

## **Interview of Werner Sommerfeld.**

Interviewer: Well, Werner -- today we have with us Werner Sommerfeld --  
S-o-m-m-e-r-f-i-e-l-d --

Werner Sommerfeld: -- f-e-l-d.

Interviewer: -- f-e-l-d. And we really appreciate you coming up here.

Werner, you were born in what city?

Werner Sommerfeld: Hamburg.

Interviewer: Hamburg, Germany.

Werner Sommerfeld: Right.

Interviewer: In 1929. And obviously, you were 10 years old, about 1939?

Werner Sommerfeld: That's right.

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit about some of your early experiences growing up in Hamburg and if you can remember when Hitler came to power and what were your first recollections as a young man?

Werner Sommerfeld: Like you said, when I was about 10, early on, you don't know much anyhow as you grow up. Of course, when I started school when I was six, it was a big day there. Everybody's looking forward to that. But, when the war actually broke out, I read the paper this morning. And I kind of thought of that over in Germany. When Hitler spoke, everything was shut down. And there was no choice whether you wanted to listen or not. It was different than here whether I listened or read it in the paper here. You had to be there and you

had to listen and to do whatever you've been told. And then in my early -- age 12, I had a paper route as a young kid. And I kind of was proud then. It was necessary, too, for additional money for my family, but I had to deliver the paper to government places, too. And what you had to do every time you go before you give the paper, "Heil Hitler!" You deliver the paper and go. And go on -- wherever you go, you had to greet, "Heil Hitler" before you presented whatever you had to do. Then, of course, we had the --

Interviewer: Well, did the paper guys tell you that? Did the owners of the paper say you had to say, "Heil Hitler?"

Werner Sommerfeld: Actually, it was drilled into us. We had to do that. That was a greeting -- we had to use that.

Interviewer: And when Hitler spoke, they shut off --

Werner Sommerfeld: Everything.

Interviewer: Every other radio station?

Werner Sommerfeld: Everything.

Interviewer: And they didn't have TV then, but it was all shut out and everybody had to --

Werner Sommerfeld: Listen to him.

Interviewer: Well, in 1939, Hitler took -- the German Armies took Austria. Do you remember anything about that, or what was going through your mind when that happened?

Werner Sommerfeld: No, I don't remember much of that, no.

Interviewer: Okay.

Werner Sommerfeld: I just remember, you know, we had to go in bed with our clothes on every night. The air raids were going day and night. We never knew when we had to leave our home to go into the bunkers they built. They were concrete with a pyramid where we had to go into to protect ourselves. And I forget, was it in the daytime the Americans came, and then in the night time it was the British, or vice versa. I can't remember. The sky was just dark -- and bombs came down, and we had to sleep with our clothes on and then our pants and get out and go to the bunk. That was several times during the night. We never could sleep with our clothes on. One exciting thing for us kids were -- it depends what time how much sleep we had, they changed the time of going to school. And we kind of was tickled we could sleep a little bit longer, and sometimes we had an opportunity to get together as boys to go around our area to pick up parts of the bombs and had a collection and compared them and we were proud to do that.

Interviewer: Well, now, you were still in Hamburg at this time?

Werner Sommerfeld: I was still in Hamburg.

Interviewer: And they had a big port there, and I imagine they were bombing the port or the ships quite a bit.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, and when was it -- was it June in --.

Interviewer: Probably around 1943 is what I'm thinking.

Werner Sommerfeld: July 28th, 1943.

Family Member: You were not there at that time?

Werner Sommerfeld: That's right; we lost our home that was flattened out. I was not there at that time. Hitler, he designed or organized a plan. We call it (Speaking in German), which means -- he sent us to Hungary. I was close to Budapest, the whole group of

Hitler Youth, it was no choice. You had to join the Hitler Youth. You didn't have any choice not to.

Interviewer: At what age did everybody have to join?

Werner Sommerfeld: 14, well, that was early on. I guess, usually 12, 13, 14. And, so I was privileged and it was a blessing, I went to Hungary to foster parents. In Hungary, the people were kind of German friendly, so Hitler devised a plan to send us over there and it was a great blessing because we had food to eat. In Hamburg, Germany, it was all rationed. We didn't have enough food. You wanted to say something there --

Interviewer: I wanted to go back --

Crew Member: Do you need that paper? We can hear that rustling.

Interviewer: Your home in Hamburg was bombed?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Werner Sommerfeld: We had five in the family. I was the youngest of them. I had three sisters and one brother and I'm the only one left right now, the rest are gone.

Interviewer: I understand. At that time, were your older brothers in the Hitler Youth?

Werner Sommerfeld: He was actually drafted and kind of an Army type thing, my brother. And, maybe I shouldn't forget, I was not home when we lost our home completely.

Interviewer: You were in Hungary?

Werner Sommerfeld: I was in Hungary. But like I said before, we had to go back and forth to protect our lives because bombs came all around -- I mean, Hamburg was

flattened out that night, the night we lost our home. And my mother asked my brother to go back home to get that little suitcase with documents and stuff, which were important. And he went back in the house and while he was in the house, they had the (inaudible) bombs coming down, and he was burned and came and flame out of the home and went in the shed, of course they took him to the hospital to take care of it. But I was there to see that, and he has gone through a lot of problems himself.

Interviewer: What did your family do after that without a home? What did they --

Werner Sommerfeld: My mother petitioned the government to go back to Sudetenland (inaudible) Czechoslovakia. And they gave her permission, so they went back there as a family and all the relatives of my mother, they were very kind. They had a home again, they all got together and got them furniture and everything to have a nice home there again. And then, I came back to (inaudible) to join them from the (inaudible). But then, when the war was over, within 24 hours, we had to leave my mother's old place where she grew up there, and we went back to Hamburg, Germany. All we could take was on a two wheel cart what we could carry with us. And we went --

Family Member: Tell them why you had to get out.

Werner Sommerfeld: And we went for four weeks' travel by foot, and stayed, you know, all those beautiful farm homes, all the German people left it because the Russians were behind us, and we found food in the homes. Potatoes and how they have them and we were able to sustain life through that, going all the way back home.

Interviewer: Let's go back to when you signed up for the Hitler youth, and they sent you to Hungary and what was the reason, again, that they sent you to Hungary?

Werner Sommerfeld: Good question, the reason was for us to grow up and have the nourishment we need for us to train as soldiers and fight the war.

Interviewer: Okay, so Hitler was trying to make sure the youngsters were going to be healthy and vigorous.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: So they could continue fighting the war. And did you know the foster parents that you were assigned to?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, I got a picture of them still.

Interviewer: I mean, did your parents know them before?

Werner Sommerfeld: No, they never knew them.

Interviewer: And so, they were complete strangers to you?

Werner Sommerfeld: They were.

Interviewer: Okay.

Elizabeth: What was that like?

Werner Sommerfeld: Pardon me?

Interviewer: She wants to know, what was it like going into that foster home and not knowing them and leaving your parents, was that the first time you were away from home?

Werner Sommerfeld: No. I was before, training on several occasions. But this was as an organized group, we had a whole bunch of young boys like us, all had foster parents and the blessing was we had good, rich food right on the farm, but every day, we had to get together as a group with a leader to train us. And we had some good trainings. One I remember, they had us go over school grounds on gravel school grounds with our bare arms to

go over while they had live fire going over us. And some, they got up and got shot and some got killed there and some cried for their mother, you know? And the other item I remember well, too, they trained us with -- they call it "Panzerfaust." It was a bazooka, I'd say. It was a thing you'd shoot tanks with. You have it under your arm, you know, and you go close to the tank and then you pull the trigger and the fire came out the back. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about, what kind of --

Interviewer: Like a bazooka, we call them bazookas.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And this is all while you're 14?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yep.

Interviewer: Here in America, when I think of a newspaper boy, they ride along on a bicycle and throw the paper.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah.

Interviewer: You had to stop at each home and say, "Heil Hitler?"

Werner Sommerfeld: That's correct.

Crew Member: Have him say that, please.

Interviewer: And just explain that again, too, so that we get a good statement about that.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, like I said, it was drilled into us, and --

Interviewer: Start with, "When I was a certain age, I was a news boy, and this is what we had to do," kind of thing.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah, when I was, what, 12, 13, 14 -- when I had a paper route, I forget how many I had, but we had to deliver them. It was some of the

government places, and of course others, too, but every time we delivered before, the greeting was, "Heil Hitler," and there was no other way out. If you don't do it, they look at you funny. It just was not done. It was drilled to us to do it that way.

Interviewer: And then make the salute, the Nazi salute?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, that's interesting. Was this only when you greeted somebody, or was it every place you delivered the paper?

Werner Sommerfeld: Every place you delivered the paper.

Interviewer: Whether someone was there or not?

Werner Sommerfeld: It's actually, I mean, that was a greeting -- every time "Heil Hitler" where ever you go. Not necessarily when you just delivered paper. But the other thing you may be interested in, too, we were in line and they had search lights like this when we had the line, they had the Gestapo and those leaders of Hitler in front, and they wanted us to volunteer to fight. And they drilled into us, if you love your fatherland, sign here. And you know, it was a voluntary/force thing to do. Of course, I always in my mind, I said, before I got in front, "Not now, maybe later, maybe later." So, I just, even so, it was tough when they push you. I mean, if you love your fatherland, if you want to win the war, you better sign right here so we can win the war.

Interviewer: And that was to volunteer to serve in the armed forces?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: At what age did you have to do that?

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, they did it with 14, 15 -- they took all the young kids and they took all the old Grandpas, too. That was the last resort he had, so he tried to get everybody to volunteer to help him to do, accomplish what he desired to do.

Interviewer: So you were sent to Hungary --

Elizabeth: Can I ask first? He said -- he didn't sign it.

Family Member: He didn't sign it, he made his mind up. "Not now, maybe later." The Germans were very legalistic, they wanted them to sign, they had to sign, but they were legalistic. And they just drilled in his mind, "Not now, maybe later," so they threw him out of line.

Interviewer: That's interesting. As a young man, when everybody was signing it, what was it, in your mind that made you feel like you didn't want to sign?

Werner Sommerfeld: I don't know, I just didn't want it. I'd gone through all of those other trials and problems and I just didn't want to, and maybe just with the German stubbornness, and many of them, they have signed. And I guess you know if it is still the same. The Germans, if they get a leader, they follow, you know? It's in the German, I think. But I just felt like I -- and it was a blessing. I'm glad, and if you see my document with the swastika on the rail pass from Germany, it was right -- how did they word it again? Well, anyhow --

Family Member: (Speaking in German).

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, what is it in English?

Family Member: No use to it, well --

Werner Sommerfeld: No use at this time. And --

Interviewer: So, because you didn't sign, they wrote this phrase, "No use at this time?"

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah, and maybe not just because of that. Of course, he didn't care if Hitler -- he just wanted everybody to sign. But there, again, I was fortunate enough in my age, I was not very mature. I was still quite small. And I was not like some of the others, some of the others form maturity, you know? I was small and that probably was a blessing for me. Later, a couple years later, I really grew up and was tall and stronger than the rest. But at that time, for my benefit, I was not very big at that time.

Crew Member: Rick, can I ask a question?

Interviewer: They'll ask questions, but pretend that I'm asking, so you look right at me for the camera.

Crew Member: We've interviewed pilots and crew and bomber planes and maybe one was over Hamburg. When you were a small boy in bed with your clothes on, what were your thoughts and feelings when bombs were dropping? What were your feelings and thoughts about America, what were your feelings?

Werner Sommerfeld: We were scared to death. It was, you can imagine, I mean, we had the bomb raids on the daily basis, on a daily basis. And of course, as kids, I think we are probably not thinking the same way our parents did. I mean, just a kid. But it was very, very tragic. You here people lost their home, burning, and one night, when we the Hamburg city was completely flat and you saw bodies on the street, you had to walk over it, and it just, it was just devastating. I don't want to go through that again.

Interviewer: Werner, did you have questions that Hitler got us into this, or was it more anger at the British and Americans?

Werner Sommerfeld: No, of course, we don't want to get the church involved. This has nothing to do with the church, but my parents, they joined the church after the First World War. So I was born in the church over there, which was unusual.

Crew Member: Can you say that again and say, "The Mormon Church?"

Interviewer: Say "The Mormon Church."

Crew Member: Just start that over please.

Interviewer: Just say that again in a complete sentence for us. "When I was very young..."

Werner Sommerfeld: When I was very young, my parents, they joined the church before I was born, and I was actually born into the church, into the LDS Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was an American church. Of course, Hitler and all the others, they didn't -- they didn't like any part of it, even we were, well, we went to meetings, but we had Gestapo sitting right in our meetings and Sunday School and Priesthood Meeting, whatever, to watch everything that was said and transpired. And it came to that point where they wouldn't let us meet any more publicly, so we just rotated into homes and had our meeting together there. But, because it was an American church, I think they didn't want anything to do with it.

Interviewer: And so, you actually -- did everybody know where the Gestapo guys were? Were they in uniform or anything?

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They were right sitting.

Interviewer: Tell me about the LDS church meetings when you were a young boy in Hamburg.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, I guess they were right there watching everything that was said. And, maybe that would be interesting for you, too. We had a branch presidency,

branch president in our ward, and he was somewhat Nazi. He had his sign on his arm, whatever, I guess. And that was a sad experience for my family, too. We had a doctor who was Jewish, nice doctor. He took care of my parents' family, us, all the time there. And one day, she went -- somebody, I don't know who was sick. She went to the office, and they'd been waiting there all day long for the doctor to come. And the secret was, and we didn't know, he was able to escape out of Germany to Austria, where ever he went. And it was not him. Many, many were able from other Jewish people over there to get them out in time. But we didn't know that at that time. The other thing we had, in the ward, was (inaudible) who had a son at BYU. I think he wrote something about that. We had --

Family Member: Werner?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Family Member: In my mind, you confused two things there. It was not the Jewish doctor who went to church who was your doctor --

Werner Sommerfeld: No, that's not what I'm trying to bring out. Is that what I said?

Crew Member: No, you didn't say that -- because he was put in a camp.

Werner Sommerfeld: No, in the ward, we had a Jewish man, too. A good member of the church, and when Hitler put pressure on the church and our branch president who was kind of Nazi minded he put a sign out in front of the church, of course we didn't have beautiful churches, but we rented a place, and it says: (Speaking in German). "Jews are not permitted," and they weren't anymore. So we felt bad about that, that he was a great man. It was just not him, many, many of the Jews were hurt because of Hitler's regime, you know?

Interviewer: So, this was a Jewish member of the Mormon Church?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: Whose ancestry was Jewish?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: And the branch president put a sign out there that said, "Jews are not welcome," even though they're members of the Mormon Church?

Werner Sommerfeld: He was actually excommunicated, which would -- they would have to do to preserve of the rest of the membership, you know, they had to do something. But he was reinstated for full fellowship in the church.

Interviewer: Right, and tell us about this doctor again that -- your doctor was Jewish, he was not a member of the church?

Werner Sommerfeld: No.

Interviewer: Tell us, let's go back and go over that story again.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, my mother took one of us children that day into this office, there was an infection or some problem, I don't know. And she had to stay in that office all day long. Nobody announced or told them -- they said, "He'll be here soon, he'll be here soon." But never came. So, he was able, with many other of the Jewish people to get out of Germany, so they won't put them to death, if you know what I mean.

Crew Member: Rick?

Interviewer: Yeah?

Crew Member: Can I ask him -- so, in those services, what would be said about nationalism and America and these planes that were leveling his city? What would his parents say to him?

Interviewer: Yeah, so, go back and tell us, the fact that the branch president was in the Nazi party.

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Were the messages coming from the pulpit and so forth, were they pro-Nazi, anti-Nazi, anti-American -- is that what you --

Crew Member: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Werner Sommerfeld: We had some that were pro-Nazi who believed what he was doing, and maybe most of the Germans -- we had something similar like we have now, you know? There was no jobs, no jobs at all. No money, and Hitler came in and he, he got jobs for everybody, people were happy, they had food and all this kind of stuff, but nobody knew what was behind this whole thing. We also, uh, maybe I should remark that my, in school, we always talked together with kids what's going on, how our parents felt about what's going on, and this one boy openly in our class said -- well, because they tried to find out what they think, because (inaudible) they had been told to find out what the parents and what the people think about it. And this one boy said, "Well, my mother complained about the soap we got here. It has no suds, it doesn't keep anything clean." So they got to her house and interviewed her and put her in a concentration camp, and that's not just one time. You had to have tight lips there. You had to be -- you don't say what you think, like over here you have free press and free speech. It was very, very bad. Very awful. You had to really control yourself to know what you said so you won't get in jeopardy to be hauled away like Hitler did with so many Jews and even other people

Interviewer: So, this was a German citizen, non-Jewish, that said -- remarked that the soap wasn't too good?

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And whatever, and the Gestapo came to her house and she ended up in a concentration camp?

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay, well --

Crew Member: Can he talk about the, not only was there fear of Americans and British bombing, but there was fear of his own Nazi party, his own neighbors, right?

Interviewer: And so, you were afraid to say anything?

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Because your buddies at school or neighbors may turn you in, is that right?

Werner Sommerfeld: Exactly.

Crew Member: Can you have him say that?

Interviewer: Just make that statement, they don't want to hear my voice, they want to hear you stating that.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, to repeat what I tried to say before, you had to be very careful what you said, no matter where you were. You never know if there's someone who's really a pro-Nazi and maybe even has a, like the SS who were Special League, whatever you call it, to Hitler. Where ever you went, where ever you go, you had to be very careful what you said. Otherwise, you could have been in deep trouble.

Interviewer: All right, now, you went to Hungary. Tell us a little bit more about those experiences in Hungary. You were 14, did you say?

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And you had to train with live ammunition?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: And some of those kids got shot?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: All right, tell us about that again.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, like I said, in Hungary, it was '43 and '44, was it? I think 1943 and 1944, and like I said, Hitler wanted to have a place for us where we had good food to be able to have the nourishment you need as teenagers, which was good. But his plan behind it was not so good, because he wanted us to go there for one year, I been there, and come back and be able to have the healthy, strong, body to sign up, volunteer or enforced to go now and help him to have more man power to go against the enemy.

Interviewer: And tell us about your training while you were in Hungary.

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yeah. That was, and it was just not in Hungary. I had some before, right when I lived with my parents at home. Every so often, we would, even for a few days, have us go somewhere to be trained and sharp-shooting, too. I remember when we had, you know, like they do over here where you have, what do you call it again where you shoot a target? And I was pretty good at it. But, that was just -- like I said before, for the kids in Germany. We probably don't take it as serious and hunt as much as our parents and older folks that, you know, how the SS kids, when you get together and like I said before -- Hitler, he just was a man who wanted to force people, and that's why I'm so glad to have been able to come to America, to see the difference where we have free speech, you know. Free press where we can express ourselves, and they don't lock you up by reading the paper this morning. Again, all these

things in common about politics and people there. They could have never happened in Germany, and I still don't think you can have that to the certain extent now than you have here over there.

Interviewer: Werner, tell us, when did you come back from Hungary.

Werner Sommerfeld: I came back in 1944, and I mentioned before, I guess, when I went to Sudetenland first, where my parents were blessed to have another home, and lived a good life there, but then within 24 hours, the government told us we got to get out, and we went back to Hamburg, Germany, and I mentioned before, four weeks we traveled with a two wheel cart, and one thing too, of course, I don't know if it has any place. I like music, and I had a little 12 base accordion, you know what I mean? And I played it quite well, and I was proud that we took it back, too, when we had to leave Sudetenland, and on the way back, of course, you had all the check points all over. It was no picnic to go back. They stopped you everywhere else, and they took my nice accordion away from me, and I was pretty sad about that. Of course, with my sisters, they had to dress in boy's clothes when we went all the way back there, you know, through all the check points because many -- the Russians, they just abused and used the women going back. That was another tragedy, but then we went back home and we went back --

Interviewer: Just a sec, this was when the war was over, and the Russians had taken over that part of Germany and had the check points.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Interviewer: How far was it from the Sudetenland to Hamburg that you had to travel by foot?

Werner Sommerfeld: I should have -- I don't know how many miles and kilometers, but it was four weeks. We just stopped and found homes and other places, and then carried on each day till we got back to my home town, and I remember when we got back, there

was no places to live, you know. It was bombed out, it was all flat. But the areas where I grew up, they had house development started, and they just had the basement with no roof, no doors, no floor. And we lived there without heat or anything else.

Interviewer: And, go back again. You dressed -- your sisters had to dress like boys?

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: So that they would not be molested.

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Just make a statement.

Elizabeth: Can you have him say that?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Have him say that.

Interviewer: Say that again, I know you said it once. But we want to get that just in a regular statement coming from you about your sisters because of the fact the Russian soldiers were molesting the girls.

Werner Sommerfeld: Okay, when our family went back, on the trip back to Germany there, we stopped many places to get food and had to rest. My sisters, and not just my sisters, any women on the same route where we, what do you call it again when you have the --

Interviewer: Just the route you traveled.

Werner Sommerfeld: What do you call it where, they had a whole stream of --

Interviewer: Refugees?

Werner Sommerfeld: Refugees going back to their home. Anyhow, my sisters, who was scared and other women, too because -- they were molested and they had to wear boy's clothes, and their hair they had tucked under a hat or whatever, a scarf, or they can just go through all the check points safely without being grabbed by any of the Russians and be molested.

Crew Member: Can I ask him?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Crew Member: When the war ended, what were his feelings or his parent's feelings? I mean, was there fear about Russia talking over, or what was going on through a 13, 14 year old mind.

Werner Sommerfeld: Even when the war was over, I guess they had all the (inaudible), not just the American -- we had all those American, British, who was the other two --

Interviewer: Russia and France.

Werner Sommerfeld: Russia and France.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Werner Sommerfeld: We had them all over, too, to take over. Of course, they just pulled out. The Americans mainly I guess were there.

Interviewer: What was going through your mind, Werner, at that time -- was there any kind of hatred for America or hatred for Russia?

Werner Sommerfeld: No, we loved it, we were happy. Of course, again, being members of the church, you know, we loved that the war was over and the Americans took charge there. I don't know if you were interested in this was another blessing when the war was

over, Ezra Taft Benson at that time, he was in the government, American government. And we, the German people were starving. There was no food, nothing to eat, nothing to wear. And he petitioned the government if they can send some food and clothing over for the poor German starving people. And, they said, "Okay, when can you have it?" "We can send it tomorrow." So, they made agreement that they send a whole wagon train of food, but they had to agree that one third goes to the Catholic, one third goes to the Protestant, one third to the German, which we agreed on, and we rented, like I said before where we met as a branch, all that food was stored in that branch, and we, as young deacons and teachers, we had to rotate to protect that food. And I tell ya, we were scared at that time. We were just 13, 14, very young, too, there. And when people are hungry, you know, they just banged on the door and hurt the door and we just were shaking there. We had to bond the inside with two by fours, but they couldn't get in. We were fortunate about that, I don't know if they would have gone in. I know if people are hungry, they do anything. But then they had that seagull milk, you know, that we still got over here. My buddy and myself, we opened the seagull milk, and we drank it, and we were deathly sick. We never were used to that kind of food and stuff, you know what I mean.

Interviewer: Did you have guns when you were in there? You were in the church protecting the store of food that they were keeping mainly for the Mormon people, is that correct?

Werner Sommerfeld: No guns.

Interviewer: No guns.

Werner Sommerfeld: We couldn't have any guns, no.

Crew Member: Werner, did you mean one third to the Catholics, one third to the Protestants, and one third to Mormons?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Crew Member: Can you say that to Rick because you said, "One third to the Germans."

Interviewer: He said one third to the Germans.

Crew Member: Can you just say again --

Interviewer: Say, the food allotment they gave us was --

Werner Sommerfeld: The food allotment they gave us, under the condition that we will give one third to the Catholic, one third to the protestant, and one third for the Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Interviewer: Okay, and Werner, you must have been about 16 years old after the war, 1945.

Werner Sommerfeld: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And, so tell us kind of what it was like after that and just go on with your story a little more and give us details as well.

Werner Sommerfeld: I think, I started my apprenticeship as an instrumenteur. That's a plumbing, probably roofer, gutter, rain gutter and stuff. I started there, and then I went back after the war and I worked as a plumbing apprentice and then turned out as a German plumber. So I worked on buildings with plumbing.

Interviewer: And this was still in Hamburg?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, are there any other details about that experience or attitudes about the Hitler regime, about Americans or whatever that you'd like to share with us?

Werner Sommerfeld: No, I think --

Crew Member: Can I ask you something? It's kind of personal, but -- did you say family prayers together?

Interviewer: The question was, did you have family prayers?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, we do.

Crew Member: What was in your prayer? What was being asked for or --

Interviewer: She wants to know details of during this troubled time, what was said in the prayers?

Werner Sommerfeld: Of course, like I mentioned before, being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we had our daily prayer, morning and lunch time and night. Of course, we prayed that our family would be protected and blessed, and we prayed that Heavenly Father will watch over all of his people to help them.

Family Member: Werner, let me butt in and tell what the story is. They kind of -- the neighbors despised them --

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yeah.

Family Member: For being religious people. When the bombs came, they all wanted to be in their bunker because their mother was a praying woman.

Werner Sommerfeld: Let me tell them.

Family Member: Something in that order.

Werner Sommerfeld: Okay, previous, when I talked about, you know, when we had the air raids day and night, when we always had to leave the home and go into the bunker to preserve our lives, all those neighbors we knew and they knew we belonged to an American church, they all wanted to be with us to sit in the bunker because they knew we were perhaps religious and prayed so they thought they would be protected if they would be close to us.

Interviewer: Tell us about the bunkers, was it a central place in Hamburg, like a subway or something where everybody went?

Werner Sommerfeld: They had several bunkers all over. Quite closely located where ever you resided.

Interviewer: And describe what a bunker was in Hamburg, if you can.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, it was, like I said, a pyramid, a cone type shape out of concrete, solid concrete. No wood, no nothing in there. It was cold in there. But, it was well built so when the bombs came down, they just, you know, and protected. There was no doors, nothing in there. So everybody could come in and out to be protected.

Interviewer: Was it underground?

Werner Sommerfeld: No.

Interviewer: Above ground, and how many people could it hold?

Werner Sommerfeld: I don't remember, quite a few.

Elizabeth: I have another question, Rick.

Interviewer: Okay.

Elizabeth: After the war and all the information started creeping in slowly about what was going on in the concentration camps, you probably doesn't know as a 12, 13, 14 year old what were had discussions around the table of what Hitler's ultimate plan really was. Can you look at Rick?

Interviewer: Answer me.

Werner Sommerfeld: That's a good question, because I don't know if you learned over here, but we didn't know anything about the German people what was going on. We just learned it all after, it was so kept secret, and if anybody would just mention the small

little things, they would be taken care of. So, we didn't know anything about at that time what was going on in the concentration camp. We were not aware of anything like that.

Crew Member: So, once you did know what were your feelings?

Werner Sommerfeld: Devastated. There was another story, too, but I don't know if you are interested in that, you know. We -- I don't know if you saw where I was interviewed just like here about three against Hitler. We had those three boys in our branch that was Helmuth Hübener, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, and Rudi Wobbe. Helmuth Hübener, he was a smart, smart man. And he was only 14, and he worked for the government, but he listened to BBC London, and that was a no-no. His brother, who was in the Army, brought one of those little radios and he listened to that, and they caught up with him and went in, pulled him in and asked him questions, and many -- they didn't believe that he himself did it all by himself. They thought somebody else, a brain, was behind it when he said, "Hitler's all wrong. We're not going to win the war. He's just a --" what did he call him? He called him (Speaking in German) -- I can't remember. But, there was -- they tortured him so much that he gave two of the buddies who he associated with and who listened to the radio, too. And they pulled them all in and, of course, Helmuth Hübener -- maybe you heard the story. I read the letter in the story where, before he was beheaded, he had three wishes he could have by the government. That was to write to three people, and one of them was my mother. She was like a mother to him. And that letter was very sad, there. And of course, those other two, they got five years of hard labor, and one ten years of hard labor. One of them is still alive now. But, this whole story -- it was just devastating because the government, and the people wrote in letters that they should, well, (Speaking in German). Not kill him, but give him life in prison. But Hitler himself said, "No, get rid of him." So, they beheaded him, French style, whatever. You probably heard that story,

but that was devastating. And he was one of our members, too, in our ward. A very, very, bright young man.

Interviewer: And they were all three members of the Hamburg branch there?

Werner Sommerfeld: They were there three members, and they came to our home. I had three sisters, and I guess they liked the sisters. Every Sunday, they came after the meeting and we, my sister played the piano and we just sang around the piano. And like I said, that hit us very hard, of course, as most stories about his grandmother and stuff. But when people -- like Gestapo drove around the streets all over, and they could detect, too, if somebody is listening to BBC London, what he has done there. And man, if you've done that, then you're through. They pick you up and put you away for good.

Interviewer: He didn't do anything else but listen to the BBC, did he?

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, he did more than that. He didn't keep it for himself. He advertised it. He duplicated it, put in telephone booth, put it all over. He, and he could have lived, I guess, if he said, "No, I don't believe it." But he said no. But these three boys we know -- there's many people who really tried to fight against Hitler and stated their point of view, what they thought about him. And that takes courage, I tell you, to do that. I don't think I could have done that.

Crew Member: Do you still have, do you have in your possession the letter he wrote to your mom?

Werner Sommerfeld: My mother was interviewed way back when, in the 50's. And I don't know -- the church or, if they have it. I got a copy of that letter.

Crew Member: You do have a copy of that letter?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Crew Member: He wrote to your mother?

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes.

Crew Member: Wow.

Family Member: One thing you asked about, did they know about the concentration camps, they didn't know about the large concentration camps, but they knew about the local ones because he has quite a little story of a Christian boy having empathy for a starving Russian who was a prisoner in that camp.

Crew Member: Can we hear that?

Interviewer: Yeah, tell us that story.

Crew Member: First, tell us that you know about the local camps only.

Crew Member: I was going to ask, were there any repercussions to the branch because of those three young men?

Werner Sommerfeld: Was there what?

Interviewer: He says -- go ahead.

Crew Member: Any repercussions to the branch because of these young men?

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yes.

Crew Member: Why don't you talk about that?

Werner Sommerfeld: That's why, well, the branch president was a Nazi, you know. And he, of course, they were excommunicated. They had to do that. And at that time, because of all the problems, and having the Nazis come to our meeting, sit with us in the meeting, we couldn't do it any longer because they were right in our nest there. We just secretly, sometimes in our homes, sometimes in another member's home, to have our meetings together

there. That was necessary to do it because, I don't know this, there's other stories too, about this. Hitler said something at that time, you know, we got rid of the Jews, and after that, we get rid of the Mormons. That was a statement made regarding them, too. I don't know if you heard that or not.

Crew Member: Did he really feel -- is that what Hitler thought?

Interviewer: I don't know. I haven't heard that, but, let me ask you this.

There were small areas, little concentration camps around Hamburg that you knew of?

Werner Sommerfeld: No.

Family Member: Werner, talk about the Russian camp. That's a concentration camp, too.

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, well, that was -- that was close to us. I mean, they had Russian prisoners right close where I lived. And, every morning, I saw, I mean, we didn't have any food ourselves, and they didn't feed the Russians at all, and you saw them loading the dead bodies on the pickup and hauling them away. And I have a tender heart, I really felt bad about it. And we had a meager food to eat, too. A little brown bag, my mother made me to go to school with. I saw the one Russian, skin and bones, looking through the garbage can right close to my home, and I just -- I put my brown bag on the garbage can and just left and I noticed him taking it, but if somebody would have seen me have done that, I would have been in trouble, too. Not just me, many were kind and loving considerate and they would have done the same thing.

Interviewer: Well, that's interesting. So you had Russian prisoners?

Werner Sommerfeld: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Right near your home in Hamburg there that were starving?

Werner Sommerfeld: That wasn't actually a concentration camp. You know, the prisoners from Russia we had there. Oh, yeah. Very bad.

Interviewer: Is there anything else?

Elizabeth: Oh, yeah. I have a bunch of stuff.

Interviewer: Okay.

Crew Member: This is great, this is the greatest interview.

Elizabeth: When you say, "You were drilled to do certain things like 'Heil Hitler' --"

Werner Sommerfeld: Yeah?

Interviewer: Who was it that was drilling you and when? Was it school? And talk to Rick.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, it was school --

Interviewer: Make it a full sentence, like, "When we were drilled" or whatever because we need to have the full thing.

Werner Sommerfeld: Okay. When we were drilled, and just not in school, otherwise, too, were brought together as a group of boys, they had those men, Nazis who were assigned by the higher upper to do this, and to teach us and to help us to do the skills, to help them to win the war. And that was, that was a tough thing to do there. I mentioned before, us poor kids, what, 12, 13, 14, go to the school grounds and having fire flying over us and sharp shooting and also the bazookas for the Panzerfaust, this is, I mean, this is not for young boys for us to do. But Hitler has done it, so he can have enough man power that he would be able to win the war. And that's, I don't know what else to say on that.

Elizabeth: Did you have uniforms?

Werner Sommerfeld: We had uniforms.

Elizabeth: Describe them to Rick?

Crew Member: Can you look at Rick when you're talking?

Interviewer: Just say, "We had uniforms --"

Werner Sommerfeld: We had uniforms, required to wear them every time.

And there's a brown uniform there.

Interviewer: Did they have the Nazi insignia on them, the symbol, the swastika?

Werner Sommerfeld: I don't think they had that on there. No, I don't think they had that on there.

Family Member: I'll put a little side note for your own information. He never would have any part of boy scouts because the uniform was so familiar, he wanted nothing to do with it.

Interviewer: That was after you came to America, you mean?

Elizabeth: Have him describe the uniform again.

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, it's just a brown shirt and brown pants, if I remember right. That's all there was to it. Too bad I don't have a -- I don't have a picture with a uniform, I guess. Hitler youth uniform.

Elizabeth: Why did your neighbors despise you?

Werner Sommerfeld: I guess, it was an American church, and it was not accepted over there. It was never, I forget what year it was when they actually accepted it as a real church over there. But that time, I was on my way passing on my ID's, were just like Protestant. They would not have the Mormon Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, we belong to.

And I think people knew we were somewhat religious and kind and loving and considerate, I guess. They didn't like us, and yet they liked us because they wanted to be close to us because there was danger around us.

Elizabeth: Did they just ignore you, or were they mean to you?

Werner Sommerfeld: I don't know they were mean, they were not pleasant. But I don't know they were mean. They just kind of, sometimes they even go out around you, you know. They don't want anything to do with us.

Interviewer: And then, Werner, what happened shortly after that? How did you get to America, at what age and stuff?

Werner Sommerfeld: I came in 1953, I came to the states. I was called as a missionary over there by another branch president at that time, not the one that was Nazi. It was (inaudible), another. And he called me and I serve a mission, and Hamburg, well, I served a mission in 1951 to 1953. First in Nuremburg, then in (inaudible), then I finished there in Bitterfeld. And right after my mission, I went to America. My sister, he was over here and her husband had relatives over here. So I was planning to go over to America after my mission, which was in counter with what the church wanted you to do. They wanted you to stay over there and build branches. And I was disobedient and I'm very happy I was because I was thankful to leave Germany and come here to America, the United States. And then, I come in July, 1953, then I met my young bride in August 15th, in 1953, and I got married in August 30th the following year.

Interviewer: Did your parents stay in Hamburg till they passed away?

Werner Sommerfeld: My mother came after we got married here. My dad, he died over there.

Interviewer: Is it hard for you to talk about these experiences of the war?

Werner Sommerfeld: It is, some of the things, especially. Very emotional and can -- it's sad, what happened to good friends you had, people who lost their lives. I guess this young man, especially, who gave his life for what he believed in, you know?

Family Member: You know, Germany is so different today. But I have seen his mindset from that time when we were able to and wanted to go back as tourists. He said, "I've lost nothing in Germany." He didn't care if he ever went back. That was so engrained, the difficulties he went through, and he's gotten over it to some extent, but not really.

Elizabeth: I have another question. Were you always fearful of the Nazis? In your memory, was it always the same fear, or did the fear get more as you got older?

Interviewer: Look at me.

Werner Sommerfeld: I think I was fearful. Most of the people were fearful, I guess. Like I mentioned before, when you get older, you're more fearful, and I think you understand better and more what happened there.

Interviewer: And, you been back to your old neighborhood since then?

Werner Sommerfeld: I went back the first time with all my family after 25 years. That was a long time ago. We have been married 55 years, and that was a choice experience, to have gone back the same areas where I served a mission and visit with friends. When we were on the train, I talked to the one fellow who was traveling on the train too, and I told him I lived in America, I came to visit my homeland. "What is your name," he said. I said, "Sommerfeld." "Oh, you're lucky you're still around. Originally, Sommerfeld was a Jewish name. But it must have been generations back." So, but going to places and seeing the old people and some of the old members we used to know was just a choice experience.

Crew Member: Can I ask a question? Um, can you describe, this is maybe not that important, as a young -- what it feels like to be hungry and how your family divvied out food and stuff. Do you remember that?

Werner Sommerfeld: I remember it very well; let me relate that one story to you, too, there. The food was rationed very small. We just had one little loaf; it has to last a whole week. And we had to really just make sure we don't eat it all at once, so we had a little bit for every day. And that made me sad; too, when I experienced my dad, of course, he was a grown man, working hard. He ate one of my bread one time and I didn't have anything. But I don't, I forgive him. I know he needed it more than I did. I'm still very conscious of having grandkids waste food. Like I said, I'm very grateful to have come to this country. It's still the best country in the whole world. Even so, it's not the same as it was when I came 50 or more years ago. But, there's still no better place on the earth than America. And I'm grateful to be here, among good people where we can have food to eat, where we have free speech, free press, where we can express ourselves. Compared to the experiences we had over in Germany as I grew up there, I know Heavenly Father blessed us, my family, that we could come here. And I pray that we may continue to be faithful and pray for our leaders, for our president, here in this great nation that our Heavenly Father's hand will be over the dealings on this great land of America.

Interviewer: Werner, thank you so much for coming up here today. I know it's hard to re-live some of those experiences, but we appreciate so much you doing this.

Elizabeth: Rick, I wanted to ask one more thing.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Crew Member: Warner, did you ever have to take an oath or anything every day, sort of like the pledge of allegiance, only --

Werner Sommerfeld: No, I was just indoctrinated. You know, "Heil Hitler." That's an oath, I guess. Whatever you say.

Crew Member: I'd like to ask one last -- when you tell your grandchildren these stories, do they know what kind of youth you had and how different it was? Did you ever explain to them how grateful they are and what you went through? Tell me if they have a true understanding.

Werner Sommerfeld: Yes, I do talk to my grandchildren. Maybe not enough, I tell them the stories I had gone through, and I'm sure they do appreciate it. I don't know to the extent, the way I appreciate it. But, they had never gone through anything like this. Most of us in America have not. And I don't know how any of us would do the things necessary in case we have something coming up here in America.

Elizabeth: You say it's not the same now as it was when you first came here.

Werner Sommerfeld: That's right.

Elizabeth: How is it different now?

Werner Sommerfeld: Well, I don't know. I think -- over there, you know, there's a total power over the government and socialized medicine. Of course, we have family coming over here for visit, and they come for four weeks. I don't know how they do it, of course the government pay and they get vacation. When we go over there, we go maybe for a week to come back to work. Now, I hate to see it come here in the great land of America where we have too much socialized like we have -- it has gone since I come to that point and I'm afraid that it might come just like we have experienced in Germany, I hope it doesn't.

Crew Member: That was a great interview.

Elizabeth: Terrific.

Family Member: I'll tell you, the one thing that saved my marriage was a garbage disposal. Because anything that sent him ballistic was when I wasted food. A tomato would be half rotten, he would eat it. Now, I could put it down the garbage disposal and he never knew.

Interviewer: Well, you did a great job, Werner. Thank you so much. I know it's hard to recall some of these things, but very valuable I think for future generations to know those kinds of the stories.

Crew Member: Is this you?

End of interview.