Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Eva Bentley on March 18, 1985 with Josey Fisher. The address is [given]. Mrs. Bentley, could you continue with your description of where you were in school at this time? You had been in a Jewish *Gymnasium*.

EB: After the public school, they enacted a law in 1940 which was set [?], a *numerus clausus* even for the *Gymnasium* for higher education. The Jewish children, after elementary school they had a limitation just like at the university. You had to be a very good student. Your grades had to be very good and besides that, they allowed a certain amount of children, 6% Jewish children, to enter the *Gymnasium*. Now, with my grades, I could attend any public school, any Christian school, but by that time I was so fed up with my Christian schoolmates, who singled me out being non-Jewish and singled out for being Jewish and hitting them, I hated that atmosphere. I didn't want to be a part of anything where Christian kids were involved, or Christian teachers.

JF: Now, this was 1940 that you are talking about and you are seeing a considerable difference, then, in the nature of the classroom from your...

EB: From my very early...

JF: Even within the last four to five years before this time, and you had been in a public school after your move with your new father...

EB: From second grade.

JF: From second grade on and you are talking about this need to change schools at that point—where there was this *numerus clausus.*

EB: Yes, and they established in the Jewish *Gymnasium* they were very much aware... They enacted a law that the Jewish kids had to learn some crafts. Either they became mechanics, the boys, or this is examples—and the girls either seamstresses, or whatever, but not the higher education, not the *Gymnasium*, and not what was necessary to have a degree to go to the university. It was closed and they started to close everything front of us, so the Jewish *Gymnasium* had 800 pupils. We had schools all over the country and they decided to establish a certain school which one will teach us the *Gymnasium* subjects plus subjects that we can use. Like learning how to design, how to sew, learning business school, like accounting, and languages, so they combined three or four different types of school systems which what they thought we can benefit by when we graduate. And most of the university professors who were Jews, they were fired from the universities. A Jew couldn't be a university professor. A Jew couldn't be a *Gymnasium* teacher. They were all fired because of the Nuremberg Law, so they realized that the professors being hired by the Jewish community center who was the head of that Jewish *Gymnasium* and they became *Gymnasium* teachers. So they decided to establish a experimental school that they are going to teach exceptionally the bright children and they selected from—you could apply from all over the country, you had to have the basic. You had to be an excellent student. You had to have your credits. Most of the parents could afford this because it was

very expensive experiment to set up this school system with machines and with everything, so the parents had to be able to support the school, beside the usual fee that was always in private schools. It had an extra amount so you had to have ability to support the school beside that.

JF: This was the experimental school that you were referring to before.

EB: Yes, and by the percentage how much we paid, they allowed a couple of children who couldn't pay but they were excellent students. So, we didn't exclude the poor ones. It was how much we could afford and nobody knew who paid and who didn't. So, what happened? There was 1000 of us who applied from the country in that point. Now, they gave the test that was the equivalent with the test college tests here, I guess, and 40 of us passed the test from the 1000, and I was one of them. We learned English in that school. We learned English shorthand, what I don't know any more. We graduated simultaneously in English and in Hungarian. It was a tremendous stress put on us. We went to the school and the classes started at 8:00, but we went earlier when we had tests. Because they experimented with us and they thought that they could put all of the knowledge into us that they taught at the universities and they really worked us to the bones, so six of us got nervous breakdowns. They couldn't finish and after the first year they left the school and then two more, so 32 of us finished. Everybody was in a [unclear] under stress and it was such a stress that you didn't have time for anything—and it was a good point, too, because as you asked me what was my thinking about leaving the country. We didn't have time to think about our private life. We worked.

JF: Why do you think the stress was that great? What do you think the heads of the school were trying to do?

EB: They were in love, probably, with the German idea of the supermen, because after the war, they ceased the school system. They said that you cannot bring up the elite. This was a very elitist idea. It didn't work, it really didn't work. It was too much. Like, I have lots of knowledge, but I don't master anything.

JF: You were how old when you graduated from this?

EB: I was 17-and-a-half or 18 years old.

JF: It was the equivalent of a university?

EB: Is equivalent of a Bachelor Degree, of a college bachelor degree, because I have friends, see, who came out, one of my friends is at Columbia. She is on the faculty, and her degree—and that is why I know what our degree means. Because I have several friends from the school who have different... With this school degree and not going here to the university, they have different kinds of professional positions. This one, whom I'm referring to at Columbia, this friend of mine came out. Right after the war, her parents sent her out, and her degree was the equivalent with a Bachelor's degree, and she got her Master's degree and she is doing the research on Alzheimer's disease. I have other friends in the West coast who are teaching retarded children with this degree. In Montreal, [unclear]. Because we learn special therapy classes we had, and teaching classes also. I

have friends who are public librarians in Canada, with this degree. So...who didn't go and change the degrees and they didn't go for their Masters. At home, most of them they finished and they went to the universities and got their doctorates.

JF: This school was operating all the way through the end of the war?

EB: It was operating, yes, and it closed in '44 and it opened again, and it was in operation until '45, and then the regime closed it after the war because they said that it is an impossible task and you cannot do it.

JF: But during 1944, during the German occupation, it was operating?

EB: It closed after the German occupation and then it reopened after.

JF: After the war was over?

EB: The war wasn't over overall. They reopened after the Russian take-over when the Russians came in and took over Hungary and the next semester it opened. That's when all the schools opened. And then when we had the peace, it was no need for this type of school any more.

JF: Why do you say that?

EB: It was a need that created this school. The need was there. We couldn't go to the university and it was a waste of brain power what the Jews cannot tolerate. And the other thing—giving us a craft to make a living under very hard circumstances.

JF: It was for boys and girls?

EB: Yes. The boys were separate. In the private schools, I never went to school where I had boys. We were just girls, and the boys. But the boys' school was equivalent. They had the Jewish boys and the Jewish girls school.

JF: Did you have discussion in the school about what was going on politically?

EB: Oh, sure. Always. Always. [unclear] We sang the British hymn and the American, and we were dreaming about it. We read in English and we translated. And we were happy.

JF: Some of the families, I would think, left during the time that...

EB: During that time you couldn't...

JF: You are talking about '44?

EB: Nobody could leave.

JF: Before that.

EB: Nobody. Nobody, because we were locked in. We were already surrendered. Austria was under Hitler, Czechoslovakia, Poland, then Yugoslavia. We were surrendered with the Germans. We couldn't escape. We were in a cage.

JF: There was no way of anybody getting out?

EB: Getting out... Some people did with the Zionist movement, with the underground. They went to Rumania and Bulgaria, and from there they took the famous boats that were sunk and they were rat holes. Some people went out and died, but nobody could escape. Not the Hungarians. We were the last ones and were surrounded. The geographical situation was such that we were a dry, small land in the middle of this German

ocean. Ocean, I mean, just an allegory, because we are surrounded, by dry land, by the Germans.

JF: Can you tell me about the German occupation?

EB: It's going to be 41 years tomorrow. March 19th. We thought the war was going to end. It was a very hard time for Hungary because most of the land was already in labor camps, and dying and nobody... Most of the people didn't have jobs, the Jewish people.

JF: What about your stepfather?

EB: We had our store because my stepfather had Gentile partners and under their name he operated the store.

JF: Under their name he operated the store. But financially, he was in partnership with them?

EB: Yes, he managed it and he was giving most of his shares to them, but we could operate it and we could live, under the circumstances, to compare with other cities, very well. But nobody lived well. You always have to see the circumstances. We had our home, we had our clothing and we had our summer vacations, still. We went to theaters.

JF: All the way through the '40s.

EB: Yes. We couldn't go in a car so my stepfather rented a car, but that was not the average life. Still, I had my English textiles, the woolens, because mother ordered it from years before and we always went to the [unclear] when the season started to make the clothes. We still had that. Now, when I learned how other people suffered those times and later on I suffered the same way, or maybe even worse, then I realized that we lived a charmed life, while everybody was suffering around us, without knowing it really.

JF: This was until the occupation?

EB: Yes, and that is why we have to come out in the open because we are so involved with ourselves in our lives and we don't look around and we don't think so that it can hit us.

JF: You think that it was more shocking for you because you had not had a lead-in before the occupation?

EB: We didn't want to have the lead-in, because I remember when the Polish Jews were escaping in 1940 and '41, coming across the border and the Jewish community center sent out to Jewish homes to give them food and shelter and clothing, it was our duty. They came to our home, too, and I remember one incident. I opened the entry hall door and there was two men and they had their papers. Because they always get a little slip of paper for the community center that so-and-so is assigned to you—so they came over and they spoke German and mother said, "O.K., let's feed them," but she didn't invite them into the house.

JF: You mean that she didn't invite them to stay with you?

EB: They had another place to stay. They had schools and shelters because they were in transit. They were going somewhere, they were trying, they know what they were

doing. Some were stuck in Hungary. But they scattered with false papers. They know what was coming, but we didn't, and they were just coming for dinner or for clothes and then a new group came and a new group came.

JF: And what?

EB: Let me tell you about this incident, what is in my mind. You always have to tell one incident because that really points out the real illness underneath and the self-centeredness. Mother said, "Oh, give..." She was always giving with food and with everything. And that's our self-centeredness... Mother gave the food from our table. She said, "Take it out to them and let them sit outside in the hallway, outside on the steps, you know."

JF: On the steps?

EB: Yes, and I gave them the food and the man was hungry and angry and he took the bowl of soup or whatever I gave him, and I was just a little girl and he said to me, "You Hungarian Jews, you stink. You think you are so mighty. I had a home a week ago, like yours, even bigger, and I am not good enough to sit at your table. You are giving it out to me like a beggar. [unclear] It's coming to you! I don't want your food!" And he throw the dishes down and they run away. I never forget. He said, "It's coming to you and you deserve it!" [very agitated]

JF: You must have had such an upsurge of feeling after that.

EB: I still have it. I see his eyes, I see his face, and when it happened to us, I said, "Oh, yes, we deserved it."

JF: How did you feel about your mother's decision to handle it that way, at the time, then?

EB: I felt very bad about it.

JF: You think she should have done differently, then?

EB: Yes, because you see what happened, many times after and during and before, if they came and mother wasn't, nobody was home. Like once, the doorbell rang and a very beautiful young man—I was a little girl and this young man was *so* beautiful, standing in the doorway and he spoke, you know. Luck was that at that time I spoke German fluently, but I wanted to forget and I do. He said to me that he was looking for a neighbor of ours who was Jewish, but she was converted and she always said that she was not Jewish. So this young man came and said, "I am a friend of so-and-so and they used to spend a vacation... My parents had a summer home in Innsbruck, and she used to spend her vacation there—they had a pension, you know, it was that kind of thing, and our train was going to one of the concentration camps." That was the first time I heard about concentration camp. He said that he escaped from the train, from the wagons.

JF: This was in what year, do you think?

EB: I don't know, I don't know exactly, before the German occupation. Could be '42, '43, I don't know. He was escaping from one of the wagons, because he said he was hiding. He was blonde and blue-eyed, typical Aryan-looking, and he said, "I have just

this clothes that I have on. They caught me on the street and they put me in this wagon train and I know that we are heading to the concentration camp, and I don't have food or anything to wear." I said, "You know what? Come in," and I was shaking because it was a strange man and nobody was home and I took out from the closet one suit of my father's and shoes and everything and I said, "Why don't you go to the powder room and change here?" But I was so scared. Letting in a strange young man, anybody could come in at that time and I always was told not to open the door, not to let anybody in and you know...[unclear] And he said, "Isn't Mrs. Shank home? She knows me; she spent summers there and she said that she cannot do anything for me because she is not Jewish and she does not want to get involved with an escapee!" That's Hungarian Jews for you. So I didn't tell mother when they came home and they never missed the suit or that shirt or anything because my stepfather had a million of anything.

JF: They didn't want to get involved.

EB: No.

JF: They also didn't feel that it would happen to them.

EB: Oh yes, it wouldn't happen to them. They are superb. [long pause] Would you like me to continue?

JF: Can you?

EB: Yes.

JF: Can you tell me any more incidents, any particular incidents like this that you would like to record?

EB: This kind of incidents, before it happened to us? Probably I have a million, but right now I have a blockage.

JF: Do you think that there were other Jewish families that you knew that handled it in a different way?

EB: Yes, I am sure. I can give you a book about the other part other families. A friend of mine whose family was converted Jews—they were the biggest landowners in the southern part of Hungary, and one of the uncles was a friend of Horthy's brother. Horthy was [unclear] and his brother was one of the generals and, you know, as I told you, the Hungarian Jews, the gentry Jews, were very mixed with the aristocracy in their marriages and what not. We were just like the American Jews are now with inter-marriages and interwoven because [unclear] education, and they were intermingled. So he was called in because that time already the forced labor camps started for the Jews. A Jew couldn't be an officer or a Jew couldn't be in the army, but they wanted them to be involved, so they had these forced labor camps or they became ambulance chauffeurs. He became an ambulance chauffeur for the front until the general took him out and he came back home. By that time, we were in war with Russia and he was at the front. The front was in Poland and he went there and what he has seen it was unbelievable. They were already killing the Jews there in Poland. They were taking Hungarian Jews out of Hungary who lived in Hungary for 100-150 years—one of my classmates—but they were Polish origin so the

Hungarians said that they are not real Hungarians and they were deported. And they shot... they had to dig their own grave and they were shot, so this man and all those Hungarian Jews who were with ambulances tried to help them and whomever they can pick up in the ambulance, they put it in the ambulance and brought it back to Hungary. And he came home and he stood at the door. At that time my parents, my friends' parents were one of those aristocratic Jews who lived in a big mansion and they had butlers and footmen and whatever, and they still maintained that type of life in the '40s—came home from this dreadful hell, and he stood at the door—it was lunch time in the dining room, and they were served with the butler and with the maid and he said, "How could you eat? Do you not know what is going on outside in this world?" He was horrified. He lives in Vancouver now, British Columbia, this man.

JF: A friend of your parents?

EB: No, this was a friend of mine, a so-called boyfriend of mine whose parents and him, they were sitting at a table and his uncle was coming back—he was an ambulance driver—a friend of Horthy's—he was a gentry Jew, he still is—and he came back because you know, with his connections, he was released from his duties, from the front, but he saw this what was happening there so he came back [unclear] and the horror was there, the contrast that what he left behind him and his coming home and the family seated—at that mansion and the servants around them and serving the plates and he just couldn't understand it.

JF: Was this story relayed to you by...?

EB: By him the uncle, here in Los Angeles, and I have a book that he is written about and I will give it to you. This family was aware of lots of things and did a lot of good things but, unfortunately, they went to Auschwitz and nobody came back except this uncle who was saved and I will tell you how. But he didn't go to Auschwitz. The family and the boyfriend, everybody was killed in Auschwitz, and they were converted Hungarian Jews who gave to the Catholic in that time. They built a church and they built a hospital for the Catholics and the same time the father—who was a converted doctor [?] [unclear]—converted, but at the same time, he gave double the amount to the Jewish community. Even when he was converted. They had to, you see, because they rented lands from the [unclear]—that's the Catholic Brotherhood—very rich in Hungary and they were landowners. Besides that, they rented the land, leased the land, at least 20,000 acres, and from the Esterhazys, they managed their lands besides their own, so to fit in and not to lose that, they converted. But the father, Dr. Patko [phonetic] never wanted to convert, not even for that, but his wife was the one who wanted to blend in and convert, and she converted the whole family.

JF: So, she didn't actually convert, then?

EB: Not in his house.

JF: I see.

EB: Because he was the one—he went every Yom Kippur, even when he was converted, to the *shul*.

JF: And they, as converts, were still taken to Auschwitz?

EB: Oh, yes. [unclear], he went off to Hungary because of them to be accepted, and meantime, they were sent to the concentration camp to... The Primate, the Hungarian Primate, who was not a philo-Semite by any means, but he wanted to save this family and he did lots of good things. But he was not really philo-Semite. The controversy—what you are asking me—that they were aware. In certain respects, this boyfriend of mine, before he was taken to Auschwitz, knew that he was going to die, and they had gas chambers because most of his friends were Gentiles and he knew from them. Even in that hospital—he was a medical student—even in that hospital he couldn't continue his studies because he was Jewish regardless he was converted. He was converted back to Judaism because that was my demand that if I ever married him, he has to be a Jew.

JF: Was he willing to do that?

EB: Yes, it wouldn't be a problem. That's what his uncle told me. He said it would never be a problem. And he's keeping the *yahrzeit* of his. When he [unclear] that he was gassed in Auschwitz and he wrote me a letter about it when he is not going to be here. I have to light a candle. So be it.

JF: What happened when the Germans came in? You are talking about the families, including your own, who are denying that it could possibly affect them. What happened when the Germans came in?

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two, of an interview with Eva Bentley. We were talking about the beginning of the German occupation.

EB: The German occupation took place in March 19, 1944. I been walking on the street with my friend and across the Opera House in Budapest, a strange man came over to us and said, "Girls, what are you doing on the street? You better go home. The Germans took over Hungary." So, we ran to the telephone and called our parents right away from the first public telephone booth and we went home. After that on the streets and everywhere we had placards telling what the Jews are supposed to do. They had to report to the squadron captain of the street, because they had [unclear] squadron...and when the sirens came out we had to go to the cellars, and they were the squadron leaders, so they had defense regulations and we had the Jewish community center and they were, we were supposed to report there and everybody who was Jewish had to take certain measures. I don't know the sequences and when and what they happened, but I know what happened. I don't know when, the day.

JF: Let me ask you something at this point. What was your parents' reaction? This was not supposed to happen to them and it had happened. Do you recall?

EB: Everybody was in a shock, and I remember my aunt who lived in outskirts in Budapest, this was New Pest, they called that suburb, and she was my mother's sister, the youngest sister, with my cousin, who, at that time was 11 years old. And she came in and she said that she knows lots of Czechoslovakian Jews who escaped from Czechoslovakia and they had false identity papers and if we want some, she advised us to get together and buy some papers and cover ourselves. And my parents did not want to know, and my father, my stepfather, didn't want to know about that. He said he won't go that way; he's not going to cheat. And that was one aspect. And then, some other people came and said that you better get some papers, false papers, Gentile identification papers. "We can get it for you." You know, they were doing it for money, and for [unclear].

JF: These were non-Jews?

EB: Jews who could get them.

JF: Your father said "No" again.

EB: "No," again.

JF: Do you think he was aware of what was going on to Jews in other parts of Europe?

EB: It was amazing how much we were in the dark about that. We didn't know about gas chambers. We thought the wagons and all of those things that was going on in different parts of the country... They started to gather the people in ghettos—that was the first thing in the countryside, and by May they started the deportation. We believed that they were replaced, relocated, to going to work and they covered it so much, and the Jewish elders in the Jewish community center—they were cooperating with the Nazis because of

compromise or necessity, but all kind of reasons...and they didn't advise us, they didn't warn us, they didn't tell us, "You are in danger and everybody can do whatever they could do," because they were afraid of a revolution or fighting. We were a well-organized, law-abiding, very assimilated and educated society and that was our downfall.

JF: Did you think that the elders knew any more than you did?

EB: Yes. It came out in documentation. Professor Braun, who wrote about the genocide about the Hungarian Jews...his book is explicit about that. So first, they put placards on the street that certain age group has to report—men—for labor and they were sent to the labor camps. And other placards said that the Jews have to leave their homes and go to certain designated houses to move in. A family can have one bed and so much square meter place to live. So, they put us together with two families in one room and that was the designated yellow star houses. The Jews have to, every Jew over five years old has to wear a yellow star on the left side of the coat and then, after that in certain hours you can go out. We had rationing of milk and butter and a Jew couldn't have more than 10 grams of butter for two weeks and a certain amount of milk, and most of the time even if you lined up for milk—like my mother for my sister who was 20-some months old—they kicked her out. They didn't give her the butter or the milk unless she bribed with money or with jewelry. The stores were taken away and closed up or Gentiles stepped in and they moved into our homes. We could take certain furniture and a certain amount of clothing.

JF: What happened to your family?

EB: First, my second father had to report to a labor camp. Then he was stationed at the airport and they were bombing there so they had to clear it out. They were not allowed to go down to the shelter, the Jewish people. They had to clear the remains of the bombing and during the raids they had to stay there and whoever were killed were killed. Then we had to move into this yellow star house and because we had a little bit more money than... Mother wouldn't move into anybody's house where the room wasn't freshly painted and cleaned, so we painted it and we cleaned it and we managed to have a whole room for three of us; for mother, my sister and me.

JF: You had the time, they gave you the time to paint it?

EB: Yes. We painted it... We cleaned the bath. We cleaned the kitchen because my mother was an immaculate woman and she wouldn't move into a place when it was not absolutely clean, spotless. Another family was in the other room. It was a young woman, it was a smaller room and she also arranged it, so we moved in and another lady whose husband was a Gentile who came just to register there because of the law, but her husband most of the time took her out, so we weren't crowded as other people. This was a two-room apartment basically, but we had one bathroom and a kitchen and it was an unusually good situation because we bartered for money and this other woman whose husband was in the labor camp, by that time he was already dead, but we didn't know it—in the Ukraines in the Russian front—had a baby also the same as my sister. She was a young woman and she got the smaller room and she had a day bed there and a little crib for her baby and a little

hot stove and we used the kitchen together and we had the larger room which one we had a sofa bed where my mother and I slept and a crib for my sister and we had some furniture and we had the kitchen. So mother always managed. She had the ladies from the farmer's market who always sent her something because she paid for it, so we had food and she had the goose liver, they sent her gooses and she kept the goose fat and she put the goose part in that to keep it because she was afraid that she cannot feed us if she didn't have that.

JF: So, if you had money you could buy food above and beyond...

EB: For a certain time, but you were limited to get out of the house between certain hours and that was cutting shorter and shorter and if you went shopping and you had the yellow star, they wouldn't give you the food. So this certain farmer that came to the yellow star house sometimes, they robbed you. If you could afford it you could and so...

JF: Oh, so they came to the house?

EB: Sometimes, and my mother had good connection because we lived in the same place for a very long time and they know her and she was a good customer and so, she managed. She managed somehow.

JF: What happened with your house?

EB: It was given to a Gentile couple. They moved in.

JF: And your possessions?

EB: We could move out our possessions, certain possessions; they let us certain possessions to move out and we put it at an upholsterer who worked for my father. He was a Jewish man, and in his house where he worked his... and in his cellar he put it away and at that house nobody bothered belongings, and we took certain things with us to the yellow star house. Finally, the bombing was going on and the war was escalating. The Russians were coming very, very close, and Horthy, who was our regent, declared on October 15, that he is joining the Allies and that was the biggest mistake that he made because it was too late. He was always vacillating between Hitler and the Allies, and when he made up his mind, it was already too late and most of his people in the government were fascists and on Hitler's part, and Hitler knew about it and he asked him over to visit him in Germany and he put him under arrest and he never came back. So the Arrow Cross took over, and the Arrow Cross government is made out of riff-raffs and absolute killers.

So that was the 15th of October and on the 16th of October, the massacre began in Budapest. I am talking about Budapest, but you asked me about the occupation. I have to tell you that in different parts of the country, the deportation was already closed by August and they already were transported in cattle cars, the Hungarians except Budapest, the Jews in Budapest.

JF: Why was that?

EB: Because Horthy...they had a very good connection to Horthy, because as I told you, lots of his friends were Jewish and he was convinced that if he was keeping the Jews in Budapest alive [unclear] because we had most of our men in the labor camps—

whoever remained there, he had a good point with the Allies, and somehow they convinced him of that. And by that time they couldn't deport us to Auschwitz because everything was bombed out. The train connections were bombed in Upper Silesia and in Czechoslovakia, so they had to deport and detour. The transports couldn't go to Auschwitz, they went to Austria instead of Auschwitz and they went to Germany instead of Auschwitz, even in the last minute after October, from Budapest. So I am not talking about the total Hungarian population. I am talking about Budapest. You have to understand that. What I am aware of and I can give you a picture of what happened in Budapest on October the 15th after he declared that he is getting out of the war and he's not on the Axis side. The Arrow Cross took over. And on the 16th of October the massacre of Budapest Jews began. What happened—the Arrow Cross and some of the S.S. and S.A. came to the houses. We were still in the yellow star houses and took the people out and killed the children and killed the people. Unbelievable torture was going on. On the 16th of October, this is my personal story. Mother got very restless and she got very afraid for us, so she packed a little bag and she dressed my sister up in two outfits. It was a cold fall. I dressed and I had my school case, an attaché case in my hand and we decided that we would look up some of our Christian friends to hide us, and we went on the streets. We took off our yellow star. We didn't have any papers with us, but we passed the Arrow Cross guards and they looked at us, but we went by. We arrived at this friend's house and we asked for shelter and she said that she cannot have us and that we should go back to our home. And we were wandering on the street and nobody would take us in, so we had to go back to the yellow star house. On our way back, we ran across a [unclear] an Arrow Cross [unclear] and picked us up and took us to the precinct. We couldn't talk them out of it and they put us in jail.

Now, the police were quite nice to us. When we arrived at the precinct, we were seeing lots of friends of ours, Jewish friends there, and everything was filled with people. And they were taking their vital statistics down and when they came to us, and it was our turn to give our vital statistics, the sergeant, the police sergeant and then a plainclothes detective, two plainclothes men came down and looked at us and they went back to the sergeant and they said to us, "You just go back to the cell and later on we will come to get you. We are not taking statistics down." We really didn't know what was happening, and they were clearing the people out. They were taking them in police cars and later on we heard they were put in wagons and they went to some of the concentration camps and they were gassed. They never came back. The whole wagon went to be gassed, and we were there. And there was another lady whom I know through a friend of mine, a friend of my mother's who was this lady's friend, and we were talking and the detectives, and sergeant thought she was with us, that she belonged to our family. I had never seen those policemen before or those detectives before, and they hadn't seen us before either. So, finally, when they cleared everybody out, it was midnight, and they came over and they said that it is your turn, and then the two uniformed policemen and the two detectives said, "Now, where do you live?" And we said that we are in this yellow star house and we have to go back

there and they said, "Don't you have any place to go where you will be safe?" And we said, "No, nobody is taking us in and we have to go back there." And then they asked the other lady, "Do you live with them?" And she said, "No," and my mother said, "Yes, she does. She is coming with us. She doesn't have," she didn't, a place to go any more. So she came with us, and they didn't talk too much, the policemen, but they said, "On the street if we run into a patrol of Arrow Cross, we will tell them we are taking you to interrogation to the Parliament, to the Arrow Cross headquarters, and you just shut up and don't say a word." So, they took us back; and they saved our lives.

JF: Why do you think they were so sympathetic to you?

EB: They were good people and they saved our lives. They just took us back. Four strangers. They just couldn't stand it any more and that is what they said. They just cannot stand it what these hoodlums are doing, what was everybody, and whatever they can do, they do. And they did it. After the war, when you had to vouch for people what they were doing with the police and with certain governmental functions, mother went and vouched for them, because they really saved our lives, for nothing. Just out of the goodness of their hearts.

JF: All the other people that day had been shipped off and this was the end of their day, and this was one more family.

EB: We had a friend and we know them very well, and they were cleared and others we know, because the detectives and the policemen told us because they followed it up and they told us what happened. So we went back and that was after midnight and so mother made a bath for us and we had a bath and this lady had a bath with us, and whatever mother left in the kitchen and in the icebox we ate and the whole house was very happy to see us, and in that yellow star house, they always nominated a house, they always had Christian people there and they could move out and they could get a better quarter from the Jews. And in that house most of the Christians didn't move out. They stayed in the yellow star house and they said, "This is our home. They were our neighbors, not all of them because we had Jewish neighbors, and we are not moving out because they were good before. They are good for us and we are staying in the yellow star house." And they stayed with us.

JF: Were these people that you knew?

EB: I didn't know them because it is a different house. I will tell you what happened to the house where we lived, and where I grew up, and Mother was good for the manager of the house, because it was an apartment house. Her son, he became the manager and he became an Arrow Cross man. His son reported me to Eichmann, to the S.S., and to the equivalent...that I was a spy, an English spy.

JF: This was a family from your own home?

EB: Before we moved to the yellow star house. I am not doing it in the periods that I should. I am going ahead of myself and I am not doing this part. Now, this part is important because what happened... They came out to investigate me. And...

JF: Who is they? Who came to interrogate you?

EB: They were the Hungarian Counter-Intelligence officers.

JF: So, they were Hungarian men?

EB: Two Hungarian Counter-Intelligence officers.

JF: And they worked under Eichmann?

EB: Yes, because by that time, I don't remember the name of the German, Weissmueller [phonetic] I guess, who was the governor at that time, the German governor, and everything belonged under the German protectorate so, the Counter-Intelligence was a branch of Eichmann's. They were a cooperating, not official branch. But it's a cooperation and it was basically directed by Eichmann, who was residing in the Schwabe Mountain. That was the name of the mountain, and that was his headquarters, so the counter-intelligence always worked together with the Germans. And the counter-intelligence and the Jewish question was under Eichmann. Eichmann was the man who everybody reported to finally, so the counter-intelligence men came and they looked at me and said, "Are you Eva Wahrmann?" And I said, "Yes, I am." They said, "Are you sure?" And I said, "I am sure." They said, "You are a little girl," and they were looking for a *femme fatale*, for a spy, a woman, and they got this little girl who at that time had not even 98 pounds!

JF: Did they question you?

EB: Yes, certainly they did.

JF: Were they rough in any way in their questioning?

EB: No, no. They saw the whole thing. I don't know basically [unclear]. They showed me the papers. The whole thing started... It was a revenge and they were very nice and they said, "Now you disappear. You get some papers and disappear. You are in danger." Because they showed me...if I recognized the writing. Because the name was a false name. Whoever reported me didn't report it in their own name. They used a false name.

JF: So, at that point you didn't know...

EB: I know because of the writing and I remember... They showed me and I remembered the handwriting. They were extremely nice. They were absolutely nice. My mother was so shocked that she went in the kitchen and opened the gas because she wanted to commit suicide. She was so scared, and they ran in and they brought her back and they said, "Don't worry. This is a ridiculous thing and just don't worry." But they gave me an advice, and they said, "You get some papers. And even if you don't, you don't look Jewish, but get away from here. You have enemies and they are going to kill you. You have to get away, you cannot live in this house and you cannot stay here." And they went away. They said that the whole thing is ridiculous but, "The only thing what we are asking you to do, for two weeks you don't leave the house because we are going to report it, that we interrogated you and we put you under arrest and you are not here. After that you escape and you disappear."

JF: You were to be under house arrest?

EB: No, no. They were supposed to...

JF: They were supposed to have taken you and put you in prison?

EB: Yes, that is what they reported. Some people did things and I haven't seen them before and I haven't seen them after. They were good people. Now, it happened that I didn't go out for ten days, really, but I couldn't get away to leave my mother and leave my sister and we couldn't get anywhere, so I stayed and then we moved to that yellow star house. But for ten days nobody had seen me, so they didn't know if I was under arrest or not because these people were in the house. Now, what happened, the manager's wife, after the German occupation, came over and said to mother that the Germans were here looking for us and if mother gives them 10,000 *pengö*, then they can protect us. And mother told me. I came home that day and mother said to me, "You know, honey, that was Mrs. Seidler, that was the name of the woman, told me if I give her 10,000 *pengö* she will protect us, because the Germans came and asked how many Jewish families do you have in the house and what are they doing, who are they? But she can save us if I give her money." And I say, "Mother, this is blackmail, and she won't save us. She just wants to blackmail you and she won't do anything." And I went down to her and I said, "Look, Mrs. Seidler. Did you talk to those S.S. men? Since when are you talking German?" They speak fluent Hungarian. "They were speaking German," she says. "We were talking German." And I said, "Since when do you speak German?" And the German S.S. men wouldn't come to her and tell her that she take care of us for 10,000 dollar [*pengö]* and then nothing happens to us. And I said, "Well, you leave my mother alone and you won't get a penny from us." So, after that, that's what happened. So, when we moved to the yellow star house, which was a couple of houses down the street in the same block, the people were very nice there. They didn't know us, but they were very nice to everybody. The manager was a lovely woman and everybody was just really nice in that house.

JF: The manager was Christian?

EB: Christian. Yes, and you know, they were very nice people. In that house, as I told you when we came back—now I will go back to that point when we came back from the precinct, the next day there was a bombing raid, a big bombing raid. I didn't like to go down to the cellar and most of the Jews didn't, because we enjoyed it when it was bombing. That was the only time when we went up to the roof and we could breathe, and we were people and everybody was in the same shoes, so we didn't like to go down to the cellar, but we had to because the squadron captain said, "You have to go down. And I had such a premonition. I never, usually I'm, I wasn't afraid in my life. I didn't know what fear was, since my father told me not to fear anything. But that time I was just shaking. And I...had such a tremendous fear. And I told mother, "I don't know, Mommy, but I have such a fear something is going to happen to me today. I just don't know. It's just, I just, I just don't know." And after the raid we came up and I was knitting a little sweater for my sister. And around 6:00 in the afternoon, it was dark, dusk, we heard a tremendous noise. Because we

had to lock the gates, because we weren't allowed to get out at all. To a certain [unclear] we can get out, and then we couldn't get out. We were locked in, in the yellow star house. And we heard a tremendous noise, like a dynamite going up, and that was it. Twenty-two S.S. men came in, with machine guns, guns, and hand grenades. They threw the hand grenades in through the doors, and they said, "All the Jews downstairs! You line up, you put your coat on, and go down!" So, we put our coat on and they lined us up on the street. The streetlights were darkened because of the raids, the air raids.