



SIGMUND (ZIGGY) GORSON
International TV & Radio Variety Shows

WOODLAND TOWNHOUSE APTS.
7 LOWRY DRIVE
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19805
(302) 633-1266



(B1) "ASHES OF MY PEOPLE"

BY: ZIGGY GORSON

In the middle of December of 1945, about 8 months after my liberation from the Bergen-Belsen Nazi Death Camp and during a heavy snow storm I suddenly decided to smuggle myself from our liberated D.P.Camp, which was in the British Occupational Zone of Germany, to somehow reach my home town where I was born and where for the very last time I saw my entire family still being alive. I was at that time 14 years of age and we all lived in Lodz, Poland.

Rumors were flying around our camp that some Jews were liberated by the Soviet troops who captured the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp in the middle of January 1945, and were living in and around the former Warsaw and Lodz-Ghetto.

I had mixed emotions within myself at that time, believing and not believing these heart-breaking unsubstantiated rumors whether or not I still had some flimsy hopes to find some of my loved ones who by sheer miracles somehow survived this incomprehensible tragedy.

Although, I was well aware of the brutal truth that no member of my large family were waiting for me to celebrate together our survival from Nazi Hell. I knew the awful truth that they all perished in Auschwitz or in the death factories of Treblinka.

And yet, my conscience did not give me any rest until I would have been able to see for myself, to see the truth. I was unable to sleep and was unable to eat and a fire was burning in my heart telling me to go to Poland and to look and to search for at least one member of my family. I was already married to my Jean who was at that time six months pregnant with our first born son.



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I had long heart-rendering conversations with Jean whether to go on that very risky journey or staying with her at our camp and await together the birth of our baby. I was at that time 20 years of age and Jean was 18.

We both knew the penetrating perilous danger of my proposed journey to the Communist occupied country of Poland which at that time was full of lawless deserters of the Russian Army which consisted of cruel ruffians who were mostly Ukrainians still in their Soviet Army uniforms but nevertheless, they were all deserters of the worst kind.

They were preying on innocent people who were trying to reunite with their loved ones and who also were smuggling themselves from Germany to Poland and back again not bothering a soul and minding their own business, preying and plundering and even murder these victims who but, just a few months ago were liberated from the worst living hell on earth.

I was fully aware of the potential danger facing me on my trip back home, but Jean insisted and begging me to go and saying to me: Please, Ziggy, take this trip and perhaps you will be lucky finding a close living relative and if you should refuse to leave, you would never find peace within yourself.

She packed a few pieces of old clothes, a few worn shirts and socks for me and wrapped around my entire worldly possession in an old bed sheet and this became my so-called luggage which I was carrying on my back.

I kissed her with tears running down my face and promising her that I would try my utmost to take good care of myself and that I would come home again to her and the unborn baby. I remember well that heartbreaking parting when I left her on a cold, dark snowy night heading for the unknown before me... Jean was still standing in the doorway crying and rubbing her



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tiny hands from the bitter cold and still whispering please come back to me, you know that I am all alone without you, I have nobody left to look after me, please, please Ziggy, come back to me as soon as possible, you are everything that I have left in my life, come back to me alive.

I knew well her fears and her tragedy. Indeed, she had no one left from her family to look after her. Her father and older brother passed away only hours after our liberation from Bergen-Belsen Hell and after the agonizing separation for brutal six years, they were able to see each other finally, for one day and several hours. They died peacefully knowing that they were at long last free.

Her brown wavy hair, rising and falling gently on her shoulders as I was leaving her and her smiles and tears gave me the strenght and the resolve to succeed and never to abandon this so young and pretty girl who suffered so very much and tasted the very bitterness of a cruel life throughout her six years of horrors in different concentration camps. Yes, I shouted to her amidst the heavy snow falling... Jeannie, I will come back to you, no matter the sacrifice. I have kept fully the promise which I gave her on that unforgettable emotional snowy night.

I was walking in deep snow up to my knees, while the cold blistering wind was blowing ferociously through my thin clothes, I was being blinded from that wind and snow, my old and illfitting shoes were coming slowly apart from the wet snow, and I remember wondering, why did I leave a warm apartment and a really good young wife on such a treacherous lonely night? But I had to get answers to what has happened to my family and so, I kept walking throughout that night toward the little town of Bergen, which was only 8 kilometers away

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from where I started from. The snow was still falling all around me and for a single moment I was thinking of returning to Jean, but my uninterrupted strong persistence and the imaginary vision of my loved ones constantly before my eyes forced me to continue to endure the frostbitting elements all around me.

I kept on walking without stopping for even one single moment, knowing well that if I would, my journey would have been over and there was no way of just returning.

As I was walking being completely immersed in my thoughts, I heard from a distance a large wooden sleigh with bells on and being pulled by two large horses with an elderly German farmer at the reins and smoking a pipe being covered with a heavy large fur coat and straw boots, stopping at my side as I was silently walking by and in the German language invited me to jump on his sleigh and then he proceeded ahead at a faster speed not saving anything to me for quite awhile, he just kept looking at me with a puzzling smile on his face wondering what I was up to and what I was doing there in the middle of this terrible cold night.

He slowed his horses down, turning to me and asking me the inevitable why? I told him who I was and where I was heading to. He asked me for and I showed him my concentration camp tattoo on my left arm and he understood and not asking any more questions. I was indeed, most grateful to this old farmer for being so compassionate to me and taking me along in his sleigh, I was tired and wet from walking such a long distance and I told him what his kindness meant to me on that cold snowy night.

He pulled out from a bag which he kept under his seat and gave me a large slice of his bread and a piece of smoked bacon which I accepted with much appreci-



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ciation, because I was very hungry, I was eating his food with much gusto while telling him what a nice man he was feeding me and for allowing me to ride with him, after all, I was a total stranger to him. The snow still kept coming down without letting up and it got colder and colder, all around us the wind was blowing with such a ferocity that I was unable to breathe and was unable to communicate with my so generous host.

He offered me some more of his almost frozen food and he told me to share with him a bottle of his home brew that he also kept under his seat wrapped around in a bundle of straw, telling me that this brew would keep me warm.

He stopped his horses for a moment and pulled out several empty burlap sacks and wrapped them around my shivering body mumbling in German to hang in there and smiling at me with a flick of sincere compassion on his old wrinkled with age face.

I remember thinking what a few short months has made the difference in some people's mind and attitude towards a former Nazi camp inmate like me. Just a few short months ago, his bravery which he gave me willingly, would have been considered high treason by the hateful destructive Nazi regime and he, no doubt about it would have been executed on the spot together with me for his humane behavior and super-human decency.

I kept looking at the two huge farm horses pulling our sleigh and felt so very sorry for them because they were completely now covered with white snow flakes and I saw a white steam coming out from their tired bodies, I felt inside of me deep compassion for these two animals remembering well, that I and some others like me, were forced while being constantly beaten over our naked heads to pull with the little strenght left in our ^{emaciated} ~~emaciated~~ bodies the hea-



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vy steel lorries piled high with dead naked victims throughout the Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen camps. Suddenly the old man slowed his horses again and bending over to me placing both of his hands on my knees and shouting to me over the blowing wind: My only two sons who were both medics in the German army during the Nazi War, were killed on the Russian front during the battle of Stalingrad, I don't even know where their bodies are buried he said in a voice which indicated to me his horrible grief.

My wife, he said in a trembling voice, died shortly after receiving the heart breaking news from the German Red-Cross. I have no one left to live for, my entire family was wiped out during the American air-raid over the city of Kassel where they have fled away from the daily bombings he continued, again in a voice which betrayed his deep pain. Hitler and his murderers have destroyed my German Homeland he was saying almost in tears, the world would never forget what the Nazis perpetrated against innocent people and it will take many German generations to wipe out these horrible Nazi sins he kept repeating over and over again shaking his head and wiping away his tears.

I told him that I don't blame the entire German nation for these horrific crimes against my innocent people and the crimes committed by the Nazi barbarians against all others.

I told him right then and there while riding with him, that he indeed, was the finest example of human decency and that he was not guilty in the infamous crimes perpetrated by the German Nazis and that I didn't see a Nazi murderer in every German, that there were good humane Germans during the war and that there were others who willingly committed these despicable crimes against mankind.

I also told him how very sorry I was hearing from him about the loss of his

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two sons, his wife and his family, he thanked me for my understanding and my sympathy. He also told me that during World War I, he was a cook in the Kaiser's Army being stationed in France.

We have arrived in a small village where he stopped his horses telling me to wait for him while he would visit for a few moments with some of his friends who were living in an old wooden shack near where he stopped. I waited for him for a short while and then he came out with an elderly German couple inviting me to follow them into their home. I eagerly did just that because I was almost frozen, their so-called home was warm being heated with big wooden logs and a heavenly aroma of cooked potato soup with pieces of smoked ham was saturating the air with delight.

The elderly German woman told me to please sit down with them at their long wooden table and within moments she placed before me a huge bowl of piping hot soup and also told me to help myself to a basket loaded with fresh baked farm bread and pieces of smoked pork. Needless to say, I was indeed, grateful to her, her husband and the old coachman, I am most certain until this very day that my German benefactor told them about me while he left me waiting for him in the sleigh. They even invited me and the old man to rest up before continuing on our journey.

She noticed the bag which Jean made for me out of some old bed sheets which I have brought into the house to get my bag dried up, and she noticed that the bag was torn and wet and so she brought out a double red pillow casings telling me to exchange the same with my old worn out bag. I was elated and was unable to thank these fine people enough for their kindness and compassion which they gave me and knowing that I was a Jew and a just liberated Nazi victim.

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Several hours later, the old sleigh driver dropped me off at a small railroad station which was still closed up because of the early hours of the morning and advised me to wait a couple of hours for a train coming in from the city of Hamburg which was about 100 kilometers away from the Bergen station, and yes, it was still very cold and very snowy on the outside, The old man and I, embraced each other like two close family members and were holding each other for quite a long time, it was a very sad morning for the two of us, like father and son, the old man and I, were crying on each others shoulder like we had known each other for a life time and not like just the few precious hours when we first have met.

He wished me several times a very safe journey to Poland and the findings of my loved ones there. He demanded from me my solemn promise, that whenever I would again be near his Bergen village, I should come and visit with him and even stay with him for as long I would need. He also told me that the commercial train from Hamburg would slow down in Bergen and then it would proceed to Hanover, from there I would have to jump on another train or two and perhaps get lucky to find the right train which would take me close to the Polish border.

He gave me several American worn out dollars that he has kept hidden in his shirt, he then kissed me goodbye for the very last time and still crying jumped on his sleigh and returned from where we came. I have kept my promise which I gave this wonderful old German coachman and I was desperately trying to find him several years later while I was serving with the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence In Frankfurt a/m and in Munich in the then American Zone of West Germany. I was willing and more than able to pay back to him his so compassionate kindness.



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which he so very gallantly gave me. I was a little too late in finding him alive, because when I returned a few years later to see him, I was told by some of his German neighbors and friends, that unfortunately the old man passed away only one year before my returning to see him. I have been saying throughout my adult life and especially while broadcasting my Radio and Television Shows, that no nation in the world has the exclusive monopoly of having only saints among them or just murderers, there is good and there is evil among all of us. This old German coachman is indeed, the very finest example of my philosophy. Yes there is good and bad in all of us.

Two days later I was on a military train heading for Poland. This entire train was full of uniformed Polish military officers returning home from the war and I and a few other had no other choice but to climb on the roof of the train to come along with the Polish military, It was still snowing hard without letting up. I was laying flat on the roof while this train was speeding at a high rate and next to me I kept my entire worldly possession; the red double pillow casing with some of my clothes. I remember ~~the~~ the tips of my fingers were glue frozen to the metal roof of the box car and I was afraid to lift my head because of the many approaching bridges above me, it was truly a mission impossible.

In the middle of the 2nd. night, A very tall man dressed in a dirty Russian uniform came on top of my box car and started kicking over some innocent passengers who were laying right next to me on the same roof, but first he stole by sheer brutal force their meager belongings and as these victims were falling down below while the train was speeding, he killed them all. I immediately recognized this murderer as a deserter from the Russian Army and I also knew that he was a Ukrainian. He crawled over to me where I was laying and as he was bending over me I've noticed a large tumor the size of an orange on his right neck I showed h



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my Nazi camp number on my left arm while the bright full moon was shining above us and told him in Russian that I was just liberated from the death camp and that I was going home to Poland to search for my family and also pleaded with him not to harm me, he looked at me with cold murderous eyes for quite a long time while the train was still speeding and the snow was still falling, I turned around taking with him my red pillow case with all my belongings and then he abruptly left the roof and vanished somewhere.

The next early morning we finally arrived at a small Polish town and I saw down below me several young Polish military officers walking by stretching their feet from the journey. I jumped down to talk to one of them telling him in Polish the incident a night before on the roof and what has happened to me and the other victims whom he has killed in cold blood.

The young Polish Captain asked me if I would recognize this deserter and I told him that I would indeed, because of his large tumor on his neck, we walked from box car to box car and finally I have found this scum. The Captain yelled at him where he kept the stolen goods and he showed him that all the items he robbed the people of, including my red pillow case, he had hidden in the last empty box car. I immediately recognized my package and the young Captain grabbed the deserter by his elbow leading him behind some empty box cars on the other side of the tracks, the Captain told me to follow him and I did, when they reached the other side of our long train, the officer pulled out his pistol and shot to death with a quick bullet in his ear this cold murderer and that was that. As he fell down, I remember seeing the white snow on the ground turning into a bloody red puddle. I still remember seeing this execution I had to vomit right then and there. The Captain told me that he shot him mainly for being a army deserter and that he didn't deserve to live. Those were the

days of darkness