

Transcript:

Erna Preis

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Interviewer: This is Ruth Tanner and it is June 10th, 1990, and we're interviewing Erna Preis. Erna, let's talk a little bit about life in Leipheim. I hope I'm pronouncing that right.

Erna Preis: Correct.

Interviewer: Leipheim, Germany. Tell me what the town was like, what it was like for you as a Jew, and the town, that's sort of thing.

Erna Preis: Well, basically, I was born in a small town of Leipheim. We lived there until 1925. Then, we moved in another small town, about 1200 people, and the town...Germany is different than the United States. Most people were of the Protestant faiths. Now, there might be 9 to 10 Jewish families living in the town. We also had a small synagogue and, generally, we had wonderful relationship with all our neighbors. And in the small town, you know just everyone. When we moved in 1925, I went to a private school. School in Europe is approximately eight years, public school. If you wanted a better education, you had to pay for it. So, I went to what they call...we call that a Realschule. It was mostly for boys, but they took a small number of girls there, too. And after I graduated, I went into business, to get a profession. Well, as I said, in the small town, basically, people were mostly farmers. And, it is different in Europe. The farm, the people lived next door to each other, but the farm is outside of the little town. So, it was real nice living there and also very congenial. And when I went to public school, there was never any problem. But in 1933, Fascism came, and as it was, and it looked like all your neighbors, everyone, you felt like you were totally isolated.

Interviewer: These people who had previously been friendly and—

Erna Preis: Yes.

Interviewer: —congenial with you?

Erna Preis: Yes. And we had a neighbor. She said, one time, to my mother, my mother's name was Paula. "Now, Paula, if I want to be evil, I can say to the fascists now, you said..." Let's see..."You talked about them, or you said this or that." There would be no trial. You would wind up in prison. As it was, everything changed so rapidly. There was such a propaganda against the Jewish people that I sometimes felt even nice and good Christian people, got sort of afraid. And I remember one day, there stood a lot of young people in front of our house with guns and told the people not to come to us, from the small town.

Interviewer: To your father's business?

Erna Preis: Yeah, right. Just don't come, and the papers were just sort of full with propaganda and they talked about, of course, "Who isn't with us?" The fascist is against us. Then, they started off...Of course, the world doesn't realize that fascism and communism, they are both evil. One is to the right and the other is to the left. People have no choice of expression. People are living in constant fear. If you, for instance, were a Democrat, and you didn't agree with this, you wind up in slave labor camp like everybody else. And all at once, even in schools, everything was controlled, what's supposed to be taught, what's supposed to be said. But, in general, the Jewish people were to blame just for everything.

Interviewer: Can you remember a specific instance that happened to you that was anti-Semitic?

Erna Preis: Yes. I remember that. I lived in a little town and there was a little dance on a Saturday evening and there was a Christian young man. We went to school together. We were friendly. It wasn't anything, anything. All at once, at the dance, they had called out, "Jews not allowed." So I remembered trembling. I went out. He brought me home. And they told him...They called him all kinds of names then because he was kind enough, or decent, let's say, decent. And there were so many incidents which really happened to people which you really, like I wanted to say...One day, I was...Then, I took a job in the city, in an office, and I see these men coming in the big trucks and just smashing the windows in Jewish businesses, just everywhere. That was the beginning. That was as early as 1933. And then, as we were descent, God-fearing people, and whenever there

was something going on like in the little town, where you needed to give something, we were always there. It didn't make any difference, whether people were Christian or Jewish. People lived in harmony, I should say. Well, when I saw that then in the town, what really was going on, and one day, I walked home from work and I see boodles and oodles of people going to this big sports arena, and there Hitler spoke. And I had seen such a fanatic people. I said, "What is going wrong? How can one turn overnight?" I mean there were screams and the people raised their arms and I just got utterly afraid even walking by. And the brown shirts stood outside. And so, you were never sure. When you went some place, somebody might come up and ask you directly, "Are you a Jew?" Well, if you said yes, you don't know where you would have winded up. You need no provocation, absolutely nothing. And then, what actually really happened which was when we decided to come, I had a little brother and he was handicapped and he was burned alive. They put him, all these kids like when somebody, let's see, a child would be retarded or something. They said they want a race...the race shouldn't have any mixture of any nationalities or anything else. So, if someone was handicapped, they put gasoline on, put him in what I would say, in a barn and lit the barn and burn the kids alive.

Interviewer: Do you mean your brother was in like an institution?

Erna Preis: Well, yes—

Interviewer: And all the children were—?

Erna Preis: Yeah, he had...When he was a young boy, about 3 or 4, he had some kind of, like what you would now call it, we called it [unintelligible 0:08:39.4], something like the flu. In that town, in the little town, there was no doctor. There was no one. And so, he lost his speech. You see, that affected his speaking, and he was in a special school for children. And one day, they got there, the Nazis, of course, they talked...the race got to be cleaned. You got to have blond...You got to have blue eyes and blond hair and all those things.

Interviewer: And nothing defective? No? Not—

Erna Preis: But that didn't mean only for Jewish children. That meant others, too, the gypsies and all kinds of people which had handicaps. They were in their way.

Interviewer: How did your family find out about what happened to your brother?

Erna Preis: Well, strangely enough, we had gotten a letter. He was in the city from a relative who wrote what actually had happened.

Interviewer: And your parents were never notified that he had died?

Erna Preis: No, no. There wasn't such a thing. They snatched people from right, left, and it didn't make any difference. You need only maybe to voice your opinion; you could get snatched away. But you have to understand, it took Hitler maybe three to four years to get organized. When he came in all these other countries, he had already so much propaganda and so much was going on there that was just like lightning. They rounded the people up. Now, my father, of course, didn't have any means of support. As I said, we were people who had had a little small acreage and we planted our own food. We had our own cattle. And it was just like...my father couldn't go to the barber where he had been going all these years because Jews were not allowed. So, my sister and I decided, "We are leaving. We're coming to the United States."

Interviewer: How old were you then?

Erna Preis: I was 20.

Interviewer: And your sister?

Erna Preis: She was 19. But now coming back to something in the business which I worked, that became "Aryanized," as it were. The Fascists and put someone in this business, to run his business. And all the Jewish people lost their jobs right then and there. And you had no leg to stand on. You had no place to go, no one to talk to, and the Jewish community, many of the Jewish people mostly lived in small towns. But Europe is different. I could walk from one little town to the other in 20 minutes.

Interviewer: It will be like living in a suburb and going to another one.

Erna Preis: Right. And you know, you had no transportation. People had no cars or anything like that. And of course, as I said, since I left fairly early, and that was just the beginning, but you could, everyday, in the paper, you could read all their stories. And one time, there was a farmer my father did business with, and we were very friendly. They had once a big fire and we let their cows stay at our little acreage, our little farm which we had. And one day, there were what you call the [Jungers (sp), 0:12:37.7] the right-wing Germany. It was different. He was very extremely wealthy. He never worked on his land and maybe Polish workers or German workers worked the land. And one day, he said, "You know, I am a [Junger (sp) 0:12:57.8] and that meant right-wing. They go back to the history of Germany. If we should get to rule Germany, we will cut the throats of all the Jewish people in Germany. And you know, my father fought in the First World War as a German soldier for four years for his country and he worked for some kind of growth for his country, was two-year soldier inactive. That meant, inactive, the army was requisition, and he came home and said, "Mr. Roteman(sp) said that to me today." But how can anyone, the loyalty and all I fought for my country, how can anyone think that way? We didn't realize that that can happen every place, any place. You need to say it long enough. I could say something, this country of course is made up of all kinds of nationalities, all people, all creeds, all color, all religions. I could point out someone. Let's say the Italian people...I keep saying long enough, long enough. You will find enough followers. So, at this time, we didn't realize really, but there was another question. The world was totally silent. We didn't know what to do, where to go. And there was a quota system in the United States. If you were German, there was a certain part. If you will happen to be Polish or Hungarian which was the east in Germany, the quota was so low where you couldn't get entry visa.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you and your sister Lily decided to leave when you were 20 and she was 19. What happened then? How did you go about leaving?

Erna Preis: Well, my family had settled in Nashville, and they came out to see the family and see what was going on.

Interviewer: Is this the May family?

Erna Preis: Yeah, right. And see what's going on. And my mother had a cousin and he said, "Dark days for the Jewish people, will come," we don't believe it. If we had read Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, everybody who didn't believe like this thought they

should believe, was in the way. Now, it was easy to call you a Bolshevik whether you have been one or not. And there was so much uncertainty, people losing their jobs. So we talked that over with our family and I never forget what my mother said. She said, "I've always been thinking there is a future for my children in Germany." After all, we were very German. At that time, I say that was our country. And like, This is my country, America, like I'm very American. This is my country. "I always thought my children had a future here. But maybe you are the forbearers. Who knows what is coming, what I see. But if you have made a decision, you both go. One alone cannot go. You and your sister have to go together. If we should never get out, so you'll have each other." You see, there was quite a difference in age. My sister and I were born before the First World War. And the rest of my two brothers and my sister were born after the First World War. But when you really come back to the history of Germany, one doesn't understand, we do not understand world history, what it really was. Germany always started the war. In 1870-71, there was a war against France. 1940 was another war. Then came, the Second World War. So, Germany always was the, what should I say, the originator. And the First World War started so innocently on account of the assassination of the Crown Prince of Austria. I mean it's not enough reason really to start a world war. So, when we then came to the United States, of course, I had three years of English and also three years of French, but as you know, there's a limitation. But we were lucky, we found jobs. It was directly after the Depression.

Interviewer: Let me back up a minute so I'm sure we understand. So you and Lily, the May family came, and they offered affidavits for you and Lily?

Erna Preis: Right.

Interviewer: And then, you applied for immigration and you came to Nashville.

Erna Preis: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Erna Preis: That was—

Interviewer: When was that?

Erna Preis: That was in 1934, arrived March the 2nd, 1934 in Nashville.

Interviewer: And when you came here, where did you live?

Erna Preis: With our family.

Interviewer: You lived with—

Erna Preis: —met them until the rest of my family came.

Interviewer: I see, I see. So, now go on to say what you were doing, I'm going to come back to your family in a moment. So you and your sister then got work. You lived with Mortimer May—

Erna Preis: And Gertrude May. And we went to night school; we went to Watkins, and of course, what we were doing, they had a factory, we were sorting cards. Everything was done by what the people produced. There was a card filled out and this card, it had so many items on. It had to be sorted maybe five or six different operations while on it. So, that's the way we started out.

Interviewer: Did you work in the May Hosiery Mill?

Erna Preis: No, in the office.

Interviewer: In the office.

Erna Preis: My sister worked in the office, too.

Interviewer: I see.

Erna Preis: As I said, so...

Interviewer: Okay. To go back to what it was like for you in the hosiery mill. So, you both worked in the office and you were hoping meanwhile that the rest of your family would be able to come. Is that what happened?

Erna Preis: Yeah, right.

Interviewer: And did they?

Erna Preis: Yeah, they did come.

Interviewer: All of them.

Erna Preis: Uh-huh. In 1937, they came except my little brother who got—

Interviewer: Do you know when that happened when he died?

Erna Preis: No. Lots of things happened and there's no...

Interviewer: Okay. Did the remaining brothers and sisters, when they came, work on the hosiery mill, too?

Erna Preis: No, they went to school.

Interviewer: They did.

Erna Preis: They went to school to finish their schooling. You see, there was limitation in Germany, and like my sister, in the little town, she was a little...There's so much difference, age difference. And they sat down and there were just two Jewish children in the class, and the teacher started saying all kinds of terrible things

about them personally and just sent them home. So, they didn't get much of an education, you see. And there was no reason, and you couldn't do anything about it. With whom were you going to talk? With whom were you going to fight with what? And as I said, I don't know. And even the teachers, everybody just...You see, what happened, all the books and everything was written for the fascism, what's supposed to be taught.

Interviewer: Yes.

Erna Preis: And there was no...And if you thought different, you were afraid to get up and say, "I differ with you," what is going to happen to you.

Interviewer: Yes. When the remaining members of your family came, was there anybody at all left in Germany other than your youngest brother?

Erna Preis: I had my aunt, was in Camp [unintelligible 0:22:43.0.9] in France, my mother's only sister and the way she came, they lived in a small town in Baden, and she had gone to see my grandmother, and she got a telegram, she must come home immediately. And so they just picked up. Camp [unintelligible 0:23:05.4] was in France because they were on the other side of Germany. And so, what actually happened then, she had what they call is [unintelligible 0:23:21.3]. When she came, she was just skin and bones from not getting any food, and she was ill. She was very ill. And the way we had heard, it was the last ship out before the Second World War. And, they came on a French freighter which was going to Martinique which was a French possession at this particular time. The English took them prisoner at sea. The war had started. And so, they had been in Trinidad. They didn't have any money and we didn't know. They didn't take the francs in Trinidad because the franc didn't have any value; it was French money which they had. So, as it happened, she said for the first time, she saw a bar of soap and a towel, which the English had given them to clean up on ship. And just accidentally, there was a German-Jewish newspaper which was started by immigrants. And so, my mother glances through the paper and she sees her name. She sees in the paper—

Interviewer: Her sister—

Erna Preis: That they had become prisoners of...that the English took the ship prisoner. And so, we got, I think with the consulate in touch and we brought them here to the United States.

Interviewer: I see. Did they come to Nashville?

Erna Preis: Yeah, they came to Nashville. And they adopted a young boy which was the nephew on his side who was—the whole family perished and he was the only one who survived. And she came, but she was, through all these horrible experiences, she wasn't the same. Looked like she never got over it. She just was sort of resigned. Life didn't mean anything, there wasn't any value and how we [unintelligible] about this little boy. When the camp opened, some French nuns took some survivors in, and they came and as they were in the camp, my aunt had said to her other relatives, "Give me your names and your dates of birth." And we also just accidentally came a list out after the Second War that so many children were found, staying with the nuns. And they did work on the farms, all during the Second World War. There was that boy's name and they had adopted him later.

Interviewer: So, your aunt then brought the child to the United States?

Erna Preis: And he was, I think he was 12 years old, this child. He was about that tall and totally, I mean he had nothing to wear and totally malnourished; you could have seen and so that was part of...We were fortunate to get out before the Kristallnacht at least, and my parents got out.

Interviewer: Yes.

Erna Preis: But now, we had a house and the way they came and took our property away, they just came and confiscated our property before my parents left. And before you leave, you have to have everything in order. You can't leave except your taxes are paid and everything. You cannot even get a visa. Everything has to be in order. So he came. They called him. They can't leave. They were already there. They were ready to leave, they can't leave. Some guy at the tax office gave me a little slip of paper, put the figure on and said, "You owe me this much and don't you ever open them up, your mouth about that. If you do not pay that, I will see that you will not leave Germany." You see, people were so...just I don't know...I think, someone [unintelligible 0:28:12], I think a relative, but they got together and got the money together to help my parents to leave.

Interviewer: When your father and mother came here, did they set up a house? Did they have a business here?

Erna Preis: No, no. My father worked as a butcher and my mother was a housewife and she took in other people. We had a room in the house and I usually see they had worked so hard, darned their socks, that's European. We Americans throw them away, washing, I said, "You're always washing and ironing."

Interviewer: When you think back on it, what differences were there between your life in Germany as a family and your life in the United States and Nashville as a family?

Erna Preis: Well, life was very hard in the small town, as I said, either you had a farm or you were a small business man. But we were five children and things were, as I said, if I wore a dress and there was still some good parts in it, my little sister got a dress out of it. People were so...but, I think maybe this is, in general, as I said, we had our own milk and our own eggs. We lived in the country. We're just like everybody else.

Interviewer: And here? Was it harder or easier here?

Erna Preis: Well, when you have to leave your home, it's never easy. We were young. We were adaptable. I came to this country and I loved this country. I'll never forget...oh, they have such gorgeous stockings here. When you're young, you can easily adapt. I mean, the family, every single turmoil, you don't know the language. You have responsibility.

Interviewer: So, it was hard for your parents?

Erna Preis: Yeah, after all, like my mother said, "I thought my children had a future in my country." You see. But there is a great difference. Germany, you have to consider, has always been a powerful nation. And I can see very much what's happening now, that all the nations around Germany are very much afraid. What if she is rising as a power? After all, if you have entered...When we think about fascism, after all, fascism reached all over the world. It did not remain in Germany. Every country was in it. So, we Americans need to think really very hard. What if that freedom is gone, freedom is gone for everyone. Religion has very little to do with it. Of course, you point out certain people in order to get

there. Point out the Jews. It could be the black man. It could be...but if we are not on guard and freedom is meaning something to us, as I said, there is danger every day. As I said, we didn't want to realize what is happening. We said, "Well, what could that men do to us?" Like my father said. "What could he do?"

Interviewer: Speaking about Hitler.

Erna Preis: Yeah. "What could he do? I served my country. We are honorable people. What...just my religion is dead in the way?" That's what we saw it because we were the evil of everything. The communism, we were the evil of communism. There was hardly any communists in Germany. Everything was done under pretense. When the [Reichstag (sp) 0:32:57.3] burned. They did so much, it's unbelievable. Then, there comes another thing. I lived in a small town. When you really think, we think about things like that. This girl was a member of my family, but several generations back she married a Christian young man in a small town. And she said, "Well, my husband is Christian. I have a future here." Believe it or not, they didn't. One night, they came, and they left; the family, she and her husband, they had two children, left in a hurry. And she had sisters in the United States. They dug in people's past, unbelievable.

Interviewer: So she was considered Jewish even though—

Erna Preis: Well, yeah. Her father was the mayor of this little town. I mean his father, I should say. And she had converted to Christianity. And she felt totally she and Harvey is Christian. After all, she left her—

Interviewer: Religion?

Erna Preis: Judaism, her religion. "What can they do to me?" But that didn't mean anything. It didn't mean a thing. So, what I say, "When it befalls of country, we all suffer."

Interviewer: Yes.

Erna Preis: Some suffer more. Others suffer less. But we all. We don't know.

Interviewer: Let me come back to your family's life in Nashville, in the United States. You said that you loved it and you felt at home here and just enjoyed it. Was that true for everyone in your family? Did everybody come to feel that they had made a good choice and feel happy in the United States?

Erna Preis: Of course. When you know that, like I said, many people come maybe as an immigrant to the United States and say, "Well, the United States is not for me, but I can go back." There was no return. And the United States, as I said, there's individual freedom, worship as you please, go wherever you want to. And this was something and totally new experience for us. Even, as I wanted to say, when I really sometimes think back, one doesn't realize. When one is young, one doesn't think. When I was in school for instance, and the teacher had said...Something was pink. And the teacher had said, "No, that's blue." I don't know whether I would have gotten up and said to him, "Mr. Teacher, I think that isn't so." It was such a...how should I say it? There isn't anything like it. Everything...you had to be on time. You couldn't be tardy. You had to...everything...It's just a different nationality, a different people. And of course, if you grow up in this environment, you become like the people. As I said, I think I might have been afraid to oppose him in any way or form. Even if it would have been correct to say.

Interviewer: I'm going to ask you one more question about the May family. Since they brought you here and they were relatives, did they continue to be helpful to you?

Erna Preis: Yes. They brought hundreds of people over. All of this, so many...I think this is...many of the people, of course, had to wait.

Interviewer: Yes.

Erna Preis: You can imagine how many generations: my parents and then, I and my husband, our children and our grandchildren are here. So basically, four generations, when you really think. I wouldn't swap this country for any country in the world.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever gone back to Germany?

Erna Preis: No.

Interviewer: Did you ever want to?

Erna Preis: No. I do not have to feel...I think the young people are innocent, but I couldn't be in good conscience, go back and so much blood spilled, so much blood, unreasonable...And people accused and in turmoil and what do I want go back for? To think that, as I said, I don't have hate in my heart. But I couldn't go back and be very heartbroken.

Interviewer: Yes.

Erna Preis: It can be very hard.

Interviewer: I see. How do you think that your experiences before the war and then coming to this country as a young person affected you? Did they change you in any way do you think?

Erna Preis: Well, you know, yes, I think so. I have become Americanized in my thinking, in my way, in the love for this country. I appreciate the freedom and the opportunities people have regardless where you come from and what you believe. But the system in Europe where I was born, if your father was a doctor, the son would have become a doctor. If your father was a farmer, you would have remained a farmer. If your father was a carpenter, you would have remained...There was strictly sort of a caste like...

Interviewer: And there was more opportunity here?

Erna Preis: Yes. It's a different country and it's just made up of all kinds of people and I think everyone has contributed something and we have a choice here. Education was not free in Europe. Everything was expensive. Books were expensive. The education had to be paid for. So, you have so many opportunities in this country. Of course, I cannot speak about Germany. I'm gone since '34, what is today? Of course, we build all these countries up. The

Americans have built Germany up, built Japan up. Basically, it looks like they won the war.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes. How did these experiences...did they affect the way you feel about being Jewish?

Erna Preis: Well, I'm absolutely secure in my faith. I respect everyone else and I think regardless of what's going to happen in life, it's going to happen. And it has happened to many people who were, three generations go, converted to Christianity. They were just locked up like everybody else because they were not Aryan. And my Jewishness, I think I want to be a good person, a good person to all people and it doesn't affect me in any way. And I respect everyone else's belief as long as they believe.

Interviewer: Do you think that your experiences before the war and then coming here as you did had an effect on the way you brought up your own children?

Erna Preis: Well, one mistake, now I see that. We were so...what should I say? I couldn't quite express it. I think we were so disturbed about these conditions that we did not expose our children, and I think we didn't talk about it. We didn't want to talk about it. We thought maybe, as I said, we don't want to mar the future of our children, but I see today, it was a mistake. We should have started to talk about these atrocities years and years ago even to the world, I think. It is rather late to...Maybe, it isn't too late, but young people should learn in school what it really is. There have to be any...Do we expose our youth to know what it is and to realize it is as bad for them than it is for all.

Interviewer: You felt you and your husband didn't want to tell your children because you wanted to protect them?

Erna Preis: Yes.

Interviewer: But from what you're saying, that kind of protection in the end wasn't in their best interest. Was that right?

Erna Preis: Theirs and in all people. I think we should have, even after the Second World War, we never spoke what really had happened. People learned about it when they came to the camps, but there was no teaching in the world.

Interviewer: And you feel that lack. Did you see it in your own children? That lack of understanding?

Erna Preis: No, I think they know. Later, as they got more mature, and we talked and we talked to the grandchildren, yes. But it's hard to be born in the United States and to understand Europe and the division in Europe, the different personality, the different people. The Italians are different than the Polish and each people...And you can go to Germany. It's one nationality. We come to the United States, it's people from all over which is good. And it is, as I said, each country has a different standard, different...everything is different. You know, it's hard for them what I wanted to say, we have a German background. I'm sure that have we taught our children what we were taught in a way...that maybe they teach them something different in a different country, in Italy. Then, you have to realize that immigrants come, they have to live among themselves. It's not as much in Nashville. When I came to Nashville, we went to Watkins, well, they had never heard people coming from abroad. But when you went to New York, the Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, all nationalities. There was an Italian section. There was a Greek section. And even in the West Coast because these are the ports of entry in order to facilitate things and to learn to understand, people live among themselves.

Interviewer: Are you saying that it was a problem for you when you went to Watkins? That people made you uncomfortable—?

Erna Preis: No—

Interviewer: —because you were—

Erna Preis: Never, never. As I said, people hadn't seen a European coming and settling in Nashville. Everyone settled at the port of entry. That's what I meant.

Interviewer: I see.

Erna Preis: I wasn't uncomfortable at all, but when we came, everyone wanted to talk to us and everyone wanted to see...After all, we were right...It was different. Not many people came from different countries here not getting support.

Interviewer: Do you feel that Nashvillians and perhaps particularly the Jewish Community of Nashville treated the German refugees well when they came?

Erna Preis: Well, maybe I will decline to express my opinion about things like that. I think we weren't so affected by it because we lived with our relatives. Of course, you also have to understand, news can be very cruel. I don't care whether the teenagers or what...And we were lonely, yes. I agree, we were very lonely.

Interviewer: Sure. And you missed the kind of groupings you would have had in Germany?

Erna Preis: Yeah, well, but that's not, of course, as you can do...you can do decide that I much rather live in the United States than...There is no regrets on that part.

Interviewer: Let me ask you another question. How did you meet your husband? Did you meet him here?

Erna Preis: My husband came from Austria and he is an engineer by profession, but he had to work in a coal yard, repairing trucks, for many, many years, because he couldn't speak the language properly. And he was going...he had a contract to go to Texas and he worked on the bus in New York. And worked also I think as an auto mechanic for someone else. And he said he knew from the cowboys from the movies, he wants to go to Texas. Work was hard to find. He went and found a job, he told me, and he paid \$3, maybe 9, and so he went outside of New York, and he decided that Texas is right for him, but he didn't have enough money to buy his ticket. So he goes there, goes to the bus, and he asked the man I want to go to Texas. And the man asked him how much money he had, and he said \$15. And he said, "Well, that will take you halfway." So, he came to Nashville. You had to have a couple of dollars or something and the war broke out, Second World War, when he came to Nashville. And as usual, everybody was welcome in our house. People came, had no home, no money, no nothing. We fed them. We had shifts. Well, maybe, we didn't have enough for ourselves, four or five or six or eight. Then, my mother washed dishes and the others ate. So, they all came and they stayed with us. We made do, and we never charged them anything. That's why I would say, I think that my mother

was just a real, real good person. And he came from Austria. And one day, somebody brought him to the house and he ate with us and my father couldn't get over how hungry he was. And so, that was maybe three or four months later. And he was alone. He had no home. And he lived in a boarding house and we met. And we met in October and we got married in January.

Interviewer: Nice story.

Erna Preis: And, of course, I worked and he worked. And as I said to you, we worked very, very hard. He was with a friend's coal yard at that time. We keep that fleet. They had people deliver coal. I remember how Nashville had soft coal. I mean that's the way we started.

Interviewer: If you could, I don't know, if you could tell other people or have other people learn something from your experiences, what would you like them to remember?

Erna Preis: Well, I would like them for the...general public?

Interviewer: Well, for whoever would hear the story, what would you want them—?

Erna Preis: I would say that we, as a people, need to be wide awake whatever we dismissed like Fascist is common. Oh, he is only crazy. Do not believe that. There is evil behind that and there is so much untruth about it all. Let's examine it and if we want to remain a free people, let's get together and do something about it while we can. You see, we said, "Let this man come, what can he do?" So, it affects not only one part. It affects all peoples regardless. We think we save ourselves. In the end, we don't. I think of that cruel Second World War. Here was a man who was destined. There were so many lies and so many things happening. Give me this, give me that, I'm satisfied. So, even a democracy can only survive if its people want it, I think.

Interviewer: Good lesson. Is there anything I've neglected to ask you that you would like to say?

Erna Preis: No. Well, not really except, as I said, I'm now no a youngster anymore and I'm grateful that we did have the opportunity to come to this country. So many people perished and for no reason other than their religion? And of course, among all peoples and on the end, we're all the same, we all want the same goal for ourselves, for our children, and maybe for all the world, to be this a better world. But, as I said, who knows what's coming after, but if we do not talk what has been, we also cannot expect the future.

Interviewer: To be bright. Thank you very much.