

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
JOACHIM KULENKAMPPF  
German Army, World War II.

2006

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**Kulenkampff, Joachim**, (1923- ). Oral History Interview, 2006.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 38 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 38 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

### **Abstract:**

Joachim Kulenkampff, a Bremen, Germany native, discusses his service in the German Army during World War II, including his experiences as a prisoner of war. Kulenkampff touches on his family and education, and he states he didn't join the German Army until 1942 because he had medical problems with his feet. He touches on having reconnaissance duty and requesting a transfer to Rennes (France), where his brother was stationed. Kulenkampff details his capture by American soldiers and being interrogated at a provisional camp by an officer fluent in German. He describes the hardships endured while being transported by truck and boxcar to Camp 404 in Marseilles, and he reveals some prisoners suffocated in one of the boxcars. He speaks of being put to work in an office of the Salvage Depot, interacting with Black soldiers, and witnessing some tents accidentally burn down. Kulenkampff tells of seeing a German camp doctor about getting orthopedic shoes. He explains that he was sent home to Uenzen (Germany) by an American doctor who was a fan of Kulenkampff's violinist uncle. He comments on treatment by American soldiers and once being beaten for refusing to exercise due to illness. Kulenkampff reflects on life in the German Army before his capture, including food and equipment, and he states that once, after they ran out of ammunition, they had a snowball fight with the Americans. He relates his mixed feelings about the end of the war and talks about his father, who was a colonel in the German Army and an area commander of a town. Kulenkampff speaks of his activities after the war: learning the mercantile business, doing bookkeeping, opening a lingerie store with his wife, and taking care of the children while his wife ran the store. He relates some interactions he had with American soldiers during the war. At the end of the interview, he reads a written note about being drafted, even though his father could have postponed it, and states the food supply was worse during the Allied occupation than during the war.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Joachim Kulenkampff (b.1923) was born in Bremen, Germany and attended high school in Jena, Dresden, and Hamburg. He was drafted into the German Army in 1942 and spent time as an American prisoner of war. After the war he studied economy in Göttingen (Germany), owned a lingerie store with his wife, and raised two children.

**Note:**

Joachim was with the German Army in World War II. Joachim's niece, Gundel Metz, SFC, USA, Retired, translated during the interview and also transcribed the tape in 2007.

Interviewed by John Driscoll, 2006.  
Original transcription by Gundel Metz, his niece, 2007.  
Revised transcription by Katie Chapman, 2011.  
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011.

**Interview Transcript:**

- John: This is John Driscoll, and today is October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and I'm a volunteer with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Archives. And this is an oral history interview with—
- Gundel: Joachim Kulenkampff.
- John: Okay, Joachim Kulenkampff, and I've got that spelled properly on the tape. And Joachim was with the German Army in World War II. Is that correct?
- Gundel: Du warst bei der deutschen Heer. Du warst bei der deutschen Heer im zweiten Weltkrieg. [*You were with the German army. You were with the German army in World War II.*]
- Joachim: Ja. German Army.
- John: Okay. When and where were you born?
- Joachim: I am born in Bremen, 16 August 1923.
- John: '23, okay. Family?
- Joachim: Family, I have-- I had a wife and she gives me two children. A son and a daughter.
- John: How about brothers and sisters?
- Gundel: Geschwister? [*Siblings?*]
- Joachim: I am six. We were seven, ein Gedicht von Edgar Allen Poe [*a poem by Edgar Allen Poe*], we were seven. And I'm the Vorletzte [*next to last*]. Next to last?
- Gundel: Second youngest.
- John: Okay, okay, okay.
- Joachim: Sie [*She*] and me, we are five and six.
- Gundel: My mother is his twin sister.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: A quarter earlier than me.
- John: Okay, okay. How about school?

- Gundel: Schule? [*School?*]
- Joachim: Schule [*School*], yes. High school. Aber [*But*] not the same school [*incomprehensible*], oder Abitur oder [*or diploma or*] what we meant it.
- Gundel: High school diploma. He went to school in different cities in Germany, cause he moved.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Gundel: Nicht? [*Right?*]
- Joachim: Ja ja [*Yes, yes*]—
- Gundel: Ihr seid umgezogen immer. [*You were always moving.*]
- Joachim: Ja ja, wir hatten [*we had*] school first in Jena, then in Dresden, and at last in Hamburg.
- John: Hamburg, okay, okay. Uh, then, How did you get into the Army?
- Joachim: Ja [*Yes*]. I came a little later because I handicapped with my feet. I made the Abitur [*high school diploma*], you know what that is.
- Gundel: High school, yeah.
- Joachim: And then I was in the-- Landwirtschaft [*agriculture*].
- Gundel: Uh, [*incomprehensible*].
- Joachim: Agriculture, [*laughs*].
- Gundel: Agriculture, yeah, you know, is farming, kind of.
- Joachim: In December '42 I came to the Army because they need all the older one and the handicapped. And then I came to Litzmannstadt to the Landesschuetzen [=a branch of the infantry during the German Reich; *Reconnaissance?*]. It was a group who had to observe objects--
- Gundel: Obser—yeah, okay.
- Joachim: Yeah, that's right?
- Gundel: Yeah.
- Joachim: Bridges and cars, and what—
- Gundel: Reconnaissance I would think then.

- John: Okay.
- Joachim: And my brother was in Rennes, in Frankreich [*France*], in France. And I wrote him, he told me-- Anforderung [*request*].
- Gundel: Request.
- Joachim: Request. Ich wollte zu ihm nach Frankreich [*I wanted to go to my brother in France*].
- Gundel: I wanted to go to my brother in France. I wanted to be stationed—
- Joachim: Ich wollt' ob ich so in die Stadt—[*I wanted (to know) if I could go to the city--*]
- John: I see, okay.
- Joachim: And then I came 1943 to Rennes. August, in August sometime.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: And then I were in France, eh, during the whole war. Rennes, Orleans, Cannes.
- John: Mostly in the South of France?
- Joachim: South of France? Later on I was captured, I was in Marseilles.
- John: Marseilles, okay, okay.
- Joachim: In Marseilles. In March 1945 I was captured. Oder wie heißt es? [*Or, how do you say it?*]
- Gundel: Yeah.
- Joachim: Is that right?
- Gundel: Yeah, correct.
- Joachim: Ja [*Yes*]. And then we were--
- John: How did that happen?
- Gundel: Wie ist das passiert? [*How did that happen?*]
- Joachim: Oh yes. We are sleeping in a little village and heard the American Panzer [*tanks*].
- Gundel: The tanks, yeah. They know it.

- Joachim: And then we get up and turned up and rode, oder [*or*] jumped up a little hill, ein Berg [*incomprehensible*] [*Mountain-can't make out the rest of this compound word*].
- Gundel: Yeah, little hill.
- Joachim: And we had the idea to come to Germany. But we didn't find a way, we couldn't go. I'm couldn't go. The officer who were [*incomprehensible*] was wounded, couldn't go. And so we're find in the evening an understand, you know, an understand, is that right? Understand [*dugout*]?
- Gundel: Understand, was—[*Understand, what--*]
- Joachim: Wo man sich versteckt—
- Gundel: Oh—
- Joachim: Im Wald. [*In the forest.*]
- Gundel: He found cover in the forest.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: And then we go in there, and then the next morning I'm went out and little Fahrt [*drive*].
- Gundel: Driveway. Weg, ein weg? [*Path, a path?*]
- Joachim: Yeah, a way, aber [*but*], but--
- Gundel: A walk, a little narrow passage.
- Joachim: We were [*incomprehensible*] Fahrt [*drive*].
- Gundel: Yeah, a little passage.
- Joachim: And I looked over here and I saw two G.I.s coming up. Oh! Zurueck [*back*] –
- Gundel: Back to the Eintritt [*entrance*]—
- Joachim: Back to the comrades, we were four. Officer, Corporal, another Corporal and I were Corporal. And then I had the Aufgabe [*task*]—
- Gundel: I had the duty—
- Joachim: Had the duty to show the white towel.
- Gundel: White rag.

- John: Okay.
- Joachim: And then this guy came up, the little Fahrt [*drive*] way—
- Gundel: The little passageway.
- Joachim: Because the towel. And then they come out. Naja [*So anyway*], and then kommen wir [*we come*] out. With the towel. Und [*and*] they hatten [*had*], they were anxious the same as we.
- John: Oh yeah?
- Joachim: Yeah, yeah.
- John: Observers.
- Joachim: But they didn't shoot.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: And we came out and go down in the valley and we must, in a jeep, and we came on a camp at provisorisch [*provisional*] camp.
- Gundel: Provisional camp.
- Joachim: Ja? Ist das richtig? [*Yeah? Is that right?*]
- Gundel: Yeah.
- John: Yeah.
- Joachim: Eine Wiese. Was... [*A meadow. What...*]
- Gundel: In a field.
- Joachim: In a field, yeah.
- Gundel: A provisional camp that was set up in the field.
- Joachim: And the first officer who has... abgefragt [*interrogated*].
- Gundel: Questioned us.
- Joachim: Questioned us. He was, he speaks fluently German.
- John: Oh yeah? Oh!



- Joachim: Yeah, the American.
- John: Yes.
- Joachim: He was German, I know it. Oh he was, “Say your name! Say your unit! Oh wo wo wo wo!” And the officer wouldn’t say that, say what [*incomprehensible*] march [*incomprehensible*]. Naja [*Anyway*] and then we was loaded on trucks, great trucks, diese GroSSen [*these big*]—
- Gundel: Deuce and a half or 5 tons probably.
- Joachim: Ja, wie die Herringe. [*Yeah, like herrings.*]
- Gundel: [*laughs*] We were packed like herrings.
- John: Yeah.
- Joachim: And we had a colored driver. He must bring us over the Vogesen [*Vosges Mountains*]. You know Vogesen [*Vosges Mountains*]?
- John: Vosges Mountains, yes.
- Joachim: The mountains, yeah. Oh he drives like a bat...
- Gundel: [*laughs*] Bat outta hell...
- Joachim: Wo wo and wir schaukelten da oben hin und her [*we were swaying side to side up there*]--
- Gundel: We were swinging back and forth in the back.
- Joachim: And then we came to Epinal.
- John: Epinal, okay.
- Joachim: Epinal. Oh you know Epinal, yea?
- John: I know of it, yes.
- Joachim: It’s in France, in France. We were on a place, a school.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: On the [*incomprehensible*].
- [*Clock chimes*]
- Gundel: School grounds, yeah.

- Joachim: Und hatten [*And had*] no, nothing to eat, and there—and there we were one night I mean. And then we were transported in a train in...Guterwagen [*box car*]? In what you mean?
- John: Box car...
- Gundel: Box cars...
- John: Goods wagon.
- Gundel: Yeah. That's exactly what it means. Box car. Wo man Gueter mitnimmt [*what you take goods with*].
- Joachim: Yeah yeah, yeah yeah. These cars were different. I-- One were closed and the other were, had, wackelige [*shaky*]...
- Gundel: Panels.
- Joachim: Yeah, yeah. And I came and who [*unintelligible*] he were, he had air.
- Gundel: Draft.
- Joachim: We could become air. Another wagon, when he was loaded in Marseilles, they had Tote [*dead; casualties*]. They were, they died, some comrades.
- John: Oh, oh, okay.
- Joachim: Erstickt und die muessen da reinmachen und ihre Notdurft verrichten und bwoa [*Choked, and they had to clean up there, and empty their bowels, and bwoa*]...
- Gundel: They were enclosed holdings, had no fresh air really, and, you know, they had no place to go to the bathroom and everything so...you know, the old same old story you see.
- John: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah.
- Joachim: And then we came to the camp 404.
- John: 404.
- Joachim: In Marseilles.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: It's a very bekanntes Lager [*well-known camp*].
- Gundel: It was a, it's a, was a well-known camp.

John: Okay, okay.

Joachim: A camp of about 100 thousand—

John: Oh wow.

Joachim: --prisoners. There were cages. Twelve, fifteen cages about three, four thousand prisoners. And then I was prueft [*tested*] if I could a little bit English.

John: Uh huh, uh huh.

Joachim: And then I came to the labor Abteilung [*division*].

Gundel: Yeah.

Joachim: And uh, first in a camp near, in Marseilles, in an office. I couldn't understand the telephone. And then er hat wieder rausgeschmissen [*he threw me out*] [*laughs*].

Gundel: [*laughs*] He kicked me out cause I couldn't understand.

Joachim: And then I came in the office of the Salvage Depot.

John: Okay.

Joachim: You know what that is?

John: Salvage? Yes.

Joachim: Yeah? Salvage. Was the depot where the army left their clothes. Yes, we would, we washed and bagged, packed in bags. And I had to make the statistic—

John: Okay.

Joachim: --in the Buero [*office*].

John: Okay.

Gundel: In the office.

Joachim: Yeah, in the office, in the office. Und da kam [*And there came*]... [*unintelligible*] I could speak with the soldiers, first colored and then we were changed, they were changed in the white. Und [*And*] the colored said to me, "Don't speak with us! That could be not good for the other one." Naja [*Anyways*], and then we changed and then came-- it was the time without exciting things. We became an a -- Zelt [*tent*].

Gundel: Ein Zelt [*A tent*]?

Joachim: Zelt, oder eine Halle? [*Tent, or a hall?*]

Gundel: Tent?

Joachim: We could theater, musics, and so on.

Gundel: Okay.

John: Okay.

Joachim: Und [*And*] came was blown up.

John: Oh yeah?

Joachim: Yeah. The guard had--[*incomprehensible*] die Lampe.

Gundel: Oh, yeah, tipped over the lamp.

John: Oh, okay.

Gundel: The guard did.

Joachim: Yeah, and this is camp [*you can hear how he draws on the table*], here was the guard who had the lamp, and the wind came from there. Und [*And*] when they ooh, twenty minutes were alle weg [*everything was gone*]. Naja [*Anyway*]--

John: Could you—

Joachim: Say?

John: Was anybody injured, anybody hurt?

Gundel: War jemand verletzt dabei? [*Was anyone hurt?*]

Joachim: No, I don't remember it.

John: That's good.

Joachim: That was in Marseilles, and that was I-- in nineteen hundred and fifty--forty-six. In the end I went to the doctor, because I couldn't wear these boots. I had orthopedic.

Gundel: He had specially made boots.

Joachim: Were specially made, yeah, and you could give me that. And so I went to [*incomprehensible*] there was a doctor, and there were prisoners who came

back from the French. They were given from the American to French, and they were--gebracht in die Pyrenaen [*brought to the Pyrenees*].

John: Pyrenees, yeah.

Gundel: They were brought to the Pyrenees.

Joachim: For ma—for ernten [*to harvest*]—

Gundel: Harvest.

Joachim: --tomatoes, and wine.

John: Okay.

Joachim: And they came back no hundred pounds. Many of them died in the camp of, how many in France I don't know. But in the camp I was there to spend blood [*means 'to give blood'; German for 'to give blood' = 'Blut spenden'*].

John: Yeah, okay.

Joachim: And when I went to the doctor for pull the teeth and for this-- Angelegenheit [*issue/matter*] what with [*incomprehensible*]--

Gundel: Hm?

Joachim: Wegen der FueSSe, nicht? [*Because of my feet, no?*]

Gundel: For his feet, you know, when he went to the doctor.

Joachim: And there was a nice story. The German doctor had read my name. And an uncle from me was a Virtuose [*virtuoso*] here, a violinist.

John: A violinist?

Joachim: Yeah. And then the German doctor said to me, "Oh! The American doctor is an fan of Menuhin!"

John: Oh, oh!

Joachim: Und [*And*] he said that, that I am the nephew from the German Menuhin [*all laugh*]. Oh [*incomprehensible*]-- konnte nach Hause [*could go home*].

Gundel: He could go home.

John: Good, good, good.

- Joachim: And then I came about, over [*incomprehensible: Name of French city*], oder [*or*] what in [*incomprehensible: Name of French city*] and [*incomprehensible: Name of French city*] kam [*came*] right back to my sister, my twin sister--
- Gundel: In Uenzen.
- Joachim: --in Germany, yeah.
- Gundel: In Uenzen.
- Joachim: That was the whole story about, a little story-- ja, unbedeutend [*yeah, not important*]. And the whole, also once I was bad handled, oder [*or*]--
- Gundel: Badly handled?
- Joachim: Ich wurde schlecht behandelt? [*I was handled/treated badly?*]
- Gundel: Yeah, I was badly handled.
- Joachim: I had in 404. Wir [*We*] must go all the day in the round.
- John: Oh yeah?
- Gundel: Exercise.
- Joachim: And I couldn't go for a long.
- John: Okay, sure.
- Joachim: And so I went to the doctor, and there was a long snake—
- Gundel: Long line.
- Joachim: Long line?
- Gundel: Line.
- Joachim: Line.
- Gundel: Lange Schlange [*long line; literally, 'long snake'*].
- Joachim: Ja ja, lange lange [*Yes yes, long, long*]-- we say in German 'snake' [*laughs*].
- Gundel: Long snake.
- John: I can understand that.

- Joachim: And that was not in the-- Zufriedenheit [*satisfaction*] or content—of the Waechter da von den [*guard there of the*]--
- Gundel: The guard.
- Joachim: Von [*Of*] the guard, yeah.
- Gundel: Guard.
- Joachim: And they have-- weggetrieben [*took/carried away*]?
- Gundel: They took me away.
- Joachim: And some under these German prisoners had fever about forty, over forty grades in Germany.
- Gundel: Celsius, fever.
- John: Oh, okay, oh, okay.
- Joachim: Aber ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste, nicht war? [*Without caring whether there were casualties, you know?*]
- Gundel: They didn't care whether they lost any or not.
- Joachim: Die brachen zusammen, nicht wahr, die waren krank [*they collapsed, you know, they were sick*]. They were sick.
- Gundel: Yeah, they were really sick.
- Joachim: And I whether should go to make Kniebeugen und schwipfen und [*knee-bends and jumping and*]--
- Gundel: Oh, he was supposed to do, you know, knee bends and hopping exercises.
- Joachim: But I couldn't do it—
- John: Couldn't do it, sure, sure.
- Joachim: --my feet, and I stand, stehen [*stood, to stand*].
- Gundel: I stopped.
- Joachim: And then came one of the guards to me and with a long Knute [*knout*].
- Gundel: With a long stick.
- Joachim: Stick with leather.

- Gundel: Yeah.
- Joachim: Wie die Russen, nicht? [*Like the Russians, you know?*]. Und hat mir links und rechts und hier und hier und ueberall [*And (hit) me left and right and here and here and everywhere*]--
- John: Wow, oh, wow.
- Gundel: Hit me all over in the face.
- Joachim: Naja, hat er danach abgelassen weil ich mich nicht rührte, ich stand [*Anyway, then he gave it up because I didn't move, I stood*]--
- Gundel: Then he quit because I wouldn't move.
- Joachim: Naja [*Anyways*], that was not good. But all together it was a normal treating of the American GIs [*pronounced 'guys'*], I couldn't say anything bad. Is that enough for what you want?
- John: Oh no, that's, yeah. Just—oh we have plenty of time left. Um—before you were captured, while you were still in the Germany army, what was life like? Food? Clothing? Quarters?
- Joachim: Before, before I was captured?
- Gundel: Yeah.
- John: Yes.
- Gundel: Wie war es in dem deutschen Heer? [*How was it in the German Army?*]
- Joachim: All right. Enough food? [*incomprehensible*] nicht zufrieden [*not satisfied*] [*laughs*]--
- John: Yes, yes.
- Joachim: Komissbrot [*a pan loaf bread often fed to soldiers*] [*laughs*]--
- Gundel: Commissary bread.
- John: Yes.
- Joachim: Gummiwurst, hatten wir immer Gummiwurst [*Rubber sausage, we always had rubber sausage*] [*laughs*]--
- Gundel: Yeah, the sausages were more like rubber.
- Joachim: But it was enough, it was enough, it was enough.



John: It was?

Joachim: Yeah.

John: Okay.

Joachim: Wir waren natuerlich nicht so, wir waren nicht so [*Of course we weren't like this, we weren't like this*]--

John: Yes, what about supplies? Clothing, boots, shoes?

Gundel: Eh, Nachschub-- von Kleidung, Schuhe [*supplies—of clothing, shoes*], whatev—you want ammunition too?

John: Yeah.

Gundel: Munition und so [*Ammunition and the like*]?

Joachim: Yeah, wenig [*not much*]. Munition [*Ammunition*] not so much.

Gundel: Munition was not so much.

Joachim: We were forbidden to shoot. I was with artillery. And we saw our Ger—your guy on the other side, we made a Schneeballschlacht [*snowball-fight*]--

Gundel: [*laughs*] We had a snowball fight! [*laughs*]

Joachim: We saw them, but we couldn't shoot.

John: Yeah, okay, okay.

Joachim: We had no Munition [*Ammunition*].

John: Okay, okay.

Joachim: I was in a unit with--how do you say that? Holzgaserwagen. War no no--fuel?

Gundel: Oh that, they made fuel from charcoal, yeah.

John: Charcoal, yeah, okay.

Joachim: Ah, you know that?

John: Yes, oh yeah, yeah, uh-huh.

- Joachim: Oh wo wo wo. And then at first it was in Saar-- nee, first it was-- in the Eifel. And then began the Ardennenoffensive, you know Ardennen--, the last--.
- Gundel: The Ardennes Offensive.
- John: Oh, the Ardennes Offensive, yeah sure, okay.
- Joachim: --the last offensive of the German Army. And because we had this art of wagons and carts--
- Gundel: Fuels--
- Joachim: Wir waren [*We were*] too old, we were changed with—
- Gundel: Younger.
- Joachim: Mit anderen, die hatten also Rauchenfahrzeuge [*With others, they had „smoke vehicles“ (<literal translation; unsure what exactly that is)*].
- Gundel: Yeah, that had tracked vehicles.
- Joachim: And I came in Saargebiet [*the Saar area*], Saarland, the Southwest of Germany near the French border. And there was, later on I would catch there.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: Army, they were bad Ereignisse, was heiSSt das [*experiences, how is that called*]?
- Gundel: Eh--
- Joachim: After the Invasion [*invasion*].
- John: After the invasion.
- Joachim: After the invasion.
- Gundel: They were bad times.
- Joachim: Da fehlt die Munition [*There wasn't any ammunition*].
- John: Okay.
- Gundel: We were missing, yeah, we didn't have enough munitions.
- John: What was it like when you heard the war was over, what did you feel?

- Gundel: Wie fuehltest du dich, als du gehoert hast, dass der Krieg zu Ende war?  
[*How did you feel when you heard that the war was over?*]
- Joachim: Oh, this and that. The Niederlage [*defeat*] is not so good for country.
- Gundel: To be the one that loses—
- John: Yes, oh yes, yes.
- Gundel: --is not so good.
- Joachim: We couldn't know what passierte [*happened*].
- Gundel: What to expect, we didn't know what to expect [*note that Gundel's translation of 'passierte' is incorrect here*]--
- John: Okay, okay, yeah.
- Joachim: Meanings are differently.
- John: Yes.
- Joachim: It's the same thing we had nineteen hundred nine-teen. We were in the believe, belief? In dem Glauben [*In the belief*]--
- Gundel: We believed.
- Joachim: We believed that we would good handled [*note: the German verb 'handeln' means 'to act'*] oder [*or*]- but it wasn't so. And therefore two--zwei Seelen habe ich in meiner Brust [*two souls I have in my breast*]. [*laughs*] Two souls I have in my breast.
- Gundel: Yep, you have two souls.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: The one we are “aww, the end.”
- John: Yes yes, yes.
- Joachim: And the other one, “what now?”
- John: Yes, alright, okay, yeah, okay.
- Joachim: That was the feeling. And then we had to hunger, we had no-- were on the country bei meiner [*with my*] twin sister, the others have hungered. Die anderen haben gehungert [*the others were hungry*].

- Gundel: The other people were hungry, but because my mom and dad lived on a farm and he was there, he had food.
- Joachim: And has got no clothes and nothing, nichts [*nothing*].
- John: Yes.
- Joachim: It was a heavy time.
- Gundel: One thing he didn't mention is my grandfather was a colonel.
- John: Oh, okay.
- Joachim: What--?
- Gundel: Papa war ein Oberst [*Papa was a colonel*].
- Joachim: Yes, yes, yes.
- Gundel: His father.
- Joachim: He was released? Entlassen [*Released*]?
- Gundel: Yeah, released.
- Joachim: No, he was, er bekam [*he got*]- es wurde ihm dringend angeraten, seinen Abschied zu nehmen [*he was strongly advised to go away*].
- Gundel: Yeah, he was—it was recommended to my grandfather to take his leave of the military, cause he didn't want to join the Nazi party.
- Joachim: Because he was known as a, not a friend of Hitler. After the Attentat [*assassination attempt*]—
- Gundel: After the attempt on Hitler.
- Joachim: My father was Standortkommandant [*area commander*], also, of a town.
- Gundel: Area commander.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: Yeah. And wer [*who*] [*incomprehensible*]-die Einheit [*unit*] who has to hol' [*get; pick up*] new soldiers.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: And after the Attentat [*assassination attempt*]—

Gundel: After the—

John: Attempt.

Gundel: Attempted—

Joachim: Attempted? [*sic*]

Gundel: Attempted.

Joachim: Attempted. [*sic*] He had to, he had to hold a-- Rede [*a speech*]--

Gundel: A talk, give a speech.

Joachim: A talk, over there.

John: Oh, okay, alright, okay.

Joachim: Rettung! [*Rescue!*] He didn't.

Gundel: [*laughs*] He wouldn't say that because Hitler survived it, that that was--

Joachim: And therefore they know ah--Butteman [*don't recognize this as a word-- possibly it's a name, or I'm hearing it wrong*].

Gundel: [*laughs*]

John: Okay. What did you do—you worked on a farm after you came home, and then what, after the war?

Joachim: After the war? I was looking for a university, in Hamburg, in Tuebingen, Goettingen, Marburg. And all universities were full.

John: Oh yes.

Joachim: I couldn't get a place. And therefore I learned merchant.

Gundel: Worked in town business.

Joachim: In a, in a, in a--Schuhfabrik [*shoe factory*].

Gundel: In a shoe factory.

John: Oh okay, alright, okay, yeah.

Joachim: And then I came to a town Meister [*master*], this is town Meister von [*master of*] my father.

Gundel: Pay master?

- Joachim: He had—who had fabrication of underwear.
- John: Oh, okay.
- Gundel: Uh--
- Joachim: Miederwaren [*lingerie*].
- Gundel: Yeah I know, lingerie.
- John: Oh.
- Gundel: [*laughs*]
- Joachim: And he had a-- Buchhalter [*bookkeeper*].
- Gundel: A bookkeeper.
- Joachim: He has t--
- John: Oh.
- Gundel: He had bookkeeper that--embezzeling.
- Joachim: And die Buch fuehren war im Eimer [*the keeping of accounts had gone down the drain*].
- Gundel: Yeah.
- Joachim: The town Meister hatte mein Vater gebeten, ob er ihm das in Ordnung bringt [*the town master had asked my father if he could put that back in order for him*].
- Gundel: Okay, uh, I guess he had a bookkeeper that embezzled and so the books were a total mess, and then he asked my uncle's father if he would put that in order for him.
- John: Oh, okay.
- Joachim: My father wanted a Belange [*interest; need*] and he hadn't, he hadn't, and so I say-- I go in there. I have the whole Firma wieder [*company again*]- ich habe die Buchfuehrung gemacht von drei—[*I kept the books from three--*]
- Gundel: He did all the bookkeeping.
- Joachim: --back, two years or three years back and added two twice, paid on one [*incomprehensible*]-And there I learned my—

- Gundel: Trade.
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: And then I had a little shop of lingerie and underwear, because my wife were-- na [*huh*]? Gelernt und [*Learned/educated and*]*--she was in a school of the stage tour and on so on and on--*
- Gundel: His wife—
- Joachim: And so they, they--did the work—
- John: Oh okay.
- Joachim: And I must—and then, then I, I'm go to Goettingen—
- John: Gottingen, okay, okay.
- Joachim: To the university. I have studied economy, economy.
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: And then came the children, '65 and '67. And then I had to observe our childrens, because my wife was in the shop!
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: I had to cook [*laughs*]!
- John: Oh [*laughs*], okay.
- Gundel: Take care of the kids. See, he-- he was a house husband before it was famous.
- John: Let me, a, let me flip--

**[End of Tape 1, Side A]**

- John: There we are. Okay, okay, let's, let's a—
- Gundel: Continue.
- Joachim: Ist es alles angekommen, was ich gesagt habe? [*Did it get everything that I said?*]
- Gundel: Glaube. [*Believe so.*]
- Joachim: Ja, mit? [*Yeah, it got it?*]

- Gundel: Werden wir sehen. [*We'll see.*]
- Joachim: You mean [*laughs*]?
- Gundel: He's asking if everything was recorded, because the mike is a little far away.
- John: Yes, oh oh yes, oh yeah. That's what that battery does.
- Joachim: [*Incomprehensible*]
- Gundel: Hat eine Batterie da drin, damit es verstaerkt. [*Has a battery in it, to make it stronger*].
- Joachim: Ah, verstanden [*understood*], ah yeah, okay.
- John: Okay, that's quite a story. Uh, what—everybody here would wanna know—what did you think of American soldiers when you met them?
- Gundel: Die Wahrheit [*the truth*] [*laughs*].
- Joachim: Yeah yeah. Das erste was ich sah, als wir gefangen genommen worden [*the first thing I saw when we were captured*]—
- Gundel: The first thing that I saw when we were captured—
- Joachim: Came great trucks with American soldiers.
- Gundel: Yeah, came these great trucks with the American soldiers.
- John: Yeah.
- Joachim: In the best uniform, from the shop. Cleaned, all, um Gottes willen, das sind ja Paradesoldaten [*God almighty, if those aren't parade soldiers*]!
- Gundel: These are parade soldiers! [*laughs*]
- John: Yes, yes, yeah.
- Joachim: And the whole, I must say, oh there were some in Marseilles, there were Texaner [*Texans*].
- John: Texans.
- Gundel: Texans, yeah.
- Joachim: From Texas.
- Gundel: Yeah.



- Joachim: They came back with a-- “I have once ueberfahren ein [*run over a*] French”.
- Gundel: Oh, I-- [*laughs*]. Came back and said they, um, drove over a Frenchman [*laughs*].
- John: Oh, oh! Oh wow, yeah. Well see, there—
- Joachim: I had a good contact to the GIs, I spoke with them better than today [*laughs*]. And I can't say anything bad. One of them was a, a lawyer in New York—
- John: Okay.
- Joachim: --and the other was, had a Taxiunternehmen [*taxi company*].
- Gundel: Taxi driver?
- Joachim: Taxi driver. And I could speak with them.
- John: I see, okay.
- Joachim: They were friendly and I couldn't say anything bad about it.
- John: That's, that's something many people have mentioned to me. During World War II, Americans soldiers weren't soldiers. They were lawyers and taxi drivers and farmers-- there were very few soldiers, professional soldiers.
- Joachim: Yes, yes. We have less professional-- we were-- lift up? Or what you mean--
- Gundel: Drafted? Eingezogen [*Drafted*]?
- Joachim: Ja ja, eingezogen [*Yeah yeah, drafted*].
- Gundel: Drafted, we were drafted.
- John: Yep, yep.
- Joachim: [*Incomprehensible*]. Nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, there were only three years of eingezogene Soldaten [*drafted soldiers*].
- Gundel: Was waren, drei was? [*What was, three what?*]
- Joachim: Drei Jahrgaenge [*three age groups*].
- Gundel: Oh three years, age groups.

- John: Oh, okay.
- Joachim: Ne [*Right*]? Nineteen hundred and thirty-six, seven eight. In nine was war, and six war ja [*was*] the beginning of German--
- John: Okay.
- Gundel: Build-up.
- Joachim: Uh-huh.
- Gundel: Build-up.
- Joachim: And therefore the army was—
- Gundel: Small.
- John: Small, okay, yeah.
- Joachim: Small, small. [*Incomprehensible*].
- Gundel: [*laughs*]
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: Ah yes. And uh-- the Engagement [*obligation; commitment*] was differently. The youth were, you know, for the new time, for Hitler. And some older, they became labor nineteen hundred three four, and they were—they couldn't know what happens later on, right?
- John: Okay, okay.
- Joachim: It was a—what there were opinions to.
- John: Yes, yes.
- Joachim: And one made-- Witze [*jokes*].
- Gundel: Jokes.
- Joachim: Jokes about it, ne [*right*]? It was a time not all could see what was, what they did.
- Gundel: The big picture, we'd say.
- John: Yes, yes, yes, okay. Okay.
- Joachim: It was. What you want to know?

John: This is quite a story! It's a remarkable story, it is, yes, yes, yeah.

Joachim: Kann er was mit anfangen? [*Can he do anything with it?*]

Gundel: Oh! He asked if you can use this story.

John: Oh absolutely! Oh yes, oh yeah.

Joachim: You have more from other, other prisoners?

John: No. A lot from Americans who were prisoners, but no—this is the first German—

Joachim: German prisoner.

John: --first German! Uh, I did interview a fellow who was a strong objector, a conscientious objector.

Gundel: Yeah.

John: And he had—he had an interesting story, you know it was his story.

Gundel: Yeah.

Joachim: They are different, yeah.

John: Sure. And a, but no, this is—

Joachim: It is different from the prisoners, eh?

John: Yes.

Joachim: To look, eh? One this way and another way.

John: Yeah.

Joachim: Yeah? And the, and the, when we were captured in 404, there was a labor who, who was communist, yeah?

John: Oh.

Joachim: And he, na [*huh*]? Schimpfte. Schimpfte auf Adolf, nicht? Auf Hitler. [*Cursed. Cursed at Adolf, right? At Hitler*].

Gundel: Yeah, he always berated Hitler.

Joachim: And I said to him, he had no reason to do that, to do that! He became labor in nineteen hundred thirty-three. And he—Kraft durch Freude [*Strength Through Joy*]

- Gundel: Was?
- Joachim: Kraft durch Freude war eine [*Strength Through Joy was an*] organization for the, for the labors you could—
- Gundel: Labor through happiness.
- John: Oh.
- Joachim: They could make a trip to, to the Kanarien [*the Canary Islands*], the Mad--
- Gundel: Canarian Islands.
- John: Yes, yeah.
- Joachim: Also they had no reason to be boese oder [*mad or*] what--
- Gundel: Belittle, you know, or--
- Joachim: The Fabriks [*factories*] were heller [*brighter*], new, all new--
- John: Yeah, okay, okay. This is great, this is a tremendous story, very tremendous. Okay.
- Joachim: [*Incomprehensible*]
- Gundel: Ist eine gute Geschichte. Er sagte, es ist eine gute Geschichte. [*It's a good story. He said it's a good story.*]
- Joachim: Ja [*Yeah*]?
- John: Oh yes, oh yes. Well, what I'll do—I'm gonna shut this off, but if there's something else you think of, let me know, I'll put it back on.

**[End of Interview]**

[My uncle also wrote the following down before he left for California and then Germany]:

Nachtrag zum Interview vom 6. Oktober 2006,  
 Mein Vater war Bezirkskommandeur. Das Amt hatte die Aufgabe alle wehrfaehigen Maenner nach Wehrfaehigkeit zu registrieren und eventuell zum Wehrdienst einzuberufen. Die Wehrfaehigkeit war in 4 Klassen eingeteilt: AV = arbeitsverwendungsfaehig, GVH = garnisonsverwendungsfaehig, GVField und KV. Ich war AV, und befand mich in dieser Kartei. Als aus diesr Gruppe Maenner gebraucht wurden, wurde die Kartei benutzt, um die gebrauchten Maenner auszulosen. Dabei wurde mein Name gezogen. Da die Einberufung noch vor Weihnachten stattfinden sollte, wollte

der Adjutant meines Vaters meinen Namen zurueckstecken. Das hat meine Vater abgelehnt!

Zum Thema Ernaehrung: nach der Besetzung war die Versorgung mit Lebensmittel schlechter als waehrend des Krieges!

[Translation by Gundel & revised by Katie Chapman in 2011]:

An addition to the interview from 6 October 2006,

My father was the area Commander. That office had the responsibility to register all males fit for military duty and eventually draft them into the Army. The draftees were divided into 4 classes. AV = capable of working, GVH = capable of working in the garrison, GVField and KV. I was AV, and my name was on one of the cards. When men were needed from this group, they would pull out a card and draft that individual to relieve other soldiers. My name was pulled in this manner. Since the draftee had to report before Christmas, my father's adjutant wanted to put my card back. But my father said no!

On the topic of food: After the occupation, the supply of food was worse than during the war!