

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Bertha Schwarz



Bertha Schwarz (Nee Teitelbaum) was born in Antwerp Belgium on January 10th, 1933. She was the eldest of her parent's Asher and Dora's three daughters and also lived with her grandparents. Bertha grew up in a Hasidic household and recalls going to synagogue with her father who was the Cantor.

Bertha recalls in the late 1930's listening to news programs on their family radio. She recalls her mother commenting on the news of what was happening to the Jews in Germany. When the Nazis invaded Belgium on May of 1940, Bertha and her family fled Antwerp by train. After several days Bertha and her family arrived in the small village of Villemur in Southern France, where they were met by the Red Cross and provided them with an apartment.

Bertha and her family remained hidden until September of 1940. They were taken to Brens internment camp in Southern France. Upon their arrival Bertha's Grandparents were sent to a different camp, Saint Sulpice, and eventually Auschwitz in 1942. Bertha's father, Asher Teitelbaum, was able to obtain false papers in the camp and with his assistance Bertha's family escaped the camp. They eventually found their way to the village of Orgueil. Unfortunately, Asher was arrested by the French Gendarmes and taken first to the Drancy Internment Camp and then he was sent to Auschwitz on August 25, 1942 Transport #25. Bertha's mother sent Bertha and her sister Malka, to Rabbi Zalman Schneerson's home just outside of Marseille France. It was there that she remained until November 1942. Bertha's mother and her youngest sister, Bella were sent to a different location.

As the Nazis expanded their invasion into Southern France, Bertha and her sisters were moved several times to different children's homes. With the ever growing danger of being discovered, by September of 1943 Bertha, her sisters, and her mother were smuggled into Switzerland. They arrived and were held in a Swiss refugee camp. Bertha was separated from her mother and youngest sister, while she and her sister Malka were sent to the Institute Ascher in Switzerland, where they remained until the end of the war in 1945.

After the war Bertha, her mother, and her two sisters immigrated to Palestine. In 1950 Bertha joined and served in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) for 2 years. In 1955 she married Michael Schwarz and in 1957 they emigrated to the United States settling in Boston. They had 3 children and later Bertha moved to Baltimore. Bertha now continues to share her story with students and is a speaker with the Baltimore Jewish Council.



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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center

www.hamec.org

8339 Old York Road Suite 203/205, Elkins Park 19027

Phone: (215) 464-4701 Email: info@hamec.org

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