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Interview with: Dr. Werner H. Von Rosenstiel
Interviewed by: Dr. Georg Kleine
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GK:= Dr. Georg Kleine
WVR: Werner H. Von Rosenstiel

GK: Welcome to the University of South Florida Library's Oral History program. I am Georg Kleine, Professor in the History Department at USF and our guest today is Dr. Werner Von Rosenstiel.

GK: Dr. Von Rosenstiel, you were an eye witness to the first part of the twentieth century from a highly advantageous and privileged viewpoint. Please tell us what happened, what was your angle on the events, and when and how did you make sense of what you saw.

WVR: Georg, this will be a long story. I better warn you about this because uh, it will take you virtually from the day of my birth to the time I was about 35 years old. And that covers the period from 1911 to 1945. And, if you want to put it into a sort of an unusual frame, you could say that I grew up on the volcano without knowing that I lived on a volcano. That when I realized what the volcano was, I made efforts to get away from the volcano before it thoroughly and completely exploded. So, I have to take you step-by- step and what I will attempt to do, I will relate to you individual instances and events, how all of this occurred to me, how I changed my opinions about many things, and ultimately how I participated in some of the world shaking events that have made our century.

So, let me first take you back to the time and the place where I was born. I was born in a small town in Prussia in Promerania called Anklam. The city was, in a sense, the prerogative of my father, who was the County Commissioner. He was the most important man in the town. And you might say he ruled over this small town of about 13,000 people with surrounding country, for about 20 years of his life. And I was born there and grew up. And one of my first recollections are, of course, the events of World War I. And, there were some very strange things. My mother read us everyday the number of tons that the Germans subs had sunk.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: This was sort of like a baseball game to us because we had never seen a submarine. We had never seen a major ship. We had seen, let us say, little boats. But no, big ships. And 10,000 tons sunk with to us, that was just a story. It was nothing more. Then, of course, there were the same things that happened in World War II. There were the planes shot down. And there appeared in our mind the names of the famous Air Aces, the German Air Aces; Boehlke, Von Richtofen, and Goering.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: But Goering at the time, of course, meant absolutely nothing to us. He was just a great Air Ace and a hero. And then suddenly I had to go to school. And, like everybody else, I had to make a beginning. And, on the first day of school, you wouldn't believe it but immediately after we were sort of signed up, we were told to go home. We were told to go home and scour in our basements and everywhere to see whether there was anything that could be used for the war effort, like iron or brass or wine bottles. There was this kind of uh, lead pa...type of...

GK: Foil. Yeah. Uh, huh.

WVR: Lead foil. And we would collect that and bring that. My older brother, who was also in school, collected (inaudible) that were brought in in order to make uh, fabrics. Well, a few days after I had been enrolled, I came home and I had noticed during the school time that there was some terrible noises in the town, really ghastly sounds. And it was the sounds of the church bells that had been demol...molished and they were thrown out of the belfries and the material was collected to make guns or shells. And then came, of course, the dreadful day on which there was the announcement...it was the 9th of November, 1918 where Germany had accepted the armestries. Where the emperor had resigned. And my father is a County Commissioner. Suddenly, saw his whole life collapse. And, it was the only time in my life that I saw my father cry.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And when we came to dinner, my mother said, "Please behave." I had five brothers and sisters and we were told that we had to be very gentle. Don't make jokes or do anything. There was something terrible. And we could see...we had never seen our father cry, but there it was. The war was over, my father had lost all his background so to speak. He was no longer the King's representative. He now served a Republic. He had no idea what a Republic was. Nobody had ever told him. And he was not quite prepared to learn about it, either.

GK: Of course, his whole family had been loyal to the monarchy for hundreds of years.

WVR: Absolutely.

GK: So, it was a collapse of many generations.

WVR: It was a terrible event for my family. I had no idea that suddenly the Kaiser would be gone. Well, I had no idea what a Republic was. How...where could I have learned it? I didn't. And so, now a new life started. But ostensibly in the beginning there was no change. Everything went on the same way. And suddenly we noticed that there was an enormous effort to restore either the Monarchy or to help the Republic to stay in office so there was an enormous amount of confusion. And I remember in 1920, happened an event that had made an enormous impact on me. At that time, a man by the name of Cupp had attempted to restore the Monarchy. And in order to accomplish this, he had persuaded some of the armed soldiers that were organized in free cores, which were really mercenaries, to come and help him take Berlin. And they came from the northern part of Germany and marched toward Berlin. And they stopped in our town. And so, at the age of it must have been 19, 20 I was nine years older, I saw for the first time, real soldiers.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: I mean soldiers with guns and machine guns and they (inaudible) in our garden. And of course to my older brother, he was four years old, and me, this was a glorious time. Because suddenly, for the first time in our lives, we could handle guns. I had, for the first time, a gun in my hand and the soldiers were delighted to have interested people in their business. They showed us how to load the machine gun, to crouch behind a machine gun and move the machine gun.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: It was a fabulously exciting thing. And they allowed us to take their (inaudible) and their machine guns apart and then put them together again. It was wonderful. And when they left, they were really...they wanted to indicate to us that they were our friends. So, they gave to my brother and to me, a whole load of shells, really fine shells. Loaded shells.

GK: Loaded shells?

WVR: Loaded shells so that we would have the privilege of being almost real soldiers.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And then they marched on and about the last thing we saw was that on each of their steel helmets, there was a swastika and they called them the Brigade Ehrhardt, which was one of the earliest supporters of Hitler, and later on became one of the part of the SA, the Storm Troopers. And, of course, my brother and I were overjoyed with having these maybe twenty or thirty shells. Wonderful, real powder in there. Real powder. And, of course, we did not show to our parents this wonderful gift that the soldier had given us because we felt that our parents were, of course, rather narrow minded about those things. They might have even taken them away from us. So, we hid them. And then after a few days, we felt that there was the danger of discovery by our parents. Who, like all parents, somewhat inquisitive at times. But we wanted to have the excitement of the shells. And we reflected what would be the best way of doing something with the shells that would give us the satisfaction of it. So, we decided to go into the basement of our house, which was an enormous house because it was also the whole administration of the County. And so, we went in the basement and there was the enormous plant that heated this building. And it was winter. And, so we went there, opened the boiler and threw the ammunition in there and raced around the corner and then heard, of course, the excitement of "bang, bang, bang, bang."

GK: Hmm.

WVR: The shots were getting off. And in the end, of course, the boiler was shot to hell.

GK: (Laughter)

WVR: And, later on there was the question, "How did these shells get in there?"

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And it was thought it must have been a mistake. It must have come among the coal and it was shoveled in there. My parents were never informed about the real cause. But we had the bang.

GK: Right.

WVR: It was one of the bangs that we had. And, of course, then for the next years or so, there was relatively little excitement for us. We had to go to school, except that, of course, in 1923 I recall we heard that in a distant part of Germany, which was Bavaria, and as a Prussian, we did not consider the Bavarians really, we had always a very low opinions of the Bavarians. So, we heard that there was a funny kind of a guy by the name of Hitler who had tried to overthrow the German government from Bavaria. Well, this sounded to us all very ridiculous. And we heard that many of his guys were shot up and he was taken prisoner and was tried. And so, we thought this man was totally ridiculous.

GK: And irrelevant.

WVR: Yeah. Totally irrelevant to us. And so, we saw the German Republic come slowly into existence. But nobody, and this is a curious thing, and I've never really fully comprehended why this was so, nobody really made an effort to impart to us knowledge about a Republic.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: We were educated precisely as my father had been educated. There was no instruction in what a Constitution was. There was nothing like, for example, Civil Rights. We were accustomed to obeying.

GK: Uh, huh. If anything, there were probably negative associations with the Republic because of the inflation...

WVR: Yes.

GK: ...happened during that time.

WVR: And now....

GK: And the Republic gets blamed for it.

WVR: Yes. And the inflation was, of course, a horrible event. And I, myself, recall the year 1922. I was like all kids. I always had dreams of having a great future.

And, at the age of 11, the future is described probably by some things that you today might find absolutely ridiculous. But in my time, if you owned a soccer ball, you had a future. Because you could...nobody else had a soccer ball. If you had a soccer ball, you were the person who called the shots. And the shots were of two kinds. You play with me, you play with me, and you don't play with me. This was the dream of everybody to have a soccer ball. And in order to get a soccer ball, I decided that I would work in the fall in the potato fields picking potatoes at the age of 11. And at the end I would be paid. I would buy the soccer ball and I would be the big shot. Well, I bought the ticket, I went to a farm, arrangements had been made that I would be paid at the end of the time. I worked like a slave and really earned at the end an enormous bill of 10,000 marks. It was already inflation. And proud with my 10,000 marks, I'm on the way back to the train to get to my parent's home. I go to a bake shop, I want to buy for myself a sweet roll. I go in there, I put my 10,000 marks on the counter and say, "I would like to have a sweet roll." And the man hands me the sweet roll, puts the 10,000 marks into his cash register. And I said, "How about some change." And he bends over to me and says, "Sonny, the rate of exchange has changed. A sweet roll today costs 20,000 marks but you are a nice kid so I gave it to you for half the price." I got an education about inflation that you cannot beat. And I found later on, at one time, when this took place I cannot precisely tell you but I found a note that showed 25 billion marks note...

GK: Hmm.

WVR: Just a simple sheet.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: Printed on one side and there was a serial number printed on it which showed that this was about number 5,550 that had already been given out. Now, imagine it. And this sheet of 25 billion marks did not buy a box of matches. Can you imagine?

GK: Let alone your soccer ball.

WVR: Yeah. My soccer ball. That was all past.

GK: Right.

WVR: Yeah. I lost that. And so, I drifted along, not particularly interested in politics, only hoping that if I would get to the university, I would then perhaps find for myself a job like everybody else. And so, in 1930, I graduated from high school and went to the University of Berlin in Bresslaugh to these two universities.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And finally decided to study law. And my father told me you got to hustle. You have to get yourself finished in three years or I cannot pay you anymore because my pay is so limited and you have brothers and sisters who also have to be educated. So, hustle. And so, very quickly I decided to work and study. But before I did this, I had about one semester in Berlin. And Berlin was, at that time, a thriving city of excitement.

GK: Of course.

WVR: Berlin was something that you can hardly imagine these days. There was theater, there were cabaret. Can you imagine that one city like Berlin played in one season three different versions of the Marriage of Figaro in three different opera houses. So, you could go and at the price for a ticket...admission ticket was about a quarter...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...you could go there and hear tremendous productions for virtually nothing. And one better than the next.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: You never knew what was going. There were wonderful cabarets. And the cabarets were very, very perceptive people. And I remember particularly two events that I saw in one of the cabarets. The cabaret was a art form that was highly political where the government would be taken to account, would be ridiculed...

GK: Satirized.

WVR: it would be satirized. There was a wonderful system of really putting the finger...it was sort of the same thing that you have here in America with some of the commentators, like the Will Rogers type. And there was one particular performance that I remembered must have been in 1930, you saw a stage, you came in this cabaret of...would accommodate perhaps 75 or 100 people only. You came in there, there was the stage. And there was the lector. And at the right side, where the lecturer was..was a speaker. And to the left was an audience that listened to him. And the man who spoke was a funny kind of a guy. He looked like that great and famous swindler. You must remember his name. He was always talking...telling tall tales. He had the big hat and was middle aged man. The only thing that was different with this man was that he had a small moustache and his hair was brushed just so that you knew it was Hitler. And the speech that he gave was something like this, [series of huh...huh...huh...] And the crowds listened to him totally mesmerized. And then there is a voice coming...coming from the one end of that crowd and says, "Nice. Nice. Nice. But don't disturb him. Because you would disillusion him." That was a description of what 1930 was in Berlin.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: And there was another (inaudible) play I remember, only very few lines of it. And what was told there was the Jews are responsible for everything. If the telephone is busy, it's the Jews. If the bathtub leaks, it's the Jews. For every conceivable evil that you could find or misfortune, it was always that they blamed the Jews. This was the climate in which Germany lived at the time.

GK: This was a satire on the Nazi propaganda at the time?

WVR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: Indeed. It was...

GK: But only a very few people took it on the light note.

WVR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

GK: The others took it very seriously.

WVR: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And so this was a typical cabaret out of the time where it was still possible to ridicule....

GK: Yes.

WVR: ...this kind of an approach.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: But then you could see the economy in 1930 breaks, as it did here in America. The unemployment increased. And with that, the desperation in Germany took on an enormous change because it became obvious that it was not possible to govern Germany with the parliamentary system because the parliamentary system required that the government must always resign if it did not have a parliamentary majority. And who would vote together in order to demolish the government? The Nazi and the Communists. Toward 1932, it became impossible to govern Germany by the parliamentary system that had been set up and which really never managed to excite and enlist the German nation. When I was a student, I devoted all my time now to studying because my father had said six...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ..six semesters, three years. So, I better take my exams. Now, at the University of Berlin when I was there, this was a university the equivalent of Harvard. And it had a very large proportion of wonderful faculty, many of them the famous and well-known German jurists like Martin Wolf and Hans Goldschmidt. They were Jewish and they had attracted the crop of the best students in Germany. So, it was a very active and competitive society in which I studied and where I had to compete with them. And I found this an exciting thing because people had told me, "Don't go there. There is too much competition." And I said, "Well, let me find out. Let me find out." And I found the competition was fine because if you have to compete then you have to compete. And I thought that this was an exciting and demanding process in which I was engaged. And I did quite well at the University. And one day, while I was at the University, must have been in 1932, I went out with a colleague of mine...a student. And we ate in a little cafeteria. And there was some terrible food. Both of us were always very short of money. We had bought pork and beans, not a very desirable but very inexpensive dish. And as we were eating there, the man with whom I was there, said to me, "You know this awful kind of a meal, the last time I ate this was when I was at a table and the man opposite from me suddenly fell over and fell with his face in the plate of pork and beans." I said, "No, come on. Come on." He said, "No. It's true. It's true. That's what happened." I said, "What was this all about?" Well, he said, "You know, it was a man who had a coronary." And I said, "Where was that?" And he said, "It was in Salt Lake City." And I said, "Where is Salt Lake City?" And he said, "That's in America." I said, "In America?" "Yes," he said. "It's in America." And I said to him, "Have you been in America?" "Yes" he said. "I have been in America." So, I said, "Say something in America." So suddenly he switches into English. And I said, "Tell me. You are not any smarter than I am. How did you get to America?" Well, he said, "I applied for a scholarship in the United States and I got it." And at that very moment, something...some light went on in my mind. And that is you get in your life only the things you go after. So, that very same day, went to the German Exchange Student Bureau right next to the place where we were eating, and filed an application for a scholarship in the United States. I had no knowledge of English at the time. I had given up English as a elective in high school because it interfered with my playing tennis. And I was convinced I would never have any need for English anyway, but tennis would be really something for life.

GK: Oh, yes.

WVR: You know.

GK: Right.

WVR: And so, I had maybe one year of English. That was it. And I signed that I would provide a certification that I was completely qualified to deal with the English language. My, that was in the future. And I filed the application and then devoted myself to the question of being a good student and making a good exam. And then I see in 1932 that it becomes worse and worse economically. The fighting in Germany, the daily confrontations between Communists and Nazi became such that, for example, in Berlin everyday there were murder, there was shooting. The University was closed for days because there were riots in the University. It became virtually impossible to continue. And then, of course, in this period Germany was really breaking apart as a nation. Nothing functioned anymore. And suddenly, on January 30, 1933, while I was in Berlin, there was the announcement that Hitler had been appointed Chancellor. And that was a moment that gave, I think, all of us pause. And perhaps at this moment I should say a word about Hitler. I thought at the time Hitler was a yo-yo. I had no idea that he had any...I thought well, he will be appointed Chancellor and like every other previous Chancellor, after three or five month, we will have another government. I was very naive. I was lacking in any kind of perspective.

GK: And yet you belonged to the educated elite of Germany.

WVR Oh, indeed. Indeed. And I'd taken courses in Constitutional Government.

GK: (Laughter)

WVR I had taken, I had taken all the required courses. But they did not register with me.

GK: No.

WVR: I was...

GK: The study of law in particular was really removed from the political activities at the time.

WVR: Totally. Totally. The...and we looked down upon them.

GK: Yes.

WVR: This was such...

GK: Impure.

WVR: Yes. It's....it's...and contracts was suddenly reality. Real property was some real....but Constitutional...and when they talked about Civil Rights, would...would...we cleared out throats and said [cough].

GK: The Romans didn't have it?

WVR: No. No. No. We didn't.

GK: Roman legal history was studied. But contemporary events in Germany were ignored.

WVR: We have very, very...and...and just pushed over to the side. But let me say now, a couple of things that we did not know about Hitler but that it is important. And I, later on, recognized all of this. And perhaps it would be a good point to make at this time, a remark about Hitler. Hitler, we thought, was a yo-yo. But when you really look at Hitler with all that we have learned in the meantime, we should not forget that Hitler was an unbelievably talented man. Where he got these gifts from will probably never be discovered. He must have gotten some of it out of himself. Other people may have contributed to him, but he was a brilliant man. He had a talent that very few people have been given by nature. And that was the talent to mesmerize crowds. The crowd inspired him and created for him a persuasiveness that increased the more the crowd responded.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: But in addition to that, this was not all. He had, in addition to that, an incredible talent of finding people who, like him, were undoubtedly close to criminals. People who were not bothered or burdened with any concept of morality.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: This is a...it's old fashioned. Forget about it. But he must have also had a clear understanding that in order to succeed you need power. And what did he do? He created from 1925, when he got out of jail, he created for himself a bodyguard of storm troopers - SA - that were so powerful that the government feared him and was not sure that they could suppress them even if they wanted to with their own army. This was an enormous weapon that he had. But in addition to that, what did he get? When he became Chancellor, he was suddenly given as a present an absolutely reliable German administration that the Prussian Kings had developed over centuries. It was free from bribery, totally devoted and absolutely reliable. And, he was given an armed force, an army of 100,000 men of probably the finest soldiers that you could imagine. All of them World War I veterans. All of them trained in the real stuff, not just on the marching fields but in the trenches. This was made available to him. And now, what else did he provide? He provided...he had developed a system of dealing with a whole nation that nobody had ever experienced before. He did not use what other people had used before, the guillotine, to shorten people by a head. No, no. Not...not that. They did not...he did not go out to shoot people by the thousands. No. He created a psychological approach. And the psychological approach was something very, very unusual. He created a concept that can be called angst, fear. But how was fear created? The moment he took over power, there appeared in the German conscious a new word. Carcet to us, to the world it was concentration camps. There were concentration camps. Nobody knew precisely what is a concentration camp? Where people are gathered for friendly purposes? No, no. No, no. But the...the...we don't know what concentration camp...but it is not a friendly thing. It is something very, very unpleasant. Tell us, how is unpleasantness described? Well, suddenly somebody who had been, let us say, a social democrat, does not come from his work. He does not come home. His wife is concerned. She waits. He does not come. She waits for another day. She calls at his office. No, he left here. Oh. She becomes concerned, she goes to the police. She says, "Has he been arrested?" "No, he has not been arrested. We have no record here. Is your husband involved in any crime or..."

"No, no. We don't know." So, finally word gets to the woman, maybe he is in a concentration camp. That is a place where they put people. Where they...they put a lot of people there. Weren't you a social dem...wasn't he a social dem...well, you know, social democrats are not so...so popular these days. Maybe that's where he is. But we...we really don't know. We really don't know. And now, she is at home. Her husband doesn't come. Finally, after two or three months, she receives a package. The package is a box. She opens the box. In it is a tin container. And in the tin container is ashes of her husband who died of pneumonia. Hmm. Before very long, some man comes by and says you received a package. We suggest that you deposit this in a cemetery so that he is properly buried. But we would recommend that you not talk too much about it. Well, word gets around. This is what happened. This is angst. This is angst. And angst enters into the life of the German nation in a manner that has rarely ever been described or experienced.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Later on, I would tell you more about what angst is like. But now, back to January 30, 1933. I was on my way to law school as I'd every been...I lived...lived at an apartment in uh, near Tempelhofer Field. I go to the railway station. There's one strange change. On the morning of January 30, when Hitler had been appointed, there stands with the policeman who stands always there, an SA man. Funny. Funny. I get off the stations. At every station....

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...there is a SA man. The SA is there. This is Nazi power. For the first time visible. Now, within a few days, there is an announcement that there will be elections. New elections for a new parliament. And the elections will take place on March 5, 1933. Now, all the parties begin to rev up. They print their posters.

GK: Except the Communists that were..

WVR: No, the Communists, too. The Communists, too. Now comes, on the 28th of February, there comes an event that is definitely proof that the Communists are out to destroy Germany. They have set fire to the Reichstag. The parliament building of Germany has been set on fire by the Communists. Therefore, Germany is in absolutely mortal danger. And Hitler is the Chancellor. Goes now, to old General Hindenburg and says, "As Vice President, Germany is in desperate need of strong action. The Communist party will be forbidden, number one. We will arrest every Communist we can lay our hand on. And more important than that, all portions of the German Constitution that (inaudible) such foolish things as liberal rights, civil rights, or so...are abolished, are suspended." And that is the end of Constitutional government. Of course, you know that as the election takes place on March 5, Hitler is confirmed and now sits solidly in the saddle. And the very first time that I saw Hitler was on May 1, 1933. There was a giant rally that was held on the Tempelhof Airfield. There were over a million people who came to hear him speak. And I was there with the people with whom I lived. And it was a fascinating occasion and I must say, I was very much impressed. Hitler spoke, not about the Jews, not about the enemy from outside except for saying the Versailles treatment will no longer be obeyed. That he said at the time. But he spoke about things that were really close to all of us. He said the plague of unemployment that gives desperation to everybody is going to be changed. I am announcing at this moment an enormous program of building roads. And so, he disclosed the plan to build the Autobahn. Now, we were all enthusiastic about that idea. There were no cars at the time. We had no idea that these roads were designed for totally different purpose, namely to shift armies from one side of Germany to the other. We thought this would be for the future time when each one of us would have one of the little bugs to drive through Germany. We had...they would be so cheap that you...that every one of us could use `em and we needed fine roads on which we could zip along. We were enthusiastic. We applauded. He spoke about other things. He spoke about the fact that it was very bad that the German Jews did not really have anything to be proud of. They were just smoking cigarettes. They were going, if they could find the money, they were going to go to a movie that...but they fretted away their time. So, what did he announce? He said we are going to have every young German, upon reaching the age of 18, will join the labor force. He will serve for one year, without pay, the German nation. He would clean up swamps, clean up bad areas. Uh, do some road work. Do anything that would help the nation to be better. Well, I thought that was...was nifty. I could...could see nothing wrong with that whatsoever.

GK: And they would become physically fit as well in the process.

WVR: Yeah. Undoubtedly. Undoubtedly. Was a very...

GK: Towards some ulterior purposes.

WVR: Yeah. Yeah. And then, of course, he spoke against the Versailles Treaty and there was not a person in Germany who was not in favor of that. And finally, he spoke about the one bugaboo. That everyone had still sitting in the back of his mind, and this bugaboo was inflation. I mean inflation was an experience that the

German nation had had that has never left the Germans. Not to this date....

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...I mean here, in America, it's...it's a newspaper announcement. But in Germany, it is a reality. It is a reality when you know that a bucket...a wheelbarrow full of money doesn't buy you anything. Where people can come and say, "Look. I have a dozen eggs. But you give me this nice silver cup." And you take the silver cup and you..there go the eggs.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: This is the relationship. And he made a statement and he said, "I guarantee you that as long as I live and as long as I am Chancellor, you will be able to buy a loaf of bread for fifty finnish. For half a mark." And believe it or not, in 1945, at the end of the war, a loaf of bread was fifty finnish. Now, that was something that stuck with me. And at the end of it, he said, that's the way he concluded. He said, "We mustn't forget that the Nazi party has always been the party that is the party for the working man. Let us not forget that for a minute." And we all applauded. And there was...there were...I think followed a show where they showed us that there were still six planes from World War I, old double-decker planes. And there was a famous war Ace by the name of Udet, who made trick flights over the....and they had brought in the Zeppelin to run around in the air up there and impress us with the German ability to get things into the air. And we were tremendously impressed. And we were applauding. Then we went home. And the next day, guess what happened? On the next day, there was announcement that all German Unions were forbidden and all German labor was organized in the labor front. And it was all so declared that any strike would be punished severely. And everybody suddenly knew what severely meant. Now, I saw all of this but I was still convinced that basically Hitler was moving along a track that I could understand, that I could subscribe. I did not think that it was very nice what he was doing to the Jews. But I was, in the meantime, I passed my first bar exam. I had been appointed a law clerk and I worked in the Judicial Administration. And I saw, in some of the courts, Jewish judges still performing. This was in 1934 and in 1935. And now, in 1934, I get the announcement that I have been awarded an exchange student scholarship to the University of Cincinnati. Now, I had to learn English, which was not so easy because I didn't have money to take courses. So, I bought a book on self instruction but I can tell you, it's a very difficult thing to see or to learn from a book, which says this is a "th" and it's sounds different from what you see there. And how you pronounce a "th" you couldn't get that really without recording equipment, which I didn't have. So, I had a very hard time persuading anybody to give me a certificate that I was fully qualified person to go to America. But I managed. I managed. I...I swindled myself the certificate and I arrived in America. And, of course, the first thing when I arrived in America was that there was something that I had not expected at all, namely that I thought America, of course there were many cars and there...there were other things. But I thought that there was respect for the government. This was...I came into a dormitory and there was a bull session and I remember they...we were discussing the new deal. Because I always said what is the new deal? You always talk about the new deal. And so, they explained it. And suddenly, one of the students said, "Well, I'll tell you. That Roosevelt. That son of a bitch." And I said, "Just a minute. Just a minute. That's the President of the United States. You cannot say that about the President." He says, "Why not?" Well, I said, "You know, if I would say Hitler, that son of a bitch, I would get into a concentrac..." And he said, "You're in America now. You're in America now." And so, I suddenly and gradually became aware that America was very, very different. And I bought myself newspaper in order to improve my English, which was very necessary. I bought myself a newspaper and read the newspaper. And, of course, I read in the newspaper not only about America but I read a great deal about Germany. And it did not match at all...

GK: Yes.

WVR: ...what I had seen in Germany. It was from a totally different point of view. And in Spring of 1936, I...part of my functions as an exchange student was, of course, to visit with the people who had given the scholarship and discuss with them...talk to them either in German or to talk to...to them about what I heard from Germany and what I thought about Hitler and whatnot. But I had also to go, from time to time, to song and gymnastics clubs in the city of Cincinnati. And Cincinnati had a very large German population. And one evening, when I was with one of those groups - I think it was a singing group - was a singing group....

GK: German American Singing Club.

WVR: German American Song Group. And while we were drinking and singing, a man came in and he said , oh, you know, I...and everybody said, oh. You're back from Germany. How was it? "Oh," he said, "It was terrific." And did you see anything exciting and so? "Yes. Yes," he said. "I saw something. When I came into Rothenburg, there was, besides the road, an enormous sign. And this sign said Jews are not wanted here." And at that moment somebody, not the man who spoke, turned to me and said, "What do you think about that?" And I did not have my mind in gear. I said, "I think that's awful." And then we sang...went on and sang and had some more beer. And a couple of days later, I get a telephone call from another exchange student in Oberlin, which is very near to Cleveland, Ohio, and she says...and she's an exchange student there, too. And she says, "Werner, what did you do?" I said, "What do you mean, what did you do?" You must have done something very, very stupid because the German Consulate in Cleveland said that somebody had reported you as not being in line with Hitler's concept. And he has asked me whether you are a reliable person. And suddenly I experienced what I've mentioned before. I experienced angst. Suddenly I noticed, "My God. I have put my head into a noose." So, now I had to plan how can I neutralize or do something about this? If I go to the Consulate and say I've been tipped off. Somebody...that would have been the clearest way of cutting my own throat completely. So, I see in the newspaper that there is actually in Cleveland a sensational event, namely there is an exhibit of VanGogh. The first great exhbiit of VanGogh to come to this country. So, I drive to Cleveland and I see the exhibit. And then I go up to the Consulate and say I would like to visit you because I'm over here to have just seen the VanGogh exhibit and it was such a tremendous thing. And so we sort of palava and he said, "Well, how do you like your time in America?" And I said, "Well, I'll tell you...to tell you the truth," this is 1936, "to tell you the truth, it's all right. It is all right. But I find many things that don't really appeal to me. And there is one thing that I really regret. And that is that by having this scholarship in this year, I will miss the greatest opportunity that I could have had to see Hitler open the Olympic games in Berlin." And the Consulate said, "Well, I can well understand. That is something that I would like to see myself." And then I led him on and said I was, in 1928, I was in Amsterdam and at sea and the Olympic games there. And I was convinced that Berlin would show them really what could be made out of the Olympic games. Well, the Consulate was rather pleased by this very devoted...devout young man to the cause. And no question was brought up. But later on, when I returned to Germany, this had followed me just the same into Germany as I found out. Now, the time ultimately in America ended and I traveled in the west and ultimately decided to go back to Germany, not by way of the North Atlantic but go around the world. So, I...with another German exchange student, the two of us went by way of Japan, Manchuria, China, ultimately to Singapore, where we had run out of money. And so, we went to the Consulate and said, "Please find something for us to work our way home." And he found a way, not the most pleasant. We were hired on a German tramp steamer that took us through the Dutch East Indies and we shoveled coal from Singapore by way of Celebus, Java, Sumatra, to Marseille. It was not the most pleasant kind of employment but it was informative because everywhere where we came and where we had been, we could see already an enormous preparation for things to come.

And the things to come were not economic penetration of the world. It was conquest. We could see it every place where we went. And then in the end of January, 1937, I returned to Germany. I was, of course, the great hero because I was the first one in my family who had ever been around this world. And, of course, I made myself a great hero having been traveling all around this world. But...and now, I had to go back because I had to finish up my education and get myself a job. So, I started out and I could see already on the very first day, when I returned into Germany, that Germany was changed.

GK: Hmm.

WVR: In the 17 months that I had been away...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...Germany had turned into an armed camp. You could hardly believe what was going on. There were army vehicles. There were tanks. There were air fields. There were barracks being built. Planes all over. Everything was armed. I mean, in the meantime of course, they had compulsory military service for everybody. So, I see all of this and suddenly I realize that what I had read in the papers in America was a much better picture than most of the people that were in Germany. And I read the German papers and the German papers said nothing. They were bland. There was nothing in the paper except for praise for the government and showing Hitler being here. Hitler being there. And wonderful. Everything was just hunky dorey. And now, I return to my job in Breslau as a law clerk. And I have, living there, an uncle who took care of me in every, every respects. And on the day on which I returned and visited him, we go into his living room. And the moment we come into the living room, he puts his finger on his mouth. And I think, what is this? Why I should I....but I..I obey. I said...and with that, I see him take from the table a coffee warmer and put it over the telephone that stands in that room. Once the coffee warmer is over, my uncle says to me, "This is the first lesson that you have to learn now that you are back from America. Most telephones are wired but we do not which...know which ones are wired. So, we suspect that every telephone is wired. You cannot use the telephone anymore for anything but is strictly business conversation. That's the first thing. And the other thing that you have to learn is that whenever you go into any office, you better raise your hand and say loud and clear, heil Hitler. Do not smile or sneer or be ridiculing this. Heil Hitler is the word of today. You cannot fool with that. The other thing is you must join something. And you, as a law clerk, you should join the German Lawyers Association. It costs you only one mark per month. It is an area where one of Hitler's cronies has set up for himself a preserve where he siphons off money for himself. He wants to ultimately have you when you are lawyers or judges to pay more. But now you pay a mark. And you get a button for your buttonhole, which is important. Take my word. Well, I had learned. I began to become a very precise disciple of the system. But I could see that this was something that I had never, never anticipated and now gradually there came what you might call a realization that something is very, very fishy and perhaps very dangerous. Now, I begin to go back to my clerkship. And I am the clerkship for a law...for a young law clerks is that for three years they work in the German judicial administration. They are passed from the lowest court to the highest court and are exposed to every conceivable judicial problem that a judge or an attorney would have in the practice of law. And this is done. The law clerk provides for the judicial administration. The cheapest labor force that is available because the law clerk is not paid. He must work and he must get a good grade from his preceptor because if the preceptor says, "This law clerk is dumb or lazy" he will never...

GK: He is finished.

WVR: He is finished. So, this system enables the German Judicial Administration to have first-class workers. Eager beavers all the time. And so now I get back into the stream of education. And the first judge to whom I'm assigned is curiously enough a relatively young judge. He's probably not much older than maybe 30 or 35. And he's very nice. And I am very forceful. And so, and...but he knows from my personal record, which is seen when I'm assigned to him, he knows that I had been in America. So, very unusual occasionally he invites me to have lunch with him. Normally, a judge would never eat with his law clerk. I mean, this...he's just a slave. But not to have lunch. But he invites me for lunch and we talk about the Grand Canyon. And we talk about the Niagara Falls. We talk about the University of Cincinnati. And we talk about everything but never, never do I talk about politics because it is too dangerous a topic. And when he says, "Have you read the latest feature of Hitler?" And I would say, "Yes, I have. And indeed, it is a very impressive speech." And I played the game the way it has to be played. Now finally, my six weeks or so are up with this man and I now go in to thank him for the education that he has (inaudible) and how he not...how charming he has been in his...in taking me out for lunch. And he opens a drawer and he pulls out a blue book. A curious blue...small, blue book. And he said, "Here's a present for you." And I take the book. The book is called "Gufstave Lebon, Psychology of the Masses." I said, "I do not know the book." And he smiles and said, "Well, I hope you will enjoy it." And then, as I say goodbye to him, as we go out of the door, he says, "The book has been withdrawn from the book trade just a couple of days ago." I say, "I didn't know that, either." I take the book. I go home. I am totally and completely perplexed. Why did he give this book to me? I think I better read it. So, I quickly sit down. I read the book. The book is written in 1894 by probably one of the first sociologist or psychologists of his land. A Frenchman. And it describes Napoleon's ability to mesmerize masses. And as I read it, I say, "My God. This is precisely what Hitler has written in Mein Kampf." And, of course, I had read Mein Kampf because nobody would go into a first bar exam in 1933 without having read Hitler's Mein Kampf from cover to cover and annotate it.

GK: Really.

WVR: So, I had read this. And suddenly I see it is precisely the stuff. But why did he give it to me? Did he want to trap me? Did he want to get rid of the (inaudible) because he felt himself in danger? Angst. This is what came up. The next assignment, I'm assigned to Judge Schroeder. Judge Schroeder is a man of perhaps 50 and his field is execution of civil judgments. There's a department that every legal system knows. It's known in America. It is known in Germany. And it deals with the question, what do you do with somebody who does not pay his bills or his contracts? Well, if you buy merchandise on time and you don't pay, you're taken to court. The man gets a judgment against you and probably takes the furniture away and you may even have to pay some money.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: Now, this judge has to make these decisions. But at the time, this is 1937, there is still hanging over Germany the after effects of the terrible Depression. And during that time, laws were passed in Germany that said, "If you cannot pay a bill because you have been maneuvered into financial distress by circumstances beyond your control, there is a justification for giving you a year's time to get back on your feet." Now, this was a standard thing. And (inaudible) cases came and I knew exactly about this whenever it was granted, one year. Next case and so on. Now comes the case of Furniture Factory Lohse versus Jacobson. The case is like all the others. The only difference is that Jacobson is a Jew. He had bought in 1932 a very long contract to buy furnishings for his house. He had gotten married and he had married a German girl who was not Jewish. In 1934 or 35, Jacobson had lost his job because he was a Jew. But his wife stepped in and said, "I will hold down the job and we can make the payment." And after a year and a half, in 1937, she gets tuberculosis. She cannot work anymore. They do not make payments. The case comes. And now the decision has to be made what to do with these. I have it. I see Jacobson loses his job because he's Jewish. He's not responsible for that. She has tuberculosis, circumstance beyond her control. Nobody goes out to get tuberculosis to avoid payment of a bill. Ergo, in the name of the German people, execution of the judgment postponed for one year. I draft the decision. I give the explanation before that. I put it in the basket. It goes to the judge and I expect nothing. Next day, I'm being called in to see the judge. I go and see the judge. And the judge...when you walk into the judge's room you stand there at attention, Heil Hitler, and you do not get a seat because you are a clerk. And he speaks from his seat there at his desk. He goes and closes the door. He makes me sit down. He says to me, "Herr Kollege," which is my dear colleague, "though a law clerk." My God, I think, what was happened? He said, "I have read your draft of the judgment in the case of Furniture Factory Lohse versus Jacobson. I've torn it up and thrown it in the wastepaper basket. I cannot sign that judgment. If I would sign that judgment, my name would be tomorrow on the front page of the Stuermer, that horrible magazine that is published daily in Nuremberg, by Streicher. And my career as a judge would be finished. I have two children to educate. I cannot afford this. But you may rest assured that except for me, nobody will ever know about this. I will give you a first class reference but I cannot do otherwise. I must do what I am doing. So, rest assured, that this will never leave this place." Well, that man, in a sense, saved his career and perhaps my life.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: This was precisely what existed in Germany. It was angst. Everything that Germany experienced was angst. You never knew. The next thing that happened to me in 1937, after uh, probably some other assignments, I was assigned to a place for two months where I would be brought together in a law clerk training center where we were taught specifically how to go about bending the law to the accommodation of the Nazi party. For two months, I was confined with about 200 other law clerks from all over Germany. And we were there. Everyday. We were physically toughened by playing soccer and but always instructions on how to be devout and devoted Nazi judges of the future. And it was an astonishing thing that nobody trusted already anybody else now. We were all...everybody always saluted. Nobody made a crack. And they found out, we lived in a group of 20, and we had a one big room with double deck bunks. And in the evening, we sat around. There was no radio. And so, they knew that I had been in America. The 19 guys said, "Won't you tell us what America was like?" And so I told them about it. And then they said, "Well, what do American students do for example for when there is a big event?" I said, "The big events are always football games." And they say, "Well, what is a football game." Well, I said, "It's...it's a game very different from soccer. And it....it's like rugby. And so, but I cannot really explain it because I...but I can tell you that it is (inaudible) also because there come dancing girls come out." This interested them immediately. And I said, "There is something very unusual that you would never hear at a German University, namely they have yells." And they said, "What are yells?" Well, I said, "You know, you this is again...I will attempt to give you a demonstration of what a yell is." Now, I knew from my partner in the...the other German exchange student. He was much more involved in athletic activities than I was. He was at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. And they had a yell which went like this. "Rock, shock, jay hawk. Kay, yoo-hoo." Now, I told them this. And so, they said, they tried this once more. And so, suddenly the whole room begins to make this yell. And they are absolutely enchanted. I mean this was something totally different. And the next day, when we are marching out, suddenly one of them says it. This group of 20 people does the Lawrence, Kansas rock, shock, jay...what do you think happens? It is put into my personal record as a law clerk that this man has seen too much. He is obviously not suited for going on in this way. He has seen too much. And this is clear proof this man is...is...

GK: Unreliable.

WVR: ...is unreliable. Unreliable. Came into my personal records. Imagine. Now, it is the end of the year. In January I take a new job. And the new job is as a law clerk in a bank in Berlin. And there I see in March an enormous event. And the enormous event relates to Hitler having incorporated Austria. On the morning when Hitler returns to Berlin from his conquest of Vienna, I come to the bank. And I've not even taken my coat off and there's announcement over the loud speaker the bank will close in 30 minutes. All personnel will form in front of the bank. And for the spontaneous reception of Hitler. And we will be marched over a spontaneous route from the bank to the Chancellery where there will be a spontaneous space roped off for us where we will stand. And so, we march there. And it is the last time that I have heard and seen Hitler speak. Next to me walks a very...somewhat older but very attractive young woman and we carry on a gay, but not political conversation. And we arrive in front of the Chancellery. And I was absolutely astonished how small the space is in which you can push 250 people. I mean it's...it's like a sardine box. And we stood there, which of course, since the girl was very attractive, it was not so bad to be in this sardine box. But, now came the piped excitement, namely music and marches of all type are being played. And then came announcement the Fuehrer has just arrived at Tempelhof Air Field. And so, all of this was orchestrated. And I was taller than the average. And I could see in the distance finally, I could see Hitler car come with the banners. And so, I turn to my friend and say, "Franzie." And Franzie was no longer with me. Franzie was completely in the trance of this man who had not even opened his mouth. Her pupils were dilated. She was sweating. Her head...her hat was pushed back. Her mouth was half...half open. I said, "Franzie." She was listening to somebody else. And this was the first time that I really saw this mesmerizing quality that Hitler had. I saw it there for the last time. Now, I'm going to take you six years later because it might be in point, even though in point of time it doesn't fit. Six years later, the war is over. I have come from Nuremberg to Berlin with a Colonel whom I accompanied. And I took him to the Chancelllery and said, "This is the place where I stood and saw Hitler and the Chancelllery burned out." You could still see the red marble. I picked up a piece of red marble and brought it home with me because I wanted to make...have a memento of the Chancelllery. And we looked at it and I told him about this event. And he said, "Well, and how did you get here? Do you work...work at a bank, didn't you?" I said, "Yeah. Let's drive over there." So, we drive over to the bank. The bank, by a miracle, has not been touched by a bomb. It stands there. There is the very same door through which I had entered the bank for a whole year....half a year. I press the button...the bell. I hear in the distance the bell ringing inside. Nothing. I push a second time. I see or I hear sort of dragging feet coming to the door. The door opens. A woman's face appears. She looks at me and says, "(inaudible) Von Rosenstiel." Then she closes the door and it is Franzie. It is the girl who stood next to me at that time. Now, back to Berlin in 1938. In 1938, a major event happened, namely a girlfriend of mine whom I met as a student in Cincinnati, appeared in Berlin to visit. And I took her to my family's farm in the east. And during this time, we talked also about other things. And are we running slowly out of time?

GK: No. Your story is right on target.

WVR: Okay. But I met at the time not met...re-met the woman whom I ultimately would marry. And she saw me as a very changed person. And she was concerned about that. And ultimately she said, "Well, uh, I don't think there's any point or hope that we could that we could possibly come into...into any kind of an agreement of being married here because this is not the right place." And I think I should go back for a moment and tell you that in...after I had the experience with the two judges about whom I told you about, the angst concept. I had gone back to my parents and had said to my parents, "You know. I do not think that I can continue living in this country because I think I cannot be in an honorable judge. I cannot be an honorable lawyer. I have to be a liar all my life. And I do not think I can do that." My father was beside himself. He was still a Loyalist. He said, "Well, that's treason. It's treason." And I said, "Well, uh..." And he said, "By the way, in addition to that, you owe me something." He got very, very noisy about it. He says, "You owe me something. I educated you. I had to put up money for you all the time and now you want to chicken out. I'll tell you what's the trouble. You are scared of taking the second bar exam."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: I said, "Just a minute. Just a minute. That is not the case." And now, my mother said, "Now, please calm down." Because we live in a condominium and the walls are thin. "I don't want people next door to hear what goes on here." So, we turned down and my father said, "You are chicken. You don't want to take the second bar exam." I said, "Just a minute. Just a minute. I'll take the second bar exam. I'll take the second bar and I will not mention to anybody the idea of leaving. But if I pass the second bar exam, can I go?" And I don't know what motivated my father to say yes. I have a suspicion that he thought I wouldn't pass it. Well, that is...is a wonderful delusion and it's understandable because he had failed in the exams. So, he said, "Well..." And then he said, "Of course, probably he will meet a girl, get married. Then it's all over." You know, (inaudible). And so, I told my girlfriend in the Spring, in the Summer of 1938, unless I can...can out...get out of Germany, there is no chance for us. And she said, "Well, I'll work on it, with also...with some of our friends in America." And so, now, in 1938, you can see already how Hitler becomes more and more aggressive. He has in 1938 incorporated Austria. When you look at the picture of Austria related to Czechoslovakia, you can suddenly see that Czechoslovakia hangs there almost like a...like a ripe plum to be picked. So...

GK: You are a soldier.

WVR: No, not yet.

GK: Not yet.

WVR: Not yet. But I...you can see, that the excitement starts and suddenly begins the crisis of Czechoslovakia. And so, I now find myself drafted into the German Army. I am...suddenly I find a letter. You had to appear. Bring with you a toothbrush, and some wrapping paper and string so that you can send your civilian clothes home.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: So, I become now a soldier. And for eight weeks, I am one of millions of people who have been drafted. In 1938, Hitler had an army of one million men.

But in order to impress the allies and the reporters about the magnitude of the German Army, he drafted two million soldiers. People like me to teach them within a very short time how to look like soldiers, salute like soldiers, turn right and left like soldiers, be neat like soldiers, and had very little idea about what soldiers is all about. And the result, it paid off, because when Chamberlain and Musselini and Dalligy came to Germany, they could see this is an armed camp. They will run all over us.

GK: Right.

WVR: This is...this is a hopeless task. We better give them Czechoslovakia. It's cheap. It's cheap for us. And so, after two months in the German Army, I was released. I was sent back and now I prepared for my final bar exam. I went back to Berlin. And there came in November. On the 12th of November came the moment, one evening I go out on the...it was not the 12th, it was on the 9th of November, I go out onto Kerufesdam, and it is the night of the broken glass. And I am there surrounded by masses of people, silent, looking at what the Nazis had done. They had destroyed every Jewish store. They had burned the synagogues and now was the moment of truth also for me. I wrote a letter to my girlfriend in America, without giving my return address, how ashamed I was. This letter was saved. And later on, in 1943, it helped me be freed when I was tried as an enemy alien. I think we are about almost running out of time.

GK: But tell us the end of the story. You were able to leave.

WVR I was able to leave. And I arrived in this country...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...as an immigrant. I was ultimately drafted and became a soldier. And in the next meeting, I will tell you about what became of me as an American soldier.

GK: Thank you very much. A fascinating story.

[Note: This section is from the afternoon session of the interview]

Welcome to the University of South Florida Library's Oral History Program. I'm Georg Kleine, a Professor in the History Department at USF. Our guest today is Dr. Werner Von Rosenstiel.

GK: Dr. Von Rosenstiel, you are a unique eye witness to the first half of the twentieth century, especially to one of the pivotal events of the mid-century, the Neurhmburg Trials. Would you please tell us how you got to go to the Nuremberg trials and especially how you got to be there as a native German, yet being on the prosecution side on the American side.

WVR: I came to Nuremberg as almost everything that happened in my life my a number of great accidents. It certainly was not planned, although in some way planning has always been an important part of my life. The German Army had great plans for me. They wanted to use me unquestionably in the interrogation of allied prisoners. And they knew that I'd been in America and that I had learned some English, not too much at that time, yet. I've learned some more since. But, they wanted to improve my English. And so, during the time from 1937, when I returned from America, `til 19....the end of 1938, they had drafted me a total of three or four times for two-week language courses. They were very much interested that my English would be perfected. And this ultimately helped me to get, in a sense, to Nuremberg because it helped me to get out of Germany. In 1939, I passed my final bar exam and managed to get a very, very high grade, which qualified me, curiously enough, to a lifetime judicial position in the German Judicial Administration. I received a certified letter offering me this job. And I immediately accepted this with profound gratitude and appreciation for the acknowledgment of my value to the German Judicial Administration. But I asked that I would be permitted to postpone my commencement of my service by 30 days, during which I wanted to go to America for the purpose of polishing my English, in which the German Army was so very, very interested. And with this letter and my appointment, I went to the German Army and said, "Please give me my passport so that I can go back to America." And they said, "That's great. That's great." And so, they gave me my passport and I booked passage to America. But being extremely cautious and extremely fearful that at the last moment somebody would spill something on me. I booked on an American boat. And I was prepared with all my documentation that I had, if somebody came to me as I boarded the ship and said, "Why didn't you go on the German boat?" I said, "Look, I want to use every minute to speak American." And so, they didn't ask me and ultimately I arrived in the United States. And now I began a new life as an American immigrant. The first thing that I discovered was that a German education in 1939 was about the most worthless thing to have. And so, I decided that I would work on myself and go back to school to learn really English. And in addition to that, I went to law school. And ultimately America entered the war and suddenly I had changed my classification. I had become an enemy alien. And so I was first arrested and continuously questioned. And then I was brought to trial. They decided we better make up our minds. Are we going to trust this guy or not? I was brought before an enemy alien hearing board and they went hot and heavy at me. They said, "Where have you been? And what did you do? And what is your father? And have you served in the German Army? And why did you want to become a German lawyer? Isn't this all very, very, very unpleasant and...

GK: Suspicious.

WVR: ...it's very suspicious. You are certainly a man who belongs behind barbed wires. And so, I had been denied the opportunity to have counsel to help me. But since I was a trained lawyer in Germany and had gone to law school in America, I felt that I could pretty well defend myself. But I had a large number of witnesses who came to testify in my behalf. And the most important of my witnesses was my wife. My wife had been in Germany in 1938 as I have told you in an earlier installment of this series. And, now came her moment of glory because my wife was what you call conventionally, she was a pack rat. She did not throw away a single letter that she ever received. And she had saved the letter that I had written to her on the night when I had seen the shameful performance of the Germans during the night of the broken glass. She had the letter in the original envelope, with the postage stamp and the date and she read my words of disgust and shame. And she said, "This is the letter. I am reading it to you. It convinced me. I do not know how else you can prove that somebody is of good faith or not." And the court said, "We agree with you." And so, I was released and within three months, I was a United States soldier. I was drafted as an enemy alien into the United States Army. Now, I went through probably more investigations of character, of almost anything that you can conceive. And ultimately, after I'd received basic training where I again became a very dangerous person because I qualified as an expert rifleman, which of course was a sign that it was....I was a very dangerous person. And in the tests that you take at the beginning of your admission to the Army, I had...I had scored one of the highest scores ever scored in the Army, which of course made it look as if I was really a professional spy.

GK: Absolutely.

WVR: And so what they did is they sent me to a camp for undesirables. And for about three or four months, I was in this camp in Indiantown Gap Military Reservation where they had boarded off a section of the camp for the so-called Foreign Legion. And these were soldiers like myself, who were under high degree of suspicion. They wanted really to explore what we were, what we believed, whether we could be trusted or whether we should perhaps be assigned permanently to KP or something. And ultimately, after three and a half or four month, one day I was told that I was going to be made a citizen. So, they carted me to a little court in Lebanon, Pennsylvania and 30 minutes later I was a citizen. And then I was released to a service where the Army was absolutely convinced that I could not do damage to anything. I was assigned to a Quartermaster Laundry Battalion. And this was a wonderful...there were wonderful people in this organization. And I counted laundry and marked laundry and learned everything that you can imagine about laundry. And I was convinced that I would spend the rest of my time in the United States Army counting laundry. And then, by a sheer accident, I was transferred to a Core Headquarters because there was a Captain who ran an IBM unit. And they knew that I'd worked with IBM equipment at the company where I was employed. And he had also seen two things. He had seen that I knew about IBM equipment and that I had an inordinately high intelligence score. And he was of the opinion that he was going to have under his command the unit with the highest intelligence score in the United States Army. And when he saw on the IBM cards that came through his Headquarters, my number...he said, "We need this man." And suddenly, I was no longer a dangerous enemy alien or so. I was suddenly brought into Headquarters and he was just delighted to have a man with this high score. And then he sees on my record, cannot be in...used in the Infantry, in the Artillery, in anything but in Laundry. In Laundry. He was depressed and he said, "You know, I brought you here under false pretenses. I couldn't do this." Now, that's impossible for me. But I would do my damnedest to help you. And so, for four months before the Army Intelligence Units found where I was, they thought I'd hidden some place, and came around and found me. He made me wrap packages because no intelligent works and no secret things. How many people had venereal disease? Or had gotten absent without leave? Anything. All of these very vital things. This...I shouldn't seek. So, I was employed wrapping IBM cards and sending them to the Pentagon where they are probably still today in the basement. And ultimately, the intelligence people came and said, "He cannot be employed in this very, very sensitive IBM Center." And he said, "Why don't you give the guy a break? He is a lawyer. In America he's a lawyer. In Germany, he is smart and he can do you some good. Why don't you put him with the judge advocate?" I mean that's something totally harmless. And the intelligence people said, "You're right. That's where we put him." And so, they put me there and ultimately they said, "Well, it doesn't look as if he is a spy." And one day, our whole unit is activated and four weeks later I am on a boat to Germany. To...first to England, where I receive training as an Airborne soldier. And then comes, of course, the great excitement, namely the Battle of the Bulge. And they need me desperately. And I appear there with my unit. The whole time I am very much concerned about two things, namely to be taken prisoner by a German, because they were there everywhere. And this would have been very unpleasant....

GK: Yes.

WVR: ...for me because as a...I would have been considered a deserter from the German Army and would have been shot. But there was an equally danger...great danger from the American soldiers who shot everybody who spoke with an accent. And so, I became a silent soldier and I would go out only when I was accompanied by somebody from Brooklyn or from Texas. Those people were never considered dangerous aliens. And so, I survived this portion of the war. I ended up the war at the very end, I was in...on May 8th I was in a little town in Mecklenburg, about 100 miles from where I was born. And during all of this time, I was very popular because I could speak French. I could speak German. I was used as an interpreter and had a very interesting and exciting time because I could now see suddenly what Hitler had made out of Germany.

GK: Yes.

WVR: I walked through the rubble field. I saw thousands and thousands of dispossessed people. I saw people walking in concentration camp garbs, desperately looking for food. I came into concentration camp. I spent May the 8th participating in a service for the victims of a concentration camp at Rebelene, a small concentration camp where we had picked up 500 victim...concentration camp victims who had been stored like...like uh, railway ties. And the mayor of the town got orders to bring these people into the town. The...the local residents dug graves for them. The women had to wash the bodies and then they were lowered into the grave with a ceremony which the whole town had to attend. And I took pictures at the time, being convinced that later in my life, somebody would say it's not true. There were never concentration camp. This is all an invention. And I took the pictures and I still have the pictures. And I knew one of these days somebody would come, at a place maybe where I would be and give a lecture. Or someone would say it's all fake. And it happened to me. It happened actually to me that when the man said, "This is not true." I said, "I've been waiting for you. And I have the pictures."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: But he walked out very quickly.

GK: Yes.

WVR: But now while I was a soldier, the Colonel for whom I worked said, "You can be better used as an officer than as an enlisted man. I'm going to see to it that you are going to be given a commission." And so, at the very end of the war, I was made a Second Lieutenant and I was sent to Paris to become an aide to the Judge Advocate for Europe, a General Betz. And I sat in his front room and I was very disgruntled because I wanted to do something useful. And sitting in Paris as (inaudible) for a General did not particularly appeal to me.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: But he said, "This is important." And one day he suddenly , called me in and said, "We are sending you off. We are sending you off to something uh, we are sending you off to survey the secret records of the German Ministry of Justice." So, I was sent there. I surveyed the secret records and learned unbelievable things. I found the documents with which two of the German Generals were hanged in Nuehrmburg.

GK: Really?

WVR: And this then brings me to Nuremberg because as soon as I finished with that job in September of 1945, I suddenly received orders to proceed to Nuremberg as the Special Member of a team that was working for the Judge Advocate. And the purpose of what we were to investigate was to find out how to run such a trial. We had complete carte blanche. We could talk to anybody. But nobody could order us.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Which was a wonderful thing to have because we could go to everybody and say, "Why do you this way? And could you tell us what your real job is, what your difficulties are?" And I worked for a Colonel who spoke not a word of German but was inordinately bright. And I was sort of his...his hunting dog.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: He sent me out and said, "Go to this man and talk to him what his problems are." And so, on the very first day after we had made our rounds, I am introduced to a man by the name of Colonel Amen. Colonel Amen. The moment I hear the name Colonel Amen, it comes back to me who he is. Colonel Amen is the former District Attorney for government... Governor Dewey. And he was known, during the time I went to law school, as the racket buster. He was the racket buster in New York. And he had accomplished many, many astonishing things. He had uh, trapped Dutch Schultz, who had invented the system of murder by...by ticket. You...you just order yourself a little murder and he'll take care of it. And he was now the man whom Justice Jackson had hired to do the preliminary investigation of all these people that were there and could possibly be used as witnesses. And so, I was introduced to Colonel Amen. I said, "Colonel Amen. I remember you from the time that I was a law student and you were a very famous person already." And of course, this goes over very good...

GK: Right.

WVR: ...with a...with a prominent man. You can imagine that. And I said, "Colonel Amen, I know nothing about what of the wonderful work that you do here. But I want you to know that if there's anything that I can do for you, I speak German as well as any of these Germans and some English. If I can help in any shape or manner, I will be....Oh, he said, "You come just what I need because I...we have scheduled for tomorrow an interrogation of Hermannn Goering. And Hermann Goering is a very, very difficult person to interview. And my normal interpreter, a very smart fellow by the name of Summerfield, he is gun shy because Hermann Goering always does something to him which rattles him and rattles me. This is what Hermann Goering does. The moment he is tired of dealing with this interrogation, he says to the interpreter, "Please tell Colonel Amen that what you...he has asked you to tell me, is not what you have told me." And then Colonel Amen that the...will turn on the interpreter...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...and say, "Don't you know German? Don't you know English? What's the matter?"

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And then, of course, the whole thing comes apart.

GK: Yes.

WVR: The case is continued. He says, "You have to be prepared for that." I said, "Fine. No problem. I know what...when do you want me to be here?" He said, "Tomorrow morning, nine o'clock." I said, "We have a date." And so, that day I go off to...to my billet. And my billet is in the Grand Hotel for two or three days before they assign...get me a...a permanent billet. And I come to a table. And at the table sits a young Lieutenant. A lieutenant in the Navy uniform, very nice. He introduced himself. His name is Whitney Harris. And we eat there and I tell him what my job is now. He said, "God, you know, I wish I spoke some German." I said, "Well, I presume that would be a very nice thing for most of you people here." He is on Justice Jackson's staff and he has been assigned the job of writing the brief against the Gestapo. And he said, "You know, I am absolutely up....I...I just don't know where to turn because I must prove that the Nazis had a system that they killed Jews by the millions." And they never say killing. They always use a term resettlement. And I said, "That's absolutely ridiculous. Resettlement is resettlement in another world." Very simple. You only have to ask them, "Isn't resettlement the same thing as resettling them in the other world....isn't it the same as killing?" That's all you have to ask them.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: He said,"Would you interpret for me?" Oh, I said "Sure. Sure." As soon as I'm finished with Goering, we'll go and do it together." So, the next morning I go to...with Colonel Amen and there is the inter...interrogation of Hermann Goering. And Hermann Goering, of course, is a brilliant guy. He is smart. He is now off the dope. He does not take drugs anymore. He doesn't eat too much. He has lost probably something like 75 or 80 pounds. He's the normal size man and he is very, very smart. And he knows immediately that there is no danger for this interrogation because they want to ask him about his art collection. Now, this is a wonderful topic to discuss when you find out how does a poor man like Hermann Goering, who has really nothing when he becomes Prime Minister of Prussia, and suddenly he ends up with one of the largest art collections in the world.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: Now, how did he get this art? And now we hear how you do this. And this plan is absolutely astonishing. He marries some years...the year after he became Prime Minister of Prussia, he marries an actress in Berlin who is....acts...also a singer, Emmy Sonnemann. Emmy Sonnemann. And (inaudible). And he marries her and then sends around wedding invitations. And he passes the word, don't send silver. Don't send china, all that. Just send cash. Send cash. And, of course, when Hermann Goering, such an important man, says send cash, you don't send him five dollars, you know. You make the check really something very nice. And all these checks are deposited in a foundation. They are not....they are not given to him personally. They are put in a Hermann Goering Art Foundation.

GK: Got it.

WVR: Now, this becomes a really...a body of money. And now he goes out with...he hires himself an art staff and a finance man. And they conceive the following plan. His art consultants go to the big art houses in Berlin and say the Prime Minister is very interested in a certain type of German art. Let me see what you have. And so, they pick out for simplification, ten pictures. And these ten pictures are displayed there and, for simplification, each one is 100,000 bucks. So, let me see. This looks very good. They bring in Hermann Goering. He looks at the picture and said, "Terrific. I'll buy the whole lot." And he says, "Ten times a hundred...that's a million." Well, since I buy them in...in the lot, I should have, I think, a twenty percent discount, don't you think so? And they said...the art dealer says, "Yes, indeed. Eight hundred thousand." So, he pulls out the checkbook of the Foundation and writes a check for 800,000 marks. And the art dealer says, "Can I wrap them up?" "No, no," he says. "Leave them here. I'll have them picked up later." They stayed there. Now, he is also in his spare time not only an art collector, he is...which is much more important, he is the supervising authority for all the concentration camps where political enemies are. Where people....bankers who have not been doing properly. Everybody is there and everybody wants to get out. So, finally, people in the concentration camp find a way to get to Hermann Goering. Why can't you spring us? And they get sprung. And, of course, the moment they are sprung, they have to show their appreciation. Now, they go to one of his associates, what can we do for the...for the Prime Minister? The answer is very simple. He is very interested in art. And I know that he has looked at some of art at this store.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And he was very, very fascinated by that picture. So, the man goes in and buys the picture for 100,000 marks. Pays 100,000 marks to the art dealer who has no..does not let the cat out of the bag.

GK: Right.

WVR: He writes the man cashes the check, gives 100,000 marks to Hermann Goering. And as soon as the 10th picture is sold and acquired in this manner, they all go back to Karinhall, which is where his art collection is...

GK: Located. Yeah.

WVR: ...located. And the whole money is back plus more. So, this is a wonderful deal. And Hermannn Goering was perfectly agreeable to talk. No contradiction. That's precisely the way we did it. Yes, yes. He knew nobody would hang anybody for stealing art. I mean, that's...there would be too many hangings. Everybody knew that. Yeah. So, the next...I said goodbye to Colonel Amen. We became good friends. And he said, "By the way, in a couple of days, we are going to have a very interesting interrogation for Dr. Karl Braundt who ought to be see..you ought to go there. I said thank you and I go back to Whitney Harris. And now...now, Whitney, what is on your plate? And he says, "Yes. I would like now to interview and take testimony of Otto Ohlendorff. Otto Ohlendorff was one of the men who was in charge of an extermination command that went into east Europe when the German Army invaded Russia. And he had one of these famous gas vans, or not just one. He had probably 10 or 20 of those that were started...cyclone gas. They were filled with...with Jews and Communists. The doors were closed. Cyclone gas was pumped in there. They were all killed. Next load. Time after time. And so we had him there. And the question was, of course, Mr. Ohlendorff, you were the commander? Yes, I was the commander. And you used these wagons? Yes, we did. And we saw in your report that you always refer to them as a..as a resettlement. The word resettlement really mean s extermination killing. Of course, he said. Of course. Whitney Harris beaming was delighted. And now when the discussion is over, and we have all the evidence that Whitney Harris suddenly asked him. Mr. Ohlendorff, maybe accurately, how many people you resettled or exterminated whichever way, in this manner? And at this moment, something strange happened. Ohlendorff became rattled. He looked suddenly nervous. He had sweat pearls. And both Whitney Harris and I had the feeling the man suddenly sees the enormity of what he has done, come down on him. And then he suddenly wipes his lip and turns forward and smiles that say (inaudible). It's awful. What happens to your memory...I can't remember whether there was 90,000 or 190,000. That was Otto Ohlendorff. You think it's an astonishing thing to meet a murderer who has killed maybe 90 or just maybe 190,000. But now, accompanying me to Karl Braudt. Karl Braudt was the Surgeon General of Germany. And at the outbreak of the war with Russia, they were, of course, convinced that this is a pushover. No problem. And they find that their casualties are far, far in excess of anything that they had imagined. And there were many, many soldiers that could probably be repaired and patched up so that they could fight again. But there were no hospital beds. So, Hitler calls in Dr.Braudt and says, "We need hospital beds. Something has to be done." And Braudt says, "No problem. No problem." He knew that in Germany, there were over 300,000 beds for people who are incurably insane. That's a simple problem. We are going to give them an injection and we can...in a couple of days, we can have...the only problem is burying them. We can have the beds for the soldiers. So, boom. And now, within about two or three days of being in Nuremberg, I had seen two people mass murderers. One from maybe 190 and one for 300,00 people. Poor, sad people.

GK: Yes.

WVR: And now I began to look around and attempt to understand what was being done in Nuremberg. And, of course, anybody who came to Neuhrmburg, in a very short time realized that the motor than ran that operation was Justice Jackson. And Justice Jackson was an...an extraordinary person. I think probably the...the greatest man I have ever met. Justice Jackson was quite different from any lawyer that I have ever seen. Justice Jackson did not go to law school. Justice Jackson did not go to college. Justice Jack...Jackson was a self-educated men and I've rarely, if ever, met somebody who had a greater knowledge of Shakespeare and the Bible...

GK: Really.

WVR: ...than this man. He had also an unbelievable understanding of human people. He had been a very successful lawyer in some state...some town in upper New York state. He was a convinced Democrat. And when Roosevelt came...and became...was elected President, somebody said to Roosevelt, "You know there is a very smart lawyer in New York state. He has done a lot for the Democratic party. Why don't you see whether you can get him?" So, he appointed him to become Attorney for the Internal Revenue Service. And he did such a tremendous job, that before long, he was appointed Solicitor General of the United States. He won every case. It was absolutely astonishing. And suddenly they needed a new Attorney General for the United States. And who was it? Jackson. And Jackson was a politician but a brilliant legal mind and a man who had the feeling, get things done. Get things done. Let's not talk too much. Let's get `em done. And finally, he ends up on the Supreme Court. And Roosevelt had...that is the man. And when Roosevelt died, Truman said he made already that decision. That's a fine one. We'll send him there. And he was the one who sparked this outfit. He gave us all directions. And I will tell you later how he did some things that were absolutely unique. And when I came to Nuremberg in September, they had just reached a final agreement how this trial would be run. Yeah. Now, there were enormous complex problems. You could not bring to trial more than maybe 25 people. This is....it's already a monster trial with 25 people.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Now, there was..Nuremberg was 95% destroyed.

GK: Yes.

WVR: The only place that was not destroyed was the Palace of Justice, the courthouse in Nuremberg. That was there with the...behind the courthouse was a star formed...star shaped prison which held 1200 places. And there was locked up the whole Nazi elite. We had them all. Every one was there except those who had committed suicide. But we had them all there. We could see them everyday, walk for their exercise to keep them in good shape until the final day of judgment came for them. But the problems of organizing a trial for four nations is enormous because there are four languages. Or actually three languages, namely Russian, French, English, and then they're to deal with a fourth, namely with the Germans. So, four languages are continuously necessary. And imagine that you are having here a group of 25 or 20-25 defendants who must all be wired. There must be, all the defense counsel must be wired. All the prosecution staff must be wired. And then there sits a bunch of judges up there. Eight judges, four regulars and four alternates. They sit up there. They must also be wired. Now, imagine what happens when, for example, one of the judges wants to say to the presiding judge, "Presiding Judge, could we have a little recess? I...I...I got to go to the men's room." Now, you don't want to have it that everybody from the...the defendants hears this...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...so, what has to be done. There is a total separate communication system for the bench. But they have...each one has a double system. He has on one ear, he has all the court activities and on the other ear he has the bench activities. Now imagine what this is like...must be like. And then there must be...there is a press room and there is a visitor's gallery where everybody gets all of this equipment. And this is 1945, this is not 1995. This is 50 years ago when they had just invented this stuff. So, I...I lived with some of the guys who built this equipment...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...and it was fascinating to talk with these people because they were wizards. They...they operated in a world that was totally foreign to us. But they explained. They helped us understand. But with it come...came enormous other problems, namely here were the Russians. And the Russians were going to judge Germans for in...for aggressive war. Now, what had the Russians done? They had invaded Poland. They had invaded Finland. And now they were sitting on the bench. How was this going to be solved? Jackson went for endless conferences and ultimately they arrived at a system that they said the defense of two (inaudible) you two may not be used. That's excluded from this operation. In this court, if you say you have done it, too...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...you cannot...you are disqualified as judge. Forget it. That will not be permitted. That was part of Jackson's...what he...

GK: Strategy.

WVR: ...strategy of getting this into the place. Now, what or how were these criminals to be found out and convicted? In a sense it was very simple because we had captured all their records. We had all their records. And there was no exception to these records. They found 28 enormous bookshelves, maybe...maybe 20 feet wide bookshelves in...in Rosenberg's underground cellar.

GK: Hmm.

WVR: They brought that from Nuremberg. I looked at some of them. Some of it was so absurd and what a stupid man he was. For example, every letter that he had received was recorded, bound and there was a reply letter. For example, he...they would...somebody would write and say, "On page 375 or your book about the uh...

GK: The myth of the twentieth century.

WVR: ...the myth of the twentieth century, there is a typographical error. It's misspelled. And then it's pointed out precisely where it is. And then comes a personally signed acknowledgment letter with deep appreciation. And every last dreck, it is all there. You can pick it up. And I found thousands of records. We...nothing...nothing could be hidden. They...they had not known of the existence of shredders and...and all of this.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: It was all there. And we had it all. But how can you use this material unless you have people who can translate it from German into English? This was one of our problems. Suddenly, how can we produce this so that the people...the prosecutors could not read the German document? They had to have a translation. All the other people who were involved had to have it. There was no Xerox machine had existed at the time. Now, how do you find translators? Well, the Army, of course, knows everything. The Army is just wires to Washington. Send us two planeloads with interpreter and with translators. And so they arrived. And now, suddenly we had heaps and heaps of translators but we had no idea whether they could translate. So, what we did is we divvied them up. I got maybe 20 and I said, "Okay. Here are 20 Nazi books. Open them up any place you want and make me two pages of translation. And bring it back tomorrow and I will tell you whether you stay here or you go back to the United States."

GK: Right.

WVR: Now, we found that probably less than one out of ten was a competent translator. And the interpreters were even worse. I remember one of them coming out to me and he said, "I am a very good translator and interpreter. I speak seven languages, English the best." Well, I said, "Thank you very much. We don't really need you at this moment, you know." And this was a typical activity.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: And then of course, at the time of the trial, not all of the material had been received. There suddenly comes a whole truck with maybe 500 big boxes of new material. And they were brought in and they were opened. And for maybe a week or two, I worked in that room. I sat there. And there were maybe 30 German English people who really knew what it was that matters. And also had the feeling whether it tied into the whole thing. And they sat there at tables and each one had a stack of things and would go through and then write a brief. This is something that's probably suitable. And then they'll...but, as they were opened and given to the people, you suddenly heard somebody, "Oh, my God." And I would then run up and run up to there. And I remember particularly the night...the day when I stood there and there were the so-called Russian experiments. There was a...a SS General who devoted his time to do significant research for the United States...for...for...for the German Army. And the German Army had lost innumerable pilots who were shot down over the Channel. They were shot down, they managed to get down maybe either with a wrecked parachute or with a...with a...with their plane sank slowly and they had a rubber boat or something. But by and large they ended in the water. Yeah. And they were fished up by German speed boats after they had been in the water for a long time. And the question was, "Can they be revived and sent up for another flight?"

GK: Yeah.

WVR: And in order to determine the best way of...of reviving these people, in order to do this, they had to do experiments. What did they do? They made big tanks, filled them with ice blocks and put concentration camp victims in the...into this icy water until they fainted. And they had various methods of reviving them. The first one was to put them in warm water. The next one was when that didn't work, that they got some gypsy girls and put them with gypsy girls. Neither method worked. And this we saw.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And then came suddenly something which was equally exciting. They had found a file in which they had...the Nazis had operated with poisoned ammunition. "My God," I said. "If that would work, what would that mean? Everybody who was slightly wounded would die."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And so we looked at it. It didn't work. They had brought concentration camp victims and just shot them like...and they all healed up very nicely. No problem. And now came the disappointing thing. On the last page, there were photostats...photographs of the ammunition that had been used for the purpose. It has been captured from the Russians. So, this was one of the things that was not so popular.

GK: Right.

WVR: And so, we went from case to case. And I saw more in four. And finally we came to the moment where we had to determine how many people would ultimately be indicted. And it was all together 22. There was a seat for Hitler and there was seat for Bormann, because they thought maybe the suicide and so, what...maybe they would find him. Of course, we know that this is not so today. But there were seats for both of them. And so, ultimately there were 22 of them who were indicted. And the indictment was prepared English text and German translation. And I had persuaded the British officer who was in charge of the service of the indictments on the defendants to let me interpret for him. And he said, "Fine. Fine." And so, I had an opportunity to serve for about ten of the defendants. And I say that's an interest. And (inaudible) these, I have only vivid recollection of three people. One of them was Albert Speer, was police. Took the...took the indictment, turned around and was brought back to his cell. The next one was Hjalmar Schacht. Hjalmar Schacht was the financial viz...wizard of the early time of the Nazi who had found the ways of producing all the money that they needed to build all of their weapons. And Hjalmar Schacht was always an arrogant, very articulate man. And when the indictment was served to him and capp...(inaudible) said him, "Here's your indictment." He said, "I want to protest that I'm being indicted here. This is an outrage. The only reason why you are, why you decided to indict me is you want to acquit me so that later on you can say these trials were fair. And, Major Neeves said, "Take your things and go back to your cell." And the last one was Konstantin Von Neurath. And the reason why he interested me is a very personal and very unusual one. He had a moustache precisely like my father. He had a kind of a very small moustache. And he was very polite, talked to (inaudible). These are the three people. Now, about ten years later, I'm on a plane...I'm on a plane between Dusseldorf and Hamburg. And on this plane, who should sit opposite from me but Hjalmar Schacht and next to me sits Hjalmar Schacht's wife. And the moment the plane takes off, he starts to snore. And I say to his wife, "You know, Mrs. Schacht, I'm sure that your husband will not remember me but I remember him very well because I was the interpreter who served the indictment on him."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: "And, interpreter there when the indictment was served on him." And she said, "You did?" "Yeah," I said. "I did." And so she reaches over and says, "Poppy, wake up." And he...he...and he wakes up and she said to..."This man here just tells me that he served as an interpreter when you were indicted." And I said, "Yes, Mr. Schott. That is correct. I interpreted...and I remember very well that you were outraged about the indictment." And he said, "You see. I was right." And indeed, he was acquitted.

GK: Yes.

WVR: And a couple of years later, 1976 of 77, I was in Heidelberg and I had an opportunity to see Albert Speer. And I made an arrangement that I would see him. And went to his house. And it was an astonishing thing. I, for a man, he was probably a little taller than I am, six foot one. I would say he was maybe six foot three or four, which is a very tall man. He had amazingly small feet. Very small feet. And had wonderful elegantly shaped hands. Very long, narrow, art hands. And we got involved in a discussion and, of course, there was always one thing that fascinated me about Albert Speer. He was unquestionably a highly intelligent man.

GK: Yes.

WVR: And unbelievably well educated. And I could really never understand how a man like that could fall totally under the spell of a man who spoke such an atrocious German. And I said to him, "You know, this...I'm...I'm astonished about it that you could fall for a man who spoke a German that I think was just impossible." And he says to me, "You know, I could never follow a man who speaks of German like you." Well, can't win. You can't win all...can't win them all. But now comes probably one of the most exciting experiences of my time at Nuremberg. One week after the indictments have been served, there is the usual staff conference where Justice Jackson presides on a podium flanked by his managing General, who arranges for...for feeding and security. And, in addition to that, he has a Colonel Storey, who is his legal right hand. And he sits up there. And there are maybe 100 or 120 people waiting to hear what goes on. How are things going. And so it is one week after the service of the indictment. There are only three more weeks before the trial starts.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And, Colonel Storey says, "Mr. Justice Jackson, we have here a petition from the Defense Counsel. And the petition states that for all the defense counsel, there is only one set of the documents on which all of their crimes are based. There is one stack of maybe three feet high, but not a copy for each. Only one copy for the 22. And they feel that this is improper. And they've asked that they be given copies, each one, the whole stack." Justice Jackson turns to Colonel Storey and says, "Colonel Storey, what do you think we should do?" And Colonel Storey says, "Mr. Justice Jackson, I think we are going to hang most of them anyway. I would ignore it." At that moment, I don't know what happened to me but I raised my hand, I got up and said, "Mr. Justice Jackson, I quite agree that the end result is what Colonel Storey says. But I'm also convinced and certain that none of the defense counsel will be hanged. And the defense counsel will be the men who will determine whether their clients were given a fair trial or not."

GK: And bear witness to history about the trial.

WVR: That's right. Precisely. And so, he turns to Colonel Storey and says, "Colonel Storey, please call General Clay and tell him to send two companies with printing equipment immediately to Nuremberg to give the defendants the material that they must have." Then he turns to me and says, "Lieutenant..." He didn't know my name, he merely says, "Lieutenant, you made such a valiant plea for the defense counsel, will you please go now and take command of the defense counsel and tell them that they must do with the one stack they have until the replacements come in. And keep them pacified." And so, I said, "Yes, sir." Marched out and went over to the defense counsel. And here I stand practically every one of the defense counsel is about twice my age, and I said, "Gentleman, I would like to have your attention. I have just received from Justice Jackson word that the material will come. It will probably take a week, perhaps even a little bit longer before all the material will be here. In the meantime, you have only these documents. I will lay them out, each one with a sheet. And there will be....on the sheet will be the name of each one of the defendants and a time. You will enter the time. And you will bring the book back in one hour. And anyone who violates this order of mine, will not see any document after that. Do I understand that you are all agree?" There was not any response but suddenly I noticed that one of the attorneys sort of had his hand over his face the way I used to look at the girls when I was in the library, you know. And finally, he couldn't stand it. He got up and uh, walked up to me. And I recognized him at once. It was the son of Van Papen, one of the defendants. And he said to me, "Sir, is it possible that we have met before?" And I said, "Yes." And so, he turned around, walked back. After five minutes or so, he couldn't stand it and said...comes up again and says to me, "Sir, is it possible to know where we met?" I said, "Yes. We went to the same cram course for the bar exam." Such are the incidences. Yeah. This was for me, perhaps, the great moment at the Nuremberg trial.

GK: Those were your fifty minutes of fame for sure.

WVR: Yes. Yes. And then came, of course, a...an enormously important part. And that was the opening of the trial as Justice Jackson came and gave his opening speech. And in his opening speech, he produced a number of thoughts that were totally novel. He started out by saying, "We cannot follow precedent because there is no precedent. Such a trial such as we have here has never taken place. And the reason why this is so, that we are here sitting in judgment, is that there have never been crimes on this scale. When we are looking at what these people have done, they have put to death something on the order of perhaps 45 million people. This is something that has not occurred. There is no law for this. And we must deal with it.

And why must we deal it? Because civilization cannot afford a repetition because civilization might very well be ultimately wiped out. That is why we are here. But with this plan that we have made, we have also determined that the defendants should not be put on the wall and shot as perhaps some people think would be the simplest way. We want to give these people the opportunity to show that they have not done what we accuse them. But I want to warn them that we have their records and it will be a very difficult task."

GK: Yes.

WVR: "But we will listen to them. We will provide them with every conceivable help that is available. So, they are ready to obtain counsel of their own selection. They will have secretaries that will help them. They will have researchers that will have...they will have translators. They have everything that is needed and they have to contend and learn only one thing. And that is the procedure will be run according to the Anglo Saxon system of trial. And this means that every witness that is produced, either for or against them, can be cross examined. And every defendant who decides to take the stand in his own defense, will be cross examined. And you better find out what kind of a burden this places on you." And there was only one of the defendants who decided not to be cross examined. It was Rudolf Hess. He decided, "I don't want to be cross examined." And every one of the others was cross examined. And some of the cross examinations were hairy.

GK: Yes.

WVR: But there were astonishing things. Jackson had announced this system. He, himself, was a brilliant conceptual man about a trial of this (inaudible). But he was not, even though he had been Attorney General, he was not a very good cross examiner. And of all the dumb things, he chose to cross examine probably the second smartest of them all, namely Hermann Goering. And it was a disaster and he had to be rescued by a British cross examining specialist, you know.

GK: Yes.

WVR: Anybody could have told him, for example, Colonel...or Amen could have told him, "I'll be glad to do it for you."

GK: Yeah.

WVR: "I know how to do it. Hermann Goering cannot possibly be smarter than

Doug Schultz." But that did not work. That did not work. And so, I had a glorious time at Neuhrmburg and uh, I had also, of course, some experiences would show you how some of the very important people had never fully comprehended what they had in their hands, namely in terms of the defendants. There was the...the commanding Colonel of the total prison detachment. The man who had these 1200 people under his thumb. I mean he commanded several battalions of guards who guard these men 24 hours a day, standing at their doors. And so, the man was an infantry officer, had absolutely no finesse and was not very bright. And I remember at one time I was invited to a party at Justice Jackson's chalet. He had a very fine quarters. And it was very seldom that you got an opportunity to go there. And one of the secretaries had been invited and her boss could not go. And so, I got...she said, "Please take me." So, I...I went as her escort. And it was very nice. And but...these parties were very lush compared to the...the mess halls in which we are usually eat....were eating. There was good china and...and good silver and...and good glasses. And what went into the glasses and on the plates was also considerably better. And so, as soon as the formalities were over, the men and the women separated and the men were usually the people who...where the people who had really been in the war, they told war stories, you know. And the majority of them who were there were, of course, fighting lawyers who had come to Washing...to...to put on a uniform. They had...they wanted to buy from anybody what had been in the war, pistols and so. And...and so these....here we are now and there is Colonel Andrews. Colonel Andrews has steel rimmed glasses and is very marshal. Very, very marshal. And we are all getting more and more boozed up. And we are standing in a circle and curiously enough, Colonel Andrews is right next to me. Now, it is very rare and is only a sign of Neuhrmburg that a Second Lieutenant would be with a full Colonel. But I have to say something significant to make Colonel Andrews feel good. And I said, "Colonel Andrews, you are truly a remarkable man." And, of course, Colonel Andrews falls for this comment. He looks at me and says, "Huh?" And I said, "Colonel Andrews, I think you are in a way the unique here in Nuremberg who has under his command the total German Intelligentsia in your jail." And he looks at me out of slightly bloodshot eyes and says, "A bunch of jerks. That's what they are." This was Colonel Andrews, you know.

GK: Yup.

WVR: And...and uh, there are people like that. They run around and ultimately, of course, two of his famous people got away, Ley and Goering. And uh...

GK: Got away by committing suicide.

WVR: Yeah. Yeah. Committing suicide. And that was his function, to prevent this.

GK: That was his...his fault, indeed. Yes. Yeah.

WVR: Yeah. And so, this...this was perhaps amusing kind of a...of a side light...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...of the trial. And there were other instances, all of them contributed in a sense a feeling of how the enormity of this crime was exposed. And I perhaps conclude with one event which shows how you ultimately lose almost the sensitivity for seeing or identifying yourself with crime. As part of the trial, they suddenly needed certain exhibits that were stored in Wiesbaden in special security vaults. And I was sent to Wiesbaden bring two exhibits. And these two exhibits were the lamp shades that had been captured in Buchenwald by the...and they had been made by the wife of the Director of the Commandant of Buchenwald and she had a desire to have human skin with enormous tatoos. And when people were delivered and they had a tattoo, there were identified, sent to the dispensary, given an injection and skinned. And the skin was used for lamp shades. They were in this vault in Wiesbaden. And the other one was something that we called the George. It was called George. It was a little pedestal, perhaps this big, and on top of the pedestal was a head. A shrunken head of a man who could still be facially recognized. And I remember from the times when I was a child, they always told us about the technique of the Fiji Island people who had discovered a technique of reducing missionaries to this size. And I remember seeing this figure and here was still clearly recognizable, the facial identity of that man. I think you probably could take a photograph of the man before and after and say this is the same man. And here it was had also been captured in a concentration camp where one of the Commandants and so, wanted to relive what he had read, perhaps as a child. Yeah. And now, I came there and I said, "I need this here....the order. Please give it to me." And so they opened the vault. They gave me two brown paper bags. They brought them to my Jeep and I drove them back there and handed them over to the Nuremberg receptionist there. The next day they were on trial. They were put (inaudible).

GK: Accepted.

WVR: Yeah. And I must say I looked at them and I felt pity. But I mean by that time the degree of outrage, I...I didn't know on whom I could vent that.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: I mean it...it...I was...I was helpless. I was helpless. I was ashamed that such a thing had...could have happened. That could have been done. But there it was.

GK: Yes. Was there something uh, some special feeling of..that...that you held being a German in this environment? You were probably one of the very few native Germans who were part of the team.

VR: Well, I...I shouldn't...I was the only man in the...the only native German in the prosecutor's staff.

GK: Right.

WVR: And I was very popular because I...I...I knew...I had seen all of these men in their glory. I knew of all of their shortcomings.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: I they loved to have me there because they could...they could pump me. And in my billets, of course, I had the opportunity to meet some other people in very curious circumstances. Our billet was right next to what might be called a...a safe house. And that was a house where the allies had brought witnesses whom they wanted to keep apart from anybody from the outside. Had them comfortable. Had them well fed and give them an opportunity to...to play cards or....and not be bothered. But these people got very nervous after a while and they couldn't go out and walk around. And they would...one of their greatest things, one of the people who...who sort of manipulated and administered them, was a man who lived in our billet. And he brought them into our billet.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: And here they came, and they were delighted to be out.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: And I was the only one in our billet who spoke German. And we had recording equipment under the...under our beds. And so we turned on the recording equipment and recorded the whole evening.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And I remember, for example, there was a General in the German Air Force. He was brought in and he spoke to us about that he had been appointed a General after he had been a Flying Ace or something. And the Germans had prepared a special submarine and taken a Messerschmidt jet fighter...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...apart and put it into the...had put it into...into the submarine. And the submarine had then set out with a so-called snorkel. The snorkel is a tube with a box up there that enables them to have air for their engines so that they did not have to run on batteries. They ran on diesel engines.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And he had gone past...out of the Bay of Biscayne, south. Then out to...to the South Atlantic. And suddenly, there was a little antenna on this little thing. And it said, the war is over. The war is over. And he was to deliver this Messerschmidt to the Japanese.

GK: Oh, yeah.

WVR: He was going to go all the way around there. Now, suddenly he had a Messerschmidt in the belly of the submarine. They surfaced. Put up their...their surrender thing.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And he was taken prisoner and brought to Nuremberg, Nuremberg.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And he told us about this. And then, as part of the conversation, I said to him, "Where did you live? Where did you live before the war?" "Oh" he said, "I grew up in Neubrandenburg." "Oh" I said. "I know Neubrandenburg. Then you probably have eaten also in the Reuterstuben. "(inaudible) you know the Reuterstuben?" "Yes. Yes," I said. "I know it very well." And then he became suddenly...

GK: Loosened up even more.

WVR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And so, one of the people whom we quite often saw, was Heinrich Hoffmann. That was the famous photographer. He was...

GK: Hitler's personal photographer.

WVR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But so...

GK: How about feelings of ambivalence? Were you...were you fully and completely an American at that time?

WVR Yes. Yes.

GK: You did not feel any association with the German side any more?

WVR: I...I...I hated them.

GK: Did you feel pity with the Germans you met there, either the defendants or the civilians you met? Or...

WVR: Well, yeah.

GK: ...had you...had you closed...

WVR: No, you see...

GK: ...it off all together.

WVR: Yeah. But the people whom they had there, that came, of course, there was...I can tell you one typical case of enormous pity. They bring in Karl Haushofer. Karl Haushofer is the great man in the field of

GK: Geopolitics.

WVR: Geopolitics. Yeah. And Haushofer is, in a sense, a tragic, probably the most tragic person out of this whole group. He is a General in the first World War. On his staff, he has a dumb Lieutenant by the name of Rudolf Hess. Rudolf Hess becomes enamored with geopolitics and meets Hitler. And says, "Hitler, I'll tell you. There is a guy at the University of Munich who was my commanding officer who is absolutely terrific. He is just what you need."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: So, he established the contact between Hitler and Haushofer. And Haushofer now inspires Hitler's dream of world conquest.

GK: Yes.

WVR: Yeah. And Haushofer has a couple of very serious flaws. If he had been really smart, he would have stayed away from Hitler like poison.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: He was married to a Jewish woman. He had two sons who detested Hitler.

GK: One became a member of the resistance then?

WVR: One of them was a member of the resistance and now he comes...is picked up and brought to Nuremberg. And they were...we were thinking of indicting him.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Now, this man, imagine, in 1941 gets tipped off that Hitler intends to invade Russia. He goes to Hitler and says, "Don't do it. Don't do it under any circumstance." And Hitler puts him on ice. This same man imagined this in 1925, when Hitler and Rudolf Hess are discharge from prison, come to Huashofer and say, "Our game is up. We have decided to commit suicide." And Houssover says, "That's the last thing you are to do. You should stick up for what you believe." Wouldn't that have been great if those two guys would have shot themselves?

GK: Yeah.

WVR: But what happened? How is the end of Haushofer's story? Haushofer, we cannot use Haushofer. We say he is...will not make a good defendant. This is...is worthless. We send him back to Bavaria. We don't even keep him in jail. We send him...what does he do? He finds his old Army pistol and shoots his wife and himself. End of the story of Haushofer.

GK: Yes.

WVR: But I must say for that man, this is a...a kind of a tragic Shakespearean figure. I mean if you put together what this man, where he stood at the crossroads, this is impossible to...to magnify that.

GK: Yes.

WVR: But, in general, I did not feel particularly good about the Germans. I mean, I had seen, I mean, I was different from almost anybody...

GK: Yes.

WVR: ...at the...at the trial because I had been a soldier.

GK: Right.

WVR: I had not just been a lawyer, I had been a soldier doing...doing the Battle of the Bulge.

GK: Right.

WVR: There...I had seen the concentration camps. I was not one who just saw the picture. I had seen this.

GK: Right.

WVR: Yeah. And...and I was en...I was furious.

GK: Enraged. What did Germans think of you? And what did your parents think of you?

WVR: Well, my parents thought I was a traitor. My parents...

GK: Did you ever make up?

WVR: Well, I was nice to them. I helped them. And they appreciated that.

GK: Uh, huh. Helped them in the physical sense, provided them food?

WVR: Yeah. Provided them with food and...and said, "Look, if you...if you want to...to be tough with me and it's....then I won't come. I mean it's...they said, "No, no. Please do come."

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: But I know from...from the memoirs of my wife that she talked to my mother at one time and they never forgave me. They never forgave me. And I'm quite sure that some of my, for example, my older brother, I think I helped him, too. But, there were very many people who...who thought this was a disgrace. I belonged...I was a born Prussian and Prussia, Prussia forever, you know. And...

GK: You were not just a born Prussian. You were born Prussian aristocrat and a Junker.

WVR: Yes. Yes.

GK: In that capacity, I think your betrayal in their eyes was an even more grave crime.

WVR: Yes. And, they found this...I was just...I was just too smart for them and...and...

GK: Yeah.

WVR: ...it was...and I...and I lived with this. Very often Americans say, "Weren't you really at the bottom a German and wanted to help them?" And...and so, and I really...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...I...I came over here because I thought something had to be done. If...if...and it...it was close. It was close. If Hitler had won, what kind of a life would we all...we wouldn't be here.

GK: Yeah.

WVR: This is the point.

GK: Yes. Do you think Nuremberg will retain its significance as a historical event?

WVR: Well, I think Nuremberg is...and I've met recently, I went to a convention of former Nurembergers and was fascinated. I met Whitney Harris again.

GK: Really?

WVR: And I'm hoping to bring him here to the University maybe for a lecture. And it is fascinating to...to meet these people. But, of course, if Nuremberg meant something, it meant that only power can accomplish such a thing.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: And power was there. I mean Germany was crushed. They could not resist. We had...we had them all. It was like a big net in which they were all...and not..none could get away. Maybe two or three got away. But...but basically we had them all. And now Bosnia, we invite three of these murderers and send them to...to Ohio to negotiate? And then we send them back to murder some more?

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Put `em up for the gallows.

GK: Uh, huh. But at the time, you expected that it would...that Nuremberg would set uh, an example for the future.

WVR: Well, I...I...I was very idealistic. And it took me about 50 years to become a realist.

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: Now, I can see the world will never change. The world will never change.

GK: But as a trial, you would...you would think it retained its integrity, I would imagine?

WVR: Oh, yes. I think...

GK: You gave us several examples of that.

WVR: I think absolutely it will...it will retain the impact of total honesty and...and willingness to...to yield to somebody who...who wants to do the right thing.

GK: Yes.

WVR: That I think it is. So, I think I've told you about all that I can at this moment. Produce about the Nuremberg trials. I have been back to Nuremberg...

GK: Uh, huh.

WVR: ...I've gone to the old court room. Nuremberg is rebuilt in an astonishing fashion.

GK: Yes.

WVR: And I have even lectured to German audiences about the Nuremberg trial. And, I will conclude with one remark, which you will probably find amusing. I went to the University of Bonn, and they had invited a Professor of Criminal Law to be there as a contestant with me. And, I said I know perfectly well that any well-trained German lawyer will say that there must no...be punishment for anything unless there is an existing law on which the punishment.

GK: Nulla poena sine lege.

WVR: Sine lege. Nulla poena sine liege. I said this is old fashioned. This was invented by the Romans and we should look at reality. Somebody can murder 45 million people and because there is no law about it, you say he cannot be punished? I think you must be out of your mind. And the students applauded. And at the end of the lecture, the Professor came up and said, "Maybe you are closer to the truth than I." Which was nice.

GK: Very nice.

WVR: Which was very nice. That's it.