

Could you briefly introduce yourself? Name, date of birth, where you grew up?

My name is Gusty Weinandy, I was born in this house in 1932 and grew up here.

Here in Doncols?

In Doncols.

Could you briefly introduce your parents?

My father was called Joseph Weinandy, my mother Christine Cornely. My father was 56 years old at the time of the offensive, my mother 6 years younger, i.e. 50 years old.

Did you also have brothers and sisters?

Yes, only one sister, Marie-Louise Weinandy.

Who played an important role in your childhood?

That was the parental home. Father, mother, the family, the neighbourhood. The church, the school.

How old were you when the German Wehrmacht invaded Luxembourg and can you still remember that day?

Yes, I remember it very well. Already at 10 o'clock in the morning, the whole army was here. The children from Sonlez had already come up for school, they were sent back home. Word had already spread that the Germans were on their way. The milk had not been collected. My father and I looked out of the skylights, from there you could see the Poteau de Doncols, and we saw them coming. Trucks, infantry, etc. They stopped here for a break. They were sitting in the yard with a bucket of milk, which had not been collected. "Red today, dead tomorrow," they said. More and more came. Some days there was a standstill, but Doncols is a street village, but it is also a thoroughfare. There were people passing through almost every day. In other villages that were more remote, they also took up accommodation from time to time, but here was always something going on: sometimes tanks passed by, sometimes artillery, infantry and then all those horses! A lot of the supplies still came by horse. It was always pretty quiet, except for one time. The Germans were playing football in the meadow barefoot and in their swimming trunks, and my mother told them to use the water in the yard as they weren't allowed into the house. "Are you Jewish?" they asked my mother. But that was the only interlude at that time. About the many horses: Doncols had many trees and orchards at that time. They put 50 horses in an orchard, and when they stood there for a day, they had not only eaten the branches, but also the bark off the trees. Since we were a border village, people were afraid of what would happen if the Belgians fought back. Then we would have been right on the front line. The Belgians had only put up some barbed wire, mobilised in the past days and felled trees. Trenches had been dug at the border so that we had to pass in zigzags. There was no resistance at all, it was quiet.

What changed in your everyday life when the Germans were here?

We immediately got German occupation, German customs and German customs officers. We had to accommodate them. Most of them had already been through the First World War, they were quiet people. At first there were only a few. They had their office opposite. GAST was written there. To this day I don't know what that means. "Generalstab" (Headquarters)... I

don't know. Smuggling went on immediately. The Belgians came over to hoard. They had a path that went past the house here. The Germans always let their shepherd dogs loose on them. At the fence, the dog would catch them and they would be taken prisoner. They were then forced to saw wood for half a day and then they were brought back across the border. An hour later they were back. That was the beginning. After that, more and more customs officers came and we had to accommodate them. They were pleasant people in themselves, most of whom had already experienced the First World War. They were happy to be here and not at the front. One of them guarded the border from our stove because it was such a cold winter. "I knew every cowshed in the village", he said. It was warm there, he could retreat there. He was the boss, but there were others there too. They were checked themselves and they had to watch the border. They also hoarded themselves. When they went home, they took bacon and eggs with them. A woman who had been hoarding here was slowly following a German, who was going on leave, at the cemetery in Doncols. When the German's suitcase suddenly popped open, bacon and eggs fell out. "Can I help you?" she asked, proudly strolling by. That was how it was back then. Then when the Wehrmacht came, the boys had to be taken across the border. That's when things got more serious. On Sunday mornings, the Germans always got a list of who was on duty and when. The women then went to early mass. Alphonse Klein was always given the list of their duty routes. Alphonse had to memorise it, and then the list was thrown into the oven. The smugglers were, of course, the best escape helpers. There was an old smuggler's trick: one of them was sent ahead. When he was caught, he "only wanted to get tobacco". Of course, he could be punished for that, because the border was completely closed after being open at the beginning. My sister had bought shoes in Bastogne and the customs officer in our house said nothing. Then a day later he said: "You bought some nice shoes in Bastogne". That was Mr Starringer, who stayed in our house at the time. He said to my father, "But you also listen to the English radio." My father smiled and said nothing. It was all OK.

How many customs officers did you have here in the house?

We had two. I still remember all their names: Schmit, Goll, Starringer, Jelsch, someone from Berlin who could imitate the landlady of the pub wonderfully, and Neubauer. Mr Schmit was here the longest, he was certainly not a Nazi.

**That means that a maximum of 2 people always lived here in addition to your family?
What did living together look like?**

That worked well, they were only here to sleep. Towards the end, the Belgian Maquis had become active, they attacked a train in Schleif that had still made it into the tunnel. We had just had a break and were watching it. The Maquis had derailed it. Then Mr Schmit asked if he could still stay with us. He was always very correct. He always got eggs and bacon when he went home. He also used to bring us shoes from over there, which you couldn't get here. I had a good pair of shoes, we couldn't take anything off in the offensive. We had to go to the air-raid shelter too. One person from each house had to go into the air-raid shelter, in our case it was my sister. The instructor came crawling out of the Kinnen's stables in the morning because they were having a drink there in the evening. It wasn't all so overly strict.

What did it mean that you "had to go to the air-raid shelter"? What was done there?

We had all been given an air raid pump, it was like an air pump. You put it in a bucket of water and then it sprayed water. It served us well in the offensive. Sand had to be laid in the attic because of the incendiary bombs. Bandages were applied, something like first aid courses.

And that took place here in the village?

Yes, here in the village. The people from Noertrange had to walk in the high snow all the way to Winseler.

What also changed was school. We were only taught German. We had to learn Gothic script. We were lucky, we should have joined the Hitler Youth. They showed up at school once when I wasn't there. There they had to sign whether they would join the Hitler Youth. Some in the village kind of supported the Germans. They didn't dare. Then others came. We had to march at the Poteau de Doncols, it was cold. The chief said he had a coat and someone who could run fast should go get it. But I didn't come back again. We had to go to Winseler once. We had a teacher who made sure the children from Doncols didn't have to go. At first we did sports: tug of war, long jump. That was fun. Then came theory, and those from the other villages knew more. They said that no one was more stupid than those from Doncols, so we were all given an earful. In the end, they said that those who had not yet enrolled should come forward. We didn't. And now I don't know whether we were enrolled or not. During the war we had lessons only in the morning, in the afternoon we were free. We had to collect herbs for tea, do sports or handicrafts or do a bit of marching, as the Germans wanted. We collected white deadnettle, for example. There's a bit of nectar in the blossom, which we used to suck out. "The Germans don't need honey." What else did we have to do? The American or British planes dropped tinfoil strips to interfere with the radar, and we had to collect those. Collect potato beetles, cut off the cows' tail hair to use as fibres. That was a little later in the war. When the teacher came a little later, school was still closed. We then sang Luxembourgish songs in front of the school and rephrased the German songs. Once the fat Hengel came from the Eifel and scolded us. Either he had been sent or he was on patrol. Otherwise, nothing happened, there were never any problems until later, when the young men were brought across the border. Then one has played with life. Our neighbours, the Hansens, they were sent to the concentration camp. They had caught one of them in Belgium or Paris.

What was the situation with the food supply during the war?

We had food stamps, you only got a certain amount. People smoked a lot, so tobacco was grown in the garden, or someone who didn't smoke gave them their ration card. The farmers in the villages were doing well, but then the others came hoarding. The people were all self-sufficient. They had a garden, cattle, chickens and eggs. Depending on the number of chickens, however, a certain number of eggs had to be delivered to the dairy. Therefore a hole was made into the wall and the chickens were fed from the other side. If they were to come to count, there wouldn't be so many. But they never came. You were also only allowed to slaughter a certain number of pigs. Each village had a mayor, here it was Mr Didier. When pigs were being slaughtered, he went through the village with the scales, but he never weighed anything. If the pig weighed 80 kilos, he wrote down 60. The pigs were slaughtered during High Mass, when the men went to church. When the pigs were slaughtered, of course they screamed. So they were slaughtered during High Mass.

Can you remember the population census?

Yes. The Gauleiter asked three questions at that time. Nationality, language and a third question. They didn't go everywhere, but here in Doncols people had to answer the questions. I remember that my father and the other inhabitants came to school at 10 o'clock and we were sent home. That was a fiasco. There were maybe a few who wanted to become German. That was then called off.

Do you remember the general strike in Wiltz?

Yes, I remember that well. They went through the village with loudspeakers, saying that anyone who didn't take up work would be shot on the spot. Then came the posters saying that the teachers and civil servants from Wiltz had been shot. My father said they were bluffing, they couldn't do that. But it was true, it did happen.

That means that as children you witnessed that there was resistance or collaboration?

Yes, we understood certain things. Not everything, but some things. Some of those who had been drafted into the Wehrmacht died or came back from leave. Then there were those who were hidden and those who were arrested. We didn't get to see everything, but we did get to see some of it.

And did you also know who stood by the Germans here in the village and who didn't?

Yes, we knew that too.

Can you be more specific about what you witnessed of the resistance here in the village?

Of the resistance? Just what was told, the village gossip. Young men were hidden, some were arrested... There were always whispers, you couldn't say everything everywhere. It was a strange time. Then there were the hidden young men who kept quiet, that went well. But when there were a lot of them in a bunch, you couldn't keep young men of that age quiet. It was worse in Heinerscheid, that's what we witnessed. Four young men were shot in a bunker there.

Can you tell us something about collaboration? Were there people in the village who obviously collaborated?

Yes, there were a few, but they didn't denounce anyone. But they had sympathies for the German. Before the war, many had farmhands and maids from the Eifel. They worked well and many had married over here. But that was not only the case in Doncols. I think the Germans put pressure on them right away because they were German.

Did the mood change during the five years of occupation?

I don't know. The Germans had advanced in such a way, and there were some who thought at the beginning that this was the right way, because they had overrun everything. That changed a bit at the end.

In what way?

People saw that there was one retreat after another. We also heard the news about Stalingrad and Africa. We sang songs like Lili Marleen and It's a Long Way to Tipperary.

So you could say that the mood was calmer at the beginning and then became more aggressive?

Yes, the Germans became more brutal after the general strike.

How did you experience the liberation in September 1944? Do you remember that day?

Yes, I remember that well too. There had been whispers for a few days. The Americans had landed in Normandy, they didn't advance at first, but then suddenly they did, Paris was liberated ... And at some point, if we lay down with our ear to the ground, we could hear the cannons and artillery from far away. It all came closer and closer, and the Germans suddenly left. They had rounded up all the customs officers and drawn a nice square with chalk where the Hansen's garden is and put up a flagpole. They had called together all the customs officers from Troisvierges to Boulaide - or maybe even further - because Herr Speer was supposed to come. But he didn't come, he just wanted to count again what "personnel" he still had at his disposal. They didn't show up there, however, but in front of our house. One day they were told to march off. A truck picked them up and then they were gone. We were happy, but it was another week or two before the Americans arrived. Then in September the Americans were here. The priest had already hoisted the Luxembourg flag when the Germans sent another scout car. They shot once, but not at the flag, in the air. The car went back to Boulaide or wherever it came from. It took a few more days, but the Americans didn't pass through here in the village. They drove from Bavigne up to Schumannseck and then moved into Bastogne. After the evening mass, they said the Americans were in Schumannseck. And off we went. We ran across the fields, through Pommerloch to Schumannseck. We hadn't told anyone at home, but the priest had seen in which direction we were running and knew where we were. There was a lot going on at Schumannseck, everyone had gathered there. More and more troops, trucks and so on were coming. In the evening there was a party in the pub. The young men who had been in hiding were already there. They sang all sorts of songs: the Brabançonne, the Marseillaise and the Luxembourgish songs. They were celebrating.

How did you experience the time afterwards, between September and December?

We went to school with a new curriculum. We started learning French. Opposite the school, at Mr Streveler's, the Americans had taken up quarters. They slept there and had a field kitchen. From the school, we saw them chopping wood. They didn't saw it, but one chopped first and then the other. It was fun to watch until the teacher shouted, "You'll never learn French like that!" They did their chores and then they left. They came from Wiltz, I think. It was quiet then. They asked for eggs because they were fed up with their canned food. I was never there, but up on the road they were handing out chocolate and chewing gum. Many were stationed in Bastogne. There were 3 pubs in the village. In every pub was one young woman, and the Americans would go there. They felt very safe and thought the war was over.

How did you then experience the Battle of the Bulge?

The mood suddenly turned sombre. There would be no progress, they would not have enough supplies. They had only advanced to the border. The mood was depressed. Until suddenly they were told that the Germans were coming back. They hadn't listened to the Luxembourgers, who had warned that so many troops had been mobilised on the other side. They were coming, they were not coming, it was not clear. Refugees came first. Only a few for the first few days, but then more and more with horse- and ox-drawn carts. The horse-

drawn carts overtook the ones drawn by oxen, we had the house full. People from Heinerscheid, Eschweiler, Wiltz. The house was full, the barn, the stables as well, it was swarming everywhere. We had packed a ladder truck for the escape. On the fourth day we were told that the Germans were now at the Poteau de Doncols. We should leave too, but how, with all the refugees we now had in the house? We couldn't leave like that. So we stayed. The last young people who were still here jumped on their bikes and fled. There were a few cars in the village, they were also packed and then drove off. Around noon they were at the Poteau de Doncols, but they didn't come to the village yet. They parked their tanks on the slope and came up from Schleif. The Americans hardly put up a fight, they fired at them. They had shot down a truck, up by the isolated house „op der Klunsch“, coming from Wiltz. The Americans retreated as far as Bras, that's where the barricade was. It took a little while for them (the Germans) to come to the village. Then they came up from Schleif and from Bastogne, where they hadn't got through. That also produced a big traffic jam. Tanks, artillery, infantry were coming. The infantry had bicycles and little handcarts. They were loaded, even strapped with ammunition. There was a whole baggage train coming. Many young men were with them, they had such cheeky faces, but also many old men who were overtired and just trotted along. They came to this house immediately. The field kitchen was set up on the stairs at the back of the yard. The cook stood higher up so that he could reach the big pots better. Then it echoed through the whole house: “Where do you have the hams?” – “Oh, you don't need to look, we've already found them” – “Now we want some pudding.” My mother found some, and then they got pudding too. In the evening, an old soldier sat in the living room while we were in the next room, and he said, “Hans, be good.” My mother had told us that the ham had been stolen from us. And then the refugees. At the Poteau de Doncols, one man was shot because he had a revolver with him. He had tried to hide it in the hedge, but it was too late. That was Mr Lucas from Winseler, shot by the Germans. The Binsfeld family from Winseler was also here. The father, who had emigrated but returned because of a death, also had a revolver and was wondering what to do with it now. The houses and stables were full of Germans! The next morning, when he was mucking out the horses, he put the revolver in his waistband. He went to the dung heap and shook it out of his trouser leg into the dung to hide it. Some still had papers from the Wehrmacht, that was all burnt. More and more came, and then we were in the middle of it. At first it was quiet until the first shells fell. That lasted a few days. When the first shells hit the lower part of the village, people from over there came to us in the cellar. Once we hid in the family Tholl's cellar when we went out to get firewood and the shells fell nearby and my father was alone in our own cellar. They set up here, there was ammunition everywhere, tanks. There was a bit of everything.

That's probably when it became more dangerous?

Yes, that's when it became more dangerous. Until Christmas it was still relatively quiet, there were only isolated impacts. Further up, there was a German who had a DKW, a sports car. The man must have been from a better family. That's where the first shell hit and hit the DKW. He was still complaining in the kitchen the next morning. He had to wash himself in a cake tin. Then Christmas came, and they celebrated it. From the kitchen they said, “Schnapps is too common, we'll make liqueur.” Then they made schnapps with honey and brandy. My sister said that they had also got hold of the pots in which we had always boiled soap during the war. We got soap stone from the pharmacy, and soap was made from the fat of the pigs, from the intestines or from what was left over. They had got hold of that very pot. In the evening they were drunk. We were in this room, they were next door. They were singing and

climbing on the table. My father said, "I wish the ceiling would fall on their heads." They had a little Christmas tree, which my sister liked so much. But our ornaments were hanging from it! The next day, the tree was lying in the hallway covered in vomit. At noon, when we were eating in the kitchen, there was a commotion. The ceiling had really fallen on their heads. They came out, white with dust. On Christmas Day, there was a shot-up ambulance in the yard, with two medics inside, two field chaplains. Their ambulance had been hit at Saint-Hubert, they belonged to the 5th Parachute Division, which at that time extended from Saint-Hubert to here. They said to my mother, "We must not win the war." They wanted to hold a mass and asked if I could be an altar boy. In the church, the ceiling had also fallen down, the windows were broken, and no one was there except the two field chaplains and the priest's cook, Caroline Felgen. I stood at the altar and froze. They saw the end too, I think. That was Christmas. After mass, in the morning, they all had to line up at the back of the yard. They had a truck disguised as a threshing machine. A whole company had lined up and they were given a small parcel with a fir twig on it, an officer gave a speech and they stood there quietly. A plane flew by, one of theirs or an American one, and suddenly it was over when they realized that the planes were coming. Across the street was a tank that wasn't camouflaged, and when the sky cleared in the afternoon, the planes spotted it and dived on it. We squeezed into the corners between the double doors over there. Every time my father thought it was over, the next one came. Everything went dark, turned red and rattled. They had thrown a canister of phosphorus at the tank. Nothing happened to those inside. But on the other side at Kinnen's four Germans had been killed, the cattle in the barn were dead, the barn was on fire. Our gable wall was also full of phosphorus, but it was panelled with zinc, so nothing could burn. Then it was quiet again, and we all ran back and forth with buckets full of water, even with cooking pots, to put out the fire, which we succeeded in doing. That is the advantage when you're right on the spot! It happened that the artillery fired at the village, then the grenade launchers, twice bombs fell. Once the house shook in the evening like an earthquake. The radio operators were at Thilmany's. After the tank attack, my father went to the captain, the Hauptmann, and he said that we would free up a room for them in the cellar. The fireplace reached down into the cellar, so we could make a fire there. Those in the other room asked if they could dig a hole through the wall so that they could make a fire too. Then we were there in the cellar, together with the neighbours, Thilmanys, „Schmatts“ (Family Majerus). In the evening there were even more. Up to 20 people were lying on the potatoes, my mother and my aunt sat in armchairs. we lay on the potatoes in one room, the Germans in the other. We had the potatoes for the pigs, in the other room were the potatoes for eating. My mother sent me to get potatoes from the other side. That's where the Germans lay when they were back from their positions. I would dig the potatoes out from under the Germans. I remember grabbing one by the boot and pushing him away. They were so dead tired and numb that they didn't move. So we led a cellar life. We only went outside to feed the cattle. There were more and more air raids and bombs. The Poteau de Doncols was a neuralgic point. They could no longer pass through there. The supplies only came at night. The "Stork" would stand there, and when a vehicle came, the Stork would report it. It was an observation plane. It was never shot down. If it had been shot down, the American artillery would have fired at this point. The task of those who were sitting in the bunkers was only to shoo the passing horse-drawn carts past so that they could get across quickly. One evening a German came and said he was lucky to be alive because they had shot his horse and cart out from under him. After Christmas there was snow, and we always saw in the morning that the fields were churned up by the shells. Then another one came - but that must have been before, because we weren't in the cellar yet

- a short, stocky German sergeant, who yelled in the hallway that 80 horses and 100 men had to go into the house. My mother said, "Put the men wherever you want, but how are we going to get these horses in?" They didn't have 80, but we had to take our cattle out of the stables. Even though it was dark, we were not allowed to turn on any lights. But where to put the cattle? After all, everything was broken and there were no longer any fenced meadows, so we tied them to the trees. I was supposed to light the way with a candle, and we tripped over the drawbars of their wagons with the cattle. The Germans then knocked the candle out of my hand with the words "Lights out!" because of the planes. They also had Russian war prisoners with them. In the barn was grain in sacks that were closed with twine. At that time, it was weighed out in 100-kilo sacks. The Russians couldn't carry that, so they dropped them in the yard. The sacks then burst open and the Russians received a beating. One came crying to my mother, who gave him a bottle of brandy. He came back a short time later and said the bottle had fallen and broken. I think they had drunk it. My mother then gave him a new bottle. There were days like that, but there were also quieter days. On New Year's Eve, the Americans shelled one village after another with artillery. The large farm of the family Klein called Frantzen burnt down, they came to the village. They had managed to save the cattle and put them up at Heinz's. When the Americans came, their farm also burnt down and the animals were killed. They then came to us in the cellar. The Germans had a radio in the cellar corridor, and at midnight Hitler spoke. The Germans stood there and shouted, "Quiet!" But house and yard were burning, of course we talked. It is clear why people weren't quiet. "Silence, the Führer is speaking!" It was quiet for a few minutes, then people started talking again. Nobody jumped up, he talked about Liège and all sorts of things, they just stood there and nobody said a word. They knew they were sitting here in the dirt and not in Antwerp or wherever. After that it was quieter again. We didn't have a toilet in the cellar, so we always had to go outside. I also went upstairs, and when I got to the hallway, the door was open. It was always open because of the planes, so you could get in and out quickly. The Germans never ran down the stairs, they literally jumped. In the hallway stood the captain's cadet, who always had to stand guard there. He came to us and said, "Mother, they're after the chickens again." "Oh, let them take them, we can't go out now." I had to go upstairs, and the radio was at the bottom of the cellar stairs. I had to pee urgently, and the little trickle ran downstairs into her radio. That was sabotage. The next morning they asked: "Who peed in the radio?" I stayed quiet as a mouse. I wouldn't have trusted anyone to do anything about it either. I was never terribly afraid during the offensive itself. Probably because we already had the Germans in the house during the war. The first day the Germans came, we were on the other side at Kinnen's, there was a wall. We stood in the farmyard entrance with the Deprez, the Kinnen's tenants, and Emile Reichert from Sonlez, known as Mim. He was French. The Germans had moved towards Bastogne. Only one scout car came down and they asked whether we had seen any Americans. We answered, "No." But Mim had a revolver and asked whether he should shoot. We stood there perplexed, I think Constant Deprez moved in front of him. It was very close several times. Also the aeroplane attacks or the bombs – we could have been hit. They also had grenade launchers, which my uncle from Heinerscheid already knew because the village had come under fire earlier. The grenade launchers were not far away, they were rather small and thick. You hear the firing, but a second passes before the impact. We could no longer let the cattle run free. The Germans had thrown them out of the stables. We only had one stable left, but it was just a kind of storage because the door was too small. We had managed to get some cattle in there. That's where the dung lay too. The Germans had laid straw over it, on which they had lain down. They weren't all in the cellar. They lay nice and warm on the dung. Because

we couldn't let the cattle run free, we had to water them. I stood in the kitchen and pumped, because the pump in the yard was no longer there. My father ran around the yard with the buckets. My uncle stood in the stable and shouted, "Come now!" and "Stay there now!" He could hear when a grenade was fired off. I saw a grenade fly over the farm once. It was indeed dangerous. It was best to sit quietly in the cellar.

Can you also remember the liberation later? How did you experience it?

We sat in the cellar, the Germans were in their positions. They took up positions in the morning and evening, camouflaged with white sheets. They had my mother's curtains wrapped around their helmets and always took up position when it was dark. They got goulash from the one we called the butcher. He came and wanted to slaughter a bull. "But no, why don't you slaughter the cow that's already got a piece of shrapnel?" we said and bribed him with brandy. So he slaughtered the cow and we got meat from it too. He cut so slowly that he cut goulash all day long. That kept him busy and safe. He said with every piece he cut, "When I was still in Crimea ...". When it came to the liberation, not everyone wanted to join in anymore. When the Americans came, it didn't really work out. They had met resistance in Berl , so they wanted to come here to Doncols, but they came under such shellfire that they had to break off. So they only came at night. That was on 10 January. The artillery also fired on the village until it was light. Then suddenly there was silence. "Now they are coming. At dawn", the Germans said. But they didn't come yet because there was no progress. They had advanced to the village, but the artillery was up on the hill and fired. But it didn't work out. In the morning, when the artillery stopped, the captain ordered everyone to come outside. But many did not want to join in. He called them up and stood there with his revolver. I can still hear him clicking the safety catch on and off. So they came outside. But three of them, including the so-called butcher, the man from Crimea, had gone outside with them. But they returned to their hiding place shortly afterwards. "I'd rather break stones in America than still go along with this." We hid them among the things the neighbours had brought with them. They told us not to go outside and not to go near any windows because it was so dangerous. The man from Crimea said that. They came to ask whether any of us had seen them. My uncle from Heinerscheid didn't know they were hiding among them and said with confidence that no one was there. So they left again. The Americans came very close on this side, but there was still resistance on the other side. There was no progress until the tanks came. Lieutenant Griffin, in charge of 6 tanks, had been watching the road. Bois-de Poux. the path goes down so steeply there, in the direction of Golette river, he said, that they had to partially winch the tanks to the beech trees. Down in the valley was snow and frost but the ground was muddy. So they sank into this mud with the tanks. That's why it took so long for them to come with the tanks, because they had to get them going again first. They shelled the Heinzen's big farm until it burned. The Americans had tried to go ahead. One of the German sergeants said, "Follow me!" But they had barely covered ten metres when four had already been shot. They had to wait, and it took time until the tanks came. Then, when the tanks shot up the farm in flames, they had to get out. They came to one house after another. The Germans still had the Red Cross, the medics, in the cellar at that time. The two of them and those who had been hiding stood there and were taken prisoner. They searched them and found many revolvers that others had left lying around. They (the Americans) were welcome. Mrs Thilmany was a Belgian and ran the pub. She always said during the war, "Whether their name is Will or Jimmy, nobody gets any more schnapps from me!" But she was the first one there with the bottle. Then the house, the cellar, was full. The place was crawling with Americans. My

father and an officer who knew French drew sketch maps on the white wall in the kitchen. After a day, we were told that it wasn't over yet. There were still many Germans in the woods, and it took three more nights to get them out. They also found some material, but rather less. The Americans then said it was far too dangerous and we would be evacuated. We were only here for one day, then we went to the Klein's in the cellar. Only 3 men were allowed to stay in the village to feed the cattle. It was terribly cold, there was a lot of snow, and they had moved in so massively. And they needed to house their soldiers. If you empty the rooms completely, you can fit a lot of sleeping bags in them, we only understood that later. At 11 p.m. we were loaded onto trucks. Up in Bras there was still shooting, flares were flying, the sky was bright, and the machine guns were chattering. This village was not liberated until the next day. We started at midnight, first to Tarchamps, then along forest paths to Bavigne, then back up to Boulaide. In Arsdorf we stood for two hours on these open trucks with the old people. An American convoy had priority, so we had to wait. It was 7 o'clock and it was just getting light when we arrived in Luxembourg City. In Hobscheid, someone was already putting milk on the doorstep. We were lucky and found accommodation with acquaintances. My uncle and aunt stayed with relatives. We were there for a total of three weeks. We came back one by one. My uncle was the first to return, nothing kept him in Luxembourg City. On the way north, we were checked everywhere by the militia. We stopped several times. Thomas the butcher looked everywhere for petrol, but there were only empty canisters everywhere. "You come with me to your aunt in Noertrange." My uncle was here and the house was full of Americans. My sister, Marie-Louise, came back eventually too. The others came back later. They didn't come into the house then because it was full of Americans. I remember that there was a sentry box in front of the house where an American was standing guard. We slept with neighbours until suddenly they said they were leaving. I don't know where they went. They were gathering the German prisoners of war and carrying ammunition. You could see them blowing it up near Tarchamps. That was the Americans, but there was also the militia. Slowly but surely, everything settled down again.

How would you describe Doncols when you came back after the Battle of the Bulge?

Only then did we see what had been destroyed. The last day we were here before leaving, we stayed only in the vicinity. Now we saw how much had really been destroyed: destroyed vehicles, artillery, tanks ... Dead horses were lying around, mines. It was still dangerous. Only then did we see the full extent of what had happened. People gradually came back. They tried to repair the windows. Back then you didn't have plastic yet, so they used cellophane wrappers. They were partly green and partly transparent, so you could see through that part. Everyone started to clean up, which was not easy. It was no longer possible to use horse-drawn vehicles because the Germans had taken the horses. There were only a few warmblood horses in the village left which had been caught. The people still had potatoes and flour. Only three chickens were left. The Americans were just waiting for them to lay eggs so they could take them. We also ate American tinned ham and eggs and the like. They didn't want the tins anymore, they lay everywhere in the bunker holes. A lot has been left behind, for example powdered milk. The cows didn't give any more milk, so my uncle mixed the milk powder and fed it to the calves. Whatever you could find. That was also a difficult time.

How would you describe the solidarity among people?

It was pretty good. The neighbourhood was good. Everyone had to look out for themselves. People helped each other, but everyone had enough to do themselves. The first helpers were a pro-German team from the south. There were craftsmen and a foreman from ARBED, Mister Hoffmann. They came to clean up. They plugged the holes in the roofs. They were here until a contractor came at some point. The farmers got German prisoners of war as farmhands. Some were here for a long time, others stole bread and fled across the border back to Germany in just one night. Almost every village got a tractor. Two Swiss men came, funny guys. They used to sing over in what was left of the pub. They ploughed, spread the manure. Today it's common for farmers to drive all night with big tractors. Back then they could drive with lights on and there were two drivers. That made for progress. Then came another tractor, a Fordson, which had no tyres. The reconstruction began. Sometimes there was a lack of fuel. Jos sometimes fetched a barrel of fuel from Ettelbruck with the horse. There was a shortage of everything. The wholesaler, Mister Clarens, didn't come either. The grocer also drove to Wiltz with the horse to get goods at Clarens's. Gradually everything settled down again. My father died in September 1945, not because of the offensive, but because everyone smoked so much at the time. Afterwards, my mother was alone with us, which wasn't so easy either.

The ammunition that was lying around everywhere after the war was probably also dangerous?

Yes. The Americans instructed the Germans to collect ammunition. But not all of it, of course, because there was so much everywhere. Ammunition was still being found years later. There is still some in the ground. Back then, we buried the dead horses and cattle in the bomb craters. Luckily the holes existed, because otherwise you would have had to dig a deep hole to bury such an animal. There is certainly still ammunition in the craters. A cannon and American artillery were located near the village. There were so many copper shells that they threw them into bunker holes. I think still today some are in there, even though some have been dug up again. I had a friend who died because of the grenades. You can still find some today. Wherever construction work is being done, they search with a metal detector.

What goes through your mind when you think back to the war from today's perspective?

So much has changed, but it is still "war and peace". You would have thought that after everything that happened, after everything the Germans did back then, in Russia and in our country... Everything was quiet for a while, and then you think ... Oh, I don't know. But people don't change. Technology has achieved so much, everything is now so comfortable and practical. We have become "golden boys". And then another war starts.