then there arose the protest by many young people who said now more than ever and so it happened that even I went to mass in the Catholic church on Sundays and also served as an acolyte during the mass even though at the time I was one of the highest ranking leaders of the Hitlerjugend in my hometown. There were only a few people who made this protest but we made it and were enthusiastic participants in the mass in church. And we had with the local priest in Neustettin a very intelligence teacher. We had a class in religion which was not held at school because there were so few Catholics in the class. Rather, the priest held the class at the church and there we were actually very cleverly bound by the church. And the second thing which we kids, children found to be negative was the Nazi campaign against the Jews. Because at home I learned or knew that Jews were exactly the same as we were. My parents had some friends, Jewish families with whom they were friends, and 1937 these friendships became difficult because they were not permitted or they tried to forbid them That resulted in the fact that in 1939 two family friends of my parents emigrated. One of the families had a large felt factory, or factory for manufacturing slippers made out of felt. And they sold my parents some items, a rug, some furniture pieces which had to be picked up secretly at night at their apartment under difficult circumstances. And to hear that families left Germany wasn't at first very reasonable to me because my father had always said that many officers in the First World War were Jews who had earned certain medals. There three books from the First World War. "The Fighters from Goslar"—my father spent four years during the War with them. It was a regiment with traditions about which a lot has been written. And in which you can still read today that there were many brave Jewish officers who fought with them so that basically I couldn't acknowledge that Jews were different from us but as I have said the Nazis told us again and again that Jews were responsible for the war and were capitalists. And in short, for us we didn't like the campaign against the church and against the Jews. Otherwise, the Hitlerjugend had a lot to offer. It didn't depend on whether your parents were financially able to afford this or that. You could qualify for a sailplane pilot's license. We had a navy element within the Hitlerjugend. You could pass a marine test. There was also a motorcycle element there and you could obtain a driver's license. I myself obtained my license when I was fifteen years old and passed all the sailplane tests. You could also be trained as a sharp shooter, a sports rifleman and you were very busy and there was a strong sense of ambition. And all that didn't depend on whether your parents could afford it like it still was at school because your education depended on whether you parents were in a position to afford extra unless you were so good at school that there were places reserved in a limited number for gifted children who did not need to pay extra. But as I have said, they were few in number. There were at the time so-called political schools, the "Napola," the national, political educational institutions which were the equivalent to the Middle Schools where gifted pupils could go. There was also the so-called Adolf Hitler School which was equivalent to a Gymnasium (lyceum) or a high school where gifted pupils could also go, who had to apply and pass certain entrance tests and they would be

educated there. In 1944 I became a soldier and was assigned to a battalion. There were 420 people there who were of the 1927 generation and who were inducted and of this number approximately 30 per cent had been Adolf Hitler pupils and that is the first time I had contact with these Adolf Hitler pupils. And I determined that they were much better educated than they we were who had attended normal high schools; they weren't just educated along one line, the National Socialist one, on the contrary, they were very knowledgeable in every area, whether a sport or anything else. So the education they received at Adolf Hitler Schools certainly brought them a lot. For me these schools were not considered. My father didn't think much of them and I didn't have any reason to try to get to these schools. We lived very peacefully in this small town, and we were busy with our ambitions as stated in the area of sports and also in the Hitlerjugend. At that time school had become a negative influence because in 1939 teachers were assigned who had already been pensioned because in 1939 there were a lot of people who had been drafted and so thy activated teachers who had been pensioned before 1939. That resulted in the fact that the school instruction actually was very average. These older gentlemen didn't have any ambition to make grownups out of us with extensive knowledge. In addition, this situation naturally developed in us a certain degree of self-awareness because of the Hitlerjugend and that was also not always so easy for the teachers to lead us on to a humanitarian path. So we lived in this small town in which politics in families or at least in my parents' house was really not first in our minds. You had.., you saw.., well, you were not specifically in opposition to National Socialism; my father too as an officer was not in opposition although you certainly weren't in agreement with the system because the officers were saying Hitler was still a so-called Bohemian corporal and didn't acknowledge him as commander in chief or head of the armed forces (Wehrmacht) at the time. In addition, all the politicians who were active were basically people who couldn't succeed in their professions and were many who belonged to the SA at that time and organized protests, public gatherings and organizations like the Stahlhelm and the German Society of Officers and everything else that existed at the time after the First World War. There was always a certain struggle against these organizations, and National Socialism used these people in the SA and SS to push and drive ahead and they (groaned softly), God, you can say they were more like trouble-makers then that they were convinced of the matter and many of these people in 1933 were naturally pressured into certain positions as Gauleiter or county chief or whatever. As stated, it was in many respects people who were not recognized by the officers at the time who were loyal to the Kaiser. I still remember that my father was very upset that there was a regulation in 19-, it must have been -35, -36, that deserving National Socialists could make an application when they thought that in the First World War they didn't receive medals they should have, that meant mainly the iron cross, either first or second class, and that it would be examined if these people should have received these medals and they then received these medals belatedly. And they could then hang them on their brown uniforms. Adolf Hitler especially placed a lot of value on them so that he also received the iron cross, (emphasizes) first class, as an ordinary soldier which was certainly a rarity for people from the so-called enlisted ranks receiving medals like the iron cross, first class. He had justified it at that time and had acquired it justifiably, and naturally a lot of SA leaders wanted to do the same and there was, as stated already, a regulation that many former world war veterans got upset that national politicians could

receive this medal belatedly. So until 19-, until the war we lived as I said without the families being strongly engaged in politics, at least in my family house. And, but as said already, my father up to the end of the war, up to his death, didn't offer any direct opposition. Only in conversation and so forth he always expressed his displeasure, but he like many others did not offer any active opposition. That had to do with the mentality of those people at the time who felt tied to their oath and were simply obedient to authority, regardless whether they were in agreement. They served and the so-called loyalty to the fatherland always came up so that they said that you must serve the fatherland, regardless of how and so forth and that everything resulted in people at least went along, indeed making a fist in their pocket. In 1942 my sister was born and she was certainly what they wanted, to have another child. I have often thought, it was perhaps because we had lost so much household help. My mother has always denied that. So there was a child, a second child and to the joy of my parents. My father had seen her only a couple of times during furloughs. My sister was born in November –42. For me then in 1942, my time at home came to an end more or less. At the time there was a so-called "children's dispatch organization." That was for schools in Berlin, from the Rhine area, which would be evacuated to be protected from air raids because the flyers couldn't cover the distance. So there were schools, especially on the Baltic, by class. These classes were then quartered in hotels and pensions, continued their education there with their teachers, and in every hotel, in every pension where there were one or two classes quartered there, a Hitlerjugend leader would be assigned there for three months who would then deal with these children in the afternoon when they didn't have school (emphasizes), would be responsible with the teacher for games, educational programs, sports and also for discipline. You could volunteer and that counted as auxiliary war service and that was an enormous benefit to us pupils and when you had spent three months with the auxiliary war service and thus (missed?) school…. (trans note: the rest is apparently missing here when the reel ran out)

(Tape ¼, Side 2)

P: that several of my friends had now volunteered for this so-called auxiliary war service. That was a great job. You were a king (sic), as they say today So I graduated in Binz on the island of Ruegen, from November, from October to December 1943 and then as a result had my transfer 1944 in my pocket. There were many of these tricks then at school. And we utilized various ones, for example, you could obtain a transfer, that is what I also did, by zealously gathering old metal objects. People collected old metal at the time. So there was first of all paper, then also iron, copper and tin, and so forth. Whatever could be recycled. And the pupils would collect old metal objects, within the family, from family friends and so forth. This collection of old metal which was organized by the schools, also by my school where I went. It was naturally very slow and difficult. Because we weren't very enthusiastic here to tote old iron and paper to school. That would then be weighed and then there was a point system. For a kilo of paper there were two points, for a kilo of iron there was one point and so forth. And these points would then be registered and then at the end of the school year the results would be read aloud and whosoever excelled received then a book or some sort of reward, but the short and long of it was that it didn't work in my school exactly. And then the school principal

at the time felt obligated to say when someone works very hard at collecting old metal, then he would have less time for his school work and so you naturally have to take that into account at promotion time and so forth. And that was actually decisive for me. because I thought about how I could make myself stand out especially. And my father's construction company naturally had a lot of old metal material, from the workshops and the welding etc..and the head of the company at that time with whom I had a good contact arranged for two trucks to deliver used iron parts so that I became as a result the pupil with the highest point score in the whole school and was honored in the school auditorium and what all and so I had my promotion in the bag. Those were the tricks that we used. And they were legal but that was caused more by our ambition. Unfortunately we didn't think the knowledge we obtained at school was worth anything, especially since we viewed the future as very rosy. No one believed that we would be driven from our surroundings, our hometowns. We had heard indeed from our parents that the war could not be won after America had entered the war against Germany and so forth. But that we would also lose house and home, that never occurred to the people living there and father had also said that when the war is lost, we had our property, we had our construction company, and we would continue on again, we would still be on our feet and for that reason we were ambitious at school but the evidence of it was relatively small. In 1943, as I said, I was assigned to so-called auxiliary war service, in 1944, in January our class was drafted to assist Flak (trans. note: initials which stand for "Fliegerabwehrkanone" or anti-aircraft gun) units. That was the norm. At that time in January 1944 we were 16 and a half years old and had to assist the anti-aircraft units. That meant that the school classes together (emphasizes) with their teachers were distributed to Flak batteries in areas vulnerable to bombs. There were at that time air force and navy Flak types. My class was sent to a navy Flak battery in Kiel, and we were distributed there as helpers on the guns. The guns consisted of 10.5 centimeter howitzers. They had a drum, a drum full of ammunition, and this gun was mounted in a bunker it could revolve all around and could fire diligently at the enemy planes, and each gun had four or five men assigned to it, two soldiers and three or four of us pupils as assistants., sixteen and a half year old anti-aircraft assistants. That resulted in a community, a school community assigned to this battery. Basically we had little fear. That also wasn't constantly emphasized to us. On the contrary it was actually a job that you had to perform and where you could demonstrate your heroism. There were firings when one gun was involved with several others to bring down an airplane. There were also points made, and many anti-aircraft assistants after accumulating a certain number of points received the anti-aircraft combat badge which was a special honor. You could, when you had been assigned there for nine months, you could advance to chief anti-aircraft assistant, and that was a special honor. And we were considered heroes. Every four weeks we received a 96 hour furlough. We could thus go home, by train and would be, as I said, two days at home, that was every four weeks which we took advantage of, since we had a sharp uniform and we had to wear an arm band with this uniform. It indicated that we were anti-aircraft assistants but this arm band which we always had to wear wherever, whatever we put on, if you only wore the navy shirt with the so-called **Kolani (sic)**, either on the jacket or on the shirt, if you didn't look very closely you couldn't distinguish an anti-aircraft assistant from a sailor. And that was naturally great for us because we could go into the bars which were normally closed to adolescents and so

forth. In any case that was something which we particularly liked as anti-aircraft assistants. Then the time came when we were now slowly drafted into military service. I have to turn back to 1943 when as a fifteen-sixteen year old I volunteered for military service. As a volunteer you had the one advantage of basically choosing the branch of service. In any case you would be drafted shortly before your eighteenth birthday or in 1944 as a seventeen year old. But if you had formerly volunteered, then you could choose your branch of service and that I did in 1944 and reported to the air force. Also with help from my father who said at that time, if you report to the air force as an active officer candidate, then you will be trained and then you will remain there for a year and will not be sent to the front lines, and that has a certain advantage compared with infantry training which as a rule lasts only eight weeks. Therefore I volunteered as an active officer and because my father told me they have much more interest in training you because they see that you want to become a professional officer as opposed to wanting to become a reserve officer. He said when we have ended the war or won or lost it, then there will be many who because of a victorious war will want to remain soldiers so that they would be happy when others resigned voluntarily from active service. In any case you will get out of your active obligation.. So as I had said, I volunteered as an active, career officer. This volunteer application was normal then; it wasn't especially characterized as some form of ambition; on the contrary we did that while at school and as said could choose our branch of service. And after the voluntary application was made we received the so-called military pass which certified that we had volunteered and which also had certain advantages that you could go to the movies which was forbidden for an eighteen year old. With this military pass we marched right in there without difficulty and that was all those things which you noticed as a child, as a pupils or as a teenager. This so-called enlistment as they called them then, there was also a certain negative aspect I experienced with it The SS at the time, the Waffen SS (SS combat units) , made an attempt to commit young people to them, that is, to recruit young people, people who volunteered for Waffen SS. And the Waffen SS actually had no (emphasizes) good reputation with us young people, not because we somehow thought they would have, were concentration camp guards or such (…….). We knew very little about that and that wasn't worth anything. The image of the SS for us, what signified to us, was that the Waffen SS was no army in that sense and we young people, we wanted, or we now felt like soldiers and not as Waffen SS or those members, and so the Waffen SS had tried to recruit young people for their purposes. And so there were recruitment drives especially in rural areas. That meant that in the villages a recruitment drive would be announced for the Waffen SS. Young people could then volunteer in the restaurant where the drive was held. And so the recruitment proceeded from there. First there were Hitlerjugend officials who sat there and registered the young people and then it continued on with an SS man who then asked questions and so forth and then there were (coughed a little) kind of three or more stations for questioning and where the young people would be won over and that continued automatically so that there would be highly decorated SS people who was there who looked indeed very impressive, had been decorated when young and so forth. That was to try hard to make an impression. And then the young person would be asked, wouldn't you want to join the Waffen SS and then he would say, no, I want to go into the artillery. "Well, what do you mean the artillery?" "Well, my grandfather was in the artillery, my father is in the artillery, and I have had a lot to do

with horses, so I want to go into the artillery." And then the other one would say, well, the Waffen SS also has artillery, right? And he says I don't want to. O.K., he says, and then talks to the next one. He then says are you afraid? The other one replies I'm not afraid. O.K. if you aren't afraid, you can also go into the Waffen SS artillery. And so these young people would be bullied, always with the argument (emphasizes) are you afraid and that led to the fact that many young people were won over to the Waffen SS who really didn't want to join them because they said, O.K. whatever service branch you want we have in the Waffen SS except for artillery and the navy. So that was a very serious matter and after the war it was evident that there were many who had joined the Waffen SS who were never happy to be a part of an elite element but had been somehow forced into it, right? But as I have said, I only witnessed these recruitment drives as a leader of the Hitlerjugend because we were ordered to participate in the registration there and that was therefore a bit shocking. Well, the short of it was that I was inducted into the Labor Service for a so-called three month period in 1944, as an anti-artillery helper in July 1944, on July 11, 1944. The three month labor service you had to complete before military service. That was always the case whether you volunteered or were inducted after a certain age, mostly when sixteen or seventeen you were put in the Labor Service and thereafter into the military. I served in the Labor Service from July 1944 until the end of the year. We were deployed there for trench work, they called it, which meant in East Prussia on the Polish border, therefore in the so-called "General Governement (trans note: the Nazi title for the part of Poland conquered by the Germans)." The rest of the country was occupied by the Russians at the time, but then conquered again and that was considered an occupied territory of the General Governement. which was transferred to a kind of civilian administration which extended to Warsaw. In this General Government we dug anti-tank traps. They were kind of deep trenches where tanks wouldn't be able to pass. That was the so-called "East Wall" which they tried to build in contrast to the West Wall which bristled with concrete bunkers and which had been built during peacetime and which therefore contributed to a certain upswing in the local economy. The East Wall was constructed more from physical labor and trench work. So I had to spend these three months with the Labor Service and was lucky that I didn't have to shovel because when I was younger, in the Hitlerjugend with the little kids, I had taken a medical course. That was a kind of first aid course and with it you became a first aid assistant in the Hitlerjugend. They called it being a medic and I had been trained in it along with my many-sided various courses I completed. I profited from it in the Labor Service in that I was one medical assistant in a department of about one hundred people. The medical assistant was therefore a position in the Labor Service who was therefore responsible for health problems in this department. Mostly they were former musicians in the Labor Service, professional musicians in the Labor Service and now in wartime were given other duties and so then were trained as medical assistants, first aid assistants and that was an ominous position, a significant position and had an assistant and that was the assistant to the medical assistant and that person was recruited from the body of young people in the Labor Service and that was me in this department. I was the assistant to the medical assistant. That was a terrific thing in that there was a first aid station where always about ten percent of the boys, that is, ten people were patients and then there would be sick call held and my superior, the medical assistant, he was, didn't think much of work, and in any case I therefore held sick call fresh and happy. That was always a

very nice thing. You could then admit people to the first aid station and at the station the health care was especially good and in that manner I did very well. And I still remember there were standard medicines. At that time there were many people with boils, there were abscesses. They would be treated with real Jo-Ichtio (trans. note: an iodine concoction) salve, then with "Livertran" salve if it was no longer infected and then there were coal tablets and if someone had a fever he was given Prontosil tablets. And with these four medicines you could hold a real sick call and if things became critical,, then they were sent to a real hospital. So in short, these three months were really pleasant and so I did that until October 1944 and on the 30th of October, the beginning of October I was then discharged from the Labor Service and on the 30th of October I was then inducted into the military, into the air force in the vicinity of Sopot, at the Wawel air base near Gotenhafen. Ah (emphasizes) there were…., now began the serious part of life. You were now a soldier. In any case there I was, I was 17 years and three months old and was now a real soldier, trained in a so-called, basic training which you completed in four week where you were taught from military courtesy to shooting and so forth. And then came the so-called pre-flight training. That was then a little instruction in navigation and so forth. That lasted then until January -45 and then it would be decided if you qualified as a flyer or ground personnel or otherwise. I was qualified and I passed the tests at this time with distinction and was then declared qualified. Some of my comrades were sent to the anti-aircraft command or to an air force division. There was also the air force infantry and those of us who had passed the tests went to flight school. At the time they had a kind of air war schools where flying instructions began. There was one in Briecke near Breslau, in Oschatz near Dresden and in Fuertenfeldbruck near Munich. And we could pick which one we wanted to attend, and I picked Fuertenfeldbruck then because I didn't know this mountain region there and I wanted to leave Pomerania for there but this whole plan was overtaken after the Russian started their grand offensive against East Prussia at the beginning of January. Retreat was then already in full force and we were now supposed to complete a so-called short-term test at the front. That would be, we were in any case four hundred, three hundred and fifty flyers, perfectly fit kids of the 1927 generation. We had passed the first tests and, as I said, healthy, ramrod-straight soldiers and we were therefore supposed to complete a short-term test at the front and that was made to look good to us by promising us then a half year at the war academy. That would mean that we would become officers a half year earlier which the ambition that people had then, was indeed that you would now be an officer, lieutenant and the younger you were as a lieutenant, the more that was a special honor and you could depend on being a lieutenant at 19 and that was certainly fantastic, something for us and basically we would do a lot for it. Well, in short we came to the so-called infantry testing at the front with very great enthusiasm and at that time the newsreel came to interview us and it was said that young flyers have volunteered for infantry duty and that was given a great send-off and then sent to the front. We had not grasped the seriousness of the situation, you see, and we were so honored and we looked at that as a passing event which would be over soon and we were supposed to continue our military training then further. Basically people said O.K. the war had been lost in 1944, certainly it had been lost to a certain extent strategically so that we had to give up all the territory we occupied. But people would be told over and over again that there were amazing new weapons (emphasizes) and things will turn around again, and at least the young people

purposefully believed in this turn-around, also our superiors believed in this turn-around, the V-2 and all that was being talked about and there was huge discipline with the Wehrmacht at least in the lower ranks which we were familiar with so that you always still thought that some new weapon would appear some time. That was also up to shortly before the capitulation and then it was confirmed that there were no further miracles coming, in the form of weapons, right? then the rumors appeared, O. K., that the Americans would turn around and fight with us against the Russians, right? People still believed right up to the end that thus there will be a turn-around, O.K.?, and the propaganda had very cleverly made that clear to people that the war couldn't be lost. Yes, yes, yes, and people had experienced a great deal of misery because of the bombing attacks and because of the occupation by the Russians and so forth. But let's say that in one sense people weren't suffering, with the exception of the rapes which were not publicized and which we only learned of later in prison camp. It was in any case so that we young people, young soldiers, there was another change and it was only for a short time that we had to fight at the front, and so we, all of us moved to the front. A company in Marienburg which was surrounded and that had made a break-through, and they had shot them like rabbits. I myself joined an infantry regiment, the 32nd Fusiliers, the Hermann List regiment—I still remember it today, so—a regiment with tradition where we were assigned and so were deployed in trenches opposite the Russians. The Russians were comparatively quiet in this part of East Prussia which was not occupied by them until the capitulation. It was a pocket on the battlefield. The Russians marched around it on their way to Berlin. And in East Prussia except for the refugees the military was deployed in fixed positions, as they say, and I was able to witness this battlefield of fixed positions. And there for the first time it was very sobering when one of my comrades was killed, dead. I remember a good friend who was shot, somehow when he was making a report or getting something to eat. In any case I learned that he was suddenly dead and he was then buried. And that was a friend with whom I had known since school days and he was dead; he had found the so-called hero's death. But that was a very sobering story. So he was then buried without any great (…..) and then a cross was placed on his grave and the whole thing was dismissed. (emphasizes) and then that was the end and no rooster crowed afterwards and so there was absolutely nothing. And all at once I came to the sober realization that we could be killed here without any blood or comment lost. And that it was something which didn't save the fatherland or had any other purposes. And that offered, that was really the point in time when we, when I personally came to the conclusion that this was all nonsense to hope to achieve honor as an officer or otherwise. On the contrary the only important thing was (emphasizes) to stay alive. Because nothing is worth it and it offers nothing (emphasizes) if you're no longer living. And that was a realization which I wouldn't say was shocking but at least had transformed me from a young person to someone different. Or at least it was this experience which I will never forget that this boy, Wolfgang was his name, was dead, and now, as I have said, this battle of fixed positions began. We were deployed in trenches and that went on until the 13th of March 1945. So anyway that was for eight week, six weeks, and when I was wounded one time. I was in one of the trenches and then an officer came, a first lieutenant Tatschik, I will never forget him, and you had to come to attention when an officer came into the trenches and had to tell him about any special events which had occurred and so forth and I did that. I also stood at strict attention and

he snapped at me asking if I had not seen the Russians in front who were somehow marching or I don't know what. I had indeed seen them but told myself what was I to do. What was I to do there? In any case this man felt obliged to take aim at them. He had thus a so-called telescope rifle, which the snipers had which we ordinary soldiers didn't have and aimed at them there and shot at these poor fellows fifty meters away or however many who marched. And I had to lie there with the telescope and observe whether he had hit any at any time and always when he shot, I ducted down in fear, I slowly had fear (emphasizes), real fear. Well, he had shot only one or two times and then the Russians had shot at him with grenade launchers and they shot at us now with grenade launchers; those are fragmentation grenades and things were becoming dangerous so that one grenade hit a tree behind us and a man standing to the right of me with his rifle, he got hit with the full blast and sank together and I was hit with three fragments, one in the cheek and in the thigh and foot and I collapsed in fear, of course, completely

(Tape 2/4, Side A)

And then a medic came very quickly and put the man on a stretcher and asked me if I was also wounded. I said then simply yes and was thus transported off to a so-called wounded collection station and I quickly noticed that I was not very seriously wounded; As already stated I had three fragments which bled slightly and there at the wounded collection station the wounded were registered; The most seriously wounded received a red tag, I believe, I got one then, and the others received a green one and those who could walk received a yellow one and so forth. Well, in short I lay there next to this man there and he received immediately a red tag and then I raised my hand and received one too, without being examined any further and that led to being evacuated to the rear, to a so-called field hospital and since the splinters had to be removed by an operation, I was transported further to a hospital in Danzig and came there on the 14th or 15th or 16th of March and lay there as a wounded person. As already stated, there were three fragments which now had to be removed, because as I said I had a lot of pain. In this hospital there was a certain agitation because the Russians were now just outside Danzig. They came from the East, not from the South; the South was thus still open from where we were, thus in the direction of Posen (trans. note: present day Poznan) They came instead from the Memel area. We knew that and every day wounded were taken out of this hospital to ships which docked in Danzig and then transported them to Sweden or Germany, and the wounded were selected according to the severity of their wounds and so forth. Unfortunately I wasn't lucky to be evacuated by ship and so remained in the hospital. I became indeed more or less the little mascot since soon then, I was indeed a young person, and they admired such a little soldier who also had become a real soldier but was also wounded. In short, on the 27th of March the Russians had arrived at Danzig from the direction of Sopot , I think, and the hospital was disbanded and everything that could be moved was evacuated. I was in a so-called emergency unit, so the soldiers who had been rounded up were grouped together and then an officer came and then they were sent to the front and handed weapons and had to shoot, O. K.? I was lucky in that process because my army record stated I was combat tested so that I had to be sent back to my unit which no longer existed because all the boys, they were all either wounded or dead. This battalion didn't exist any more. I learned that at the hospital, they were all gone, but

I, I naturally didn't say that. So I was supposed to be sent to my unit. I went and had to report to the so-called army command, that was approximately sixty kilometers east of Danzig and so I started on foot in that direction and on the way I stole a bike and with it continued to there. And there they knew that the unit didn't exist any longer and I was then sent to another unit and on the way to this real unit where I was supposed to report which was about two kilometers away I was lucky to come across an artillery unit from my hometown and in this artillery unit there was a first lieutenant whose brother was my f-, was a friend of my father's, and the Kreisch name was familiar to him, and this first lieutenant, whose name was Semrau, he was more or less sympathetic with me and said you stay here as a radioman and so I remained there with this artillery unit which was always in the rear, not directly at the front. So I am, I was assigned as a soldier and then on the twentieth of April, that was three or four weeks later, three weeks later I was taken by ship to the Hela peninsula, that is from Schiefenhorst there was a port there, up there in East Prussia, so we were sent there by means of small boats-- they called them "Brahms". On the Hela peninsula there was a port for large ships, troop transports, to proceed to Germany or Sweden. They couldn't land in Danzig but only in Hela and then I was there on the Hela peninsula from the twentieth of April -45, and on this peninsula there were about twenty thousand soldiers, all waiting for evacuation by large ships, and were partly from the then Kurland army or from East Prussia. And they stayed in earth bunkers and so the whole island was (emphasizes) completely packed with soldiers and there we waited then for evacuation to Germany. But it didn't work, we didn't get a connection, in any case we weren't yet lined up for it. And I had an uncle, he was my father's brother who was a vice admiral, the chief of German destroyers and these destroyers had helped to evacuate the Hela peninsula. There were other ships, for example the Wilhelm Gustlof which was torpedoed off the Pomerian coast. There was heavy ship traffic, but among it were destroyers there which participated. There are today some books about how they had evacuated refugees against the views of the army command at that time and they had done that. And I had tried to make contact with this uncle through military channels etc. so that he could get us out. He got the radio message but didn't know that in the meantime I was in an artillery unit and he kept looking for me in an air force unit. So he didn't know it, and in short, it didn't work. And on the eighth of May, at twelve o'clock midnight from the eighth to the ninth of May all guns were silenced. Up to that point all the tracer ammunition was used up across the sea; it was thus a huge fire works display and at twelve o'clock there was deadly silence. And then the capitulation and Hitler in the meantime had committed suicide, and we knew from the radio we had at the time, they called it a field receiver, that Doenitz was his successor and that the capitulation followed. The Russians came and then some days later on the Hela peninsula, the soldiers were grouped together by companies and were supposed to march to Deutsch-Eilau, in Deutsch-Eilau we would be discharged. Whoever wanted to could go home beforehand, but the Poles would attack anybody and shoot them or some such and therefore it would be better that the Russians supervise the discharge (emphasizes) in orderly manner. And then to be able to go home with a discharge certificate. It was therefore necessary that we march then to Deutsch-Eilau.

That was a fourteen day march on foot, approximately, and then they led the whole twenty thousand soldiers over Sopot Danzig to Deutsch-Eilau, and they all jogged along because they thought, you know, that they would really be discharged and then it would

be organized and people were used to order and discipline. And people wanted also to get it over. In Deutsch-Eilau they had blocked off a part of the city, it was for a POW camp, a camp for prisoners. And there we would obtain our papers and then we would be home at Whitsuntide (emphasizes) but that wasn't the case. In this camp which was guarded by the Russians the first rail cars arrived. People said the rail cars are headed home. On the twentieth of June there were five thousand prisoners who were assembled, in groups of five hundred apiece. And they were supposed to return to Germany. At first the direction was to the East; you could tell from the position of the sun and people said that it is, you know, we head east so that they can first change to the wide tracks. In short after a few days we were in Minsk. And in Minsk there wasn't any longer any talk about our going home. We were now in a POW camp where war prisoners had been kept since -43, -44 and we were designated for Minsk, and so were now POW's. One nice episode I can tell you as an aside. In this camp in Deutsch-Eilau where there were now untold thousands of soldiers who all had come from Hela. One day there was the order that all soldiers had to have their heads shaved because of lice. So they had to have their haircut and now everybody was organized into companies for distributing the food and so forth and then they said here and there are barbers with scissors and electric razors and there you could get your head shaved and that is mandatory. There was a thundering laughter, everybody said not us, we're not doing it, and so forth so that no one was ready to have his haircut. But the Russians got it done. Within four days twenty thousand soldiers or however many there were at that time, ten thousand perhaps, had shaved head and the Russians had done that very simply. They stood at the chow lines and said anyone who had not had his hair cut off would not get fed. And they held out for three days and then all of them had shaved heads (emphasizes). All of the soldiers were bald within three days. So the way the Russians organized this impressed me at the time, but as I have said that is only an aside. We landed in Minsk 1944, -45. In Minsk itself there were prisoners of war who had been there for several years and were used as laborers. They had to rebuild cities. I was then sent to (Modeldetschnow), a small railroad crossing where I worked in construction, for houses and in a sawmill. And I did some work as a machinist, as a welder and locksmith. And in –47 the Russians had to transfer five thousand prisoners to the Czechs because the Czechs (had) a uranium mine in Joachimstal—that is on the Czech border; that's where the "Taler (Dollar)" originated. There were silver mines there and in these silver mines administered by the Czechs the Russians searched for uranium. These silver mines were reopened without having the plans for the mines and that was the type of work for prisoners of war. So they deployed Russian prisoners, ah German prisoners from Russia, also from the area around Stettin and there we had to, the Russians had to transport five thousand war prisoners and there I was again because I was one of the youngest, was…, it went according to age in his company, in others it went according to whether they were strong men or whether they committed some infraction; they would then be sent there. In short, it was a very mixed crowd and we came to Czechoslovakia to the uranium mines, and that was a very hard time in as much as the Ru--, the Czechs who guarded us were more sadistic than the Russians. The Russians were also moody and we received very little to eat and until 1947 the Russians gave the prisoners scarcely anything to eat and in that manner they made a natural selection. Everyone who was the slightest injured and not one hundred percent healthy died during this period because they had too little to eat and no

medicines. So whenever someone fainted, you could certainly reckon that he would be dead two days later. After 1947 the meals got better because they needed people to do real work. And so we came to the Czechs in –47 and the Czechs were, as I said, very sadistic, although the food was bad and insufficient, it was at least enough so that we didn't go hungry. We then worked in the uranium mines. As I have said, for the Czechs that was a kind of punishment. The guards demonstrated that by making you stand with your toes against the wall and your nose against it so as to hold a sheet of paper. And if you did that for five minutes it will somehow hurt when you press your toes and nose against the wall. And if the paper falls down, they would begin to beat you. They practiced tricks like that whereas the Russians would hit you right away in order to punish someone. But the Czechs would do it sadistically. So I worked in this uranium mine as a "Samnitschnik (?)", a machinist and mine shaft engineer until September –49, 28th of August 1949, and on August 28, 1949 I fled from there to what was then called the East Zone. The flight was possible, there were many who fled then for the simple reason that this silver mine which earlier was vertical was extended further into the mountain and there were no site plans and if you were in one of the shafts which broke out of the mountain somewhere outside the perimeter of the mine fence, then you would be somewhere in the forest and outside the camp. Everybody who had worked in this mineshaft, five, six or how many people, would take off then if you had the courage to. If you didn't, then you stayed there. And so the numbers fluctuated because of defections, comparatively greatly, that is, when four people left, four, five people that was a lot but in any case they took off and (coughed a little) they wrote then to us. We could get mail from our families and they wrote us then at the camp using a girl's name and told us that they had visited relatives in Berlin or in Aue, that they would stay a week with Aunt Alma and they would continue on to so and so and in that manner we always knew that they had gotten away. And on the German side it happened that they had done the same at the so-called Wismut AG than the Czechs had done in Joachimstal. In Aue and they had also mined for uranium there, but not in silver mines but rather in new mines they started. And so many of us went to Wismut AG and reported at the mine saying that we had come from the West and wanted to obligate ourselves to work there. And then we received a work contract and worked there and that's what we wanted to do too. There were three of us, comrades from the war, and one day we also defected. We didn't get out through a mineshaft but through an exit door. On Sunday mornings there were many civilians in the mine camp. There was a shift change and they passed through a control point, like at the train station, showed a green I.D. or not. And then they went to a bus and rode with it eight kilometers or more to Joachimstal to the place that was the next stop. We were there in a kind of small village, Sei-Seifen or such was what it was called with our mine and the Sunday morning shift didn't know each other because many who worked on the night shift changed on Saturday and some changed to Sunday and the Czechs who sat at the control points on Sunday mornings weren't very interested in strictly enforcing the controls. In any case we took off Sunday morning and got into the bus. We had also announced beforehand that we were going to pull a double shift. You could do that. You didn't need to stand to be counted when the shift was ended. So we pulled the night shift from Saturday to Sunday and then said that we are going to work a double shift until Sunday midday. And then we went to Joachimstal with the bus. The people who sat on the bus didn't know the people from this shift And from there we

went by foot to Aue, over the border. That was actually no problem. You would orient yourself by the sun. In Aue we applied for work, saying that we came from the West and wanted to work in the uranium mines and that we had previous experience in coalmines. Then we received a two-year contract and 500 East marks, food ration cards and lodging in the Hutschenreiter Bachelor Home. We were greeted there with great ceremony as genuine activists who wanted to work there and were also honored by the German-Soviet Friendship Society. I still remember the first day we were there they had a kind of assembly when we were introduced and we moved in and had four or five days free until we had to go to work. And then for our 500 marks we bought an atlas to learn about the region where we were. And we bought shoes, clothes, cigarettes and butter with the food ration cards, and then we took off again towards Hof (trans. note: right on the West German side of the interzonal border). You could go by train where we sat until Zwickau. We had tickets only to Zwickau which was still in the uranium restricted zone and remained on the train until Plauen where we got out. Then we went into the woods and found a forester there who found a guide for us in exchange for our butter. And then we got to Hof-Moschendorf where we obtained our discharge papers. In any case we had passed over the border of the then East Zone and although we were still in a camp we were able to recruit one of them there because we had money and ration cards. And then we got to Hof itself. In Hof we had a nice experience. After many years we were finally living in freedom and we then marched to the train station and wanted to purchase train tickets. One wanted to go to Aachen, the other to Erding and I had to go to Gantersheim and still had East Zone money which we exchanged. Well, the money was not enough for all three tickets, O.K., and so we said we weren't going to do it. If only one had a ticket. Well then, we will give it again…We're going to do something different. Then we sat down in the waiting room and all of a sudden I saw someone who had a jacket on like we had in internment. You had a kind of jacket material made from blankets, from a kind of gray blanket. They had a certain cut in the Czech area where I had been, there was a kind of tailor there and that person had a jacket like we had on. And I went over to him and said, tell me where are you from and he said where you come from and so forth, and so he had also escaped sometime ago from another camp and he then told us that there was a camp in Moschendorf. You had to get your discharge from there. There you would receive a discharge certificate et cetera and then you could head for home without any difficulty but without a discharge certificate it would therefore be difficult in what was then the West Zone. So with heavy hearts we hiked to this camp although we all had sworn to never spend another hour behind barbed wire. So we had to go to this camp and were admitted. And then we were in the opposite of where we belonged. We were assigned to a barracks for refugees and there we said we wanted to start for home the next day (makes a short laugh). They then laughed out loud and said you people must first apply for permission to stay; we have been here already for several months et cetera. Well, in short we found out that we were in a civilian refugee camp although we were POW's. So we explained that with great difficulty to them that we did not belong there and then we went to a POW camp which was situated right next to the refugee camp. Then the Americans for two day's length interrogated us and to prove our status we had postcards from our relatives. We still had the cards in our belongings and we knew you needed them to document your status so that we could leave from there. And we knew the situation then. The Rus.., the Americans then registered us and everything and then

they gave us safe conduct passes. I got one to Friedland because I had to be discharged from a regular camp in Friedland which is near Goettingen and there I spent a day and then I went on to Bad Gantersheim, the home where my mother lived. In Friedland there was still another episode. I almost got beaten up. In Friedland there were POW trains arriving, from Russia with soldiers who had been discharged on a regular basis before leaving, and in the POW camps there was a certain hierarchy of Germans, you know, so-called Germans who spoke Russian or Polish or something or the Volksdeutsche (trans. note: people living outside Germany who claimed German origin) or whatever who had worked their way up and now were not the friends of their comrades. They were either people who dealt in food rations and so forth and you could recognize these people by the better clothing they wore, certainly because they could afford it and so these POW's in these trains who had already been discharged were all beaten up right away, especially those who were better dressed because they were some type of functionaries who had gained advantages at the cost of their comrades. And that was the usual practice that they got hit right away. And since we had already been civilianized, had been given clothes in Moschendorf, that we had even received a suit and everything, so I stood there with my comrades at the train station by the tracks and waited for one of these POW trains which was arriving. And now these friends in quotation marks beat them up (emphasizes and laughs) and included us too because we were well dressed and we escaped a severe beating by a hair and saved oursel0000ves only by running and shouting that we didn't belong to them. But that's just an aside and then on the eighth of September the whole matter was ended and I went to Gantersheim, and my mother lived there; my father died a casualty of war along with my little sister. My mother wasn't eligible for a pension. My father was a reserve officer, not a regular officer, and so my mother worked in city hall in the file room to support herself, and then I joined her and you have to try to choose a profession. Well, those were the days that we experienced. In hindsight you ask yourself naturally how you could have gotten through this time period. In your attitudes you were forced to grow up rapidly. You know we were kids well taken care of and our ambition was systematically elevated by the Hitler Youth movement. And we swam with this whole group, did our duty, offered no resistance—you couldn't do that, also didn't protest but were formed by the times and then all of a sudden you notice for the first time that heroism is nothing and then you are branded a criminal in the POW camp, that you have to pay reparations and that you are burdened with guilt even though you knew nothing about it and couldn't know anything as an adult even and you have to adapt and for me, a child well sheltered by my parents it was naturally difficult to adapt to a group. In a group which depends on mutual cooperation and friendship and where an egoist who thinks only of himself necessarily will perish and when you are a POW in need, when you suffer from hunger and don't have any friendships, then you perish. And we suffered from hunger, hunger is…You don't have any hunger anymore today, only appetite and when you suffer from hunger, it's a, a..,a very peculiar feeling which you can't compare with what they call hunger today. And I experienced it as a POW. Once we worked on a farm harvesting potatoes and we ate potatoes, we grated them and after you grate three large potatoes, you get a creamy sauce and when you eat it, then you don't quite satisfy you hunger but your stomach is full and you have the feeling that your stomach is full and that you could hardly eat any more even though you still have hunger. That is, well, that is a situation you just can't describe. You know, and so you experienced a lot as a

young man which today you would scarcely believe was possible, and as I have said, opposition which always arises today against.., against the government, also by young people who say how could you allow that (emphasizes), how could you…Even my sister who is fifteen years younger said what kind of parents did we have, you know. Father volunteered for military service and could have stayed home instead and all. You yourself volunteered (clears his throat) and they had certainly realized that the war was lost and everything. She couldn't understand it. There were those families who had a certain higher living standard and naturally profited from the whole economic situation at that time. I mean, unemployment was reduced in 1933 by means of enormous rearmament. A whole military industry was built, autobahns were constructed and so forth. For the workers a lot was done. There was at the time the "Labor Front.", an organization like unions today which employed many. For the worker there was the organization "Kraft durch Freude (trans. note: the Nazi organization offering vacations and other benefits to party loyalists; translated it means strength through joy)." You could take a trip on a ship abroad (emphasizes) with little money. And they told you you could save for an automobile, a Volkswagen. An automobile was a symbol of affluence. And that was suggested to the ordinary people, that now he could own an automobile. They were offered a radio for 35 marks, a so-called "Volksempfaenger (trans. note: people's receiver)." And they would listen to the radio and so forth. And they were naturally very enthusiastic about this whole development, without having said that they agree with everything. (clears his throat). So they profited from it all in their own right and saw naturally, also the…(something missing here)

(Tape 2/4, Side B)

many primitive people who were, like from the movement, the so-called movement as they called the **SA** (trans. note: Storm troopers, an early Nazi organization to protect party meetings but later disbanded and purged) then and came up during the **SA** time who today gained positions where they developed a certain craziness, you know, so that people always hear again that the people, the lower classes had now gained power who naturally took especial advantage of it (emphasizes). They saw that in part but they had offered no resistance. Certainly they had condemned the persecution of the Jews, enormously condemned it, but they had said, O.K. what could we do, the individual terror acts of the concentration camps which were uncovered after the war, they became known only through rumors here and there. Many didn't considered it possible that they were gassed in such a mass manner and so forth. And many had rebelled against the battle against the church That was right but they offered no resistance and people were not happy about their living standard but they took it to heart. And at that time there was a lot of money given for children, for so and so many the mothers would be awarded the mother's cross after the fourth child or whatever. A lot of mothers had worn the mother's cross with pride, right? Today you would die laughing, O.K. when you saw a mother being awarded a medal after her fourth child, right? And at that time people accepted that and you can't say that they were all Nazis who offered no resistance, right? People were busy with their own affairs, accepted the good sides of things and more or less

ignored the bad side. They sold the people on the idea of war with {the slogan] "Volk ohne Raum (trans. note: famous Nazi phrase meaning a people without room to grow.)" We had to have room to grow and we had to bring back the "Volksdeutsche (trans. note: people of German origin living outside Germany)." To bring back all of them who wanted to come. And at that time the, the whole….like the Austrians into the German Reich. And then there was the propaganda, "ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer (trans. note: famous Nazi phrase meaning one people, one empire, one leader.)" All that was delivered to the people very cleverly and as I have said ambition incited young people so that they said all right if you become someone of importance, you get power and power is something that intoxicates everybody. And when that is combined with a visible decoration whether that is now…Today there are titles or something, all right, and before there were awards with uniforms and so forth which is especially desirable. So you have to say that certainly in hindsight only how could you but from the viewpoint at that time, you had to say on the other hand it was good. We hadn't learned anything else and we had…Today you don't feel like a bad person or you can certainly say you were cheated out of a lot. For example we were cheated out of our professional education because we had no possibility of gaining the high school graduation certificate (trans. note: the Abitur required for entrance into universities or other higher educational institutions). But on the whole you don't have any direct feeling of guilt. You can't say that and certainly there are people like Kohl (trans. note: obviously German Chancellor Helmut Kohl) who had the luck to be born later and spoke about it and so forth. Those are all, in my opinion, things you can't sum up after the fact. You have to have grown up there at the time. You can only talk about luck, all right, if you grew up in a home where you could say your family was good and so forth but they didn't offer any resistance (emphasizes). And they were tolerant. My parents had friends who were Nazis and who were Jews. So that was..you weren't asked like today what your political philosophy was or what your moral outlook was and so forth. It is the same today whether you are an atheist or not, or go to church, it's fundamentally the same thing. You look at the man and that people did that at that time too. As far as the church is concerned, I told you at the beginning that basically I was brought up in the church and became an altar boy ("Ministrant") out of protest but not because of any real belief (emphasizes). But I became a real believer when I became a POW. I knew fellow soldiers who really wept because they had left the church because of some kind of professional reason or political motive. And in doing that they thought they had distanced themselves from God and so (emphasizes) then since they had become believers again if one of them was near death's door and if for example they are fearful that they will get diarrhea, for example, and if they come down with this they know that two days later it is all over. They slowly go to sleep and are gone. And when you are in such a situation, then many people become believers again. Nobody can tell me about it and the Russians also had…Just look, there was for example…we were in Minsk, that is in White Russia (trans. note: Byeloruss now) there were many, not many but some now and then who were picked up who had escaped from camps on the other side of Moscow or that vicinity and who found themselves now in this (emphasizes) German friendly Polish area in Minsk and who thought that they were now at home and were picked up and these people came into our camp and were supposed to say where they came from so that they could be sent back there. And when they arrived back there, they would naturally be punished for escaping, just like the Poles and Russians and so

everyone tried not to tell what camp they came from but I have to tell you I never knew any of them who did not eventually tell them. The Russians (emphasizes) were very brutal and said to them, all right, if you won't say where you came from, you will be shot. So and you can believe it or not, then they had to dig their own grave, particularly in a corner where there already were other graves. They would be assigned there for digging, two meters deep, one and a half in length. And so they did that which lasted one or two days and in any case the Russian always said that is your grave, you will be shot here and then they had to take their clothes off and they had to lie down in the hole (emphasizes two meters deep) and up top the Russian stood and released the safety on his pistol and said, now kid, you've shoveled, tell us either where you came from or it's all over. We don't need you and when you are lying down there you can be assured that that says everything (laughs). Everything that they want to hear up there, and so they got everything from them and if someone tells me today that the Russians (emphasizes) didn't get this or that from me, then he was lucky that they didn't use their most brutal methods or whatever that may be. (Emphasizes) but whenever they wanted to get something out of you, they did it. In so far that didn't work, then they told the man, "It's finished," and when one of them stands on top and you are down under, naked and they release the safety on their pistol, then the right thing to say is I didn't say no, everything is…, things are always viewed in a limited way, all right. And you went through that experience as a young man. And certainly you can say, all right, afterwards everyone is more mature and you can enjoy it with caution. Certainly there are many who because of this situation stumbled into criminal areas. Many became egotists and many became this or that but in any case you always have to consider the time a little differently from 1933 when six years old just beginning to have experiences and then formed into some kind of person by twenty years old.

What can I still tell you. In case you have other questions to ask?

I: I wanted to ask you to tell me perhaps a bit more, you began with your childhood and about your parents' home; could you perhaps tell me a bit more about your early childhood, when you were small?

P: O.K., good, my early childhood was primarily marked naturally by the good fortune that I had to been raised within a family which was well-to-do according to the circumstances of time then. At that time my father was ten years older, he was thirty-one years old when I was born and my mother was exactly twenty-one years old. And I was certainly a child they wanted when I was born because my parents had been married for two years already. And like it was at that time, young mothers or at least my mother was very (hesitates a little), I wouldn't say, she was a bit full of life, but she had experienced life at the fullest, had traveled and I was considered a little bit like a badge to show off. I was always dressed well and my mother was in a certain respect definitely proud of her son, but for example when I was three or our years old and someone asked me how old I was, I wasn't supposed to ever say my age because my mother was afraid that then they would know immediately her age. So that was vanity on the part of the young women then, right? And you would be outfitted, for example…, it was the practice in Pomerania proper that women of the various families, especially those from estates traveled to Berlin

in November in order to go shopping there. The farm, the people on the estates had paid by then for their harvest, had money and you then went to Berlin and made purchases there because that was indeed a metropolis where everything was available. That was situated three hundred kilometers from us and these women utilized this time, eight days or how many then, also sometimes fourteen days each time to make purchases. That was an special vacation, O.K.?, and in the course of shopping a purchase would be sent, for example, for me, some suits would be ordered which my mother had selected there. There were various stores, Magnus Mueller I know was one of them, a store for boys' clothing and then there was a selection of three or four suits and I was permitted to choose one suit and my mother chose one. And that was it. So therefore I had two suits, the one my mother had selected I had to put on whenever we went out. There was ruffles or whatever and that was in my eyes and those of other boys what girls wore or like a girls' sweater which was red and you didn't put that on. So we were therefore very, I was well taken care of and grew up in that manner, as I said. I had worn out various nannies who kept quitting, right? Because I was so fresh and then I had to apologize and my mother expended some tears and things were good again or they quit. And in addition we also had two maids who took care of the house who I also.., God, they were people that I had a bit of respect for. That is to say, they were permitted, could give me sometimes a box on the ears when it was necessary. My parents weren't that way, and it went very fast and we got a box on the ears and then everything was somewhat back to normal. Well, as I said, my father was a passionate hunter. He had leased two areas for hunting and went there every evening about 5 o'clock and returned again at eleven and every engagement for my parents revolved around the times for hunting. They would say father is away until eleven o'clock and mother went skiing in the winter, and to the ocean in the summer. And in winter she went shopping, O.K. And thus we lived wonderfully at the time and full of joy and certainly whether the marriage was always happy, I can't judge, but in any case they were satisfied and there were few arguments and we lived, our life was naturally protected in that manner, as I said, the business belonged to my mother and her sister, and father ran the business and as head of the business he was restricted in terms of capital and naturally some differences also arose, primarily with his sister-in-law and so forth who then terminated the contract and was paid her share in 1937. And, and, and certainly there was a lot of argument, only my father had the advantage; you could arrange for being reactivated at the time as a former Reichswehr officer. That meant that people could become career officers again and in 1930 father was thirty-four years old and in 1935 he was, I think, 39 years old and could become a career officer in the Wehrmacht again at any time and that naturally gave such people a certain sense of security. So they would say, O.K. good, when I'm not happy here or when you people don't agree with me, then I can become a soldier again and can support myself. And that led naturally then often to discussions of this…, my father was no, no graduate construction expert, and he and his people who were now active in that business stood a bit above it all. And today I have to say in retrospect that they weren't used to a lot of work, O.K.? You see he was raised in a Jesuit convent, went to school and became an officer, and at twenty-nine years old was an officer. But he had never learned to work hard in that sense. He always had people, young people he could order around, could command in the Reichswehr and naturally he brought this with him when he went into the business world. At that time in the Third Reich officers meant a great deal. They

would say they were a First Lieutenant, retired, or a Captain, retired. And that was then…, People accorded that special recognition. This whole officer class then became a bit watered down in –35, -36. Many became officers when they obtained their high school certificate (trans. note: called the "Abitur", which is usually considered equal to two years of college by American standards.) They went on exercises, that means they reported in, received training and when they had done that about three times a year for four weeks, they became something. And naturally many took advantage of it, especially teachers. They said all right, we have our vacation and in addition we go on military exercises. That's today still the case, only not in such numbers and so there were many officers who, as I said, had the "Abitur" as a prerequisite and were government officials, and they could do it. If someone were a shoemaker or whatever, he couldn't afford to do it, to shut his shop for four weeks. Then he would have no work. So this so-called officer corps which was recruited out of the Reichswehr became a bit watered down. And there arose two classes of officers. They were the peacetime officers who had a touch of National Socialism. And then there were the old Reichswehr ones, the officer clique who were closely bonded together. That you could see them for example very strongly represented in the navy. In the navy the chief of staff at the time was Grossadmiral (trans note: equivalent to a four star admiral) Reeder. And Reeder came out of World War I, and Doenitz became an officer after the war and had a touch of National Socialism. And Doenitz succeeded Reeder as chief of staff because these, World War I officers were slowly dying out, receding or they were passed over. And for that reason they naturally, these officers led their own lives, O.K. There was the "DOB" which stood for the German Officer's Society. In this officer's society there were people like my father who met together about every four weeks and had discussions and got excited in their private meeting rooms about Hitler, the Bohemian corporal, but did nothing in that sense. And those people were very satisfied with their living standard and for us children; at least for me there was a very early confrontation with poor people, primarily through the family business. Just look at the construction business we had. There were hundreds of stonecutters. At that time as a street construction firm you bought stones from farmers, stones that they had uncovered while plowing and they would be removed and when the farmer had one two cubic meter in size, he sold it to a street construction firm and that firm employed (speaking softly) people who pounded the stones. They had a rubber piece and a hammer and out of sacks and shields so that they wouldn't be affected by the wind and dust from the stones and they sat (emphasizes), hundreds of them in a huge courtyard and beat these stones into smaller pieces for street foundations. And these people were the poorest of the poor. And they used to tell us if you won't learn, then you'll become a stonecutter. And they were paid by the hour and every firm did that. When today they say (whispering) fine, those were firms with four thousand employees which today could be compared with one with about four hundred. And at that time there were no conveyor belts. You had to shovel everything. And they had a gravel pit and they had to shovel it by hand.

I: Can I offer you some coffee?

P: Gladly (laughs softly out loud). Thank you.

So they shoveled by hand and these people earned 30 pennies an hour or so. And first you have to look at this separately (emphasizes). But in this time I was confronted with poor people. I knew what it was like to be poor and my father had always told me, look there, those are stone cutters who are exactly the same as we are only they have to cut stones because they have learned nothing else and because they have a lot o children who have to be fed and everything. And as I have said, especially at school we were certainly, my parents were the most well off of any in the city and I had a couple of friends and they established themselves in this group and we were naturally the best of them and we had two bicycles, one for good weather and one for bad weather. And we went to the ice cart and bought an ice cream for 20 pennies, one after the other, and the other kids looked on with envy and had no money for ice cream. And you were very consciously aware of that. And that was a realization which helped me greatly in life, that you have to be fair to other people and not take advantage of a certain power which you necessarily have in your professional life. when you think you're the most favored one. On the contrary you always have to consider people and that you can say of yourself in consideration of others that you have conducted yourself fairly properly. And always in my personal life I have…, I cannot be unfair to people because of some kind of external thing and I have gained an enormous feeling for people because of being a POW, from being in the army. When you have had to live with people who are in need, whether we would say today in prison or something like it, then you learn about people, who they are and how they get along with others and you will be forced to practice a certain kind of brotherhood because if you are alone you are lost. Today you can survive as an egotist in a civilian environment but to live in a regimented environment you have to get along and you have to keep getting along with others and as a young man I had to (emphasizes) get along especially. Naturally my youth gave me a certain advantage so that I could say, O.K. I'm in good shape, significantly better than the others. It was certainly bad in the POW camp for those who were twenty-five years old in 1945. They had become soldiers when they were 18 years old, were drafted for a two year period like today. Then war prolonged it and they became a non-commissioned officer or corporal or something, (emphasizes) had acquired no profession or trade, had a family after marrying during the war. They had children and nothing else and they were significantly worse off than we were, as an eighteen or nineteen year old. Whatever is fine, you can do what you want, we were used to a kind of primitive life style. You didn't have any fear of the future so that something or other was fine…It can't get any worse, only better. You don't have any obligations. You are forced to that realization, only what I blame the regime for was that we were drafted into the military after being promoted into the seventh class, in other words after eleven years at school, the whole time in primary school and we didn't obtain the "Abitur" degree. If the war had continued, you could have obtained the Abitur. In my case I would have been eligible in –46. You could apply to the military authorities and then you would receive it automatically. That means that all the people who would normally have received the Abitur by 1944 receive it and could then study at a higher learning institution. But in our case when the war ended, we received nothing more and as I have said in 1950 I had begun to live as a free man but had no money and was no longer in the position to do that. God knows I hadn't learned much at school previously and they had barred us, I would have very much liked to have study to be a doctor, to somehow be admitted to a university. Because the prerequisites were not there and I

hadn't known about these cram courses that they had in part at that time where people within a short time could collect credits, I mourn this period in retrospect. It wouldn't have made any difference if they had said O.K. there are only a few from the –27 generation, just a handful of people who want that, so that they would say, O.K. people, it's all right that you don't have everything, you had bad luck, or some such. And that it goes forward. It always made me sick to say, I would have liked to study medicine. And then I took some training at Shell to become a salesman and then I went into the oil business and pushed forward but basically I have never had complete fulfillment in my professional career and that is the only disadvantage from it. But otherwise, you know, you can say only that for a person's personality, especially for mine, there had been a certain advantage. And perhaps it wouldn't have been so without caring parents and regular schooling.

I: You mentioned just yesterday that there was a high living standard in your parents' house and the poverty which you observed with other people and mentioned in particularly the situation when you father told you that you had to look at these people. Could you just (cite) a situation, one you have before your eyes when….

P: No, Ah God, I don't have one in front of my eyes. There is one which occurred over and over. My father had to visit the construction site every week to bring the payroll. That was always on Fridays and as a child I often went with him and then he would hand over a box or basket of pay envelopes to the foreman and then they would talk a bit. And the workers stood there and it was quitting time. They waited for their pay and had bicycles with carbide lamps, and in some case there were women with children who then wanted to take papa immediately by the hand so that he wouldn't go with the others to a bar or somewhere else. And there were people who were still working, who were cutting stone even in the rain and those were the situations always when you would say for God's sake he's already soaking wet and still hammers away at the stones and so forth. Or then there is a woman with three children who starts to bawl already, O.K.? Those were the situations when my father said those are human beings just like you and me, only they live differently. And there was also…., look, because of my father's passion for hunting we had many friends who owned large estates and I had friends who were the children of these estate owners and there you naturally got to know the families of these day laborers whose living quarters by today's standards would be considered inhumane where these families lived, and a lot of them in a room that was damp and was almost like a livestock barn and so forth. So you learned about poverty all over. And so you just had to take it to mind and you shouldn't have the feeling or imagine that you were an elite; on the contrary you could only say that you were lucky or some such but nothing more. And naturally there were people who didn't acknowledge that and they feel that way still, even today. Give power to a primitive person and then he sets himself apart and no longer recognizes what he is. We experienced that in the POW camp and if they were overseers or given a position to overseeing others, they were almost worse than the Russians, particularly because they always wanted to demonstrate their power, first to those under them and secondly to those above them. That way they stood just in the right light. You will always see that whether that is a personality trait or whatever, in any case with me it was an education. And my father was naturally (the rest is missing)

[Tape ¾, Side A]

You know you have earlier, in contrast to today…, earlier in the period –33 to –45 or until –39 you didn't have a well-defined middle class as it exists today. At that time we had (emphasizes) very, very poor people, even people who went hungry and who couldn't afford to have shoes. We were very affluent people who were not ostentatious about their wealth like the case today. So these rich people or these affluent people, they were a bit moderate, in other words, they didn't outwardly display their wealth, decidedly not, in the media and so forth as is the case today. But they lived quietly. And the so-called middle class, that basically consisted only of the people in government and skilled craftsmen, the independent tradesmen and so forth, bakers and so forth. But that was vastly different from what it is today. There were great differences in the so-called middle class indeed. And today there are no poor people any more. At that time it was the case. On the other hand, you can say that, my personal opinion is…, which doesn't conform with what others think, that the poor people had accepted their fate, all right? I wouldn't say that they were satisfied but that the poor had adjusted to it. I remember, you know, that there were some children, we knew for certain who couldn't attend school, a higher school. The parents said we couldn't, that others could but only we couldn't. They adjusted to that and became laborers or something similar. And they didn't have any ambition to make something out of themselves as they say so well today. On the other hand they were satisfied with what their social level offered. And the middle class, those people for example had, I can remember, they said all right, we don't have an automobile (emphasizes), we'll never get one and that's it. Today everyone has one or wanted one in the Sixties. That was a completely different time and whether it was nicer or not, that's (laughs slightly) the question. But people were different.

I: Yes, it was different. Tell me then when you were ten years old and joined the Jungvolk and your father, on the one hand, venerated the Kaiser but on the other hand was in favor of that. Can you recall that situation?

P: Yes, of course. I mean my father was proud when a boy was well behaved and the Jungvolk was not, we were not ideologically indoctrinated. We had a uniform and we felt, you know, now…. You had a uniform and this uniform especially elevated you from the masses and you would be promoted. There were various levels so that you would be…The first level was squad leader, and then came chief squad leader and so forth. And if you were particularly good, you would become, you would have a group of other children under you and these promotions which I had, my father took note of, of course not in all seriousness, but a little bit with satisfaction and said, you are indeed a very clever boy and so forth. And the whole thing was not organized ideologically. I also had, you didn't at that time as an adolescent argue with you parents like the case now. So I wouldn't have, never…You wouldn't have said (emphasizes) how do you view it or I see it as such. But on the contrary you accepted what you were told by your parents but there wasn't a discussion like I have had with our daughter or like you have today with adolescents. People accepted what adults said, what the parents and teacher said. We accepted that. Privately we often said they were all old fashioned but we didn't argue. I

remember an expression, you know, when I entered the draft on the 30th of October. My father who had just returned home on furlough took me to the train station and there my father stood, he was in uniform and with tears running down said son, I have only one word of consolation, that you won't be involved much longer because the whole thing can't last at a maxi…, at the most more that a half year more. And then I said, well father, that's O.K. and he said look out, it's at the end, and actually it lasted a half year and 8 days more and then the war was over. The parents, or at least my father had certainly known that, but you didn't talk about it with young people. That was a completely different situation and for that reason it is hard to understand today that we young people, as children had our own ideas and perceived what was happening and what we were being told. And we also could protest in a certain respect, as previously stated by doing something different from what people had told us. We assisted at church services, wore a uniform and then a church cassock and assisted at the service.. And as I have said, we did that more than ever and no one said anything against it and that was one thing. But the student movement, you know, with leaflets and so forth, you know, which you frequently hear about now, I did not know about that and it didn't occur among us in that sense. Also the teachers didn't discuss politics with us, they didn't have discussions with us because they were afraid to talk to us about any contemporary events. Because when a student had denounced them or even when parents were denounced, there would be difficulties. Just look, I remember I had a very smart teacher for my class and when in1943 I volunteered for the military at 16 or 15 years old, he took me aside and said, listen son, you have volunteered as an officer candidate and I said yes and then he said you father has a very good business. Don't you want to take that over later? And that's what he said and I replied at that time, no I don't want to. And why did I say that? At the time I thought he was crazy, what did he have to do with my decision? Today I say the man had enormous guts to speak to me at all about it. But we or I didn't discuss it at all. Afterwards I thought he's crazy, it has nothing to do with him.

I: He was worried.

P: Certainly the man was worried and showed courage that he said that but you realize that only in retrospect.

I: That's clear. You just mentioned when you were inducted into the army and your father cried. How did you feel about that?

P: Ah God (laughs a little). That was shocking for me. I had never seen my father crying; he had never kept back a tear or such. I didn't know that my father, I learned afterwards from my mother, had enormous worries about me because he knew much better how serious war was. At that time I was shocked. I see him today; he had a leather coat on and a uniform and he was on the platform with tears streaming down and I was at the time, I mean my father had…, my mother told me, when I was inducted I was always so enamored of wrist watches when I was young and that was something special for an adolescent and my father was also enamored of them. In any case my father had bought a wristwatch after he had given me his earlier, it was a good one, one with a big second hand which was something special. And I had always said that I wanted one and

he should give me a present of one of them. And when I was inducted, as I said, I asked could you give me your wrist watch, I will give you mine or something more or less in jest and then my father said, you know, I will keep my watch, you will not get it because you already have one and so forth. And there was nothing further to discuss and I didn't take it very seriously and my mother told me later, you know, when I was a soldier and then they were refugees in –45. My father had said when our son comes back, the first thing I will give him is my wristwatch because he wanted it so much. So my father in a certain respect had become soft, but he had never shown that side of him to me.

I: How was this…,Well, you talking now about your relationship with your father and your role in the Jungvolk. So how did you get along with your mother?

P: Well, I have to tell you, my mother was comparatively young. My mother came from a good family more or less. My mother was very superficial. She was, you know certainly a good-looking woman for the times. My father let her do whatever she wanted. She had her own ideas about decor and coffee "klatsches" (trans. note: like a tea party, only with coffee served instead) and everything else. From my mother I have in particular, she never engaged in a serious conversation with me. My mother was very superficial. When I wanted money, I had only to ask my mother and she gave it to me. Whenever I wanted money from my father, he first asked three times for what, why and how so. And my father had more to do with me than my mother because he asked more follow-up questions. So my mother was very superficial. I remember we had, we lived on a lake. My parent's house was on a lake and every year there was a regatta on this lake. There were two boat clubs for rowing and there would be regattas, or races with rowboats and I was a zealous rower. I was always part of the crew for either of these clubs and I was there whenever there was a particularly big regatta on Sundays. My mother could watch it from our house's balcony as we zipped by and then I always told her that I would be coming along and so forth but my mother never saw such a regatta. Naturally it also lasted a long time until I came and then other boats too and so forth (emphasizes). My mother said, wonderful, you've won and this and that but she had no intensive interest in it. So that is my memory I have of my mother. She had a heart of gold and I was spoiled rotten and it resulted in my being a nice, pretty little boy. I had a haircut with bangs at time which was very unusual for the times. And I can give you an example which people can't understand today how I was such a little child, two or three year old or how long. And I would be taken by my mother to the beauty salon where she frequently went and had my eyelashes cut because my mother thought that a boy should have long eyelashes. They were then cut and I would be held down, I remember it still today, and I cried. And the eye lashes would be cut because my mother thought I was such a beautiful boy and had to have the eyelashes long. That was so schizoid but that was the ay it was and I know that my father would have wanted more children. I learned that from a conversation. I can't imagine it but a friend had said to my father, his name was Paul, well now, Paul, one boy is not a lot or something other and my father said, well what are you going to do when she said she won't.

I: I can't imagine what that means, she won't.

P: I've often thought about it when I was a small child. Later I knew that my mother didn't want another child. It was only during the war –42 that my sister was born, in November. My father had come home on leave in April. That I know, in March/April and it was done intentionally, I always told my mother. You did that because you were only allowed two servants for families with small children. By she always denied it. In any case they were very happy about having a daughter and then when she was three, four or five, …no, when she was three years old they became refugees and basically my sister had a completely different experience than me, she lived with my mother in Bad Gantersheim, went to school there and became a teacher, marrying a lawyer and lives in Osnabrueck. They are well off but she has absolutely no memory of our parent's house, likewise of my father. She only knows my mother who at the time was living in comparatively modest surroundings. She has a completely different point of view and what I realize today over and over, as an adolescent I questioned my father continuously about the period we didn't know anything about, in other words about the first world war and how it was and so forth. And my father told us how they had fought and everything else. The present generation in no longer interested in that. My daughter yawns whenever I start about the war or earlier. And my sister still says today that's good. I know you were a hero (laughs). But that's another situation today. And so when you are an adolescent at that time and it was the Fatherland, you know, and everything was presented worth achieving, the German and everything that he can do, whichever wars he begins although we only won one war, you know, and all that was explained in a different manner than is the case today and the history that we were taught in school was somewhat beautified. And then you had the supermen and what all. We little kids, people like the Hitlerjugend, they told us to read Alfred Rosenberg's book, "The Mythos of the Twentieth Century." That old volume would make you vomit reading it today. That was mandatory reading and God knows you had to read it backwards and forwards. And they said that's great, that's right and that the Germans originated from the Germanic tribes and that they were especially good people. Well, you realized that and everything, right. Look, I still remember how in 1942 the first Russian POW's arrived in Germany, right, and we had been told in part that the Russians were sub-humans who while no longer living in the trees had recently advanced to the lowest human level. And in my father's construction company there were many Russian POW's working there, and every year in the fall we received a carload of coal. It arrived at the train station and from there it was transported by truck, and then taken into our house, into the cellar. And the Russians were there to shovel the coal and I saw them there (emphasizes) and I was really astonished that they were friendly, young people. And my mother had given them something to eat during their break and I always went along and one of them had smiled at me or something like that (emphasizes) and I was shocked and thought, well, how can they be Russians, he's just like me, and I realized that then and at the time I was fifteen years old and I thought, heavens, he's just like a human being and then we had…, just look, there was a popular novel, that what we called it, a small pamphlet (Rolf Toring) for example. That was a kind of book of adventures which I will never forget. It was, there were always three people. There was Rolf (Toring), then there was his friend, Heinz (Waren) and Pongo Pongo, a Negro. And they got into some kind of adventure and Pongo, the Negro always rescued them from some kind of rebels and for that reason the Negro, to us he was a very strange person, a little like when I saw my first Negro, 19-,

that had to be –43, when the film "Kolberg" was made. That was a Nazi film about a fortress which had been built up because it was about the battle for Kolberg and there were scenes which were made in my hometown, Neustettin, and in them was (Kristine Soederbohm), and Veit Harland was the director and some actors, among whom was a Negro. And these actors were invited to our homes by various families. So one time because my father was off with the army my mother invited a few of them, Soederbaum and others came to us in the evening at some time and along with them was the Negro actor. But he was properly attired and that was shocking to me because the only Negro I had known was Pongo who was a savage and I thought (whispered) for goodness sake, that's a black Negro and he is really handsome and well dressed. To me that was something very unusual because you had images from your whole education and through publications that they are sub-humans or thereabouts and we are the only Nordic race, or the master race who are basically intelligent. But as I have said, that was from my education and my parent's house. I mean at the time that parents did not take the trouble with their children as they do today to inform them about current events. And to offer (hesitates a little) political views to them, the young people, you didn't do that earlier. (Emphasizes) I mean at least in my case at home it wasn't discussed with me. And I know from my classmates or from my friends that it wasn't discussed in their homes either. So we had to form our own opinions or you were simply influenced by the "movement", through the Hitlerjugend period during adolescence. Also the church, look, I just want to say that we had religious lessons from a priest named (Ramatsche) once a week at church and I went to communion and we had instructions about confessions which is still the case today and so forth. And this religious person was wary of having discussions with us because that would be dangerous for them if they wanted to influence us for some idea. Rather, they had no idea of what to do, but when asked, all of them had nothing to do with us, the young people. They all were afraid, starting with the parents and then with the teachers. And the young people themselves and their generation, I'd say all of us with one year's difference, we were leaders in quotation marks for the others. So we held home meetings in the evenings where lectures would be given and the children would be motivated. And we ourselves were still children and that was certainly another situation at the time than what is the case today.

I: How did that happen? Can you still remember when you entered the Jungvolk how they conducted the training courses?

P: Oh God, (laughs slightly) that is certainly, when I look back I see how that came about. As an only child I naturally had to play with children outside the family. And we lived on a lake and a lot of children naturally would romp around this lake. And whether it was in the winter or in summer you had (emphasizes) a circle of friends, and in this circle of friends I was, I wouldn't say the King, at least the leader, not because I was particularly capable or something. But it was perhaps from habit or something. I was always…, I always played the first violin and was always the one who persuaded them to do something, whether in a negative or positive sense (emphasizes). And that carried over into the Jungvolk. So I was a little kid at the time. I remember when we joined and I saw some of the others who had some command function and made loud noises. So I thought very early on that I had to do that too and so forth and then I became one of the

most zealous of them who always showed up on time for duty and stood up straight… and then they took a little notice of me and that has always actually been the key to my life, always punctual and reliable. And during my professional career I have always told my colleagues that when someone is a little bit slow mentally, you can excuse a lot. Then you can say, well he is too high for what he can understand, right. But it is really bad when an intelligent person has the image, you can say what you want about him, that he forgets everything and is not reliable, that is a lot worse. If I have a co-worker (emphasizes) that I cannot rely on, then he is labeled as such. If I have one who is punctual and reliable, but doesn't comprehend everything quickly, you can't do anything about it. You give him other things to do and so he has a better image than the person who is not reliable. And that is something that has actually marked my life and because of it I made something of myself fairly quickly. For the way the situation was when I was fourteen, you finished grade school and then learned a trade. And the fourteen year olds then entered the Hitlerjugend, and this Hitlerjugend met in the evenings, as they say, one or two times a week. In contrast, the Jungvolk had duty Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons. You couldn't do that if you were pursuing a trade. And as a student continuing his education you could choose when you entered the Hitlerjugend when you reached fourteen or wanted to stay in the Jungvolk. And that was a really special situation. So I stayed in the Jungvolk until my fifteenth birthday and became a leader of the honor guard and was excluded whenever there was any trouble and I could do what I wanted to or not. And then they said now you can go into the Hitlerjugend and took me aside and added unless you didn't want to go. So I went into the Hitlerjugend and there it was the practice then if you had been a leader in the Jungvolk, then you would also be one, switched over to the Hitlerjugend only one grade lower. And that was the same thing we know today in pursuing a career, you know. There is a negotiation, you say I will transfer employment but only if I retain the same rank and so forth. And that I always did, very diplomatically and then I became a leader in the Hitlerjugend and at the end I was the highest you could get before starting a career, that is to become an honorary commander and adjutant to the group leader. And then everything else is for your professional life. And that I acquired very quickly. That was at that time a very unusual story. And you have to understand that that was a completely different education but it wasn't marked by ideology. You could see ambition in it and at that time there were big sports festivals and contests and marches, right, night marches and field marches and all that fun. And people were naturally very enthusiastic about them. There was also rivalry, for example, with the Hitlerjugend groups from the villages, just like it had been earlier after the war (trans. note: presumably WWI). Earlier it was one village against the other and so forth. That was naturally very strongly emphasized.

(Tape ¾, Side B)

P: It wasn't anybody's ambition to become a politician at that time. That was a second-class thing. People in our eyes who wanted to become politicians, that was something none of us ever thought about. You talked a bit among yourselves and when we became adults we thought about some sort of organization. At that time there were the NS flying corps and the NS truck corps. And all these stories, but to become a politician, I know of a cousin of mine, the son of my father's sister, who wanted to become a leader in the

Arbeitsdienst (trans. note: Nazi labor organization replacing the labor unions). And there was an uncle who was a Landesgericht (trans. note: equivalent to our district judges in state courts) judge in Hesse. And they had to bring proof that they had left the church to gain a higher position in the Arbeitsdienst…And they got rid of him in this job. You didn't do that, it's not right and they were not a strongly religious family. But you are in the church and you don't leave the church in order to become a politician. That's not a question for debate. So that was the way it was then, everything was a bit programmed in advance. So I was supposed to go into my father's business even though my father didn't want it. He had always said it was too difficult and too risky for me and I should become a physician instead. To become a judge was not worth it because the judges didn't have anything to say under the system at it existed. I still remember. He said it is a dead case. But you should become a physician. Well, then he said wait a bit, first be an officer now and then you can always see. So you didn't have any thoughts about it but becoming a politician—absolutely not. You know politicians, they're for the first time, let's just say, I remember in –45 or not –45, the beginning of the fifties, there were politicians, absolutely nothing to admire. That changed for the first time with Adenauer, a little by little. And then it became acceptable and today it is naturally something to aspire to. If I were still young today, I would want to become a politician immediately because you couldn't have more security than it has today. According to the newspaper a state secretary, two of them who served with Lafontaine (trans. note: Minister President, the equivalent of a U.S. governor, of the Saar state) for 130 days receive a pension of 14,000 marks and 8500 marks after one or two years for life for 130 days work. That people would agree with that I will never understand, but today that is certainly something worth aiming for. But at that time it was not the case.

I: You mentioned how the war began and that your father was inducted into the army again and can you still recall it?

P: I can. I remember it very well because the war began on the 1st of September 1939 and my father had already been inducted the middle of August. I'll tell you my father had good connections in the army and my father's uncle, in other words the brother of my.., the only brother, had stayed in the navy after the war , and he was already a captain or became one later. In other words he had already had a career. For many years he was commander of submarines in the Mediterranean and so forth. In any case my father had many connections there and so he also had a connection to an army staff or general staff and this general staff was for General Buechs who was a friend of my father's. He insured that my father could join this staff although as I have said he was a reserve officer at the time, a first lieutenant who became a captain at war's beginning. And for that reason he had already been inducted by the middle of August. And that he was assigned somewhere on the border in Schneidemuehl or thereabouts and father had telephoned my mother every evening at a particular time. And on the last day, that has to be the 30th of August, my father said now I can't call you any more. And then my mother cried and said now war will begin because he said we're on the way and can't call again. And then my father became part of the invasion of Poland and the campaign ended within three weeks. A lot of people were discharged from the Wehrmacht at that time. There wasn't any other campaign planned at the time and everything was a bit organized. And my mother had

somehow made application that my father would be demobilized because they had built airplane landing strips and so forth and he was supposed to continue the work. And my mother had told my father that in great joy or I don't know what. In any case my father came home on furlough and was very mad about it that people had gone to the trouble of releasing him from military duty which was nonsense. I am no expert here, and so he did everything possible to remain in the military and another man who had complained and who was excused from the military was named the firm's head, and he led the business while my father remained a soldier with all his heart and soul. And it was also very logical. My father spent the whole war in France (Rouen), attached to an army staff after the French campaign (trans. note: read "invasion"). And then after the Allied landings he retreated and then was assigned in Pomerania, in Ahrendswalde as a battalion commander and in charge of the military forces in the city until the Russians came. So he had a fairly pleasant experience during the war. There is a book currently available, "A Hunting Party Every Day" (Sneetlage), by a man who was on my father's staff there, an officer, who wrote about the hunts which were carried out by this staff. They were all hunters, and my father organized the hunts, and there were two times when Goering participated as a guest. And it stated in the book how my father greeted Goering and took him through the hunting preserve and so forth. So for my father hunting was his real passion and being a soldier was secondary, just a game, right, and you can't blame these people. I…, look, he was 18 years old in 1914 and he had…, there's a postcard he wrote to my mother which I still have where he writes that he didn't give a rap for this war (laughs). He had just graduated from high school ("Abitur") and was immediately inducted into the army. So that was the way he thought. They hadn't learned anything else, these people.

I: You just told me how he was inducted and called your mother and informed her that the war was starting and she had cried. How did you react.?

P: Well, I must say, I was eleven years old at the time and I did not realize the seriousness of the situation at that time. You had only heard of heroic tales and I remember how we students at the time, I and my classmates, had maps at home, and you stuck needles and threads marking the front, and what we heard was only what we had conquered and where the army was and so forth. And to mark the front with pins was normal for us students and then when the war came to a quick end, we were so enthusiastic. So soldiers…, the ones who participated in the Polish campaign, they marched through my hometown and they were greeted with flowers. That was in September, I still remember today how really hot it was and they all received something to drink and so forth. And no one realized the seriousness of the situation. The first time they realized the seriousness of it was when America entered the war. Then they said we can never win over America and then naturally there was Russia. Even when Russia went on the offensive there were people who were convinced that the war was justified and they only woke up, the people, in November when Stalingrad was lost along with the Sixty Army. And they heard of the deaths in Stalingrad of people they knew or who where trapped in Stalingrad. It sunk in a little bit, the awaking that all that is a bit like a cramp, O.K., but when you pursue all that…just look at the twentieth of July (trans. note: assassination attempt on that day against Hitler at his field headquarters in Rastenburg,

East Prussia) which failed. (emphasizes) It is unimaginable how these people who led a genuine active resistance had made such detailed preparations and had part of the general staff behind them and everything. And then for a discussion of the current situation at the front to be held in the barracks instead of a bunker when the bomb didn't have a lot of explosive power and the guy wasn't wounded and so you can't imagine it. And before that there was another episode in Munich.

I: The cellar of the Hofbraeu brewery, right?

P: In the Hofbraeu brewery cellar, an assassination attempt when by chance he didn't appear and so people talked at the time about Providence; well, Hitler never talked about God, only that Providence had saved him and naturally there were many who said there was some truth to it. I recently heard from a family where the wife who is ninety told about her mother who whenever she passed by the Fuehrer's picture in the evening, she (emphasizes) greeted it, the Fuehrer's picture. The woman, a simple woman, you have to try to picture that. And that's what happened then.

I: And about the time when there was a conflict about your father, whether he should return to the business or remain a soldier, how did you view it?

P: I certainly felt it was the right thing at the time. Not because of personal considerations but rather because my father thought it was the right thing. As a child you never went against what your father thought. You shouldn't forget that at that time (emphasizes) it wasn't terrible when the father of the household was not always at home all the time. Can you understand it. That only came up later. In the beginning it was something special and really great and you could say among your friends that your father was there or there or did this or that and so forth. For the first six months of the war that was something special. The children whose fathers had not been inducted were asked why their fathers weren't in the army So that was a little different, people didn't think it was earth shaking.

I: You talked about how you went to church, to mass and can you still remember a situation when you were in the Jungvolk or Hitlerjugend when there was a kind of…, in other words when quit the church.

P: No, (hesitates) that was…, the goal of the Hitlerjugend was to keep the young people away from the church. That was not done very rigorously. For example there was no prohibition against baptism or confirmation and communion. At the time there was no alternative like in the DDR (trans. note: German Democratic Government, i.e. East Germany under the Communists) with the "Jugendweihe" (trans. note: literally, youth consecration, which was a secular ceremony replacing church confirmation). It wasn't forbidden but they would say, O.K., the popes, the priests weren't the right kind of people and they would indulge in little gibes, for example in our town, at the Catholic church in Neustettin next to the main entrance they would set up a showcase for the periodical, "Der Stuermer" (trans. note: literally, the storm trooper, the principal Nazi periodical for disseminating anti-Semitic propaganda). The church couldn't do anything about it. It

was just there and people knew about it but didn't approve of it. And often the Hitlerjugend would schedule duty to coincide with church services, in other words, on Sunday mornings so that the students couldn't go the church directly afterwards. And we had…, I know a classmate who also had a leading position (Zalewski), and both of us were model cadets and attended church as altar boys and when we had duty, then we went to church and didn't show up for duty with the Hitlerjugend. You didn't have to expect any penalties for that. They only said that you shouldn't do that and so forth. And the older people there just grinned. But we thought we were special in doing that and more particularly because we weren't supposed to do that (emphasizes). We then said now we are going to that instead. But we didn't suffer any consequences because of it. That was like a quiet protest and because people didn't approve of it, then like the religion…. I had a grandmother on my father's side who was a very strict Catholic and who prayed with me every evening and I didn't think that was right.

I: Do you still remember when you became an altar boy?

P: The priest was responsible. As Catholics we were a minority in Neustettin and they had to meet their religious obligations by attending church. And then there wasn't such a strong movement like today among altar boys who came partly from the boy's organization or such and are strictly controlled by the priest and are supervised by one of the mass superiors. Then it was more informal. The priest said, would you want to do it or not. And then we attended a course. Afterwards with the altar boys it was arranged from one week to the next. You were asked to come the next Sunday or the one afterwards, to high mass or to the early service. And you nodded and then you were there. Most of them were reliable, at least I was and perhaps others not so but it wasn't a strict practice like it is today. And you know, you did that and so I had…You know, I have always done everything early, swimming, bicycle riding, driving, basically everything that was offered. But there was one disadvantage: I never did anything with intensity. When I was young I played tennis and rode horses and all but not with intensity, just a little playing around, you know and in a like fashion I performed my altar boy duties. After the war my grandmother on my father's side entered the St. Anna Cloister in Remagen after my grandfather died who had a pharmacy in Essen. The St. Anna Cloister was a home for the elderly. Old women would participate in the Cloister life. They had a room there and participated in the Cloister life, as I have said. 1937 or –38 my grandmother had a birthday, the seventieth I believe it was, and since the whole family had been invited to Remagen, we stayed at a hotel there and then went to the Cloister and so forth. And there I had…, I was the second youngest grandson the grandmother had. One, two, three, four and with me four grandsons and one granddaughter. And I served as the altar boy and the others were not altar boys and it really pleased my grandmother that I had served on her birthday. And she especially liked me and the Cloister did too. When I was in the POW camp I didn't have an address for my mother and didn't know where Gantersheim was and whether she was there. And so I wrote to the Cloister to ask if they knew where my mother was. And through relatives this Cloister found out my mother's address and wrote her that I was alive and so forth. Well, that was –46 or -47 when we could write and every year at Christmas this Cloister had sent greetings to my mother and asked if I had returned yet and when my

mother said not yet and in –49 said he had returned, then I visited the Cloister when they invited me and they were all there, the prioress and so forth. And then I poured out my heart to them that nothing will become of me or thereabouts and then they made me an offer to attend school at their expense, to gain the Abitur and then to study further at a higher institution. They said I should study theology but I didn't accept that as a pre-condition and rejected the offer because I told myself I couldn't do that. I don't know when I made that decision. I mean today I have…, I am in a Knight's Templar order which is a successor to the crusaders and we have a relationship with the Maria Laach Cloister and once in a while we have a convention and I have met some monks there and become acquainted with their lifestyle there and those who had pursued careers like me and so I thought, boy, these people are satisfied with their fate and pursue their academic interests or whatever and the problems with aging which one had in professional live and the pressure and all, they don't have and I have often thought at the time if I had met the right person then, my life might have turned out differently perhaps. But then I was 23 in –50 and immature in many respects, hadn't really lived a life yet and didn't know what life was all about. I had still not slept with a woman then and, and all that was a different time. And if I had taken the right turn, you don't know, I often make myself sick (clears his throat) that I am such an idiot about cultural things that I don't know anything about. My wife is very interested in them and so forth but I have never been introduced to them and I have never had the interest and so I have worked until my 66th, 67th birthday and I always had to take my job seriously. There was no time and naturally there is a lot that is flat in my life, you understand? Sometimes negative themes arise. Earlier you could compensate for that through your work. But when you are no longer working, then there is something missing. You can talk about the garden or about the weather (laughs). And then I think often if things had gone differently, you know, but…

I: Yes, that is the…You describe very well how you grew up very fast in the war in comparison to today's generation but on the other side not, in other words, other things were slow to acquire in comparison to today.

P: Yes, naturally (clears his throat). Naturally that here..you had among other things a kind of half knowledge. And you know we are also not, today in position. , many of us, we say to study intensively. (……..) haven't learned anything at school. We spent the time with jokes, and many of my generation absolutely never learned to concentrate on anything with intensity. We also have…, well just look, I have been a manager for twenty years in an oil company. That had been possible at (emphasizes) that time with the people of that time period. Today it's no longer possible. The people today have studied at the university and have a different way of working, and they don't care about success. But there are others and we were like those guys with rolled up sleeves. But we hadn't studied anything intensively. We worked more intuitively with sweat and perhaps that is a mistake. And today, you know, they would find some other kind of work. And that is always bad, you know, this development. So I have always said if I were a bit gifted with writing, I would like to put my impressions which I have on many subjects on paper. Only my wife always says who would be interested in that, right?

I: Well, another time. You had said in the context of talking about the church the fight against the Jews by the Nazis and that in your home in contrast the Jews were called human beings like us. Can you tell me a bit more about your parents' Jewish friends?

P: Yes (clears his throat). Well, Jewish friends: there was, for example, the Loewenberg family and whenever Herr or Frau Loewenberg called—the telephone was situated at the firm and the calls would then be transferred to us at home. And when they called, they would say this is Frau or Herr Berg, and then my parents would know that it was Loewenberg (laughs a little). They avoided identifying themselves as Jews. As I recall, Jews were fully integrated into society up to –36. You had friends, Jews who had a business and then it was said although they are Jews, I had always heard, you know, that right during the war, the First World War, Jewish officers had distinguished themselves and so forth and there wasn't any difference to see in them. And after –36, -37 they were discriminated against for the most part. That means that you had contact with them now and then but, for example, earlier, as they say today you had a party, you held a reception and in my parents'house sometime during the winter there was a party, people were invited to dinner and then waiters were hired, you know, who would serve the meal and all that was a festive occasion. And after –36, -37 these Jewish families, there were the Freundlichs and another was the Loewenbergs, were no longer invited. And there wasn't much discussion about it in any case. They would just say at the moment and so forth and so further. And then the time came, that was "Kristallnacht" in front of the synagogues, that the parents talked about it, that they wanted to emigrate or give up everything and my father then talked a great deal by telephone with Herr Loewenberg and what they agreed to in detail, I don't know. Whether he helped him or not or whatever. In any case they talked about it often that he wanted to leave and they drove off in the dead of night and my father bought a rug from them and said farewell. And I remember it was in winter and my father had a convertible and the top was let down in order to get the rug into the car and I found that wonderful, you know, in winter. And they parted form them in friendship and I really didn't know what was going on or whatever. And the other family also, we parted from them and this family, the Freundlichs, they had themselves driven to Berlin. Herr Freundlich had a Horch at that time (trans. note: a large limousine, like the American Cadillac); that was a large car and he gave the car to his driver at the airport. This was a driver who had been in their employ, and he drove the car until the beginning of the war. And he always said that was given to him by Herr Freundlich at the airport or I don't know what. And all at once they were gone and we never heard anything more from them. Only my father, he had a lot of regrets or something. In any case I didn't learn anything about it. There were two or three families and then the so-called Kristallnacht came when their houses, the windows in them were smashed and in our hometown, Neustettin, the synagogue was burned. And a lot of people were shocked, my parents too, I know, and people talked about the mob which did that and this and that and so forth. And then all the Jewish businesses…

[Tape 4/4, Side A]

P: And later these Jewish businesses were Aryanized, as they called it. That meant that the business would continue to function and would be sold to Aryan businessmen who

would then continue the business. That was the same with these businesses. One of them was a felt slipper factory that someone took over. That was, in my parents' eyes, specifically my father's, not right. He said how can you do that, and someone comes into the business and hasn't a clue. So people considered that very bad and unjust, that someone would be dispossessed and there were frequent discussions about that, you know. They said someone had taken over a business from a Jew or had gotten this or that from a Jew and through connections or some such. And people criticized it but didn't make any protests (emphasizes) against it. And they couldn't do anything about it. And you never found out about it and you know the whole legal system was different then. I remember a woman friend of my parents who was a physician; Frau Doctor Buchholz had a case against her because of abortion, illegal abortion which was illegal at that time. And she had performed an abortion on a woman and then they arrested her. And she was put on trial and a friend of my parents, a lawyer Beier defended her. And in our circle of friends it was naturally discussed that…, Trude Buchholz was her name, that she was put on trial and what was proven and what was not. In short, the woman was declared not guilty because of this lawyer but after the verdict she was arrested by the Gestapo. The Gestapo, the Secret State Police as it was called, could arrest without any judicial judgment or order by the state prosecutor. And they couldn't do anything about it and this Gestapo had put her immediately in jail, a prison or concentration camp or such. And people had an enormous fear of the Gestapo naturally. Every criminal policeman or such had to obtain an official determination of a crime or permission for a house search or an arrest warrant but the Gestapo could act directly against the people, exactly like the DDR (trans. note: Communist East Germany) had done sometimes with the Stasi (trans. note: Communist secret police). And for that reason people were very fearful and many Jews, you know, were arrested from one hour to the next by the Gestapo (speaks quickly and with emphasis) then they were gone. And people didn't do anything. What could they do? They were against it, inwardly but outwardly they didn't do anything in any fashion. Certainly there were many people who helped, you know. So I can…., I don't know if my parents had helped Jews. I never found out but I can imagine that at least they never approved of it and whether my father helped the families financially, I can't judge. And so that's how many thought and acted but they offered no resistance. Good, they had…, all right, they went to work camps, in a concentration camp and people didn't know of these enormous mass murders or whatever. Just look, as well known as the euthanasia was at the time, the destruction of a worthless life, people also knew about that. I had an uncle who was head of a psychiatric clinic in Andernach and was also the chief physician there. After the war he was convicted of euthanasia and sentenced to several years in prison in Frankfurt but was then released and rehabilitated. He then recovered his civil service status and then reached the title of Senior Medical Counselor when he died although he was no longer a chief physician, only a senior one. At that time these people killed those through injections who were considered incapable of life or had a worthless life. For the most part people knew about that. That was also reported in the press…People didn't consider that as a crime. Certainly from a religious standpoint you aren't supposed to kill anyone, for all I know, but that was not the case. And people didn't talk about the death penalty. People were shot because they were deserters or because they had stolen something during blackouts, and so forth. They were stood against the wall and shot. People were aware of that but a discussion about arbitrary

killings, people against other people, that wasn't discussed in any form. And there were some who did not agreed with euthanasia but only from a religious standpoint. That was not considered a crime just like abortion. Abortion, from a medical point of view was primarily not condemned. But on second thought people said all right, every life had to be saved and so forth. That was a completely different point of view. And as a child, teenager I agreed already with it. But about gassing the Jews, I only know from my father about Poland, but not about the massacres there, only about how they were treated. I had told my mother from time to time how bad it was, how they were housed and so forth, but otherwise nothing further.

I: Can you still remember when you heard about the gassing?

P: (takes a deep breath) Yes, from the gassing I learned about it during the war as a soldier. But how that happened in gas chambers when people were led into them…That we didn't, people only thought they were killed by gas. And basically the discussion arose because people had a great fear about gas warfare in the Second World War. You know that in the First World War they had employed gas and people became blind and I don't know what all. And in the Second World War they were fearful that the Germans or someone would use gas as a last resort and for that reason there were gas masks which we always carried with us and so the discussion arose that they gassed Jews. But how, I never found out about until after the war when we were released from POW camps. Even in the POW camps we didn't know anything about it or discussed it. But that this (emphasizes) these mass murders and that children which we later…, that I learned only in the Fifties when I came home and read the publications about it. (softly) We hadn't done that at the time in that manner, you know. That I have to always, always say. And…, but people also hadn't thought about such. You just always said they are in a work camp, a concentration camp and a work camp was a concept for us. One: they have to work and we knew about work camps from history and the penal colonies and so forth. So people had an idea about them and people who had just been released or who had a glimpse inside them were not permitted to say anything about them as I learned later. They weren't like they were described in publications. But you know, Frau Rupp, people then were different. If they had publicized it then, there wouldn't have been any protests. Today they say how could you agree to that but that was at the time. You have a parallel today when you talked to the East Germans. The young West Germans who say how could you agree to that. You roared at them, saying but every election is a lie and fraudulent. nd you didn't do anything. And the East Germans say what were we supposed to do? They would have locked us up. Someone thinks that way who wasn't there, who can't understand it t all. Today the people are politically oriented differently; they represent all different directions. You can't work in the economy in your profession the same as you did earlier. That doesn't work. Earlier people grumbled, they were mad. That doesn't exist today. In exchange there are other complaints like unemployment and so forth and that didn't exist at that time.

I: When in the Fifties you learned about that, how did you feel?

P: Ah, God, Frau Rupp. Certainly you said that's bad. Today I can only say I know what men are capable of, how people can manipulate others. And these people who had done that were manipulated in turn. And you can make animals out of human beings (coughs a little). You can do anything with human beings. You only have to really understand that there were people who surrendered others to be gassed or to be shot and so forth, you know. That…, I mean I can't judge them but I know that it is possible, even that it is terrible but please…I always say again if people hear today like…How could you people allow what they had said, what did you do, nothing at all, all right…I have been to the DDR many times when it existed and I have friends there. And they always said, you know, what do you say now about it here. I know a couple, he is a physician, a forensic doctor who always says, man, tell me just what you would say, just imagine for a moment how it is here. You know how it is. And I said,… what should I say to you. It is terribly bad, you know (emphasizes). Yes but it is different where you are. But I say, of course, we also have our problems, you know and the children can't study, you know because, I am a physician and, and what will I tell you about it, I say it is terribly sad and what should I say in addition. People are also egotistical in certain respects, you know, and it is difficult to understand; the young people today are certainly, certainly different. But please just look, I have been following now this, this party congress by the Green Party which took place on Sunday. I have always said these people come from the peace movement, you know. (emphasizes) They have to decide today regardless of what is behind it, an immediate stop. Even because of their whole structure, but they haven't done it. I don't understand it either. I mean certainly it is right what they do from their standpoint but the ones who came from the peace movement who are against NATO, who oppose the Pershing II missiles and all. And now they weigh this bombardment and think it can't lead to anything positive, you know. And then they do a quick step, a limited stop which is certainly puzzling, which can't work, you know, when it is not defined how long it would be, when and so forth. So they just let themselves be carried along, and I don't understand now. Young people perhaps understand it. (laughs out loud).

I: Well, I just wanted to come back to your parents' friends, if you can remember them when you were a child. Did you have Jewish friends even before –33?

P: No. I had none. They didn't have any children that we knew the same age. I went to elementary school with Jewish children but I can't remember them. But it was natural that there were Jewish children there but there was no distinction made. In –37, -38 at high school (Gymnasium) there were no Jewish kids there whom I can recall, that I know of, and in the Hitlerjugend at that time none were accepted. The problems were with those who were a quarter Jewish. That distinction was made when one of their grandparents was Jewish which made him a quarter Jewish or what and they then felt the effects of reprisals. You know for that reason I had after the war…I had a girl friend who was Jewish and I always thought that I would never marry her even i…She could be so, so nice and loving but I couldn't do that to my future children, to marry a Jew. That was –50, -51, -52 when people had different ideas. Today I wouldn't care whether my daughter married a Jew. It wouldn't matter at all but then it was such that if the family had somewhere a great grandparent who had married a Jew, then they had trouble and

their careers were fairly over, you know, because someone had a relationship with a Jew. That was unfortunately the case.

I: Well, can you tell me about the war and how you joined the Flak anti-artillery team and was sent to the front. But wait, back again! I just have, that was, that was then in the context when you volunteered. Could you explain in more detail about your enlistment, about the boys from the country who were influenced by the SS?

P: I told you (clears his throat) there were places where you could volunteer. There was an announcement in the newspaper where you could volunteer to join the air force or where you could report to a district military headquarters, like on Tuesday, from five to seven or what all. And the SS combat force (Waffen-SS) made similar announcements. And the SS combat force primarily wanted to recruit young men from the farm areas. So a recruitment drive was arranged in a village of say 5000 inhabitants or so. And then all young men of a certain age had to appear. That was mandatory and those born in a certain year from the first of the fifth month to the thirty first of the twelfth month had to appear, let's say, at the Gasthof (restaurant) called "At the Sign of the Angel", between fifteen and eighteen hours (3-5 P.M.) for enlistment. And for this recruitment drive there would be at least two Hitlerjugend leaders ordered to attend and also perhaps three or four SS officers too. And you went into the Gasthof and there were long tables and two rooms or so reserved for them. And our responsibility was to sit in front of these boxes of file cards or lists and check off if a Herr Mueller who was born during the year in question was present and then to certify who was also not present—that was our responsibility. And the Waffen-SS, they talked to these young people. There was no physical examination; the physical examination came later after they had volunteered. So that was what they called this enlistment, and the young men were influenced more or less, mainly by citing the advantages of joining the SS as opposed to joining some other arm of service. Whenever you agreed to volunteer for service, you had to obtain the signatures of your parents or those responsible for your education The Waffen-SS didn't require these signatures, you know. That meant that adolescents or young people who were in trouble with their parents and wanted to volunteer could go into the Waffen-SS and didn't need any signatures. So that was the first thing. And then these boys were passed on to the first one who asked a few questions, and then a second person came who said, all right, where do you want to go in the army and then when he said, to the artillery. He said, why are you so eager to go to the artillery? And when he replied because grandfather was in the artillery and such. He would say the artillery is very nice, you know, and the SS also has artillery. And then the young man would state that his father was also in the artillery and he had a lot to do with horses and so forth and so on, you know. And then the other would reply, what can't you go into the Waffen-SS. He would still say, no, I want to go into the artillery. And then a third person who had a stricter attitude said, boy, are you too scared? No, he would reply, I'm not scared. And the other would say, then you can go into the artillery, into the Waffen-SS, it's all the same. And then he signs up and joins the Waffen-SS. So they recruited some of these young men, not all of them that way. And the whole show was very imposing in such as way that there were some really smart looking SS officers with many decorations who naturally made a great impression. And then these country bumpkins came in there and

they got them and they entered the Waffen-SS voluntarily. Then later they received a physical examination and all and were then inducted. And these poor devils, they had the disadvantage of having their blood type tattooed on their forearm, And when they became POW's, the Russians naturally looked immediately there and it didn't matter if they were recruited against their will, volunteered, or had served as a guard in a KZ or what. He was from the SS and thenhad many, many disadvantages. But in any case they were sent to a special camp and I know.., I know (coughs a little) that many went into the SS because of change, a bit of pressure when they normally would never have volunteered. That was the time then. It was exactly the same, you know, with many policemen, most of the policemen who were inducted. They all ended up in the SS. They didn't want to go into the SS. So you can't say that in the Waffen-SS there were only those who had a tendency to commit crimes.

I: Yes, Yes... You told me then how you were inducted and were given many honors. What occurred afterwards? And after the death of your friend, could you tell me more in a bit more detail?

P: Yes. I mean, we felt were a certain kind of elite because first we were accepted as officer candidates and that we were considered qualified to become flyers. And we felt then like a certain elite and were smart looking soldiers and now we were told, you people have your military career planned for you. You just need to figure out what individual military courses to take to qualify for the flying school and so forth. And you knew that in a while you would be a lieutenant. That was a first class goal. And they told us during a loud address at an airport (Ramel) near Gotenhafen that we had to have an assignment at the front first. I thought it was supposed to be for four or six weeks and then we were supposed to receive special recognition which would be part of our records at the war college or whatever. It lasted then for a half a year until we were finished and we were the ones who had to show how it was done and so forth and we then realized that we had been chosen especially, and then the newsreel people came and photographed us and all. Then we marched east and these three companies were divided. One went to Marienburg. I learned later that they had advanced out of Marienburg even though they had been surrounded there. Marienburg was a fortress in East Prussia and they had shot at the Russians like at hares. I was sent to the infantry regiment "Hermann List". They were soldiers, normal soldiers and I became part of the trench warfare there. And we were with these soldiers and we came into a village, I don't remember any longer what it was called, and we were divided into trenches and so forth. And there was movement in the village and the Russians were there about 100 meters away. They moved around. It was a stationary front and there one of us, Wolfgang Magelsen, one morning was found dead. They said he was going to fetch some food or coffee and was shot. (talking to his wife: tell me, can you make us some? Frau Rupp have been so nice to send me some tapes.)

P: How many cassettes are there, Frau Rupp?

I: Four to Five.

P: Four…In any case he was dead, they had shot him and I saw him lying there. There was scarcely any mark on him. I don't know where the shot hit him. And then they said he must be buried. And there was a discussion about where and then they found a corner and a grave was shoveled out and he was laid to rest there, in a blanket along with his coat and so forth. And then they shoveled it over and put a cross on top. And then my friend was gone. And no one bothered about it any more. No one talked about it the next day and everything continued as before. They said the company commander would write to his parents, to his mother or I don't know to whom. And I thought, well, I have never yet seen a dead man and this one is the first I have seen in my life. And I thought that is terrible, we wanted to do so much still, that we still had plans and all. Now he is dead (emphasizes) and that now he is like dust. And then I thought now I don't care about all this that they make a big deal about. I must just see that I don't get myself killed. It's all over and I'm not going to become a hero. It's over. And then it happened again and we buried another. And then the Russians attacked on the flanks and there was an earth bunker there and I have..we had then from the time when we began the war, we were fully equipped. You know, we had, God knows, letter folders with writing paper and all that you need for daily living. And we had the right-type rucksack full and a weapon and what all and food. And then we had to flee and they said retreat from this trench and run across this large field because the Russians are attacking on the flank and shooting. And there were, I don't know how many, twenty, thirty, they say who are coming here. We couldn't do anything and then we fled across the field in formation, with all the equipment as I said. And then the Russians shot at us with guns and you could hear the shots whistling by and someone was hit somewhere and I kept running and I threw away everything so that I could run faster and because I couldn't use any of it because of fear. And there…when you run you don't know whether you have been hit or not. You only hear the shots whistling by. You don't know if you have been hit. I ran and threw away everything, the pack, everything I had.

[Tape 4/4, Side B]

P: And after this death of my friend I had, I had such fear, more than I every had in my life and I thought this here is a damn serious situation and it had nothing to do with heroism and I didn't want to hear of it. And then I got wounded while I was lying in a trench and because in the morning a first lieutenant, Tatschik, came and I said nothing unusual had happened and he barked at me, asking whether I had seen the two Russians behind me or how they were running around and then he began to shoot at them and then I became aware that somehow they suddenly saw us and I got even more scared. And he told me to watch them and I couldn't see because of my great fright. And then I got wounded and then thought now there is only one important thing in my whole life and that is to get out of this situation in one piece. And that always gave me courage as a POW. I always said as a POW that you will survive here because you weren't knocked off then and you won't be knocked off now. I have only God Almighty to thank and I have also thought that my time had not run out here and you will come out of it. But (clears his throat) this..you are afraid and the intentions you had at one time, there's nothing left. Nothing at all. And if someone talks about heroism, you have to keep it a little bit in check. I had not done that; I am…, perhaps I was then too young, perhaps.

Today it would be different, I don't know. But then I only had fear, you know (emphasizes) and that is a realization, you know, and you have to always considered it It was in March, right, with 17 years, 7 months old. You have to think about what all goes on in a human being and you can't dismiss it. You know my father had always said to me, you know, boy, you must never run away because when you run away, they will stand you against the wall and nothing will help you then, no special connections at all. And everyone who runs away is a deserter. They hanged them in Danzig with a sign around them that said "I was too much a coward to fight." And everybody knew that. There was nowhere else to go. And as I said, again and again considering that a person is 17 years old and you would have to tell that to the children today. That is unimaginable (clears his throat).

I: Well, tell me how you became a POW and was put in a train to Minsk when you first thought that you were being released to go home.

P: Yes, now…, I mean, the Russians had made us march to Deutsch-Eilau. It was wonderful weather at that time and in Deutsch-Eilau we were in a part of the city and we heard that we would not be released at Whitsuntide. And then we would go home. And (clears his throat) then they organized the first trainload, five hundred men, I think, and from each one a hundred people were selected who were assigned to this transport who would go home. And out of my 100 company of men I was the youngest one selected. In the other 100 company of men there were people who had a criminal record, criminals who had served in prison and they came together and it was a very mixed bunch. We were then loaded on to the train and we were glad to be going home. And then it started and from the sun we saw that we were heading eastwards. And we were in rail cars of about 30 men apiece or so. (laughing softly) that had to first…, they had the tracks,, all of them in a westerly direction were destroyed and then switched to the wide tracks and I knew that in a few days (emphasizes) we would be heading east. And they all still believed that we would be going home. What were they supposed to do with POW's. We had something to eat. No one thought it possible that you had to work for food. And so we arrived in Minsk and there were POW's in Minsk. The wonderful thing was that the POW's already there, they had later sewn the names of their hometowns on their caps with a few stitches. And you could always see each one immediately….well, each one had a cap on because their heads were shaven. They had them on even in the summer and you could see right away where they came from, Berlin, Bochum or somewhere and so forth. And now we said we are going home and with that they laughed themselves to death. And they said we've been here for three years already and we thought we would also going to be going home and that was the end of that. And then we noticed that it wasn't up to them and we still didn't know what was going to happen, you know, and we said, well, the war is over and what do they want with POW's? And then we came to Minsk, some of us, not all five hundred to Moledetschnow. That was a kind of rail crossroad. And then they put two rail.., or rather, two trains composed of passenger cars. And these two trains were parked parallel to each other on two tracks surrounded by a wire fence. Each rail car held twenty three people (sic), I believe. Twelve on one side, twelve on the other, with six on top and six on the bottom, in other words, in two layers. That was our living quarters and the interesting thing about this camp was that I found a friend there. That was Theo Seebold who help me set up our place in the rail car, with

straw up on top and on the bottom and we also had a canvas sheet and so forth. Most importantly we made sure that we had a place to sit on the side or somewhere. And then we had to stand in formation and be counted. That was the most important thing we did, to be counted and as we stood in formation to be counted, all the people for the various jobs had already been chosen. There were people for the kitchen, people to work as barbers, people to repair shoes, people to repair clothes and so forth. And there were the prisoners who supervised. And at that point I said, listen, how can we get one of these jobs? All those people who had these jobs knew how to get them in a camp like this, they had volunteered right away. Well, I would never have gotten this idea, but there were people who knew about it, who knew how it worked from time in prison or some such. And they filled all the positions right away. And then they sent us off to work. There was little to eat; and we would lie about in the rail cars, and we built a train depot and a bunker. And in winter there was this, this trick, you know, when the wind blew right and left. You had to do something and so we built an earth bunker, that is, digging out a hole and bracing it with boards, like a box about a meter and a half deep or two meters deep, dug out and boards put over it and then earth on top of that, you know, and that was an earth bunker and there were cots in this earth bunker, double or triple deckers and we had a stove with a chimney sticking out of the earth on top and we spend the winter there, camped outside. And every day we went of to work, marched to somewhere. And we shoveled and worked with little to eat. And as I said, the worst, you know, was if you had diarrhea, you'd be dead. There were people who died who had given up living, who stopped eating. They were finished. They had something, I think, then nothing. They then died and had nothing. Their bodies were emaciated, you know. And then there were people, you know who got diarrhea because they had eaten something or other and then they died two days later. And our main occupation was to kill body lice. We stood before the fire and then the lice…, well, we kept getting lice and there were differences. There were people who got lice and others who didn't. In my case I had lice but no bedbugs. But my friend, Theo, he always had to fight bedbugs. He put a herb into his bed or what all. But I never had bedbugs. And then we worked and then they would…, they searched for people who had committed some crime while in their army unit and they kept interrogating enlisted men up to officers, and so forth. And they interrogated me too but because of my year of birth, -27, they couldn't accuse me of any crimes and I quickly realized that I didn't have any reprisals to fear. But the others had, they had all volunteered then and so forth. And then that continued until –47 and then we were sent to the CSSR and that is another story.

I: You mentioned before that while you were a POW there, you became more religious.

P: Yes, you became more religious by necessity, you know. First, because you saw that the others had cried who had left the church. There were many of them who did so at that time and who now were afraid that when they died, they would not get to heaven, or some such. And when a person is in trouble, at least that is my experience, then he prays, you know. I have prayed many times. And because they were afraid that tomorrow would be the end or something, I also thought like that when I was working in the uranium mines, driven into one of the mine shafts, I have prayed that a rock wouldn't fall on my head. When you are really in trouble or (emphasizes) are afraid of death, then you begin to pray. Others perhaps not, but I always prayed and I always told myself that I

would never leave the church because I…,I don't know, I wouldn't do it. My wife has another opinion. She sees the collection money or the church tax. Well, all right, everybody has their own…;, And I have the same opinion today. My wife is a Protestant. I still think today that religious belief is the most intimate thing for anyone There is nothing more intimate that religious belief and everyone has to form his own as he sees it. And to be active in church isn't enough, it's everyone's belief that does it, his basic, most intimate belief.

I: Yes, you said before that when you were a POW in the CSSR, that it was more sadistic than when a POW under the Russians. That there was the situation when a sheet of paper was held against the wall by a person's nose. Did you ever see that?

P: No, not in person. I only saw that the Russians were more primitive. They had.., well, when they made the usual count of POW's in camp..they did this in the morning, noon and in the evenings. And if the Russians didn't get a correct count because the people weren't in a correct formation or something, then they kicked them in the rear. But when the Czechs saw someone standing in the wrong place, then they made a little game out of it, for various reasons. And there were various ways. I remember that then the person had to hold a piece of paper (emphasizes) against the wall, or they would be left standing, and (emphasizes) if you have to stand by yourself, it's bad. At some point you will fall over but it lasts until you fall over. Before that you would ask first to sit, everyone would because you can't stand any more and then they kick you in the rear and you have to continue standing and it lasts until you faints. And the Czechs had a lot of fun with that and did such things. Not only beating. And that was the difference with them and above all the young people. That was also the case with the Russians. The young people naturally had a special pleasure in taking it out on older people, to show their power over the older ones. I mean there were also decent people there, you know. We worked together with some civilians in the mines and they gave us some food, like poppy seed strudel and things like that. So they weren't only bad people, even in Russia. I also got to know some good people. One episode I can tell you about. When we were in Russia and were working at a construction site, we broke up stones and built with them and the population there was very friendly to us Germans. And the population had suffered badly under German occupation. That was formerly Polish territory around Minsk, White Russia, and the population was very friendly. And there was once a situation around noontime when I saw how one of our people off by himself—we were perhaps a total of thirty at the construction site, always had something to eat, bread or something. I thought where did he get that. So much! And I found out somehow, whether I asked…, that he had gone door to door begging from the civilians and then got something to eat. And even though this construction site was patrolled, they couldn't look everywhere. In any case, he was able to slip away and go door to door to get some food and then I found out about it and my comrade or friend who was a baker by profession, he was five years older, not Theo, he was a non-commissioned officer in the tank corps, a real gung-ho soldier, and I said to him, what do you know, that guy is begging and he knew about it and said sure (emphasizes). And then I said I would also go there too and he said, are you crazy? A German soldier doesn't go begging from civilians. We don't do that. Well, I thought about it and said all right that's the way it is. And it didn't last more than a day or two before I thought, now you should go there and I

also went begging and wherever I went I also got something. And I went back again and then I said to my friend, Theo, I have something to eat. Well, that's fine and then we divided it. That was the practice, that you shared what you had and then I told him I was going to go there again the next morning. Well, in short, my other comrades naturally soon "stoned" me, but I was just such a young guy that they then just…, then said you don't do that. Then I said O.K. but I wanted something to eat. That didn't last one week or I don't know how long, I don't remember any longer, that several others went begging, my friend Theo also. We took turns. One time he went, then another time I went. And then it became a general practice in every unit to go begging. And there were some who were professional about it. They said in Russian/Ukrainian "Ja memjatzi pleni." That means I am a German POW and "daimiu nemjoschka chleba" which means give me a piece of bread or "o apar Katoschki" for a few potatoes. Those were sentences we quickly learned and then the population gave us something and I was particularly favored because I was young, and I was such a skinny guy and had a frightfully long neck. They always said that I was so thin and long and I was always successful. And then there were some groups. We were a group of four prisoners. It was kind of a group for obtaining food. They would obtain a bit of bread and it had to be divided, you know and they relaxed on their cots together. We four always stayed together and when one of them left the group it was to bring something back and to divide it then and not to eat it on his way back. Because that would destroy the group's friendship and when going begging they said to do it professionally. When you came to a door and a crucifix hung there, they would fall down on their knees and make this for the first time (laughs). That produced a special impression. And there were many, many episodes. And there were also people who stole or did something. And when the guards saw that or missed something, then there was punishment and that person received a beating or it had to be reported and then they had to chop wood during the night in the camp. Wood had to be chopped at night for the kitchen. There would be two hours of wood chopping for five days or something like that. In any case there was punishment for this begging but it was the general practice and no one talked any more about the pride of a German soldier. And in that manner we held our heads above water. We got soup and bread and everything possible. And as I said it depended on what was successful, you know. None of us were stout and heavy but I was particularly clever because people had pity on me because of my youth. And I could make a sad expression.

I: Well, that's good. I have one more question. As I see it, you fled from there and you told me before how you knew about your mother where she was through contact with the cloister. Do you remember about it how you learned that your father .., I mean that he was killed in action or how was he killed?

P: My father died after, shortly after the war, October –45. And my mother wrote me then. We were able (hesitates) to receive postcards and to write cards in return. My mother had written me earlier that she was with Sibylle, with my sister. And I had a bit of inkling and sometime she wrote me that father was gone and you know that was something that you took note of. You know, you learn very early when you are an adolescent and confronted with situations, you learn early what you can change and what you can't and there are frightfully many points in your youth that you have to take note of

that you can't change. And you can't run away. That was impossible and this and that (emphasizes) wasn't any different.

I: Thanks a lot.

P: Your welcome.

I: Is there anything that you have forgotten to tell me?

P: No, have I forgotten to tell you anything? I don't know, certainly not. Until –50 I have tried to explain everything.

I: Good, O.K. Then your questionnaire, I still have for the last time….

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