

Eva Adam

Tape 1 Side A

March 31, 1997

RG-50.106*0064.01.02

Abstract

Eva Hava Adam was born as Eva Hava Beer on September 3, 1932 in Budapest, Hungary where she grew up in an orthodox family with an older brother and an older sister. They were a musical family and she sang and played the violin. She was also active in gymnastics, swimming, skiing, bicycling and skating as a child. In the early 40s relatives from other parts of Europe came to live with them so Eva learned of events elsewhere. The family had papers indicating their nationality as Hungarian which prevented them from deportation at first and helped the grandfather insist that they do not leave. When the German Army arrived, they lost their freedom as they could only go out certain hours, could not buy food, had to wear a 10 x 10 Jewish star and were sent to a Jewish Stars house. In October 1944, the Hungarian Nazi party, the Arrow-Cross, took over and ordered the family to be ready in 20 minutes and go to the ghetto. Then the soldiers picked half of the residents to be shot at the Danube River but they returned. Eva indicated that they had no food, no fire, no water and no electricity on January 18, 1945, the day of liberation by the Russians.

Eva Hava Adam discusses her life from the time of the ghetto to escaping to Israel and living in the US. She explains that the Soviet Army liberated them but sometimes sent people away permanently and at other times gave them food. She never wanted to talk about her experiences during the War as felt they did not suffer as long or as much as others. Now she realizes that they did their best to survive and helped others by sharing food and making IDs. Only 3 of 36 relatives returned from Auschwitz. Eva and her siblings escaped to Israel but her parents were imprisoned for two years before they joined them. She entered the Army, got married, had a child and went to the US with her husband for education. They returned to Israel for 10 years and came back to US where they became citizens and now are returning to Israel to live.

Summary

00:00 Eva Hava Adam was born as Eva Hava Beer on September 3, 1932 in Budapest, Hungary where she grew up. She thought it was a wonderful place to be raised. As part of an orthodox Jewish family, she enjoyed Jewish activities and felt protected from many things. She did not live in a Jewish neighborhood but lived in a good area near a Jewish school. Her father contracted paintings for synagogues and artistic works. Her mother was a housewife and worked for the grandfather as a textile buyer. In Eva's family, everyone was either a musician or an artist. She has a brother, Meacham (?) George Beer

and a sister, Sarah Beer who both live in Israel. Eva is the youngest of the three siblings. She has a large extended family and still holds good memories of Budapest. They had much music and museum-going at first and hardships came later, especially when her father could not earn much. She knew Jews were disliked but did not pay attention. If someone said, "Dirty Jew," she did not respond as was told not to answer.

- 05:00 As they were orthodox, her father wore a hat all the time and her mother wore long sleeves. They believed that their feelings were more important than appearances. They only ate kosher food and did not tear on the Sabbath. They went to Synagogue on Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday night and on Jewish holidays. They prayed three times a day. Eva felt it was a demanding and rich life. She did not have a favorite holiday but her top three were: Passover when they cleaned the whole house, it had a different fragrance and they dressed up the house with flowers; Tu B'Shvat (Jewish arbor day) when they also decorated with flowers; and Chanukah. She started to study music at age three or four and went to concerts, heard family members play music, and attended Jewish private school where she saw Jewish theatre. She also went swimming, skiing, skating and bicycling (with a second hand bicycle). There were usually five children in the house as she had cousins who came to Budapest to study. There were relatives from Poland and Czechoslovakia who had no place to live and stayed with her family. Sometimes she had to sleep with her sister. Her relatives came around 1942 and some did not know how to speak Hungarian.
- 10:00 Eva studied the violin and singing. In the ghetto others would dance to her singing. She learned about events when she heard her father discuss the fighting at the Russian front. Her uncle got wounded at the River Danube and taken to Buda (?) station where he was beaten to death in 1942. This was her mother's younger brother who was good-looking and in the Army as a Jewish soldier. This meant he had no rights, could not carry a gun, was often not given any food, and was tortured (had to go up a tree and shout like a bird). Another uncle, her mother's sister's husband, was beaten by Hungarian soldiers in 1942. In the summer they would go to the grandparents' house where the aunts, uncles and cousins lived. Eva and her cousins were afraid that the Hungarian Fascists would run after them but it never happened.
- 15:00 On several occasions she heard outlandish anti-Semitism comments such as, "You are smelly." They knew that on September 3, 1939, the Germans ran all over Poland. It is a significant date for her as it is her birthday. There was some talk of events in other countries but her family never thought of leaving. Her grandfather called the family together and announced that they would be the last Jews to leave Hungary. He told them not to speak German or Yiddish although Eva studied German in school. They considered themselves to be Hungarian and Jewish was secondary. Her mother's family went back eight generations of Hungarians but her father only went back one generation. Her father's family came from Poland due to the anti-Semitism there. They knew that

people got kicked out of Hungary if they were only one or two generation Hungarian so when her parents married they requested papers stating their nationality as Hungarian.

- 20:00 This would prevent them from being persecuted as Jews. Those who were born in Hungary and did not request papers got raped, thrown in ditches and killed. A boy from a rich family in her class came back from the Polish border but the rest of his family died. The Jews were murdered by the Poles and the Hungarians. With the late 30s came a financial change as there was no money for private school, sports, music lessons and fancy food. She heard of Jews going to Madagascar. Polish and Slovakian Jews ran away in 1939. Eva heard that terrible things happened in Austria. She heard that some Jews committed suicide and that Goring cut off parts of Jewish bodies and put their hands inside like pockets. They would see the Germans in the movies talk about the Jews. Eva attended Jewish school except for two years was at a Christian school to study English.
- 25:00 One teacher talked about Jews in a derogatory manner and Eva asked to leave the class and the teacher threw her out of school. They told her not to attend school because she was too sensitive for the times. Later she was sent to a Jewish school. Eva felt that the bigger you were, the harder it was to do certain things. Her father could not work or have a Christian work for him so had to let his employees go. They could not have a radio. In one of their rooms, a family of a high-ranking Christian officer was placed without payment and they were afraid that the officer would hear them. The officer was head of the division where only three Jews came back. After the war, the wife came to Eva's mother and requested that she come to court and tells everyone how nicely they behaved when they lived there.
- 30:00 The officer had an entire division of Jews murdered so Eva's mother declined. 1941 was an unusual year for the Jews as they were murdered in many ways. Eichmann arrived and in six to eight weeks they were wiped out. People were running away from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Slovakia and Yugoslavia and stayed with Eva's family. The family had a clear picture of what was happening as they also got letters from their relatives. The relatives had run away at night when their houses were burned down and do not know what happened to those who remained. Her father obtained working papers for some of those relatives who stayed with them so they worked for him. If they did not have papers, they were taken to the police. The family was not informed about ghettos or concentration camps but they knew that the Jews were gathered together and placed somewhere. In 1944 they got cards from a cousin in Auschwitz which three girls signed but not the rest of the family so they got suspicious. .
- 35:00 They heard about being gassed when people left the ghetto but her father said that it is impossible. They knew that people were put in places where they were tortured and murdered. When she was thrown out of school, Eva studied at home and then went to the Jewish school which was getting crowded and could not accept everyone. They had no

money and no freedom for activities so stayed with her family and friends. Eva was a good gymnast but her Jewish club could not practice. She used to swim and compete against others but this was no longer possible. **Tape 1, Side B.** Youngsters in orchestras were thrown out. Since they were excluded from everything, they started Jewish clubs. They hoped their hard times would end soon. They did not know the names of ghettos and concentration camps as there might have been a policy to keep them uninformed of this.

- 40:00 The Germans were experienced in murdering people so were able to murder so many Jews in eight weeks. When her fellow student returned from deportation, the teachers told him not to tell the others anything but he was taken to Auschwitz a second time. The Hungarian Jews felt different from other European Jews. In 1848 the Hungarians wanted to be free from the Hapsburgs so all the Jews' papers identified them as Hungarians. In other countries, Jews were not identified by their country's nationality but were identified as Jewish. The Hungarians did not fully understand their situation until they arrived at Auschwitz. From a population of 800,000 Jews, they were down to 200,000. Eva recalls March 19, 1944 on a Sunday afternoon when the Germans took over Hungary. The Hungarians wanted to get out of the War as they saw it was a lost battle.
- 45:00 The German Army came and took over the Hungarian army, police and railroads. From their window, they could see German soldiers with guns and tanks and realized it was serious. There were new laws daily. They lost freedom and protection as citizens. They could only go out certain hours, could not buy food, had to wear a 10 x 10 Jewish star and could not go to Christian places. Young men up to 45 or 50 were taken out and deported. The situation deteriorated. Those in smaller towns had to go to larger towns. 80% of Jews were concentrated in large places and taken to Auschwitz including three of her relatives. Eva remained with her mother and grandparents. Her family was sent to a house of stars, a Jewish house with a Jewish star on it. There were five to eight families in each room. Food was scarce. They got some from Jewish organizations and during the hours that you could leave, obtained some food from friends.
- 50:00 In October 1944, the Hungarian Nazi party, the Arrow-Cross took over for the police until January 18, 1945 when the War ended. Their life was in limbo. They were told to be ready in 20 minutes and go to the ghetto. They walked there through Budapest with their hands up. It was hard to think of things that they would need. They took albums instead of food and clothing. Some people were taken to a square where they had to place their gold and money in boxes as told they won't need it where they are going. At the square, they were divided into groups. She was with her parents (father returned from Army duty) as she was young.
- 55:00 They got Swedish papers as her father spoke Swedish and his brother lived in Sweden. She remained in the ghetto with her parents and siblings. There were no longer air raids

as the British and Americans stopped bombing. They heard the gunfight by the Russian Red Army who fought house-to-house. They had no food. 15 or 16-year-old soldiers came into their house. Eva and her family were in the cellar. The soldiers stood some of the residents of the house with their hands up and picked half of them to be shot at the Danube River. Luckily, they were sent back to the house but all those in the next building were shot. Eva reported that they had no food, no fire, no water and no electricity. The Germans announced that they would blow up the entire ghetto but only blew up the bridges.

- 60:00 There were huge fences around the ghetto which the Jews were forced to build themselves. Eva would try to get out as she did not look Jewish. An old Jew asked her to buy medicine for his wife so she took off her star and got it but it was hard to get back in. Her brother wore a Hungarian Nazi uniform and yelled at her to go home. There was no bread available for the three months of October, November and December. Most of the young people age 16, 17 and 18 tried to live with the Christian populace. Later it was dangerous for them if they were not fighting the Russians. Food was rationed with 390 calories for adults, 600 for workers and 900 for children. Jews guarded the ghetto. Anyone could get in with a gun. There were no SS guards. Eva was 11-years-old when she was standing near a door which fell on her when they were bombed. Both the Hungarian Nazis and the Germans wanted to kill the Jews. It was Hungarian officers and 15 to 17-year old Arrow Cross who shot the Jews into the Danube.
- 65:00 Many Jews with hats and armbands were sent to protected houses. They prepared ID papers and made them appear old. Eva's father manufactured the papers, she made them look old, and her siblings helped as they were in the Zionist party. They tried to supply others with ID papers. Her siblings used these fake papers to live with Christians. There were no trains to Vienna so Jewish women were forced to walk and 80% died. Life in the ghetto was "hellish." Eva saw bodies like pieces of firewood piled up outside in January in 30 degree Celsius weather. She was different from others as remained with her parents. At the end, her siblings hid behind the coal in the basement. They had to hide because posing as Christians meant they should be fighting the Russians.
- 70:00 Eva will always remember the day of freedom when the foreign soldiers picked them up, removed their stars, placed them in the sun and gave them fruit to eat. She saw soldiers in fur hats and Kalashnikovs (?) break down the ghetto walls. Eva saw a 7-year-old child cut pieces of meat from a dead horse to feed her little sister who was already dead. She saw the constant movement of lice in everyone's head. She recalls she tried to iron her white kerchief although she did not have an iron as it was the only clean item she had. She wanted to wash and change her clothes. They were not in Auschwitz but life was hard. It was very cold in December and January with lots of snow. If you needed shoes, you could not buy it.

75:00 They had no transportation to go to the movies and not permitted to use any available transportation. They did not understand their situation as they did not have a radio to learn about it. They thought they would survive if they did not hear anything.

Eva Adam

Tape 2 Side A

March 31, 1997

RG-50.106*0064.02.02

Summary

- 00:00 Eva Hava Adam talks of the time the Soviets broke down the walls of the ghetto. Life was still dangerous as the Soviet Army fought for years to get there. People were picked up on the street and were never seen again but these same soldiers brought them food. They returned to the Jewish Star House as it was less damaged than other houses. They were able to close a window with paper and oil or turpentine to give them some warmth. They obtained wood from electricity poles that were cut up for fuel. They had no food. They would stand in lines for days to find out about their relatives. One day three cousins aged 17, 18 and about 20, all sisters, returned out of a family of 36. They had no teeth and their hair was pinkish cotton as they had worked with phosphates at a bomb factory. They asked about their family who had been in Auschwitz. Those from Hungary had been gassed with no selection.
- 05:00 Eva's family had just learned about the gassing. Eva felt that if she had not been with her family, that she would not have survived. She felt that her family was caring as her mother asked her to give her soup to a little girl who had none for two days and she did so. They were educated, good human beings, good Hungarians and good Jews. They stayed at first to see who returned and became involved with the Zionist movement. In 1949 the family ran away illegally but her parents were caught and put in jail for two years. She reached Israel in three months at age 16 and placed in a kibbutz with children her age where she worked and studied. Eva wanted to return to Hungary but was told not to do so. She was with her brother and sister and her parents arrived after two years. They had been in jail from 1949 to 1951. Eva went into the army, attended the Academia of Music, met a young man, fell in love, got married and had a child. In 1961 they went to the US to study. She got into an opera workshop and her husband was admitted into the Einstein program for surgical oncology which was not available in Israel. They stayed 10 years and returned to Israel where she sang and taught music and her husband became head of the department of surgery in a government hospital.

10:00 Then they came on vacation to the US and remained and became US citizens. Now they are returning to Israel to live. She was able to erase many of the bad memories but now she is 64 and remembers some things. After the War, she was told that she had no right to speak up as she suffered less than others. Eva felt that eight weeks or eight months is no time compared to years of suffering. Some children were not gassed but put alive into the earth and took days to die. There were 100,000 people in her ghetto and they suffered just a short time. Eva feels it is not right to compare their ghetto's lack of uprising with the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto. They were able to stay alive and still show they were human and capable. They made ID papers for people to run away and live like Christians. They had no time to take clothing and food to the ghetto so the next day, Eva returned to their house and got some useful items and found a person with a horse to bring them to the ghetto. She was 11 years old at that time. Eva felt that everyone did what was possible to do.

15:00 Her father and brother served in the Jewish legion with no right to protection or food. They did not serve as soldiers but prepared roads and ditches for the army. Jewish men age 16 to 50 were supposed to join so her father and brother served but constantly tried to run away. It was dangerous as if they were caught, they would be killed. All her father's brothers served and were murdered; also, her mother's brothers in Russia and Budapest served and were murdered. Older relatives were sent to Auschwitz. Eichmann knew what to do when he arrived March 19th. The ghetto ended on January 18, 1945.

18:00