United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eva Yachnes

October 17, 2010

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PREFACE

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Transcribed by Gene Jennings, RMR, National Court Reporters Association.

EVA YACHNES

October 17, 2010

Question: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Eva Yachnes conducted by Agnishka Nakur (ph) on October 17, 2010, at the Kindertransport Association Conference in Arlington, Virginia. We would like to ask you a question about your childhood. How far do your memories reach and what do you remember about your hometown?

Answer: My earliest memory is from somethingjust a scene that took place before I was two years old, so I don't know how oldwhere I'm standing in my crib and I see my father coming into the room, and my mother is already in bed. After that, there'sthere are not too many things, a scene here, a scene there. Definitely, I remember from three on quite a few scenes. There's no continuous memory.

Q: I didn't ask you that at the beginning but could you tell us what year you were born in?

A: I was born May 1932, in Vienna.

Q: In Vienna. And you just mentioned that you recall the very early memories of your mother and your father. What were their names?

A: My mother's name was Leonee (ph), her maiden name was Oberzone (ph). Her father was Croatian and her mother was Czech. And my father's name was Ernst Steiner (ph) and his parentshis mother was originally Czech and his father Polish. So they were all from different parts of the AustroHungarian Empire, and they landedmy grandparents all landed up in Vienna.

Q: So I guess your maiden name was probably Obersteiner, right?

A: Obersteiner (ph), right. Steiner in German.

Q: Steiner in German.

A: Uhu.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

A: No, I was only child. And when I was about two years oldwhen I was born, my father lost his job. His boss saidthis was during the Great Depression, and his boss said, "I know you cannot support a family on what I pay you so you're fired." And he never found another job in Vienna. And he ended uphe was a communist and he ended up finding work in the Soviet Union. And when he came back he had to live illegally because the communist party was illegal. So that was probably the only memory I have of my father, when I wasbefore I left Viennano, II do remember him again. After he came back, he tried to teach me a few words of English.

Q: When he returned from Russia, right? From working in Russia?

A: Yes. And he was jailedhe was caught; he was jailed with Nazis and communists. Both parties were illegal; they were jailed together as political prisoners. And when he got outthis was already near the time of the Anschluss; it was in 1938. And my mother immediately was able to get a domestic's visa to go to England as a cook, so she left first.

Q: And you stayed with your father or

A: I stayed with my grandmother. My mother and I had been living with her mother, my maternal grandmother, so most of my memories are from my maternal grandmother's apartment. And while my father was away he sent back as much money as he could, but my mother and I lived with my grandmother, and I stayed with her. The second one to leave was my father, who left illegally with friends over the border into Switzerland, and then to France, and eventually he was interned in France, and my rich great uncle from America sent money to take him to New York. And also, my grandparents, my father's parentsit was my grandfather's brother who was here in New York City, and so they were also rescued. My great uncle brought them over, and eventually also my father's next younger brother, and my mother and I joined the family in New York in 1940.

Q: And you mentioned that your father was working in Russia. What was his job there and what was his profession in Vienna?

A: He was what we now call a high school dropout, but he went to technical school and he became sort ofhis jobI'm not always sure what he exactly studied but he workedbefore he lost his job on my account, he worked for a company that set up medical equipment for doctors, you know, in doctors' officesfluoroscopes and whatever. They had very little equipment then but whathe took it to the office and he set it up and made sure it was working and so on.

Q: Would you say that you were relatively welloff until he lost his job?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No. He didn't get paid very much, and mywhen awhen my mother and I lived with my maternal grandmother, she had lost everything during the course of World War I.

Q: I see.

A: So there were the remnantsshe had been wealthy. There were the remnants of that. She always used to show me the wonderful chinaware and silver and so on and say, "When you grow up and get married, this will be yours." On my father's side, my grandfather had a small butcher shop, a little neighborhood butcher shop, so they were definitely lowermiddle class. Myon my mother's side, they were very uppermiddle class, but I never saw anything of that because we lived in relative poverty.

Q: Did you attend any schools in Vienna?

A: Only kindergarten.

Q: Did you have many friends?

A: Well, I had a best friend who lived across the street. Her name was Bitte (ph), and she was half Jewish, and I never found out what happened to her. And I had myotherwise, I can only remember playing with the children in kindergarten, and when we went to the park, always whatever children were together, played together. So I would bring a ball to play with, or a jumping rope or whatever, and we all played together. But the only real friend that I remember is Bitte, who lived across the street from me.

Q: And those children out in the playground and in the kindergarten, did you live in a strictly Jewish district or was it a mixed district?

A: It was not a Jewish district. It was the FourthFourth District in Vienna, and wemy grandmother was told she had to leave butbecause it was not Jewish. But the kindergarten was run by a Jewish organization.

Q: I see. So if you were to describe your family would you say that your family was relatively wellassimilated?

A: Yes.

Q: Or did you speak all German between each other?

A: Yes, all German. My grandfather on my mother's side had been one of the founders of the Free Thinkers Association of Vienna, so we were not religious. And on the other side, my father's father had had a Jewishhe came from shtetl in Poland, had had a Jewish education, and sort of shook the dust off his feet, that was it, no more. And so I grew up with Christmas trees; I did notwe were not religious.

Q: You didn't practice any Jewish customs or religion?

A: Not at all, no, no.

Q: Didn't know any Jewish prayers.

A: No. We learned a little Hebrew song in kindergarten, but I, no, had no religious education in Austria.

Q: And do you recall when the things started to change? Do you remember when the tension started growing in Vienna?

A: What I noticed firstwell, first of all, I didn't start school when I should have, when I turned six. I remember my grandmother rented out a room to a boarder. It was the same room I remember in that scene where my father is coming into the room. Well, she eventually had to rent out that room, and the lady must have been a Nazi because she gave me a coin for my sixth birthday, and she said, "Soon we'll have a new picture on the coins." And she was very triumphant; you know, she was gloating over this. And then I remember the most frightening thing, when the doorbell rang one day. And my

grandmother was a little hard of hearing, she didn't hear, and I kept telling her, "Oma, the door." And she went to the door and these two men in Nazi uniform came in with the high, shiny black boots and the whole thing. And they passed through the room where I was, and one of them patted me on the head and said something. And I have no idea what he said, I justI was terrified. And they went into the next room with my grandmother and shut the door. And I heard a lot of talking and then they all came out, and my grandmother came back from closing the front door and she had tears running down her face. And she said, "We have to move out, we're not allowed to live here anymore." And then one dayI don't know how many days after thiswe went to a police station, my grandmother and I, and I believe she got a stay, you know, she didn't have to move immediately, because we stayed there. But I remember the police station, the big picture of Hitler and the flags and so on, which I found very frightening, but she seemed relieved, and I'm sure it's because she got this stay, she didn't have to leave immediately.

Q: Was your mother already in England?

A: Yes. My mothermy mother took me to a friend's house outside Vienna, because my parents thought in the first days I would be safer staying with friends of theirs who were outside the city. And they also had children. So I stayed there a few days, and my mother, when she put me to bed that first night and she said to be very good and brave and she would see me as soon as possible, that she was leaving.

Q: And you're talking about moving to England right now? In the house outside the city, it was in Vienna?

A: It was outside Vienna. And then after a few days my father said I could come back to Vienna, and my grandmother came and got me and took me back to Vienna.

Q: Was there anything specific happening in Vienna at that time that

A: I don't know. I think they were just unsure. This wasmy mother left in April of '38, so in March '38 is when the Germans actually came in in person, and then she left almost immediately, in April. My mother was very blond and blueeyed and she looked, if anything, Slovak, not Jewish, if you're going by stereotype.

Q: Right.

A: So my father pushed her on the Aryan line when it was time to get her papers stamped. And he said, "These are still Austrians, they'll look at you and they won't ask for proof." And sure enough, that's what happened, they just stamped, instead of standing in the long, long Jewish line. So she left and thenshe left me with these friends, and then it couldn't have been longtwo, three daysmy father brought me back. I think they were just unsure of what would happen in the city.

Q: So that probably happened shortly after the Anschluss, right?

A: Beforeactually before the Anschluss. It was in between the marchin (ph) because when she left, the man who stamped her papers told my mother, "Be sure to go to the embassy and vote about the Anschluss." He was thinking, Good Aryan, she'll vote yes.

Q: For the Anschluss, yes?

A: So it was part of, you know, this interim period. And then I have a memory that must have been around Kristallnacht, because I remember comingwalking with my grandmother, and we passed where my kindergarten was. And as I said, it was run by a Jewish organization, and I saw a truck pulling away with the furniture from the kindergarten and broken things on the ground and broken glass. So I think that probably was around that time maybe, Kristallnacht. And then the next thing, my father took me to the parkI think it was right before he was going to leaveand at first he had thought he would take me along but then

Q: To Russia, right?

A: No, to France, to Switzerland and France. And then I think he got a little bit more realistic, that a sixyearold trying to climb illegally over the Alps into Switzerland wouldn't work too well. So that was when he tried to teach me a few words of English, thinking my mother is more likely to be able to get me to join her.

My parents realized immediately that there was not a hope if they didn't each go out as quickly as possible and then try and bring me out. So my mother, in England, was trying to get papers for me to join her.

Q: She got you on the Kindertransport?

A: That was before theas soon as she left she started trying. And there was a school, a boarding school that even signed a paper that she had paid for my schooling but the people, the officials, didn't believe it because how could a domestic get up enough money to pay for a year of boarding school?

Q: I see.

A: So they didn't believe it.

But it was my grandmother who found out about the Kindertransport. I have no idea how, but she did.

Q: Did she talk to you about it?

A: No. All I remember is she toldshe showed me: "I have sewn your mother's address into your coat. If anything happens, you know that"she told me, "You're going to meet

your mother, your mother is going to be there to meet you, and here's her address in your coat. If anything"you know, "if you get lost or anything, this is where your mother is."

And she packedI don't remember her packing the suitcase. All I know is I have to leave my doll behind; she didn't pack my doll.

Q: I'm sure that was really upsetting.

A: It was. I was only six and the doll would have been a comfort. But I had a bag with my lunch, the food for the trip, and we left at night. And although I was usually an obedient child, I clung to her and screamed on top of my lungs when they tried to take me away. The families were not allowed to go on the platforms so we were in this big waiting room, it was nighttime, and they tried tothe women who were organizing the transport tried to leave me with the other children, and I just held onto my grandmother and screamed.

Q: So you didn't want to go, did you?

A: My grandmother was the lastyou know, this was my bastion, my home, and everybody went away and now she's sending me goodness knows where. I think I didn't really believe that my motherI don't know. And so

Q: Did you doI mean, your mother left to Englandit was still very early, you were very young. I mean, did youdid you remember your mother very well when you were going on the trip?

A: Oh, sure. It was only a few months different. I left in December of '38; she left in April of '38.

Q: Were you closer with your grandma or with your mother?

A: My mother went out to work so my grandmother watched me all day, you know, I was with her all day. But emotionally, it was my mother. I mean, always it was my mother.

Q: So did they succeed eventually in separating you from your grandmother?

A: Oh, yeah. Physically, I mean. They took my fingers off her skirt, and as soon, you know, as I was out of sight of my grandmother I think I just resigned myself: This is it. I stood with the other children waiting to get on the train.

[Interview interrupted when person enters room.]

Q: So we were just talking about you waiting with other children on the platform. Were there many children?

A: I don'tI don't know. I mean, there were quite a few but I have no idea exactly how many were on that particular transport.

Q: Were they upset or that mostly was just regular?

A: I can't reallyI think I was too selfabsorbed toyou know, I justI don't even remember really looking around me at all. The next thing I remember, I was in a compartment on the train. There were four of us in the compartment, and I think we were all rather among the smaller ones there, all four of us. And it was nighttime, so one of the women who escorted us put some blankets on the flooryou know how those compartments

Q: Between the seats, right?

A: Between the seats. So two of us she put down to go to sleep on the floor and two on the seats, and somewhere in the middle of the night somebody came again and changed us around, so those on the floorI started out on the floor, then I was on a seat. I don't remember sleeping very much that night. It was just, you know, it was too confusing and upsetting. And we got to the German border, I suppose the next morning it was, and I remember being very frightened of the soldiers who came on board. And they checked everything, and I remember particularly being outraged that one of them took a piece of fruit from one of the children's food packages, and I thought, How can an adult steal from little children? The thing I don't remember, totally suppressed memory: Apparently I had a small gold locket on a chain around my neck. My mother was told that a German soldier tore it from my neck. I don'tI have no memory of that. I remember being in England some time later and being unhappy that I lost my necklace, but the incident itselfnow, he couldn't have torn it; I would have been cut. He must have taken it from around my neck. But that was so frightening, I don't remember it at all.

Q: Do you remember that locket at all? How did it look like? What did it look like?

A: I don't know. I only remember being unhappy that I had lost my necklace. Lost. But I don't even remember from that memory that I knew how come I had lost it, whereyou know, what had happened to it. Only later my mother told me that my grandmother had given me this locket and a German soldier took it from me. We weren't supposed to have jewelry, apparently, I don't know. But I've read other accounts that little girls did have necklaces or whatever. So I always found it strange that II can only remember mourning for it and not remember the thing itself or the incident where I lost it.

Q: Yeah. Sometimes that happens, though.

A: And then later that day I was taken to be in a compartment with some older girls, and the rest of the trip was in that compartment. They tried to distract me

Q: Mother you a little bit?

A: Yeah. And I remember going through a tunnel and there was a train that I thought was on fire. And I realized since it was a coalburning train from those times and there

were sparks coming out of the chimney, and I thought the train was on fire, the Nazis must have put the train on fire. You know, I blamed them for everything; the bad Germans had put the train on fire. And then we landed insomewhere in Holland, and there had been a blizzard and we couldn't proceed. We didn't get there until after the boat we were supposed to have taken had already left, and we spentwe got there at night again. It was nighttime and we were taken to this what looked like an immense hall. And there were some Dutch women who bathed us smaller ones, and there were rows of cots, and we were put to sleep. And I thought it was so strange: It's daylight and we're going to sleep.

And then they gave us a hot meal, a hot dinner, the first hot food we had since we left home, and then we were taken to the ship for the channel crossing. Nighttime again.

Q: What did you have to eat on the train and at that place?

A: I don't remember what I had to eat. Sandwiches of some kind that my grandmother gave me. I can't remember what I ate, only this business with the piece of fruit stuck with me. And on the Dutch end, again, I only remember it was hot food, and it was so nice because it was cold, it was winter, and that we had a nice hot meal, and that I thought I could almost understand these women. It's a Germanic language, but I couldn't totally understand them, so there wasand they seemedI don't know if this is a picture that I made later or if at the time: I really remember that they were rather rosy looking, cheerful, matronly kind of women, and they were ratherthe one who was bathing me was rather dismayed at how thin I was. Well, I was a thin little girl, always. It had nothing to do with lack of food, I was just a poor eater and a very thin child, but she was rather dismayed at how thin I was. The other thing I remember about the train trip was that I was afraid to ask to use the toilet. Now, it's impossible that I didn't use the toilet the whole time but I was afraid to ask. So I only went when somebody took me, you know, pushed me to go.

Q: And who was there to ask? The chaperonnes?

A: There were chaperonnes, there were women, but I didn'tI was afraid to ask. And I think that was the reason I had a kidney infection by the time Ior a bladder infection. By the time I reached England I had a bladder infection, because probably I held my urine much tooso that I got sick.

Q: And how about the passage from Holland to England, the one that started at night?

A: I slept.

Q: Oh, lucky you.

A: I slept. I had a cabin mate. Two of us children were put in a doubledecker cabin, and we got a talk about what to do if we get seasick and the bag and laid down, fell asleep, that was it. And the next thing I knew, it was England, and we disembarked and we were interviewed for the, you know, intake, whatever, and I was talked to by a nun. And I was afraid of nuns, and here was a nun with atalking a foreign language. I could say yes and no. That's all I remembered from my father's English lesson, yes and no. Doesn't help if you don't understand the question but

Q: Yeah, that's problematic.

A: And then we were taken to Dover Court Camp. And it was still cold and snowy, and we were put to sleep that night. Again, it was night, the next thing I remember. There were small unheated cabins. You know, it was a summer camp. Dover Court was a children's summer camp, and the only heat was in the main hall. There was a potbellied stove. But we were putwe were given hot baths and put to sleep in the small cabins, and the woman who was there taking care of us told us to rub our legs against the sheets to make them warm. And the other thing, she gave us woolen robes to put on, bathrobes to put on, and we actually slept in them because it was so cold there. And the next day we walked over to the main hall where the one stove was. The little boy walking with me kept talking about his father's ice cellar, and I thought, here it was so cold, my feet were freezing, why is he talking about ice when it's so cold? And there we had breakfast. Don't remember what we had but I remember we were organized to dance around the stove to warm us up, you know. We were

Q: Was this your idea or did the

A: One of the women, you know, got us all together to dance until we warmed up.

And then the next thing I remember was a man who came to adopt a little girl who took me away. And all the time I was talking about my mutti, and they hadit was a terrible mess, you know, the paperwork on the adult end was a terrible mess. They were in a hurry to get children out of there and the next train was coming and so on, and so they thought I was an orphan. Most of the children were orphans, and he camethis man came to adopt.

Q: So he actually really wanted to adopt, not just to take you as a foster child.

A: Yes. He hadhe was a Congressional minister, and he and his wife had a fouryearold son.

Q: I see.

A: And I was in the easy age group to get adopted. I was six, I had blond hair then, and so, you know, cute little girls got adopted rather quickly, and he didhe wanted a little girl as a sort of companion to his little fouryearold son.

Q: So did you get adopted?

A: He took me with him. He spoke maybe two, three words German and I spoke my yes and no. And I also kept showing them the address, and he wrote to this address, and he wrote: To Whom It May Concern, I have a little girl, and so on. And my mother wrote back: My daughter. She in the meantime had been trying to find out what happened to me because none of the organizational people seemed tothere seemed to be a terrible mess at that point, and she had gotten a letter from my grandmother that I should arrive such and such a day and nobody could tell her anything. And she was just recovering from illness, so she was not in good shape to go running around to agencies, so it was wonderful when he wrote. And he actually would have kept me as a foster child, because she couldn't keep me with her, she was a livein domestic, but I wanted to go with my mother. And she kept saying, "I'm going to have to put you in school, I can't keep you." But I just wanted to go with her, so I went with my mother.

Q: So that seemed to have been a pretty nice family, the one that

A: They were very nice people. They must be, because although I was still upset when I was there, because I wanted my mother and where is my mother, the things I rememberfor instance, I had ginger for first time, and gingerit always evokes this memory, and it's a pleasant emotion. So they were very nice to me.

Q: When you say ginger, you mean ginger cookie?

A: No, just piece of

Q: Just to eat?

A: Preserved ginger.

Q: I see.

A: It waswhen I landed, it was very close to Christmas.

Q: So the memories from the foster family to be were pleasant.

A: They were very pleasant, yes. But I only stayed there for a few days becausethey sentactually, they sent my mother a railway ticket to come to them.

Q: That is nice.

A: And they had very little money. They had a doll for me as a present but then when Iwhen I wanted to leave with my mother I had to give it back to them because they were

going to get another child and they actuallythey couldn't afford to buy a second doll to give to the new child. Now I understand it. Then I was very, you know, inside very indignant. It was a present; you don't take back a present, you know, butso my motherwell, I was finally able to tell my mother that I felt sick. So the first thing, she took me to the doctor and

Q: With your bladder infection, right?

A: Yeah. And then she took me to the boarding school that she had enrolled me in. And they were a school who were taking refugee children.

Q: How was your mother able to afford a boarding school?

A: Charity pupil. The schoolyou know, she paid a little but she could notno, she couldn't have afforded the regular fees. But the same schoola little boy who was the son of friends of my mother was at that school. But I didn't stay there long because the school had been an allboy's school, and they were trying as an experiment to have boys and girls together, and they decided it wasn't good, and theyso I had to be moved elsewhere.

Q: It wasn't working?

A: It wasn't working.

Q: What was the age group for the children?

A: I don't know. It seemed

Q: Were you two youngest?

A: I was among the youngest. I seem to see a vast room with loads of children, and I learned how to eat with my arms tucked in properly, you know. You don't eat like this, you eat like this. And they started trying to teach me to read. I didn't even know English, you know. It was a little difficult. But I remember the big fuss when I said my first English sentence. I remember the matron there asked me, "Eva, where is your handkerchief?" And I said, "My handerchief is in my coat pocket." And I would have not remembered it, but she got so excited, and she called to a teacher close by: "Eva said a whole English sentence." "Eva, say it again. Where is your handerchief?" So this was a big thing.

Q: So actually, they must have been pleasant in that school?

A: Yeah. You know, I remember trying hard to follow the reading. What I could do, they had to teach arithmetic. They had beads on a piece of stiff wire.

Q: Abacus?

A: But it wasthey were individual pieces. Like an abacus but individual. So you had toif you were adding, they gave you two and you had to count how many. So three plus four is seven. That I could understand, but the reading Ibecause I didn't really know the language. But what I remember, I was notnot always happy there. I remember, for instance, when my mother left me there I againI screamed and I said to her, "I will not learn anything, it's not""you shouldn't waste your money, I'm not going to learn anything, and particularly won't learn English." So of course, the first thing I did was learn English in selfdefense. What do you do? And the other thing I remember that shows I was pretty miserable for part of the time, at least: I remember sitting for hours when I hadwhen nobody was giving me a lesson and they said I could go and play. It was a sort of play room, and they had equipment for much smaller children also, and they had this little bench with pegs in it, and you took a hammer and you pounded the peg and then you turned it over and youI sat with thatI seem to remember endlessly banging and banging and banging. So I must have, you know, still been unhappy.

Q: Because you were parted from your mother?

A: I think that was it. I mean, I was parted from everything I knewlanguage, food, everything.

Q: How was the English food? Did you like it?

A: I don't remember much about it until later when I began to relax a little and things like kippers andvery strangeand you know That unhappy period didn't last long, but then the school found another place for me because they were getting rid of the girls.

Q: And while you were still in that first school, were there only the refugee children?

A: No, no, no, they were mostly English children?

Q: Did they play? Did you guys play together.

A: I don'tall I remember with playing, aside from this banging on that, was there was an outdoor play area, and I remember going on a seesaw, and a little boy threw a stone and hit me here.

Q: Oh.

A: And I couldn't figure outhe said it was an accident, that he meant to hit the wall behind me. And I remember wondering, Is it because I'm not English or because I'm a girl that he hit me with with a stone?

Q: It's hard to say. It might have been an accident or it might have been on purpose.

A: Yeah, I don't know. But the nextI was back at that school briefly again for a few months in anotherit was a family that had a little day school in the house, and they had a

girl and a boy and I camethey took me in to live with them, and that's where I learned to read, actually. And I was like the third child in the family, sort of. It wasn't a boarding school.

Q: Was it a British family?

A: Yes, it was British family. And then they went away briefly for holiday, to relatives, and they took me back to the school to stay for about a week. It wasn't more than that.

Q: And who is your seat partner, do you remember?

A: No. Another little girl, I think. I don't really remember interacting so much with other children. More with the adults around me.

Q: Did youwere you able to see your mother often? Was the school close by?

A: Not so close. I don't remember her coming to visit at that school. But then the next placeI think it was a fairly brief period where I was at that first school, and the next place where I was with the other children, like a child in the family, I'm beginning to remember more, and there my mother could come. Not frequently but she cameI remember her coming to visit, I remember they helped me to make a birthday present for her, and I

Q: What was it?

A: It was a fancy handerchief.

Q: That's nice.

A: And

Q: Did you embroider it?

A: No, not yet. Not then. Later in life my mother taught me to embroider. But there, I began to relax and my English improved and I finally began to understand reading, what that's all about. And the last time I was changed school, the one where I stayed the longest, my mother changed me only because she wanted

Q: We have to pause. (Pause.)

A: Yeah, so

Q: There we go.

A: I stayed there for relatively brief period. I remember being taken to a birthday party for another child, you know, along with Elizabeth and Christophergood English namesand feeling very like a princess, because I was given this fancyprobably one of Elizabeth's old dresses, and I thought, you know, this was it, this was ruffles. And we went to this children's party and I played and had a good time.

Q: And those were mainly British children then that you were with?

A: Yes, they were allI don't think I had any contactuntil the third and the final school where I spent the year until we came to America, there therewas not another child while I was there, although I understand they took in several children during different times. But there was alike a teacher's helper who was also from Austria, and I didn't want to have anything to do with her; I wanted to be a little English girl.

Q: Did you speak the German at all or

A: I wouldn't speak to her in German.

Q: Did you communicate with your mum other than her coming to see her? Did you draw her pictures? Or I don't know if you could write in German?

A: I could not write in German. I could neither read or write because I didn't actually go to school at all. I learned to read and write in England and I wrote letters. My father at this time was in France and he saved letters I wrote to him in France.

Q: In English? Letters in English?

A: In English, yes, in English. But he knew a little English. He knew a little bit of several languages so And thenoh, and then America, because while I was there he came to America. And I wrote him: I hope you like it in America andI don't know, I have the letters. He saved these little letters that I sent to him.

Q: So you started integrating more and being more outgoing after

A: Yes, after school I wasI wanted to be a little English girl. I certainly didn't want to come to America. I didn't want to be uprooted again. At least this time I traveled with my mother. By this time, of course, there were air raids already and

Q: So what year did you go to America? Do you remember that?

A: November of 1940.

Q: 1940. And that third school, what kind of school was that?

A: It was a small boarding school called the Mildred Lodge School, in a little town called East Molesey in Surrey. So it was not very far from London; it was more Hampton Court Palace somewhere.

Q: Julia has been there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just went there.

A: So, you know, it wasn't that far for my mother to visit. Oh, there was one time my mother worked for a while forthe first family treated her so badly she said she would not

go to work for rich people again, she would go to work as a general housekeeper to a more middle class family, and she worked for a family where the wife was American. The husband was British, the wife was American, they had a little baby, and they allowed my mother to have me with her for a week during the summer holidays. And the lady put red nail polish on my nails. When the matrons saw my red nail polish when I got back to school, ah, you would thinkit was shocking, terribly shocking. Immediately she took it off. And I thought it was so pretty, my red nails, and she just, oh

Q: So the first family didn't allow for your mother to keep you for the holidays, right?

A: The first family that she worked for, they had paid her fare so she had to work it off, and she hated them so much. All the kitchen cupboards were locked and the lady of the house had the key, and when my mother went to cook, she had to come and open all the locks, and as soon as my mother had taken out and so on, everything was locked again. She hated it so much. So there was somebody she already knew in England who lent her the money to pay off so she could leave them.

Q: I see.

A: And then she went to work for this nice family. And she would have stayed with them but they moved furtherwhen the bombings became more intense, they moved, and she didn't want to be so far away from where I was going to school so she left there. And I think what she did next, she went to work inan Austrian restaurant that a group of refugees had started. So she worked in the kitchen of the Austrian restaurant. And

Q: And you at that time were in that second school, right? Third school, and you were already a little bit older, right?

A: Yeah. By the timewe left in November '39. I was eight, and I could read and write and I was learning English history and long division and all those, which I hated. And when I was bad they sent me instead of being able to listen to the teacher read from "The Wind In The Willows" I had to do long division examples. Bad.

Q: It waswell, it was useful.

A: Yeah. I have onemy mother has one report card, the only one from England, from that school, the third one. And when I waswhen you were bad you gotaside from being punished, you got what they called an order mark. And if you wereif you left something where it shouldn't be you got a confiscation mark. And I had three and a half order marks and 45 confiscation marks, and the note: "Too untidy." But the general comment from Miss Randall, who ran the school, was something about my happy disposition. So by this time I was already doing much better.

Q: Adjusting, right?

A: Uhu.

Q: Did you have many friends in that school? Do you remember that?

A: I remember particularly two girls. I wasit was a very small school. There were two classes, the upper form and the lower form, and I was in the lower form. There was one child younger than me. Poor little thing was five years old. She was an orphan and her uncle sent her to the school, and she wanted to adopt my mother. She so wanted a mother. And our beds were next to each other. So I remember her. Jill was her name. And I know there were two or three other children who were learning aroundyou know, we were learning about the same material and that if I finished my work sometimes I was told to help Jill with her reading, and I was rather proud of myself that now I could read well enough to help Jill.

Q: Was Jill also from___?

A: No, no, she was an English girl. There were two nonEnglish people there. But I know there were other children that came and went from that school, that they took in other refugee children. My mother said definitely I was a charity pupil because she paid a little bit. Nobody ever asked her for money for clothes for me, I always had the school uniforms and everything. And I remember going to church with them. They asked my mother if I could go to church to be, you know, with all the others, not to be singled out. I remember us walking in a line, you know, like those picture books of the children with the round hat with the ribbon hanging down.

Q: Like Madeleine.

A: Exactly. Yeah, that's what we looked like in the spring, and in the winter we had brown woolen coats and brown felt hats when we went to church. Until the bombings got bad and then we didn't go.

Q: Did that anywhere influence your religious affiliation?

A: No. I mean, if I had stayed longer I would have become probably a nice religious little Church of England girl but I was reunited with my parents. And one day I said to my mother something about God, and she said, "Oh, we don't believe that." And I said, "Okay." That was the end of that, no more God.

Q: So you went with your mother, you traveled back to United StatesI mean, not back but for the first time to United States to reunite with your father?

A: Yes. I remember we left in an air raid, by train to Scotland, to Glasgow, and the boat sailed from Glasgow, and it was a tenday voyage because we crossed in a convoy until we reached the Canadian waters and came down, you know, as close to the coast line as possible to New York. And we landed in New York, and there was my father, who I

barely recognized. And he started speaking German and I said to him, "You have to speak English to me, Daddy." So he spoke English to me.

Q: Did you speak German? Did you remember any German?

A: I remembered a little. I can understand somewhat. Ithe first time I tried to speak German to my father he burst out laughing because I had an English accent in my German. And somebody who met me as an adult said, "You are the first person I've ever met who has a foreign accent in every language she speaks." Which I do.

Q: That is pretty amusing. So was it a happy reunion with your dad? Did hedid you have to wait long? Did you have to go towhen you were going through immigration in the United States?

A: Wethe immigration was onboard ship, the officer was onboard ship, and we were nearly the last ones off. My father was already in despair because they said if they're not processed that day we go to Ellis Island and have to be processed the next day. But we didwe got processed. And my father bought me at the pier a boxmy first American food, a box of these cookies called Mallowmars. I don'tthey are a piece of cookie, round. On top of that, marshmallow, and on top of that, chocolate, all coated in chocolate. My first American food. And then we went to my uncle's house. We were stayingthe great uncle who brought us all to America, we went to his house in Brooklyn and we stayed there for a little while. I immediately got an ear infection and ended up in Kings County Hospital, in the children's ward. During this time that I was in the hospital, my parents found an apartment in Manhattan with two sisters who were fellow refugees, and that's where I started school in America and so on.

Q: And so five of you stayed in one apartment?

A: Yes. It wasin New York, the lowcost housing at that time, they had what they called railroad flats.

Q: What does that mean?

A: Okay. On the street side is a living room.

Q: Uhu.

A: Opening directly from the living room, no hallway, each room opened from another. That's why they called it railroad, because one after the other.

Q: Uhu.

A: So my parents had the living room, I had the little bedroom right after them, next bedroom the two sisters shared, in the back looking on the back yard was the kitchen where we ate.

Q: And the bathroom?

A: Yeah, kitchen and bathroom next to each other.

Q: Did you have to pass each other's rooms?

A: Always.

Q: So best room was your parents', nobody was passing their room, or was there an entry to the staircase through their room?

A: Well, there were two doors, the back doorkitchen door and the front door. And we stayed there not too long, until my parents could afford an apartment of their own. Butand then my father joined the American Army when the war broke out here, and disruption again. I think Iit took a long time until I began to be close to my father because of all the separation.

Q: What about your grandmother? Did you keep in touch with her? What happened?

A: My mother was able to write back and forth for a while. In fact, myfor my seventh birthday my mother asked for my grandmother to send some books, German books. So I have four books, two school books for beginning reading, you know, the first two

Q: Right.

A: years of reading and writing book, and Grimm's fairy tales and Andersen's fairy tales, with beautiful pictures. Those were my presents for my seventh birthday.

And then there was nothing. You know, first, the letters came to the old address, then to another address, and after the war, when the Red Cross started helping people find relatives, we found out that she died either on the way to Theresienstadt or in Theresienstadt.

Q: I'm sorry.

A: So however, unlike most of the Kindertransport people, I did haveI had not only my parents, but one set of grandparents here. So I grew up fairly normally when it came to that.

Q: Right. And did you start school in the United States?

A: They put me in second grade, because they asked my mother when she went to enroll me, "How much schooling has Eva had?" And she said, "Well, not quite two years." So they put me in second grade. Now second grade here, they were still learning how to read, and I was at home reading "Alice in Wonderland" and, you know, real books, and in England I was learning history and geography and they were stumbling through Wilbert sat on the windowsill. And I think I nearly died of boredom.

Q: They didn't move you to an upper grade?

A: They did eventually. The next semester I got moved, you know, but it was very choppy for a while, you know.

Q: Not very stable.

A: Not very smooth. The transitions weren't smooth because I got put ahead and put ahead. But it allyou know, by the time I was in middle school it was all kind of straightened out.

Q: And did you find United States welcoming or did youhow did you see that move? Did you feel upset that you have to leave England?

A: Yes, I did. And strangely enough, the first time I was called a dirty Jew was here in the United States. One of the childrenyou know, they didn't know what they were saying and, you know, it was justI don't remember what I said back but it might have been "dirty Irish," for all I know, that I said back. I'm sorry but I have to leave.

Q: Thank you very much.

This concludes our interview.

A: Thank you. I'm sorry.

Conclusion of Interview