

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997
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PREFACE

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BERNARD PASTERNAK

October 22, 1997

Question: This is the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Bernard Pasternak**, conducted by **Esther Finder** on October 22nd, 1997, in **Rockville, Maryland**. This is a follow-up interview to a **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** videotape interview conducted with **Bernard Pasternak** on April 20th, 1994. This is tape one, side **A**. I would like to have you speak to me today a little bit about your liberation and your post-Holocaust experiences. Can you tell me about the day that you realized that you were free, and no longer under Nazi control?

Answer: Well, have to give me a couple of seconds, to turn the clock back, to tell you about it. The first thing on the liberation, I noticed a lot of noise and I didn't know from where the noise is coming. Then I heard people are saying the Americans are here, the Americans are here. But some people who were saying the Americans are here, they were from far away the noise, because inside on the camp there was still **SS**, try to get people up, to keep on going for the death march, keep on going. So I could not go any more because of wa – was very weak. I don't know, maybe have 60 or 65 pounds. So what I did, I saw bodies, dead bodies laying there, and I figure I'm gonna go between the dead bodies, in the middle there and I had a weak spot on my nose, which all – blood always comed – it came out. So what I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

did, whatever what I had, I hit my nose, and I fulled it out with blood, and my mouth was full of blood when the Nazis came around to try to drag the people out. So first of all, the people who did not want to get up, they shot them on the pla – they killed them. So when they came to me and they saw that I still have a little life in it, so the other guy says, don't waste your bullets [indecipherable]. So they kept on going. And then a little bit later, the Americans liberated, but they did not come in the camp. That was all on the outside. The thing were t – when I got up already, how did I get out there? There was a lot of other people who were a little stronger, and they went around the camp and they start running, and they start saying, we are liberated, we are liberated, you could get up. Whoever lays down there who could get up, get up because we are liberate from the Americans. I never know just how the system works in – in the army, because I never was in the army. The first thing when I got up, I went outside a little bit, I saw the American soldiers in there, and I was told that's General **Patton** over there. I said, who's **Patton**? I never know this – those kind of names, because we never heard it. And then later on I find out all whatever happened, how he came there and what he came there. And suddenly a few soldiers came out, American soldier, and they start talking Yiddish me. They say, are you Jewish? I say yes. He says, who else is here? I said, they all Jew, all around me, they all Jewish people over here. Then he start talking, and the first

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

thing they tried [**indecipherable**] chocolate, chewing gum, they tried [**indecipherable**] the thing was interesting, the chewing gum, I took a lot of packages in, but they – I – I – til it was sweet. And when it wasn't more sweet, I swallow it. Then I got sick, because I didn't know. And then the guy – one guy came over to me, another guy, he says to me in – in Yiddish, he says, you don't eat that, he says, that's [**indecipherable**] only chew it on the mouth. I said, I never saw something like this in my life. And nobody said it, so there was other guys who got sick from it. I must – I don't know how many packages I ate up on the time. And then we – we were – we get up a little bit and – and then more problems started in the camp.

Q: Let me ask you, which camp were you in when you were liberated, and when was that?

A: The camp I was liberated was **Buchenwald**. I was, I think in 63rd block, 63 – 30 – something, I think that was the block, I was there. So –

Q: When was liberation for you?

A: I – it was in April some time, I think. I really don't have the date. I have it marked down someplace, but in April sometimes, it was the liberation. Then it – it arrived the problem was what happened after. We were all – of course, we didn't eat for so long, and we were all hungry. And what was the bi – the biggest mistake,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

what happen. They brought in all the food the SS ha-had accumulated for themselves, and they brought it all in the camp, and we went there, you know, like – like – like hungry people, and we start eating and then the problem – nobody told us don't eat because the stomach is smaller. And we all sick, so we start eating and most of them died right in the sprot – in the spot in front of me. I got a flat typhus, and I was too – took right away to the hospital, and you know who treated me? A Nazi doctor, where he still had the SS sign on him, and he treated me [indecipherable]. So they pumped the stomach and I had a headache after that for years and years I couldn't get rid of that headache, that finally it went off – in account of that flat typhus.

Q: In addition to the typhus, did you have any other medical problems?

A: Well, you know, you are so weak, and in general and you're really the merak – you are – you are sick all over, I mean, it's something which I could say, it's – it's a miracle thing which people survived after that, because we all were by all miracle, you know, by all – how shall I say – medicine would not help us the way we were looking. No – nothing would have help it, just miracle thing, and – and that's what happened is the way we pulled through. Also, you pull through is the will – the will – the willpower to live, and that's the way it kept us going. We were a few people together there and we stick together til things got a little bit better. And then doctors

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

came in. Al-All a prisoner of war doctor, all German – German doctors came in, in the – although we went to the hospital there. We didn't leave the camp for awhile, but later on we took [indecipherable] part of camps, and we went in in the German and the SS barracks, and there start to get a little bit better in general.

Q: When you were taken to the hospital for treatment, you mentioned that you had an SS – a former SS doctor. Were there other doctors perhaps supervising, or – who – who was in charge of running the hospital at that point?

A: That – that hospital actually was a hospital for the SS people. And due to the fact there was a lot of prisoner of war who were Germans, they kept on running the same hospital, the same thing i-it was, except in – as – how shall I say? Instead treating the Germans, they treated us. The hospital was overflowed and it kept on [indecipherable] more and more places and bringing more and more doctors to try to see – to cure us a little better. And all the medicine already the – the American provided all this necessary thing for the people to survive. Also, like I was mention before, the willpower to live, we had a lot of encouragement from the American – for the soldier, from the Jewish soldiers, who told us – they were speaking, so interested. I wa – I had a eastern European accent, you know, and when they were talking, you know, I c – I couldn't understand. First I – I thought they – what kind of Yiddish they are talking to me? And then I got used to it and they told me, oh, I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

was born in **America** already and my grandparents came here, but it was interesting they were still speaking the Yiddish language, which it had a lot to do with our survival, I think.

Q: What was it like for you to be free, no longer be a prisoner of the Germans?

A: We were told in the camps that it doesn't matter. If you live, they gonna kill you, and if you die, you die.

Q: Who's the they?

A: We were – we were talking between us in the camp. He says, there is no way out, because they not gonna let you live after – because we saw what happened already to the – the people who were weak, they took them to work and then they killed them. And we said between us, as long we could work, maybe they gonna keep us alive. Once we cannot work, th-they not gonna let us go free, they gonna kill it. So actually to say – to find out in the end we are free, it just a – so many years passed and I still can't believe it I'm free, I'm out of that thing. Because I still could see that it happen like yesterday. It's not – so many years, so many – 50 years. I think it happened yesterday. I could see everything in front of my eyes, what happened, right now, what – anything, any – any little details.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Q: Were you a witness to any acts of retribution or retaliation against the former prisoner – for – against the former guards or against collaborators, by the prisoners or by the allies who came and liberated you?

A: Well, that's a ver – very interested. First of all, when we got liberated, who – who was a little strong, they caught some of the guards. What they did to those guards, even me, I had such a hatred against what they did to me, I couldn't stand it, I couldn't see. They pulled their finger out. They took pliers and they pulled their finger out. The – they – they took a knife and they took their eyes out in front one of the other one. And when one got tired, another guy took over. And – and what they did to those people, I'm sure they never **[indecipherable]**. I couldn't – I couldn't witness something like this, some – because one human being to do – to do to the other one, I – I – I said to the old guys around, I says the – I think the lord should take on that, I saying we shouldn't take any retaliation something like this. Even what they did to us, you have to have a heart, you know, to do something like this. I also heard that soon the camp was surrendered, **Buchwald** was surrendered, they caught some guards and they put them to the wall – I don't know, I di – I think it – I was told from the allied soldiers, I – I cannot – I – I can't poi – point a figure which allied soldier – and they shot about a hundred, 150 people. They put them to the wall – first they show them the brutality that they did, and then they killed them. I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

think you're better off to be killed than to – to do something like this, take eyes out, pull finger out or something like that. I – I couldn't witness something like this, but they – they kept on doing it. Most of them was the f – French soldiers, they were imprisoned, they brought them in prison, you know, they brought them to the camp, just a little bit before the liberation. They were really strong, and they did the job for this thing.

Q: You mentioned that you were very weak, and – and you said you only weighed 60 or 65 pounds. Can you describe what you looked like at the moment of liberation?

A: I have a – a – a picture here of one inmate, the way he looked after the liberation, beyond medical – you know, beyond medical thing. If you would have given any kind of medicine, you could not survive. And well, you were young, you know what, 20 years, 19 years old, you know, the willpower was there. You try to take care of yourself wherever you can, and – and now it-it's something which you – you survived, which it – like I said, it's a miracle thing, whoever survived, whoever came out alive from – from those camps.

Q: You mentioned that you went to the hospital and you were cared for by the doctors and they pumped your stomach. And you said you had a headache for – for

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

years after that. Did you have any other health problems other than the headache after your – your time in the hospital?

A: Well, you know, even – even you went to hell like this, and when you are so young, you are in the teens you know, it's – it's something, you know, it doesn't affect that much, the thing which it happened by the older people, which they – they died right on the spot. They – even the hospital, they died. Of course, in the later age, it comes out a little bit. I have other problems now, which you know, it's related to the camps, an-and even now during the night a lot of time, I see the SS in – marching by, and – and I'll wake up with a sweat. I'll go to the window and I see, oh, I'm liberated. It's just an unbelievable thing, even now that I'm liberated.

Q: After you got out of the hospital, you said you went to the SS, the barracks, and you were staying there for awhile. Tell me what were the living conditions like for you and the other people you were with at that time?

A: The living condition wasn't bad because the American provided everything. They brought in everything. They brought it in with the truckl – truckloads. But I was hoping that somebody will be there and tell us, don't touch this, don't touch this, because our stomach couldn't take it and you just keep on throwing so much food in there and – matter of fact, I – the first thing what I did, there was a box of – of cookies, and I finished the whole box of cookies. I got sick from that too, and

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

then one **SS** guy says to me, who – one **SS** doctor says to me, you understand any English, American? I says no. The only one thing I heard the Americans saying, okay. That's the only on – word I could understand. He says, you know what you are eating? I says no. He says, you are eating dog biscuits, and that's why you are – got sick. I says, what about the – in the camps, the – the meat tasted so good. He says, that was dog meat what you are eating, and that's what you got sick. They have to put you back in the hospital for that da – so, matter of fact, I went in and out in the hospital for all kind of thing, any little thing. And – and then they had a big celebration in the camp for liberation. And they had so much food in there, and got sick again. You know, you keep on eating and eating, you try to full yourself up and – and that was the wrong thing to do, but nobody said, and we were too naïve to understand the whole thing, so –

Q: When you were liberated, were wi – you with any family or friends that you knew from before the war?

A: I was – I had some people over there, some – just some friends, they were coming from the same town, the area, but I didn't see them after this. The reason, on the camp, and – in **Buchenwald** on the camp, and that s – it was some kind of a library, at – but the **SS** library. On that library walls, they put down names – I don't know who put on the names, how they got the names, they put on names who

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

survive in other camps. So I looked around there and I saw my te – my sisters in – in another camp not far from **Suico(ph)**. Now how do you get to **Suico(ph)** from **Buchenwald**, the one place, the other one? Then I find out that's the bus is running from one town to the other one, I had another friend who finds somebody there, and I hop myself on the bus, but it wasn't easy, the bus – the bus was so full up inside, there was no room whatsoever. So we went on top of – on the bus, on the roof, and we laid down there. It was in – in July or August, it was – it was really so chilly, the weather was so chilly, was so cold, and we didn't have the proper clothing, but we were in the – in top of the bus almost all night, a day and a night something it took. What did we eat? There was some food around. Those people who were in the – in the – they were mostly of the Germans – German people, not any others, so they had some food, and they shared some of us until we arrived in the place and destination where we wanted to be. When we arrived in the place, I find there – I don't remember the name of this town, but I know it was **Suico(ph)**, ou-outskirt of **Suico(ph)**. It's **Sachsen** in **Germany**. So when we arrived over there, I went to look up, I went to the **Bürgermeister** and I wanted to find out if there is such a such people, where they are, because they were all registered. What they did there, they – also the American made the people to take in the refugees in – in civilian homes. So, due to the fact everybody was registered in town where they are,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

because they had to provide food for them. So he told me yes, there is – over there and there, there is three **Pasternaks**. There was my oldest sister **Rose**, younger sister **Raechel**(ph), and there was another sister, **Gitel**. So I ask [**indecipherable**] they said she died in the camp of – of-of typhus, something. So she died Hanukkah time, so – and then we were all together in that time, and we were there for a little, short time.

Q: Tell me about your reunion with your sisters. What were the first things that you spoke about?

A: When we got the reunion, the first thing was of – if – to find our father, because we know he was strong guy, and we know he could survive. We didn't talk about our mother and another sister, because we know they went straight to the crematorium because my mother was sick, and with the little sister. That's the first question, we tried to figure out a way. And then I had another brother, and I wanted to find him. His no – his name was **Azreal**(ph), so we wanted to find him, so we didn't know where to start looking. And we were in that camp a little while, and I wanted – and – and it was – it – it really was some kind of a barracks too, after – after – when we went out from the civilian, we went in a little barrack because we were ready to be – to go back into **Germany**. It's the reason it – because that time the allies, they made some agreement with the Russians, that the Russians gonna

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

come over to **Suico**(ph) and they gonna divide something [**indecipherable**] I heard something or – and – and that means, the next day, we will be in Russian zone, not in the American zone. It was very interest at that time, we didn't want to move from there because we wanted really to go straight home to find out who else is alive, and who else we could get reunited. So there was again, soldiers, American soldiers. I – I don't know their rank, and they say okay, let's back up – in Yiddish, he say let's back up and – and go. We going – we going in to **Germany**, we going to **Frankfurt**. I say why? I have it so good over here, for now. I'm gonna ma – we gonna make all the arrangement, and – and we gonna go back for my [**indecipherable**] which it was **Transylvania**, **Mamurish**(ph) and **Oybarishu**(ph), he called it a different name [**indecipherable**] Yiddish they called it **Visho**(ph). So I wanted – so the – the – the f – captain, whatever he was, he had – he had some stars on the time, was to be a captain. He says to me, you know, you people making a mistake. You just got liberated, and you gonna stay here. You know who's – who's gonna take you over? The Russians. I say look, when we were kids, they told us the life in **Russia** is so good, he say, you only work and you get everything for nothing. So, you would have no pro – I mean, we would have no problem, I says, nothing's wrong with – with them – to stay over there and to wait for them. He says, don't tell me – don't say it I didn't tell you, I didn't warn you. He say goodbye. The next day,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

the Russian came in and they – first of all, that ca – that barracks over there mus – was only women. I think me and my friend was the only man, well a – maybe – I would say over a hundred girls [inaudible]. Soon that guy comes in and from us – there was people from **Czechoslovakia**, there – Jewish people from there, and they speak the language, the Russian language. The first thing the Russian came in they said, if you people don't behave, we send you to **Siberia**. That guy who told – talked to us about the – th-this way, he had a couple of spoon in his boots, dirty all around. I couldn't figure out, I says to friends there, I says, that's the Russian? That's what they told it to so good, and all the good thing it's in there? And he said, that's the Russian. Now, we had to be very careful not to say anything because th-they were drunk, right away they were drunk. I saw guys, they had two, three watches in th – in their hand, taking them from other people. So we – now we were – now we had a problem, tried to – we should get back to the American zone, but we could not do it. So what we did, we made the arrangement, like I said before, and we went back to **Romania**. It wasn't such an easy trip to go back. First of all, we had to get out from **Germany**, we went into **Czechoslovakia**, to **Prague**. We also went with the train. And this was all Russian controlled zone. Those people acted like wild animals, like you see the wild kingdom of the animals. What di – what did they do? First of all, I saw right away that I am dealing with the devil. So,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

I removed – I was in – on one car, one boxcar, I was with some girls, with the girls, like I was saying there was girls. So I says to my sister, first thing I gotta do, I gotta remove the locks. I took the locks off on both side, they should not be able to come in. They were banging all night to come in and to try and rob the people, rape the people, whatever they did. The next day after the night, we – we got to a station, we got some water there. It was in **Czechoslovakia**. What happened, I find out what the Russian did. They were acting unhuman to those girl, the skeletons girl, they were acting. They – even they had something like a watch or something, they took everything from them away. They were riding also on top of the – on that – on the train, and the bridges were low over there, most of them got killed on the spot there, because they were – they were drunk and standing up there, and they falled off. So from there, after I saw right away the situation again, so the girls come over to me, they say, you saved our lives. I was there with my other friend in there, he says you saved our lives because you – smart thing to do is to remove the locks, they shouldn't be able to come in. And then we arrived in – in **Prague**, we were there a few days, it to – it took quite awhile to get for the train there to **Prague**. And in **Prague** we were a few days. There was already, I think the Jewish organizations; the first time I saw Jewish organizations try to talk us and try to help us go further.

Q: Which organizations?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: The – the Joint. That time was the Joint. So they were a – also I saw – I was very surprise to see also people of the Jewish organizations from **South Africa**. Of course, I learned about **South Africa** [indecipherable]. There was a woman soldiers, Jewish girls, women soldiers, speaking Yiddish in such a funny accent, I never – never heard something – I couldn't figure out – even I understand, which I – I didn't speak any English, I couldn't understand the way they were talking. But m – the products – i-it's too – it was the Joint, but most of the [indecipherable] it – it was written on the can, I – I – I'm a tuna, you know, a gift from the South African Jews, **Johannesburg**. I could see the label in – in front of my eye, there was written. And they made us very comfortable over there and they tried to get us further dow – further to – to get to our desin – destination. So from **Prague** we took another train, of course. Some people – not with the same people, some people, they went on different direction. We went into **Budapest**. We sto – in **Budapest** I had very little problem, because Czech, I didn't speak that language, but in **Hungary** I speak the language, so we didn't have – we had very little problem. Also there was also the Jewish organization like the Joint. I didn't see the South Africans there, there was only the Joint, the American. And they took over a place, they call it **Adjibat**(ph) school. There was a school there and the name was **Adjibat**(ph) and they – there was a lot of food already, kitchens over there, setting up. But you

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

couldn't go out on the street because they were looking for Nazis, the – the Russians were looking for Nazis so they had the Hungarians with the – going around with them. And the – and they know right away, there's not the – don't look Hungarian because the way you walk, the way you eat, the way the thing, right away they point it out from you. So the Russians gave in the documents that we are re-refugees in **Budapest**. We also got documents in **Prague**, which I have them right here. And the reason I kept all those documents from wherever I went, they gave us a paper and I kept it. I also got the papers from the liberation from **Buchenwald** from the **U.S. Army**, which I have it here in my possession. For all those year, I carried that. So in **Budapest**, I went out in the street, I felt like home, you know, we went out, we took a walk. I find one guy which e – he was our neighbor, and he was in the Czech army that time. And we walked, we kept on talking, we walk in the street there and finally we saw one guy – two – two people, not one, but one guy we recognized. I said, is it the chief of the police of our town? You know what this guy did with him in my – thi – this person who I – I know from home? He – first he beat the hell out of him, and the Russians came around, there wa a lot of soldiers, they came around and they seen what's going on, they didn't intervene at all, til the guy got ready, and then he s – he says to the Russian, he said, this is the guy, when we were in the ghetto in the – and boxcars used to come in

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

with potatoes or other kind of food for the ghetto, so this guy took away all the food, he gave it to the local people and to us, when it – in the bottom on the train there was dirt, he said, this is for the Jew. And then this fellow, the Jewish guy, he picked up the – the Czech soldier and he pu – picked up a lot of dirt from the floor and he fullled up his mouth, he says, this is the dirt what you told us to eat, now you eat the dirt. And after a few days, we decided we are going to see whoever's alive. It's about five an – 500 kilometer from **Budapest** to our destination. When we got – it was easy to get, you know, the – the traveling that I – the trains used to go maybe 20 miles an hour, the whole train, even the – it was written in the car they go 40 mile, they only go about 20 mile. Sometime you could run faster than the trains, the way they had those trains. And we got home to our destin – destination, the **Oybarishu(ph) Mamurish(ph)**. We came home, and of course the – it was a very interesting place. First of all, on the da – this place, before th-they call it **Rishu(ph)**, it was **Austria-Hungary** before the first World War. On the fir – on the W-World War first after, they – the Romanian took it over. In 1940, the Hungarians took it over. So we were shoved to one – from one to the other one. When the Hungarians went – when it was **Austro-Hungary**, that wasn't a bad place to live, and to – it was pretty good over there, because there was a lot of wood, and the Hungarians, the Austrian didn't have so much wood, the tree, so it was not a bad life. But when

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

the Romanian came in, and the Romanian had a lot of wood, so life got deteriorated, it was – it was such a good, I mean, people were suffering a lot. And when we arrived in the – on the – in the town and the city, manufactured was

[indecipherable] city with – of three – 4,000 Jews in there before the war. When we arrived there, we find a couple of Jewish families in there and we tried to see how we could do something, and tried to build up our lives – put together the life. But we really couldn't make it out. We try all kinds of business, we're trying to bring in store from one – from one place to the other one, tra – traveling to the towns, things like this, and the bottom line, we couldn't make out.

Q: When you came back to your town, how were you received by your – your neighbors, the non-Jewish community?

A: We – we really – it wasn't too bad even before we le – we got along with the Romanians pretty good. It was a city from Romanians, Hungarians, Germans. We had our own, you know, like neighborhoods. This was a German neighborhood, there was Hungarian. But really i-it wasn't that bad before the war with those people, we got along pretty good. But th-the – the thing is, with the Germans it was another – another ball game that time because they – they went – they called it **[indecipherable]** they all went to the German army, they all went to the SS army. And of course, that was not, you know, good cooperation with them. So when I was

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

– we – when we were in **Viseu**, so our first thing, we find our brother in there. He was in the Hungarian army as a laborist. And we find him over there already, but we couldn't make ends meet over there. So I was there with my – my brother **Azreal**(ph), and I was there with my sister **Rose** and **Raechel**(ph) and **Gitel**. But the most interested thing, my sister was married before the war, and my brother-in-law came back and they got reunited again in **Viseu** in the same town. So – but there was no more futures because I saw a different type of life after, whenever you travel one city to the other one, and the life in – in the town was so backwards. So there was really nothing more we could do. So we made preparation. We tried to sell thing, but to who you gonna sell? Because when we came home, most of the houses was robbed. They took everything away, the local people. Even we got along with them nice, but they still, you know, they still tried to get something for nothing and they came down – they used to live out of town, they came down in the town, they occupied all the Jewish houses in there, and it was no life whatsoever. So our mind was just to get out of there, and to see what we could start up new.

Q: You mentioned several reunions; your reunion with your sisters, and then meeting your brother and then your sister finding her husband. When you became reunited, did you sit down with these family members and exchange experiences? Tell them what happened to you and hear their story?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: We – we ex – first of all, we were talking about the – our father to see if we could find him to find out what it is. And that was in the top of the agenda, to find out if he's alive, because we know he – he could survive because he was strong fellow and so the thing is this, we find some other people who came in in town, and they told us we should not expect the father, because he had – he was in **Theresienstadt** for specialty reason and they bombed the camp, and he was working there as a veteran doctor with a friend of his, and he didn't go to work that day, he was taking care of the German horses, and the allies bombed the camp, and destroyed the camp, and they killed them, the f-f – the first day of **Chol HaMoed** Pesach, and that's when we keep the **Yahrzeit** because we know exactly when he got killed.

Q: We're going to pause, and I'm going to change the tape.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: – continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bernard Pasternak**. This is tape one, side **B**, and I had asked you about the kinds of things that you and your siblings talked about when you became reunited. And you had told me that you had news of your father in **Theresienstadt**.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: Well, there – some more people came in in our town, and the city, they came home and we tried to find out if the – if – if maybe they could find out where my father was. We didn't know he was in **Theresienstadt**, we had – couldn't find out what camp. Then there was a barber, he was a **avrum(ph) de barbera(ph)** they called in town. He was a very good friend my father, and then he told us the tragedy what happened. My father knows horses, and he had a friend, he was working in a drugstore, and due to the fact there was a very good combination, and the Germans give him the job taking care of their horses. And then the next day or so, that time it was very big bombardment, they wiped out the camp, right, and my father and his friend **Drogas(ph)**, th-they both got killed. And it was the first day of **Chol HaMoed Pesach**, and that's the day we are keeping the **Yahrzeit**, because we know exactly what the day and – and the **Yahrzeit** for my mother, my sister, we keep the first day of when we arrived in **Auschwitz**, that was **[indecipherable]**. And we – it's actually picked a day, because we don't know exactly when they went to the crematorium, but according to the rabbi, they told us that when you arrived, that's the day that you gotta keep the **Yahrzeit**. But therein – then, after we find out about our father, so there were no more hope in there, and no more thing, so try to go back from where we came, to **Germany**, to the American zone, we know we have family in the **United States** and other family in other areas. So we tried to go

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

back because we already heard that they have there **DP** camps they opened in **Austria** and **Germany** and other places. So we go in in that camp and from there probably we'll be able to go into our – another country because we have nothing to do any more in here, it's all washed out. Now, going back wasn't so easy, it was very hard to go back. First of all, we had to have money to travel, you couldn't do it. We had a few things, but we hardly got anything for it. So we start traveling, we went back to one city, they call it [**indecipherable**]. We went over there with the train. From there we had to go in on the – to the **Czechoslovakia** side again, in the **Allneek(ph) Javorkt(ph)** mountains. We went – they shouldn't catch us, the Russian, because if they catch you, they were controlled with Russian, [**indecipherable**] Russian they get you, then like they said, they take you to **Siberia(ph)**. So we went to **Czechoslovakia**. From there we had to cut into **Hungary**, also during the day – it was summer – during the day we were sitting on the high grasses, lay down over there, because there was a lot of Russian patrols, and a lot of them got caught. And then we went, little by little, til we arrived to **Hungary**. We went over to **Hungary**, back to **Hungary**, and when we arrived there, also we – they caught us, because a lot of people, they were talking, and you're not supposed to talk. And they – that time was the corn harvest, we were sitting in there, and at night we start running again. We – we went one place, we

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

had a few dollars that time, we sold something. And there was a guy who used to take over from – who took over the water there with the boats, something [indecipherable] from one place to the other one, so we gave him a few dollar, he took us over in the other side, on the Hungarian side. And then we took a train over there. The train which – the train will go to **Budapest**. Now also that train was so full of people, local people, there was no place what to put nothing. We also find out that **Hungary** has no salt. There's no salt over there. So we took a few bags of salt, and we – to take it back to **Hungary**, because that was a big commodity over there. Oh, actually, the salt we had for nothing, because Romanian had so much salt, which it was no problem. When we took the train, we also had to go on the slate roof. We had to go on the slate roof and lay down there, you know, to keep on going, which it took a few days from one area til we are – til we got to **Budapest**. Now who was there? It was there was my brother **Areal**(ph) and again my older sister with her husband, they remained behind. They – they decided they not ready to go back yet. So it was my other two sister, my brother and myself. So we stood on that slate roof over there, also the bridge, it was so low you had to keep your head down. And a lot of time, you know, the way those trains were going, it's not like a train, you know, it was shaking you back and forth and throwing you around. Then finally we arrived in a – in **Budapest**. And from there, there – there was

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

already – the Joint was there, and put us up there temporary places. We also had to give for the Hungarian newspaper, we had to give interviews to them what happened. And we stood there about a week or so, and then – the be – the **Bricha**, the Jewish orga – the Jewish **Bricha** from – from that time of **Palestine**. So what the Jewish **Bricha** from **Palestine**, working already to try to help people from destination, one the other one. So the bi – **Bricha** brought us over to our destination close to the Austrian border. I forgot to tell the name of the – of the city over there. And from there, the **Bricha**, they wanted we – we should go – we should go further. Th-The destination supposed to be **Pa-Palestine** that time. So, when we arrived in **Saulfil**(ph), **Soulfil**(ph) – something – so when we arrived over there in that place, of course we had to cross over to **Austria**. Now, how do you cross to **Austria**, because it was all Russians, all around. And then what the border was, it's so tight, I mean with soldier, that he couldn't go through at all over there, even through the fields, and more than it was in **Hungary** and **Romania** and **Czechoslovakia**. So w-we sold a few things, a few – first of all, we sold the salt that we already had, about 50 dollar that time for the salt, it was such a commodity. Must have schlepped maybe 200 kilo of salt, between all of us. We had about 50 dollar already. Well, we arrived over there in this place, so they told us, the only way you could go past there, if you have to go, they have to take you over the border. We find out there is

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

a guy, a Russian guy, a driver, he had a truck there, his name was **Sashka**(ph). We talked to him – I mean, I didn't talk, because I didn't speak Russian. So there was people who talked to him, and finally he agreed I think five dollars for each of us. We wanted to give him shillings, Hungarian money, but we – because that was easy to get. He says no, he says, **nyeda**(ph) shilling, **nyeda**(ph) – **dollare**(ph), **dollare**(ph). So finally we give him five dollar each, still had a few dollar left, and he filled up the truck, a open truck. He says, all – everybody lay down in the truck. We come to the border and the Austrians, they try to stop us with some soldier guard. You know what the guy did? He went right over them. He kept on going like – like nothing, he didn't care who stopped him or what, because there was – to him was no border. And – and he took us in to – we passed **Wiener Neustadt**, and we arrived in – in – in **Vienna**. In **Vienna**. We arrived in **Vienna**, that was the destination.

Q: When?

A: The time – the time from one to the other only took weeks, weeks, to get to this destination. I would say it was summer, and really it could be in September sometime, August, September, because we didn't stay too long, we got liberated May, and August, September, maybe October, we arrived in th – in there. From there – when we arrived to **Vienna**, we already had some helping, people helped us

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

and they told it, there is the **Rothschild** hospital, which they used that hospital. Who are they? They – the – the **Bricha** from – from **Palestine**, they used that hospital. Of course, who paid? The Joint paid. The American Jew paid for that. So we used the hospital for all the refugees who got together. Now, **Vienna** you couldn't get out just like this, because **Vienna** – **Vienna** had the four zone over there. And we were on the American zone. Now how you gonna get – you couldn't even go from one zone to the other one. Now how you gonna go in, and all – everybody wanted to go to the American zone because that was the right place to go if you wanted to emigrate, or even they had the French zone, the English zone, they didn't count much – much in that, they didn't care too much about the other zone. So it was very interested when you are in the – in the hospital, in the **Rothschild** hospital, they – the Joint, with the **Bricha** together, they – their leaders, they rented a truck, a big truck and they made it special for – for – for people to be able to sit down in the – in the side of the truck. And we should go from **Vienna**, we should go to **Linz**. **Linz** is in **Austria**. Of course **Linz** was already the American zone. There was a bridge over there, and that divided between the Russian and the American zone. When we got to – when we got f – we – we got on the way, you know, we – so what happened in the mountain, the truck had an accident, banged with another truck. I hit so bad my arm there, and ripped off the r – the roof, everything, and we couldn't

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

go further. So then we have to take a train. So we come with the train, they filled up the train with so many people from the camps, ma – from other camps together [indecipherable] of three, because everybody want to run away. And we got with the train, we got by the border by **Linz**, the Russians. We were told – they ask you who you are – first of all, you don't speak no Russian, a word, even the people who speak Russians, they shouldn't say a word in Russian. So they told us we should say we are Greeks. We were displaced, thr-thrown out from **Greece**, and now we like to go back. The train stopped there by the – by the bridge there, where it's supposed to go over to the American zone, on the Russian zone, the train stopped there, and the **Russkis** came around. They were a little bit better dressed already, they didn't have that knife and fork and – and stuck in in their boots. They were a little cleaner, they come around this, and to every car they say, [**speaks Russian**] that – that much I learned. And nobody – everybody looked in them, and we kept on saying – a guy came over to me, he says to me [**Russian**]? No, **Greco, Greco, Greco**. So he kept on going, because that's what they told. But in that train with me, there was a lot of Russian – I know what they were looking, they were looking for deserters, mostly deserters. There was a russ – a lot of Russian Jewish soldier, they deserted and they went to **Palestine**. I would say most of the credit for the liberation, 1948, comes to those Russian soldier, they were already trained, and they really know how to fight,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

those people, that's why – I was talking with them after. So finally they – we went to that bridge and we went into **Linz** already in the American zone. It was the – it was something to us like in the liberation from the Nazis, because we really liberated now. We stood in **Linz**, they had camps there made up for displace persons. So I was talk with my sisters, my brother, I says to the – I says, you know, this is too close to the Russian. I – I – we hated them so much what they did to us. I said, let's go further and far away from them, far away. So we went into **Salzburg** – **Salzburg**, and they also had camp set up, a displaced person camp.

Q: In the **DP** camp in **Salzburg**, who or which agencies provided assistance for you?

A: That time the – the Joint was providing with a lot of stuff, but that time was the **UNRRA**. The – the organization which they – they – they did a terrific job, no question about it. Later on, it took over from the **UNRRA**, took over the **IRO**, International Refugee Organization. So they took over, but we were much better off in the **UNRRA** when we arrived in – in **Salzburg**. I had some mechanical and electrician background. On the first thing I became the chief of **[indecipherable]** and I have here a statement from the lager camp, and it's written in Yiddish, and I'm gonna read it for you Yiddish. It says **[reads in Yiddish]** So what it says in English, that I was in – in – in **DP** camp there, I became the chief electrician on the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

– on the camp, and there was a lot of people, thousands of people, and they all counted to me and I did the best I can to make everybody comfortable, and – and then that's why they give me this – this thing.

Q: Can you translate that for me?

A: In the – in the – in the English way, right? Okay. That's where we were – we are a – we are telling that **Pasternak** [indecipherable], he – he – he was born in 1927, and he lived in the – in **Salzburg**, the camp in **Salzburg** they called **Machne Yehuda**, **estra**(ph). He was the electrician in la – in the camp, and he did a lot of installation work, he made a lot of people very comfortable. People start to come that time, the people who got liberated from **Russia** – there wasn't only concentration – people from the concentration camp, there was already people they came from **Russia**. And I – I tried to do the best and – and of course there was no pay whatsoever for this, you did it just for the – for the sake of the people. And that's – it's – it's – it's a signed by the [indecipherable] and it's signed by the – by the whole – by the whole people in there who was in charge of that camp. But when I was in camp there, I did not really – I was not such a great electrician to be able to get a job any other place, you know. There, you put a wire right to left, and so you can be an – you could get by. But I was very interested in the – in that kind of job for my future, so I – I went and I registered myself in – in I – in the **ORT** school.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

They had a **ORT** school, and I – I learned there – I went there electrician school, but I had a problem, yeah, I had a problem at the **ORT** school. One of the problem – most of them were speaking Polish, were mostly fr – they came from **Russia**. I didn't speak a word Polish, a few words, so I had a problem, but the problem got solved a little bit, I start picking up the Polish language, so it got a little bit better. I had certificate right in front of my eyes with a picture from the **ORT** in **Salzburg**. It says [**indecipherable**] student of electric, electrician in **Salzburg**, and this was given out to me in 1948. I also have one – another one that's – th-that [**indecipherable**] from the **IRO** – well, from the **ORT**, was in – in **Haline(ph)**. It says, Assembly Center **Haline(ph)**, International Refugee Organization area, team one, **Salzburg, Austria, Haline(ph)** 12 April 1949, that's when they give that out. And this is the certifica – the certif – certify that **Pasternak Beru** – I didn't even know I used to call **Bernard Beru**, now I didn't even know this, they call me that **Beru, b-e-r-u**, born in 15/8/1927, in **Oybarishu, Romania** has been registered in Camp **Reidenburg** since August 1946 til August 1948. So you had to have all this thing if you wanted to emigrate to another country, you had to be registered in all those places. So –

Q: In addition to the people who were speaking Polish, so you picked up some Polish language, who else was in the **DP** camp with you?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: Mostly Jewish. Mostly – mostly – most of them Jewish people. That camp was in **Salzburg**, in **Reidenburg** what they called the camp, that was mostly all Jewish people. It was, like I said, there was people from concentration camp, there was people who arrive from **Russia**, and destination was **Israel**, because we supposed to get that – you know, the – the country is supposed to be born that time. Before – before even the country was born, I had a little bit, you know, like something, a revenge type – I felt myself I need some kind of revenge to see what they did to the Jewish people, to the families, things like that. And the only thing what I could do to go in and to – to go to the **Irgun**, they had classes in – in the camp they had classes for the **Irgun**. So I became a **Irgunist**. I did a few things, you know, right or wrong, whatever it was, so to take some kind of revenge, to see – and I learned to shoot very good, and I became to – to be a very good soldier in there. It took months and months. Of course, it was hidden, it was underground whole – the whole thing. There was some already Israelis [**indecipherable**]. Matter of fact, most of them were Israelis who trained us how to shoot. And I never had a gun in my hand or thing like this. So they had, in **Salzburg**, they had big parks in there, in – like amusement parks. I went in the park one time with my friends, and you know, they had this – to shoot the ducks or the other thing, and I aimed perfect and everything, whatever I want to shoot, so I became – matter of fact, they even said, i-

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

if you go – when I go to **Israel**, is gonna be, I'm gonna be the first sergeant without any st-st – star from the stripe, not from the beginning. They put me on for sergeant right away, the way I was leading, and the way I was operating and – and the way I was learning the whole thing. I wanted to go to **Israel** so bad because before the war, and I was a kid, I also belonged to organization **Betar**. I wanted to go to **Israel** that time, but I could not go at that time because the parents were ver – very against, and also the rabbis were very against, and even that time, of which the Romanians didn't care too much about the organization, we had to be underground in account of the Jew, our own Jewish people, because they said to me, if you step out of this city from here, you're gonna become a non-Jew. So I says, well, there is – my aunt is in the **United States** and she's Jewish, and maybe I could go there. No, you cannot go no place, otherwise you're not gonna be a Jew, you're gonna throw away your heritage, your Jewish heritage. And they – matter of fact, really I wanted to go to **Israel** because my – my – I – the Zionists were so much – even now, my Zionist was so much in me, I wanted to go just to **Israel**. I didn't care, I wanted to be [indecipherable] just to go, and I was young, 17 - 18 year. I could not go because those rabbi didn't let me. And I tell you the truth, I have a hatred for that, because they hold us back, all the kids. Most of the kids they even – they even got killed in the concentration camp. So when I was already ready to go to **Israel**, which I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

mentioned, I had an aunt, she lived in the **Bronx**, and – 156 **Honeywell** Avenue, and was [**indecipherable**] Boulevard, so **Southern** Boulevard. So I went and we didn't know her address, but my older sister **Rose**, she remembered she used to write to – my mother used to write to her sister. She remembered the address by heart. So we wrote her, and she said, dear, we are so happy you are alive, and things like this. She said, don't try to go any other place, come to the **United States** first. I have – matter of fact, I have papers here in front of me. When my aunt send us all paper, you know, the affidavits with working, with all the guarantee. She says, first come here and then you gonna go to **Israel**, **Israel** just created right now, it's gonna be a little hardship. I says, I don't care the hardship, that's what I want to do. And finally I couldn't leave my sister, we – we have such a few left, so finally we decided we come to **United States**.

Q: Who in your family was with you in the **DP** camp?

A: We were al – my sisters, all sister, my brother, we were all in the **prekee** ca – **DP** camp in **Salzburg**, except my older sister with her husband, they remain behind.

Q: Can you be a little bit more specific about the kind of – of activities you engaged in when you were training for the **Irgun**? You said there was some retaliation. Can you please just clarify a little bit?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: Yes, well, we had the Austrians there and – and in the **Reidenburg** camp, there was a fire brigade in there. I went out with my friend and we blew up a truck over there, we put something in there, we blew up the truck. There was no human life lost. And it was another time we went to – to a bridge there, we know that a lot of Germans are passing over there, we blew up the bridge over there, so we really got a little revenge in a different way. But I still wanted to go to **Israel** with that time, like with the training thing I had and I was very, very famous [**indecipherable**] guys there. But I feel very bad my aunt took th – talked us into come to this country, which – and then, you know, once you came in this country, so you don't go away so easy, so – I cha – also want to mention, my brother, **Azreal**(ph), he had so much courage, which I, tell you the truth, I wouldn't do it. What did he do? He went back to **Romania** in the town, he got my sister and my brother-in-law and brought them back to **Austria**. We alre – I already had some money in there in the camp because I was doing some work sa – for the Austrians, I was doing some work outside the camp. They needed electricians, so I went, my friends and we did some work. The Austrians, the work what we did, it was not really for the Austrians, it was for the American soldiers, they were living in **Austria** in the houses, in the apartment, and they needed some lights and all those thing, and we used to put them on, I used to get the stove, you know, all the merchandise, whatever I need. And I used to do

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

some work from them, so I already had some money. And we give this whole whatever we had to my brother, and he start the journey back and he got them back safe to **Austria**, I mean, to **Salzburg**, I says – I don't know whoever could do something like this, but he had the guts and he did it. So til – we all got together, we all were, the whole family got together in **Austria**.

Q: When you were in the **DP** camp, what kinds of things did the survivors talk about, other than perhaps the – the training that you were having, and – and your – your ideas about going to **Israel**, what else did you talk about?

A: Well, it f – we f – first of all, we talked about families, what happened. And when we went in in – in the concentration camp, we didn't know what happened, we didn't know what's going on, anyhow, til we were in there. So everybody used to tell the story, I was there, I was there, and one guy says, oh I was there too. I says, I was in the same block and I couldn't rec – I didn't even know he was there. And the main [**indecipherable**] the whole thing you want to know is all just **Israel**, just **Israel**, to get the land of **Israel**, to get to our own place. Also, at the first time, and it was a holiday, it was Passover at that time, and there was the Austrian station, the [**indecipherable**] radio station, and the first time we heard Yiddish speaking on the Austrian radio station to wish us happy, healthy holiday. And it was one of the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

greatest things to – to hear a Jewish voice f-from, you know especially in – in Austrian, Na-Nazi land, and – yeah.

Q: When you were in the **DP** camp, were there any demonstrations for the partition of **Palestine** and – and the state of **Israel**?

A: No. I – I don't think there was any demonstration, because he ha – you didn't have [**indecipherable**] to demonstrate whatsoe – we did have different type of demonstration. We had demonstration, there used to be a lot of guys, they used to go out on **Salzburg**, they used to beat up guys, German guys, Austrian guy, they used to beat them up. They used to be caught by the police, and the police arrested them, and we couldn't see this – a German sol – German people to hold our own people, so we start to demonstrating, we didn't want to eat that time, you know, we took the food out the middle of the camp, and we took the – there was a kitchen there, I mean, there was a lot of food, and – and we spilled the food on the street over there, and we showed the camp commander – he was an American – that we not gonna tolerate something like this. So they finally have the agreement that we gonna hold them in our own jails to find out what – so we brought them back to the camp and matter of fact, the guy's name was **Kulnik**(ph), so he brought him back in the camp, and – til the trial came and they had trial about it and they find him not guilty. But they also give him the punishment – the judge in there give him the first

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

punishment, he said, you have to leave the country right away. And there was no – you know, there was no com – transportation to go anyplace, so there was special transportation for some of those guys, they took them straight to **Palestine**. Final – final – probably they wind up in – in **Cyprus** that time. But that was the punishment. So –

Q: When you did your retribution activities, the blowing up of the truck, whatever, did you make it known that it was a – a Jewish activity in retribution for what happened during the war?

A: Yes, because we put – we left our – our – our – w-we put a **[indecipherable]**. That's what it's gonna be, so they know right away that it comes from us. But nobody would expect me whatsoever, I was such a quiet guy in camp, fixing everything in there. And then we went out, had a few guys, they really were tough. Like, I was mentioning these Ru-Russian soldiers – the Jewish soldiers, and they were really trained, they were really some **[indecipherable]** what they say, they really did. And they did some contribution to the – to **Palestine** that time. They were good.

Q: You said that you left like a calling card. What was it? Rock, **kach**?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: [indecipherable] that's what it's ga – that's the way it's gonna be. The way you say – way they say never again, this was [indecipherable] you know something, that's the way it's gotta be. And –

Q: Only like this.

A: And only like this and they know right away that – matter of fact, they gave us a name, the German; [indecipherable] was here. They – the way they p – they pronounced it. So – actually we – we – we just took our little revenge and – and – to show them that we are not sleeping people, we are not people you could shove us around, and we could do something too. Thing like that. And they – the – the Germans, they – I would say they start respecting us in general. We also did – we also traveled to **Germany** itself, to **Minchen**(ph) where there was a – so many Jewish people in there, so we had co-contact, along with the other one, and we got caught by the border too, by the American soldiers, we got caught, because it's still a country, going to the other one. And we got caught by the border, he's – we – we supposed to go that time to – to **Minchen**(ph) from **Salzburg**. So when we got by the border, so two **MPs** come over, they say halt. Stay there, he says. Where are you going? I say, we gonna go to **Salzburg**. It's not true, because we came from **Salzburg**. He said, you can't go, you have to go to **Minchen**(ph). And that's the way we went right through. So, we had to laugh in our own way, you know. But we

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

did get caught a few more times and – and – in that – in that thing, by the border thing. It was guarded by the allies, you know, and couldn't fool around too much, so – but we were young, you know, and full of hate, hate from the – what they did to us, you know, and – and matter of fact, I saw, when I was a kid, and when the Hungarian soldier marched by in the 40 – in the 40s, and they stopped – the soldiers, they – they stopped the regiment over there, right in front of the shul, and one of the Hungarian officer, he says to two, three guys, he says, there's a lot of Jews there, I want you to pull their beard out and hit them. You know, so they pulled the beard, they hit them, they kept on going. And this, you know, this – this thing kept telling me, eating and eating inside, why, why, why? Because why are they doing that, because I have another religion? There's so many religions, well why pick my religion? So it's – it's – it's start to be, you know, and it never went away, it's still the same thing, I still feel why, why, why they did it to us? Why they did it small children things like this, and with no mercy whatsoever.

Q: When did you begin to realize just how much the Jewish people had suffered?

A: Soon – soon you went out of the camps, when we went out of the concentration camp and you see the Jewish people there. You know, you could have see people, you know, putting on the **twill** and stuff, praying over there, and then from the back he got shot because he's putting on **twill**, something like this, you know. And

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

another – the – stay there and they pick up their hands and pray to God to come a miracle, they got killed. The miracle was they got killed. So you could see your own Jewish people. Look, I am Jewish. I wouldn't change my religion if you killed me. Even I went through all the prosecution thing, whatever they did to me, it – I like very much where I am, but [indecipherable] we have our own – our own thing between the extremists and the thing, so i-it's not such a good idea, I think we should get a little more better united than [indecipherable]. In case God forbid something like this comes around, we should be united, which we were not united those days, because there were too extreme, and they all – and they forced us to be extreme and we didn't – we didn't feel like being extreme, we just wanted to be good Jewish people. And little by little starts up and [indecipherable]

Q: What you were just saying, was that a reference to before the war?

A: Yes, before the war, when we were kids, the religion was so strong, they force you to do things, which you didn't even feel like doing all those things. Because they were so afraid you gon – you not – you gonna be a non-Jew. And I think that was the wrong way to force somebody to be a Jew, because you have to be the extreme way. You could be a go – a good Jew, and you could be Jew in your heart, and – and not to be the extreme way, to be – to God and to people. For God and for [indecipherable] you know, you have to be both ways, you cannot do things in one

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

way. And we suffered a lot for that, because we were not united, even those days.

When I wanted to go to **Palestine**, they told me I'm gonna be a goy, I'm not gonna be a Jew after all, I wanted to come to **United States**, or any other place. I had be just in – in that place where in that town over there, where you could grow up a good Jew. The misery was so bad in there, there was no food, there was no nothing, but the religion was on top. First the religion, and then it came the food. No, it wa – it was very hard to – and then you could see what's going on, you know, and you have different idea, you think different, and – and the problem arrived little by little.

Q: So we have to pause so I can change tape.

End of Tape One, Side B

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bernard Pasternak**. This is tape two, side A. And you were telling me about the decision to come to **United States** and let's go with how you got to the **United States**.

A: After I was in the – in **Austria** and **Salzburg**, camp name was **Reidenburg**, we prepared, you know, I mean people start moving out, they start going to **Israel**, start going to other countries. A lot of visas came in from almost all over the western world, that they take in so many people, so many people. And due to the fact my aunt, she wrote us we should come to the **United States** first, so of course you have to prepare yourself to come to the **State** to see, because like my aunt said, so few were left of her – of my sister's children, I would like very much you should come here first, but then you make your destination further. So we start preparing to do – come to the – the **United States**. There was a lot of visas you could go in any other country, like my brother-in-law went to **South America**. And I had friends, they went to **Australia**. They went all over the world, but my aim was now the **United States**. So from **Austria** they did not take people yet to go to the **United States**. So we heard in **Italy** this – it's a faster quota there, you could go faster from **Italy** to the **States**. So we went to **Italy**. We went some friends and we went to **Italy**. So, it

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

– it didn't go so smooth either. We had to – from **Salzburg** we had to go to **Innsbruck**. From **Innsbruck** – this is **Austria**, from **Innsbruck** in the area, to go over the border to **Italy**. So **Italy** was already independent, and they had the – watching the border there, and a – soldier were there and we were trying to go over the border, they caught us a few times. That's why I will never forget those Italian that time. They caught us twice, and due to the fact I speak Romanian, and it wasn't too much a – of a differential for the Italian, so I start talking to the guy, he ask me, where you go? I says, I'm – I'm looking for a be – a better world. I'm looking for the – to settle myself. He say, you want to settle **Italy**? I says, no, I have an aunt in the **United States**. He says, okay, but right now what we have to do with you guy, we have to send you back, because that's the rule. And next time we'll see. It just happened, the guards there, they saw what's coming, and they turn around the other way and they say, **Avanti! Avanti! Avanti!** Let's go, let's go, let's go. So we went over the border, and we took a train, and we went into **Meran**, not **Milano**, **Meran**. This is then the northern part between **Austria** and **Italy**. So we went into that city over there. Of course, the Joint was there already. And from **Meran** they made arrangements, and we went to **Milano**. And also they had the camp there, only transit. **Meran** was a transit camp and **Milano** was a transit camp. So they, from there we sh – we went to a place not f-far from **Meran**, they called it **Chiari** after,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Chiari. In that they had a camp already established to go to is – to **Israel**, to go to any other place, or to **United States**. It was a faster – you know, faster – you get visa much faster over there to go wherever you gonna go. So I was in that place in **Chiari** for a little while, and then I heard that if you go to **Bari**, it's much faster from **Bari**. So we went by train, it took all night. The train were going a little faster than in **Romania**, so we went all night, we went to **Bari**. **Bari** had a camp which it was the – you could have stayed there and there's camps there, but there was another place not far from **Bari**, they called it **Trani**. And we went to that camp, it also was about five hours or so with the train, approximately. So we went into **Trani** over there, and we stood there for a little while, a f – months already. The whole thing took a year and a half or something like this, wh-what I'm telling you, between **Austria** and **Italy** all those things. So when it came, there was a delegation over there, and they start taking all the refugee people to go to the **United States**. Now, it wasn't so easy to come to **United States**. First of all, you had to go through from he – head to tail, they – they checked you out. Well, they checked out you in general, and they find out – and they wanted to know if you have anybody sponsoring you. And wanted to know if you have a trade and the feeling, and all those things. And how intelligent you are, they showed something to look. And in books, something to figure out numbers like they do it for children now, they put it

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

one, two, thr-three together. I did put them – I could put them all together because the colors were so funny, I could put them together. So the bottom line, everything was set, and it – did they come that we are ready to go to the **United States**. So from there, from **Bari** we went to **Naples**. We stood there for a little while, I think they had some kind of a strike that time, so we hanged out to **Naples**. And – and then finally we had a boat, we had [indecipherable] a boat – matter of fact, they just brought some soldiers over to **Italy** and the boat was empty to go back, and the boat's name was General **Greely**. So we went in in the boat in there, and of course, after being so hungry all those years, I was watching to eat because I shouldn't get sick again. But I – I was always hungry. Matter of fact, I'm even hungry now. I mean, I cannot full myself up from those bad days. So I went to the boat, we went in there and right away I volunteer to work. Because wherever I went in **Italy**, I worked. I made some money in the – all those places where I stood, I always look for a – sometimes I worked in the camp, they paid, because the Italian government paid for that. So I had some money and tell you, the first time I saw what life is when I was in **Italy**. First of all, the people were so nice. It's a different type of people over there, and so friendly and generous. And I had money, and I never know how to live, and this – that's – tell you, this I – I know this is the best life what I ever had up til now, because all the – matter of fact, we went into – the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

government was so nice in general to us. We went in, when we were in **Milano**, and there was a theater playing that time in this [indecipherable] **Milano**. I went in there and th-there was no room whatsoever, but due to the fact we told them we are – we are fr – refugees, so – which I speak the language already. We are refugees, so right away they made us at home and they took us in there to see the opera. And I was not much interested in opera thing, so I walked right out the other way, you know, they shouldn't see me, they made so much effort to get me in. So I walked out. And there was other places which I was interested and they gave us so much respect for the – because we were refugee, **profugo** they called it, we are refugees. Matter of fact, a lot of time you could have go from one place to the other over the train free because they know you are a refugee, and what you went through. So finally we go in the boat, General **Greely**. I said – they ask volunteers, I went to work in the kitchen, where the food is. So I went to work in there in the kitchen, and I was doing – in **Italy** I traveled around from one place to the other one. I went to a lot of place; I went to **Pompeii**, I went to other places. I went to see, you know, all the old places, and I went to **Assisi**. Well, ha – you name it, I went all over **Italy** to see, because I had an opportunity to travel. So I worked in the kitchen in the boat, I worked in the kitchen. And the third day I got so sick, I got so sick with all the food. Matter of fact, it's not only me, the whole boat got sick. Everybody got sick

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

[indecipherable] throw all the food around there. It was something. But I have some friends, they live now in **Queens** on – in **New York**. And just a couple of guys, they were standing there and they were laughing [indecipherable] and then nothing affected them whatsoever. So it took a few days pass the island of **Capri**, and the boat to come in. And a few days after we come to ourselves you know, and we start acting a little bit normal. But the boat, it was some kind of a storm, and you could see the boat, you know, th-the plates in the – in the – in the mess hall where people were eating, you see, while they were eating, the soup was going one place to the other one, it was going back and forth with the boat and **rockling** the boat. And finally we come to our desti – destination. We c – we came to **New York**. Now

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Q: I want to ask you what expectations you had for **America** before you came to **New York**.

A: Well, I had – I figured I have a trade, which it didn't do much good in this country because they were doing different, but I had a start. And th-the whole thing was in my head just to settle down and – and to start living like a human being, not to travel around all over. So when I arrived in the – in the country, they – we came straight in the harbor in **New York City**. I could never find out where the boat landed, it was in December 1949. I could never find out which harbor it come in. I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

wanted to go see the – really the place. Soon I walked down, there was a lot of organization, there was Christian organization, other organization waiting for their refugees, because in the boat was not only Jewish people, because there was refugees from – almost from all the Eastern Bloc. Some refugees were fr – they were Russians, from **Russia** they came. They were Polish, but they were in **Russia**. Some refugees [**indecipherable**] they run away from the Germans, and some of them they run away from the Russian. I don't know what kind of a people, what their background was, what their pol – politic was, I don't know. They were screened in – in **Italy** before they came, I don't know. So they – those organizations right away we had – like I had something written **HIAS** in my shirt, some people had different organization. So we had to go to the – each group. Matter of fact, I walked over to a Christian organization, I didn't know what's all about, and then – and the – the woman was so nice, he says, no, he says, the **Jude** organization is right across on the other side on the hall. So when I came over, the **HIAS** on **Lafayette** Street in **New York City** had already established for refugees who came over from the other side. They had room and board and they were looking for jobs for them, they took us downtown to the – in another place, to the Joint. I forgot the – the – the – the street over there, where they took us in there, and – and what the interview was for jobs, what we know. So that time, when I came from **Italy**, my

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

sisters were here already. They ca – they – they came from **Austria** because they were single and it was easier to get them out. So my sister and my brother came already. And they waited me – they waited for me six months before they came, they waited for me. First of all, I could have come really before. I didn't want to leave **Italy**. I had such a good life over there, why leave such a good life? Why go away? But my friends told me, this life is good, but **United States** even is a better life. I say, what do you mean? So they says to me, did you see the **Marshall** plan, an-and all over **Austria** and **Germany** and **Italy**? I say yes. He says, you see, all the star – things comes from the **United States**. Could you imagine if you go to the source where you got all those things? And there how good it could we? So I let myself talk in, I say you are right and we came over. And when we were – they were – the arrangement from the organization, they made arrangement we should go to **Lafayette** Street. But my sisters – sisters and my brother told me, he says, it's not so cozy with my aunt, the way she wrote we should go. First thing my aunt did, she looked all over our packages, she figured we have a lot of money in there, we brought over from **Europe**. So it was a different aim and so soon they saw me, they say, you not going to my aunt, he says, you go to the **HIAS** in there, and – and be established from over there, whatever you have to do. You want to go from there. So I find they already give me all the information there, so I went to the **HIAS**.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Now they took taxis, they had taxis to take from the – from the – from the thing – from the boat there, from the terminal there. They had taxis to take you to the **HIAS**. I walked on the street, and I – with my head down, I looked down. So the guys asked me in Yiddish, he says to me, what are you looking for? **Wassusto(ph)**. I said well, I was told there's a lot of money in the streets in the **United States**, I thought maybe I could pick some – maybe I could pick up some. The guy says to me in Yiddish [**speaks Yiddish**]. Til you gonna see a dollar, you've – you're gonna get black and blue til you gonna find a dollar here. You gotta work your head off. I says to my friend, see why we came? You gonna work your head off, you had such a good life in **Italy**. So he says to me, one guy which you get a – still in contact – we still have a few friends we are in contact from the camps. They are spread all over. So, I says to him, okay, let's see the bottom line what's gonna happen. So we – I always wanted to go back to **Italy**. Whatever I did, I wasn't happy, I just wanted to go to **Italy**, I want to go to **Italy**. So once got together with my sister and my bro – my brother. He sits down there, he says to me, look, we know you had a good life in **Italy**, better than we had in **Austria**, because it's a different country, different [**indecipherable**] with better things in there. But I want to tell you something, my brother says to me, when you came with the boat, did you see the Statue of Liberty? I say, what's the Statue of Liberty? Did you see somebody like a woman holding

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

one hand up and one hand down, with a book? I say yeah. He says, you know what that means by us refugee? The hand up means welcome to **United States**. The hand down means, you never gonna leave the **United States**. Here you gonna be buried and die in the **United States**, you never gonna leave that. So we all start laughing and that's what it happened, exactly what happened, you just go [indecipherable] think like this, so you'll always come back to the **United States**. So we were in the **HIAS** a week or so, and then they took us to a – to the Joint in there to start interviewing us. What kind of – they had a big – big building over there, just – I just forgot the place. And there was a lot of people, they interview you in your own language, [indecipherable] what job you could know, what job you could do. And I told them what I could do, and – but in the meantime til they find something, I – my aunt had a cousin here, and he was a tinsmith. So in the meantime, I – I – of – I just – I – I was without work maybe – maybe, maybe two months. So he says to me, look, a temporary thing til you get the real job, you come work for me. I have work for a – once in a while I have a little work. I do roofing, I do other thing, repairing. So I says, okay. So got a few dollars that time, for – so I went to work for him, he was someplace in – in **Brooklyn**, and you had – go travel from **New York** to **Brooklyn**, if you don't know you – you know, you don't know your way, you don't know the language. So I supposed to start eight o'clock, I used to leave 5:30 in the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

morning because I left a few hours for going from one place to the other one, one train – I traveled all over the city before I re – I reached the destination. I think it was in **Grammerton**(ph) Avenue in **Brooklyn**, he had a job, til I got used, better and better. And my uncle wanted to show off that he's a real American when I used to go downtown from him from – fr – when I used to go with him, travel around from one place to the other one. So he bought a newspaper, he looks in the newspaper – I don't even think he knew how to read that time because the newspaper wasn't even straight. So he takes the paper, looks in it, he comes to the station the next day, he throws it in the garbage. He says, you see, that's what you do in **United States**. You look in the newspaper, you have no time to, you throw it away. I don't even think he knows anything in that thing because he couldn't read at all. Why he wanted to make an impression to me, that he – and then I went out after, I went out with my cousins and they took me around, they took me to ice cream parlor. And I go in there and get an ice cream. She says, you know what you with that? You lick it. I said, no kidding, I said, I didn't know you lick ice cream. I says, you think I come from the mountains, I didn't have ice cream in **Italy**, or in any other place? So – but I didn't want **[indecipherable]** so I'm glad you told me, at least you teach me something, you know, weth – important thing. So finally I got – I went back for the interview and for the job, and they still couldn't find the right

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

job for me. I find some people who we came over with the boat together, I ask them, where you working? So they told me, I'm working there and there in a metal factory, but it's so dirty over there, we couldn't take the dirt. So he says, but I'm sure with your background, I think you could get a job over there and you could work in there, provided you like the grease and the dirt. So I went in the place for an interview, and the guy was talking to me in English, what the heck, I know English, I know a few word, okay, okay [**indecipherable**]. So he says to me, first I want you to go try my friend, he has a place over there and see if he could get you a job. So I went over to the guy over there someplace in **Manhattan**. I went in there, I see people working, cutting wood and other thing, just – just a regular work. Went in there, he start talking to me, I didn't understand not one word he was saying. I had to work harder, I say okay, okay, I don't understand a word. I mean, to give me the courtesy, I speak so many languages, can't you talk to me in a different type of language? So was sticking to the English. So then I went back to the – to the place where the guy told me he is working. I went in there and comes out – the guy comes out first, interviews me and then the boss comes out and checks out the interview, see – he looks at me, he says, you know, I see something in you. I'm gonna give you a job. And I'm gonna try you out, see what you could do. So I went in in that factory over there, machinery, dust flying all over, because that time they didn't

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

care too much about the pollution, all those thing. And I went in there and I would take anything, because if you have no language, I mean you don't know the language, you have to take what you can. So I went in there and start working.

Q: When you came to the **United States**, did you feel welcome by the Americans?

A: I felt welcome almost by everybody because I have my tattoo number from **Auschwitz**, and it was summer too, and I was going without the jacket. And matter of fact, some of the American people, they even got up and get me the seat, even the older people, they says, here, sit down, I see you standing up. But I was very welcome by the Jewish people in general, talking about the – the refugees, wa – all they went through. And also some of the people and – and – in – in the job, they were afraid that something is wrong with me because I went to a camp, or maybe I did some kind of a criminal activities I did, why di – they put me in a camp, because they couldn't understand why I was, you know, in prison for something like this. So it was very hard to explain, which I could not explain, but after they saw pictures, and they saw the newspapers, so they start to get a little bit educated more, a-and start to accept me. But I should say, the worst – somebody to call me Jew, or thing like this, yes I do have encounter with the people who were working. I – I understand already a little bit, and I remember one guy used to call me hey Jew-boy, come over here, hey, Jew-boy. I figured that's the way you call somebody

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

over, til somebody else told me what it means. But I couldn't do nothing anyhow, and I didn't want to start up anything because like I said, I was afraid for the job, an-and that guy was a little leader over there. And on the end, we worked together with the guy, but I never trusted him because he never trusted me either. So he was doing some mechanical thing and I was doing different thing. And I did not encounter anything, I would say, went in in a store, thing like this, cause – what – no – I wouldn't say ant – anti-Semitic thing when I came to this country. Maybe I didn't understand, I didn't speak the language, but [indecipherable] I think it turned out pretty good.

Q: Did people ask you about your experiences when you came? Did Americans ask you?

A: Yes, there was a lot of talk about it when they went to the shul in **France**, and when I use – started – started going out with girl, they ask me the background, what happened. And like I say, soon they saw my number, they know I went through hell. And they tried to understand, but I couldn't make nobody understand, because nobody could believe it.

Q: What did you – what did you tell them?

A: I told them the experiences. I was a kid I was taking away because I was Jewish, and I was taking so many different thing, and exterminate the family, just because

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

they were Jewish. And it was very hard to understand for the people in general. But later on when I start already speaking the language, then it was a different – I explain it to them different and then they start to accept what I went through.

Q: You said that you started going out with girls and – and started having a – a social life. Tell me about your social life in your early days in the **United States**.

A: When I start working first in the job, I was starting with 70 cents an hour. But I would say the boss liked me and I start working overtime. So it was a heck of a dirty job in general. It was so dirty that a shower wouldn't take off that dirt, that black stuff. But I already had money, so you start thinking about settling down and start having a different social life. So I used to go out with – with girls in general, but somehow, we were afraid – the refugee, they were afraid for the American girls. Why? Soon you start talking to them, the first question, do you have a car? I said, I don't even have a bicycle, not a car, I mean I just came, you want me to have a car? So then I was afraid, I didn't date it the second time, because who knows if she asks for a car, what will happen later on, what you ask? So, I didn't – I didn't bother. But a few years later, about two years later I did bought a car, because I had better opportunities to date girls. So I took them out. I ha – I'm very poor, you know, in the sense of direction, I only know – if I go out someplace and turn back, sometimes I lose my sense of direction. And I also, I am colorblind, so I had those two

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

problems. And – but those girls, they know their way and I tell them I want to go there, I say, but I never been there before, which it wasn't true, I was there before, I – but I didn't know how to get there again. So they directed me over there, and I had a 1942 **Dodge**. I had a lot of trouble with that car, but I kept it running just to get better dates and which it happened to me and – but the thing is this, I still – I was sitting in the car one time, I never forget, and I said, enough is enough, I say, I should settle down and start living a family life. And I say, well, you find the right girl, you say, you just can't jump into something like this. So we did – we dated very few American girls, and most of them we dated our own type of girls. Not necessary Romanian, it could be from any other country we dated, because our view was different, our aim was different and we had nobody you know, we had to stick to each other, so it was a different type of dating.

Q: S-So how then did you meet your wife?

A: Well, I was going her – with a girl from **Czechoslovakia**. And you know, if somebody pushes you, you push back, you know, you – you – you go a step back. She was pushing me to get married, she was nice lady, good looking, everything was right, but somehow, I was pressed too much, you say, when you gonna marry, when you gonna marry? And I wasn't ready that time. So that time – the refugees used to get together in **Manhattan** in **Hotel Diplomat**. You always find, whenever

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

you wanted to go to a dance, or you want to meet somebody, you could meet them at two places, on front of the **HIAS**, **Lafayette** Street, or in – in **Hotel Diplomat**, there you could meet. So I went with her to a dance. Didn't know how to dance really, but I went to a dance. I start learning how to dance, and so we saw a lot of friends there, we got together a lot of friends over there. And then she says to me, meet my friend. So I meet – met her friend, and said hi, things like this. And then I look in the friend, I say gee, I would like to marry that girl, because she had everything what I really wanted. I always liked black eye, dark eyes. I alwa – because **Europe** most of them got blue eyes – matter of fact, I have blue eyes, too – I always wanted somebody in the darker side, because most of them are, like I said, blonde. And she had all the thing I – what a girl could have, and I wanted to meet her very bad, and so little by little, I ask her for a date, but she had somebody – going with somebody. I didn't succeed the first time, I didn't succeed the second time, so I kept on pushing, not the strong way, because I had a lesson from the other girl, you had to approach very easy. So I – finally we had a date. She lived in [indecipherable] by her aunt. She also from eu – **Europe**, she came from **Transylvania**, **Romania** and **Hungary**, and she was by an aunt or by a cousin in **Mount Vernon**. She came in 1946 as a kid the – with the children transport. And I went out with her once or twice and – and looks like she was not too much

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

interested in me and you can't press something like this, has to come mostly natural, and we broke off. That time, I have in – in papers here, that I – the Korean War was on that time and I went to register to the army. I was trained already, might as well do some service for the **United States**. So I went to register it, and the registration to the army was [indecipherable] **Arthur** Avenue. And I got my registration thing and then they called me back to see – fi-first they gave me **1-A**, they took – call me back, I passed all the physical, I passed everything. I didn't pass the language, I didn't speak the language, just a little bit. So the guy says to me, language is no good, we need somebody who speaks English and we have no schooling over there, things like this. And you could make one mistake, the whole platoon could die fe – because you don't speak the language. And I got **4-F**. And I'm carrying around the **1-A** and the **4-F** with me since I – when I went to register to the army. So I didn't succeed. My wife now, she find out – which her name is **Bella, Brocha**(ph) in – in Yiddish, she find out that I am going to the **Korea** – to the war. So she picked up the phone and she asked me, is true you are going to the army? I says yeah, I just said, I'm supposed to go to the army, I am waiting. And then the meantime I – give me a lot of courage, because she called, and I said, would you like to go out for a date? She says, okay, before you go to the Korean War, I go out with you. So I went out with her once, I went out with her twice, and it came through that **4-F**. She was

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

going with somebody, if she cared, she didn't care too much. The cousin where she was living, so she says, gee I'm torn – my wife says, I'm torn between two things, she says. I got this guy, and I got this guy. I says, what do I do? So the uncle, or the cousin, he says to her, look, I don't know much about the other guy, but I could tell you this; **Bernie** comes from **Mamurish**(ph) and I know all those people, they work very hard, and I'm sure you wouldn't go hungry. And it looks like he did the trick and finally we go out again. And we went in **Mount Vernon** in the – and parked there in the park there, we sat down over there and I ask her, I says, look, would you try to get more serious and thing? So we went – went around for a while. A serious thing, they called it steady that time. But my family wasn't too keen about her, because my wife has a – she talks a little loud, but she means nothing, but that's the way she talks and they couldn't accept her to – right away. But I saw in her a different thing. I saw in her a smart, and knows what she's doing. And I saw in her that we could have a nice future together, because I am not a businessman. I would be very well off if I were to be a businessman. I'm not a businessman type and she is. So she had – she was always a step ahead of me, whatever I wanted to do. So then, when I was talking to my family, I says look, I says look, this girl who I'm gonna marry, she has more than – than you think with – with all the things she says, we – so they said look, it's your life and your decision, things like this. If she says –

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

because I wanted – not that I wanted to get their permission to marry her, I just wanted they should give me – you know, to say look, I don't want to divide the family. And then they says, if you think so – so highly about her, we'll accept your – your knowhow, your thinking. And let's see, let's plan and see what's gonna work out. And we had our cousin, he was in the jewel business, and we're talking to him for a ring. This cousin – I didn't want to buy a ring and she shou-shouldn't like it. By the way, I already had 1500 dollars saved, which I was in the country two years, and that's a heck of a lot of money because I work so much overtime. And I wanted her to encourage that – like the cousin said, that she not gonna go hungry, so I wanted to encourage her, and I was working that time seven days a week and 10 - 11 hours a day. I had a check of 250 dollar. I was working 70 cents an hour. So when we went to take out the marriage license that time, I had loose change, I says to her, I says, look, **Bella**, I don't have any change you could see, but I have my check, you cash it tomorrow, and you pay for the license, two dollar, which I tease her up – up to today I say, you paid for me. So she give – paid the two dollar, I gave her the check, and she saw the check 250 dollar [indecipherable] have to make over 300, 350 that time. And as saw the check, she was [indecipherable] right away, she says, gee, this guy makes a lot of money. Because people used to make 60, 70 dollar a week that time, and I had 250 dollar, single guy. So I don't know if

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

that impressed her to marry me, because she – she didn't care for money, never cared for money in general. So – but it – it helped, I wouldn't say it didn't help. And she – they took the check and cashed it, you know, and – and I says, you open a bank – we – we were only talking about getting engaged. And she had the cousin that he was in the jewelry business, and I had 1500 dollar, and then she picked out the ring of 1200 dollar. So it's – were a little over a carat, a carat and a quarter, something like that. She picked out that ring, so I paid the 1200 dollar for the ring.

Q: We're gonna pause to change tape.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: – of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bernard Pasternak**. This is tape two, side **B**. When did you get married?

A: I got married in June 1953. '53. '53. June 1953. I – I had to think twice because I didn't remember it's '54 or '53, but it was '53, June 1953.

Q: What were your plans, your ambitions, the two of you?

A: Well, first of all, we were talking a lot when we were engaged, about having a family together, how we should bring up the kids. I was not too – I was brought up in an Orthodox home, strictly Orthodox, to be, you know, to be – having really Jewish faith. So when I got out of the camp, it – that – it cooled off a little bit, in

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

general, for me. And she was – she was more religious, because my wife's family comes from more a religious background. Not that my family didn't come, but it was a different background because he had a brother, he was a **shochet** and some rabbis in the family. So she says to me, I want to bring up the – my children Jewish, the real Jewish way. And like I was saying, we were very smart, in general, and I went – I went along right away. The only question I says, where the heck you gonna get so much money? I says, there's nobody gonna give you here, you have to do it all wi – we have to do it all on our own. She says, we'll make it, God will help us and we'll make it. She also was telling me a story, when they – they build a school, the **Westchester** Day School in **Mamaroneck**, and she went to visit there with – with the family there, where she was staying. And that was in the – probably in '46 - '47, when they build that school. So she says to the family, this is where I'm gonna send my children. And she was telling me the story, so she says, I'm gonna send them in that school. And they – you know, they were very, very expensive schools, things like this. So she says, I'm gonna work too. I says, how you gonna work with small kid, thing like this. So she says, I'll manage somehow. She was working bi – the year we had our son **Jerry**, but she was working in the dress line. She was so good on that dress line that she became a sample maker. You're not gonna believe this, she worked til the day she gave birth. Like she's worked til five

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

o'clock and eight o'clock was I took her to the hospital. And she was so good in that thing, that where she was working, she had to go to the doctor every week or so, and this fellow by the dress line, he took her to the doctor, waited for her, because she was so good. And when she had the baby, the – the – the – the fellow came over to take the sample back, because she didn't even finish the sample. Now, when our ambition was very much to see how we could better ourself, and even how to better somebody else's too, you know, with who – people you are together, learn one from each other one. So for – we moved in an apartment, it was in the Bronx. And it was **[indecipherable]** over there, it was in the dirt floor. And we were – when I went to the hospital, I was so excited that my wife was sitting down, she says, give me a glass of water, because we went to the hospital. I say why? The – the water busted. And I got such a bang I jumped up. I thought somebody hit me in the back. And when we got up she said, don't worry, don't be scared. Th-The water busted, we gotta go to the hospital She said, give me a glass of water **[indecipherable]** call a taxi. You think I could call a taxi? I didn't even know how to – I was so excited, I couldn't even call the taxi. And then she says to me, give me a glass of water, I don't feel too good. Now who drank the water? I drank the water, because – and she said, it's okay, I'm gonna get my own water, because you can't even give me a glass of water. And then we went out, we got a taxi to go to Jewish

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Memorial Hospital, and the guy didn't even know where Jewish Memorial Hospital is, the taxi driver, so she had to explain where it is. So I went into the hospital, went in there to the hospital. And by the time I turn around, I didn't do anything, somebody comes by, she says it's a boy. Fast. And the next day I went back to work, I went up [indecipherable] and the next day I went back to work. I brought the kid home on third floor, but we couldn't – it was close to go to work for me, but it really wasn't a place to raise family because third floor. The neighborhood was good, so we went to **Crotona** Park. They had a park there, they call it **Crotona** park. [indecipherable] So to get this apartment, we are now, we had to pay the – that time you had to pay – they call it the key money [indecipherable] you had to pay. We paid a few hundred dollar to get this apartment. And then we – we had somebody who knows in – in **Yonkers**. They lived in the – in **Hilltop Acres**, the place was called **Hilltop Acres**. They lived over there and they says, i-i-if you get – go there and you talk to the landlord in there probably, there's a lot of development there, lot of apartment. And also you had to pay that time, too. So we give the guy some money over there, he gives us a three room apartment over there. But that was not right away, because it took time, and by the – by that time she was pregnant with the second kid and – and on the same thing happened, but this – this – this child was not born in Jewish Memorial, he was born in **Bronx Levin** Hospital.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

[**indecipherable**] **Bronx Levin** on there. So we went to that hospital. I was a little more calm, I had a little experience because it was two years. And when he was a few months, second boy, we had that apartment, in which they called 90 si – **Hilltop Acres**, the number was 96. So we lived there for quite a while. And then I had another child, it was also a boy. But the thing is, they all – they all were born – one was born June 17. My second child was born June 18. And I wanted to have an anniversary present, he should be born in June the 27th, so he stretched it til a minute past the 12 and he came June the 28th. So I lost out in that one. Then we went to that new apartment, which it was in **Hilltop Acres**. And we had the three room apartment. And soon this – the other one, they went to school. First they went to kindergarten and went to school, and my wife picked up something – something else. She picked up real estate.

Q: How did you – how did you pick the names for your sons?

A: Well, where she came – where my wife came to this cousin we – she called him uncle, but he was a cousin. His daughter got married and the doctor said she cannot have any children. So she wanted to do something real important for those people. So the first son was named after this cousin's father. His name is the – i-is

[**indecipherable**] English is the name **Jerry**. So he was named after his cousin, think. Now, my second child I couldn't name after my father because the first name

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

my father was **Moishe Zev** and – and – and my son's the f – name is **Yehude(ph) Zev**, so I couldn't name any more after my father because my father's name, half of them is by the first son. So my wife – so, I was talking to my family and I says, look, I like to give a name and what can I – I can't name after my mother because it's not a girl. So we had a discussion and I talked to my wife. So my father – I named him after my father father, **Shmol(ph) David** also to be close, my father should have a name. So this is the way I got the second name. And this cous – the first name always belongs to the wife, the second name to the man and if the third one, it goes again to the wife. So the third name was **Yithzak(ph) Shlomo(ph)**, and my wife named him after her father and after a brother who also got perished in the Holocaust. So this is the way we picked the three names.

Q: What did you tell your sons about your childhood before the war?

A: Well, first of all, what I tell them, it's very hard to believe, but they only believe because the parents are telling them. I tried to tell them what happened with those people, what happened if people are not united, if – what happened if, you know, you don't trust each other. And even all those things you know, it – I was persecuted because I'm a Jew and I hope you gonna keep up the faith and be a Jew because they didn't want you to be a – me to be a Jew, but I kept up the faith, and I want you ke – people to keep up the faith. And they promise me they gonna do it,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

and which they are doing it right now, which I'm very proud of them, what they doing. Soon my older boy **Jerry**, so soon – soon he was old enough to go to school, so he went to kindergarten for – he went to kindergarten in the regular public school. And then like my wife, she kept her promise and she sent him to **Westchester** Day School for regular schooling. It was a quite a ride from – I lived already in **Yonkers**, from **Yonkers** to **Mamaroneck**. And they said the only city in the **Westchester**, they have no transportation. All the other cities, they have transportation from one school to the other one, even private. So we had to get together people there and we had a school bus, we paid for the school bus. But sometime we had to go ourself and pick him up from the school [**indecipherable**]. When my other boy was ready to go, we send him to the same school over there, to **Westchester** Day School on the – **Mamaroneck**, and also we did with the third boy, we send him to **Westchester** Day School til they graduated. Ma – but the third boy, when he was about a year old or so, my wife went to work with real estate, she became a broker. She took the kid with her, wherever she was going, because I did not trust a babysitter. I never went to a movie while the kids were small, I never trust a babysitter, because a boy, you know, they're a little on the wild side, and I did – wherever I could entertain myself, I always used to take the kids along with me, in general. Matter of fact, there was one day they were playing cowboy that I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

was cowboy and Indian and I was so tired from working the seven days a week and I lay down one time in the afternoon. It was a Sunday, cause Sunday we only worked eight hours, so I came home and laid down a little bit. What happened, we were playing cowboy and Indian and they cracked their heads on the radiator, we had to go run to the hospital and put them all three stitches on. So that time I, for sure I didn't trust anybody to watch the kids, til they start growing up a little bit.

Q: What did you tell your sons about your parents and – and your family?

A: Oh, we told them things, you know, make them understand what happened.

Also, I did not have to tell them too much because the schools, the **Westchester** Day School, they had classes for this and they explain it to them what happened on the – it was much easier for me that somebody else told them, because I get very emotional to start talking again what happened.

Q: Did they understand why they didn't have grandparents?

A: Yeah, after they explain it in their schooling, too. They used to ask if **[indecipherable]** my grandparents, where are my grandparents? So they – they start to understand why they don't have any grandparents, and why we were all alone. With all the family, with all the friends you had, you had to make it on your own, whatever it is. Even the – where my wife was staying **[indecipherable]** there was a little girl that time, she was 16 – 15 years old, and my wife came out to meet me

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

someplace and I says, where are the children? And she says, I left them with the little girl. You know, I st – I did not go into that affair – that affair, I went straight home to watch the kids, and I send the girl home. I said, I don't trust nobody. And I – I think it was some kind of a Bar Mitzvah, whatever, and I didn't – she made arrangements, she was so – she worked so hard to get arrangement to have a babysitter and I didn't trust them, so I missed that affair, because since they had the stitches on in the head, so that time I didn't trust them at all, til they grow up.

Q: Besides asking about grandparents, what other questions did they ask you?

A: They ask me – it was very interested, they used to come home and show me their report cards, how good they are doing in school, which they, they were brilliant, all of them in school. So they came home with their report card, and they said they got straight **As**, they got straight fives, whatever. So – fours – four were the best, they show me five fours. So he ask me, my older boy **Jerry**, he says, Dad, four, you don't say nothing? This the best. I say, you know how many fours I had when I was in school? So he say, yeah? You had so many fours? He goes over to his mother. So he says, Mom, Dad had so many four, was he so brilliant in school? She says, no, all the four was failing, he failed every subject, he failed in school. Because what can I tell a child from the school when I only made four grades? Four elementary grade school. Matter of fact, I went five because the fifth one I – I went over the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

second grade, I went over twice. How could you go in a school when they beat you, when you have a yellow – and th-the yellow stars came out that time, so it was very hard. But they went to their mother because my wife is more educated, she has – went to school over here, she was younger, and she was very good in Romanian schools ca – too, which I was very bad. So they never came around to ask me question about school and things like that, they always went to their mother and with books, with all those things, she understood more.

Q: As your sons grew up, did you tell them about your wartime experiences?

A: Yeah, we kept on – but a lot of time when I start explaining something, says yeah, we just had a class about **Auschwitz**, we just had a class about this, about this – this liberation, about this, whatever happened. So it was – it wasn't so emotional for me to explain them all those things, but they – they says to me, I will never forget the thing you went through, even I don't mention it, they said to me. So we have very good relationship and the contact all the time, so –

Q: Did they ask you questions?

A: Yeah, they kept on asking me questions in general, how they took us away, and who was there. I did not want to give them hatreds, you know, we – the Hungarian took us away, to say the Hungarians did. I did not want to mention any nation in it. I just tell them, the thing was Nazi that time, from – from – control from the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Germans. And I say, of course there was a lot of col – colla – collaborators and different kind of nations, so if you want me – they get together with somebody and say oh maybe you killed my grandparents, they see somebody, so I didn't want to have this to happen, I want them to find out a lot of thing their way, too.

Q: Was there something that you would have wanted your sons to ask you that they never asked you?

A: Well, they could have asked me more questions about the Holocaust things, but they already know from the schooling, so there was really a – no a lot of things which they could have asked me. I wanted to hear it from them they ask me, I wanted to get in – more involved in thing they are involved. But they know it from other people, from other places they go. So they know what's going on, what happened.

Q: If they didn't ask you the questions that you wanted them to ask, do you think there might be perhaps any other reasons why they didn't ask you?

A: It could be they didn't want to hurt me because they know – they know I'm going through even now, emotional a lot of time. It's fi – it's – look, it's – we are in '97 now, I got liberated in 1945. I still see what's going on, I still see everything in front of my eyes. I still run to the windows, a lot of time I look out, I – did I really

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

liberated, and I really free? No – so they know how I felt about it, maybe they restrain themselves in a lot of questions to ask.

Q: After the day school, what kind of education did your – your sons have?

A: After the day school they finished in **Westchester** Day School – first I'm talking about **Jerry**. He went – he went – he wanted to continue with his Jewish education, because they were very, very good Jewish – and by the way, **Jerry** won the **valedictoria**(ph) in Hebrew, he was so good in that **Westchester** Day School. So he was making all the speeches in Hebrew that time. And from there he went on to **Yeshiva** University, which is in **Manhattan** in **Amsterdam** Avenue. So he went in to that school and kept on his education in there. And of course, it looks like one son follows the other step, and it's three brothers, and they been raised so close, so the same thing what happened with my other son, he finished the **Westchester** Day School and then he went to **Yeshiva** University. Well my third boy had a couple of more years to finish **Westchester** Day School. It was very hard to travel out to **Westchester** Day School to pick him up, to bring him back for certain classes they had. So we decided we gonna have to change school for him, to make it a little bit closer to **Yeshiva** University. This way you pick him up, you pick them up all one time. So there was a school, the [indecipherable] School. So we registered him over there, in [indecipherable] and he finished his two year there. He was so

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

advanced from **Westchester** Day School that he always was ahead of the game in school. Til – in there, there was no transportation at all, so we didn't have a bus like in **Westchester** Day School. So what happened in the morning? My wife, before she went to the real estate business, she took them to school every day by day for years and years and I picked him up at night, six, seven o'clock, day by day, all the time. This is the way they got their transportation back and forth. That's not all, sometime they had games, they had other thing, and I didn't want him to – you know, to hold them back from anything, so we took them back at night, sometimes I fall asleep in the car waiting til they get out from the game, and this went on til they all finished, and they all finished **Yeshiva** University school.

Q: During this time, tell me, how was your – your business, your – your job world developing?

A: Well, I start working in this metal plant, and I was doing very hard work, you know, like – like a plain labor or things like this. And this boss who hired me, after he says he sees something in me, after a year or so, I was performing very good. Usually in that plant what they did is, if you were working a whole – a whole year without being out for any good reason, you used to get an award. I always got the award because I was never out. And my record was so great. So I didn't even know this, this guy was an expert in – they both was an expert in metal. And he – one

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

time he was watching me, I didn't even see him watching me. I was working piecework at that time, you really had to move. So he was watching me, and he came over here, he came – I was speaking English already, with a Yiddish en – accent. So he came over to me, he says, hey listen. I don't have a section head over here, would you like to take over the section? Maybe 30 people in there. Me? Me? I don't even speak the language the right way. How you want me to do something like that? I don't even write, I can't even spell. He says, we'll give you a secretary, we'll give you anything you want, just take over the area. He had 30 people in there, I saw a lot of faults in that department, but I only mind my own business, I did what I have to do. But once I was in charge, I shifted 10 people on the spot. I says, I don't need these 10 people because this guy could do two jobs. Not to do something which is impossible, because what happened there, they put a line on, and when the one guy finished faster, he was standing around and doing nothing. I says, okay, you finish this and then you take the other area. And things like this, I shifted 10 – about 10 people approximately. And then they saw I was doing so good with this – with thing, they had a meeting, the bosses had a meeting between them. They said, let's make him a supervisor. Came around again with the same bosses, with the same stories and I told them with the same stories, but I wasn't so much afraid for the – for being the supervisor because I had the section head already

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

taking. I took over the job of supervisor on the – fine, of course, you get a hundred people involved. And I was running back and forth and try to run the department. And I was so success in running the department, that we need more machinery. Okay, we need more machinery. I get machinery, so there's a lot of places where you buy those machinery, those kind of things. Called me in, he says, you going to **Detroit** to buy a machine for this. I say, where's **Detroit**? What **Detroit**? So he explained me, and he says, like I was telling you, we get you all the help. You could take somebody with you if you want to, and you going to **Detroit** to buy the machine. I went to **Detroit**, come back – that time, in the 50s, we paid almost a half a million dollars for a machine, and I was trusted with so much money to buy the machine. And put out the machine, I set up the machine, put – course, I had to learn the business, I had to stay in **Detroit** for a week, two weeks, to learn the bi – to learn the machine, the new type of machines. Put down the machine and business started booming again, started hiring more people and kept on going all over the country, I went all over the cun – **Minneapolis**, I went all over the country to get machines. Matter of fact, there was another guy, a boss, he was of German descent, and that guy used to travel around too. He went to **Germany**, he bought a machine. He says to me, **Bernie**, you going to **Frankfurt**? I says no, I'm not going there. I said, I don't want to put my foot down there, I'm not going there. He says okay, this

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

is part of the business. It's something you have to do, and if you won't do it, then we gonna have a problem. So he says, take somebody with you. I took somebody with me, I went to – to **Frankfurt**, I went to other places around there to buy the machine, went back to the old places. And when I stepped down in the airport, **Frankfurt am Main**, I saw Nazis over there, you know, I see the – the picture comes back to me. It was so – you know, in early 60s, it was something, you know, it come back to my mind. So I says to the guy, he was an Italian guy, I says to him, I say, listen. I don't want to touch a fra – a – a mark, I don't want to touch anything here. I'm gonna buy something in the store which is made in any other country, and you handle the whole thing. I do the negotiation, and you handle the whole thing. So he couldn't handle it the right way, so I have to step in anyhow, because it would be a problem. So after the meeting was there, and we bought the machines, that's already came out for over a million dollar machines, came out the machines, so finally they said stick – there was a Belgian guy at one who lived in **Germany**, so he says, okay, we going out to eat in **Frankfurt**. I says, okay, we going out to eat, but I want to tell you something. I only eat kosher. They all got stung because I – they didn't even know I was Jewish. So the other guy says, I don't even know where they have kosher places in here. So they told the secretary, she kept on looking and looking, looking. Finally they find in the synagogue in **Frankfurt**,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

there was a Hungarian family that immigrated there, Jewish Hungarian. Matter of fact, she was from **Hungary**, he was from **Israel**. They opened a kosher place in there. So they say, oh, we have a kosher place in there. So we were re – all went in there and eat. Can you imagine that? Making all those Nazis eat kosher food? And when we went in there I said, that's not enough, I want to do something else too. I say, you want wine? I say yes. Which I don't drink wine, once in a while. Well, actually [**indecipherable**] So, I says okay. So they bring out the best wine from **France**. I said no, no, no, no, no. I want wine from **Israel**, and I want to see the kosher mark on there. So they brought kosher wine and I had to make all of Nazis drink kosher wine too, so I should get a little bit revenge of them. So we find out the deal, we made up the deal, everything. Went back a few times there because – and I went the same thing, the same thing what I said now, I never saw a mark and I never touched a mark. And never bought anything except when I bought in the stores, I went in – I went in with the American dollar to buy, that time. And then came home, we put up all those machines. And from the hundred people, g-grown to 250 people. The business was so booming, the whole plant had over a thousand people. Business was so booming that we had to put in a night shift. So I was in charge in day and night on the plant and the machine. Matter of fact, I got up, I went as high as I became a **metallurgent**(ph) engineer. I know metal, I know it

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

anyhow, so I didn't go to school, but I recognize the metal anyhow, and I told them if it's stainless steel, if it's iron, how much iron is in there. So I became the **metallurgents**(ph) engineer, and we hired people, new people. We hired a lot of Italian people because I speak the language and they were very good workers, so I was leaning to the Italian people. And also I never forget what they did for me when they told me **Avanti, Avanti**. So I never forget, which I have a soft spot for them. I went back a few times to **Italy** and I have neighbors Italian, I speak to them Italian. But there was one time I couldn't get any workers. They used to ask me, where you get those people? Do you go to the boat? Do you pick them up there? And so I couldn't get any people, so they were – that time – **Puerto Rico** opened that time, and there's a lot of Puerto Ricans came in. And interviewed them, and of course they didn't speak a word Engli – interview them. And before they start speaking English, I learned Spanish, because they couldn't speak the language, so I had to learn Spanish in – in the job there. So I was – I had about – about 250 people, maybe more, in charge day and night of the oldest machinery. And I find I'm working over there 37 year in one place. I was that time in the union, and when they make me all those big – big – make me all those proposal, they says, you have to step out of the union, because you cannot be in the union and you cannot be a boss in the side. I came home and I told my wife, I said this and this happen, I could

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

became the vice-president in charge of manufacturing, if – but I cannot be in the union. She says to me, look, you stay where you are. You – I don't need a title. You're doing very good the way it is, don't leave the union. There was a lot of guys that left the union, and it's true, they – they lost their jobs. And I was protected from the union. So I was staying in the union. They – they had no choice, and I didn't want to leave, so they left me the way it was, and the exemp – exemption to do something like this, to work for the boss, and to work for the union. Then is – the plant got bigger and bigger and I retired, and they take over the – some other people took over the plant, and the plant went downhill, it took about 10 years. I'm retired already 10 years, and they took over the plant and they – they – they brought it down and down and down. Finally they sold it, and – and they moved to **Thailand**, the whole company moved to **Thailand**. So they dissolved the pi – dissolved everything over here. People were coming to me. I had some of the former bosses, they begged me to go and restructure the whole thing, I mean, but I was not interested to go back. I was, but my wife did not want me to go back. She says, enough is enough, so that's it.

Q: During your – your years in this country, working and raising a family, a lot of changes have happened in this country. I was wondering if you can tell me if any of these had any particular interest for you. You –

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: Well –

Q: – you were here for the – the **Vietnam** War and the Cold War. Did you have any concerns about either of those?

A: When we had the **Vietnam** War that time, we had a union, it was **UE** Electrical, it was a communist union. And during the war that time, most of the **[indecipherable]** went for the – for the war, you know all those – they went to the war. And there was a lot of – of work, like to make rockets, to make other thing for the war. And we could not get a contract bef – because we were a communist union, so they couldn't give us a contract. What we did, we went – a few people we got together and we went down to **Manhattan**, and we talked to the **Teamster** union, to try to take over, we gonna throw this union out. Everything was a secret. And finally we suc-succeed, we throw out the communist union and we got in the **Teamster** union, which it's up til – til the last days til they closed. And we had the contract, and we were doing very good, and we were looked – we looked up much better without that communist union.

Q: There were also some changes in Civil Rights in this country. Did you have any thoughts about that as – as you saw the changes?

A: The Civil Right movement was a very good movement, not only for – for the Civil Right thing, it was a good movement for – for – for everybody, for all

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

minorities, majorities. Everybody benefit from it. We benefit because before, you know, they wer – you weren't treated right. No matter what you did, you weren't treated right because was taken advantage. It doesn't matter what nationality you are. Once the Civil Right start movement, it was a little easier for everybody, and it was a g – a good movement with that.

Q: Also in this country, there was the sexual revolution, which is certainly different than the kind of environment you were raised in. Did you have any thoughts on – on some of those changes?

A: Now, you talking about equal opportunity? Something like this? Okay. The thing is this; I had a lot of womens working for me, and they – they performed sometimes better than the man. And I could not see, because you're a – you're different, you know, your sex is different, why couldn't you get the job? Because you could perform. And I did it, because I got better performance from them, and I'm glad they start that because it's better for the country.

Q: So anything else that happened in this country, in the years that you're here, that was of particular interest to you?

A: Yeah, the Civil Rights movement is of particular interest. Secular harassment, you know, it's a – it's a good movement with – also job opportunities, business opportunity, and a lot of whatever the change is, it's for the bettering, since I came.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Also with the – used to be the pollution thing, when I worked in the plant, there was smoked all over, and then they came in with the pollution thing, tried to protect people, and it's getting better and better with all those things, which I'm delighted to see that.

Q: We're gonna pause and I'm gonna change tape.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: – of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bernard Pasternak**. This is tape three, side A. Can you give me a little insight into – into your life overall in this country?

A: Oh, I married in 1953. That where you – that's where I – I always wished I should settle down and start living a normal life. Also was looking for the right girl, which everybody looks for the right man or the right girl, which I could say I find it. We both fit in so much to each other like a pot with a cover. I was very honest all those years, I'm married for so many years. I had my fun in **Italy**, so I was very, very devoted to the family, and very honest with my wife, on – pulling on the same track together, we never stepped out of line. Once you step out of line, you lose everything. So we educated – highly educated our kids. We worked really, really the hardest way we could, we worked seven days a week, that she worked. There was a lot of time she brought the kids home – when I brought the kids home from school at night – all day she was working, and when I brought them home at night, I took over and she went to work. She used to come home 10 o'clock a lot of time from work. And we had to share whatever we had to do. We had to do the best thing we can. We did when they went to the schooling, and we had also, the most important thing was the friends, with which friend you were going. Sometimes they

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

went out with friends and we didn't like their friends, because their friends, they left the kids with babysitters, it didn't work out. So we didn't agree with that, and the kids, after they finished the **Yeshiva** University, they decided they want to go to get the profession, so decided he want to go to law. So **Jerry** started out, the first thing he said he wants to be a lawyer. So my wife says to him, says look, I will support you and your father will support you all means, all the way. But I want to tell you something, you gonna be a lawyer, I don't want a **shysie**(ph) lawyer in my family, I want the best lawyer there is. If you cannot perform as the best lawyer, I don't want a lawyer. But thank God he made it, and my wife got her wish, he's the best lawyer. So my second boy, he came around, I ask him, what you want to do with your life, what you want to do for the future? So he says, I'm gonna be a – a manager, some kind, industrial managing, things like that. I says to him, look, there are so many thing – so many people doing that kind of job, and I don't think that's gonna be some kind of a future. But if you want it, I'll **[indecipherable]**. So then I find out he is interested to go in law. So he went into law too. And of course my third one followed the same step. What I could tell you one thing, that I am very happy with their profession, and they're very established in the – in their way. By my – by **Jerry** I have two grandchildren, and they're wonderful children. And my younger boy, he – he live – **Jerry** lives in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. And my younger boy,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

who married before my middle boy, he lives in **Livingston, New Jersey**. He has a – **Jerry** has a boy and a girl, and my younger boy **Steven**, he has two girls. One girl is named after my mother and my sister, the one I was telling you she died in the camp, **Hannah(ph) Esther**. My other granddaughter is named through my wife family. And I wanted to have a name for my father so bad, so my younger son, he gave me the whole name, and I called him **Moishe Zev**. He doesn't even have an English name, just **Moishie(ph)**. That's the way they call him. He's also very – he succeeds very much in his **[indecipherable]** in his – my younger one, he opened his own practice and **[indecipherable]** in a law firm. And my middle boy, we – he just got married in November. He was waiting too long, he couldn't find what he wants to here. So finally he finds somebody, find a wonderful girl, and he married November 1996. And my – he – of course, no grandchildren over there yet. He is doing very good doing the job in – in the law firm. They are very well established themselves, and thank God, they don't need any help from nobody, because they're doing in their own. And I could say that I made it, what my aim was, my dream, everything came true the way. Of course, like I said, if you married, and you start pulling different direction, you never make it. Once you stay together and you work out your problems together, you make it. I give you an example for myself.

Q: What's your reaction to this resurgence of interest in the Holocaust?

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

A: This is one of the greatest thing the younger generation are doing. I am amazed to see some people are putting in their life. Like **Esther Finder** who's interview me, she's putting in her life in that Holocaust thing. And that's all – whenever we get together, we ask about family first, the second word is about the Holocaust. And I'm delighted. Also, she had a daughter – she has a daughter, she got – she wa – got Bat Mitzvah. And we just saw the tape, and she made a speech, also mentioned the Holocaust. I tell you, even for so many years, we both – my wife was here too, we both start crying, you know, to see. That's the third generation. So it's one of the greatest thing people could do, to keep on passing from one generation to the other one. And **Esther Finder** is a very good example, what she's doing.

Q: Thank you. How do you respond when you hear Holocaust deniers?

A: Holocaust?

Q: Deniers.

A: Oh, well, you know, you could – have to take those people serious, but they don't know what they're talking about anyhow. It makes no sense whatsoever. But you have to put a stop to it because somebody else may believe something like this, and you have to prove that that's why it's so important to search the Holocaust, to open more museum, to open more things, to talk more about it and especially in

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

school for the younger children, and not to let go. Just keep on reminding people what happened, because if you do that, it'll never gonna happen again.

Q: Do you think the Jews in this country have reason to fear from skinheads or neo-Nazis?

A: That's the way it starts. That's the way it start, this anti-Semitic thing, that's why you have to put a – you have to put a stop right on the spot. Matter of fact, I just heard from Jewish [indecipherable] that there is some kind of inte-internet, they start sending anti-Semitic things from the internet, one to the other one. All those things gotta be stop. Soon something starts, you st – you have to stop it right away. You don't let go, nothing. Take it serious.

Q: How has your Holocaust experience influenced the choices that you made over the years?

A: Well, we were – you see, we – we were born in the place, soon you were born, you are independent, because there were so many children over there, you couldn't take care of them. So you had to be independent in – in general. But once you went through this Holocaust life, you know, your experience was entirely different. You – you devoted more, because you see the **tsoris** you could get in if you do something in – and the wrong thing. So it – it influence a lot, and in the other way, it's – it's something which I don't feel very well now, you know, you remember all

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

those thing, it's tough, cramming you all the corners, you see all those thing. So I'm glad the way it turned out now, that I'm happy.

Q: In what ways has your view of Judaism been changed by the Holocaust? Are you a believer?

A: That's a very hard question to answer. I am a believer, but not the way they believing now, in that the ultra-Orthodox, like forcing children to accept something which they don't want to accept. I believe you, in Judaism, to God and to people. You have to be for both. You don't have separate from the other, from anybody else, just to be a Jew. You could be a good Jew, and – and – and do what you have to do not to be separated, that – dress different, go different, do other thing different. I'll tell you, that caused a lot of anti-Semitic thing too, because the way you separating with the thing. You could keep up your faith very well, like I do now, for both ways, to people, and to God.

Q: When you look back at yourself as a parent, what influence did your war experience have on the way that you raised your sons?

A: See, the thing was this, when you – when you had your parents – first of all, you lost them very young, and the second thing, it was a different influence what they tried to do, it – with – with – first of all, what they – the parents those days was worried how to feed their children, which cause there was no food. Who to give

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

first? And it's a very interested thing, it was not in our house, but most of the houses I saw, when they had a little food, who'd they give first? For the father. He was the head of the comm – on – on the he-head of the house. Everything the father for, the – the kid could have suffered from hunger or diseases, first they take care in the father, and that was the wrong thing to do.

Q: In retrospect, would you have done anything differently raising your sons? If you di – di – if you could do it again today, would you do it differently at all?

A: I tell you, if I would have listen to my wife, probably that we would never be in so much education, so many Jewish thing, because my wife was very highly educated. Even she was young, she was the best in school. And I saw so many good things on her that she could do, and I left her do whatever she had to do, and she did the right thing, and I'm so delighted to see this thing what happened.

Q: Do you speak with your sons about your past? About, you know, the Holocaust now?

A: Well, whenever we get together, you know, they live one apart, one from the other one, but if my middle son, which is **Alvin**, he doesn't live too far from me, it's about 20 minutes or so. But how could you speak, they working so hard. They working from early in the morning to early – late at night. But when there is a

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

vacation, we talk about it, because they all belong to the museum, they all supporting the **Yad Vashem**, so they all involved in different ways.

Q: Some of your grandchildren are old enough now to – to talk to about some of your experiences. Do you talk to them about your childhood, or your wartime experiences?

A: Well, we do – I did explain to my older grandchildren what happened with the schooling, with all this thing. So the – the thing was, it was a different world, and it will never happen, this kind of world any more, so we have to do the best we can now.

Q: Did they ask you about the war?

A: All they did was certain – there was sometimes – they kept on questioning me why the – we have no grandparents, you know, even now, and what happened, where I was, especially my **Auschwitz** number is very visible, it's very big letters. So sometimes they come over and kiss my arm, things like this. So they feel very st – very bad what happened with me and why I lost the whole family.

Q: Is there anything that you would like your older, the older grandchildren to ask you, that they haven't?

A: I want them – they – they are – they are – they are very busy with schooling now, but like it was mentioned before, I want them to get more involved in – in

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

third generation Holocaust things with the museum, with all the other thing. But probably they were left – they're gonna have a little free time. So we get together quite often, so –

Q: Do you speak publicly about your experiences?

A: Yes, I do speak. Matter of fact, I went to an affair and those people were not Holocaust survivor, and it – it – it's something, you know, where you get together with people, Holocaust survivor, after you talk a little bit, the Holocaust thing comes up. So I was – we were talking about something, and this person comes over, they says, we don't talk about Holocaust here, we having a **simcha** over here, we don't – I don't want to hear anything about it. There is some people like that, they don't want to hear what happened, they're not interested.

Q: You've mentioned several times that you've had recurring dreams since the war, and you – you wake up to see if you are, in fact, free. Can you – can you share with me a little bit about some of those recurring nightmares?

A: Well, the thing of it is, what you see, and – and what happened before, it's – i-i- it's so much different than one with the other thing. We never thought we gonna be free, because we know we gonna be killed, or – or – or get killed. So either way, we didn't have any hope to be – to – to live. And – and that's thing is still in our mind, that we never gonna be free. I go up a lot of time at night and I look out of the

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

window and take a look where I am, how I am, and a lot of time when I go up, I could bang in the – it happened one time I broke the glass from the – from the – from the window, because I went out there and I knocked on the glass because I wanted to look outside, and it was dark, and I didn't see, and break the window to see if I'm really free, because it just an unbelievable thing that I am free.

Q: I wanted you to – to back up for just a minute and – and tell me, during your time – after the war, but before you came to the **United States**, in those years, did you follow the **Nuremberg** trials?

A: If I follow the –

Q: **Nuremberg** trials.

A: Not too much, because I didn't know who they trying. Because we had no – we didn't read no newspapers, and we didn't – we – we couldn't read because there was not the papers we know how to read. So I just saw [indecipherable] what's going on, and then I find out about the big guys. The only trial I was follow very close is **Eichmann's** because he was involved with [indecipherable] the Hungarian Jew. And I was following very good, even they had a movie about it, so I was very much interested to see what happened, because a lot of thing I did not know what this guy did. So I followed that thing close, which I know what the other things, the other one, I just heard about the names.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Q: Did you think justice was done?

A: Yeah, justice was done, but the problem was, why was he caught so late?

Q: Did you follow the news on the partition vote for **Palestine** and the birth of the state of **Israel**?

A: Yes, I followed it. So we all followed it when I was in **Austria** and **Reidenburg**, **Salzburg**, we did follow the whole thing, and due to the fact I am and I was and I'm gonna be forever a real Zionist, and it interested me very much, every corner. They also had a lot of film, like – they had one film like “**Hill 24 Doesn't Answer.**” So I was watching that movie a few time, matter of fact, I didn't even go out to see. And I – when I was with family there in **Israel**, they show me around the area, I ask them where the fights was. I also, when we went for **Tel Aviv** with family to **Jerusalem**, they [**indecipherable**] back and forth and they show me all the places where the Jordanian used to hide. And they shu – shoot down the thing. So I know **Israel** very well, and I know every corner because I been there at least 20 times. So we go very often there and – and our hearts, me and my wife is **Israel** and **Israel** again. And it's one of the greatest things because I think Jewish people will never exist in this country without **Israel** and **Israel** will never exist without the American Jewish. So it's something like one people, and we have to stick it together, otherwise we will never survive.

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

Q: What has been the – either the best surprise, or the biggest disappointment that you had in this country?

A: Well, dis-dis-disappointment is when I came to this country, and it wasn't so rosy in the beginning and it was a very hard life to start, you know, without speaking the language. It – it – it was a terrible thing, which I kept on saying I want to go back to **Italy**. I speak the language there and I had a job with the government, Italian government. And there was a disappointing – soon I walked down the boat, I was disappointed in my aunt, she didn't tell us the true, I would have be in **Israel** now, where I belong; in the army someplace, being a general, who knows? And so it didn't work out with that, was a very big disappointment. What I am very surprise and very happy, I could tell you I succeeded. In this country I did made it, in general, for one reason; because we pulled in the same direction with my wife. We married from 1953, and now is 1997. And of course everybody has a little quarrel back and forth, and I always back up, because I know she's right. So I always have the last word, I say, okay, what do you want me to do? But she's a great lady in general, and also she don't feel too good now, she has – arthritis developed in the – in the camps. She doesn't feel good, a lot of problems she has, and she's talking to me, she says, you got – now you – look what you – you have yourself now, look what a wife you have. I can't help you too much, I can't do too much because I

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

don't feel good. My only reply was, I don't see you the way you look now, I only see you the way I met you, and to my eyes is the way I know you and the way you're gonna stay. So you know what she said to me? Why don't you get – change your glasses? That was the reply. Which I wear no glasses anyhow.

Q: What would you yet like to accomplish?

A: I – what I like to accomplish, I'm accomplishing. Traveling from one son to the other one, going to **Israel** and make sure my wife feels good, make sure I could do everything to help her, because bothers her, a lot of thing. And whatever I do now, I'm very happy in general, and my happiest – second happiest thing is – was the grandchildren, the family, and then when we go to **Israel**. Like I said, we go every year, and we see so many friends over there. And I'm just delighted to see the way the country is growing and – and they cannot say now like they used to say, in **Romania** used to say, hey Jew, go to **Palestine**; hey Jew, you don't belong here. Now we are there where we belong.

Q: What would you like your sons and – and grandchildren to know about you that they perhaps don't know about you?

A: Well, I only want them to know the way we are and I don't want them to think that I came from the big family, you know, very important people. I came from a – from where I came. Came from a – we were very poor, it was a very poor place

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

from where I came, I want them to know that. I also want them to know the hardship I went through, and I want them to know that my success, they should take an example from me, why – why you success in life. And you stick – when you want to do something you stick to it, and help each other and I want to see close family, like I am with my sister and my brother now. To me the – this is the most important thing, cousins, whatever it is, just stay close, get in contact with each other, call each other. And that makes my life.

Q: I wanted to ask you about a book that recently came to our attention, both of us. The book is entitled, “**Prisoner 83571**.” Can you tell me a little bit about this book, and what it has meant to you?

A: This book, what you just mentioned, it’s very, very interested to me. Why? He’s telling the story exactly what happened. And it – very interested that this man went through the same thing that I went through, and by reading all this thing of what he went through, I remember a lot of things. One thing, I was working in a – in a – in a mine on – on a stone mine, we were working in the mountains there, and I didn’t know what the heck they were doing there, the German. In the book I see they were trying missiles there. The German were trying the missile, the **V-2**, whatever they make. And there was other thing. A lot of marsh – marches we went, and we didn’t have any direction. So he says in the book, we – we marched a death march to

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

nowhere. I didn't know [**indecipherable**] we were going there. And there was a lot of areas I didn't know the distance from one place to the other one, he's telling me where. It's something I keep on reading and reading, keep on reminding. It's one of the greatest book a man could ever write, especially the – the thing which I went through.

Q: Are you saying that you were in the same camp as this – this author?

A: Yes, I was in the same camp from the beginning. First of all, he's starting up with his life in **Poland** someplace where he was before they send him to **Auschwitz**. And from there where he picks up the **Auschwitz** til the liberation, it – it's exactly what I went through, because he was in the same camp. And it's – it reminds me the thing, a lot of thing, which I couldn't remember. Like I was working when they had that mine working in there, in the mountains in there. And I was working for somebody there, for a German guy, a civilian guy, I didn't know his name. He puts it down in the book, what the guy's name was and it was very interesting to me to see it, which I have a copy and I treasure it very much.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add? Something that perhaps we didn't cover, that you would like to include before we finish?

A: Well, it was very hard for me to give this interview, because it takes me back, way back what happened. It's not gonna be easy for me to forget all those thing,

Interview with Bernard Pasternak
October 22, 1997

because sometime it takes months to get over this thing, because it brings you back a lot of memories, which – what happened, and you get so confused now, after you finish. There's a lot of thing I really forgot. I didn't cover everything what I wanted to say, because there's a lot of thing I forgot. So whatever I remembered, I said it, and I hope this thing will go out to schools and to other places. They should hear what happened, and they learn from it. And maybe if there is any problem like the skinheads or the other thing, then those kids will say no, no, I heard it from a survivor and I don't believe what you say, because it's not so, it's – it's really the truth that the Holocaust existed, which we all know that.

Q: I want to thank you very much for doing the interview with me today, and this concludes the interview.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Conclusion of Interview