

(not taped)
until end

she was v.B secy at Pennemuende, beginning in 1941, when she was just ~~22~~ 20 yrs old -- she became his 2nd secy & was w/ him till '45. He had 2 secys then. Other was elderly, had been w/ him for a no. of years when Dorette joined him. Older lady worked in an outer room, controlling visitors, doing his scheduling.

* (He said to her: "I always have two secys -- one pretty one & one prettier one."

* ("He was a kind boss. He never criticized. He was a sweet, kind man."
"He was a sweet, dear man w/ children, too."

* [Although she was "young, ^{unmarried,} with long blond hair, and sportive," there was never anything romantically or sexually betw them. It was always her policy not to fool around w/ her boss, or bosses.

"I was committed 100 percent to the job, as was he."

They worked hard, often into th night when she had to stay late to take dictation, etc. "But it was not so hard to do, bec he was so committed, and he had such charisma & charm."

* ["Once, when there was a deadline on a certain project, he said to me, 'Would you like to come along when I now go through the shops and see if ~~theyxxxxxxx~~ they (the workman) can stay the night?' Their eyes were shining as he came and talked to them personally. He touched their shoulders. He made everyone feel so important. They stayed and worked all through the night."

* ["All the girls were attracted to him. He was young, he looked to the girls like a Greek god, the way he walked, the way he carried himself. He was a genius, and yet he was playful, sportive."

* [v.B had a girlfriend he visited on weekends in Berlin during the war years. "He came back to work in a happy mood on Monday mornings, and everyone on the staff was happy for him." (He & bro. Magnus wd fly small plane to Berlin.)

* [And even during long work periods, he was "thoughtful."

* ["He would say, 'Let's take a break, because we still have to work tonight.' So we would get bicycles and ride to the beach nearby to enjoy the air and the scenery."

* [v.B lived at "the plant" in Pennemuende, in one big house he & his "directors" & other key people shared, as opposed to the others working there lived with their families in the nearby town of Zinnowitz. who At Pennemuende was also an officers ~~type~~ club, with a good restaurant, where von Braun had lunch & dinner, if not too busy. It's also where he played the cello privately in a room with 3 colleagues in a string quartet, for their own pleasure.

home at night after late work

She lived onbase also, the only "girl" to do so, so she could walk
The night of the British bombing raid on Peenemuende in 1943,
Dorette went w/ v.B (he led her by the hand) into a burning bldg
(house?) where there was a safe with important, secret documents.
She had the key to the safe. (v.B et al. had gotten in large bunker
just in front of their office bldg., when raid began.)
v.B said: "Every man out (of the bunker), and save the documents!"
"It was fire, fire, fire everywhere, and the men saved armfuls of secret
documents." v.B took her hand and led her, gingerly picking their way,
up the stairway to the safe, with "flames all around. One wall was gone
completely, and the rest was burning." They found the safe ~~xxxxxx~~
overturned and half open, but with its contents intact.
"He was very courageous, leading the way, leading the other men. So
much was destroyed. All th peace & beauty of the island was gone."

v.B loved the nature of the island very much, ~~often~~ sailing when he
could aboard the one yacht there, borrowed from the owner. ~~oose~~ hunting
v.B was "very good to his younger brother, Magnus." Dorette once
went flying with the bros. in an old Junker plane there. Although
v.B was always the pilot, Magnus was flying this time. Dorrette
admired the clouds. Von B. charmingly said, " And look, all the angels
are looking at you!"

Magnus was 1 year older than Dorette; ~~gxx~~ "good-looking, shy, nice --
some thought arrogant, but he really was just shy." Dorette married
in Germany 3 mos. before he came to U.S. She had to stay behind until
-----ome over abt 2 yrs later (in April '47). Ft. Bliss living
conditions were spare but so much better than in postwar Germany.
Dorette took much dictation from v.B -- for universities, the govt,
the military -- made many carbon copies & used the plant print shop
often.

"W hen the military came to watch the launches (v-2), Dr. von Braun
hated it. The Nazi bosses -- Himmler, Goring, and the others."

~~xxxxxxthe launchxxxxflightxxxxwasxxxxawesomexxxx~~
(Dorette confirmed that on one, rare, successful early ~~fx~~ launch &
flight, many cameras were used to film it from many different angles
& perspectives, to give th Nazi bosses the impression in the finished
film that this was several flights. "They thought that was awesome,"
Dorette recalled.)

at Bliss as v.B secy -- on his German correspon-
dence, on his book on the Mars Project. He paid her personally. Her
-----pped when they came to Hsv.

* (v.B very neat in his handwriting. Dorette lefts typewritten drafts for him , and his editing notes that he gave her back were always so very neat.

But he was sloppy in his personal life. "His room was [#]amess. His older secy would go there to straighten out his room, find a decent pair of shoes for him to wear, and things like that."

* ("He loved good music. He played the cello, for himself and with a chamber music group at the base, made up of engineers and scientists."
(See previous note re playing privately in string quartet at base offs' club)

* (v.B loved to hunt. In Alaska, Texas, Arkansas. Once went moose hunting with Milton Cummings in Alaska (she thinks). The moose v.B shot (the head) is hanging at Burritt Museum, with a plaque.
(I NEED TO CHECK THAT ~~XXX~~ OUT!!) -- ASK Jean Watts!!!

* (Rudy Schlidt came to U.S. w/ 1st group in '45. He & Dorette married in Germany 3 mos. before he came to U.S. She had to stay behind until she could come over abt 2 yrs later (in April '47). Ft. Bliss living conditions were spare but so much better than in postwar Germany. At Ft. Bliss, they had private living quarters, food, families together, El Paso, the Rio Grande. At Ft. Bliss they heard what some of the German men said must be "ship horns blowing" on the Rio Grande. It was only later that they saw what a "trickle" the Rio Grande was, and realized what they had been hearing were trains.

* (von B. knew Maria from childhood, from visits to her family estate. He said there were two estates ~~xx~~ of relatives his family visited and he was always glad to learn they were going to visit Maria's, instead of the other, which he didn't care for.
Dorette was friends w/ Maria in U.S. Some of their children were born at the same time, and they had that in common too. Dorette still worked ("privately") at Bliss as v.B secy -- on his German correspondence, on his book on the Mars Project. He paid her personally. Her work for him stopped when they came to Hsv.

4 -- Dorette Schlidt

After v.B had first visited Hsv. & returned to Ft. Bliss, his reaction for his team members was: "Oh, it looks like home! So green, green, everything is so green, with mtns all around!"

(interview continues later on tape:) (folo-up question by phone)
or mixed feelings

Q.-- v.Braun had misgivings/abt moving to Wash. & NASA HQs? Felt it wd lead to breakup of his team, etc.??

DKS: Yes, he was, very much, very much. He was th only one able to keep the team together for such a long time. That was almost unique. It doesn't exist anywhere else that such a team stayed together ~~for~~ so many, ~~for~~ many years. There's no other case of that in history. It was his ability, his character...

Q.-- and the sheer force of his personality & stature...?

DKS: Oh yes, ^h yes, absolutely.

Q.-- I also hear that Mrs v.Braun was not so reluctant to leave Hsv.?

DKS: That's right. She was very happy to leave for Washington. You know, she is a big-city girl. She had lived many years in Berlin. She grew up, of course, on that estate in Pomerania, but then her parents left for Berlin, And she is a big-city girl. (and she lived there. She was happy to go. I guess she pushed him to go. Yes, that is true.

Q.-- So, Dr. v.Braun knew she would hav no reluctance to leave Hsv.

DKS: That's right. (Q.: And Hsv was such a small city...) And she was so well-known here, and she was so shy. She didn't like any (public attn.). She didn't like social life, she didnt participate (in th community). With th German members, she was very careful to whom she was talking, and where the others might be jealous, so she wanted to avoid them all. She was ~~also~~ also very careful -- and maybe it was the smartest way -- abt never talking to any, any reporters and journalists. It was very smart of her. She does not come to or participate in any activities here -- for instance, the Wernher von Braun Forum and all these wonderful things. I am very sorry about that. I am so happy to see these events once a year to celebrate all these accomplishments, at this show at the Forum. ...and she (Maria) wanted her privacy, and in the big city she could have that.