

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Bella Simon Pasternak
October 22, 1997
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PREFACE

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BELLA SIMON PASTERNAK

October 22, 1997

Question: – **Holocaust Memorial Museum**, volunteer collection interview with **Bella Pasternak**, condus – conducted by **Esther Finder**, on October 22nd, 1997, in **Rockville, Maryland**. This is a follow-up interview to a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** videotape interview conducted with **Bella Pasternak** on April 21st, 1994. This is tape number one, side **A**. I'd like to start by asking you about your liberation experience. What was the moment of liberation like for you?

Answer: Well, we got liberated by the Russians. We didn't know anything til the **lagerfuehrer** came in and told us we are freed. We didn't hear no noises, nothing. The – the older **SSs** left, and we were surrounded only by the **lagerfuehrer**, who was from **Czechoslovakia**, a girl, a Jewish girl. So we really don't know anything much about it. But the ru-ru-Russian government declared it liberated, and that's all wa – we knew [**indecipherable**].

Q: When you heard that you were free, that you were liberated, what did that mean to you?

A: We were in a small town. Because we were on the front line, we were given the ammunition for the soldiers. So we were in a farm, in a – in a stable full of hay, that we slept in. And when they came in and said we got liberated, everybody start running. This is the way it started. That was January 21st, winter, cold, and we were

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shivering in a barn. The first thing people went, and they were looking for food.

Everybody grabbed what they find in the farm. They tried to get the milk from the cow, because the farmers just had left when we got there. The first thing that we did was we – by the time we realized that there is no more food left, I grabbed a little pig running in the stable. I took a fork, one that i – cleaning the stables, and we punched into the pig, and with everything in it, we made a fi – bonfire and we sat down, about 10 - 12 girls with potatoes and that's what was our first meal.

Everybody was first laughing. I took my belt and I tie it around the pig after I caught him, and I start to make a bonfire. So, got the heat, to warm up a little, and maybe about an hour later, we all start eating on the pig. That was our first meal. And then we started up walking. We had no facilities, no cars, no bicycles, nothing. Whatever we had – we took our clothes that we had on us, nothing else, and we start going towards the city. And when we got to the city, we asked the people how we go down south. Got liberated in **Estonia**. And from there we walked, we start walking. We walked from January to March. This is the way we got home, were no transportation. Because we were offered a couple of rides from the Russians. We were 10 girls, we are still in touch. One of them – two of them passed away since then. Eight is still – we still talking occasionally together. One is in **Canada**, couple of them are in **Brooklyn**, couple of them in **Israel** I just visited. And we are in

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touch. The 10 of us made a group, and like a chain, we jumped from one [indecipherable] to another one, because there were no bridges. And this was the way we crossed the rivers. We went into houses, and whatever we found, we ate. In certain houses, there was hot food on the stove, and I told them, don't eat, cause if it's hot, there must be poison in it. So we ate raw potatoes. We were sleeping during the day, and we were running at night, because we were afraid of the Russians. They picked us up once with a car, one girl went up the car and he start the motor running. So as soon as we see that they start rolling, we pulled her down from the truck. And I said, no more lifts, we have to walk. And there was no trains, everything was banned. Nothing was going. So the only way we were able to go was by foot. And wherever got dark, we start running. During the day, we were sleeping wherever we found a place, in a barn, in a house. Everything was opened. You could go in any house, there was no people around there, until we got to **Poland**. And then already there we ask in Polish, that's all that we knew was, [speaks Polish here]

Q: Translate for me, please.

A: I don't speak Polish either. That's all Polish we know that we ask her, how many kilomete – kilometers is to the station. That's what we know Polish from the Polish girls that we were in lager together. And they said there is no station. So we kept on

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walking, and we walked til March. Purim, just before Purim, we arrived to **Budapest**. And there already, we were home, because we spoke the language. We were able to speak Hungarian, and we asked the first thing if there's a Jewish agency. And we were dir – were directed because Russian ha – occupied the territory, and they told us that there is a communist government there, and we should go to the office.

Q: Did you get any assistance from the Russians along the way, after liberation?

A: No. We were afraid to take anything. When we saw them on one side of the street, we run on the other side of the street, because we were afraid from them. They didn't have a very good name to people. Even after the liberation they raped a lot of people; we heard about it. And when we tried to take a ride and a girl went in the truck, after then, whenever we see them – see – seen them on one side of the street, we run on the other side of the street. So there was no help, or we didn't have any help until we got to **Hungary**, which was two months that we left from one house to another one running. Then, in **Hungary** there already, when we got to **Hungary** they already called our [indecipherable] and explained them, because there was a couple of people who were in the army, and a lot of people who were in jail because they were communists. So – Jewish people. There were a lot of them that they jailed them because they were communists. So when the communist

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government came over in **Europe**, they had big positions. So one called the other one to let him know that the Jewish people are coming back. We were, by the way, the first group to arrive in **Hungary** from the concentration camp. And the greeting was, the dead people are coming back from the other world.

Q: What was the state of your health at liberation?

A: Well, most of us were frozen. To that extent that the – from **Budapest**, they took us by train home, and the first thing that they – I got home at **Decs(ph)** they put us in the hospital, and the first thing they'd give us was a bathtub full of ice, cause we were frostbitten. And that's the – we were skinny, very – skeletons. Really, whe – if you look on us, they would say really that the dead people are coming from the other world. And we were in the hospital maybe about two weeks. There they checked us and they gave us medication, and they gave us little by little food, til towards the end, after two weeks, they discharge us from the hospital. That was in **Decs(ph)**, which was a couple of miles from the town where we lived before the deportation.

Q: Among the 10 people, the tan – the 10 women that you were with, were any of them from your hometown, or related to you in any way?

A: We were four sisters, survived together. And there was one cousin, and one girl that my brother used to go out before th-the concentration camp, and before the

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ghetto. But when they met, my brother was married already, because he didn't come straight home. She was a third cousin, and also a friend that we were together in the same camp. And two of them were from our town, and the rest of them are from the vicinity – we all 10 were from the same ghetto. And we were all the way to – almost all the way together. Nine were together all the way from – starting from the ghetto, and once my sister we met in **Stutthof**, where she was in a different – from a different area one. And a girl that was with us found her sister in the other camp. So they changed their dresses at night, and they came to the fences. She came to us, and the other sister went to her, being that we were three, so my sister should be together, we changed places with the other girl. And this is the way we were together from September til January, til they liberated us. Because we were first – from **Auschwitz** they took us to ri – **Kaiserwald**, and then there were **Riga**, and from **Riga** to **Stutthof**. Then at **Stutthof** we met our other sister. Cause always whenever you ge – went to a new camp, we ask, is there anybody from the area. And when they told us who it was, we got to speak through the fence. And through the wire fence, we picked – raised the fence so they changed clothes, and the numbers, and this way we got together.

Q: When you came back to **Budapest**, and were then taken by tr – by train?

A: By train.

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Q: And then put in the hospital, who took care of you in the hospital?

A: In – in the hospital they – they – already they were a communist organization and they was running mostly by the Jews who were jailed because they were communists. They were leaders in the government that time, and they arranged it.

Q: Who were the doctors that cared for you?

A: The doctors that cared for us were Romanian Hungarian, the ones that they – we didn't know them because before we left in the lager, most of the doctors were Jewish, but by that time there was the government doctors because th – they put in doctors from all over. It was a big hospital, still in existence now, it's a big hospital. And that's where they put us, right there.

Q: You mentioned that your group of 10 were the first to come back from the camps. Were there any other former prisoners in the hospital with you?

A: No. There was nobody. We were the first group that ever came back. So there was no other group. The only one – there were a couple of Jewish people like I said, they were in jail. And they were government agencies now, because after the liberation that **Russia** took over from that part, they became officials. So they put us into the hospital and they took care of us. And after them, they opened the kitchen for people that they start coming from other countries. They came, not from the lagers, they came from the other part of **Romania**, people who wanted to go to

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Israel. So they had to go through that area, so they came to find that from the family. But originally, when they started, there was nobody else. We were the first ones.

Q: During your time when you were freed by the Russians, and your travel, your walk home, did you witness any acts of retaliation against collaborators or former guards from the camps?

A: No, we didn't – we – we were – were running at night where we didn't see nothing.

Q: Right after the war, when you were freed and making your way back, was your view of Judaism the same as it had been when you were a child?

A: At that point it was still pretty strong, because we – we didn't know that – we figure we go home and everybody will come home too. We didn't realize that they – they wouldn't come back any more. That time we didn't know nothing. We were together, so we figure maybe they are together someplace, and they will come home.

Q: What efforts did you make to try and find members of your family, and friends?

A: Well, the first effort we made is we went home to our town and waited to see. So we got home in March, and April was – went back to our town, and we start looking around. The house was broke – was vacant, nothing in it, no windows, no doors,

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everything was empty, nothing in the – in the stables, everything was gone. And we start looking around to see if anybody else came home. Then we settled in the city, where the hospital was not far, and we're waiting to see who else is coming. So the – all the effort that we had at that point was waiting to see, after the liberation from other camps to see who's coming. And we waited about two or three months, then they start to come, one by one. A lot of people came from – to our town, from our town and from the city. From the ghetto there must have been about 8,000 - 8,500 maybe, maybe 400 people came back all total. But we waited and we asked questions; where would – where they were, whom they seen, and if anybody else is coming, and if they met anybody. So we were home that [indecipherable] my sister came home with us, and she found her husband, who was an invalid who was in the army. But he got liberated before, and he was home. So they met after the war, right away, as soon as she came to the hospital, he came right away, and they were together. But we were waiting to see who else will come. And from March, almost another year we stayed home, and we were waiting to see. Then got a letter towards the end, from my brother, who w-was in **Austria**, who said he's waiting to see who else is coming because there was a big **DP** camp right there, and they had a list of most of the people who got liberated. But if nobody else is coming home, he suggests we should travel to him, or he's not coming back. He will go either to

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Israel or to **South America**, because – or to **America**, because we had family all over. Before the war, my father was here. But for my mother's family, we had a large group here. My grandfather's sisters and brothers were here, and their family. So we knew the names, but we did not have no idea the addresses, we didn't remember any more. So we had written, and the papers, they had papers that they were sending overseas to see who was left from the family. So we waited til around March. There was a group of Polish people who were entertainers, and they came to our town for Purim in 1946. And after their – the show, that they were putting up a show in the theater, they were saying, the reason we are entertaining, and we're going around the country is to let you know that the Russian people are taking prisoners for work. And when they're taking them, fortunately, the Jewish people, they'll be the first one to go again. So I advise anybody who could just leave, the sooner the better. So that was Purim. So the next day we packed, and we start running. So we went towards my brother. We figure my brother was in **Austria**, and it's crossing the border, so see what's gonna happen, we'll meet him, we'll see what decision gonna make after. So we packed, and we took a couple of bottles of whiskey, knowing that the Russians, if they are on guard, if we give them a bottle of whiskey, we'll be able to cross borders. Money, we didn't have. Whatever we were able to put on our back, we put, and we left. We left, a group about 40. We met

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from **Decs**(ph), we went to the border, which was a couple hours by train. And then there was a Jewish organization that was working to the borders. From there they picked up the people to cross them to the border, because there were a lot of people who were trying to bring them to **Israel**. And we were ready to go anyplace, to **Israel**, to the **State**, just out of the communist group. So the first thing they took us, we crossed the border, and we walked about 40 - 50 miles, at night too. We paid off the Russians with whiskey and went through 40 in a group, with three or four people who knew the way, they were the leaders. And from there the first thing we went to, went to – arrived to the English zone. I think it was **Innsbruck**, or whatever name it was, I don't remember exactly. And the first thing when we went into the **DP** camp, they give us injections and they give us a meal and they put us up, and we were waiting to see who else is coming. And there was a lot of groups already. Every days new and new people used to arrive.

Q: I want to pause for just a minute and ask you, when you went back to your hometown, did you feel welcome by your former neighbors – non-Jewish neighbors?

A: I felt welcome, but there was nothing to stay with. The house was empty, and they themselves didn't have too much. It wasn't a big city, they were mostly very older people, and poor people in the – in the town. Because wherever it was before

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the war, everything was taken away. So they offered us a meal, and we were there a day or so, then we went into the city.

Q: Can you give me a time frame, when you left your hometown and – and made your way into **Austria**?

A: We left after Purim, two days after that group – I don't know, was it March 22nd or 23rd, I don't remember exactly the date. That's when we left our town. And I just get wi – me and my sister and her husband. My sister got married one a – on the **[indecipherable]** date, the time that we was there, and my other sister had already a new baby, so she di –couldn't leave. So she was staying home with the baby, and I took the key, we locked up the house, and I said, look, we are leaving. If they catch us, we'll come back, we have the apartment. And if not, whatever you want to do, give it to somebody else.

Q: What year are we talking about?

A: 1946. March 1946.

Q: You mentioned that you were in a **DP** camp?

A: Yes.

Q: In –

A: I think it was **Innsbruck**.

Q: In **Innsbruck**. Can you tell me – can you describe what the **DP** camp was like?

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A: There was a small **DP** camp, maybe 200 people. They had a kitchen, and they had bunk beds. And everybody got a blanket and a pillow and a bunk bed. And we were sleeping with the – in the – in there it must have been about 20 - 30 people in a room.

Q: Do you know which agencies provided assistance for that **DP** camp?

A: It was an underground agency that ca – that came and took us to the camp. At that time it was the – the English zone, so I don't know which – i-it was **UNRRA**, I don't know what – what agency was involved, **UNRRA** was involved with it.

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

A: When I left from – my sister, only my sister with her husband was there, and there was a lot of people from our town that we still in touch. They live in the **New York** area.

Q: Were there people from other nationalities?

A: Oh, there were Polish people, German people, French people, Belgian people, from all the camps. And they were trying to get to an area to be able to go further, because other people did not want to go back home to their own town.

Q: How did the different people get along?

A: Pretty good. Everybody went to town to find out more information, and there they had bulletin boards. And th – by the kitchen there was a big board that

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everybody was – was able to write down for who they are looking and for what par – from where they coming, and anybody what group they are looking. At that point I put a sign that I am looking for the **Weinstein**(ph) family from **America**, if anybody knows where they are located. And I was there only maybe two or three weeks. My brother was in the American zone. He was in **Bad Gastein**, which was a one night ride by train from where I was. So he send over – a couple came from **Bad Gastein**, my brother paid them, and another person. It was a husband and wife group, and they came with Austrian clothes. And my brother wrote me a letter that somebody will visit me, cause he couldn't talk on the telephone. And she came over with a letter from my brother to the camp, and she says, my brother sent for me. And I got dressed in Austrian clothing, and I was the wife for her husband, and a friend of mine that I knew, he was supposed to be the husband for her. We changed. From one couple, they made two couples. Like he's Austrian and I'm his wife, and she was Austrian and my friend was the husband. And he says, just sit in the train and you don't say nothing. And if anybody comes asking questions, make believe you're sleeping and I will be dudi – doing the talking. So we took a train in the afternoon, and we went a couple hours. Then we had to stop because there was no train further that day. And we shared a hotel room that we all slept, the four of us on – on the floor in a hotel room, because there was no room. And then the next day

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we got dressed and we went with another train, and we arrived to **Bad Gastein**.

That place already my brother was there, he was married with his wife. And that was in a hotel. The – is – was a – that was already American zone, and it was **[indecipherable]** from the American organization. They had a store that people used to go and pick out the clothes. There was old clothes, but cleaned, and you registered there and you get food. But being I was a outsider, I came in illegal, I couldn't register. So I had a job in the kitchen that I peeled potatoes and carrots, just to have my food. And at night I didn't have where to sleep, so my brother had the room with his wife, and with two other fellows. So we slept five in one room. My brother had one bed with his wife, and the two boys have – had one bed. And then whoever came from our group, we were in the alley, sleeping in the room. And we were working in the kitchen. This is the way we lived there until a month and a half, then they got a job for us, legally, they legalized that **[indecipherable]** are there. And then they start registration for people underage to go to the **United States**.

Q: When you met with other survivors, whether they were with – meeting your brother, or meeting people from your hometown, or meeting people from different places, in the **DP** camps and along the way, did – what kinds of things did you all talk about?

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A: Everybody ask, where were you? Who do you see? Who died, and who do you know where they was left? That was the only questions that were able to ask.

Q: Did you have to register or sign up or do anything in order to come to the **United States**? If that was your plan, what did you have to do?

A: Well, first we didn't have no plans at all. By then they had a notice that anybody under 18 to register, because there are gonna be a children group, the first group to go to the **United States**. But you have to register in order to be able to be in it. So I went and I registered.

Q: How old were you?

A: Seventeen. And we went downstairs to register and after we register we have to go for medical checkups to – to get the visa. So when I walked into the doctor's office, I saw somebody that I recognized from – it was our – we lived in a town, but he lived in the city. And he played as – he was the doctor that it was supposed to examine. I know his brother was a dentist, but he was never a doctor, he was in a mental institu – they were saying that he was a little crazy from overworking in a yeshiva. When I saw him I said to him, **Crazy Blatt**(ph), what are you doing here? He says, please don't tell anybody anything. I will sign you all the papers, you will be ready to go in the first group, but don't mention to anybody that you know me. I said, okay, you got a deal, provided I don't take no medication and no injections. If

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you want to take an x-ray, fine. You can check me up if you have to, but you don't need to. So he sign me all the papers, he took a chest x-ray, and I was the first one [indecipherable], I left for **Feldafing**. That was in 1946.

Q: So **Blaut**(ph) was his last name –

A: **Blatt**(ph).

Q: **Blatt**(ph) –

A: Yes.

Q: – was his last name. In the **DP** camp, in this one and in any other camps also, but after the war, did you notice a different moral standard among the survivors after –

A: Yes. There was a lot of people who they were sick, there was a lot of people who were disbelievers. There were all different kind of a groups. They didn't believe that this thing could happen, and no matter what who you were talking, they said, pinch me to see if I'm alive. I just don't believe that this could happen in this generation, in this type of a world. So many people were bewildered over it. A lot of people got married there, but non-Jews. There was a lot of intermarriages in the – in the towns there. A lot of people didn't believe in anything. It was like a wild dreams for a lot of people, they couldn't believe it. And then when the groups start working, and organizations came in, they came in from this – in the **Bad Gastein**, they had a big group of Jews. They had a couple hotels, big hotels. They were

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staying in there, **Hitler's** supposed to be staying in that [**indecipherable**] up in the hills. Was loaded with **DP** campers. The place was just beautiful. Downstairs in the basement there were bathtubs, with hot water coming from the springs. It was beautiful hotels. We were in the Hotel **Austria**. I – I would like to go back one day to see it again, because it is – **Austria**, it's a beautiful country. Got beautiful waterfalls, and the movies, everything they give special tickets, they used to have shows, and anybody from the **DP** camp used to go in with half price. The people were – the Austrian people that – in that area, in that particular town, were very nice to the **DP** campers. But I was there only a short time, and after I got the papers to go to **Feldafing**, which the doctor signed them to me over right away, we went to **Feldafing**, there was a strike, a boat strike. That time the boats weren't coming through to the **United States**. And we were supposed to leave in November, but instead of that, in the beginning of November, we left in the end of November, because there was a strike. And in **Bremerhaven**, the children used to come in that we ended up sleeping three in a bunk bed, because it got overcrowded. And even then we went already to the boat, we were supposed to take the boat in the 19th of nove – of November, the boat left the 22nd or the 23rd of November. And we went a couple of hours or a day and a half, I don't remember exactly, and boat got a hole in the water and we had to stay in the English channels for the winter. We had to jump

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the boat in the little crafts, were waiting for another boat. So we started that with **Marine Fletcher**, the boat, and then we went to the **Marine Marlin**. And took us almost a month to get here by boat, because we waited [**indecipherable**] for another boat, and only got into **New York** December the 20th, 1946.

Q: While you were still in **Europe**, before you came to the **United States**, at that time was there any movement among the **DP** campers to support the establishment of a – of a Jewish state?

A: There was a big support about it, and there was a lot of people who registered to go. They were taking them by boat, a lot of people went from there to e – to that time to **Palestine**, and a lot of people got caught – I have a lot of family caught on **Cyprus**. After I came to the **State** I find – I – I used to send them packages. They were a lo – a long time on **Cyprus**. But in the **DP** camps, every place they had big signs. When I was putting up a sign too, and I got a reply that from the **Weinstein**(ph) family, from my grandfather's sister. The brother died, but the sister is alive, and my – and his brother's children are here and they waiting for us – for me. I got a reply – got a letter from them before I got here. And they were even sending out an affidavit for me, but I already had the ticket to come here.

Q: You mentioned before that your father had been here, meaning in the **United States**.

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A: My father was here in the early 1900, before he was married. And after he became a citizen, he went back home to get married, and the war broke out, and being that he was born there, they didn't recognize his citizenship, and he went into the army. And after he get back, his visa had expired, and they didn't let him out any more.

Q: The war you're referring to?

A: The first war.

Q: World War I?

A: World War I.

Q: When you were growing up, did your father tell you stories about **America**?

A: Yeah, my father used to – there was another person in our town. We weren't in the city, we were in a small town three miles from the city. And there was another person who was non-Jewish, who was in **America** with the same time with my father. And they used to talk. They used to come over – my father learned a trade in American, he become a blacksmith, and he used to made the carriages, like here in the **Fifth Avenue**, the carriages. He had a lot of people working with him, and he used to talk with the other person who was from our town – in English occasionally, but we didn't understand them. And they used to take meat and make steaks. So they were saying them crazy American people are eating raw meat. Because they

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couldn't believe that you just put the steak on top of the coal and you keep it a couple of minutes on one side, and a couple minutes on the other side, that they are eating. But he used to eat it with the other fellow, and we all looked around, but we never ate it.

Q: A few moments ago you told me that you were coming to the **United States**.

What were your expectations of **America**, and what were those expectations based on?

A: Well, the only expectation I had is I knew my – my mother's family was here. My mother used to correspond with cousins who were here in **New York**. And my mother wanted to come back and my father, they all had couple of times papers to come. But the government kept on changing, and that time there wasn't flying, the mail came by boat and it took months. And by the time one letter came and one visa came, the government kept on changing and they never were able to come out. And my father used to speak about **America**, how nice it is and how well organized it is and how comfortable people live around here, more comfortable than on the towns in **Europe**. So the expectation was that I will find somebody from the family, because in **Europe** we lost a lot, maybe we'll find somebody.

Q: When you came to this country, what were your first impressions?

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A: For the first night we stopped in front of the Statue of Liberty, and all night we didn't sleep. We were just looking at the Statue of Liberty. We saw the city lit up, and they were waiting to embark. We were there a couple hours. And then in the morning, we went off the boat, and they took us to a children place, a home. You wouldn't believe it, there were cribs waiting for us, because they said a children group was coming. It was in the **Bronx**, I think it was **Ca-Caldell**(ph) Avenue, but I don't remember the number. And it was a big house, and in there we went – most of the group went there. And every day families from the group came over to see. And there were a lot of people who came to adopt children. I got there, it was December the 20th I arrived, and the 21st already, my mother's cousin came to see us. And the first day they asked permission to take me out for a day. So I felt a little comfortable, because they were speaking Jewish and Hungarian, because I didn't speak no English. And I was there for the first couple of days, about two days til Christmastime. And then I went back, and then they were asking me if I want to go live with them. So I said okay for the beginning, until my rest of the family will come. And I was living with them til I got married.

Q: Can you tell me who was with you on that children's group transport that came?

A: There were all ba – all children from all over, from all the **DP** camps. There was a group organizer, the children group organization. All I know is there was three **Cs**

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they had in the hat. What that meant, I don't know. Three **Cs** he had on the hat, and we all had rooms in the – in the ship, it was like a military boat, but it was considered first class. And we ate, but ich – food was plenty, but nobody was able to eat. It was shaking so much the boat that food didn't stay in anybody's stomach. Who – everybody was dizzy from the boat.

Q: How old were the children?

A: They were from 17 and 18; 16, 17, 18. One boy was 13, who met a soldier in **Austria** and adopted him, a 13 year old boy in the group. He was the youngest.

Q: When you came here, what did you plan to do? What wa – were gonna be your first steps in building a life here?

A: When I arrived, I had no plans. First I was waiting to see how my sisters and the rest of the family will come out. But they didn't get no visas, all of them, to come here. So one sister came to **Canada** with her husband. And my brother and my other sister with their husbands wen – and my brother with his wife, they went to **South America**, because we had family there, and the quota th-there was more liberal. So they went to **South America**, to **Uruguay**. They settled in **Uruguay**. And I was here alone for the first couple of years, but I was living with a cousin of my mother's.

Q: When you came, did you feel that the Americans welcomed you?

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End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: – tinuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bella Pasternak**. This is tape one, side **B**, and I was in the process of asking you if Americans were curious about your Holocaust experience, and you told me that they asked you – what kinds of things did you tell them, and how did they react?

A: Well, they couldn't believe it. It's like when somebody will walk into your house and say, you have five minutes; pack, and you have to come with us. And they said, really? That's the way it happened? They just said, how in the world could that happen? I said well, this is the way exactly it happened. Even if you knew, they wouldn't have believe you. It just happened that I knew it before, that was gonna happen. But then I went home, and I was telling my mother and father what I was told. They all said, it's very, very hard to believe. Everything they else – they understand that I'm telling them the truth, but to come to the house and tell us that you have to leave and they taking you away, the reaction was, it's kind of impossible.

Q: Now, are you referring to your – your experiences before the war, e-early in the war. Let me just see if I can get you to clarify that. How did you know, before your parents did, what was going to happen?

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A: The reason I knew was because everything in **Europe** was rationed, and everything was blackmail. If you [**indecipherable**] anything, they used to put you in jail. You couldn't do business. But being that I was young, and my mother and my father, they were very much afraid to do any kind of a business. I was very not afraid. I didn't think anything could happen, so I used to sell merchandise. My father was a blacksmith, and if you wanted anything, clothing or shoes, you had to give them food, otherwise you wouldn't get them, because all you had rationed, a pair of shoes a year, or a pair of soles in the shoes. So the – the – in order to buy shoes, or to buy any kind of a food that you wanted, you had to exchange for something else. So, I used to go into the city, which was three miles. We had everything in the house. We had cows, we had chickens, and from the town you were able to buy everything. Now, in order to go to the city and sell it on the black market, in case they catch me or something, I had to have connection. So I know the head of the police, the captain, and I used to give him things for nothing, because I couldn't charge him the black market price. And the price that it would have been to charge, I may as well give him a present, because it was pennies. So I became very friendly with him. And he was the one that told me, a couple of days before it happened. And when I went home, and I mentioned it, nobody wanted to believe it.

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Q: What other things did you tell people here about the war, besides the – the rounding up of the people?

A: You see, my father was a blacksmith, and the ji – the Germans were in our town. The soldiers. And we had the pa – a big house, compared to the rest of the people in town. So, being that our house was the biggest, they came and they took my mother and father out of their bedroom, and there were officers of the German Reich, who were sleeping by us in the house. And their horses were – my father was taking care of the horses in the – as blacksmith to put them – shoe the horses. And they liked the food and the milk, so they ate by us. They used to pay us, and they used to tell my mother, if she'll be kind enough to make them food for breakfast, some for lunch and supper. My mother had no choice, she cooked them, and she served them. And even when they came for us, my father was still with their horses. And they had to wait til he finishes the horses in order to leave. At that point already they believe me, what I told them the days before, but it was kind of late.

Q: Did you tell Americans about your experiences in camps?

A: Yeah. We talked about it. We talked and we a – when I arrived in **Auschwitz** the first day, on the ghetto, we were outdoor on the ghettos. And there was raining, it was right after Passover, between Passover and **[indecipherable]** we were in the ghetto. Just before **[indecipherable]**. And it was rainy weather. And there was no

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bunks, was nothing, it was out in the woods. And we took the blankets that we took with ourself, and everybody made their own little sukkah. And that's where we slept, the kids all crying. There was no bathroom facilities, there was no wat – running water. There was a little lake nearby, people went for water to wash, or food, whatever they – they were giving out ration food. And we were in the ghetto about three weeks. And at that time that we were in the ghetto, this particular person that I knew used to take me out as – take – he used to come for the Jewish girls for maids, to take them out in the city. So every day a truck used to come for the Jewish girls to go to be a maid for the Hungarians. So this particular guy requested me to go as his maid. But I used to go in there and I used to do nothing, just talk to **[indecipherable]** and at night he used to come and he used to drop a bread to – in our place and used to say, just close the lights already, it's getting late. And he had suggested even then, that if we want to leave, he would give us a truck for 40 people to leave. Then my mother said, 40 people, who I'm gonna take for that's gonna be with the rest, will be with us too. So we didn't go nowhere.

Q: I'd like to maybe clarify my question. I wanted to know what – what you told people about **Auschwitz**, for example. And how did they deal with what you were telling them?

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A: Well, a lot of people had some ideas, because there were the American soldiers already, that they used to write home and explain them what's was going on. That time with – it was a little knowledge about it, not too much. A lot of people didn't even want to – they – they says it's hard to believe, but they know it had happened.

Q: When you first came to this country, did you already at that time have a real good idea of just how many Jews had died?

A: No. We had an idea that a lot of them did not come home. But how many exactly died, nobody knew.

Q: When did you begin to realize the magnitude of the genocide?

A: The – a man that haman – the – the – the six million or whatever they – they had perished, we knew it only by year after, year and a half it took to calculate. Because at that point when I – it was st-still a lot of people still were coming. But nobody knew exactly how many.

Q: Now that you're in this country, were you able to go back to school?

A: Yeah, when I went – when I came to my mother's cousin, she had two girls. One was two years younger than me, and the other one was only about four years old. And I went at night school that time, and I went to – first a couple of months they didn't let me do nothing.

Q: Why?

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A: I don't know. They just said I need a rest. And they asked me how I survived, and I said that when I arrived in **Auschwitz**, there was a Polish fellow who asked me how old I was. I already had [indecipherable] me and my mother, to go with her. And he asked me how old are you? I said 16. He says, well, say you are 17 – say you are 18. He pushed me in a side, he said, you are not 16, you are 18. So when I went to registered, they regist me – the – I was registered as 18. And my birthday is [indecipherable] in that particular thing. She's got here the information about it. And th-this is why I survived, because I didn't say I was 16.

Q: What kind of paper is this? Why don't you tell me what this is?

A: I – I just wrote away this year in [indecipherable] and they sent – they send me an – an acknowledgement that I was there, but my age difference is two years. Not exactly with the date, either.

Q: Do you know why your relatives wanted you to just rest for awhile? Did – did you have any health problems?

A: I didn't have a lot of health problems. I had fallen down and my wrist was broken, but I just put my belt and I tied it around, and it didn't grow back properly. So when the daughter become that time 16, she bought her a fur coat. So she bought me the same coat, and when I picked up the coat, I fainted. So when I fainted I – they took me to the doctor and the doctor took x-rays and they said my wrist was

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broken, but it didn't heal properly, and they had to re-break it again, and put it in a cast. So for awhile I was just home with a cast, and after a – they told me after what I went through, they want me to take it easy, and then I will go to school, or to work, whatever I want. So they didn't want me to travel to the city, so they find me a job there in that vicinity, but I was able to walk to it. And at night I would – used to go to school to learn English.

Q: Tell me about that job.

A: I was working in a dress factory. So I started out as a floor girl, just carrying strings, and then I got promoted. I – they sh-showed me how to make dresses. I learned a trade and I become forelady in the company. So I started from scratch, and couple of years later, I was working there and they liked me. So I worked there for a long time. Until I got married I was in the same company.

Q: Did you have any social life?

A: Wherever they went, they used to take me, and I used to go out a lot with the daughter. And went from school, they had places, and family affairs, whatever they had, family affairs. I used to be part of the family there.

Q: In the time that you were first in this country, and getting yourself into learning English and working and everything, did you follow the **Nuremburg** trials?

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A: Very little. It wasn't too much. I didn't understand it too much because everything was in English. So I used to ask a lot of questions in Hungarian what they were saying, because I didn't – I didn't understand it. Later on I followed it, when they reviewed it on the television, later on. I was by the television, and I watched it. But in the beginning I didn't understand it.

Q: Did you follow the news on the part – partition of the state of pa – of **Palestine** into two different states, an Arab state and a Jewish state?

A: Yeah, that we followed, because I – I used to get the Hungarian paper, they used to bring me the paper so I should understand it. Because that I understood.

Q: Tell me what it was like for you, given your experiences, to hear that there would be a Jewish state.

A: It was very thrilling, I co – I just couldn't believe it. I was crying for happiness when that happened.

Q: And when **Israel** declared statehood?

A: I was go – I was trying to that time – there was a lot of people that I knew, they went to **Israel** and I used to send them packages. They were in **Cyprus**, and a lot of them was in **Germany**, and **Italy** and wherever I – money I used to make, I used to come home and I used to make package and send it away. I used to get correspondence from all over, from – they were in **Italy**, they were in **Germany**,

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they were in **France** and **Cyprus**, and they kept in touch with me. I al – always knew where they are, and I keep in touch even now when I go to see them.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to make any friends on your own, aside from people that you met through your relatives?

A: Oh yes. There were a couple of people from – also survivors that settled not too far from where I lived, and they had girls mine age, and we used to go out together, and we had the – also a group of Americans that they were speaking Yiddish, and we used to get together. And after I went to school, I used to speak a little bit. And I got along with them fine.

Q: Did you start dating?

A: About two years after. I used to out in a group a lot, but not really dating. Two years later I used to go out with – in a group, but not really dating.

Q: When you started to mingle, were there any special gentlemen that were interesting to you?

A: Mostly – at that time mostly we used to go to the **HIAS**, or to organizations that I used to be the newcomers, and I always wanted to find out who else is coming up, because the – there used to come boats – mostly then they used to come by the **HIAS**, we used to go to find out who came from our area, and what news they are bringing. So you find a lot of people that we knew from the **DP** camps and from the

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unt – our own town. And then we starting – they used to have the special affairs for the refugees camps. They used to have groups in the **HIAS**, they used to have it in the Joint, they used to have it in the – with our diplomat, and they used to get together from all over. And we met all the people who used to say in the boat, we will meet you whenever they gonna have a Hanukkah party, or a Purim party, we used to go together, just to see our friends from the other side.

Q: What I'm trying to get at is, I want to know how you met your husband.

A: Well, we went to a Purim party, I assume. It was a Purim or Hanukkah party, and I went with my cousin's daughter, and with other people from our town, a group, because we lived out of the city. And we went there and somebody looked at me, I didn't recognize him. And one day I got a telephone call from him, and he said his name was **Andrew**, because he – **Andrew**. He said it's a Romanian name, so he start talking Romanian. He said he saw me, and he would like to meet me. And this is the way we had a blind date. So he came out with his brother and his sister-in-law, together with the car, and we had a blind date, the four of us together. And we met in early '51 or '52, I don't rem – I think it was in '52 that we met the first time.

Q: And so you met, and then what happened?

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A: We went out for a while, and then I went out with other people for a while. I couldn't make up my mind. And then, eventually, I think the Korean War broke out, and my friend called me, and he told me that he was drafted. So I – it was just before New Year's, I send him a New Year card, and I wished him good luck in his career. So then he called me, and we got together again, and after then we started to go out more steady, and we got engaged, and married in '53.

Q: So your husband is also a survivor?

A: Yes, my husband is a survivor, also from **Romania**, but from a different area. That's like a different state.

Q: When you and your new husband were first married, what plans did you have for your future together?

A: We didn't make big plans. He was working and I was working and that time it was – it wasn't as easy as today, there were no apartments, it was difficult to find apartments. In order to get an apartment, you actually had to buy the apartment, throw out the old furniture, and get apartments. So we moved to the city, where he was closer to work. And I gave up my job, and I went, in order to make it convenience for him. But then, as I walked around on the area, there was a job opening there, and I walked in and I got a job. And I was working first as a operator, as a dressmaker. And then he – they approached me, the new owner, and

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he said look, our forelady is getting married and I would like you to take her job. And I said – I looked on him, I said, you must be kidding. You know I'm expecting a baby, I'm only working temporarily. I said, you better look for another forelady. He says, well, you know something? Take the job until we find somebody else. I said, but look, sometimes I don't feel good and I don't come in and I can't really work so much. I'd rather work piecework. This way I don't cheat you, and I know that I'm only getting what's coming to me. He says, don't worry about that. So he took me, and I became the forelady in that place, and he was so nice to me. When I had to go to the doctor, he used to come to the doctor with me, I shouldn't waste time with the bus, going back and forth. He used to wait for me. The doctor even thought that he was my husband. He used to take me to the doctor for monthly check-ups, practically, til – I was working for him as a forelady til two hours – I came home at night and I took home a sample to make for the next day to take to work, to be able to show the girls how to do it. And I call them up the next day, I said – from the hospital, I said, pick up the sample, I'm in the hospital, I have a boy. He was first one to send me the flowers, before my husband send them to me. He was very nice to me, and he wanted me to go back to work. By then my first son, was **Jerry**, was a colic baby, and I couldn't put him down. He offered me a nurse plus my salary to go back to work, but I just couldn't do it. I used to go with the kid

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a little to look around and help him a little, til he found somebody. He was very nice. They were Italian people, very nice people. But he got the store, the factory, he got, and he went in with a partner. And he put in the money, and the partner didn't like it, and he walked out of him. And he really had no experience in dressmaking, so he was stuck. So I tried to help them out. So we helped each other. And that's when I stopped working in the dress line, when **Jerry** was born, two hours af – before he was born, practically. I wa – he took me to the doctor and doctor says, see you in a week. Then I went home and I had to go into the hospital.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: Three. Three boys.

Q: How did you pick their names?

A: Well, my first one, I was living ba – by my uncle, and his daughter was married before me, she got married – she was married three years and she had no children, so my uncle – my – actually my cousin's husband said gee, I'll never have my father's name. So being he – they were so nice for – to me, and my father and my mother already had a name by my other sisters and brothers, so I figured it was just right to give his name. After that his daughter had three children, but it took her – my first name, **[indecipherable]** that she should have the children. So that's the way I picked the first time. And then my second name – my second child was

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named after my husband's grandfather, and my other one that was born, the third son has the name of my father and my brother.

Q: What have you told your sons about your childhood, your life before the war?

A: We spoke to them when they were already about seven years old, they kept on asking. When they went to school, they said, everybody has birthday parties, and everybody has grandparents, how come they don't have any? That's when we started to tell them what happened to their grandparents. And they kept on asking. I never refused an answer. I didn't want to bring it up when they were too young, but after then they start asking, and whenever they asked, I told them.

Q: What did you tell them about your parents?

A: I was telling them that we were very, very religious. I had a brother who was a rabbi, who was so religious, he came home from the yeshiva at 19 and a half, not even 20, and he told my father, th-they should both rest in peace, he says, I'm getting married. So my father jumped in this chair, he said, you're getting married? You're in yeshiva, there is no girls there, how are you getting married? He says, my Rebbe find me a wife. I said, and who's the wife? He says, my Rebbe's sister's daughter. I said – my father said, did you see her? Nope, but if my Rabbi said that she's the right girl for me, I am sure she's the right girl. So my father said, what if she's blind? Or she has hand on her feet, you didn't see her, you don't know. He

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says, it'll be a bigger mitzvah. They went to an engagement party, I remember I was young that time, but I remember hearing them talk. My mother and father went and they got engaged, and they came back and they were telling us, and they were sitting by the table, because the reason that the rabbi wanted them to get married is because her husband died. Th-The girl's mother's husband died, the girl's father had died, and she – there's a family of four children and the oldest is 18, and there is no **shochet**, and there was no rabbi in town. And he figured that he would be good for that. At that age he became the youngest rabbi in the area there. And they got married.

Q: As your sons got older, did you tell them about your wartime experiences?

A: Yeah, we always talk about the wartimes experiences, what we went through.

And I always wanted to be a lawyer when I was small. I told them that I – I want – my father, being that he was in **America**, he did not speak Romanian, and he was born when it was **Hungary**. And when he came back, he didn't go to school back to learn Romanian, and whenever he had to go someplace, I used to go with him to read what [**indecipherable**] and tell him if he could sign that or no. Cause he could speak, but he didn't read and he didn't write in Romanian. He only was able to do it in English, which I didn't know that he knew it, and Jewish, Yiddish, or in Hungarian. But Romanian he didn't know. So when I was seven – after I was seven

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years old, and I was his translator, he used to say, I'm only gonna sign what my lawyer will say I can sign. And therefore, I always said I – when I grow up, I'll be a lawyer. But I never finished it.

Q: Did you ever tell your sons about what you had to go through in the ghetto and the camps?

A: Yes, we spoke about it.

Q: What kinds of things do they ask you about those experiences?

A: They ask that – how many we were in the family, and how many came back, and how was it in the lagers, and how did I got here, how did I met his father. We went over that many, many times.

Q: Did you ever get a sense that perhaps your children had questions that they either wouldn't or couldn't bring themselves to ask you?

A: Well, if they have a lot of – cause maybe they had asked – because most of our family are Holocaust survivors. And whenever they didn't speak to us, they must have spoken to them, because they didn't want to bring it up to us, we shouldn't cry. Or they shouldn't hurt us, or they didn't know how to put it. But whenever they got together with their cousins, they always used to talk or ask somebody else. It's easier sometimes to ask a stranger, than your own.

Q: Was there ever something that you wanted them to ask that they didn't?

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A: Not really.

Q: Was there ever something that you wanted for them to know, but you weren't able to tell them, and they never asked?

A: They all, when they went away to school, or when they went to high school, there was a lot of groups that they were involved with the Holocaust, and they were involved with the groups, so whatever answers they needed, most of the time, they got it from them. And whatever I felt that they didn't ask me, they didn't want to know, or they already knew it. Because all of them are involved on the new generation Holocaust group.

Q: What kind of education did you provide for your children?

A: Well, when we got married, we weren't religious at all. My husband was way the other side, he didn't even keep kosher. I went out – if I ate fish or anything but **treyf** to go out to eat [**indecipherable**] the first meal mine was pig. I didn't eat it when I was in this country. But he didn't keep kosher at all. Shabbas we didn't observe, none of us. We lived by my cousin, who was a kosher butcher. But Shabbas they didn't work, but they went shopping, we went to the movies. No work around the house or anything. They used to play cards in Shabbas, but it wasn't Orthodox. They were more Conservative than Orthodox. And it was sort of a – for me too, I mean, Saturday used to go to the city, meet my friends. Sunday – during the week

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we worked and went to school. Saturday and Sunday we used to go to the city shopping or meet our friends. And when I met my husband, we weren't thinking about [indecipherable]. But then in 1948, when the **Arnold Constable** estate got sold in **Westchester** for a yeshiva, that time there was a big article in that "**New York Times**." **Arnold Constable** estate sold for yeshiva. It was an estate of 27 or 28 acres, beautiful, by the water. It's a castle, a beautiful place. Everybody from the city came to see it. So I – we took a ride with friends and neighbors, we took a ride to see the s – the new school. At that point I wasn't even married, didn't even think about it, so I said to myself, it is just gorgeous. If I'll ever have children, I would like to send them there. And this is the way it started out that I send them to the yeshiva. I didn't have no other dreams of making them religious, or anything else. Despite that, I came from a very, very Orthodox family. And then when they were born, I send them to school. And **Jerry** went to school when the – got ready to go to school – when **Jerry** went to school, the first week he came home, he says, Mommy, you know what I learned? I said, if you'll tell me, I'll know. He said, you're not supposed to work on Shabbat, not you and not Daddy. Saturday is a day of rest. I said to him, **Jerry**, they are right and you are right. But you have a choice; if you go to a public school, I could stay home and you don't have – I don't have to work. But if you want to go to that school, I have to work in order to pay for you

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they should take you into school. So I said to him, got time to decide, it's Friday. Monday you let me know, do you want to go to school, or do you want to go to public school? So Sunday night I bathe him and I prepared the clothes and I said, so what is the situation for tomorrow? He said, well, I decided that while I go to school, you work. But once I stop, then you should become **shomer Shabbos**. So I said, you got a deal. So I kept my promise. But we were working, Saturday was the busiest day for both of us. My husband came from work and I took the car and I went to work. And even when they went to s – to **Yeshiva** University High School, where I took **Steven** and I put him on [indecipherable], I went to the rabbi there for an interview, and the rabbi said, and I'm sure you are **shomer Shabbos**. My husband wouldn't say a word. I said, sorry. I said, the prices you charge, I have to work in order to pay it. I don't have nobody to pay it for me. They didn't reduce the price, so I had to work in order to pay it. And they continued yeshiva, but they – **Jerry** was even – when he finished high school and **Yeshiva** University, he applied to **NYU** and they called him for an interview. And being that they called him for an interview in Shabbat, he refused to go to that school because they called him for a interview in Shabbat. I said, **Jerry**, they don't have to know that you are Orthodox. He said, but can they see I'm in **Yeshiva** University? Would I be in **Yeshiva** University if I wouldn't be Orthodox? So I told him, **Jerry**, there are many people

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in **Yeshiva** University and they're not Orthodox, they travel in Shabbat. All you have to do is write them a note or call them up and say you want another interview. But he didn't want to go any more. And for that reason he went to **Yeshiva** College. And the other ones never asked me, and they continued it.

Q: What do you mean they continued it?

A: **Yeshiva** College.

Q: Did they get education beyond college?

A: Yes, they all went to law schools. And that time it was very difficult to get into law school because they ask where did your parents graduated from. And despite that they were very good students, not because they were my children, they couldn't get into **Columbia** or to a school in the vicinity. So **Jerry** went to **California**, **Alvin** went to **Saint Louis**, and **Steven** went to **Boston**. Because we didn't go to school here, so **Yeshiva** University, when they graduate over a hundred students in a class, and they only took two or three students from ea – to each school in law school, so I was in the bottom of the list, because we didn't go to no schools in here, in the state or colleges. So that's where they ended up, in very good schools. They got a fairly good education, I hope.

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Q: You mentioned that you had to make compromises, working on Shabbat and you know, th-the deal that you made with **Jerry**. Were there other compromises that you had to make raising a family and working in this country?

A: Well, we didn't ba – travel. We didn't have a big house or anything, we had a small apartment. It was expensive and the colleges were very high and the schooling was very expensive, although they didn't – didn't – when I start working already, later on, I was able to – to get an – a – a house before they went to high school, but when they were small, we were sacrificing to that extent that I put them all three in one bedroom. We had a one bedroom apartment and that's where I raised them. We slept in a open couch in the living room. But we sacrificed in order to give them a good education.

Q: I wanted to ask you if you had followed the **Eichmann** trial?

A: Yes, I followed the **Eichmann** trial a lot. [indecipherable] watched already on television, that was televised.

Q: What were your thoughts and your reactions to that trial and the judgment?

A: My thought was why it took them so long to find them? With all the knowledge and with all the new things that they have and they [indecipherable] spaces and everything, they had to take them so many years til they find somebody? They knew all along where it was. **America** had the records from all the Nazis that they

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were here in **America**, and the Nazis are there on – in – in **Canada** and all over the world. It really didn't had to take them that long to find them. That was my reaction.

Q: Did you have a reaction to the fact that **Eichmann** was being tried in **Jerusalem**, in **Israel**?

A: No, I didn't think that he should be tried any other place, because the majority of the people in **Israel** are survivors, and they were the one that knew him the best, so they know mostly what he did. He would – even there, it took a long time to have a trial for them. And here would have probably [indecipherable]

Q: I'm going to pause now and change the tape.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Bella Pasternak**. This is tape two, side **A**. In the 1950s and 60s and 70s, this country went through some major, major changes. You were busy working and raising your children, but I wanted to know what your thoughts were about, you know, things like the war in **Vietnam**, an-and the Cold War.

A: Well, the war in **Vietnam** and the Cold War th – every war that you look, even now you can look on the **Yugoslavia** war and all those things, it's heartbreaking to see all the refugees. You know, when you see the refugees, you remember of yourself, how you were. It's a very difficult situation, it's heartbreaking. The war is never right to have. No matter na – no matter who the enemy is. It's – innocent people will still suffer. It's not the army that suffers, it's not the soldiers. It's the innocent people, you see children starving and all this thing in the streets. It's a terrible situation no matter where you go and you look on it, regardless what race they are, or what kind of a people are.

Q: There was a lot of activity also in the country in the area of civil rights. Did you follow some of those changes that were going on in this country?

A: Always following the changes, I – I think they did the right thing, because the rights, no matter what – who you are and what you are then – and **Martin Luther**

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King was killed, and all those things, I followed them. I liked to look on all this, in the history, from all this, people that they suffered and they tried to better themselves. It's a terrible thing. I think that it should be equal right for everybody, doesn't make a difference. They're not any better than we are, the color or – or the white. It should be equal opportunity to all. It doesn't make a difference, but it was here terrible when they hold them back, too. It wasn't right to hold the colored people back and everything. I don't think it was right.

Q: What about the assassination of **Kennedy**?

A: I cried. I couldn't believe it when it happened. I – I remember like today that I – that – when it happened in 1963, when they said that he got shot. First I thought it was a joke. And then, when I saw it on television, it was heartbreaking. His father was a anti-Semite, but the – the children – he suffered a lot. All his children, I think, he got punished right and left.

Q: What about the sexual revolution in this country?

A: Well, I think that is a little too much for me. I don't – that I don't believe in. You see, I was 17, and there was a lot of revolution, even between the people in the concentration camps after – out of the concentration, in the **DP** camps, a lot of people were free, and that – I don't believe in that. That is one thing I – I – I would stay away from it. I don't – I hope my grandchildren will stay away from it, I don't

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believe in it. I believe the old-fashioned way. You love a person, you get married, you settle them and you live. But that – this kind of a life, with all this disease especially going around, I think is wrong.

Q: What about the – the women's movement for – for women's rights?

A: That is the right way. I mean, a woman shouldn't be lower than a man. They have the same brain, they have the same ability to work. Matter of fact, in a lot of places you find women better than men. It should be equal opportunity if you qualify for a job, it shouldn't be a difference you're a woman or a man. **Golda Meir** was a great woman, a great president.

Q: Was there anything else that's ha – that happened in your ti – in your years of being in this country? Any other issues or problems that were of particular interest to you?

A: I don't think I had a lot of problems. I had problems my family was all over, until I was able to bring my sister over from **South America** in the family, which they came in 1962 to this country. I still have – my brother is in **Uruguay**. I have a sister that – from **Canada** that sh – I brought her over. Instead of coming to **New York**, she went to **California**, and my other sister in – that was in **Romania**, now she's in **Israel**. But to get the family together at – all at once, it's very difficult.

Q: Did you ever experience anti-Semitism in this country?

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A: No, I don't think I would say that I experienced anti-Semitism in this country.

Q: How do you respond to Holocaust deniers?

A: I don't think anybody with good knowledge would admit that. It only the people that they are denying that, either they were Nazis, or they are anti-Semites.

Otherwise they would not say it because it's open to the public and the museums and – and the newspapers and every place else. I don't think a normal person would really say that there was no Holocaust

Q: In your opinion, do you think that American Jews may ever be in danger in this country, either from skinheads or neo-Nazis or from any other element?

A: I tell you, nobody would believe that it could happen again, and nobody would want to believe that it could happen again, but unfortunately, nobody believed it in **Europe** either that it could happen. And the situation in here too, they have swastikas in synagogues, they have a lot of swastikas in Jewish homes that they put on. And there is **anti-Semite** in here. I personally didn't – didn't see it in my immediate area or my house, but there are people who could start something like that, if it's not controlled in that.

Q: What are your thoughts about the resurgence, this new interest in the Holocaust?

A: It's good in one way and not too good in the other thing, because I think they are putting too much effort into it now, and a lot of people resent it.

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Q: Can you explain what you mean by too much effort, and a lot of people resent it?

A: There's a lot of people who feel that they shouldn't go too much in the past, they sh – instead of that, they should look for the future of the Jewish people, not so much on the past.

Q: I assume that you have been to **Israel** many times. What is it like for you to be in **Israel**?

A: I go to **Israel** often, I have family there, I have friends, very, very good friends that we suffered together, and we correspond together and we meet as many times as we go there, if we can. Fortunately we go for three or – three weeks or four weeks and it's not enough time to see everybody, but – [break]

Q: Have you ever regretted not moving to **Israel**?

A: Well, I really wanted to go to **Israel**, I wanted to move many times. When the children were small, I was hesitant, for the simple reason because they're constantly on war there, and I didn't want the boys to throw it up to me and say gee, why did you come? I was hoping they would go on their own and I would follow. So I send **Jerry** over for the – a year to **Israel** to study, he loved it. And the only mistake that they made is, when he applied to law school, he applied to **Israel** and they told him, finish first, and then come. When he finished and he got married, they said, now you have to go back to school. I was hoping that he wou – they would go on their

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own and then I would follow. But now it's difficult that they all settled here, for me to pick up and go. I love **Israel**, my husband loves **Israel**. It's not that I don't love **America**, I love it here too, but there it's a different type of living. And I really would enjoy it there maybe better than here. But the thing that the children are here, and most of all my grandchildren, I couldn't stay away from.

Q: What changes have you noticed in relations between American Jews and **Israel**, over the years?

A: Well, in the beginning the Jews that went to **Israel**, they were more Zionist type. They were hardworking people, they really were depending on American fund that they were getting, and they were living different life, very hard life. Like the people who come from **Europe**, when they started here life wa-was difficult, for them it was 10 times harder. They had to live like in **DP** camps after they were in **Israel**, and after **Israel** was declared a state, because they had no facilities there. And they worked really very hard. Today it's a very beautiful country. They work less than here. They have a more normal life as far as social life, and they traveling a lot. They are not settled as much as the American people are settled. They take life in day by day because all the time something happens in there. And they want to grab them whatever they can while they're alive. So that's why they are more loose in traveling and more loose in life in **Israel** than here. Life in **Israel** is beautiful.

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Q: How has your experiences in the Holocaust influenced choices that you've made over the years?

A: Well, I'm ver – I'm very close with the family. I've always protected the children, I was always afraid something that's gonna happen. When they were small I used to get up from bed at night while they were sleeping to listen if they're breathing. I was so surrounded with dead people, that if they didn't cry, or they to – they were sleeping, I went to see if they're alive. So it was fearful no matter how long and no matter how much time after it happens. Would the children or even the grandchildren, I watched them today. If I go over there, whatever they do, I said, you do this, now your Mommy and Daddy's home, not when I'm around you. They – they – cause they are daring, the children are daring. Mine, I kept them [indecipherable] cause I was – I was always afraid something shouldn't happen.

Q: In retrospect, do you think you would have done something, or anything differently if you were raising them today?

A: I don't think so. I still think that they should know more res-respect for others. I – I believe that today the children are raised a little too loose – in most of the places, not all. Some of the children, the parents, you know, have a lot of things, they run around, they don – they have strangers watching the children. I don't approve of

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that. I believe if you have children you gotta be with them and raise them. Hired help is not the same as you do yourself.

Q: Do you speak with your sons about your Holocaust experiences in – in the past now – now that they're all adult and parents of their own?

A: They don't ask too many questions lately. I think they are all up to date with it. They all belong to the gathering, they all get the newspapers. But the – my little grandchildren start to ask now. I have [indecipherable] and I have three little ones. One is named after my husband's mother and sister. The other one is named after my aunt and my grandmother, and the little one is named after my husband's father. And they all – we got all three names, and they're after the Holocaust survivors [indecipherable]. And even her parents, they never requested a name, they – I'm sure they have deaths on their family too, but they sti – they kept on telling my son, if that means so much, the names, to your parents, give it to them. So we have all three names in there. And the children now, the older one is seven. She starts asking questions. She didn't ask til now, but now she already knows why she's named after her mother and why she perished, and she starts asking questions.

Q: Do you talk with your older grandchildren about your experiences?

A: [indecipherable] claims he knows. He follows it in school, and he's reading about it, and he gets some information in the computers.

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Q: Is that satisfactory for you?

A: If they – whatever they ask me, if they ask me, I'd be happy to talk to them. But just to sit down and starting stories about that, I don't bring it up. If they don't bring it up, I don't bring it [indecipherable]

Q: Does it bother you that they don't ask you more?

A: No. I figure they know about it. If they wouldn't know, and what they don't want to know, then it would bother me, but they all know about it. I never kept it a secret and they never kept it a secret. They all know that they are sur – that they children of survivors and they know about it.

Q: Do you speak publicly about your experiences?

A: In a group for me, in the **Hadassah** occasionally, or in the – or in the sisterhood, if they have questions, or things like that. My husband spoke occasionally in city hall about it. But not going out strongly, like many people do.

Q: Are you involved with any survivor groups?

A: I belong to the groups, I get newspapers. I have an – wh-when they had the gatherings in '81 in **Israel**, we went and made a tape there, in **Yad Vashem**, I get mail from them, I belong to that group. I belong to the museum in here. I get the newspapers in it and all the things that's happening. We have – occasionally we have, in our area they have, in a church they have a gathering ever year about the

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Holocaust. And they have the interracial groups talking about it and singing Hebrew songs, and I attend them.

Q: Have you had any recurring dreams since the war?

A: Many times.

Q: Can you tell me?

A: I just feel sometimes like I'm slipping in bed. I'm sleeping, and

[indecipherable] I slip, that somebody's behind me. And then when I wake up, I get ch-chills all over my body. Many times I dream I'm in **Auschwitz**, many times I dream I'm – I am carrying the ammunition, it explodes in front of me. I see the war constantly, that's something that doesn't go out of your mind. **[indecipherable]** even if you think or you don't think about it. Especially for like I speak about it now, it's gonna be a couple of weeks til I still gonna see it in front of me.

Q: Regarding your life in this country, what has been the best surprise about life in **America**, and/or, what has been the biggest disappointment about life in **America**?

A: My best surprise are my grandchildren. I adored my children, but nothing like my grandchildren. This is the – this is the real dividends. And that's the reason that I ben – that I don't go too far away, and I always want to be in touch with them.

Q: Is there, perhaps, a single disappointment about your life in this country?

A: Not really. I think I got more than I expected.

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Q: What would you yet like to accomplish?

A: I would like to see them grow up, my grandchildren and be happy and attend good schools and be in the right side of the street. Know where they're going and where they're coming. I always want them to know where th-the roots are coming.

Q: What are your plans for your golden years?

A: I really haven't made too many plans. I just hope I'll be well to travel a little more. My husband loves to travel, I don't. I – I love mami – my – my bed. I love to be home, and I love to get company home. Travel it – I find it – I [indecipherable] I – we're wandering so much around before that now to me sometimes is a punishment to travel, I hate it. But I'm going because he loves it.

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

A: I really have no idea what I would like them to know. I really don't know.

Q: Is there anything that we didn't discuss that you would like to talk about, before we finish the interview?

A: I don't know if I mention it to you, my sister we brought over from **South America** with her family, and she lives in our area now. I had – and she also has chil – two daughters who got married and they are involved with the Holocaust a lot. The children and the grandchildren, they all know. Matter of fact, the dau – the

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granddaughter wrote an article that was put in the newspaper, about the Holocaust.

And that's about all.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

A: It was nice knowing you, I made a lot of friends through this. And it's a really pleasure to get to know you, and your family, it's part of our family, a little bit. And we hope to meet you soon on good occasions.

Q: I want to thank you for doing the interview today, and this concludes the interview. Thank you.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Conclusion of Interview