KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 1

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

(beep)

(Interview with Eta Hecht, Wentworth Films, Kovno

Ghetto project, 5-5-97, sound roll 11 continued, camera

roll 22 at the head. Eta Hecht spelled E-T-A H-E-C-H-

T)

(Speed, roll 22, marker 1)

SB: Begin with you telling me when and where you were

born.

EH: I was born in Kovno, October 7, 1938, Kovno Lith-

uania.

SB: Tell me your earliest recollections about Kovno

itself. What are some of the snippets that you remember

from your...

EH: Actually I rally don't remember anything before we

were sent to the ghetto. I was two and a half years old

when we entered the ghetto so basically what I remember

is just being in the ghetto in the room mostly.

SB: Do you remember actually going to the ghetto.

EH: No, I don't.

SB: So tell me what you remember from being in the

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 2

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

room in the ghetto.

EH: Well I remember just one room, where my parents,

my mother, father and my grandmother lived in this one

room. I remember a little table, in the middle with a

clothing hanging over it and I would sit under it most

of the time because I was afraid I knew that Germans

were always searching for children. So I would basical-

ly just sit under there and sometimes draw pictures.

But that was it, that was my place of hiding unless

someone, they were literally coming in to look for

children and there were other hiding places that I

would have to go to. But that's really all I remember

is just the room. Because I wasn't really allowed, at

the beginning my father said they would let me out,

outside, and I would have to stand right near the door,

but after that I had to remain in the room because they

were always searching for children to kill children. So

that's pretty much. I had, I know I had a crib which

eventually they got rid of because again that would

have been a sign that a child was living in that house.

That's pretty much it. I.

SB: Do you remember being taught to be quiet and to

stay under the table. Can you tell me about that.

EH: I wasn't taught to be, to stay under the table. I

would just do it myself. I just felt comfortable, a

little more secure there. There were times when I had

to hide places and my parents would of course tell me

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 3

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

to be very quiet and not to move. But as far as the

table itself, I think it was just my own little refuge,

or sometimes even under the bed.

SB: And you already had a fear of Germans and tell me

a little more about that.

EH: Yes, I do. I remember that. It's interesting

because I remember, as I said I would sit under the

table and I really didn't have any toys but paper and

pencil and I would draw pictures. And it was always

about soldiers, Germans and the Jews fighting. I

remember drawing pictures of house, of a house, this

one is just amazing because it has always stayed with

me. I drew a picture of a house with a chimney and

that I would stuff Hitler inside that chimney and that

he would suffocate and die and you're, it's only re-

cently that I even thought about my god how symbolic

that the chimney was obviously I had, was no idea. I

just knew a house had a chimney but it's just amazing

that I did know. I understood you know the risk that

was involved for me if I was not quiet or if I you know

would not, if I would move if papa wasn't, if I was

told not to and so on. I, I definitely knew the dan-

ger. I was aware of that.

(Mark 2)

SB: So do you remember knowing who Adolf Hitler was.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 4

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

EH: Yes, I knew about Hitler, I knew the name Hitler

and that he was a bad guy. I definitely knew that

because again with that picture with the chimney, I

wanted him. I knew he must, I guess the leader as

opposed to the important one that I felt that he de-

served to die.

SB: Do you remember anything about being cold or being

hungry or anything like that.

EH: Yes definitely, definitely I remember that. There

was one time specifically actually it was towards the

end, in March of 44, the Germans had a major search for

children. They called it kinderaction and my parents

tried to you know they had to hide me. And we went

underneath the stairway. Where we lived there was a

second floor.

SB: I'm sorry.

(Marker 3)

SB: Ok, you were talking about the kinderaction.

EH: Yes, so we hid underneath the stairway. My par-

ents had a cousin of mine place a mattress to camou-

flage the opening and we stayed there for 2 days and 2

nights and it was in March and it was very, very cold.

The house was just made out of wooden, of wood. And you

could see through the cracks you know the outdoors and

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 5

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

I remember being very, very cold, hungry. I had a cold,

I was coughing and I remember having to try to suffo-

cate the cold, I would try I knew that if I would cough

out they would hear me. Because I can still remember

the sound of the sol, the Nazi soldiers walking up the

stairs, you know the boots and, and hearing people

screaming outside. So it definitely was the fear and

the hunger and the cold and that I definitely remember.

There was, it's something that has never left me.

Besides being hungry of course in between. You know

the whole time int eh ghetto there was very little

food.

SB: Going back to near the beginning of the ghetto, so

this is when you were littler. The great action, do

you remember anything about that.

EH: Actually I don't. My father has described it to

me. Interestingly I, I might add that he mentioned that

as the day when everybody had to line up in front of

the Nazi and he pointed people to go to the left and to

the right and my father noticed that the people that

were being sent to the left were the disabled, the old

and the children. So when it was our turn and appar-

ently he pointed to the left, my father just grabbed me

as we were all walking together and just pushed our way

into the right side and that's why I survived. Or I

survived certainly as a child, the action, but I don't

remember that cause I had just turned three.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 6

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

(Battery)

(Speeding, and marker 4)

SB: Tell me about the great action from what you've

learned from your father.

EH: That particular day when...Well as he told me he

said it was early in the morning, October 28, 1941. I

had turned 3 October 7 as a matter of fact. And he

said that loudspeakers, trucks with loudspeakers drove

through the ghetto and told everyone to leave their

home. That every person had to leave and assemble on a

place. And then that we had to line up in rows of 8 I

believe and march in front of this Nazi who sat on his

chair. And pointed to people to go to the left or to

the right. And he said that as I pointed out and my

father of course became aware that the people to the

left, something, he just had the feeling something was

wrong, why there were all these elderly and the small

children and sick people were being sent to the left.

He just yanked us to the right. And the next day we

found out that the people who were sent to the left

were killed and there ere about 10,000 people who were

killed that day. So this is.

SB: Tell me instances of you being hidden just when

the Germans did come in to your...

EH: There was one instance now this was before the

kinderaction, when a neighbor came yelling, quick hide

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 7

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

her, hide her, hide her. People would watch out for

one another. And a Nazi was coming into the house. So

my parents, they had already removed the crib. That I

had been in. And they just had one bed. So they, they

rolled me up in the bedding like a sausage. I was

inside of that and they rolled me against, placed me I

should say against the wall so it looked like the back

of a sofa, I don't know if you can visualize that.

But they placed me in there and they told me to be very

quiet and not to move and I remember feeling that, that

I wa suffocating and I couldn't breathe and yet I knew

I wasn't supposed to move because otherwise you know

they would find me and that meant death so that was a

very significant event that I remember. The other one

of course was underneath the steps. Another episode is

eventually when I was smuggled out of the ghetto but

everything in between is pretty much. It's sort of like

snapshots, you know. A couple that really stand out

and everything else I just don't recall that well.

SB: Tell me again about under the stairs during the

kinderaction.

EH: Well we went into hiding under the stairs that

were, it was an opening. It was at the house had two

stories and we were right underneath the stairs, a

mattress was placed against it to camouflage us. My

parents and I were there. My grandmother had already

passed away and we stayed there for 2 days and 2 nights

and it was very cold, it was in March, the end of

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 8

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

March. I had a very bad cough. I remember how I was

trying not to cough so that I wouldn't be heard.

Because you could hear everything that was going on.

And we obviously realized that they could hear us. I

remember hearing this, the noise, the sound of the

boots of the marching soldiers running up and down the

steps over our heads, being very hungry and cold and

afraid. That was my memories.

SB: Your parents in there with you.

EH: Excuse me.

SB: Were your parents in there with you.

EH: Yes, they were with me, they were with me.

SB: Do you remember anything else after, right after

that when you came out after the kinderaction.

EH: No, I really don't. Not, after that particular

day, I remember that within three weeks from that event

I was smuggled out of the ghetto. My parents decided to

smuggle me out and to they, they knew that I would be

staying with a Christian family. And interestingly,

even though I was born in Lithuania, I did not speak

Lithuanian, we spoke Yiddish at home. I was two and a

half when I entered the ghetto so obviously my vocabu-

lary wasn't very extensive but and in the house we

spoke Yiddish. So now they had to basically brainwash

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 9

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

me that I was Christian, that I was you know

Lithuanian and we had 3 weeks to teach me Lithuanian

and to again to teach me that I was Christian and they

gave me a new name and that I was never to admit that I

was Jewish. So that was the other major event you know

obviously I remember.

(Camera roll 23 is up)

(Marker 5)

SB: As if you haven't already told me anything about

the escape three weeks after, why don't you just tell

me that whole thing again.

EH: Ok, right after the children's action, my parents

realized that in order for me to survive they would

have to get me out of the ghetto. That luck would run

out sooner or later and so they were able to get in

touch with someone, a Christian who was actually a

colleague of my father and my father was a teacher

before the war and so was this gentleman. But he was a

Christian from, he was a teacher of a Lithuanian

school. My father was teacher at a Jewish school but

they used to meet. And he was able to get a note to

him to ask him if he would take me. If he would save

my life. And he responded that he would. He liked my

father and he would do it for him. So now my parents

had to make arrangements. You just don't walk out of

the ghetto, how to get me out. So they decided to use a

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 10

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

potato sack. And to put me in that bag and then when

my mother would go to work with the women you know they

had to file out of the ghetto to go to work, she would

carry me out that way. They planned on a special day

when they knew that the changing, there were different

guards and this particular one was bribed. He was a

little better than the others and arrangements had been

made so, so I had about 3 weeks to learn Lithuanian,

because I only spoke Yiddish at home. And my parents

had to basically brainwash me to teach me that I was to

be Christian and that I would never admit that I was

Jewish. And they gave me a new name. I, my Yiddish

name was Eta or Etalle, and they called me Ellenitia,

and that, and as I said I had to learn Lithuanian. And

so when the day arrived I was. Well and also I had

practiced, they would practice with me to sit in that

bag without moving, while my mother would carry me

around in the room. So then when the day arrived and I

had to be carried out. Sorry. I just remembered. My

mother taking the risk obviously and she carried me out

and we met the Lithuanian and she got out, removed her

yellow star. Because you, yo know so she would look

Lithuanian. And she appeared that way. And would

take, took off my star. We all wore stars in the

ghetto. And then she handed me over to this woman. And

I remember saying good by. Sorry. And being a mother

myself, I just wonder how she, how hard it was for her,

realizing she'd never see me again. Sorry. And then I

was taken away. My mother went back, put back her star

and went back into the line with the women and went to

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 11

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

work. And that was in April when I was when she smug-

gled me out and then in July the ghetto was liquidated

and sent off to camps, to the concentration camps.

SB: What about the family that you lived with. What

happened to you after that.

EH: Well basically they, I was with them. They had 8

children, some were already grown. This teacher was

quite a bit older than my father. He had a, his family

was, there were some young ones, there was a couple of

teenagers in the house. And I remember the, I remember

one episode when this boy would tease me that I'm

Jewish. And I remember saying no I'm not. You know.

But I was, I think I was treated pretty well. I don't

have any recollections really. I just remember that, I

know well there was one time when uh there were sirens

were going and they went into hiding and they were

afraid to take me with them into the hiding place.

Because the neighbors would know that, I was kept

inside you know. So I would say they left me in the

house all by myself while they all went to hide. And

then another time, actually I was in that house for

three months and then they'd have to move me to the

country. This gentleman his name was Mr. Losouskas,

Jonas Losouskas, had a sister in the country and they,

they placed me there because he afraid, he was afraid

that it was too dangerous to keep me int he house, that

neighbors might talk, and children, other children, you

know friends of the children and I was with. So then I

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 12

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

spent 3 months on a, on a farm. But I just remember be,

sleeping in a bed with 2 other kids but nothing major

really or eventful that occurred at that point. I,

until finally when my father came to get me. And when

he arrived, I, I can still remember I was sitting at a

table drawing pictures with the other children. This

was on the farm. And he came up and, and he said do you

know who I am and I looked at him and then I looked

down. I was afraid to admit cause I had been taught not

to admit anything yo know that I was Jewish and so on.

So I was just afraid. So then later he took me aside

and took me outside and we went for a walk. And he says

do you remember grandmother so and so. And of course I

said yes and you know then I, so I did recognize him

but I was just still afraid you know to say anything. I

was five and a half so I was well taught.

(Cut)(Marker 6)

SB: So after you were smuggled out of the ghetto what

happened to your parents.

EH: Well my parents were still in the ghetto and then

from what I understand July, the middle of July in

1944, the ghetto was liquidated and they transported

everyone to concentration camps and they placed them on

cattle trains. And my parents, apparently during that

time, when they were traveling they talked about maybe

one of them should jump off of the train and just take

a chance that maybe one parent would survive so that I

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 13

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

would have a parent. And my mother was afraid to jump.

So my father said ok, he'll do it. And so he jumped off

the train from that little opening, there was just the

little window while the train was moving and it was

still on Lithuanian territory. he jumped and of course

fell, got hurt. He must have lost consciousness he

said because when he woke up there was somebody stand-

ing there, a railroad worker who was going to take him

to the gestapo. He said he didn't believe you know he

says where are your papers. My father didn't have

anything and so on, so my father managed to run away

from him and my father survived basically by hiding in

the woods and on farms and that's how he survived the

war. My mother on the other hand went on to the con-

centration camp which was too tough and that's where

she was the remaining of the war, remainder of the war.

(Let's cut and keep rolling)

(This is voice over, Eta Hecht explaining pictures)

SB: Tell me about the photographs.

EH: (VO) A few days ago I was looking for pictures

from the before the war and I came across a picture

that was in an album. The picture shows me and my

parents. this picture was taken in 1939 in Switzerland

where we had gone to visit my uncle, before we, of

course we had to go back to Lithuania, unfortunately.

We weren't allowed to stay in Switzerland. But I had

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 14

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

never really looked on the back of the picture because

it was in an album. I took it out of the album and on

the back of it I noticed there was something written in

Yiddish so and it was dated July 4, excuse me July 7th

1944. And I became aware that in July of the 14th in

1944 the ghetto was liquidated and here is this picture

and what it says on it is that this should, this pic-

ture should be sent to B. Levin, to Arosa Switzerland.

He says, it says here, it's all in Yiddish and it says

(Yiddish) . He should look for his brother's child,

Etalle, which is that's my name, Levin (Yiddish). Her

name is now Ellenitia. And then it says her new family

I do now know. Well apparently while my father did

know of course where I was, I was with this Christian

family who was a colleague of his from before the war

but he was obviously afraid to write it down because he

thought if, in case someone would find, a German would

find this picture they would know where I was hidden.

But when I found it I just became so emotional, I just

couldn't believe here is this picture and here is and

it was written right before, right after of course I

was gone already and right before the ghetto was liqui-

dated. I'm assuming that this picture was hidden in the

ghetto because I don't know how else where else it

would have been. But unfortunately I don't know exactly

where it was hidden or the exact details of it. But I

must say that this was quite a revelation to me and

really excited about I was very excited about finding

it.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 15

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Do you think your father left it because he

thought maybe he wouldn't make it.

EH: Oh I, I'm sure. I'm sure of that. Yeah I think

my parents, I think it was quite a hopeless sit, they

all thought it was a hopeless situation and I don't

think they felt they would survive. But and that's why

he wrote it the way he did,

whoever would find it.

SB: Thanks.

EH: A few days ago I was going through an album of

pictures and I found a picture of my parents and I that

was taken before the war in Switzerland. My parents and

I had gone there in 1939 to visit my uncle who lived

there. And when I took the picture out of the album and

I turned it around I realized there was something

written on it in Yiddish. Also that the date on it that

was written on the back of the picture was July 7, 1944

which is barely a week before the liquidation of the

ghetto and what it says on the picture basically is

that this, send this, send this, meaning this picture

to B. Levin, Arosa Switzerland. And it says here in,

it's all in Yiddish (yiddish). He should look for his

brother's child Etalle Levin, that was my name, that is

my name, my maiden name was Levin. (Yiddish). Her

name is now Ellenitia. (Yiddish) Her new family I do

not know. However, he, eh did know because this was

written in July and in April they sent me away to this

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 16

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Christian family was a colleague of his so he knew I

was with Mr. Losouskas and where I was, he knew exactly

the address and everything but apparently he must have

been afraid that in case this was found by a German

they would be able to, to find me, they would be able

to locate me. But I was just so moved when I found this

because I realized how desperate. They obviously didn't

feel, my father didn't feel that he would survive and

so whoever would find this, you know should give this

to my uncle so that he would find me.

SB: Thank you.

EH: A few days ago I was looking through some pictures

or some albums of pictures and I found a picture of my

parents and I that was taken in Switzerland in 1939. We

were there on a visit, visiting my uncle, my father's

brother. And then of course unfortunately we had to go

back to Lithuania. We ere not allowed to stay there.

But this picture when I turned it around, I realized

there was something written in Yiddish on it. And it

was also dated July 7, 1944. Which was the week before

ghetto was liquidated. And on the, in the, on this

picture, on the back of this picture is says that this

should be sent to B. Levin, Arosa Switzerland and in

Yiddish again it says (Yiddish). He should look for

his brother's child, Etalle which was my name Levin.

(Yiddish). Her name is now Ellenitia. (Yiddish) which

means her new family I do not know. Well my father did

know where I was and he knew the name of the family

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ETA HECHT page 17

Interviewed (5-5-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

because this was a colleague of my father's and he knew

exactly where I was but I, I think what happened his,

he felt in case this picture would be found by Germans,

that of course they would be able to locate me and also

I realized, I got very emotional when I found this

picture because I realize how hopeless the situation

must have been that my parents felt that they wouldn't

survive and so whoever would find this should send it

to my uncle so that he could you know find me and take

care of me.

(end interview)

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_