

THE STORY OF MY LIFE



Rolf Muuss

BACKGROUND

My father was a Lutheran minister in Schleswig-Holstein, the most northern part of Germany, stretching from Hamburg to the Danish border. He served as Pastor in Tating, Eiderstedt (a peninsula reaching into the North Sea) from 1920 to 1930 and later from 1930 until his retirement in 1957 in Stedesand, Nordfriesland (The northwest coastal area of Schleswig-Holstein). His father had been a pastor in the Marienkirche in Flensburg for 30 years. That is the church in which I got married in 1954. My father conducted the wedding ceremony, which was attended by my 93 year old grandfather. My father's grandfather had also been a Lutheran minister in Heide and later in his life served as the "Probst" (superintendent for the county). His wife Anna Prall (my great grandmother) had been very active as a "Diakonisse" (deaconess) in the city of Heide. Actually the city gave her the honorary title "Diakonissse von Heide" for her life long efforts in helping the poor, the sick, and the old. Very recently she was immortalized in that the new Residential Center for Senior Citizens was named after her. With the suffrage for women, she was elected to the city government. She was one of the first women elected.

My mother came from Enger, a small city in Westfalia. The city is famous as the "Widukind Stadt." Widukind was the leader of the Saxons in the conflict with Charlemagne. Widukind is buried in the church in Enger. My grandfather on my mother's side was very versatile, a skillful merchant and apparently quite successful in many of his undertakings. He started out helping his mother running a "Heringsladen" (Pop and Mom store that became known for its salt herrings). During the War of 1870/71 he served in the cavalry and demonstrated great skill in training horses. After the war he bought young horses, trained them and sold them at a profit. Later he bought a run down "Ziegelei" (brickyard) renovated it, improved the production process, of making bricks and made a success out of it. Eventually he turned his skill to Cigar production, which started small, but when I was a young child, he owned a thriving cigar factory. From my perspective he lived in a very fancy and rich house. During my childhood I spent many a summer vacation at my grandmother's house in Enger, visiting my three uncles, who after my grandfather's death were running the cigar factory. My grandmother often took me in a chauffeur driven car to visit the sights in that part of Westfalia.

My father grew up in Flensburg. He attended the "Gymnasium" (secondary school) there and learned: Danish, English, French, Latin and old Greek. Later he studied theology, philosophy and history at the universities of Tuebingen, Copenhagen, Bonn, Marburg and Kiel. In WW 1 he volunteered and served in the trenches in France. Recovering from surgery in a military hospital in Enger, he met my mother who worked in that hospital as an assistant nurse. They were married in 1916. My sister Ingrid was born in Flensburg 1918. After the war my father held a teaching position and served as an assistant minister where he had to conduct all church services in Danish. As a young man he was politically very active especially in the referenda to be held in the northern parts of the province according to the Treaty of Versailles. At stake was how much of Germany should be ceded to Denmark or not. In Flensburg and Nordfriesland a large majority voted for remaining part of Germany, while the region between Tondern and the old Danish border prior to WW I became part of Denmark.

In 1920 my father accepted a permanent position as pastor in Tating, where my brother Uwe (1921) and I (1924) were born. Besides the large house, the beautiful flower gardens and the quaint village, I remember relatively little from these early years of my life, except the illness of my mother. She died of breast cancer in 1929. At that time I was 4 years old.

My father was very active in various cultural, historical and literary endeavors I have no recollection of his actual work during that time, except through the books and papers that resulted from it. He visited and interviewed older people in order to collect legends and sagas. These sagas often described local events, geographic features and mystical doings of dwarfs in a fictitious manner. The result of his effort was a book "Nordfriesische Sagen" which more recently even appeared in a second edition. He explored the history and the legends surrounding the Town "Rungholt." Rungholt was totally destroyed as were many other communities by the "Sturm Flut" (devastating storm flood) of 1362. As a result the city was swamped by the flood and buried under the mud of the North Sea. All people died, except for the minister and two young women, one of whom may have been my great, great, great Grandmother. In the 1920's the current of the sea had washed away the mud and exposed the partial remnants of dikes, locks, houses, water wells and even the tracks of the plowshares which could be identified from the air. The outcome of his investigation was a book "Rungholt" (Subtitle: Ruins under a Frisian island.) Jointly with Professor Borchling they wrote a book "Die Friesen" (The Friesians).



Frisian Crest: Inscription "Rather dead than being a slave"

1927 my father became president of the “Nordfriesischer Verein” (North-Frisian Society) a position he held until the beginning of the Hitler regime — and again after the end of WW II. Since I used the term “Friesen”, “Friesisch” and “Nordfriesland” repeatedly and the Friesian Crest hangs in my living room, a few words may be appropriate. Friesland, at that time, was not a political entity, but a cultural one, that crosses international borders. West-Friesland is located in the Netherlands, North-Friesland in Germany and the Southern tip of Denmark. There also is a small area referred to as Ost-Friesland. In the years 1928-1930 he was involved in the foundation of the Friesenrat (Frisian Council) an entity that encompasses all three Frisian tribes. Friesisch is a language in its own right, with its own literature; a language that is quite different from German. The Friesians have been seafarers and fishermen. As farmers they had to build dikes to protect their farms. As such they had to struggle for centuries to keep their land safe from the raging storms, high waters and flooding of the North Sea. Their land behind the dikes often was lower than the North Sea. In time of ferocious storms their survival depended on strong dikes. To accomplish their goal, they had to cooperate with one each other and elected their own “Deichgraf” (overseer of the dikes).

In 1930 my father was elected as pastor by the congregation in Stedesand. The following year he married a woman from the village who was a former teacher. She became my stepmother and raised me. My parents had three more children: Harro, 1932, Hans 1937 and Franz who died before his first birthday. Initially my father too was caught in the optimistic spirit of the early Nazi years, as many people were. Thus he initially showed a positive attitude toward “Nationalsozialismus,” but not for very long. Early after the Nazis assumed total power, all clubs, societies and associations went through a process referred to as “Gleichschaltung” (enforced political conformity). Therefore, already in 1933 he disassociated himself from the Nazi movement and resigned from his position as president of the Nordfriesian Society and withdrew his membership. “Gleichschaltung” also came to the church and the new orientation of the ministers conforming to the Nazi ideology went under the name “Deutsche Christen” (German Christians). They transformed Christ into a heroic Aryan and dismissed the Old Testament. My father joined a group of ministers under the leadership of Martin Niemoeller (Concentration Camp 1937 to the end of the war). They were referred to as the “Bekennende Kirche” (Confessing Church). They opposed the “Deutsche Christen” without explicitly opposing Nazism, but remained loyal to traditional church doctrine. Their sermons were closely monitored by Nazi spies, who listened for anti-Nazi ideas in the sermons. Attending a Nazi-Party-Rally, my father heard the speaker proclaim: “And even if we have to join our forces with the devil, we will prevail”. A statement, which as a

Lutheran minister, he found not only revealing but very offensive. These events ended his initial acceptance of Nazism. When he argued, and wrote in favor of environmental protection for the "Nordfriesischen Inseln" (Islands) "Halligen" in the North Sea and took issue with the Nazi's approach to the flooding of the low-lying land, he received an official "Maulkorb" (a muzzle). That is, he received a letter from the "Gauleiter" (Nazi head of the province) forbidding him to speak in public, except in his function as a pastor in church related matters. Nazi ideology slowly but inevitably made inroads in everything, including what you could eat. One Sunday each month the meal had to be "Eintopf" (a dish cooked by using only one pot) and the money saved was to be given to some Nazi-welfare-cause. Party officials occasionally checked whether the Sunday meal really had been prepared in just one pot.

Nazi fanaticism even divided some families, including my own. My sister who was 7 years older than I, was a committed member in the Hitler Youth movement for girls and held a position of leadership. The most dramatic clash between her and my father, which I remember, took place in March of 1939. We were listening to the radio when a special announcement came over the wireless. Germany was annexing Czechoslovakia and the troops were marching toward Prague. At that point, my father said: "Turn off the radio!!, Hitler has gone insane"! That Hitler had taken over Austria and even the Sudetenland where 3 1/2 Million Germans lived, he could understand. However, occupying Czechoslovakia was "too much" for my father. Declaring him crazy, my sister, who at that time was an idealistic Nazi, got angry: "If you talk like that about Hitler, I will report you to the Gestapo". Whereupon she left the room, shutting the door with a bang. However, this was apparently only a threat, she never reported him. However, I distinctly remember the tense atmosphere in that room.

With the beginning of WW II the Nazis dramatically increased their control of all information. Listening to foreign radio stations was strictly forbidden and punished by concentration camp. My father, who did not trust the Nazis, said about the reports from the war front: "They are lying on both sides." And to form a more accurate picture of the war situation, he listened not only to the German radio, but to Copenhagen and BBC London. My task became to walk outside the window to make sure nobody could hear the forbidden foreign language and report him to the Gestapo. The punishment for listening could be severe. But he took the risk. — In 1944 in one of his sermons my father commented: "It is a shame that the children no longer learn the 10 commandments in school". (German children used to have religious instruction as part of the general curriculum, usually two hours per week.) Somebody reported him to the

local Gestapo. He was summoned to a hearing, had to pay a fine of 3,000 "Reichsmark" and was admonished, since his comment was interpreted as an attempt to stir up the public against the government. Any further declaration of a similar nature and he would be sent to a concentration camp. Even his superiors in the church hierarchy issued him a warning. My father became very careful in what he said, even in his Sunday sermons.

MY CHILDHOOD

Writing about my childhood eighty years after these events, there are obvious gaps and may be distortions in my memory. I do not remember the particular dates as to when these things happened, nor do I remember their chronological sequence. Therefore, I organized my account by topics, even though the particulars may have occurred over a period of several years. Generally speaking these events happened in the nineteen-thirties, or at my age of 6 to 15.

I grew up in a very small, somewhat remote village in the NW corner of Germany, a few miles south of the Danish border and a few miles inland from the North Sea. The house in which I grew-up had once been a farm house, it was built in 1781. The roof was straw thatched . In the earlier years there was still a barn with a hay loft attached to the building and a large gate so that a horse drawn wagon could have been pulled inside the barn. On the roof was a stork's nest and as a child I enjoyed watching these large birds coming and going as they were feeding their young. Every year they left in fall and returned in spring. We had no running water, but we got our water from a hand pump. I often had to go to fill the buckets and carry them into the kitchen. When thirsty I simply pumped the water into my hand and drank it. During my childhood our house served as a parsonage, and one of the many (8) rooms served as "Konfirmanten Zimmer." That is a room that served for confirmation classes and for other congregational functions since the church did not have a room for general, social or congregational activities outside the nave.

Our house was surrounded by a large garden with many old and beautiful trees. My favorite tree was a gigantic chestnut tree over hundred years old, it required three men to embrace the colossal trunk. In spring when in bloom it was truly a beautiful sight and later in the year it provided me with an endless number of chestnuts to play with. However, they were not edible. Eventually, after I had developed some climbing skills in other parts of the garden, I was able to climb the old chestnut tree. Sitting near the top

much higher than our house, it became my observation tower from which I could overlook most of the village. As a child I felt like being on top of the world. I built a primitive tree house high-up, a beautiful hiding place. And many an afternoon I spent time up in the tree reading and enjoying myself and watching from my serene location the comings and goings in the village from the perspective of a bird.

Besides numerous climbing-trees and shrubs, the parsonage was surrounded by large and beautiful gardens. In the front of the house was primarily a large flower garden, with a great variety of blooms. There were flowers almost all year long, beginning with snowdrops and crocuses in late winter and asters in fall. The garden in the back of the house was primarily a vegetable garden. When I didn't get "filled up" at meal time, or when I just wanted to snack, the vegetables and fruits from our garden provided me with fresh and delicious food. Carrots and radishes were pulled out of the ground, the real earth was rubbed off on my trousers, but after that rough cleaning these foods were eaten unwashed. There also were peas and beans, that were very flavorful eaten raw, so were tomatoes when they were ripe. Even among our flowers there was one we were allowed to eat, it had a very distinct flavor, if I remember correctly, it was the nasturtium. If my appetite was more fruit oriented, there were strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries and currants. We had numerous current bushes, the red ones were most plentiful, but we also had white current bushes and flavorful but not so common black currants. Our garden had a variety of fruit trees, primarily apples but also plums and pears, which supplemented my food intake in the fall. On the farms in the neighborhood were other odd diet supplements. I remember chewing on kernels of wheat, eating beans intended as horse feed and sugar beets (ruddebekas). Other fruits and vegetables less appropriate for snacking, but most delicious if prepared in the kitchen were quince and black salsify. I am sure in the process of consuming considerable number of fruits we commonly ingested our share of worms. The warning we heard, that they would live on forever in our stomach didn't turn out to be true. I rarely got sick with this diet, except when the pears and apples were consumed still very unripe, I got diarrhea.

For mealtime our family had a very loud gong that could be heard all over the village and let us know that it was about mealtime. If I did not come home when the gong announced mealtime and I was late, I had to eat what was leftover. Which, as described above, could be supplemented with vegetables or fruits in season from our garden.

Prickpohl

As children we played several simple games that did not require expensive equipment. One game I remember, since we played it with passion, I will describe it: "Prick Pohl." Those are Low-German words, translated into English would be "pointed stake." The game required a hand carved wooden "Pohl" about 1 1/2 foot long, the thickness of an arm, and the lower fifth was hand carved into a conically shaved point. Usually 3 to 6 boys played "Prickpohl." The first (A) would, with all his strength plunge his "Pohl" deep into the ground so that it became firmly lodged. The second (B), using his "Pohl," would try to dislodge boy (A's) "Pohl," by plunging his "Pohl" against (A's) but — and that is important — his "Pohl" must remain standing in the ground. If (A's) Pohl fell flat on the ground, (A) would have lost and be eliminated. In any case boy (C) would now have a chance of attacking either (A's) [if still standing] or (B's) "Pohl." This would continue for as many as there were players: D, E, etc. If (A's) "Pohl" was still standing after the first round, he could pull his "Pohl" out of the ground and attempt dislodging any of the "Pohls" still standing in the second round. This would continue until only one "Pohl" remained standing. The boy whose "Pohl" was still standing at the end was the winner. Winning required a solid hard wood "Pohl"; muscular strength, but also tactical considerations such as which opponent to attack and especially how to aim at, and where to hit the opponents "Pohl."

In all of this I really had a considerable amount of freedom and independence. Partly, because the village and it's environs were relatively safe, even for a young child. The streets were unpaved and automobiles were still very rare. Partly, my parents attitude was quite liberal. My father often voiced his attitude in two sayings which have stayed with me: "des Menschen's Wille ist sein Himmelreich" (Men's will is his own heaven.) and he often spoke about "das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Voelker." (the right of nations to determine their fate) and in his use of the phrase "Voelker" he did not merely mean Nations but also folks, including us as children. Partly, because my father often was not at home. He was not only involved in church matters (He was ships pastor on the German cruise ship Milwaukee) but in numerous cultural/historical and geographic issues. — Until the Nazis shut him up. The proverbial saying in the village was "Pastor Muuss is nich to hus" which is "Plattddeutsch" (Low-German) and means "Pastor Muuss is never at home". Low-German is a language in its own right and has its own literature. It was the language spoken in the village where I grew up, except for police, school and church, where "Hochdeutsch" (High-German) was the most commonly used language. Some children who spoke Frisian at home and Low-German on the street, had to learn High-German when they entered first grade. My father loved the Low-German language

and occasionally preached in Low-German in church. Later in his life he translated the New Testament from Greek and Aramaic into Low-German.

At home the doors to the house were generally open, days and nights. Sometimes the door was left ajar even at night. This was a reflection of the basically trustful and relaxed atmosphere in the village. Only when the gypsies came to the village were doors not only kept closed but even locked. I had friends, but even at my friends houses I came unannounced and simply walked in without knocking or ringing the doorbell and inquired whether my friend was home. These get-togethers were rarely prearranged and usually happened without the knowledge of either set of parents. Nobody brought us and nobody picked us up. How was that possible?

The mother of one of my friends baked her own dark rye bread. The baking produced a delicious aroma and when the bread came fresh out of the oven, we had to wait until it was sufficiently cooled off to hold in our hands and place in our mouth. I don't remember any bread that tasted as good, as that rye bread coming hot out of the oven.



Frisian House With Straw Thatched Roof and Frisian Windows

In my childhood, the village still had many such Frisian houses with straw thatched roofs. The windows were subdivided into 4, 6, or 12 smaller, square panels (see picture). The road through the village was unpaved and automobiles were rare. Every once in a while a fisherman stopped at every corner, shouting loudly: "fresh fish for sale." Less frequently came the knife- and scissor-grinder who offered his services with loud announcements. While we in the parsonage did have electricity, there was a section in the village, where people had no electricity. Those houses were referred to as the "Petroleumviertel" (kerosene quarter). The parsonage was one of the few houses that had a telephone, so that occasionally villagers came to ask whether they could use our telephone. We did not have a refrigerator. However, under the house was a cellar, always a couple of degrees cooler, where perishables were stored. I made many trips down into the cellar to get something or bring something down from the kitchen. Meals were cooked on the stove heated by burning wood and/or coal. All the modern electrical gadgets had not even been invented. We had no playstation, no Nintendo 64, no X-Box, no Video-games, no 64 TV Channels, no movies, no Videos or DVD, no surround sound. Of course, we did not own a cell-phone, we never even heard of a chat-room or messaging. We had of course no TV set, and when we got a fancy radio, it really was a big deal. We were listening to the news, and I was especially interested in car races and other sports events, Sometimes my father's devotional services were broadcast over the radio. He would clear his throat as a special message to us, his children.

A picture that stands out in my mind, occurred at the time of hay harvesting in June. In the late afternoon a never ending column of horse drawn farm wagons (at times 20 to 30 were visible, but more were coming), loaded with very high stacks of fresh hay, from the fields in the lower lying region west of the village. They went past our house. Quite often small bundles (and sometimes not so small bundles) of hay, slid off the horse drawn vehicles, As a child I was keen on collecting the hay that had fallen off, to fill my little handcart with it. The hay was ideal to cover the bottom of my rabbit hutch. At one time or another I also had other animals, a goat and a doberman dog. One time when some kids wanted to beat me up, my doberman came running, growled and showed his teeth, which made the kids run as fast as they could to get away. In addition my family had at times, a cat, chicken, geese and sheep and at one time even a cow. My father kept bees, who could find plenty of honey in the abundance of flowers in our garden.

The school was a two classroom school, grades 1 to 4 for the younger kids and the other room for the older grades 5 to 8. Even with snow, sleet, frost, rain or thunderstorm we had to walk to school and for some of my friends that meant walking 3 miles each

way. After 4th grade a selection into different school systems took place. Most pupils simply moved up a grade but stayed in the same building. They concluded their formal education at age 14 or 15 and learned a trade. I went to the more academic "Oberschule" (secondary school) in a nearby town, the county seat. While still in the lower grades in the local school, when school left out for the summer vacation I put my shoes and socks in the cupboard and went barefoot. The first couple of days I encountered some painfully sharp stones and if I was not careful some bleeding. However, after a couple of weeks I could run on the unpaved road and even on broken glass without any discomfort. During the summer vacation I left the house in the morning to explore my small world and play with my friends. Nobody knew where I was and we didn't even have a cell phone. In my family a loud gong notified me that it was time to come home to eat. We got no sex education neither at home nor in the school, but the bull and the stallion in the barnyard provided a viable substitute.

As I grew older I learned to ride a bike and eventually owned my own bike. The bicycle became my primary mode of transportation and my treasured possession. It carried me everywhere in a radius of about 10 km, and in my adolescent years much further. We drove fast and sometimes recklessly. As I progressed I learned some impressive stunts, such as letting go of the steering bar, biking free hands and controlling the bike by the seat of my pants. If a friend needed transportation he could either sit on the steering bar or on the luggage carrier. If need be I could even handle two passengers at the same time. As I became more experienced I was able to take the bike apart, down to the last screw and put it back together again. In that way I could manage repairs as needed. The most frequent repair was the inner tube, which seemed to get punctured often.

We swam in open, unfamiliar water, of course without a lifeguard and in temperatures well below 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In one instance, I was not yet able to swim I almost drowned. On a Hitler Youth outing, we were bathing in a canal and I had moved into deeper water and was in the process of drowning, when my Hitler Youth leader came and rescued me. Later I built my own canoe from simple wooden planks. I discovered on my first trip that I estimated the needed length incorrectly and consequently capsized a few times. However with more experience I became an expert on paddling my small boat safely. The longest boat trip I remember, first took me on a small creek, later on a canal to another town, a 6 to 7 miles trip.

Later as teenager I rode in automobiles that had no safety-belts, no airbags and no back-up lights. To blow the horn one had to squeeze a rubber tube. The turn-indicator

was a small visor that was located in the door-post and came out when activated.

The land on the west side of the village, was lower than the normal water level of the North sea, and therefore flooded early. It was merely suitable for grazing animals and harvesting hay, hence the long volumes of hay wagons in late June. During the Winter months, these areas remained flooded and froze over. Thus providing us with endless miles of ice. This gave us marvelous opportunities for ice skating, speed skating and casual ice hockey. However, if we tried our luck too early when the ice was not strong enough to hold a skater. I remember cracking through the ice into cold water and a need to run home quickly to get dry clothes.

In retrospect it is hard to believe that I was able to survive such very dangerous events and times. However, strange as it may seem, I can't recall any serious life threatening accidents or death in my circle of friends. However, minor scrapes, cuts, bruises, skin abrasions, black and blue marks from falling out of a tree, bicycle accidents, walking barefoot and cutting my feet and getting into fights, were commonplace, as were incidents of falling into a ditch or breaking through the ice.

With the beginning of WW II, I helped farmers in the village, weeding, shearing sheep, harvesting crops and threshing grain. Threshing was hard and very dirty labor. The dust accumulated everywhere in one's body. However, I was very proud of the first few "Reichsmarks" I earned.

MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY

In contrast to the current pre-Christmas hubbub in stores and shopping malls, blaring sacred Christmas Carols into a crowded and noisy shopping mall, the memories from my childhood are of a quieter, less commercial and more spiritual — and in retrospect magical — Christmas. We were 5 children, spanning almost 20 years, I was the middle child.

First let me emphasize that during my childhood years the holiday festivities in December involved two distinctly different periods, with different decorations and different activities: Advent and Christmas.

The anticipatory excitement of the season began with the first Sunday of Advent. On the

Saturday before the first of Advent we were allowed to put one of our shoes outside the bedroom door. On wakening the next morning we were anxious to check our shoe to see whether Santa Claus had been there and we always found a small gift. The items we found were things like a small Marzipan Bread, a chocolate bar, an orange, a cookie, or a small toy. Nothing expensive, but a delightful reminder of the joyous season to come. This Advent ritual was repeated on the remaining three Advent Sundays with a great deal of anticipation and happiness. (It is a tradition, I shared with my own children many years later.)

At the beginning of the Advent Season the entrance hall in our house was decorated with a large red Moravian Advent Star — which, as we grew older, we had to learn to carefully assemble. In the evening when the electric light bulb inside the star was lit, the room took on a festive, warm, intimate, spiritual atmosphere, symbolized by the Moravian Star.

Suspended from the ceiling over the dining room table was the Advent Wreath with 4 candles. The first candle was lit on the 1st Sunday of Advent and on subsequent days during that week. On the following Sundays the 2nd, 3d and 4th candles were lit. The wreath was constructed out of pine tree branches by hand. As we grew older, we became more actively involved in the binding of the wreath. Other left over pine branches were used to decorate — where appropriate — furnitures, tables and pictures. As children we took a special delight in holding a less useful pine branch over a candle flame, creating a delightful, unique scent in the room, which I still recall, and associate with the fragrance of Christmas.

Another aspect of our Advent decoration was the Advent Calendar which was displayed in a prevalent spot in the house. The calendar had 24 small windows, which we were allowed to open on the appropriate day, one per day. Behind the open windows pictures revealed various images relevant for the holiday season: such as a star, a sled, a snowman, a pretzel, a colorful ball, an angel, a Christmas tree, or a Santa Claus. A candle was placed behind the calendar and in the evening the candle was lit and festively illuminated these portents of Christmas.

A few days before the 24th of December, the door to one room in the house was closed off and became tabu for us children. The room was designated as a special place where Santa Claus could work. On the 24th of December, the Advent Season was over and the advent decorations were removed and put in storage. Thus making space for

the Christmas decorations. The distinction between the decorations for these two seasons was very significant; although the Christmas preparations were part of the Advent Season and created childhood anticipation of things to come. Actually, we did not see a decorated Christmas tree until the evening of the 24th of December, unless we furtively peeked through the keyhole or from the outside of the house trying to get a glimpse of the Christmas tree through a small crack in the curtains that were drawn for the Christmas Room. In the beginning we just got glimpses of the green pine branch, but as Christmas got closer and "Santa Claus got busy" we were able to recognize tinsels, candles, colorful balls and other decorations.

There was the baking of large quantities of Christmas cookies. In the preparation of cookies, we as children were — depending on our age — very much involved. A special treat was the tasting of the uncooked dough. The baking of the cookies generated a delicious aroma throughout the house and enough cookies were being prepared to last into the new year. Some of the Christmas cookies were unique for the season, they were based on age old traditions of family recipes, not baked any other time of the year. I especially remember the brown cookies for which we had special cookie cutters, shaped like a star, a moon, a Christmas tree or an angel

In contrast to today's emphasis on commercially bought Christmas gifts, our parents expected us to make our gifts for them ourselves. Quite often this involved fretsaw work with plywood, such as designing, sawing and painting decorative pieces, such as a wooden disk that might serve as a hot plate, or a wall plate intended to hang up keys. I still have a sample of such a self-made key board holder. Part of our advent chores were to create self-made tree decorations, such as: Stars made from straw, three dimensional paper stars, creating colorful figures or small baskets to be filled with nuts or candies. I remember cutting small stripes of paper and glueing them together as interconnecting links creating a long, colorful decorative chain that later embellished the Christmas tree.

As we grew older, we went with our parents into the woods to select, cut and transport the tree. As I remembered we always looked for a fir tree with many well formed branches which would fill its corner of the Christmas Room from the floor to the ceiling. At that time (in the 1930s) it was not customary to decorate the outside of houses with electric lights. However, the tree inside the house was always decorated with real candles. It was not unusual that mother nature collaborated with white snow flakes decorating the country side in a festive way, which at Christmas added a serene beauty and an atmosphere of peace.

The celebration of Christmas began — as is customary in Germany — on the evening of the 24th, and the official holidays included not only the 25th but also the 26th of December. On the 24th at 4:00 PM we all went to the Christmas Eve Service in the church. This often involved the presentation of a nativity pageant, and at times we were part of the assembly. Coming home after church there was — what seemed to us as children — an endless period of waiting and anticipating, until finally the tingling of a bell was heard, That was the sign that Santa Claus was finished with his preparations and was leaving, and as soon as the whole family was assembled, we were allowed to enter the Christmas Room. All electric lights were turned off. Entering the decorated room and seeing the large Christmas tree with burning wax candles¹ and the glittering silver tinsels² created a spiritual beauty and magic atmosphere that can hardly be appreciated today when real candles are usually replaced by electric lights. Entering the decorated room is an experience that has been imprinted in my mind for over 80 years. After the reading of the Christmas story and the singing of some of the familiar Christmas song, we were allowed to look for our table or our corner with our gifts. Everybody's table had a plate with nuts, dates, apples, oranges, chocolates and other edible goodies. One child would open his/her gift while the others watched, Followed by the next child. Since this activity often involved several rounds of gift openings it consumed considerable time. After most of the gifts had been opened we ate our Christmas supper, consisting of the Christmas salad (which I prepared as a child and still prepare today)— served with open face sandwiches of various kinds of cheese and sausages. (A more detailed description of the Christmas Salad is presented in the section entitle "My favorite Foods.") Afterwards we played with our toys and admired everybody else's gifts. Christmas eve was the only evening in the year when we had no required bed time and were allowed to stay up as long as we wanted. The 25th was celebrated with the traditional festive dinner: A roasted goose. The goose was stuffed with dried fruits: apples, prunes, raisins, etc. The goose was served with potatoes, gravy and red cabbage. As I recall, Christmas was the only time of the year that a roasted goose was being served. The Christmas decorations would remain up until Epiphany.

1) A bucket of water stood always behind the tree. The basic rule for everybody was; the last person to leave the room while the candles were burning was required to extinguish the flames. When the candles had burned to about 1/3 inch length they had to be extinguished and replaced. because the melted wax in the candle holder could create a large and potentially dangerous flame. But the festive glow and the intimate atmosphere created by the large number of flames remains an indelible reminder of my childhood Christmas..

2) Tinsel. The German word used for tinsels was "Engelshaare", that is the "hair of angels", which conveys the atmosphere the tinsels are supposed to create.

HITLER JUGEND

The "Hitler Jugend" (HJ) was the Nazis organization for boys and girls ages 10 to 18. A distinction was made between two age ranges, with a different organizational structure, different leaders, and even slightly different uniforms. I joined the junior branch, the "Jungvolk" (Young Folks), rather early, I think even before I was 10. I had not formed any political opinion or allegiance to any political party. My early entrance into the "Jungvolk" was motivated by my friend's suggestions, since they had joined the "Jungvolk." Members of the "Jungvolk" were commonly referred to as "Pimpfe" (in English the word means a youth before his voice changes). Later at the age of about 14, I became a member of the Hitler Youth proper. Similar organizations and distinctions extended to girls, whose organization was called: "Bund Deutscher Maedel" (BDM) (League of German Girls).

The Nazi leader of the HJ was "Reichsjugendfuehrer" (Reich youth leader) Baldur von Schirach, who had an American mother, and he bragged about the fact that one of his ancestors had signed the Declaration of Independence. At the beginning of the war he was transferred and became "Gauleiter und Reichsstadthalter von Wien" (Head of Nazi province). For his anti-Semitic activities in Vienna he was sentenced at the Nuremberg Trials to 20 years of prison. Arthur Axman assumed his role as "Reichsjugendfuehrer." The often-heard challenge and ultimate goal for German youth was: "Flinck wie Windhunde, zaeh wie Leder, hart wie Stahl." (As swift as a greyhound, as tough as leather, as hard as Krupp's steel).

Hitler Jugend Organization and Ranks

The HJ was organized into increasingly larger units, similar to military organizations. The titles for most of the ranks are not easily translatable, at least not in a meaningful way. The leader of each of these units wore a whistle in his left pocket connected with a very visible color-coded lanyard attached to the shoulder epaulette. As I recall today the names of these Jungvolk units, the number of boys in them and the color-coded lanyard identifying the ranks were as follows:

Jungenschaft, up to 15 boys, red/white whistle lanyard.

Jungzug, up to 50 boys, black/green whistle lanyard. (I still have mine)

Fähnlein, up to 150 boys, green whistle lanyard.

Jungstamm, up to 600 boys, white whistle lanyard.

Jungbann, up to 3,000 boys, red whistle lanyard.

I had no knowledge about and no contact with the higher ranks. The proclaimed motto was: "Jugend soll von Jugend gefuehrt werden" (Youth should be led by youth). Leaders in the higher ranks were often older than 18, Baldur von Schirach was 33 when he was transferred to Vienna.

The HJ initially was a voluntary organization and had already an approximate membership of 2,500,000 at the time when Hitler came to power. Membership grew rapidly and reached 5 Million by 1936. By 1939 membership in the Hitler Jugend reached 9 million. Looking at this rapid growth of the HJ in those years from todays perspective, it is difficult to comprehend the idealistic fervor, the enthusiasm and the optimisms that prevailed in the youth generation at that time. I like to quote Inge Scholl, Sophie Scholl's sister, who initially was a fanatic Hitler Youth, describing her attitude. I choose her for this quote, because she later became instrumental in organizing youth against the Nazis. She and a group, code name "Die weisse Rose" (The White Rose), distributing flyers attacking the Nazis. For that Sophie was executed.

".....something drew us with mysterious power and swept us along: the closed ranks of marching youth with banners waving, eyes fixed straight ahead, keeping time to drumbeat and song. Was not this sense of fellowship overpowering? It is not surprising that all of us joined the Hitler Youth? We entered into it with body and soul and we could not understand why our fathers did not approve, why they were not happy and proud. On the contrary, he was quite displeased with us." (Quote from Inge Scholl, The White Rose).

There were, of course a number of other reasons why youth may have joined the HJ. For some boys and girls, the Hitler Youth uniform certainly was an attraction to join the organization. Furthermore, one must also consider the fact that in the early years as Nazis attained power other youth organization were forbidden, not only the political ones, but even church youth organizations. Finally, there were subtle, and often not so subtle, social pressures asserted on youth who had not joined the HJ. Admission to Universities was dependent on HJ membership. Some industries, businesses as well as individual employers made entry jobs dependent on being a member of the Hitler Youth.

And there were teachers who assigned to the non-joining students the task of writing essays on such topics as: "What is my reason for not joining the HJ?" There, of course, was peer group pressure from committed HJ leaders as well as members pressuring the non-members to come forth and join. By 1939 membership in the HJ had become compulsory for every German child and youth and the teaching and practices of the HJ began to take on a more para-military function. By the end of WW II some HJ units performed duties that supplemented the German Army.

The Uniform

The uniforms of the HJ were quite similar to those of the brown shirted SA and were fairly standardized, especially in the later years. The differences between the "Jungvolk" and the HJ proper were minor and primarily obvious in badges and insignia. I will describe the uniform I wore as a "Pimpf" (age 10-14):

The brown shirt with pockets, was the most important part of the uniform.

The shirt was decorated with a black neckerchief, held by a leather woggle.

Black shorts were worn with a leather belt and a buckle with a rune (sigma).

(See the sigma rune symbol on the flag hanging from the fanfare)

In the winter the shirt was replaced by a warmer dark colored jacket or tunic.

A leather shoulder strap was attached to the belt in the front and in the rear.

A badge shows the name of the "Bann," which for me was "Nord Nordmark" meaning the geographic region of the most northern district of Germany.

The achievement of clearly defined requirements provided the individual with decorations to be worn on one's uniform. Often the privilege to wear these badges were acquired by attending courses or for the more important ones two weeks HJ-camps, where certified judges would record your accomplishments of specific criteria. Thus, over the years, I was able to decorate my uniform with badges for sharpshooting, for attending a First Aid course, for track and field achievements, for attending a camp and passing the tests for motorbike driving skills, that went way beyond those required for the driving license. For me the most highly treasured of these badges were the A, B, and C glider flying insignia. These badges showed 1, 2 or 3 seagulls spreading their wings over a blue circle. At one point I even acquired a Hitler Youth dagger with a scabbard, but don't remember whether there were any specific requirements associated with that.

What was it like to be in the HJ?

The prewar experiences of the Jungvolk and the HJ pretty much resembled those of the Boy Scouts, as I have been told by people familiar with both. The weekly meetings

included singing, sport, wrestling, games, camping and participating in parades with flying flags. The HJ probably placed more emphasis on discipline, marching in formation and the exposure to political ideology than the Boy Scouts.

Once a week we were expected to attend a "Heimatabend" (A home-like-evening). These events were usually attended by the smallest unit, the "Jungenschaft" with 10 to 15 boys. As I advanced in rank I must have been responsible for the preparation and execution of these evenings. We had our own rather small room in the outbuilding of a farmhouse, which had served as a pigpen in the past. The activities of the evening included singing Nazi-songs. The books that were read and the stories that were told were imbued with Nazi-ideology. Frequently these stories focused on historically significant figures such as Herman der Cherusker, Charlemagne, King Barbarossa, Frederick the Great and, of course, Hitler and his associates. The attendance of these meetings was sporadic, and I don't remember having or using means to compel attendance. On the contrary, as a leader I was often pleased having a small group of boys who were attentive and interested in the lessons, rather than a larger group who were trouble-makers.

On the Saturday afternoon the larger unit, the "Jungzug" or even the "Faehnlein" met usually in the schoolyard. Those activities that I remember included marching in formation, participating in organized sports activities such as running, broad jumping, lance throwing, shot putting, etc. At times there were more formal competitive activities in various track and field sport events. There were, of course, ball games, especially popular was soccer. At times the larger group the "Faehnlein" met. In the nearby woods we played "Gelaendespiele" (war games). Two teams were issued wooden bands to be fastened around their wrist. The colors were different for the two teams, who were sent into the woods with different assignments. The goal was to find the opposing team, and interfere with their assignment. As the groups met a wrestling match ensued, trying to tear off as many wrist bands of the opposite team as possible. Everyone who's band was removed was "dead" and was no longer permitted to participate in the game. The team who at the end still had the most members with their woolen band intact was declared victor.

HJ Camp experiences

Already at the age of 11, I enrolled in a two-week summer camp experience, living in tents. I remember becoming quite homesick in the first couple of days. The one event that stands out in my memory from that camp, was an evening parade with fanfares,

drums, flying “Wimpel” (pendants) and with flaming torches through the neighboring town. Another camp experience I remember was to find, identify and estimate the distance between me and cardboard heads hidden at widely different distances in the terrain.

The Holidays of National-Socialism

For the holidays of National-Socialism we, as Hitler Youth, were frequently ordered to wear our uniform and participate and even perform in these events. The following celebrations in which I participated stand out in my memory.

31st of January. “Tag der Machtergreifung” (The day Hitler was made chancellor and attained power). I remember one such celebration, which began with a march through town and ended up at Hitler Plaza, where all the organizations and spectators assembled for some music and speeches. It was a bitter cold January day. While we were marching I didn’t feel the cold so much. However, once we were standing in formation at-ease listening to some Nazi dignitary giving his speech, which I didn’t understand and didn’t comprehend, I started freezing even though I had my winter uniform on. Nevertheless, standing in the cold winter-wind, I got chilled down to my bones wishing nothing more than to be able to get away, to move, to seek shelter and warmth. But standing in the formation I had no option but to freeze.

20th of April Hitler’s birthday. On the day of Hitler’s birthday, we were expected to appear in uniform at school. For the festivities we (grades 5 to 13) assembled in the school’s auditorium. The program started with some fanfares, poetry reading and music, but ended with a lengthy, absolutely boring and incomprehensible (I was in 5th grade) speech by the principal of the high school that went on and on. I remember having to sit still and listen and I felt a great deal of relief when we were finally allowed to return to our classroom.



Hitler Youth Marching in Berlin



Hitler Youth Fanfare

May 1st, "Tag der Arbeit" (Labor Day). The event was celebrated with a parade, which included some other Nazi organizations. I participated as a young boy in one of these parades where we had to march in formation for quite some distance in formation. We passed through a number of villages, the total distance was about 10 km. Our small black HJ tent with its white rune (sigma) flew in front of our unit, followed by a group of fanfares and a group of drummers. The initial mood was gay and exuberant but by the end I was tired and my feet began to hurt. However, the atmosphere in the villages was festive, women, children and older men stood in front of their houses and waved to us and cheered us on. The villages themselves were decorated at almost every house, with the Nazi-flag. If you didn't fly the Nazi-flag, you became "suspect." I remember my father, who didn't like the Nazi-flag, having a second flagpole erected in front of our house. One was for the Nazi-flag, which he couldn't avoid, on the other he flew the Frisian flag. He had been president for a number of years of the Frisian society. By flying two flags next to each other, he wanted to convey that there are other alternatives to the overwhelming display of Nazi-flags, without getting himself in trouble for not flying the Nazi-flag.

The 9th of November is a date at which several significant events occurred in German history. That was the day of the armistice of WW I. However, the event that we celebrated with music, fanfares, poetry and likely some speeches was a memorial service for the Nazis fallen on the 9th of November 1923. That is the day of Hitler's first attempt to overthrow the government and assume power. He and his followers marched without permission through Munich. Near the "Feldherrnhalle" (a war memorial in Munich) the Nazis were confronted by the Munich police. Gunfire between the two groups ensued — 16 Nazis were killed. That was the first group of casualties in Hitler's march to power. It was their death that was the focus of the November 9th memorial celebration. As a result of that attempted coup Hitler was sentenced to prison, served time in Landsberg where he wrote his book "Mein Kampf." I remember one of those November 9 services where we as Hitler Youth were very much involved in arranging the program for that event. I still remember sitting on stage, rather anxious, but don't remember what my performance/contribution was.

HJ Leaders reprimanding me

During the summer vacation 1940 or 1941 I decided to go on an extensive bicycle tour by myself to explore the country, see the world and visit relatives and friends. This was a somewhat unusual experience, for a youth my age, but I did have my parent's approval. I cycled through the Lueneburger Heather as well as the quaint villages along the river

Weser, an area known as Germany's fairy tale land. One famous legend is that of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin". I visited the city of Hameln on that trip. The total distance was about 300 miles by bike (one way). My final destination was the city of Hannoversch-Muenden, where the river Weser begins. The river Weser does not come from some spring in the mountains but from the confluence of two tributaries, the Fulda and the Werra. A stone that marks the point of confluence reads "where Fulda and Werra kiss, they lose their name and become the Weser". Somewhere along the way on that trip I was stopped by a Hitler Youth Streifendienst (Untranslatable, but equivalent to a Hitler Youth Police) asking me for my papers and the permission slip to go on such an extensive trip — which I had neglected to acquire. Apparently, a report was mailed to the county HJ office of my district. After I returned home I was visited by a higher-ranking Hitler Youth leader. In front of the other boys I was severely reprimanded and warned: if I would ever do something like that again he would invalidate and remove my glider flight badge. I was very embarrassed, not because of what I had done, but because my boys heard the reprimand, and I feared losing their respect. I knew losing my glider flying certificates would really hurt me more than being demoted in rank.

Early during WW II polish prisoners were stationed in an old mill in our village to help those women whose husband had been drafted with the farm work. Except for a very strict curfew they had some freedom to move around in the village to get to work. I remember meeting one of these polish prisoners who spoke some German. We began a pleasant conversation. While we were talking my "Faehnleinfuehrer" passed by on his bike. Seeing us talking, he turned around and reprimanded me rather severely: "He is our prisoner, you know that you are not allowed to fraternize with prisoners." With some harsh words he sends the prisoner on his way. Both of these incidents show that Nazi-control was always present, even if you least expected it.

Movies depicting Hitler Youth

The following events are not something I personally experienced, except that I was most deeply impressed by seeing these two movies depicting Hitler Youth in very different, but very dramatic ways. Both stories are true. In the movie **THE BRIDGE** a group of young HJ-boys was ordered to defend a bridge against the spearhead of the advancing American Army. Actually, the boys were able to stop the advancing troops and their tanks for 1 or 2 days, with great losses on both sides. On the other hand, the siblings Scholl distributed anti-Nazi leaflets in the halls of the University of Munich for which they were executed. An event depicted in the movie **THE WHITE ROSE**, which was the symbol of their resistance to Nazi ideology.

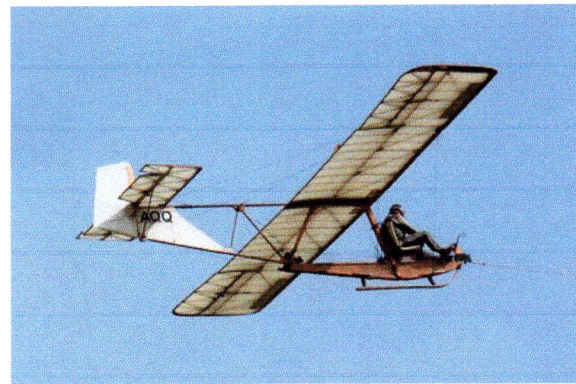
In retrospect it appears that many of these Hitler Youth activities as well as the general economic recovery during the early Hitler years were in preparation for making Germany militarily strong, if not an outright preparation for war. The tragedy is, that at the time these things happened, hardly anybody was aware of the things to come. Newspapers, radio programs, movies and literature were under the watchful control of the Nazis. At times even church services were attended by Nazi spies. Even the paintings of artists were allowed or forbidden depending on the standards advanced by the Nazi regime. For example: A rather famous expressionist, Emil Nolde, living in one of my father's wartime congregations was forbidden to paint. He circumvented that prohibition by painting miniatures which he was able to hide.

LEARNING HOW TO FLY

My glider flying experiences started in earnest when I was 15 or 16 years old. But my interest in flying and airplanes had emerged long before that, in that I had started early building various model military airplanes and sailing planes as a child. The model glider was thrown in the air and sailed on its own. As soon as I was old enough, I enrolled in a Hitler Youth camp in Boostedt near Neumuenster which provided glider flying training for beginners. The first and most primitive glider (By today's standards) on which I started my training was the Zoegling (literal translation protegee or pupil) (see pictures). The Zoegling is a sturdy but very simple glider that was popular around the world as a training glider between WW I and WW II. The pilot's seat was at the very front location of the plane, nothing obstructing his view. There were no instruments and no safety features, except for the seatbelt. Located at the very front of the plane there were only two important controls accessible to the pilot: One was the side rudder controlled by two feet pedals at the very tip of the plane, the other was the yoke or control stick. The control stick located between the pilot's legs operated both the elevator (steering the plane up or down) and the aileron, controlling the angle of the plane in relationship to the horizon. The body of the glider was a very simple wood construction with a slightly curved, flexible landing beam with a spring. Its function was to absorb any shock when landing. The important parts were the wings with the ailerons and the tail with both the elevator flaps and the side rudder. People handy at woodwork built their own Zoegling in their garage. As boys in the camp we had to learn to care for and if necessary to repair the planes we flew.



Ziegler Glider Being Towed

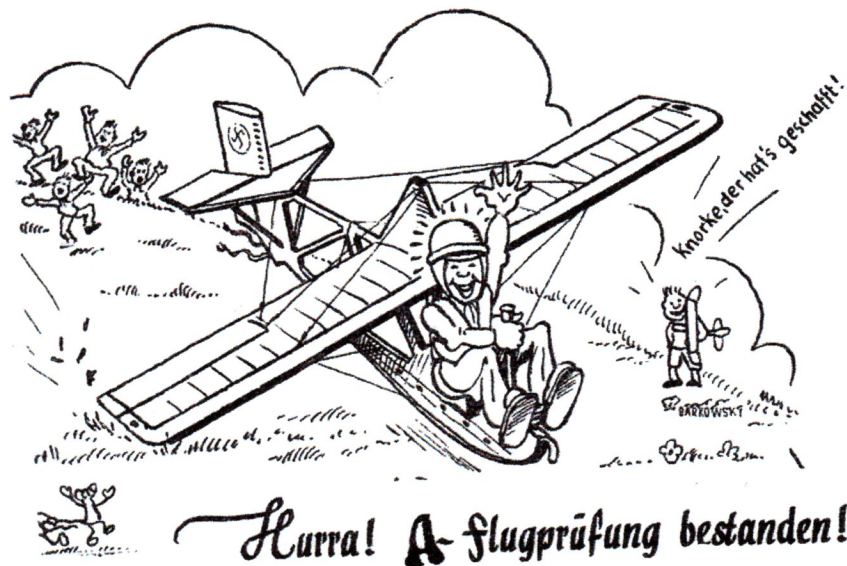


Another View of a Ziegler Glider

Our training began with the Ziegler on the ground facing a moderate breeze. The task of the student pilot was — using the ailerons — to maintain the plane at all times in a horizontal position parallel to the ground. The wings were not to touch the ground. If the plane began to tip to one side or the other — as it inevitably did when nobody held the wing— the student had to take immediate corrective actions with the aileron to make the plane stay in the horizontal position. Since the landing board was not very wide, the glider had a natural tendency to tip to one side. The next step was, holding the glider in balance, while it was being pulled forward. That followed by short airborne jumps and eventually short flights. The training ground was created around a hill about 40 to 50 m above the landing field. Getting the heavy glider off the ground and into the air required three teams of boys and a very heavy, thick rubber rope that was V-shaped. One team of 2 boys sat behind the glider holding it in its starting position on top of the hill. Each of the two arms of the rubber rope was held by 5 to 6 boys. They pulled the rope tight and upon command pulled the rubber rope as far as it would stretch. With the command “let go,” the boys in the back of the glider let go and the two teams continued to pull the glider as they ran down the hill. When the glider passed over the pulling teams the ring located at the point where the two parts of the rubber met, dropped to the ground automatically releasing the glider. The simple hook at the nose of the plane is visible in the postcard picture below. The student pilot was now in charge of the controls. He had to maintain the horizontal balance with the aileron and the proper speed with the elevator control. As the glider descends and approaches the landing area, the pilot has to move the elevator control slowly up, so that the glider lands smoothly and gracefully. If the plane comes in too fast, it literally “plows” the field. If the plane comes in with too little landing speed, or too high, it will stall and fall to the ground with a thump. Some boys accustomed to riding a bike, initially found it difficult to adjust to the fundamental difference between a glider and a bike. On a glider pushing the left side rudder pedal

away from your body, makes the plane turn to the left side. On the bicycle pushing the left part of the handle-bar away from your body has the bicycle make a right-hand turn. Boys who followed their old bicycle riding habits at times made the wrong turn, we called them "bicycle-pilots."

My personal experience and excitement of having met the conditions to get the A-badge were expressed on postcards written to my parents and friends. I recently rediscovered two of those postcards. One of those, a postcard with a glamorized version of the Zoegling, is depicted below.



A translation and combination of my comments to parents and friends follows and very much expresses my emotions: "Today I have flown the A-flight. This afternoon I was catapulted from the top of our hill and made the A-flight with a time of 31 seconds. Previously I had passed the other conditions of 5 flights of 20 seconds. The weather was perfect and most of my buddies also passed their A-flight. After my flight — as is a tradition among glider students after they made the A-flight — I was placed on the seat of the glider and spanked by everyone. I can't imagine a spanking I have ever received that felt that good. You can't imagine how happy I am." Learning to fly a glider not only gave me great pleasure, but also gave me status among peers and very much enhanced my self-respect.

The picture above shows a caricature of a Zoegling landing. The pilot is seated in front

of the wings, one can clearly see the small hook where the ring of the rubber rope would be attached. The pilot smiles because he has achieved his A-flight. However, on closer inspection one sees that the wing of the glider touches the ground while the Zoegling is still flying (grass is flying). That would have been a “No, No” and may actually have disqualified him, because the wing should only touch the ground after the glider has come to a stand-still. We often attempted — applying the very first lesson learned — to balance the landed glider on its landing board, without letting the wings touch the ground. Waiting for the other boys to arrive to push the glider again up the hill for the next flight. Moving the glider back up the hill was hard work.

My enthusiasm and enjoyment for glider flying quickly brought me back for more. Having gotten a real “taste” for glider flying, I joined several months later the glider camp in the same location as before for my B-level training. The overall physical setting was the same, but the glider was more sophisticated and the starting mechanism constituted a new challenge. An automobile with a winch was located downwind on the edge of the “glider port” (our training field was not an actual airport). The crew of trainees were usually standing on the opposite side of the field away from the winch, near the starting and landing cross. Preparing for the next flight a rope was attached to the glider and pulled tight by the winch. Subsequently everybody had to stand clear of the rope and the starting path. The team at the starting area and the winch signaled their mutual readiness. Upon command the driver in the automobile accelerated the winch drum to full speed. At the appropriate speed, the glider became airborne and the pilot had to guide the glider in a rather steep upward climb. As soon as the glider had reach a certain altitude and approached the location of the winch the glider pilot had to pull the release mechanism, that had held the ring of the rope in the nose of the plane. Forgetting or delaying that release could have dire consequences. The B-flight of one minute required accurate and coordinated use of both the rudder and the aileron. Flying the plane back to or near the starting area required two 180 degree turns; one soon after the release from the winch, the second before reaching the area of the glider-port where the flight had started. The second 180 degrees turn constituted a real challenge since the glider had to still have enough speed and enough height to turn and subsequently to land without the wings touching the ground. The B-level flight required the glider to stay airborne for one minute — but was much more demanding than the A-level flight since it required several well-coordinated curves, using the aileron without making the curve too flat or too steep and using the right amount of pressure on the side rudder pedal. My feeling after having completed the B-condition were exhilarating and rewarding.

In the summer of 1941, before I joined the Luftwaffe, a friend of mine and I had an opportunity to do more advanced glider flying on a military airport on the island of Sylt (5 years later I would become a lay-teacher in the village next to the airport). We trained together with some of the airmen on the airport. The starting mechanism used at this airport was again quite different and was a new challenge for me. A motor plane connected with a tow line to the glider pulled us up into the air. The problem with this starting method was the greater speed of the motor plane as compared to the relatively slow speed of the glider (for which it was designed). The glider with more speed than its usual sailing speed had a very strong tendency to climb up and wanted to fly much higher than the motor plane pulling its tail up and its nose down. An impossible situation for both planes to reach more height and a deadly situation if it happened while the motor-plane was just taking-off. In the beginning I had that experience, when I let the glider do what it was designed to do, climb with speed, The motor plane pilot now below me, waved rather frantically to bring the glider down to his level. To counteract this tendency of the glider to climb faster than the motor plane the glider-pilot had to push really very hard on the elevator rudder to push forward, so that the glider would fly at just about the same height as the motor-plane. At the predetermined height the motor-plane pilot gave a disconnect sign and the glider-pilot activated the release mechanism and the glider was flying. The motor plane returned to the airport to release the tow-line before landing. The C-level flight required for the glider to remain airborne for 2 minutes and with the motor-tow you had enough height and enough time to leisurely fly some circles and returns to the airport to land near the landing cross where you had started.

My friend with whom I shared room and board and these flying experiences completed his Air Force pilot training a year before me. He was shot down over the Mediterranean and lost his life.

As I was moving from A to B and to C-levels of training the gliders I became more sophisticated, had a few instruments and had better flying qualities. One important flying characteristic for every glider is the "glider ratio." The "glider ratio" is the relationship between the height of the plane above ground and the distance it will fly. For the Zoegling the "glider ratio" is 12 to 1. Which means for each meter above ground, the glider will stay airborne for a 12-meter flight. That is not a very impressive "glider ratio." Some of the current most sophisticated soaring sail planes have "glider ratio" of 50 to 1 and even better. For the A and B-level flights we were very much dependent on the "glider ratio." As the glider inevitably descended toward earth and however high the

starting method got you the glider ratio determined the distant you would be able to fly. Only very experienced pilots are able to take advantage of air lifts, gain height and fly further than the “glider ratio” suggested. However, for the C-level training the glider had a better “glider ratio” and the motor-tow-plane brought us to more favorable locations and flight conditions to allow us to take advantage of thermals or rising air. Discovering where the thermals or up winds are, is really the primary skill for successfully soaring in a glider. The ability to find thermals means being sensitive to even small motions of the plane, or as we called it “flying by the seat of your pants.” Possible clues to finding thermals are feeling an upward push in the wing(s), also on hot days flying over sand, or over cement, under certain clouds, and just watching birds while sailing in the air without flopping their wings. In one situation for a C-level flight I could feel the updraft pushing one of the wings up and I very excited turned into that area and the plane actually began climbing. As a result I actually gained altitude and was able to stay airborne for 26 minutes. My longest flight time with a glider. Flying like a bird, smoothly, silently, miraculously climbing higher was truly a marvelous, enjoyable and unforgettable experience. As my training instructor frequently proclaimed: “soaring in a glider free from the earth and all its restrains is the second best feeling there is in the world.”

Several months after I had received my C-level certificate and the C-badge (see above) I was ordered to present myself to the induction center of the SS for a physical exam and an assessment of my military fitness. Why I was considered by the SS remains a mystery to me. I really have never been able to figure out why. My only guess is that my rank in the Hitler Jugend was responsible for that selection. Apparently, I easily passed the physical exam and was considered fit for service in the SS. At the exit interview I finally was able to declare my intentions to serve in the Luftwaffe with the goal of become a pilot. As evidence I proudly exhibited my recently acquired C-level certificate to the SS-officer. Seeing my C-level flying documentation he started swearing at me and shouted: “Get out of here.” The reason that he was bound to dismiss me was, that Herman Goering, the commanding officer of the Luftwaffe, and Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, had an agreement that any potential recruit who could present evidence of genuine flying experiences could not be drafted by any other branch of the German Army. Thus, my glider flying experiences as a young boy protected me from being drafted into the SS. I have often wondered — with a great deal of dread — how my life would have been different if I had not had those flying experiences.

My enthusiasm for glider flying never waned and was renewed later in life, 10 years after the war. As a graduate student at the University of Illinois I joined the glider club. As a

result, I had many delightful flying experiences in a more sophisticated sailing planes over the cornfields of Illinois. Later while in Maryland I made occasional glider and balloon flights. Even at my advanced age, I very recently made a glider flight over the city of Frederick, MD. According to my Glider Pilot Log Book I have made a total of 139 flights.

MY FAVORITE FOODS

My food preferences were influenced by local customs and family traditions.

1. Pickert

"Pickert" is not a widely known meal in Germany, but is unique for the Lipperland in the NE corner of Westfalia, where my mother was born and grew up. Every summer we visited my Grandmother who lived in that region. She served us "pickert", our favorite meal, that was always celebrated as a special occasion. "Pickert" being properly prepared a special "pickert"-pan, a large round iron skillet without any sides, just a very tiny rim to keep the fat from running into the fire. The ingredients are: potatoes, eggs, bacon and some flour to help in binding it all together. The bacon is diced into small pieces and 6 to 10 pieces are fried prior to assembling each pancake. The dough is poured on top of the bacon bits, in the hot and by now fatty pan and distributed as thinly as possible. When brown and crisp on one side the potato pancake is flipped over. The "pickert" is ready to eat when it is dry, brown and crisp on both sides. It is served with apple sauce and coffee (at times with butter).

2. The Eel Meal

A quaint old restaurant, not very far from home, behind a huge dike, protecting the land from the North Sea, offered one of my favorite restaurant dishes: a 3 course eel meal. The appetizer was a large and very flavorful piece of smoked eel. The main entree was fried eels, served with a salad or vegetable. The dessert consisted of eels in aspic. Since eel has much fat, the meal was served with a "schnapps."

3. The Christmas Salad or Herring Salad

Before Christmas my task was to prepare enough salad to last till the end of the year.

The amount of the ingredients can be varied to suit individual tastes and/or available supplies. Roughly speaking the amount of each of the major ingredients ought to be equal. All ingredients are diced into approximately the same size cubes. Size: Somewhere the size of the pinky fingernail. The sequence is unimportant, except that the apples should come after the pickles and the mayonnaise, to keep them from turning brown.

Ingredients:

Cooked red beets diced.

Pickled Cucumber.

Salt herrings, or herrings in vinegar.

In my childhood salt-herrings were used; however, they had to be soaked in water for 2 or 3 days otherwise they were too salty. Today supermarket herrings in vinegar suffice.

Mayonnaise gets stirred into the mix, to be supplemented by beet and herring juice.

Apples are chosen for firmness are added to the mixture after cutting.

Cooked but firm potatoes should be peeled and cooled before they are added.

Roast Veal: cut into cubes, like everything else. The drippings can also be included.

Decoration: The finished salad can be decorated with hard boiled eggs and capers.

This salad has remained our Christmas tradition, even in my American household.

WW II

Barely 17, I volunteered to serve in the German Air Force, having only completed a 10th grade education (Mittlere Reife, 1942). For my basic training, I was stationed in the beautiful Belgian City of Ghent. It was a rather tough and physically demanding period. However, in retrospect it was a strengthening and maturing experience. What followed were a number of assignments in northern France and later in Romania where our main responsibility was that of a sentry guarding airplanes, airports, ammunition depots and other military installations. Most of this was rather routine, dull, if not outright boring.

A few incidents stand out in my memory and deserve mentioning. One of my first assignments was to guard army installations at Calais. From our watch towers, we could see across the channel to the coastline of England. On a clear sunny day, we could not only see the White Cliffs of Dover, but with our binoculars we even saw the steam from locomotives traveling in England. On the 19th of August 1942, total alarm was given. We had to appear feldmarschmaessig (battle ready) to be moved to Dieppe, where the

British had landed. We were given extra ammunition and loaded on trucks, ready to roll. However, the alarm was called off, as the British raid had failed. Of the 6,086 British and Canadians who made it ashore 4,384 were killed, wounded or captured. We returned to our barracks. That was the closest I came to seeing combat until the Spring of 1945.

Another assignment for me became guarding a communication relay center in the heavily wooded area north of Noyon, France. My father's younger brother August Muuss was killed in WW 1 in 1915 in Le Mesnil, France. I knew he was buried in a WW 1 War Memorial not too far away from my location. On a sunny fall day, I borrowed a bike and made a pleasant day trip to visit the site of his grave. I was overwhelmed by the endless rows of the crosses of fallen German soldiers. I think I am the only family member who visited his grave. — I recall another exciting event from that location. That is when we went on nightly hunting trips for wild boars with French laborers. We provided the Frenchmen with guns (which was, of course, strictly forbidden by Army regulations and could have gotten us in real trouble). They in turn provided us with guidance as to where the wild boars might be found.

An incident which easily could have cost me my life occurred during sentry duty. The usual routine was that 2 soldiers had 2 hours of guard duty, followed by 4 hours' time "off". Being on duty we not only carried a loaded gun, but also a hand grenade which was passed from one guard to the next at the time of relief. The German hand grenades were in the shape of a vegetable can (containing the explosives) a wooden handle which was hollow inside with a cord and a small ball protected by a screw top. The top, when removed exposes the detonation cord and ball. Pulling the ball out of the shaft activated the detonation mechanism. In order, not to carry the hand grenade for two hours we stuck it in the shaft of the high army boot. That is where I had kept my hand-grenade for two hours. When, after two hours my relief arrived, I pulled the grenade out of the boot to hand it to my replacement. However, the screw top must have loosened and fallen into my boot. In other words, pulling the hand grenade out of my boot and handing it to my replacement, I had inadvertently activated the detonation mechanism. Normally the hand grenade would have exploded and killed all four of us. Fortunately, the detonation mechanism was defective, an event, that according to the weapons inspector, happens very rarely, but saved my life.

In the late winter of 1942, we were loaded into cattle cars and in a weeklong trip were transferred from France to Romania. During the trip our train was parked on a side-track. While we were allowed to leave the train to wash-up, get some fresh air and food,

another train of cattle cars was overtaking us. That train was stuffed with emaciated and scared looking people crying for food and help, a rather frightening view. Only in retrospect did we realize that we had seen political prisoners, or most likely Jews, on their way to a concentration camp. This rather scary image has stayed with me all these years. Our trip ended in a remote unpopulated area in the NE area of Romania near Ploesti. The airport we were guarding was used to store the conquered remnants of the Polish Air Force. This was a rather dull and monotonous assignment.

An event that stands out in my memory was one Easter Sunday. A group of us, who had no guard duty that day, decided to explore the country-side. We began a hike toward the mountains which we could see in the distant from our barracks. After a 2-3 hour hike we encountered a deep ravine with a river valley and a small village. As we approached the village we saw people who were celebrating a shared Easter meal in the outdoors. And even though our language communication skills were minimal, we were invited to join the natives in their festivities. What stands out in my memory is the very friendly reception we received and the extremely small size of their straw thatched houses, which consisted of just one room, the sleeping area on the one side of the house, a primitive kitchen on the other. This was one of the truly pleasant and memorable events during the war years. The other delightful event was the celebration of a Romanian national holiday with a major parade in the next large city: Ploesti. Already weeks before the event we were drilled every day, mercilessly, in the Parademarsch (goose-stepping), which we had to perform in front of a group of Romanian dignitaries. and German generals. Romania was an ally of Germany.

PILOT TRAINING

After a year of guarding military installations my commanding officer gave me a choice of whether I would like to be transferred to either a pilot training school or an officers training course. Already as a Hitler Youth I had accumulated considerable experience in glider flying. Because of my enthusiasm for glider flying, my preference, without hesitation, was pilot training. I was assigned to the pilot school in Guben on the river Oder. Learning to fly a variety of small airplanes, including some aerobatics, as a teenager, was an exhilarating and rewarding sensation. Flying the double decker Buecker 131 alone, seated in an open cockpit, was a wonderful experience — a childhood dream come true.



Buecker 131; a double decker, open cockpit plane, in which I learned to fly. The picture shows a restored version of the Buecker 131.

Having a glider pilot license I had no problems flying the aircraft in the air. Initially the real difficulty was landing the plane. For that purpose we had to repeatedly fly a Platzrunde. That meant flying the aircraft around the airport and landing it. Landing required a fairly specifically defined height and speed in order to touch the ground near the landing cross. If you miscalculated and came in too high or too fast, you might have to give gas and fly another Platzrunde, which earned you boots from your peers and demerits from your flying instructor. A perfect landing was one where the wheels touched the ground near the landing-cross, smoothly, without jumping and without swaying.

Toward the end of the basic small airplane training, we were required to learn some flight aerobatics: Such as the "knife's edge" in which the plane flies 90 degrees to the horizon and the controls reverse their function (the aileron controls the height while the height rudder controls the radius of the circle). There was the "Immelmann Turn" in which the plane is made to shoot up vertically into the sky to the point where it is going to stall, to make a sudden dramatic turn downward, also referred to as "wing-lever". Other stunts we had to fly were the "inverted flight" in which the plane flies upside down

and finally, the most difficult of all, the "loop", a big circle in the air. I recall my first solo loop, in which I lost consciousness as I had accelerated too fast on the downward leg of the loop. Luckily, I regained consciousness in time to control the airplane. Fortunately, I was alone in the plane, so my flight instructor was not aware of my error. Apparently, the downward section of my loop was not round, but a straight down course with much too much acceleration. Besides the practical flight experiences there were more theoretical instructions dealing with: Navigation, Meteorology, Aerodynamics, the function of the motor and identification of German and foreign aircrafts.

I do remember a joke that circulated among us pilots-in training. A young pilot in training has had a furlough and before returning to duty says good-bye to his grandmother. Her parting words: "Now dear, fly carefully, fly slowly and always low, stay close to the ground."

A nerve-racking aspect of flight training was the "emergency landing". On a beautiful day, you were flying at about 3000 feet, enjoying the scenery and feeling free like a bird with nothing to worry about. Suddenly your flight-instructor pulls the throttle back, depriving the aircraft of its forward thrust and says: "Emergency landing, your engine conked out." Suddenly you are confronted with three simultaneous decisions: (1) What is the direction of the ground wind? Any landing, especially an emergency landing, is easier performed against the wind. You look for smoke, or the steam of a locomotive or try to recall the wind at take-off. (2) The aircraft, to remain air-born, needs speed (which normally the engine provides). Without the necessary speed, the aircraft will stall, go into a spin and crash. Without the engine thrust the only way to maintain airspeed is by exchanging height for speed, that is becoming a rapidly descending glider. (3) You need to locate a possible landing site, which must be free of obstacles: cows, horses, ditches, fences, trees and electric wires and must be long enough to serve as a landing strip. The final trick is to bring the aircraft just a few meters above ground to the beginning of the selected landing strip. At that point, the flight instructor pushes the throttle forward, the air craft with full speed moves again up into the air. Your teacher tells you whether you may have landed or would have crashed.

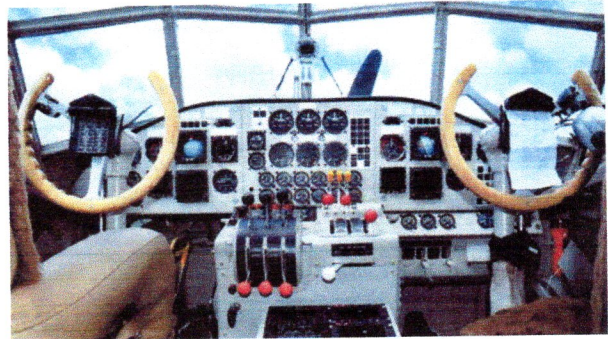
Between the completion of the requirements for the pilot's license and the beginning of more advanced specialized training (e.g. Instrument flight and flying combat aircrafts) I had to complete a course to become a sergeant, a very tough experience, much like basic training, but with more emphasis on executing the role of a platoon leader.

INSTRUMENT AND NIGHT FLIGHT TRAINING

For my more advanced pilot training, including instrument and night flight, with actual combat type advanced aircraft, I was assigned to the pilot school in Prag-Rusin. There I learned to fly — among others — the large 3 engine transport plane Junkers 52.



Junkers 52; Mainly used as a transport plane by the German Air Force. Picture shows a commercial, post WWII, version



Junkers 52 Cockpit

Eventually I progressed to the Stuka/Night-Fighter Junkers 88. The goal of my training was to become a night-fighter on the Ju. 88. The Ju. 88 in the beginning of the war, was one of the most advanced and powerful airplanes in the world. However, by the time I learned to fly the Ju 88, it had long been overtaken by Allied airplane development. Initially, these training flights were with an instructor, but eventually we had to fly by ourselves with a copilot and navigator who were also in training. A few of these flights in which I commanded the airplane, as well as the crew, are engraved in my memory. My first overland flight was from Prague to Warsaw to Magdeburg before returning to Prague-Rusin. As we approached the city of Warsaw, I saw a large section of the city, dark and brown and ominous looking, quite a color contrast to the rest of the city. Being the naive nineteen-year old I that was, I asked my co-pilot: "Why does that section of the city in front of us look so dark and so different?" His reply was: "that is the Jewish Ghetto". This is an image that has stayed with me ever since. — Another experience I remember, in which my flight actually served a purpose besides being just a training flight. I had to deliver a Ju. 52, the three-engine transport plane of the German Air Force to Vienna. While the flight was uneventful, I do remember viewing the impressive castle Schoenbrunn and its parks from the air.



A more serious event occurred on my first solo instrument night flight in the Ju. 88. I reached my goal, a city inside Czechoslovakia. Somewhere on the way back, I asked my navigator (also in training) for the precise course to the Prague-Rusin Airport. After a while his response came back: "All communication to the ground is out of order". I asked him to keep trying. Not knowing where we were I began to attempt some ground navigation. All I could make out in the dark of the night was, that we were flying over a major river flowing northward with its silver reflection in the moonlight, while we were flying westward. I calculated that the river must be the Vltava River (Moldau). Two ideas went through my mind as we were rapidly approaching the mountain range, which in peace time had been the border between Germany and Czechoslovakia. I knew the mountain range had numerous peaks 700 to 1200 m, and the highest 1605 m. We were not allowed to change our assigned flight height without permission. And without contact with the control tower, there was no way to obtain permission. However, even if I had climbed high enough to fly over the mountains I would have no idea where I was and where I could land the aircraft without communication with the control tower. Another night flight training crew — maybe for similar reasons — had recently crashed into the woods in one of the mountains at about 1000 m height and all had died. As I considered my limited options, I saw in the distance the glow of the fires of gigantic industrial furnaces. The sky was bright, and I knew that could be no other town but Pilsen. Seeing Pilsen in front of me, I knew where I was, turned the aircraft around and flew a NE course in the hope of finding my home base Prague-Rusin. Not long after that turn, the

landing lights of the airport came in view and almost at the same time the voice of my navigator. He had reestablished contact with the airport and we were cleared for landing. I surely was relieved when the wheels of the Ju 88 touched the ground.

Finally, there was a Ju 88 flight, uneventful by itself, except for the landing. As we approached the Prague-Rusin Airport, one of the engines gave out and the propeller stood still. Since the Ju 88 has two strong motors, powerful enough that the aircraft — with some adjustments — can fly with one engine. However, as we approached for landing the other engine began to sputter too. That became the roughest and bumpiest landing I have ever experienced. A reflection of the inferior quality of training equipment in 1944 and I was only glad the landing gear did not get damaged.

Stationed in Prague during the periods of training-flights-suspension because of gasoline shortage, I took advantage of the offerings of the Prague opera house and saw many performances, some 2 or 3 times. As soldiers, we got free seats usually in the upper tiers. However, being single and an astute observer I quickly located excellent vacant orchestra seats. Beginning with the second act I usually had one of the best seats in the house. It was there that I developed my love of operas and fell in love, not only with the opera, but with the opera stars (unrequited of course) having never seen beautiful women like that before in my life. This delightful diversion came to an end when Goebbels declared TOTAL WAR, the entertainment business ceased, and actors had to serve in the Army.

THE END OF THE WAR

Due to the shortage of gasoline my flight training was repeatedly disrupted during the summer of 1944. During one of those “no-gasoline-for-training flights” periods we were assigned to Ernteeinsatz (harvest duty). The time must have been the last weeks of the summer, when our flying opportunities had come to a virtual standstill. Trucks transported us from Prague to a small town in the Sudetenland. We were required to supplement the local women in their Hopfenernte (hop harvest) efforts. This was physical labor but a rather pleasant assignment since we got away from Army rules and regulations and discipline. Harvesting hop was a meaningful activity in contrast to digging trenches around the Prague airport, which we considered meaningless. For me exposure to hop was also an educational experience. Growing up in Northern Germany,

I had never seen a hop plant, so the large hop plants (20 to 25 feet high) looked strange and unfamiliar. I had to learn to separate the flowers buds from the rest of the plant and collect them in large containers. I remember my hands getting black (which didn't wash off easily) they also acquired a somewhat bitter taste. A taste which later in the production gives the beer its characteristic flavor. In our spare time, we greatly enjoyed the freedom, no curfew, the small-town atmosphere and the girls.

Another image that has stayed with me all these years occurred on a beautiful late summer day. I was in a machine gun tower guarding some installation. Suddenly I heard a dull engine roar that got louder and louder; as I looked up at the sky I saw a formation of hundreds and hundreds of American bombers flying in a south-eastern direction. As they were overhead from where I was standing, the sky seemed to darken. As far as I could make out the formation flew unmolested by any German fighter planes. That picture created a very early awareness, that the Americans had gained air superiority and the war could no longer be won. As I learned later, the bomber formation was heading for the Romanian oil field, where 1/3 of Germany's oil supply for the Army was produced. A year and half before I had been stationed in that area. The intent of the large mass of bombers was to destroy the oil field and thus deprive the German Army of its essential source of fuel. This one, and other similar attacks, may have contributed to the premature termination of my flight training in Prague. Consequently, my training was repeatedly disrupted, sometimes for weeks. As a result, even though I had already received my basic pilot license, I never completed the required flights to be certified for night and instrument flying, which probably saved my life. (Older friends with whom I shared glider flying experiences as a Hitler youth, became war casualties on their first, second or third combat mission.)

July 20, 1944 was the day Colonel Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg attempted to assassinate Hitler. We were battle-ready loaded into trucks to occupy and guard the Prague-radio-station for a day or two. The bomb did not kill Hitler and Stauffenberg was shot that evening. We returned to our regular duty. However, thinking about that incident in retrospect made me reflect on how little, as soldiers, we thought, discussed and even cared about Nazi ideology, political events and yes, even the advances and defeats of the German army. That was quite a contrast to my Hitler Youth years before I was inducted into the Air Force. As a Hitler Youth, I followed the political events and the daily (Wehrmachtsbericht) Army report with much greater personal and emotional involvement than as a soldier. During the war, and with my enthusiasm for the accomplishments of the Luftwaffe (Air Force) Erich Hartman, who was credited with 352

aerial victories, became my hero and model. After the war, when the atrocities of Hitler and his henchmen became known, Colonel Graf Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg became my WW II hero. His assassination attempt on Hitler was the last one of about a dozen serious attempts by Germans to kill Hitler.

Toward the end of the war our company was visited by a political Officer who gave upbeat lectures, trying to convince us how successful the German Armed Forces were and about the new VERGELTUNGSWAFFEN (retaliatory weapons) such as the buzz bomber, the jet fighter, the rocket propelled fighter and a whole new class of submarines. Weapons that were currently being developed and would soon be ready for deployment. Of course, with these new weapons, the victory was all but assured, so we were told. The goal of these lectures was to create optimism and enthusiasms for the "near" victory. Since we had no outside information whatsoever about the broader picture, I guess initially we were swayed by these skilled orators. However, I don't think the morale boost we received from these sermons lasted more than 48 hours. Looking back at these lectures, they obviously were nothing but political lies and propaganda, trying to put a positive spin on a dreadful situation

As the training program in Prague was terminated altogether I was transferred to Brandenburg-Briest pilot school. I was to start all over again to become a regular one engine fighter pilot, probably the Messerschmidt 109. However, a few months later even that training program was terminated. There no longer was enough gasoline for training purpose. During my stay in Brandenburg in the Winter of 1944/45 we were assigned to guard sensitive installations in and around the airport. One of my duties was to guard the testing facilities of Hitler's Top Secret Bird: The Luftwaffe's Messerschmidt 163 Comet. The Comet 163 is the only rocket-powered fighter to have entered operational service during WW II. The Me163 attained a fantastic speed unknown to any aircraft at that time. However, its rocket propelled flying time was very short. Once its rocket fuel had been spent, the Me163 became a glider. The slow flying glider returning to its base became an easy target for enemy fighters. Comet pilots claimed 16 aerial victories. Because of its great vulnerability as a slow flying glider full scale production never materialized. In the night, while guarding the Comet 163, I heard the engine being tested with an earth-shattering noise (more than 120 decibels). I think my hearing problems today were caused by guarding the rocket engine testing of the Comet Me163 in Brandenburg.

During the late winter and early Spring of 1945, I was assigned to an Engineering

Company on the Western Front. We were traveling with 12 large trucks loaded with the last existing Rhein Bridge of the German Army. It was to be placed in service as soon as the alleged "victorious" German Army was moved westward again. That, of course, never happened. Nevertheless, our task became to move the bridge to a new safe place every night and camouflage it, so that the trucks and the bridge during day time could not be identified by reconnaissance planes. In addition, since we were in the Ruhr Kettle surrounded by the American Army on all sides, our bridge had to be moved to the center of the Ruhr kettle, to avoid contact with the enemy. As a common soldier that assignment placed me at the safest location in the Ruhr Kettle.

As the war approached its end I briefly experienced combat, not as a pilot, but as a regular soldier near the famous Remagen Bridge. Many years later in the USA I became friends with Brooke Peirce, a colleague at Goucher College. He was an American soldier at the same time, in the same area on the other side of the Remagen Bridge. The thought that one of us might have killed the other, haunts me to this day. I became an American POW for four months. The most miserable time in my entire life. I got out of prison camp a bit early by working as a farm-hand after release. Fortunately, in the camp I had met a farmer from my father's congregation, who hired me as his farm-hand while still in prison.

On one of the last days of war, I, as a corporal, was given the responsibility to take a small unit of 8 or 10 men from one location cross-country for duty at another post 10 to 15 miles away. As we were marching along, we came to an intersection in the road, where some Army vehicles, men and a high-ranking officer were standing. The leading Officer was wearing a bright golden armband on the left arm of his uniform, it said: "Im Namen des Fuehrers" (In the Name of the Fuehrer). Apparently, he was deputized by Hitler with special powers to override the commands by other officers. In the general chaos of the last day of the war, his goal was to pick up stragglers and assemble them into new combat units. He asked me where were we going and I explained my instructions. He rescinded my previous orders and commanded me to take a different route to a collection point where new army units were being created. We marched some distance to a point where his instruction would take us on a different route. We decided to disobey him and follow the direction to our original destination. The officer or his men never followed or caught us — but I have often wondered what might have happened to me for disobeying orders given "in the name of Hitler".

WORK, EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Returning home to the very difficult post-WW II situation in Germany, I first worked, as I had agreed in prison camp, as a farm-hand doing manual labor. Being on a farm helped me gain back some of the 30 lbs. weight I had lost in the prison camp. Since most teachers had been members of the Nazi Party (NSDAP), and had often held leadership positions in the local party, they were disqualified from teaching until they were officially "denazified". Obviously as a result there was an extremely acute teacher shortage. I, who had been too young to have been a real Nazi, was quickly "denazified". Since membership in the Hitler Youth was compulsory it did not count. A few months after I returned from Prison camp, while still working as farmhand I was offered a job as a Lay-teacher. Since I was without work and any prospect of work, I readily accepted the offer. I was only 20 years old. Without any training and only a 10th grade education I was assigned a combined grade 1-3 classroom in a rural 2 room school with 70 children on the North Sea island of Sylt. I utilized the more mature 3rd grade girls to help teach and supervise the 1st graders. All books, except the Bible, were banned because they were usually decorated with swastikas or espoused Nazi ideology. I, the teacher, had only chalk and the blackboard to write on. The children had their slate plates and slate pencils. Not having had any teacher training, that assignment became a genuine challenge for me. After a year of teaching, I realized that I needed to complete my own education to pursue a future career. Having joined the air force with just a 10th grade education I decided to go back to High School and after some failures was able to complete the Abitur in 1 1/2 year. The Abitur is the German high school diploma, often considered as the Junior College graduation in the USA. In peacetime that would have taken me 3 more years. Special courses were offered for war veterans to obtain the Abitur. After much frustration, and special difficulties in Latin and English, I was finally able to attain my high school diploma (Abitur). However, having finally completed high school at the age of 23 meant that now University admission and eventually professional careers were opening up for me

My first real opportunity for post-high-school graduation employment came with an offer to become a Youth Secretary for Christian Reconstruction in Europe. Located in an exclusive villa near Hamburg overlooking the Elbe river, the "St. Michael's House" offered week long courses in Christian education to German youth. The aim of that organization was — under the leadership of Rev. Ronald Goodchild, who later became the Bishop of Kensington — to train youth leaders to rebuild the Christian faith among

young people in Germany after the moral and spiritual desolation of Nazism. Through the St. Michael's House I was given an opportunity to attend an international church conference in England, my first opportunity to visit a foreign country since the war. After the conference I hitchhiked from London to Scotland on the East side of England and returned on the West side. However, with the currency reform in Western Germany, money for work at the St. Michaels House became an issue; consequently, the program had to be discontinued. (On June 20th 1948, overnight the old currency, the Reichsmark (RM), was replaced with a new currency the Deutsche Mark (DM). 10 RM = 1 DM. The next morning consumer goods appeared in the stores.)

Fortunately for me, I was offered the opportunity to attend a nine-month youth group leader course at Sigtuna's People's High School in Sweden. The Scandinavian People's High Schools are unique educational institutions in the world, which emphasize learning for learning's sake, exploration and critical thinking rather than book-learning, exams, scores and certificates. The schools are unique in that Swedish boys and girls at the age of 14 or 15 complete their public school education. They become apprentice and learn a trade. After they have completed a vocational apprenticeship some of them at the age of 18, 19, or 20 volunteer to expand their cultural/educational horizon and attend a People's High School. Sigtuna was attended by students from other Scandinavian countries, and after 70 years I am still friends with a student from Iceland whom I visited later. These schools are based on the philosophy of the Danish theologian Grundtvig. For me attending a Scandinavian People's High School became the pivotal educational experience for the course of my future professional development and stimulated my interest in psychology. In my spare time I read Freud, Adler, Jung, Kierkegaard and Sartre. These exposures inspired me later in Graduate School to publish a professional article "Existentialism and Psychology". Learning first hand about Swedish School-Maturity Tests gave me ideas for my first major research project which I pursued as I got into college. It resulted in the publication of the: "The Flensburg School Maturity Test." That test is designed to determine whether children age 5, 6 or 7 have the maturity and the prerequisite skills to succeed in a first grade classroom, or whether they might be better advised to wait a year before entering school. Before Returning to Germany I hitchhiked from Stockholm to Lapland, the very northern tip of Sweden, where in late May the sun shone 24 hours a day. To earn money for my trip to Lapland I unloaded banana boats in the harbor of Stockholm, carrying the very heavy bunches from the ship to the warehouses. Returning to Germany I was admitted to the Teacher's College Flensburg-Muerwik and, despite of all my high school problems, received my teaching diploma with honors. Having finally reached my first really professional goal, I taught a

fifth grade all boys class in Hamburg, Germany.

VISITING AMERICA

Another enriching educational opportunity opened for me soon after I graduated from college. The Office of Education in Washington, DC. invited me to participate in a 9 months Teacher Training Program. The program was designed to provide young German teachers with an opportunity to learn first-hand the American educational system and the underlying philosophy of democratic education. I spent the fall and winter of 1951/52 at the Central Missouri State College in Warrensburg, Mo., attending classes and visiting public schools. A Christmas vacation trip to Los Angeles stimulated me to write up my impressions of America to be presented in a broadcast by me on the Northwest German Radio. Subsequently, I was assigned as an observer to the school system of Minneapolis, MN and Ann Arbor, Michigan for a month each. My father, who had many international friends, instructed me to visit his friend Pastor Green in McKeesport, PA. During one of my visits I served as a translator for the German Bishop Wester, who spoke to the congregation about the church situation in Germany. On another trip, Reverend Green had invited some of the young ladies of his congregation to meet the German exchange teacher (me). It was on that occasion that I met my future wife Gertrude nee Kremser. Reverend Green also asked me to preach on the coming Sunday to his congregation; the text for my service came from Chpt. 4 of Acts. My future wife sang in the choir. His church was a Congregationalist Church which is autonomous and less formal in such matters and allowed me to conduct the church service. Before returning to Germany I worked as a farm-hand on an American farm to earn some money, so that I could study at Columbia University in New York. I took courses in Adolescent Psychology, Social Psychology and Mental Health and greatly enjoyed the experience. I was surprised how relatively easy it was to earn "A's" in the USA, in contrast to my great difficulties in the German High Schools after the war. Returning to Germany I became a substitute principal in a two-room rural school, teaching a combined class of 5-9th grade boys and girls.

MOVING TO THE USA

During my year in the USA I realized that the professional opportunities for me were far superior in the USA as compared to the rather limited opportunities in post WW II Germany. In 1953, I left family and fatherland to start a new life in America. My first job, that summer was that of a houseparent supervising seriously emotionally disturbed children in Baltimore, MD. One of the very difficult boys had been sold by his mother for \$100 and he knew about it. After some initial difficulties in having my academic German background recognized as the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, I did get admitted to the Master's Program at Western Maryland College. This was with the help of Dorothy Elderdice whom I had met in Sweden. She became my sponsor for entry into the USA, she helped me finance my college education, and later became a family friend and a substitute grandmother for my children. For my thesis, I evaluated the "Action Research Program" at the College. While at Western Maryland College, I married Gertrude nee. Kremser with whom I had two children, Michael born in 1958 and Gretchen born in 1961. We had two weddings, a legal one at Christmas 1953 conducted by Judge Taft in Santa Monica, CA and the second one six month later, a church wedding in the Marienkirche in Flensburg, 1954. That service was performed by my father, in the church where my grandfather (who attended the wedding at age 93) had been a minister for 30 years. Followed by a European honeymoon trip. My wife was an avid gardener and quite active both in the local and the regional garden club. She also became passionate about cruises and many summer was spent on cruise ships, with such voyages as: through the St. Lawrence stream, Bermuda, Bahamas, Caribbean, Jamaica, and Hawaii.

Returning to the States, I continued my advanced graduate studies at the University of Illinois, with a major in Educational Psychology and a minor in Clinical Psychology. I financed my studies by becoming a Graduate Assistant to Dr. Celia Stendler. I taught lab sessions for her Child Development course. We published an article together on race relations in Education, which was later reprinted in a Book of Readings. My doctoral advisor was Prof. Glenn Blair, and I remember well his advice: "Even if you have to live on bread and water, finish your dissertation before you accept a job elsewhere". Colleagues of mine who accepted academic positions while still working on their dissertation proved him right. The topic of my doctoral dissertation was: "Theories of Adolescence: An Analysis of Selected American and European Positions." This was an attempt to show how different psychological theories explain and describe the unique

characteristics of the period of adolescence in the human life cycle. Initially, this included such theories as Freud's (and followers) psychoanalytic theories, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Robert Havighurst, Arnold Gesell and various Central European positions. My dissertation became the basis for a small paperback book published by Random House in 1962. Surprisingly it became a bestseller in Random House's paperback series. Apparently the two topics of my book "Theories" and "Adolescence" were, at that point in time, relatively unexplored and widely neglected topics in the developmental literature. Thus, my book seems to have filled a real void and became a widely used textbook. Consequently, there was a great demand for modifications and expansions of the book, resulting in three considerably revised editions by Random House in 1968, 1975 and 1982. McGraw-Hill at that point had acquired the psychology books from Random House and published two further enlarged revised edition, 1988 and 1996. Each revision included new theories, supplied more research finding, and in general updated the material. That the book not only touched a national concern but addressed issues that were of international significance was reflected in the publication of several language translation: Dutch, Hebrew, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish and more recently even Chinese.

PROFESSOR

The first full time academic appointment following my PH.D. in 1957 was that of a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa, in the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station in the Preventive Psychiatry Program of Dr. Ojemann. The purpose of that program was to develop curriculum material, train teachers and research the outcome of an educational curriculum in Primary Prevention. We attempted to teach children coping mechanisms to deal with difficulties, frustrations and social disagreements at school, on the playground and at home in a constructive fashion, thus preventing the development of mental health problems. My task was — and I published seven research papers, a book and tests — to assess the effectiveness of the program.

My son Michael was born in Iowa City. His grandfather and grandmother came from Germany to conduct the baptismal services in the Lutheran Church in Iowa City. We jointly drove back to the East coast to visit friends in Westminster and Washington. At the same time, I received an invitation for a job interview at Goucher College. Since I was quite content with my research appointment and had the opportunity to publish

research papers and actively participate in Dr. Ojemann's Preventive Psychiatry Research Program I had not been actively seeking employment. However, since I was in Westminster I accepted the invitation and went for the interview. I liked what I saw: a beautiful campus, small classes and a very personal atmosphere and being with friends at the East Coast. When at the end of the day I was asked: "what will it take to entice you to come to Goucher?" I answered rather frivolously, not really expecting a positive reply: "the rank of Associate Professor". My hunch is that I got that early promotion because of a strong letter of recommendation from Celia Stendler and the fact that I had already published (or in press) tests, articles and research studies. That is how my 36-year professional career at Goucher began. While in Washington visiting the Capital my father, who was politically active, had the opportunity to meet and converse with Senator John Kennedy.

From 1959 to 1995 I taught at Goucher College concentrating on those psychology courses that are required for the certification of teachers: Child Development, Adolescent Development, Educational Psychology, Learning Theory, Test and Measurement, Diagnosis of Children, Counseling, Case Study as well as supervising students during their practicum, both in the graduate and the undergraduate program. My proudest accomplishment was to be promoted to full professor before my 40th birthday. I served as Chairman of the Education Program, Chairman of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Special Education Program major I established at Goucher College. To develop my own competency in Special Education I received a one year leave, fully supported by the Andrew Mellon Foundation Grant for Faculty Development. During that year, I did diagnostic work with children in several special education schools in Baltimore and returned for additional diagnostic experiences to Columbia University, N.Y.

In addition, I taught courses at The Johns Hopkins University, Towson University and the Enoch Pratt Hospital Training Program for Psychiatrist, as well as at the "Youth Officers Training Program" of the Baltimore City Police Department. On the national scene, I offered courses at the University of Illinois and the University of Delaware. Internationally at the University of British Columbia, Canada and the Paedagogische Hochschule Kiel, Germany. For about 10 years I served as a Local Level Hearing Officer, and in cases of an appeal as a State Level Hearing Officer. My role was to adjudicate disagreements between the school system and the parents of handicapped children. At issue in most of these hearings was: whether or not the schools provided the handicapped child an "appropriate" educational program as defined by special

education law. An appropriate education can loosely be defined as the kind of services and instructions that qualified educators would offer a child of that kind of handicap. The parents usually sued for more special education services than the school system was willing to provide. Some of the programs at issue involved very considerable sums of money. These were legal procedures in which both parties frequently were represented by lawyers. The hearings followed general court procedures, although with a less formal atmosphere. Only one of my decisions was appealed and overturned at a higher level.

INTERNATIONAL LECTURER

On one of my trips to Germany I visited my cousin Dr. Helmut Outzen who was a pediatrician and an avid sailor and I enjoyed many sailing trips steering his boat in the Baltic. As a small token of appreciation I had given him a copy of my book "Theories of Adolescence." As a pediatrician he apparently liked my book and sent it to Professor Hellbruegge at the University of Munich. Hellbruegge was in charge of the continuing education program for Pediatricians and was responsible for organizing two congresses: The Easter Congress for Pediatrician and the Fall Congress for Sozialpediatrie (Social pediatrics). At that time German pediatricians received only a minimum of psychological training in their academic education. On the other hand, pediatricians were increasingly approached for advice and confronted with those problems which parents had with their children and adolescents that were not strictly medical in nature. As a result I got invited by Professor Hellbruegge to become the keynote speaker at the "12th International Easter Seminar for Continued Education for Pediatricians." (April 1979) The topics of my five evening lectures to the entire congress were: The psychological development of adolescents, Sexual behavior and conflicts during adolescents, Alienation of adolescents from family and society, Behavior disorder during adolescence, and Rational Emotive Therapy for children and adolescents. At the end of the 5 lectures I got a standing ovation from the large group of pediatricians; but not only that, I got invitations for both the "International Congress for Pediatricians" (1980, 1982, 1991) and to the Congress for Social Pediatrics (1981, 1983, 1987, 1992). My lectures for the pediatricians focused on such adolescent topics as: alienation, sexuality, drug use, delinquency, suicide, eating disorders, risk taking behavior, parental divorce, egocentrism, key children, cognitive development, moral development and behavior modification techniques. For the International and Interdisciplinary Congress for Social Pediatrics, my lectures at the fall congress focused more on special education issues,

such as: Special Education Law in the USA, the Individual Education Plan (IEP), mainstreaming, integration, family dynamics, sibling relationships, parent training and intervention strategies. Both congresses were held in Brixen, in the Dolomites, Northern Italy, since the German tax code made participation in conferences in German speaking countries tax deductible. Before WW I Brixen was part of the Austrian Empire and to this day German is spoken everywhere. The Easter Congress was particularly popular, since at this time of year it was spring south of the Alps while it might still snow north of the Alps. A large number of my lectures were requested for publication both by German and by Swiss journals. An additional outcome of my Brixen lectures were invitations to speak at the University of Munich (1982) and at the University of Zurich (1988).

In addition to my evening lectures I was asked to expand the content of my first presentation "Rational Emotive Therapy" and to offer at both congresses an 8 to 10 hours seminar through which congress attendees could receive a certificate and earn continuing education credit. The seminar demonstrated the application of "Rational Emotive Therapy" (RET) to problem solving. RET (or REBT as it is called today, the B standing for Behavior) is a rather powerful and efficient form of therapy, that does not attempt to solve the problems of the neurotic person, but "teaches" the neurotic person a method to solve his/her own problems. In that respect REBT has more in common with education, than with traditional psychiatric therapies. Its fundamental philosophical assumption is best expressed by a quote from Epictetus: "Men are not disturbed by the events in their lives, but by the view which they take of these events". I have found that people who can accept this philosophical thought as an alternative to their previous thinking (a process referred to as "cognitive restructuring") can quickly reduce the disturbing events in their lives to a more tolerable, normal level. RET does not eliminate emotions — an often-heard misconception — but RET replaces dysfunctional neurotic emotions with functional, constructive emotions. And I found it very gratifying, that even after I had returned home, I got feedback that RET had provided some real help helpful to some of them.

These international lectures were for me a real challenge. They were personally rewarding and professionally expanding and stimulating. Initially I even had to review and expand my rather "rusty" German language skills. There also was an indirect benefit. As a result of my work in child and adolescent development Goucher awarded me an honorary title: The Elizabeth C. Todd Distinguished Professorship. That professorship — at that time — was the only one at Goucher College, that had attached to it generous financial benefits. For the five years that I was the holder of that title, I

was receiving a 20% increase in my salary tax free, designed to enhance my research and writing endeavors. It even allowed me to attend the International Congress for Psychology in Acapulco, Mexico.

RETIREMENT

At the time of my retirement, Goucher College established the "Rolf Muuss Prize in Special Education" honoring each year a promising student in Special Education. Also the lobby in one of the colleges buildings was named after my colleague and friend Eli Velder and me. Prostate cancer and surgery lead to my retirement in 1995, which was 5 years more than the traditional retirement age. Trying to enjoy retirement my wife and I planned to visit Rome, followed by a cruise to European Capitals. However, that trip had to be canceled because my wife was mugged and injured while waiting for the Pope in the St. Peter's Square on Sunday morning. As she had barely recovered from her injuries, she was diagnosed with cancer which after a very long and difficult illness lead to her death in 1999. A year later my son Michael was killed in a tragic car accident. He was a brilliant computer scientist, father of "Ping" and grandfather of the Internet. He wrote the ARPA-NET, which became the model on which the Internet was based. In a government publication, dedicated to him, "50 Years of Army Computing" he is referred to: "He was truly a national treasure."

In the years that followed — as long as my health permitted — I have traveled extensively to Europe, sailing with my cousin in the Flensburg Fjord and cruising the Norwegian Coastline, the Baltic Capitals, as well as river cruises on the Danube and the Rhone rivers. Finally, I have moved into a retirement community: "Edenwald". From my window, I see the woods of Goucher College. Inspired by my wonderful opera experiences in Prague as a teenager during the war, I have returned to the appreciation of operas in my old age. Every other week I give a brief introduction about the composer and the plot and show an opera from my extensive collection, which keeps me intellectually stimulated and active. With the Edenwald bus, I participate in many day trips to museums, parks, monuments, libraries, battlefields and cruises such as sailing trips to Annapolis.