

**Interviewer:** Just like state your name and where and when you were born.

**Herman Kraiser:** Ok. Uh, my name is Herman Kraiser. I was born in 1938, in **Nathan**, Germany. Which is about twenty miles south of Stuttgart.

**Interviewer:** Was in a rural area?

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh, it's a smaller town, at that time had about three thousand people living there, now it's about six thousand so it was a smaller town.

**Interviewer:** uh, what was your father's occupation?

**Herman Kraiser:** Ah, he worked with my grandfather, he first was a carpenter, then he learned to be a mason and then he made his architect.

**Interviewer:** So, uh.

**Herman Kraiser:** So, uh, in Germany you have to do that, you have to be a carpenter and a mason to become an architect, it's not like here in the states, you know. Here you just go to school, over there you actually got to practice. So.

**Interviewer:** What school did he go to?

**Herman Kraiser:** No he didn't.

**Interviewer:** He didn't go to...

**Herman Kraiser:** He has to go like OJT on the job training. You work...uh oh.  
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**Interviewer:** Ok. Oh that your father, how uh.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, he has to practice three years as apprentice to be a carpenter and two years as a mason, when he completes that, then he can put in and go for his architect. So that's what he was.

**Interviewer:** How long did he work in that, be an architect?

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh, probably about, just five years, he got drafted in the German Army.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so did he serve in WW1?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, WW11.

**Interviewer:** Oh, WW11. Oh.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, he went in, in 1940 and got killed in 1945.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** In uh, in Russia, but he got, they transported him to Berlin, and he died in the hospital in Berlin.

**Interviewer:** So was he part of the invasion force of..

**Herman Kraiser:** ...of Russia.

**Interviewer:** ...of operation Barbarossa.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, of Russia and uh.

**Interviewer:** What battle city..fighting?

**Herman Kraiser:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** You don't know?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, I saw my father about three times.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, I don't remember very little about him.

**Interviewer:** But you heard a lot about him though?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, my sister's older so she knew better what was going on, I didn't know much about that.

**Interviewer:** Huh.

**Herman Kraiser:** You know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So uh, but you don't have any memory of the great depression in Germany at the time?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no. Uh, like I say, I was born in 38' and the depression was in 31'.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, time.

**Herman Kraiser:** Now when I was born, what I've been told, uh, the times was pretty good, you know, and that's why everybody was for Hitler because he brought Germany over the depression. So, uh, that's where the Volkswagen come in, he wanted every family to have one,

that was his goal. It's like all the people who was unemployed, he said I got to pay them anyways so, might as well put them to work and that's when he build the ... .

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** And the ... was built as initial, uh, north, south, and east, west, was strictly built by hand. They didn't pull down trees, take them out and transplanted them. So, I mean fruit trees not roots but fruit trees. So, he put a lot of people to work and that's why Germany, I mean they, they was for him, you know. They didn't know what was going on anyway, most people. So, you know.

**Interviewer:** So, did you all own a Volkswagen?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no we didn't. uh, my father, well I remember he has a motorcycle and uh, my grandfather, he was too old, he didn't have a ... ,you know. Back in them days, anybody who had now a car, used to have a bicycle. And ... and wagens'. So.

**Interviewer:** So you mostly got around on bikes?

**Herman Kraiser:** Motorcycles and bicycles, and we had trains, you know, train connections was pretty good, and every little town had bus service so it wasn't the end of the world, you was actually, you know, pretty mobile.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** So.

**Interviewer:** So was your family, were they especially interested in politics, you remember?

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh, not really, I mean, uh, when I grew up and I was a young kid, uh, my grandfather, he didn't talk much about politics. No, he was kind of quiet, so, and by being, living in a small town, we didn't know what was going on, you know with the concentration camps and all that. The German public never did find out until after the war. It's like, uh, I saw Hitler one time, when I was about five years old. He was ..., he held a speech in Stuttgart.

**Interviewer:** You saw him in person?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was your impression of that?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, everybody hollered, you know. He could speak, I mean he was a good speaker, he could fascinate the people, as far as his voice and the way he presented himself. But I was about five when that happened, I just became a, got my little brown uniform and, uh.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** That's when we went down to Stuttgart and he was speaking. That's the only time I saw him.

**Interviewer:** Did your family, did they, uh, were they in support of him?

**Herman Kraiser:** I would say everybody was and one reason is because he brought Germany out of the depression, everybody had work, everybody had money, everybody had food. It was a great life back in them days.

**Interviewer:** You didn't have any food shortages, mostly when you remember?

**Herman Kraiser:** No. Now, after the war, yeah there was food shortages, but not, we didn't feel it that much because we had a farm community there. Most people grew their own stuff, like potatoes and meat, and we all had food, apples and all that stuff. Uh, we never went hungry, like after the war, you just couldn't buy, like there was, uh, shoes you was allowed to buy one pair a year, and that had to be in ration stamps, so uh, that's the only thing that we had problems with, but as far as food and stuff, no. We lived, we butchered our own pigs, you know, so we never was short of any meat and stuff like that, bread, baked our own.

**Interviewer:** What did your mother, did she work doing farming and stuff like that?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no, my mother, my family we got a saw mill and she run that business, so, uh, and my grandfather, he was still building houses as far as his carpenter work.

**Interviewer:** When did he go into the army?

**Herman Kraiser:** Who?

**Interviewer:** Your father?

**Herman Kraiser:** In 1940.

**Interviewer:** 1940.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. So he was in there four and half years before he got killed.

**Interviewer:** You remember what unit he was in?

**Herman Kraiser:** No. I don't know. I know where his grave is and we went there one time after the wall came down because it was in east Berlin, but uh, otherwise, I don't know.

**Interviewer:** What was his name?

**Herman Kraiser:** Erinrye, was his first name. So.

**Interviewer:** So do you remember uh, what kind of schooling you had, during like which..?

**Herman Kraiser:** What I had?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, the way it was back in them days now, I started school still during the war and uh, when there was, towards the end of the war when there was bombing, coming into like Stuttgart, uh, if we had enough early warning, they send us home, otherwise we had to go to school in the basement. But I, uh, back in them days, the way it worked, everybody went to elementary school for four years, then you took tests, and if you passed at a higher rate you went to high school, at a lower rate you went to middle school, and if you was real low you kept on going to elementary school. Now, everybody went eight years to school. Now I finished, I went to high school, I went four years elementary, and four years high, and I graduated high school when I was fourteen years old.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** And then I went into apprenticeship to be a tool and die maker, and I graduated from that when I was seventeen and a half, that's three and half years.

**Interviewer:** Did they pay really well at the diamond or the uh..?

**Herman Kraiser:** Tool and Die Maker?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, when you are apprentice, you don't get paid much. Afterwards, yeah, they paid good, and then I, uh, made my master degree. I had to go to school at night and I did that. And then I came to the states. So, I never worked really in Germany, except about two years after I finished my apprenticeship. So.

**Interviewer:** So did you have any vocational training?

**Herman Kraiser:** That's the apprenticeship.

**Interviewer:** That's the apprenticeship?

**Herman Kraiser:** yeah, you work actually in a factory and one day a week you go to school, we learned the theoretical portion of your job. Like, we had to make blueprints and all that, you know, so one day a week you went to school but the rest of the time you worked in the factory, but in the factory what you worked you had to write a report every week of one item, what you

made and that counted over the apprenticeship. It is a different set up, than what it is over here. All the things are different. I think it's better because you learn a lot more.

**Interviewer:** Over there you learn more?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. It's like here you go to school, high school until eighteen and you don't know nothing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah

**Herman Kraiser:** Over there when you're fourteen, you graduate from high school, you learn book keeping and everything, you know.

**Interviewer:** So is it real difficult going through all that school, is it a lot more difficult?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, you learn more, you go to school more hours, like you went to school at like seven o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening. Except for Wednesday afternoon or Saturday afternoon, but Saturday mornings you had to go to school, and we didn't have no two months vacation, we had two weeks in spring and two weeks in the fall. That's it, so that's why you actually got to graduate at an earlier age, you know, than you do over here.

**Interviewer:** So were you a member of the Yung Folk, as a boy?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, the Yung Folk were the older boys. I was a Hitler Youth, and that's just like over here, you got Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. Cub Scouts is the Hitler Youth and Boy Scout would be Yung Folk. Yung Folk was kids who, like fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old, and Hitler Youth was the ones below.

**Interviewer:** So you didn't know anybody in the Yung Folk at the time?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, uh, well I knew guys who was older than me who was in the Yung Folk but I didn't have no personal contact with them, you know, there was some of them who like troop leaders. Who was like our, more or less, instructors. You had to go one evening a week and you had to go to Hitler Youth training. That's where you learn politics but I only went there like not even two years and then the war was over.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Because the war ended in 1945, so you know, I was seven years old really when the war ended.

**Interviewer:** So you don't have any or much memory from that time?

**Herman Kraiser:** Not really.

**Interviewer:** Not really.

**Herman Kraiser:** I remember when, when a it was towards the end of the war, when in fact that our town we was a border town between the American Occupation Forces and the French Occupation Forces. So uh, I remember when they came in and took over, and the town gave up they... the... flag, but the castle on top of the mountain they were still Germans up they so they fired artillery up there, and then we was all, uh, we was the last house in the town on our street, and there was about four hundred yards no house, so they came around and checked because you was on curfew but as far as really, they searched the house, yeah, looked for weapons and stuff like that but as far as otherwise, we, we didn't have no other contact with American forces when they took over, you know.

**Interviewer:** So when the forces were coming you were still a part of the Hitler Youth even at the time?

**Herman Kraiser:** Oh yeah, you still was.

**Interviewer:** To the very end of the war.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. But uh, we uh, like I said we was the last house on the town there. German soldiers gave up and they came to our house and we gave them civilian clothing and we took their uniforms, and that's what we burned.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, made fires with it, you know. Gave them something to eat, and so they went home, but in civilian clothes, they changed clothes and I guess that's when my brown uniform got burned then too.

**Interviewer:** So they stayed for a few days with you, you said?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, there was about, I would say it started in about March, now the war wasn't over until about, oh, May. But March and April, German soldiers just gave up, they laid their weapons down and just walked off, you know.

**Interviewer:** They just went home afterwards?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, they normally took a whole war, and a shovel and acted like they was a farmer or something.

**Interviewer:** Disguise themselves as if they were not soldiers?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, we used their clothing and burned them but the reason we burned them was to make fire to cook stuff for them to eat when they left, you know.

**Interviewer:** Were there a lot of soldiers that came by your house or were there just a few?

**Herman Kraiser:** No there were quite a few of them, especially at night. They was up in the, oh, about a mile away from our house, was the woods and that's where they stayed in the daytime and night they came down and that's when we gave them civilian clothes, now my two aunts and an uncle of mine, they collected clothes in the town, for them, you know, to help them get home. Otherwise, if they would have got caught, they would have been as a POW, so most of them just went home.

**Interviewer:** Did you know anyone else that was in the military at the time or just your father?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, my uncles was, you know, and I knew young guys who was maybe six, eight, ten years older than me, who was in the war. Now my godfather, he was supportive of my mother, he got killed in the war. I would say, ...war rate wiped out one whole generation of men between the age of twenty and forty because most of them got killed, you know. There was some of them that came home but you know, I know one man in my home town, he lives about three or four hundred yards away from us, he's still alive and he got one leg, he lost one leg in the war.

**Interviewer:** How is he now?

**Herman Kraiser:** Oh, he is in his mid-eighty's.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah

**Interviewer:** So he was in the military?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. And then from my uh, like I say from my aunt and uncles and cousins, there was some of them who was in the war. Some of them got killed and some of them came back home.

**Interviewer:** And in the Hitler Youth, you didn't remember what kind of activities you were involved in did you?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, we didn't do much, uh, you had uh, you did a lot of sport actually, you know. But, uh.

**Interviewer:** You do any camping or hiking?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no. Not as a Hitler Youth, no. That was the Yung Folk, they did that. Yeah, we didn't do that. Now, you wore your uniform, yeah, when you went to the meetings you had to wear it. But uh, you had to say heil Hitler, you know.

**Interviewer:** You had to do the Hitler salute and everything?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, and uh, like in school uh, like here they say Pledge of Allegiance and we sung the German National Anthem back in them days.



**Interviewer:** Which anthem was it, is it the **Duetchalite**?

**Herman Kraiser:** .....(something in German along the lines of the Anthem), and then they changed it after the war.

**Interviewer:** it's still a similar anthem today, isn't it?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah but different words now.

**Interviewer:** yeah, it's as militaristic.

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no, not as radical.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, um, so you said you were five years old when you joined the Hitler Youth you said?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And you remained in there for about..?

**Herman Kraiser:** Almost two years.

**Interviewer:** Two years.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. That's when the war ended and that's, there was no more Hitler youth, you know. They started to poke them afterwards for it, young kids was under the new regime, it was almost like Cub Scouts then, you know. That came up then. As, far as Hitler Youths, you went one evening to a meeting and the meeting was about an hour, you know. Yeah you learned where Hitler was born and what he did, and .... but as far as really getting into politics, you didn't, not yet. So we uh, the only thing that a remember from uh, the whole Nazi regime, was uh, we had a factory in my home town, it was Jewish owned. Well, they hauled them off. And we had bombs there one time, and that factory got bombed and people would say, nobody could prove it but it was German airplanes, destroyed factory because it was owned by Jewish but as far as, anyways we didn't know concentration camps existed.

**Interviewer:** Did you all know any Jews back then or like before the war..?

**Herman Kraiser:** We knew that family there, the ones who owned the factory. I can't remember their names but, but they was normal people, you know. We didn't have nothing against the Jews, you know, it was Hitler that had it against them, so. Now we got bombed two more times in my home town. Um, one of them was a farmhouse and they said after us, that he... was a light, was a lantern, and he saw a light and dropped some bombs there.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, but anyways we, we didn't have much, like they show in movies now, with the S.S. I never saw no S.S.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, not in my home town.

**Interviewer:** Did you see, but you saw normal .... soldiers around?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, like when that airplane crashed we had them staying at our house cause it was the last house and they lived in our bomb basically for about two and half months and well, we feed them, they ate there and they was guarding that airplane, that bomber that crashed and ..., uh, there was some high officials came when the bomber crashed, afterwards it was a small little airplanes, but anyways, they looked at it, who they was I don't know.

**Interviewer:** Was the pilot still in...was he dead?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, the pilots jumped out.

**Interviewer:** He jumped out.

**Herman Kraiser:** the whole crew jumped out about ten miles before, used parachutes to land. They captured them.

**Interviewer:** Oh, the Allies captured them?

**Herman Kraiser:** No the Germans.

**Interviewer:** Oh the Germans captured them.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, they captured them and what they did with them, I don't know. They hauled them off.

**Interviewer:** So do you remember hearing from your families like from the beginning of the war where they were talking about the early victories over Poland and France and Denmark, they ever talk about that?

**Herman Kraiser:** Now they talk about it, but back in them days, nobody talked about it.

**Interviewer:** Even when the invasion first happened?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, I don't remember nothing about that. And like I say, I was a little baby at that time. You, know I was about three years old.

**Interviewer:** But you never remember hearing them talk about it later?

**Herman Kraiser:** No. In fact, after the war, uh, told me about the Hitler time period in history, there was nothing told in school or nothing. It was completely left off. So, there was basically taboo, nobody talked about it. I learned more about what was going on before the war and after and during the war from later on, from TV. Because people just didn't talk anymore. So, it was, I don't know. Hitler had some good ideas and he had some bad ideas, now we adapted some of his good ideas right here in the states, our interstate system, you know. That's basically what, the way he had it planned.

**Interviewer:** Which system was that?

**Herman Kraiser:** Our interstate system.

**Interviewer:** Oh interstate, yeah. The Ottobon.

**Herman Kraiser:** But he had, again he had different agendas when he built it, first of all it was a long landing strip for airplanes plus moving troops from one place to other place fast, there was purpose for it in one way, you know. Another way was for the public but uh, it was also for military, you know. So.

**Interviewer:** Did your parents ever have to ration, your mother ever have to ration anything or..?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, we had to ration things like clothes and shoes, they had to ration butter, but that didn't effect because we had our own, made our own butter, we had eggs and all that so, plus we traded. What we didn't have, somebody else had so we wasn't hurting as far as rations.

**Interviewer:** Was mother able to find can pains to collect scrap metal and other things like for the war effort?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, we didn't, I wouldn't know. During the war I was still a little kid.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** the only thing we had to collect, uh, back in them days .... didn't have no potatoes beetles. And I know that American airplanes trapped potatoes beetles and we had to go from the school and go in the potato fields and collect them and .... and turn them in.

**Interviewer:** Who did you have to turn it into?

**Herman Kraiser:** To our teacher and they collected them but as far as this, it was like chemical warfare. They trapped them in drums because of the airplanes. So.

**Interviewer:** What was the purpose of them doing it?

**Herman Kraiser:** The potato beetle eats up the leaves of the potato and they don't grow.

**Interviewer:** Oh ok.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, it was one way of destroying the German economy, you know, no more food and we didn't have them before the war and they trapped them. So, I guess they collected them here in the states and brought them over there or raised them in labs but as far as the war effort, we didn't uh, that was the only thing I know. And I was in first grade, we had to go in the fields and do that.

**Interviewer:** So, you mentioned that your father and your uncle were casualties in the war?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, one of my uncles, one of them came home. And then from my aunt's husband one of them got killed and one of them was, my younger aunt, she wasn't married yet but she married a guy after the war who was in the war, but he came home. So, it's why I say uh, I was raised not by my father because he was in the war, my grandfather was the one who raised me then, you know. Yeah, my mother was there but my grandfather was the main influence as far as raising me, you know, and he didn't have to go to the war, he was too old. Now, he was in the First World War, but he never talked about that.

**Interviewer:** Never did?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, I know one thing that he still up to this date, well back in them days, he still hated the French. He would have went to war against the French anytime, you know.

**Interviewer:** How old did he live to be?

**Herman Kraiser:** One hundred and two.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh huh.

**Interviewer:** When did he die?

**Herman Kraiser:** Back in the late seventies.

**Interviewer:** Did he still have any uh..., did he have any artifacts from back then, like his guns or did he have to turn that stuff in?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, in Germany, well after the war nobody was allowed to have any guns, it was all collected, you know. That's why the American soldiers came and searched the houses, if there was, in fact they took my little pop pistol.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, they took that one. But they took all the weapons they found, so after the war nobody had any weapons, it wasn't allowed to have any. And still up to this date as private citizen in Germany, not suppose to have any weapons unless you belong to a gun club.

**Interviewer:** So, that was even when, under the Nazi regime, you were still not allowed to have weapons?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, under his regime, you was.

**Interviewer:** You were?

**Herman Kraiser:** But after the war you wasn't. Because uh, Germany uh, surrendered. So, you wasn't allowed to have no weapons, of any kind.

**Interviewer:** So, you remember the Allied bombing, you mentioned before, the Allied bombing?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Around...

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, we used to sit outside the house in the evening when it was dark and we watched them drop bombs over Stuttgart.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Herman Kraiser:** And what we used to call Christmas trees, when they dropped the flares first to light up the area where they wanted to bomb, so they could see where they bomb, you know. So uh, and we could hear the airplanes at night and they flew up our castle and turned toward Stuttgart. And in the daytime when they came, I remember we collected them, they dropped aluminum foil, little strips of aluminum foil, to throw the radar off. And there was always one airplane farther in front, who laid a smoke screen so you couldn't see the main squadron coming. Like he, like you see now when the airplanes fly high, you see the, the exhaust smoke, well they did that but more. And so you didn't see when, when the squadron came, where they were in that smoke screen you couldn't tell, you hear the noise but you didn't know, you didn't see them. They was pretty well pretty high, you know so.

**Interviewer:** So what was your, right when you all were watching it, was your impression of the bombing and...?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, at that time everybody knew that the war going to be over.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** You know uh, people didn't say it but uh, everybody knew it was a lost cause, you know.

**Interviewer:** People started giving up?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. And even, if Germany would have won the war which uh, it didn't happen uh, they didn't have enough soldiers to even secure the area they, they occupied, you know.

**Interviewer:** They kind of over-extended?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, now if Hitler would have...but he got greedy and power hungry...

**Interviewer:** Over confident?

**Herman Kraiser:** yeah if would have.... he would have took Poland, waited two, three years, or four years and then took the next little country and build out like a satellite country, but the way he was going, he was fighting and the whole world. And you can't do that. And it's been a proven fact, you know, over history that that never works.

**Interviewer:** All the alliances that build up against.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. So, and it's like the underground, like he got whipped in France with the underground, you cannot fight the underground and that's proof now, look in Iraq, we can't win there because them people, they know the area, same thing was in Vietnam, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** They got their tunnels, they got... they at home there, so you cannot win against the underground and Hitler, if he would have won the war, he never could have kept it. Because the general public from the other countries, the underground would have destroyed him within. So, I think Germany was better off losing the war and uh, history will tell you that like, Germany and Japan after the war became economic power house, where yeah, it was destroyed but then the United States help build it up again and so, Germany had new machines to produce their products. A good example is your cars, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** But economic wise the best thing that ever happen to Germany was that they lost the war, cause then all the factories, what got built again had new machinery.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** Not old ones.

**Interviewer:** The Allies, they got rid of a lot of the old factories?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, they bombed it, basically destroyed it, you know.

**Interviewer:** I think I read, the Soviets, they came in and took, once East Germany took apart...

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, they took machinery out of there. It's like uh, Germany was as far as...., science was ahead, Russia and the United States was both took the scientist, you know.

**Interviewer:** Like...Van Bran?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, well there's a good joke. The Russian satellite out in orbit, he was talking to the American satellite and neither one of them could understand each other so the American satellite said well, let's talk German because both was from German scientist, you know. So, that's a joke but it's actually reality basically too, you know. So.

**Interviewer:** So, you remember uh, I know this is dangerous to express this but do you remember people uh, uh having opposition against Hitler or talking any opposition?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, if somebody had uh, I mean I was a young boy and after the war you hear about it, if somebody was against him, he disappeared, or she, you know. So, in open public you didn't talk against the regime. Maybe in private but not in the open, and even private...(says something to a pet)... even in private you didn't know if your brother or your cousin or somebody wouldn't turn you in, you know. So, people just didn't talk about, you know.

**Interviewer:** But do you know how your family felt about, even during the, they talk about it secretly?

**Herman Kraiser:** I wouldn't know, I was too young for that. But in later years uh, yeah, my mother, my grandfather, everybody they hated it because my father got killed, you know. My uncle got killed, so based on that, they hated what Hitler did, you know. But uh, that was in later years when they talked about that, but during the war, you didn't.

**Interviewer:** So after the war or during the ending of it they blamed him for losing the war or...?

**Herman Kraiser:** Basically, yes. Uh, he was stubborn, it's like a ..... to work there. Switzerland, and I feel no where..... is, uh. .... have and it's where they built the..... well, that's where they built the M262, which was a fighter jet. Well, he wanted to use them as a bomber, well, they couldn't carry enough fuel, to bomb. But he was stubborn. He didn't listen to his, if he would have listen to his generals and stuff it would have been different, but he didn't.

**Interviewer:** I hear that **Gering** was very furious when Hitler, when, become bombers, with the..., M262's.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, yeah. And uh, they was sitting there and they got bombed, the airplanes because they didn't have no fuel to get up. So, you know. And stuff like that is, you heard about that, but you didn't say nothing, you know. It's like **Romo**, I think **Romo** was one the biggest war hero's there was. Him and **Patton**, in Africa. But uh, and **Romo** went to school over here, in WestPoint.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, so they had the same ideas and uh, well Romo had to kill himself because he spoke out against Hitler, he didn't agree with his philosophy so he had a choice, either get killed or kill himself. Now I know his son, Romo's son. I know him.

**Interviewer:** Personally?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. He's a Lord Major, in Schtutcut.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, he been there for the last thirty years, he's good.

**Interviewer:** Is he still living?

**Herman Kraiser:** He's still the Lord Major.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, city of Stuttgart.

**Interviewer:** So, how did you know him, just from living around him?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, and one of my uncles, he uh, he's a business man, he had business contacts with him so that's how I met him. In fact I met him when I was stationed in Germany. So.

**Interviewer:** What was your impression of him?

**Herman Kraiser:** oh, he's a, he's a pretty nice fellow.

**Interviewer:** Pretty nice.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, I mean, his father was good, he was a good guy but like I say he was against the regime. What Hitler did so, he had to kill himself.

**Interviewer:** Did he ever talk about his father?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no, we didn't talk about that, no. That was altogether different generations, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, did your family or anything believe in the propaganda that a wonder weapon would appear near the end, to turn the tie at the war?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, the wonder weapon did appear. It was a V-2 rocket, you know. In fact, there was, when we looked up, you know, hear the noise or saw something in the sky,



everybody saw that it was a V-2 flying over. Some people said it looked like a telephone pole, you know, but I never saw one.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Herman Kraiser:** But it did uh, I don't know if you can call it a wonder weapon, but he was trying to get, use that against England, you know and, well, it was too late when that appeared, you know so.

**Interviewer:** So do ever remember, that your father was he not as equipped , or kind of untrained when they put him into war or was he...?

**Herman Kraiser:** No they got , they got training, you know and, the German soldiers back in them days was better well disciplined, you know so.

**Interviewer:** Because toward the end they started bringing anybody without training because they said the wonder weapon would come out.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, well towards the end they had what we called uh, lunch doom, I don't know if you ever hear that expression, lunch doom was older people over 55, over 60 years old, who was stationed in your home towns with rocket launchers, you know and uh, grenades and stuff like that, it was suppose to stop anybody, but they couldn't, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah

**Herman Kraiser:** And that was what they, like I say called, lunch doom, was your old lame individuals, you know, because everybody else, the younger generation was in the war, so he didn't have nobody left to take.

**Interviewer:** He took some Hitler Youth...into it?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah well, but they was already sixteen years old.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, is those the older ones?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. That's why I say, I know guys who went to war who was about eight years older than me, you know, they was young kids. But they, yeah they got drafted.

**Interviewer:** Were they killed or did you know anyone that were killed.

**Herman Kraiser:** I don't know. I don't... I know there was two brothers, they went in, one was seventeen and the other was sixteen and uh , the sixteen year old didn't come home. But I don't know where he went or what, you know.

**Interviewer:** Did you know him really well?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no. there was two brothers they lived about, oh, half a mile from where we lived. And their father got killed in the war. So uh, we knew the mother, or their mother so she lost the husband and one of the sons. Now I had an aunt that lost three sons in the war, you know, but they was older already. There was a lot of families that all the, uh, or basically all the man population was completely wiped out.

**Interviewer:** Was it?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So when was your first contact with Allied troops?

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh, well, when they took over the town. I remember one night we were sitting outside the house and they came by with the jeep, and we all went in the house and they just left and turned around, because there was a curfew but with us being the last house out there we didn't pay much attention to a curfew, you know we sat outside the house. But as far as, and then they searched the house, otherwise we didn't have no contact with them at all.

**Interviewer:** They just came in and out...searched...?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah

**Interviewer:** ...and just left?

**Herman Kraiser:** There was probably about ten of them that came through, you know. And they just went from house to house and checked the houses, you know.

**Interviewer:** Did they search like everything in your house or did they just like, mostly certain areas.

**Herman Kraiser:** No, they looked in glasses and they lifted the bed spreads and the mattresses and everything, oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** Were you, what was your families reaction to, did they?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well they didn't like cause they went in like, their private like, in treasures and stuff, but I mean they was doing their job, you know. You couldn't stop them anyways because you had to go outside when they, when they went through.

**Interviewer:** Right. Did you know anybody that were hostile to them?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, well, one reason why not, is because our home town, at that time what was the major, they greeted the Allies with the red flag, they surrendered the town, so there was no hostility in town afterwards.

**Interviewer:** So the troops, they weren't hostile to the civilians mostly or...?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, no, not really. I mean we had that guard post there that separated the American sector from the French sector but we could walk over there, that was about two, three months after the war uh, they didn't do nothing but we couldn't talk to them anyway because we didn't speak English and they didn't speak German, you know.

**Interviewer:** Were they Americans or were they British or were they a combination of both?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, Americans. See Germany got divided into four sectors, which was the French sector, American sector, British, and the Russian sector, well we was on the border between the French and the American sector. The next town over the mountain over there was French occupied, you know. And they had regular check points on the streets where, you know, where a ....couldn't go unless he was stopped and you know.

**Interviewer:** Was everyone relieved after they came in or were they...that the war was over and, or were they disappointed that they lost or...?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well I guess some of them was disappointed, but uh, most population, I know in my home town, was glad it was over, you know. Yeah, we had, not really in our town, they had hard times, especially in bigger cities, you know. They had hard times because they didn't have nothing to eat or nothing because everything was destroyed from the bombs, but like in my home town, yeah, they was glad it was over and everything start going back to normal then, you know so. I would say uh, mostly everybody really was glad it was over.

**Interviewer:** Were your parents glad or your mother and family were glad or were they...?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But did they have any support for the German cause at all or...initially or did they kind of gave up on it..?

**Herman Kraiser:** I would say initially, every German was for Hitler or for the...

**Interviewer:** But towards the end did they kind of, middle towards the end?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, because they saw it wasn't going nowhere but before the war started everybody was for him, you know, because he did good things for Germany, and so, I would say towards the end of the war, everybody was against it, what he did. Now, again people didn't know about how many, that he killed all them Jewish people, you know. But again, if you had a child who was not normal, the state took it, now where they took it to, you didn't know. Afterwards you found out, yeah they took them in camps and used them for research.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** You know.

**Interviewer:** Did you know of that happening around where you lived?

**Herman Kraiser:** I know there was two, uh, young children who disappeared, they had birth defects and they just, the state came and took them, and the families didn't have nothing to say about it, you know. And there was, it comes back to Hitler wanted a perfect human race, you know. So, that comes back to that. But, otherwise, and we didn't know where they took them, you know. After the war you found out, yeah they used them for research, you know so. It's like a lot of Jewish, not all of them wound up in concentration camps, a lot of them wound up, they used them for research, you know so.

**Interviewer:** So, before, when Hitler first came to power was your family, were they supporters of the Nazi party or were they...?

**Herman Kraiser:** I wouldn't know, I wasn't born yet.

**Interviewer:** They never talked about it or anything?

**Herman Kraiser:** Not, uh, even now, like my mother's still alive, we don't talk about that, you know, that's, I guess that time in history just better left alone, you know. And she never told me if she was proud of the Nazi party or if she a member of it or not, you know, but I imagine, she was in her twenties when she got married to my father, but I guess everybody young in that age, had to belong to the Nazi party, you know, you didn't have much of a choice, if you believed in it or not. That's...it's all right, well look in that camera(talking to his cat that just jumped in his lap)

**Interviewer:** So uh, finally, why did you decide to leave Germany after the end of the war?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, I left Germany in 1958, which is about thirteen years after the war, and the reason I left is, I worked in the factory, where I took my apprenticeship, and I was in 1958 in Belgium at the World Fair, with a machine from our factory on display, and I met an individual, American who was looking at the machines and he asked if I wanted to come to the states and work for him. And I said yes and so we did some paper work and I immigrated.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah. He was building machines up in Pennsylvania and it's where I came to and it's where I started working then.

**Interviewer:** So he was an American, he was a person that you say worked in the factory or..?

**Herman Kraiser:** No, he was a business man.

**Interviewer:** He was a business man, ok.

**Herman Kraiser:** yeah, he was building machines, in fact, they are still building machines up there. He was making machines to make uh, balls for ball bearings, bowling balls, machines to make bb's. So he brought me to the states. And I worked there for three years and then I got drafted to go into the American Army.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Herman Kraiser:** And then they sent me to Germany, as a young G.I., I had it made in Germany.

**Interviewer:** Yeah send you back where you...

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, spoke the language and read and write everything, you know. And back in them days, Germans didn't have the money, what they have now, you know. The economic boom just started like around 1960, so uh, as a young G.I, when I went over there, then I had, the dollar was high, the mag was low, you know, it was pretty good, so I stayed in.

**Interviewer:** Were you the only one that immigrated to the U.S. out of your family?

**Herman Kraiser:** Yeah, well I had some uncles and stuff over here, they all dead now but they lived in Pennsylvania too, but where I worked they didn't work there. I had one of my uncles, he's a builder, a contractor, and his son, my cousin, he does it now. But I came to the states uh, to, do business, you know. I don't know if you know really what a tool and die maker does.

**Interviewer:** They make uh....uh, tools, or dime , or...

**Herman Kraiser:** No.

**Interviewer:** Or diamonds.. or uh...

**Herman Kraiser:** No, not diamonds, die...d. i. e.( spells it out).

**Interviewer:** Oh ok.

**Herman Kraiser:** Uh, a tool and die maker makes the tool or a die to produce something.

**Interviewer:** Oh ok.

**Herman Kraiser:** Like if you want to produce, say like this, well that's glass, but let's say you want to make them, you got to have something to stand without this, so that's a tool or a die.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Herman Kraiser:** So that's what a tool and die maker, a tool and die maker is actually a higher machinist.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so initially you said you were working in Belgium, you said?

**Herman Kraiser:** No I went to Belgium, on the World Fair, my company form my home town had a machine. We set up a machine for display and the machine that we was making in

Germany, was paper machines, like uh, notebooks, machines to make notebooks. And we had the machine set up in the World Fair in Belgium.

**Interviewer:** How did you like working there?

**Herman Kraiser:** Well, we didn't work in Belgium, we just set the machine up and showed it, you know.

**Interviewer:** Ok.

**Herman Kraiser:** And that's when my later boss, from the U.S. , he was interested in the machines, so I, and we talked, and I invited him to come look at the factory and he came and that's when he asked me if I want to come work for him in the states and I said yes.

**Interviewer:** Alright, well I guess this concludes uh, our interview so uh, thanks Herman.

**Herman Kraiser:** We talked for about a good hour, uh?

**Interviewer:** Yeah....