

## Bella Steinmetz After WWII



The photo was taken in Marosvasarhely, Foto Merza is written on it.

After the war I let my hair grow. It didn't grow too fast, but in one year I already had a long hair [until my shoulders], and I put on weight suddenly. I had grown extremely thin. You can imagine, after the concentration camp...

When I fell sick and had nobody to support me yet, I sold it. This necklace belonged to my mother. I could keep some of my mother's jewels. We had to surrender them. They let us keep only the wedding rings. But those too only until they put us on freight trains, because they took here [in the ghetto] already the wedding ring. They didn't know about her jewels. I found a screw-topped bottle, I put in it her jewels. I was left alone in the yard, I lived in my own house, I put it in the ground, out in the garden, next to the wall, it was already digged, it was spring. I buried it. Not too deep, as I could take it out with my hands after. It was a corner house, I was afraid that somebody would see me from the outside. I still have the medal. My mother is in it and my first husband. I couldn't find such a small photo to put it in. The medal belonged to my father, it hanged on his watch-chain, the two children were [in it], his son and daughter.

I restarted life very hardly. The neighbors didn't rejoice much at the returned people. This doesn't mean that there weren't many straight people, because I slept on the pillow of a Christian until I got married, from 1945 until 1947. I didn't come to see my house for two weeks. I couldn't come, I had no energy. And when I arrived in the street, it was then that I realized, what did I come home for in fact?! Who is waiting for me, and why did I come home!? I burst out sobbing... I was walking

on the right side, and I was looking at my house, which was on the left side. I stopped in front of my house, on the other side - I was looking at it, an unknown curtain at the window - and I was sobbing aloud. The window was open, because it was summer. The owner looked out [on the side where I was staying], and tells me: 'Oh dear, it's not true after all what people say about you? It's not true, is it?' I looked at him, I said: 'No. Why don't you ask me where is my mother? Why don't you ask me where is my husband?' Hearing this he closed the window! I fell down, so that he would come out, that he would stand by me, that he would take me inside. He didn't even bring me a glass of water, though he could see how I looked like! This was the neighbor who lived opposite, and whom my husband gave so many good advices. It was a couple, they didn't have children. They were drudging, they did sewing, they were rich. He was such a neighbor! Oh, I didn't care anymore. They behaved badly. I didn't come in my house's vicinity for two weeks.

I wasn't a working woman, or a self-supporting [woman]. I was dependant. When the child got married, her husband supported her. Only a very few women worked from the middle-class. I got a job. A good old acquaintance came home, his merchandise was walled up, and he found it, so he opened a store in the yard, he became a merchant. I became the cashier, he trusted me. I was so desperate, and I was so rootless. I got back part of my jewels, but I wasn't interested in this. I had an employment, but I couldn't get accustomed to loneliness. There were many young widower, and hundreds of widows. I had company, we fooled each other, we were together every evening, but that didn't offer any solution for me. These were all young Jewish people, who came back. Everybody had a place to stay. One had a better, the other had a worse one. I lived under difficult circumstances, because I let out instantly three rooms, I kept two, hoping that the good Lord would bring home my brother, so he would have a room of his own. I had nothing. Thus I lived under the hardest conditions, but a young person endures it more easily, and this was a common tragedy. In the meantime I became 33-34 years old. I was still a young, athletic-looking woman, I came home healthy, despite all the misery, so I endured it more easily. I was working, I could buy a pair of stockings, then I got a package from abroad, from aunt Sari, the sister of my dad. It arrived to the militia, because she didn't know the name Almasi, and she sent it to the name Bella Bacher! The militia, I don't know how, but found out that Bella Bacher was searched. Many Jews worked there. So everything is a matter of chance. I still have a terry towel. I used it as a bath sheet for a long time. I was very happy with the package. It had second-hand things too. She didn't know if I was fat [or not], perhaps she didn't even know how old I was, only approximately. She left before the war, I was about 4-5 years old.