



Episode 11, Hitler Films, New York City

Gwen Wright: Our last story investigates what may be rare home movie footage of Adolf Hitler. Hitler's terrifying rise to power came in a few short years in the 1930s. Much of his success was due to his masterful use of propaganda. The manipulation of words and images to win the hearts and minds of the German people. Thousands of documentaries, newsreels and short films were made to glorify Hitler and the Third Reich. Today, any new film discovery is an opportunity to examine the craft of the Nazi image makers. Now, Francis Cardamone from Staten Island, New York, wants us to investigate some rusty film cans that were brought back from Germany and have languished in a closet for more than half a century.

Francis Cardamone: We'd always wondered what was on them. And in 62 years, they've been unseen. We're curious.

Gwen: I'm Gwendolyn Wright and I'm going to Staten Island to meet Francis to find out more about the contents of these intriguing film cans. Hi, Francis, nice to meet you.

Francis: Gwen, it's so nice to meet you. Come right in.

Gwen: Thank you.

Francis: I have them right here beside me. The films were set home from Germany by my wife's uncle. His name is Walter Ladziak. It was about 1945 and he was stationed in Germany as part of the military government.

Gwen: "Der lustigen streiche von Fritz und Fanz" I read a little bit of German, but I don't understand much of this.

Francis: And this one really got me thinking.

Gwen: "Der Fuhrer in Bayreuth ein akt". Seeing the phrase, "Der Fuhrer", has a chilling effect even after all these years. It means supreme leader and it was Hitler's title when he was in power.

Francis: This handwritten title makes me most curious. I'm assuming they could possibly be a home movie.

Gwen: Well, I'll take good care of them and I look forward to getting back to you with your answer.

Francis: Thank you very much.



Gwen: Walter Ladziak has agree to meet and tells me that when he found the films he was part of the massive U.S. military force occupying Germany immediately after the war.

Walter Ladziak: I was assigned to a military government unit, IB3, 3rd Regiment.

Gwen: As a 24-year-old, Walter was a witness to the destruction Hitler had brought to a continent. He advanced with the U.S. Army into the heart of Germany.

Walter: Going through Europe I went through a number of cities. From Normandy we followed the Army right up to Bayreuth.

Gwen: Bayreuth. That's the name on one of the film cans. It's the town in Bavaria in southern Germany where Walter was stationed. Tell me where you found these films.

Walter: In the vicinity of the old Richard Wagner Opera House.

Gwen: Was it bombed?

Walter: It was damaged and it looked like debris from a bombing or a fire, whatever.

Gwen: I know that Hitler was a big fan of Wagner's music. Walter tells me he was aware that Bayreuth was well known long before the war for its annual Wagner Music Festival. But it was the words "Der Fuhrer" that caught his eye all those years ago.

Walter: Rummaging around I seen canisters of films and as I looked at them I seen Hitler and Bayreuth written, otherwise I would never taken it. So I figured, gee, this is something. Maybe somebody will look at it. I said, I know my brother-in-law has a camera at home. I'll send it to him when I get home and we'll look at it, but I never looked at it.

Gwen: So they were in her hope chest all those years.

Walter: Yeah, all those years.

Gwen: I'm heading back to my office to take a closer look at the cans. The first one is Nurnberger Lebkuchen. I think I know what that means, but it's a big surprise. Yes! Lebkuchen is gingerbread. Nuremburg gingerbread. Then here's a small one... Die lustigen streiche von Fritz und Fanz. The pranks of Fritz and Franz. I'm not sure what to make of that. I'll put that to the side. But this one does look more interesting. Der Fuhrer in Bayreuth



ein akt. I'm not comfortable screening these fragile films myself. But an archivist with the Library of Congress, Cooper Graham, has agreed to come to New York to give me a hand.

Cooper Graham: I'm going to get my white gloves on, because it's very easy to damage film.

Gwen: We stopped by an old edit suite to view our films. The first I show him is the Nuremberg Gingerbread can. So, we have industrial production of gingerbread.

Cooper: That's what we've got alright.

Gwen: Perhaps these films won't amount to much at all.

Gwen: Well, the next film has an even stranger title. It's, uh... Die lustigen streiche von Fritz und Fanz. So it sounds like it's a sort of Abbot and Costello of Germany. The film is very fragile.

Cooper: I don't know if I'm going to be able to play this.

Gwen: So fragile, in fact, that Cooper wants to show me only the first few frames. In any case, it seems the can has been mislabeled.

Cooper: Ein bord ein Panzerschiff.

Gwen: This is a very different topic.

Cooper: Which means, on board an armored ship. Probably a cruiser or a battleship.

Gwen: It's a short newsreel for home viewing about the military. Another of the films celebrates the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939.

Cooper: So this was issued really so home viewers could celebrate the Polish campaign in their house.

Gwen: Cooper explains that from the beginning of their rise to power the Nazis saw film as a weapon, with an extraordinary power to win mass support. Nazi rallies and films of military victories such as these were made by the thousands and widely distributed.

Cooper: You could buy them for maybe a dollar and half in a department store. And if you had any kind of projector you could take them home.



Gwen: Here's the one that may be the most intriguing. Der Fuhrer in Bayreuth ein akt. It appears to be the town of Bayreuth. Cooper believes it may have been shot in the mid-1930s, when the Nazis were soaring in power and popularity. There are flags and swastikas everywhere.

Cooper: The decorated city... and cars going down the main thoroughfare.

Gwen: And there he is, Hitler being greeted in style. Cooper knows immediately what we're watching.

Cooper: It's pretty clear that this is the Wagner Festival.

Gwen: He tells me that Hitler went to the Wagner Festival every year when he was in power. Hitler's henchmen arrive one by one with full Nazi honors.

Cooper: Dr. Goebbels.

Gwen: The minister of propaganda, Himmler, the head of the SS. Goering, the head of the Air Force. Cooper finds it slightly strange that the film doesn't show any of the opera performances. Instead it documents the Nazi leaders and the opera goes outside the festival hall.

Gwen: So this is actually focusing on the people, more than on the spectacle.

Cooper: Yeah, which is really interesting.

Gwen: And something else was a little odd. Since it's silent and uses inner-titles to describe what's happening, it's definitely not a newsreel for movie theaters. But the close access to Hitler suggests it's not an amateur home movie either.

Cooper: Amateur photographers are usually 50-feet away and you can barely see what they're trying to photograph. Clearly, this photographer had the permission to be there.

Gwen: The end. Well, Cooper, you've seen hundreds of German films from this era. What do you make of this one?

Cooper: It seems decently edited. The inner-titles seem professionally done. It's a funny kind of mixture of amateurism and professionalism. And I've got to say, I don't think I've ever seen anything like this before.



Gwen: Is it an unknown propaganda film or simply a well made amateur movie? I want to compare it with one of the most famous Nazi propaganda films. In 1934, the young Leni Riefenstahl made *Triumph of The Will*, celebrating Hitler's attendance at the Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally.

Gwen: Leni understood how to use fast cuts, very short camera angles. Having Hitler come out of the clouds. Having the crowds below looking up adoring, all in unison. She understood how to create the image of a godlike hero. While the Riefenstahl film was completely staged, a triumph of propaganda, ours seems much more natural, like a documentary or a home movie. In some ways, it's presenting what was going on in Germany some point in the 1930s, and doing just that without much of a spin. Perhaps digging a little deeper into Hitler's connection with Richard Wagner will give me more information. Wagner expert, Professor David Dennis says our film illustrates a key strategy that Hitler used to win power. At first, many of the German elite viewed him as a clown and a ruffian. The Wagner Festival allowed Hitler to appear as a cultural sophisticate.

David Dennis: We think of the Nazis as having been sort of a gang of street thugs and militaristically oriented alone. But it was important, especially once in power, for Hitler to demonstrate respectability. Bourgeois respectability.

Gwen: But Wagner's nationalism and anti-Semitism also appealed to the Nazi elite.

David: He wrote an awful essay called "Judaism In Music" which was condemned even in his lifetime. He was strongly nationalistic, so his art is providing a cultural basis for unifying Germany in a spiritual and not just a political way.

Gwen: Hitler's romance with Richard Wagner's music even extended to a close friendship with his daughter-in-law Winifred and her children.

David: We can see her here in the film. And---

Gwen: That's her in the white dress?

David: That's her in the white floaty dress. That is very demonstrative of their close connection. He would visit the house as a family guest and play with the children. He was known to the Winifred Wagner children as Wolf, Uncle Wolf, which was his nickname.

Gwen: But who made the mystery film...and why? Well, given all that as background, what do you think this film was made for?



David: One might guess that it could have been used for newsreels, but there isn't sound. So I would say that that mystery remains open.

Gwen: Our film has stumped two experts, but Raye Farr, an archivist at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. believes she may have some answers. I'd sent her the film earlier and we're meeting in New York at the Museum for Jewish Heritage. So, what do you have to show me?

Raye Farr: Well, when I saw your film I really... My heart nearly stopped. I thought, hello. There is something here I recognize and I have a real hunch about it.

Gwen: Raye told me that she had recently come upon some unusual home movies from the same era, which share certain characteristics with our film.

Raye: So take a look.

Gwen: This is mine, right?

Raye: That's yours. And here's ours. And look at these film titles.

Gwen: The titles are... They're basically identical. It's the same font.

Raye: Even the spacing between the lines and the layout.

Gwen: So, can I see some of your film?

Raye: Sure.

Gwen: Here, I'll do this.

Raye: Alright. I tried to put up scenes that are rather similar of the private airplanes arriving.

Gwen: It's presented in a very similar way.

Raye: Yeah. You know this is someone with special access who can get right in the middle of Hitler and the people with Hitler.

Gwen: Hitler was somebody who was paranoid about people getting close to him, so this would---



Raye: Absolutely.

Gwen: Well, now I need to know... who made this film?

Raye: You really want me to tell you?

Gwen: Absolutely. What Raye tells me next will certainly surprise Francis. Well, Francis, you have some very interesting films here.

Francis: I can't wait to hear what you found out.

Gwen: Well, the Nurnberger Lebkuchen is actually a presentation about the industrial production of gingerbread.

Francis: No kidding! Is that right?

Gwen: There are films here about the German occupation of Poland.

Francis: Is that so?

Gwen: But far and away, the most interesting film is indeed this one here. This seems to be a piece of film about Hitler that has never been seen before.

Francis: No kidding.

Gwen: But it wasn't until Raye Farr had showed me her research that I'd learned who may have made our film and why. What was his name?

Raye: Arthur Kannenberg, sometimes called Willy, and, he was a jolly character who was also quite an entertainer, even a court jester.

Gwen: Arthur Kannenberg has been a restaurateur in Munich in the 1920s and 30s. Hitler hired him as his personal chef and head of the household in Berlin. During the war the portly servant had unparalleled access to the Fuhrer. He even spent time in Hitler's Berlin bunker. He made some home movies, several of which Raye has in her collection. Comparing our film to Kannenberg's other work is certainly a subjective observation. But another piece of research does fit the jigsaw puzzle.

Gwen: Do you have any records of his having gone to Bayreuth with Hitler?



Raye: Well, yes, there are pictures. Here's one of them. And this photograph is in 1938. Here is Kannenberg.

Gwen: That's fascinating. And this is Winifred Wagner.

Raye: Yes. And Wagner's sons, the two Wagner sons. And part of Hitler's group.

Gwen: That's fascinating. Walter Ladziak had salvaged the films at the end of the war, wondering if they were Hitler's home movies. It turns out that's exactly what Raye Farr believes this one to be, an intimate record of the Fuhrer appropriating a nation's cultural identity and filmed by a member of the Nazi inner circle.

Francis: I always think to myself that history happens to other people. But, this is a prime example that history happens to everybody. This is tremendous footage. I hope to be able to share this with other people from this point on. Thank you. Thank you. This is great.