

We are interviewing Eva Weinberg at the Holocaust convention on April 13, 1983. Eva, will you begin by telling me where and when you were born.

I was born in 1927, Nyirbator. My maiden name is Eva Wechter. I come from a very loving family. I was 17 years old when they took us away-- very naive, very protected young girl.

I am not going to detail the times that before we got to Auschwitz. I'm going to start at the time that we got on the trains. And we were packed like cattles.

There was a small window in the train, and everybody was going to get fresh air. There was a pail in the middle of the train where the waste was going. The smell was unbearable. But my family kept saying, as long as wherever they take us, and we're going to be together, that's all it matters.

After traveling days and days, finally we got to somewhere where we didn't know where we are. And we saw light, and we saw a big chimney. My mother said, oh, it's a factory. We'll be all together, and we're going to be working.

And my father, on the train, he was so depressed. He says, I don't think there is a God anymore. But my mother kept up and kept saying, has to come something, that, well, we'll be together.

When we got off the train, my mother was holding my sister, who had a cast on her leg. She was put towards the left side. Me and my father went to the right side.

They told us right away that we're not going to survive, the people who worked there. But we were angry at them. We didn't believe it, that such a thing could happen, that we won't survive.

We saw my father going to the place where we thought that maybe he'll be safe. I saw him once, through the barbed wire, and he had a piece of bread in his hand. And he wanted to throw it to me. And I had a hope, the whole time, that at least I'll see him.

But I must go back, before. The minute we got off the train, they took us into a room. We had to get all undressed. I was 17-- naive girl.

The first thing they did is sit me down. A man came-- shaved my hair, all over my body-- the most humiliating thing that ever could happen to a person.

We looked at each other, with my friends, and we didn't recognize each other. They put us on some kind of a striped clothes. And they threw us to a barracks.

And they gave us something, but we didn't know what it was. It looked an oval shape. And we wanted to put it on our heads, because we wanted to cover our heads. But then they told us that we're going to need it for something else.

Then we found out later that they put something in the food, that we should not have our periods. And for a whole year, we didn't have it, but we didn't care. We just wanted to live.

And they put us into a barrack where there was about 15 people on one bed. When one turned, everybody had to turn.

There was no food. There was no clothing. And every day, early in the morning, just standing out for Appell, counting and counting. Treated us like worse than animals.

And one day came a Gestapo. And he says half a transport is going away. And we got very frightened, because, as bad as it was there, we didn't know where they're going to take us.

So there was a rumor that if we're going away from Auschwitz, that it's going to be better. And I find my aunt there.

And I was so happy to be with her. So I went next to her. And wherever she was going, I wanted to go.

So that transport went to Stutthof. Stutthof, the situation was just as bad as Auschwitz-- every day, standing out early in the morning, in all kinds of weather, and counting. And people were fainting. And my aunt kept holding me, that I should be strong. And she was pinching my face, that I should look healthy.

Finally-- I don't remember too clearly how long we were there-- after about a couple of months, again we went away. So they told us again, in Stutthof, the people that worked there, you're going to be better off if you're going away. Finally, we went to another place. It called Brahnau Bromberg. And there we were put to work.

First, we were doing work in the forest. It was so cold. We had no clothes. We were so hungry. If we were marching to this working place and we saw grass on the street, we wanted to grab it and eat it. And they didn't let us touch it.

I worked all day in this forest in the cold. And I was getting skinnier and skinnier-- nothing to eat. We had soup like water-- nothing in it. A little piece of bread for the whole day. And we were scared, but we just wanted to live.

And after this, they picked a few people who wants to work in a factory. There is going to be hard work. And they didn't want to take me, because I was very skinny. But my aunt, who was a little heavier, they picked her, who was a little older. And I begged, and I said, I'm strong and I want to work with her. I didn't want to be separated from her.

Then we went to this factory, where called NGL-- NGL-- where they were making bomb powder. And there I was working at night, a whole night, outside in the dark-- was a conveyor belt, like, where two people were standing on the end of it, and big, heavy sacks were coming down. And there was not a minute even to go to the bathroom, because they kept coming and coming.

And I was getting weaker and weaker. I was so exhausted already that I was hoping that I should get sick, so maybe if I'll go to a hospital where I could rest a couple of days-- I didn't care. Somehow, God gave me strength, and I was strong. I didn't even have a cold, the whole time.

But I had faith in God. I kept saying, the whole time, I know this has to end, and I know that I'm going to be freed. But I never dreamed that I'll be the only one from my family who's going to survive.

When finally came the end of the winter, and they said-- we heard rumors that the Russians are coming in, and they are-- and they're winning the war, with the Americans-- first we couldn't believe it-- that nobody wanted to help us. How come they didn't come and bomb the railroads? And they picked--

They told us, one day, just that we're leaving, and we have to walk. And it was middle of the winter-- January-- no clothes, no shoes, nothing. We were marching and marching for days.

Finally, they threw us into some kind of a barracks. We started crying. We want to go back to the camp. This is worse than the camp. Even though we knew it that it's maybe going to be the end of the war, we were so exhausted and so-- that we just wanted to be safe! We wanted to be one place.

And they were shooting on top of us. We heard the Russian a army-- that we heard the bombs, we heard the shooting. But we didn't know what's happening. We didn't know-- we didn't want to believe it, that they're coming and going to liberate us.

Finally-- I don't remember clearly if they left us, or-- I think they left the German army, and they left us somewhere out in the cold somewhere. And then we started marching. And we wanted to get somewhere. But we were so scared, because that's all we heard is shooting.

Now we thought we're going to get killed by the Russian. They wouldn't know who we are. We looked like animals. We had no clothes on. We looked skinny, like-- like skeletons.

And we were marching. And this was in Poland. And we asked the people, please, let us in somebody's house or anywhere where we could sleep a night. And they didn't let us come in.

Finally, we got to a house where the Germans ran away and they left everything. And we went in this house. We were a bunch of young girls. I was among the youngest ones.

And I don't remember if it's right away or day later or so, the Russians came in. And we were so happy to see the Russian soldiers. But that happiness turns soon to be very sad, because that's all they wanted, is to rape the young girls. They were, like, hungry for them, or they were just like animals. They didn't care.

So everybody was hiding me. We went to sleep at night. I was afraid to go get out of bed, because the Russian soldiers were sleeping in the next room. And my aunt and other people, they put black clothes on me, so when the Russians will see me they should think that I'm an old lady-- that I'm not young. And this went on for a couple of days. And God was with me, and they didn't harm us.

We were so hungry, and we were so-- we weren't even happy that we were free. We didn't know what are we thought. And we started eating. We ate like-- impossible to imagine the looks of us, when we saw food.

Then we all got sick. We had cramps. We was sick for days. And we knew already we're free, but we didn't know how to be happy. We wanted to have our families back.

And we started walking and walking. We walked. And there was no trains. It was the war still going on, and it was dangerous to walk, but we wanted to get home.

It took me about two months to get home. I come home-- what I called my home. The home was not there. People were living in my house. There were strange people all over.

And even though, the Hungarians, they seemed to be nice when we were still there, they were not happy to see us. Nobody likes the Jewish people. We have to learn that we have to have a country of our own. That's the only place for us. America is good to us, but you never can tell. We believed, when we were in Hungary, when I was a young girl, to be so safe that nobody could take us away.

I came home. I remembered my father being on the right side. I kept looking for him, going to the train every day, but he never came home. And I was left all alone, with some relatives.

But then I realized that I'm never going to see my parents. And until I find my husband-- who wasn't my husband; I just met him. And we got married, and we came to this country.

And now I have children of my own and grandchildren. And I just want them to remember never to let the Jewish people down, and always stand up for your rights. And no matter who it is-- and be a good person, and never forget that, what happened to us.

Will you please give me the names of all the members of your family?

My father's name was Mikl³s Wechter. My mother's maiden name was Kovacs Kato. My sister's name was Magda Wechter. And my aunts and uncles Ebe Erno, Zoli, Jeno. My grandmother and grandfather, they perished-- everybody, except these people that I told.

Thank you for the interview. Please tell me now the current members of your family.

Well, my husband's name is William Weinberger, and my children, Terry Weinberger, Gladys Weinberger-- now her married name is Gladys Bagley. My daughter-in-law name is Evelyn Weinberger. Her maiden name was Evelyn [PERSONAL NAME]

My son-in-law, Danny Bagley, and my two beautiful grandchildren. One is Danielle Weinberger, and my grandson is Spencer Bagley. And I hope they remember their grandparents for a long time and they remember what happened to the Jewish people, and they should never forget it.

I want to find out about your life in Europe before the war. Can you please tell me about the house that you lived in?

Like I said, I was born in 1927. Life in this Hungarian village, called NyÁrbÄtor, was not a bad life. People worked hard, but we heard, on and off, "dirty Jew"-- "the Jews are no good." We always heard these kind of things, but nothing major, that people would have really been that desperate that they should have thought about to go to another country.

When I was growing up, I was very, very angry when I used to hear it, "dirty Jew," for no reason at all. These were people that I knew since I was a child. And they were very jealous of Jewish people, because Jewish people always kept a nice home, no matter how much money they had. They never drank. They never smoked. They led a beautiful, clean life.

I used to go with my father to shul. We kept all the holidays. On Sabbath, I would go with my friends, and we had a wonderful time together, just doing little things. We weren't rich, but just a nice family relationship.

My grandparents lived in the same town. They loved me very much. I was the first grandchild. And I used to be in their house an awful lot.

My mother had a very hard life. She lost her mother when she was a young girl, and she was also left alone. And myself and my sister was her whole life. That's all-- and her husband. That's all she cared for.

And even though we weren't rich, we had everything that a child could imagine. We had lovely home. We had love. We had everything.

But as I was growing up, I saw all the injustices that was going on already starting with the Jews. The Jews couldn't go here. The Jews couldn't do this. You heard Jews all the time being mentioned.

And as a teenager, I started having friends who were Zionist, who wanted to go to Palestine. Then, it was called "Palestine." And secretly we used to meet-- because you couldn't meet openly. So we had, like, a little group of five, six people. And we talked about it, if we would one day go to Eretz Yisrael and build a country. And we would have a country where we wouldn't be called "dirty Jews."

But my parents were so protective and sheltered, when I used to talk about it-- I was a teenager-- I want to go-- they said, it's such a hard life there, and people won't survive. So they didn't want me to go. And my father, although he loved me very much, he mentioned it a few times, that maybe we should let her go. He was a Zionist, too.

And then, when we heard more about the Germans, what they were doing-- and even though we heard what's happening in Poland, we didn't want to believe it. We thought these were rumors-- that there's no such a thing could happen, that they take people and they kill it for no reason, just because they're Jews. We thought maybe these had to be that people-- did something.

And we couldn't believe it, that a country like America, who was also such a democratic country, they wouldn't do anything. They wouldn't say anything. And they said something about, there is such a thing as Auschwitz. We didn't want to believe it.

And that's why I'm saying it now, over again, to my children. Don't ever believe it that these things cannot happen again. We said the same thing. It never can happen to us. They will not take us away. There is no such a thing.

And when already time was coming close, and my mother and father saw that things were getting very bad, my father remarked that, I wish I would have let her go to Israel. And people were talking about it-- if we would have our own country, this would have never happened. But when people have a good life financially, they forget about everything

else. That's all people interested in-- a financial aspect of life. They don't think about the future generations-- what we must, and we must learn from this.

Could you tell me about some of the certain holidays that you celebrated and any memories you have of Pesach, Sukkot, Shavuot?

We kept all the holidays. We kept the Shabbat. It was a beautiful holiday for all the holidays. Came Passover, even though we weren't rich, my parents bought me new clothes. When we sat down to a Seder table, it was a meaning to it. It wasn't just what people think, that you sit down for a dinner. You recall all the past of the people-- what they went through.

We thought that they had it so hard, until we see what we had. Now we understand more about our past generation-- what we had. Because we felt that. We feel it.

And all the holidays-- the Rosh Hashanah and all the holidays were so beautiful together. It was meaningful. And in our home, came Friday night, it was-- my mother was like a queen. And we felt, like, reborn. We felt wonderful, to be together.

And Sabbath was a beautiful day. That's the only day my parents rested, was Sabbath.

Sunday was a regular work day. We even went to school. I went to a school-- what you call a "Jewish day school," where I learned a little Hebrew, where I learned to read Hebrew. I learned my prayers.

And I had a wonderful childhood, until when it came 17 years old, and that was the end of it. And I said to my parents, just before they took us away, it's true that a lot of people taken away, but look at all the young people, that they didn't have any life yet, what they had a whole future ahead of us, them. There was so much to look forward.

And you're cut down just like a blooming flower. Your life is not the same, ever since then, no matter how you try to pick up the pieces. I think about it. And I think that I'm alive-- and what happened to my parents-- I just-- I don't know how we were able to survive thinking.

I guess, all the years, I couldn't talk about it. I didn't talk to my children enough about it. I wanted them to grow up to be American kids, like everybody else.

But inside, when it came a Sunday and other people, all the children, used to go visit their grandparents, and my children came to me and said, why can't we have grandparents like all the other children? I couldn't really give them a good answer.

But God is good to us. And now, I feel that it was God's plan, whatever he did. And I am very grateful that I was able to start a new life and have children and grandchildren. And I feel that my parents are up in heaven, and they see everything, and they know everything.

How were you first able to tell your children about what had happened to you and relate the experience to them?

They started asking question. First thing was, where is their grandparents? They asked for the grandparents. I only gave them a short sentence-- that the Germans killed them. And then, when they were older, I talked a little about the concentration camp.

But if I started telling them what I went through, I didn't want to hurt them. I was hurt, and I didn't want-- I want them to spare them from anything bad. Whatever-- I wanted their life to be perfect, like I would have had my life perfect, if this wouldn't have happened to us.

Could you tell us about your father's work and your mother's work?

My father was a very fine cabinetmaker. My mother was a housewife, like most women in Europe. They did not go out to work.

She kept a beautiful house. She kept us happy. She cooked and baked and tried her best.

They worked very hard, but they never complained. And they were very happy, what they had. Long as they would have let us live, no matter-- even if they would have taken away all our possessions, long as we would have been together, no matter where they would have taken us, no matter how hard they would have worked, no matter what we would have had to give, long as we would have been together.

Can you tell us about your grandparents-- what you remember of them?

I had very lovely grandparents. They lived in the same town. We visited them every Saturday. My father was their first son. I was the first grandchild.

Actually there was another grandchild who was the first but lived in another country, and they never saw her. She lived in Czechoslovakia. But they couldn't travel to each other. So I was really their first, and I was very much loved by them.

My sister had trouble with her leg, where My mother took her very often to Budapest, to doctors, to straighten out the problem. And each time she went to Budapest, I stayed with my grandmother. And she was very loving, and she was very good to me.

And I had really two homes. I was very fortunate, because I had my parents, I had my grandparents, who I had wonderful memories. I had cousins who were my age, who were-- one was Agi Wechter, Judith Wechter, [? Potye ?] Wechter, and Lotseka Wechter.

And I had another little cousin. Her name was Suzsi. She was about three years old when they took her away-- the most beautiful, smart child that anybody could ever imagine-- never came back.

And we used to get together with these cousins. We had wonderful times together. We loved each other so much.

And only one came back, out of this whole family. All the others are all perished-- all my uncles-- everybody-- all their children.

Can you tell me about your relationship with your sister?

With my sister? We were two years apart. I guess we liked each other. But because I was the firstborn, I was grown, they treated me like a grown girl.

I was able to travel certain places by myself. I was given responsibilities. And I was getting all the new things, because I was the older.

We weren't very close. But I know that, eventually, later on, we loved each other. But, because I was the older, I was treated a little differently.

And she was the one who had this trouble with the leg, and she was treated differently. She was always pitied a little bit more. But I know that, over the years, if we would have been together, we would have had a wonderful and close relationship.

Is there any message that you would like to give to the next generation, concerning your experiences?

Yes. I want my children to know that they should be proud Jews and they should always keep that in mind, what their grandparents went through being Jews. And if I had to do it over again, I wouldn't want to be anything else but Jewish. And they should be proud of it, and they should carry on and that-- that Jewish heritage-- they should keep it and

observe as much as they can.

And remember to keep Israel safe. We must have our own country. You can be anywhere, but you have to have a country of your own.

Thank you very much for this interview.