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Sonia Brodecki interview 2/10/95

SWB: Why don't you start by telling me where you were and what was going on.

SONIA BRODECKI: I was in three concentration camps. In Kindabricka, 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 seventh May 1945. The yu- the oldest in the Logry[?] camp and she said you should be very quiet and lie down, because we gonna blow up the whole camp. But thank God the that the eighth of May the Russians came and liberated us. Eight, May eighth 1945. We couldn't, we couldn't really believe it when it happened. I remember that when the Russians came, mine girlfriend opened the door and she spoke, she was from Odessa. But she came to, to Europe to-to see her grandmother, and then when you know it was, when the war started I got in concentration camp. And she opened the gate and she said to the Russians, Trustweshiduwadisha[?]. As I opened the gates, and you are free. You know we couldn't believe it and we didn't know what to do with ourselves. Where are we gonna 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, this was just[?] me going in concentration camp, I was hoping. And I remember whenever I got upset, I went back home, you know, in my mind. That's what helps, that's what helps me. I even went back to Poland, when everybody was slaughtered. I didn't have anybody, so I just _____ and went back to Germany.

SWB: Before we do that, tell me right after the liberation,

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how did things get organized. Did you get new clothes, get a toothbrush?

SONIA BRODECKI: No. I remember that it was four girls, Giselle, Tonya, Giselle, Tonya, Salla, and myself. And we got together and we went from Ludwigsdorf to Valdenburg. And there we just found our apartment and we moved, we just moved to an apartment, and we found brushes, and I don't remember those things. I don't remember. I think we were helped by, somebody helped us. Somebody had to help us. Because we didn't re- we didn't have any money, we didn't

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have any clothes, we didn't have anything. I-I don't remember those things.

SWB: Okay, now tell me about the trip back to Poland.

SONIA BRODECKI: 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, where the candy factory in Poland, and I went back _____ work, mine 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 France with mine parents who had things for my mother want to give it to me and I said I don't need them you can keep them, where I'm gonna take them. And one day I just disappear. Didn't say anything to mine cousin, just went. I'm glad I did.

SWB: Tell me, when you went back, you weren't afraid there

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was no antisemitism.

SONIA BRODECKI: You're not afraid of anything, you just hope for the best. I was hoping that I have mine 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. It's what kept me going.

SWB: So you didn't, when you went back, there wasn't any anti-semitism.

SONIA BRODECKI: Yes it was.

SWB: Tell me about it.

SONIA BRODECKI: Because, not toward me, but I heard when they said, are you still alive, I was _____ _____ _____ kill every one of the Jews. It was. But you know.

SWB: So then, tell me how you ended up coming back and going, and ending up and Landsberg.

SONIA BRODECKI: I-I just didn't know. I met one of my girlfriends and we just traveled together, we went to

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Landsberg, we went.

SWB: How did you travel?

SONIA BRODECKI: By train, we didn't have any money, by train.

SWB: How did that work, how could you get on the train?

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SONIA BRODECKI: How did I.. I-I don't remember. We just went. When someone-when somebody ____, nobody stopped, nobody asked questions. It was just after the war, a few days you know. Two- maybe two weeks after the war.

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

SONIA BRODECKI: To me, to me, when I came to Landsberg, we had our apartment with my girlfriend, and later I met my husband. I mean, I accept everything. You had to. You had to be very positive, it doesn't matter how-how that everything was wrong, but you have to think for the best.

SWB: Could you come and go....

SONIA BRODECKI: Yes, you could come and go wherever you want to go. You could go to schools, I had ORT[?] in DP camps, they had other organizations who helped, I was knitting, I was knitting little things, we were sending them to Israel.

SWB: Um, in the DP camps, was there barbed wire around?

SONIA BRODECKI: No, not in the DP camps.

SWB: What about the attitude of the Germans outside the DP camps, were you afraid of them, were you afraid when you went out?

SONIA BRODECKI: Hm-mm, I wa-, no, I was not afraid. I didn't go too much out, but when-when I went out I was not afraid.

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SWB: Tell me about the incident, how you met your husband.

SONIA BRODECKI: We went dancing one night, I had you know no- little cafes and people were playing music, and it was a great, ____ come to our plays, and [laughs], and he says I'm not going to marry him, he's gonna ask me. And we called the police and mine husband came. And that's how I met him.

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

SONIA BRODECKI: He didn't do anything to me. [laughs] He was just. He really didn't do anything to me, he just organized the whole big group and rioters attacked us. Myself and my husband. I remember the very night... But they were nice people anyhow, just you know if somebody instigates you, you b- sometimes you believe him.

SWB: After that first time that you met your husband, when did you see him again.

SONIA BRODECKI: The next day. He wrote me poems. Sorry I didn't bring it with me, I still have one.

SWB: Tell me what else happened, tell me...

SONIA BRODECKI: I just knew mine husband three month and I married him. It will be ____ fifty years this December. He's my best friend.

SWB: Tell me about the time before the wedding, tell me about the things you did together in Landsberg.

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SONIA BRODECKI: ____ bright young couples, you see each other, you go for walks. But th- I will tell you something, you're walking one the streets, a young man will approaching you and kissing you. Later they apologize to you, oh I was thinking you were mine cousin or you were mine sister, you looked like that in the back, you know. It was after the war, after the liberation.

SWB: We're just about to run out, I think we will probably

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put another roll on.

[CAMERA RELOAD]

[CR#2]

SWB: In Landsberg, do you remember the American commander, a man named Major Heymont. Did you ever see him?

SONIA BRODECKI: I never have his book. Heymont. I don't remember, I wouldn't remember things like that.

SWB: What about, do you remember when David Ben-Gurion came and visited.

SONIA BRODECKI: My husband remember, he was, he give him a letter to take to somebody. He remember.

SWB: Do you remember him?

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

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

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SONIA BRODECKI: The camp got decorated and people were t- people were ecstatic, so happy, and running around, but I don't know if I have a child, I don't remember, I couldn't go.

SWB: How did they decorate the camp?

SONIA BRODECKI: With paper I think, with color- with colorful paper. Such a long time, I really don't remember.

SWB: Major Heymont says that they took all the toilet paper and decorated all the trees when Ben-Gurion came.

SONIA BRODECKI: With pap- I guess they decorated with colored paper, with different things. I really don't, I wasn't there. But I remember that it was such a big fuss that I was screaming, that I was so happy, everybody, they were meeting.

SWB: Tell me about the wedding.

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SONIA BRODECKI: Which wedding?

SWB: Your wedding, the first wedding in Landsberg with your....

SONIA BRODECKI: 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 many, so much, music, they were playing off key, it's such a long time, I can't

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remember, but those things I remember, it's just a few.

SWB: How did he ask you to marry him?

SONIA BRODECKI: I don- This I don't remember.

SWB: Who married you?

SONIA BRODECKI: We got married, first wedding was in Landshood, or-in- not in Landsberg, was in Landshood, I had to have somebody who p- s- sign for me, I had to have a father, because I was, un- you know I was sixteen, sixteen 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 a month, December, January 27th, we got the religious wedding, two weddings. Mine went, apprent, and out together, but we were married by a rabbi. And before we came to America, we had to get another wedding, you know.

SWB: But was one of them in Landsberg itself.

SONIA BRODECKI: Yeah, one was in Landsberg, the religious wedding was in Landsberg.

SWB: Describe that. Who came.

SONIA BRODECKI: Everybody. Everybody came. Everybody from the DP camp. I don't know how many p-, how many thousand people. Everybody. They were coming and going and coming and going. It was very exciting.

SWB: Why was it exciting?

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SONIA BRODECKI: Cause you saw so many people, after the war, we had music, we had food, we could exchange wishes.

SWB: Was that wedding like starting over again.

SONIA BRODECKI: Yes, for me it was like start ovi- over again. Cause I was not by myself, I had somebody who loved me, who was there with me, who was taking care of me, _____
_____.

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

SONIA BRODECKI: When I came, when I came, when I came to Poland, to the city I am from, I went down from the train, and I call, came on the, I came on the street where we had our candy shop, you know, we had _____ candy shop. And I just looked at it, and I remember I was going on those streets, I was going to the movies with _____ there with mine parents, mine brother, and I took, call a carriage, and they took me where I was living, and mine heart was pumping, how do you say it, palpitation. Everything comes back to you. If any, if you suppress things, they are back.

SWB: 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 have you had?

SONIA BRODECKI: We got married in 1945, like I said December the 21st, and today is what, February wha-, February the tenth, 1995, we are still together thank God. We're going to keep together for always. Fifty years in

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December.

SWB: Can you think of anything else about the wedding. How did people organize the food and ...

SONIA BRODECKI: People were baking, just strangers bringing things. And I had a cousin who was baking, who knew how to

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bake, and he was baking. And everybody was bringing something. You know, str-stri-right aft-after the war, three months, three or four months after the war, everybody was excited, it's like a, life goes on you know, we made it, we are here. Because all of us, we were, we couldn't understand that our parents perish we are still here we felt very guilty about it. Which we still do. We shouldn't, but we do.

SWB: So everyone just pitched in and helped at the wedding. How did you guys tell everyone you were getting married. How did people know?

SONIA BRODECKI: Well people tell each other about good stuff, good things.

SWB: Tell me how that works in a DP camp.

SONIA BRODECKI: One tells the other, when you tell somebody something nice and good, he would-he will uh decide, he decided to share with somebody else. Which was good.

SWB: Do you remember the newspaper in Landsberg, was there a newspaper in Landsberg?

SONIA BRODECKI: It's possible, it's possible that was but

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uh.

SWB: When you lived in Landsberg, was, did you have private enough quarters or...

SONIA BRODECKI: Yeah we had one room. I remember we get up in the morning and it was very cold wintertime, we didn't have heat at the winter because the water was frozen in places. But we were very happy, we were free, we were looking to the future. We were hoping for the past. And we want to fr- all of us we want to form families.

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

SONIA BRODECKI: Oh I didn't met meet my husband at the dance, he came to our apartment where we were living because we called and, I didn't call him, somebody told him that a Greek is there who- a man is there who is disturbing, who is threatening me. I don't know if mine girlfriend called or

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somebody from the neighbors. It was a bark- a barrack, I don't know how to say, what is a barrack in English. It's, yeah, okay. [laughs] And uh somebody called and right he came.

SWB: So...

SONIA BRODECKI: And we became friends, right then.

SWB: Start back at the dance and how you left and the Greek followed you and threatened you with a knife.

SONIA BRODECKI: We went to a dance in the DP- in the camp.

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And they were playing, we were dancing, we were touching. And I don't remember, I remember I talk 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, he was threatening. Just like I said, somebody called the police.

SWB: He threatened you with a knife. Tell me how he threatened you.

SONIA BRODECKI: He put a knife on the table. That's why I called him Greeko Bandito. [laughs] I shouldn't do this. They were nice people. I don't remember the details, it's such a long time.

SWB: Thank you.

SONIA BRODECKI: Oh, you're very welcome.

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