

Reed, Eva  
RG-50.029\*0029  
Two Video Tapes  
Recorded November 1, 1994

### Abstract

Eva Reed was born Chava Tannenbaum on December 14, 1909 in Pulawy, Poland. Her father had a successful family lumber business. She was the youngest of four daughters and a son. After World War I, her family had to move to Warsaw due to a Russian order. The children were educated at the gymnasium and Eva also completed dental school. In 1934, at a time of political change toward Jews and Tsarist Russia, she married a doctor. She completed residencies in orthodontia and dental prosthetics and opened a general practice in 1936.

When World War II started on September 1, 1939, Eva's baby was two months old. The family went to Bialystok, leaving her parents behind because they refused to leave. Eva's husband got work in a hospital, and they obtained the required Russian passport for residency. In the spring of 1940, they moved to Stolin where her husband secured a position as a surgeon. They realized the situation was worsening and decided to flee, leaving their son behind. Their son was placed in a prison ward and was killed.

Eva and her husband were hidden by a series of peasants until they were accepted by the partisans in the forest where her husband was the surgeon. In 1942, they were ordered out of the woods and to return to Stolin. Eva's husband was assigned to the Russian railroad army, and they lived for a time in Lublin, until liberation, when they went to Russian-occupied Germany. After their second son was born, they entered Israel illegally. In Israel, Eva's husband obtained a visa for the U.S. They arrived in November 1959 after a long wait in Paris. Eva now resides in New York.

### **Tape 1**

**1:00** Eva Reed was born Chava Tannenbaum in Pulawy, Poland on December 14, 1909 during Chanukah. Eva's parents' names were Shmuel and Taube. Pulawy was a small town on a main road so it flourished. The Vistula River served as a highway for the export of lumber. Eva's father exported lumber from the forest to Gdansk (Danzig), a large Polish city, and he did well.

**3:00** The gentry, who did not work, owned large areas of dense forest and borrowed money from Jews using their land holdings as collateral. Eva's grandfather started the business and her father inherited it. The gentry got their money in advance and the Jews who provided the mortgages were specialists called Brakash. Eva's father evaluated lumber to determine for what kind of boards it would be good. In the winter the trunks were frozen so that they could be marked and cut and sent to lumber mills.

**6:22** Eva's mother had a small cottage business. There was no school for girls in the town, only the government school which the father did not permit them to attend, as the children had to write on the Sabbath. Her mother was intelligent and

wanted to have the older sister, age 10, learn at a gymnasium, so the sister was left with an aunt and registered at Krinsky(?), the first gymnasium for girls in Warsaw. There was no transportation to Warsaw except by wagon. The journey took an entire day.

- 9:38** Eva's family needed money to educate her sister so they took commissions to buy material for wigs as a side occupation. There were four daughters and a younger son; Eva was the youngest. The Russians occupied Poland and were burning the Jewish towns. The Jews lived in towns, the peasants lived in the surrounding areas, and the gentry lived far away.
- 11:18** World War I was beginning. One day at 4:00 a.m., the Russians ordered all Jews to leave. Eva's father got a wagon and her mother took pillow cases and packed them with underwear for each family member. They stopped for the Sabbath at a place for Jews to sleep and change horses. Her father was very religious and her mother was more modern.
- 12:18** They spoke Polish when in Warsaw, but the father said he knew only Russian and spoke Yiddish to Eva. Eva was happy to speak Yiddish as it was spoken everywhere.
- 13:33** At the beginning of World War I, they rented her aunt's dacha near Warsaw. After the war, they got a one-room apartment in Warsaw. Her father could not perform the same work as before, because there was no transportation due to the war.
- 14:42** Eva's father took commissions for lumber and wheat mills. In Warsaw he bought transmission belts. He traveled around and came home for the Sabbath with food from the country. Then they changed to better accommodations in Warsaw. The school was crowded. It was a government school so one had to attend on the Sabbath, and it was expensive.
- 15:31** The three older sisters attended gymnasium. Eva was tutored at home until the third grade, and then went with one sister to the gymnasium which they all completed. The gymnasium was like a high school and two year university. After gymnasium, Eva was accepted into dental school because of her good grades, and her passing an entrance exam. There were 500 openings and just 25 places for Jews. It was 1927 and she was 17 years old.
- 17:25** When Eva was 18, she got her diploma from the gymnasium, and an affidavit for admission to the Special Academy for Dentistry. The first three years had the same curriculum as the medical school, followed by dental specialty and two years of orthodontia specialty for children. In her youth, Eva joined Hashomer Hatzair, the Zionist youth organization. She enjoyed handwork and was thinking of going to handwork school if dentistry did not work out. She finished dental

school and married a doctor when he finished medical school in 1934. He went to military school for academics for one year.

- 21:38** Conditions were changing. It was economically hard for all, as the political trend was to fight the Jews and Tsarist Russia, and pogroms camouflaged the situation. There were higher taxes and stores were closed on Sunday. Jewish stores were closed on both Saturday and Sunday.
- 22:53** Regarding anti-Semitism, Eva recalls that as a dental student, the Poles demanded that the Jewish students sit on the left side of the room. Instead, the Jewish students stood for the entire semester. One day some people were beating up Jews in the park and Eva's non-Jewish friend, whom she tutored, hit Eva with an umbrella.
- 25:06** Before that, Eva did not experience any anti-Semitism in her private Jewish school, but there were short outbursts of anti-Semitism from military factions composed of students. They were fighting for Russia and the Ukraine.
- 27:25** When Eva studied for her specialty, the medical students went to Juska, a suburb of Warsaw where there were famous doctors. This is where Eva's husband received his training.
- 28:25** Eva started her practice in 1936 while her husband was training as a surgeon with a famous surgeon, Wertheim.
- 29:26** Eva had a residency in orthodontia and prosthetics, but had a general dental practice at first. She had only Jewish patients as Warsaw had many Jewish inhabitants. They lived in the center of the city near a park and near the ghetto.
- 30:12** From 1937 to 1938 Eva's practice was developing and they were not expecting war. The press reported that Poland would not give up land and that they were prepared to fight to win.
- 32:12** A blitzkrieg war was not expected. The war started suddenly on September 1, 1939 with bombs and fire all night long.
- 33:12** Eva's apartment had a balcony which was destroyed. Across the street was a bombed-out house with open rooms where pictures were still hanging on the walls.
- 33:25** Her apartment was habitable with a living room in the front, a bedroom, a study and a kitchen in the back. Her parents were bombed out, so they came to live with her.

- 34:21** On the third day of the war, it was announced on the radio that all men were required to leave Warsaw and organize the Polish Army. Eva stayed with her two-month-old baby who was born on July 14, 1939.
- 34:56** Eva does not recall tragedy, as they were brave. They had food that she had made just before the war, they had water to drink, and she nursed the baby, who had been born in a Jewish hospital.
- 37:02** Eva's father was 64 years old so he remained at home. He went out to the store and a German cut his beard off. He came home bleeding and enraged.
- 38:11** There was no army organization or place for her husband at the border so he returned home.
- 39:30** They decided to leave Warsaw, but her parents would not join them as her father did not want to be a refugee again. Her brother, her older sister, and her sister's husband and child left for Bialystok.
- 40:48** In September 1939, Eva left with her husband, her baby Alexander, and an older doctor and his wife and their five-year-old daughter. They hired a car for the two families to get to the Russian side of the border, and went to Bialystok, the first town across the river.
- 42:53** They had to bribe the German police, so Eva gave them a watch she had hidden with the diapers and her wedding ring. They were taken to the river and would go no further. The other side was Russia. It was an all-day trip and they were not frightened.
- 44:02** They lay down on the floor of a hostel all night. Part of Germany had been given to Poland after the First World War by the League of Nations to make Poland a stronger buffer between Russia and Germany.
- 44:45** A Polish/German took their money and at night he took them by boat over to the other side of the river. In the morning they took a Polish train to the first city, Bialystok. They were taken in by the Russian-organized community center for refugees. They were assigned one room for the three of them. They did not think about food and the baby was nursed.
- 47:49** Eva's husband had to look for a job as there were no rations. The Russians wanted to conquer Finland and Estonia, but Finland fought back. The soldiers had frostbite and there was a hospital especially for this problem and they needed surgeons.
- 49:05** Her husband got a job writing medical histories in Russian, and was paid a few rubles which they spent mainly for wood because it was cold.

- 50:09** Eva had to wash diapers for the first time. In order to live 100 kilometers from the border, the Russians required the refugees to get a Russian passport. Some refugees returned to Germany but her family remained and got the passport although they were Zionists.
- 52:05** The three of them went to Stolin, a small town on the old border with Russia, about 100 kilometers away, where they had friends in the medical profession. The husband's married sister remained in Bialystok but another sister and Eva's brother came with them.
- 54:00** The rich people had cars but no gasoline so they left their cars. There were many refugees from Warsaw, and her husband got a position as surgeon. The Poles were afraid of the Russians and preferred the Germans.
- 55:28** One Pole, a surgeon, was the director of the hospital and another Pole was the internist.
- 56:23** Eva's husband was assigned a kitchen and one room for the family. The rest of the apartment was taken by a Russian Communist, the Civilian Commissar.
- 57:20** Peasants brought eggs, meat, and milk as payment so Eva's family had sufficient food. There was mail every two weeks and they knew conditions were bad when a letter said, "Big wedding and running lots of red wine and glad you are not here."

## **Tape 2**

- 00:02** In the spring of 1940 they went to Stolin. When the war began, they wanted to leave Russia but they were not permitted.
- 00:27** The Russians were not doing well at the time and did not want the road blocked with civilians.
- 01:50** The Jews were told to go into the forests and to organize like the military. They were not permitted to do this, so they returned to the Germans. The Ukrainians were anti-Semitic. Eva's family felt isolated by living in the hospital.
- 02:52** They had a nanny to care for the baby. She was sweeping the porch when the Ukrainians came and insisted that Eva's husband do the sweeping. Then they were forced to the ghetto in Stolin and the nanny left.
- 04:45** The German Commissar arrived to command the civilians, and his teenage son visited him during his vacation.
- 06:39** Eva's family knew that the shtetls had been liquidated.

- 07:38** Just before Rosh Hashanah, everyone in the ghetto was told to assemble in the town square. Eva looked around and noticed the beauty in nature. She felt the world was beautiful but the people unfeeling.
- 08:24** The Commissar's teenage son had appendicitis, but they would not permit a Jewish doctor to operate, so they had a Polish surgeon operate, with Eva's husband as the assistant.
- 12:57** They felt that conditions were temporary and decided to escape. The priest gave Eva papers but none for her husband, so she did not use them.
- 15:03** The woman whose husband managed the woods was friendly to them, because she had been operated on by Eva's husband. Eva gave her son to this woman, along with her watch and addresses of her family. The woman's husband was drinking and wanted to return the child. Her son was placed in a children's ward and taken to a prison where he was killed.
- 16:28** The family spread the false news that Eva's husband had been captured and killed so no one would search for him. Eva and her family first hid in a house which was dangerous, so then they hid in another one.
- 18:10** While they were hidden in a Baptist peasant's attic, some peasants came undercover and brought them eggs. Someone knocked and they hid under the bed and heard, "He has the reputation of hiding Jews."
- 20:27** They realized it was dangerous so they made contact with the partisans in the woods, because the Germans were afraid of the woods.
- 20:56** The partisans came at night and took them to the forest where the commander wanted a doctor. It was a one-hour journey. They sat in a wagon covered with hay. A woman partisan drove the wagon. A German and two Ukrainians came with a bayonet and could not find them under the straw.
- 22:06** The partisans needed the support of the locals for food and medicine. The Germans burned the villages and killed the men because they knew they were helping the partisans.
- 23:01** The partisans sent soldiers with dynamite to destroy the railroads, because the trains were carrying supplies to the front.
- 24:37** Commander Stephen Kaplun, a Ukrainian, was in charge of the partisan group. The group had 50 people and took care of radio communication with Moscow.
- 25:50** They were behind the front, in the enemy's territory, and built hospitals. Each hospital had three or four beds and was built with logs in a square with branches outside and a white parachute, like wallpaper, on the inside.

- 27:20** Eva's husband had to perform amputations using vodka as anesthetic and a woodsaw. Anyone who was in the army and had a gun was admitted into the partisan group. There were a few women, including a nurse and a Ukrainian girl who helped in the kitchen.
- 29:21** They treated typhoid. The partisan members who had rank were 30 years old, and the younger members did not hold ranks. At night they sabotaged the railroads.
- 31:07** The beds were made of logs. At first Eva and her husband and a young boy were the only Jews, but more Jews came later. Her husband was bitter and wanted to fight but was not given permission to do so.
- 33:38** Eva had a gun and her husband had a rifle and they were given an order to help four Socialist Russian delegates meet an airplane. One night they made a bonfire in a clearing and a small airplane arrived but it was spotted by the Germans with a bright light so the plane left.
- 35:35** For three weeks they went to different clearings at night until a plane landed and took the four delegates away to Moscow.
- 37:17** The delegates were the "seeds" of the government – the Minister and the Commander. It was 1942, and because Stalingrad had been taken, they thought they were liberated and thought they were going home.
- 38:36** The partisans received an order to leave the woods and travel 300 kilometers towards Germany. They liquidated everything in the woods and took backpacks but no horses and went behind the Germans through the swamps.
- 40:02** They went 300 miles near Brest but it was not far enough so they went to Kovel where they dismantled the unit.
- 41:08** Those considered capable were conscripted into the army. A 17-year-old Jewish boy that Eva had cared for when he had typhoid, was taken into the army. She and her husband were ordered to return to Stolin. They were permitted to keep their gun and rifle and were given a piece of a parachute. They walked to the first door that was open which was back on Russian territory, so they had to respect the law. They requested horses and a wagon and the owner drove them to Stolin. It took them a week but they stopped along the way at a place with sewing machines.
- 43:45** They sewed six shirts and long drawers from the parachute material. Eva's husband was given a uniform and she was given chenille to cover her civilian clothes. The hospital in Stolin had nothing, because everything had been removed, but the war did not touch the town. Her husband received an order to

go to the city for instruments. Eva escorted him to a town which had no roads and where the streets were trenches.

- 45:15** Luckily a Christian nurse liked Eva's husband, and she had placed all of their documents under a large breakfront. They were happy to get all their papers and diplomas back.
- 47:46** They went to L'viv but the nurse left with the Germans because she was afraid of Russian collaborators.
- 48:41** Eva's husband was conscripted into the railroad army because they had a hospital. They knew that Lublin, the temporary capital, was already taken.
- 49:29** The Nationalist Front's capital was in London, because the Russians did not let them take over Warsaw. The Russians waited until Warsaw was defeated and then took it over.
- 50:40** Eva and her husband had friends in Lublin, including the military minister and the governor. Eva hitchhiked to Lublin and her husband stayed with the military. He told the Poles that he had to go to Lublin because his wife was there. He hid under straw in a wagon and they did not find him.
- 52:07** Eva and her husband reunited in Lublin. Her husband was made head of the military hospital treating left leg amputations only. They were that specialized.
- 54:03** Eva hitchhiked with a nurse to Germany. She and her husband were civilian members of the Russian Army so they got a civilian apartment together and remained there until they were liberated in Bydgoszcz.
- 55:06** Eva and her husband drove a small truck to Berlin to see the Reichstag while it was still smoldering. They got official letters from Martin Bormann, which the Germans then stole.
- 56:06** They returned to Bydgoszcz where Eva's husband was director of the hospital. From there they went to Torun which was demilitarized and her husband directed a hospital there too. The Russians left, taking all the many wounded with them.
- 58:09** When the war ended on May 5, 1945, they danced in the streets and decided to have another baby, whom they named Victor. He is now a researcher at AT&T.
- 59:05** They came to the U.S. later because they were stuck in Poland with a second baby. They could not get a certificate for Israel so they entered Israel illegally at night with their two small children. Because Eva's husband was a doctor, he was able to obtain a visa for the U.S. in November 1959.
- 1:01:04** They arrived in the U.S. on a first preference visa after a long wait in Paris.