

BLANGA

By  
Emily



ROSENBERG



An autobiography on Blanca Rosenberg.

Cradling Zygmund in my arms telling him the soldiers were coming. Crouching under a secret staircase with eighty odd people. Wondering whether we were going to survive another one of these actions. One peep and we would be...

That was my life. Those were memories I will never forget.

"Bronislava Panasiac," that was the name that kept me alive. Blanca, Blanca Nebenzahl was the name that could not be told to anybody except those in the family.

"There's nothing to worry about. Everything is going to be all right," she said as she ripped the star of David off my sleeve. That is when it all started.

My name, Blanca Nebenzahl. I was born in Poland in 1913 in the town of Gorlice, but I grew up in Nowy Sacz. I, was the first child of my parents Eli and Elenore.

Six years after being pampered and adored came my brother Romek. It seemed as though this male child replaced me and I resented that. When the arrival of my twin brothers Bernie and Izac came I was already twelve. By the time the twins were ten I left to get married and have a new life.

School was definitely not my cup of tea. I went to a private school with mostly Christian children. After about four to five months of school my parents couldn't pay for my tuition anymore, but my mom wouldn't let my education stop. I dreaded going to school because one time I got kicked out the classroom because we hadn't paid our tuition. I ended up having to earn my own tuition by tutoring kids.

As a young child in Poland I succeeded in trying to avoid all the actions and all the hatred for Jews that was going on. Some kids would think that school was a really safe place, but for me lots of awful things happened there too!

For instance, at school one time I ran into a Christian friend of mine. We talked for a little while and then he started to walk away. Then I saw him hitting and punching a bunch of Jewish students that were walking to their class. Soon I was assaulted. I was grabbed by my hair and was pushed under a water fountain. He let the water run over my head and blind my eyes. Then, he pushed me down the stairs and treated me to a few extra blows. A lot of Jewish students were hurt from that fight including me.

When I was younger, I wanted to study medicine, but my parents wanted me to have my own family, marry and settle down before I started any major work. I did end up settling down and I married Wolf.

I met Wolf in school. He was older than I, but I was the first woman to interest him romantically. My parents pretty much pressured me into marrying Wolf. What they really wanted for their daughter to do was marry and settle down and have children. But I didn't see me and Wolf together in my dreams. That was not who I wanted to take care of me and love me. It was only Wolf, an orthodox Jew. Wolf introduced me to new books, included me in his ideas and that did make me feel pretty good, really special and important. That did make Wolf special in that way to me.

Wolf and I were married in 1936 under my parents strong wishes.

Our son, Zygmund was born on February 19, 1941. The first four months with Zygmund were wonderful times for both of us. It was after that we found ourselves about to be swallowed up by the creature of war and hatred.

On June 22, 1941 there was an air raid in our country, Poland. This wasn't just a regular air raid. The Germans had attacked near the Polish border. Soviet forces were going to fight them to keep the Germans from coming any closer. Polish soldiers joined the Soviet forces to keep the Germans away. Wolf was picked to fight!

I couldn't believe it! Wolf was leaving us! What would happen to me? What would happen to Zygmund, my baby?

Soon it was almost time for Wolf to go. Only a little while till the baby and I would were about to be left on our own. Before he left Wolf said " My darling, you know how much I love you. I swear if I survive this war I'll come back and find you. We'll be together again, I know,"

That was it. One young woman, a baby and their two shadows except for my brother Romek. Romek was always there for me and took care of Zygmund and I after Wolf left us. Even though Romek was six years younger than I, I always seemed to look up to him and turn to Romek for advice and help.

#### THE NEW ORDER

On the morning of June 31 1941, I saw signs and posters with messages written in three languages; The languages were German, Polish and Ukrainian. The new order restricted movement and activities for the Jewish population in Poland.

One morning after the new order had been declared a mad German came in and pointed a rifle at me. " All right Jew-sow, where's your man?" I don't remember how I responded. I do know that my brother Romek was hiding and I was holding Zygmund. Thank goodness we would die together. Suddenly a shot rang out very close to me.

3  
Luckily I was only grazed by the bullet. When I heard the shot ring out, I fainted. That was one of the very close encounters I had with death.

Another close encounter I had, was one time when the Nazis appeared and began to shoot Jews in our ghettos. Luckily, our ghetto was the furthest away from the gates, where the shooting took place. By the time Zygmund and I had reached the secret place behind the stairwell there were eighty odd people there. Of course they didn't want one more person to be hiding there and especially not a baby who would cry and give them away, but they let us in anyway.

When I told Zygmund the German soldiers were coming he started to shriek and cry. Soon the soldiers heard Zygmund's shrieking and they came quickly and held up a gun. That is the last thing I saw. After Zygmund and I got out of that situation safely. I found out that both Zygmund and I had fainted and the German soldiers took some other people who were in hiding but didn't do anything to me or Zygmund. Luckily Zygmund and I made it back to our home unharmed.

A dreaded new word entered our vocabulary. " Action " This could describe being killed, rounded up, victims, dead people, disappearances, terror, bad news.

Most actions happened on Jewish holidays like : Passover, Chanukah and Rosh Hashana. Those were times when the soldiers liked to take people by surprise and have what they called fun. Their fun was torture for us. Actions were usually when the soldiers would make Jews do awful things and then of course they would shoot them. Sometimes the soldiers would round up a bunch of Jews, chain them together and bring them to Concentration Camps or Gas Chambers! Actions soon became a word that we used quite often and also experienced a lot.

One of the worst actions I have ever experienced was the Mokra Street Action. This was as terrifying as a nightmare. Mokra Street was awash in blood. Those who did not get to their homes quickly enough were shot or trampled. The women or children who were on the streets were dragged, trampled and kicked.

Many of those who were taken by the soldiers were made to dig their own graves and stripped to the skin. One of the soldiers played a harmonica and their victims were ordered to dance. Those who disobeyed were set upon with clubs. Entertainment for the soldiers was torture for us. That was how it was.

After being clubbed the Jews were commanded to face the trenches they dug. Then the shooting began. Some people protected others from the bullets. Even if some Jews didn't get killed the dead pushed the living down. One boy was saved. Even though there were bodies on top of him he came up through them. Unnoticed, he went back to his home.



On March 21, 1942 all of us had to relocate to one of the three officially established ghettos in the town.

One night Romek opened the door of our home. He was afraid it might be the Gestapo, but found Paula Bergan, a woman who had also lost her husband. Her baby was somewhere safe. Her plan to escape was that she would remove her band with the yellow star of David on it, and get a fake birth certificate with a Gentile name. Then, if her family was still alive she would head to a large town in the eastern part of Poland. As Romek and I were talking to Paula about her plans to escape, I was thinking to myself, "Babies are very special. They are very precious. Almost like a diamond." My life was a diamond that I would hold and then sometimes, I would let go. But my Zygmund was a thousand diamonds all together. I could never imagine getting rid of my delicate little baby like Paula did. Even knowing that he would be in better hands and safer wouldn't convince me to let Zygmund go. No, I never would. No, I never would.

A simple and courageous plan for her but for me? NO! I had a little boy who was circumcised. I could never get out of there even though I didn't look Jewish. I would never let Zygmund and I separate. He was all I had. All, I had. That was when it all flashed on me. I was hiding in a shack with my own baby and my brother. Was that as far as I could see to get out of this nightmare? Was I ever going to see the other side of the rainbow? Would Zygmund? It was like I was among all these little grains of sand ready to sink down with all the others in a sand timer. If I let go of that diamond I would be free! But that precious diamond was Zygmund. He's my baby, my baby, my little baby. My baby who if I said the word, "soldiers or Germans" he would run and hide. Was this the life for him? NO! But, I was going to fight until the very end for Zygmund and Romek's lives. Little did I know that my whole life was gradually turning.

The next action came much too quickly. Before Zygmund and I knew it, the door opened, and instead of a Gestapo soldier, Romek came in. "You were safe at the factory. Why did you come home?" I asked.

"There's a new action happening, and the Gestapo have set fire to the synogogue. We must leave quickly," Romek answered. Then he tore the armband off his sleeve and reached for mine. Quickly Romek grabbed Zygmund, and he and I climbed over the fence. Luckily for us there were no soldiers there.

Soon we reached the home of Lydia. She was the manager of Romek's factory. Lydia soon found us a place to stay near her, because it was not safe for us to go back to our home.

5

A while later when Romek, Zygmund and I were back in our home, a woman came to take Zygmund away to live with my parents where it was safer. I couldn't part with him so Zygmund stayed with me.

A week later news was spread that the Gestapo had ordered the Judenrats to hand over several hundred children tomorrow. The Judenrat is a group that is owned by and partly works for the Nazis. The Judenrats also secretly help Jews escape and survive. " I'm here to tell you because my telling you may save one Jewish life ", said this man who worked for the Judenrat and had come to warn me about Zygmund's life.

That night Romek had that same woman come again to take Zygmund away and bring him to my parents. She took Zygmund and was gone. As I watched my baby and the woman disappear into the night I thought... I had let the diamond go! How was I going to deal with parting from my baby forever! How was I ever going to be able to do anything again without thinking of Zygmund? I never did get over it. It was one of the most tragic things that ever happened to me!

Soon I got a job and began to work. I began to enjoy the company of a girl named Mati. She was several years younger than I but we both grew very fond of each other as the time passed. I didn't know then that we were to share and survive many adventures together.

A while after Zygmund left I received a letter from one of my twin brothers Bernie. The news was terrible! My parents had a very good hide-out, but when the Germans came into the room Zygmund gave them away! My twin brothers were saved but the rest of the family was shipped off to what the Germans called " an unknown destination in the East, " On August seventeenth, Romek and I became orphans. And I could only hope that Zygmund would die in his grandmothers arms rather than in a gas chamber.

Romek soon broke down in tears since he was very close and very fond of our father. I was fond of both my parents, but I scrubbed and cleaned the floors. It let all my feelings and energy out. I thought that diamond was right, I thought it was good. I thought it would take care of my son, my baby. Who was in charge of this world? Who made things happen? Not god. What was god? If he was in charge of this world and made things happen how come this world was such an awful place? How come...

After I was finished cleaning the floor I felt much better, just a little.

" Her life is the only one I want to save, " I overheard Romek saying to Lydia. What was I to do? Let Romek risk his life for mine? Should I die or live? What do I do?



The day was September 7, 1942. All the soldiers wanted to know was how many Jews there were living in that area. They had a big registration time for all of us in that area. This was also a time to get rid of all the Jews who didn't look healthy. There were tons of Jews there. Soon it was our factory's turn to register. A thousand men and woman stepped forward. Then I saw Romek carrying the list with all the names of who worked there. Then he got a place in line near the front. When he reached the front of the line the man pointed to the right.

"Me to the right?" Romek asked.

"No you're too slow, go to the left," The man said.

What was he doing? Was he trying to die? I couldn't let him do this to himself. I didn't understand why he didn't just move to the right instead of asking. Why did he do that? What is wrong with him? Why is God making this happen? Suddenly I felt this urge that I had to join him if he was going to die. I wouldn't let him die alone. I wouldn't, so I moved my way through the crowd. The guard shoved me toward the living when my own brother was moving closer and closer to the dead.

"I beg you, let me go to the left. I can't be separated from my brother, I can't," I said. Soon I was pushed to the right and Romek was about to die.

Then I saw a body on the ground that was unable to rise. It was Romek. A guard had seen him trying to move into the selection line and had clubbed him in the face, then he fell to the ground with his head bleeding. I tried to break out of my line, but I was felled by the club. After the selections were over I saw the whole group of Jews who didn't look healthy being marched to the rail yards. Romek was one of them. He didn't see me. Blood was flowing from the wound on his face, bandaged by a rag. He was going to die. Romek was going to die. That diamond was cheap. What did he do to deserve this? What did I do to deserve this? Was I this bad guy, because I didn't save my brother? My mother was dying for my son and my brother for me. What was wrong with this picture? It was I that was wrong with this picture. I hadn't saved anybody! If only they had survived this with me or the things to come!

Soon after the registration was over, I found myself at Nunek, and Mati's house. Nunek was Mati's husband. He had carried me all the way from where the registration was. He told me that I had fainted after I saw Romek being walked to the rail yards. Nunek and Mati let me stay in their home for a while until I knew where I was going to live and what I was going to do.

A couple of weeks later after being back in my home I received a message from Romek. He entrusted that message to a friend who jumped the train not thinking that he would ever make it. But he did, and he delivered the message which said, "Blanca, you must try to escape on false identity, escape and tell the world what has happened to us. Too old, ready to die". Was

7  
that it? Was that why he gave up on himself? How was I suppose to go on with life when my own brother was not alive anymore? How come Romek couldn't see the end of the tunnel? How come I was suppose to but Romek couldn't?

After I got that message from Romek and ever since I knew I had to survive. I had to do so in order to mourn my dear ones, to bury them and be able to go on with my life. I was going to fight till the bitter end.

One morning when I arrived at work Lydia called me into her office. " Sit down <sup>after</sup> Blanca. Look, I haven't wanted to burden you till now. But <sup>after</sup> the September action, Romek made me swear I would help you to escape if he didn't survive." Lydia said. " I won't let you die. I gave my word on the blessed virgin, and on my affection for your brother."

The next day Lydia brought me a birth certificate. It was in the name of Bronislava Panasiac. That is when I remembered when Paula Bergan had come to visit us, and she had told me the exact same plan that I was trying to do! I remember that I couldn't do the same because I had a little boy who was circumcised. But now I didn't have my baby or my brother I had nobody.

When it became the evening, Lydia embraced me. " There's nothing to worry about. Everything is going to be all right." She said as she pulled the star of David off my sleeve. That is when my new life started falling into place. And, what I did have, was a road leading me onto freedom.

I was on my way. During my travels and during the time I was escaping I was in many places. I traveled mostly around Poland.

I was going to Lw'ow. It was the end of October 1942. On the way there I kept repeating to myself, " My name is Bronislava Panasiac. I was born December 4, 1915. <sup>on my vacation</sup> I was visiting relatives. My parents names were... They were born in the province of..."

As the train began to speed up, so did my heart. I was afraid that if I would say anything, I would give myself away. So I started to rehearse again incase I was stopped and they asked me some questions. Who was I? Bronislava Panasiac. I was born in Lw'ow, I'm Greek-Catholic and I'm twenty five years old. I'm also all alone in this world. I gulped. No longer a Jewess, no longer hunted like prey.

I had forgotten how to be free! How to act normally! I was no longer a slave, or was I?

I stayed with members of Lydia's family until I could tell they wanted me out. I only stayed there two weeks until I got



used to the town of Lw'ow. Soon after, I contacted a friend of mine who had also escaped on false identity and now helped Jews get work and find roofs over their heads.

After some very close encounters with death, and being in the hands of the police when they threatened to hand me over to the Gestapo did Edward ( My friend ) say I had to leave Lw'ow and go to Warsaw. There it might be safer.

After I reached Warsaw I found a place to stay that was owned by a widow. Hopefully this was a safe place and I wouldn't get pulled over to the Gestapo quarters. I had been traveling with a man named Anthony. He had the looks to survive but his Polish was heavily accented with Yiddish. I was surprised he had even made it this far. If I wanted to survive I had to break it to Anthony that we should both go our separate ways. With my looks and my language I could survive but Anthony couldn't have. The only way, he had gotten this far was because he had a lot of money. Each time someone took him to the Gestapo or threatened him he would pay them money and they would stop. That was the only way he was going to survive any longer.

Soon I told him this, but I promised him I would get him some food and a roof over his head. I also promised him that I would come and see him once a week.

After I found Anthony a nice safe place to stay, I found myself some work. Because I was working again I wasn't as worried about getting caught but the one thing that worried me was that each time I heard some gossip about Jews in hiding it would immobilize me with fear.

The new year came. 1943. After one Jewish girl had been brought to the Gestapo and other Jews killed I was convinced that the ax was going to fall on me any day now.

When I got home from work one morning there was a letter from Juliana G'orska, Mati's fake certificate name. I could see that Nunek had convinced her to escape. She had arrived in Lw'ow and wanted me to write to her. I was thrilled that she had arrived safely and I wanted to go see her.

I soon discovered that the Gestapo had found out Anthony was a Jew and he was killed. I felt so guilty that I hadn't let Anthony stay with me, but that would have endangered my life even more! Since Anthony was killed they have records of both of us together. I was in big trouble! The Gestapo were probably searching for me! I had to leave Warsaw.

The next train to Lw'ow was four hours away. I decided to kill time. I walked down the streets hoping it would be safer than walking around where the train was coming. As I walked along I noticed a new poster. It was warning to watch out for Jews with fake identity papers. I was glad to be leaving Warsaw. I forced myself to think about Mati and my friends rather than Anthony.

9  
When I reached Lw'ow I saw Edward waiting for me at the platform. Then Edward drove me to where Mati was awaiting my arrival. We both collapsed into each other's arms. Then we each told each other our stories. Mati had an awful story. After being dragged to the Gestapo quarters and almost killed, Mati was just about to go back to where we used to live when Edward found her. Edward had told her that he knew she was Blanca's friend and was going to help her. When she finished the story Mati's eyes filled with tears.

" It doesn't matter. Just as long as you are here with me. Together we'll face the world. Maybe we will survive," Mati said.

As the end of my visit to Lw'ow approached, Matti told the landlady that she was going to take me home to visit her family. Would the room be available when we returned? Yes, everything was set.

On our way we got stopped by Frania, Mati's older sister, her three year old son Lezek and her sister-in-law Helen. As I looked at their faces I could tell what had happened. The Kolomyjia ghetto had been destroyed, and they'd escaped its last grasp.

It was February 2, 1943. Their story about their escape was a story that was too awful for words. Too awful to explain. A terrifying nightmare.

Soon a friend of ours found a place for them to stay that was safe and another man to get fake identity papers for all of them.

Each day the papers reported more and more arrests of Jews. Mati and I also watched some Jews get dragged to the Gestapo and experienced it too.

At the end of January 1943, Mati and I both had jobs. She was working at a pharmacy and was the supervisor's favorite, while I got a job at a hospital and, in addition to helping nurses, I was assigned to floor and staircase scrubbing. We began to feel more secure and were able to move around more and not have to worry so much.

In the new place Mati and I were staying, the lady of the house let us in on one of her secrets one day when Mati and I got home from work.

" You know, there a lots of Jews who've gotten out of the ghetto and are using forged documents to live on the outside. I never told you, but the very room you two are in was rented by a couple of Jewesses with phony papers. The Gestapo took them away not two weeks ago before you got there," she told us.

Luckily for us in that situation we didn't give ourselves away but we were used to answering those kind of questions.

The Spring of 1943 came. One day I was called to the main office. The first person I saw entering was Mati, white faced. " What's happened" I whispered.

" We're finished, that's what." She said.



10  
Before Mati could explain we were chased and then came to our home. We could only stay there for a couple of minutes, just enough time to contact Edward and ask what had happened after our escape.

That evening Edward came for us. Mati told the landlady that her father had died and we were going to his funeral. "Your situation is pretty awful. The Gestapo is after you all right. They have searched both your rooms and now have pictures of both of you. I don't know how I am going to get you both out of Lw'ow," Edward said.

We eventually stayed at a place where they were hiding a Jewish orphan just staying there long enough to plot our escape from Lw'ow.

The only way, was by an evening train for Warsaw, and that would mean passing through an identity check at the station.

Edward got hold of the tickets, and Mati and I got hold of the disguises. We decided to dress as peasants.

Soon Mati and I got on the train and were on our way to Warsaw and hopefully safety. When we had reached our destination, little did we know that Warsaw held a very different future for both of us.

When we got there we went through this whole awful thing. First when we got off the train we were taken by these policeman, and then were threatened that they were going to take us to the Gestapo quarters. Then finally this nice policeman named Stach let us go.

After he let us go we found out that he was part of the underground railroad to help Jews escape, but he was given a job as a policeman. We sure were lucky that time.

Stach found us this guy who would get Mati a whole set of documents for not very much money at all. The fee was not much and Mati had a new identity : Maria Bielska. Mati liked that name and has kept it ever since.

I found a place to stay pretty quickly, but without my blond hair and blue eyes Maria had a very hard time trying to find a place to stay. We finally found a place for her, owned by a Polish sea captain.

Soon, I got a job working as a maid and got Maria a job working as a girl to come in and help clean in the same house. Maria had decided to dress as a peasant-turned-street-girl. One morning Mr Schmidt knowing that I was Jewish but didn't know Mati was, told me it was not safe for me to go out today but Maria was in no danger.

Throughout the whole time we stayed there Mr. Schmidt was always afraid of Maria. Several months later we told him that Maria was Jewish. Eventually he fell in love with the same woman he had feared, even though he was already married.

Maria and I followed the news from the fronts through underground leaflets and reading between the lines in the German press. Sicily was captured (July-August), then Italy surrendered on September eighth. The Americans bombed Rome. Events moved

so fast it was hard to keep up with them.

Some months into the routine of the household, I received a telephone call from our old friend and protector from Lw'ow, Edward. He had lost his cover and was on the run in Warsaw. We received this news with horror. Soon we took Edward home and got him out of all the trouble he was in. Edward had hurt his leg but then it soon started to get better.

Soon Maria and I found this cobbler that Edward could stay with for a while.

One evening in May, 1944, the Schmidts were having a dinner guest all the way from Germany. I found out later on in the evening that his family needed a maid and I was the one he wanted. If I had said no I would have gone anyway so I realized I had no say in this decision. My world collapsed around me in a way I never expected. I would have to leave my only family - Maria, my friends - the world built up out of so many sacrifices. But, I had no choice.

We reached Heidelberg, Germany on a beautiful May morning. When we reached the house that I was to be the maid in I almost fainted from the beauty. For the beauty of that house was probably the prettiest thing I had ever seen in my whole life! No gray, no sadness, nobody was frightened. Everybody and everything and everybody was alive. The blue sky, the aroma of pine, the complete absence of war, tragedy and martyrdom transported me into an earlier world - full of other paths, flowers, woods, youth, and joy. Oh how I wish Romek and Zygmund and my family could have been able to see this.

Soon I got introduced to Cesia who used to be the maid but I had taken her place. I could tell right away that she was Jewish too and also a kindred spirit. She soon showed me around the house and took me to my bedroom in the cellar. After a week of doing the work my whole body was aching. I was not used to such burdens.

Usually the only thing that would break my loneliness was when I received Maria's letters. I soon began to worry about Maria because her letters had stopped coming. Mr. Binder had no news of her either. She had to survive! My last hope could not be destroyed.

One morning in November I got a letter from Maria saying that she had been wounded and wanted to come to Heidelberg as soon as possible. Then I told the family that a friend of mine would be visiting.

As soon as Maria arrived she told me what had happened after I had left.

The winter of 1944 was our fourth winter of the war. That winter I became ill. Since the food was scarce for a maid and so was medical help I was transferred to a civilian ward, where I was given the proper treatment.

1945 started out badly. This time Maria was ill, it was



12  
her leg and hip that was bothering her. Soon she recovered, and stayed in Germany with me.

Air raids were becoming more frequent, kind of like actions. Soon I found myself sharing my cot with the Binders.

Throughout the war years, we have had two all-encompassing aims : To survive and to see Nazism in ruins. On this Good Friday, April first, 1945 - two years to the day since Maria and I landed in that police station in Warsaw - our promise and our hopes were fulfilled. The Nazis were defeated, and the lives we had fought so very hard were secure at last! How would we ever live with the memories and the guilt? Full of these thoughts, questions, and fears, we greeted our first moments of liberation.

As we sat by the side of the road watching troops march by this American officer came up to us and said in Yiddish, " Are you girls Jewish?"

Astonished, we both nodded our heads. That was amazing. Throughout the latest part of my life I was never able to say that I was Jewish, being that I would probably get shot. And now a person was asking us if we were and he wasn't trying to kill us. Right then and there I could have sworn that this was heaven. Then the officer told us that we were the very first Jewish survivors he had met! Then he scribbled down his name and told us to come see him at the Heidleberg city hall, the American headquarters. Then as we were walking through the town we realized we still were in considerable danger. Even though we were on the American front there was still war going on.

We found this place where this big group was standing. The meeting had been organized by a young American rabbi. He told us that we were the first Jewish survivors he had met. In the next few weeks he did everything he could to provide a shelter and some food for us.

Soon after Maria and I found some work in a club mainly waiting on tables. That was where we put on a lot more weight.

Learning English was the most important thing to me after the war. I had learned that you really depended on it. And, as I got better I was promoted to better jobs, ones that involved more and more English.

Soon my English was getting much better, I was hired by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The manager also got Maria and Cesia, the maid in the Binder household in Germany, jobs.

When the war finally ended on May 9, Maria and I went to different camps to go and meet the newly liberated survivors.

Each time Maria and I went to visit the camps I would ask if by chance my twin brothers Bernie and Izak had survived.

13  
They ended up leading me to my cousin Joseph Korzenik. He then told me that my two brothers had gotten killed at the age of eighteen when all the victims were being led out of the camp. If only they had survived just a little bit longer.

One day, two girls from Gorlice where I was born came into the office. Though we grew up in the same town we didn't know each other, but both of them knew Bernie and Izak. Then, one of the girls told me that they might have survived.

A few days later I heard that my husband Wolf was still alive and Maria's sister Frania and her son Lesek were alive and well in Poland. Maria and I both decided that we should go back to Poland to find out who was still living in our families. When we got to Munich which was still in Germany we were warned that it might be very dangerous. I then convinced Maria to stay there and Joseph and I would go.

Finally after a long journey we arrived in Czechoslovakia. Then we got on a train on the way to Prague.

There was a day's wait before heading to Poland so I decided to explore the beautiful town of Prague. I wanted to explore it as a free woman and not as Bronislava Panasaic. As I was walking down the street I decided to stop in to a beauty salon. I had the woman in there cut off both my long braids that I would wear at the top of my head. When I came of there I was a new woman entirely.

The next day Joseph and I left for Katowice, Poland. When we reached Poland, Joseph and I went to the Jewish survivor's committee and asked for the Kolomjia register. The next morning, as I walked back to the Jewish committee, I noticed a tall man in a Russian uniform. As I moved closer I saw that it was Wolf, my husband. "Let's go up to my hotel," I said.

Later we talked. Wolf told me that he was in Prussia and heard that I had survived but he didn't know where to find me.

Then, he and I drove down to Glevitz to reunite with Sam Rosenburg. Before the war Sam and I had fallen in love when I was married to Wolf but my parents hadn't wanted me to get divorced.

After a time of talking Wolf brought up in the conversation about this Russian girl who he had very strong feelings for. Then Wolf turned to Sam and said, "Would you marry her and bring her back to Poland?"

Then I said to Wolf, "There's no getting back for us. Let us go our separate ways."

There, I tied the last knot in my life. It was time for me to build a new life on the shattered remnants of the old. To bury all those who died and remember all who risked their lives for one another. The next day I set out. but this time I was not alone; Sam rode next to me. We had no words left, but the warm grasp of his hand on mine. I was now going to be able to see the other side of the rainbow, no longer hunted like prey, and finally able to tell the world what has happened to us Jews.

## EPILOGUE

Sam Rosenberg and I were married in Salzburg at the end of 1945. Our twins, Mark and Alex, were born there. In 1949 we emigrated to the United States. We settled in Cedar Grove, New Jersey. One year later we returned to New York. Sam was then offered a job as a psychiatrist with the Veterans Administration.

I entered my graduate training in 1953 in education. After graduating, "a new life unfolded for me. I loved my profession, and in it I found a new meaning to life and a new sense of myself." For twenty years I was an educator. Currently, I am a psychotherapist and a social worker. I also really enjoy my work. Now, I am giving speeches about the Holocaust.

I have never forgotten all of the people who have survived and risked their lives for mine. First and foremost, was my dearest best friend, Maria Rosenbloom. Maria emigrated to the United States in 1947. She became a professor at Hunter School of Social Work.

"Maria and I remain very close friends, and are joined by ties stronger than blood."

I would like to pay special tribute to Lydia, the woman who provided me with fake identity papers. She also offered all the help I would need to escape from the ghetto. I also want to thank Cesia Osenton, the maid in the German household in Heidleberg. She has kept in touch with me by wonderful letters and presents for my twin sons when they were younger. Also, I would never forget Stach, the Polish policeman. Stach freed Maria and I from the Gestapo, and from almost being killed.

Our marriage, Sam and mine, sadly ended on December 28, 1987. We were together forty-two wonderful years. When I brought twin boys into a world that was not full of war and hatred, I felt that I had accomplished something special. Those years, watching the twins, Mark and Alex, grow up were very happy times for me, but also very difficult. Taking care of twins was definitely a full time job.

Now, Alex is a professor of philosophy in California. He and wife, Merle have had two fabulous children. Mark is involved with the religion of Hindu, and does yoga. He lives part-time in South India. When Mark is not living there he is working on his doctorate in comparative religion at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

I lived. Many people did not. My accomplishment was to survive and tell the world what has happened to us Jews. And I did. I fullfilled Romek's empty bag with the truth and the future, the new world, the love and the light.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Friedman, Ina R. Escape Or Die. True Stories Of Young People Who Survived the Holocaust. Yellow Moon Press, Boston. 1982

Moskin, Marietta D. I Am Rosemary. Scholastic Book Services, New York. 1972

Rosenberg, Blanca. To Tell At Last. Survival Under False Identity, 1941 - 45. University of Illinois Press, Chicago. 1993.

Rosenberg, Blanca. Letter from Blanca.

Tec, Nechama. The Story of a Lost Childhood - Dry Tears. Oxford University Press, Connecticut. 1982