

Oral history interview with Eva Arnold RG-50.219.0001

Summary

Eva Arnold was born in Hamburg, Germany, in June 1929

Eva's father was a secretary in the Jewish Community Board, fought in German army in WWI, was loyal to the Kaiser, and worked for the Warburg Bank before 1933.

Eva's mother worked as a sales woman in the only clothing store in their neighborhood, which belonged to Eva's mother's uncle. She had 4 older sisters, one younger brother, and two younger sisters. Her younger brother and one younger sister emigrated to New York City in the mid-1930s. She exchanged meat ration stamps for ration stamps for other foodstuffs to help relatives. Two older sisters lived nearby in Hamburg.

Eva's childhood was happy and she loved going to school. She had one brother, Alfred, who was three years older. Eva's family had an apartment next to a market and one hour walk from the city center. Their neighbor had a bakery at the street level, and had a son in the Hitler Youth.

Kristallnacht: Everything changed. Her father was arrested and was sent to a labor camp in Oranienburg for six weeks. When he was released, he knew they had to leave. Mother's uncle's store was destroyed and closed; mother's uncle's daughter, six years older, had the opportunity to emigrate with a youth group to Palestine, but refused. They were later sent to camps.

1939: During air raids, her neighbor the baker had a basement and allowed Jewish families to shelter there. There was another basement in the building, but Jews were not allowed to go in.

The US government granted them a visa, maybe helped by the Warburg family. They were sponsored by the mother's brother, who was already in the US.

1941: Left Hamburg for Berlin by train. Stayed several weeks in Berlin with a family that the mother knew, waiting for documents. In early or mid-May they left Berlin in a train to Lisbon, in a compartment of eight people: Eva's family of four, a family of three also from Hamburg (Herr Reich [41:59] who was caretaker of one of the Jewish cemeteries in Hamburg, his unnamed wife, and a 4-year old daughter named Hilda), and a younger single man (unnamed). The very uncomfortable trip lasted around six days. Crossing into Spain, they saw destruction of Spanish Civil War in Irún. An organization prepared them a lunch in another place in Spain. In Lisbon, the eight lodged in the same pension for 1 to 2 weeks, waiting for US visas and the ship. Eva's father before departure to the US received \$10 for each of the four members of her family at the US consulate (total \$40).

Eva's family took a freighter ship named "Mouzinho" which departed on a Sunday evening and arrived in Staten Island, New York, on Saturday, June 21, 1941. Also on the ship was a group of Jewish orphans (aged 4-10) who had been hidden in Catholic institutions, accompanied by a nun. Eva turned 12 the week of arrival.

In New York City, Eva lived in the Bronx with her family. She knew very little English and was put in 3rd grade. In 1947 when she was 18 and still in high school, Eva met her husband-to-be, Lester, who was 27, lived in Brooklyn, played the cello, studied chemistry, and had started graduate school. They met at a dance to honor the survivors of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Eva's husband Lester died of cancer in 1996. Eva went back to Germany six times after that with an organization.