

## Eva Unterman

Her heartfelt, inspirational story shows the resourcesfulness and determination of a Holocaust survivor

### Chapter 1 - 1:13

#### Introduction

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**John Erling:** In the summer of 1939 there was a little girl living in Lodz, Poland who was looking forward to the first grade. It was while on the family's summer vacation that Eva Unterman heard her family members quietly talking about Germany and war. They cut short their vacation and went home to Lodz and soon little Eva was looking at black shiny boots. The German invasion of Poland was underway. Listen now to Eva Unterman recall her days of how Eva's family was forced into the Lodz Ghetto, and after four years deported to Auschwitz and then to a labor camp and then forced to march in what was called the Death March. In May of 1945 Eva and her parents were liberated, survivors of the German Third Reich which took the lives of three million Polish Jews in World War II. Oklahoman Eva Unterman tells her story to honor the millions of children whose lives were cut short by the Nazis, and to be sure the Holocaust shall never happen again. For Eva, the invasion of Poland begins when she is six years old. Her story is preserved forever by the generous donations of our Founding Sponsors on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 2 - 5:10

#### Family

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling. Today's date is October 12th, 2010.

**Eva Unterman:** My full name is Eva K. Unterman and I was born in Poland in 1932 and I am 77 years old. Soon, God willing, I will be 78.

**JE:** Were you named after somebody in the family? How did your name come about?

**EU:** My actual name at birth was Khristina Teofila Eva Krystyna and as a little girl I was called Khrysha, which is a popular Polish name. I was also given, as is common a Hebrew name

at birth and that was Hava. Hava translates to Eva, but as a girl I was Khrysha. And in my name now, when I write "Eva K." the K is for that little girl who lived in Lodz, Poland.

**JE:** Where are we recording this interview?

**EU:** We are recording it in my home in Garden Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma and I am looking out the window here and the sun is shining and I'm looking at a beautiful blue morning glory. I am enjoying that view very much.

**JE:** Tell us the town you were born in.

**EU:** It's pronounced differently in Polish but in English it's Lodz. And the Germans called it Litzmannstadt during the occupation of Poland.

**JE:** Your mother, let's talk about her name and maiden name and where she was born.

**EU:** My mother's name was Estera. Her maiden name was Kafeman, married name Wolman. My mother was born in Lodz where my family lived for many years.

**JE:** And your father?

**EU:** My father, Markus Wolman was also from Lodz. He was called in Polish "Marek"

**JE:** What is that?

**EU:** In the Polish language, names change, so there is a formal name and there is a name by which people are known. As I mentioned, Kristina becomes Khrysha. Marcus becomes Marrick, that's very common in the Polish language.

**JE:** What did your father do for a living?

**EU:** My father was a businessman. He actually inherited a business from his father who passed away at a rather young age. My father and his uncle had a wholesale office machines business in Lodz selling the early office machines that were typewriters and adding machines and so on. We were not wealthy, but we were comfortable.

**JE:** So your mother was home taking care of the family?

**EU:** That's right. In those days, most women did not really work outside the house. My mother was always very industrious and talented and she was knitting and sewing and embroidering, never using a pattern. She had a great imagination, which we all admired.

**JE:** Brothers and sisters?

**EU:** I have one brother who was born after the war in 1948. I was an only child during WWII.

**JE:** And what is his name?

**EU:** His name is Eli Wolman.

**JE:** Let's talk about your grandparents. They were a big part of your life. So on your mother's side, who were your grandparents?

**EU:** I never knew my grandfather Kafeman. He passed away. My grandma Kafeman was very important in my life. She immigrated sometime in the 1930s to Israel, Palestine, with her two sons, my mother's brothers. Grandma Kafeman came to visit us in Lodz with a return ticket. This was just going to be a month's visit or so, that was in early 1939.

**JE:** Because of the invasion, she was there then throughout?

**EU:** Correct.

**JE:** On your father's side, who were your grandparents?

**EU:** Again, I did not know or didn't remember my grandfather Wolman, but my grandmother Helena Wolman, I remember very well. She lived with us and I will tell you more about her life after the war. Both of my parents were patriotic Poles. They were Polish citizens. We spoke only Polish in my home. They were looking forward to the future of a Jewish life in free Poland.

## Chapter 3 - 3:50

### Pre-Invasion

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**John Erling:** You were six years old at the time of the invasion. What do you remember of your life prior to that?

**Eva Unterman:** I always like to remember that, bits and pieces really. I recall where we lived. I remember my Nanny. I had a Nanny then which was customary in middle-class families and she was a Christian peasant woman who lived with us during the week and spent her weekends with her daughter on a farm. This became very important to us as time went on. She was very devoted to my family and I loved her dearly. She had very long hair and she allowed me to braid her hair. As I am speaking about her, I see her in my mind's eye. I remember going to the park with her and playing. Then what I remember most is the summer of 1939 when my immediate family and some extended family, some uncles and cousins, we spent the summers in a little village near Lodz. I remember that time so very well. We stayed in little, simple cottages and the adults used to play cards by kerosene lamps in the evening on the veranda of the cottage. I was supposed to be in bed, but I remember peeking through the door and watching and listening to what they were saying. I recall the lovely birch trees and tall sunflowers and I would pick the seeds of the sunflowers and eat them. It was very peaceful. I have very good memories. My father used to come on a train from Lodz and I am really not sure if this was on the weekends or if this was every evening, but I recall running toward the train station. I was an only child and my dad and I were very, very close. I recall that when I was sick years before that with whooping cough, my dad was the only one that I would allow to carry me as I was coughing and he used to sing Polish military songs to me. I remember to this day every word of the Polish national anthem.

**JE:** Wow. Can you do some of it here?

**EU:** I certainly can. I won't sing it but I will tell you the first few words of it. (Speaks a few words in Polish) How I remember this I don't know, but the tune to it I remember also, but I really have a terrible way of singing. It means, literally that Poland isn't lost yet while we are living. This goes way back to Marshal Pilsudski, who was a hero of many Poles and most of the Jewish population. So my early childhood was a happy one from what I remember. Being the only child in the family I was probably spoiled a little. But I was looking forward to going to school when we would return to Lodz in the fall of 1939.

## Chapter 4 - 6:37

### Invasion

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**Eva Unterman:** I remember that while the adults were sitting and playing their card games, and I was peeking in and listening that eventually there was some whispering going on. They told me I should go to bed and that I had no business being there. They were talking in worried tones about something happening in Poland, a war perhaps, Germany came up. And then eventually it was decided by the grownups that there was some trouble on the horizon and we should get back home. I was very disappointed to cut the vacation short, but indeed the packing was done in a hurry and we took a train back to Lodz.

**John Erling:** We should point out here as background that while you were enjoying your summers there, as a child, Adolf Hitler had become the Chancellor of Germany in 1933. So leading up to September 1st, 1939, Germany attacked Poland and Poland fell to the Germans within three weeks. So, that date was what your parents were whispering about.

**EU:** That is so true and so very important. Of course as a six-year old I had no idea what it really was that they were talking about. But I remember getting back to our home and within days I think there were German soldiers in the streets of Lodz. And from what I have learned, the Polish Army did try to defend its country. But they were no match against the mighty German panzer divisions. And there was some bombing of the Capital of Poland, Warsaw, but not of Lodz. They simply drove in and from then on, unbeknownst to me then, our lives changed forever.

**JE:** Lodz, where you lived, is located in Central Poland, held the second-largest Jewish community in Europe, only second to Warsaw. But then, as you said, seven days after the invasion, Lodz was occupied. By the way, I have to interject here and ask you, Justice

Marian Opala who just died yesterday, also lived in Lodz and he was 19 at the time of the invasion. Did you ever meet him or know about him?

**EU:** No, I had not, but I heard on the news yesterday that he did indeed pass away.

**JE:** Right, but you didn't know that you both of you lived there at the very same time?

**EU:** No, I didn't.

**JE:** He was much older than you of course.

**EU:** I have learned of other people who have lived there and as time goes by...the focus used to be on the Jews in Warsaw, the Jewish population. It is now after all of these years, the Lodz situation is becoming better known. You mentioned that there was a large Jewish population in Lodz. Well, 230,000 Jews, a third of the total Lodz population was the Jewish community. It was very large and very diversified indeed. Lodz was the Manchester of Poland. It was an industrial, textile city. I learned these things. Of course I didn't know them then because I was a little girl. I just knew my family and my friends. But within days, these German soldiers were everywhere. I recall when some came into our home and removed the chandelier that was hanging over the dining room table and we just stood there. Both of my grandmothers, my dad, my mother and I stood there totally helpless. They had total control over everything in the city of Lodz and we Jews were singled out from the very start as the enemy. Edicts were given out, orders were given and I recall that clearly. I was no longer allowed to play with my non-Jewish friends. I was no allowed to play in the park. All of us Jewish citizens of Lodz were not allowed to walk on sidewalks in the center of the city. And then I remember so clearly when we all were ordered to wear these yellow stars of David with the word "Jew" on all of our outer garments, so that we could be easily recognized when we were outdoors. We could be insulted, have rocks thrown at us, not only from the German occupation soldiers, but also from some Polish hooligans. Many were anti-Semitic and saw this as an opportunity to insult their Jewish neighbors. Not all, but some did. Most of all I remember how very disappointed I was that I wasn't allowed to start school. I was looking forward to it so much. I already had my school supplies ready. That was done before we left for vacation. But, I wasn't allowed to go to school. And the life in Lodz as in other occupied Polish cities became very difficult. The ration cards for food were much smaller than for non-Jewish citizens. We were so fortunate that my Nanny who had a daughter on the farm would bring us milk and fresh eggs. I remember how thankful we were for it and how this was just second nature to her. That's one important memory of those early years after the invasion and occupation.

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**Chapter 5 - 4:30****Brave Mother**

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**John Erling:** You have an image of your mother actually sewing that six-pointed star on your coat.

**Eva Unterman:** I do. Yes, I do. I remember that quite well and asking, "What is it?" My mother just explained that this was something we had to do. It wasn't just my coat it was my father's, my grandparents', all of us would wear that. We were branded in that way. I also remember an incident that kind of sheds light on my mother's personality. As I said earlier, my mother was quite creative. She used to knit and do all of these wonderful things. She also made throw pillows out of felt with her own design. They were on the sofas in our living room. I recall this one incident when this German, I believe he was an Officer, came in and looked around to see what he wanted to take and his eye caught these pillows. He said he would take those with him. Well, what can you do? There was nothing we could do. We were totally helpless. So he took the pillows that were there. He came back a few days later. He said he liked the pillows so much he would like to order some and he asked where did my mother get them. And she told him she made them. So he said he would like to order some to send them to his family in Germany. And my mother, this fearless woman, said, "Okay, I will make them for you but I need something in return. I need some flour and some butter." I remember my father and grandmother thinking...okay this is it, he's going to shoot her right on the spot. But you know what? He didn't. And my mother, she would make pillows, she would sit half of the night at the dining table stitching the pillows and this officer, an SS man I think he was, would bring the various items that she requested. So we always had a little more food. On another visit, some soldiers came in and they wanted to know where our suitcases were. They needed some suitcases. We are all standing there and my mother said, "We don't have any." And I remember thinking but we just brought them back from vacation, how can she say that? And again my father and my grandmother are thinking what is she doing here? Well, he asked for the German word "coffre" and my mother's presence of mind was already then visible because when he said to her, "Oh surely you have some coffre." And she says, "No, we don't." So he said that they would search, and he went looking, and of course he found the suitcases and came back holding two that we had just unpacked recently. And he said, "And what is this?" And then she gave the Polish word for suitcase and she said she didn't know it by another word. So this presence of mind and this fearlessness, characterizes my mother through all of the war years.

**JE:** The shiny black boots of those German soldiers was a big image in your mind?

**EU:** Yes, and it is until this day. The first time I saw them was actually when they climbed up on a chair to reach for the chandelier. Shiny black boots and I've seen them over and over again, a very frightening picture.

**JE:** You see them right now don't you?

**EU:** I certainly do. I can see them right in front of my eyes. No matter where I have lived, in cold weather or different parts of the country, I would never wear black leather boots.

## Chapter 6 - 5:07

### Resettled

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**John Erling:** Then one day you were told you were going to be ordered to leave your home the next day. What was going through your family's mind? Obviously, you wondered where you would be going, but also what you would take with you. Talk to us about that.

**Eva Unterman:** That's a very important question, because indeed we were ordered to assemble at a certain time in a certain place. All of these things were done in a very efficient methodical way and there was no escaping it. People often ask me why didn't you just run away? Run away to where? Who would hide us? And what about my grandmothers? No family, my family anyway, would leave a child and two grandmothers and run. Run where? When that order was given, I remember it so clearly as if it were yesterday. My mother and others used sheets to make bundles to take their belongings with them. They were lighter and you could pack more in them than in suitcases. Even though some of the suitcases were actually taken away from us. But I recall mother making these bundles and she would put some blankets, sheets, comforter and some pots and pans. We all had a bundle and the evening prior to leaving, my family and I believe a couple of other neighbors had an idea. They were going to bury some of their family heirlooms and some precious belongings in the courtyard of our home and of course claim them after this madness was over. This couldn't last long. We would come back. So they buried, I don't know exactly what, but some silver pieces and other things in that courtyard. And I was told that I too had a bundle that I would carry. I had a beautiful collection of dolls and for each birthday my mother made a new wardrobe for them. I was an only child. These were my playmates and they sat on a deep windowsill in my room. And I was told that I could take only one doll. Well, I didn't know what to do because in my mind, I was just a child, they were friends, and I couldn't separate them and how could I take a favorite one? So, I turned them all to see the street. I told

them to be good and that I will be back, probably soon, and I took this little old rag doll with me with an odd Polish name with me. And then we had to leave. When I speak to young people in schools, I always ask them, “How would you feel if you were told to leave everything behind?” Your grandparents’ photos, your parents’ wedding pictures, all of your prized possessions and just walk out of your home. Which was indeed what we had to do and I remember it was so cold. This was winter 1940. My mother put as many clothing pieces on me as I could possibly wear. Blouses, dresses, sweaters, coat, I remember how stiff I felt in it. But this was to maximize that which we could carry and also because it was very cold. We went downstairs and met others from our neighborhood, other Jewish Polish citizens. And we were told to line up in the middle of the street and there were the soldiers with their guns and their big dogs at their side. We were told to walk I remember to our right. This was a transport from this particular part of Lodz. We didn’t know where we were going. I remember some neighbors looking out of their windows and some standing in the street and some just staring, not knowing what to make of it. But there were some who were actually applauding. They were glad to see their Jewish neighbors leave, so that they could rush up to our homes and our apartments and take whatever they wanted before the Germans ever got to it. We walked for a long time, it seemed to me forever and I remember how cold it was.

## Chapter 7 - 6:00

### Ghetto

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**Eva Unterman:** And then we reached a dilapidated, old part of Lodz. We were all taken to a building, all of us. I don’t how many people there were. But we were assigned a room upstairs. I remember rickety stairs and it was dingy and dirty and no inside bathroom facilities. But my mother, the most resourceful person that I think I’ve ever known in my life, that’s a word that Holocaust educators need to remember...you had to be resourceful to survive. Mother found an old cot in that room, opened it up and out from her bundle took out a clean sheet and pillow and a comforter and that would be my bed for four years. We were all in the same room and the area we were in was closed in with different fences and it became the Lodz Ghetto. It meant absolutely nothing to me. But I was told by my mother, “This will not last long.” I heard that repeated over and over because if the world just knew, someone would come to our rescue.

**John Erling:** Define the word ghetto. We know what it means here in the U.S. but I think it has a different meaning there, is that true?

**EU:** Yes, it does. It was really a prison. It was totally sealed off. At the very beginning of it, my Nanny tried to bring some food to us, but that was stopped when the Ghetto was totally sealed off. The Germans of course ran all of this, but they appointed a Jewish administration to carry out all of their orders. The Jewish administration at first tried to open a school and a hospital. Even some concerts were performed. Anything to keep us in some kind of human condition and not to allow us to be so humiliated all the time. But they didn't last long. And, this is important, unlike in other Ghettos factories were set up by the Germans in which people worked for the German war effort. This is an important part in my particular story. Food became so scarce. People were starving eventually. It didn't happen overnight, but it did. In order to have any food one had to show that a person was employed. Again, we were lucky. My mother found a job in a soup kitchen, which meant a great deal. And my father found employment also. I stayed with my grandmothers, and my grandma Wolman died in the Ghetto. She died in a bed surrounded by her family. She could not get used to what happened to her life and she became ill and she passed away. So there was my immediate family and then I had some uncles and aunts and if I may I would like to say a little about the Ghetto because there were transports brought to the Ghetto from all over Nazi-occupied Europe. You could hear every language spoken. And people were also taken out of the Ghetto to be resettled. And because the starvation reached dangerous proportions, especially for children, the Germans announced, and I'm using the word Germans instead of always saying Nazis because those in charge were the Germans, they had others, Poles and other people carrying out their orders, but that came directly from the head of the Ghetto and from Hitler himself, that children could be resettled to a better place, more food, better living conditions. And of course parents seeing their kids ill dying from starvation, agreed to it. I mean, why not? Any normal person would allow that. Except no one ever heard from the children again and people became suspicious. And I remember then that when people didn't give their children, the SS came through the streets of Lodz looking for children. There was a hunt. I don't know any other word to use, going on for Jewish children. And I remember once, when the word got around that they were coming, they made no secret of it, they were proud of what they were doing. But my mother and a couple other neighbors had a plan. There was a dried-out water well in the courtyard of this building. They opened the lid and a ladder was put down it and a couple of other children and I went down there. The lid was put back in place and when the adults felt that it was safe, they brought us out. I remember it was dark and scary but my mother told me to go down there and I trusted her.

**Chapter 8 - 4:18****In Hiding**

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**John Erling:** So, you were seven years at this time?

**Eva Unterman:** No, I was probably more like eight or nine.

**JE:** Okay. So, two, three or five children were down there?

**EU:** I don't think there were as many as five. Probably there were more like three. It wasn't that large of a place. And we just stayed there. We didn't ask questions, we just did what our parents told us, and what I have heard and read about, that even very young children sensed the danger. Their parents didn't tell them how dangerous it was, but they followed their parents' orders. I remember that incident quite well.

**JE:** The children were taken because that was the future.

**EU:** That's right. The Jewish children all over Nazi-German-occupied Europe were one of the major enemies. As you said, children represent the future and in order for genocide to succeed in the minds of these, evil, horrendously...I don't want to say the word crazy because they were not crazy. They were doing this out of some impossible conviction that they were going to give the world the gift of a world free of Jews. In order for genocide to succeed the children had to be eliminated. I have since learned that over 1.5 million Jewish boys and girls were murdered during WWII.

**JE:** You spent four years living in that Ghetto?

**EU:** Correct.

**JE:** Were you educated then in the Ghetto?

**EU:** At the very start I joined the school, but I don't remember it even. It's in bits and pieces. It didn't last long. I would like to mention a name of a young man whom I think I remember but I am not sure. And that is Dawid Sierakowiak. He became a very real person in my adult life now and chances are that I actually did meet him. It was about 15 years ago when I was in an old Borders bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I love going to bookstores and going through the bargain tables and always looking for anything that has anything to do with the Holocaust. I came across a book, The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak from the Lodz Ghetto. I took the book of course and I turned the pages and there on a page totally at random was a photograph of my mother that is now displayed at the Sherwin Miller Museum here in Tulsa. I couldn't believe my eyes. There was my mother. I tried to trace where that photograph came from. I believe it was Mendel Grossman who was a photographer there that took photographs at random in the street. It (the photo) had to be early on because in the photograph she still looks like a normal person. She looks like herself the way I remember her from before the war. So I read of course

the diary, which is really part of the diary that was found in an apartment in Lodz and kept by someone. Parts of it were used to heat a stove during part of the war. But those parts that were found were edited and published by Ellen Adelson and it is called The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak, who died in the Lodz Ghetto of starvation and tuberculosis, a brilliant, young man who was only 18 years old. So when I speak about particularly the Lodz Ghetto, I always speak a memory of Dawid Sierakowiak.

## Chapter 9 - 6:55

### Cattle Car

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**John Erling:** You didn't realize it as a child, but as you reflect on it and talk to adults, did your parents know how the Jews were being treated in camps in Germany? That they were being annihilated? Did they know that at the time?

**Eva Unterman:** There were rumors I found out, but no one in their right mind could have imagined any such thing. Mind you that this is before CNN and various forms of communication that we now watch to see events as they happen. There were some rumors and I didn't know about them because I was protected by my parents.

**JE:** Then one day you were ordered to walk to a nearby train. I think this was about 1943?

**EU:** No, actually this was in 1944. It was early fall or late summer of 1944. Of course there was no choice and we could again take only take that which we could carry and there wasn't much left. But we again had the bundles and we went to the train station. We were one of the last transports to leave the Lodz Ghetto. There were rumors that it was being liquidated, people were being resettled to better conditions. That's what I believed and that is what my mother led me to believe. If she really believed it, I don't know. But she convinced herself in a way, and me too. And who could have imagined anything worse than the Lodz Ghetto? It had to be to a better place. So, we assembled at the train station there are the black boots and the dogs and the guns. A few people did manage to hide in some cellars. A few young people who were healthy enough to do that sort of thing, very few. And we were ordered to get on this train. But this wasn't a train like we usually took. This was a cattle car. Most people listening to this have seen on documentaries the trains that we were transported in. And I recall that the door was so high off of the ground, my father lifted me and we got into the train and we were pushed against the back of the train further and further. As many people as they could get into each of these wagons. It was covered. There was a little barred window on the

very top and some people could see a little bit of the sky or something that stood near it. We were just pushed and they were yelling at us to go further back until eventually we just stood against each other. No one could sit down. There was no room. And then we stood for what seems to me like forever. I remember until this day the sound of metal hitting metal as the doors closed. And we were as tight as we could be against each other. There was a bucket somewhere in the corner for the bathroom. People were whispering and speculating. Maybe the rumors they heard, maybe there is some truth to it. "Oh no" others would say. Children were crying. People were praying. Some people became ill and kind of slid between us. We started moving and it was the sound that I remember of that steam engine whistle as we traveled to an unknown destination. It stopped and it picked up speed. I don't know how long we were on that train, but eventually we stopped.

**JE:** The stench on that train had to be...

**EU:** Tremendous. It is the sounds and smells that to this day that I recall more than anything else and when I speak about it, I can see, and feel and smell it. But I have been so fortunate over the years that there is some kind of a protective, I don't know what to even call it, but I can talk about it and not break down.

**JE:** Through all of this time, there must have been the questioning, the four years in the Ghetto and then you are on this train. Why are they doing this to the Jews? What did we do? Why do you not like us? All of those questions had to be obviously being asked by the adults.

**EU:** Of course there were discussions going on all of the time. And it is the Jewish tradition from ancient times until now and it will always be that people ask questions and argue over it. You know there is this saying that if there are at least three Jews there are at least six opinions because we are encouraged to question and to discuss. As I said, I was always protected by my parents, and maybe by my own psychological makeup. However, I must say especially in Poland, there has been anti-Semitism for years and years and people went through it and recovered and then went somewhere else. Since I have been studying and trying to understand some of my personal background and the larger history, Jews have been dispersed ever since the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, in all corners of the world. Until there would be an outbreak of anti-Semitism and we, the Jewish people would have to leave and go somewhere else. Whether it was, Spain, or all over. And in Poland in particular, there has been I was told much anti-Semitism perpetrated often by the Catholic Church. The Poles were mostly Catholic. Now, mind you, having said that, there were individuals, individual Polish Catholics who on their own tried to make, and did make, a difference. And I could tell you many so-called "righteous" among the nations. But there was anti-Semitism, which was very fertile ground for Hitler to embrace this and use this common hatred to propel the third Reich into existence.

**Chapter 10 – 4:10****Auschwitz**

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**Eva Unterman:** But I want to get back, if I may, to arriving in that place, which I didn't know what it was. Once we were made to get out of the train, I do remember these people, SS standing there and screaming at us in German yelling for us to get out quickly and using their whips. Men and women were immediately separated. I no longer saw my father, but I stayed with my mother and my grandmother. Then as we got off the train, we were made to go to the right where a selection took place. I didn't know what it meant, but the younger, healthier looking women went to one side, and the older, the sick and the children to the other. We had no idea why. This was done very efficiently and quickly. We left all our belongings in the train and we were told that we would get it later. We were made to run toward the right side, mother holding on to my hand and we came to this large building that I believe it was made of concrete. We were made to go inside where long tables were set up where SS women were sitting there, who were every bit as brutal as the men, and they were processing us.

**John Erling:** Explain what SS meant?

**EU:** Those were our guards. It was an elite unit of people who volunteered for it. They were there in all of the concentration death camps and various labor camps. It certainly was better for them to be in charge of these poor Jews than to go to the east and fight the Germans.

**JE:** So then you were being processed?

**EU:** Yes, and what did being processed mean? We had to take all of our clothes off. I had long braids. One woman grabbed my hair and cut them off and the next one shaved my head. And that was done to all of the women and the few children who were in our group. Then we were led to another building where there were showerheads overhead. We did not know how fortunate we were that water came down on us. After that, as we came out of there, we were given these coarse, dry pajama-like uniforms and wooden shoes and made to go into a certain direction. Well, I know now, which meant nothing to us then that we were in Auschwitz, a death camp, as it is now known. We were there shivering running toward this barracks and people who visit there now, I have not been there and have no intention of visiting, there are still barracks as far as the eye can see. We were taken into one and made to spend the night sitting there on the floor. The next morning we were marched outside and made to stand to be counted. That was the routine in all of the camps. We were counted and then given a rusty bowl that we were to keep. That is what our daily ration of food was poured in. It consisted of water, turnips and potato

peels. No spoons mind you. We were not considered human. Animals don't use spoons. And my mother made me drink every bit of that stuff and you know, we learned to just eat it like that, directly holding the bowl to our mouth and eating it that way. And we got a dry piece of bread that people ate. We were very hungry at that point.

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## Chapter 11 - 6:00

### Death Factory

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**John Erling:** Let's talk a little bit about Auschwitz, which was the largest of the concentration camps. There was Auschwitz 1, which was the Base Camp and Auschwitz 2, which was an extermination camp, and Auschwitz 3, a work camp. There were 48 camps in all. They had standing cells, starvation cells, dark cells, and you may want to comment on that. Was Auschwitz then in full operation while you were there, so the exterminating was actually happening in the so-called property area?

Eve Unterman: Yes it was. And I should mention that as we, our fortunate group went to the showers there was a building that was built to the same specifications where the old, the sick and the children were taken, and instead of water, poisonous gas descended on them. They were killed and then their bodies burned in the crematorium ovens built for that purpose. So you see, there were people running this entire machine, this industry of killing. There were people who were building the ovens, who were maintaining them, who produced Zyklon B. It was a business of killing people. There have been many tragedies in human history. And to this day people are being killed for various unbelievable reasons, innocent people as we speak. But there have never been death factories set up, that were so well organized.

**JE:** You are talking about 1944.

**EU:** Correct.

**JE:** The Germans were committed to the so-called final solution by January of 1942. In September of 1941 the gas chambers were in operation. They experimented on 600 Russian POWs and 250 Polish inmates and gassed them September 3rd of 1941. So we've established that was already in operation as you were there in 1944. So maybe I'm jumping ahead of myself then, but are you looking back then thinking why did we not meet our end there at the extermination camp?

**EU:** Oh yes. For many years until recently, really until about six or seven years ago I always asked myself that question. I actually felt guilty telling people who came through the

camps as the only surviving member of the family that I was with my mother all of the time. If I have time, I certainly want to explain how this came about which comes a little bit later. It is a most unusual story, but I have learned why it is that I as a child survived the selection and survived being in Auschwitz for a short time.

**JE:** Okay, then you refer to the fact that you were moving on, why didn't you meet your end there and why were you selected to move on?

**EU:** Well, I think that maybe if I can briefly tell from then on it will become clear and then I will speak about it. We were taken to a concentration camp called Stutthof. I don't always tell this story, but I will for this interview. It was every bit as awful as Auschwitz but less well known. And it was in Stutthof that one of the worst memories occurred. We were sitting on the floor in one of the barracks. They were all built to the same specifications, long, low buildings divided lengthwise into three sections. The center section was where mostly SS women would march up and down and beat us, and scream at us. Then, there were on both sides these bunks that really were shells. You have probably seen them in a documentary film. Well, that one evening my mother and I sat on the floor in front of those bunks with other women and my grandmother Kafeman sat across on the other side with other women. We were already undernourished and not doing well physically when from the left side I remember here come the black boots. And they were spiffy looking, clean looking, with starched uniforms, some young men, I believe that one of them was an officer, maybe they all were. And he announced that he was looking for some volunteers to mend their socks for an extra piece of bread. I believe that to this day, when my grandmother's hand went up, she was one of the first to volunteer—it was because she wanted to give this piece of bread to me. My mother later told me as she held on to my hand that she wanted to shout to her mother, "Don't!" but she couldn't, because that would have brought attention to me and I wasn't supposed to be there. As the women were led outside, one of the young men came back laughing. He was laughing. There was no mending to be done. This was Saturday night and these men entertained themselves by taking these women outside and killing them.

## Chapter 12 - 4:35

### Birthday Spoon

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**Eva Unterman:** I thought as a child that these SS men and women weren't human. I thought they were monsters. It was much later that I realized that they were as human as you

and I. They had families and children and mothers and grandmothers. How on Earth could they do that? Also, most of those SS that were caught and other officials from the Nazi Regime said that they were following orders, that they were soldiers following orders. Nobody gave these men that order. So I have, until this day been dealing with the question, they were human like I am. How can we human beings behave that way and do this to one another? That is one of reasons why I am telling about it because normal people cannot possibly imagine it, that there can be such evil in human beings and such propaganda against the other that they are capable of doing this. That's the reason for telling this story. Now it is just mother and I and we are again relocated.

**JE:** And let me just say that they are obviously wondering where your father is. You've had no contact with him at all.

**EU:** Correct.

**JE:** He would have been in the same camp area, but there was no contact at all, so you had that concern about him.

**EU:** Actually, if I may go back a bit, in Stutthoff there was an occasion that I don't always talk about, but if we have the time I would like to mention it. There was a Polish worker, an electrician who worked on the women's side of the camp and far away over on the men's side of the camp. There were two parallel camps in Stutthoff, men and women. My mother found out, she was always curious, always trying to find things out, that this Polish man knew some of the men on the other side and through him she found out that my father, very ill, was on the men's side of the camp. This Polish man who brought these messages back and forth was eventually found out and killed. But, before that, this Polish man in touch with my father, sent a message to my mother that on my birthday, which is in late October at a certain time, my Dad would throw a wooden spoon over on the women's side. There was a business going on. People would, for a piece of bread, find a piece of wood and carve a spoon or some other little necessity. And for a day's ration, or a two-day ration, they would make like in this case a spoon. And indeed on my birthday, my Dad, at a certain time of day threw a wooden spoon. This cost him probably several days of food. He threw it over the fence for my mother to catch. We were told about this by this Polish electrician, and when that happened, maybe he had someone else throw it, whatever, my mother ran closer to the fence which was electrically charged to pick up the spoon. But an SS guard noticed that there was someone running toward the fence and shot at her. He missed her thank goodness. The word got around that a woman wearing a scarf ran toward the fence. People made scarves out of little rags that they found here and there and a search went on for a woman wearing a scarf. I never got the spoon. She had to drop it and I always think of it as the most loving birthday gift that I almost received.

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**Chapter 13 - 4:30****Fire Bombing**

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**Eva Unterman:** Well, what happened in our barrack was that other people would tear a piece of whatever they had and put on scarves, so that when they were looking for a woman wearing a scarf, she could not be found. Of course they could have shot everybody, but it just so happened that they didn't. So, I just wanted to tell you that about Stutthof. Now it's mother and I and we are being relocated again on a train, less horrendous than the others. And we arrive at the city of Dresden, Germany to work in a metal and munitions factory. I'd like to tell you a little about it because this is where I found out how come mother and I stayed together and how come my dad and also survived, which we didn't know. We knew in Stutthof that he was probably there, but very ill. We lived and worked in a factory. We were still watched by the SS from the Flossenburg concentration camp, but here is the story. The Ghettos' German dictator, the chairman or whatever his title was had an idea, not unlike Oscar Schindler, that he would move the metal factory from the Lodz Ghetto to Germany. They were at this point in need of workers for the war effort. First, he was going to move this factory closer to the Czech side near Sudetenland but the Russians were approaching, so he decided to move the factory to Dresden. It used to be a cigarette factory and it was converted to a metal and munitions factory. Mother and I were working there. Anytime they could use you for labor, you got a little bit more food. We had actual bunks to sleep on and we had a little bit more food. It was in that factory that one night on February the 13th, mother and I were working the night shift in the basement of the factory. I was almost 12 years old. I was sorting bullets and my mother was working on making some holes in some sheets of metal when the worst bombing of conventional weapons of WWII occurred and we were locked in this metal and munitions factory. Books and articles have been written about the bombing of Dresden, it has become controversial, but I must tell you a little about it because it was an unbelievably horrific experience. Our building and many others were hit not with explosive but with incendiary bombs, everything was on fire. Everywhere. Everything. The SS never for a minute stopped watching us that was more important than their own lives. They got us out of the building where the whole street, everything was on fire and the fire created this windstorm which is difficult to describe. I remember the noise it created when the sheets of metal went up and down on this concrete floor. We went out into this. The black boots never lost sight of us and they marched us through this totally burning city to outside of the city where we stayed in this meadow. Two young women managed to escape in this chaos. One was caught and brought back and we had to watch as she was tortured and killed. Nobody escaped after that.

**Chapter 14 - 4:20****Dresden**

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**Eva Unterman:** Now we stayed there. I don't think they knew what to do with us. They took us back to what was left of the ruins of the factory and then we started what is now known as the Death March.

**John Erling:** Let me ask you, you said that the burning of Dresden has become controversial, what is the controversy?

**EU:** It's very interesting. I was in Dresden as I mentioned earlier and I will tell you more about it. I was invited by the city with some others of us who are still around who were in the factory. The Mayor put a plaque on the building and so on and I spoke to German students.

**JE:** But you visited in what year?

**EU:** 2002 I think that's when it was.

**JE:** 2002, okay that's when you visited.

**EU:** Yes, I think so. I will tell you what I told the students who asked me then. This was a horrendous, horrendous thing. Many, many people, innocent German people, women, children, everybody died during this firebombing. I was asked how do I feel? What do I make of it? And there is a controversy there. Some people now consider this a war crime. And what I said to them I feel to this day. It was awful. War is hell. It was terrible, but I told them, had Germany and the Nazi regime not invaded and occupied and tortured many people in all of the countries of Europe, the English and the Americans would not have come and bombed Dresden. So to us then, as scary as it was, and many thought we would die in the fire, this was our very first time that we thought maybe there really is someone trying to help us. We were so naïve. I was. I thought nobody knew about us. If they did, wouldn't the Americans and other people come and rescue us? This was a sign that while we may indeed die, which we probably would anyway, everyone believed that except my mother, or so she told me, our tormentors would also be killed along with us. And in those days that was a sign of hope. And when I explained this to the German students, they in a way agreed. Many are questioning their grandparents' role in allowing Germany this cultured beautiful country of great composers, great architecture and great artists, highly educated to commit these atrocities against people in all German-occupied countries. This is how I feel about Dresden until now. In this world there are consequences. In other words, I will repeat, had Germany not committed all of these crimes and invaded all of these European countries, certainly Americans and the British wouldn't come and bomb Germany. That was the way wars were fought.

**JE:** All of that had to happen in order to bring the Allied forces to bomb Germany.

**EU:** That was then warfare. It is now different. They bombed the whole city. Now mind you so that the Germans, you know what happened to London for instance, that was what Eisenhower and the British saw as a way to stop the Germans. The Russians were fighting on the Russian front. You know of course our heroes that landed on Normandy and this was to end the war. This was to get the people against their own regime. War is as I said, horrible.

## Chapter 15 - 2:40

### Return to Dresden

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**John Erling:** Let me bring you back to the factory and you being in the basement, did everybody around you also escape? I mean the very fact that you got out of that is a miracle.

**Eva Unterman:** It's unbelievable as is much of everything that I remember. Because being in these camps, it's one thing and then I was there during what Germans experienced from bombings. So it was just horrendous, but they got us out somehow. When I was back in Germany in Dresden a few years ago, we went through that basement. By the way, it is now again a cigarette factory. And we went up the stairs that went up from the basement. They are still all there. Here is something that is so important about Dresden, while there I was given, as were the other people with me, there were people from England, from Australia, from Israel, the U.S. Czechoslovakia, there were 20 some of us. We were given the documents from the day that we left Lodz, all of us on the same transport, going the same route to the same camps, ending in Dresden with the metal factory. My father did not work in the metal factory, but he had some connections. He knew some people and we were put on the list to go with the metal workers. We were originally supposed to go to the metal factory after leaving Lodz, but as in Schindler's story, we ended up in Auschwitz and Stutthof and eventually in Dresden, and that's why I was with my mother as were some other children on that list to go to Dresden, so we were not taken away and murdered in Auschwitz. Some were because there was lots of confusion going on.

**JE:** So that's why you escaped Auschwitz?

**EU:** That's right.

**JE:** There was a mission and a reason for you, they wanted you to work in the metal factory.

**EU:** Yes, yes absolutely. And I have all of the documents and right now I feel chills thinking about it because for all of these years I didn't know and I tried to search for it because I knew I was in that factory, but I didn't know any people.

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**Chapter 16 - 6:00****Death March**

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**Eva Unterman:** And while we were on this trip to Dresden, I met people who were on the same transport. I will tell you about one woman that I met on this return trip a few years ago to Dresden. We were on a bus retracing our route of the Death March. And while we were on the bus a lady is sitting next to me and we start speaking, she is still speaking Polish, she lives in Israel. But people had this Polish connection and they were speaking Polish to each other and I said, "Please, I don't remember Polish anymore, speak English or German, which I know." They said, "You don't speak Polish?" And I said, "No, I live in Oklahoma, there just isn't an opportunity to speak Polish." So this lady sitting there she starts speaking to me in English, she knows English and we exchange our names and she heard my maiden name, Wolman and she said, "Wolman, Wolman, Wolmanowa." In Polish, a woman's name changes. It's different from a male's. The Wolmanowa was my mother. She says, "I remember her! And she had a little girl with her, and that's you." And we embraced.

**JE:** Wow.

**EU:** And I am in contact with that lady to this day.

**JE:** Tell me again, when the fire broke out-

**EU:** Everything was burning. This was one of the bombings by the Allies, specifically the British and the Americans. The firestorm, there were two bombings and it pretty much erased that very beautiful city. But this is what I meant when I said that we the prisoners, the workers in that factory felt that there was someone that wanted to win the war to help us. I didn't know it until then. How could this be going on if the world knew?

**JE:** Yes.

**EU:** So if I may, I would like to tell you what happened now. After awhile they decided to walk us to an unknown destination and this is now March 1945 after the bombing of Dresden. And we walk along the river for days and days and people who can no longer walk collapsed and are shot on the spot. We were weak and sick and hungry but we kept walking. It seemed like an eternity. Nights we spent often in open soccer stadiums. And while we were walking, a nail in my left wooden shoe, I still have the wooden shoes, embedded itself on the side of my left foot. I was in terrible pain and I begged my mother, we always walked in groups of five. It's called a Death March. We were dragging along. We weren't marching. My mother was on my right side and three other people were walking with us. I begged her to stop because I was in such pain. She asked the SS woman, she was not German, she was from the Ukraine, if we could stop for a minute so she could pull that nail from out of my foot and get it with a rock out of my shoe. And the SS woman said, "No." in German. She

shouted “No!” and you don’t ask again. And mother kept pulling me along until we finally got to this stadium where she was able to get the nail out of my foot and out of my shoe. Some rag was torn off of what we were wearing wrapped around it. How I didn’t get a blood infection I will never know. I still have a scar there, to this day, a mild reminder. But I must tell you something else during this walk. It was dusk and we were walking through a very picturesque little town, always walking down the middle of the street. I remember seeing curtains on windows and lights and thinking I will probably never live like that again. These people had beds and families and food. A German man, a civilian came from somewhere and came right behind my mother and handed her a piece of bread. And I always tell the students or anyone for that matter that this man was a hero. Had the guard noticed this man, he would have been shot on the spot. So when I tell the kids to remember and learn about these monsters, Hitler and Eichmann and all of the others. To also remember people like Miep Gies who saved Anne Frank, such people as Raul Wollenberg, Oscar Schindler, and this unidentified German civilian who dared to give a Jewish woman a piece of bread.

## **Chapter 17 - 6:42**

**May 8, 1945**

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**John Erling:** Didn’t you hear that your father was also marching?

**Eva Unterman:** Well, we heard but we didn’t see anybody, there was just women, we didn’t know if that was a rumor at that point or not. There were some women saying that the men are also marching, but who knew? And the last that we heard from this Polish guy was that my father was very ill. So, we are walking and I have since found out, I had no sense of time, for 11 days when we arrived in a most unusual Ghetto camp called Theresienstadt, in Czech, it’s close to Prague and I remember that there were windows. Seeing a window in a camp, wow, that was so unusual. But it was there on May 8, 1945, which happens to be the last day of the war we were liberated by Russian soldiers.

**JE:** How long were you in Terezin before you were liberated?

**EU:** A very short time, I don’t know how long. And suddenly the word got around that the SS was gone and we could hear the tanks approaching and they were Russian soldiers who gave us food. That’s all we wanted was food. And people ate, myself included, we ate and ate. Se, starvation cannot be explained and I never tried to do it, but we just ate. Many people became violently ill, some died, because our stomachs were not used to all of this food. But that’s what people wanted to do. We just wanted food and the Russians gave it to us.

**JE:** The feelings that had to be coming over you...

**EU:** It was a moment or a time of disbelief for me. I will only speak for myself. What do you mean it's over? "You're free." The Russian soldiers told us, "You're free." Well, what now? What happens? The first thing, like I said, was eating and then people started searching for their relatives. That went on for years. It is still going on. I still attend a conference, which I will attend again in November where people are still, how many years after the war, 65 years later...there are still some people who are looking for their true identity because those children, the majority who survived, survived in hiding under false identities. In this incredible chaos, we found out that my father was there with the men on the other side and of course everybody was able to run and to walk and we were reunited. It's a most unusual story.

**JE:** Can you bring us there? You saw your father, now you are 12 years old. He hadn't seen you for all these many years.

**EU:** It was, just...really there weren't words exchanged, just hugging and crying, hugging and crying. And then for many people and for us, once we overcame the initial shock was, what about other family members? What happened to them? I mean we were a family. I had cousins and uncles and aunts. My father has a sister. What happened to all of them? And then the search started, which consumed everybody. First, we were unable to move, we were skeletons and we were so, how shall I say this, just too weak to do anything. So we stayed in Theresienstadt and once we were able to move, people wanted to go home to Lodz my home, our home. Mind you, there was no transportation. You didn't go to a train station and buy a ticket. People moved around by walking or hitchhiking. People were moving in all directions. Those Germans, the ethnic Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia were being sent back to Germany. And all of the camps, people who survived in all kinds of conditions were trying to find home, wherever that was. It was a time of unbelievable tumult and confusion, really confusion. And by the time that we were able sort of to think of going back, word came from Poland that some people who went back were not welcome. There was a town in Poland where some people returned and they were killed because their former neighbors did not want to part with all of their belongings that they looted from the homes of the Jewish neighbors. It's very complicated. It's unbelievable. I shouldn't say unbelievable because to me, everything is believable. And I don't know if I should interject, but I will, when I came to this country, in all of these years, this happened over there, not in America. The United States, this was the country of liberty, of freedom, of people being true to their what we thought was human nature. Atrocities didn't happen here. Of course there would be some, somebody got shot or this or that, but nothing organized. We weren't perfect. There was slavery here and when I came to Oklahoma I learned about the American Indian. Horrible things happened, but

Americans came out of it eventually after all of this and realized their mistakes and tried to make it right. And I am a very proud American citizen and an Oklahoman. This accent, don't let it fool you, I am after all of these years, I am an Oklahoman.

## Chapter 18 - 2:16

### 9/11

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**Eva Unterman:** And then what happened, which changed much of my thinking, or reinforced my thinking, was 9/11. Because the unimaginable that happened in Europe on a different scale in a different way, something unimaginable happened in the United States where innocent people were murdered and it has influenced me ever since. I remember watching when those towers collapsed and seeing ashes and all that we all watched in disbelief and thinking, there are human beings who were trapped in the airplanes and in the buildings. Who could imagine such a thing? Who could imagine that gas chambers were built and people murdered in them in Europe. Who could imagine that airplanes would be hijacked and people would be murdered in the United States. It affected me deeply.

**John Erling:** You realized that our country the United States is vulnerable too and continues to be vulnerable to this very day in October 2010?

**EU:** I think so. I know so and that has influenced me as I said because something like this wouldn't happen in America. Well, I have come to the conclusion, unfortunately, after Auschwitz, and after this horrendous killing that happened in our own country, I think anything is possible. And I do believe that most people can be brainwashed and enough propaganda can influence them unfortunately to commit terrible, terrible acts of brutality against other human beings.

## Chapter 19 - 4:30

### On The Move

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**John Erling:** Okay, so take us, after the Russian troops liberated you. You were looking for family members and wondering where you were going to go? Then perhaps you became afraid to go back to Lodz because you heard others had gone back to their communities and they were actually killed. What decisions are made then?

**Eva Unterman:** What now? Well, first many of us got a ride in to Prague in what was the capital of what was then Czechoslovakia. In Prague the Red Cross and other agencies set up stations so that many people, that were in that part of the world and survived the camps, could head to Prague. At the train station and in hotels food was distributed. I remember my first bath. I remember getting some clothes and sitting at the table with my mother. My dad was very ill and he physically, and to a point emotionally, never quite recovered. But my mother was a tower of strength through all of this and again now. So we were in Prague and now, what do we do? You know, we can't stay here, but we had to stay long enough to regain some strength. And then they decided that my father's uncle, the legendary uncle Leon Goldman, brother of my grandmother Wolman. He lived in Switzerland, and the aim became to reach him, but how? What do you do? There was no way. So then, we started a journey that is an unbelievable story on its own and I won't go into all of it. We were in the Russian Zone. We were in Czechoslovakia and then we were in the Russian territories so to speak. And to get to the American-occupied areas of Germany was just the aim of everybody.

**JE:** Were the Russian soldiers kind to you or sweet to you always and accommodating?

**EU:** I had no bad experiences. Those first Russian soldiers who gave us food, they were very good to us. I have since heard stories that the Russians right after all of this were already closing the borders. And that with the second wave of Russian troops, there were horrendous atrocities committed by them toward anybody. Again, we were just very enclosed and you didn't know what to expect or who was your enemy or who was your friend. But it was known that the thing to do was in some way to reach the American Zone, which we did. We had nothing to carry. We had no belongings, but somehow we walked and some others managed to walk through the countryside into the American occupation zone of Germany. We walked through no man's land so to speak.

**JE:** So that was many days?

**EU:** Oh yes, yes, many days but we were used to this. At this point we had some strength and we walked and there were some others too. You should know, there's a wonderful book written by a historian and her name is Ruth—oh, I will think of it in a minute...I'm so sorry. And there is also a book written by a Tulan, a history professor at TU, Dr. Jay Geller about being safe for Jews. The safe place after the war was in Germany. The book that Ruth has written is called *Safe Among the Germans*. Why? Because that was the place that the English and the French and the Americans set up the displaced person's home, the camps, DP camps. They were set up to help those who survived the German concentration camps. And those DP camps were set up in Germany and that was the safe place to be under the protection of the British and the French and the Americans.

**Chapter 20 - 6:10****Ludwigsburg**

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**Eva Unterman:** So you see, the story continues. On our way, somehow to reach Uncle Leon, we traveled in whatever way was available, hitchhiking...everybody was on the move. And then we spent the night in a German town not far from Stuttgart. We were traveling toward Stuttgart and we hitchhiked a ride on a truck. It was evening and the driver of the truck said, "You know Stuttgart is bombed, you won't find a place to stay the night. But we are going to drive to this little town, 14 kilometers from Stuttgart called Ludwigsburg, that town has not been bombed." Because traditionally large cities were bombed and small towns were left standing. He said, "I'll drop you off here and you spend the night." He told us what to do. "And then tomorrow you can continue your trip to Stuttgart." He dropped us off by these tall stairs in front of a church in Ludwigsburg. I remember that so clearly. And as we got off the truck, my father grabbed his chest and he fell. My mother told me to stay with him and she ran for help. And it's in Ludwigsburg by chance, I'd never heard of the place before, that we, after all kinds of long struggles stayed. And it is in Ludwigsburg, in 1952 where I met an American soldier Herb Unterman, who became my husband, and that is how I came to the United States.

**John Erling:** Your father then, he grabbed his chest, what was happening?

**EU:** Well, mother ran for help and this wasn't far from the mayor's office in that city. And what happened in those towns was that when the Nazis fled, whoever the mayor was and his cronies, they fled. And the occupation force installed people who were in opposition to the Nazis, they were either known or brought in from France or somewhere and installed as mayors of these little towns and big cities. So first, they got someone to take care of my dad. He had suffered a heart attack. And, I don't know if I should go into all of this that happened afterwards because it's all so unbelievable. There was no plan. You just tried to survive. Okay, the war is over. We are no longer hunted but we have to eat, you have to have a roof over your head, and there we were in Ludwigsburg, where there were no other Jewish people. And the mayor who was installed by the French, he wanted to help us. He became a friend. And the story from then on just takes on all kinds of strange circumstances.

**JE:** Your father, did he survive that heart attack?

**EU:** Yes, my father did but he was very weak.

**JE:** Is that where your parents continued to live until their death?

**EU:** Correct. Yes. They tried to leave. We were on our way to Cyprus to go to Israel, all kinds of things happened, but eventually they returned to Ludwigsburg where there was safety

and life. My brother was born there in 1948. It was always just for the time being. But then when they realized that they couldn't go anywhere right away. They didn't know what to do with me. I had just had a little bit of schooling and I was 12 years old. No one knew what to do with me. I was concerned about one thing, to look like a girl. My hair was just beginning to grow in and I wanted to be like all of the other girls. We didn't talk about the past, very few people did. That is true of many survivors and American veterans. People just wanted to go on living and the past was not talked about. No one asked and no one talked. Most people who survived were late teens and early adults, those that were strong enough, young adults. Old people, there weren't any old people who survived and very, very few children. Were it not for the factory, I wouldn't be here now. So in Bergen-Belsen those people who survived, lost their families, husbands, wives and, of course, the children...within a very short time they found a mate and were married and had children very soon afterward. The highest rate of babies born was at that time, in the 1940s after the war in the DP camps, particularly in Bergen-Belsen. I was involved in bringing a program about it to Tulsa. I have books on it. There was this need to live. It's a very strong impulse among humans and we see it in the garden among nature also. Jewish people traditionally have overcome nothing like this, but horrendous, horrendous tragedies and went on, and that was the focus of most, to go on.

## Chapter 21 - 5:40

### Israel?

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**John Erling:** You were 19 years old when you met your husband Herb?

**Eva Unterman:** Correct.

**JE:** What was going on in your life between 12 and 18? Were you getting an education then?

**EU:** Well, like I started saying, they didn't know what to do with me. I spoke Polish and a little bit of German. They couldn't put me in first grade, so they decided to put me in a German school just for the time being with my contemporaries and I had private tutoring all along. And I attended school in Germany in Ludwigsburg and I also took classes in Stuttgart at the Academy Arts School. I loved art. I loved drawing. You know, kids now sit and play video games. I used to either read or draw and paint and do that sort of stuff. My formal education is limited by those years but I've always been an avid reader.

**JE:** So your contemporaries were ahead of you in their education?

**EU:** Oh totally. I didn't even speak the language. And besides German in those days in German

high schools there weren't any electives. You weren't given just choices. So besides German, which of course these kids grew up with, I had to learn English and French and I learned quickly. I think that when kids are motivated, they learn quickly. It wasn't easy.

**JE:** So did you continue through high school?

**EU:** Yes.

**JE:** You did graduate from high school?

**EU:** In a way, yes, I didn't ever get a (inaudible), but I went all the way through with my contemporaries.

**JE:** Right.

**EU:** When it came to history and to language I did quite well. Math was a puzzle to me then and well, I am better at it now.

**JE:** The fact that you were a natural student, you were a reader, you enjoyed books, you educated yourself.

**EU:** Absolutely, yes and I still do. I am a curious person by nature and history has always been my favorite subject.

**JE:** By the time you met your husband and then came to the United States in 1953, your parents had passed away by that time?

**EU:** No.

**JE:** Okay so you left them then, both of them then?

**EU:** That's right.

**JE:** Both of them then were living at the time?

**EU:** That's right.

**JE:** And was that the last time that you saw them?

**EU:** No.

**JE:** Okay then tell us.

**EU:** Well, my husband and I met when he was stationed there and as I said he was an American soldier. He was stationed in Germany during the Korean War. We met. My parents at that point had a little shop that originally was for the Allied troops only and it's another unbelievable story. This mayor that my mother and father befriended, this French man, had an idea since we couldn't go anywhere. Now there was an attempt. We were going to Israel as most Jews wanted to go to America or Israel. America was impossible. The United States I should say was impossible to get a visa to. We were all stateless at the end of the war. All concentration camp survivors were stateless. But when it came to immigration, we were on the quota of the country of our birth. I would probably be still waiting. Everybody wanted to come to the U.S. and to what was then Palestine. But there was the Jewish Brigade, the Jewish Army that was forming in the region called Palestine and they made attempts to bring some survivors over. The ship

the Exodus, you know that story, it was made into a film and I met Ruth Gruber who wrote about it originally. Anyway, we too, my family wanted to go to Israel, first America, but Israel, Palestine. And, we joined this group and as we were traveling on this truck, it was on this truck that my mother who always spoke with strangers, starting speaking with the Jewish soldiers who were helping to transport us illegally. We were heading toward Cyprus, which was a camp for people to stay at, for the survivors mostly that had the need for a homeland. And as we were approaching the city, my mother was speaking to him and he said, "You know you are going to a camp, there's no telling when you'll go to Israel or Palestine." It was Eretz Israel, that's been the traditional name by Jews in Europe for a long, long time, Eretz Israel, the land of Israel. My mother knew she had two brothers there, but couldn't get in touch with them. But when she told this soldier who her brother was, especially one, he knew him. And he said, "You don't want to go to Cyprus, you'll be in a camp there and there is sickness and it's a terrible situation." My parents had no idea and at this point the word camp...they weren't going to go to a camp. We got off of the truck outside Munich and hitchhiked a ride back to Ludwigsburg.

## Chapter 22 - 5:40

### Herb Unterman

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**Eva Unterman:** So we returned to Ludwigsburg to the Mayor who was so happy to see us. He had an idea. He found us a place to live and he had an idea. All the stores were closed. No shops were open. All of the soldiers, the Americans and the French that were there, the occupation soldiers wanted souvenirs. So he had the idea that there was a little store and some guy had owned it, some big Nazi, and he had left. And with his connections and my mother's ambition and strength, they could open a shop for the Allied soldiers only, which they did. There was no merchandise that one could buy, so we made souvenirs. Mother and I would sit at night, my father too, but he did more of the writing stuff. She made her pillows out of whatever fabric that the Mayor with his connections could get. Again, she made her famous pillows. I would write "Souvenir of Germany" on empty cardboard boxes that we got somewhere with pencils. We opened the shop like at noon, the word got around. There were soldiers, Americans, this used to be French territory then it became American. They sat on the sidewalk waiting for the shop, which was named after the Mayor's daughter, to open for a couple of hours. We sold our souvenirs and went home and started making more souvenirs. And eventually, other stores opened, a few, but

they did. Ours stayed a little gift shop and it was in 1952 that this American soldier came in. Mother didn't know much English but learned quickly. But any American soldier, you know, they were our friends, our liberators. And this young man came in. I'll show you a picture of him. And he started talking to mother who didn't know much English but that didn't stop her from talking. If they didn't understand her, it wasn't her fault it was theirs, so she was just making conversation. And he showed her what he wore around his neck, which was a Mezuzah. A Mezuzah is a Jewish sign just like the Star of David is a sign. He showed it to her, and Wow, a Jewish-American, that's instant family and she of course invited him to go home with her and she would fix him a home-cooked meal. And this young soldier from Brooklyn, New York and I became friends. And then when he left a few months after that, we continued to write and he asked if I would come to the United States and we would get married. Of course, what a question! First of all, he was so much fun to be with. Herb Unterman had a great sense of humor. He was an American. Anything American was to me magical. And I met people, soldiers and their families and thought this was the real, good world. Then it started, how am I going to get any papers? We didn't have any money. He didn't and we didn't. So, he had an idea. His family had relatives in Toronto, Canada and I found out it was much easier to get a visa to Canada. So under a false pretense I managed to do that. And I left in late January 1952 on a ship through Paris to Halifax and eventually to Toronto where Herb and his parents waited for me. We were married in the Holy Blossom Temple two days after I arrived on February 4th, 1953. I had to stay six months in Toronto to get papers to come to the United States. And I then of course studied for citizenship, which was very important to me and still is.

**John Erling:** Where did you enter the United States?

**EU:** We went to Niagara Falls and entered through there. On legal papers I'm a legal citizen. I have spoken to naturalization groups of people who became citizens and I never take anything in this country for granted. I appreciate what it stands for and I believe in it. Of course now I've lived here for so long but it's so easy for people to take it for granted. Wow, there is no place on earth like the United States. There are people who are unfortunate. But the idea of the U.S. that everybody has a chance to persevere, to make whatever dreams they have possible...it is just as real now as it was when I came here in 1953.

**Chapter 23 - 3:50****Tulsa**

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**John Erling:** Then you settled down where?

**Eva Unterman:** That would be too easy. I've never lived anywhere that I'd ever heard of before. Now my husband is from New York. And even though I am married to an American citizen, I had to stay in Canada six months. He was then managing a store with a company. By the time I came to New York, he was transferred to Charlotte, North Carolina. I had never heard of it before. And here his parents had picked me up and shown me New York and the Statue of Liberty and all of this and then we drove to Charlotte. Well, all I knew about the American South is from reading about Scarlett O'Hara. Here I come, you know it was that kind of a naive feeling, but a beautiful feeling. So we were in Charlotte. From Charlotte we moved back to New York and from there to Amarillo, Texas where my son Steve Unterman was born. From Amarillo, we were transferred to Pampa in the panhandle of Texas. Do you know where Pampa is? It is in the middle of nowhere. And we lived in Pampa and then in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. In those days, companies moved their store managers like the Army does, always to an advancement.

**JE:** What kind of store was this?

**EU:** This was a junior department store in those days.

**JE:** And the name again was?

**EU:** Lintz.

**JE:** Lintz. So then...

**EU:** Then when we came back to New York...my husband when he was in Germany he just talked about New York. "You know, it's a great, great city." It is a great city, but we realized that wouldn't be where we wanted to settle. I mean I was in a state of shock coming from the Black Forest area of Germany to New York, but oh, I adapt easily. It was an exciting time. We were young, what did we have to lose? Whenever we moved, we had nothing, you know. We eventually bought a car. Then he got to know someone who owned Levine's Department Store and we went to Amarillo and Pine Bluff and Tulsa with Levine's. It was a small department store way out north, Pine and Cincinnati or something like that. What happened then was once we came to Tulsa, this is where we were going to stay. Everything about the city appealed to us. To me, the trees, green country, it's true. And we stayed here and they wanted to transfer us again and we said, "No." Our son had just turned five and started kindergarten and we wanted for him to grow up in a place he would call home. Herb quit and went to work with Zales Jewelers where he managed a store for over 25 years. When he retired from Zales he worked part-time at Moody's in Utica Square.

**JE:** And you worked?

**EU:** And I worked for Brooks Brothers. Prior to that, I spent 11 years teaching preschoolers. I was the Director of Temple Israel Preschool. When my daughter who was born in Tulsa turned three years old, I was doing that, working with young children. Then I needed to do something else and I went into retail, which I learned from my parents in that little shop in Germany.

**JE:** I just want to ask you some overall reflections.

**EU:** Sure. I hope I am not talking too much.

**JE:** Oh no, this is terribly interesting.

## Chapter 24 - 3:12

### Return to Lodz

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**John Erling:** Have you ever returned to Lodz?

**Eva Unterman:** Yes, I never really wanted to, but at the same time when we were invited to Dresden, and again I can look it up but I am pretty sure it was in 2002 that Herb and I went to Lodz.

**JE:** Did you find your house where you grew lived?

**EU:** Well, this was an adventure that I have actually written about. It's an incredible story. I didn't want to go and didn't go to any of the concentration camps. I didn't want to see this for me. I think it's very good that people see it, but I remember what it was like, and I didn't want to go like a tourist going to see these places. But it was an incredible event. We connected with an organization called Our Roots in Poland, which is sponsored by the Lauder Foundation. We had someone meet us in Warsaw when we arrived there. He took us around and showed us where the Warsaw Ghetto was, and all of the things that I have read about it, I now saw. And then he drove us to Lodz. Odd as it was, I made the arrangements in Tulsa through a travel agent, and she suggested that we stay in the Grand Hotel. As it turned out, that was a few buildings away from where my father grew up and where I lived with grandma Wolman when I was first born. This was the main thoroughfare and that building still stands. It's now an office building. So here we are walking, my husband and I, back and forth, and our guide made arrangements for us to see the building from the inside. I tried to remember. I remember standing as a child by the window looking out. That's what I tried to do and have the memories come back. Of course, much has changed. We went to the Ghetto area. I looked for the well where I was

hidden. I never found it. Much, much has been changed- that Ghetto area is still poverty riddled and in a bad part of Lodz. It was very, very interesting and emotional. And staying in that hotel, the Grand Hotel, on this main thoroughfare, they were playing 1930s music trying to preserve the “before the war” atmosphere. And with my father as a young man living so close to it, and with my mother, she loved to dance. We sat there. There was the dance floor and it was empty but there was music and I tried to imagine my parents, as young people, dancing on that dance floor in the Grand Hotel while dating.

## **Chapter 25 - 5:20**

### Catholic Church

**John Erling:** Let’s go back, your mother and father then eventually died in what years?

**Eva Unterman:** My father died in his 70s and my mother died at 81. I will get the dates. I have them written down. I have no sense for numbers.

**JE:** And you were here in the United States when they died?

**EU:** Yes, I did visit my parents. My mother came to visit twice. My father never did because he was never well enough. I visited them several times. My father had ultimately Parkinson’s and the last time I saw him he had hallucinations from the medicine. When I came into his room, he told me to hide and to run because he thought of the nurses and the doctors as the SS.

**JE:** You know there’s a whole study about the relationship between the Polish people and the Jews, which is extraordinary. These righteous gentiles as they are called that risked their lives to save Jews.

**EU:** Yes.

**JE:** And yet there was plenty of anti-Semitism in pre-War Poland.

**EU:** That’s right.

**JE:** Many Poles actually risked their lives to aid Jews.

**EU:** Absolutely yes. Because people, you know are people. And even though unfortunately the Catholic Church did not speak up. I don’t think they would have stopped Hitler, but it would have encouraged more people to help their Jewish neighbors had the Pope at the time spoken up in defense of the Jews. But there was consideration that it may anger Hitler, you see, the appeasement thing is a whole other issue I won’t get into. But have you ever heard of Irena Sendler? Have you heard of Life in a Jar, a play?

**JE:** I think I have heard of it.

**EU:** Yes. Well, here is a woman, a young, Christian Polish woman who with the assistance of an organization saved 1,500 Jewish children, one at a time, by smuggling out of the Warsaw Ghetto. She gave them new identities. She taught them how to behave as Catholics. She found places for them one at a time, but what she did is most admirable. She saved their true identities and where they were hidden and she put the little notes in a jar that she left under a tree at her home. What a wonderful, wonderful person. And then a teacher from Uniontown, Kansas found this story some years ago and told it to his students and they visited Irena when she was already in her 90s and they have written a play, *Life in a Jar*. It's touring all over the world. Uniontown, Kansas. Irena Sendler and Warsaw.

**JE:** Despite the fact that the Allies and the United States put an end to all of this, it took them a long time to finally be convinced that what was happening was actually going on. The mass killings, they were dismissed as exaggerations. And so the reports of two Jewish prisoners I understand who escaped Auschwitz in 1944, details were broadcast June 15th, 1944 by the BBC and then published by *The New York Times*.

**EU:** Correct.

**JE:** So it could not be ignored, it had to be dealt with. It took all of that time. So does that go through your head?

**EU:** Unlike what I thought, that if only the U.S. or the world knew...they knew. But what I have read is a number of stories. First of all, there was a lot of anti-Semitism in this country. In the 1930s there were strict quotas of how many Jews can enter and President Roosevelt was very much aware of what was going on. But from the accounts that I read, his main vision—and what he had to do was defeat Germany in the war and by doing so everything would be settled. Now there were airplanes, American airplanes bombing factories around Auschwitz but they didn't drop a single bomb on the railroad tracks and people ask me what I think about it. To be perfectly honest, I don't know if it would have made a difference. So instead of running the trains they would walk people. They would find a method of killing us. The United States entered the war after Pearl Harbor. It was not to rescue us. In reality, as I tell our dear friends the American WWII Veterans, because of what they have done defeating Germany, we were rescued. But that was not their mission.

**Chapter 26 – 5:14****Anti-Semitism**

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**Eva Unterman:** You know the story of the Saint Louis Ship, which we have in our Sherwin Miller Museum and I again was in charge of a program. In 1939, that was the last ship to leave Hamburg, Germany for Cuba. It took a great deal of persuasion and money to have these people leave Germany, most of them were children, for Cuba where they were given asylum, or were supposed to get asylum. The parents of some of them were already in Havana. But when the ship came to Cuba, the government changed its mind and did not allow them port of entry. There were 936 people on that ship. There were telegrams sent and phone calls and what have you to the United States 90 miles away, to allow those people to temporarily come to the U.S. And the answer was our immigration quota is full. We're not taking any more people in and the ship had no choice but to return to Europe. Some countries, Belgium, Holland, Europe and France took some of the people. Those that went to England did survive. Those other countries when they were overrun by Germany, the people were trapped again. I know a child who is now my age who was on the ship. He was with his mother. His father was already in Havana. Henry Blumenstein. They went back. His mother found a hiding place for him in Holland where he hid and survived. She herself was killed in Auschwitz. Ninety miles away from our shores, immigration, bureaucracy, anti-Semitism, and everything else combined. Unfortunately, the U.S. did not set out to help the Jews.

**JE:** Why do you think the Jews were hated so much?

**EU:** That is an age-old question and you are a historian also. Ever since the destruction of the second temple we have been all over the world. And as far as why, much of it goes to, I am sorry to say it, the Catholic Church's anti-Semitism. And that goes back to the idea that the church perpetrated that the Jews killed Jesus. And as we of course know, Jesus was a Jew, and we respect Jesus. We only have one God. And it has been this way through history and it is now still going on. This is the original hatred on which anti-Semitism was built. And I think there is more to it. There is some jealousy because in many countries Jews by being studious and hard working have accomplished things and also maintained some traditions that were foreign, such as wearing certain clothes or covering their head. In Judaism, just like in Christianity, there are different traditions. There is the Orthodox branch. There are the conservatives and the reform movement. We all believe in the one God. But we express our traditions in different ways. But there has been historically and is again a perception by people who hate Jews for all of these reasons I just mentioned that, you know, the old stereotypical stuff that is again being

(talked about) on the Internet and other places. The Jews rule the world. The Jews are this—the Jews are that. There is a poster that shows a caricature of a Jew with the flag of Communism, the old Soviet flag, and our American flag representing Capitalism. And there are people who blame the Jews for Capitalism and for Communism at the same time. It shows the ridiculous assumption that is being perpetuated by different people for different reasons. And what has been traditionally anti-Semitism is now by many translated into Anti-Zionism, in other words, hate the Jews, hate Israel. Israel can do no good, no matter what, in the opinion of others, not my opinion.

## Chapter 27 - 4:18

### Why Eva Speaks

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**John Erling:** That brings me to the point here as we finish that for a long time you didn't speak out. But in 1978 you spoke for the first time to a classroom of students here in Tulsa. So you've been speaking out and you have been going to schools and you are speaking out today here on this website [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com). Tell us why you continue to speak out.

**Eva Unterman:** This is an obligation for me. For many years, I, and others did not speak about this horrendous past. We didn't speak and no one asked. Historians tell us that it takes about 50 years before something becomes part of history. Who would have believed us then, our bizarre stories? Nobody would have. And most of us wanted to go on with our lives. We didn't talk. Not amongst ourselves either. When I went to school in Germany in the late 1940s this wasn't mentioned. But it's the same here. My two children attended Tulsa Public Schools and it just wasn't talked about. It just didn't exist. And I think for a number of reasons, it was too bizarre to believe and our wounds were too raw to talk about it. Now, there is an urgency of time and I must tell you that this is what I am committed to, and have been gradually since 1978 when a teacher called me and wanted me to speak to his school. He's a history buff and he talked about WWII and about the Holocaust and that was the start. And then, even though it is not mandated in Oklahoma, I am committed to telling the story to young people to impress upon them how we are capable of doing these incredible atrocities toward other human beings and hoping against hope—as we speak there is Darfur and other areas where crimes are committed. But, hopefully young people will learn from our experience to speak up early on. To care about the other person, to become what my tradition teaches me human beings should be. We are all God's children, all

on this little planet together. And if we are to survive as a species, we must learn not only to tolerate, but also to respect one another. I hope that our information and our testimony will in some way lead to making that a reality.

**JE:** Would it be fair to say that what you are doing here, because anti-Semitism still exists, that didn't go away in the 1940s, it still exists in 2010. So what you are doing and others like you, are merely trying to keep it stomped down by talking about these atrocities and what we are capable of, so that the world is aware that even though this, shall I say flame of Anti-Semitism is still burning—we shall never, ever let it become a major flame. And that is why you are doing this.

**EU:** Absolutely. You said it very, very well and it is part of my tradition, as we do each year during Passover, we remember when we were slaves in Egypt. It's our responsibility to remember our past and teach others that freedom is something that we all must work toward for ourselves and for every oppressed person anywhere.

## Chapter 28 - 3:50

### Without A State

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**John Erling:** You think because the Jews did not have their country, you were the wandering Jews, it was easy to dismiss here in the United States. Here are the ones who liberated you, but they are also the ones who are very slow to embrace what was happening. That because, if you had Israel as a country, and it had to be dealt with as a country then the plight of the Jews would have been different.

**Eva Unterman:** Absolutely, and that is something else that I am very much committed to. Israel is our security. Had Israel existed during WWII, during the years of the 1930s through 1945, had we had a place to go, a place of rescue that would take us in as people who would belong to that land. In all Jewish history, in all Jewish religious services and among people who aren't religious, Israel has always been at the very top of our consciousness. A Jew always prays for the safety of Jerusalem. It was a nation at one time and through history as it happened Jerusalem was destroyed and we were at the mercy of other countries. They could invite us in. They needed workers or for whatever reason and then kicked us out and we would go someplace else. All over the world there are Jewish Synagogues and places of worship and Jewish history tied in and wherever Jews have been, they took the culture of that country and influenced their ways of life. That is true of food. I am often asked what is the Jewish food? And it depends where you lived,

Eastern Europe or perhaps in Iraq or Iran or somewhere else. Different countries have made an influence but we are steadfast about our own identity.

**JE:** Right and if Israel would have been a state back through all of this, you would have had a government who was speaking out for you at all times and you just didn't have that.

**EU:** That's right, speaking out, yes, and also acting on our behalf. What I often tell the veterans, why I consider them so important in my life and our lives, there have been conferences, as there are now, usually in lovely places like somewhere in Geneva and they discuss things like this and that. But you know, who liberated us? Soldiers, sad but true. In an ideal, Utopian world, we could sit and discuss our differences and come to an agreement, but that's not where we are. And I think that Israel's strength, as a country, is very important. It's important to the United States to have an ally in that part of the world and it's very important for a number of reasons for Jewish people no matter where we are. I'm an American and I cherish being here and living in this country. And my children, my great revenge against Hitler, my children and my grandchildren are Americans. Judaism is our religion, but we have a close tie to the state of Israel and many of us see the importance of it.

**JE:** Yes.

## Chapter 29 - 5:27 Through Eva's Eyes

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**John Erling:** Were you a religious family and did it play a part in your survival?

**Eva Unterman:** No, that's a simple answer, but I will elaborate for just a minute having said so categorically no. My parents were very assimilated into the Polish culture, particularly my father's family. We only spoke Polish. Yiddish was not spoken in my home. My mother comes from a more traditional Jewish family. That's why her two brothers left Poland in the early 30s as Zionists and went to Palestine. I always knew that I was Jewish but we did not participate in all of the Jewish festivals and celebrations. There were some. My parents were very choosy about it. We observed Passover. We observed Yom Kippur. They always said the Prayer for the Departed, people who died and their parents. And I always knew I was Jewish but I did not have what I have come to appreciate living in this country, a Jewish community, being part of it and observing Jewish holidays which gave me a great deal of pleasure.

**JE:** That's what you are a member of now. You are a member of that religious community.

- EU:** I am, and I am most grateful for that. In Tulsa we have a small but vibrant Jewish community and I feel very much a part of it. I have so much to be grateful for.
- JE:** Yes.
- EU:** I am a grateful, grateful person to still be around and have wonderful children, my son and daughter and their spouses and great grandchildren Sophie, Phoebe and Jacob.
- JE:** Yes, you are very fortunate and I know you are very grateful.
- EU:** And I am grateful to you, for doing this, for asking me these questions and having the opportunity to speak about it. I really feel good about being part of the Oklahoma community. So, I thank you very much.
- JE:** Thank you. You did a wonderful job. Let's just say a word about the book. A book has been published about your life, tell us about it.
- EU:** Well, my granddaughter Phoebe, to whom by the way I didn't talk about my story when she was a youngster. But I was invited to come to Kansas City when Sophie who is two years older than Phoebe was in sixth grade or fifth grade, I don't recall. Phoebe was allowed to come to the class and hear her grandmother speak. And then years later, when Phoebe was 13, she was given an assignment to write a story. She's always been writing and illustrating. Both of my kids are artistic and I think they are very talented. And she thought and thought and then one day she decided to write the story based on my childhood. And she really wanted to tell the story only up to the war, my childhood before the war. But her teacher wanted to know more and didn't want to end it right there in 1939. And so Phoebe worked on this, writing and illustrating. She entered a contest through a publisher called Landmark Publishing in Kansas City and she won and the book was actually published last November. It is called Through Eva's Eyes and she wrote and illustrated it. It's for children primarily. She was very sensitive in telling my story and doing research on her own. It is appropriate for kids I would say from 5th grade and up. It tells the story without all of the cruelty described that I was talking about. It's for kids. I am very, very proud of her for doing this. There is a great deal of interest in it. Phoebe and I were invited by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. for a book signing. She has her own website. It is [throughevaseyesonline.com](http://throughevaseyesonline.com) where she tells about the process she underwent and the story. So again, what more can one wish for?
- JE:** Well, as the Germans took the young children away because they were the future, this book is for the children here, because they are the future.
- EU:** That is so beautifully said, I am going to write that down. I could never come up with anything so eloquent, and I thank you for saying that.
- JE:** To hear this story told...I've never sat down and talked to anybody about it before. Now this story is preserved. Thank you Eva, you did a wonderful job.

**EU:** Thank you. Thank you so very, very much. I truly appreciate it and what can I say, this has been an incredible experience for me. You have asked the most important questions.

### **Chapter 30 - 0:25**

#### **Conclusion**

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**John Erling:** You have just heard the remarkable story of Eva Unterman, one of the few children to survive World War II. Eva's granddaughter Phoebe has written a children's book called *Through Eva's Eyes* about her grandmother's early life in Poland and it's available in our bookstore. This listening experience was made possible through the generous donations of our founding underwriters on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).