

PENINA BOWMAN

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Penina Bowman (born Pszi Weisz), daughter of Eizig and Leah, was born on April 19, 1927, in Cluj, Romania. Penina had two sisters,

Yaffa and Miriam, and one brother, Mordechai. Eizig owned a mikveh (Jewish ritual bathhouse) and the family was Orthodox. Penina attended a Jewish day school. The Weisz siblings were members of a Zionist youth group that advocated for an independent Jewish state.

In August 1940, the northern part of Romania, where Penina and her family lived, was ceded to Hungary. The city of Cluj then became known as Koloszvar. The family was forced to give their house to Hungarian soldiers in 1943 and moved a few blocks away. In the spring of 1944, Hungarian soldiers began rounding up the Jews of Koloszvar. The Weisz family was told to pack clothing, food, and broomsticks, and that they were being sent to a work camp. They were marched to a brick factory and were forcibly kept there for two weeks. After two weeks, they were sent on cattle cars to the Auschwitz camp-complex in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Penina survived the selection and was a prisoner at Auschwitz until October 1944, when she was sent to Weisswasser, a concentration camp in former Czechoslovakia. In May 1945, Penina and the other inmates at Weisswasser awoke to find the camp free from SS guards. Penina's parents did not survive the camps, but all of her siblings survived the war.

Penina lived in displaced persons' camps until March 1945, at which time she immigrated to British Mandatory Palestine (the region that includes what is today Israel). In October 1947, she immigrated to the United States. Penina married Harold Bowman and the couple had three children. At the time of her interview, they had two grandsons.

This interview was conducted on January 30, 1996 in Marietta, Georgia.