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Tape Footage: Childhood

1 -526 Eva was born in May, 1927 in Serednica (Sherutza), Poland. Her parents were Eliezer Rotberg and Yochevet Tchernovitch. Eva had two sisters. She was in the middle. Her oldest sister Sima was 18 when she died during the war. Her younger sister Nellie also survived.

Eva's father was a cattle dealer. Between 1932-35 he built a home on the outskirts of Serednica, in a town named Boncza, and moved this family there. There were about 20 Jewish families living there. Eva went to public school, and learned about Judaism at home with a visiting Rabbi.

Eva's family was very observant, as were most of the Jewish families in the area. Eva's maternal grandparents lived with them most of the time, and they were very orthodox.

WWII

527 -901 Until the war the Jews had no problems with their Polish neighbors. After the war broke out there was increased anti-semitism. Jewish children were barred from the public schools, and all Jews had to wear white arm bands. The Jewish children learned at home or with tutors.

On November 12, 1941, Eva's family was given 15 minutes to move out of their house. They were sent to the ghetto at Wegrow, near Treblinka. The only reason they did not go straight to Treblinka was because the Germans ran out of trains that night.

They stayed in this ghetto a couple months. An acquaintance of Eva's father took them to his place in the country for the summer of 1942. Then in September, around the time of the Jewish holidays, the ghetto was liquidated. Eva's family was sent to the ghetto of Kaluszyn, which was smaller and open, with no barbed wire. They were there two weeks when a fireman friend of Eva's uncle warned them that there would be an 'action' that night. That evening the family of five ran out to the fields. They could hear the shots and the fires in the ghetto as they ran. The family hid overnight at the farm of an acquaintance. They spent the entire summer hiding by day in the bushes.

During the winter they hid at the farm of another acquaintance, a woman with four small children who took them in in return for money. During the day they sat in a hole Eva's father dug under the barn, with the pigs running on top of them. At night they got out to stretch their legs. They stayed there until June of 1943.

902 -1274 In the summer the family hid in the woods again. On September 15, 1943 they were ambushed. Eva's parents and older sister were killed. Eva covered her head and was by-passed. Her younger sister Nellie hid in a tree. At nightfall the two sisters found each other. Another boy who was with the family, trying to make his

way to his parents in Israel, was also killed.

Eva's father had arranged for Polish passports for them, and they arrived a few days after he was killed. Eva's younger sister only needed a birth certificate as she was under 13. The man who brought the passports gave her his niece's birth certificate. The two sisters had different identities then, and had to separate. They did not see each other again until after the war.

Eva went to look for work in Demenka (Domonica), 20 kilometers out of Serednica. She found work as a maid for a Polish family. Everyday she was afraid she would be found out. The family suspected her and sometimes asked things which she denied. Eva went to church with them and copied what they did. She stayed with them over the winter. Then the landlady's sister, who was a mid-wife, asked Eva to come live with her family. Eva stayed with this family from June until the end of the war, cleaning, cooking, baking and babysitting.

1275 -2110 Towards the end of the war, Eva would go up to the roof at night and watch everything burning. It made her wonder what would happen next. She was happy to see the fires and the Germans running away.

After the War

When the war ended, Eva was afraid to go back to the city. In September her sister came to get her. The man who had given them their passports had spent years in prison for killing his wife, and had little to do with other people. He had become a strong Baptist who believed in good deeds. He had kept the sisters aware of each other's whereabouts and welfare.

The sisters went back to Serednica. A few Jewish families had survived, some by hiding in caves. They were pale and sickly, and didn't believe Eva was Jewish because she looked so good from living in the country.

People were living on Eva's family's property, and refused to give it up. They wanted to kill Eva and her sister. A Russian hospital from Leningrad was moving towards the front and needed help, and so took the sisters in. Nellie worked in the lab washing bottles, while Eva helped with the wounded. She wasn't afraid, and only cried on one occasion. They worked at the hospital until Warsaw fell in 1945 and the hospital moved on.

Eva worked in another hospital until she fainted in the operating room, and was told not to return.

More Jews came out of hiding, and Eva was reunited with some friends and her aunt Luba.

Eva's sister wanted to go to Russia. She applied at the hospital, explaining that she was an orphan and wanted the chance to study. She thought if they stayed in Poland they would be killed. She left April 6, 1945. The war ended a month later. Two weeks later, Eva's auntie Miriam, who survived Majdanek and Auschwitz came to town. She had come by bike from Germany to find Eva. This was Eva's father's sister. Luba was her mother's sister. She had survived on false papers.

The same day Miriam arrived, Eva's future husband's troop came to town to weed out informers. Eva had a cousin in the same troop. She crossed paths with her

future husband Paul and inquired about her cousin. "Are you Jewish?" he asked her, surprised. From then on he came to visit her, bringing along his buddies. He married Eva and his two friends married Luba and Miriam.

While in hiding, Eva was afraid of her own shadow.

Emigration

They decided to leave Poland. Miriam's husband Alex was six years older than Paul, and so was immediately discharged. It took Paul a few months to get discharged. The couples met up in the south of Poland on a kibbutz, organized by Zionists arranging for refugees to get to Palestine. Army men particularly were needed. From Poland they went to a DP camp in Germany and registered to go to Palestine. Eva and Paul were supposed to leave on the Exodus, but Eva did not want to leave Miriam who was pregnant.

2113 - 2328 They stayed in Germany awaiting the next ship. In the meantime Paul found an uncle living in France. The uncle got them to France. He had two sisters living in New York. When they found out that Paul was the only survivor in their family they tried to bring him to the USA, but there was a two year wait. One of the aunt's came to Winnipeg for a wedding and to see if anyone here was willing to sponsor Paul. Clara Fink, a second cousin of Paul's, made out the necessary papers.

Eva and Paul spent a year and a half in France living with Paul's uncle. Miriam and Alex went on to Israel. Clara brought Paul and Eva here in 1952. Luba remained in Paris, and now has two sons and grandchildren.

Eva has three children and is very thankful that they were born here and have a normal life.

Eva's oldest daughter is a musician, and her youngest daughter a computer programmer and analyst. Her son just graduated with a secondary degree.

2329 - end Eva's feels it is important to tell her story so that no one will deny the Holocaust.