

So why don't you start? Tell me where you were, and what was going on, and how you came to be liberated.

I was in 3 concentration camps, in Gäntherbrücke Kletendorf, and Ludwigsdorf in Germany. The last one was ammunition place. I was making ammunition. And my whole body was green, blue-green from the powder.

But I will tell you, the last night, it was the 7th May, 1945. The oldest in the Lager came, and she said, you should be very quiet and lie down, because we're going to blow up the whole camp.

But thank god, the 8th of May, the Russians came and liberated us. May 8, 1945. We couldn't really believe it when it happened. But I remember that when the Russians came, my girlfriend opened the door, and she spoke. She was from Odessa.

But she came to Europe to see her grandmother. And then-- you know, that was when the war started and then got in concentration camp. And she opened the gate and she said to the Russians, [RUSSIAN]. And they open the gate, and you are free.

You know, we couldn't believe it. And we didn't know what to do with ourselves. Where we going to go? Who do we have? I want to go home.

I was naive, I was believing that maybe my mother, or my father, or my brother are still there. That's what kept me going in concentration camp. I was hoping. And I remember, whenever I got upset, I went back home in my mind. That's what helped me. I even went back to Poland, but everybody was slaughtered. Didn't have anybody. So I just turned around and went back to Germany.

Before we do that, tell me-- right after the liberation, what kinds of things-- how did things get organized? You know, did you get new clothes?

No.

Get a toothbrush?

No. I remember that it was four girls-- Giza, Tonya. Gisa, Tonya, Sarah, and myself. And we got together and we went from Ludwigsdorf to Waldenburg. And there, we just found our apartment. And we moved. We just moved to our apartment.

And we found brooches. And I don't remember those things. I don't remember. And I think we were helped by-- somebody had to help us. Because we didn't have any money, we didn't have any clothes, we didn't have anything. I don't remember those things.

OK. Now, tell me about-- tell me about the trip back to Poland.

I didn't have any papers. I didn't have any money. But somebody went-- I got a letter from my cousin from Poland. If I come back home, they will see that I go back to school, and I get lessons. And I was very, you know, I was looking forward to hear something like that. And I was very eager to do something like that.

And I went back to Poland. We had a candy factory in Poland. And I went back, they were working. My cousin was there and people were working. But I couldn't be there because everything wherever I went remind me of my parents.

And everybody said, oh, you are here. We are so glad to see you. And I went to friends of mine parents who had things from my mother who want to give it to me. And I said, I don't need them. You keep them. Where I'm going to take them? And one day, I just disappear. Didn't say anything to my cousin, just went. And I'm glad I did.

Tell me, when you went back, were you afraid? You weren't afraid? There was no antisemitism?

You're not afraid of anything, you just hope for the best. I was hoping that I had my parents. I didn't think about things like that. I just want to go home and see somebody, see my mother, my father, my brother, somebody. That's what kept me going.

So when you went back, there wasn't any antisemitism?

Yes it was.

Tell me about it.

Because-- not toward me. But I heard, when they said, are you still alive? I was thinking that it's like every one of the Jews. It was. But you know.

And so then tell me how you ended up coming back, and ending up at Landsberg DP camp.

I just didn't know. I met one of my girlfriends, and we just traveled together. Then we went to Landsberg. We went.

How did you travel?

By train. We didn't have any money, by train.

How did that work? How could you get on trains?

How did I? I don't remember, we just went. When somebody saw-- nobody stopped and nobody asked questions. It was just after the war. Few days, you know, maybe two weeks after the war.

Tell me about Landsberg, what it was like to live there.

To me, when I came to Landsberg, we had the apartment with my girlfriend. And later, I met my husband. I mean, I accept everything. You had to. You had to be very positive, doesn't matter that everything was wrong. But you have to think for the best.

Could you come and go? Were there marks?

Yes, you could come and go wherever you want to go. You could go to school. They had art in DP camp, they had other organization who helped. I was knitting. I was knitting little things and we were sending it to Israel.

In the DP camp, was there barbed wire around?

No, not in the DP camp--

What about--

--where I was.

--the attitude of the Germans outside the DP camp? Were you afraid of them? Were you afraid when you went out?

No, I was not afraid. I didn't go too much out. But when I went out, I was not afraid.

Tell me about the incident with your-- how you met your husband.

We went dancing one night. I had little cafes. And people were playing music. And it was a Greek who came to our place and put a knife on the table. And he said, if I'm not going to marry him, he's going to hurt me. And we called the

police, and my husband came. And that's how I met him.

And tell me what happened after that. What did this Greek do to you?

Didn't do anything to me. It was just-- gee, I'm embarrassed.

Tell me about it.

He really didn't do anything to me. He just organized a whole Greek group and I just attacked us, myself and my husband. I remember they broke mine, too, there was nothing. But they were nice people, anyhow. Just you know, if somebody instigates you, sometimes you believe him.

After that first time that you met your husband, when did you see him again?

The next day. He wrote me poems. I'm sorry I didn't bring it with me, I still have one.

Tell me what else happened with him. Tell me about this.

I just knew my husband three month and I married him. And we will be married 50 years this December. He's my best friend.

Tell me about the time before the wedding. Tell me about the things you did together in Landsberg.

Like young couples, you go dancing, you see each other, you go for walks. But I will tell you something. After the war, we were walking on the street, and young men were approaching you and kissing you. Ladies, I apologize to you. Oh, I was thinking you were my cousin or you're my sister. You look like that in the back, you know. It was after the war, after the liberation.

We're just about going to run out. I think we should probably put another roll on.

OK.

Camera roll number two is up, slate two is up.

Still two.

Wonderful.

Put another roll on.

OK.

Camera number two is up, slate two is up.

Still two. Wonderful.

OK. Two.

In Landsberg, do you remember the American commander, a man named Major Heimont? Did you ever see him?

I think I have his book. Heimont.

Heimont.

I don't. I wouldn't remember things like that.

What about-- do you remember when David Ben Gurion came and visited?

My husband remember. He gave him a letter to take to somebody. He remember.

Do you remember him talking?

I remember that he came but I didn't see him.

Tell me, do you remember that the camp got decorated?

The camp got decorated and people were ecstatic, so happy, and running around. But I don't know if I had a child. I don't remember. I couldn't go.

How did they decorate the camp?

With paper, I think, with colorful paper. Such a long time, I really don't remember.

Major Heimont says that they took all his toilet paper and decorated all the trees when Ben Gurion came.

Like I said, decorated with colored paper, with different things. I really don't, I wasn't there. But I remember that that was such a big fuss. They were screaming and they were so happy, everybody. They were meeting.

Tell me about the wedding.

Which wedding?

Your wedding. The first wedding in Landsberg with your husband. Describe to me the wedding.

I didn't have a dress. Somebody brought a dress. Somebody brought me a veil. I really don't know who it was. And we didn't have any money so we couldn't buy any-- people were baking and cooking. Somebody brought drinks from Berlin. And so many people, so much music. That were playing off-key. But it's such a long time, I can't remember. But those things I remember, just few.

How did he ask you to marry him?

This I don't remember.

Who married you?

First we got married-- the first wedding was in Landshut, not in Landsberg. Was in Landshut. I had to have somebody who signed for me. I had to have a father, you know, because I was-- you know, I was 16, 16 and a few months. So we went to the city hall and got married. We got married three times.

So somebody said we should have a religious wedding. So on December-- January the 27th, we got the religious wedding, two weddings. Mine with a friend and ours together. But we were married by a rabbi. And before we came to America, we had to get another wedding, another.

So but was one of them in the Landsberg itself?

Yeah, one was in Landsberg. The religious wedding was in Landsberg.

Describe that. Who came?

Everybody. Everybody came. Everybody from the DP camp. I don't know how many thousands of people. Everybody. Well, they were coming and going and coming and going. It was very exciting.

Why was it exciting?

Because we saw so many people after the war. We had music, we had food. We could exchange wishes.

Was that wedding like starting over again--

Yes.

--for you?

For me it was like starting over again. Because I was not by myself, I had somebody who loved me, who was there with me, who was taking care of me. He does until still.

When you went back to Poland, one time when you told about it, you said your heart was beating.

Yes.

Describe that.

When I came to Poland, to the city I am from, I went down from the train and I call-- I came on the street where we had our candy shop. You know, we had a [POLISH], candy shop. And I just looked at it. And I remember, I was going on those streets, I was going to the movies, we took walks there with my parents, with my brother.

And I called a carriage, and they took me where I was living. And my heart was pumping, how do you say it? Palpitation? Because everything comes back to you. Even if you suppress things, they are back.

And now, just tell me something about how long you've been with your husband, starting from that point in Landsberg. How long has that lasted? And how many children do you have?

We got married in 1945. Like I said, December the 21st. And today is what? February the 10th, 1995? We are still together, thank god. We're going to be together for always. 50 years in December.

Can you think of anything else about the wedding? How did people organize the food?

People were baking. Just strangers were bringing things. And I had a cousin who was baking, who knew how to bake, and he was baking. And everybody was bringing something. You know, right after the War, three or four months after the war, everybody was excited.

It's like, life goes on, you know, we made it. We are here. Because all of us, well, we couldn't understand that our parents perished, we are still here. We felt very guilty about it. Which we still do. We shouldn't, but we do.

So everyone just pitched in and helped for the wedding?

Yes, yes.

How did you guys tell everyone you were getting married? How did people know?

Oh, people tell each other about good stuff, good things.

Tell me how that works in the DP camp.

One tells the other. When you tell somebody something nice and good, he decided to share with somebody else, which was good.

Do you remember the newspaper in Landsberg? Was there a newspaper in Landsberg?

It's possible. It's possible there was.

When you lived in Landsberg, did you have private enough quarters?

Yeah, we had one room. I remember, we get up in the morning, and it was very cold winter time. We didn't have heat at the winter. The water was frozen and glasses. But we were very happy, we were free. We were looking to the future. We were hoping for the best. All of us, we want to form families.

OK. Tell me again the story of going to the dance and how you met your husband.

Oh, I didn't meet my husband on the dance. He came to our apartment where we were living because we called him. I didn't call him, somebody called him that a Greek is there, a man is there who is disturbing, who is threatening me. I don't know if my girlfriend called or somebody from the neighbors.

See, it was a barrack. I don't know what is a barrack in English. It's-- Yeah? OK. It's a barrack. And somebody called, and he came. Then we became friends right then.

Start back at the dance and how you left and the Greek followed you and threatened you with a knife. Tell me that again. We went to a dance in the camp. And so were playing, we were dancing, we were talking.

And I don't remember. I remember I talked with him later. He came to our place and he said I should marry him. And I said, I don't know you. I barely know you. And he was threatening. Well, I guess that somebody called the police.

He threatened you with a knife?

Tell me how he did that.

He put the knife on the table. That's why I called them Greco Bandito. I shouldn't do this. Because they were nice people. I don't remember the details. It's such a long time.

OK. Thank you, Sonia.

Oh, you're very welcome.

Which means we record just the sound of the room very quietly. So we just sit very quietly for 30 seconds.