

## **Interview with Eva Blockinger**

***By Teresa Gorrell***

Hello, this is Teresa Gorrell. I'm here today interviewing Eva Blockinger in the Dale McConchie room of the Marshall Public Library in Illinois. Today is Wednesday, June 27, 2012.

Eva and I have known each other from church since my family moved to Marshall over six years ago.

The first question the first set of questions for you Eva have to do with your childhood.

First, when and where were you born?

**I was born in Deutschbentschek, Hungary, which is now part of Romania, on March 26, 1919.**

When did you come to America?

**I believe it was December 1920 that we hit New York. And it happened that we were lucky that we were able to get off the boat, because, shortly after, very shortly after, I came down with measles. And of course we would have been quarantined if they found it on the boat; we wouldn't have been able to get off. And I understand I was very, very sick. They didn't expect me to live. But they didn't expect me to live when I was born either because I was premature.**

Who were you parents and siblings?

**My father was John and my mother was Eva...Schmidt.**

**And I don't remember my two sisters—one died before I was born and another died after I was born—because of the big flu that was during 1917-18 in Europe. And then there was a boy born after me. I don't remember his name, but he only lived one day. And then we came into this country in 1920. So I never knew of course my sisters and brothers. Then I had a sister that was born here in Montana about a year later.**

Which communities have you lived in?

**Just the regular... Well, how shall I put this? Communities in Chicago, a neighborhood that was all over a big city, and different ethnic neighborhoods. I didn't live in an ethnic neighborhood; it was just a mixture of everything. We lived there for many years, all within about a mile when we did move. That's about all I can say about that as far as neighborhoods are concerned.**

And then when did you move to Marshall?

**We moved here—of course I was married by then—we moved here in Marshall March 26, 1983. And I've lived here ever since. My husband died here in 1988. And he's buried here in Marshall.**

Can you talk about the mealtimes when you were a kid? How were your family's meals like?

**Well, being German, my mother cooked I imagine 99% German way. Because she couldn't speak [English] in the beginning of course. And so she wouldn't be able to compare meals or some recipes with any neighbors. Because they wouldn't be able to speak [German] and she wouldn't understand English anyway; not in the beginning. It took her a long time to learn English. My father had to pick that up as soon as we practically came here because of working.**

As a child did you have any favorite toys?

**We had a doll, and I remember having a teddy bear, for a long time. But as I was growing older, I was more interested in playing baseball with the boys in the neighborhood than playing with dolls. My father would say, "Get over here and play with the girls." And I didn't want to. They were no fun. It was more fun to play baseball.**

Where did you go to school?

**I went the Catholic school my full twelve years: Loretto Academy in Chicago, and our church school of course in our neighborhood.**

Did you like school? Did you enjoy it?

**I liked it. I enjoyed school and it was very, very rare that I ever missed it. I had to be really sick before I would miss a day, because I enjoyed school. And the nun, I remember her having me get up in front of the class to read. And I still enjoy reading very, very much.**

Would you say that reading was your favorite school subject?

**Well, we had of course so many other subjects...**

**Geography, I loved geography, I remember that. History was alright. But geography I think was one of my favorites. I had a little problems with arithmetic I remember in fifth grade. My father could only help me for so long because they didn't go to school like we do here like eighth grade or anything like that. They had to work in the fields or whatever.**

Did your mother or your father have any sayings that you remember...anything they said often that sticks in your mind?

**Yes. "Eva don't do that!"**

Was that your father?

**My father! My father! More my father than my mother!**

**And I was afraid of him. He was a German bullhead! And Germans are stubborn. Mhm. They'll tell you that. With me anyway!**

What were some pastimes you enjoyed as a young adult? You know, your teenage years...?

Well, it was during the depression, so there was nothing much that you could be doing. Even when I was in high school, I couldn't go to dances because we didn't have the money to go.

It was just...And I learned how to German dance. I was more interested in that. But there wasn't any in our neighborhood, being a cosmopolitan neighborhood. So we didn't get to German dances too often, of course we went with my mother and father. We lived on the south side of Chicago and the German dances were on the north side. So we rarely ever got to them.

What kind of dances did you do for German dances?

Polkas and waltzes. German dancing is still my favorite. American dancing was something that I did as I got to be, you know, like 19-20 years old, but it was not my favorite.

Did you date in your younger years?

No. I went to an all-girls school, so there were no girls around me that had brothers. And then I played baseball with them—I wasn't dating them!

When and where were you married?

Well, I waited until my...Well my husband...

He wanted to get married before he went into service. And I wouldn't do it. I said no. Though I did write him quite often, almost every day.

When He came back from service, he wanted to get married right away.

And I was still...I was still...Nope, I wanna wait, I wanna wait. I don't know how long I thought I was going to wait, for the next fifty years, or what, really?

And he said if I can't make up my mind, he was going to leave Chicago. Because he didn't come from there. He came from Marshall, Illinois. So I thought I better hurry up and make up my mind if I wanted to get married or not. I was comfortable at home, so why bother?

Can you talk about the jobs you've had?

Well, it's very difficult because during the depression you would have many jobs because trying to find office work mainly is what I was looking for. I worked for a dime store for maybe about a year at one time. That paid, I think...oh, I've forgotten how much an hour; seventy cents an hour or something, but very, very little.

Then that business was getting poor during the depression, so I was let go.

Oh, various office jobs that I don't remember them anymore.

Can you talk about your children?

**Well, I have two girls and one boy. Marla is my oldest. Paula is two years later. And then Glenn Junior is the boy born five years after Paula.**

Do you want to tell me a little bit about some of the funny experiences you had with one of your kids? Are there any good stories?

**Oh, I remember being at the beach with the girls—that was before I had the boy—and I saw Marla splashing around at Lake Michigan.**

**And Paula was right next to me. And all of a sudden, I looked down. Her head was in the water. 'Cause we were standing in my ankle deep.**

**I looked at her and I thought, "She could drown!" And she's just standing there, bent over. I don't know if she tried to put her face in the water or what. But I grabbed the back of her neck and pulled her out.**

**But I thought, "We better get out of the water."**

**Lake Michigan was always so cold.**

How about a scary moment you had as a parent? Which, I guess that one kind of was, but are there any others?

**Yes, when Marla was about 2 years old, we lived on a third floor apartment. And I was getting Paula—as a baby, she was a few months old—getting her ready to go down to the buggy to go for a walk.**

**And I went downstairs, I let her go downstairs, and I told her to wait for me.**

**And she was gone. And I thought "Oh no."**

**And we lived on a corner apartment building with two busy streets. And I went to the different stores. They had not seen my daughter. And I thought, "Please Saint Anthony, find my daughter."**

**And so, I didn't know where to go a where to look. And here my husband happened to drive up in the car. He had her.**

**She went 2-3 blocks crossing streets looking for her daddy. We always took the same route walking every day. And he saw her. And he wondered why she was alone. Well then he asked her, "Where's momma?"**

**She answered, "Home."**

**'Cause she was only a couple years old.**

**And, of course, Saint Anthony found her for me. He's still my favorite saint.**

What was the best trip or vacation you've ever taken?

**Oh boy. Well, I've been up in Alaska on a cruise.**

**My husband and I went to Europe for a German play, the Crucifixion of Christ (Passion Play) in Oberammergau, Germany. Which is wonderful.**

**I've been on a cruise down in Mexico. And, let's see...my husband and I went on one of our anniversaries to Hawaii, many, many of course years ago. I've been to the four corners of the earth, so to speak.**

What was the best thing about being a parent when your kids were growing up?

**You're always busy, very, very busy. I wanted to sit down and sleep for a while.**

What was the worst thing about it?

**They wouldn't listen. Of course I did the same thing when I wouldn't listen!**

Today, what's your favorite hobby or activity?

**I do some volunteer work. Reading. I used to like to walk a lot. But I've been curtailed it a little bit recently. So I kind of miss that, 'cause I was always a walker. I find that probably I'll have to cut back on my volunteer work a little bit.**

What kind of volunteer work do you do?

**Well, I help out at the Burnside's Nursing Home for [bingo] and once a month their church service where I wheel in the residents at the nursing home into the chapel. And I may have to cut that out, because the wheelchairs are getting a little heavy.**

What kind of books do you like to read?

**I prefer mystery books. But I'll read almost anything I get my hands on. And I like the Amish books too that I've read recently. Those were very, very interesting.**

Do you enjoy the pace of life you are at right now, or is it difficult?

**Well, the pace of my life now is slower. And I find that difficult because I was never a slow type of person. Either walking fast or going to the Y for exercises. I haven't started in again; maybe again in the fall. I'll see how I feel.**

So what do you enjoy about, maybe going slower? Is there anything you enjoy about that?

**Not at all! Because I'm not used to it!**

**Seems like I was always asked, "Why are you always running?"**

**I said, "No, I slow walk, sometimes."**

**Not very often. But I have to learn how to.**

Do you have grand children?

**Yes. Let's see, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.**

Do you see them very often?

**Very, very seldom. Maybe at Christmas time.**

Where do they live?

**They live up north. Oh...I'll say near Chicago.**

Now, Eva, something I know you're very fond of is your large collection of hats. Do you want to talk about them for a minute?

**Well, I don't get rid of any hats; that's the problem!**

**But I enjoy wearing them, some are many years old and I don't care. I still wear them on Sunday. And depending on, of course, what I'm wearing and I try to match up or be different. So I know that I'm usually the only one at Mass when I go on Sunday; and I don't care. But I just happen to [enjoy wearing] hats. But there's a story about that.**

**Many, many years ago when I was single—and this was during the depression—I only had one hat that I wore all year round. And somebody asked me, "Is that the only hat that you wear?" And I think it started then, where I wanted different colors.**

What activities that your age restricts you from do you most miss?

**Well right now walking is one of the ones that I'm really missing, because I find that I can't do my mile that I even did six months ago. And whether I'll be able to get back to it or not I don't know.**

Anything else from when you were younger that you miss?

**Of course I've always gone to the Y for both many years for both exercises and the pool exercises. And since the pool has been closed in Paris, of course I haven't been able to do that the last three or four years. And chances are if it were that they open it I won't go back to it.**

Do you feel like you have more free time now than you did when you had a job and had to take care of kids?

**Oh, yes. I have more free time. I can sit and fall asleep in my chair!**

Do you enjoy that free time?

**Yes, but I get restless, because I can't do the things that I did before. But again, as I said, at 93 you're kind of restricted.**



What age has been the best age of your life and why?

**I've always enjoyed as each age came along because every few years it was different.**

**Kids were growing up, and maybe I had a little more free time. Or I got into more volunteer work. Or did more types of exercises. Just things were different as each few years went by.**

**When you're 93, you live a long time. And I've enjoyed my life as it came along and all, so that's all I can say about it.**

**I'm lucky that I've lived this long I guess to enjoy it.**

Thank you, Eva, for your interview today.

**Thank you very much.**