

**EVA KOEPESELL
BORN 1944
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY**

Eva Koepsell was born 1944 in Budapest, Hungary, of parents also born there. Her father was a physicist and her mother a social worker. She shows pictures of her family from 1906, of her mother, and of herself as a baby. Since she was so young, her recollection of the past are mostly about what she learned later.

Her mother lost her job in 1941 and then could not get another. Her father could work for a company a little longer but lost his job in 1943 and was taken to a forced-labor camp. She talks about living in cellars first in the Jewish ghetto and later outside. The baby of her mother's sister died because of lack of food, and her mother still feels guilty about not having been able to do more. Another aunt was taken to Auschwitz in 1944 and survived medical experiments but then could not have children.

To survive, her mother felt you had to take off the yellow star, leave the ghetto, convert to Catholicism (although the document probably would have been of little value) and hide out. She also knocked out one of her teeth and dressed poorly to appear as an old woman. Her mother left her for several months at a Red Cross nursery where many babies were saved.

She was three and a half years old when she came to the United States. There is a picture of her Hungarian birth certificate. Her mother is very much affected by the events and tries to distance herself from her experience. She always lives in fear of another holocaust. Her father had escaped from the forced-labor camp after a few months. The family survived the war and were liberated by a Russian soldier. At first, they could not believe it. After the war, life was difficult because of chaos and lack of food.

The Hungarian Jews felt themselves to be completely assimilated and a number survived because of the efforts of Wallenberg. Her mother got her old job back but the family moved to the United States in 1947 where her father could again work as a physicist. He had a stroke a year later. They lived in the Bronx and had relatives in Brooklyn and Queens, but few of her family had survived. Eventually, they moved to Buffalo.

She had gone to a Catholic school in the Bronx and at age 12 became curious because all her relatives were Jewish. She found out about her own Jewish background of which she is proud. After her father died, her mother returned to Hungary to stay with a surviving sister until her death. Then she moved to a Jewish home where everyone is a survivor from a concentration camp.

Eva still feels guilty for having survived and that life now is so normal, but she believes it is up to her to tell the story. Throughout the interview she reads several poems that she had written about the conditions during the war. She feels it is important to recognize what is going on and also that more people should have acted during the war. Perhaps, some day we will learn.