

Evans: My name is Doris Evans. Was born June 4<sup>th</sup> 1944.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Evans: I was born in Germany and grew up in Berlin.

Interviewer: Okay you were born in

Evans: Senftenberg where my mother and I were evacuated to during the war.

Interviewer: Okay how about your father what happened to him?

Evans: I don't know anything about my father. My mother gave me different stories so I don't know which story is true.

Interviewer: So you said you moved back to Berlin when you were little.

Evans: Yes we moved back right after the war ended we moved back to Berlin where my mother was born and grew up. My grandfather my grandmother they were born, grew up in Berlin.

Interviewer: So can you tell me a bit about what it was like living in Berlin in that period of time?

Evans: Yea sure. I grew up in East Berlin which was a communist part of Berlin. Berlin was divided in four sections the Russian section the French, British, American section and it was totally surrounded by property of Russia so called occupation of Russia because Stalin insisted on it and everybody gave in. Which was a big mistake because he could just close everything which he did. I forgot the year when he didn't let any trucks or supplies through and they had to build the air bridge the Americans built the air bridge to get the food and the necessities into Berlin.

Interviewer: Did you live in like a house or an apartment?

Evans: We lived in apartment houses I think four stories high we had a big balcony. There was some families had to share an apartment so because Berlin was pretty much bombed out and everybody was pretty much crammed into any kind of space. And I guess we were lucky the rooms were big and it wasn't too cramped where we lived. But we had to share the whole apartment with another family.

Interviewer: Did you believe you said that you played in the ruins when you were little. Could you tell me about that?

Evans: Yes the burned out houses this was our playground when we were children and even though we were warned at school by teachers and parents not to go in there we didn't listen and played in there. We called it exploring and we found a lot of things like hand grenades and skeletons, soldier uniforms with skeletons in it, helmets. And we took out the guns and the hand grenades especially the hand grenades they had a long stick on them and started playing with them throwing and catching them. Until one of my friends didn't catch it and blew up and that was the end of us playing with hand grenades because it was very brutal, bloody and that was the first time I really experienced war and so forth.

Interviewer: Did you find any unexploded ordinances in buildings?

Evans: Yes there was one house we played in or we explored where we found a bomb that didn't go off, it was a dud. We were also educated about those things and we did go to the police and evacuated many many blocks and disarmed the bomb and took it out of there and tore down the \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ ruins.

Interviewer: So how was can you tell me a little about your school the school you went to?

Evans: The school I went to I started in regular school in first grade and then was transferred to a school for fast learning children where we had to put in 12 years of school. And eight years we went to school on Saturdays so six days a week. We had more homework, less vacation time and had to put in the same things as kids who went to school for 12 years. Because East Germany needed professionals and that's how they trained up you know as professionals to use us sooner.

Interviewer: And then did you go to a vocational school after?

Evans: I went to college studied electronic engineering and graduated from there a year early.

Interviewer: How old were you when you graduated?

Evans: Seventeen it was kind of a rough time because I didn't fit in with anybody. I didn't fit in with my friends who were still in regular school and I had already graduated so.

Interviewer: So can you tell me a little about interactions you had with soldiers U.S. or Russian? Start with the Russian soldiers.

Evans: Russian soldiers they were extremely mean. All the others were very friendly Americans they were the best. They'd always give us candy, chewing gum, money, whatever. There was an international bookstore we went and opened doors for everybody and the Russians gave us a kick in the behind, chanced us off. The British and the French the British they'd give us something every so often the French they were not generous but they weren't mean either. But the Russians were extremely mean to us and I remember on year I think I was 10 or 11. We went on vacation outside of Berlin near Potsdam and my parents rented a cottage and I had to go and get milk in a big milk can everyday every morning from the farmer and bring it back. And there were always two Russian guards working the \_\_\_\_\_. They took the milk away from me and drank it or even sometimes poured it out and laughed and stuff like that so when I came home I didn't have any milk and my stepfather though you know I had drank the milk and nobody ever believed me that it was the Russians. And one day I went and got milk again and went by the farmhouse and I peed in it so when they took it away and drank it I was laughing because they drank it. It was worth a whopping at home.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything else they did?

Evans: In 1953 I think it was 1953 the East German people revolted against the government and started to take over police stations and other (phone began ringing and interview stopped for a second). So in 1953 East German people revolted against the government against the dictatorship that was going on. And took over police stations and newspapers and radio stations and some of the government offices. And we were sent home from school, didn't know what was going on, and when my parents came home we went onto the balcony and saw the streets black full of people marching peacefully. And all of a sudden there were Russian tanks coming in and anybody who didn't get out of the way got run over by

the tanks. Like squished tomatoes the streets were red with blood. It was a horrible sight to see especially for a child and then they started shooting at everything that moved even up to our balcony because we were watching. So we went inside my parents took us inside and told us my sister and me to go into our room and stay down. So we did go into our room but I went out on the window and went back on to the balcony to see what was going on and bullets were flying all around us. My mother came in screaming and pulled me back inside. And one of my school mates after this day or on this day they also had Russian set a curfew for us to be in at a certain time. And one of my schoolmate's dad came home from work and cooked dinner their mother was sick I don't remember how many children there were, there were quite a few children in the family. But he cooked dinner and hung a blanket over a window and lit a candle and sat under the kitchen table to make a birthday cake for his wife who was very sick with cancer, she was dying. And just to make a birthday cake for her and I guess some of the night when they came through and the Russians saw it shot through the window and a bullet ricocheted off one of the pipes and it the man in the head and he died instantly. I've never seen any of the children again, I don't know what happened to them.

Interviewer: Was there like a secret police or?

Evans: No it was more regular police. The secret police came and got people who were turned in that talked bad against the government. You couldn't trust anybody if you said anything bad about the government that's when the secret police came in and those people usually disappeared. Most of them you never heard from some of them years years later you saw them again. They came out of jail and they looked terrible they were sick and shortly died when they were released from prison.

Interviewer: And were those Russian or German?

Evans: Those were Germans.

Interviewer: Germans

Evans: Yea the Germans took all their orders from the Russians. The Russians practically ran East Germany.

Interviewer: So tell me about the camps that you'd go to.

Evans: Well officially they were camps for the city kids to have a vacation in the country. But when we got there they were more like boot camps. We had to learn how to when we were young I don't remember up to the ages but it started with BB guns we had to crawl in the mud like soldiers and shoot at targets with BB guns. Later on we had real guns and real targets and we played war games like the boys had to defend the girls in the middle of the night they got us up and told us to hide and after so much time they let the boys loose to go and find us take us prisoners and bring us back and vice versa. Other nights the girls had to go out to take the boys prisoners. And one night I was the so called platoon leader and it was raining and it was muddy and we just went to the edge of the woods and I told everybody to hide behind the bushes. We saw the boys running out of the gate, before that I told the girls to unlatch the windows before we left, so after the boys were out of site we doubled back and went into the window and got cleaned up and went to bed and went to sleep and they were looking for us all night.

Interviewer: Did you have to do anything else for the government like work?

Evans: Yes sometimes we were pulled out of school because farmers had a quota to fill. We used to call it the five year quota the government set a five year quota for everything factories, bombers because they owned everything. And it was always a five year quota and the farmers you know nothing is certain because of the weather conditions and things like that. So they used to pull us out of school and put us in the fields to dig up potatoes by hand and fill baskets to help out the farmers.

Interviewer: Did you have issues getting supplies or food with the rationing?

Evans: We had each family had ration cards but our parents had to go and clean bricks for them. If they didn't clean so many bricks for a week or months whatever I don't remember. But they had to clean so many bricks in order to get their monthly rations. So that's what they did after a hard day's work and sometimes after overtime work they had to go clean bricks to get those ration cards. And everything was rationed flour, sugar, butter, coffee if there was any coffee usually most of the time East Berlin didn't sell any have any real coffee. But meat any food items they were rationed. And if you ran out of your ration cards you know you had to go and buy on the black market or go to West Berlin to buy it and smuggle it into East Berlin.

Interviewer: Tell me about your interactions with the black market.

Evans: Well I

Interviewer: If you're willing to say.

Evans: Yea while I was opening the doors there was it was in front of an international bookstore that carried books in all languages the American's, British, French, and the Russians used to go there. Russian soldiers were not allowed to get off base except for the officers so they were all officers the Russians. But the Americans anybody could get off of base to leave and stuff. They went and bought books in this bookstore and smoking was not allowed so I saw them throw away half smoked cigarettes or just barley lit cigarettes. And American tobacco was in very high demand at the time so I ran put them out took the black stuff out and took the tobacco out of the paper and my grandfather gave me a little metal box that I asked him for, he didn't know what I was using it for. Anyways I put the tobacco in it and the only source I had there was a street where the black marketers were hanging out and selling stuff and I wasn't allowed to go there. However I needed to sell my tobacco and that was the only place I could think of they bought my tobacco and I had more money than I could spend.

Interviewer: So tell me about your leaving East Berlin.

Evans: On the day they built the they started closing everything off there wasn't a wall. Everything was closed off by old barbed wire and very heavily armed guards. You couldn't I don't know 50 feet you couldn't even get 50 feet to the barbed wire because there were so many guards. And my dad went around on his motorcycle trying to find a spot where we could possibly make it to get over there because he said if we don't go today we will never get out of here.

Interviewer: Was this right after the border closed?

Evans: Yea that's the day of when they closed the border. I think it was a Sunday because we were still sleeping when the doorbell rang and rang and rang and rang. And friends of my parents came in and were all upset and told us that they closed off the border. So that's when my dad went out on his

motorcycle. My sister was supposed to go across the bridge at a checkpoint telling the guards that she lived over there because friends of my parents which we used to call aunt and uncle were waiting for her on the other side. And that she was visiting in East Berlin but she lived in West Berlin. So by the time we got to this particular checkpoint the phones were still open so they were able to communicate and have their friends waiting for them on the other side. But by the time we got there they shut this checkpoint down and we had to walk a long time to a different bridge over a canal a manmade canal. And my sister started to cry and she was afraid she didn't want to go, she didn't want to do this and so I just volunteered to go with her and just talk in her place because she probably would have given us away. So that's what I did I was 17 and in those days everybody had a picture ID but I always was skinny and little for my age and looked younger. So when they asked me for my ID I told them I wasn't 14 yet I was 17 at the time, and they believed me and I did all the talking. They interrogated us for over an hour in the meanwhile they pushed everybody away from the bridge and my parents couldn't even see if we made it or not. But we finally they finally did let us go because I had all the right answers being street smart and I knew the area and they asked where we went to school I knew where the school was the street's name and some of the street names I just pulled out of my hat. I had no idea if they even existed but I knew the address of the friends of my parent's which we called aunt and uncle. And so they finally did let us go and we waited and waited and waited and my sister started to cry and it was in the middle of the night I don't remember what time it was my sister took a bath to make her calm down some. And we heard a car pulling up I looked out the window and it was a taxi and my parents got out of the taxi. So we just stormed down the stairs my sister was totally naked but we were happy to see my parents. And my stepfather he found a spot where they could escape there was a huge apartment building in behind the apartment building were railroad tracks and he counted the guards there was no barbed wire there were guards with arms walking the tracks and he counted how long it would take them to go one way how long it would take him to come back. And they waited until dark they couldn't go home because they didn't know if we got caught or not and talked. They would have been arrested if they would have made it to West Germany they could have fought in court for custody of us. But if they would have gone home and we had talked they would have been in jail. So anyways they made it my mother ran and lost her shoe lost her purse all the identification and little money we had and they kept running and running and heard this voice stop. And my mother gave up don't shoot we give up and turned out they were already in West Berlin it was a West Berlin police officer and he gave them money for a taxi to get to us.

Interviewer: Did you what happened to other people who tried to escape? Did you see anyone who was trying to escape?

Evans: Yes I went the wall went up pretty fast and I went the very next day after we escaped I went to the canal and looked and the canal was owned by half of it East Berlin and the other half West Berlin. So the East Berlin side threw barbed wire into the canal which people couldn't see. And people started to jump into the canal to swim across to West Berlin they got caught in the barbed wire and the East German police just let them drown there. Some of them got shot and they just let them lay there didn't pick them up right away or nothing. Just let them die and later on we saw people getting a young man I was a young man about 18, 19 years old he made it through all the barriers to the wall almost to the wall but there was still some rolled barbed wire and he got shot in the back and fell into this barbed wire. He was alive for quit sometime and screaming hollering and they let him bleed to death. So the East Germans in another case the building belonged to East Germany the sidewalk belonged to West Germany and an elderly woman tried to jump out of the window out of the first the second floor. So the West German people pulled on her and East German police pulled on her arms West German people pulled on her legs to try to get her down help her down and they pulled her arms literally pulled her

arms off. She came down without arms, it was gruesome it was gruesome. Okay one day, I don't quite remember how old I was, we always played together boys and girls always played together as equals there was no difference between us. We played soccer and everything we could think of all together. And one day we hashed out a plan how to get to the Russians. We found out where the tour buses go to take some of those Russian soldiers sightseeing to museums because they weren't allowed to go off base by themselves. And when the bus came we all turned around we were all standing at the curb, we all turned around and mooned them and pulled up our pants and ran in all directions so we wouldn't get caught. So that was one fun thing we did to the Russians to get back at them for being so mean.

Interviewer: You said you were trained in electronic technology?

Evans: Yes

Interviewer: How did that help you once you left and went to West Berlin?

Evans: After we escaped I tried to get a job, I specialized in telephone equipment. And I tried to get a job and they were very impressed with my application. But when I took the test I found out the equipment I worked with and learned on in East Berlin was totally outdated West Berlin West Germany was so far advanced that I would have had to go to school all over again. We worked with relays West Germany worked with relays too but the relays the East Germans worked with they were from the stone ages. All the buildings were crumbling and factories were never updated machinery was not updated it was just temporary fixes everywhere. So they were totally behind the times.

Interviewer: And they weren't motivated to improve stuff?

Evans: No because the government owned everything there was no competition. They couldn't even get materials at times to keep the factories running or the concrete they needed to fix the streets. And the workers did go to work they did get paid but they played cards and the government didn't care and you know there was no unemployment. So there was no competition the government owned everything no incentive to do better. That's why there was no progression and in West Germany West Berlin the government didn't own anything and there was a lot of competition and West Germany progressed. I remember my grandfather my mother told me that he was born into a very rich family but he ran away from home. I think there were ten or eleven children in the family and he was somewhere in the middle. He ran away when he was ten and the Polish underground found him and raised him. So he as a child he fought in World War One against the Kaiser with the underground to blow things up. To blow up supply trains and railroad tracks and you know was raised as a communist and then as a young man he was already a family member and he fought in World War Two in the underground doing the same thing. Blowing up supply trains and helping the allies pinpoint the ammunition factories so they could bomb them. And also sabotaged a lot of those factories through the underground with the other people in the underground. And he stayed a communist all of his life he was very loyal but it was not treated that way when he was an old man he was just another old man to be thrown away.

Interviewer: So when the Russians came into power they treated him just like any other person?

Evans: Yea but he was very loyal to the communist just not because he was so old the younger communist they were treated well. They got very good jobs very good pay more ration cards and they didn't have to clean graves but the older people they were not taken care of.

Interviewer: You said they were stealing I don't think you have what age you were.

Evans: I believe I was between nine and eleven.

Interviewer: Okay can you tell the story?

Evans: Yea when I was somewhere between nine and eleven years old we always had the iceman come every day. We didn't have a refrigerator, television, any of those electrics. I remember we used to buy ice from the iceman he carried it up the stairs stuff. So he came around with a horse that pulled the wagon when the ice was there and one day people attacked the horse and cut it up for meat because they were hungry. And it was very bloody the iceman tried to defend his horse and got beaten very badly. I don't know if he lived or died but he was taken away by the ambulance. I had a lot of nightmares. My grandmother she finally taught me how to have good thoughts before I go to sleep and slowly the nightmares went away.

Interviewer: Do you still have nightmares about some of the stuff?

Evans: Yes well no not really. I might after this interview.

Interviewer: Sorry about that.

Evans: No that's okay. I didn't get any nightmares after I moved \_\_\_\_\_. It just brings back memories.