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The Finnish interview partners

Aili Maria Viitala (*1938)

Aili has six brothers and sisters. They were born in Merijärvi hinterland in Pahkasalo. Aili was three years old when her father died at the end of the Winter War on 10 March, 1940. They left their home during the inter-war period of 1940 for Käsämäki where their mother had been born. Aili does not have any memories of her father or of the first war, which was the Winter War. Before the war started, the family had lived in a small house. Their parents had been planning to build a new, bigger house for their family, but everything changed when the War started and their father had to leave.

When her father left for the war

On 06.12.1939 her father left for the war, but Aili cannot remember that. Her brother Eino was the only child who was awake in the early morning to see their father leaving. After that Aili's two brothers had to take care of the livestock. Subsistence was one of their problems. Sometimes their well was frozen during the winter and they did not have any water then. That was the worst problem of all. Luckily, her brothers were able to bring water from a hole in the ice which was 500 m away with the help of a sledge and a tub.

Their way to school was more than 5 km and there was no proper transportation. The journey would have been too long for a little school child, so her brothers went to a touring school. On their way to school they saw enemy airplanes.

People were generally afraid of the war. It was a difficult time and food rationing began. They started to feel the lack of coffee, sugar and firewood and people needed lamp oil because there was no electricity. At the beginning of the Winter War there was the order for black-out which meant that the windows had to be covered with "Molotov curtains" when people wanted to have some light inside.

Her father's death

The Winter War ended on 13 March 1940 and that is when the men began to return home. The family did not hear anything about their father for a couple of weeks and this period of waiting was nerve-racking. They were desperately waiting for letters from the battlefield, but these letters often did not reach the small villages or if they did, it took a long time. So getting information was difficult for a village which had just



one radio, but people tried to listen to the radio whenever it was possible. Finally they were informed that their father had gone missing on 10 March 1940. His friend had seen how he was killed in action in the evening. But even in the morning it was not possible to retrieve his body. Her father died in Vilajoki which was a territory that had been ceded to the Soviet Union, so they could not enter there to get her father's body.

Aili's oldest brother heard the bad news when he was visiting their aunt. He was not allowed to tell the family and he had to wait for their grandfather (father's father) to tell them the bad news.

After a couple of weeks their youngest brother was born, and it was a difficult time without any hope. Their mother's sister arrived from Käsämäki to help and their mother's family was also helping. The Neighbours also helped. They were the only war orphan family and they had nothing to complain about; luckily the kids faced no bullying at school and they were treated just like the others.

After the family's father had died, they were not able to take care of the farm anymore, because the children were so young. Their mother's parents invited them to Käsämäki. The family moved there in autumn when the food from the stock was depleted. That was the first time when they had to move and that is about the time when Aili's memories begin. That was the time when the interwar-period was at its end. They set forth with a truck, and the two youngest children got into the cabin with their mother. The rest of the children were travelling on the top of the platform with the luggage and the livestock, except for her brother Eino who had gone there beforehand. The circa 100-kilometre-trip took the whole day. Her first recollection of her grandmother's was the threshing, which had already started and the whole village was helping. Her grandmother's house was located in a side village. This village was and still is very lively.

Life in the village

Their grandfather (mother's father) had bought the neighbour's farm which included a big house. Aili's family was given two rooms of the building to live in. They were the only family living there during the winter time. In the spring a family with nine children moved in. This family of evacuees from Laatokka was placed in the big living room.

The children had to start work as soon as they were old enough to do something alone. Aili remembered that she often washed the dishes. She had to get the water from the well and then warm it inside. She washed the dishes in two vats. She used one to wash the dishes and the other one to rinse them. She had to learn how to milk the cows when she was ten years old. She had to work on the hayfields at a very young age. As they grew up the amount of work they had to do grew as well.

Especially at the beginning of the Continuation War when the men went to war again, there was a lack of manpower in the village. The men who stayed in the village were old and sick, so they could not help with the hard work.

They did not talk a lot about the war at home, probably because their mother tried to protect the children. Especially their father's departure was very hard for her. Young Aili knew that there was a war going on, as the village's men had left for the front.

There were Russian prisoners of war in the village, but they were not treated badly. There was never an air raid on Käsämäki, but Aili was able to see the bombing of Oulu. Even though the distance was more than 100 kilometers, the lights from the flames were easily seen in the calm winter nights.

Considering the time, the family's situation was rather good. They owned a cow or two, so they were able to get their own milk. Sometimes there was so much milk so that they could make butter and even sell it. They also had some sheep so they had meat and wool. They also grew some vegetable, so that even during the winter they had no problem with food supplies.

Christmas was a holiday everyone was waiting for. About 50 % of the orphans had "a war godparent". This could be a private person, a company or a family. The godparents sent parcels with clothes, books, toys and fruit. The siblings, including Eino and Aili, saw their first apples when their godparents from Helsinki sent apples to them. There was always a celebration when they went to get the parcels, even though the post office was ten kilometers away. This ended in the early 1950s. But luckily this was the time when Finland's economy started to recover.

The village's school was small and it was located in a teacher's small farmhouse, where all the school classes were in the same room. The time at school was shortened, which meant that lower classes studied in spring and continued in the early autumn for a couple of weeks. In the winter it was the older students' turn. They had fallen behind compared to students of other schools in the country. In spite of this everyone was able to study at the Christian Institute of Kalajoki.

Religion influenced their everyday life very much. Their mother was a very active parishioner and she started a choir. Religion had also a big influence on every one. They sang psalms in the evenings and children went to Sunday school every week.

The children grew up in Käsämäki. They built a new home on the property of their grandparents. The oldest brother continued the farm and after him his son continued the tradition.

At first the government did not give financial support but after a while the government started to pay small pensions which depended on the amount of children. Groceries

were rationed by food cards as there was a lack of everything. Extra food cards, for example for coffee and soap, were sold. It helped a lot that they had their own cows. In addition, they received food support from their grandparents. The pension had fallen behind, and it was too small for such a big family. Fortunately, the government noticed this at the beginning of the year 1950 and started to pay more pensions to compensate for the years when it had been too small. With that money they bought a new foal which they had not been able to afford before.

Aili did not immediately realize that the war had ended. Soldiers were coming home, but as Aili's uncle had been wounded he had already returned some time before. As their father's fate was already known, the children did not have that to wait for him.

After the war Aili did not want to cross the clearings in the forests because she felt like that she could be seen from above and she felt that she was in danger. Slowly but steadily freedom and the feeling of safety was increasing all over Finland.

Nowadays Aili is a member of Ostrobothnia's War Orphans Union.

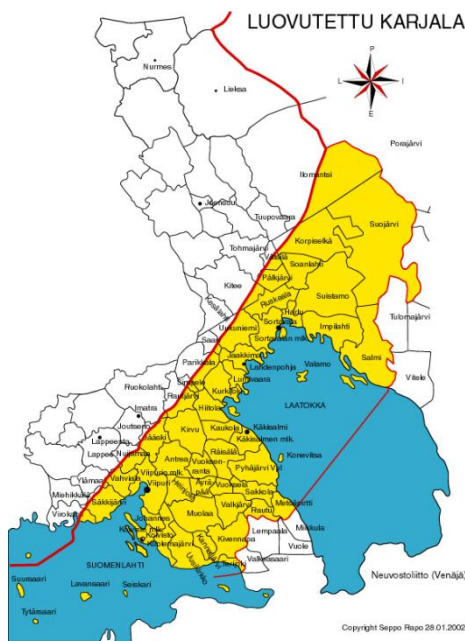
Interview: Alina Koivisto, Riikka Kangas, Lea Loriz, Annika Minsch



Eino Viitala (*1932)

Living

His grandfather (mother's father) had bought the neighbouring farm which included a big house. They had two rooms of the building to live in. They were the only family living there during the winter time. In the spring a family with nine children moved in. This family was placed in the big living room. They were evacuees from Laatokka, the former eastern part of Finland. The evacuees had their own farming equipment and their own animals, but actually they were one big family. Eino got to know the children of the evacuee



family. There was also a Russian



prisoner of war working on the family's farm. They were supposed to treat him differently, but actually he was treated like the other members in the family. Sometimes an official checked the treatment of the prisoner, but the family was always warned. When the war ended, the prisoners of war were released back to Russia. It was very difficult for both sides, because the Russian prisoner of war and the family had become very close to each other. Now the situation became more complicated because they had to do all the hard work by themselves.

The children had to start working as soon as they were old enough to do something on their own. The older they got the more they had to work. Especially at the beginning of the Continuation War when all men went to war again, there was a lack of manpower in the village. The men who stayed in the village were old and invalid so they could not help with the hard work. But they were expected to help with all kind of tasks. For example, Eino remembers that there were occasions when all the villagers went into the forest to do wood-cutting and logging work. Even the children and the elderly were expected to help as much as they were able to.

The children grew up in Käsämäki. They built a new home on their grandparents' property. The oldest brother took over the farm and after that, the next generation kept on working on the farm. Eino arrived at Veteli as an agricultural adviser 46 years ago. He has lived here ever since. But like all the other children of their family, he also feels that Käsämäki is their home.

The Finnish government did not give financial support at first, but after a while the government started to pay a small pension which depended on the number of children. Groceries were rationed by food coupons because there was a lack of everything. Extra food coupons, for example for coffee and soap, were sold. It helped a lot that the family had their own cows. In addition, their grandparents supported them with food. The pension did not increase which meant that it was too small for such a big family. At the beginning of 1950, the government started to pay a higher pension and added some compensation for the years before. With that money they bought a new foal which they had not been able to afford before.

The family was not hungry even though the conditions were quite poor during war time. For instance, the family had a lot of grain, a part of which they had to give to the other families in the village. This had to be done because the government had ordered it.

Although there was a lack of food, Christmas was still a big holiday everyone was looking forward to. About 50% of the orphans had "a war godparent". Sometimes it was a private person or a family, sometimes a company. The godparents sent parcels with clothes, books, toys and fruit. This was the first time when Eino saw apples. There was always a celebration when they went to get the parcels, although the post office was ten kilometers away. This ended at the beginning of the 1950s. But fortunately they did not need these parcels so desperately anymore because Finland's economy had improved.

When Eino's father left for the war

Eino can vividly remember the time when his father left for the war on 6 January 1939. He was the only child who was awake in the early morning. The other children had already said goodbye in the evening. They did not speak a lot then, and the people did not show their emotions in such a situation. People had already been afraid of the war in the summer when they could see the first signs of the war. Eino was 7 years old then, so he could not understand very well what was happening, but it felt really bad to see his father and the other men of the village leave. He and his oldest brother had to take care of the livestock. Subsistence was one of their problems. Their well was sometimes frozen and they did not have any water then. That was the biggest problem of all. Luckily they could carry water with a sledge and a tub from a hole in the ice which was 500 m away.

It was more than 5 km to the school from their home and there was no proper transportation. The journey would have been too long for a little school child, so they went to a touring school. Eino only went to that school for a few weeks, but that was not such a big problem because he had already learned the basic reading skills. On their way to school the children saw enemy planes. People were generally afraid of the war.

This period of time was difficult and food regulation began. The lack of coffee, sugar and firewood became worse and people needed lamp oil because electricity was scarce. At the beginning of the war there was the black-out order which meant that windows had to be covered with “Molotov curtain” if people made some light.

Eino’s father died in the war

When the war ended on 13 March 1940, the men began to return home. But Eino’s family did not hear anything about their father for a couple of weeks and they had no idea what had happened to him. They were expecting letters from the front, but those letters often did not reach those tiny villages. Getting information was difficult for a village which had just one radio. Finally, they got the information that their father had gone missing on 10 March, but his friend had seen how he had been killed in action. Eino’s father had died in the evening. On the next morning it had not been possible to get his body from the battlefield because he had died in Vilajoki, which was not accessible for the Finnish soldiers anymore.

When Eino’s brother visited their aunt, who lived in Merijärvi, he heard the bad news. He did not feel able to tell the family and he wanted to wait for their grandfather to tell them the news. After a couple of weeks their youngest brother was born. The time was difficult and they felt hopeless. Their mother’s sister arrived from Kärsämäki to help and their mother’s family also assisted them. Neighbours also helped. They were the only war orphan family and they had nothing to complain about; they were not bullied at school and they were treated just like the others.

After their father had died, the family was not able to take care of the farm anymore, because the children were too young. Their mother’s parents invited them to Kärsämäki, so Eino moved there on Midsummer Day riding his uncle’s bike for 116 kilometers. The rest of the family moved there in autumn when the stocks of food were finished. That was the first time when they had to move. It was a short time before the Continuation War. They set forth with a truck. The three youngest children got in the cabin with their mother and the rest of the children travelled on top of the platform with the luggage and the stocks. The approximately 100-km-trip took them the whole day. Their first recollection of their grandmother’s place was the threshing of the corn which had already started and the whole village was helping. Their grandmother’s place was located in a tiny village. The village was lively and it still is.

The village's school was small and it was located in the teacher's small farmhouse, where all the school classes were in the same room. The time at school was shortened, which meant that the lower classes studied in spring and continued in the early autumn for a couple of weeks. In the winter it was the upper classes' turn. Their studies were lagging behind compared to other schools. Eino and his brothers and sisters were able to study at the Christian institute of Kalajoki one after another.

Religion had a great influence on their everyday life. Their mother was a very active member of the parish and she founded a choir. Religion also had an influence on everybody.

Eino has been actively involved in Ostrobothnia's War Orphan Union for ten years and he still is. Nowadays there are over 500 members in the area of Ostrobothnia. Eino has been working in the union for as long as it has existed. War orphans did not have any governmental support, but some people thought that it was important to register them.

Interview: Heini-Maarit Takala, Vili Ruuska, Stefanie Birk, Dominik Kaltenbach



Senja Viitala (*1934)

The time of the Winter War

She remembers 9 December 1939 very vividly. It was a freezing day, - 40 celsius. Her father and Eino (her brother) were somewhere near Savukoski building fortresses. Her sister Salli was working as Lotta in Kemijärvi sewing white camouflage clothes etc. for soldiers. The rest of the family was staying at home (her four siblings and the mother).

Army representatives ordered everyone to evacuate immediately to Kittilä via Suvanto. Just two weeks before they had moved from Suvanto to Hiltula to a new house built by her father and Eino. Their cows were transported separately. They also owned sheep. Someone who owned a



hay cart had to put it at the disposal of the refugees. The family put on their best and warmest clothes. Tuomo, her little brother, was wrapped into a felt blanket; the other children were covered with a quilt to keep them warm. They had to pack food for the journey. Then they left, first towards Saukkola. They traveled in the forest, not on roads. The paths in the forests were called "winter roads". The whole village was evacuated, over 100 horses left. It all happened very quickly, according to her memory. Before they left, her mother took a broom and set it leaning against the front door, and prayed for Jesus to bless and protect the house.

A mother and four children joined the family in Saukkola. They were travelling in a sleigh which the family used to take when they went to church. The oldest children were supposed to walk, but Senja could not remember how many were really walking. They stopped in Suvanto for food and to feed the horses. The place where people from Pyhäjärvi stopped was called Saunala. Senja believes that this was the place where the adults discussed with the military police which way to take.

They had some coffee and the journey continued towards Aska. The group consisted of a cavalcade of 100 horses, with military police on skis as a vanguard. When no enemy planes could be heard, the police attached oil lamps to the branches of trees to show the way. They stayed overnight in Aska to feed the horses and do many other things she does not remember. This was the only night they stopped somewhere to sleep; otherwise they were traveling all night and had to sleep in the sleigh. That night some people were accommodated in the school building, probably in Jeesiö, but Senja's family was in a house, but she cannot remember where. She remembers that someone's infant had died during the journey and many people were

crying because of it. After four days the children were told that they had arrived at their destination, Kittilä.

During this 4-day-journey there was fighting towards/near Savukoski, but luckily the children did not see how scared the adults were. The children felt safe on their hay cart; during the breaks the children could go for a pee. After all, the horses had to rest, too. She does not remember arriving at Kittilä, but she does remember arriving at their evacuee house which was a farm. The house was warm and bright, and the people were nice. The house owner was fighting at the front, so his son had to be the head of the household. The daughter of the house had children, and Senja became good friend with Liisa, who was a bit younger. The grandmother of the house was a “granny” for all the children and they all liked her very much. The family were given the daughter’s room because she had a small apartment nearby. They also had a small kitchen where Senja remembers her mother and Mimmi making soup. The house owner’s family lived in the biggest kitchen of the house where the stove and baking oven was.

The children do not have any bad memories of this evacuation journey. At Christmas her father and her oldest brother Eino were celebrating with them. Her father was not an active soldier anymore because of his age and Eino was too young. She cannot remember her oldest sister Salli’s visit because she was working as Lotta for the army. In Kittilä she went to the Christmas service for the first time with her mother, “grandmother” and her brother Martti. Her “grandmother” gave her 25 pence for the collection at church.

Her father returned from building defence lines, when peace came in May 1940. Senja remembers the day when her father came. She remembers that all children were visiting their neighbours Pertti and Impi who did not have any children. On their way home, everyone was crying and celebrating. All the children were confused. One adult said: “Rauha on tullut.” (“Peace has come”) But the children heard “Rauha on kuollut” (“Peace is dead.” Rauha is also a Finnish name.) The children came back running and shouting “Peace is dead, peace is dead!” - “Who is peace?” - “We don’t know, but everyone’s crying!” At Anttila’s they were told what had really happened.

They returned home from Kittilä very quickly, even though the Swedish trucks were a couple of days late. There were no mines on the roads anymore, so they did not have to be afraid. It was hard to say goodbye to the grandmother and the other family who lived in the same house. The lorries went via Rovaniemi to bring the evacuees home, it was February 1940. The new house had not been bombed during the war and nothing had been stolen. Her father and Eino had gone home earlier to heat the home. Children’s everyday life turned back to normal quickly, even though there were

not as many friends or relatives as in Kittilä. The children used a lot of imagination when they played their games.

The time of the Continuation War

On 7 September 1944 Senja's family were ordered to evacuate during the night a second time. They lived in their own home in Hiltula, the place they had returned to after the first evacuation. In the morning lorries came to take people to Kemijärvi, where they spent the night in a school. The train station was right next to it, but it was bombed during the night. Senja recalls that she woke up under a table and was confused why she was there. Her mum told her that the enemy was bombing the station, so they were hiding under the table in order not to be hurt by any shards. Luckily, there were no people in the station, so no one was killed.

In the morning they left for Toholampi by train. There were no benches on the train, just some hay on the floor to make it a bit softer. Conditions in the train were cramped, the people were sitting tightly next to each other and even the children could not lie down. Lottas gave some food to the people. Some Austrian soldiers helped and gave people a sort of cream and bread from their own lunch packages. Senja cannot remember when this happened, but the train suddenly stopped. It was because the German soldiers needed the locomotive for their own train, so they would be able to leave Finland. The German troops took the locomotive and the people had to wait for a new one from Oulu.

They got to Toholampi and the people were taken to a school where they spent the first night. From there they were taken to the evacuation families. Senja's family got an apartment on the second floor of the school building. An old teacher lived there, but she moved into another teacher's house, so Senja's family got her apartment. In the apartment there were two spacious rooms, which was more than enough for Senja's small family. The father came to Toholampi a bit later. In the neighbourhood there lived an old woman who became a close friend of Senja and her family. They even left a couple of cows behind for the lady when they went home after the evacuation.

They got back home in May 1945. The way home was quite dangerous because there were a lot of mines on the roads. That is why they had to use smaller roads or wait for someone to clean the mines away. Senja heard that 70 people had died on their way home and over 200 were injured because of the mines. Senja's brother died in the Lapland War. This brother wrote sad letters in which he said that if he should survive, he hoped that there would not be any wars in Finland again. After the Lapland War Senja's family got her brother's diary where he had written down how long they had marched every day.

Senja recalls much more from the time of the Continuation War than from the Winter War, because she was older than during the first evacuation. Before their evacuation the German soldiers often stayed in their neighborhood. Senja often visited them and became friends with one young commander. The commander held Senja on his arms and taught her German numbers. Once the commander suddenly put Senja on the floor and went to the window. Senja saw him crying, she was sure that the commander was homesick. At that time Finns thought that German soldiers were very hard, but they were nice and warm people who helped normal people.

Although Germans were the enemy in the Lapland War people did not hate them and kids were not taught to hate them. The Finnish people thought that the Lapland War was not necessary and it was difficult to fight against former allies.

After the war Senja had nightmares of partisans, although she was so young during the war. The adults were very afraid of the partisans, which obviously affected young Senja. Senja's mum was quite religious, so the religion was a great help to bear the horrors of the war. Religion also helped Senja.

*Interview: Nina Rauma, Samuel Hi-
etalahti, Tabea Binder, Nadja Straub*



Aune Valtamäki (*1937)



Aune Valtamäki is the second oldest daughter in her family. There are three other siblings in the family: Liisa (*1934), the oldest sibling, Inkeri (*1938), the second youngest sibling and Tuulikki (*1941), the youngest one, who was born in August when the Continuation War had already been going on for a few months. Aune was four years old.

The sisters did not know where their father had gone. The only information they got were the letters the father wrote because he was so worried. In one of these letters he even suggested the name for the newborn child: Sanna Tuulikki. As there was no radio or television and as the mother also did not talk much about the war, the children did not know anything about the Germans and the Russians.



While their father was at war, the mother and the children had to make do without him. As their house was still under construction, they had to live at their grandparents' house at first. The construction work was delayed because of the war; they were able

to move in at some point though. But there was only a bedroom and the kitchen. Other rooms were not finished yet.



The girls only have a few memories of their father. The oldest of the siblings, Liisa, remembers the day when their father died, whereas the youngest one, Tuulikki, never saw him. The reason why Tuulikki was never able to see her father was that he had to stay at the front and could not come home for a visit. They only got letters from their father.

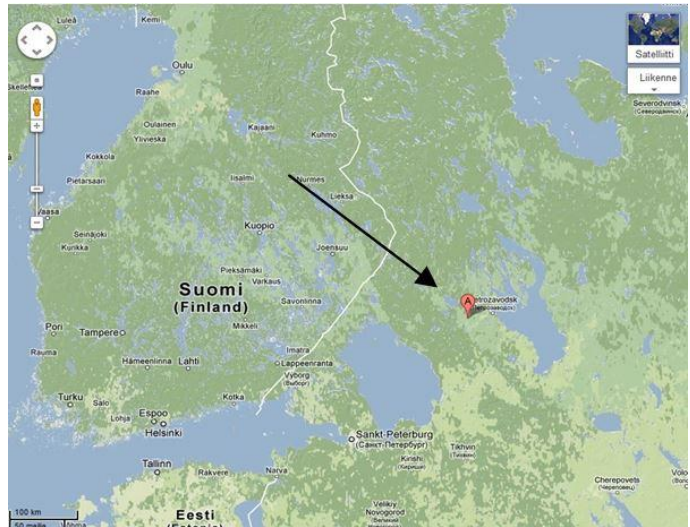
The day their father died, the children of the village were playing outside when their mother came to tell the sisters that their father had been killed in action. She had received a letter from their uncle with the sad news.

Later the priest came to their house to tell the sorrowful news.

The father had died on 7 September, 1941 in a place called Prääsä. This was the day when Tuulikki, the youngest sister, had been baptized. Their father was buried temporarily in the Soldier's Grave in Käsnäselkä, but he was transported to Kaustinen almost half a year later on 12 April 1942.

Yearning for their father intensified when the girls grew older. But the family had to continue with their life.

Aune believes that her mother did not want herself and the children to mourn, since it would have made life even harder. Thus, the mother, Kaino, remained silent about the children's father. In church they had a small commemorative ceremony for all the families that had lost a close relative in the war or were having a hard time.



Since they did not have a father any more the whole family had to take care of all the tasks and farming. The children started with looking after the cows. The sisters were able to cope with this as they were not alone: other children were helping them, and looking after cows was easy and enjoyable. On one occasion the cows managed to escape, but they were found in the neighbouring village. For other, more difficult tasks the children could not do some men from the neighborhood came to help them. Their mother's brother was released from the military service because of a shell shock, which made him useless at the front. He therefore could help on the farm as well.

There was a Russian prisoner of war at a neighbouring farm. The girls got on well with him, but there was not any real relationship because of the language barrier and the difference in age: The Russian prisoner of war was 18 years old and Aune just 8. Other girls were also interested in the young Russian man, but they did not talk with him.

As the girls grew older, they had to do even more exhausting and harder tasks. At the age of seven Aune already had to chop wood or carry water. This made the children stronger and taught them important lessons of survival.

The family never got any help or advice from the authorities. But as they lived on a farm they were able to produce their own food, like potatoes and milk. Also, they got some parcels from Denmark and from their Swedish godparents. The parcels contained food, fruits, toys and clothes. Mannerheim's League for Child Welfare, which is known as MLL, gave small funds for the families with children, including

Aune's family. But the funding stopped as soon as the children were over 18 years old. Despite this the family did not have many subsistence problems. Aune's mother was able to make fine clothes from different kinds of material. And the old materials were reused over and over again. The only thing which was not so easily to be solved was getting nice shoes.

The siblings had friends whose father had died in war as well. This made it easier to get along and understand each other. The children did not attend a regular school, except the youngest one. Aune went to a different kind of school, where she could learn some common skills, like cooking and doing the laundry.

Interview: Jesse Pulkkinen, Valtteri Joki, Christina Niefer



Hellen Hietalahti (*1936)

Family and household

Hellen had two brothers. The children lived in the same house together with their parents, their grandmother and their father's grandfather, their mother's sister and two brothers and their father's youngest sister. All in all, there were eleven people. During the war Hellen's cousin Annikki from Helsinki also lived with them for a while. Hellen's aunt, who worked at an arms factory doing night shifts, sent Annikki to Halsua after she had woken up in the night because of the bombings and had run to the streets yelling "Do not shoot my mum!" Hellen remembers Annikki coming to "safety" and how she enjoyed having "a little sister". Also, an evacuee family from Salla (a mother and three children) stayed at their house. The children of the evacuee family were exactly the same age as Hellen and her brothers and sisters were, and they played and had a lot of fun together. Hellen's father and two uncles were in the war, and so was the father of the evacuee family.



They lived on a farm, and they were partly self-sufficient. For example, they had wool and flax of their own and they knitted their own woolen socks. Hellen's aunt was an

agricultural advisor, so the family knew how to collect and use berries and mushrooms, for example. They made their own butter, and the butter was good for bartering. On one occasion her brother bartered butter for a pair of shoes. Hellen's father also made a pair of shoes for her. There were men at the village who also made shoes, for example Väinö Karhukorpi made boots which they wore in winter. They also had a permit to buy rubber boots, but sometimes they ran out of goods so the permit did not help.

There was a shortage of all supplies, and there were buying restrictions for nearly all products. The family did not need to buy a lot of food, so that was not a big problem for them. There was no coffee, but they made a substitute for it by mixing and roasting dandelions' roots, chicory and rye. They also had to use sugar wisely, and there were no sweets. For baking they had to use roots instead of leaven. At Christmas, they made ginger bread from rye and barley flour, because there was no sugar or wheat flour. Whenever there was wheat flour, they baked buns. Her grandmother made sweet dark loaves and they sent parcels of bread to the men on the front. Once they had yellow buns made of corn and juice seasoned with saccharine on a Sunday school feast in the church. Hellen's father and uncles were great hunters, but since they were on the front they did not have any game. Before the war, there had only been one radio in the village, but during the war nearly every house in the village got one, including Hellen's family. They mainly listened to it for war news, and sometimes they had fun mocking propaganda speeches. There were no forbidden radio programs as there were in Germany.

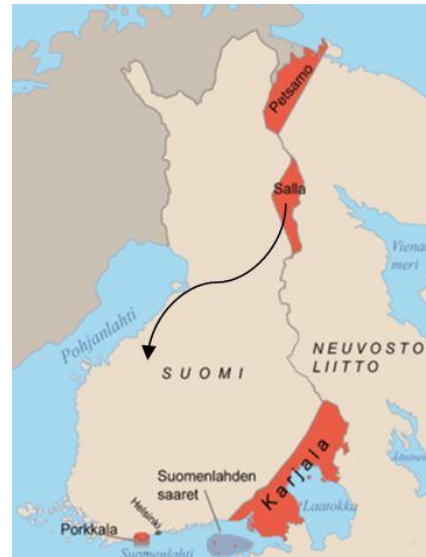
Farm

Because most the men of the family were on the front, children had to tend the herd. Hellen liked it, because she had no other duties at that time. They had bread, milk, tomatoes, cucumbers and potatoes of their own. But they had to give something away. A milkmaid appointed by the government milked the cows on the farms every now and then in order to control the milk production and to proportion it to the size of the family. They had to give butter to the army and government depending on how much their cows milked. Hellen did not understand this until much later, and she had always wondered what the discussion she overheard was about. She also remembers that the milkmaid had said that their cows were such "good milkers". Her grandmother replied: "That is because they are not milked at night". Some farmers milked their cows secretly at night so it would seem they got less milk and they would not have to give so much butter away. But Hellen's family did not do this, because they wanted to be honest and do their duty for their country. Her grandmother was responsible for slaughtering the sheep. Every sheep was used to the last bit. The work in the village was done together with the neighbours. They did the farmwork one

farm after the other, and the children did what they could. Hellen remembers that it was fun to jump into the straw from the beams of the barn.

Evacuees and prisoners of war

Hellen's family was eagerly waiting for the evacuees coming from Salla. They had cleaned the house very carefully. So they heated the sauna and they also made lots of food for the evacuees who would be very tired after the long journey. But at first, no evacuees came to their farm. But there was a very large evacuee family in one of their relatives' house, and Hellen's grandmother went there and brought a mother with three children with her. At first the evacuee family consisted of a mother and about five nearly grown-up children, of which one son had a wife and three children. The son and his father were in the war. The son's wife and children came to stay at Hellen's family's house. The evacuees had their own cattle with them. The families only took care of their own animals and they did not even share food with each other. The only thing they shared was living space. It was easier for the children to adapt to the evacuees than for the adults.



There were Russian prisoners of war working on some farms in Halsua, but Hellen's family did not have any. Hellen thought that the families volunteered to have a prisoner of war as a worker. The prisoners of war were treated well on the farms, but Hellen heard that in some forest camps the conditions for them were quite bad. There were also some love tragedies between Finnish women and Russian prisoners of war. Hellen remembers one couple from Halsua that was already engaged and were hiding, but their love affair was discovered and the prisoner of war was taken to another place.

Hellen's father

Hellen was only three years old when her father was drafted for the Winter War, so she does not have any memories of the day he left. Her mother did not want her to see that she was worried, but the children remembered their father and uncles in their evening prayers. The children missed their father, and they sent their love in their mother's letters to him. Hellen's brother still has got those letters. Hellen's parents died in the late 1990s.

Hellen remembers that the most memorable moment of the war time was her father's return after being wounded in 1942. Hellen and her mother heard from a woman they

did not know: "Matti Rutanen has been killed". Matti was Hellen's father. The woman told them that her husband had seen Matti injured so badly that it was impossible to survive. Hellen's mother looked very calm, even though she nearly fainted. She told Hellen and the other children that she did not believe that Matti was dead. At first, the children thought their mother was protecting them, but she said exactly the same words to their grandmother, and now the children also believed it. After a while, information came from Kajaani war hospital that Hellen's father was recovering and would return home soon.

After he had been wounded at the front he had to wait for a while before he could be taken to the hospital. Some fragments of a grenade had pierced his shoulder and right lung. He told the orderlies that they should not carry him with his head downwards because he felt like suffocating. When her father came home, Hellen's grandmother made Karjalanpaisti and they heated the sauna. The sauna was an old-fashioned smoke sauna that had to be heated all day long. The whole family was much relieved to see him come home, but they were shocked by all the blood and injuries. Hellen remembers his scars very well, but her younger brother did not recognize his father at all because he was so young. He was scared of his father and tried to push him away from the bed where his parents slept. Because of his injuries Hellen's father did not have to go to war again, but he worked for a while as a guard at an arms depot in Kokkola.

During the first years after the war it was hard for Hellen's father to talk about the war. It took him several years to start talking about it, but when he started talking, he talked so much that his mother sometimes had to say: "Do not talk about the war again; I have heard those stories so many times". After the war Hellen's father also had bad nightmares, especially when he had a fever. Sometimes Hellen's mother had to wake him up and calm him down because he was screaming and shouting warnings for his comrades. All in all, Hellen's father was a life-affirming person; he loved playing with his children and he often sang when he was working. Hellen remembers that he said that he did not want any more wars for his country.

School and childhood

Hellen's first schoolbag was her father's old haversack which her mother had repaired, cleaned and dyed. They could not afford to buy a new one so the bag had to be fixed. Hellen's father had brought the bag with him when he came home from the front after he had been wounded.

There were about 20 pupils in her class, and the number doubled when the evacuees came. Classes were held in village houses because there was no school building in the village. There were no school meals at that time, so pupils had a bottle of milk and sandwiches with them. Sometimes they swapped their bread with each other

because they had different kinds and they did not want to eat the same type of bread all the time. Hellen was a little upset after the war because her favourite teacher moved to Salla with her evacuee husband.

The war also affected the children's games. The evacuee children from Salla taught them new games, and also the things a child could see about the war started to appear in the children's games. For example, Hellen and her brothers once made a hero's graveyard into a sandpit. Her brother made the white wooden crosses and she collected moss and beautiful stones to decorate the cemetery. But when their mother saw what they had done, she took a rake and destroyed the graveyard.

At the beginning of the war Hellen was afraid of planes, but her fears disappeared when the evacuees came, because she realized that the area was so safe that evacuees could stay there and expected that the war would not come there. She was also very strict about the Molotov's curtains. Her brother used to lift the curtains and look outside, and he scared Hellen saying: "Russki's watching!" Even though there was no electricity in the whole village, the curtains had to be used. They only had oil lamps, and the radio worked with batteries. Hellen's aunt was working as a Lotta, and she did air patrolling on the top of Halsua's church. Once when she came home she told Hellen that Kokkola was going to be bombarded that night. They went outside to watch the bombardments. Actually, the black-out of Kokkola was so good that the enemy planes could not see their target, and they went to Kälviä and Kalajoki instead.



What impressed us most

We were impressed by the honesty of Hellen's family with milking, and that they did not milk the cows in the nights so that they would have to give less butter to the army. The circumstances of her father's return were very impressive. And we think it is amazing that she was able to overcome her fears and that she has not suffered any traumas or any other long-term consequences from the war.



Interview: Tomi Karhukorpi, Saara Koivusalo, Marion Nothelfer, Tamara Ringer

Toini Alaspää (*1937)

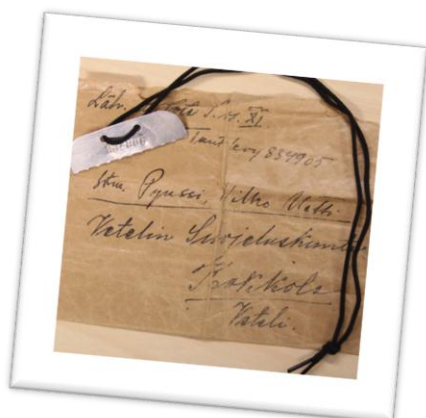


Toini Alaspää (née Pynssi) was just a little girl when her father died so she does not remember a lot about him. She does not remember her father's death either or how they received the sad news. Her father Vilho Pynssi was married to



Alli Oravala, who was from Toholampi and worked as an apprentice in the dairy of Veteli. The couple got married in 1930. They had four children: Arvo (1931), Anni (1932), Toini (25 April 1937) and Jorma (1938).

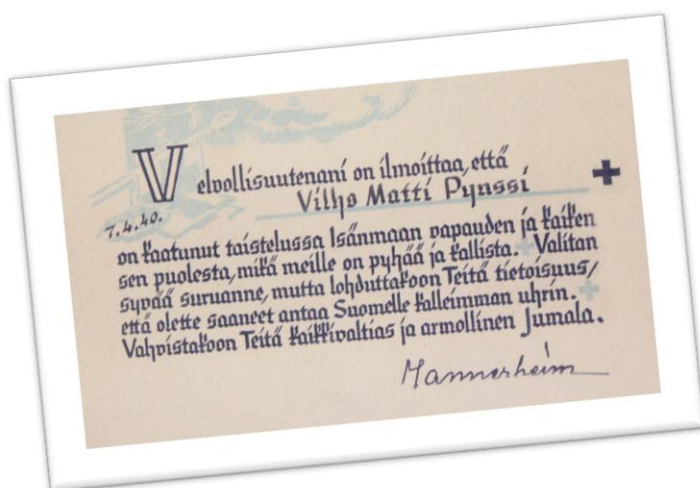
During the Winter War Vilho Pynssi took part in the battles of Suomussalmi, Raate Road and Pitkäranta. He had only been at the front for three months before he was wounded. When he was drafted he said that it was like accepting his own death penalty. Another soldier who had been in the same dugout as her father told Toini how the shrapnel of a grenade hit the dugout. Her father was wounded in the right arm.



He was taken to a soldier's hospital in Siilinjärvi. In the hospital he seemed to be recovering when an infection in his arm set in and it had to be amputated. Toini's mother, Alli Pynssi, visited Siilinjärvi twice to see her husband. Unfortunately, his wound opened again. His family were informed that they should visit their father quickly if they wanted to see him alive. Their mother was with him when he died on 7th April 1940. He was 34 years old at the time and his wife was 31.

The oldest children, Arvo and Anni, had to help with the farmwork even though there were some neighbors to help them. What added to the problems of the family was

the fact that they did not actually own the farm and it had to be shared with their father's brother. Thus, Toini's family had to buy their uncle's share in order to really own the farm alone. They also had to give a part of their crop to the government until the 1950s. Toini thinks that her mother must have been a strong person, even though she looked skinny and miserable.



Toini Alaspää thinks that without the war widow's pension the family would not have been able to survive. It was difficult but she does not remember going hungry or having shabby clothes. Their mother was always a loving mother.

Toini Alaspää's mother took part in the meetings of the War Widows Association; they always took the youngest children with them. There they talked about the difficulties of their lives.

The war orphans were given godparents from Finland and abroad. These godparents sent the children various things, for example food, money and clothes. Toini does not remember having been bullied because she did not have a father, but some of the children were jealous of her sister's clothes. On such an occasion her sister asked the other children, if they rather wanted to have nice clothes instead of a father.

One of Toini's very special memories is when she and her mother visited the Presidential Palace in 1945. President Mannerheim shook hands with all the guests even though he was not very well. Toini also received money (200 FIM/month) from the Mannerheim's Child Protection League (Mannerheimin lastensuojeluliitto) for a couple of years.



During Toini's childhood they neither talked about their father nor the war. People did not talk about the problems of the war orphans until the beginning of the 21st century. Many people were jealous of the war orphans and their families because they received financial aid from the government. Thus, people considered them as "second-class" citizens. War orphans just did not talk about their situation, so it was a great surprise for Toini Alaspää when she finally found out how many of her friends were war orphans as well.

Toini and Olli Alaspää met in 1956 and got married two years later. They have two children, Leena and Juha. Toini worked in a bank most of her life. They have talked about their problems as war orphans to their children and talking about these times still is a very emotional experience for them.

Toini mentions the year 1952 as especially important because that was the year when many things happened in Finland. For example, Finland paid the final instalment of its war reparations to the Soviet Union, the Olympic Games took place in Helsinki and Armi Kuusela won the Miss Universum contest.

And she remembers how, during the war, the government wanted to have people's gold jewellery for financing the war. In return they got black tin rings. Toini's mother refused to give her golden wedding ring because she believed that sacrificing her husband was more than enough.

Commemoration Day for the soldiers killed in the war is of course an important day for Toini. That's when she visits the war graves. She told us that the grave is a place where she has a lot of memories. For example, the first Christmas memories Toini has are attached to visiting her father's grave. When they stand in front of the cross-shaped gravestones the family always says the same prayer. In this prayer they ask the Lord to protect Finland so children will never have to experience a war again.

*Interview: Karoliina Hakkarainen,
Matti Haapala, Miriam Erhardt,
Andy Mayer*



Anja Kuusela (Ratilainen) (*1937)

Memories of the Winter War bombing raids

Anja remembers the bombings of Värtsilä, she was watching them with her father. Suddenly, the chimney of their home collapsed and they went inside to the house that was otherwise undamaged. Her sister can't remember anything from these times. Anja's mother Hilja was afraid of the bombings and was crying, and Anja's sister



Helvi also cried. Anja was walking along with her father who was very calm, which helped Anja to stay calm as well. Anja thinks this "saved her memory". Their family escaped the war to Pielavesi. They were first taken to Riistavesi church and from there they were taken to Pielavesi. After many events, the family (mother and her sons) ended up at the house of Heikkilä in Nurmo as evacuees.

Sister Helvi's memories came back when they were visiting Värtsilä together. Värtsilä Company had a large shared sauna and Anja asked her sister if she recalled how they used to have a wash basin and a wooden basket their grandpa had made. The girls had walked across a bridge to the sauna with their mother. She remembered that they used to live in Pihkalinna during the truce. As she started remembering things, the two sisters had to sit down, because the sensation of remembering things that happened decades ago was so strong. Anja can't remember exactly when they were evacuated from Värtsilä when the Continuation War began.

To Sweden as a war-child

During the Continuation War the family managed to return back to the new Värtsilä. The family's father was rebuilding the new Värtsilä during the Continuation War. He was too old to go to the frontier. At home front they needed men to build new houses. Their father was a painter and a carpenter. The mother and sons of the family were in Nurmo. Pentti, one of the sons, was in bad condition, so their mother didn't want to send him to Sweden. The situation with supplies was so bad in Finland, that Anja's and her siblings' stomach had dilated.

In August 1944, twins Anja and Helvi were sent to Sweden as war children. They traveled from new Värtsilä to Turku by train and from there to the capital of Sweden, Stockholm, by ferry. At Stockholm they were in quarantine for a long time. Even though they were separated from their parents and they had to travel to an unknown country, they didn't cry at the trip. Hilja had prepared her children for the trip by saying: "It's better for you to be there. They have food there." Mother also had a wish, that there would be good families in Sweden, and she comforted her daughters by saying that they would get another dad and mom. "Then you have two fathers and mothers."

The trip continued from Stockholm to Örnköldsvik, where families were waiting for the children. The children had a note hanging from their necks, which had their name on it and the name of the family which would take the child/children to their home. Anja and Helvi were sitting on a bench waiting. There were many families picking up war children to their own protection. The girls didn't pay any attention for strangers; they were just thinking that "we don't want to go to that family". Until 50-year-old Sara Östholm came in. Right away Helvi said: "Well, that's my mom!" Sara Östholm was a small, older female, who looked a little bit like the girls' own mom, Hilja. Anja's Sweden-mother, Maria, was tall instead. She was 174 cm tall. She seemed like a giant, since people of Karelia were really small. Anja thought at the first sight, that she might be a nice person. And she was right!

The twin girls, Anja and Helvi, were separated to different families, but they still lived in the same village. The distance between them was about 1.5 kilometers. Anja and Helvi didn't see each other every day, since they were still so young and there wasn't anyone to take them to see each other often. In the families they wondered why the social authorities hadn't informed about the twins coming to the same village. It would have been wise to send them to the same house, at least. But Anja said that living separated in different families wasn't that bad. Helvi agreed. Instead, they liked it this way. They had a competition about who will learn Swedish first. When they met each other, it was the same: a table= ett bord, a lamp= en lampa (and so on.) If the other learned more Swedish, the other would get mad. In two weeks the twins started to speak and understand Swedish. From studying Swedish, Anja remembers one thing related to snow: Anja was able to speak Swedish a bit, but didn't know the words "snow", "snowing" and "winter". Anja still wanted to tell Maria that it's snowing outside, so she said: "Titta Maria, lunta sataa, snart kommer talvi!" (Swedish: Titta = look, Snart = Soon, Kommer = arrives. Finnish: Sataa lunta = it is snowing, Talvi = winter). Maria completed the sentence in Swedish, and so Anja learned new words quickly.

At their age, the girls could have started school already, but because the schools were filled with evacuated Finnish children, they couldn't afford normal school for them. (The Lapland War had raised the number of evacuated people. The Lapland War took place in 1944-45.) The evacuated ones were accommodated in schools. Evacuated Finns were coming across River Tornio. The evacuating was a secret project. Maria's young brother was in army and helping people across River Tornio during the evacuation.

Anja doesn't feel that she was left from the civilization, because Maria was the person with good sense of culture. She taught her to read, count and write. When the girls came back to Finland as novices (they had forgotten the Finnish language partially), their mom sent them straight to New Värtsilä's school. The teachers back then didn't speak Swedish, but the girls were working hard and managed to get the best grades. Anja said to her mother, that she didn't want to go to the second grade. Instead she would skip the second grade and go straight to the third grade. Mother took contact with the head-teacher Sorjonen. The decision had to be explained, because the teachers didn't want to approve of this. In the end, Anja got her request through and managed to do really well in school.

Sweden was clearly a lot wealthier country than Finland in 1940. There was food enough for everyone and people were helpful and kind towards the evacuated people from Finland. Local children managed to get to know the girls really well, like they would have been there always. Kids took the Finnish children with them to their plays and games without a problem. Anja thought that one good thing that she received from such a welcome and kindness was that they learned Swedish really fast and other kids didn't meet them as novices (they weren't able to speak Swedish yet).

Anja's twin sister, Helvi, had appreciated her mother and father for sending them to Sweden after recalling her memories of the time as a war-child. The girls got a new, great family from Sweden. They received great memories from their time in Sweden with their host mothers. They have kept in contact even 10-years after the time they were there. Anja's host mother from Sweden, Maria, sent Christmas presents from Sweden to Anja and she even remembered Anja's children's birthdays, until Maria died. Maria visited Finland 7 times and she went 4 times to Joensuu to see Anja's and Helvi's real mother, Hilja.

When we asked Anja about the feelings she had about going back to Finland, she said that she would have wanted to stay in Sweden. Her sister wanted to stay as well, if they had had a chance. But they weren't able to do anything for it, because the Finnish government said that all war-children should be returned back home after the events in Finland would calm down. The country itself had suffered critical losses

in war, and children and youngsters were needed in their home country. While being in Sweden, the girls had kept contact with their parents, who had already moved to New Wärtsilä, which had been reclaimed in the Continuation War. Wärtsilä Syndicate factory's boss Åhman's wife spoke Swedish as her main language and helped Hilja to write letters to the girls by translating Hilja's letters from Finnish to Swedish. She also translated the letters Hilja received. Anja's and Helvi's brother Lassi wrote some letters home as well. He was old enough to remember Finnish language while being in Sweden. Even though the girls had the connection with their real parents, Anja felt like she had become estranged from them. Anja didn't recognize her mother Hilja at the station of Joensuu, when they returned back to home by a train from their journey in 1946. Anja remembered her mother being really thin, but during the time they had spent in Sweden, their mother had gained more weight and size. She had become unknown to her daughters. Anja recognized her father Aleksanteri right away, though. At the station Anja asked her sister: "Dear God, who is that woman next to dad?" Helvi answered: "It is mom. Don't you recognize?" Anja replied: "That can't be mom! She is twice as fat as mom!" But it was their mother, but not so thin and young as she used to be.

After returning back to Wärtsilä, Anja's and Helvi's life seemed quite bright. They had a new home and even a little Wendy house for girls (A small playhouse with furniture.) But after about three months, their father died. Helvi became a widow at the age of 44.

The girls' big brother Lassi had been a war-child in Sweden in a village called Värmlann. Lassi was a teenager and stayed as a war-child for a year. His first host family gave him so much work that he decided to escape. When authorities asked the reason for such an act, Lassi told that he didn't like the family. They moved Lassi from the old host family to live with an old granny. The change ended up to be a quite good decision. Now he managed to do better, since he didn't have to work all the day. Lassi had finished school in Finland before moving to Sweden and later he started to work at Wärtsilä Syndicate as a stable boy.

Lassi remembers the December when his dad died (in 1946): It was a blizzard and he went to Wärtsilä to fetch up a horse from his mother's relatives. Mother had already gone to her sibling's house to make preparations for Christmas. Back then they used to slaughter pigs for food, make Christmas dinner and bake cookies and such. Anja remembers that she woke up that morning and wondered why no one had woken them up. At night dad had snored loudly and Anja and Helvi had argued about who would go and poke dad, so he would stop snoring. In the end, none of them went to poke him and soon he went all quiet. Everyone started to sleep. The whole family slept in the same room and because of low temperature, Anja and Helvi slept

in the same bed. In the morning dad had a white sheet on his face. Anja looked at her father quietly, until their neighbor Sointu Tietäväinen came to pick up the girls to her place to wait for Lassi and mother. Anja realized what had happened, but didn't want to tell it to Helvi. When the travelers Lassi and mother arrived after traveling 15km from mother's relatives place, they were shivering and freezing outside, even though they had warm clothes. Luckily they had some supplies and warm clothes with them. Lassi left in such a hurry that he managed to forget some of the equipment. As soon as mom arrived home, Anja started to cry for the loss of her dad. She cried almost two and a half days nonstop. Later mom told her that it was impossible to make her stop crying. Their mother was now the head of the family. She was a strict and emotional person at the same time. It was brave of her to start to take care of the 9-year-old girls, two adult sons and the family's economy.

Father's funeral was a catastrophe for Anja. Aleksanteri had died while sleeping on his belly and when he was turned around, his face was completely blue. As the funeral day arrived, his body had regained the original color and for Anja he looked like he had resurrected. Anja jumped in the open coffin and took a hold of his dad's body. She started to scream and shouted that they can't take her dad to the grave. The adults had to take her off from the coffin.

Life in Finland after the war

Groceries were running out in Finland after the war. The milk portion of family Ratilainen was six dl per day. Helvi has said that: "What did mom think when she waited for the six deciliters of milk; Did she think that she's so hungry, that she should drink all the milk herself or should she give half a glass for each one?" That would've been a deciliter for each family member. But mom always made gruel from porridge. Anja's mother was a practical person. She always kept a pig. Mom also had a vegetable garden.

Mom had a chance to go to Sweden in the summer of 1948 and Hilja and the girls spent the whole summer with Maria and Sara. The trip was great for Hilja; The villagers brought her lots of wool. She made string from the wool and socks from the string. The toll was so strict that nothing new should be brought from Sweden to Finland. When they bought rubber boots for the family's boys, the boots had to be "worn" so they would look used. The shoes passed the toll without questions. But the socks and wools became a problem. In the harbor of Örnsköldsvik the customs demanded big duties. Maria got angry and said: "You can't be so strict, this woman has been a widow for two years and she has four children. Good people have given the wools for free and now you are going to charge for them." Maria said that if the wools didn't go through the toll, they would be sent afterwards by the post. The customer passed the wools and the socks and they got to Finland.

Anja's Sweden-mother was a 36-year-old single woman when she took in Anja. She was her own family's first child (She had 4 other siblings) and her mother was still alive. The girls started to go to Sweden every second summer, stayed there from the end of school till beginning of it. Sara and Maria were sewing the clothes for girls for two years. The Sweden-mothers used to dress Anja and Helvi with the same type of clothes, which the girls didn't like at all. One summer they were going to the fabric store to buy some fabric for dresses, again. Anja wanted blue fabric, which had outlined flowers with white, when Helvi wanted a red fabric with black polka style. When Sara asked which fabric they would take, Anja told that they would take both. Sara was amused, but the girls were simply bored to walk around in the similar clothes.

In the time of rebuilding in Finland, even the children had to work to earn money for the family. Anja remembers that when she was 12 (in 1949) she rode her bike 12 kilometers to the station of Tohmajärvi to get ice. She spent the summer selling ice cream.

Original interview: Katariina Matilainen

Translation: Karoliina Hakkarainen, Jesse Pulkkinen, Valtteri Joki, Samuel Hietalahti, Matti Haapala.

Adjustments and corrections: All named above plus Vili Ruuska and Tomi Karhukorpi, Sari Juntunen

Oili Pietilä (*1939)

Oili Pietilä was born in Aska, which is a small village near Sodankylä. Both of her parents were born in 1911. Mother was a housewife and father worked as a lumberjack. Pietilä family was a big one, 11 children. Oili had four (now dead) older siblings. Maila (1932), Mauri (1933) and the twins Taimi and Toini (1934). There are six younger siblings and they all are still alive. Maire (1938), Eila (1940), Kirsti (1944), Raija (1945), Mikko (1948) and Olli (1951).

The family was evacuated in late summer 1944, while father was in the war. Both of mother's brothers died in the war. Mother was distressed about having to leave by herself with so many children, of which four were



quite small and another four a bit older. The shocked mother threatened to throw the kids to the nearby river one by one. Oili cried, thinking her mother was serious. Before leaving, the children were brought milk. Because of the hurry, the milk was left in a pot on the table. The ones leaving were mother, children, and their aunt's family. Also some of the villagers left at the same time. Grandma had left to Sweden with the herd.

People left Aska in German lorries. The aunt knew some German, so she arranged the ride. There were two lorries, one for the luggage and one the for people themselves. The one for the people had a tarp protecting from wind and rain. The journey went on to Hirvas, where they got on a train. It was very tight in the train. Everyone was sitting and lying right next to each other. One man got to rest properly for the first time when mother got up to feed the youngest child. The train stopped at Kannus after the night, where they were carried on by horses to Himanka. The journey went on about 500 kilometers, and lasted a couple of days.

The reception in Himanka was a chaos. Nobody wanted to take family Pietilä in, because there were so many children. Finally an old lady, Lyyti Tuorila, was happy to take the family to live with her in her little cottage. There was one bigger room and two smaller bedrooms. The Pietilä family got one bedroom to share with an old couple from Aska. Raija was born during the evacuation when they were in Himanka. There were no special chores to do, nor did they have to learn to new habits. Oili can't remember how they made their living, since Lyyti had no cattle or such. But milk was being queued into the night with cousins. They switched shifts during standing in the queue, so that the previous one got to sleep. Mom once had to walk 23 kilometers to Kannus to get some milk.

About a year was spent in Himanka. Oili managed to complete the first class for the second time, because her one year younger cousin went to the first class, so she was thought to be the same age. Oili didn't dare to say that she had already graduated from the first class in Aska, and she had lost her diploma, so she graduated again. After returning to Aska she 'lost' her new diploma and started the third grade, as her mother recommended to do. In Himanka, the children went to school by foot because you could almost see the school building from the cottage. Oili was not homesick, since she was so young and couldn't worry about home. Also there were many Aska evacuees in Himanka, so it felt like Aska had just changed scenery. Oili made new friends with the children from school and neighborhood. There was no bullying, even though Oili was from somewhere else. On the contrary, the family next door would have liked to have Oili as their own daughter. Mom joked, that she'd leave Oili to the neighbours and leave with others to Aska, which made Oili cry badly because she thought mom was serious.

The family returned to Aska by train after the war of Lapland had ended in the year - 45. Father was waiting for them at the station. They had no home anymore, since the Finnish soldiers had demolished and burned it as firewood while chasing the German troops away from Finland. Because of this, father had bought a small site closer to Sodankylä, and built a small one-room cottage, where the family moved in. In the evenings, the floor was filled with bunks, leaving only a small shred of bare floor lead to the door. While being quite cramped, life was still going on.

Oili visited Lyyti's cottage in Himanka with her sister Maire a couple of years ago. It was pretty hard to find the way to the house, even though the siblings knew where it was. The landscape had changed so much and the house was now surrounded by forest. Lyyti had died a long time ago, leaving the cottage uninhabited. Visiting the place brought many childhood memories to Oili's mind. Oili and Maire would have asked the neighbours if they would have remembered anything about the girls while being evacuated, but they were too shy. Both mother and father had also visited Lyyti while their children were young, but they were not taken along to these visits.

Oili cannot tell how being an evacuee affected her. She was so young during the evacuation, so she didn't really understand the meaning. Also, the people around her were pretty much the same in Aska and Himanka, so there was no dramatic change. The time of evacuation was also quite short, and after that the family moved back to Sodankylä and lived on.

Interview and translation: Nina Rauma and Alina Koivisto
Revisions by Sari Juntunen

Sirkka-Liisa Ruuska

Childhood memories

We children of a farmer family played on the yard, for example, with stone cows and cone sheep. Our toys were made at home. Both dolls and wooden horses, as well my skis were made by my grandfather. Between plays we had time also for making tricks and jokes, which our parents didn't like very much.



After carefree childhood the school began. On a beautiful autumn morning I was going to primary school. I remember the lovely atmosphere, when the threshing machine was pounding last summer's crops behind the drying barn. Neighbours and friends were doing their part around the threshing machine. The chores were shared in our village with a group of volunteering villagers finishing one household's work at a time. The results of my parents' worries and their heavy jobs for this summer started to be together. They must have had relieved and thankful mind, when family had bread in store for the winter.

The war began and made many kind of worries for the parents. There was a lack of everything. There were problems with school apparels of the growing children, too. Where you could get enough warm clothes for kids for cold classrooms and often also for long-distance school trips.

I must have got inventive parents, because there were many school clothes, that didn't lack of ingenuity.

The shoes were light and comfy, and they had originally been my mother's. The shoes were made of leather and some sort of fabric, and they extended to calves and were fastened with laces. The shoes had been fixed to fit child's feet by cutting the heels. The school trip was travelled lightly with these shoes in autumns and springs. I remember also that I was at school also with my dad's "parish boots" in winters.

The big plaid scarf was used as a winter jacket. The plaid scarf was dyed, must have had colours insufficient or that operation in another way failed because the checks were few visible. A late dressmaker made a warm jacket from this plaid scarf. The jacket didn't apparently success totally 100% because I remember the right sleeve which didn't fit so well and the jacket was hard to use. The jacket got fake fur collar for decoration.

Later I got a new, gorgeous skiing suit which had much growth room – trousers were up to the armpits. Fabric was made from mocha and the trouser legs were wide and handsome. We attended school and trousers elapsed at the same time. This problem was removed by patching up. I have never stopped wondering how the fabric sufficed on so fancy patches when there were patches all the way from waist to legs.

I remember that beautiful spring school day when I had got a new dress. The fabric had been changed with rags and that surely wasn't as resistant as fabrics we use nowadays. At breaks we sled on thick plank from school hill. The other kids already sat on the ride and I got the front place. Then it happened so sadly that my pretty long, new skirt got below the plank and back side of the skirt ripped. Like this joy changed out into sadness. But nothing to worry: the skirt was also cut from its front side and a different-colour patch that reached around the skirt saved the skirt.

A spring party suit was made from an old bun flour sack. It had beautiful red decorations in the ends of the sleeves, in the neck and in the waist. But the suit left me an unpleasant memory, because there were letters SOK (=Suomen Osuuskauppojen Keskusliitto, which was a union of Finnish retailing cooperative) at the back of the suit. Wooden shoes fulfilled the ensemble. The shoes were like modern sandals, and they had straps made of paper strings. The shoe bottom was made from wood or plywood. I remember that plywood shoes had cuts in the bottom to improve flexibility. Wooden shoes were factory-made. These war-time school clothes didn't annoy or embarrass me, but maybe that black SOK at the back of the skirt did embarrass me a little.

We schoolchildren of the countryside had to walk or ski to school. We didn't have any school transportation, and for economic reasons, we didn't have bicycles available. On war time we didn't have school lunches yet. Children had a sandwich and a milk bottle as packed lunch. We didn't even know about cold cuts.

I'm pleased to note that schoolchildren of the nowadays do have factual, warm and light apparels and good nutrition as a base for studies.

The war time ended. Thankfully we were allowed to continue our lives in an independent Finland. Work was made by spirit of youth for good of our native country. As a result of application and enterprise the war debts were paid and welfare was increased.

Translation: Vili Ruuska and Tomi Karhukorpi
Revisions by Sari Juntunen

Our German interview partners

Alois Fimpel (*1936)

Situation during war

Mister Fimpel lived with his family and grandparents in Wurzach. They had a blacksmith's shop and a farm, where his mother and grandparents worked. During the war they had a Russian forced labourer who helped them on the farm. They had a good relationship and so she promised to write the family when she would be back in Russia. But the Fimpels never got a letter from her. The Russian government often saw the forced labourers who returned home from Germany as "enemies" because they had survived in Germany. So Mister Fimpel assumed that their forced labourer had not survived her return to Russia.



During the First World War Mister Fimpel's father worked at a hospital for horses as he was too old to fight as a soldier. Furthermore he knew a lot about horses because he was a blacksmith. That is why he was qualified to work with the horses that were needed at the front.

Mister Fimpel remembers that his father and grandfather held a critical view of Hitler but they did not resist openly. Mister Fimpel was not in the Hitler Youth because he was too young for it at this time.

During the Second World War French prisoners of war and later several hundred people from Jersey were interned in the castle of Wurzach. Even though the castle was at the centre of the city the citizens of Wurzach had not much contact with them. Sometimes they saw them behind the fence and bartered fresh vegetable and fruit for chocolate and coffee from the internees' parcels from the Red Cross. Mr Fimpel also met them when his father sent him to the castle to take with some provisions for the internees.

Especially at the end of war Mister Fimpel did not have many school lessons because the gym was used as a warehouse for companies from Friedrichshafen. And after the war French soldiers (occupation troops) were accommodated in the school building so lessons still could not take place in for some months.

Family fates

Mister Fimpel had three cousins who were deployed at the eastern front and were killed in action there. His aunt got the message of her son's and her husband's death who was killed during an air raid at the same time. That was too much for her. She had a mental break down and was sent to the psychiatric hospital. Eight days later the family Fimpel got a shoebox with the aunt's ashes. It was accompanied by a letter which said that she had died of a heart failure.

Having heard some rumours about the killing of disabled persons, the Fimpels believed that this might have been a case of euthanasia because of her unexpected death.

Even today the younger son of the woman is outraged at the behaviour of the doctor who had sent his mother to the psychiatric hospital. He is convinced that the doctor should have known that his mother would be in danger of being killed there.

The end of war

At the end of the war, when the French units were approaching Wurzach, tank barriers were built at the entrances to the town. But these tank barriers were a sign of resistance and would have meant the shelling of the town. One of these tank barriers stood right in front of the Fimpels' house. On 27th April 1945, the day before the French troops marched in, Mister Fimpel's grandfather and two other men removed the tank barrier and hid the parts of it behind their house. Some SS-men, who were in Wurzach at this time, noticed that the barrier had been removed and so they looked for the men who were responsible for that. But the three men were hiding in the Wurzach marshes and so they were not found. Therefore the SS-men threatened Mister Fimpel's grandmother with a gun to force her to tell them where the men were hiding. But she was not frightened and did not say anything.

At the same day Ziegelbach, a small village close to Wurzach, was shelled by the tanks of the French troops because a German combat unit in Ziegelbach put up resistance against the advancing French troops.

Mister Fimpel was able to watch the attack from the Gottesberg (a small hill with a church on it) together with his grandfather. A few days later he went to Ziegelbach to look at all the damages. The destruction and the burned animals moved him to tears. This is the event he still remembers best.

We were most impressed by what he told us about the attack on Ziegelbach during the last days of the war and that Mister Fimpel still remembers these things so well. The other thing which impressed us was hearing about the suspected case of Euthanasia in Mister Fimpel's family.



After the attack in Ziegelbach



Interview:
Jesse Pulkkinen,
Alina Koivisto,
Lea Loriz,
Miriam Erhardt

1st Interview:
There was no first
interview.

Revision of the
English translation:
Gisela
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Theresia Krug (*1930)



Her father had to leave

On 26 August, 1939 the general mobilization was ordered. On that day Mrs Krug's father was drafted. Her mother and the four children had to manage without him. It was the day childhood or teenage years ended as everybody had to work.

From now on fathers and brothers were drafted, so were the horses, food was rationed, women and children had to do the work at home, while the men became soldiers and fought in the war.

Asked whether they had talked about the war in the family, Mrs Krug pointed out that they had experienced the war every day; they did not have to talk about it.

Evacuations – no privacy anymore

Very soon people from air-raided towns were evacuated to the country. The family had to give two rooms on the first floor (BE) to the evacuees and lived in the remaining rooms. There were always other people in the house; the family was never on their own anymore. For Mrs Krug this was one of the most severe strains, next to the fact that her father was not at home.

As there was only one kitchen in the house, Mrs Krug's mother and the inhabitants of the two rooms were using it together. The two rooms the evacuees lived in also did not have running water, so the people had to get it in large bowls from the kitchen. In addition, it was very difficult to heat those two rooms. Frau Krug remembers that one Christmas they gave the teacher who lived in the rooms five pieces of briquette, nicely wrapped, as present. The teacher was delighted with this present, because it meant warmth.

- First evacuees: a mother and a child from Kiel. The child's name was Annegret, a name Mrs Krug had not heard before.
- Second evacuees: a teacher from Duisburg (in the Ruhr Area). A complete class was evacuated to Seibranz. The teacher lived with the Krug family.
- Third evacuees: *Kreisleiter* (district head of the Nazi Party) from Pirmasens and his family (wife and 3 children)

When they moved in, the atmosphere in the house changed, as everybody noticed that this family was somehow different. Frau Krug remembers the wife to have been very nice. But he did not look at people and kept separate. Frau Krug's mother urged the children to keep quiet and not to tell him anything. ("be quiet, don't say anything")

When Ulm was air-raided an aunt and her three children came to stay with the Krugs as well. That's when 14 people lived in the house, sharing one kitchen.

General remark: The Krugs were not the only family who had to take in evacuees. In those days there were a lot of men, women and children from air-raided areas, mainly the Ruhr Area, in places like Seibranz. The evacuees were allocated, the families were not asked. ("you could not do anything.")

Mrs Krug did not live at home all the time. For some time she lived with her aunt and uncle in Gospoldshofen where she had to help on their farm. Once, on returning home, she was greeted by her mother with the words: "Oh, now you are coming home as well." This remark hurt her and shows how difficult times were for everybody. Her brother had typhoid fever, a contagious disease typical for times of malnutrition and undernourishment, and her mother was already struggling to prevent further infections.

Contact with the evacuees: Did the children play together?

The children from the village had little contact with the evacuated children as there was little time to play together. In the afternoon all the children had to help on the farms.

In addition, there was a language barrier. The children had difficulties understanding each other as the local children spoke their Swabian dialect, whereas the pupils from Duisburg spoke standard German. Besides, the pupils from Duisburg were taught by their own teacher in a separate room.

Mrs Krug's mother did not want her children to have much contact with the children of the *Kreisleiter*.

Keeping in touch with the father

Every Sunday Mrs Krug's mother wrote a letter to her husband. She made the children write a letter as well, although they sometimes did not really want to write. The father also wrote letters, as letters were the only way to keep in touch. Mrs Krug still knows her father's "*Feldpostnummern*" (*armed forces postal service number*) by heart, which shows how important this number was. With the help of this number the mail could be forwarded to the soldier.

Mail was delivered quite quickly. It took only a few days. Once a month the soldiers were usually allowed to send a letter via airmail. This arrived even more quickly.

Letters were censored, in particular those letters written home by the soldiers.

Holiday

Mrs Krug knew this term only in connection with soldier and front. Soldiers who visited their families were on “soldiers’ holiday”. (*Heimatsurlaub*). People then did not go on holiday as we know it today.

Mrs Krug’s father visited his family several times, once in 1940 for Mrs Krug’s First Holy Communion, several times while he was stationed in France; his last visit was at Christmas 1943. The soldiers probably had to apply for this holiday at home (*Heimatsurlaub*), as Mrs Krug remembers her father saying: “It had been approved” The father usually stayed for 3 weeks.

The time when their father was at home was “nice” as the children did not have to work on the farm in the afternoon. They were allowed to play with their father who was not very strict with the children, whereas the mother was. Mrs Krug remembers one trip to Lindau by train during one of these stays.

Before coming home the soldiers had to be deloused. Mrs Krug saw white powder on her father’s uniform. Once he complained that he had lost a complete day because of the delousing procedure. The father wrote into his war-diary about his time in Russia: “First came the fleas, then the bugs and finally the lice”.

Railway station at Unterzeil

There were always soldiers at the station. Some were getting off the train, some were getting on. Some soldiers were crying.

When Mrs Krug’s father left, the children had to say good-bye at home. Father and mother went to the station on their own. The fear that their father might not return was constantly there, in particular in 1945 as the family had not heard from him for a very long time.

It was very important for Mrs Krug to make clear that they had been children and teenagers. Although they had fears and worries they also laughed, played, sang and quarrelled with each other.

The war was omnipresent.

People did not talk about the war. It was present everywhere.

- People did not have proper shoes: One winter she had only shoes with wooden soles.
- People did not have nice clothes: Clothes were made from somebody else’s old clothes and always had muted colours (brown, grey). One of Mrs Krug’s dearest wishes in those times was a colourful dress.
- You did not have your own bicycle: the whole family had to share the father’s bike.

- Scarce food supplies: The people in Seibranz never experienced a real shortage though. As there were farmers in the village, they always had potatoes, but you could not always get what you wanted. e. g. sugar was rationed
- Children were scolded when they needed two matches to light a fire, as matches were rationed as well.
- People who had something to barter with never did really badly.
- People from the towns came and bartered their "good things" (clothes, schoolbags, fabric, etc.) for food (potatoes, eggs)

Mrs Krug's 8-year old brother wanted to have a fretsaw for Christmas once. It was his only wish. Mrs Krug and her older sister went to the hardware stores at Leutkirch (the next town) to ask for one. They did not get one, but they watched other people passing butter and eggs across the counter and receiving their merchandise. One person even got a fretsaw. The girls did not have any food to trade in, but Mrs Krug sister did not leave the store and kept standing next to the counter until she eventually got the fretsaw. On their way home the girls learned from a neighbour that meanwhile the father had come home. This Christmas was a very special Christmas: the father was with them and their brother got his fretsaw.

Illegal radio channels: Mrs Krug's family did not listen to illegal radio channels, as they did not own a radio. In addition, it would not have been possible as the *Kreisleiter* from Pirmasens was living in their house.

People knew who was a member of the Nazi Party and were careful. There were always rumours that certain people were sneaking around the houses at night trying to find the people listening to the illegal channels. The moment people said about somebody else that he or she was a member of the Nazi Party, people did not talk very much when this person was present. But not everybody who was a member of the Nazi Party was a convinced Nazi. If you wanted to be a civil servant you had to be in the Nazi Party.

Childhood and Youth

Childhood and teenage years ended with the war as the children and teenagers had to help. Those who did not live on a farm had to go to a farmer to help. The daily routine of the Krug children looked like that: school in the morning, running home after school, eating whatever their mother had prepared for them, changing clothes to start their work. As the mother was working on a farm herself, the children were on their own. First they had to feed the family's pig, then they went to their uncle's farm in Gospoldshofen where they helped with the animals or any other kind of work they were able to do. For some time Mrs Krug even stayed with another uncle in Lindau

where she tended the cows. As she did not like it there very much, she returned home. By the end of the war Mrs Krug lived at her uncle's farm in Gospoldshofen

The children did not consider school as something negative as being at school meant not having to work. Mrs Krug was afraid of cows, so she did not really like the work on the farm. Nevertheless, the children were happy when they did not have regular lessons because of holiday.

School:

- Before the war there were three classes in Seibranz (forms 1-3, 4-5, 6-8). The number of classes was reduced to two (forms 1-4 and 5-8) right at the beginning of the war as the teachers were also drafted. All pupils were in one room.
- Only old teachers or teachers without a family did not have to be member of the Nazi Party. Mrs Krug holds her teacher in high esteem for what he taught her. He must have been a convinced Nazi, although she never noticed it. She remembers him making ironic and derogatory remarks about church. After their confirmation he said: "Now you finally have the spirit".
- Mrs Krug's sister remembers the cross in the classroom being exchanged by the picture of Hitler.
- Pupils had to greet their teacher with "*Heil Hitler*"
- The church books prove that the Hitler salute had to be used in Religious Instruction lessons as early as September 1933. Later it was forbidden to teach RI at school.
- The weekly slogan issued by the *Gauleitung* in Stuttgart was framed and hung at the classroom wall. These slogans had a military tone and were read every morning. The German Army Report was also read to the pupils daily.
- Pupils had to line up to greet the flag (Fahnengruß = oath of allegiance) on national holidays (e.g. November 9: Marsch auf die Feldherrnhalle = March to the Feldherrnhalle). The National Anthem and the Horst-Wessel-Song were sung after the oath. Some lines in the song ("die Rotfront und Reaktion erschossen" = Communists and other reactionaries who are against Hitler shot) did not mean anything to Mrs Krug; she simply sang them. Her little brother had his own funny text ("die Fahne hoch, die Eier sind gesotten" = raise the flag, the eggs are done"). Mrs Krug and her sister always started giggling when this song was sung because they had the brother's version in their minds. Pupils liked this kind of events as they were a welcome change from regular school lessons.
- There were not any particular changes in the school curriculum. Pupils were influenced in so far as a Hitler speech could be used as dictations. Besides many old stories (probably legends) there were stories about Hitler's life in the schoolbooks. While the troops were advancing pupils were shown on maps how much territory the German troops had conquered. During that time Mrs Krug knew the places in Russia very well. These kind of Geography lessons stopped when the troops retreated.

- During all her time at school Mrs Krug never understood what “*Protektorat Böhmen-Mähren*” was. These kind of terms were constantly used, but the children never really understood them.
- Another topic people talked about was Rudolf Hess’s visit in England. This was considered to be treason.
- The pupils had to look up their family tree to proof their Arian descent. (*Arier-Nachweis*)
- Pupils experienced school as something nice, as they did not have to work.



Were you impressed by Hitler?

Hitler was part of daily life. Mrs Krug remembers a *Führer*-Photo in which you could see Hitler together with two girls in the traditional costume of the Berchtesgadener Area. Mrs Krug was more impressed by the traditional costumes the girls were wearing than by Hitler himself, as she had never seen this kind of costume before.

People referred to Hitler as “the Führer” (= guide, leader). Even today German words which contain the word “Führer” as e.g. the word “Reiseführer” (travel guide) have a bitter taste for Mrs Krug.

The Nationalist Party:

Mrs Krug liked the uniforms. She did not know what people were talking about when they called somebody a “party bigwig” (Parteibonze) as she had never heard the term “bigwig” before. There were party bigwigs in Seibranz, though.

Was there any kind of special training on what to do in case of an air-raid at school or somewhere else?

No, there was not. There had to be a black-out in every village in the evenings and at night. Mrs Krug cannot remember any kind of special training in Seibranz or during her time in Lindau.

Free-time and the League of German Girls (BdM)

- The League of German Girls (BdM) did not exist in Seibranz. (personal comment: there probably was no Hitler Youth either). Mrs Krug believes to remember that once a young woman tried to found a group, but as the children had to work on the farms in the afternoons, nobody had enough time and the attempt came down to nothing.
- On Sunday afternoons Mrs Krug attended a youth group run by nuns of the Caritas order. They sang a lot of songs, in particular songs from the songbook “Wandervo-

gel" (a collection of songs that were sung while walking in nature.). Often the lyrics were slightly changed, so children would like them.

- There were nativity plays (Krippenspiele), even during the war times. Rehearsing these plays was considered to be free-time activities.

Mrs Krug is grateful to the priest and the nuns, because thanks to them she had a nice youth.

Role of the Church, Influence of the National Socialists on the church.

- Besides school there was church. The priest's view of things was always somewhat different from what the pupils learned at school. The children knew: at school it's this way – the priest sees it that way.

- The priest's word was more important in Seibranz than the teacher's one who was a Nazi. As the priest came to school as well, Mrs Krug remembers the pupils greeting him: "Heil Hitler! Gelobt sei Jesus Christus")

- It was the time of practical ecumenical Christianity. The evacuated people were Protestants. The people from Seibranz were Catholics.

- Today Mrs Krug knows that the priest was transferred to Seibranz on disciplinary grounds, as he had voiced his opposition against the persecution of the Jews. She has also read in the church books that the priest had to report to the Gestapo in Friedrichshafen twice. To her knowledge the priest was the only person who had "problems" during Nazi time.

Celebrations and Festivals

- Religious festivals were the most important festivals celebrated in Seibranz. Victories were not celebrated. Neighbours who had radios usually turned them up when there was a special report on successful events during war. Those special reports were usually broadcasted when the Germans had sunk an enemy ship. In this context she always heard the term "Bruttoregistertonne" (gross registered ton), a term she never understood. Like everybody else she sang the song "Wir fahren gegen Engeland" (We are going to England) on these occasions.

- Mai 1 was introduced as a holiday by the Nazis. In 1934 the maypole was cut down at night. The houses of former members of the Centre Party were searched.

- The priest refused to decorate the church with the swastika on harvest festival. (Erntedank): The entry in the church books reads: "The actions taken against the priest after his refusal, did meet with no approval." This shows that Seibranz was not "brown" (= Nazi). People just swam with the flow. Mrs Krug explained: One should not forget that there were a lot of people whose living conditions had improved because of measures taken by the Nazis.

- Mrs Krug remembers the ceremonies honouring the soldiers killed in action very vividly. "Ehrung" (honouring) was an important term of that time. Everybody who was at war was honoured. For every soldier killed in action there was a birch cross with the soldier's name written on it.

First there was a funeral service at the parish church. Then everybody marched to the cemetery. There the head of the local Nazi Party (*Ortsgruppenleiter*) gave a speech. This was followed by the National Anthem and the song "Ich hatte einen Kamerad" (I had a comrade). The ceremony closed with prayers: the Lord's Prayer was recited 5 times followed by the Creed. (*Glaubensbekenntnis*) When the prayers were forbidden by the Nazi Party, the people of Seibranz did not obey the order. After the officials had left with their flags, the people prayed.

Criticism of National Socialism - knowledge of persecution.

Mrs Krug was not really aware of the persecution of the Jews. She remembers remarks by which you can tell that older people must have known something.

- 22 July, 1944 - assassination attempt on Hitler: Mrs Krug heard a neighbour saying: "He should have died". She was shocked by this remark and reported it to her mother. Her mother warned her not to tell this to anybody: "Don't tell this to anybody. Otherwise he will be in trouble."

- The lyrics of a nationalist song read: "The flag is worth more than death and the flag is leading our way." (*Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod, und die Fahne flattert uns voran.*) She had always liked to sing this song, but her grandfather made her think about the words. "So many people have been killed in action. Think about what you are singing here." This was when she started to become aware that not everything she learned at school and read in her school books was as nice as people tried to tell her.

- Time before Christmas: On the radio Christmas songs were played all day long. One of the nuns commented on this fact: "Now they honour this child in songs all day long. Normally they persecute it." This comment also made her think. Mrs Krug was 14 years old.

During the official opening of the war veteran memorial the priest said in his speech: "In the frenzy of victory and the distress of defeat" – Mrs Krug ran home and asked her mother: "Is it possible that we will lose the war?" This shows that slowly a certain awareness of a possible started growing.

Persecution of the Jews:

The only Jews who lived in the area were the Gollowitsch family in Leutkirch and Mrs Krug did not know that they were Jews, she did not know anything about their persecution. She was not aware of the “Reichskristallnacht” (9th November 1938). Her family did not have a radio; furthermore newspapers did not report impartially on these occurrences. She never saw a Star of David— for her father they were also something new, as he wrote in his war diary: “The Jews had to wear a yellow batch.”

She only knew Jews from Religion Instruction Classes and associated them with the Bible and Jesus. She was completely surprised to learn that there were real Jews in Germany in her times.

Nevertheless, she knew derogatory phrases with the word “Jew” but never thought about them. “Jews always have the money”; “a Jew’s cart” = a more comfortable cart

Euthanasia

Mrs Krug heard the word for the first time after the war. Today she knows that two boys from a neighbouring village (Starkenhofen) were killed in this programme.

After the war she once mentioned to her mother that 3 retarded boys she knew might have developed better had they been at a school for special needs. Her mother scolded her and told her that the boys’ father had fought against the boys attending a special school with great effort. “I won’t give my boys away. They will stay here.” The father must have known what was happening to such children because the parents of the two boys from Starkenhofen had received a letter informing them about the death of their children.

Prisoners of war

Prisoners of war had to help on the farms in Seibranz. The first prisoners of war were from Belgium, and then they were from France. The prisoners lived in the old school building. A guard opened the door in the morning and locked it in the evening (8 pm): During the day the prisoners of war were on the farms. The farmers would not have been able to fulfil their production norms without prisoners of war working for them. The German men were not at home anymore, but in order to grow enough food for the soldiers and the people at home every hand and every patch of soil was needed. The prisoners were treated well in Seibranz. An example is that they were allowed to eat together with the families. Mrs Krug remembers that a farmer once had to answer for this. He said: “He (the prisoner) is working with us, so he is eating with us.”

In summer times the guard locked the schoolhouse door at 10pm, so the prisoners could stay outside longer.

This good treatment paid off for Seibranz at the end of the war. (Mrs Krug was not in Seibranz then, so she only knows this from hearsay) When the French occupying troops came to Seibranz with their tanks, the mayor, the parish priest and another citizen and four French prisoners of war went to meet them. They carried a white flag

and a written statement of surrender. The first tank stopped and the French soldiers came towards them with their weapons ready to fire. After the French prisoners of war had called out some words to them, the soldiers immediately shouldered their rifles.

End of War

Mrs Krug was living with her aunt in Gospoldshofen when the war ended.

People in Seibrantz were longing for the end of war, but they had to be careful as members of the SS were in the village until shortly before the end.

Mrs Krug describes this period as a time of waiting in the knowledge of the large guilt. Everybody was relieved when the war finally ended. One week before surrender, it was Low Sunday (the Sunday after Easter), the *Kreisleiter* put up in their house left the village. Mrs Krug's mother commented his departure with the words: "It won't take long anymore." His wife and children were taken somewhere by the French later.

The declaration of surrender was a relief for everybody. "It's over now. Now we are waiting for everybody to return home."

The day Ziegelbach was shelled with grenades, the shots could be heard in Seibrantz, Mrs Krug's aunt planted potatoes. Mrs Krug could not understand her. "We don't know whether we will still be alive tomorrow and you are planting potatoes." There was no official surrender of Gospoldshofen. Mrs Krug was hidden by her aunt on that day. She saw the soldiers walking around the house and heard them asking: "SS?". Only later she realized why her aunt had "hidden" her.

Their house in Seibrantz was searched by the French. They even searched the stove. Mrs Mang and her children were taken. The French knew exactly who Mr Mang had been.

Time of occupation

Accommodation of the French soldiers and curfew:

The Krug family had to give their ground floor to the French. From the beginning her mother had to cook for them. (e.g. fry a chicken or whole potatoes, which was completely new to the people in Seibrantz.) and to do the laundry. Suits and bicycles had to be handed in.

The uncle pretended to be "stupid", which puzzled Mrs Krug. Towards the end of war he hid soldiers during their retreat, even deserters. Later he had some food. As people believed him to be stupid, he got away with it.

Some of the French soldiers were Moroccans. The children got chocolates from them, but they also raped some German women who lived on the solitary farms in the country.

The mayor (who had been appointed by the Nazi-Party, because from 1933 onwards mayors were not elected anymore), the teacher and the local head of the Nazi-Party (*Ortsgruppenleiter*) were taken to a camp in Balingen. The *Ortsgruppenleiter* did not have to stay long and was allowed to work in his former job after his return. The teacher, Mr Hähl, had to stay longer.

The father's return from captivity

Mrs Krug's father was in American captivity. He wrote in a letter: "We were on a bridge across the River Elbe. Americans and Russians were shooting across us. We were lucky. As we had cars, we fell into the Americans' hands. The fighting troops of the 5th Division were captivated by the Russians. Her father belonged to the Armed Forces' postal service. The Americans released their prisoner of wars earlier than the French, but her father could not return home, because Seibranz was in the French occupation zone. He would have been arrested immediately, so he had to stay in the American occupation zone.

Mrs Krug remembers telling a relative with great joy that her father had been released from captivity. When this relative asked about the whereabouts of his son who had always been near her father, she answered him that his son had also been released. She was given milk by the happy father. At that time Mrs Krug did not know that the son was in Russian captivity as he had been with the fighting troops. He only returned two and a half years later. The relative was cross with her for a long time. Even today Mrs Krug does not want to think about this incident. Back then she did not know it any better.

Conclusion

Although people had to suffer more deprivations after the war than during the war people felt those deprivations to be legitimate.

Types of deprivations:

- More people had to be put up – now they were refugees from the east.
- Clothing, food etc. had to be handed over

- Reparation payments to the victorious powers. For example, there were French woodcutters in Seibranz in the following years who cut wood for the French as reparation payment. Those woodcutters were also accommodated in the houses of some families in Seibranz. Mrs Krug showed us an old family photo taken in front of their house. In the picture you can see a woodcutter looking through one of the windows.



Strains on the family and the people:

- Some German prisoners of war returned home quite early, others later.
- Many soldiers had died in action. Mrs Krug knew a lot of them personally as they were only a few years older than herself and she still see them standing in the back of the classroom.
- For many years it was normal to see people who had been maimed in the war, for example there were people who had been shot in the head, which was very difficult for their families.
- Many people had difficulties finding a job.

People did not talk about your experiences. Knowing about their guilt made everybody speechless. The term “collective guilt” was not used, but everybody knew it. The terrible pictures made it clear to everybody what they had done. There was this unwitting sense of guilt. People suffered from their own losses - dead people, war-disabled people and deprivations - and at the same time they knew about their own guilt.

Mrs Krug’s father wrote down his memories - his war diaries and later when he was at home. Mrs Krug remembers asking her father once: “What are you writing?” She found those diaries later. They were the cause of her interest in history.

How did she become a teacher?

The priest convinced her parents, so they allowed her to attend a special school for prospective teachers in Ochsenhausen. The entry exams were in Ravensburg in 1946. The evening before the exams she had to take a bath, so she would not smell like a cowshed. They walked to Wurzach. It was winter and they only had shoes with wood soles. In Bad Wurzach they got onto the train. Because of the bad weather the

train stopped at Rossberg. So they had to walk to Baienfurt where they eventually got a train to Ravensburg.



Interview: Christina Niefer, Karoliina Hakkarainen, Vallteri Joki

1st interview: Comenius group, Christine König

Revision of the English translation: Gisela Rothenhäusler

Siegfried Mitter (*1936)

His home should be somewhere in this area of the Sudetenland.



General background

Home: Kunnersdorf, approx. 15 km from Zittau in the Sudetenland, all inhabitants of the village were Sudeten Germans.

They had a farm with 15 cows, horses and a small transport business with horses and carts. Mainly logs were taken from the woods. His grandfather had a small sawmill with eight employees.



His halfsiblings from the first marriage were older. Two older brothers did not return home after the war. One died in action in 1944, another one was missed.

Father (year 1897) was member of the German mountain troops in World War I. He was not drafted in World War II because of his age and the large number of children, but he had to serve in the *Volkssturm* (Germany's last ditch defense in WWII)

Life in the Sudetenland during the war

1938: The Sudetenland "returned home" into the German Reich. The family's life under Hitler was not bad, as Hitler e.g. introduced family allowance.

A French prisoner of war named George had to help on the farm. He lived in a prisoner of war camp in the next village (4 km), where he had to return every evening. George was very friendly and helpful, he liked the children. Shortly before the arrival of the Russians he left the village, pulling his belongings on a handcart. He hoped to be able to reach his home. Unfortunately the family has never heard anything from him later. The Mitter family came into the GDR after their expulsion. The possibility of making use of international tracing services was very limited there.

His family did not suffer from hunger during the war. His mother secretly gave bread to the prisoners of war. She put the freshly baked loafs into a wooden box outside the house. On the next morning the bread had disappeared. Normally she found some money instead, as the prisoners of war working on the farms often earned some money, but they did not get much to eat in the camp.



When Hitler started the war against Russia, his father knew that this war cannot be won, as this meant a war on two frontlines. Mr Mitter remembers that very well.

Starting in 1944 the first refugees from Rumania, e.g. Banat or Transilvania (Siebenbürgen), came through the village. They had horses and carts. The horses were stabled on two floors in the barn. The horses' urine dripped through the floorboards onto the horses below. The refugees talked about the fact that the people in the village would have to leave some day as well. Mr Mitter's father did not really believe this.



End of war

In May 1945 the first group of Russians came. The civilians were not treated well by the Russians of this first group. Women were raped. Mr Mitter's family had locked themselves in a vaulted cellar. The two sisters (16 and 21 years old) were hid behind wood. Nothing happened to them. The Russians shot through the door before they opened it.

Two weeks later a second group of Russians came into the village. They were more "human". This time the family was not in the house. They had fled into the woods with a horse drawn cart the father had changed into a covered wagon. They stayed for

two nights until the Russians left. One person always had to look, whether the Russians were still there. Then they returned into the village.

With the end of the war the Sudeten German children were not allowed to go to school anymore. The children believed this to be great, as they could play.

General remark: The first Sudeten Germans had to leave their home immediately after the war. Each area organized the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans differently. Some families were driven out of the village with whips. Those families could take nothing with them. In other cases the expulsion was more organized.

Shortly after the war former prisoners of war from the camp nearby came with horses and carts to take the whole family and their belongings across the border, so they could start a new life there. The father did not accept this offer.

The eviction

At first Mr Mitter's family was allowed to stay as his father knew where the wood could be found in the forest. Until 1946 he had a lot of work getting the logs out of the forest and processing them. After that they had to leave.

The family had one day to pack their things. As his father had always believed that they would not have to leave, this order came very surprisingly and nothing was prepared. Every family member was allowed to take 50kg of luggage along. As a lot of his brothers and sisters were younger than Mr Mitter, the luggage transport was quite challenging. The youngest child was eight months. A lot of things were packed onto a handcart and the twin stroller. (his younger brothers and sisters were twins twice).

Animals, fields etc. had to be left behind. Mr Mitter was nine years old then and it was very hard for him to leave back "his horses".

At first the family was taken to the former prisoner of war camp in the next village which consisted of four barracks. There their last valuables were taken away from them. His sisters had managed to keep some pieces of jewellery till the end of the war, now this jewellery was taken away.

After one week the family was taken to Germany in livestock wagons together with other families. There were about 25 people in one wagon. His baby sister cried all the time. To make her stop, his mother immersed her in the water barrel. On 15 July



1946 (birthday of his twin brothers) the family arrived at a camp in Berlin. On that day Mr Mitter got a piece of hard cured sausage (Hartwurst)

Now the family experienced hunger for the first time. Quite often the family only had gruel (flour soup) with “addings”. The father kept saying: “Close your eyes and eat”

Then a flat for 12 people was allotted to the family.

New start in Schorfheide, East-Germany

The flat was more or less one big room. The eight or nine younger children (Mr Mitter was one of them) slept in this one room. His father found a job with the state forestry. An older sister worked at an inn. This was very important as now the time of hunger started. The children had to help on farms. His Mother and the children went to the wheat



fields to glean. They also looked for the potatoes which were left in the ground after the harvest. The mother also went to the farms to beg for food. The farmers' reaction was very different. Sometimes she got food. Other times the dogs chased her away.

After more than one year Mr Mitter went back to school in September 1946, where he started with grade three. For the first six months the pupils were taught English. Only then the Russian lessons started. The newcomers were bullied by the local children. “Children can be very cruel”. That is why the children formed groups, the newcomers and the locals. Those groups fought with each other. (“That’s how children/boys are.”)

In 1948/49 the family was given an allotment. From that point on hunger got less as they could now grow vegetables and potatoes.

School ended with grade eight. Mr Mitter wanted to become a chef because he never wanted to experience hunger anymore, but this did not work out. So his brother and he started an apprenticeship in forestry. After two years as apprentices they could have started to study at university. But before they were allowed to study, they had to serve in the Barracked People’s Police, a forerunner of the National People’s Army in the GDR. Both refused and were not allowed to complete their forestry degree. While Mr Mitter’s brother stayed in forestry, Mr Mitter himself started a second apprenticeship. He became a blacksmith specialized on horseshoes and wagons. Vocational school was in Berlin Lichtenberg.

Escape to West-Germany, January 1956

People who wanted to get into West-Berlin were thoroughly controlled. As one of his sisters was working in Berlin Henningsdorf, the family could always claim to visit her. Like this they were able to take things to her house unnoticed before they eventually left the GDR.

The family split up in different groups when they escaped to West-Germany. Mr Mitter and his two brothers were one group. They sat in the same train to West-Berlin but not in the same compartment, so the controlling officers would not notice that they were travelling together. On 13 January, 1956 Mr Mitter and his two brothers arrived in Berlin Marienfelden. From there they were taken to Hannover by plane. As the family had escaped in different groups they did not get into the same reception camp.

New start in West-Germany

At that time one sister was already living in Ehingen; that is why all family members gave her name when they were asked where they wanted to live at. At first the complete family was taken to St. Blasien (Black Forest) and later to Biberach. There they were housed at the Kolpinghaus. Mr Mitter had no problems finding a job. In September 1956 he started as logger in Treherz (village close to Bad Wurzach), where his father was already working. He signed a 15 year contract with the Prince of Zeil and worked in the woods. Later he worked in different professions. In the end he opened his own small business, producing wooding crosses for graves.

In 1963 every family member received 700 German Marks as compensation for they lost property in the Sudetenland. The father had already died in an accident. The children gave their money to the mother, as she received only very little pension.

Mr Mitter has visited his home village three times. Once he was accompanied by his children. The village is very "run down". Only about 150 houses of the 400 in former times are still there. One of them is his parents' house. He was allowed to take a look at the inside. Mr Mitter does not feel bitter about the loss of his home. "That's what happens in wars."

At the end he told the pupils: „You simply have to work. Eight hours, nine hours, sometimes even eighteen hours a day. You can do it as long as you are healthy."



Interview: Andy Mayer, Dominik Kaltenbach, Vili Ruuska, Matti Haapala
1st interview: Comenius group, Christine König
Revision of the English translation: Gisela Rothenhäusler

Erwin Wild (1930-2013)

Family

Erwin Wild's father was a trained painter. From 1925 till 1928 he was in New York for three years and so he gained more experience and a better world view. When his father came back to Germany he opened his own painting shop. Because of his stay in America he was freer in his judgment about the war. After his time in New York he met his wife. They married and he became a member of the parish council.



His father was called an outsider (or "Schwarzer"), because he was not a member of the Nazi Party, moreover he helped in the church as a sacristan. According to the Nazi Ideology this was not appropriate.

Mr Wild's father had fought in the First World War and was too old to be drafted for the Second World War; therefore World War II did not have a direct effect on the family. In 1945 he was called up as a policeman to build a fortification in the west (Schanzarbeit). But this happened only twice for four weeks.

During and after the Second World War the family Wild spoke a lot about the war and the situation.

Also, the family did not have a lack of food as his mother had been born on a farm and so she got bread and eggs at home. Nevertheless, it could happen that a special kind of food ran out.

School

At first Mr Wild attended primary school and after this he went to the secondary school for boys in Waldsee (a small town 14 km west of Wurzach). In summer the pupils had to go there by bike and in winter they were taken by bus or train. The pupils had the possibility to take their A-level exams in Ravensburg or Wangen, two larger towns in the area. As the German Wehrmacht wanted to draft the boys as early as possible, those exams were just "Emergency A-level exams" (Notabitur). Mr Wild decided to go to the employment agency to look for job training. Eventually he started an apprenticeship as a car mechanic in Waldsee. Just after Stalingrad, he took his apprenticeship certification exam.

Racial ideology was not as openly used at school as in the Hitler Youth. But you also talked of inferior race and there were many demagogic slogans like song texts: *"Hängt die Juden und stellt die Bonzen an die Wand"* (Hang the Jews and shoot the rich ones at a wall.) or *"Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt, dann geht's nochmal so gut"* (Things go much better when Jewish blood splashes from the knives). Erwin Wild was religious and therefore did not like those songs. He explained that he always just pretended to sing and only moved his lips without singing a word.

When they talked about inferior races at school they usually talked about the Polish or French prisoners of war. A teacher, former organist and conductor of the church choir became the leader of the local Nazi Party. The Hitler Youth meetings in the afternoon were more important than school lessons and the pupils were not allowed to miss it. Religious Instruction was forbidden. At the secondary school in Waldsee there was a room in Bad Waldsee castle where you could attend voluntarily religious instruction classes

Military drill was taught at school as well. Mr Wild remembers that once pupils had to come together to listen to a speech by Hitler. Mr Wild was not very impressed by Hitler because his parents taught him another view of Hitler.

Youth

In Wurzach there was the Hitler Youth and the *Jungvolk* for the boys and the League of German Girls. Mr Wild was a member of the Jungvolk, Hitler Youth and of the trumpet band (Fanfarnzug). During lunch time break he walked with his drum (Landsknechtstrolch) through the village. At the Jungvolk he learned in groups of six to seven boys how to march, how to shoot with an air gun and how to use a compass and a map. For the older boys there was the Hitler Youth and the National Socialist Flying Youth (NSKF). They had a room in the school, where they built model gliders (Segelflugzeuge) and let them fly down the hill in Bauhofen (small village just outside of Bad Wurzach).

Due to his religious education and because of the fact that his parents did not support the Nazis, Erwin Wild stood between two sides. On the one hand his family

rejected the Nazi regime and they slowly became outsiders; on the other hand he was fascinated by it. He was for example interested in what the boys were doing in the Hitler Youth. He was especially fascinated by the outdoor games or the shooting with an air gun.

In Mr Wild's youth his mother had a corner shop in which you could buy food with special food ration cards. These cards needed to be collected and taken to the town hall. He well remembers one day when he took these cards there and the vice "Ortsgruppenleiter" (leader of the local Nazi-Party) belittling said to him: "What do you want, you Oberministrant (head of the altar boys) you!"

Holiday was an unknown word in Mr Wild's youth. In his free time he collected herbs or he helped on farms (e. g. collecting potato beetles).

General Things

Jews: Mr Wild said there were no Jews in Wurzach, but everybody knew about the persecution of the Jews. Nevertheless people were fascinated by Hitler as he promised many different jobs, like the construction of the motorways.

Prisoners of war: In Wuzach there were prisoners of war, too. They were taken to farms by guards. On these farms they were treated very differently, either as family member or as slave.

Celebrations: In Nazi time there were no celebrations. The only celebration Mr Wild remembers was the "putting up of the May tree" on May 1. At this day you marched in uniform and everybody showed off with the Hitlergruß (Hitler salute) and with the Hakenkreuz. (Swastika)

Fears during the war

The parents, not only the parents of Erwin Wild, were afraid that their children would betray them involuntarily because they were so young. E.g. at Mr Wild's home an illegal Suisse radio channel (Schwarzsender) was listened to. He remembers that one time the display was broken, so you could see the last radio station. It would have been dangerous if somebody had seen this, in particular a controller of the NSDAP and it would have had very bad consequences for the whole family.

Mr Wild's sister was mentally disabled and people threatened Mr Wild's father with her being picked up if he did not follow the orders of the Ortsgruppenleiter. At this time nobody was willing to talk about Euthanasia, but most of the people knew about it.

End of War

After the war was lost, the French and the Moroccans came to Wurzach. Mr Wild remembers the shootings in Dietmanns and Ziegelbach because some people had believed that they had to build a defence wall. At this time he was 15 years old and he likes to remember the liberation of the internees in the castle of Wurzach on 28th April 1945. The Wild family had good relations with the internees and so they had

often exchanged fresh eggs for chocolate. The picture of the internees “jumping outside” from behind the barbed wire fence is still very vivid. The camp guards had to line up at the town hall with their faces towards the wall. Only because of interventions and appeals of the internees they were not shot, but taken away and later released. Captain Roy, speaker of the internees, became the Stadtkommandant (mayor) because the French occupation troops and the inhabitants of Wurzach trusted him.

After the war

After the war there were no cars anymore, so people stayed in town. Due to that fact more solidarity was developed. People had to learn to trust each other again. Erwin Wild also remembers that after the war nobody admitted having been a member of the Nazi party which caused the one or the other argument.

After the war there were not many clubs, because they were not allowed. Only by the time some clubs were founded. Things were explained to you and you listened to many interesting reports. The circle of officials and the mayor were elected.

Interview: Tamara Ringer, Annika Minsch, Saara Koivusalo, Riikka Kangas

1st Interview: Steffi Birk, Tabea Binder, Antonius von Waldburg-Zeil

Revision of the English translation: Gisela Rothenhäusler, Christine König

Franz Reiser (*1921)

Living conditins

At the beginning, the Third Reich had no influence on Mr Reiser’s family. When the war started everything changed, because Mr Reiser was actively involved as a soldier abroad. That was also the reason why he does not know whether his family talked a lot about the war. In Seibranz, where he was born there was not any lack of food. Mr Reiser said this had something to do with the modest life which the family was leading.



During his apprenticeship there were only 8 days which we can really compare with our holidays. During this time he had to do lots of work at home. His workday started at 7 o’clock in the morning and ended at 7 o’clock in the evening. On Saturdays he was allowed to tidy up and finish work at 5 o’clock in the evening. Lunch break was one hour per day.

School:

The children of Seibranz also went to school there. When he was a boy there were only seven classes, later they increased the number of years at school from seven to eight. For Mr Reiser the lessons were normal. He does not know anything about forbidden subjects. His teachers and also the pupils were “enthusiastic” of Hitler and the National Socialism.



Everyday life

During the war there were both Hitler Jugend (HJ - Hitler Youth) and Bund Deutscher Mädchen (BDM – League of German Girls) in Seibranz. Mr Reiser joined the Hitler Youth, where everyone was encouraged to join political education and especially to do sports. Free time mainly took place on the village square. On Sunday, it was taken for granted that people went to church; this did not cause any problems, but the HJ always marched to church with the “Swastika flag”. Mr Reiser remembered that he played football after the church service; he went on walks through the forests or went swimming in his free time. In those days there were French prisoners of wars in Seibranz, who were working on the farms.

At that time, he did not know anything about euthanasia. Mr Reiser does not know if people celebrated the successes of the war, because he was a soldier. But he knows that nobody talked about special celebrations.

During his childhood people celebrated 1st May and the harvest festival.

Jews:

In Seibranz there were not any Jews, but Mr Reiser remembers that there was a draper's shop in Leutkirch, called Gollowitsch, which was managed by Jews. In 1938, this shop was damaged (the shop windows were smashed). This did not go down well in Seibranz because they had already heard about the persecution of the Jews. According to Mr Reiser, this incident only happened because of the Third Reich propaganda.

Soldier:

In 1940 Mr Reiser was drafted. He served the first two years as a medical orderly and experienced many terrible things. Then he worked for air reconnaissance for three

years in Russia. He had to take pictures for the Wehrmacht reports on more than 100 reconnaissance flights.

The end of the war

The post-war era for him was marked above all by good luck; because Mr Reiser was lucky enough to see his home again and found it safe and sound. From his school class, which had been twelve boys and twelve girls, six of his schoolmates had died in the war.

Thanks to his job, Mr Reiser immediately had work and an income, although this was not much. He remembered that he could not buy many things with the Reichsmark. Many things were only available if you could barter things with the salesman.

In cities, there was a big scarcity of food. But in the Allgäu and Upper Swabia you could be content as Mr Reiser said, because there were many farmers and producers. When the Deutsche Mark (DM) came in 1948 everything was suddenly available. Consequently, there was an economic boom and almost everyone had to start from the beginning, just like Mr Reiser.



Interview: Marion Nothelfer, Nadja Straub, Tomi Karhukorpi, Samuel Hietalahti

1st Interview: Mr Reiser could not come to the first interview but answered Steffi Birk and Tabea Binder's questions in written form.

Revision of the English translation: Gisela Rothenhäusler, Christine König



Heinrich Vincon (*1932)

When the war began Mr Vincon was six years old. At this time he lived with his parents and his three brothers and sisters in Wurzach. Today he is 80 years old, he has seven children and he still lives in Bad Wurzach.

Family and the situation of living

Mr Vincon was born in Wurzach in the "Spital" which was then the hospital in Wurzach. Next to the Adler, one of the village pubs, was the tannery which his father owned. Mr Vincon's home was the tannery and a farm, which was not so big (16 ha). He had to help his parents when he was young. All the farmers' children had to help.

In 1938 he was sent to school; one year later the war began, so he was seven. He had an older brother (1925), an older sister (1927) and a younger brother (1938).

The farm was situated in the middle of the town, so they always were up to date about what was happening; and because they also lived next to the town hall, there was always something going on. Many people, also farmers, came into town ("Städtle") with horses and carts. They wanted to go shopping.

Father

His father also had an enterprise with horses and carts. He transported all kind of things, for example coals for the baker or timber and oven wood. Many people heated their houses with coals, but during the war coal was scarce so people also heated with peat. There were three peat factories which produced peat: the town's peat factory, which had a machine to harvest the peat. Second, the Zeil Peat Factory, which belonged to the Prince of Waldburg-Zeil. For 20 years Mr Vincon has actively helped to turn this old peat factory into a museum. The third peat factory belonged to the Prince of Wolfegg. It was situated in Haidgau and it was opened as late as 1920. The people only had horses and carts. Not even the craftsmen had a truck. Only the vet and the master brewer had a car.

Herr Vincon's father was a soldier in the First World War. In the second he was a soldier for two days, because his hand was injured, so he was exempted from military service.

Brother

In the year 1942, his older brother was called up. He was 16 or 17 years old. He had to go to the Reich Labour Service (RAD - Reichsarbeitsdienst) in Eggenstein. There the Siegfried Line (Westwall) was built near Karlsruhe. This Siegfried Line was



intended to protect the Reich against France. Later he was transferred to Radof, which is situated in Poland. There he also had to work at the Reich Labour Service. His brother wanted to go to the Luftwaffe (German Air Force), but he was assigned to the anti-aircraft defence (Flak /Fliegerabwehr). According to his own account, he later worked for the project of the secret rockets V1 and V2. These rockets were supposed to guarantee Germany's final victory. Rockets were launched from France towards Great Britain. Because Herr Vincon's brother had helped to defuse a rocket, which had come down on the ground in France, he was awarded the Iron Cross. Herr Vincon always knew where his brother was. Only when the brother worked with the secret weapon project his family did not know where he was. They only knew the "Feldpostnummer" (Armed Forces postal service number). And his brother was not allowed to write a letter.

He was very fortunate and returned home without any injuries. He returned together with Max Westermeyer. Mr Vincon had to go and meet his brother in Ampfelbronn. When his brother came home he started a commercial apprenticeship.

Daily routine

The family talked much about the war, because they were interested in the brother's fate. Due to the fact that his father had been in the First World War he knew a lot about the war. The father listened to the illegal radio stations, but the children were not allowed to listen to these stations. The father knew a lot, but did not talk with the children about it.

The motto was work, work, work ("schaffa, schaffa, schaffa")

During the war people sang many anti-semitic songs, for example "Hängt die Juden, stellt die Bonzen an die Wand". That means „Hang the Jews higher, place the rich ones at the wall and shoot them." He sang this song with enthusiasm. He did not know it better.

School

In school they were particularly trained in writing and calculating. Before lessons Mr Vincon had to tend the cows. And so he did not have to be at school before the second lesson. In the first lesson his teacher always taught calculating. Mr Vincon always has been good at calculating. So it was not bad when he missed it.

Religion education did not stop during the Third Reich.

Sometimes they were 70 to 80 pupils in one class. At school there were only four teachers. In the first class his teacher was Mr Nagel. For the remaining school time the head teacher was Mr Mayer. This man was a good German teacher. He also played the violin very well. Mr Vincon could remember one of the sentences of his dictation. "Die Juden, diese aalglatten schmierigen Aasgeier haben den Krieg gesät." Translated that means "the Jews, these slick and grubby vultures, have sowed the war. "

In the classroom they had a big map of Europe. There Mr Vincon had to mark the front line on a daily basis. After Stalingrad he had to be ever faster with re-defining the front line.

Actually he loved to go to school because he wanted to learn something. After school he did not go to university. He attended a school for farmers in Leutkirch and there he took his master craftsman diploma. Mr Vincon took over the farm.

Deutsches Jungvolk and Hitler Youth

In Wurzach there was the Hitler Youth (HJ) and the League of German Girls (BdM). The children grew up with these associations. For Mr Vincon this association was a normal thing, the people did not know anything else. In the Hitler Youth the boys did a lot of sports and the boys sang a lot. They learned marching and sometimes they had to wear the uniforms. Mr Vincon attended the “Jungvolk” first, then the Hitler Youth, but at this time the war was over. Nevertheless, he received some military education. He was in a winter camp in Emmelhofen, together with four other boys from Wurzach. There was a lot of snow, but nonetheless they did field exercise and gunnery exercise.

They did not go on trips, only with the school once a year. The Hitler Youth’s meeting place was at the school or in the “Wehrrertüchtigungslager” behind the castle. This was a camp for boys who were in the Hitler Youth and in this camp they got their military education.

Persecution of the Jews and euthanasia

He did not know anything about the persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich. Maybe his father knew about this because he listened to illegal radio channels, but the children didn’t know anything. Mr Vincon did not know any Jews in Wurzach. There were Jews in Leutkirch, the family Gollowitsch, who owned a well-known shop. There, his father had often bought some things.

Mr Vincon learned about euthanasia in Grafeneck after the war. He also read a book about it and he repeatedly said: “This was very bad and sad”.

In Wurzach there were only a few disabled persons and he does not know whether disabled people from Wurzach were taken away. Mainly disabled people who lived in homes for disabled people were taken to Grafeneck. The only thing the citizens of Germany heard was that the disabled people were transferred to Grafeneck. Later the Nazi regime ordered that they had to be transported to Auschwitz in Poland. That’s what Mr Vincon read in a book.

Church and Memorial Day:

Church was the centre of life for the citizens. Every Sunday they went to church and the children attended the service for pupils. He was an altar boy in St. Verena for eight years.

The Hitler Youth and the church did not get in each other's ways. Sometimes there were football matches on Sunday mornings when there was a mass. The Nazi Party wanted the kids not to be able to go to church service anymore. (This is a sign of the anti-clericalism in the Third Reich)

For the soldiers who died in action there was a memorial day once a year. Mr Rottler was the local head of the Nazi Party in Wurzach. He conducted the church choir and the Liederkranz (another local choir). They always sang "Ihr Helden, die ihr euer Leben, fürs Vaterland dahingegeben." ("You heroes who have given your lives for your homeland.") This song was sung every year until Mr Rottler's son died in action. Then the song was not sung again.

Prisoner of war and internees

In Wurzach there were many prisoners of war. Family Vincon had the same prisoner from France for four years. Normally, the prisoners were not allowed to eat together with the family at the same table. Mr Vincon's dad said: "He works with us so he also eats with us!"

When this French Prisoner had to go back to France he cried, but they never heard anything from him again. He had a girl-friend in Wurzach although it was forbidden. If someone had noticed this, his girl-friend's hair would have been cut. The prisoners of war only worked on the farms and not in the peat mill.

The internees of the internment camp in the Schloss were allowed to work, for example at a butcher's or a hair dresser's. They lived in the castle of Wurzach and Mr Vincon had to deliver parcels to the internees. The citizens traded with the internees, e.g.: chocolate against a chicken. The internees only had canned food and they really liked fresh food. On the other hand the internees had chocolate from their Red Cross parcels.

General information

Celebrations

In the Third Reich there were a number of celebrations. They had to celebrate Hitler's birthday every year and they also celebrated a day, when they thanked God for the good harvest. It's like Thanksgiving. When the troops were successful there was no celebration. Teenagers did not have any alcohol and did not celebrate. The people were very glad when they sometimes got some chocolate.

Parts of the arms industry from Friedrichshafen had been transferred to Bad Wurzach because of the air raids in Friedrichshafen. The factory was located in the gymnasium, that's why it could not be used for sports lessons or festivities anymore. Due to that the celebration took place in the Kronensaal.

Advertising

The pupils had to post the Nazi Party bills. So they did not have school at this time. During the war they did not have many lessons. At the "Postplatz" (the bus stop in front of our school) the citizens could read the newspaper of the Nazi Party "Der Stürmer". This paper printed only positive good things about the Nazis.

Films were often shown in the Kronensaal.

Swastika flags were hoisted everywhere. Every family had one at home.

Relatives

His cousin was a soldier in France and he was wounded. So he cleared out and went to Stuttgart. From Stuttgart he showed other soldiers the way to Kempten and accompanied them to Wurzach. As he arrived in Wurzach eight days before the war ended, he had to hide at the Vincon's. Later he could not go to his home in Crailsheim for a whole year because Crailsheim was in the American occupation zone. So he worked at the farm.

Ziegelbach

On 28th April 1945 Ziegelbach was shelled. Herr Vincon and his brother watched the burning farms from a hill. The French tanks tried to shell Wurzach too. Due to that, the two kids ran home quickly. One grenade nearly reached the garden of the Vincon's.

French occupation zone

Herr Vincon thinks that the French occupation zone was better than for example the American one. From there the German prisoners of war sometimes had to go to America. Some of the Russian captives came home only 10 years after the war ended and many captives didn't come home again.

When the French soldiers came to Wurzach the citizens had to give away many things. The first things were the radio and weapons. His father didn't give away his pistol. He hid it.

Much timber had to be cut and the wood was taken to the train station with carts.

The horses were mustered. But the soldiers didn't want his father's horses. During the war the family had one horse. It was not until 1945 that they got one more horse.

After the war

Mr Vincon said that the end of the war was redeeming for him. He said:

"Endlich ist das Gemetzel aus." That means translated "Finally the massacre finished."

It was a hard time because many people did not have any food e.g. the refugees. Sometimes his relatives from Canstatt came by train and fetched food from the

Vincon's farm. Fortunately Wurzach was not destroyed and there wasn't a shortage of food.

His brother came home on 1st July.

At his home there were evacuees, one mother with her daughter. Pupils from Essen had been in Bad Wurzach for two years as "holiday children". During the war many Polish people and other foreigners worked at the farms. Often these workers had been treated badly and so they took their vengeance for that after the war and burgled the farmers' houses.

Mr Vincon's conclusion is: the war marked him and he hopes that things like this will not recur. Germany had been a dictatorship and committed genocide.

Poem

Herr Vincon likes to learn and present poems. The following is a poem he recited for us when we talked to him. He had to learn it for the Erntedankfest (this is like Thanksgiving) in 1944. This poem describes the work steps from how a pig is fetched from the farmer until it can be eaten.

"Hausgmetzged"

Was man doch für gute Sachen ka,
aus so nem Saule machen,
aus em Saustall hinterm Haus
zieht d Bauer d Botzel raus.

→ the farmer is fetching the pig

Ob se grunzt und ob se quickst,
Sau isch Fett etzt wird se gieckst.

→ what the butcher is doing with the pig

Dussa steht d Metzger Gmähle,
wetzt sein Messer an seim Stehle
Metztger farb isch weiß und rot.

Er sticht zu und d Sau isch tot.
Etzt wird gebrüht und geschabt und brennt.
Botzla ebe Saua sind

und dann wetzt d Metzger Gmähle
wieder s Messer an seinem Stehle.
Ohre schneid er weg und d Schwanz
und versäblets Säule ganz.

Rudled rum im Schweineblut.
Sieded Hackt und Pfeffret gut.

Hinterm Stubentisch im Eck
sitz d Bauer vor em Speck.

Der muss sich heut schon recht verleiden,
muss d Speck in Würfel schneiden

und muss versuchen und probieren,
bis im Kessel Herz und Nieren.
s Wurtsbrett extra allefalls,
wegen Modig Gwurz und Salz.
Was man doch für gute Sache ka → what snacks we can make out of a pig
aus so nem Saule mache.
Blutwurst, Bratwurst, Schwattermagen und Leberwurst,
wer will da sagen s well d best.
Und Delekat
Salz und Kraut und Specksalta.
So wies ist und alles zammet,
hat a Sau koin guta Namen.
Mag se ihre Ohnfirm hon,
gmetzged muss ma's gelten long.

What impressed the Finnish partners most

For the Finnish partners it was unbelievable that people in Bad Wurzach could hear the shelling of Ziegelbach, a little village about five kilometres away.
In addition they were very impressed by the many fighter planes to Munich which flew over the school without any warnings.
Furthermore, it was very impressing that all the citizens had to hoist the Swastika flags on Hitler's birthday and on the first of May, crosses were forbidden and they had to be replaced with Hitler's photos.
Another thing the Finnish pupils had no idea about was that people did not know the truth of Hitler and NSDAP, so they thought they were all right.

What impressed the German partners most

Mr Vincon told us that they thought they had to flee from Wurzach to Ziegelbach, because the French came to Wurzach. When they realized that in Ziegelbach the conditions were even worse they returned to Wurzach after half a day. This section of the interview was very impressing and touching. What was also terrible to us is the order to replace all the crosses in school to Hitler photos. So the kids had no contact to the church anymore.

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Max Westermayer (*1932)

Mr. Westermayer was a watchmaker in Bad Wurzach (like his father). Today he is a pensioner and lives with his wife in Bad Wurzach.

Family

Mr Westermayer's father was a watchmaker and electrician. He was drafted in 1941.



His father was redeployed to Köln and his assignment was to control the radar. Mr. Westermayer had one younger sister (one year younger) and a brother (four years younger). In their family the war was called "condemnable war". Food was rationed and you needed Food Ration Cards to buy it. Everyone got only as much as they needed to survive. Many children had to help on farms. Mr Westermayer did not have to work for food.

Military tests in the reedmarshes of Wurzach

The reedmarshes of Bad Wurzach was a shooting range of the Luftwaffe (German air force) military airfield of Memmingen. There was a concrete dugout for those soldiers who had to monitor the targeting of the pilots. The targets of the planes were wooden trucks, ships and armors. They bombarded with concrete bombs and the planes had aircraft cannons to hit the targets. In order to be able to see the places where the bombs had hit the target, smoke rose from these places.

School

Every morning a German Armed Forces report was read out and the advancing front line was shown on a map. His teacher was a Nazi. The pupils were told that the German soldiers were the best. Often they had to collect bottles which were refilled with wine for the soldiers at the front. The lessons were not very different from the time before the Third Reich, except that they did not have any Religious education lessons any more. One teacher who was not a member of the Nazi party sang Christian songs with the boys every morning.

Mr Westermayer was not in the HJ. He was an altar boy. The HJ meetings were moved to Sundays with the hidden agenda that the young people could not go to church any more. The church was Hitler's enemy because they did not accept Hitler's ideology. Although Mr Westermayer was not a member of the HJ, he knew what the young people were offered there. In the HJ (Hitler Youth) they played a lot of games

outside and they did also a lot of athletics. They were even allowed to ride a motorcycle. Sometimes they went on a camping trip or they could shoot with an air rifle or a machine gun. The HJ uniform was a brown shirt.

Mr Westermayer only got to know something about Euthanasia from his teacher. The Westermayer family had a clock shop. And the women worked as housewives or in factories. In Wurzach there were only four Protestant families and there were no Jews.

In the last months of the war evacuee children from the Ruhr region (Düsseldorf, Essen) came to Wurzach. They played “gesteckelt” and other games they could play in the street and for which they did not need anything; they had no money to buy real toys. At the beginning of the war all boys had toys like planes or tanks.

They were only told good news about the war. When there were festivities there were Swastikas (symbol of National Socialism) everywhere. When somebody died in the war, there was a service at church.

Prisoners of war in Wurzach had to help the farmers. They were accommodated in the castle and they were allowed to do sports. Some of the prisoners tried to escape. Later families from the island of Jersey were interned in the castle.

Mr Westermayer was interested in planes. He believed that German planes were the best ones. He always looked up to the planes when they flew past Wurzach. On the Gottesberg you had the best view.

At night you had to switch off the lights, close the shutters and there were no street lamps. The purpose of this black-out was to avoid that the enemy could see the town in the night and did not release bombs. If there was an air alert they had to go to in the cellar.

The nation waited for the magic weapon, V1 and V2 rocket.

End of war

Mr Westermayer's father was taken prisoner by the Americans in Bad Aiblingen near Rosenheim. At the end of war all members of the Nazi Party had left Bad Wurzach because they were afraid of the Allies. Mr Westermayer's teacher said that all people had to burn the uniforms and all pictures of Hitler. Wurzach was occupied by the French. The French came with tanks from the west, the Americans from the east.

The guards of the internment camp in the castle had to line up and were to be shot. Thanks to the internees this did not happen. The guards were taken away and later released. It was a non-violent occupation in Wurzach. All weapons had to be handed in at the town hall.

For some months after the war there was no school, because the food for the French occupation troops was cooked in the school house.

French soldiers lived in the house of the family Westermayer. Later, Moroccans came to Bad Wurzach. The Moroccans wore long tunics. The French in general were friendly, but there were some rapes by the French and Moroccan soldiers.

Mr. Westermayer found an ammo dump in the reed and built rockets with his friends.

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Heinz Nothelfer (*1929)

Situation of life during the war

Heinz is the son of a teacher and lived with his family in a house in Bellamont. (12 km north of Bad Wurzach). During the war there were lots of prisoners of war on the farms in the area around Bellamont. Refugees from cities found accommodation in families who lived in villages. So his family had to take in their relatives from Freiburg, after the relatives' father had died. That's the reason why many households were overcrowded.



There were no bomb attacks in Bellamont, but sometimes there were some in Ochsenhausen and Biberach. About 100 people died in these bomb attacks. He remembers a bomb attack near Bellamont, where a warplane had to release its bombs, which fell on a farm and destroyed it. At the age of 44 Heinz's father died in an attack, too. He was a teacher, but had to go to Russia as a guard. On the journey the train was attacked and most of the passengers died.

In Bellamont there was the Hitler Youth (HJ), which all boys and girls from the age of 8 could join if they wanted to. But at the age of 10 everybody had to go there. All other clubs and associations were closed and forbidden, so he had to join the HJ, too. In the little villages the HJ was not controlled as strictly as in the big cities. He liked to go there and he was very proud of his uniform, which every member of the HJ had. He had to wear a brown shirt, black trousers (shorts), a big belly belt, a shoulder strap and a cap.

The boys, who were the head of the HJ, had to go to a training course once every 6 months. Heinz had to attend one of those courses which lasted for 2-3 weeks.

During this training course they learned much about the Nazi regime and received a basic military education. There they were taught how to handle guns and hand grenades. At another time he was ordered to participate in a trench-building assignment. He had to build trenches on the West Wall on the River Rhine. He remembers that it was raining all day and they were always wet because they wore wood clogs. They worked very hard because they knew that they had to finish the trenches before the French planes came and they had to be in safety then. Unfortunately, after finishing the trenches there was a big flood along the Rhine and the waters destroyed all trenches they had built before. And the train which they had to take to get home was bombed, so they were forced to walk. It was a hard winter and he nearly lost his right thumb due to frost bites.

After his medical examination for military service he was called up. But he knew that the Frenchmen had already advanced very far and that Germany had no chance to win the war, so he kept his order from the others and stayed in Bellamont. That was a big risk for him because not to go on the service for his country was punished hard. So he hid a packed bag in his room to be able to escape through the window into the forest when it was necessary. He said: "It was a risk and I was scared, because you never knew if and when they would come".

After the war

There was a big famine after the war. Food, cattle and wood had to be given to the French. But the villagers were very lucky because little villages were not controlled as strictly as the cities, so they could get food more easily.

In his holidays Heinz worked on a farm. As reward for his work he got food and a piglet. He fattened it and butchered it secretly, because butchering was forbidden. Butchers weren't allowed to carry on their profession. He was lucky, because his secret butchering was never discovered, so he had enough meat and was able to barter some for other foods.

School

Sometime after the end of the war someone told him that the grammar school in Wurzach was going to open again. He had started an apprenticeship but he wanted to finish school, so he enrolled at this school. The grammar school was in the castle of Wurzach and was a boys' boarding school. Every day, Sundays excepted, they were taught in all subjects, which wasn't normal for the schools at that time. The three main subjects were Latin, classical Greek and French. In certain schools history and geography were forbidden, but in Wurzach it was taught in the second term. His wife, for example, never learned anything about geography because it was forbidden and they often had to work instead of lessons. In Heinz's' geography lessons only the topics of the past were taught.

Everyday life in the boarding school was always the same: They had lessons all day long with some free time after lunch. He said it was a so called "forded freetime", because they had to go out for an hour to take a walk or play. Otherwise they had to study much, but it wasn't hard for him because he wanted to do it. They all wanted to learn and catch up on the subjects they had missed. With a chuckle he explained that you can't compare them to today's students, because at that time they were happy that they were allowed to attend school and everyone was hungry for knowledge.

Most time they spent inside the school grounds, so they didn't often go into town. Sometimes some tried to leave without permission, like Heinz and his friend did once: They ran home to fetch their bikes, because they wanted to cycle to the Lake of Constance.

The students were allowed to meet their families about three times a year.

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