©2026 Midwest Center for Holocaust Education
Transcripts of interviews may be used for individual research with proper citation. All other uses require written permission from MCHE.

Eva Hartwich Interview
January 4, 2000

INTERVIEWER: It is January 4th. The year 2000. My name is Harold Edelbaum. I will be interviewing Eva Hartwich in her home in Overland Park, Kansas. And we will do pre-war and post-war scenarios of home life and coming to the United States and what took place at that time. Eva, what was your name at birth?

EVA: My maiden name was Braunsberg.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that? Are you able to spell that?

EVA: B-r-a-u-n-s-b-e-r-g.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. When were you born?

EVA: In, on April 26 in '21 in Hanover, Germany.

INTERVIEWER: 1921, Hanover Germany?

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you know anything about the circumstances of your birth, like were you born at home?

EVA: I was born at home, the doctor came to the house, and I don't know if there were any nurses, I'm not sure. I don't think so. I think it was just the doctor.

INTERVIEWER: Was your father there or other family?

EVA: My father was there and I had a two-year-old sister.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What were your parents' names?

EVA: Ernea and Joseph.

INTERVIEWER: The last name was what? Erma? Erna?

EVA: Ernea. E R N E A.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and Joseph?

EVA: And Joseph.

INTERVIEWER: The last name was what?

EVA: Braunsberg.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Alright. What were the roles of your mother and father? Do you remember what they did?

EVA: My mother used to go out with her sisters for coffee and play cards and my father was, had a business in wholesale yard goods and he spent a lot of time with us on the weekends.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Okay. Ummm. Their occupations, you say your father owned…

EVA: Owned – a wholesale…

INTERVIEWER: … a wholesale yard goods.

EVA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was your mother involved in the store also? Did she work?

EVA: Not at that time. Later on, we owned a different store and she was the cashier.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did the children help out in the store?

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Um, do you remember any of the other members of your family? Their names, ages, relationships to you?

EVA: We had lot of cousins that lived in town and aunts and uncles and we were a very close family.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Everybody lived fairly close to you?

EVA: Everybody lived fairly close yes.

INTERVIEWER: You kept in contact?

EVA: Very much so, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

EVA: There were like three story houses and had big yards. And we also had two maids, and we had a dog and lots of toys. And one maid was especially like the nanny. She would take us to the zoo and to the park and did homework with us. But that was meant a.. not really rich at that time. That was an average family.

INTERVIEWER: Average living?

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, it sounds like you were in a nicer, lived in a pretty nice neighborhood. Okay.

EVA: Yes, it was a very nice neighborhood. Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were there uh - Can you describe some of the things that were in your neighborhood, some of the types of stores or movie theaters?

EVA: There weren't any stores, it was just a residential area.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: And it was very close to the park. You could walk to the park.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What kind of things did you have inside of your home? What kind of items did you have inside your home?

EVA: We had large rooms and like a sunroom with beautiful stained windows and a yard and sand box and swings and everything. Very nice.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds, your typical.. very nice.

EVA: Um Hmmm.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have appliances? Did you have electrical appliances?

EVA: I don't believe so. I can't remember what the stove, but I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a gas stove or a wood stove that you had to cook with or eat with?

EVA: I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: The thing is we moved away from this town in the early '30's when my dad bought a department store in a smaller city and we lived upstairs.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: And there I had a lot of friends and then things became a little dangerous because Hitler came in 1933 and my dad fought in World War I and he was a veteran and he was very proud of it.

INTERVIEWER: And what side did he fight, who did he fight with or for?

EVA: For Germany.

INTERVIEWER: For Germany.

EVA: In France.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: He fought in France.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. Let's see you had servants. Did you own land that you had retreats to?

EVA: No this was in the city…

INTERVIEWER: You lived in the city…

EVA: …it was close to the marketplace, and this was more in the city.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take vacations?

EVA: Oh yeah, we took a lot of vacation. We had grandparents in different parts of the country.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you went to visit?

EVA: So, we went visiting in the summer - one grandparents, the other grandparents.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what cities you went to for that?

EVA: Well, they're not very well known. They're all small towns.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You were still probably pretty young then and...

EVA: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I mean a small child huh?

EVA: And especially my parents, my father's parents were very Orthodox, so I wasn't always very comfortable going because things were very strict. Couldn't do anything on Saturday and...

INTERVIEWER: So, you walked instead of rode?

EVA: Oh yeah and they had a horse and buggy then, my grandparents.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What kind of foods did you have? What were some of your favorites?

EVA: Just general…roast.

INTERVIEWER: Was there something special that your mom, your mother made that the family enjoyed?

EVA: No not especially. Besides we did have a cook in that first house we lived in. And my mother just told the cook what to...

INTERVIEWER: What to fix?

EVA: What to prepare and then she would go off with her sisters.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm - Okay.

EVA: And have a good time.

INTERVIEWER: And then come back and it was done.

EVA: Right. (laughing)

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were you a, was your family politically active? Were there any groups or anything you were involved in?

EVA: I don't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: Now in the smaller town, which is called Peine, P-E-I-N-E, it was couple of hours away from Hanover and there weren't as many Jewish people in that city and they started to boycott my father's store and business was very bad and I was told later on, which I was very young, that he had money problems. And besides the money problems and the Nazis boycotting his store, he had a heart attack and died. And I found out later - 30 years later - that he committed suicide.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

EVA: He was only 46. But I, at that time, I was 12 years old and they didn't want to tell me. But somehow, I knew there was something wrong. I didn't want to know, but I did know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

EVA: OKAY, after that we moved back to Hanover. My mother sold the store…

INTERVIEWER: Okay

EVA: …and we went back to my hometown.

INTERVIEWER: Hanover.

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: We lived in an apartment and went to school, and my mother was close to her family.

INTERVIEWER: Um hmm. Did you all live together then in the apartment?

EVA: We lived together in the apartment.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: And we used to always ride the bicycle.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. That was pretty common I think.

EVA: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: For a way of getting around - bicycles.

EVA: Um hmm. I was an apprentice. I learned how to sew, and I had to go pretty far, but I went on the bicycle every day for two mile for job.

INTERVIEWER: So you went, you were attending school?

EVA: I was attending school in Peine and in Hanover and I had a lot of friends - Gentile friends which a couple I still remain in contact with.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

EVA: One especially.

INTERVIEWER: What were your a, what were your teachers like? What were your friends like? Did you graduate from school?

EVA: I graduated from high school and in '38 when there was the 'Crystal Night' and a lot of our relatives got, at that time they went to jail, not concen-, they didn't have concentration camps. We decided…

INTERVIEWER: Some of your relatives were arrested?

EVA: Some of my uncles and cousins, they were all picked up to go to jails but they didn't take women at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

EVA: They started out just – and most of them or all of them came back.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that's good.

EVA: And at that time, we decided to leave.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

EVA: And we had relatives in Shanghai which at that time nobody went to China, not in '39. Where's China, right? So…

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what relatives you had over there?

EVA: My mother's sister and her husband was, did export and he left Germany in the early '30s and he was doing pretty well...

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: …and he told us to come. And we did stay at their apartment for a while and then we moved into what you call Hongkew where all the Jews lived and there were 20,000. A suburb of Shanghai. It's called Hongkew.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Okay.

EVA: And all the immigrants settled there, and we had a good time. We didn't have any money, but we had a good time. And uh, they were later occupied by the Japanese. The Japanese were supposed to kill us because they were German allies…

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

EVA: …and we found out after the war that they were actually supposed to take us to the river and dump us.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know why they didn't carry that through?

EVA: Because they said we weren't harming anybody.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

EVA: I mean we were minding our own business and some commander decided not to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

EVA: Which we didn't know anything about it luckily.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

EVA: So, we stayed in Shanghai for eight years because we can't immigrate to the United States during the war. So, from '47 – from '39 to '47 we stayed in Shanghai.

INTERVIEWER: Did you learn Chinese? Did you learn the language?

EVA: No, most people speak English and uh…

INTERVIEWER: So, you picked up on English.

EVA: Picked up on English and where we lived, we spoke our own language [German].

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh. You said that there were 20,000 people, refugees that settled there.

EVA: There were 20,000 refugees…

INTERVIEWER: … refugees that settled there.

EVA: from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and we all lived in this district, and we were supported by American money.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

EVA: We had soup kitchens because you couldn't take any money out of Germany. The only good part was my mother was allowed china and, and crystal and - which we later sold to make a living. But we could not take money out. You had to leave all your money over there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have boyfriends, a lot of girlfriends that you did things with?

EVA: Yeah, we had a lot of girlfriends.

INTERVIEWER: Was that kind of pretty much normal?

EVA: Yeah, was pretty much normal from school you have to - that was pretty nice.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You said you had a job that you...

EVA: I had a job and I met my husband in Shanghai and we got married there.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of work did you do?

EVA: I was sewing - what I learned in Germany.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: I was sewing for some German people that made blouses and they exported them.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So, you were in a factory setting. Okay.

EVA: Um hmm. Well, it was really their home.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you worked out of the house.

EVA: Uh Huh.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Did you get along with your parents okay?

EVA: Oh yeah - um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Okay. Were they pretty strict?

EVA: Yeah, they were strict.

INTERVIEWER: Pretty Orthodox maybe?

EVA: No, we were conservative.

INTERVIEWER: Oh conservative?

EVA: Um hmm, and we had Passover and Purim parties and anything that came along and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Just your… it sounds pretty normal in that respect. Did you have favorite holidays or holidays that ..

EVA: Oh, my father always liked Passover. He had to have as many people as possible at the house.

INTERVIEWER: Did you invite strangers?

EVA: No, usually family.

INTERVIEWER: Mostly family.

EVA: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you go to Hebrew school?

EVA: I went to Hebrew school and Sunday school. It was all together. So once a week - we had to go in the afternoon - we had to go to Hebrew school where we learned both, a lot too.

INTERVIEWER: There's a lot to learn, huh?

EVA: Yeah, we learned quite a bit.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Do you think your religious beliefs had an impact on your life? Or you know, your beliefs?

EVA: I believe so.

INTERVIEWER: You said you had Gentile friends?

EVA: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: … as well as Jewish.

EVA: I had a lot of friends, especially in the smaller town. There weren't as many Jewish people. I had a lot of Gentile friends.

INTERVIEWER: Were you pretty well accepted? The Jews were accepted?

EVA: Oh yeah. I don't think I knew any better at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: 'Til Hitler came and taught them.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

EVA: I don't think they, they minded that we were Jewish.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: You know after the war was over, we lived pretty primitively in Shanghai.

INTERVIEWER: Primitive?

EVA: Yeah, we just had couple of rooms. And I had a baby then - my older son was born in Shanghai.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now this is what, what year was this?

EVA: It was from '39 to '47.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so this is through the war. During the war years.

EVA: Through the war.

INTERVIEWER: During the war years. You had a child.

EVA: I had a child and I got married in Shanghai.

INTERVIEWER: In Shanghai.

EVA: And then after…

INTERVIEWER: Is this your first marriage?

EVA: My first, my first only one.

INTERVIEWER: Your currently a…

EVA: Yeah, I've been married 57 years.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Okay. Congratulations.

EVA: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. How did you meet your husband?

EVA: Through some friends.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

EVA: We met through friends.

INTERVIEWER: Like a blind date?

EVA: Still living in San Francisco now.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. Are you in contact with them?

EVA: Once in a while, yeah. Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: What was it that attracted you to him or he to you, or?

EVA: Well, everybody was getting married. It seemed to be the thing to do.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: And also in '30... I'm trying to figure out my, my years. Oh yeah, when I was pregnant in 1946 the Japanese were bombing Shanghai [sic] and we lived very close. The American's were bombing the Japanese Quarter and we lived very close, so it was not too pleasant.

INTERVIEWER: That was dangerous.

EVA: That was dangerous because that was around Pearl Harbor I think, when they bombed it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you move to another area then? When that started?

EVA: No, no, no, the Japanese made us stay in this ghetto.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were in the ghetto...

EVA: We were in the ghetto so that's why we only lived in like two rooms, and husband's mother and the baby, we all lived in very small quarters.

INTERVIEWER: I see. They didn't carry out their tasks, but you were still confined.

EVA: Yes, we were confined and had to have passes to leave the ghetto. Now, my husband did business - he had to have a pass to leave to go into town.

INTERVIEWER: Um hmm. What did he do? What kind of work did he do?

EVA: He was buying crystal and china from the immigrants and sold it to the Chinese and to the Russians. They loved all that beautiful...

INTERVIEWER: And what was done with that money that was received? It was given to the...

EVA: No, we lived on it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that was yours.

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You kept that.

EVA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

EVA: That is how we made a living.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. It wasn't black market?

EVA: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: It was just uh…

EVA: People that came and they were still allowed to bring their household goods like we were. Later on, you could not bring anything out of Germany. But my mother was allowed all her china, and her crystal, and her sterling and we made it into money and we bought a, my mother bought a little house.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Your dad was not there at that time?

EVA: No, my dad died in a…

INTERVIEWER: When you got married.

EVA: No, he did not go to China with us.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was your mother there?

EVA: My mother was with us.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. She was there at your wedding and she attended the wedding.

EVA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did she approve of your husband? Was that a good deal?

EVA: Yes, she approved of my husband.

INTERVIEWER: You got a bargain?

EVA: Well, we all had nothing. Nobody had any money. So that wasn't any bargain because he had nothing and I had nothing.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, you were pretty even then. And what was the wedding like? How many people, how fancy or plain or...

EVA: My uncle that brought us to Shanghai, he was giving me away. And uh, my husband's family lived in Shanghai. They later on moved to Israel. His family and my family they gave us a dinner and the Rabbi married us.

INTERVIEWER: You had music and dancing and all that.

EVA: No, we went on a rickshaw to my uncle's house. I don't have a picture from the rickshaw. I wish I had.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that would be neat.

EVA: I'm sure they had cabs but went in a rickshaw. I remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

EVA: No, they just had a dinner for us, and we spent the night in a hotel which wasn't very clean and I was happy to go home.

INTERVIEWER: You remember that too?

EVA: Yes, very well. And my mother always she you had to check everything. Well, I did so the next day. We went to my mother-in-law and that was very nice and very clean. We should have never gone to the hotel.

INTERVIEWER: After the honeymoon, after the short honeymoon, you went - did you have an apartment to yourself or did you still stay with the family.

EVA: No, we had two rooms.

INTERVIEWER: Still staying with the family…

EVA: My mother-in-law and my husband and me and then later the baby were almost in one room.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so it was crowded.

EVA: Yeah, because we still lived in the ghetto.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: There was no hot water. You had to buy it from the Chinese.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really.

EVA: It was only cold water.

INTERVIEWER: You couldn't heat it up?

EVA: Yes, you could heat it and you would bathe in it in the tub. And do that for years. Because we did have a bathtub, but only cold water.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

EVA: So, to fill the tub, you had to call the Chinese and he brings hot water. But he spits in it and all that kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really.

EVA: You could use it to cook. You had to heat what you need for coffee. That you had to do yourself.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

EVA: But I'm still here, right?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, oh yeah. You survived. That's why you're a survivor.

EVA: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you had one child before the war? [sic – first child born in 1946 in Shanghai.]

EVA: Uh huh and one in the United States.

INTERVIEWER: And one here.

EVA: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: What were your children's names? What are your children's names?

EVA: Ralph and Steven. Ralph's the Chinese like I call him.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was there, with the war, were there any problems with the pregnancy or birth as far as conditions? Could you see a doctor?

EVA: No, we had a lot of good doctors.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. No problems.

EVA: We had a lot of our own doctors and there wasn't really any problem. We had a hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Within the ghetto...

EVA: Uh huh. We had a Jewish hospital and I knew the doctors so there wasn't any problems.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. When and how did you first become aware of the Nazis, you know, being around and what they were doing? Do you recall how old you were or where you were or what you were doing?

EVA: I was 12 and they had assemblies in school and you were supposed to go there. But I wasn't very comfortable because you were supposed to raise your arm.

INTERVIEWER: Salute, huh?

EVA: Yeah, so I tried to stay away from the assembly and then I...

INTERVIEWER: How old were you then?

EVA: 12.

INTERVIEWER: 12, Okay.

EVA: I remember when the guard was standing in front of my dad's store to boycott the store so the customers wouldn't buy there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that was 1930 what, 3?

EVA: Yeah 3 [1933].

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you remember the first day of the occupation when the German's actually came in and really, I mean were serious? Completely serious....

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: …serious about what they were going to do?

EVA: No. We left before it really got too bad.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You saw it – you saw it coming?

EVA: We saw it coming and... My mother didn't really want to leave her home but somehow, we expected it was going to get worse.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay. Did you have family discussions about the Nazis? Do you remember?

EVA: No. I know my father was very depressed just before he died.

INTERVIEWER: Just about the circumstances and the things that were going on?

EVA: Yes, uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel persecuted? I mean, well... You were forced to move basically or you felt - you had fear of being in danger. So, I guess you were persecuted in that respect.

EVA: I didn't have so much fear. It was my sister who somehow knew something was coming. She had some kind of... I don't know where she…

INTERVIEWER: Had she heard it or she just thought...?

EVA: No, she just thought it was time to go.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So, she was instrumental in getting the family to pack up and go?

EVA: Uh huh. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And she was older?

EVA: Two years older.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you remember book burnings that probably went along with Kristall…?

EVA: No, that wasn't at that time. It was later on. [sic]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Nuremberg race laws, was that later?

EVA: That was when we were already gone. **[sic]**

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: And see concentration camps and this we learned after the war. We didn't know anything about it. There was very little radio and there was no television. And we didn't know what was going on.

INTERVIEWER: Plus, you were in another part of the world basically.

EVA: Yes. We didn't know anything about it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. At anytime did you have to wear the Star of David on your clothing or to identify yourselves?

EVA: No – not yet. No, we didn't.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have to do that?

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: That never happened to you.

EVA: They hadn't..they didn't come up with that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. The Japanese didn't come up with that?

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were there Gentiles that helped you make ends meet or get a... you know make things more...?

EVA: No, we were okay til we left.

INTERVIEWER: The Jewish community you mean. You were kind of on your own. Self-sufficient, on your own.

EVA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You say that you were never deported to a concentration camp? Just the ghetto?

EVA: No. No. No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You escaped being taken away by leaving, by moving?

EVA: Yes. That's how we escaped. We left early enough to escape.

INTERVIEWER: You were able to do that?

EVA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you have any more pre-war experiences that you want to tell about or discuss or do you want me because I'm going to go to after the war at this point?

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. We are going to go to post war circumstances of life at this point. Um… You weren't actually liberated were you?

EVA: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, when the war...what happened, the war ended?

EVA: The war ended in '45 and before we got all our papers, we left in '47 from Shanghai to America.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, you went direct from Shanghai to the United States?

EVA: Yes, on a, on a freighter.

INTERVIEWER: Hmmm.

EVA: Because...

INTERVIEWER: Was it direct? Did they make stops?

EVA: We went to Hawaii and we were greeted by some Jewish Organization. It gave us a big luncheon and that was the only stop. It couldn't stop in Japan because there were still enemies. The only place it stopped was in Honolulu. And we arrived in San Francisco on July the 3. **Which they told me…**

INTERVIEWER: 1947?

EVA: 1947.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Which what? Which they what?

EVA: They were telling us it was the 4th of July which I didn't know what that was.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see…Independence Day, huh?

EVA: Yeah, we had to get off of the ship before the 4th and I didn't understand why.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were there a lot of people on the ship?

EVA: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know how many?

EVA: No, I really don't.

INTERVIEWER: Several hundred**?**

EVA: Several hundred. We slept in bunk beds. Because this was in a freighter.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, they had cargo too. They had people plus cargo or strictly people?

EVA: I don't think so. Strictly people but they had men's quarters and women's quarters.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Who all came over to the United States? You and your husband and your sons?

EVA: One son.

INTERVIEWER: One son?

EVA: Yeah, the other was born here.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, okay.

EVA: Me and my husband and my mother was already here.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: She was in New York with her sister. And my sister and brother-in-law had to go to Australia because there were Polish quota and they didn't have papers yet to come to the United States. They had to spend couple of years in Australia because there were only so many people come in on a German quota. Polish…

INTERVIEWER: Each country had a certain amount.

EVA: Yeah, so they had to go to Australia for a couple of years.

INTERVIEWER: Before the quotas opened up? Before enough numbers were available for them to....

EVA: Yes. Because at certain times Germany belong to Poland and Poland belonged to Germany and the American Consulate tells you, when you were born this was Polish, so you are Polish. My mother-in-law had to go to Israel. We could not bring her here.

INTERVIEWER: Because?

EVA: She was Polish quota. And she was already quite old.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting.

EVA: And she had to go.. She could go to Germany, but she wouldn't go. So, she and her daughter and family went to Israel which was very poor living then. Coming from poor living in Shanghai to go to Israel was not too good.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. What was your physical condition? Were you healthy? I mean no previous...In good shape?

EVA: I was very healthy. Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. When you came to the United States did you have to go through physicals, examinations or anything?

EVA: No, we did in Shanghai before we got our papers.

INTERVIEWER: Before you left?

EVA: We had to go through a physical.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

EVA: Because there were people like having TB or something, they would not let in.

INTERVIEWER: What did they do with those people?

EVA: They had to go to Germany. I know some that..

INTERVIEWER: Oh, for medical care?

EVA: Um hmm. You could not immigrate if you weren't 100%.

INTERVIEWER: So, they probably went to like VP [sic – means DP] camps or something. For health care relocation?

EVA: I think so. Um hmm. You could not get your papers if you weren't healthy.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were you at the time of your uh.. at the end of the war were you in a pretty good mental state?

EVA: Oh yeah. Um hmm, um hmm, um hmm. We were young and we had fun even though we didn't have much. Which was not as good for like my mother because the extreme living was not too easy on the elderly, but when you are young you don't...

INTERVIEWER: Sure. You come back quicker, easier.

EVA: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you look for family members? I mean you pretty much...did you know where everyone was after the war?

EVA: Well, I knew some of my relatives in Germany did not survive.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you find that out?

EVA: After the war.

INTERVIEWER: I mean through Red Cross or..?

EVA: No, I still had family left, but some of them didn't make it.

INTERVIEWER: But they knew of.

EVA: Yes, they knew about it.

INTERVIEWER: They knew who didn't make it?

EVA: Yeah, I was in contact with family. After the war, not during the war.

INTERVIEWER: Um hmm.

EVA: We arrived in San Francisco and there they wanted to spread you all over the country. Everybody wants to live in New York or San Francisco, but that's not the way it should be so they asked my husband's occupation and his parents had grain so they told us to go to the Midwest and they told me to go to Kansas City and I said where in the world is Kansas City? So, they told me it's right here in the middle, and so that's how we came to Kansas City.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And you've been here ever since?

EVA: I've been here ever since. I didn't like it because it was so hot in August, but I'm still here.

INTERVIEWER: Did you pretty much stay in the grain business?

EVA: They found my husband a job...

INTERVIEWER: Grain related?

EVA: In a board of trade and he stayed there for over 20 years and then he lost it and got another one. He stayed in that kind of profession.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What did you think of Kansas City? You say you didn't like it...just because of the weather?

EVA: Because I didn't know anybody.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

EVA: And there were a few people here I knew from Shanghai and uh..

INTERVIEWER: Did you join up with them?

EVA: We joined up with them and belonged to Beth Shalom. At that time we lived on 39th Street.

INTERVIEWER: Um hmm.

EVA: And met more people from the old country.

INTERVIEWER: So, you formed new relationships and kind of just basically started over.

EVA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You uh..Eva you came to Kansas City...You uh.. Did you yourself work?

EVA: Yes, I always... Well, I worked at home while my kids were little. I always did alterations and later on I worked for like [unclear but referencing specific store**] and other stores**.

INTERVIEWER: At stores?

EVA: No, I was sewing. I was always sewing.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: When the kids got bigger, I had job - part-time jobs usually.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And your kids.. did they adjust to the.. Of course I guess they didn't know really anything other than life in the United States?

EVA: They, they adjusted very well and they made us adjust.

INTERVIEWER: They helped you.

EVA: To be sure and speak English and don't speak German because they were embarrassed.

INTERVIEWER: They were embarrassed.

EVA: Yes. **My oldest, he always says "mother!" Especially in Kansas City, they weren't used to having people speaking different than English.**

INTERVIEWER: What were your biggest challenges coming over here?

EVA: Probably the language, especially in Kansas City because they don't really speak English in Kansas.

INTERVIEWER: They don't speak English?

EVA: No, you learn British English in school.

INTERVIEWER: Oh...

EVA: But when you come to Kansas City that's not the way it is.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, it's a different English.

EVA: It's a different English. We did go to private school in Germany before we left to learn some English, but that's a higher English, that's not Missouri. So, you did have to get used to it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Where did your inner strength come from to keep you going?

EVA: My kids probably.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: Because they want you to be like the rest of them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you talk about your war experiences…

EVA: Yeah, some. They know all about it.

INTERVIEWER: …or pre-war experiences to your children?

EVA: Yes. I know some of my friends were hiding that from their children. No, mine know all about it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do they tell their friends about their parents and things like this?

EVA: Yes, Oh yes. Several times we had a reunion from the Shanghai people. There was one in...

INTERVIEWER: In the United States?

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Where?

EVA: There was one in the Concord in New York. There was one in Chicago and there lately was one in Philadelphia, but we didn't go. We don't know too many people anymore.

INTERVIEWER: How many people showed up to those? I mean about?

EVA: Oh, 30, 40 at least. It was quite interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. It sounds like it would be interesting to kind of compare notes.

EVA: Yes, uh huh. It was very interesting. They are still doing it, but the last one we didn't go to.

INTERVIEWER: Um hmm.

EVA: They had one in Israel too. Because of a lot of Shanghai people, they went to Israel.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Did you go to like night school here in Kansas City or anything to learn English or....?

EVA: No, we had to go to citizenship school.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: To pass your citizenship.

INTERVIEWER: How long was that? How long did that last?

EVA: Just a few months like in the evening we had to go.

INTERVIEWER: Like a night school?

EVA: Uh huh. Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you do that? Where did you take your classes?

EVA: On 39th Street.

INTERVIEWER: Westport?

EVA: Yeah. High school.

INTERVIEWER: Westport High School.

EVA: Westport High School we had citizenship class, and then you have to go to the judge and he asked you questions.

INTERVIEWER: You became an American citizen when?

EVA: In 1953.

INTERVIEWER: '53?

EVA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you had been here uh..How many years?

EVA: '50..

INTERVIEWER: You came over in '47?

EVA: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, six years? Okay.

EVA: It takes five years.

INTERVIEWER: You have to be here five years before you can even apply?

EVA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was that significant to you?

EVA: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: To become a United States citizen?

EVA: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Why was that? Why was that important?

EVA: Because the Germans took away our citizenship. We were allies until we became American citizens.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

EVA: We were nothing

INTERVIEWER: And this gave you something.

EVA: Yeah - uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.