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## **Peenemünde Interviews Project: Walter Haeussermann 1/24/1990 (Tape 1 of 2) A**

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WEBVTT

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: OK. This is January 24th, 1990. Interview of Dr. Walter Haeussermann, by Michael Neufeld in Huntsville, Alabama.

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And so, first Dr. Haeussermann, I'd just like to ask you to state your full name, your birthplace, birth date, so forth.

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I'm Walter Haeussermann, in German Häussermann, and I was born 2nd of March, 1914.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And what was your birthplace?

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: My birthplace was Künzelsau—

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: How would you spell that?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —and that is in Württemberg. K-U-E, or umlaut instead of UE, N-Z-E-L-S-A-U.

00:00:55.000 --> 00:00:59.000

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And that is... where in Württemberg?

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: That is in the northern part of Baden today, Baden-Württemberg. About, since you mention before, Nuremberg, it is only about 60 kilometers from Nuremberg.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Oh, really?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Actually, west of Nuremberg.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Is it... in the area of Rothenburg, or up there?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Yes. Yes.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So you come from near Rothenburg?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Right. Right.

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I went to school in Schwäbisch Hall.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: It's certainly a name that I know, unfortunately I never had a chance to go there. I hear it's beautiful.

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Beautiful place.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Your father's occupation, was...?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: My father was, um, a merchant. Actually had his own hard- big hardware store.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And he made?—

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Agricultural machinery.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Agricultural machinery and so forth.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And he stayed with that pretty much throughout your career — before, up to the second world war — when everything was disrupted.

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —That's right. —That's right.

00:01:56.000 --> 00:02:05.000

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And, so you went to school in Schwäbisch Hall, and you go to a Gymnasium, or Realgymnasium?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: It was a Oberrealschule, in Schwäbisch Hall.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And would you say your inclination was technical, scientific?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I was always best in mathematics and physics. And I volunteered, usually, to -- also in chemistry -- and I usually volunteered to set up the equipment for my teachers in physics and in chemistry.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So when you went to university you pretty much had predetermined that you'd wanted to be an engineer or scientist?

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I first thought I should become a physicist, but then... as it is requested in Germany, you had to go through a kind of abbreviated apprenticeship before you enter an institute of technology.

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So I got this 'practicum', as we called it, in ... [[?]] for one and a half years at the Robert Bosch Company, and that gave me then the idea, I better go into engineering than into physics. I wanted to be closer to the hardware.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: You were going... Had you planned which Technische Hochschule that you wanted to go to—?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —I went first in 1933, to the Technische Hochschule, in Stuttgart.

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And after I received the 'Vordiplom' which is equal to the Bachelor degree, or Bachelor in engineering; I went then, because I preferred the level of the Institute of Technology in Darmstadt, so I went at that time to Darmstadt in '35 where I stayed to get my master's degree in electrical engineering.

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And even before I got this, I had an excellent chance to become an assistant professor on the Institute of Electrical Machinery. And then, after I had received my master's degree I stayed there in order to write my thesis. However, the war came in between, and it was not possible to continue on my thesis, which involved a lot of buildup of electrical machinery, so I could not continue on this.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: OK. Let me get some details from that. You first went to Stuttgart in 1933? — [[mic noise]] — Uh, so you first went... I was wondering, had you determined that you definitely wanted to go to a Technische Hochschule because, of course, one could also do physics in the university.

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I had made up my mind by that time already, after I had the practical experience from Robert Bosch, that I want to become an engineer, or want to go into the engineering field. And for that reason I went to the Institute of Technology in Darmstadt. In Stuttgart first.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: In Stuttgart, and you'd pretty clearly focussed on electrical engineering—

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Yes.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —right from the beginning.

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Now, you have to understand, at that time, the first four semesters were almost equal whether you studied mechanical engineering or electrical engineering. There was a little more emphasis on electrical engineering, and this, to go specifically into electrical engineering, almost still equal to electronic engineering, was then in the later semesters.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So, that initial two years is pretty much transferable...other places — and from...

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Right.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So, at Darmstadt you started at '35 and became a Diplom-Ingenieur in '37, in two years? — Or did it take a little longer?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Umm. Since I, at that time, had a practical, or I had to work on quite some practical equipment, actually especially built machinery, it was delayed, and since I was at the same time already an assistant professor, I got my, actually my...



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