

GÜNTER SANDER

German Pilot/Infantry Soldier

Interviewed January 3 2012

- Life in Germany before the war was structured around militarization and protection of the government.
- There were groups put in place to install a military spirit in the German public, such as the Hitler Youth
- Günter was part of the Hitler Youth but distanced himself from it due to their different taste in music.
- He says they “liked marching music” but he was not very fond of this style so he stopped playing music with them.
- Here is Gunter as a 17 year old right around the time when he would have left the Hitler Youth

PRE-WAR



- Günter's friends all joined up in the armed forces and were stationed all around Germany; some he would never see again.
- Here two of Günter's friends, who were based in the city of Helmstedt, are pictured at right

FRIENDS



- At the outbreak of war people everywhere joined their armed forces.
- This photo shows Günter's flight instructor, Westphal, inside his training plane the Arado. This was the plane used by Günter after he joined the Luftwaffe.

JOINING UP



- Even at wartime Christmas was still celebrated by German soldiers who were fighting.
- The Christmas experience differed based on where the soldiers were and how the war was going.
- From 1939-1940 Christmas was celebrated with grand occasions by German soldiers everywhere, such as by signing O Tannebaum (O Christmas Tree).
- In the later years of the war (1941-1944) Christmas was celebrated less by German soldiers due to the turning of the war in the favor of the allies.
- Here Günter's parents are sitting down around the Christmas tree in 1943

WARTIME CHRISTMAS



- German prisoners surrendering.
- It was not uncommon for prisoners to break away from their units and surrender to allied forces later on in the war
- The loss of strategic battles, the realization that the war was being lost, and there almost being no hope of victory led German soldiers to surrender
- Günter broke away from his unit while retreating in a forest by saying he forgot his gas mask and waited behind for the allies to come.
- This picture shows German soldiers surrendering

SURRENDER



- After being captured German prisoners were sent to camps set up to hold them.
- Günter was sent to a POW camp in Germany after it was occupied and was released after saying he would return to the west instead of the east
- This is a picture showing German prisoners of war being moved from one part of the camp to another

POW CAMP



IMPACT MOMENTS

- The first impact moment was when Günter talked about how his mother was raped by the Russians.
- It was not uncommon for this to occur from the invading Russians due to the national feeling in Russia that the Germans had it coming after what they had done.
- The second impact moment was when Günter remembered how he used to play in a band in Western Germany after being released from the POW camp.
- This is because, “It was one of the happiest times in my life” when he no longer had to worry about war and could focus on his music.

DIVIDING UP GERMANY



- After the war Germany was divided up among the conquering powers of Britain, France, United States, and Russia; Berlin was divided up between the four as well.
- When Günter was in the POW camp he figured out that if he agreed to go to West Germany he would be released sooner, so he ended up in the West in his friends house who had a drum set.

- German soldiers were put through screenings to determine if de-Nazification had worked and if they were ready to be returned into the public
- Germans in the West Germany were let go if they passed their screening and agreed to return to the western, non-communist side of Germany
- Günter decided to go to the West and took up drumming in a big band by night and graphic designing by day.
- He said “he was working too hard” so when the idea of going to Canada came up he went straight away with his family and stayed there since.

LIFE AFTER THE WAR



BIBLIOGRAPHY

"German Christmas ." *Christmas*. N.p., n.d. Web. 7 Feb. 2012. <www.feldgrau.com/weihnachten.html >.

"German Release." *German release*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2012.
<www.fortunecity.com/campus/dixie/921/PoWs/pows.htm >.

"German Surrender." *Surrender*. N.p., n.d. Web. 7 Feb. 2012. <www.art.com/products/p13882073-sa-i2769699/german-soldiers-surrendering-with-raised-arms-shortly-after-the-allied-d-day-invasion-of-france.htm >.

"Germany Divided." *Dividing Germany*. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Feb. 2012. <www.pbs.org/behindcloseddoors/in-depth/prelude-coldwar.html#Germany >.

"Hitler Youth ." *Hitler Youth Military*. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 Feb. 2012.
<www.historylearningsite.co.uk/hitler_youth.htm >. "Occupation zone." *Occupation Germany*. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Feb. 2012. <www.awesomestories.com/assets/map-occupation-zones-of-germany-after-world-war-ii >.

"Prison." *Prisoner escort*. N.p., n.d. Web. 7 Feb. 2012. <picturehistory.blogspot.com/2010/01/first-world-war-images-british-soldiers.html >.