

Bella Pasternak

RG-50.106*081

Bella Pasternak (née Bella Simon), born in Romania on November 7, 1928, was liberated by Russians on January 21, 1945, on a farm in Estonia. She had been in concentration camps in Auschwitz, Kaiserwald (Latvia), Riga (Latvia) and Stutthof (Germany). Following her liberation, Bella led a group of nine girls south. Sleeping during the day and running at night, they arrived in Budapest in March. After being helped by a Jewish agency in Budapest, Bella returned to her hometown in Romania to wait for loved ones. In late March 1946, wanted to escape Communist rule, she and her sister left for Austria to join their brother. Hoping to get a visa for the United States, Bella went for the required medical exam. She recognized the doctor as someone who had been in a mental hospital near her hometown. Bella kept his mental history a secret in exchange for a place on the first transport to the United States. She left in September 1946 with a children's transport for Feldafing, Germany. Due to strikes and damage to the ship, she did not arrive in New York until December 20, 1946. She lived with her mother's cousin.

In 1953 Bella married Bernard Pasternak, who was also a Romanian survivor. Although Bella discussed the Holocaust with her three sons when they were young, she would not instigate the subject. She was brought up in a religious family, but she and her husband were not religious when they married. Her sons attended the Yeshiva and were more observant than their parents. She loves Israel, but did not want to live with a constant fear of war. She is worrisome and protective over her children and grandchildren.

*Note: This interview focuses on the interviewee's post-Holocaust experiences. There is an earlier interview with this interviewee. It can be accessed by requesting RG-50.030*176.*