

Excerpts from the Memoirs
of
Werner Mork

“Aus Meiner Sicht (From My View)”
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The Schiller School

It is not the kind of 'ism that is the bad part, it is that men misuse all of the 'ism's for their own base ends and goals. I am ashamed of all the men who even today all over the world can not behave otherwise. One the whole, mankind is full of inhuman criminality toward their fellow man and toward the dignity of man that everyone in the world is entitled to, or at least should be entitled to. Throughout history men have not truly acted like men, regardless of culture, religion or world outlook. Humanity and tolerance have not always been the defining traits of mankind. Unfortunately, these concepts have nearly always been abused by all men, including the Jews.

Raising children to see themselves as being part of Humanity, to have respect for others, to be tolerant and to deal honorably with others regardless of the color of their skin or the color of their hair, regardless of nationality or cultural background; this should be the foundation of schooling. It should start in the public elementary schools and continue on in all scholastic institutions up through the university. Unfortunately, this has never been the case and certainly not in the Weimar Republic. Teachers and students failed equally, but also the parents carry a great part of the blame.

I had now been transferred from Lobbendorf to Fähr, but also the greater number of our teachers were transferred, too. This included my dear Fräulein Tiemann, but she was no longer teaching my class. Also transferred was the headmaster of the Lobbendorf School, Herr Donicht, who was nicknamed "The Godfather." He became headmaster of the Schiller School.

Headmaster Donicht was a peculiar fellow. He came from the part of West Prussia that became part of Poland in 1919. He was expelled, came to Aumund and became headmaster of the Lobbendorf School. Godfather Donicht was a reactionary. He was a devoted, nationalistic-thinking Prussian who made no bones about his ideas and agendas. He had a strong hate for the Poles who 'stole' his homeland from him and his family. He never missed an opportunity to bring out the fact that it was the Germans, the Prussians, who first brought culture and good breeding to the Polacks in West Prussia. The Germans were the true masters of the land and built everything that was now deteriorating in the hands of the Polacks. Herr Donicht talked about this all the time.

My teacher here in Fähr was Herr Torborg who lived in Lindenstraße. This teacher was one that I had a lot of respect for. He was quite different from the rest of his colleagues. With him there was no physical punishment, no raps with a cane, no teaching through brutal and inhumane means. He used a lot of patience to get 'his' kids through a very difficult curriculum through using understanding and comprehension.

He made it clear to us why our school studies were so important, what value and use they would be to us in the future, and what diligent and good study habits would do for our success later in life. He used his patience and empathy to try and nudge us unruly hooligans, and not always lovable little girls, into coming around to his point of view. We began to follow him with enthusiasm. We loved this teacher, even when we were not so lovable ourselves. However, when Herr Torborg needed to discipline us, instead of resorting to swats or the cane, he would bring his violin out of the closet and play for us. This made us terribly ashamed of our bad behavior. We would sit, still and ashamed, while listening to the sound of his violin. It had a deep effect on us and worked much better to educate us than swats and canes.

Herr Torborg was never lost his self-control. He was never excited. He never lost his calm. He had a

very unique way about him. The time with him was my best time in school.

Besides Herr Torborg there was another teacher, Fräulein Fahrenholz, who was a devoted Humanist and a devoted Social Democrat! Her teaching also had a deep influence on me when she taught our class. She did not have an easy time of it with the mostly National-Conservative colleagues in the Schiller School, nor with the Liberal-Conservative Herr Torburg. Things were especially difficult for her after 1933 when the nationalistic tendencies of the conservative faculty began expressing itself as Naziism. Then, Fräulein Tiemann could finally wear her swastika openly and with pride as a member of the NSDAP.



She even wore it in school after it was no longer forbidden to do so. This German bosom was now decorated with the party badge.

There were two superb individuals who, next to my mother, I credit with decisively molding my intellectual development right from childhood. Fräulein Fahrenholz and Herr Torborg remain in my mind as ideal role models that I retain to this very day. Even now, I remain thankful to them for what they gave me to help me on my way in life. Unfortunately, we only had a short time together before I had to move on to another teacher who was the total opposite. He was dreadful. That was Herr Lambrecht.

My school career developed in such a way that my grades were mostly 'average' ranging from 'good' to 'adequate' except for gymnastics and singing. I was a dud in both areas earning lousy grades. My grades for conduct, diligence, attentiveness and homework were erratic. I will explain why later. But this time, there was no question of me being held back a grade. I sailed through. My final report card only had one 'four' on it which was inflicted on me for my droning in singing class. I could deal with that, it wasn't terribly important to me. Later I found that, even with this bad grade, it did not stop me from getting a job in a music store as a sales apprentice.

It is not really the time to talk about graduation, and not yet the time for a diploma, nevertheless I am going to present my final grades here without looking back to previous years. They were tracked in my notebooks and can be dealt with separately. I am of the opinion that the final grade for my school year represents a complex overview of the entire year and speaks to my development in elementary school. Here are my final grades:

Conduct	Good
Diligence & Attention	Good
Religion	Good
Reading	Good
German	Adequate
Arithmetic	Adequate
Geometry	Adequate
History	Good
Geography	Good
Natural History	Good
Nature Study	Adequate
Writing	Adequate
Drawing	Adequate
Singing	Poor
Gymnastics	Adequate

This was hardly a brilliant report card, but it would do for my “Entry into Life.” I was not a Rhodes Scholar. I never achieved those heights, but I did well in later life even though I was just an average public school kid. I have never been ashamed of this but rather built upon it and didn't do too bad. The grades were not so bad considering that for a long stretch of time I was not at all good in school. The reason for that was my emotional depression that set in after our request for a scholarly stipend for the school in Vegesack was denied. More about that will follow.

The classes in the Schiller School were mixed, both boys and girls, neatly separated in their own places. There were four rows in the class, two for each gender, about evenly divided.

At first I did not care for the longer distance to school that I had to traverse because I had to walk alone. I soon got used to it and as I got to know playmates and neighborhood kids we would make the trek together. We made for quite a lively group as we made our way across the fields and meadows to

Schillerstraße. I have never been one to spring out of bed in the morning and often find it hard to leave the feathered mattress. However, I always managed to somehow get to school on time before the bell rang. In winter the trip to school could be very difficult and it would take a lot longer than the normal 20 minutes, especially if there were snow or ice. In those cases I would have to leave much earlier and make my way across the fields covered in snow or iced over. The path over the fields was the best and the shortest way to the school. All other options were unnecessary detours. They were also not so romantic as the narrow paths through the fields and meadows and not nearly so direct.



German schoolgirls from the 1920's with their new 'bobbed' haircuts

Mixed classes of boys and girls were the standard practice in the Prussian lands. They had their charms and usefulness particularly as we boys got a little older and began to pay a little more attention to the girls instead of dismissing them as silly geese. We began to notice certain bulges and curves among the girls and the new bobbed haircuts gave their faces a very different look. The very common pigtails gave way more and more to the 'bobs' and the girls were very

much aware of the effect they had. Skirts were getting shorter and the still somewhat gangly legs were nevertheless pleasant to gaze upon. The home-knitted stockings were becoming more rare and the new 'look' was much more enjoyable.

Puberty

During recess the boys had more things to talk about, and they were rarely dealt with in a morally correct manner. The daily speech was very vulgar. The tone of our conversations was not at all

refined, but it was the customary tone whether in school or on the street. This ugly talk, which could be quite hateful toward girls and anything having to do with them, did not arise spontaneously from our 'little manure heap,' we picked it up daily from the older kids. It even came from older siblings, but also from some adults who did not watch what they said in front of children. Added to all of this was the growing curiosity about the difference between the sexes. There were no upstanding men around to give us a clear and respectful explanation. All of the explanations came from our own little group and that led to some pretty ugly viewpoints. The result was that vulgarity and obscenity were commonplace among the children.

The parents wanted nothing to do with the topic, they did not have a clue as to how to even begin. When we asked where babies came from, the only thing we could get out of them was the fairy tale about the stork delivering babies. Everything about our bodies was considered unclean, and fornication, just like the bible said. It was all a great sin, nevertheless it was pursued with great dedication, desire and enthusiasm by the adults.

It was all so comical, this idea that their dear little children were the products of immorality and fornication. Yet they were considered to be a gift from God, so how was this possible? Or did God sanction this alleged immorality only when it came to making new human beings? Did the parents get some kind of signal when they would be allowed to do what had to be done to have babies? And what did God do about unmarried couples who got unwanted gifts from God? These were very stupid questions that no one would answer for us. They stood by immorality, fornication and unpardonable sin!

As puberty began and left evidence of its arrival on the bedsheets of the children, then would loving and caring mothers express their concern by showing their children the 'right' path. However, the advice to the children was to warn them that they could lapse into sinful ways if they were not brave and upstanding. If they did not pay attention to this warning then they risked being punished by God because he saw all sinful acts. The dear Lord heard and saw everything, and the reference to Him was an attempt to give a special emphasis to the message. The dear Lord could be used for a variety of purposes. The one thing our dear mothers would not give us was a reasonable explanation.

Mothers spoke to us about 'bad' girls and warned us brave young boys to be wary of them. So they spoke against their own sex. Boys should not harbor 'sinful' thoughts and their hands did not belong in their pockets or under the bed covers. Dear mother did not fail to mention that sinful actions could lead to sickness, above all affecting the spinal cord. So these were the 'explanations' we received that only produced anxiety without reducing our curiosity. There was nothing left for us but to seek explanations in the streets. They were not always good, but at least they led to some sort of explanation even if they were colored by the vulgar tone of the streets.

Unfortunately, it was not unusual for curious boys to try out certain things on themselves, often times on 'dares' from friends in their group. In many cases older boys and adolescents would talk the boys into things.

The school was not of much help in this area. In nature studies they used examples in the animal and plant world and tried to tie them into the world of human society. This only led to cheeky grins from the kids, all of whom were much farther advanced. This attempt at education did not work and did not have the hoped for results.

The admonition about going around with bad girls, or rather NOT going around with bad girls was not

as successful as our mothers would have hoped. We boys wanted know and understand the 'little difference' better. There were many opportunities as we roughhoused with the girls to let our hands wander. This way of getting a taste of forbidden fruit work well for nearly every kid in spite of the (weak) resistance put up by the girls. There were many attempts to make contacts with the girls even at school where we swapped decals, 3-D pictures and the very popular cigarette trading cards. It would also happen that a boy and a girl would meet by chance and walk home together. This would often result from the boy's knightly offer to carry the girls heavy school books for her. It would be an opportunity to set a date to meet the next day too.

These little flirtations were quite natural. However, most of the grownups wanted to see something unnatural about them. The results would be the same but with a little more enlightened attitudes on the part of the adults it could have been more healthy and attractive.

The time came when we boys wanted to have a bevy of girls. I, too, had my bevy. It consisted of two young girls who couldn't care less about me.

Both of them laughed at me, and deeply hurt my childish heart. To top it off these girls were not ordinary worker's kids, they were the daughters of managers at the Bremer Vulkan and, so, were considered my 'betters.' The two girls were close friends, pretty and charming. One was Gisela Uhlhorn, with dark hair and lovely long pigtails. The other, Annegret Schiller, already sported a 'bob' haircut and was a blond. I was hopelessly in love with both of them.

Both girls lived very near the Lobbendorfer School in houses that were very middle class, much nicer than us working class kids. It was where the 'best people' lived.

My unattainable 'bevy' was captured in a school photograph. I don't know whatever happened to it. I can only hope that they both had good luck and a wonderful life.

Karl Will

During recess there were always scraps between us boys that were more for show than for meanness. It was a show we put on to impress the girls. Most times we liked ring fighting. This is where we could measure our skill and strength against one another, but at the same time show off to the girls. Whomever could get his opponent down on the ground on his back was the winner and he would be acknowledged with applause and cheers. Even the girls would cast admiring looks which made us feel good. These looks were not of the ordinary variety and they had a certain tingling effect on us which did us very good, indeed.

There were some girls in my class that were already well developed. They garnered a lot of attention, not only from us hooligans, but also from many of the male teachers, a fact that was not lost on us.

My classmates, Helma Hoyer and Wilma Segelken were two such impressive young ladies that attracted a lot of attention and spawned a lot of naughty fantasies.

The childish roughhousing during recess was not particularly dangerous, but there were also fights carried out to determine who was the toughest guy in the class and eventually the whole school. In the

often brutal fights that ensued the kids would demonstrate their power and strength. These clashes were never harmless or safe. These were violent contests that were not without bloodshed. These battles would begin on the schoolyard but the real brutality would take place after school on the way home. The winner would not simply be acknowledged as such, he would be feared by everyone else. He was the 'master' who could be as malicious and evil as he wanted to be due to his superiority.

This kind of superiority and nothing to do with intellectual superiority. This tough guy could make demands that would always be fulfilled. This was really just a form of extortion. These guys spread anxiety and fear to the extent that many of the teachers also gave them a wide berth.

In my class there was a schoolmate, Karl Will, who was a big, strong boy. He wasn't the best scholar, in fact he appeared to be rather dumb and backward. Karl Will could be aggressive and violent and he loved to test himself against the other boys and that eventually made him the top dog. He was so much so that even the recess monitors bowed to him.

Karl Will exercised his 'rule' in a very rough way, always making trouble in order to challenge the others.

He singled me out for his outpourings of ridicule and scorn. I was the cherished object for his spitefulness. In the Schiller School I got a nickname, just like everybody else did. My nickname was 'Hubby.' Where this came from, I have no idea. I didn't care for it, but it was better than 'Red Fox' or 'Fatty.' But Karl Will gave me a hard time because I had red hair and because I was fat. That upset me and made me angry, but what could I do against the toughest kid in school?

I just had to let the adversity wash over me along with the hateful laughter of the other kids. I was a victim who simply had to endure the pain.

Then one day something happened that broke the thread of my patience and filled me with immeasurable anger and rage. It was on the way home from Schillerstraße toward Bertholdstraße on the path through a field. Karl Will took the same path home and once again treated me like a dog. Suddenly I let my pent up rage explode. I threw my schoolbooks on the ground and without thinking I flung myself on Karl Will like a wild man. I punched him out, pushed the school tough to the ground and began to pummel him without restraint.

I don't know when my strength and power came from. Now, however, I was so out of my head that the classmates who were gathered around us began to fear that I would kill him! They forcibly tried to pull me off of my prey which they finally were able to accomplish after considerable effort. What lay at my feet now was no longer the tough guy, Karl Will, but a pitiful kid who tasted for the first time what it was like to suffer the pain and humiliation of getting beaten up. He lay there now in a torn sweater hardly able to move. The 'tough guy' sobbed and cried to himself. What I had done to him in my boundless rage was bad, but I felt no compassion for my opponent. I was filled with nothing but feelings of triumph because I 'gave it back to him.'

I had demonstrated that I was not a coward and that I did not have any fear (any more) of the so-called toughest guy in school. I had beat him down and at the same time fought my way free of a growing psychological complex. Me, the fat kid with the red hair, who was so often mocked, hassled and scorned, was now the victor over this brutal bully. I was very proud of myself.

As Karl Will slowly pulled himself together, gathered his books and slinked away, the surrounding

boys wondered at this fight as did the girls who also witnessed it. I had become the hero of the day and remained so for quite a while as the story was told and retold in school. No one hassled me anymore and my nickname, Hubby, was uttered with a little more respect. People looked at me with different eyes. This act of self-defense had earned me a different reputation in school. I learned from this incident that a man needs to defend himself and not let every offense go by without taking a stand. But the implied violence has not become a part of my later life. From that point on there were no more violent battles aside from a few little scraps. There was never another brutal confrontation like this one was.

When I got home after the fight I wasn't feeling as good as I had just a short time before. I got the jitters which my mother quickly noticed and there were clear signs of the recent struggle on my body and clothing. My mother became very frightened and concerned at how I looked. She demanded to know what had happened. I explained it all to her as best I could, but this only made her more upset. Then the doorbell rang, and on our doorstep stood Karl Will's mother. She was equally upset but moreover she was angry at what I had done to her poor little boy. In her eyes I was a rowdy with poor upbringing who should be reported to the police, which she was on the verge of doing. But first she wanted restitution for her son's ripped sweater. She made it clear that she reserved the right to make further claims in case the beating caused additional health problems for her son. This, she said, was a real possibility given the state her son was in when he came home. Finally, she told my mother that I was a hooligan that belonged in reform school. That got my mother hot under the collar. She got really angry herself and said that would never happen, that I was a good child and well brought up which was not something you could say about Frau Will's little urchin according to what she had heard! It was to the point where the situation could have easily escalated from words to blows. Fortunately, that didn't happen, the outcome would have been very serious.

But my rather high-strung mother did not hold back with some rather heavy accusations against Frau Will, even as mother pressed a 5-Mark coin into the woman's hand as compensation for the torn sweater. Then my mother told Frau Will very firmly that it was time for her to leave our house, or my mother would file a complaint against her for housebreaking! That was some serious stuff that left Frau Will speechless. She took the 5 Marks and left.

Once she left our house, all of my mother's anger fell on me. She boxed my ears a couple of times really hard and told me that I would get no more allowance until she was paid back for the 5 Marks. That was a lot of money for a little kid. When that was settled she let me know that I would have gotten a lot more slaps if I had not been defending myself against such an awful bully! She wanted this to be a life lesson for me and I needed to understand that I should not resort to brutality to solve problems. Inflicting bodily harm is not the way to resolve issues with other people. From this moment on I was not to get into any more fights. I needed to put on my big-boy pants and from now on find more intelligent ways to get through life instead of fist fighting.

There was a postscript to the story that played out in school. Frau Will came to school and talked to our teacher and the principal to complain about the thug, Werner Mork. She demanded that I be punished. But our teacher and the principal brought both of us before them and reprimanded us both. They said we were both thugs that needed to change our ways or we would have a hard time in life and they gave us many examples to illustrate the point. Mostly they wanted us to realize that the path we were on would lead straight to jail! In front of the entire class we were held up as bad examples and the other kids were warned not to do as we had done. They were given to understand that such behavior would not be tolerated.

This was where I really got my comeuppance, getting thrown in the same pot as that bully, Karl Will. That did not sit well with me in the least. All I had done was to defend myself. Now I was being described as a rowdy and a thug to the entire class by my teachers. Oh well, the outcome of this unfortunate event was that Karl Will and Werner Mork became good friends. We had the doubtful honor of sharing the title “Toughest Kid in the School.” That is how we changed from rivals into fast friends!

Benefits

The principal, the national-conservative Herr Donicht, could not help himself as he “lectured” us from commenting on the poor state of upbringing among the children of the worker classes. He bemoaned the sorry state of their character. In doing so he evoked the displeasure of our class teacher, Herr Torborg, who in his own gentle way made it clear that such incidents occurred in all classes. Bruit force was never a good way to defend yourself. Force only engendered counter-force and this was not a civilized way to resolve differences. We should all learn to deal with one another without resorting to violence. This was a very different message than what we got from Herr Donicht. When all the tumult was over, Herr Torborg took out his violin and played for us in order to reestablish reason and calm once again. This worked out well because it coincided with the time for our singing lessons.

We worker-kids became very still when we heard the first notes of the violin. Our little world became suddenly more peaceful. Herr Torborg understood that not only could our world be other than what it was, he gave us an assurance that there was more to the world than meanness and vulgarity. For us worker-kids this was a total contradiction to the nationalistic tones of the Stahlhelmer “Godfather Donicht.”



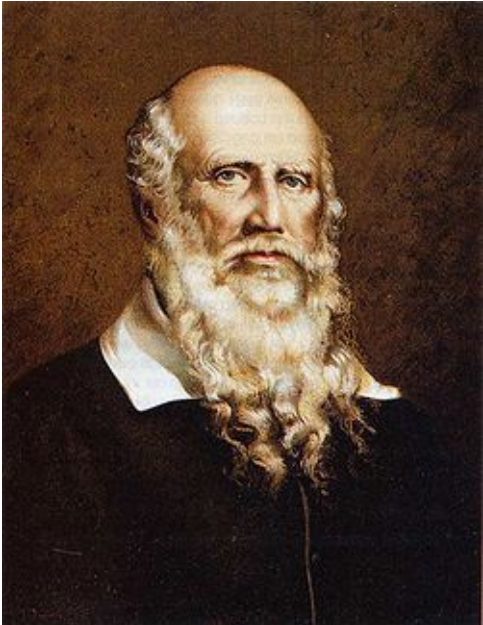
The Stahlhelmer [Steel Helmets], League of Frontline Soldiers were a paramilitary organization formed after WWI

This gentleman was not only a member of the Stahlhelm, but he was also in the DNVP, then in 1933 he

was associated with the NSDAP [*Nazi Party*]. He never made a secret of his opinions, especially in regards to the hatred he held for the Polish, the Polacks.

In my subjects in school I was still a zero in Singing and Gymnastics. Since my singing voice was unbearable, I was excused from it. That is to say that while everyone else sang, I sat at my desk doing my homework. They had given up on me. That did not bother me particularly, I never saw singing as a necessity of life.

Gymnastics was another story. My failure to master it really bothered me. I could not do the same tricks on the equipment as the other boys could do in spite of the best efforts of my teacher Karl Blume who was also my gym teacher. I could not handle the bars, balance beam, horse, rings or climbing pole. My arms simply did not have the strength to heft my weight onto the equipment and do anything with it. It made me mad enough to scream, but I couldn't do anything about it. It was otherwise with exercises like dodge-ball, rounders, handball and football. I was also good a light athletics like running and jumping. In some of the other events I was not real good, but at least passable. That was important, but it did nothing to help my grades in gymnastics.



*Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852)
Known as the Father of Gymnastics*

I always took part in the annual gymnastics tournament and occasionally even earned the coveted “Laurel Wreath” in events like running, broad jump and the relay races. However, I never reached the gymnastic ideal imagined by the revered father of gymnastics, Friedrich Jahn.

Apart from these two poor areas, there were other subjects in school that interested me very much and where I got grades of 'good' and even 'superior.'

In Reading I advanced to the level of Class Reader. When the teacher wanted something read aloud to class, I would be called upon to come to the front of the room and read it. I could read the most difficult text without previewing it or study and do so without error. I always found the right tone for the passage and added my own theatrical gestures to try and capture the interest of the class and add a certain excitement.

One of my favorite subjects was essay writing. I would write with a lot of spirit often giving my fantasy free rein. The assigned theme would be embellished according to my whim and I would launch into the writing with gusto.

It was very different with Dictation. I had a lot of difficulties there. I often made mistakes that resulted in bad grades. The reason for my problems here was the strict time constraints involved. I found it hard to keep up.

The subject I loved the most was History. I couldn't get enough, my interest was boundless and even went outside of school. I took advantage of every opportunity I got to get my hands on books and articles about history. This interest stayed with me right up to today.

Earth Science and Natural History also enthralled me and much of that was due to the way Fraulein Fahrenheit taught the subjects. She taught these topics very well and had a way of sparking my interest and causing me to delve deeply into the material.

My weakest subjects, other than Singing and Gymnastics, were Penmanship, Geometry and Drawing. That did not stop my teacher, Karl Blume, who was a member of my father's union, from maintaining the opinion that I should move up to a higher school rather than stay in public school. He thought it would be a shame if I did not try to make the change.

My parents were delighted at the thought of me going to an academic high school [*Gymnasium*], but were worried that they would not be able to pay the additional fees required for that type of specialty school, especially in these uncertain economic times.

In the time before 1933 additional fees had to be paid, and if I remember correctly the costs in the Prussian states were higher than those that the kids in Vegesack had to pay. The Bremen city of Vegesack had its own regulations in effect regarding higher education.

We once lived in Vegesack and I was born there, however when we moved to Aumund we became "Prussian." We were now considered 'Out-of-State' for Vegesack. At that time there was no North-Bremen, that did not come until 1939. However, starting in 1933 Prussian children did not have to pay anything extra to go to the academic high schools. Going to such a school could be a financial burden for a family. Often not very gifted children could still get into the higher schools if their parents paid up enough money. In the Third Reich it was no longer the wealth of the parents that determined who got the better education, it was the ability of the student that decided matters.

No Stipend

Karl Blume understood the financial concerns of my parents and was of the opinion that there was a very good possibility that I could get a stipend to help with the expense. He set out to have us apply for it. He did so thinking that it would be granted without much problem. The decision to award a stipend lie with a panel made up of teachers (school counselors) and parents. Karl Blume saw no reason why the panel would not be favorable. We were all set for a positive outcome and just sat back waiting for the decision.



*A German Gymnasium Student
Sporting a Spiffy Cap*

My parents were now proud of their son, and I was proud that soon I would soon be a student at Gymnasium and I would get to wear one of the spiffy caps they all sported. My mother was taking great care with the hat, she was going to go to the Baden Mützenfachgeschäft which was the sole official provider of such caps and run by the Baden family. The cap was of blue velvet with a shiny visor and a single silver stripe for a first-year student in Gymnasium. Additional years could be marked by using the included extra stripes. The caps could only be obtained from Baden after showing proof of acceptance in the school. This careful organization prevailed in all of the customs and practices surrounding the Gymnasium student and served to characterize the schoolboy as a superior student.

My mother could not buy the cap yet because I had not been 'officially' accepted. However, she was good friends with Frau Baden who made an exception since it was certain that I would be going to Gymnasium in the coming school year.

The cap was tried out to let me get the hang of it, to find the perfect jaunty angle, and my obvious vanity grew even stronger. When we got home I put this stunning cap on and struck poses in front of the mirror. My pride was boundless.

Then everything came crashing down, over night and without warning. We received a short letter from the Gymnasium administrators simply saying that our request was denied. This was a heavy blow, my world collapsed. My parents couldn't understand what had happened. My father immediately contacted Karl Blume who was equally surprised, and set about to find out why I had been rejected.

What he had to report to my parents after his discussion with the Gymnasium Directors was the sad fact that the rejection was not some awful mistake. It was because I was the son of a "Red," a shop steward in a tradesman union. The German Nationalistic leanings of the school masters and of most of the parents for that matter were such that they did not want to grant a stipend to a "Red" who, moreover, was not even a 'Vegeacker' but was actually from Bremen now. Therefore, they flatly refused. And this sort of thing happened in the time of the Weimar Republic.

Karl Blume could not understand this behavior. In spite of his longtime membership in the NSDAP [*Nazi Party*] and the SA, he had no negative feelings for my father, his "Red" sports buddy. That there would be different political parties with different opinions was something he took for granted, even though he was a Nazi. It was completely normal!

My dream ended, my mother had to take the cap back, and I would remain in public school. There was another attempt to get me into a middle-school in Blumenthal, but I didn't want to go, and there was a good chance that it wouldn't have worked out anyway. I went back to public school in shame since I had already bragged about going to Gymnasium. It took a long time for me to get past this misfortune. It was also bad that my good attitude toward school was destroyed. I was in such a state that I began to lose interest in existence itself. I was depressed and one night I took my belt, wrapped around my throat and pulled it tighter and tighter. This idiocy might have been 'successful' if my mother had not come into my room to check on me after she heard funny noises through the door.

When she saw the stupid thing I was doing she was filled with sorrow, but also with great anger. First she gave me a couple of hard slaps, then she sat me down and gave me a long, comforting talk, wherein she blamed herself for not being more attentive to me following the denial by the Gymnasium. Her comforting words gave me the courage to begin anew!

At school my teacher Herr Torborg was a great help to me and contributed greatly to me being able to get over my emotional distress and get back to normal school life. It was lucky that Torborg was my teacher at the time and not Herr Lambrecht. With him it would not have been possible.

I had accepted that I would only ever be a public school kid. For a long time I felt like I was a second-class person. My earlier self-confidence had taken a serious hit. There came moments when I doubted myself. Add to these problems my problems of being a redhead and overweight and it is no surprise that I would have doubts even with the encouraging words of my mother and Herr Torborg.

It wasn't easy to get past these complexes. Things only began to change when I first joined the Red

Falcons and they disappeared completely when I joined the Hitler Youth! These are two diametrical opposites, but they both were decisive in their own way in developing my inner character, even the Hitler Youth! I will now describe why that was so.

When I got into my apprenticeship I was done with the psychological complexes. I was a self-confident young man even without the academic high school [*Gymnasium*] education. In future years I was proud to make it known that I was public school student.

The change of teachers from Herr Torborg to Herr Lambrecht was a normal occurrence. Teachers were assigned to particular classes according to a well founded pecking order. The new teacher up to level 1-B would be Herr Lambrecht and the last class, 1-A would be taught by the Rector, Herr Donicht. That was according to the school hierarchy.

In Herr Torborg we had a teacher. With Herr Lambrecht we had a true educator. He saw it as his duty to educate his students in the national-conservative spirit. His teachings were always directed toward this goal. Regardless of the topic he always found a way to guide the lessons in this direction.

Professor Lambrecht

He was a member of the Stahlhelm, the organization of front-line soldiers, and he always emphasized his service during World War I. Somehow he always failed to mention that his military service consisted of being a hospital inspector who spent the entire war behind the lines. In the year the Nazis came to power on January 30th, 1933 he was already a member of the NSDAP. He soon rose to the position of being a political leader and then took over a role in the National Socialistic Teacher's Union. Here this 'Hero' found his nationalistic fulfillment. He was the archetype of the educator totally blinded by nationalism. His education techniques in dealing with second-class students included resorting to the cane, both the long stick and the short stick, which he used on both the boys and the girls. He had no reservations. The cane was a necessity in order to transform sassy, poorly-raised children into responsible adults. He ran the class like a military drill and demanded complete obedience. He had little knowledge of pedagogical reform like that espoused by J. Pestalozzi [*Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 1746-1827*]. He lived in the time-proven tradition of breeding and order according to the old Prussian spirit. Rather than leading the class using fact and feelings, his method was more akin to scolding the class. His disciplinary methods were not restricted to physical punishment, he used a very pointed verbal style that could be very nasty.

His idea of mild punishment was to use "lovely, long Gerte" to rap children across the knuckles. He did it with a long windup because the effect was more noticeable. He knew the nuances of this method of punishment.

The short rod was for the behinds of the dear children. It had the right balance for the purpose and was a very powerful instrument. He would let, as he put it, the cane "dance" over the backside of the boy who he thought deserved a beating for disobedience. Herr Lambrecht did not shy away from paddling the girls either and to let his cane 'dance' over their kiesters also.

Herr Lambrecht perfected a subtle method when rapping hands to only strike the very tips of the fingers and fingernails. The child would have to hold his hand out steady and at arm's length. The blow was very, very painful. This was pure Sadism on the part of a teacher who was supposed to be preparing youngsters for their future life. He took a visible pleasure in preparing each act of corporal punishment.

His particular favorite was paddling a child's behind which he referred to as the “dance hall.” The delinquent would have to come to the front of the class, bend over the front desk and take as many swats as the teacher thought fit. He also had the lovely custom of having the entire class count the swats out loud. It was never less than 10 swats, that was the minimum administered in each case.

With such methods he wanted to see that the children, most of whom came from “Red” families, were raised to be good and respectable Germans. He saw this as his duty in accord with his nationalistic German sentiments.

He would talk with great enthusiasm about the heroic struggles of the German front-line soldiers and especially of the so-called self-sacrifice of the German youths who voluntarily enlisted in the army and sacrificed themselves for the Fatherland. Particularly revered were the youths in the Battle of Langemark at the onset of WWI who marched into the battle singing the German anthem and who were nearly all killed. This attitude of German youth was held up to us as an example of an ideal to aspire to and to emulate. These lectures always led back to the need for us to extract revenge on the French and our other enemies who treated us so outrageously. The shameful Treaty of Versailles must be torn up and the chains of ignominy cast off. We growing children would be called upon to revenge our fathers.



“Mourning Soldiers” Monument at the German War Graves Cemetery, Langemark, Belgium

He worked very hard to make us wayward children into good German children, but he did not have much success, not yet. The new age had not dawned yet. When it did dawn, on January 30th, 1933, the good German, Herr Lambrecht, came to school in his field-gray uniform of the Stahlhelm. But the other teachers did too, the ones who were already members of the National Socialists came in their brown party member uniforms. Now, finally, the hidden party insignias of the Right could be openly worn in the school.

This was also the beginning of the time when so many Nazi party sympathizers thought to 're-educate' those who had different views than they did. They were already familiar with the use of the cudgel in school to effect such change so it was no wonder that they resorted to the same means to effect change elsewhere. For these people it was just so normal, like Herr Lambrecht in his role as teacher, to make use of physical punishment as a means of re-education. The perpetrators were not criminals, they were good, upstanding German men who knew the feel of the cane from personal experience. They knew it would be an effective means to 'educate' unruly free-thinkers. They saw it as just so normal!

Herr Lambrecht would soon want to become the chairman of the Kyffhäuser Union in Aumund that brought together all of the various veteran clubs and groups under one organization. By decree all candidates for office had to bring forth proof of their front-line combatant status, and Komerad Lambrecht couldn't do that.

Because he couldn't produce any documentation he could only take note that it was another member of the group, Wilhelm Mork, that denied him the right to stand for election as chairman. He also took note of the fact that Komerad Mork ended up being elected chairman. Komerad Lambrecht never forgot that.

I should also mention that, aside from Fräulein Fahrenholz and Herr Torborg, all of the teachers, at least in my public school, were dedicated to raising children with a nationalistic consciousness.

We got servings of nationalism throughout the school year. That included, in spite of the Republic, the day of the Emperor's Proclamation at Versailles in 1871, the Victory celebration of the Battle of Sudan. Even the Kaiser's birthday was not forgotten. The day marking Luther's Thesis in Wittenberg was a holiday with nationalistic overtones, just think of the hymn "Our God is a Mighty Fortress" with the chorus, "A mighty fortress is our God, a good bulwark and weapon." The 9th of November 1918 was not a national holiday. On this day our teachers did not tell us about the meaning of the November Revolution. It was a day of shame that no one wanted to identify with.