Keep it quiet!

Family secrets in the aftermath of WWII

VESTAGDERMUSEET

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The drafts of most of the personal accounts have been written by the following employees at the Vest-Agder Museum: Birgit Gautschi, Marius Kolkin, Arve Lindvig, Judith Seland Nilsen, Kathrin Pabst, and Gunhild Aaby, and afterwards examined and approved by the informants themselves.

This does not apply to Jan Jørg Tomstad and Morten Rimstad Bentsen, who have signed in full name. They have written their accounts personally.

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Keep it quiet!

Family secrets in the aftermath of WW II

21 personal narratives
about how experiences during the war
have affected the lives of the time witnesses´
children and grandchildren.

This publication is a catalogue,
following the travelling exhibition
“Keep it quiet!
Family secrets in the aftermath of WWII”.
It is based on the Vest-Agder Museum´s
documentary project with the same name,
2020-2022.

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Keep it quiet! Family secrets in aftermaths of WWII

Long-term consequences of the World War II in Norway, and its repercussions within some families

KATHRIN PABST, PHD, PROJECT LEADER

The project's background and starting point

In the years between 1940 and 1945 some 500 000 German soldiers were temporarily deployed to Norway in order to occupy a country whose population numbered 3.0 million people. This implies that in that period one out of six persons could be Germans, and in certain parts of the country the percentage was even higher. Throughout the five years of occupation the German troops approached the Norwegian local society in a number of different ways. They recruited political sympathizers, and they punished their adversaries hard and brutally. They hired Norwegians to build military installations or roads, they fell in love with Norwegian girls, married them and got them pregnant. In 1945, when the occupation was over, the Germans departed. But they had left their traces, and more than 75 years later there are still many who struggle with the long-term consequences of what happened during the war.

The condemnation of those who had collaborated with the Germans could be strong, both from the Norwegian authorities and from the local society. Many women who had had an affair with a German soldier, had their hair cut off publicly and were rejected by their families and the people around them. Many of the children whose father was a German soldier were branded as "German bastards", and some even stowed away in earmarked institutions. At the same time other kinds of relations between Norwegians and the occupiers were suppressed in the public debate, such as the large number of profiteering companies and individuals who had worked for the Germans and supplied them with goods and materials they needed.

Incidents that took place during or after the war could result in different types of long-term consequences, regardless the side one was on. Many of those who fought against the Germans, found that life in the aftermath was hard to handle, and even though many members of the resistance were decorated and honoured, there were

This advertisement was published on social media and in local newspapers in January 2020.
DESIGN: PER GRIMSGAARD

some who had risked their lives for Norway without feeling that their contribution and sacrifice was properly acknowledged and appreciated.

Even today the history of the Second World War contributes to forming people's self-image, their family history and identity. In some families it is still, two to three generations later, challenging to talk about what happened. This is particularly so if family members were on the "wrong side" during the war – those who supported the occupier or fraternized with the foreign troops in a way that could be considered improper or even treacherous. But even among those who had been on the "right side", had to cope with severe long-term effects of the war, for example after imprisonment and torture. This is what constitutes the core of Vest-Agder Museums's documentation and exhibition project, *"Untold Stories. Family Secrets after the War"*: The different personal attempts to handle what happened during the temporary migration of more than 500 000 German soldiers from 1940 to 1945.

About the working process and the contact with the informants[1]

The project was launched in January 2020 with an announcement and advertisement in newspapers and social media. In the advertisement we asked: *Are you a descendant of a German or of someone who worked for the Germans? What kind of marks has the war left on you and your family? And: Which stories are told – and which are suppressed?* Our premise was that possible family secrets must have been kept secret for some reason, and that it, therefore, would not be legitimate to ask people directly to share their personal stories. Research from other countries and disciplines indicated that trauma could be involved in many of them, and that this made it particularly challenging to talk about what has happened. This was the main reason why we decided to wait and see who contacted us, instead of being more active in finding the informants ourselves. Only on one occasion, towards the end of the project, have we approached an informant, well knowing that he had gone public with his story before.

After the public advertisement we received several calls and e-mails from people who wanted to talk with us and become informants. Each of these informants has been followed up by one member of the Museums´ project group, for a one-to-three hour interview, face-to-face or through the digital platform Zoom. Afterwards a summary of the interview was written and sent to the informants for comments, corrections and finally an approval by means of a detailed declaration of consent. Two of our informants chose to write their stories themselves.

As theoretical starting point for our work we mainly used the German philosopher Axel Honneth's approach to recognition. In his well-known book *Kampf um Anerkennung* from 1992, Honneth establishes a social

theory based on the premise that people have a fundamental need for being respected and recognized on three different levels: as a loveable person by the members of his inner circle, as a citizen with well-defined rights from the state, and as an equal member of a group where his unique skills and experiences are held in high esteem.[2] The Museum wanted to work on all three levels. We wanted a genuine and authentic contact with the informant during and after the interview. It was self-evident and imperative to us that all the legal rights and demands an informant has in his encounter with a public museum would be followed.[3] And we wanted to use the exhibition as a channel of dissemination in order to reach a public which could be moved by and made attentive to what the informant had experienced.[4]

Our advertisement in newspapers and social media has prompted 31 people to contact us. Among them were women who have had relations with German soldiers, their children and grandchildren, descendants of members of the Norwegian Nazi Party and descendants of German soldiers. Several stories bear witness of traumatic incidents during and after the war, which have made a lasting impression on the families. 21 have given us permission to recount their stories, most of them under a vow of anonymity.

Examples from some of the stories we have collected

Our informants are men (11) and women (10) from all over the country, aged between 32 and 94. All three generations are represented with a large majority of members from the second generation. One informant is a first generation representative, which implies that she was a grown-up person who made her own independent choices during the war. Fifteen informants are from the second generation, that is to say they were children of people who were grown-ups during the war, and five informants are third generation members, which means they are grandchildren of people from the first generation. In one case we have had the opportunity to interview three generations from one family. Only three informants come forward under their full name. Five others have authorized us to use their first name; all the rest have wanted to be anonymous.

The stories we were invited to share have so many different angles and subtleties that it is hard to categorize them. Any attempt will necessarily have to be superficial in the sense that the categorization will be based on the most prominent aspect of the story, without considering the many subsidiary aspects which make that story unique, and which might have prompted us to categorize in a different way. For the travelling exhibition here in Norway we have selected extracts from 12 of the stories, and nine can be found in their entirety on the following pages.

The most important findings

A first analysis of the collected material indicates that at least two aspects play an important role for the long-term consequences of the war for children and grandchildren. The consequences seem to be more severe

a) if the first-hand witnesses have had painful experiences which they couldn't or wouldn't share, and
b) if the local society acted as a punitive instrument.

Altogether the stories show that silence and concealment have had a major impact on children and grandchildren. The descendants have often been able to perceive that something was withheld, either because the behaviour of their parents or grandparents indirectly revealed this or because of the reactions they received from their local society. Research confirms how important it is for the development of one's own identity that one knows who or what has had formative influence on one´s life. If one is denied access to all the knowledge required for this process, one could be left feeling alone and not accepted as separate individual.[6]

We have also seen that the local society has had a major influence on how one was able to cope with the happenings during and after the war. The local environment could either accept and support or punish and exclude. If everyone in the local community knew what had happened and accepted the chosen course of action as understandable, given the challenges one was up against, the long-term consequences turned out to very limited. If, on the other hand, it was necessary to handle not only the incidents as such, but also punishment and to some extent exclusion from the local society, the negative consequences, even for descendants, were intensified and to some extent multiplied.

In addition, the material suggests that negative behaviour such as violence and anger, as well as negative feelings like shame, guilt and loneliness might have been transferred to the succeeding generations. The less the descendants knew about the reasons for the negative behaviour or feelings of their parents or grandparents, the stronger the negative impact seemed to have been. Several circumstances are likely to play additional roles here, and further studies are required before stating clear correlations.

Intergenerational transfer

In general, our first findings support research results within disciplines like psychology, epigenetics and neuroscience which over the last decades have studied so-called inter- or transgenerational transfer. The concept refers to the transfer of a "something" – most often in the form of memories of specific events or experiences – from one generation to another, either within one family or in the society as a whole from members of one generation to members of the next. Memories that are transferred may change form and content with the passage of time, and both the memories themselves and the change that can be ascribed to the passage of time depend on a number of external factors, psychological as well as biological, which in turn are unique for each person and each situation.

When traumatic or potentially traumatizing experiences form the basis, that is to say incidents which were experienced as life-threatening or negative to such an extent that they have affected one's life over a long period of time, the transfer may be particularly noticeably.[7] People who have been exposed to war, flight, genocide, forced migration or totalitarian regimes – and their descendants[8] - are among those who are especially exposed to this.

Some thoughts upon the theme, the working process and the dissemination
The catchline of Vest-Agder Museum is "We tell YOUR story", and this includes the difficult, sensitive and tabooed narratives which so far have not been told. Such stories have been part of our working schedule over the last fifteen years, and we have gradually established routines for all contact with informants and visitors. Among other things we are organizing workshops to prepare for challenging interview situations, always aiming at providing the best possible setting for the informant. In addition, we were in this particular project part of an international collaboration of museums, with partner institutions who all worked on similar themes and used similar methods.[9] We knew very well that both the interview situation and the exhibition could trigger emotions which in turn could provoke strong reactions.[10] The preparations we made were crucial and have more or less worked out as we expected. Still, the working process has given us a considerable amount of new insight.

Among other things we have seen four informants withdrawing their consent after we had carried out the interviews and sent the transcript of the stories to the informant for approval. When we asked about the reason why these informants withdrew, one of them said quite explicitly that it was not until the moment when he read his own story in black and white that he really understood the full extent of the impact the events of the war still have today. The strain and stress were so intense that he asked us to help him find a psychologist so that he could get on his feet and move on in life. Two of the others wanted to protect family members they thought would not want their stories to be exposed, not even in an anonymous version. And in the last case we were told that we had not managed to account for the full complexity and all the repercussions of the war in a sufficiently precise manner.

Even though we had taken a lot of precautions and tried to prepare ourselves as best we could for the interviews and the reproduction of the stories, we were surprised by learning how tabooed the war still was within certain families, and to what extent the wall of silence had affected the lives of children and grandchildren in a negative way.

That went not only for the informants, but also for us museum employees involved in the project. The work was much more demanding than we had foreseen. We had dug deep into the subject, discussed

different approaches and their possible consequences in plenary sessions and kept in touch with each other without interruption just to make sure we could handle the numerous ethical challenges that popped up during the process. Still, several of us have reacted strongly to what we have learnt, particularly after the personal contact with the informants where their feelings came to the surface in such an unambiguous way. Suddenly some of us understood that there were untold stories about the war in our own families, while others were astounded by seeing how easily the long-term effects of silence and concealment could be projected upon their own lives.

As a direct consequence of the new things we have learnt, we have changed our routines for future work. Sensitive and tabooed topics have long-term effects and repercussions, of which we up till now had not been sufficiently aware. In such projects there should always be a psychologist as member of the team from the very beginning until the end. Such contact with a competent supporter is essential in order to approach adequately such a sensitive and personal topic as long-term effects of historical events within the own family. It is important to have the possibility to ask for advice and guidance in challenging interview situations which may occur in the course of the process. And it is helpful also for us museum employees, who may need someone to talk to if the interviews turn out to trigger something in ourselves which we did not know was there.

Each interview took between two and four hours.
PHOTO: ARVE LINDVIG

Summing up: What are the main issues to remember in such projects?
Vital parts of our common history will remain deficient when first-hand witnesses do not tell about what they have experienced, particularly when their experiences are not fully compatible with the prevailing historical record. In such cases the delicate subtleties in our common understanding of history will not have possibility to rise to the surface, the diversity will not be what it ought to be. This, in turn, may have the effect that visitors feel they are not seen or understood in the cultural institutions' representation of history, as their views and understanding of the past are not presented. It is therefore urgent to bring forth the stories that so far have not been

told; small but important pieces in the mighty puzzle which constitutes our common understanding of the past; pieces that will contribute to a more eloquent and diversified historical narrative.

In this work it is essential to remember that some stories are too sensitive, too personal and too private to be shared with others. They touch a human being's innermost feelings and affect the relations to those who are his kith and kin. If they are linked to negative feelings like shame, guilt or anger, it is even more difficult to talk about them. Such stories require a transformation which makes it possible to share them with others, and that transformation has several steps, all of which have to be taken with care. In this context museums as institutions which have credibility in our society and a focus on our common cultural heritage, play an important role. When proceeding correctly, museums may have the possibility to operate as an adaptor and transformer of stories which otherwise, if they remain secret, can reverberate from one generation to another.

World War II was a historic catastrophe with complex consequences and repercussions on three different levels: for the development of personal identity for those who were directly exposed to the shock, for the inner life of families, and for the society which saw it happen. In this project we have been in touch with all three levels, even if our focus has been on levels one and two: the impact of the events of the war on children and grandchildren and its signification for the family relations.

A lot of research is still to be done in this field. In our view intergenerational transfer has not, up till now, been sufficiently clarified and integrated into the work of the museums, and it is about time that this change. In particular the historical events which have brought about demanding and traumatic experiences for those involved have resulted in obvious long-term consequences for their descendants. We do not yet know enough about the underlying mechanisms, but we understand they are important in order to help museums meet their informants and visitors in an adequate manner. In order to understand the organic connections and fully exploit new knowledge, it is vital to side with and learn from disciplines like psychology and neuroscience, both of which have been studying these phenomena over a long period of time.

Here at the Vest-Agder Museum our ambition is to continue our work devoted to intergenerational transfer from one generation to another. A follow-up research project will deal with secrecy and concealment and their long-term consequences for individuals, for family relations and for the society as a whole. By finding out more about what it is exactly that is transferred, and how that transfer takes place, our hope and ambition is to become even more professional and better prepared in our contact with informants and visitors.

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8. The involved employees in the seven partner institutions in the international project Identity on the Line (see www.i-on.museum), have among other things cooperated to produce an interview-guide which was meant for use in all sub-projects in the seven countries.
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«Keep it quiet! Family secrets in the aftermath of WWII» is not only a separate documentation- and exhibition project, but also a part of an overall project, co-financed by the European Union. Here, we are regarding the German occupation as temporary migration of more than 500.000 soldiers between 1940 and 1945.

«Identity on the Line (I-ON)» is a large-scale cooperation project between six cultural history museums and one university from seven European countries - Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia and Croatia. Our goal is to explore the long-term consequences of different migration processes, forced or voluntary, which took place in Europe over the last 100 years. Through the collection and dissemination of experiences from former migrants and their descendants, summarized and placed in factual historical contexts, we will unfold and transmit common features of migration from past to future generations. What does migration mean for one's feeling of belonging or not-belonging, and in which ways does migration affect the feeling of identity of all touched by it?

The seven migration processes cover, in sum, experiences of soldiers and children of war, indigenous people, Greenlanders within the Danish society, internally displaced peoples due to war, multi-ethnic inhabitants emigrating and their descendants searching for roots, and a mixed group of migrants collectively deprived of their identities and basic human rights.

Each of the partner institutions have produced a separate exhibition in their own country, and together they have worked on a joint exhibition, publications, movies, guided trips to places of remembrance, school packages, webinars and lectures. In total, 164 in-depth interviews have been conducted, each om them between two and fifteen hours long. Here, the same interview guides have been used, and the comprehensive material collected was the starting point for all jointly produced outcomes, as well as for scientific articles.

Please find more information about the overall project on our webpage www.i-on.museum and in our social media channels!

The historical background

BY ENDRE WRÅNES, MILITARY HISTORIAN

Norway and Germany
– two nations, two destinies

During World War I, 1914-18, Norway, a seafaring nation, was dependent on co-operation with Great Britain, the leading maritime power. Norway was a "neutral ally" and lost approximately 915 ships and 2000 sailors that fell victim to mines and German submarines. But no foreign soldiers ever set foot on Norwegian soil and the supply of goods to Norway was maintained. Norwegian neutrality had stood the test.

Germany was one of the losers of the 1914-18 war. An Allied blockade had paralysed German naval warfare and provoked starvation in Germany. Both the war and the peace following in its wake were laborious charges. Germany was held responsible for the war, which forced her to cede territories as well as pay enormous reparations. During the turbulent years of the inter-war period the new German democracy fell apart.

As the Second World War was drawing close, Norwegians and Germans had very different historical records to fall back on. An entire generation of Germans had personal experience of the hardships of the trenches of World War I, had suffered from the exacting demands of the peace treaty, and had been subjected to the vicissitudes of an unstable post-war democracy.

April 9, 1940. Germany attacks
Norway and Denmark

The German plan for the attack was audacious and based on surprise. The main concern within the German military was not the Norwegian defence, but the risk of having their task force discovered by the Royal Navy. In spite of serious losses of ships, among them the heavy cruiser Blücher in the Oslo Fjord, broadly speaking, the German attack was a success.

In Kristiansand the attackers were met with stiff resistance from the coastal fort at Odderøya. Shells from the German warships overshot the island targets and impacted within the city proper. Several buildings were destroyed and some twenty Norwegian soldiers and civilians were killed. Norwegian land forces pulled back up the valley of Setesdal where they surrendered without fighting a few days later.

During the fighting between German, Norwegian and Allied forces in Norway in April-June 1940, several Norwegian towns were bombed to rubbles by German aircraft. This was done in order to hit enemy troops and supplies. 853 Norwegian soldiers were killed in the defence of Norway in 1940.

German coastal artillerymen at Odderøya in Kristiansand in 1940. PHOTO: COURTESY ENDRE WRÅNES

Why did Germany attack Norway in 1940?
At the outbreak of war in 1939 Norway once more declared herself neutral. Shipping was the most important branch of Norway's economy, and Great Britain was the most lucrative market for Norwegian trade. An agreement entered into in the autumn of 1939 gave Britain the right of disposal to some 40 % of the Norwegian merchant fleet. Once more Norwegian ships were attacked by German submarines.

In order to keep her armament industry going, Germany was dependent on the import of iron ore from Northern Sweden. When the Baltic was frozen, this ore was shipped out from the port of Narvik. Germany wanted to secure this supply, whereas the Allies were set on stopping it. For Germany it was also important to avoid a repetition of the unfavourable strategic situation from World War I. With the occupation of Norway, Germany had an advantage in her war against Britain, which she had been denied during the previous war.

Hitler feared an Allied takeover in Norway and Sweden and the consequences this would have for the German war effort. This seems to have been decisive for the German attack on April 9.

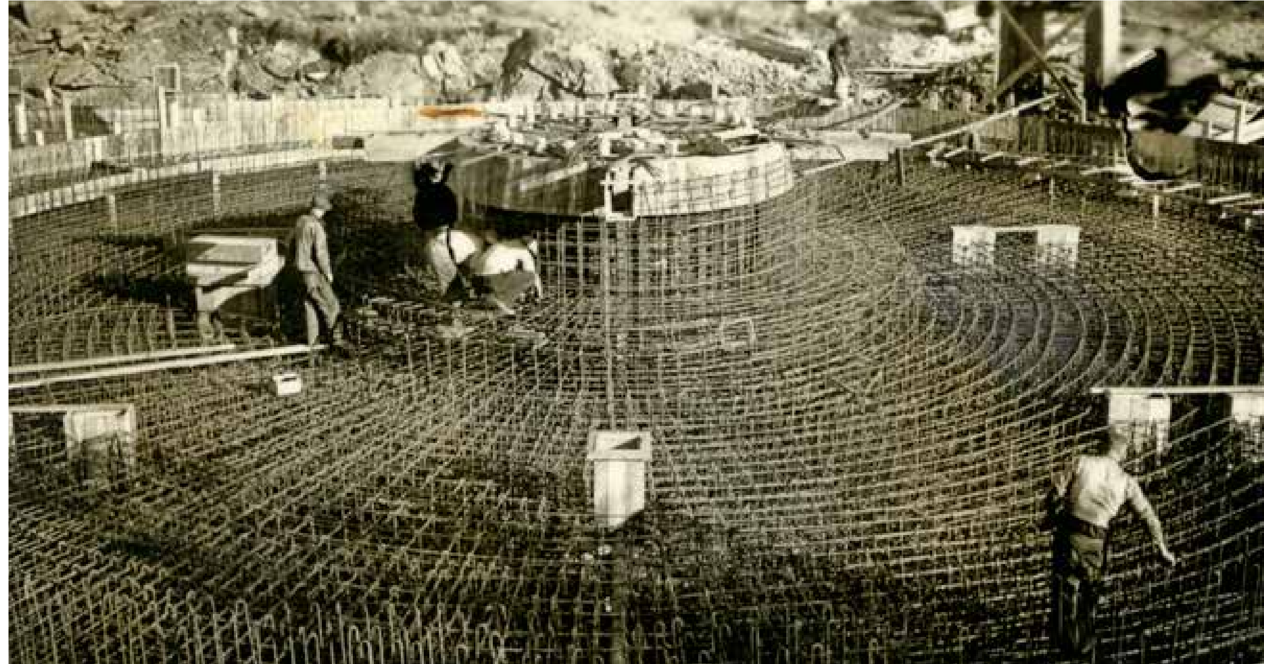
The Reichskommissar for Norway during the German occupation, Josef Terboven. PHOTO: THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NORWAY

The occupation forces
The German military, the Wehrmacht, had an occupying force numbering up to 400 000 troops in Norway. At Agder some 20 000 German soldiers had their barracks. The number of civilians living there was approximately 160 000. The German defence of the region was an anti-invasion force, whose control of the sea lanes was essential. Accordingly, with some minor exceptions, the troops were deployed along the coastline. The most important military assets were Kristiansand harbour and the airfield at Lista. This was where the number of German troops was highest.

The overall purpose of the German effort was to win a World War. A successful Allied invasion of Scandinavia could result in Germany being outflanked in the North. The German military built barracks and defensive strongholds in large numbers using Norwegian money, Norwegian deliveries and Norwegian manpower. German military interests had a considerable impact on business, trade, and economic life.

The Hague Convention gave an occupying power the right to requisition companies and manpower in order to build military quarters and barracks. But defensive constructions in large numbers were also put up. If your house happened to be located within the field of fire of a gun position, there was a considerable risk that it would be demolished. However, if so happened, you would be entitled to a compensation. This was a favour which was not granted to each and everyone in the World War.

Collectively, the Wehrmacht was a guarantor safeguarding Hitler's



Norwegian construction workers building a gun position at "Batterie Vara" near Kristiansand in 1941.
PHOTO: THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NORWAY

Labour from Norwegian contractor Betongbygg at work on the road to "Batterie Vara" in 1941.
PHOTO: REGIONAL STATE ARCHIVES IN KRISTIANSAND

dictatorship. German military forces were used to arrest people and in combat against the Norwegian resistance. But in general, the German soldiers behaved correctly towards the Norwegian civilian population. There were also German soldiers involved in co-operation with Norwegian resistance groups at Agder, eventually paying a high personal price for such activity.

«Proceed in such a manner that you win the Norwegian hearts and minds for me»
This was Adolf Hitler's instruction to Josef Terboven in 1940, before he was sent to Norway as Reichskommissar, (Reich Commissioner). The Nordic peoples were high-ranking within the Nazi racial hierarchy. Therefore, Norwegians must be persuaded to join the Germanic fellowship and endorse German destiny. This was going to prove a difficult task. Even though their Germanic roots were beneficial to Norwegians, there was a tendency on the German side to forget or ignore the fact that Norway had a history of her own.

Norway was governed by Terboven as Reichskommissar. A control system, similar to those operating in Germany, where the Gestapo had a prominent role, was soon established. Censorship became standard practice and opponents of the regime were persecuted. All political parties except Nasjonal Samling , Vidkun Quisling's Nazi-inspired NS-movement, were forbidden. But Quisling's party had little support from the Norwegian population and from Terboven. From 1941 onwards, the German presence in Norway took the form of a classic occupation, with popular resistance directed against the foreign oppressors. The first members of the Home Front were executed in 1941. In 1942 the hamlet of Telavåg was burnt down after a skirmish where German policemen were killed by Norwegian agents. The local inhabitants were deported, 31 of them did not survive their detention in German concentration camps. The hard-line policies of Terboven provoked increased resistance in the population.

Prominent personalities within the German Navy, who wanted stability around their bases in Norway, were at odds with Terboven. They thought that Germany from the very beginning should have supported a Norwegian government under Quisling. Hitler, however, retained Terboven as Germany's senior civilian representative in Norway until the end of the war.

Impressive dimensions – "Batterie Vara" near Kristiansand. This coastal fort, whose purpose was to deny access to the Skagerrak, was to a large extent built by Norwegian labour. PHOTO: STEINAR FURU

In German service
Quisling's party, Nasjonal Samling, governed Norway at Germany's mercy and had 44 000 members in 1943. "Hirden" was the party's political vanguard and was organized as a military formation. A total number of some 8000 Norwegians were enlisted into "Hirden". The Norwegian police were Nazified. They were involved in the arrest of refugees, political opponents, prisoners of war and Jews. Some 30% of Norwegian policemen were NS members in 1942. From a German point of view, however, the service was never fully reliable. More than five thousand Norwegians enlisted into the German military as "front fighters". Most of them served as soldiers in Waffen-SS units in the Soviet Union. About 750 of these were killed in action.

The ships that happened to be in Norwegian waters on April 9, 1940, were defined as units of the Norwegian home fleet. During the war these ships carried vital supplies to the Norwegian society. They were also used as cargo ships for the German occupier. Allied aircraft and ships attacked a number of naval targets along the Norwegian coast and more than 600 Norwegian home fleet sailors were killed during the war.

The Norwegian mercantile marine and its sailors gave the most important Norwegian contribution to the Allied war effort. The S/S Hesmanden sailed the seas during the two World Wars and is today in use as the Norwegian War Sailor Museum. PHOTO: VEST-AGDER MUSEUM

In addition to these are the numbers of perished passengers.

At Agder several thousand Norwegians worked as manpower on German construction sites, both as volunteers and as conscripts drafted into the "labour service". This was done in accordance with the special laws adopted for that period. The occupier was dependent on Norwegian manpower to have their plans and projects fulfilled. Several Norwegian companies were established in order to exploit the "construction boom" and make money on the hectic German building activity.

The first prisoners of war came to Agder in 1942. They represented a minor part of the total labour force set to work at German construction sites in this region. One of the major shipping catastrophes in Norwegian history took place near Lindesnes, when Allied aircraft sank the transporter Palatia. Almost one thousand Soviet prisoners of war perished.

In Allied service
About 80 000 Norwegians fled the country or were stranded abroad during World War II. With Allied assistance the Norwegian exile government in Britain built up

Norwegian military units overseas. At the end of the war the Norwegian “exile forces” numbered 28 000 men and women.

In 1945 the Norwegian Navy numbered about 7 500 sailors. The service had a total of 27 vessels sunk and suffered the loss of some 650 dead. The Air Force totalled 2 700 officers, ranks and files, and lost 228 dead. The Army numbers peaked at 4 000 and the service had 165 dead and 12 reported missing.

The Norwegian merchant marine and the commitment of its sailors was Norway’s most important contribution to the Allied war effort during World War II. Of particular significance was the traffic to and from Britain until the day the United States entered the war. From the autumn of 1941 Great Britain had about three quarters of all Norwegian ships at her disposal. From 1942/43 onwards the entire Norwegian merchant marine was an integral part of the Allied war effort.
The Norwegian ships were targets for enemy submarines, and about 3 000 Norwegian sailors lost their lives in foreign trade operations during the war. A considerable number of crew members of other nationalities also perished onboard Norwegian ships.

At the Nürnberg Tribunal in the wake of the war, Admiral Karl Dönitz, Commander of the German Submarine Arm, 1939-1943, and Commander-in- Chief of the whole German Navy, 1943-1945, was convicted of having planned and started an unnecessary war. However, Dönitz was acquitted for the charge of having waged submarine war on Allied cargo ships. The reason for this was that cargoes were defined and treated as belligerents. They were most often armed and used their radio to report on German positions.

According to the Tribunal, unwarned attacks from German submarines on neutral cargo ships in waters declared as war zones represented an infringement of the London Agreement of 1936. But since the Allies had acted in the same way, Dönitz was not found guilty of this.

In Sweden Norwegian Army units were trained as “police forces” in order not to violate Swedish neutrality. By the end of the war these had reached a total number of 13 000 troops and had suffered the loss of 25 dead during operations in Finnmark.

At Agder, as in other parts of Norway, resistance organizations were established. Their purpose was to build military capacity and run intelligence operations against German installations and activities. Milorg was the largest of these organizations.

«Everything is relative»
- Albert Einstein

As a nation Norway got off World War II, history’s largest armed conflict, relatively cheaply, with a number of casualties totalling slightly more than 10 000 dead

abroad and at home. The Second World War cost some 75-85 million people their lives. One of the characteristic features of this war was the high number of dead civilians. Several factors can account for this such as the effect of modern weapons, genocide, city bombing, massacres and war crimes against civilians as well as starvation and illness.

Compared to what took place in other parts of Europe, the German occupation of Norway was not particularly severe. Provided they did not take part in open resistance against the regime, most Norwegians had reasonable chances of getting through the war without suffering any harm. Here, however, some reservation is required – not all groups enjoyed such luxury. 773 Norwegian Jews were deported to German extermination camps, most of them to Auschwitz. Only 38 survived. People of Romani extraction, political opponents and resistance members were also persecuted and killed. At a personal level, with those who were direct victims of military actions or persecution, the suffering was not more tolerable than elsewhere.

A total of more than 400 Norwegians were executed by the occupier and by the Quisling regime, 130 died as prisoners, and more than 2 000 political prisoners and members of the resistance lost their lives. Among the rest of the civilian population 1 779 died of various reasons during the war years. The losses of the Norwegian military forces as a whole totalled 2 000, of whom 765 served in the Army, 923 in the Navy and 312 in the Air Force. These numbers include the fatalities incurred during the battles in Norway in 1940. These numbers form a contrast to the number of dead among the prisoners of war who were transported to Norway by the occupier to work at German construction sites in Norway. Out of a total of 100 000 Soviet prisoners in Norway some 15 000 died, whereas the 4 200 Yugoslav POWs suffered the loss of 2 839 dead.

Norway had a favourable location on the outskirts of Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe Hitler’s and Stalin’s policies and belligerence caused the death of 14 million civilians. There were many reasons for this such as inflicted starvation in the Ukraine, German and Soviet destruction of Poland, German belligerence in the Soviet Union, including the encirclement of Leningrad, Germany’s murder of nearly six million Jews, terror against the civilian population resulting from the constant shifting of the fronts, plus murder and rape in Germany towards the end of the war. Such harassment was rare in the West.

Strategic bombing was done by belligerents who had the capacity for this kind of warfare. This bombing was also targeting the civilian society. Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union suffered most bitterly with roughly half a million civilian casualties each. Such bombing was relatively rare in Norway. One of the major incidents was an attack on Bergen harbour in 1944 where almost two hundred Norwegian civilians were killed, among them many children.

During their retreat from Finnmark and Northern Troms in 1944-1945 German forces burnt some 12 000 houses and evacuated almost 60 000 Norwegians by force. This was “scorched earth tactics”, where everything that could be of any use to the enemy was destroyed before the German withdrawal. The damage was enormous. Still, the German C-in-C North, Lothar Rendulic, was acquitted by the Nürnberg Tribunal. “The scorched earth tactics” was considered permissible when there were good military reasons for it and had to a large extent been used on other fronts, the Eastern Front in particular.

The peace

German military discipline turned out to be of great value for the Norwegian civilian population, particularly when peace came to Norway and hundreds of thousands of German troops were going to be disarmed. The German forces administered this without help and to a large extent disarmed themselves.

After the war German soldiers, under Allied and Norwegian supervision and contrary to what was stated in the Geneva Convention, were used to clear minefields. It was common practice to have the POWs march shoulder to shoulder through a newly cleared minefield. Almost 300 were killed and many more wounded under such work in Norway in 1945. Quite a few fatal accidents took place in Southern Norway, notably at Møvik.

Compared to the situation in other countries which had been under German occupation, there were relatively few examples of people taking the law into their own hands in Norway when the war came to an end. But, for example, the German “tarts”, that is women who had consorted with German nationals and had had sexual relations with them, could be victims of psychic and physical violence locally.

After the war some 2 200 policemen were suspended from their jobs, many of them because of NS membership. 3 300 Norwegians were convicted of economic treason after the war. Voluntary work for the Germans, done by ordinary Norwegian manpower, was not prosecuted, for one thing because this practice had been so common. 25 Norwegians who had collaborated with the occupiers were executed after the German capitulation.

THE PERSONAL NARRATIVES

DAUGHTER, AGE 83

«During the war one was faced with many difficult choices. My father chose the right thing, but what would I have said if he had made the wrong choice?» *(short version)*

I was three years old when the war started and eight when it ended. When I was five, my father was arrested. I was with him in the forest when my sister brought him message to return home. He probably knew what was coming, because the teachers had met and discussed what they ought to do – after all they had received Quisling's demands. The Germans arrested seven teachers in the area, including my father. He was transported to Kirkenes. They were put to forced labour, and work and food proved to be difficult. Father was away for half a year.

My mother was left with the responsibilities at home, and we lost our income. I asked my mother: Do we have enough food? Yes, we have enough food, my mother answered, but I had the feeling that it was not quite true.

We were not allowed to go near the German camp. The swastika was flying at the entrance. I remember one of the Germans showing me some pictures and crying, it must have been in 1945. It really made an impression on me. That day I understood that there were kind Germans too. My whole life I have remembered this.

My father came home in September that same year. I remember being uncertain when we met him, I had not seen him for several months. My father did not tell about his experiences, but his hunger must have been severe.

I believe few people in the hamlet were on the wrong side. I remember the adults using the word "striped," it was difficult

to know whom to trust. I often think that the relations between the Norwegian girls and the Germans were romanticized, many of the girls were after all very young. The girls received cigarettes and presents, and some of them fell in love. It was turned into a romantic dream of great love, but for most of them it was just fun.

The disgraceful haircuts were scandalous, many people had done worse things than those girls. It was quite natural for me that my father did not speak about his experiences, it was not difficult for me. My sister, who was older, understood more and was more afraid.

I have kept the letters my parents wrote to each other when my father was in Kirkenes. I have told my sister: "Here are the letters," but she will not read them. My brother, who is a sensible man, will not read them. I have not read the letters, they are too close, too many feelings are brought to the surface.

When you are at war, you must make many difficult choices. My father chose the right thing, but what would I have said if he had made the wrong choice? My mother supported my father, but she was left at home with the responsibilities. For our family, the consequences became considerable.

The parents taking part in a May 17 celebration at Breidablikk in 1941. The blinds are down and on the table are photographs of the royal family. In the following year the father was arrested, which made life difficult for those who were left behind. PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Red banners with the hammer symbol flying in Kristiansand. In 1934 the Norwegian Labour Party, (Det norske Arbeiderparti), chose the hammer as their symbol – with clear reference to the Soviet hammer and sickle. Symbolically, the hammer was meant to crush the swastika. After the war – and atfter the swastika had been eradicated – many communist resistance members experienced that their important war effort was met with distrust, monitoring, discrimination, and actual persecution from labour-governed Norway. PHOTO: DAGFINN PETTERSEN / VEST-AGDER MUSEUM

DAUGHTER, AGE 79

«Had it just been over when the war ended! But no, then the new war started» *(short version)*

In 1942 they came and arrested my father. I was only one year old. This event marked him – and us – for the rest of our lives. The background was that that he and a band of other communists had smuggled weapons from Evje to a resistance group in Kristiansand. He was transported to the prison camps in Sachsenhausen, Natzweiler, and Dachau – and did not return home until after the war was over. He was a so-called "Nacht und Nebel" prisoner, a political prisoner, sent to Germany to "disappear." But he did not disappear. But a lot of him did not return home. He never recovered, neither physically nor mentally.

We lived at Evje when my father was arrested. He joined the Norwegian Communist Party (NKP) in the 1930s and remained a communist until he died in 1972, only 59 years old. After his arrest, the situation became difficult for our family. I think we survived thanks to our landlord. He put a bucket of potatoes outside our door every week. Before the war came to an end, we moved back to Kristiansand and stayed with my grandparents. I remember the day when my father was supposed to return home. I was not allowed to go to the station to meet him because I was too young, only four years old. I screamed!

Then everyday life started. And with it, a new war, the Cold War. And "the war" against the communists in our own country. My father was never honoured for his efforts during the war. On the contrary, he was counted among the enemies of the state. Everything he had achieved before the war was confiscated and gone. He had to start a new.

His experiences in the prison camps in Germany had left lasting scars in my father,

The homecoming: Not all of those who had been sent off to German concentration camps during the war experienced that the effort they had made during the war was acknowledged and appreciated when they returned home. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story.
PHOTO: DAGFINN PETTERSEN/ THE VEST-AGDER MUSEUM/AGDERBILDER

but the lack of recognition and the mistrust after the war were probably the worst to bear. Daily our phone was tapped. We could hear a little click when we lifted the receiver. I had no idea that this would also have repercussions for me and my brothers and sisters. When we tried to apply for jobs, we discovered that the labour market was closed to us. When my children applied for their first jobs, they also experienced some strange rejections, and indirectly I learned that this was because their grandfather had been a communist while he was alive.

My father never managed to open up for his children and show nearness, emotions, and love. In our family his needs always came first, and his words were law. He never talked about his experiences in the war. But he carried them with him, deeply hidden beneath the shell he had constructed around himself. He lived with a lot of disappointment and bitterness which resulted in dedicated outward involvement and strictness inward in the family.

Days of liberation 1945: Five years of German occupation were over, and people flocked to the streets, but for some, peace became difficult. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story. PHOTO: DAGFINN PETTERSEN, KRISTIANSAND/THE VEST-AGDER MUSEUM/AGDERBILDER

GRANDDAUGHTER, AGE 32

«Shame and guilt have changed forms, but they are still there»

When the war started my great-grandparents and my great-grandfather's brother owned shops in a little village on the West Coast, and the shops went well. My grandmother has always said that they joined the NS (the Nazi party) because they were "afraid of the Communists".

My grandmother, who was ten years old when the war began, was a member of "Jentehirden" (the Nazi girls' organization). She told that it was like participating in the scouts' association. But I have realized that she was not aware of, or conscious of, its political orientation. I did not know that she was also a member of the NS until some years ago when a relative picked up the records concerning my family and the post-war trials. It was recorded that my great-grandfather's brother, my great-grandmother, my great-grandfather and their two eldest children were members. My grandmother was the second child in the row.

I have not seen these documents, since my relative holds them close to her chest. She has only said that there were many testimonies from other people in the village that my great-grandparents allegedly were informers who followed closely what happened in the village in order to be able to pass on information. For instance, some people maintained that they had proof that my grandmother had informed on a number of people who had been singing the national anthem.

When the war was over, my great-grandfather was picked up by the police and brought to a camp. He was lucky and was released after a short while because of bad health. My grandmother, who was then 15, was denied the right to sit for her exam by the head-master. This man's family has afterwards been disliked by my family. I remember I was told when I was little that "in our family, we don't like that family". She was met with disdainful comments from

It was forbidden to talk about or ask what had happened during the war. The only thing the informant knew was that her grandmother had been a part of Jentehirden (the Nazi girls' organisation) and was abandoned by the local society after 1945. Here a group of Jentehirden is taking part in the Nazi Hafrsfjorddagen's parade, July 18, 1941, Stavanger. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story.
PHOTO: HANS HENRIKSEN, KEPT BY THE REGIONAL STATE ARCHIVES IN STAVANGER.

people in the village, including the police. She was forced to go alone to the nearest big town to ask for permission to sit for the exam. There she was met by a headmaster who declared that she deserved to be treated better than she had experienced in the village where she lived. He received her kindly and let her sit for the exam. My grandmother had to read her subjects as a private candidate, and then went to the big town and passed her exam. Afterwards she went to a few other places in the country to study. But because of illness she dropped out and was asked to take over her uncle's shop

in her home village. She chose to accept the offer and became a resident there. She was part of the community, and at the same time she was an outsider. She married a man who told her that that she was a bloody Nazi brat whom nobody else wanted. This must have scarred her deeply.

My grandmother has not participated in the 17th of May celebrations after the war. I think this is because she in a way accepted her stamp as a traitor, or maybe she was afraid of the consequences if she went out into the streets on that day? Perhaps it would awaken memories from the time after the war? She has been depressed for long periods in her life. I think she first of all was heavy with grief because she sort of lost her own life. In addition, I think she after the war has felt powerless when she came face to face with life. She has always defended the choice her parents made during the war. She has all the time only talked about them in positive terms. The story I have been told relates that other people punished them after the war because those who had been in the lower classes earlier, now were able to take revenge on the merchants; that it was a pleasure for them to trod down those who before had been on top of the society.

I regard my grandmother as faultfinding and arrogant. I don't know if that was the case with the family earlier, or if it came as a reaction to the punishment and the shame which were inflicted upon them after the war. I think the arrogance was a reaction to her feeling of shame; that she tried to balance the pain she found in her shame by extolling herself in relation to other people. The reason for my believing so, is that she was also faultfinding with her own children and grandchildren. I have always felt that she loved me, but at the same time she sizes me up with her stare and she never gives me a hug without commenting on my losing or gaining weight.

My mother was born in the 1950s and grew up in a flat above my grandmother's shop, in the same village where my grandmother was raised. My mother has told me very little about her childhood. The only thing she has told about the war, relates to the fact that when she felt that somebody did not like her, she never knew if that was because of the person she was, or because of what her grandparents had done. She was shy and reserved and concentrated on doing the right thing. She is also prone to criticize others and most of all herself. She is preoccupied with her appearance and what others think of her. I have often felt that for her it is more important what others think of me and my brothers and sisters than what she thinks and feels for us.

She has never been satisfied with herself and that has done something with her and with me. As long as I can remember she has spoken negatively about herself. She was also often very angry when I was little. Today she reminds me a little of my grandmother because she is constantly passive and disappointed with life. She easily gets depressive thoughts and it is easier for her

to meet us children in a sad mood than to take part in our joys. I have always felt that she loves me, but also that I disappoint her. I have never managed to give her what she wanted in her life.

Nobody in my family has ever talked about this in an open manner. Most of it I know because I have asked questions. The story of what happened is always the same, like a rehearsed story; a defence speech about choices of action and an accusation of others who they think have gone astray. Once, several years ago, I raised the question with my cousin if some people in our generation still feel ashamed about bearing the family name of our great-grandparents? It was a confidential conversation about feelings. She passed it on to her sister, who told it to her father and it ended in accusations and recriminations against my grandmother, and then against me, who according to my mother was responsible for my grandmother's pain. I think I ripped into something which they would not hear anything about.

All this has influenced me very much. I see clear lines going from my grandmother to my mother and to me. Both my grandmother and my mother are very busy keeping their backs straight, at all times and independently of how we feel inside. My mother used to poke her finger into my back and say "straighten up!" – presumably to conquer her inward shame. My mother justified her action by saying that her mother used to do the same thing to her.

To me that is a symbol of transferring the shame. I remember when my grandmother once criticized my aunt because she did not hide that she was tired when paying us a visit. One should hide being tired, and hide being angry. One should be polite, clever and make the best of oneself; show the world that one is equal to the others. The expression "the others" my mother used a lot – I had to act like "the others". I remember from my youth that I called back "who they, 'the others', who are these 'others'?" Perhaps "the others" is a transferred symbol of social shame. I have myself felt that I have been hindered from living my own life, as if the opinions and thoughts of others are more important than what I want from my life.

It has evolved into a feeling of guilt both in relation to others, and particularly mother whom I have never managed to give what she wanted in her life, and in relation to me. My brothers and sisters, cousins and I have in a way continued wearing the same mask, with good marks and good jobs. This is also a benefit. We have learned to use our potential, and we have learned a lot about structure and order. Things should be "proper".

If I widen my horizon and consider what events which took place during and after the war have done to my family, I must conclude that my grandmother's shame and guilt must have been so heavy that she chose to remain with a man who exacerbated her misery; in a way, she got what she deserved, she accepted her punishment from the

society. Her way of compensating for the situation was to build an appearance while she on the inside became powerless and sad and outwardly bullied others, and passed her ways on to her daughter. I have been influenced by this, but I have gradually worked my way out of the shame and the guilt. They are after all not mine. It took a long while and many, many thoughts on whom one may feel ashamed about and a realization that the guilt and the shame stem from the war. Now I have in great measure been able to free myself from the shame and the guilt harboured by my ancestors.

If there is one thing I wish for, it must be to have the events during and after the war related in a balanced manner. No defence speeches or accusations, but an honest and open conversation about what had happened and how they saw it. Why did my great-grandparents choose to remain members of the NS while Norway was occupied? Choices are usually more complex than they appear to be in the stories. What it has done to them to be looked down upon, scorned, isolated and accused of something which was not all that serious compared to what was asserted shortly after the war? They were only passive members of a political party.

The guilt they have carried is out of proportion compared to what they actually were guilty of. Especially for my grandmother who was only 15. She had not chosen to join the NS. Is that why none of them has managed to admit guilt, because they were accused of something very grave, and also bigger than what people can carry? Constructing a defence was maybe the only way for them to survive with a certain amount of self-respect. I also wish for a conversation dealing with the question: What does all this do with us who have not experienced the war, but still carry feelings from it? How has it molded us? How does it affect my view of myself today? I wish we could talk about it without feeling shame and anger, or resorting to defence and attack.

The history of the descendants of the NS-members is still lacking in our society, and the nuances are lost. The stories are not really about heroes or villains, but about people who made choices which in posterity have brought their own punishment. We need more openness about this, and we must talk about the emotions which followed in the wake of the choices, both for those personally involved and those who got to experience the long term effects of the same choices. Those who experienced it probably could not take all the emotions to heart. I think it was too painful and too deep. By and by it became part of their personality and identity. But for many who are still alive, and who are further down the row of generations, the pain has diminished and it is therefore possible to talk about it. I hope I can contribute to the process by telling my story.

Throughout the first three years of his life Bjørn lived with his father's family in Germany. His Norwegian mother died of typhus in the autumn of 1945. Here, he is with his grandmother in Bad Freienwalde.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

BJØRN, SON, AGE 77

«From my early years I was taught never to tell anyone that I came from Germany»

My father was a German soldier who participated in the Norwegian campaign. Here he met my mother and shortly afterwards she was pregnant with me. I was born in October 1943. Early in 1944 my mother took me to my father's family in Germany. In September 1945 my mother died, one month before my father came home from his POW captivity. Throughout the first three years of my life I hardly ate anything but potatoes we stole from the farmers.

In 1946 my Norwegian grandfather reported me missing and I was traced and found by the Salvation Army. I can vaguely remember sitting on my father's shoulders when he was about to deliver me in Hamburg for further transportation to Norway. My mother's sister met me on the quay. The ship was packed with children with cropped hair, dirty, full of lice and with a tag tied round their neck. I had beautiful, blond, curly hair. They hadn't had the heart to give me a haircut. In the train to Oslo they gave me cocoa from my aunt's vacuum flask. That cocoa still lingers as one of the best things I ever tasted.

Growing up, I was soon taught never to tell anyone that I came from Germany and to lie about who my mother was. Looking back, I have understood that secrecy and cover stories were good for me. I have had friends who have grown up without such stories, and who have committed suicide as grown-ups because they couldn't cope with it anymore. Later in life, as an adult, I made good contact with my father again. All the time I had known about him and my German family.

The problems connected with being a «German brat» have presumably to some extent been a question of where. Even though I grew up in a rural district with a large number of resistance fighters, the locals were very tolerant.

After I had gone public with my story, people have come to me and said: «I have a German father, too». They have begun straightening their back, which is definitely high time.

I have some experience with refugees. After all I was a refugee myself, already in my mother's womb, and also when I was sent from Germany back to Norway in 1947. I can see points of similarity with the situation many of today's refuges are in. I am afraid of what I see today. It really scares me that so many of the ideas in vogue before and during the war start popping up again, only with slightly modified signs.

My childhood heroes were never Germans, but those who fought against everything the Nazis stood for of racial hatred and exclusion. Still, there is something that has bothered me all my life up till the present day.

Once, early in the 1950s, another "German brat" showed up in our backyard. He was a sturdy chap, one year older than me, who had recently returned to Norway from Germany. He was very keen on getting to know the other kids, but his poor Norwegian speech gave him away. We flocked around him, and I seized him by the throat and pushed him up against a wall, calling him a Nazi. The poor fellow started crying and we never saw him again. I hope the shame of what I did will stick to me as long as I live.

Bjørn with his grandmother and cousin, 1945. Bad Freienwalde, Germany.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

The son has his father's hand-written pilot logbook. Here his last sortie and his air crash at the island Föhr in northern Germany is described. PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

The young Norwegian waitress and the German pilot met each other through music. She was a great vocalist whilst he played the accordion. Many years later their son met his German relatives and he inherited an accordion. PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

SON, AGE 77

«Quite early I was told that my father was a German fighter pilot. Everyone knew that» *(short version)*

My mother was 15 years old when the war broke out. She took a job in the kitchen at Luftwaffe Air Station Lista and gradually rose to serve as a waitress for the fighter pilots. She fell in love with one of them. She was good at singing; he played the accordion, so music became a perfect match for them. The plan was that they were going to get married. But he was shot down when she was one month pregnant with me. After her delivery she had to find a job to make a living. Shortly before my first anniversary I was adopted by my grandparents. Their daughter, my mother, has always been "Tullemor" to me. Quite early I was told that my father was a German fighter pilot. Everyone knew that.

In 1985 I made a first attempt to get in touch with my family in Germany. I found out that my father's sister was alive, but that she did not want any contact with me. So I didn't follow it up. 20 years later, in 2006, I tried once more to make contact. Then at last I received an e-mail from the daughter of a cousin of mine, which said they wanted to see me. So I travelled down to Germany and met my German family, three generations strong. My aunt, who by then had passed away, had never told them that I had tried to make contact 20 years earlier. She had kept it secret. None of them knew that I existed and that my father had a son. Since then we have met regularly and our contact is good. I received letters, photographs, school certificates, references, my father's old accordion and his hand-written flight log. There I can read about his last sortie and his air crash at the island of Föhr, at Wyk in northern Germany, with the exact time for his mishap. He didn't even reach the age of 22.

My German grandparents lost all their three sons during the war or in its wake. Only one little sister survived and helped the family see another day. War is a terrible thing!

German troops marching down the Karl Johan, Oslo's parade street, on April 9, 1940. Five long years under German occupation are about to begin. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story. PHOTO: HENRIKSEN & STEEN, VARDEN, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

FOSTER-BROTHER, AGE 85

«Well, you know, he has got German blood running in his veins» *(short version)*

I have kept all this a secret to protect my brother.

My brother came to us during the spring of 1946. An acquaintance of my mother's used to have a young girl staying in her house. This girl had given birth to a little boy who was now one and a half years old and had been kept in an orphanage. My mother was asked to let this boy live in our family. I was 12 at that time, and my sister was 10.

This little boy at once became the life and soul of our family – we were very proud of him. I always felt a special kind of responsibility for him. "Join the armed forces and get yourself an education," I advised him. He did as he was told. Little brother listened to big brother.

I cannot remember anyone telling us that his father was a German soldier when he came to us. This was something I got to know about later. I suppose that our neighbours and people at school knew about it, but they accepted things as they were.

But I remember one incident. My brother had been playing tricks on one of our neighbours. This neighbour didn't get very angry, but he told me, as if to excuse the boy's behaviour: "Well, you know, he has got German blood running in his veins." I remember this quite clearly. Before we knew anything about his biological father, I suggested that we made a trip to Germany to find information about his family. "Well, I've got one father and one mother, and that's enough for me," he replied.

Some years later I started doing my own research. What I discovered really chocked me. I knew that he had an important position within the German occupation authorities, but not that he was responsible for doing such a lot of horrible things – that he had been executing people.

It has been painful living with this information, but my feelings towards my brother haven't changed. On the other hand I'm afraid what this cruel truth can do to his self-image, and to his reputation if the story is revealed.

Therefore it's extremely important to me that this story is kept a secret.

Norwegian women arrested after the war, 1945. Treatment of Norwegian women who had fallen in love with German soldiers was so harsh and exclusionary that many did not want to talk about it again. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story.
PHOTO:GRIMSTAD TOWN MUSEUM, AUST-AGDER MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE

On the following pages, three women tell the same story from their individual perspectives. The women are directly related to one another: Mother (94), daughter (62), granddaughter (33).

DAUGHTER, AGE 62

«I seem to be open and sociable, but in my heart I have always felt lonely»

My mother was the youngest in a family with five children. All her siblings were active in the resistance movement, and one of them was killed as a consequence of this. In 1942, at the age of 16, she fell in love with a German soldier and appeared in public with him. She was expelled from her parents' house and travelled to Oslo where she married her fiancé.

After the war they were both first interned in a detention camp here in Norway and then sent to Germany where they stayed with his family. They were happy, but like many others they were starving in those post-war years. In 1947 they had a baby, a little boy who was ill and needed better living conditions than what could be offered him in Germany. My mother divorced in order to be able to travel with him to Norway, and they made a plan providing for her to return to Germany as soon as the boy had recovered. However, there was no return. Even though she lived at the mercy of her parents, she was warned against going back, and after some time she married a Norwegian. He adopted the boy, but in return she had to promise never to talk about her marriage to the German. Everybody in the parish knew about it, but none of them talked about it either. When I was twenty, I happened to learn about it at a pub in the city, that my eldest brother was only my half-brother. Even my best friend had known about it all her life, but had got so strict orders not to mention it to me, that she didn't dare.

I was angry and disappointed but it still took a year before I was able to confront my mother. It was not common to discuss such matters in my family, there was little room for feelings, and we all held on to an innocent surface which should not be tampered with. My mother has always been compliant and done what she has been told, with the exception of this single occasion when she appeared in public with her

German soldier. And she had later accepted the stigma she was given, both by her family and later by her new husband, that she was the one who had made the wrong choice and no longer belonged. She had promised her husband not to say anything about it, a promise she kept. From now on she made a clear distinction between her two lives – the first before she met my father, and the second afterwards – and suppressed the first as best she could. Even if my father knew that I knew, I have never talked to him about it. All the same, very slowly it became possible to mention in passing what had happened, and my half-brother gradually achieved good contact with his family in Germany.

In my adolescence I often felt different. In a way I could never really live out my feelings, everything was suppressed and hushed up. There was so much under the surface, but nobody touched it; silence was everywhere. My mother tiptoed around because of my father, and I was never able to reach her, nor him. None of the things we talked about had real importance, everyday matters was all we discussed. I reacted with anger, revolt and a lack of respect for authorities, but only outwards. At home I had accepted that the silence was untouchable. The feeling of knowing that something was wrong, without understanding what it was, was painful.

In the summer, when I was allowed to accompany my cousin to my mother's sister, I was surprised to find out how different things were there. My aunt talked a lot about her experiences during the war and about the resistance movement she had worked for. This was the glorifying story, and it was eagerly shared. Nobody talked about my mother. Everyone was nice to me, but I have always felt like an intruder, one who was not quite as welcome as the others. But I have never understood the reason why. Later I found out that all my cousins knew very well what had happened, all except me. Maybe I could have handled this in a better way if I had only known the reason why I felt like a stranger, that there was a logical explanation.

If I look back at my life up until the present day, I think that the event itself, that my mother had married a German and that my brother was only my half-brother, has been of minor importance. That was something which in a way had nothing to do with me. But the fact that I was not allowed to know, while all the others knew, and that there was no room for talking about matters which were important for the individual members of our family, that is something which has really marked me. Seen in that perspective, it is obvious that my mother's "secret" has had considerable impact on my life, but only because it has resulted in even less openness than what was there before, in the earlier generations.

Since it was so painful to feel different, I have chosen the opposite for my family and my children. I talk to them about everything, and we have a very close

relationship. But even if we internally, as a family, have a good life, we have kept our distance to others and stayed much on our own. We were never an integral part of a larger family, one whose members saw each other regularly and cared about each other. At the bottom of my heart I have a strong feeling that no one is really allowed to come close to me, that I am not willing to let anybody in, not even my own husband.

Even though I may appear extrovert and open, deep inside me I am on my own and in a way alone. I am very happy that my children seem to have a totally different life. They stick together and my daughter in particular is closely related to my mother. Together, they talk about everything.
I have learnt a lot from the painful period of my life and I am happy about the approach I have chosen as far as my children are concerned. I am also proud of my mother, who is still alive with a clear mind and a relatively healthy body. She is a strong woman in her way and has been a pillar in our family for years. I am also proud of coming from a family with many courageous and strong people, who have been steadfast in their choice of values and persistent in their convictions. Even though I have never had a close relationship with my relatives, this gives me a good feeling.

My message to those who read this is that openness can never be overestimated. Children need love and honesty and openness. The feeling of being different is painful, particularly if one doesn't know where that feeling comes from. Often there is a logical explanation, and that helps a lot. And secrets which everybody knows about, except oneself, are maybe the worst. For it does something with the confidence one is supposed to have in those who are one's nearest and ought to have said something.

An iron box that contained all of the items the German soldier and the Norwegian woman ever shared. He kept it as sacred all his life, despite her going back to Norway a few years after the wedding.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, AGE 94

«I have never been a German-tramp, just a woman who loved a German»

In the war years I was a young girl. One evening, when I was on a trip to the cinema, I turned around in the queue and looked straight at a German soldier. I felt so strongly that moment that it seemed as if he had a halo round his head. After the film, we got talking and started meeting each other in secret. After some time, I could not stand more secrecy and began showing myself in public in his company. My parents threw me out of the house, I was 16 years old, but I was lucky and got a job doing domestic work in Oslo.

We continued seeing each other and were formally engaged in February, 1944. When the war was over, we were sent to a camp together where we got married in May, 1945. Those were happy months, even though we had to work hard. In August, 1945 we were sent by boat to Germany, across the North Sea. There were 3500 people on board, women and men strictly separated. We had awful days on board, women were having miscarriages and there were mines which might explode around us. In Germany we were again sent from place to place, still separated from each other, until we finally managed to come together in the town he came from.

Everything was bombed out, and we could find neither heat nor food. We had to work hard for the Russians who controlled the area, and were constantly hungry and cold. But we were happy, together and with his family; kind, good people who wished us well. In 1947 we had a son. The lack of food was so severe that we worried about his health, and we decided that I should go back to Norway with him to make sure he got what he needed. We had to get a divorce to be allowed to travel, and we agreed that I should come back as soon as he had become stronger. It was difficult to leave my husband, but we felt it was the only solution to give our son a chance to survive.

In Norway I was allowed to stay with my parents, but had to work for them as a house-maid. Nobody wished me welcome. My brothers and sisters had worked for the Resistance, and one of my brothers had been killed as a result of this. The other siblings who had survived treated me like air, only my brother-in-law gave me a warm hug, even though he had suffered severely under the German occupation. In the village I was non-existent. But I hung on for the sake of our son; he was precious to us.

Every day I longed for my husband and life in Germany, and it was terrible to be away from him. Yet, I let my mother convince me that our son would not survive in Germany and that I had to think of him and his health. A man from the village who for a long time had shown an interest in me, wanted to marry me and adopt our son as his own. It was awful to write the letter to my German husband, and at the same time accept all the conditions linked to my son's well-being.

In 1950 I was married to my Norwegian husband, and we were married for more than 50 years. We had two children, and he never made a difference between my first son and our common children. But at the same time he was so jealous that I had to walk on my toes during all those years. He would not hear a word about my first marriage, and I was not allowed to speak about it all. We had to tell my son when he turned 16 because he wanted to travel and needed a passport. Until then he had been a German citizen and each month I had to go to the police station to bring his documents in order. After my son was informed about his German father, I asked him if he had any questions, but he had not. My other children have not asked any questions, not until many years later. If they had asked me, I would have answered them.

I went through many heavy periods and had nobody to talk to. Who could that be, in the little village where everybody knew what I had done? I had this hatred inside me, that I was a good-for-nothing. So I became stubborn and promised myself that I should get through this on my own. I have worked hard in all these years to ensure that we could have a family life where everybody was in good care. I have been forced to shut in parts of myself to achieve that.

Only many years later did I get friends whom I could tell about my first marriage. When my son was confirmed, I smuggled out a letter with pictures of him and asked my friends to mail it to Germany. They did so, and told me that they had received an answer which bore witness of my first husband's deep pain. I learned that he had married again, but that the marriage was unhappy, just like mine. Shortly before he died, he asked his second son to take care of a chest in the attic, containing his most important objects in life. The whole chest was filled with letters from me from the period we were together, and pictures of

me and us. A drawing he had made of me during the war, had hung in his bedroom all his life.

Later I travelled with my son to Germany, to the town where he was born. We were so happy there; quite different people from back home in Norway. "We should have lived here", my son said, and I thought the same. I liked the culture, the buildings and the people, and I have never forgot the kindness showed me by my German husband's family. In recent years I made contact with them again, and they were so happy when they heard from me.

I have thought a lot about the choices I have made over the years, and I know that I have never been a German-tramp. I was a Norwegian woman who fell in love with a German, and he loved me. There is nothing wrong in that, and we did not do anybody any harm. He was the love of my life, and even today I speak with him. I have done so all since I left him.

I know that my daughter, who was born in Norway, would have liked to know what has happened, and I am sorry we did not talk about it. It was not customary in our family to do that, and I did not dare risk the domestic peace with my husband and thereby making it difficult for everybody. Probably, I became tough, cold, by living this way, and in fact did not know what my children knew. But I would have answered if they had asked, I really would. Later I have talked a lot with my grandchild, my daughter's daughter. She was completely fascinated by my story, and more stories followed.

I believe that secrets can influence the next generation, but I do not quite see what is passed on. I understand that my daughter has felt this, and we have spoken out. I told her everything I remember, as honestly as I could. At the same time I feel strongly that my love for my first husband is mine only. It is my story, and I will protect it. I can share it with some people, but only with people who are close to me.

My message to everybody who may read this is that you must fight for love. I should have gone back to Germany, and I have often regretted that I did not do that. But then I would not have had my other two children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchild. I have a very good relation with them and would never be without them. After all, something good came of it all.

This story is told from the different perspectives of three generations. For all of them the salient points are love and openness, not least for the third generation member, the 33-year-old granddaughter. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

GRANDCHILD, AGE 33

«Follow your heart, and love, that is the only thing that matters»

According to the story I was told, my grandmother met a German soldier during the Second World War. He had been posted to the rural district where she lived with her parents. He was a good number of years older than her. In actual fact she was only 16, was completely thrilled and fell in love right away. Considering the fact that my family was committed anti-German (anti-Nazi), that my grandmother had a sister who was very active in the resistance and a brother who was shot, it is easy to understand that this was not at all a romance they favoured.

My mother and I have thought a lot about this and wondered what it was that made my grandmother take the risk of appearing in public with her German soldier lover when she was well aware that the consequences would be enormous. Maybe it was a kind of opposition against the role she had in the family, as the youngest and the one who perhaps felt neglected by the others.

After some time she decided to marry him, travel with him to Germany and have a baby. As the living conditions there became very difficult and her child – my uncle – fell ill, she chose to return to Norway. She had to divorce her husband and work as a housemaid for my great-grandparents. And then she met my grandfather who adopted my uncle, but reportedly was a very jealous man. Later I got to know that he had always been afraid of losing my grandmother to the German soldier, and that the issue therefore had to be hushed up. Maybe the silence was also a way of showing respect, something my grandmother felt she owed my grandfather.

I had already come of age – I was 17 or 18 - when I heard about all this for the first time. But at that time my grandfather was still alive, and everything related to it was in actual fact kept within the bosom of the lodge. But there had been certain minor incidents all the way, like when we were at the grocer's and some

German tourists asked about something. Suddenly my grandmother answered in fluent German, and she doesn't even know a word of English. There were some other bits and pieces too, things she said about love for instance, which made sense when I heard about her German husband. After the death of my grandfather, we have talked a lot about it, and she told me about all the feelings involved, that her German husband had been her one and only, and that she had done all this to save the life of my uncle. I think being able to talk about it was like a great relief for her, like some kind of liberation. Maybe it was a way of coming to terms with it.

What has made the deepest impression on me after having got children of my own, is the choice she was confronted with, whether she should listen to her heart or save her child. The feeling one must have after having chosen to sacrifice everything, certainly puts things into perspective. But maybe the rest of the ordeals she has gone through, in a prisoners' camp, in the forced labour service – it is really more or less like a movie altogether. Even today I find it difficult to see that all this is about my own grandmother. It is, as she herself puts it, like another life, strange and unknown.

I have always been very fond of my grandmother and have always been able to be frank with her when we talk. But I know that all this has done something with my mother. After all she is a very open kind of person who likes chatting with everybody, and I suspect this may be a reaction to the fact that feelings were always hushed up in her home at the time she grew up. In our home there has always been a lot of openness, and I think her adolescence has made her decide she would do it differently with us. In that way my mother has managed to stop the negative consequences of the suppression, as she has arranged for everything to be handled in a different way in our home; that we were able to talk about anything. Speaking for myself, I have never had the feeling that this has any negative impact on my mother's relation to us children, rather the contrary.

However, I think it has done something to the relationship between my mother and my grandmother; that my mother has felt she was being deceived. In actual fact everybody knew about it except my mother. It is easy to understand she may have felt like an outsider because of this, and I think there was a lot of anger inside her. Moreover, they were never part of a larger family, such as the brothers and sisters of my grandmother and their children. And if my grandmother hadn't been so frank with me later, I think I would have ended up with a totally different relation to history and to her. In that event, I should neither have had access to her perspective, nor understood her ideas and the underlying feelings of her choices. As a result, I would have been left with bare facts which would have meant little or nothing to me. This would only have triggered more questions and possibly given rise to distance, since people of my generation are very open

and actually have trouble understanding why this was something one could not talk about.

In a certain way all this is still part of me. My choice has also been to go my own way. My grandmother has always said: "Follow your heart, follow after love, that is what matters, that is the important thing." And I married a husband who was fifteen years older than me, in spite of a lot of resistance and criticism. In consequence, what my grandmother always has said has been very important to me. And I also hope I have inherited a bit of my grandmother's strength. She is an exceptionally strong woman and has always been a person I have looked up to. And I am very proud of her, that she decided to make her own choices and had the guts to hold on to them. It inspires respect to hold out over such a long period of time, and to suppress one's own feelings for a nobler purpose. In that perspective the events or what actually happened have not been of much importance to me. What counts are the feelings behind, the love and the strength that came up to the surface. The positivity, for that is how this has been presented. The good sides of love, love's strength.

If there is a purpose in sharing my story, it must be that openness provides for a better understanding of different situations and courses of action. The insight into the feelings behind the choices, paves the way for perceiving the other's perspective. Choosing openness and frankness is very rewarding for family relations, which will be to the benefit of all generations.

The three men who tell their stories on the following pages grew up in the same hamlet at the same time.

OLAV, SON, AGE 81

«Politically the families on these farms went separate ways» *(short version)*

I was only one when the war broke out and six when it ended. We lived in a hamlet of three farms here with three families closely related. The story of these three families shows the complicated diversity in force during the war. My father was a rural district forester, conservative and a member of Fedrelandslaget – a national, anti-socialist movement – before the war.

However, he was never a member of NS, (i.e. Nasjonal Samling, the Norwegian Nazi Party). Administratively he was subordinate to the County Forest Office, which received orders from the Ministry of Agriculture and from German authorities. My father had a physically tough job with assignments all over the district. When the war was over, he was so meagre that it looked as if he had been incarcerated in a prison camp. In 1946 he fell ill to poliomyelitis and died.

It seems reasonable to think that the war played a major role in my losing my father at the age of six. On one of the other farms both parents were NS members. The farmer's father had gone bankrupt in the 1930s, but his son had managed to reacquire the family farm. He was extremely well liked as a person, and although he was an NS member, people felt they could trust him.

Then he ended up in a situation where everything was turned upside down. He was ordered by the County administrator, who was an NS member, to take over the job as District Police Inspector. If he did not comply, they would anew take the farm from him. He probably felt that he had no choice. On one occasion he refused to obey an order to arrest. The consequence was that the police came up from the city to pick him up. After the war he was arrested and

Extracts from the father's diary, May 1945. On May 8 he noted:
"NS people are being arrested. Peace celebrations are taking place."
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

sent off to a forced labour camp. However, he soon came back to our district and was quickly reintegrated in the local society. The confidence was restored.

On the third farm in our hamlet people were not members of anything, as far as we knew, but they owned mines where there were raw materials which the Germans needed for their war industry, and the farm's forge was used for refinement and packing. Early in the war this farmer had been recruited by Milorg, the military wing of the national resistance movement, a fact which was unknown to the neighbours and the local community until the days of liberation in 1945.

The double identity of this neighbour as owner of a mine of importance to the war effort and at the same time a prominent Milorg member caused some trouble after the war. The locals found it difficult to accept his bonds to the resistance movement. It is important to remember that many Norwegians were "pro-German" before the war. This fact has been underexposed as far as I can see. Many came from families with a positive view of Germany, acquired for generations through education.

The National Socialism which suddenly surfaced, certainly frightened people, but at the same time there was some knowledge in our country about what the conditions were like in Germany in the inter-war years. A lot of the things which took place here during the war were to a considerable extent determined by what had happened before. The war ended in 1945, but the repercussions on the local society with rationing and so on, did not end until around 1960.

In the little forest community relations between the farms were close. Even if the father was an NS member and was convicted after the war, the family did not experience any problems with exclusion in the aftermath. They simply left the war behind and didn't talk about it anymore.
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK

SON, AGE 79

«Some end up as heroes, others as shitbags» *(short version)*

I was born when the war broke out and was five when it was over. I can't remember anything of it. My father grew up here at this farm. He was a farmer and a forester. He was an NS member already before the war. People who were NS members were called Nazis. As I see it that may be an exaggeration, since this was not what gave rise to Nasjonal Samling as far as I have been able to find out. NS people were not all of the same kind and some certainly became very fervent Nazis. Here at our farm my grandfather had been a member of at timber guild involved in the purchase and sale of timber. Towards the end of the 1920s or the beginning of the 1930s, there was an economic crisis which forced my grandfather to convey the farm to an insurance company.

My father managed to reacquire the farm, but contracted a heavy debt. Towards the end of the war, he was forced to serve as NS District Police Inspector. As I have had it explained, the County government official threatened to take over the farm if my father did not comply. After the war he was convicted and sent to some kind of forced labour camp. Life is often like that, some end up as heroes whereas others become shitbags. I do not know how long it took before my father was released, but even I have had to pay instalments on his loan after I took over the farm in 1968.

After the war my father told me nothing and I did not ask. I have never been interested. Life has always been good to me. I have been a member of organizations and have felt included. Been a member of the Farmers' association, the board of the local bank, the Forest owners' association, ten years in the Court of Protection and so on. I have been elected, which is not possible if one is disliked. I have never spoken to my children about the war. Telling them that their grandfather had been an NS member or had been punished for something would have felt shameful or unpleasant to me. I do not know if my children know. My wife and I have never talked about it. We have not needed to elaborate on it to get it out of the way, because we have already put it behind us.

Milorg was the name of the military wing of the Norwegian resistance movement during World War II. The brassard with a Norwegian flag symbolized Milorg membership. In order to be acknowledged as legally belligerent in accordance with the Geneva Convention, a Milorg member had to wear a distinguishing mark, such as a brassard. PHOTO: ARVE LINDVIG/VEST-AGDER MUSEUM

TOR MARTIN, SON, AGE 82

«Maybe it was best for everyone that we let past be past?» *(short version)*

I was born in 1938 and was six years old when the war ended, so I haven't got many memories from what took place. There was a mine on our property. It was rented out during the war. I have never heard anything about envy concerning that, but it was obviously a way of earning money from the Germans. I have no recollections of the war that can be linked to shock or trauma. I think that applies to everyone here in this district, even though there were some Nazis here.

A thing we appreciated was that our neighbour had a radio receiver. As District Police Inspector he was allowed to keep his radio, and we children were often there to listen. No-one knew at that time that even if my father had income from the Germans because of the mine, he was also a memeber of the resistance movement, Milorg. It was not until May, 1945, that people got to know about this.

Down at the other farm the District Police Inspector was imprisoned for some years because he had been a Nazi and a police officer during the war. His family was allowed to stay, but the farm work was taken care of by tenants. After the war I cannot remember that we ever bullied his son. We have never talked about the war. Maybe it was best for all that we let past be past? If we do not feel so concerned about the war, it may have something to do with the fact that the contact we had with the Germans was good. If German troops came passing by, they would always stop and offer chocolate to us children. To us they were not enemies. They were good people, just like us.

We know very well that we were lucky having experienced it this way, and I have learnt that this may have been extraordinary. But we have to be aware of the fact that the soldiers were people who in most cases didn't want to be here or to occupy and kill. However, it is the leaders who decide, here as so often elsewhere in life. With the relations between neighbours here in our hamlet it has been absolutely unproblematic to grow up after the war. To some it was certainly suspect that my father owned the mine which produced raw materials for the Germans. Whether he had any possibility to object, is unknown to me. I should certainly like to have known the answer to that. My father never talked about it.

The teddy-bear named "Brumle" gave her an important feeling of safety in her childhood. Once, her grandmother had to give the bear new button eyes. The old ones had fallen off. "I always thought it happened because "Brumle" had seen so many nasty things that he chose to 'let go of his eyes".
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

GRANDDAUGHTER, AGE 48

«I got another picture of my grandfather, but this has not changed my opinion of him»

In many ways one can say I have grown up with my grandparents. I fled to their house when things at home became too rough, which they often did. There was violence, both psychical and physical. My grandmother and grandfather provided a safe haven. They gave me the love and affection I never got at home. Therefore it was a shock for me when I received the bundle of documents from Riksarkivet – the National Archives – five years ago. They showed me that my grandfather had a past I knew nothing about, a dark secret from the war years.

My grandfather was born in 1921. He was 19 when the war began, and an impulsive young man with a lot of temper. On a day in January 1942 he happened to be at Markens in Kristiansand where he got into a fight with a German officer who had had too much to drink. The fighting ended with him knocking down the German, inflicting serious injury upon him and most likely causing his death. All this in self-defence, as it was later established. My grandfather was arrested, sent to Oslo to be interrogated at Victoria terrasse, the Gestapo headquarters. The result of the interrogation was that he was recruited to serve for the Germans. The fortunes of war took him to the Eastern Front, and my great-grandmother received his civilian clothes sent through the post. My grandfather had become an SS-soldier. In September that same year he was clearing a minefield near Leningrad. Something went wrong and one of the mines exploded. My grandfather got a splinter in his right eye and ended up in hospital. Later he was sent back to Norway to a camp for SS-troops at Holmestrand. His mishap meant he would have a glass eye for the rest of his life.

From now on, his career restarted with different missions and a lot of travelling back and forth to the continent. He worked as a driver and transported prominent German officers and leaders. As for myself I can remember that he joked about having driven around with Hitler himself. At that time we all laughed and thought all this was rubbish. My grandfather had a reputation for being an incurable storyteller.

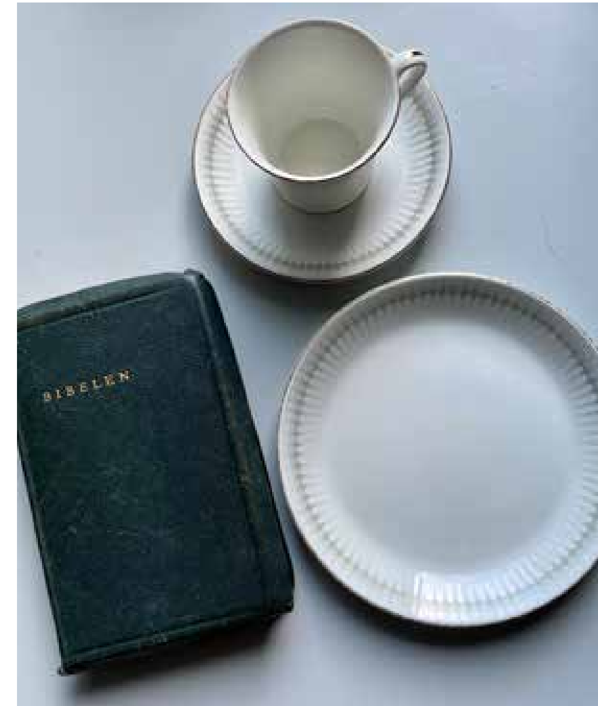
The documents showed that my grandfather lived a turbulent and somewhat rebellious life in German service. He ran away, neglected his duties and came back too late after a leave of absence. In consequence he was punished a number of times for having broken the rules of discipline. Among other things he spread false rumours about a British operation which was expected to happen. All the same, he had a certain influence, and he in actual fact managed to have his brother, who was a resistance activist and had been arrested and sent to Grini, pardoned and released. He was characterized as a good soldier, "provided he was under control".

When the war was over, my grandfather was arrested. He was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison for treason. In the judicial documents it is stated that he had "a criminal disposition" and was "mentally retarded", but there were no extenuating circumstances. On the day before my father, his eldest son, was born, he was sent to prison.

This story, about maybe the most important person in my life, was unknown to me. So it was until that day in 2015, when I heard on the radio that the National Archives had opened their files containing the acts of all the post-war trials against people who had been arrested for treason. I got a strange feeling which made me make contact to learn whether there was something in the files about my grandfather. I received a bundle with 200 pages of documents.

I am the oldest of three siblings. We grew up a long way from anywhere, up in the hills, but my grandmother and grandfather lived only half a kilometre away. My father's brother also lived in the neighbourhood. Sometimes my father and my uncle put on German uniforms and had great fun shooting at saucepans and frying pans. I was also invited into this "sport", but was never fascinated by the war. As a child I was in actual fact totally without interest for war.

It was a terrible childhood. Both my mother and my father maltreated us. My father was a sailor. He had a terrible temper and was probably the one who beat us most, but my mother wasn't any better. She was mentally unstable. There was physical violence as well as psychological terror in our home. Joy was forbidden, we were not allowed to foster hope, there was harassment and verbal abuse. My mother used to run after us with a knife and hit us with a long broom if we tried to hide under the sofa. I remember one day when I was 15-16 years old and my father beat me



Grandma's Bible and the grandparent's favorite coffee tableware.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

while my mother joined in with cheering and boxing out into the air. We were not allowed to make noises. Everything could disturb. I became a master of interpreting atmospheres and facial expressions. This was a strategy of survival, for there was no language for feelings in our home. I sought refuge outdoors and in books, but that was wrong too. So more than anything else I sought a safe haven at my grandmother's and grandfather's. That saved me, but I often have a bad conscience for having left my younger siblings with my parents.

My grandfather worshipped me and I worshipped him. This was also something which my father found provocative. "You don't know that bastard", he could say. And only now, as I have come of age, do I understand more of that context. And I have been able to forgive my father, for he too was a product of his own father, a father who was hot-blooded, violent and punishing, a father who treated his two sons differently; the elder was regularly given a bashing, whereas the younger remembers his childhood as fine. The grandfather who idolized me was at the same time a father who had maltreated his son, which most likely has resulted in my father maltreating me.

But neither I, nor my uncle or father knew about my grandfather's secret from the war. His glass eye was explained as a working accident from road construction. All the minor hints about an unknown past which my grandfather occasionally gave us – like having driven Hitler around and having a past as a teacher in a dancing school, were quickly hushed up by my grandmother and shovelled off as lies. But the documents I have in front of me now, tell me that these stories in actual fact were true.

My father died in 1995 after heart surgery, and he was never given the opportunity to know what had happened during the war. If he had known something, he would certainly have told me about it, both in order to debunk my grandfather and knock him off the pedestal I had put him on, and because we, towards the end of his life got a better

relationship and had long conversations and motor tours together. It was as if he could finally relax, escape from responsibility and feel safe, now that I had grown up and was strong and could take care of him. But my uncle remembers two episodes that took place some years ago. He had found a medal with a swastika among his father's things. Reportedly, my grandfather confiscated that "shit" in rage. The second episode was a telephone call from a frontline veteran who wanted to form an association. "I am finished with that shit – I have put it far behind me", my grandfather said. Nothing further was said about that issue. My grandfather probably thought that he took his secrets with him into the grave when he died in 2003.

My grandfather has meant enormously much to me. He and my grandmother gave me security and love and saved me. When he became a widower in 1988, a new era began with girlfriends and a slightly more daring lifestyle, different from the religious way of life he had had with my grandmother. At that time it was a natural thing for me to drive him around and follow him up. I thought I knew all there was to know about him.

Therefore it was a terrible shock to me when his history from the war was unveiled: Was this my grandfather? Was he a true Nazi? Was he a sadist? Working my way through all this material has been an emotional roller coaster for me, an experience which I feel has had a lot of influence on my own life: All the suffering from the past gave my father a painful adolescence, which in turn gave me a painful adolescence, which has now taken me through several years of therapy in an attempt at coming to terms with it. But I think my grandfather may have tried make up for something – both with the love and affection he gave me and by seeking forgiveness in faith. When my grandfather and grandmother passed through the mid phase of their lives, they became more and more religious, and I have a feeling this may have contributed to his becoming so much milder as the years went by.

All in all I think I understand. And if one understands, it is easier to forgive. And I have forgiven. My grandfather was so young when he entered the war, only 19 years old. He was still not a full-grown personality, and everything he experienced during the war in combination with a hot-tempered mind, resulted in anger which he let his eldest son pay for. And my father prolonged this by letting me suffer. But the love that my grandfather gave me had the effect of stopping it there. If you are met with love, you will pass on that love to others, as I have done with my children.

I got another picture of my grandfather when I read these documents, but this has not changed my opinion of him. On the contrary, this new recognition has helped me understand how the bits and pieces of my own life are linked together, and made me able to forgive.

Grandfather's hand knitted jacket represented safety and care. PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Three generations: Morten Rimstad Bentsen, his father Øystein, and grandfather Harry, Åseral, 1995.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

«Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a relative who liberally shares his story» *(short version)*

My grandfather grew up in Kristiansand in a poor working class family. Harry was a gifted schoolboy, but because of his family situation, he could not afford a long education. He signed on as a sailor before finding employment as a dock worker in Kristiansand.

When Germany attacked Norway, the situation seemed totally unreal. My grandfather escaped up into the hills of Baneheia from where he could see the Germans bombard the city. During his period at sea in the 1930s, he had several times been ashore in Germany and seen Nazism at close range, an ideology from which he completely dissociated himself. On one occasion up in Baneheia he came across a group of German officers' wives, who enthusiastically declared that their Führer had given them a magnificent country. When talking about this incident he used to say that it was "bloody awful" to listen to.

My grandfather joined a resistance group whose task was to carry out sabotage in Kristiansand harbour. The dockers' mission was to sink German ships. His group was unmasked in 1942. One of their leaders was arrested in a control. In his clothing he had a letter with the names of all the group members. Three out of 70 managed to escape, the others were sent to Arkivet, the local Gestapo headquarters. There they were lined up against a wall for several hours and interrogated by Lipicki, a notorious torturer.

Since some members had already confessed, the Gestapo knew well what my grandfather had done. His resolve was not to tell the

Gestapo anything, but he was brutally beaten several times on the side of his head. When the pain was at its most intense, he had to perform heavy knee bends. Lipicki fastened a nail in his mouth and hammered on it. Harry then confessed that he was a member of a Communist sabotage group.

In the beginning of 1943 Harry was sent from Grini, (a prisoner camp near Oslo), to Sachsenhausen. To many newcomers this was a shock. They were ordered to footslog in figures of 8 for several days, in order to test German soldier boots. It was winter and he had only got a thin prison uniform to wear. The prisoners were short of food, particularly in the beginning. They contracted illnesses and lacked medication.

When the Germans wanted to amuse themselves, they lined the prisoners up and hit them, one after another. Harry was frequently ordered to punishment drills with hard work. Several times he was taken seriously ill and contracted dysentery and fever. While he was confined to medical treatment and had to go to the loo at night, he had to pass by a heap of corpses. On several occasions he was on the brink of succumbing. The Norwegian prisoners were better off than those coming from Eastern Europe. Several thousand of the Soviet prisoners were executed on arrival. The prisoners had to witness hangings, which was a terrible experience.

I believe that my grandad's experiences as a prisoner-of-war opened for his strict upbringing of the children.

Listening to his stories has given us a closer relation to our history, deeper political awareness; everything is connected to grandad's background.

Grandfather Harry Bentsen (second from the right) arrives Kristiansand railway station on the train from Oslo after three years in German prison, summer 1945.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Father in Lappland, 1943-44. PRIVATE COLLECTION

DAUGHTER, AGE 55

«Something happened in Norway during the war, something terrible»

My father was born in southern Germany in 1918. During the war he was sent to Norway as a soldier. He travelled via Denmark to Kristiansand and from there to North Norway. Norway made a very deep impression on him. He adored the culture, the people and all the other things that were new to him. He particularly appreciated meeting Finnish troops who were fighting against the Soviet Union, and he made friends with a good number of them. He also got to know the local Norwegians and took many pictures - of magnificent and scenic landscapes, of people and everyday life. I have a collection of more than 700 photographs from northern Norway taken during the war.

Since this was static warfare, his posting saw little or no military action, this was at least how he described it later in life. And he told us much about this – his love affair with beautiful and scenic Norway, an affection he held on to after the war was over and he had returned to Germany from his detention as a prisoner of war. It was a romance which lasted until the end of his life. He was longing for Norway and had planned to return there after he had retired.

But life did not grant him that favour. He died at the age of 62.

Still, there was something which happened in Norway during the war, something terrible which was going to haunt him more than anything else. Something so strong that he would never talk about it. Something which later in life made him cry whenever the war came up as a subject for discussion. Something which traumatized him so profoundly that it had repercussions on our entire family. Even on us four siblings who had never experienced the war. In

The father built a log-cabin in Southern Germany in the same style as he had seen and taken part in erecting in Norway and Northern Finland during the war. He had stored the dream of Norway in that cabin.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

that way the war became part of our lives too. I don't know what it was, but I have thought a lot about it and found out it may have something to do with the scorched earth tactics which reduced Finnmark and northern Troms to ashes. That he was involved in destroying the lives of the people and the country he had fallen in love with.

After the war he and his comrades from the same battalion in North Norway saw each other regularly. I have heard they just broke down in tears during such gatherings.
The war has definitely left its marks on our family. My mother as well, born 1922, was deeply affected by what had happened during the war. She was an active opponent of Hitler, which in itself was a risky business.

She was already engaged to be married when the war broke out. Her fiancé was sent to the front and later killed. He was her one and only, her great love, and in addition to him she lost her brother. She met my father several years after the war. My mother could more easily talk about sensitive issues, and

The "Norwegian cabin" in Southern Germany was a sanctuary for the family. Here the informant is at the age of five, in 1970.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

so could my aunts, the women of the family. But my father locked it up inside himself and kept it there. He, and many of his generation, chose to carry the weight of the burden on their own and only talk about the bright sides of life, as if that could blot out the painful things that had happened.

This is what is reflected in the pictures he took in Norway and the memories he wanted to preserve – beautiful scenery and people in peaceful everyday situations. I have a feeling my mother may have known more about what had happened to my father during the war than what she told us. In her old age she repeatedly returned to those crucial years of her life, but she never told us the whole story. She died in 2002, almost 80 years old.

I am the youngest of four siblings, a true offspring of an Indian summer. There are more than 14 years between me and my eldest brother, and I was only 13 when my father died. This has clearly affected me and my relationship to my father, since he became gentler and more relaxed as the years went by and the horrors of the war had become more distant. My eldest brother grew up with a very strict father, and like my father he doesn't talk much about personal matters. But I know that he had the war and its aftermath close at hand when he was a child. And even if I was born 20 years after the war was over, it has had considerable impact on me too, on my personality and identity, which indeed is true for all four of us.

To grow up with parents traumatized by the war, and with the powerful memories of so many dead among their inner circle, has caused a lot of sadness and anxiety to our family. Today it is a well-known fact that there is also a biological component in this, that remnants of traumatic experiences may be transferred genetically from parents to offspring via DNA and come to the surface as anxiety and fear among the latter. In my opinion this may help us siblings understand why the things that took place during the war have had such a profound impact on us.

At the same time I have personally inherited my father's affection for Norway too. Even though my father never returned to Norway, he built his own little Norwegian love nest in southern Germany. He called it his "Norwegian hut", a copy of similar buildings he had seen in Norway. To some extent I actually grew up there, since we went there so often – to the place where his dreams about Norway in some way were assembled. And we still have that hut; we call it our "Donatus-Hütte", with reference to a family name on my father's side.

After I had moved to live in Norway in 2018, and on my own had fallen in love with that country, I have often wondered whether I just did it to fulfil my father's dreams – that it was his project I was trying to make come true. In order to find out more about that, I had to return to Germany. Today I know that it is not his dream but my own, and that I shall return as soon as possible – for my own sake.

I can feel that I have experienced the war passively; that I know what war really is about. People who have grown up with a father traumatized by war will know what it is all about, no matter which side of the war he was on. Therefore, one of the things that really shocked me when I was living in Norway is what I consider to be a glorification of the war, which in actual fact is pretty common there, not least among the young generation. 75 years after the war came to an end there is still this peculiar fancy for the German war machine, for weapons and uniforms and vehicles from the Second World War. At an event I attended, seeing people having great fun sitting on the back of a German military lorry, I was really shocked and thought it was disgusting.

This is part of the reason why I wanted to contribute to this project with my story. That war must not be glorified and extolled; that war is intrinsically evil and that it is essential to learn about and understand the destinies and tragedies of the victims of on "the other side". All of them were human beings, soldiers as well as people from the local population. It is only when people come together that true peace can be achieved.

At the age of twelve, the informant was ashamed when he learned by coincidence that his father had been a soldier for the Germans in the war. In this picture from 1954 he is 13. PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

SON, AGE 79

«I'm surprised that we are so few descendants who feel sorry for what our parents stumbled into, or deliberately joined during the World War II»

My father was a soldier on the Eastern Front. A nice way of expressing that he was a soldier in the SS. He was part of the regime which staged the Holocaust in Eastern Europe.

I got to know this by coincidence. I was then 12 years old. A friend of mine had been to the police station, waiting for his father who worked there. While waiting, he had leafed through an album of photographs of previously convicted criminals which had been left on the desk. When I met him later that day, he told me that he had spotted my father in that album. I presumed that it was all about poaching ducks or smuggling liquor, everybody was involved in that. All the same, I brought the matter forth at the dinner table that evening. Then my father told me that he had been a soldier in the German forces.

Later we talked very little about it, and on the few occasions when I asked, I never got any proper answers. Among other things I asked if he had participated the in questioning of prisoners. Then he answered that he could not remember. When asked if he had killed somebody, he simply said: - no, not many. He never gave us any proper answers. Not even in his 30-page-long statement to the prosecutors did I find any answers. There it appears that he had given talks for the RSHA, an abbreviation for "Reichssicherheitshauptamt", which at that time was the headquarters of the security service in Germany. It does not say what he gave talks about. There are no details. Even though my father himself did not talk about it, I understood that he was hiding upsetting matters. For a long period

I just let it rest. Then it happened that I got a chance to see his file, and then it all reappeared and it became clear to me that he had done a lot more than cook "sauerkraut" for his soldier friends.

When the war broke out he was serving with the coastal artillery in the Oslo fjord and fought against the Germans when they came. Two months later he reported for service at the "Reichskommissariat" in Kristiansand. There he was involved in censoring the press. He worked there until the time when Quisling issued his proclamation that we must stand shoulder to shoulder with our German brothers in the fight against England. Two weeks later he reported for service with the SS. He also worked for some months in the "Germanische Leitstelle" in Oslo, the office for propaganda and recruitment before he again served with the SS abroad. So he travelled a good deal, and was probably more involved with the Germans than he wanted to admit.

The police kept their investigation going for one year before the case was brought to trial. They probably found a good deal, but only followed up the matters that might be used in a Norwegian court. If you read between the lines there is a lot more. Now I'm telling this relatively easy, but there are things I still can't tell. It is not a secret, because most of the information is stored in his file, but I can't make myself say it.

I probably belong to the minority who were not bullied as a child because of this. After the war the chief of police where I grew up emphasized that the children should go free. So after this my problem is more of a personal sort. First, there is this underlying restlessness and the question if he has committed other crimes. Who was he really? Then there is a conflict of loyalty and a feeling of ambivalence as to how I shall relate to my parents when it comes to these matters. And to what extent should I keep on digging? Should I try to persuade them to talk about what happened?

I have certainly suppressed a lot of things. I have seen pictures of my father from the years after the war when he was in prison. Among other things he was once home on leave in connection with a celebration of the 17th of May. I have no memories from that week-end, even though I know I was there. I remember a lot from that time, but not that week-end. It is totally gone.

My immediate reaction after I got to know that my father had been a soldier with the Germans was shame. It was terrible. My friends had fathers who had been in the police troops and the resistance. One of them had even been in seven different prison camps in Europe. My father had fought at the Eastern Front. I dared not speak about it. When somebody started talking about the war I fell silent. Everybody could tell what their fathers had done, but not I. So I was a quiet child. Later this feeling of shame changed into restlessness and insecurity. Would anything new pop up?

Seven years old, 1948. "Everybody could talk about what their fathers had done, but not I. Therefore, I became a quiet child."
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

When I was in my mid-twenties, I learned that my grandmother had been a member of the NS. This happened about a year before she died. In a way it was worse to receive this message, in any case it was different from getting to know that my father had been in the SS. After all I had no memories of my father from the time before I was 8. On the other hand I had very good relations with my grandmother. When I was informed that she had been in the NS, it was as if my memories of childhood became tainted.

The shame I once felt is no longer with me, but the aversion lingers. Even though I have talked a lot about this, also in the newspapers, there are still things I will not talk about. I have a feeling that what I tell also reveals something about me. It could add to the process of defining me. I want to shield myself from that. My father certainly did the same thing. He did not keep quiet to shield the family, but to shield himself. I remember I told him that you are part of history. What has been revealed so far about the SS is not correct and you have a responsibility to talk. He only shrugged his shoulders. He would never approach ideology and what he stood for. He never told why he had made those choices.

This has filled large parts of my life. Not to the extent that it has influenced my job in a negative way, but social relations have suffered. I have in public expressed my surprise that we are so few descendants who feel sorry for what our parents stumbled into, or deliberately joined during the Second World War. That stirred up a lot of noise. My brother once said to me that we must forgive father, because then we shall have better lives. But can we do that? If we forgive him, we forgive the SS, too. We cannot forgive what he has done. We cannot forgive matters we don't know. But we can and should talk about it. In the taxi belonging to somebody I know there is a sign. It reads "talk yourself well". His father was in Quisling's "Führer guard". We absolutely agree on this. It helps to talk about these matters.

The war is over, and German soldiers are leaving Norway. Mandal, summer 1945.
Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story.
PHOTO: DAGFINN PETTERSEN/VEST-AGDER MUSEUM/AGDERBILDER

DAUGHTER, AGE 79

«How can one process something if one doesn't really know what it is about? It is impossible»

My father was a sea captain and lieutenant in the armed forces. In April 1940 he took part in defending Odderøya. In 1943 he was imprisoned by the Germans and sent to Poland. When he returned home to Norway after the war, he was found guilty of treason and again put in prison. We never talked about it.

I did not have a father in my early childhood. That is, I had a father, but he did not live at home. Father was at sea, I was told. Now and then we received parcels from him. Beautifully carved boats, with masts and sails. Those were boats he had made while at sea, we thought. When I started school, there was still no father at home. From this period I have the first memory of something being amiss. A girl friend of mine dropped a remark. We had probably fallen out with each other. Anyway, she said that my father was in prison. I remember I was completely stunned. I ran home to my mother and told her what my friend had said, and asked if it was true. The strange thing is that I do not remember what my mother answered. I cannot recall if she said it was true, or if she went on with the story about him being at sea. Unconsciously, I probably understood that this was something we should not know and talk about and then it was repressed.

When I was in the second or third form, my father came home. It was not said where he had been, and I and my brother did not talk about it either. After all, there was nothing to talk about; we thought he had returned from the sea.

The next time I remember something was amiss, was many years later. It was revealed in a speech given by my uncle at my wedding. Through the speech it became clear that my father had been in prison,

also after the war. I remember asking my husband if he knew about this, and as matter of fact he did. He told me that his aunt had told his parents something, but he did not know the details. So around me people knew, but they did not tell me.

The day I found out what it was about, I had received a telephone call from my cousin. This happened sometime in the 90s. He informed me of a newspaper article which described my father as a German spy. Again I felt stunned. What was this? I really knew nothing. After a couple of days I contacted the author of the article and explained that I very much would like to meet him. We met in a hotel in Oslo. There I was told that my father, after the war, was convicted as a traitor because he had worked as a spy for the Germans. This was the first time I heard that story. It was the first time I got to know why my father had not lived at home in my early childhood. When I learned all this I had turned 50. It was horribly painful.

I have discussed with my brother why we never talked about this. Why have we not come to the bottom in this case? Why have we never managed to make mother or father say something? To the author of the article, the content of the article was evidently the truth, but to me, father had been at sea. Having to accept what was presented in the article as the truth, was awful. It brought to life so many feelings. I was angry and confused. At the same time I was embarrassed and ashamed having a father who could do such a thing. I had also a need to investigate the story myself. I went to the archives and was allowed to see his file. In the file was his sentence. It says that he was convicted for having denounced three persons from an organization who helped refugees escape to England. Father evidently maintained that he had not intended to inform on anybody, but that the plan all the time had been to escape to England. He was not believed and was sentenced to several years in prison. Having read this, the story became, perhaps for the first time, solidly confirmed.

How can one process something if one doesn't really know what it is about? It is impossible. For me this has been a secret and to a certain degree, it still is. I still have not dared talk about it to other persons in the family. The two strongest feelings in all this have been guilt and uncertainty. I feel guilty for not having come to the bottom of it. I never confronted mother or father. Mother had a tough time all through her life. We were three siblings, but one of us needed extra help. This rested with mother. She was also ill. She suffered from a type of asthma which caused her having strong breathing problems when she got tired. That was probably why I did not want to trouble mother with this. I never developed a close relation to my father, and that was probably why I never confronted him. But all the same, I think he owed me an explanation, they both did. But then I never asked for one, and that is where my guilt is buried. Seemingly it is my fault that we never move on.

The uncertainty is rooted in several things. Before I came to know what had happened, I often felt that people knew more than I did: My friend at school, my in-laws, my uncle and other members of the family. They all knew something I did not. That made me feel uncertain. Now this has been turned upside down. Now I feel that I do not show the real me if those around me do not know my full background, that is, the story about my father. In addition I am still afraid that more secrets shall be disclosed.

These are of course not thoughts that I carry with me all the time. They come in waves. They pop up when the case is discussed or when I hear similar stories. My brother was for instance contacted by a lawyer who held that father had been wrongly convicted. Then the feelings came back. It gave us hope that it had all been a gross misunderstanding, but then the case stalled. The result was that we just opened the wounds.

In a way I am never able to put the matter to rest. What I find in the sentence documents, I can probably learn to live with, but in the article his role becomes so much bigger and his participation seems premeditated. As long as there is doubt about the truth, it becomes difficult to relate to, reconcile myself with and forgive. But can I really forgive? Guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation, those are difficult ideas and concepts, but he was my father and he was a kind man. I try to say to myself: that is the way it is, this is what I have to live with. Sometimes I cry, sometimes it is all right. It is a grief one has to live with, like all kinds of grief.

This story puts things in perspective, at least for my part. I feel I can more easily understand other persons who have been or are in similar situations. For me it is decisive that I manage to reconcile myself with this story. I have to, shall I live with it. Telling this story is part of that process. I need to open up for the secrets. I want that those who come after me shall know what it is about so that they can avoid living their lives in uncertainty and anxiety.
I have decided to tell the story to my grandchildren. I think this may contribute to making other difficult items easier to talk about. I want them to see grandmother talk about things, even though it makes her sad. There is strength in that.

In the 1950s and 60s, journalists often paid visits to the family, wanting to write about Gunvald Tomstad's experiences in the war. Here is Jan Jørg together with his father, who is showing a British radio transmitter from the war, 1965. PHOTO: GUNNAR HAUGAN, ARBEIDERBLADET/PRIVATE COLLECTION

JAN JØRG TOMSTAD, SON, AGE 68

«My father was willing to sacrifice his own life and future in the battle for our freedom»

I was born in 1953 and grew up at Helle, a farm near Flekkefjord. My father was a member of the resistance against the Nazis and had a role as a double agent. His name was Gunvald Tomstad. In 1940 he worked as a typographer in a local newspaper besides being a farmer.

When World War II broke out my father, aged 22, joined a British resistance and intelligence unit operating in Norway. This group collected information about German warships and the movement of troops, the construction of airfields and forts etc., and transmitted messages to London. To cover the activity with an illegal radio transmitter hidden in the farm´s attic, my father joined Nasjonal Samling, the Norwegian Nazi party. In January 1943 his unit was rolled up by the Gestapo, and my father had to escape to England. In addition to housing the transmitter, which sent compromising radio messages to England and gathering intelligence about the enemy, he also had an active role in the publication of the illegal newspaper "Kongsposten".

During the war my father must constantly be ready to ward off any dangerous situation. He always had to have at the ready a reply or an explanation to any question or situation that might pop up. This made the enemy trust him. The Gestapo and the Nazi leaders sought his advice. Living without knowing when they might strike and unmask him, was like living in a cage with venomous snakes.

In 1943, after military training in England, his superiors in London saw that his health was too fragile for having him parachuted into Norway to conduct further resistance work. The war left its marks in my father's body. One of his feet was disabled after a motorcycle accident in 1942. He had arranged this to avoid being sent to the East Front to fight for the Germans. His injury became a handicap for him in his

Jan Jørg together with his mother, father and a nabour in the garden at Helle in Flekkefjord, ca. 1955. His father is wearing an Army Officer's uniform with the rank of Lieutenant, and the shoulder straps of "Company Linge". He is at home after a military assignment.
PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

strenuous work as a farmer. But the worst pain came in the post-war years. The stress accumulated in his life as a double agent gave no convalescence. He was easily frightened by sudden sounds and movements, and his sleep deteriorated. In the morning he could wake up soaked in sweat after a nightmare. Like so many war veterans with shattered nerves and reduced health, he took to alcohol as a kind of self-medication. My father was oversensitive to alcohol because of surgery which had removed a major part of his stomach.

When he was 40 he looked like an old man and was mentally and physically disabled.

In 1963 when the doctors at the National Hospital examined his level of invalidity, the senior registrar said that every year during the war had cost him five years of life. When my father was feeling all right, his life was good. I remember once the radio sent a programme for schools where an extract from the illegal paper "Kongsposten" came on the air. They said it was one of the best illegal papers in Norway during the war. I remember father smiling then.

My father was a good disseminator, and I enjoyed sitting on his knee, listening to his stories. He taught me a lot about technical things, about motors and steam engines. These are good memories I have after him. In the 1950s and 60s we often had journalists and friends of his from the war coming to our house. I enjoyed being there when they talked about the war. As a child I didn't always understand their war stories, but I realized they were extraordinary. My childhood may have been a bit unlike that of other children, and I soon became aware of the person my father actually was. Many people said: "Aren't you a lucky boy!" They didn't know how cumbersome life was at home.

My father couldn't stand noise and trouble. As children we had to go tiptoe to avoid making noise. I remember once I was hiding behind a door saying "boo!" to him. It was like stabbing him; it put him totally off balance. He wasn't angry; all he could do was to collect himself. For more than two years he had been living

under constant fear and tension, and sudden moves could "nail him to the ceiling". Any tiny noise or hasty movement at the farm could make him ask: "What's that?" He was like a coiled spring, but gentle and mild as a person.

When we were out travelling, I had to take care so that my father did not consume any alcohol. If he drank, everything went wrong and fell apart. Home on the farm, if we hadn't seen father for half an hour, I had to go out and look for him. My mother warned me and my sisters: "We may perhaps expect to find him dead." The farm and the barn had many rooms and there were numerous places where he could disappear. Our house was also filled with weapons and ammunition. He once said to my mother: "If there is a bang, you mustn't fear what may have happened.“

I liked talking to my father when he was in good shape. He was a keen reader of dailies and interested in everything that happened. His technical knowledge was great and he had many ideas and plans he liked to discuss with people. But I missed a father who was involved in my things. Other fathers came to school or joined excursions, but he was obsessed with himself and his sufferings. From the age of 9-10 I had to be his assistant. Our relationship was two-sided. On the one hand I was proud of him, but when he drank a lot and was not presentable, everything was sad. I can still feel the pain and shame I experienced when he was drunk.

In 1965 "Det største spillet" appeared, a book about resistance fighting. One day when I was walking with my father in a street in Flekkefjord, a man approached us and took his hand. He apologized for having said my father was a Nazi. I think the book will make young people understand what the war has cost of effort, and how willing people were during the war to sacrifice their lives and their future for the freedom we enjoy today.

On May 12, 1970 my father died. I was 16 and remember every minute of that day. It was a beautiful spring day, the sky was pure azure and the birch-buds had opened. I was alone at home with my eldest sister and her family. My mother was in Kristiansand to tend a sick family member. On the night before, I dropped in at father's with some tablets. He could not sleep. I remember crying afterwards, with a sad feeling that the end was near. I said farewell and the next morning he was dead. I was relieved, because this was the end of a long agony.

The pain that the children of war combatants have to share in must come to light. A family member once quoted my father saying: "The price that peace has cost, is something future generations will have to pay as inheritors of fear and apprehension." No doubt he was right.

My father's membership in the Nazi Party during the war had been approved by the military top brass in England. After the war the proof of this was kept in the Royal Palace. From there it was sent to us. In 1965, when my mother and father attended the Army's Week at Vigelandsparken in

Oslo, King Olav left the red carpet to salute my father. It was very unusual for the King to do such a thing. This has moved me deeply. The King was aware of my father's problems with alcohol and illness. When he was fifty, he received a personal telegramme signed "Olav" to congratulate him. My father appreciated that enormously.

He received a lot of flowers for his birthday. As I wondered why, he just said: "Everyone knows that I will never reach 60." My father knew his life would be short, that was a fact. When he died a year and a half later, there was a large white wreath on his coffin. A last tribute from King Olav. The monument for my father in Flekkefjord was made by Per Palle Storm. The plan was to make a bust. But my mother couldn't stand the idea of her husband's head on a stick. So the result was a relief.

When I was 18 and left home, I first served five years in the Armed Forces for education and further service. Afterwards I took education in engineering and media. I have worked for 40 years in the NRK and have travelled a lot. Maybe I have inherited my father's interest for challenging tasks. I have missed him very much and envied my friends who could phone their daddy when they needed help. I had to get on in life on my own without anyone's support. This has made me independent and I have tried to transfer my experience to my two sons. According to some media ”Gunvald died as a bitter person". But he was not at all bitter. He was grateful for the contribution he had made, and for the freedom he had been instrumental in bringing about. The freedom we enjoy today. He repeated this, and he never regretted.

When hobby historians wrote about his war effort, relying on their own ideas and describing him as self-centred, my father was publicly denigrated. That hurt us a lot. They couldn't see how much he had sacrificed. He sacrificed everything and was ready to sacrifice his own life.

My mother, who was also active in the resistance during the war, felt stabbed in the back by people who wrote that Gunvald Tomstad was a "historical bluffer". She said: They described a person, totally different from the one she had been married to for 25 years. She was careful in her allegations and never grandiloquent.

Some Norwegian storytellers managed to do what the Nazis never did: stab her in the back.

In my opinion it is incorrect to say that he put himself at the centre of his narrative. My father's concern was to report what effort they made, his fellow combatants in the resistance during the war. We have suffered a lot from insulting press announcements, and my mother's quality of life deteriorated because of that. This still leaves a stain on my life today.

Our family is proud of my father's fighting for freedom at the same time as we have had to fight to put his story into a correct perspective.

Møllergata 19 in Oslo, seen from Folketeaterbygningen in the 1930s.
Behind the police station one can discern the prison buildings at Grubbegata.
PHOTO: J. H KÜENHOLDT A/S/OSLO BYARKIV/CREATIVE COMMONS

SON, AGE 77

«I would have liked to know more about my family's doings during the war, but we never talked about it» *(short version)*

I made contact for three reasons, because I have a letter which my father wrote from Møllergata 19 to my mother, a diary after my grandmother who fled into the countryside on April 9, and because my uncle and aunt escaped to Sweden during the war. My father was arrested in the middle of July 1943 and was released at the end of August 1943. He was incarcerated at Møllergata 19 where opponents of the German regime were held in custody during the war.

The letter my father wrote to my mother is quite neutral, my father says that he misses my mother and things like that, and he asks how the children are. The letter is read through, approved, and stamped by the security police. My grandmother fled by car to Ringsaker on April 9, 1940. She spent a couple of months there, I think. We have a 35-page diary left from her, dating from that time. The diary appeared ten years ago. In it she had written pretty much about the events from these days in April. Grandmother died in 1945.

My aunt and my uncle, my father's brother, had to flee to Sweden during the war. I don't know why they had to leave. We only have some loose notes from that time. My cousin thinks they didn't have any events worth talking about. Nobody talked about the time in Sweden, just like they never talked about my father being imprisoned, at least not while my father and mother were alive. My father never told that he had been arrested or related his war-time experiences. I was not informed until I tidied up after he died in the 90s. It was a small shock to get to know that my father had been detained at Møllergata 19.

In my youth we never talked in my family about what happened during the war. My mother was very anti-German, so we were never allowed to ask what happened. My mother always harboured a great hatred against the Germans, or the Nazis, I think it is important to draw a line between the Germans and the Nazis. I would like to know why my father was imprisoned, but I shall probably never know.

From the construction of Lundebanen at Lista. This narrow-gauge railway was built to transport supplies and building materials from the harbour in Lundevågen to the German construction sites at Lista. In addition to the airfield, the batteries in Marka and at Tjørveneset were the biggest sites. The railway had several side-tracks, for example to the sand washing plant at Nesheim and the quarry in Mabergåsen. Photo illustration, not pertaining to the individuals described in this story. PHOTO: LISTA MUSEUM

OLAF, AGE 87

«Little has been written about life at Borhaug during the war. After all, we lived in a fortress, close to the Germans»

(short version)

I was born in 1933 and was seven when the war started. In 1995 I wrote a book, based upon memories from my childhood. After all we lived in a fortress, close to the Germans. There were only foreign people at Borhaug, Russians, Germans, and Norwegians who worked for the Germans. Because my mother ran the post office, we were allowed to remain in the village. We, the children regularly paid visits to the Germans. We took part in traversing and elevating the big guns, too. In my military service, I knew more about the guns than the person who was training us. We were not exactly friends with the Germans, but I have not a bad word to say about them. They gave us sugar and chocolate, that was a treat.

We were exposed to bombing. I fell down the stairs, my father ended up in the hall, and the neighbouring house was hit. Our neighbour, Oliver Larsen, was killed. We saw the Germans placing mines on the beach, and because we knew their location, we were not afraid, and went there anyway. On one occasion we discovered five dead Russians. I remember well walking on the beach, collecting things, and there they were. Today I find it strange to think that we could stand the sight of such things. After the war, after the beach had been cleared of mines, two of my friends stepped on a mine. I can't forget the wisp of smoke rising from the place. They got their legs splintered. It was a miracle that they survived.

I have not had any problems with bad memories afterwards. But we saw how the Germans treated the Russians, and that was often horrible to witness. Once a Russian was punished; he crept under the fence and took some turnips which a farmer had harvested. We heard the shot, when the Russian was hit, his body was left there for four days as a dreadful warning. I remember giving food to some of the Russians. It was food I had received from the Germans. One of the German guards saw what I was doing, he ruffled my hair and called me "ein gutes Kind".

Nils Einar Lislevand was buried in a memorial cemetery for the fallen in Denmark – as a war hero. Everything was in favour for him to gain a place in history as a hero. Why did his father choose to ignore that?
PHOTO: LISE GUNN ESKELAND

LISE GUNN ESKELAND, GRANDNIECE, AGE 55

«What is it that makes a father not even wanting to have his son's coffin back home?» *(short version)*

The history of my granduncle has always been veiled in secrecy in my family. He was 20 when the war in Norway broke out and was employed in a firm that carried out construction work for the "Wehrmacht". After a while he was exposed as an important pawn in a large fraud in the firm, and after a trial in December 1942 with more than 30 defendants, he was convicted in the court-martial for fraud and embezzlement. Whether this was done for the sake of his own gains or a deliberate act against the German occupier, is not known. After doing time in prison in Arendal and at Akershus, he was sent to Germany to complete his sentence.

When the war was over, he was supposed to return with "The White Buses" to Norway, but because he was ill and weak, he was admitted to a hospital in Denmark. There my granduncle's life ended. He was only 25 years old. His father was asked if he wanted his son's coffin to be returned to Norway, but he refused the offer. My granduncle was buried in a cemetery for war heroes in Denmark, without his nearest kin around him. During his time in prison, he wrote several letters home, to his two brothers, among others. The letters show that he wanted contact with his father, but my great-grandfather never answered the letters. My great-grandfather also chose to ignore the request from the authors of a book about our fallen heroes in 1948. In this book my granduncle's crime was characterized as "sabotage". The consequence was that the case was omitted from the book.

I have pondered about this throughout my life: what really happened to my granduncle? Why would nobody in the family talk about him? Why can't I find a single picture of him? I asked my grandaunt and my grandmother while they were still alive. I also asked my father. They all answered that that they didn't know anything. But this can't be true, because later I have discovered that my grandaunt really visited the hospital in Denmark and saw him on his deathbed. And now all those who knew my granduncle have passed away. I should wish there had been more openness about what happened.

Mellom 1940 og 1945 var det i perioder stasjonert rundt 500 000 tyske soldater i det okkuperte Norge – et land med en befolkning på knappe tre millioner mennesker. Kanskje mer enn noen annen periode i norsk historie har disse fem årene satt dype spor i menneskene som opplevde dem, men også i generasjonene som fulgte. Åtti år senere er det fremdeles mange som strever med langtidsvirkningene av det som skjedde under krigen.

I denne boken deler 21 mennesker sine fortellinger om det å bære på en arv – kjent eller ukjent – fra andre verdenskrig.

Publikasjonen inneholder tekster på norsk og engelsk og følger vandreutstillingen «Det snakker vi ikke om!», basert på Vest-Agder-museets dokumentasjonsprosjekt med samme navn.

Between 1940 and 1945, a total of 500.000 German troops were periodically deployed to Nazi-occupied Norway – a country whose population at that time slightly numbered three million. Maybe more than any other period in Norwegian history, those five years have left deep impressions on the people who lived through them, but also on the generations that followed. Eighty years later there are still many who struggle to come to terms with the long-lasting effects of what happened during the war.

In this book, 21 people share their accounts of what it is like to cope with a heritage – known or unknown – passed on from World War II.

The publication contains texts in Norwegian and English and supports the travelling exhibition "Keep it quiet!", based on Vest-Agder Museum's documentary project of the same title.

VESTAGDERMUSEET