



# *Die Geschichte Eines jungen Mädchen*

( A Y O U N G G I R L ' S S T O R Y )

*Compiled by Rick Dreves, her son-in-law*

Second Edition



December, 2014

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*  
COVERING THE PERIOD 1897-1952

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

## How this document works

Starting on page 4, you will find Hannelore's memoir, generally starting in the left column of each page. In the right column(s), you'll find photos, maps and other resources that expand on topics Hannelore explores in that part of her narrative.

## Acknowledgments

First, and most obviously, this document could not exist without Hannelore's wonderful narrative, a valuable gift to the entire family that made all the supporting research possible.

Second, it is equally important to note that Hannelore and her stepmother, Elisabeth Walter (née Schmidthals) were outstanding in their efforts to shepherd priceless documents, photos, letters and other elements of Walter family history out of war-torn Eastern Europe, into western Germany, and ultimately, to the United States. Without these additional elements, this narrative would be far poorer. With them, it becomes a rich and thoroughly engaging tale.

For Hannelore's and Elisabeth's thoughtful efforts, I am extremely grateful.

I am also indebted to my wife, Deb, who has worked so closely with her mother to help insure these amazing pieces of Walter family history were available for use in compiling this project; and to my brother-in-law, Dana Eagles, for his help in proofreading and editing the text.

Rick Dreves  
Nashville, Tennessee  
December, 2014

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## Principal Web resources

*These web sites have proven especially useful in researching this project:*

» **Wikipedia.com**

*World War I and II historical information, including details on the Küstrin Putsch, the war on the Eastern Front, post-war Germany, German military organization, and more.*

» **Feldgrau.com**

*Specific information on the 252nd Infantry Division, of which Georg Walter was an important part; also verification of Georg Walter's military honoraria, including his Iron Crosses, braces, certificates of promotion, etc.*

» **MilitaryAntiquesMuseum.com**

*A second source to verify the significance of Georg Walter's military honoraria.*

» **AxisHistory.com**

*Information about Kurt Kühme, founder of the Freikorps Kühme, of which Georg was a member.*

» **Guhraunet.info**

*Information about Guhrau, Germany (now Gora, Poland), where Georg Walter organized a "German Day" political event in June, 1924.*

» **Schmiedeberg1924.de**

*Great site with vintage photos of the town where Hannelore spent several years, growing up. Be sure to check out the photos of the amazing scale model of the town, built in 2002.*

» **FreeTranslation.com & Google Translate**

*Invaluable tools for translating German-language newspaper clippings, certificates, memoranda and other Walter family artifacts.*

» **Google Maps and GoogleEarth**

*Google's mapping tools provided critical geo-spatial context for all the places referenced in Walter family's historical artifacts.*

## Introduction

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Genealogy (the study of family ancestry) is invariably a messy business. Sometimes you learn things that require the tossing out of venerable family lore, perhaps information has been cherished for a long time. Sometimes you find pieces that, while plausible, just don't square with other facts you've uncovered. Sometimes you find out things that are, well ... inconvenient. But it's all part of the historical record, so each nugget of information must be considered, even if it requires an asterisk and a further explanation.

Genealogy has been transformed by the Web. It wasn't so many years ago that locating the supporting information in this document would have required transoceanic air travel, a serious working knowledge of German, and many, many hours going from church to courthouse to library, poring over endless pages of archives, quite possibly with little to show for a huge investment of time and money.

This miracle (and I don't think that's too strong a word) appears in the form of a handful of websites whose originators have fused resourcefulness, attention to detail and technology to digitize and organize millions of archival records from around the world.

The result is a set of amazingly sophisticated tools for searching, cross-referencing, and ultimately, converting this mountain of data into an enlightening tale. When compared with what is already known from Hannelore's own genealogical artifacts and personal recollections, these facts provide the plot-points that extend and deepen our understanding of the Walter family's journey through time.

– Rick Dreves

## What's in a name?

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*According to both Wikipedia.com and Ancestry.com, the surname "Walter" derives from the pre-7th century Old High German given name 'Waldhari', a compound of the elements wald (meaning "rule") + heri or hari (meaning "army"); thus, "ruler of the army."*

*HouseOfNames.com states that "the surname 'Walter' was first recorded in Silesia, where the name was associated in early mediæval times with feudal society. The name would later emerge as a noble family with significant influence, having many distinguished branches. Walter family members were noted for their involvement in social, economic and political affairs..."*



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### Hannelore's introduction to her narrative

**Spring, 2002:** *My children and grandchildren have been asking me for a long time to put a record of my life on paper. I am now 71 years old and feel that time is getting shorter, and that I had better get busy! After all, I am the only one who can remember "way back when", since I grew up in Germany; my parents are both long gone; and most people in my immediate family are no longer with us, or have a hard time communicating in English. So this will be a family history of what I can remember, and what has been related to me.*

### Hannelore's narrative begins...

My dad's parents, Reinhold and Clara Walter, were living in Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), capital of the Province of Silesia (also now largely a part of Poland). Reinhold Walter was employed as an adviser to the mayor of Breslau, a pretty good job. My dad, Georg, was born on 11 December 1897. He had one older brother, Max; two older sisters, Grete and Clara; and one younger brother, Fritz. I don't recall much about Dad's siblings; I know they all married and had children, but due to the war and absence of close communication, we all lost track of each other. I do know that Uncle Max and his wife, Tante Maria, died soon after the end of World War II. They had three children, two boys and a daughter. The oldest, Helmut, became a major in the German Army during the war. He married, and to the best of my knowledge had five children. I know that after the war he joined the German Bundeswehr and was stationed near Munich.

Who is still living, I don't know. I'm sure some of the children must still be alive. Helmut's younger son was a fighter pilot during the war and was killed early on in the Battle of Britain. The daughter, Ruth, was a little older than I; she also married and was last known to live somewhere in Berlin, in what at the end of the war was the Russian sector.



Georg Walter, 1914 (just turned 18)



(above) The Walter children, circa 1907. Clockwise from top left: Max, Georg, Grete, Clara, and Fritz.



(left) The Walter family, circa 1917. Clockwise from top left: Grete, Max, Georg, daughter Clara, Reinhold, Fritz, and mother Clara.



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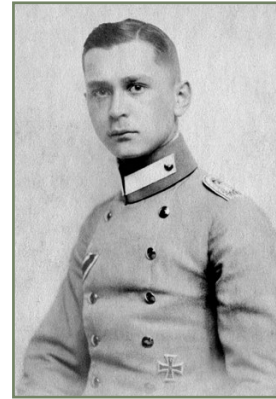
My father's sisters were all virtually unknown to me. Even during the time that I lived with my father, there was very little contact with them. His younger brother, Fritz, married and had two children, a daughter and son. They, as well as my dad's sisters, lived in what was later to become East Germany (now, eastern Germany). I believe I met all of them as a young child and received birthday and Christmas cards, but that all ceased with the coming of the war. Uncle Fritz was an Infantry soldier during the war. He fought in terrible battles on the Russian Front, was reported missing during the later part of the war and was never heard from again. After the war ended, he was declared dead.

My dad, according to his telling, was brought up in a rather strict home and attended all the best schools. When the First World War broke out, he could not wait to join, and when he was 18 he finally entered the German Army as a 2nd Lieutenant. He saw action on both the Eastern and Western fronts, and after Germany's defeat, he was discharged. He drifted from job to job, down at heart because of the defeat and the demoralizing times that followed.

Germany went through a period of severe inflation, in which any money you had was totally devalued. I remember stories about my grandparents picking up wash-baskets full of money at the bank, and by the time they brought it home it was worth half its value. Million Mark bank-notes were common.

After the First World War, Dad held several jobs, none of them successful, since all he'd ever learned was soldiering. Among them was a job in the paramilitary police force that was allowed in Germany under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I. Through that he became involved in a *coup d'état* (the "*Küstrin Putsch*"; see next page), which, for a short time, landed him in jail as a political prisoner.

» Hannelore's narrative continues on page 10.



Left to right:  
**Georg Walter,**  
1918, 1919  
and 1922



Left:  
**The Walter family, circa 1920.**  
Clockwise from top left:  
Fritz, mother Clara, Reinhold,  
daughter Clara, Max, Grete,  
and Georg.

Below, left:  
**The Walter men, circa 1920.**  
From left: Georg, father  
Reinhold, Fritz and Max.

Below, right:  
**Max and Georg, December,**  
1921.



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The *Küstrin Putsch* took place in Küstrin, a garrison city on the Oder River, east of Berlin, on what is now the German-Polish border. Of the three fortifications which were involved, only Fort Gorgast remains; these are modern photos of the fort, which is now open to the public.

## Georg and the *Küstrin Putsch*

To understand why and how Georg Walter became involved in a failed *coup d'état* against the ruling Weimar government, it is instructive to understand the situation in which Germany was placed at the end of the First World War.

The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that Germany accept responsibility for having started the war, and, as such, laid out a massive war reparations payment plan, under which Germany would pay about \$12.5 billion (in 1920 U.S. dollars) to the Allies. However, Germany's economy was in a postwar shambles, and the country quickly fell behind in payments.

As a result, in early 1923, France occupied the Ruhr Valley in northwestern Germany and began directly removing natural resources (coal, timber, etc.) from the region in lieu of monetary payments, since Germany's currency was severely devalued as a result of post-war hyperinflation. The German people saw this as a national humiliation; the capitulation of the post-war Weimar government to France's occupation of the Ruhr became a rallying point for right-wing Germans. Frustration over the government's handling of the "Ruhr issue" was, in part, what led to the *Küstrin Putsch*.

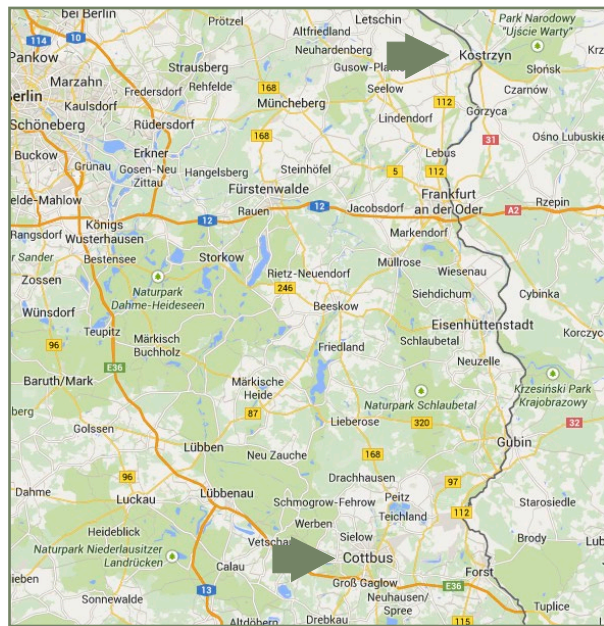
The Treaty of Versailles also placed severe restrictions on Germany's military; the *Reichswehr* (army) was restricted to 100,000 men, so a great number of First World War veterans were suddenly demobilized (including Georg). However, the treaty did provide for the establishment of certain paramilitary groups, somewhat like today's U.S. National Guard, to respond to domestic issues. The largest such group was called the *Freikorps* (Free Corps).

However, in an effort to circumvent the treaty's restrictions, the *Reichswehr* engaged in a variety of measures, including the creation of an illegal paramilitary formation known as the *Schwarze Reichswehr* (Black Army). In his 2008 monograph, *Die Schwarze Reichswehr und der geplante Marsch auf Berlin* ("The Black Reichswehr and Its Planned March on Berlin") German historian Bernhard Sauer describes the unifying characteristic of many *Schwarze Reichswehr* members:

*"In the lives of members of the Schwarze Reichswehr there are characteristic similarities. All had been dominated by the First World War and the postwar turmoil. Many of them had fought in the World War and there experienced the hell of gas and trench warfare. At a young age, often only 16, 17 or 18, they were pulled into the war or had volunteered. In the trenches of the front, their everyday experience with death and the feeling of mutual dependence*



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(above)  
 Küstrin (now  
 Kostrzyn, Poland)  
 is at the upper right  
 corner of this map.  
 Georg and 13 other  
 defendants were  
 indicted and tried  
 six days following  
 the failed attempt,  
 in the Special Court  
 at Cottbus, near the  
 lower right corner  
 of this map.

(right)  
 Georg, circa 1924;  
 not long after the  
 Küstrin Putsch.



on each other engendered the sense of community that developed ... In the post-war order [many] found they could no longer cope. Familiar with nothing but warcraft, without education and work, and without the prospect of being taken into the reduced Reichswehr, they did not make the leap into civilian life. So they pressed on in the only way they could: as soldiers, in the post-war paramilitary."

According to *Wikipedia.com*, after the Third Silesian Uprising (a 1921 attempt by Poland to re-take control of Upper Silesia from Germany, an area which historically had been claimed by both countries), several *Schwarze Reichswehr* battalions were recruited from former *Freikorps* units, comprising about 2,000 service members and 18,000 reservists.

Georg Walter was among those recruited.

Bruno Ernst Buchrucker, Adolf Hitler and others in Germany's extreme right-wing wanted to bring down the Weimar reich government of Chancellor Gustav Stresemann and replace the Republic with a national dictatorship.

The *Küstrin Putsch*, also known as the *Buchrucker Putsch* (after its chief instigator), took place on October 1, 1923, in part due to Stresemann's announcement on September 26 that he would end Germany's resistance to the occupation of the Ruhr by the French and Belgians. He was convinced that reaching an understanding with the Allies on the issue of war reparations was the only way for Germany to gain the breathing room it needed to rebuild its battered economy.

The outcry from the German right wing was immediate and shrill, and presumably Buchrucker saw the events of September 26 as a "window of opportunity."

Buchrucker's plan was to occupy the garrison town of *Küstrin* by taking over Forts Gorgast, Sapzig and Chernov, the three garrisons that surrounded the town. In preparation, Buchrucker had instructed personnel to begin hiding stores of weapons and munitions, while camouflaging the operation as a civilian activity.

Bernhard Sauer's monograph explains Georg Walter's role in the insurrection:

"Major Hertzer, the *Führer* of the regiments, called the leaders of the companies, **top lieutenant Georg Walter**, first lieutenant Arnold Schrenk and Gerhard Reichel, to a meeting together, and gave them the commands for the engagement of their companies in the old town ... Lieutenant Verspätet also appeared, along with Captain Hans Hayn."



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Here are excerpts of the official indictment, issued to Georg Walter and 13 other defendants, describing the events of the Küstrin Putsch:

## Indictment of the Special Court in Cottbus

**Indicted:** Jointly charged in Küstrin on 6 October 1923 to have undertaken to amend the Constitution of the German Empire by force.

### Evidence

On October 1st, 1923, at 7 o'clock in the morning, upon his arrival in the Commandant's office, the Colonel and Commandant Gudowius of Küstrin-on-Oder, who is here in the courtroom, was called by Major Hertzler [a defendant] who requested a meeting [with he and] Major Buchrucker [also a defendant], who wanted to discuss the situation with Gudowius.

[While waiting for their arrival,] Colonel Gudowius received word ... that some of the personnel from Division K, which includes all of the accused, had moved heavy weapons from the high cavalier of the arsenal to the road bridge at the Neuhoof.

[After Buchrucker and Hertzler arrived,] Colonel Gudowius told Buchrucker that he had been notified of a warrant for Buchrucker's arrest, received the evening before from Berlin, charging that Buchrucker and the other defendants were occupying the fortifications of the old city.

Buchrucker said, "The great national moment has come. National resistance not only here in Küstrin, but everywhere, would only lead to an abundance of bloodshed. The Colonel should not stand in the way of our cause."

Colonel Gudowius told Buchrucker and Hertzler that they should be arrested. Buchrucker and Hertzler implored Colonel Gudowius not to turn them in, but Colonel Gudowius [was not dissuaded, and] ordered a wire sent to the *Reichswehr*.

Colonel Gudowius sought to buy time, awaiting the arrival of national troops, telling Buchrucker and Hertzler their cause was completely hopeless, criminal, and that their actions would bring dishonor to them and everyone involved.

During this confrontation, Captain [Hans] Hayn forcibly burst through the doors with 'Shock Troops,' brandishing machine guns, stating he was acting on a command he had previously been given by Buchrucker, in the event that he and Hertzler and did not promptly return from their meeting with the Commandant.

Buchrucker told Colonel Gudowius that he must release both himself and Hertzler, else his Shock Troops would resort to violence.

Colonel Gudowius barred the exit with two of his officers; some of the Shock Troops went to stop them, but at that moment Gudowius' *Reichswehr* troops arrived. The *Reichswehr* troops then engaged with Hayn's Shock Troops.

Buchrucker hesitated. Hertzler asked Buchrucker to make a decision. Buchrucker told Hertzler to inform the men of Division K to disarm. On Hertzler's command the high cavalier of the arsenal was surrendered ...

As explained in the court document at left (the original of which is among Georg Walter's personal papers), the *Putsch* did not succeed.

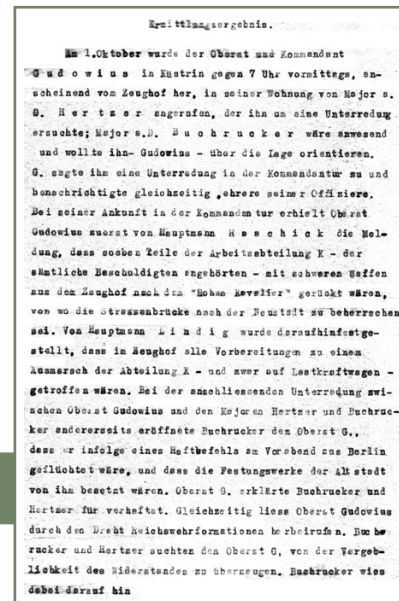
According to [Wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Küstrin_Putsch), Buchrucker and other senior officers were arrested and incarcerated after being sentenced for high treason. However, the remainder of the participants, including Georg, were soon released and did not serve their sentences.

## After the *Putsch*: the *Stahlhelm*

Georg, instead, was permitted to organize a unit of *Das Stahlhelm*, *Bund der Frontsoldaten* ("Steel Helmet, League of Front-Line Soldiers"), informally a part of the *Schwarze Reichswehr*, in Guhrau, Germany (now Gora, Poland).

Officially, *Das Stahlhelm* was a veterans' organization composed of displaced soldiers from the World War. It was politically close to other conservative parties and was opposed to the Weimar Republic, which it perceived as inept. However, *Das Stahlhelm* also organized important employment and housing programs for its members and provided them with an outlet for organized activity.

As a local leader of *Das Stahlhelm*, Georg helped organize "Germany Day" paramilitary marches to call attention to what he and others thought were the failings of post-war Weimar policies (see photo and newspaper article, next page).



A page from Georg's copy of the court indictment for his role in the *Küstrin Putsch*.





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» *Hannelore's narrative*, continued from page 5:

In 1926, Dad had met my mother. From what I gather, it was love at first sight. She must have been just 18 years old, because when they were married a year later (1927) she was only 19. Her name was Kaethe Kunisch, born on 29 May 1908; thus, 11 years younger than her new husband. As for their appearance, two more different people are hard to imagine. My Dad was tall (he must have been over 6 feet), very muscular and heavy boned, auburn haired, with blue eyes. My mother was the opposite: tiny, small of stature, blond hair and blue eyes. From all reports, I gather that she was the love of his life and he absolutely adored her. She was the younger daughter of Robert and Emma Kunisch. Her older sister, Gertrude (later known as Tante Trude) was born in 1905.

Her parents lived in Schmiedeberg, a popular tourist spot at the foot of the *Riesengebirge*, a beautiful medium-high mountain range that attracted wanderers from near and far. Kaethe's parents ran a rather well-known hotel and restaurant, with mother Kunisch as head of the kitchen. It was said to be a favorite eating place with locals as well as tourists.

When Grandfather Kunisch died in 1919, soon after the end of the First World War, Emma tried to run the hotel by herself for a while. This is where, according to tales I've heard, my dad met my mother in 1926. The hotel, which became too much for my grandmother to run, was given up, and she opened a small boarding house, where she served dinner to guests, especially tourists and business people.

## Georg, the farm machinery salesman

After his brief first stint in *Der Stahlhelm*, Georg returned to civilian life for a time, taking a job sometime before 1927 as a *werksvertreter* (field representative) for the farm machinery division of Friedrich Krupp, the German steel manufacturer. (Today, we know the company as Thyssen-Krupp; you'll see its name on elevators and other equipment.) Georg's territory apparently included part of Upper Silesia and southeastern Germany, and it may be during his business travels that he met Hannelore's mother, Kaethe Kunisch.



(left)  
**Friedrich Krupp**  
exhibit at the 1927  
*Machinen Mart*

(below, right)  
**Kaethe (Kunisch)**  
with Georg at the  
1934 *Machinen Mart*

(below left)  
**Map showing**  
**Schmiedeberg**,  
hometown of  
Kaethe. (Today's  
Czech border is  
shown as a gray line,  
near the bottom of  
the map.)





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I never knew much about my mom's side of the family. I do know that her mother's family owned a small farm in Pomerania, a county in northern Germany, east of the Oder-Neisse line, an area which, at the end of World War II, was annexed by Poland. (These border provinces, including Silesia, have a varied history, through the centuries belonging to Prussia, Hungary-Austria, Poland, Germany and Russia). I remember Oma Kunisch once in a while visiting 'Ur-Oma' and bringing back some of the best farm bread I had ever tasted.

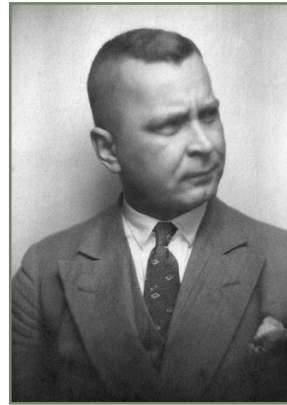
At that time my Dad was working as a farm machinery salesman for Krupp, the well-known steel manufacturer that later was famous, or rather infamous, as Germany's main weapons supplier. There are some pictures of my Dad at a farm convention, posing in front of Krupp's exhibit booth.

After a short courtship my dad and mother married. According to all information I have, it was an exceedingly happy marriage. Times were rough in every respect, but they had each other.

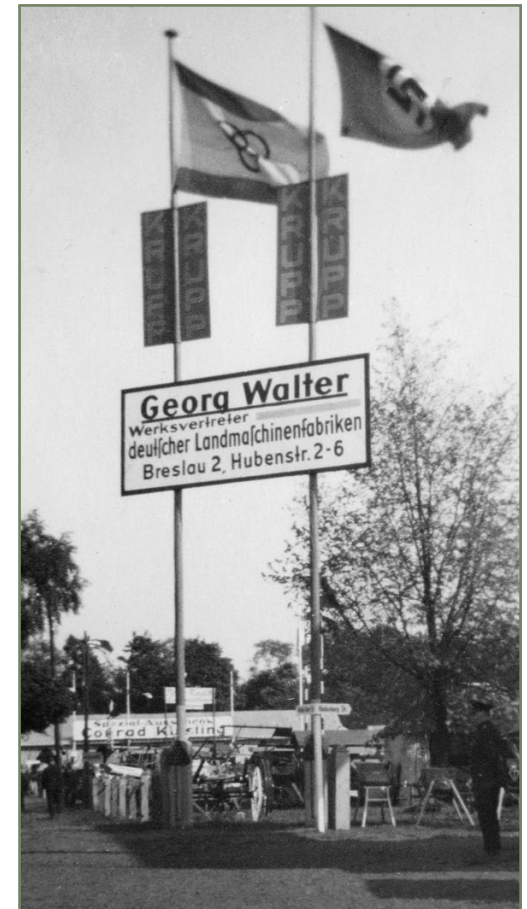
### Hannelore arrives

Three years later, on 27 February 1930, I was born. My mother, whom I called "Mutti," was not quite 22 years old. My Dad, whom I called "Vati," was 33. The nurses at the hospital called her "the child with the child" (this, according to Oma Kunisch, who was there at the time.)

I was baptized on 19 April 1930 at the St. Trinitatis Church in Breslau and given the name Hannelore Klara Emma Walter,



*Clockwise from top left: (1) Georg as a civilian; (2) Standing with his (company?) car; (3) Krupp exhibit at the spring, 1934 *Machinen Mart* (sign reads, "Georg Walter – Field Representative – German agricultural machinery maker" with the street address of the company's Breslau office.) Also note the Nazi flag flying next to the Krupp logo-banner; Krupp would soon become Nazi Germany's leading manufacturer of barbed wire, cannon, submarines, tanks, ships, aircraft and other war matériel. (4) Georg sitting at a table in the Krupp tent, presumably with other vendors or customers.*





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my two middle names after my grandmothers. Deep in his heart my dad must have secretly hoped for a boy, for soon I was given the nickname “Peter” (Pete) and the only time I was called by my given name was when I got into some kind of trouble (which was often!) and I’d hear, “Hannelore, where are you?” I knew immediately what *that* meant.

My time in Breslau (1930-1935) is rather vague to me. After all, I was very young. Supposedly, I was beginning to live up to my nickname by being a real tomboy. We lived on the third floor of an apartment house, as most European city-dwellers did at that time. I recall a big old walnut tree in the garden downstairs, and the walnuts falling each autumn. Instead of the walnuts looking the way you see them in the store, in nature they have a hard green outer shell and are hard to get open. They also really stain your fingers.

I also remember a short time before Christmas or my birthday Mutti being very mysterious about working on something, which turned out to be a wall hanging for over my bed and matching runner and cloths for the chest-of-drawers and table, embroidered with an array of jungle animals such as monkeys, elephants, giraffes and palms. I loved it, and was fascinated by it.

It was a strange time all around. Germany, having been defeated in World War I, was a country with no hope. There were no jobs; people had lost their money to inflation; malcontents roamed the streets, putting the staid *buergers* (middle-class) and others in fear of their lives.

(right)

A postcard view of Herdain Street, Breslau, Germany, circa 1930, two blocks from where Hannelore, Kaethe and Georg Walter lived from 1930 to early 1935.

(below)

53 Herdain Street, Breslau (now 53 Gajowa, Wroclaw, Poland); Google StreetView, June, 2011.

The building in the center of the photo, with the “Cukiernia” store sign at street level, is No. 53. (The two adjacent buildings are likely more indicative of what No. 53 looked like when Hannelore, Kaethe and Georg lived here, in an apartment on the third floor of the center building.)





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Governments toppled constantly, no one knew where one's loyalty belonged; there was no country to be proud of. Germany had been shamed before the whole world. So the time was ripe for somebody with a certain charisma, determination and ruthlessness to take over.

It started in small cells, first in Munich, and spread throughout the country. Bloody fights broke out, especially between the far left (the Communists) and far right (the National Socialist Party – Nazis for short). The Nazis gave people more hope, were more patriotically minded and promised jobs for everyone. Most important, they promised that Germans would hold their heads up again and take their rightful place among other countries.

So on a fateful day in January, 1930, elections were held and Hitler's Nazi Party won by a big majority. Field Marshal von Hindenburg, who headed the current government, declared Hitler the new *Reichskanzler* (Chancellor of the country). After a new Cabinet was formed, Hitler began with his promised *Aufbau*, or Reconstruction.

One of the first items on Hitler's agenda was the establishment of a modest German army, one that would later grow to gigantic proportions. My father, being a former military man, again was able to become what he wanted most to be – a soldier.

In January of 1934, Georg returned to military life, first, for about 9 months as the leader of the Breslau unit of *Das Stahlhelm*; and then, in October, into the regular German army. Two articles, from the Breslau newspaper, announced his appointment to the Breslau post. (Translation of the second article is on the next page).

» Partial translation, Breslau *Stahlhelm* article No. 1

**Headline:** New leader of the Breslau "Steel Helmet"

**Text:** The former leader of *Das Stahlhelm's* Breslau District Association, Captain Buth, resigned his position, to take a job in government service. His successor is First Lieutenant Georg Walter...

The new district leader, First Lieutenant Walter, joined [the military] in 1914. With 16 1/2 years as a volunteer in Grenadier Regiment 11a, he advanced into the field with Reserve Infantry Regiment 49. In December, 1915, he was promoted to officer and was assigned to Infantry Regiment 347 in October 1916. On the battle-front, he made it, unwounded, through the whole campaign [of the First World War].

**Breslau, Mittwoch, 17. Januar 1934**

## Neuer Führer des Breslauer „Stahlhelm“

Der bisherige Führer des Stahlhelm, Kreisverband Breslau, Hauptmann a. D. Buth, tritt von seiner Stellung zurück, da er eine Verwendung im Staatsdienst findet. In seinem Nachfolger wurde Obersturmbannführer, Oberleutnant a. D. Georg Walter, ernannt.

Dem scheidenden Kreisführer widmet Landesführer Graf Bückler in einem Mundbesetz Worte warmer Anerkennung für die hingebende Tätigkeit, die er dem scheidenden Stahlhelm seit 1923 in den wichtigsten und verantwortungsvollen Dienststellungen geleistet habe.

„Er hat“, so heißt es in dem Befehl, „den oberstehtischen Stahlhelm, dessen langjähriger Führer er war, ins Leben gerufen. 1930 entzog ihm die damalige preussische Regierung seine staatliche Stellung in Ostpreußen, um ihn für seinen tatkräftigen Kampf gegen den Feind zu bekräftigen. Am 19. Juni 1933 übernahm er die Führung der Kreisgruppe Breslau und hat in dieser Dienststellung unter schwierigen Verhältnissen mit unermüdlicher Tapferkeit wertvolle Arbeit geleistet, die im Lauf der Entwicklung notwendig werdende Umorganisation erfolgreich durchgeführt und

das Ansehen des Stahlhelm in der Provinzial-Hauptstadt Breslau gestärkt und geleistet.“

Am vergangenen Sonntagabend verabschiedete sich Kreisführer Buth von sämtlichen Führertameraden des Kreisverbandes Breslau. Landesführer Graf Bückler widmete ihm auch hier herzliche Worte. In seiner Erwiderung betonte Hauptmann Buth, daß er auch in seiner neuen Stellung, soweit es ihm möglich sein werde, dem Stahlhelm mit Rat und Tat zur Seite stehen werde.

Der neue Kreisführer, Obersturmbannführer Walter, trat im Jahre 1914 mit 16 1/2 Jahren als Kriegsfreiwilliger beim Grenadierregiment 11 ein, rückte mit dem Inf.-Regt. 49 ins Feld, wurde Weihnachten 1915 zum Offizier befördert und gehörte ab Oktober 1916 dem Inf.-Regt. 347 an. Er machte den ganzen Feldzug an der Front mit und blieb trotzdem unverwundet. Nach dem Kriege trat er in das Kreisforps 833 ein, in dem er eine Kompanie übernahm. Der damalige Kreisführer Kühme ist jetzt Obergruppenführer in der SA und Leiter der Reichsführerschule der SA. In seinem Kreisforps nahm Walter an den schlesischen Kämpfen im Grenzland, dem Kampf um den Kampf um Obergroß, sowie an zahlreichen anderen Aktionen in vorderster Linie teil. Im Januar 1924 gründete er die Stahlhelm-Ordnungsgruppe Guhrau und gehörte seitdem dem Stahlhelm in den verschiedensten Stellungen an.

After the war he joined the *Freikorps Kühme*, where he was given command of a company. The former *Freikorps* leader [Kurt] Kühme is now a senior leader in the SA and the head of the Reich Leadership School of the SA.

In his *Freikorps* unit, First Lieutenant Walter participated in the Silesian fight for border protection, homeland security and the battle for Oberichlesien, as well

as in numerous other actions on the home-front.

In January 1924 he founded the *Das Stahlhelm's* local group in Guhrau and has since served the group in various positions.

**Breslau, Donnerstag, 18. Januar 1934**

## Der neue Führer des Breslauer „Stahlhelm“

Wie sich der Soldatenrat die Zähne an Leutnant Walter ausbiß.

Zum Führer des „Stahlhelm“, Kreisverband Breslau, ist, wie wir bereits gemeldet haben, der Obersturmbannführer Oberleutnant a. D. Walter ernannt worden. Bischof bedeutende Rolle dieser als Kompanieführer im Freikorps Kühme im Frühjahr 1919 für Breslau gespielt hat, schilbert Oberleutnant Hefterberg in seinem Buch „Alle Macht den A- und S-Männern“ (Breslau 1932, Wlb. Gottl. Korn).

„Zum Eintreffen des Generalkommandos an Befehl ein Führer, aber um so erhöhter Kampf zwischen diesem und dem Garnisonssoldatenrat. Es ging um die Macht in Breslau. Wir sahen dort zunächst wie die Maus in der Falle. Der Herr der Soldaten verdrängte uns, wo immer wir waren; sie fanden im Generalkommando Boden, sie lagen im Reich, hatten im Stiller neben dem Offiziersrat ein Mischungsverhältnis aufgedeckt zum Schutze der Kommandantur, begünstigten uns, wenn wir dort oben mit dem Worte: „Macht“ und fragten nach unseren Ansichten.“

Es war klar, daß dieser Zustand ebenso gefährlich wie unerträglich war und uns am meisten bedrückte.

„Ebenso erkannte Freb, daß seine und der Seinen Herrschaft ein Ende hätte, wenn das Generalkommando mit eigener Truppe in Breslau seinen Fuß setzte. Man muß es dem Getreuen lassen, er hatte sein Material gut organisiert. Jede Vorleistung des Führers unterstützte es mit entsprechenden Reaktionen und Protesten, an jeder Demonstration beteiligte es sich. Jedem „Übergriff“ des Generalkommandos brachte es durch seinen Soldatenrat zur Sprache und nötigte uns umerlöste Überlegungen an.“

Und doch Am 13. März 1919 gewann das Generalkommando den ersten entscheidenden Kampf. Seit diesem Tage hatte Breslau ständig wieder eine Kompanie, die zu uns hielt. Ja, zu uns hielt, muß man sagen, denn darum hat es sich gehandelt. Sie kam vom Freikorps Kühme, ihr Führer war der Leutnant vom 3.-St. 347, Walter. Diese Art der jungen Offiziere hat die Soldaten gewonnen und die Schlingengraben gebildet, fiel 1914 weit vor ihren Zügen und straffte sich November 1918 mit den letzten Gefreuten im feindlichen Boden. Blühte man ihnen in die funkelnden Augen, hörte man die kurze militärische Sprache, sah man die Handgelenke am Koppel, so wußte man, hier gab es keine Mißverständnisse. Von Walter und seinen Freiwilligen ging eine Stärke aus, die uns alle in unseren Arbeiten hob, uns freier machte und den Kampf gegen die Meute der Soldaten lieb. Erst die Nachschüsse hat versucht, diesen Zapfen, denen ihr eigenes Leben nichts war, den verschwommenen Mantel des Tageslichts umzubringen; ihnen mit süßlichen Worten späte Einsicht anzubieten. Daß auch sie nun erkannt hätten, niemals in den vier Kriegsjahren auf der Höhe ihres Lebens gewandelt zu haben. Jetzt nur am Nationalismus unserer Jugend, Freiheit und Freiheit sie und dieses Wort, wo immer ihr könnt, verhandelt gegen unseren Willen, verschärfte unter letztes Gut und Ansehen, eins aber bleibt: der Geist und der Schwung der Zeit, den die Männer der Front, die den Krieg ausweglos nicht gewinnen konnten, ihren Söhnen hinterlassen haben. An diesem Leutnant Walter schreite Freb. Die freiwilligen Träger mit dem Preußenstern auf dem Armel ist die gewerkschaftlich organisierten ab. Der Breslauer Panzermann unterlag dem Soldatenrat.“



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

In October, 1934, Dad entered the new German Forces as a First Lieutenant. He was assigned to an infantry regiment stationed at Neisse, a mid-sized, rather provincial town known mainly for having been the favorite fortress of Frederick the Great of Prussia, who lived from 1712 to 1786.

Frederick was a beloved ruler, affectionately called *Der Alte Fritz* by his subjects. His religious tolerance was well known; he is credited with the saying that “there are many ways to get to heaven.” He implemented many social reforms. Soon after succeeding his father, he invaded Silesia, then a possession of Austria, ruled by the Empress Maria-Therese.

This was the time when Europe was literally ruled by three women – Katherine the Great of Russia, Maria-Therese of Austria and the infamous Madame Pompadour, mistress of Louis XIV of France, who was known to be the power behind the French throne.

Frederick liked none of them and called them “the three old petticoats.” He waged three wars with Austria. The last and longest gave him possession of Silesia. (In my opinion, Poland never *owned* Silesia; if all things were equal, the only state to have a real claim to it would be Austria).

In this second article from the Breslau newspaper, (see prior page) the story editor quotes extensively from a 1932 book by Ernst Hesterberg, who references Georg’s account of the arrival of the Supreme Command (the regular German army) in Breslau, under the guise of putting down the German Communists, also known as ‘Spartacans’. Apparently Hesterberg believes that the Supreme Command either had its own motives, or simply bungled the action against the Spartacans; and that it was the Walter’s *Freikorps Kühme* unit (named after Kurt Kühme, its original commander) who ultimately got the job done.

## » Translation, Breslau *Stahlhelm* article No. 2

**Headline:** The new leader of the Breslau “Steel Helmet”

**Subhead:** Soldiers greet his arrival with a smile

**Text:** The new leader of *Das Stahlhelm*, Breslau district association, is, as we have already reported, First Lieutenant Walter. He played a significant role as a company commander of the *Freikorps Kühme* in Breslau, in the spring of 1919, [as Walter recounted to] Lieutenant Colonel [Ernst] Hesterberg in his book “*All Power to the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils: the Battle for Silesia*” (Breslau, 1932, Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn):

*“The arrival of the Supreme Command was a silent, but so bitter struggle between them and our Garrison Soldiers. It was about who would have power in Breslau. We sat there at first like a mouse in the trap. [General] Frey’s soldiers guarded us, wherever we were: they were at the Supreme Command post; they were in the castle; they had a machine gun placed for the protection of the Command in the room next to the Officers’ Mess; they greeted us when we arrived there with the word “meal?,” and asked for our identity cards.*

*It was clear that this condition was as dangerous as it was unbearable, and depressed us the most. We also recognized that Frey and his glory would have an end purpose, once he took command and his own guard forces in Breslau had a firm footing. You have to give his corporals due credit; he had his battalion well organized. Each presentation of the guard was supported with relevant resolutions despite protests; it participated in any demonstration itself. We were obliged to attend endless meetings, and to avoid making any verbal assault on his Supreme Command soldiers.”*

On 13 March 1919, the Supreme Command lost the struggle. Since that day Breslau has had our local militia to protect us, as a result of what they did, and who they were. Our protection came from the *Freikorps Kühme*; their leader was the Lieutenant of Infantry Regiment 347, Georg Walter.

This is a young officer who has won the battles and held the trenches, beginning in 1914 and ending in November 1918 with the last of his troops firmly on enemy ground, looking them in their twinkling eyes, giving the command, so they could see the coupling on the hand grenade, and so there were no misunderstandings. Walter and his volunteers drew from a strength that lifted us all in our work, and helped make the fight against the mutineers tougher.

In the post-war period these brave men found themselves in a place where their war life meant nothing, where they were made to wear the misty cloak of pacifism; where hindsight seeks to minimize their contribution.

We now recognize they gave four years to the war at the height of their lives. War tugs at the nationalism of our youth, gags and enslaves them. The outcome, negotiated against our will, bartered our last goods and reputation, but one thing remains: the spirit and the momentum of the soul, which the men of the front, in a war they could not win, still retain. At this, General Frey failed. The volunteer hunter with Prussia star on his sleeve displaced the Supreme Command.

Walter, the Breslau (farm equipment) merchant, trumped the childish soldiers.

**GUARD CITY OF Breslau**

**Silesian Troops Occupy Public Buildings to Prevent Capture by Spartacans.**

[By Associated Press.]

BASEL, March 12.—Silesian troops, acting in agreement with the central soldiers' council have occupied the public buildings of Breslau, according to advices from that city. This action was taken owing to the discovery that Spartacan leaders were arriving in Breslau from Berlin with the purpose of occupying the buildings and delivering the town to pillage.

**Item from the Richmond (VA) Times-Dispatch, March 13, 1919 [online archive].**  
The ‘Silesian troops’ referenced in this bulletin were Georg’s *Freikorps Kühme*.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

But so much for my short detour into history! My dad's return to military service and his subsequent assignment to Neisse entailed a move for our family from Breslau. This must have been early in 1935. We rented an apartment on a nice quiet street with a small park in front of it. That is about all I remember of this time because it was to be cut rather short.

**Neisse, diphtheria  
and Hannelore's mom**

At the beginning of September, 1935, I contracted diphtheria, in those days a dreaded disease, since no inoculations had yet been discovered. I was rushed to the hospital, where I was put in isolation and in rapid succession received two rather painful injections in my behind. I recovered quickly, however, and during my stay I remember looking out my window and seeing my mom and dad downstairs (since I was in quarantine), waving at me, and receiving a bunch of beautiful hothouse grapes from them. Soon I was released and sent home, but was told to stay in bed for another week or so.

Much to my surprise, just a few days later, a strange nurse came to my room, dressed me and told me that I had suffered a relapse and had to go back to the hospital. Downstairs waited an ambulance, and I found that my mother was going, too, and she was obviously in bad shape. She had also contracted the dreaded disease – whether from me or someone else, I don't know. The rumor was that I had been released too early and had infected her. What a tale to tell a child!

**Recognition:** Belatedly, the German government (perhaps as part of its rebuilding of the German military) issued the Iron Cross to Georg, along with a certificate recognizing his service in the First World War.

**Translation:** In the Name of the Leader and Reich Chancellor, Field Representative Georg Walter in Breslau is recognized on 13 July 1934 to commemorate his service in the World War of 1914-1918 by the Reich President General Field Marshall von Hindenburg by awarding The Iron Cross.

Breslau, 6 February 1935

[signature]  
Chief Constable in Charge

**Call to Duty:** In October, 1934, Georg gets the news he has been waiting for: He has been reinstated in the regular German army, and will be sent to a seven-week Army Infantry training program.

**Translation:**  
Head of the Army Personnel Office  
Number 3460/34 PA  
Berlin W35, 15 October 1934

Mr. First Lieutenant  
Georg Walter  
53 Herdain Street  
Breslau 23

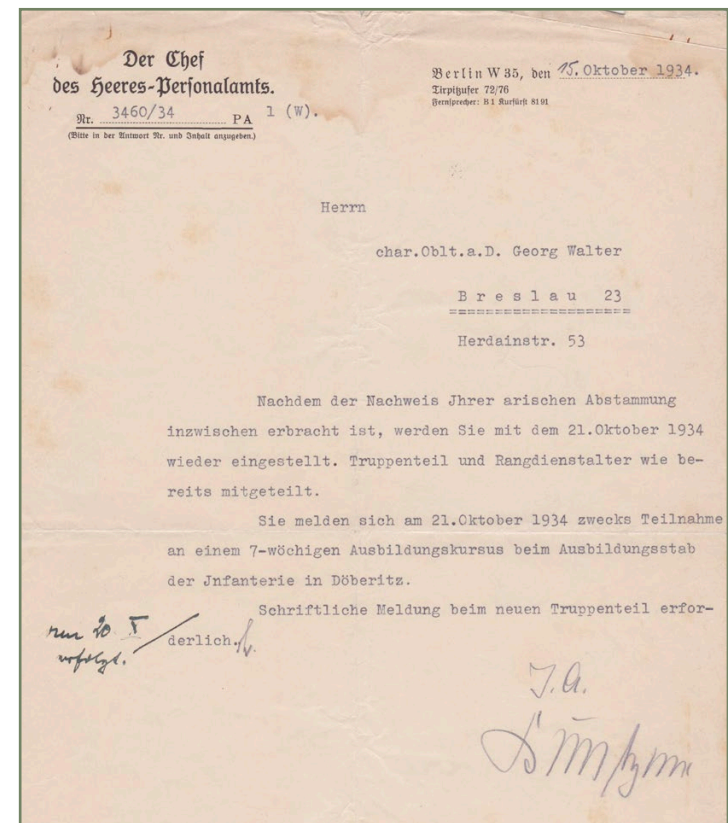
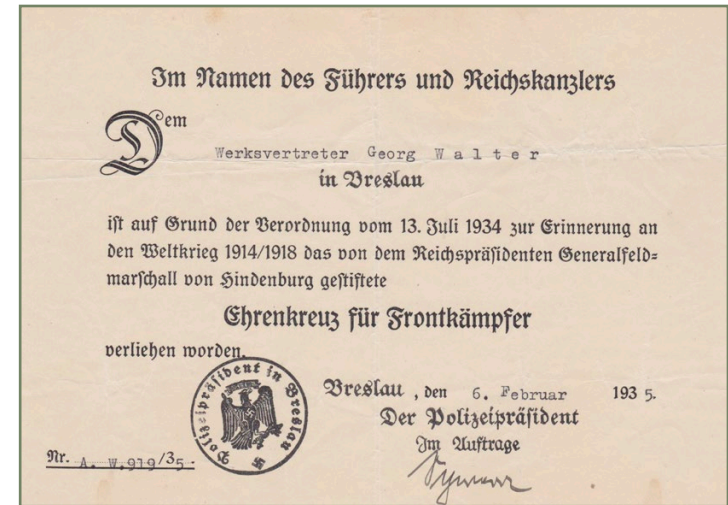
After presenting your papers, you will again join up with your Army unit on October 21, 1934.

The Army Unit and Senior Officer have already been notified.

You will report on 21 October 1934 to participate in a 7-week seminar in the Doberitz training area which the infantry will be undertaking.

A written confirmation from the new Army unit will be required.

[signature]





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

At the hospital my mother and I were in the same room. She obviously was feeling very ill, because she would not talk to me or answer my questions.

That night, I was suddenly awakened, bundled up and carried across the yard to another building. Any questions as to why and how my mom was doing were not answered. As I found out later, my mom had turned critical. Doctors performed a tracheotomy on her, but too late, and sometime during the night she died.

The day was the 26th of September, 1935. I remained in the hospital for another week or so, but no family members were allowed to see me, and the nurses were more than evasive about answering questions. Everybody just seemed overly nice to me.

The day came when I was told that I could go home and that my dad would come by to pick me up. I was dressed and brought downstairs where my dad waited for me with a military coach drawn by two horses and a soldier at the reins. He also evaded my questions about my mom, and only said "later."

(Top)

**Georg** [center] **with fellow officers** (fall, 1934)

(Bottom left)

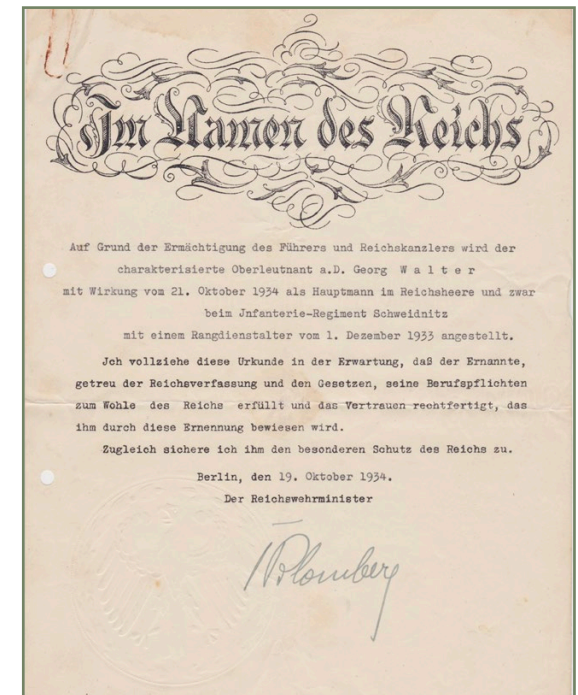
**Georg's officer class** (fall, 1934)

Georg is in the center of the photo, middle row, immediately to the right of the fellow with the round-frame glasses.



(Right) **Georg is promoted to *Hauptmann* (Captain)**

**Translation:** In the Name of the Empire: On the basis of authorization from the Leader and the Chancellery, First Lieutenant A.D. Georg Walter, effective 21 October 1934, shall be a Captain in the Infantry Regiment Rangdienstalter Schweidnitz, which he joined on 1 December 1933. I am mastering this instrument in the expectation that the person appointed, in fidelity to the Constitution and the laws, has fulfilled his professional obligations to the whole of the Empire and that the trust this appointment justifies is proven. I secure him to the special protection of the empire. Berlin, 19 October 1934, the Reich Defense Minister, [Werner von] Blomberg [who also served as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and Hitler's first Field Marshal]





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

We took a short ride out in the countryside, where he stopped the coach. We got out, walked a little and then sat down by the side of the path. This is where he told me about my mom. To be honest, it did not come home to me what it all meant until much, much later. At that moment I was somehow more interested in the horses pulling the coach and whether I would be allowed to take the reins!

Then we went home, and at the apartment I found Oma Kunisch (my mom's mother) and Tante Trude (my mom's sister) waiting for us, both dressed in deep black and crying a lot. Again, I was more excited that they had come to visit and brought me a little toy wooden washtub with clothespins and some new clothes for my doll.

I remember sitting on the floor while the grown-ups did a lot of talking, but it all went completely over my head. It was decided that I would go home with them for a while until my future was decided. My Dad, being in the military, certainly was not able to care for a 5-year-old while on duty.

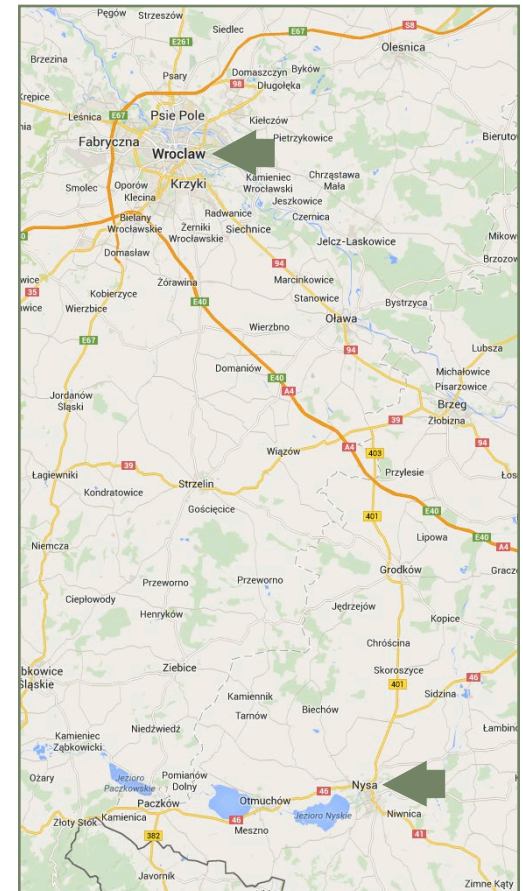
Before we left Neisse, we went to the German Military Cemetery where my mother was buried. That day, and about two or three years later, are the only times I remember visiting the grave. (By the way, nothing remains of her grave site today. After Poland assumed sovereignty, all German cemeteries were flattened and erased.) There are some pictures in my photo album of the grave, but that is all that remains. So I said goodbye to my dad, and boarded the train to Schmiedeberg with Oma Kunisch and Tante Trude.



Hannelore and her birth mother, Kaethe Kunisch, circa 1935 – not long before Kaethe's death from complications of having contracted diphtheria.



Military photo of Georg (circa 1936).



Map showing relation of Neisse (now Nysa) to Breslau (now Wrocław); today, about an hour's drive apart. (Kaethe is buried at Nysa.)



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

### With the Kunisches in Schmiedeberg

Oma Kunisch had a small walk-up apartment with a really small kitchen; a walk-through combination dining and living room; a tiny side room, like a large cupboard, that was Oma's domain; and a bedroom that Tante Trude, her daughter Sigrid (born in 1932; two years my junior) and I shared.

There was not very much room, and my coming and staying for an undetermined time must have put a strain on everybody. Times were hard.

Oma Kunisch also rented two separate small bedrooms from her landlord, which she in turn rented out to boarders or repeat tourists, who came every year in summer to enjoy the good air and the beautiful mountains. Also, as was common in those days, there was only cold running water in the kitchen. The toilet was an outhouse. Though clean, it was terribly cold in winter, especially if you had to use it at night.

The one redeeming feature of Oma's place was a beautiful large old garden that must have stretched for a mile (or at least, so it seemed to us kids). Oma Kunisch's vegetable garden supplied a lot of fresh produce for her table, and we kids had a great time playing there. Since there were quite a few other children around our age, we never were bored.

Our favorite game was Cowboys and Indians. To this day I am accused of tying Sigrid to a "totem pole," leaving her there and calmly appearing at the supper table. Finally, somebody must have heard her and untied her, but I had to pay for it! Maybe Tante Trude's insistence that I was "a bad influence on my little cousin" originated there. I've never lived it down, even to this day!



Two views of Schmiedeberg, Germany (circa 2012).



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Occasionally, Tante Trude worked as a teller in a local bank. Her husband (of a very short time) died the year following my mom's death, and she had to support herself and her daughter. So she left every morning on a bus to get to work and returned in the evening.

Oma Kunisch not only had to take care of two small children all day long but also had to cook for her dinner guests (sometimes as many as 12) and her boarders. But we were all well taken care of. She never laid a hand on us, but when we really wouldn't listen, as children sometimes won't, she brought out her cane bug beater, and that was usually enough.

In April, 1936, I started school. At that time, the school year in Germany started in the spring, usually right after Easter. Summer holidays did not start until the end of July or early August, and school resumed again in September. This allowed the many farm communities in Germany to have the help of the children with the hay and grain harvest. (Also, summery weather in middle Europe does not come till the latter part of the season, hence the later summer break.)

The school I started in was located in a small building and housed only the first three grades. Depending on the number of children attending in a particular year, they were often taught in just one room. The teacher, at least from what I remember, looked like something out of a Dickens novel. He didn't let you get away with much.

As was the custom, the first time you entered school was celebrated. You were given a cone-type container, decorated with colored paper,



Schmiedeberg Train Station, circa 1920. (Visit [www.Schmiedeberg1924.de](http://www.Schmiedeberg1924.de) to see more wonderful period photos!)

which contained all kinds of candies. I guess that was to help you get over being left alone at school, and to make it seem as if school was going to be a lot of fun.

First grade, of course, was not hard, and you soon got to know your classmates. Your backpack contained a small blackboard with a little sponge; a small rag, attached on a string; and chalk sticks.

I must have been at school for several months when one day, unexpectedly, my dad picked me up from school. Of course, Dad showing up was always a wonderful surprise because I did not get to see him too often and he always spoiled me rotten.

### Return to Neisse

I was even happier to learn that I would return home with him to Neisse (where he was still stationed). It seemed he had rented a new apartment and hired a

housekeeper/governess to keep house and to look after me. This lady, "Tante Edith," turned out to be very proper and strict. I didn't care for her very much, but one thing she taught me was the love of books. After coming home from school, she would sit me down and painstakingly go paragraph by paragraph through a book – and not a first-grade one, either!

Mostly these were stories about knights of old and their ladies and their adventures. The books appealed to me, and before too long I made definite progress and reading became fun. Soon she could not drag me away from a book, a habit that has remained with me all of my life.

Even though Tante Edith was not the perfect governess, I still have to thank her for introducing me to the joy of reading. My books helped me while away long hours spent alone. To this day, books have been one of my greatest pleasures.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

No matter where I go, whenever I expect to wait for something or someone, I still carry a book with me to pass the time.

Whether Tante Edith was the right person to bring up a young, headstrong girl is a point I am still not clear about. On one hand, my dad (when he was able to be with me) spoiled me rotten. I often went with him to his office at the garrison where he was stationed when it was Tante Edith's day off. There I would spend my time after school, roaming the grounds and especially the stables, being looked after by his soldiers, be they sergeant or private, and once again, every whim of mine was indulged. Tante Edith, on the other hand, having been charged to bring me up "proper," was very strict, often to the point of being rather unreasonable. So I quickly learned to make up any kind of stories or excuses to get my way.

### Ruth, and the darkening political situation

With the move back to Neisse (I still remember the address: No. 6 Obermaehren Gasse), of course, I went to a new school. I do not recall too much about the school itself; more about the long walk to and from. In those days the safety of young children (with respect to molestation) was not often an issue, and as long as you knew your way, your ability to return home was expected. Also, traffic was very sparse – still a lot of horses and wagons around and very few cars.

This, of course, gave me great opportunities to explore. I especially remember a great

empty lot I had to cross (supposedly a shortcut home) that held my interest. Over the years people had dumped all kinds of garden trash, which after a while somehow took root and produced a virtual treasure for me. I found all kinds of different plants and flowers and had to explore them thoroughly. This often reminds me of the newspaper comic "The Family Circus," where the little boy doesn't always take the shortest route home.

The house we lived in contained several apartments. In the apartment directly below us lived a gentleman with his family. This man owned a brewery, which was just across the street, built on a park-like lot, with lots of trees and beautiful landscaping, all enclosed by a high fence. He also had a young daughter, about my age or a little older. Her name was Ruth, and she had beautiful dark hair and very pretty dark eyes.

The two of us soon became fast friends, playing together and exploring the neighborhood, especially the park around the brewery. We knew the fence was supposed to keep people out, but Ruth, knowing the man at the gate, always managed to get us in. Knowing we should not really be there made it just so much more interesting!

Ruth even went to the same school as I did, making her a most welcome friend and companion on the long walks to and from school. But this did not last very long. For some unknown reason, Ruth dropped out of our school and supposedly went to attend a private school.

But we continued to see each other at home after school and played together as

before, until the day that I was visiting at her place and her mother had just put out some cookies for us. Tante Edith appeared and rather curtly demanded that I come upstairs right away. She wanted to know what I was doing at their house. I was also told not to play so often with Ruth.

Next day after coming home from school I stopped downstairs to ask for Ruth to come and play. I never got past the maid and was told she was sick. The following day I tried again, and this time somebody strange opened the door and told me that Ruth and her family had moved away. Away in one day? This seemed even unbelievable to a 6-year old. When later I asked Tante Edith what had happened, all I was told was that she did not know and I was not to ask any questions. I was not to mention their name again and was to stay away from downstairs.

Children will be children, so I put this unpleasant and unexplained episode behind me. But deep down in my memory there is still the matter of Ruth's mysterious disappearance. Being children, we knew nothing about what was going on around us in the larger world, and as far as I knew the departure of Ruth was not connected to anything more sinister than simply "she was gone," and I had lost my only playmate at that time.

One must understand, that at the time, "adult" matters were *never* discussed in front of children, and our questions were mostly answered in an evasive manner. It was not until years later that I realized that Ruth and her family were Jews, and rich Jews at that – an unpardonable sin under the regime of the Nazis.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

To this day I have no idea what happened to the family. I didn't even know their last name. I can only hope and pray that they made their escape that night and were not carted off somewhere by the Gestapo. Since they obviously had some money at their disposal, and the time of the accelerated persecution of Jews did not start until about a year later, I hope they escaped. After Ruth left I had no other close friends.

Black clouds were gathering on the political horizon, and slowly, I started to notice things were beginning to change. First, my dad was more absent from home than ever. The mobilization of the German Army was beginning, and he was constantly on maneuvers or detached duty somewhere. He had by then been promoted to *Hauptmann* (Captain) and the only real bright spots in my life were when he made a surprise visit or I was on school holiday.

All my holidays were spent with Oma Kunisch, whom I quite frankly adored, and Tante Trude's daughter, Sigrid, my cousin, who was like a little sister to me. We loved each other like the real sister neither of us had. To Oma Kunisch I was, of course, the one thing that remained of her youngest daughter. At that time she was running her dinner table/boarder house business, and Tante Trude had her job in the bank.

Back at home, things were very much as usual: school in the morning and afternoons and evenings with Tante Edith.

My one great joy was spending time with Vati, whenever he was home. Every once in



**2011 aerial view of Neisse** (now Nysa, Poland). The city is at lower right; Hannelore and her friends liked to explore the 16th-Century fortifications that surrounded the city (look carefully in the forested areas near the top of this photo and you'll see them)

a while Vati and I were invited to his regimental commanding officer's house for dinner or afternoon tea. I guess his wife felt somehow sorry for his poor "motherless" child. They had a son, a few years older than me. Being the tomboy I was, I got along just great with him and his buddies, especially after they found out that they could not scare me with frogs, spiders or such things. We all became good friends, and there were very few things we did not get into. (By the way, both the CO and his son lost their lives during the war.)

But at that time, we were young and untroubled, and neither politics nor other worries entered our minds. One of our main enjoyments was to explore the remaining fortifications around

the city of Neisse, built centuries earlier by Frederick the Great. Everything was wide open; I guess nobody thought of the possibilities of children getting lost in some of the underground passages. We had a grand time, playing the equivalent of Cowboys and Indians, only we were *Prussians* and *Austrians*.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Vati was a great lover of horses, and I guess I must have inherited that from him. He had several horses at his disposal for personal use, though they belonged to the Army and were stabled and cared for by them. They were all great jumpers, and one of my best memories was to watch him at a spring *Jagdreiten* (steeplechase) and see him win a trophy. Everyone wore a sprig of oak in his or her lapel or, as in my case, you pinned it to your coat. I always took the oak home with me and tried to keep it green, but in spite of my efforts it always dried up and turned brown. But there was always the other *Jagdreiten* in the fall...!

### The arrival of Elisabeth Schmidthals

A lady, who was introduced to me as Tante Schmidthals, came to the house a few times, ostensibly to play with us kids, especially with me. I understood her to be a gym and home economics teacher who knew all kinds of neat things to keep us kids occupied. She seemed to be a friend of the family, especially of my late Mutti. Though I did not know it then, Elisabeth Schmidthals was to become one of the most important people in my life.

Tante Schmidthals and Mutti had apparently both attended some of the same schools and had shared an interest in sports, especially in gymnastics. I understood that Mutti had been quite good at gymnastics and won several prizes, a talent she certainly did not pass on to me! (I was more Vati's daughter in that respect, one who, except for riding, did not care much about participating in sports.)

Christmas 1936 was spent at Oma Kunisch's in Schmiedeberg with Oma, Tante Trude and

Sigrid. Vati was there for the main holidays, and if I remember correctly, even Tante Schmidthals showed up with a gift for me. Members of the Kunisch family always seemed to distance themselves from Tante Schmidthals. Why, I wasn't to learn until later. As far as they were concerned, Vati could do no wrong. They simply adored him, and were extremely proud of their late daughter's husband, the handsome *Hauptmann* in his smart uniform. Even in his absence he was always talked about, and still referred to by Oma as her "son-in-law." I learned only later that they secretly had hoped for a match between Tante Trude and my Vati.

What a disaster that would have been! Two more different outlooks on life hardly existed – my Vati light-hearted and outgoing, looking at the brighter side of life and, I am sure, not always following the straight and narrow "moral" path. Tante Trude was quite the opposite. And I was, of course, very much my father's daughter, something of a rebel.

Soon after that Christmas my dad announced that he and Tante Schmidthals were engaged and to be married in June. I personally liked Tante Schmidthals well enough, and anything seemed better than being with Tante Edith.

I remember a visit by Tante Schmidthals and her mother to Neisse around my seventh birthday. In hindsight, I'm sure they were there to look things over, and to see what would be needed by the new lady of the house.

Tante Edith left shortly before the wedding and on June 27, 1937, Vati and Tante Schmidthals were married in a small, old fashioned church near Schmiedeberg.



**Georg loved horses**, and throughout his military career always had them at his disposal. Here he is in 1917 (top) and circa 1937 (bottom). In the 1937 photo, Georg is aboard his favorite mount, "Nation"; she went with him wherever duty called, all the way to the outskirts of Moscow in 1941.

Vati's brothers and sister attended, of course, along with several people from my new "Mutti's" side of the family. The Kunisches was absent; whether they were not invited or chose not to attend by their own choice, I don't know.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

When Vati and my new “Mutti” (as I shall refer to her from here on) left after the reception on their honeymoon, they took me along! Why, I do not know; there certainly were enough people around to look after me. We traveled to a rather secluded hotel in the Harz Mountains. All I remember is being on my own a lot (at least I had my books) and the three of us taking what seemed to be endless walks.

With my new Mutti I had also acquired a new grandmother, Oma Schmidthals. She and Tante Anna, her companion and housekeeper, were also living in Schmiedeberg.

When my new Mutti was born in 1904, the third child and first daughter for Oma Schmidthals and her husband, Walter Ernst. Her older brother was 14 when she was born. His name was Ernst Walter. Her younger brother, Wilhelm, was around 10 years old when she was born. Mutti came from an old Prussian family that had, just a short time before her birth, given up the word ‘von’ in front of Schmidthals, for reasons I do not know. (That was another case in which such matters were not discussed with the children.) Most of the males of the family where, or had been, in the military and all were very patriotic about the “fatherland,” especially under the Kaiser. I never met Mutti’s father or older brother. Her brother died at the beginning of World War I, and her father passed away sometime in the early 1920s.

Oma Schmidthals lived through three wars, starting with the Franco-Prussian War in the late 1800s, which united Germany into one nation, when Bismarck declared Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia as emperor of all Germany, and did away with all the little states that previously constituted German territory. Then followed World War I, and later, World War II. She really lived through some historic times.



(above left)  
**Herta**, the daughter of one of Georg’s military acquaintances; **Georg**; and **Hannelore**; at Schmiedeberg, circa 1940.

(above)  
**Elisabeth Schmidthals**, Hannelore’s new “Mutti,” and Georg; at Schmiedeberg, circa 1940.

(left)  
**The ‘Grande Dame’**: Oma Schmidthals, Elisabeth’s mother, circa 1947. She lived through three major German wars and died of old age in 1948.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Oma Schmidthals was what you would call “a Grand Dame” – every inch of her showing her breeding. She was of tiny stature and, according to the early pictures I have seen of her, must have been truly beautiful. It still showed.

Beyond that, she had a wonderful personality. Even though she was, to me, an “old lady” she had a wonderful understanding of young people – especially surprising since my generation was definitely different from hers. She grew up in the very proper and strict “Victorian Age,” with long dresses, tight corsets and everything that went with that.

Oma Schmidthals and I had a great relationship. Many times when Mutti and I could not see eye to eye on issues (and those times came often), Oma Schmidthals would be the mediator.

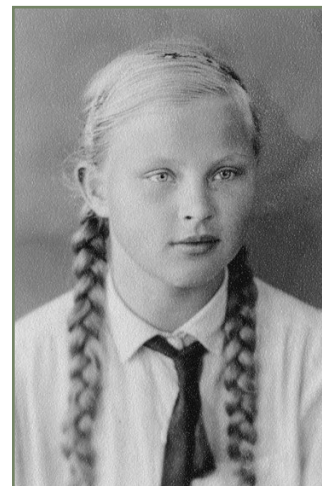
I also liked Tante Anna. She had come into the Schmidthals household as a 16-year-old when Mutti was born. She was a very unassuming and sweet person, who through her own intelligence and hard work had found her place, rising from nursemaid to lady’s companion, which was quite a climb. Eventually she became Oma Schmidthals’ best friend and equal partner.

## Oppeln

Soon afterwards, Vati was transferred again, this time to Oppeln, a rather bigger town than Neisse. This was to be my home for the next two years. We moved to a newer and larger apartment. I did not have to change schools, but my walk to and from school became longer and I had to ride a city bus part of the way.



*Clockwise from top left: Hannelore at her Confirmation, June, 1942; Hannelore, Elisabeth Schmidthals, Oma Schmidthals and “Tante Anna”; also June, 1942; and below (left to right), Hannelore’s school photos from 1942, 1943 and 1944.*





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Things at home were going OK; Mutti and I got along all right, even though she was very strict and set in her ways (which never, even in her later life, was to change) – and that eventually caused trouble.

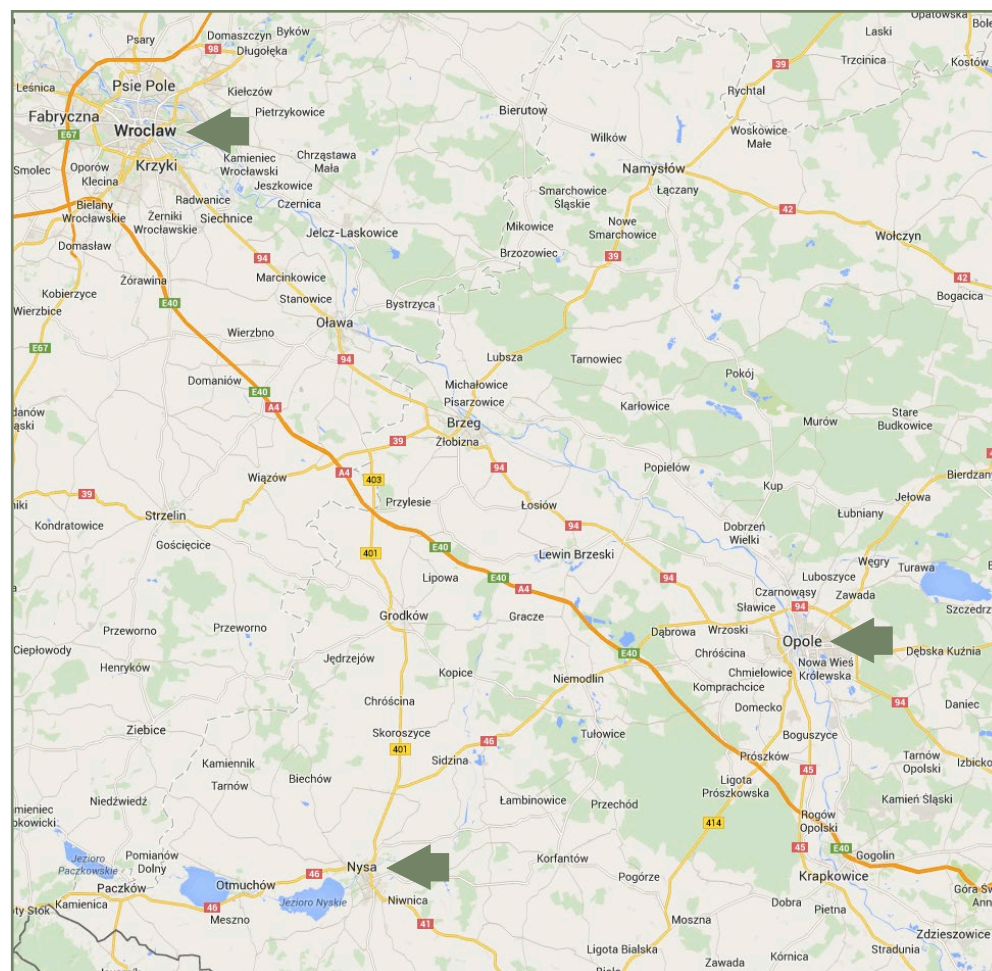
I am sure that I presented quite a challenge. I had gone through many different hands in my seven years, and I guess I also had been quite indulged by Vati as well as Oma Kunisch along the way. The Kunisch family never actually forgave Mutti for marrying my Vati, and now I realize that the spoiling and indulgences on Oma Kunisch's part had a lot to do with that.

But the friction that started at home went a lot deeper than just my relationship with Mutti. Vati's and Mutti's outlooks on life were oceans apart. He had married because he had to do a certain amount of repair to his reputation (I never got the whole story, just some hints that it had to do something with a certain "lady"), and he also needed a mother to take care of me. So Mutti, with her spotless reputation and background, was the perfect choice.

Tante Edith's presence in the home of a bachelor, even though he was recently widowed was not a good choice. So he married Mutti, but it was very obvious that, at least on his side, it was a marriage of convenience.

### *Kristallnacht*, and more signs of trouble

Both at home and in the world at large, it became apparent even to me that things were not as they should be. On the political horizon, black clouds continued to gather. Hitler escalated his persecution of the Jews. Internationally, as history shows, he was still presenting a peaceful face to the rest of the world. He met in Munich with English foreign minister Chamberlain and French minister Dalladier and "everlasting peace" and "non-aggression" was promised by all. At home, however, all the laws concerning "non-Aryans" were being put into effect – meaning, mainly, the Jews.



Map showing relative locations of Breslau (now Wrocław), Neisse (now Nysa) and Oppeln (now Opole; all Poland). All are within an hour's drive of one other. Georg was transferred to Oppeln (from Neisse) in mid-1937, about the time he and Elisabeth were married. Hannelore continued to attend the same school as she had while in Neisse, though it was a longer commute.

One morning, I was riding the city bus to school. The bus route went by a synagogue, where a big black cloud of smoke was visible. It soon became evident that, not only had the building been set afire but all the beautiful glass windows and door had been smashed to pieces. The big copper dome on the building was tilting crazily to one side. Except for some murmurs from people riding the bus, nobody said anything. When I arrived at school there was no comment. Upon arriving home and telling Mutti about it I became no wiser.





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

It was a strange time for me to be growing up. On one hand I had (so it seemed) finally found a stable home with both a father and mother. On the other hand, the political situation was beginning to make itself felt. Mutti was very pro-Hitler; she thought he was the long awaited "Messiah" who would lead Germany back to its old glory. She was not necessarily what you would call a Nazi (certainly her family background would vouch for that); and she was not a follower of the party line (I know she was not a member). But she did agree with a lot of Nazi beliefs, especially as far as the Aryan dogma was concerned. She never believed in interracial mixing. Everything not German (or of "Germanic" origin) was frowned upon, and English-American culture such as music or movies was considered decadent.

By now it was Christmas, 1938. We celebrated very little. I received a pair of skis and everything to go with them. Since the hospital had extensive grounds and there was plenty of snow on the ground, I tried them out the next day. I was not too successful at first, but had a lot of fun anyhow. (Many days, when I attended school at home, they were the only means of transportation, so eventually, I got pretty good on them.) We went home to Oppeln December 26; Vati was about to be released and joined us soon thereafter for a short time.

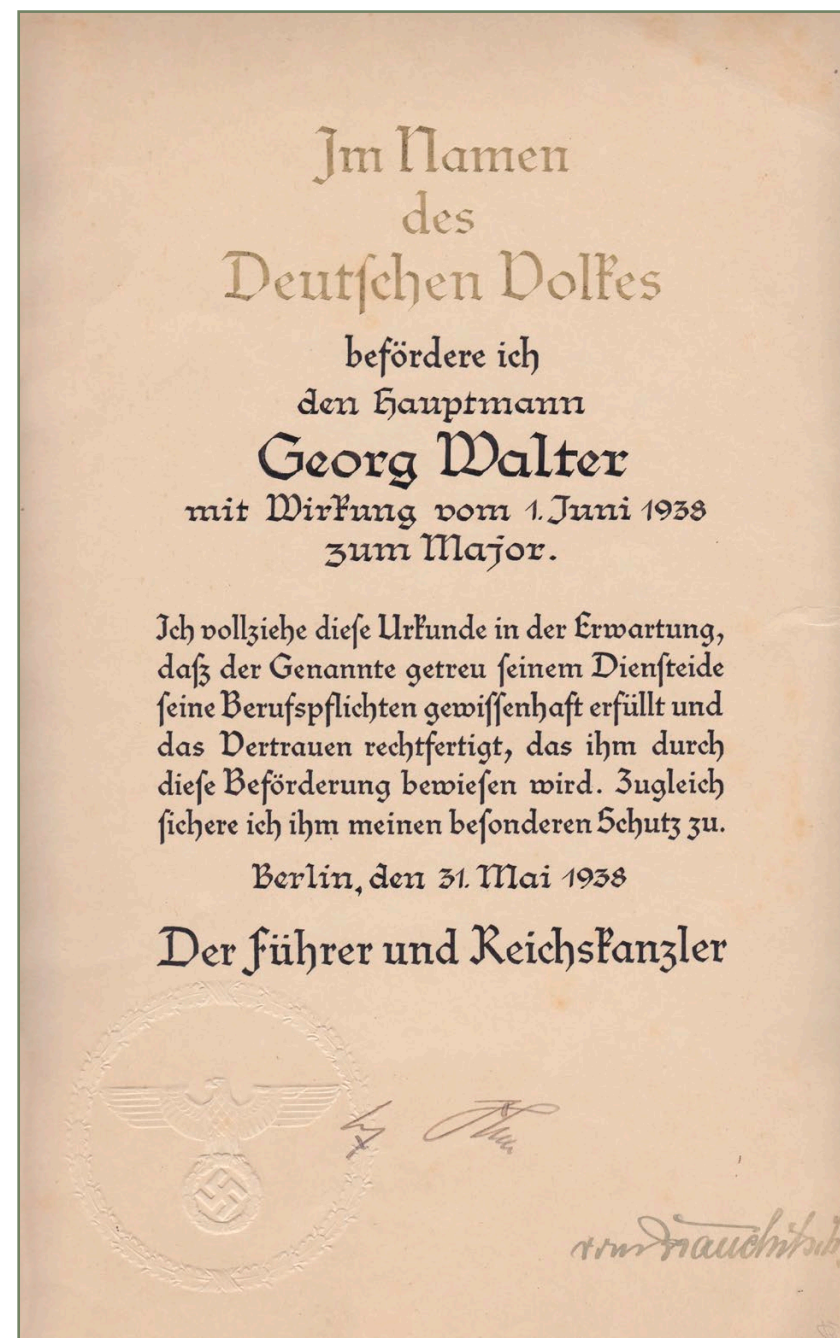
Vati was never home for long. Duty called him away constantly, mostly on extended maneuvers. The military was beginning to feel the extra pressure and the ever-present darkening political situation. Germany was definitely preparing for war. At home, the situation was still very strained because, in my estimation, Mutti's outlook on life was just so different from Vati's.

(Right) Georg is promoted to Major

**Translation:** On behalf of the German people I am elevating Captain Georg Walter, effective June 1, 1938, to Major. I am mastering this instrument in the expectation that the above mentioned will discharge his professional obligations conscientiously and justify the confidence in him which is demonstrated by this carriage. At the same time, I give him my special protection. Berlin, the 31st of May, 1938.

The Leader and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler (original signature)

The attesting signature at lower right is that of Heinrich Alfred Hermann Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army at that time.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

## Mährisch Rothwasser, and Vati goes to war

The New Year (1939) bought another transfer for Vati. He was a captain by then and was being given his first command, a small garrison located in the eastern corner of the Sudetenland.

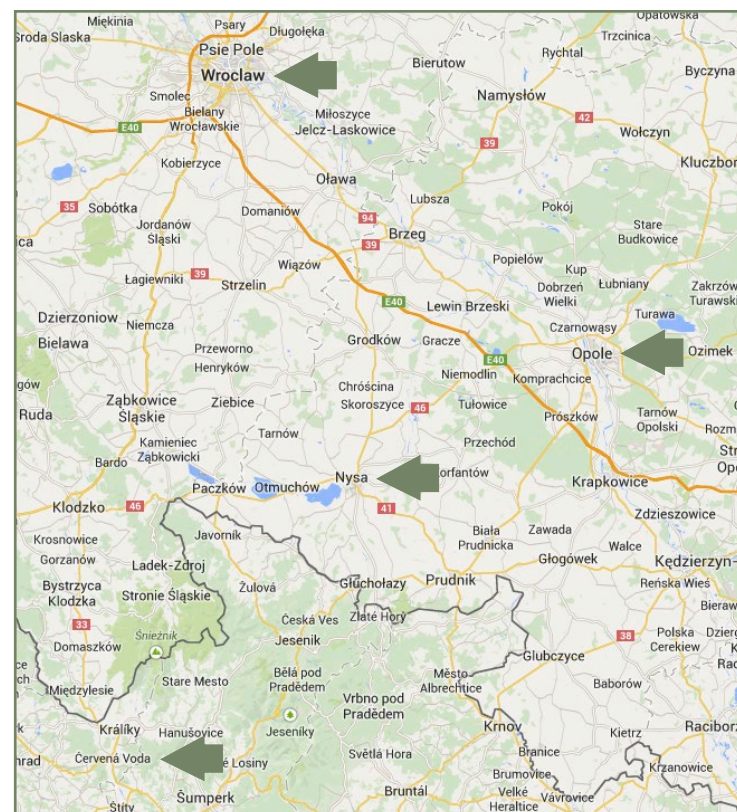
Mährisch Rothwasser was a little place, not much more than a village, located in a valley surrounded by some of the prettiest country and mountains you could imagine. The barracks had been built by the Czech Army and consisted of many rather modern looking buildings, intended to house a large contingent of mounted troops. Of course, there were also stables, which were in better shape than the quarters intended for the troops!

Vati went ahead with a small detachment of soldiers to oversee the finishing of the barracks, as well as the housing intended for dependents. Everything was in a raw state of finish and it took several months to be fully completed. The base was surrounded by a chain link fence, and the dependent housing was across from the main gate.

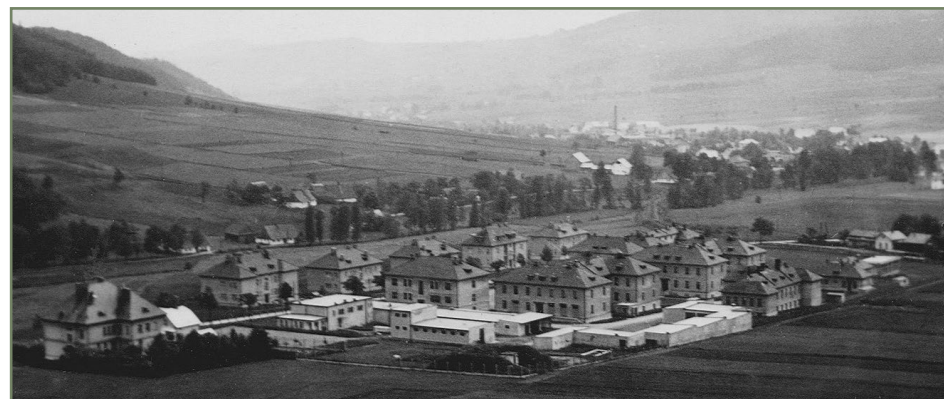
Finally, the big day came, and after the troops had arrived and been settled, we got the word to come and join Vati and take up residence in our new home. If I remember correctly, it was March, 1939, still miserably cold and wet. As you might imagine, the new and until-then-unoccupied quarters were the same.

Each room was equipped with a big old-fashioned tile stove – nice and cozy when you stood right next to it, but it took some doing to heat every room. Still, we were able to be all together again.

I went exploring, especially in the stables, and was very disappointed to find only one horse in residence, Vati's personal mount, called "Nation." However, it didn't take long before the stables were filled with horses of all types and colors, but on that first visit she did look lonesome. Besides, she was always rather ill-tempered and liked to nip you when you weren't looking. Vati exercised her daily, and when I had the chance and knew where he had gone I would run as far as I could to meet him and would always get a hand up to ride home with him.



**Georg's first command** was in 1939 in the town of Mährisch Rothwasser (now *Cerevna Voda*, *Czech Republic*). The map shows proximity to other venues where Georg, Elisabeth and Hannelore had lived.



This photo (circa 1939) shows Mährisch Rothwasser in the background, with the then-new garrison in the foreground, on the edge of town.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Before long we had to think about my starting back to school. In Oppeln, I attended third grade, with about a fourth of the school year to run, since the new school year started in spring.

Here in the Sudetenland, being formerly a part of Czechoslovakia, the school year changed in fall after the big summer holidays. So I either had to lose or gain half a year. Vati and Mutti decided to have me gain rather than lose it. In retrospect, it was probably not the best thing to do.

Not only was I thrown into completely new surroundings with new teachers and classmates, I was also at least half a year behind in school knowledge, and I was also now the youngest one in the class (a fact that would show itself in later years). As if this all wasn't enough, I was a complete outsider, coming from "Old Germany" – the country that had, through Hitler, "liberated" this area, which, to say the least, not everyone was happy about.

The local people were very much like the Austrians, with a little bit of Latin outlook on life thrown in. They were very laid back, and their philosophy was if it does not get done today, it'll get done tomorrow. This attitude did not get along well with the semi-Prussian military attitude of most newcomers. Many times I remember Vati being thoroughly frustrated when a job at the garrison needed to be finished at a specific time, but wasn't.

It took me quite while to be accepted, but once I felt like I belonged, it soon became home and has remained so till this day. I literally had to fight for respect – I intensely disliked being made fun of, due to my different accent, ways of behavior, background and life at home. Somebody also found out about my nickname of Peter, and I was constantly teased about it, until one day I did not back down from the biggest boy in the class, and we got in a fight. We were both punished, but afterward became the best of friends. I had gained a protector nobody fooled with.

School was slow in the beginning. I was really good in the subjects I liked, but scraped by in things like mathematics and grammar. I made it to the end of the school year and was promoted to the next grade. From then on things got better; I had friends and felt at home.



**The barracks at Mährisch Rothwasser, in 1939 and 2012.** The top photo (1939) was taken from the second-floor Walter apartment in a building across the street [next page]; the bottom photo was taken from street level by Google in February 2012. Note the placement of windows and doors on the left-most building and chimney placement on the right-most; the building exteriors were under renovation when this photo was taken in 2012. Also note that the parade ground has been replaced by a park or common area.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

The war had begun in earnest that summer, and within a few weeks – I think it was in August – Vati and his troops received orders to move. As in times of old, they moved out, the horses pulling the wagons. It was literally “when the caissons go rolling along,” because that is what they were: field artillery. There was not a single motorized vehicle among them. My dad rode his horse at the front of the column, his officers behind him, and the rest of the troops followed. It was quite a picture.

We – that is, the families who stayed behind – gathered all the flowers we could find and decorated all the men and horses. They were on their way to a main railway loading station several miles away.

That, and two more times in the next two years, was all I saw of Vati. After all the men were gone, it took a while for things to settle down at home. Everything was strangely quiet and empty.

All we knew is that the men were to be posted somewhere toward the Eastern front and at that time, that meant Poland. The men were all anxious to get going “in case the war would be over before they became involved” (Little did anyone know what lay ahead).

The Polish campaign was short and successful for the German forces. Germany was ecstatic. Everybody listened to the radio and waited for *sondermeldungen* (special news bulletins) to hear of the “glorious” battles the German troops fought and, during that period, won.

Starting in September, 1939, we had air raid drills and certain people were appointed air wardens. We had, of course, total blackouts at night. All of this was considered a kind of joke, even when we were issued ration cards for everything possible. Food and other things were abundant, even in the large cities. The war would be over before Christmas, we were told, and all the men would be home safe and sound and Germany would, of course, be victorious.



The Walter family apartment at Mährisch Rothwasser, where Elisabeth and Hannelore lived for nearly six years, from March, 1939 until February, 1945. The top photo shows Elisabeth sitting on the second-floor balcony (1939); the bottom photo was taken by Google in February 2012. Aside from repair of the window frames and replacement of the chain-link fence, the building is still remarkably the same as it was 73 years earlier.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Soon, however, reality set in. Within the first two weeks, the first casualty reports began arriving, and many loved ones were either dead or wounded.

Then, England and France joined the war on the side of Poland, and all of a sudden it was a two-front war and the first air raids started. That's when things started to get really serious. Italy, of course, had joined with Germany, becoming a member of the "Axis Powers". Germany quickly overran the combined forces of the Allies in France, and German troops marched into Paris; German forces dug in along the Atlantic coast after heavy fighting.

The Allies had to retreat from mainland Europe, incurring heavy casualties, especially at the infamous battle of Dunkirk. Now, Hitler faced England from 25 miles away. Britain sustained heavy losses, but so did the Germans. The air battle of Britain began, and so did the sea battles. German U-boats chased anything in their sights and sank it. Most Germans were euphoric, but the war still was not over, and the Allies dug in for a bitter battle. Frenchmen organized a very effective underground force that harassed German troops wherever they could find them. And the bombing of German cities and factories began to take its toll. Even our out-of-the-way little place was soon to have its share of air-raid evacuees, especially mothers with young children.

Vati and his outfit had been transferred to the Western front, though ground fighting there had ceased for the time being. An uneasy armistice had been declared. The French had a puppet government under Marshal Petain.

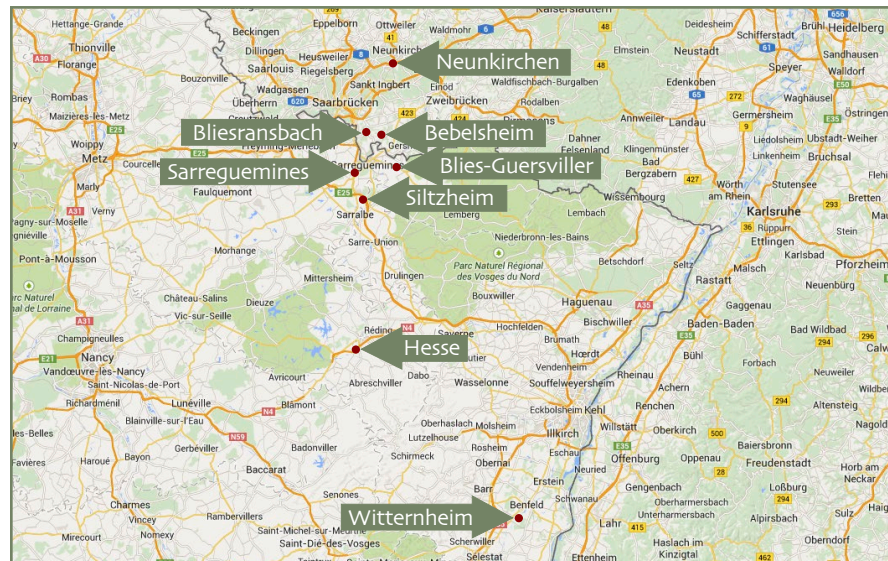
## Georg's Command: The 452nd Infantry Regiment

In early November, 1941, near Moscow, with his 452nd Infantry Regiment's ranks decimated and the survivors being reassigned to other German units on the Russian front, Georg took time to record a brief history of his unit's travels since it was first mustered out of Mährisch Rothwasser in the summer of 1939.

According to his memoir, the 452nd IR was taken by train to Freiwalde (not far from Cottbus, where, 15 years earlier, Georg had been indicted on charges stemming from the *Küstrin Putsch*). There, on August 26, 1939, the unit was mobilized as part of the new 252nd Infantry Division and marched south to Verband, near Stuttgart, to join the new Division.

From there, Georg recounts, "the 452nd was sent to Poland, but did not participate in active combat. Its activity in Poland [in the fall of 1939] was characterized by the outrageously long marches that were required. Nevertheless, a particularly proud moment for the battalion was its participation in the process of reconquering Poland."

In early 1940, the regiment was loaded on trains in Poznan, Poland, and transported westward to Germany's border with France, to help reinforce the so-called "Western Wall," a 390-mile-long fortification with more than 18,000 bunkers, tunnels and tank traps. For this, Berlin awarded Georg and his men the Western Wall medal (*below*). While there, the 452nd also saw action against French troops along the border (*see Appendix A for a sampling of letters Georg sent home during that time*).



**Georg's 452nd Infantry Regiment** was moved to Germany's western border in the Fall of 1940 to help reinforce the so-called Western Wall (what the Allies called the "Siegfried Line"). This map indicates some of the locations along the wall that were fortified with the help of the 452nd Infantry Regiment; at right is Georg's Western Wall medal.

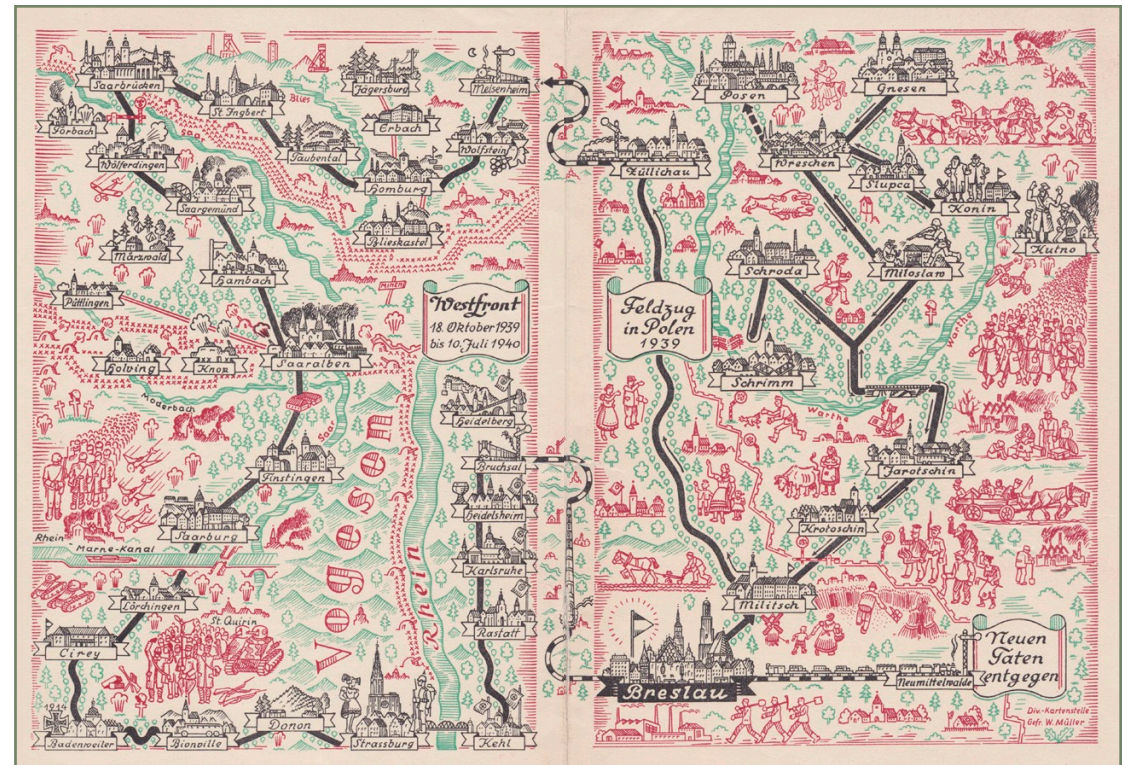


THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

This was the summer of 1940, and sometime during my summer holidays Vati came home for a short furlough. I was spending the summer doing my part for the war effort, working on a nearby farm every day, helping in the fields, or doing whatever chores were needed. All the able bodied men were in the service. It was great to have Vati home, even for a short time, if only Mutti wouldn't have spoiled it.

It seemed that every time Vati visited and things were going great, she would bring up something I had done wrong during his absence. He would then feel compelled to somehow punish me, so as not to undermine her authority. Then he would try to make up for it, sharing some special "tidbits" or goodies that, according to Mutti, were meant only for him. When he was out of earshot, Mutti, in turn, would let me know how much that displeased her and under no circumstances was I to do it again. As a result, Mutti and I never had the best relationship. She was too strict and often unforgiving, which in turn caused me to do things anyway, whether she was right or not. It also had me inventing a lot of stories about where I had to be (or had been), or how long it would take, etc.

One afternoon during the summer of 1940, when Vati was home on leave and everyone was having a good time, Mutti mentioned to him a transgression of mine that, to her, seemed serious. I had a piggy bank, in which were about 20 Marks – money that had been given to me on one occasion or another. I wanted to buy something in the village store, and just liked to have some money in my pocket, so I managed – with the help of a hair pin – to extract 5 Marks through the slot. Mutti somehow found out, and I was grounded for about a week. I think that happened in February, and Vati didn't come home on furlough until early June.



From a celebratory brochure in Georg's personal papers, here is a map and timeline of action seen by the 252nd Infantry Division, of which his 452nd Infantry Regiment was a part:

- Jan 9 - Jul 10, 1939: Participation in the campaign in Poland
- Aug 10 - Oct 15, 1939: Use of both occupation forces in Poland
- Oct 19, 1939 - May 9, 1940: Attack battles between Saar and Hornbach
- May 10 - May 13, 1940: Struggle between the Moselle and Rhine
- May 14 - June 11, 1940: Breaking into the fortress ahead of the Maginot Line south of Saarbrücken
- June 12 - June 16, 1940: Removal of the apron fortress of the Maginot Line south of Saarbrücken
- June 17 - June 20, 1940: Attack from the Seille and across the Rhine-Marne Canal
- June 21 - June 23, 1940: Battle of annihilation on the Moselle and the Vosges
- June 24 - July 8, 1940: Participation in the occupation of France
- July 9, 1940 to present: Government occupation in general

Einsatz der 252. Infanterie-Division  
 unter der Führung ihres Kommandeurs  
**Generalleutnant**  
**von Boehm-Wezing**

1.9.-7.10.39 Teilnahme am Feldzug in Polen  
 8.10.-15.10.39 Einsatz bei der Besatzungstruppe  
 in Polen  
 16.10.-18.10.39 Angriffsfestungen  
 zwischen Saar und Hornbach  
 19.10.39-25.4.40  
 Vorfeldkämpfe zwischen Mosel und Rhein  
 10.5.-13.5.40 Einbruch in das Festungsvorfeld  
 der Maginotlinie südlich Saarbrücken  
 14.5.-  
 11.6.40 Wegnahme des Festungsvorfeldes der  
 Maginotlinie zwischen Mosel und Rhein  
 12.6.-10.6.40 Durchbruchschlacht durch die  
 Maginotlinie südlich Saarbrücken  
 17.6.-  
 20.6.40 Angriff über die Seille und über den  
 Rhein-Marnekanal  
 21.6.-23.6.40 Vernich-  
 tungsschlacht an der Mosel und in den Vogesen  
 24.6.-8.7.40 Teilnahme an der Befestigung  
 Frankreichs  
 Ab 9.7.1940 Besatzung im  
 Generalgouvernement.

Es erhielten das Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes:  
**Oberst Schwalbe, Kommandeur 3./I.R. 461**  
**Major Welzel, I./3./I.R. 461**  
**Oberleutnant Fehr von Ketelhodt, 9./3./I.R. 472**  
 Außerdem wurden 91 Eisene Kreuze I. Klasse  
 und 2395 Eisene Kreuze II. Klasse verliehen.





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

So, out of the clear blue sky that afternoon, just before we were supposed to go somewhere, she informed him of my “thievery” (as she called it) and told him that he had to punish me for it, or I would come to a bad end.

What was he to do? He called me to his study and told me that Mutti had advised him of what I had done and insisted he punish me. So I was excluded from going on our outing together, and restricted to my room. Even as a 10-year-old, I could tell that his heart was not in it, and later he made it up to me by buying me a bicycle – over Mutti’s objection.

Soon thereafter he had to leave again, and I was to see him just once more, for a very short time. He was transferred to Poland, where he was to spend almost a year. According to his letters, he felt that the government had forgotten about him, but then they promoted him to Major of his battalion.

The war was at a stalemate. The only battles going on, it seemed to us, were in the air in Africa. At that time, in the Sudetenland, we were not touched very much by the war. The large cities of Germany were constantly bombed, and we were receiving more and more evacuees. Ration cards became more and more short, especially for items such as white flour, sugar and butter or margarine, and “real” coffee. Our coffee was made from roasted barley and chicory, probably very healthy and certainly caffeine-free. But the taste? Ugh. Luxury items such as good soap and shampoos, chocolate and, of course, all imported items became rare and were soon found only on the black market. Hotels and restaurants soon required that you bring your ration book with you.

Still, where we lived was kind of a backwater from the war, and since most people in the area were farmers, food was not scarce. There was almost always enough (dark) rye flour and, of course, potatoes around. More recipes, even cakes, containing rye flour and potatoes became popular. The sweetener was more often than not saccharine, often egg substitute, and of course, as fat free as possible. But, as the old saying goes: Hunger is the best cook. Still, those times were plentiful compared to later years.



**Hannelore says goodbye to Georg** as his unit is deployed to Poland; Elisabeth looks on (circa 1940).

One thing I clearly remember: During the summertime, the great pine woods surrounding the valley were plentiful with wild berries. Starting in early summer with wild strawberries, which grew along the hedges, on spots that were partly exposed to the sun; and later on, wild blueberries and cranberries, the summer ending with sweet and juicy wild raspberries as well as blackberries.

When it rained there were wild, edible mushrooms just waiting for the picking. Of course, you had to have a certain knowledge of what was edible, but somehow, growing up so close to nature, you almost instinctively knew. We would get up in the morning as early as possible, right before dawn. All the “mushroom pickers” would do this – you wanted to get to your favorite spot before anybody else did, because mushrooms are best when picked before the sun comes up. They have a tendency to get slimy later in the day.

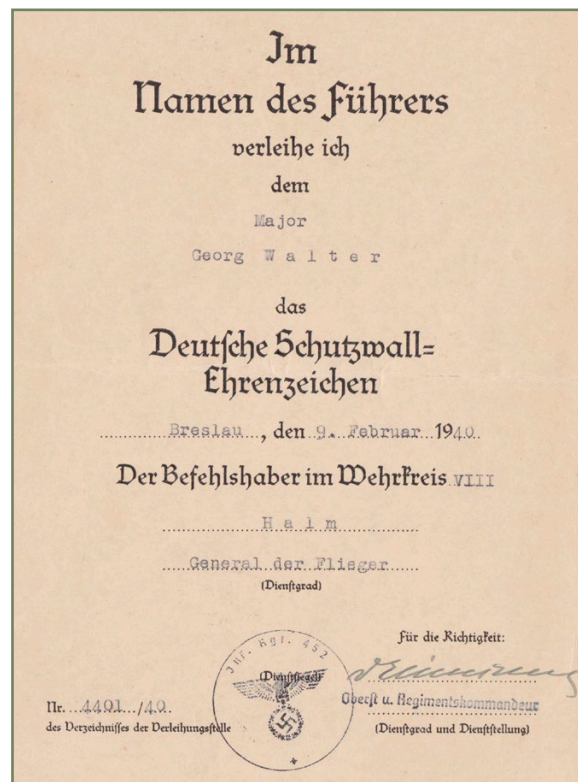
THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

During Vati's summer leave in 1940, Mutti and he had decided that it would be better for my education (meaning, "stopping me from being such a tomboy and learning some deportment") to attend an all-girls school about 30 km from where we lived. It was a combination junior high and high school, known for its higher education and teaching young girls to be more like ladies.

Not only did it mean that I had to leave all my friends behind, but also that I had to ride a bus every morning and home again in the afternoon, a total of about 2 1/2 hours on the road. I would catch the bus at around 6:45 in the morning and be home by 2:00. The bus had to travel long, winding roads through the mountains, which in wintertime meant snow and ice covered roads. Why parents would send a 10-year-old on such a harrowing trip is still a mystery to me!

Needless to say, I hated the change and was determined NOT to like the school. I did not like my classmates, "city girls" whose interests were completely different from mine. I didn't like the teachers, and I think the feeling was mutual. I was probably a bit of a troublemaker. My grades began to suffer. I cut classes whenever possible, which was not hard to do. It was easy to blame being late or absent on the bus, and nobody bothered ever to check. That sojourn lasted one school year. By the fall of 1941, I persuaded Mutti to let me rejoin my old local school.

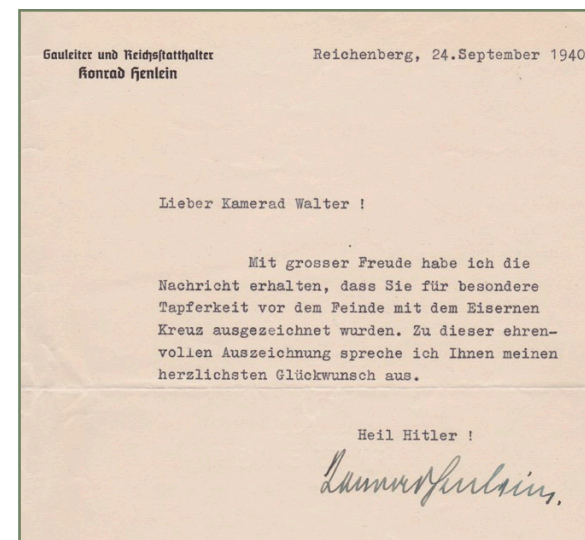
(right) In the fall of 1940, Georg's cavalry unit is deployed to Poland to take part in its "liberation." This is an archival German military photo of similar cavalry units entering Poland about that same time.



Georg receives the Badge of Honor.

**Translation:**

On behalf of the Leader  
I award to Major Georg Walter  
the Line of Defense Badge of Honor  
Breslau, 9 February 1940  
The Commander of Military District VIII  
Halm, General of Aviation (Service Grade)  
No. 4401/40 on the list of ceremony location  
[seal]  
Attested by [signature]  
Colonel of the Detachment  
[Name and Position]



Georg receives congratulations for being awarded the Iron Cross.

**Translation (Letterhead):**

Gauleiter and Reich Governor Konrad Henlein  
(Message): Reichenberg, 24 September 1940

Dear Comrade Walter!  
With great joy I receive a message that you have been awarded the Iron Cross for extraordinary bravery in the face of the enemy.  
For this noble award I offer you my most sincere congratulations.  
Heil Hitler!



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

As the summer before, I spent most of my vacation helping at a neighboring farm, partly because we had to do it as a school project but mostly because I just enjoyed being out of doors and on a farm with all the animals.

I was good with horses, and many times I helped bring the full hay wagon home, leading the horses. The noon meals and snacks they served during the afternoon were beginning to look mighty good. Food was becoming more rationed, even where we lived, and we had begun to feel it. Rationing was becoming more and more strict, and certain items such as sugar, butter or margarine were getting more scarce. Still, compared to what was to happen in the coming years, we were living well.

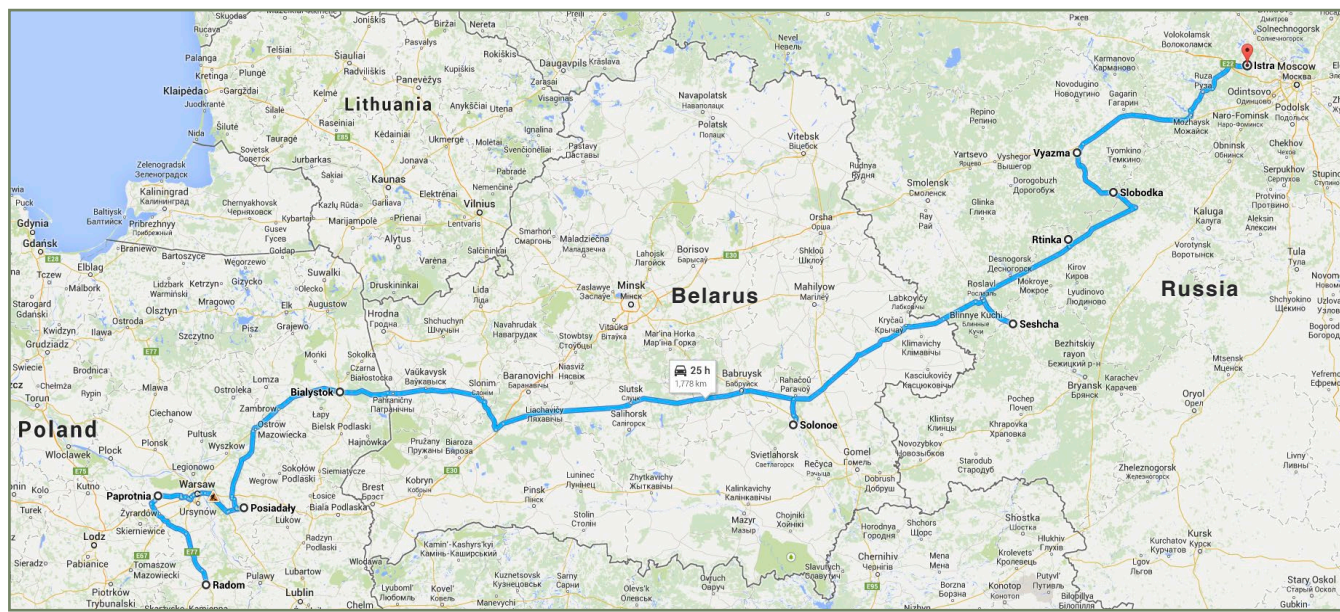
As usual, during the summer vacation I spent about two weeks at Oma Kunisch's. That was always a special treat for me. Complete freedom, and the promise of being spoiled, too! I was 11 years old, and Oma Kunisch lived about half a days train ride away in Schmiedeberg.

I was put on the train at home with a book and a sandwich and my suitcase, told to change trains at a certain place and then Oma Kunisch or Tante Trude would pick me up in Schmiedeberg. Trains were often running late; troop trains or supply trains always had priority. Homeward-bound was the same story; they would put me on the train and Mutti would pick me up at the station.

## A Storm Gathers in the East

Immediately after completing its 'Insertion in the West' (late 1940; see page 30), Georg's unit was shipped back to Poland and moved into winter quarters at Gora Kalwaria and Radom (both just south of Warsaw). According to Georg's field report of November 7, 1941, "It was a time of hard training and preparation for future battles." On June 22, 1941, as part of the 4th Army, under the command of Günther von Kluge, Georg's unit left Paprotnia and Posiadaly (both also near Warsaw) and marched east, marking the beginning of "Operation Barbarossa."

As Georg recounted, "The enemy with the Bolshevik ideology [Russia] was planning to attack our National Socialist Germany, with the goal of implanting its world view of perdition. In the early days of this campaign, we had little contact with the enemy, so our first task was to follow the surprised enemy with great marches in sand, swamp and sun. We came to know the so-called "Soviet Paradise" and could only shake our heads again and again over about the lack of culture with which the Russian population lives. However, [our] Battalion also came to learn the stubbornness and tenacity the Russians show in combat. Whether it's the days of Solone and Fut-Repieche on August 6-8th; the position battles at Star-Suschnja [Seshcha] on September 17th and 28th; Rtinka on October 6th; the forest battle at Slobodka on October 12th, or the protection of an important railway line [at Vyasma], the battalion has always shown that it understood how to fight and to march."



This map shows the 1,100-mile eastward trek of Georg's unit during 1941. The army spent the winter of 1940-41 in Paprotnia, Posiadaly and Radom; other cities in bold indicate where Georg's unit was assigned a strategic task or saw action.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

How different those days were! Sigrid and I played all day with friends that were also spending their summers with their grandparents.

### Conflict with Mutti

Everything was great, except for one big problem I had with Mutti, which would bother me throughout my school years. Mutti was a strict non-conformist, especially when it suited her purposes. No matter what my friends or classmates did or were allowed to do, I always had to be *different*, especially when it came to dressing.

She had all kinds of reasons: My Vati was an officer in the German Army and I had to behave accordingly, to consider my “background” (obviously “better” than the local farm girls). I had to behave in a certain manner that she considered correct and was never allowed the freedom they had when it came to social activities, unless she approved.

So we had quite a few differences of opinion and when I could not change her mind I started to find ways to do what I wanted. That, of course, led to telling stories (let’s not call them lies). Whether she always knew what I was up to, I don’t know. She caught me now and then, and then the punishment was severe, but in a very subtle way.

And she never forgot. Years later she would remind me of things I had done wrong. I muddled along with Mutti the best I could. After all, I reasoned that since my Vati had married her, he must have had a reason I could not understand.



Paprotnia, Poland, spring, 1941: The German Army prepares for war on the Eastern Front.

(above) Georg (saluting) inspects the troops as they prepare to engage the Soviet army in ‘Operation Barbarossa’.

(below) Elaborate motivational messages are painted on the walls of the Army’s headquarters at Paprotnia; message at left reads, “With our Flags is the Victory”. At right, “My fingers all itch to grasp the sword”.





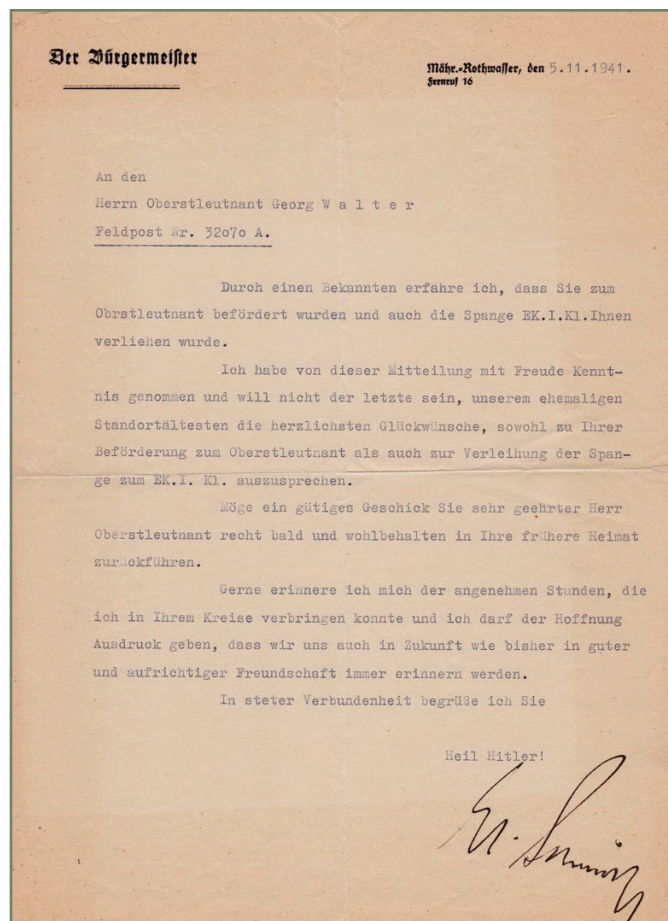
THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

One more example of Mutti's method of "bringing up Peter": As a home-economics project, we were all to sew a very simple dress, which would teach us, among other things, how to use a sewing machine – the old kind, where your feet did the work, since there were no electric machines in those days. Well, the teacher, had purchased material, a sort of gingham in red and blue checks. All the girls were to attempt to sew this into a dress, and this was later to be worn as a sort of school uniform for our grade and on specified days we were to appear in those outfits.

Of course Mutti disagreed with the colors, the material, style and everything else. She had to buy a different type of material in a different color, and wanted a different style. This not only put me in very hot water with the teacher, but also again made me different from the rest of the class.

Mutti and the teacher never saw eye to eye from the very beginning. I guess since she used to be a home economics teacher at one time, she knew everything better. The teacher, a proverbial old maid, had taught at this school for more years than she probably cared to count, and was not about to be told by a "newcomer" and "intruder" from the Altreich ("original" Germany, before the "liberation," was called old Germany). So I became a pawn in their power play, and that did not make it easy for me, because I could not please the teacher, no matter how hard I tried, especially with Mutti blocking everything.

» Hannelore's narrative continues on page 39.



Georg receives congratulations from the Mayor.

**Translation (Letterhead):** The Mayor, Mährisch-Rothwasser, 5 November 1941

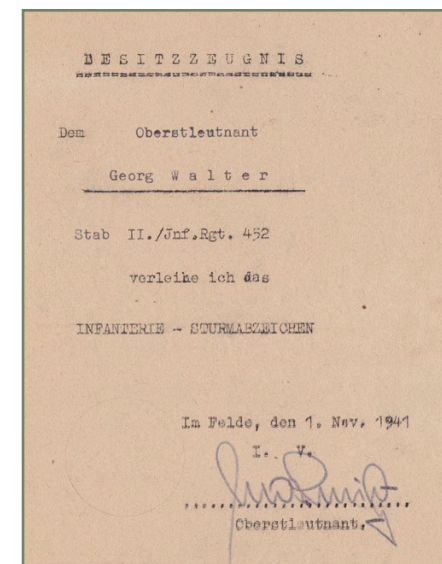
**(Message):** To: Lt. Colonel Georg Walter, Fieldmail No. 32070-A

I have been told that you have been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and your braces (EK.I.K1) have been awarded. I have taken note of this communication with much joy, and I know I will not be the last of our former neighbors to offer the warmest congratulations, both to the promotion to Lieutenant Colonel as well as the announcement of the awarding of the braces.

May you have bountiful skill [in your campaign], dear Mr. Lieutenant Colonel, and may you soon be safe and sound, back in your former home.

I remember the pleasant hours I was able to spend in your company, and I must give hope that we will also in the future, as in the past, have a good and sincere friendship we will remember forever.

I welcome your constant communication. Heil Hitler! [mayor's signature]



Georg receives the Infantry Assault Badge on the Eastern (Russian) Front.

**Translation:**

OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE

Lieutenant Colonel Georg Walter

2nd Division / Infantry Regiment 452

INFANTRY ASSAULT BADGE

[Given] in the field, 1 November 1941

I.V. [signature]

Lieutenant Colonel

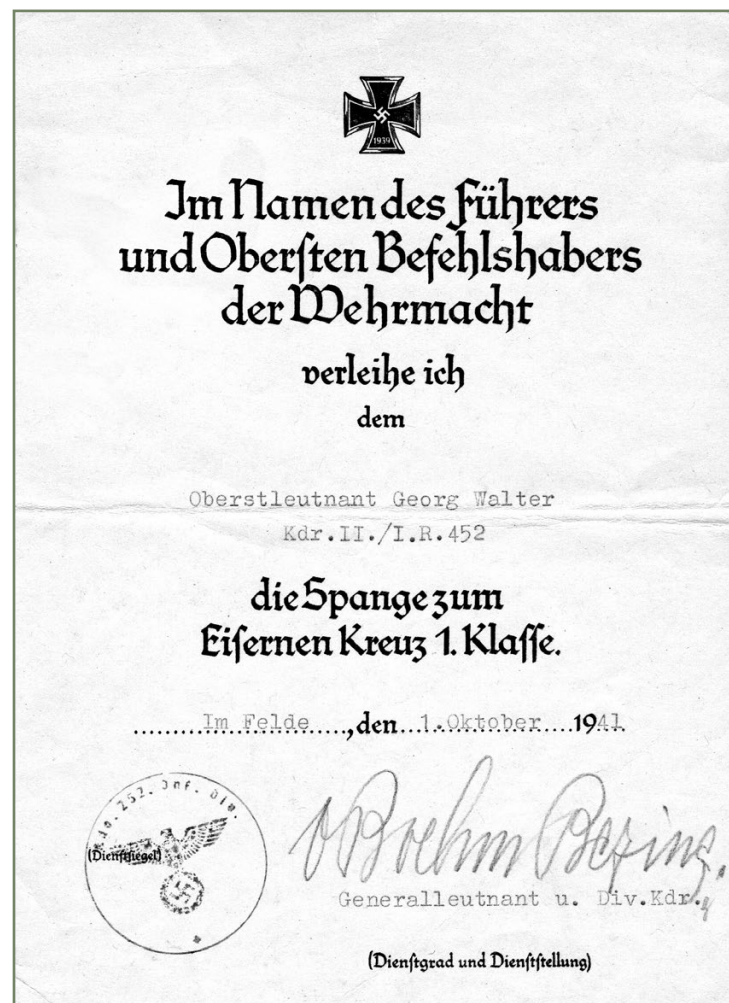
THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Georg, now a Lieutenant General, receives the Iron Cross, 1st Class

**Translation:** On behalf of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces I give Lieutenant Colonel Georg Walter the clasp to the Iron Cross 1st Class. [Given] in the field, October 1, 1941.

[signed] *Diether von Boehm-Bezing*

Lieutenant General and Division commander. (Grade and Position)



Georg reviewing his troops near Sescha (top) and Rtinka, Russia (bottom) in September and October, 1941. As you can see in the lower photo, winter was on the way and would prove to be as formidable a foe as the Soviet Army.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

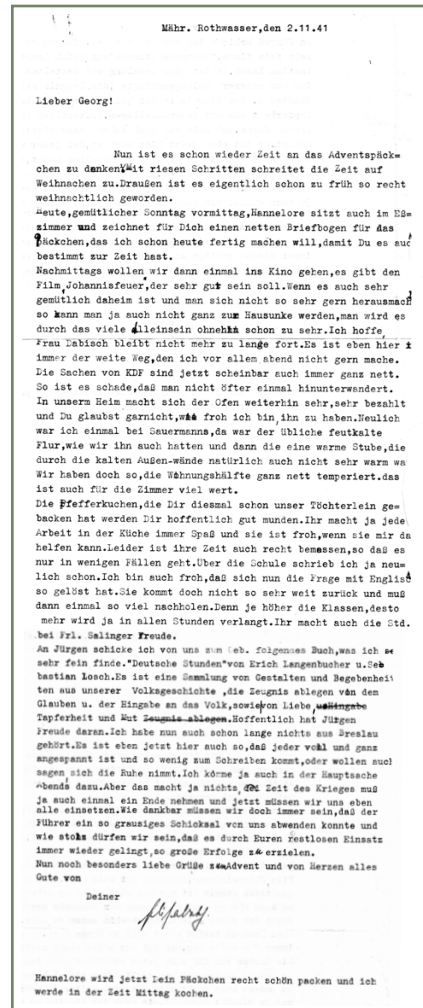
Often, in later years when I was grown and out from under her thumb, I tried to figure out the reasons that made her what she was. I'm sure she loved me in her way, and I was far from perfect, but we sure butted heads. It caused a lot of problems and made me even more of a rebel than I naturally was. And the Kunisch side of the family did not help.

There, again, I was in the middle of a power play. On Oma Kunisch's side I was considered just about perfect; I could do no wrong. They did not like Mutti at all (which was shown even more clearly later on). Mutti just decided whatever "they" said was wrong and was motivated by jealousy.

The only mediators in all this were Mutti's mother and Tante Anna. They seemed to understand me more, even though they were of a much older generation. I really loved to visit with them and listen to their stories of a very different time.



Military photo of Georg (circa 1941).



**Georg gets a letter from home.**

On November 2, 1941, Elisabeth writes Georg, who is by then nearing Moscow on the Eastern Front (*translation at right*). We suspect that this letter may have been returned to her, along with Georg's other field papers, after his demise on the battlefield near Istra, Russia (about 25 miles northwest of Moscow) on December 3.

Mährish Rothwasser, 11.02.41

Dear Georg!

Now it is time once again to work on your Advent packet. Christmas-time is coming up fast. Outside there is already some Christmas-like weather – quite early this year. Today, a cozy Sunday morning, Hannelore sits in the dining room and is making a nice letterhead for your package. I will get it ready to mail today, so you'll get it in time.

In the afternoon we will go to the cinema to see the film 'Bonfires', which should be very good. If it is also very comfortable at home and in this weather, you do not so much like going out, but we cannot be entirely house-bound, as we are already alone too much. I hope Mrs. Dabish does not stay here too much longer, however. I do not like to deal with her in the evening. The KDF [cultural] programs are always nice. So it is a pity that you can not come down here once more.

In our home, the stove continues to perform very, very well, and you would not believe how glad I am to have it. The other day after I was at Sauer's, I came back to the usual cold hallway, which was by the cold outer-walls and not very warm. But then I stepped into the apartment, which had warmed quite nicely. It has been well worth the purchase.

The gingerbread in your package has been baked for you this time by our daughter. She is happy to do any work in the kitchen -- it is always fun when she can help me. Unfortunately, her time is limited by school-work, so that it is only in a few cases. I wrote about the school just the other day. I am so glad that the question about English [class] resolved. She comes back but not so very far and then have to make up so much time. The higher the class, the more is indeed required at all hours. You make the hours at Miss Salinger joy.

Jürgen asked that I send you the following book, which I find very nice. "German Hour" by Erich Langenbucher and Sebastian Losch. It is a collection of characters and incidents from our folk history, a witness to the faith and devotion to the people, and of love, brave and courage.

Hopefully Jürgen is doing well. I have now heard nothing from Breslau in a long time. Everyone is so tense and so little attention is given to writing. I try to write in the evening. The time of war must indeed come to an end eventually, but for now we just wait. How grateful we must always be that the Leader could avert such a gruesome fate for us. We can be very proud of what you and your men are doing, and wish you great success.

Now even more greetings for Christmas and all the best.

Yours,

*Elisabeth*

PS - Hannelore is now wrapping your pretty packages and I will begin cooking lunch.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

## A pitched battle on the Eastern Front

Vati had been home for a very short furlough at the end of January, 1941 and was now on the Russian front. That was when the overall picture of the war began to change. The air raids accelerated, and Russia had joined the war on the side of the Allies. So Germany was now fighting on two fronts. The Allies dug in, as Churchill put it, "on the beaches of England and in the air."

The German troops made more and more 'strategic' withdrawals. The news from the East was bad. The rough Russian winter, the long, impossible supply routes and the Russian troops, who were more adapted to the bitter cold, began taking their toll.

Vati was by now about 25 miles outside of Moscow. Letters from him began to arrive slower and slower, and his usually upbeat tone began to change. December, 1941 arrived and the Christmas season was just around the corner. My daily silent question was: "Will Vati be home for at least part of the holidays?" I knew the answer, but one could still hope.

One night I had a strange dream; it was more like being awake. Somehow the idea came to me of what would happen if Vati got killed: I would actually be an orphan. A terrible thought for a young girl, having read all those books about poor orphans. Then came December 7, a day I shall never forget – and not because it was the day the Japanese bombed the American base at Pearl Harbor.

» Hannelore's narrative continues on page 42.

## Georg's final thoughts from the battlefield

In early November, 1941, as they drew ever closer to Moscow, German forces were encountering much stiffer resistance from the Soviet army, and taking increasing casualties. Thus, on November 4, Division HQ notified Georg that it was disbanding the 452nd Infantry Regiment. Georg, and the remaining 190± personnel under his command, were to be redistributed to other units in the area. In spite of the inhospitable battlefield conditions, Georg took time to record, for posterity, his thoughts about the 452nd. Some of his preliminary comments have appeared earlier in this narrative; below are the remainder of his thoughts, translated from the typewritten, carbon-copy "original" that accompanied his personal papers, which were sent back to Elisabeth and Hannelore in Mährisch-Rothwasser after his death, just 26 days after this was written:

*All the men of the Battalion may think back with pride of its days in the Eastern campaign. I cannot express in words what feelings of bitterness flow through me, as your commander, at this moment, when the battalion must be divided according to command. For almost 22 months, I had the great pleasure and honor to be your battalion commander.*

*I shared both joy and sorrow with you during this time, as I looked with pride on your achievements, which appeared in this last part of the war to be almost super-human. What has been done by each one of you -- especially in the days of this campaign against Soviet Russia -- is unique in the history of the world, regardless of whether sun or cold, whether taxiway or marsh ways, whether on a marching day or days heaviest battle: The Battalion has at all times always done its duty under outrageous hardship and each individual should and must be proud when he comes home healthy, for he belonged to Infantry Regiment 452.*

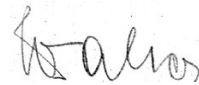
*Nothing more remains for me to do than for the last time to express my appreciation and unvarnished, indelible thanks for your dedication, for your commitment and hardness. This thanks goes equally to all, whether leaders, sub-leaders or individuals. Thanks also to each one of you for the camaraderie among us and also for those who have expressed this to me.*

*Every officer, non-commissioned officer and individual will, at parting from the Battalion, take with them the awareness of having belonged to a unit whose performance always found recognition, a solid block welded together by camaraderie and community by our struggles.*

*At this moment of parting our thoughts go back to the street battles and marches, and we see on the roadside so many crosses with names familiar to us. In awe and proud sadness we remember our dead heroes who cashed-in their oath of allegiance with their best -- their lives. Our wounded comrades in the Wehrmacht [combined German forces] deserve our thanks and our best wishes for their recovery.*

*I wish for all members of the Battalion -- and for all future soldiers -- happiness, health and a happy homecoming after the war. I know that each of you will fulfill in your new position your duty in order to prove to the other units that the 452nd Infantry Regiment was outstanding.*

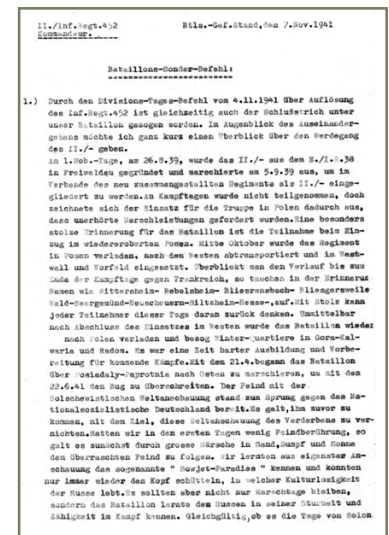
*With unconditional faith in Germany's final victory we now march separately on. We are and will remain proud of the field-gray Wehrmacht of the Third Reich, remembering forever the motto: "Long live our Leader, long live our Great German Fatherland"*



Georg Walter

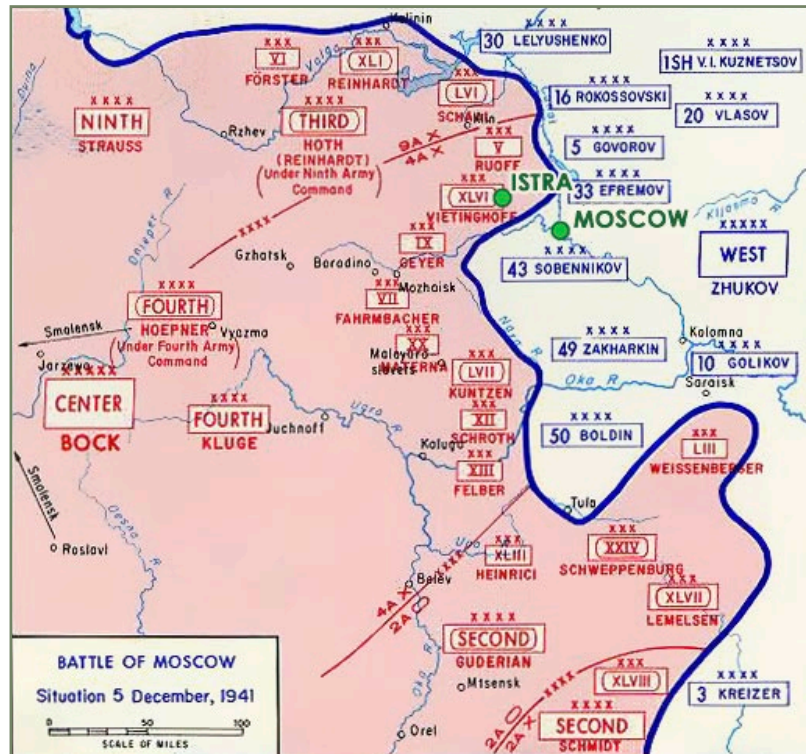
Lieutenant Colonel  
 Battalion Commander

The first of four pages with  
 Georg's remembrance of the  
 452nd Infantry Regiment





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*



This map shows the farthest advance of the German Army before beginning its retreat in the face of stiffening Soviet resistance. Georg was hastily buried by his troops at Istra on December 3, before the retreat began.

Ironically, the very next day, December 4, the commander of the Fourth Army, Günther von Kluge, orders his troops to begin pulling back across the Nara River; they ultimately retreated to their winter quarters in Poland.



**December, 1941: The German Army advances on Moscow**, but by early December, it became apparent that it would not prevail. The German tank (and fleeing Russian civilians) were photographed at Istra, where, on December 3, Georg was shot and killed by a Russian sniper (for more about Russia's use of snipers, see page 42).



**Archival German military photo taken near Moscow** in early December, 1941, showing German troops attending to a fallen *kamerade*.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

It was a Sunday morning, around 11 o'clock, when the doorbell rang. Mutti was busy with something and asked me to answer. At the door was a German Army officer asking to see Mutti. Having been taught to ask such a caller into Vati's study, I asked him to wait and went to get Mutti. I remember the radio in the corner was on, and as Mutti and I returned he was busy turning the sound down. Mutti was just about to ask him what he was doing when we both saw the look on his face and knew what he was there to tell us.

"I'm terribly sorry to have to inform you that on the 3rd of December your husband died a hero's death on the field of battle." On and on he went, how it happened, how a Siberian sharpshooter hidden in a tree hit him with a bullet right in the forehead and that he died instantly...but nothing much penetrated our minds. All I could think of was that Vati was dead and would never come home. I had indeed become an orphan.

Mutti took it very hard. It took all her last energy to ask that her mother be notified, also Oma Kunisch. After he left, she pretty much shut down and just went through the motions, doing only the things that needed doing.

Her mother, including Tante Anna, arrived by train the next afternoon. As her mother got off the train, her first words were that her brother, and also her favorite cousin, had also been killed fighting in Russia. I don't think it hit Mutti until much later what her mother had said; we were all kind of numb.

Mutti had some kind of breakdown and took to her bed, leaving the running of the house to her mother and Tante Anna, who turned out to be a rock in all that turmoil. Tante Anna went to work, getting black material and sewing black dresses for us, because mourning clothes would be worn for at least a year. All the other chores, such as notifying the paper and informing relatives and friends, had to be done.

Slowly, we began getting letters from the front, from Vati's friends and comrades, assuring us what a brave and well-liked fellow he had been; and providing more news about what had happened. Vati, who by then was commanding a division of motorized Cavalry, was on a forward reconnaissance mission with some of his staff.



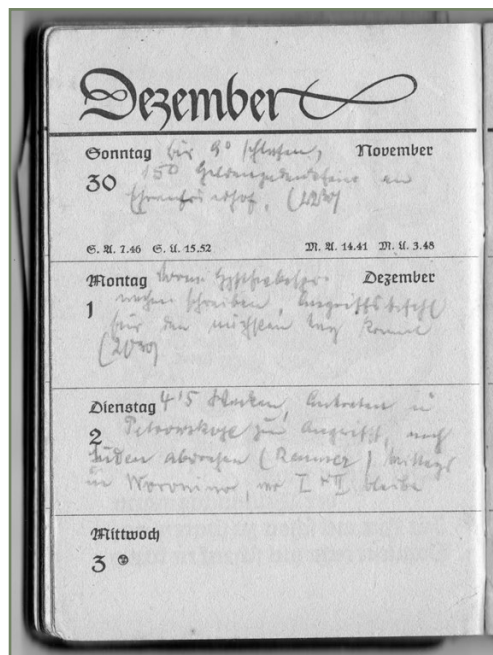
## Russia's "Lady Snipers"

Snipers of the Soviet Union played a significant role on the Eastern Front of World War II. The Soviets used snipers for eliminating targets of opportunity, especially leaders, because Soviet military leaders and combat theorists believed that military organizations have difficulty replacing experienced non-commissioned officers and field officers during times of war.

The Soviet Union used women extensively for sniping duties. One of the better-known, Roza Shanina (shown at left), was famous for her shooting accuracy. She was capable of precisely hitting moving enemy personnel and making doublets (two target hits by two rounds fired in quick succession).

The Soviets had begun deploying female snipers because it was believed they had more flexible limbs and that they were more patient and cunning. They were also thought to be more resilient than men under combat stress and more resistant to cold.

From 1941 to 1945 a total of 2,484 Soviet female snipers were deployed during the war; according to Wikipedia.com, their combined tally of kills is estimated to be at least 11,280.



Georg's personal diary from 1941; no entry on the 3rd, the day he was killed in action.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

The Russians used Siberian sharpshooters to inflict tremendous losses on the German forces, mainly among high-ranking officers, as they were trained to seek them out above all others. As the German soldiers were crossing a little meadow, a sharpshooter, well hidden, high in a tree, managed to shoot Vati right in the forehead. He was supposedly dead immediately. According to reports, they "took bloody revenge," but little did that help his family!

He was buried in Istra, Russia, in a little German military cemetery, about 25 miles outside of Moscow. His personal effects, including his wedding band, were sent to Mutti. From what we heard, careful maps were kept of the actual locations of the graves. But who would even have them now, I don't know; and it doesn't really matter. The graves were all leveled when the German Army retreated. Russians were known to desecrate the graves, looking for wedding rings, jewelry etc. Russia is a big country, and after all, a grave is just a grave. That is really all that I know about Vati's death. Most of his comrades, who might, after the war, have told us more, never returned home. Either they were killed or lost in some prison camp and never heard from again. We received lots of condolence letters from family and friends and even some rather high-ranking officials.

As I recall, I stayed home from school about 10 days, until the Christmas holidays. I had to have a black dress to wear and I also felt awkward facing my schoolmates and teachers. I think my dad was the first casualty of the war as far as my immediate circle was concerned. I remember one of my first concerns was if we were going to have a tree for the holidays this year, and how it would all work out. Mutti, who was slowly getting over the first terrible shock assured me that she considered it her "duty as a soldier's wife to carry on in as normal a way as possible. That would have been what he would have wished."

Slowly life began to resume at least an appearance of normality. The holidays came and went, a rather sad affair but everybody did their best to cope. One thing that made things appear more normal: None of the other fathers, brothers or friends were at home either. By this time only the really old, sick or young people were left on the home front.

After Christmas school started again and so I went, dressed in deep mourning black, down to my shoes, socks and accessories. I also was not allowed to attend any sort of entertainment, be it movies or birthday parties, etc. Only affairs that had to do directly with school or the war effort were allowed.

I could not see quite the reason for all this and had quite a few heated discussions with Mutti. In school I felt like a "black crow" again; I was not able to fit in. But it was winter-time, with lots of cold and snow, so except for occasional skiing I stayed home anyhow.

And I had my books. I had become a regular visitor at the local library. I brought stacks of books home each week, mostly adventure, historical or some sci-fi books. If I could just find a quiet corner and everybody left me alone, I was more or less content.

G 1

### Sterbeurkunde

(Standesamt Schweidnitz ----- Nr. - 530/1942 -)

Der Oberstleutnant Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Walter -----  
 ----- evangelisch -----  
 wohnhaft in Schweidnitz -----  
 ist am 3. Dezember 1941 ----- um ----- Uhr ----- Minuten  
 in Sacharowa, östlicher Kriegsschauplatz, gefallen ----- verstorben.

Der Verstorbene war geboren am 11. Dezember 1897 -----  
 in Breslau -----

(Standesamt II Breslau ----- Nr. - 5463/1897 -)


Vater: Reinhold Walter, zuletzt wohnhaft in Breslau -----  
 -----  
 Mutter: Klara, geborene Eichholz, zuletzt wohnhaft  
 in Breslau -----

Der Verstorbene war ----- verheiratet in zweiter Ehe mit Elisabeth,  
 geborenen Schmidthals, wohnhaft in Mährisch-Roth-  
 wasser -----

Schweidnitz, den 13. August 1942

Der Standesbeamte

In Vertretung: *afmet*



Gebühren erlassen. ----- Sch

#### Georg's Death Certificate

(Translation): Registry Office Schweidnitz, No. 530/1942

The Oberstleutnant Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Walter, evangelical, living in Schweidnitz on December 3, 1941 [died] in Zakharova, easterly theater of war.

The deceased was born 11 December 1897 in Breslau.

(Registry Office II Wroclaw, No. 5463/1897)

Father: Walter Reinhold, last resident in Wroclaw

Mother: Clara, born Eichholz, last resident in Wroclaw

The deceased was married to his second wife Elisabeth, née Schmidthals, residing in Mährisch Rothwasser.

[issued at] Schweidnitz, 13 August 1942

The registrar, representing: [signature]

Fees paid.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
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## A custody battle

February 1942 came, and one day Mutti received a letter from the Family Court in Steinberg, a small town near where we lived that housed the District Court having jurisdiction over our local area. Much to our amazement and consternation, Mutti was ordered to appear at a certain date and show cause as to why she should continue to have further custody of me. Such a question had never been raised before. After Vati's death, Uncle Max, Vati's oldest brother, had been named my guardian, at least as far as Mutti was concerned. Whether this had ever been legally done, I don't know.

In any case, Oma Kunisch and Tante Trude all of a sudden demanded guardianship. The stated reasons were that Mutti was definitely not a blood relative; her marriage had been on rocky ground; and several others. Mutti was absolutely furious, and I can't say that I blamed her. All this came right out of the clear blue sky.

Even though we had our disagreements, even at my age I knew that her approach to my upbringing was just the way she had been raised. She obviously thought she was doing her best by me. So I really felt she had been wronged. I finally persuaded Mutti to let me visit Oma Kunisch and Tante Trude in Schmiedeberg. I had to promise her to make sure that I would not give anybody the impression that she had sent me or was influencing me.

I don't quite remember what happened during that visit or what I said. I remember only praising Mutti, how well she took care of me etc. I thought I was really being diplomatic.

Somehow I must have succeeded, or else it was decided that they really did not have a case. After one more visit by Mutti to the family court, the matter was quietly dropped. But one thing remained, and never really changed. The animosity was there, especially on Mutti's side. It took many years, until after the war, when a certain truce came about and at that point, at least, Oma Kunisch and Mutti were coldly polite to each other. In the meantime, I still visited with Oma Kunisch and had a good time seeing them all.

It was now well into 1942, and the war was going badly for Germany. Soon after Vati's death German troops began their serious retreat in Russia. What had been "tactical" withdrawals became a daily happening. The Allies had launched their offensive and the Allied bombing raids kept taking their toll on the home front. Many people were evacuated from the big cities, mostly women with young children. They were brought to safer places in the country, much like England was doing.

I was finally allowed to wear plain white clothes, especially during the summer. I had also joined the *Bund Deutscher Maedel*, or "BDM." It was similar to the Girl Scouts, but a lot more politically oriented. I proudly wore the uniform, blue skirt, white blouse and a brown jacket. Again I encountered many objections by Mutti, about the time and frequency of meetings, inability of the leaders and many more.

I had learned by now to live with it and how to get around many of her obstacles – not always by telling the truth, but what was I to do? All my friends were allowed to take part, and I certainly was tired of being an outsider. Or so I reasoned.

## Puppy love and boarding school

This was also the summer that I fell in love the first time. In retrospect it was puppy love, but nobody could have me told that at that time. Hans was two years ahead of me in school, so he was actually three years my senior. He was literally "tall, dark and handsome." We met by both being in the Hitler Youth movement. He carried the standard for his unit, I for mine. So we were often thrown together at political rallies and since they were usually a long way from home, he very often saw me home.

We both rode bicycles to school and he would always wait for me at the crossing. We met during school recess and soon it was known that we were an item. When Mutti got wind of it she was shocked. She called me "boy crazy" and other such endearing names, and I faced long lectures. She told me I was too young even to think of boys, and so on. I guess she thought I should still be playing with dolls. But never even remotely did any talk ever touch on sex. In that respect, Mutti was still living in the Victorian era. Not that our relationship was anything but innocent, mind you. He never even kissed me, except one time during a school outing and then it was during an organized game. But we really liked each other.



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When he was occasionally away at glider school he wrote me the most beautiful letters, all hand-printed and decorated like old illustrated Bibles. When Mutti found the letters, she destroyed every one of them and every contact with Hans was "verboten." Soon he went away to another school; I saw him one more time, just before he left for military service (in February, 1945) and he came to see me. Even Mutti could not object to that. The war was taking a disastrous turn for Germany. I never heard from him again.

By the summer of 1944, Mutti again had me attending a different school for higher education, only this time I was boarding with a family in the school town, and came home only for the weekends. The school I had attended locally did not teach English or French, and also stopped with the ninth grade. So, in order to attain a high school diploma, I guess it was time for the change. But why I had to learn English and French was beyond me. We were at war with those countries and it just did not make sense! (Little did I know *how* important English was to become, later in my life!)

During the summer holidays Mutti had hired a tutor to help me get started. The teacher was from my local school and had been my third-grade teacher. She was rather young and, in retrospect, not very experienced. I went to her house twice a week for about 90 minutes and learned a little. Most of the time I managed to talk about all different kinds of subjects – anything but English or French (which, of course, I regretted later on). I got the basics, however, especially in English. French interested me even less.

So the summer holidays came to an end, and Mutti found that family in Schoenberg, where the girls-only high school was located. We had been to the school and visited the prospective house-parents. They were nice, had two young boys (4 and 6 years respectively), and I thought that I should be able to get along just fine. The school wasn't too far – about 15 minutes' walking distance – and the house, where Mutti had rented the first-floor apartment, was in a nice neighborhood. Plenty of houses around town took in students for the school term.

The plans were for me to catch the train home every Saturday at noon for the trip home to Mutti. Our school week ran every day from about 8 AM to 1:30 p.m. On Saturdays school closed about 11:30 a.m. Due to the war, the buses did not run, as they had when I attended school before. The train ride was much more complicated and time consuming. I would leave Saturday around noon and get home around 5 p.m.; Monday morning I would leave home before 4 a.m. to get to school in time.

Before long I discovered that a boy who was in classes with me for three years prior; he was attending the local Boys' High School. Though I muddled through the best I could, school itself was not much fun. Once again I felt completely out of place, both in terms of knowledge of the curriculum, as well as being – as the local girls called it – "from the country." This was true, not only because they were from the town, but they had been together all through school and knew each other well. Even the teachers seemed to look down on me.

The new family was OK – we got along – but even there I felt like an outsider. So I really just lived from one weekend to another, and used every possible way to stay home just a little longer. I sure had a lot of "not feeling good" back then! Maybe in time that would have all changed, but I did not know then that my time at the school in Schoenberg was to be rather short.

Along came December, 1944 and we were getting close to the Christmas holidays. Soon school closed for three weeks, and I gladly headed home. Christmas was a little better now. Sure, we missed Vati very much, but also nobody else had their loved ones home from the front – not unless they were wounded and in some hospital or recuperating, or maybe at home on leave for a short time. The war had turned against Germany, especially on the Russian front. German troops were in full retreat, and the Eastern front lines had gotten closer and closer. The Allies had landed in Normandy and were pushing toward the *Vaterland* (Germany). Allied troops were also coming up through Italy.

The food situation had become pretty grim, even where we lived. You had ration cards, but often nothing was available, and items like sugar, white flour, meat and many other things were almost impossible to be had. Coffee was available only on the black market, as was everything else you really wanted, if you were willing to pay the outrageous prices for it. Mutti considered it almost treason to buy things illegally, so we made do with what there was.

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Potatoes were always there. So was rye flour, a little milk and every once in a while some eggs from a local farmer and with luck, even a scrawny chicken. Mutti tried to save whatever was possible. She managed a few Christmas cookies. How anybody ate them I don't know – no sugar, no fat, just substitutes for sugar, butter and even some egg-powder, that had never seen an egg – but we ate every bit of them.

Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna had braved the train ride from Schmiedeberg to spend the holidays with us, and we spent a quiet, reflective time together. Just before Christmas Eve it snowed heavily, so we definitely had a white Christmas. According to German custom, we lit the candles on the tree on Christmas Eve and exchanged gifts. I received several books (much to my joy!), some clothes and best of all, a pair of new boots for my skis. Nothing fancy, but they fit and were new! Next day I had to try them out. There was certainly enough snow, and the skis were now a necessity. Soon, Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna left again. Little did we all know how long it would be until we saw each other again.

The weekend before I was due to return to school and my “foster family,” I suddenly experienced stabbing pain in my lower back and over to the sides. When I told Mutti, she first made an unbelieving face (she knew full well how anxious I was to leave). But the pains continued, and she finally called a doctor from the military hospital where she did volunteer work.

Vati's former barracks across the street had by then been turned into Reserve Military Hospital for recovering German soldiers. A doctor came and quickly, after taking a sample for testing, diagnosed an acute kidney infection. So Mutti believed that this time I was not faking it. As a matter of fact, I was in quite a bit of pain and spent most of the first few days flat on my back on a heating pad. In addition to medication, the doctor ordered two days of “absolutely no water, no food” and after that, at least two weeks of a salt-free diet. It worked well, and I recovered fairly quickly.

Before long, Mutti and I were making plans for me to go back to school. Then all of a sudden, we received a phone call from the family I was living with in Schoenberg: Both of their two boys had contracted scarlet fever – at that time a quite serious and sometimes fatal disease – and their house was quarantined for the next three weeks. Hallelujah! All of a sudden my vacation had been extended.

The good Lord must have been on my side, because soon thereafter it became too dangerous to ride the train where I needed to go. Seventy percent of the route the train took went through Czech territory. With the war going so badly for Germany, and the Russians coming closer by the day, it became routine for the train to be attacked by underground forces or the tracks being blown up, and German passengers being roughed up or even killed. We could also begin to hear the big guns from the front. It sounded like constant, heavy thunder. Needless to say, Mutti was happy to have me with her at home.

## A retreat to the west

Soon it was February, 1945, and the guns seemed to be coming closer and closer. Each day, they sounded louder and at night the sky was all lit up, like constant lightning.

The hospital where Mutti worked was put on alert to expect orders to move in the foreseeable future. Mutti was given the choice to move, which of course included me. There was never any question that we would go – everybody knew only too well what to expect when the Russian troops moved in. Our concern was not only with the Russians but also with the Czech nationalists who were just waiting for the Russian troops to provide them with an opportunity to take revenge for the wrongs the Nazis had done to them. (And ultimately, bloody revenge did they take! Mutti's decision proved to be right one, for from what we heard from talking to people who were left after the end of the war, rape and killing were commonplace.)

So we started to pack, to be ready to go at a moment's notice. What do you take with you when all you're allowed is what you can carry? We were luckier than many people. Since Mutti belonged to the hospital staff, we were allowed a foot locker and bigger suitcases than we could actually carry.

I don't know how often we packed and unpacked. I was not quite 15 years old at that time, and all of this somehow was more of an adventure. I could not quite comprehend the seriousness of it all.



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It seemed like an ongoing party, especially since all the long-stored “goodies” like canned fruit, liquors and wine had to be consumed or left behind.

Too soon the day came when a small train, consisting of three passenger cars, about 10 freight cars and an engine appeared at the siding near the hospital compound. Most of the wounded had been moved ahead to hospitals out of the danger zone, and the few that remained were well enough to help with moving the hospital equipment. Early the next morning the loading began, and by early afternoon we were told to grab our few belongings and board.

It was a strange feeling to lock the door of our apartment for the last time, knowing we would never return. Even I had lost some of my sense of adventure. I am sure it was a hard undertaking for Mutti. Leaving all the things that still remained and reminded her of Vati – things she knew she could never replace. But to stay was out of the question, so we set out on the journey of our lives.

The little train was finally loaded around late afternoon, including four Russian steppe ponies. They were used to haul various items, especially supplies, since the reserve hospital was not considered important enough to have any motorized vehicles (by that point, anything motorized was in very short supply).

Finally, we were under way. Little did we know what lay ahead of us. The trip was to last 15 days, stretching across the heart of what was then Czechoslovakia and ending

at a little town near Nuremberg in the heart of Bavaria, in what was later to become West Germany. But I don’t want to get ahead of myself...

Mutti and I were assigned to one of the passenger cars, together with the few remaining nurses. Doctors, other staff members and personnel were in the other cars. We were lucky to have a small field kitchen along, so we always got hot coffee (the burned barley and chicory variety, not the real thing). Food preparation was possible only when the train stopped – which was quite often – because troop and supply trains heading to the Eastern front had the right of way. While stopped, we also got a warm meal of soup or stew plus some dark rye bread. But when you’re that hungry, anything tastes good. Rations were meager, but better than nothing.

The first night on board the train was one of the most miserable I have ever spent. Anybody who ever tried to sleep in the luggage rack of an old German train knows what I’m talking about! No matter which way you twisted or turned, the wooden slats – designed to hold luggage, not people – poked you in the back, plus there was always the fear that you might fall out onto the floor below.



Archival photo of German civilians being evacuated ahead of the advancing Soviet Army.

I tried it that night, and that was enough for me. Sleeping upright in the seats below did not appeal, either. I was going to find more comfortable sleeping quarters for the next night, no matter what Mutti or anybody else said.

As soon as the train came to one of its many stops the next morning, I went exploring. I soon came to the freight car where the four horses and their feed were stabled. Over half a car full of soft hay! Of course, I was not the only one looking for a more comfortable place to sleep, but if you did not mind the smell of horses or weren’t allergic to hay, this was the place. So, on a first-come, first-served basis, I had found myself a sleeping place. (As the trip wore on, the piles of hay became thinner and thinner, but enough remained to be reasonably comfortable.)

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Toilet and washing facilities were rather primitive. There were, of course, several on-board toilets, but no way to get to them when the train was under way. So one just went behind the horses when Mother Nature called, hoping the train wouldn't move too much or the horses didn't care about having someone behind them. Washing was done as much as possible in the morning, or when we stopped. Face, neck and hands were about the extent of it; rinse and brush your teeth when possible. A change of clothing was out of the question because there was no way to get to our luggage. So the same pair of pants, sweater and underwear simply had to do. We must have been a bedraggled-looking lot, but we did not go hungry and we were saved from the Russians.

We slowly wound our way through the heart of Czechoslovakia, often sidelined in some unknown little place for hours at a time. We could get out and stretch our legs, and once in a while get the horses out and walk them. Seven people finally ended up in my "cattle car" – two nurses, me and four military personnel connected to the hospital. The keeper of the horses, an older guy who had two daughters at home, and I became good friends. He often made sure that I got food and other essentials. We had long talks or played cards to pass the hours during the trip.

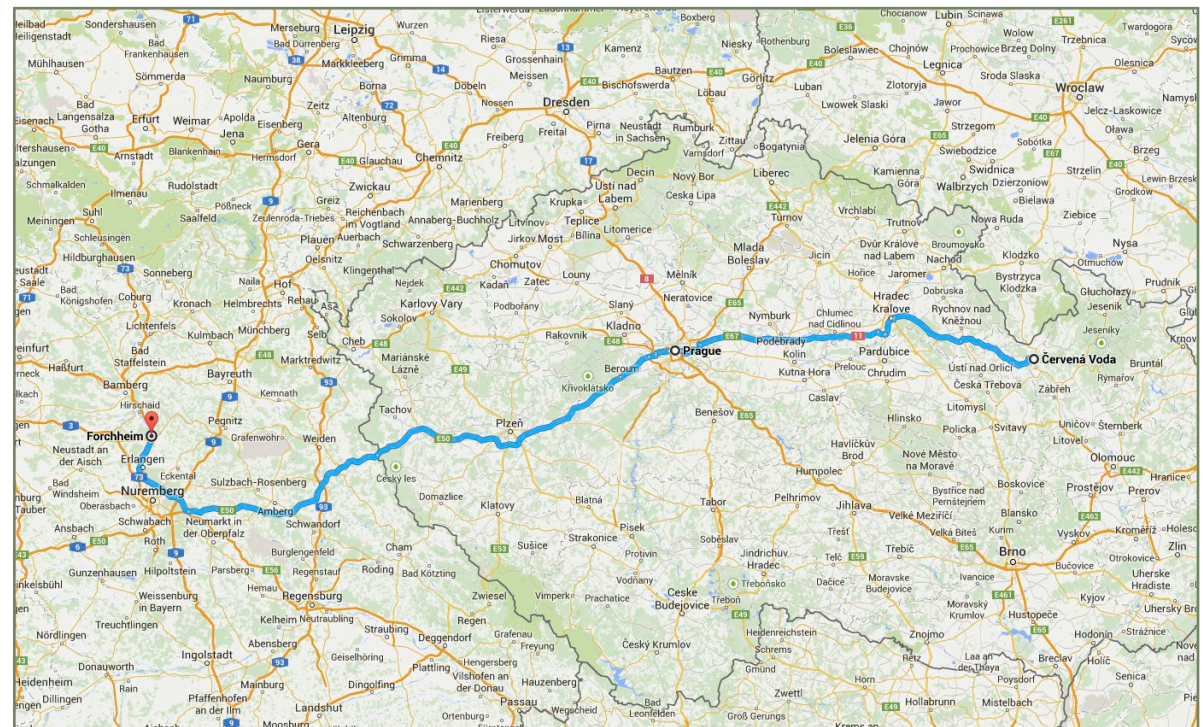
One day we were stopped somewhere and a similar train was stopped right next to us, a train that, as I later found out, had come all the way from near the Baltic Sea with passengers who, just like us, were looking for refuge in the west.

It was a larger train and carried a lot of civilian refugees, mostly women and children, plus a few military personnel on their way to the western front. A couple of nurses and I were talking and looking at the other train when one of them commented on a good looking young lieutenant who was walking alongside the other train.

I looked, and suddenly realized that I knew him! It was my cousin Helmut, my father's brother's oldest son. What a coincidence! We had not seen each other since the war began, over five years earlier. He had been on a short leave to see his wife and their newly-born son before he went to his new assignment.

His wife was from East Prussia, a province on the Baltic Sea, and like us, they were told to leave because the front was getting near. How he managed to accompany her I don't know, and we did not have time to explain. It was good to see them. They did not know their destination either. In those days you were just glad if you were able to get away from the fighting. Time for our reunion was short and soon, everybody went on their own way.

On we went. Near Prague (Czech Republic) we had stopped to let a troop train pass, and then to spend the night. The plan was to continue in the morning.



Approximate route of Hannelore and Elisabeth's 325-mile train ride to safety, ahead of the advancing Soviet Army.



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It just so happened to be the night that long-range American bombers were on a mission to take out a munition factory in the little town near the siding, so we had ringside seats for a show we really didn't want to attend!

Soon after the sirens went off, the attack began. It seemed to last forever. Actually, it lasted about two hours. I felt like a sitting duck on that siding, and was really scared. The rail car rocked back and forth with each explosion. The horses were frightened and very restless. We were all waiting for the next bomb to hit us. All I could do was literally bury my head in the hay and pray for it to be over. Luckily we were not hit, but we had some rather close calls. After the "all clear" signal, we checked for damage and found that everybody was OK. Even though some tracks were torn up, we would be able to continue in the morning.

By this time we were about 10 days into our journey. We finally learned that our destination was to be Forchheim, a town on the main highway between Nuremberg and Bamberg. We arrived without any further incidents near the end of February, 1945, just a few days before my 15th birthday. Although Forchheim was close to Nuremberg, which was almost destroyed by bombs, in 1945 almost no industries or anything important to the war effort existed there. Except for constant air raid warnings, nothing much had happened in Forchheim to that point.

## A close encounter with Allied fighter planes

While we were still at the train station in our "home on wheels", the hospital kitchen was running short of supplies. Georg, the man in charge of the horses and wagons was told to go to Erlangen, the only nearby supply base for military hospitals, to get the needed items. Erlangen, about 20 miles distant, could be reached with the horse team in about two hours; we were lucky to have our four Russian ponies to get around. Being more than bored, with nothing much to do, I wanted to go along. I was lucky, because when I asked Mutti if I could go with Georg on an errand, she was otherwise occupied and she readily agreed (not exactly knowing that we were going that far).

We took off next morning, making it to Erlangen in good order around lunchtime. After collecting our supplies, consisting of some canned goods and a wagon load of black bread, we turned back toward Forchheim.

Since Erlangen is not quite 20 miles from Nuremberg, we weren't surprised to see swarms of American long-range bombers in the air, probably on their way to targets in and around Nuremberg. It was almost a daily routine in those days to see the bombers, either during the day or at night.

What we had not realized was that bombers were always accompanied by lots of fighter planes. Their main job, I later learned, was to fly protective cover for the bombers, always on the lookout for Nazi airplanes, ground-based guns, tanks or other threats. The fighters were equipped with multiple guns, and didn't hesitate to use them.

As we quickly found out, when there wasn't an obvious military target, the fighters would look for anything that moved and seemed worth shooting, including strafing the highways. All traffic was fair game, and before we knew it, our little wagon and horses became a target. They came around, lining up with the highway we were on, and began to open fire. Georg tried very hard to keep the frightened team of horses under control, scrambling to reach the cover of a nearby grove of pines as fast as possible. We made it safely into the grove, and there we waited until the fighters left, looking for new prey. The bombing mission was soon accomplished, however, as we saw billowing clouds of heavy black smoke, not far away. One could only wonder what was left to bomb after the almost daily attacks.

We soon went on our way again and could actually see Forchheim, not far ahead. As we were approaching the last bridge into town, a German Army convoy passed us, consisting of troop carrier and several tankers. (One must remember that by that time – February 1945 – almost anywhere in Germany could be considered the front line, as the war was but a few months from being over.) As the last tanker crossed the bridge, we made ready to follow, but what should appear but a swarm of angry hornets: The American fighters were back, having found a worthy target in the tankers.

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All we could do is jump out of the wagon, abandoning it and the horses, and literally “hit the dirt” next to an embankment along the road, where we found several of Forchheim’s other citizens already taking cover. Within minutes the tankers were ablaze; several explosions followed. We could hear the fighters’ bullets striking all around us, but luckily, only the convoy was hit. I don’t know how long we lay there in the dirt, but the attack was probably over within a short time. When we finally arose, we discovered that neither horses nor wagon had been hit. Amazingly, the little ponies had remained still. So, we got back on the wagon and headed for home, this time without any further incident.

I did not mention our adventure to Mutti, and it was not until a day later that somebody told her how lucky she was to have her daughter back in one piece; wasn’t she happy; and so on. Only then did she begin to realize what had transpired. I still got a serious reprimand, but I think she also felt guilty for not listening more carefully when I’d asked if I could go. After all, I was not even 15 and really had no business going through a war zone on a wagon.

## Forchheim

Before the war, Forchheim was best known as the starting point for tourists who wanted to visit the *Fraenkische Schweiz* (Frankonian Switzerland), a very beautiful and popular vacation spot. Tourists from near and far came to enjoy its quiet atmosphere, with little trout streams winding through narrow valleys, surrounded by hills upon which old castle ruins could be found. Here and there were

small hotels and boarding houses. Long paths wound through the woods, where in olden times poets and painters strolled. In the archives there is mention of the *Kaiserpfalz*, a castle that belonged to the Archbishop of Bamberg. It stands to this day, almost undamaged, and is used as a museum. Small, picturesque buildings decorated with brown woodwork are built along narrow, cobblestone streets. All this was surrounded by very fertile farm land and low, heavily wooded hills.

Forchheim was built sometime before 800 A.D. The population consisted of burghers and artisans and craftsmen and, of course, farmers – very conservative and often narrow-minded people who wanted to be left to alone to pursue their trades. They felt that if they more or less ignored trouble – especially war – it would pass them by. That included unwanted intruders. Refugees, we soon found out, were considered to be some of those intruders. Ninety percent of the local inhabitants were strict Roman-Catholics, and Protestants like us were made to feel even less welcome.

Since it appeared that Forchheim was to be our semi-permanent home, however, the next order of business was to find a place to stay. By this time we were all a rather ragged-looking lot, wearing the same clothes for so long and



The *Kaiserpfalz* at Forchheim (2012 Google photo).

not having ideal washing facilities. No surprise that doors would close very quickly. “No room at the inn” was an answer we would hear again and again.

The hospital had been assigned two local high schools for its use. (Most German schools were closed, and teaching was done wherever you could get some students together, not necessarily at a school. Even then, class was frequently interrupted by air raid alerts at all hours of the day or night.) This was our first chance to get cleaned up and find a change of fresh clothing. Today, when I think of going without a shower or fresh clothing for so long, I shudder. But we survived, and I’m sure there were people in far worse situations. The war was definitely going badly; food became more and more scarce.



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We felt this in Forchheim, especially, for being strangers in this tightly knit little town meant we were a low-priority customer at all the stores. Luckily for us, however, Mutti was still working at the hospital, where at least we had one hot meal each day, usually soup. But even the hospital kitchen's supplies were getting low again, too. (One day, after we had an especially hearty soup for lunch, it was rumored that one of the horses was missing!)

We finally found a small room to let in the vicinity of one of the hospitals, with no running water and a toilet by the stairs in the hallway of the house. The landlord was far from pleased to have lodgers because the room that was assigned to us by the local authorities was his living room.

There was not much he could say or do – except to let us know in small, irritable ways that we were not welcome. But to us, his living room was heaven! We unpacked our few belongings and with the aid of two bunks and a few utensils, we set up housekeeping. Even that one room seemed spacious, at least for a while.

Mutti enrolled me in the local high school, whose “classrooms” were, at that point, scattered all over town, because of the use of the school buildings by the military. Between constantly moving from one place to another and the incessant air raid alerts, we did not learn very much.

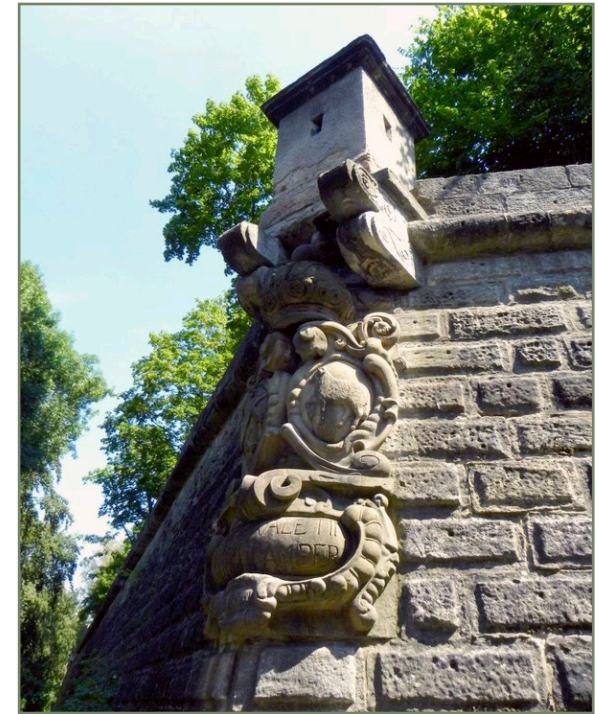
By April, 1945, it became clear that the war could not last much longer. The Western front was getting closer each day. Everybody was

called upon to “defend the fatherland to the last drop of blood.” Everybody, in this case, meant old men, women and children. Barricades were built across the main highways, but what good would they do against tanks, bombs or fighters?

Mutti continued working at the hospital, and to keep me with her during the day I began to work as a volunteer in the reception office. I helped log the arrivals of wounded and fill out release papers for discharged patients. Since we were not a surgical unit, we only were to receive wounded that already had been previously treated and were sent to us for final disposition. As the fighting came closer, however, that changed, and we began to see more seriously wounded, so I was kept busy nearly every day. Most nights we spent several hours in the air raid shelter. In Forchheim, the shelter was inside the old city wall, which originally surrounded the entire town. It had several entrances and was dark and cold, moisture often dripping off the ceiling. But it was thick, and we were safe.

### Arrival of the Americans

At the last minute, the City Fathers declared Forchheim to be an “open city.” This meant the Allied forces would be allowed to enter without resistance, and that meant no final battle. The Allies were just about knocking on our door by the time this happened, and nobody knew how effective the declaration would be. So that day, and the following night, we evacuated the entire hospital from its location at the high school to within the city walls. To distinguish doctors or nurses, or those who worked for the hospital, from actual soldiers (our patients), we were given Red Cross arm bands to wear.



**The Old City Wall at Forchheim**, where Elisabeth and Hannelore stayed the night before Allied troops entered the city.

We knew the Allies were close. It was a long, drawn-out and cold night. We tried to pass the time with cards and small talk. Sleeping was impossible since all we had was a single blanket laid on the cold, hard ground. The following morning we were not told what had happened, only that we could leave safely. That is when I got my first look at American G.I.s in battle gear. As we exited, they were waiting for us, guns drawn, to escort us back to the high school. There Mutti and I stayed for several days, American guards at the doors.

Not too many days later came the long awaited news that combat was over. Germany had surrendered.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

At long last, the war was over!

People who worked with the Red Cross were allowed to go home to get fresh clothing and finally sleep again in their own beds.

The next day we returned to work. The German soldiers who were ready for release from the hospital were transported to POW camps, and we received new patients. I still did the same work as before, but now my limited knowledge of English came in handy. Now, when we received new patients, they were always accompanied by American soldiers, and between my limited schooled English and hand motions we could usually figure out what they were telling us.

Each day I picked up more English skills, and soon was able to communicate reasonably well. Somebody had given me a discarded American paperback book of cowboy stories. I was determined to read it and though the going was pretty rough in the beginning by the end I found myself enjoying the book, and somehow the words made sense much more quickly. From then on I was on the lookout for discarded books in English, and once the G.I.s found out that I was interested in learning more, I received a big supply.

Every time a new transport came in, American medics brought me books. Usually it was the same few guys. We got to talking, and I found out that they were really decent people, most with families and children back home. It really changed my mind about our former "enemy." In particular, an elderly American ambulance driver (at least, to me, at age 15, he seemed elderly) told me all about his family back home and how he had a daughter about my age and how much he missed them all.

## Life in post-war Germany

The city of Forchheim, just as with all of Western Germany, was now under the authority of a military government. German officials were checked out very carefully for any connection to the Nazis, and many were, at least temporarily, sent to internment camps to be "de-Nazified", or in many cases, sent on for further disposition.

6 kl. Oberschule f. J. Forchheim Ofr.

### Jahreszeugnis. ( Abgangszeugnis ).

Walter Hannelore.

Sohn des Oberstleutnant Georg Walter in Mährisch Rothwasser  
Tochter  
geboren am 27.2. 1930 zu Breslau

evangel- Bekenntnisses, hat im Schuljahre 1944/45 die sechste Klasse der Oberschule Abt. — besucht.

Allgemeine Beurteilung:

Betragen	sehr gut
Teilnahme im Unterricht	rege
Häuslicher Fleiß	lobenswert
Ordnungssinn	gut
Streben i. d. Leibesübungen	— — —

Siehe Ihre Fortschritte sind:

in der Leibeserziehung:	in Naturwissenschaften und Mathematik:
Leichtathletik . . . — —	Biologie . . . befriedigend
Turnen . . . — —	Chemie . . . ausreichend
Schwimmen . . . — —	Physik . . . — —
Spiel . . . — —	Mathematik (Rechnen) — —
Allgemeine körperliche Leistungsfähigkeit . . . — —	in den Fremdsprachen:
in der Deutschkunde:	Latein . . . dispensiert
Deutsche Sprache . . gut	Griechisch . . . — —
Geschichte . . . gut	Englisch . . . gut
Erdkunde . . . gut	Französisch . . . — —
Kunsterziehung . . — —	
Musik . . . — —	

Die Erlaubnis zum Vorrücken in die nächsthöhere Klasse hat sie — — — erhalten.

Forchheim, den 29. Dezember 1945.

Der Direktor: *H. Meißner* Der Leiter der Klasse: *Meißner*

Notenstufen: 1 = sehr gut, 2 = gut, 3 = befriedigend, 4 = ausreichend, 5 = mangelhaft, 6 = ungenügend.  
Die Leistungen in der Leibeserziehung werden nach Punkten (0—9) gewertet:  
0 Punkte: völlig ungenügende Leistungen, 5 Punkte: Durchschnittsleistung der Altersstufe, 9 Punkte: ganz hervorragende Leistungen.

Druck: Otto Maier, Forchheim

In spite of the chaotic conditions in Forchheim at the end of the war, Hannelore continued to attend classes. This is her report card for the 1945 school year.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

That was the time when neighbor often turned on neighbor and “squealed” on him, especially when his *own* record was not squeaky-clean.

Mutti and I were also checked out and eventually given new I.D. cards. Even for travel from one town to another, you had to have a permit. This, however, did not last more than a year, after which most of the day-to-day running of local government was turned over to “clean” German authorities, under the watchful eye of the Allied Command.

Food was still very scarce; bartering and the black market thrived. Offer American cigarettes, or any American goods, and anything could be had. This was the time when the average farmer had the upper hand. For people who had valuable things to trade, like jewelry, furniture and good porcelain, farm products were readily available. It was said that farmers’ barns were literally bursting with such goods. Of course, only the local people in small towns, or refugees, or those who were not bombed out had things to trade. People like Mutti and I were glad to have the few things we had, and so we “made do.” We rationed everything, even heavy, dry rye bread. Eggs, sugar, fresh butter, fresh whole milk, white flour – all were unattainable luxuries, like real coffee or tea.

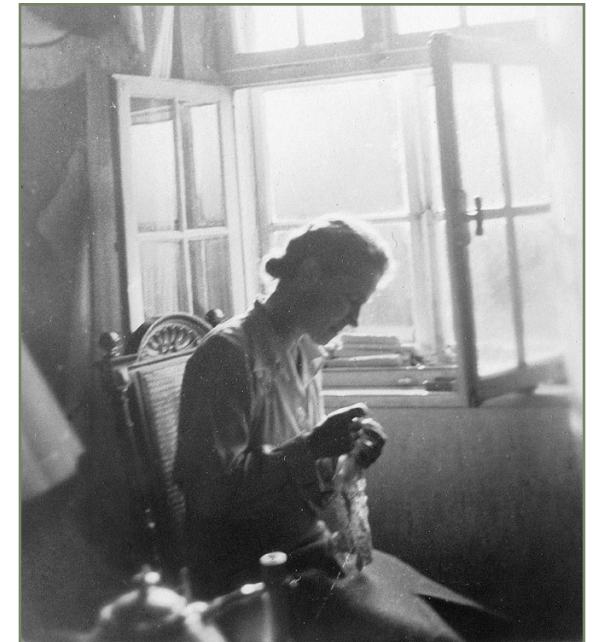
I recall a day when Mutti and I had gone for a walk through the fields and came upon an apple orchard. The day before, the wind had knocked down some fruit, most of it kind of wormy and half green.

So we picked a few off the ground to take home and make some applesauce. A farmer must have spotted us and came yelling and told us, “Quit stealing my apples. Those on the ground were for my pigs!” Well, those were the times!

What we actually lived on, I cannot even imagine any more. I guess it was potatoes that saved us from starving. With all the farms around Forchheim, this was the one thing still available. Everything, from food to clothing to coal was rationed, and even those meager amounts were, more often than not, unavailable.

How well I remember standing for an hour or more in line at a grocery store, or at the butcher’s, only to be told when it was finally my turn that they were all out; that they didn’t know when the next shipment would come; and to try again in two or three days. Originally, we received one meal daily at the hospital. But before long even this was discontinued. All the patients had been released and since the shooting was over, no more new patients were coming in. So once again, Mutti and I had to find some way to make a living. In the big upheaval after the war’s end there was no pay or pension to be had.

Somebody Mutti knew, a former patient from the hospital, had opened a shop selling all kinds of handmade items, such as knitted sweaters and handmade tablecloths, and to create his products, hired out knitting and crochet work to be done at home. We eagerly took it. He supplied the material or the customers brought their own hoarded wool, crotch yarn and other materials. You soon got to know all the “locals” by the material they brought in.



**Elisabeth and Hannelore knitted and crocheted** to earn money in the chaotic, immediate post-war German economy.

Even though he charged dearly for the work to his customers, he paid his employees a pittance. I guess he ran what you would call a modern sweatshop, except we worked at home, often until late evening. Even though the pay was not much and money did not buy much, we had to have some kind of income. Mutti received a little each month from a business in which her dead brother had been a partner, so between that and the knitting, somehow we managed. But soon even that was finished when the knitting shop went broke. For a while, on our own, we tried to find people we could do some knitting or crocheting for, but the times were hard; besides, knitting was hardly something to keep a 16-year-old fully occupied.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Schools started slowly to reopen, and Mutti wanted me to go back, but I flatly refused. She had to give in and somehow managed to at least get me something equivalent of today's GED (a work-equivalent diploma).

Through all this we still had not had any word from either Mutti's mother or the Kunisch family. Mail, even in the post-war American-occupied Western Zone was at the best sporadic, and completely impossible for the Russian-occupied Eastern Zone. They had no idea where we were, or even if we were alive, and neither did we about them. We did know, however, that the Poles, who were now occupying Silesia (the area which included Schmiedeberg), were "ethnically cleansing" all of their territory.

This meant, of course, that all German citizens had to choose between renouncing their German citizenship and become Poles or leave Silesia, losing all their farms, houses or other possessions, taking with them only what they could carry.

### The trek to visit Oma Schmidthals

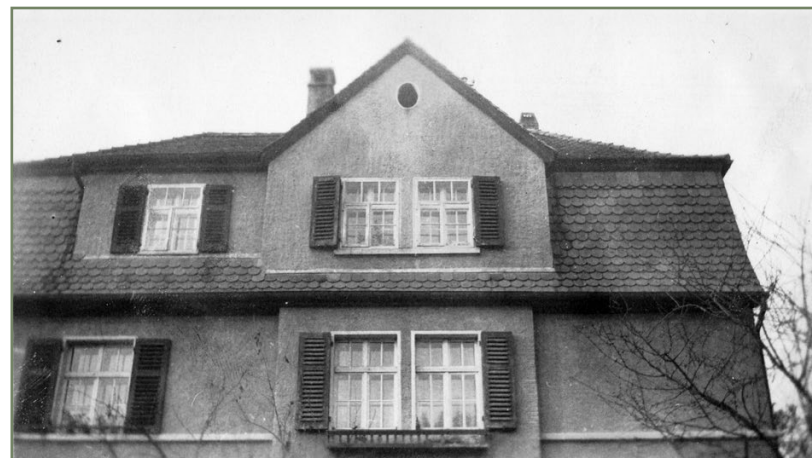
Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna were well into their 70s, and we worried what that might do to them. The same, of course, was true for Oma Kunisch. The only way to find each other was through the Red Cross or by studying big bulletin boards in places where people might see a name on a list. Refugees were sent everywhere in the Western Zone. Finally, one day in the middle of 1946 we received a postcard telling us that Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna were in the

English Zone, somewhere near Braunschweig. Ordinarily that would probably be a six-hour train ride. But trains were nowhere near to running on a regular schedule yet, and you also had to get a special travel permit.

Well, I, always being of an adventurous nature, decided to go and visit them. I took my backpack and set off. I made it all right, but it took me over two days to get to Braunschweig. Trains were filled to absolute capacity and I had never realized how pushy and nasty people can be. It was "everybody for themselves." There were long waits in train stations. When I finally made it to Braunschweig I found out that the little, God-forsaken village where they lived was way out in the boondocks. No trains or buses went there. So I had a four-hour foot march ahead of me, but I made it!

Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna were thrilled to see me. Both were physically OK, but their living conditions were horribly inadequate. They were quartered in an old farmhouse, one small room with no running water and a toilet across the yard. I stayed one day and night. I had hoped they would have some news of the Kunisch family; when Oma and Tante Anna had to leave Schmiedeberg, the Kunisches were still there.

The trip home to Forchheim was uneventful, just as long and tiring as the journey out to see them. I was glad to be back in Forchheim again.



Elisabeth and Hannelore lived here, in Forchheim, for several years after the end of the war. Elisabeth continued to live in Forchheim for the rest of her life.

About six months after my visit, Oma Schmidthals and Tante Anna managed to move to Stuttgart, in the American Zone, and not too far from us. Tante Anna's older sister had died and left her a few belongings and a small apartment, where they lived till they both died a few years later.

As we found out later, the Kunisches stayed in Schmiedeberg for another full year because Tante Trude had to have an operation and could not travel. Much later, they ended up in the same general area as Oma Schmidthals.

Food became even more scarce, and the German *Reichsmark* had so little value, it did not buy anything of value, even if you could find it. I had turned 16, a birthday that came and went largely unnoticed. I was dissatisfied with the whole situation. Looking for work in Forchheim was useless; business was slow to recover from the after-effects of the war.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Compounding my trouble was that I really did not have very much to offer, except my limited knowledge of English. Working for a German firm did not seem very appealing. Every one seemed so bitter and down.

### Going to work for the Americans

I have always been a very positive person and try to look at the good side of a situation. That left me only one choice: Try for a job with the American Army, either in Bamberg or Erlangen. So I gathered all my courage and a certain bravado, and without Mutti's knowledge of what I was going to do, went to Erlangen.

At the time, in 1947, Erlangen was the home of the 9th American Air Force. Luck was certainly with me: When I arrived, the Civilian Employment Office in Erlangen, had just received a call from the photo lab at the base.

The lab needed a person with a knowledge of English to help the American sergeant-in-charge with his technician, who spoke no English, and to assist around the lab. I still think that somebody else was supposed to apply for the job, but it was "first come, first served."

The first few weeks were pretty rough, but my boss was tremendously understanding, repeating things over and over. I caught on pretty quick and really liked the job. The money wasn't great, but I, as did all the German workers, received one daily meal at the mess hall, basically the same food as regular G.I.s.

That meant a whole lot. I learned to like foods that were strange to me, such as hominy, corn, white bread (a change after the hard black bread at home!) and various other things. Real coffee and milk! Butter on the side seemed like heaven!

I caught the morning train from Forchheim and was usually home around 6:30 at night. Of course I got to know American soldiers, and that, in addition to the fact that I was working for the "Ami" did not sit too well with my neighbors. On top of that I started wearing lipstick, another sin! Mutti, surprisingly, did not object to my working in Erlangen. It did mean that at least I had one decent meal a day and the food at home went further. I liked my job, made new friends and my English – both reading and writing, and above all, my general conversation skills – improved.

Some of my new friends were American soldiers. Mutti – and above all, our prideful landlady – had to get used to that.

Over much fussing and grumbling I was even able to bring somebody home on occasion – quite an achievement in those days! As much as our landlady grumbled, she never turned down an invitation to have a cup of "real" coffee with me. The same with cigarettes, just as long as they did not have to acknowledge where they came from. Guess people never change!

My employment lasted until about January 1948. My boss, who had always been more than ethical, asked me if I would pose for him in the photo lab. Unsuspecting and naive as I was, I showed up and asked what he wanted me to do. That was when he suddenly locked the door and started



**Hannelore, circa 1949.** This was about the time she was working her way through Interpreter School, hoping again to get a job with the Americans.

making all kinds of propositions to me, including one in which he asked me to sleep with him. When I strongly objected, he started to offer me a carton of cigarettes! That was it. I told him if he did not let me go immediately, I would not only inform his wife (whom I knew pretty well), but I would cause such a ruckus that he would be sorry.

THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

I got out of there real fast and waited to see what would happen next.

Then he got a lucky break: A new law came out, saying that nobody under 18 was allowed to work for the Americans. That gave him the excuse he needed – I had three weeks to go until my 18th birthday, so I was laid off without any further ado. So there I was, back home with Mutti, stuck in that small room.

## Interpreter School

Then Mutti came up with an idea: In Regensburg, not far from Munich, an Interpreter school had opened. The Americans badly needed German translators. So we checked it out, and in quick order I passed my entrance exam and started going to school to get my Interpreter Certificate.

While in school, I stayed in Regensburg with a German family that rented me a small room. The course ran for nine months, and everything started off pretty well. I was about half way through the third trimester when everything collapsed.

Overnight, it seemed, and without warning, currency reform took place. "Old money" was not worth anything (not that it had any buying power, anyhow) and everybody received 200 of the new *Deutsche Marks*. This wasn't too bad for people with a regular job or income, but it put people like Mutti in a tough spot – and that, it seemed, was the end of school. I tried to stay on for a while, but how to pay for it? I drifted for a month or two,

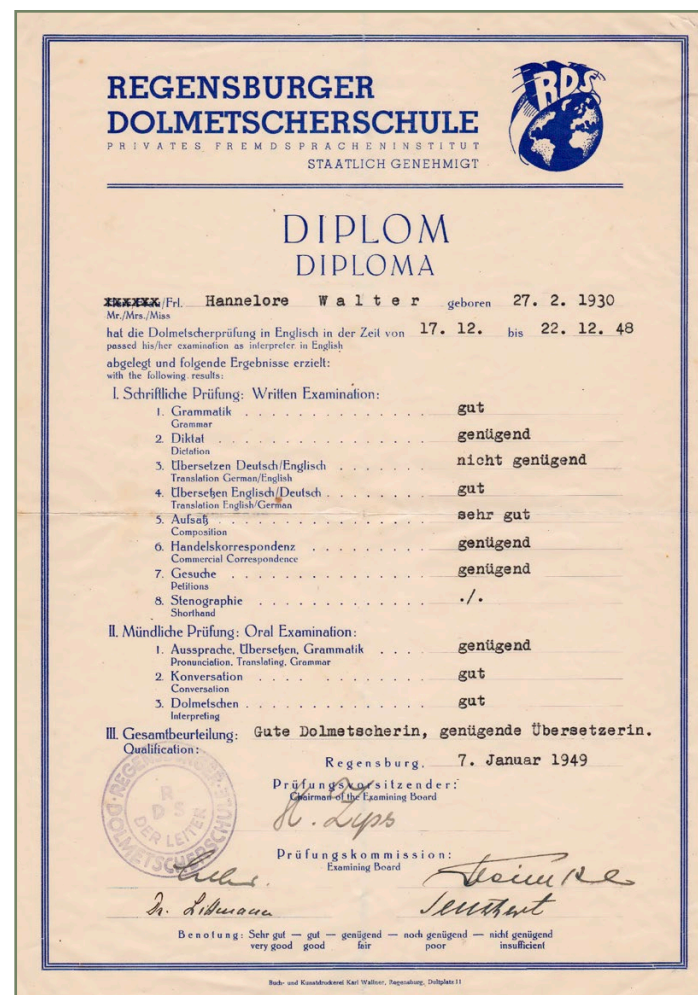
picking up occasional jobs, but eventually ended up back home in Forchheim.

Jobs were just that hard to come by, but I was just as determined to work again for the Americans. Mutti and I earned what little money we could by doing knitting and crocheting work or whatever was asked for. Eventually, we had enough for me to finish Interpreter's School, which got me back to working for the Americans.

With my Interpreter School diploma, I ran an ad in the local paper, listing my skills and stating that I was looking for a job. The German employment agency saw my ad and referred me to the Americans, who needed an interpreter to work at the American court, translating details of special court cases involving infractions by U.S. G.I.s (for example, when they got into barroom brawls).

## "Blondie" and Bill

I also interpreted in court cases in which German citizens were called as witnesses. It was here that I met Bill Tidmore, a U.S. Army company clerk, who was filling out case sheets and handling other communications. He called me "Blondie," and was always teasing me: "Blondie, when are you going to go out with me?"



By early 1949, Hannelore finally graduated from the interpreter school. Shortly after, she got a new job, interpreting at the American court, translating details of special court cases.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

Of course, I wasn't in any hurry at first; we German girls enjoyed going around to the various mess halls at lunchtime and looking at all the young men and debating which one we liked best. But he kept after me, and eventually – just to get him to stop – I said "Yes, let's go out." On November 23, 1951, we were married.

### Coming to America

In May, 1952, I came to the United States with Bill, arriving in New York City on the 12th of May, on the U.S.S. Washington.

And the rest, as they say, is *history*.

(far right) Hannelore's U.S. Immigration Manifest (1952; line 21)

(right) Hannelore's U.S. Application for Naturalization (1954)

(below right) Bill Tidmore and Hannelore at their wedding, November 23, 1951

(below left) Hannelore, at Governor's Island, New York, circa 1952, where she and Bill were stationed after her arrival in the U.S.



No. 7347450

Name TIDMORE, HANNELORE KLARA EMMA  
 residing at QTRS. T, 223 B, Gouvernors Is. NY  
 Date of birth Feb. 27, 1930 Date of admission Aug 9, 1954  
 Date certificate issued Aug 9, 1954 by the U. S. District Court at New York City, New York  
 Petition No. 637521  
 Alien Registration No. 8306935  
*Hannelore Klara Emma*  
 (Complete and true signature of holder) *Tidmore*



Form I-115  
 TREASURY DEPARTMENT  
 UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
 IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE  
 (Rev. 1-5-51)

Form approved.  
 Docket Bureau No. 43-R010-3.

MANIFEST NO. 32  
**MANIFEST OF IN-BOUND PASSENGERS (ALIENS)**  
 Class ONE from BRUNNEN HAVEN, GERMANY & MAY, 1952  
 (Port of embarkation)  
 on S.S. WASHINGTON arriving at port of NEW YORK, NEW YORK 12 MAY 1952  
 (Name of vessel) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

LINE NO.	FAMILY NAME - GIVEN NAME DESTINATION IN UNITED STATES	AGE (Years)	SEX (F-M)	MARRIAGE OR SINGLE	TRAVEL DOC. NO. NATIONALITY	NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF PIECES OF BAGGAGE	HEAD TAX COLLECTED	THIS COLUMN FOR USE OF MASTER, SURGEON, AND U. S. OFFICERS
1	SCHULZE, Edith Port Monmouth, New Jersey	35	M	F	I-1002445 GERMAN		Yes	✓
2	SCHULZE, Ingrid Same as above	5 Mo	F	S	I-1002446 GERMAN	118	NO B	EXEMPT
3	SCOTT, Anna Box 101 Gresham, Ore.	21	F	M	I-1086370 GERMAN		Yes	✓
4	STROM, Frida Ft Leonard Wood Missouri	35	F	M	I-1110079 GERMAN		Yes	✓
5	SHICK, Ruth 1098 Forest Ave Highway East Peoria, Ill.	31	F	M	I-199102 GERMAN		Yes	✓
6	SHICK, Patricia M. Same as above	2	F	S	I-1783 US	by Germany	NO	U. S. CIT.
7	SAPP, Eva W. Fort Bragg, N.C.	26	F	M	I-1270708 GERMAN		Yes	✓
8	SHAW, Margaret 537 McKinley North Canton, Ohio	26	F	M	I-1200841 GERMAN		Yes	✓
9	SILVA, Helga RFD Norwich, Connecticut	24	F	M	I-1007012 AUSTRIAN		Yes	✓
10	SILVA, Linda L. Same as above	1	F	S	I-10125 US	pp. to Germany	NO	U. S. CIT.
11	SKRZYSCZOWSKI, Anna 40 Woodman St. Boston, Mass.	26	F	M	I-1107525 GERMAN		Yes	✓
12	SURAND, Erika 3405 Paxton Ave. Tampa, Fla.	21	F	M	I-1107941 GERMAN		Yes	✓
13	STEVENS, Anna 126 1/2 St. SE Canton, Ohio	29	F	M	I-1007183 LITHUANIAN		Yes	✓
14	SHAINOWSKI, Elsie Camp Allard 534 51st St. Astoria, Ore.	25	F	M	I-1077912 GERMAN		Yes	✓
15	SIMPLINS, Marge Camp Carson, Colorado 1641 W. 60th St. Tulsa, Okla.	32	F	M	I-1007830 GERMAN		Yes	✓
16	THROCKMORTON, Lucille W. Mitchel KFS New York, New York	30	F	M	I-20102 US	LA	NO	U. S. CIT.
17	THROCKMORTON, Donald Same as above	2	M	S	I-1107839 GERMAN		NO	EXEMPT
18	TOMLINSON, Ruth 8726 Santa Clara Dr. Dallas, Texas	25	F	M	I-1110113 GERMAN		Yes	✓
19	TORBERT, Erika Fort Knox, Ky.	29	F	M	I-598170 GERMAN		Yes	✓
20	TORBERT, Marion R. Same as above	5	F	S	I-4313 GERMAN		Yes	U. S. CIT.
21	TAYLOR, Maria Washington D.C. 1100 4th St. SW BOLING	17	F	M	I-1107235 GERMAN		Yes	✓
22	TIDMORE, Hannelore Hq Co, 1st Army Gouvernors Is., N.Y.	21	F	M	I-1007391 GERMAN		Yes	✓

11-109-m-2 Dalloy  
 U. S. Immigrant Inspector  
 18 also 11-109  
 16 H.T.



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

(right) On August 9, 1954, Hannelore became a naturalized U.S. citizen

(below) Hannelore had three daughters with Bill (left to right): Diana, born 1956; Sigrid; born 1952; and Deb, born 1959. This photo was taken circa 1968.



ORIGINAL  
TO BE GIVEN TO  
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 7347450

Petition No. 637521

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth February 27, 1930 sex female  
complexion fair color of eyes blue color of hair blonde height 5 feet 8 inches  
weight 160 pounds visible distinctive marks none  
Marital status married former nationality German

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

*Hannelore Klara Emma Tidmore*  
(Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK ss:

Be it known, that at a term of the District Court of  
The United States  
held pursuant to law at New York City  
on August 9, 1954 the Court having found that  
Hannelore Klara Emma Tidmore  
then residing at Qtrs. T, 223 B. Gouvernors Island, N. Y.  
intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the  
Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with  
the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be  
admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and (she was  
admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.  
In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 9th  
day of August in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and  
54 and 79th

WILLIAM V. CONNELL  
Clerk of the U. S. District Court  
Deputy Clerk.

It is a violation of the U. S. Code (and  
punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph,  
or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

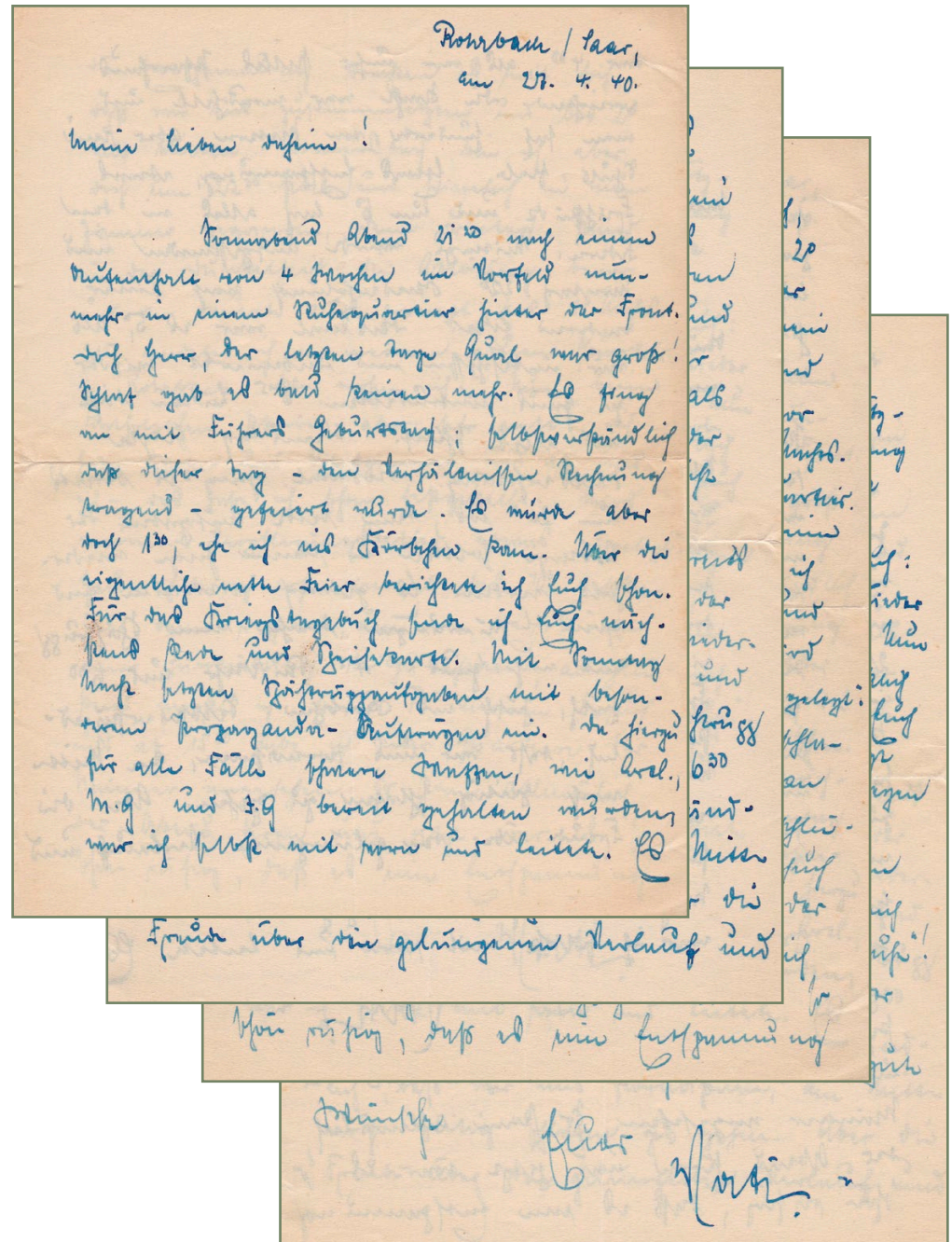
**APPENDIX A:  
GEORG'S LETTERS FROM THE  
WESTERN FRONT**

For much of 1940, Georg's 452nd Infantry Regiment was assigned to the Western Front (Germany's border with France), where it participated in reinforcing the famed "Western Wall" barricade, and engaged in some combat with French troops. On these pages are excerpts from some of the letters Georg wrote home to Elisabeth and Hannelore during that period.

April 27, 1940

*Partial Translation:*

"My dear ones at home –  
After a stay at the front we have moved to a reserve behind the front lines. The anguish of the last few days was bad. Starting Sunday we had reconnaissance patrols with special mission tasks (distributing propaganda). Just in case, for this job, heavy weapons like artillery machine guns were kept in readiness. I myself was up front and in charge. It was 4:30 when I got back to quiet quarters. The night was full of moonlight and you could see hundreds of meters in front of you, but not a shot fell. By 6 o'clock I was in bed. The same situation arose the next day. Without being shot and unseen, we got home. It succeeded again, and my party brought good results home. During the night we had to relieve other troops. Today I landed new quarters here in Nesar, and where do I end up but with a Catholic priest, of course – but very nice. I have a living and bed room and now and then I notice that my supplies are supplemented a bit. From 1-2:30 today I had to take part in a radio exercise, and then make my official report. At 3:30 pm I inspected the enlisted men's quarters. Slowly it has become evening and it is so nice and quiet that it is relaxing to write to my dear ones at home. Around 11:00 pm, suddenly the French artillery started shooting. Thank God we only have property damage. Now you will understand how daddy was tired and could not write a lot. Tomorrow is not to be quiet [either]..."









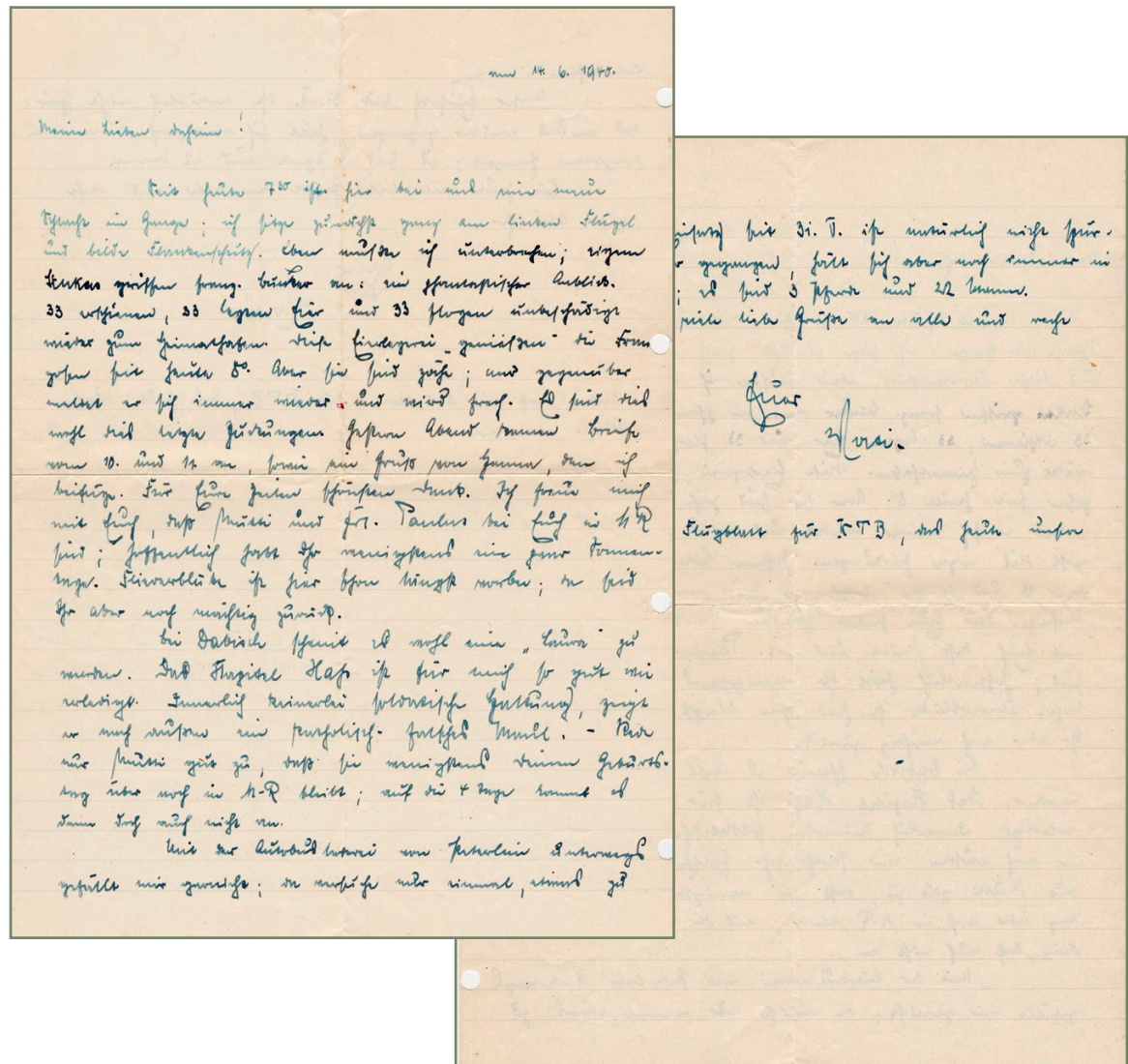
THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

**APPENDIX A:  
GEORG'S LETTERS FROM THE  
WESTERN FRONT**

June 14, 1940

Partial Translation:

"Since 7:30 a.m. a new battle is raging. Right now I'm still sitting on the right flank, and I've just given support to it. I had to stop. Our own stukas [German dive-bombers] are attacking a French bunker – a fantastic view: 33 appeared, 33 laid their eggs, and 33 flew home unmolested. The Frenchmen aren't enjoying this laying of eggs but they are tough and oppose us once in a while. Someone gets really mean and shoots back at us. I'm sure these are the last twitches before they die..."

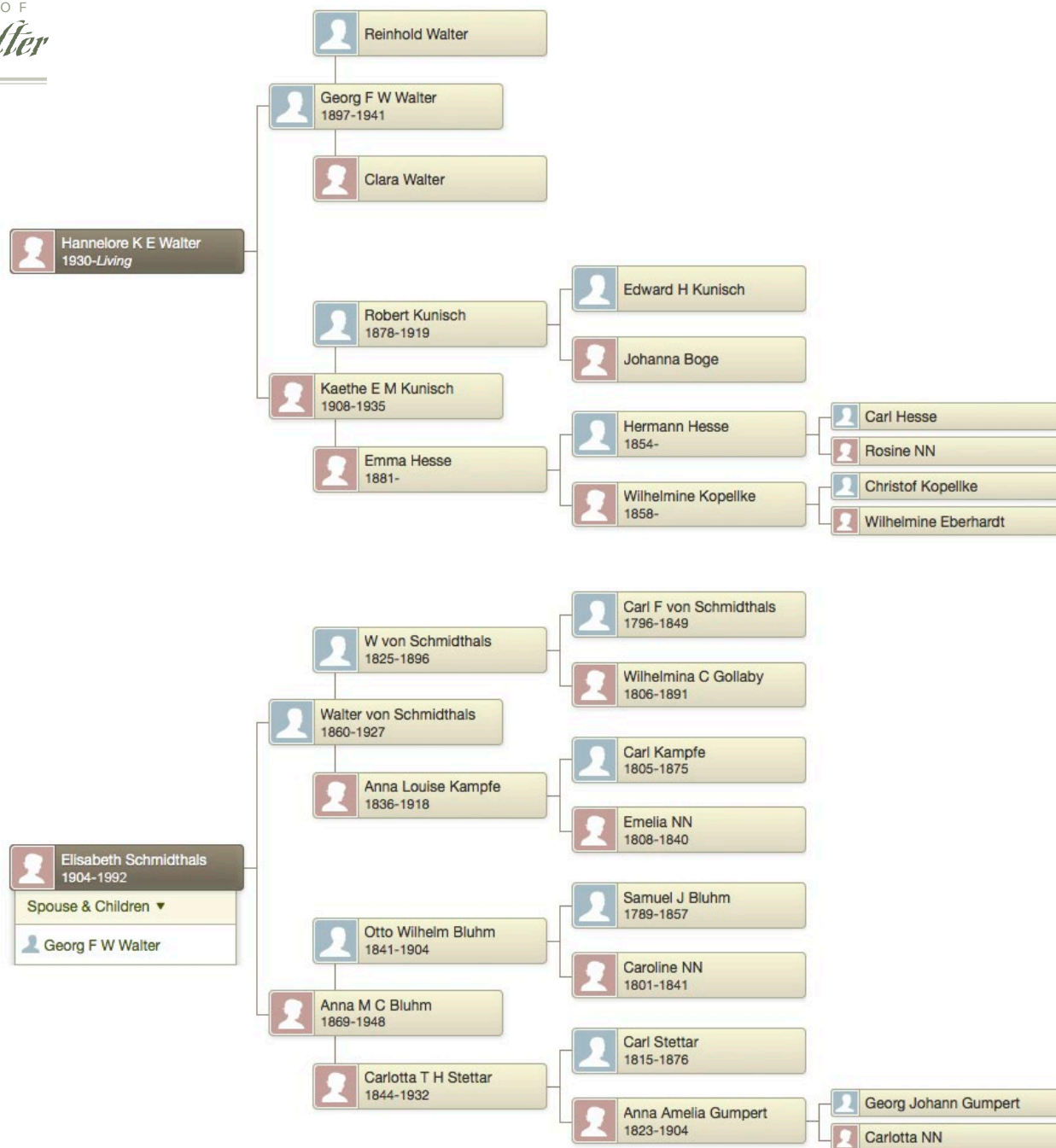


THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

## APPENDIX B: FAMILY PEDIGREES & TREES

On this page:

Hannelore's and Elisabeth's  
pedigree trees.



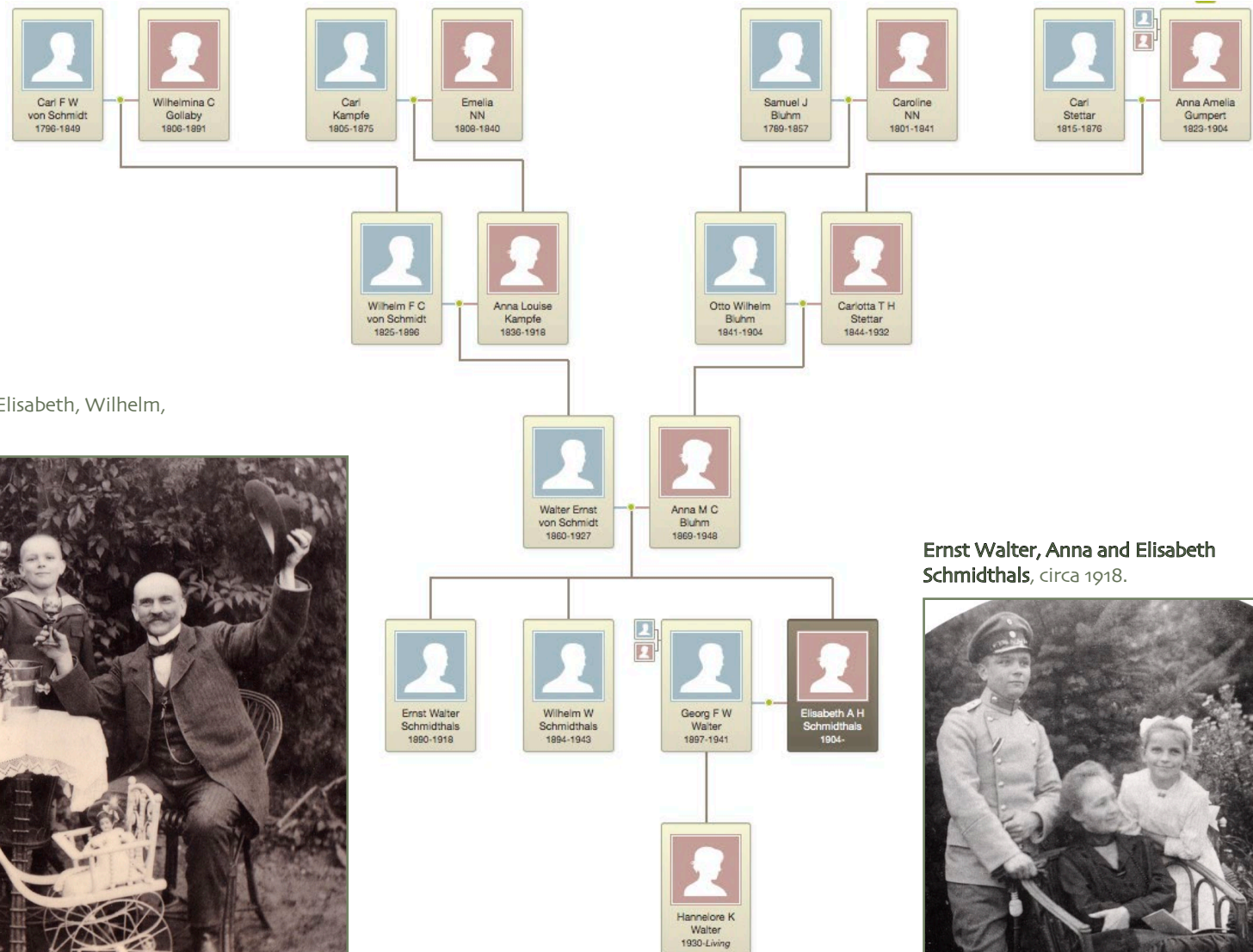


THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
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## APPENDIX B: FAMILY PEDIGREES & TREES

On this page:

Elisabeth Schmidthals'  
family tree.



### The Schmidthals family, circa 1909

Left to right: Anna, Ernst Walter, Elisabeth, Wilhelm,  
and Walter Ernst Schmidthals



Ernst Walter, Anna and Elisabeth  
Schmidthals, circa 1918.

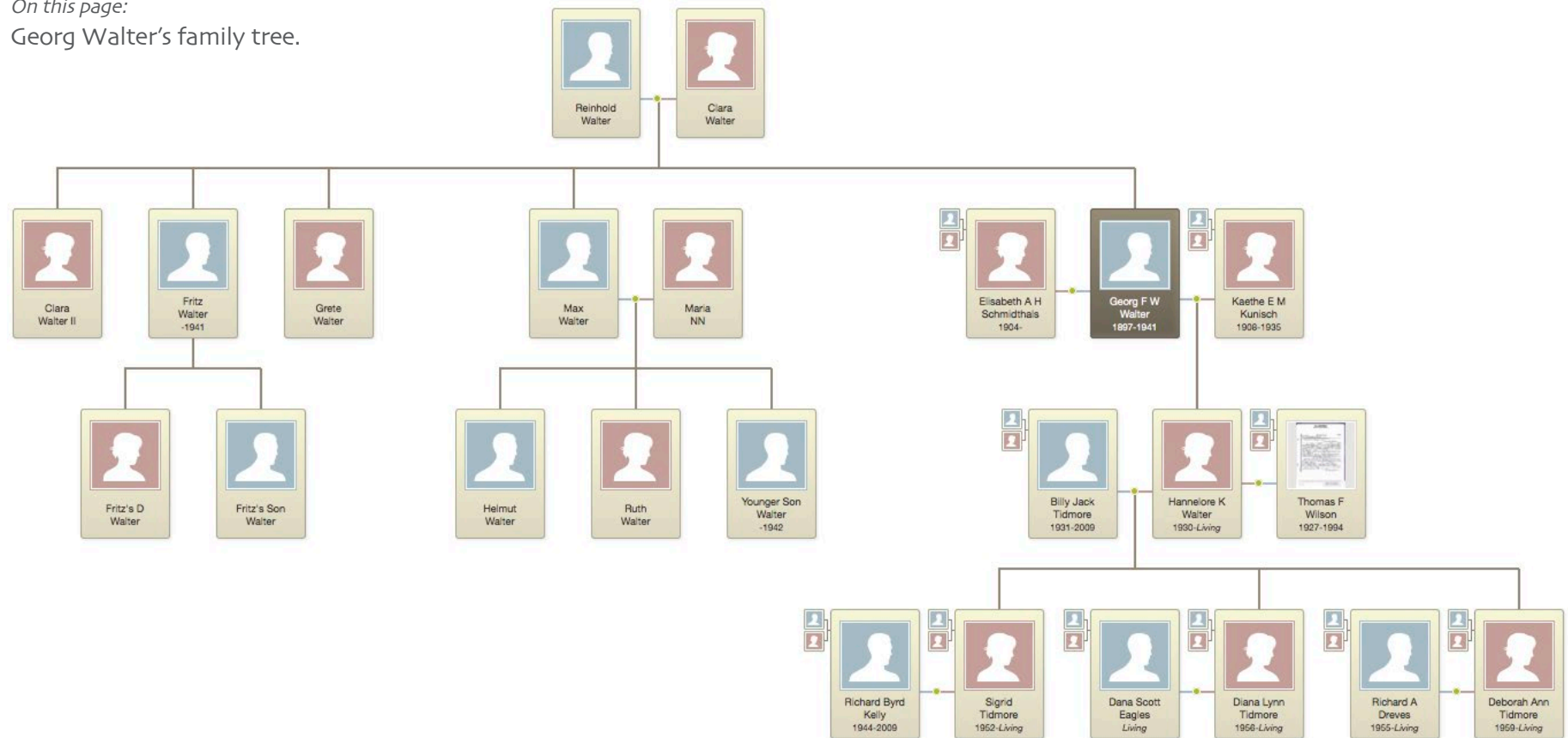


THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
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## APPENDIX B: FAMILY PEDIGREES & TREES

On this page:

Georg Walter's family tree.





THE ANNOTATED RECOLLECTIONS OF  
*Hannelore Klara Emma Walter*

## APPENDIX B: FAMILY PEDIGREES & TREES

On this page:

Kaethe Kunisch's family tree.

