

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

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Name of Interviewee: Abramowitsch, Eva

Date of Interview: 5/8/1996

Eva Koretz was born on February 15, 1916 in Hamburg, Germany, the youngest of three children. Eva attended a Jewish school where she studied Hebrew and Jewish studies. She participated in left-wing youth organizations, which she described as being social rather than political. In 1938, her father lost his store and the family was forced to sell their house. They left for England in 1939 after witnessing the events of Kristallnacht, and were able to survive on the money her father had transferred to Switzerland. The family eventually broke up as its members dispersed to different parts of the world. Her mother and sister went to Israel; Eva never saw her mother again. Eva immigrated with her husband to the United States where they eventually settled in California.

### Summary Version 2

**Name of interviewee:** Abramowitsch, Eva

**Date of interview:** 5/8/1996

**Summary:** Eva Koretz was born on February 15, 1916 in Hamburg, Germany. She was the youngest of three with an older brother, Hans Gerhardt, and her sister Leana. Their father had a hat store and had grown up in Czechoslovakia, poor, and desirous of a better life for his children. He died of a stroke in 1933, the year the Nazis would have closed his store. The family was observant of Shabbat and Passover and attended synagogue on High Holidays, but were not orthodox. Her mother's family had not been religious and Eva's neighborhood was mixed, Jews and Gentiles. Eva attended a Jewish school, which included non-Jewish students. She studied Hebrew and Jewish studies at school, but experienced some anti-Semitism from a teacher who refused to hold her hand. Her brother, whom she admired, handed out Communist leaflets. Eva participated in left-wing youth organizations, but she insisted they were basically social, not political in scope.

Eva describes her work as a young nurse in training in a Jewish hospital in Berlin as a discomfiting experience. She expressed surprise that the physicians were Jewish because they gave hormones to stop the girls' periods and also made advances to these student nurses.

Before Hitler took power Eva was unaware of direct anti-Semitism, but registered a feeling of needing to be careful. In 1937 or 1938 she was studying music and nursing at a Jewish hospital in Berlin. She describes that in 1938 "everything breaking up", when her father's store had to be given up and the family was forced to sell their house. The experience of Kristallnacht and seeing men leaving for holding or work camps convinced the family to leave.

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The family wanted to emigrate to the US and went to England in 1939 to wait for the quota to immigrate to the U.S. Eva was worried she might be taken away before her entry number would come up, because she was aware of labor camps and of people being taken away. Most Jewish “wanted to get out,” she reported. She left for England with a boatload of German refugees in what she described as a “traumatic” trip, especially for the men, who did not know their future. She, her mother and sister lived together in England, where her brother had already settled. Her father had transferred some money to Switzerland, which made it possible for the family to leave Germany. Eva worked as an au pair in England, but she had already met her future husband in Germany and he had immigrated to England about three years before she arrived. (Note: At one point she also stated she did not work in England and was dependent on her sister’s mother-in law.) She did not remember anyone in England asking what was happening in Germany.

Eventually, family life broke up as everyone dispersed to different parts of the world. Her mother and sister went to Israel, and Eva, afraid of “political things” and of “transportation” never visited her or saw her mother again. Her brother-in-law, in a high position in Israeli air force, would not let her sister mourn the deaths of their own children in Israel (from strafing and a driving accident) because he had lost so much of his own family in the Holocaust.

Eva eventually married her husband who was a musician in England. They emigrated to the US and settled in California in a boarding house with other refugees, a warm and new family for the couple. She returned to Germany in the 1960’s and was surprised that she was not merely a tourist, she visited childhood places and some non-Jewish friends who were still there.