

**Perhaps you could introduce yourself briefly, i.e. your name, date of birth and place of birth.**

Metty Krack, born in Heiderscheid on 23/05/1928. I was the oldest of 4 children. We had 4 horses and were almost the only farmer with 4 horses. We had a flock of sheep, about 100 to 120. They were all sheared in the spring. We had a shepherd and a sheep pen between Heiderscheid and Kehmen. The shepherd also spent the night there in his little hut. At noon he came home with the dogs, and then the dogs and he got something to eat. We had two farmhands who helped with milking the cows and mucking out in the stalls and also in the fields. In the spring we went out to the oak coppices with my father and uncle, taking soup, potatoes and meat. My father would score the trunks from top to bottom, and I would cut off the branches that were used to make staves. Then I had the tree stump with a ring and iron nails attached to it. There I first cut them off and then hammered them. Then they were piled up and tied together in a bundle. Then when I hammered them, the bark, which was as thick as a branch, was made into small bundles. The big bundles were taken to Ettelbruck. For that we drove to the train with two horses.

**What was school like during the war? What was different from before?**

In the 6th grade we had to go to vocational school. We had to walk to Esch-sur-Sûre for that. There was rationing at home – at that time there was no tobacco any more. Everyone who was older, that is, my parents and my uncle and aunt, had a tobacco card. None of them smoked. So I had four cards. And on our walk - there were usually six of us - we all smoked. These cards were a rarity and very much in demand. After primary school, because we were in the Hitler Youth, we weren't allowed to go to secondary school. So my father sent me to the agricultural school in Ettelbruck. I also got private lessons in French.

**Can you still remember 1944, when the Battle of the Bulge began?**

I can still remember that well. I was at secondary school then. On Fridays we visited the Americans on the Herrenberg, where they had placed the biggest guns. On Saturday we were supposed to write a geography essay. On Friday evening we were with the Americans and hadn't studied much. Philippe Theis, with whom I shared a room in Diekirch, was with me. When we got to school at 8 o'clock, the headmaster told us to come back at 10 o'clock. At 10 o'clock we took our bicycles to visit my cousin Martha Flammang from Eschdorf at the girls' boarding school, and then to go to Heiderscheid. There were quite a few American tanks there. We went home, and there the first people from Dahl, Nocher and Hosingen had already come with the horse-drawn carts and told us that the Germans were there. These people were going south. I told my father that no German would come to us as long as the American tanks were there. When we came out of church on Sunday, the village was full of horse-drawn carts heading south. They all came from the villages on the other side of the river Sauer. The front was on the Sauer. The Germans had blown up the bridges in Heiderscheidergrund and in Tadler. The Americans were in the village. When the Germans attacked, my father hitched up the horses and we set off. My parents, my Uncle Charles, my Aunt Bebbly and we 4 children, my brother Mich, my sister Ketty and my sister Margréit and me. We had adopted 2 more children from my Uncle Jeng. Their mother was ill, so we had taken in Odette and Thérèse. So we all climbed into the cart and I told my father to drive towards Belgium because they had an army at the border. So we drove towards Belgium. After Grevels, my mother said we would stay there. So we drove to Wahl, which was also full of vehicles. Further on, we saw a big farm. We stopped there and were welcomed by the woman. We were given a room and the following day I told my father that someone had to go home to feed the pigs, the cows and the sheep. So I set off for Heiderscheid with our neighbours' son, Marcel - he was a bit older but hadn't been called up because of a disability. We didn't take the road because we didn't know if there were Germans or Americans in the vehicles. So we took the

field paths. We went to Merscheid and from there we took the field path to Heiderscheid. On the way we met the militia with shouldered rifles. "The Germans are down in the village." We said they wouldn't catch us, we would sneak in from behind where no one would see us. Somewhere on an incline there was already a shot-up German tank or scout car. So we ran on, and the neighbours' son immediately went into the cow shed. We went in through the back door. The militia we had met had warned us that the Germans would take boys our age too. We said they would not find us. Once we were inside, Marcel threw hay to the cows and I went into the house to heat the milk from the jugs for the pigs. I made a fire and suddenly I heard noise in the yard and ran to the attic. I thought I wouldn't be able to get out of the cellar, so I chose the attic. There you could climb up to the front over the door of the pigsty. There I saw two Germans with a machine gun and other soldiers, they were looking around the rooms. They took the sheets with them to camouflage themselves. It was winter, after all, and there was snow. The first thing they did was open the door to the meat safe next to the stairs and took the sausages and bacon from there. Then someone called out for the others to come and have coffee. The neighbours, Marcel's parents, had stayed at home. We were all gone. They had made coffee. The houses were built next to each other. So the Germans left our house again. I couldn't go downstairs or they would have seen me. So I looked out of the skylight and saw that the yard of the neighbouring house was also full of Germans. I thought to myself that if they saw me, they would shoot me. I went out of the window and slid into the gutter because it was slippery. I walked along the gutter all the way over to the neighbouring house where there was a sheet-metal barn at the end of the gutter. I jumped onto the roof of the barn and from there onto the ground. Then I went into the neighbour's barn. Marcel was already there too, and we hid in a pile of hay. Then firing began. It came from Goesdorf, where they were firing in the direction of Heiderscheid. And they attacked with one or 2 to 3 tanks from the direction of Bourscheid. They were Tiger tanks. The haystack caught fire. And the house too. We crawled into the cellar from the barn. The tank fired between 2 cellar hatches and the windows popped out of their frames. We came out and saw that the barn was on fire. The tank was also on fire because the Americans had fired at it with a bazooka. The Germans left the tank backwards and one remained lying on the ground. He was lying on the back of the tank and later - he was completely covered with snow - an elderly farmer, whose name I will not mention, came and saw a boot. He wanted to take the boot, but he couldn't manage. So he pulled harder, and then the leg emerged. This farmer had no horses, no cows and no oxen, only goats. After we had left the burning barn, we freed the neighbour's cows and drove them into our shuppen. There we fed them some more later. Then we wanted to try to put out the fire. There were not many people left in the village, but we managed to find a few who helped us put out the fire. The commander had given us permission to use the fire hose. So we connected it to the well in our yard and started pumping. Then a shell hit the gable. Everyone ran away, and the fire-fighting action was over. Our house burned; we couldn't do much anymore. We moved into the cowshed, where we also had to spend the night. The following day we slept in the lower part of the village. My aunt and uncle lived there. They gave us each a room of our own. However, we slept in the cellar on the potatoes, which were covered with straw. Everyone who was still in the village - about a dozen inhabitants - spent the night there. The Americans had occupied the house, the kitchen, the parlour, the storeroom, the good living room. The path to the cellar branched off from the path to the cowshed. A day labourer and a farmhand would never go down to the cellar. There the rosary was prayed until everyone was asleep. The two lay in the hallway. But once a shell hit the farmyard, they were quickly in the cellar. The Americans were upstairs, but we had the wine in the cellar. It was covered with potatoes. Once we went upstairs and took some wine with us. They were really surprised. In exchange for a bottle of wine we got, for instance, chocolate or chewing gum and sweets from them. That was nice. On the other side of the Sauer, the Germans were as far as Goesdorf and Nocher. They were shelling Heiderscheid. But only when the sun wasn't shining. When

the sun was shining, the planes were in the air again, and they would have given away their position if they had fired. The first thing the planes bombed were the church towers. That's where the artillery observers sat. The Americans had set up their artillery on the road from Ettelbruck to Feulen in the direction of Heiderscheidergrund. When the Germans fired once, they fired 40 times. That's why the Germans didn't fire so often. They always fired at the upper part of the village. No shells fell in the lower part. The Americans took the dead there and covered them up. The ambulances then picked them up. The last shell came on the 31st and flew into the gable of the Hengen family. The American who was sitting there in the kitchen got hit by a piece of shrapnel and died.

**Can you remember the rebuilding of the villages? What happened when your family was back in Heiderscheid? What did the village look like and how was it rebuilt?**

In the upper part of the village, some houses had been burnt and many had been shelled. Ours was also burnt down. The workers who had come to rebuild the houses collected the sand from our yard, where piles of sand and gravel were heaped up. Our house was rebuilt as well.

**When the war was over, you shot with the guns you found. That must have been dangerous. Do you remember that?**

It was indeed a bit dangerous. We were 15-16 years old and we all had a rifle. We had found carbines, you had to load them after every shot. But we had also found a machine gun with 10 rounds in it. We went out into the fields with it and shot at the electricity poles to shoot the balls that the wires were attached to. I had found a rucksack in our yard in which I found a pistol. A P38. It was a rare weapon. In order not to get into trouble, I threw the rucksack into our threshing machine. When the Americans asked about the rucksack, I said the Germans must have taken it. So they left me alone. There was an ammunition dump between Eschdorf and Merscheid and also in Heiderscheid towards Kehmen. We went there to get ammunition. We also did exercises to shoot at mines. When he was with the sheep, our shepherd, who was younger than me, shot with his carbine at mines that he placed on the road. They were lying everywhere. When he hit them, they exploded. We tried that too. But not so often.