

FROM YELLOW STAR TO POP STAR

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Writing this book caused me to re-live my early life, a mixture of extreme pain and great joy. I dedicate it to my family.

AUTHOR NOTE

I am a Holocaust survivor and international recording artist. I am an author and experienced public speaker. My talks are not a historical account of events, but focus on my experiences of the Holocaust, seen through the eyes of a five-year-old Jewish girl, and my life beyond that. I survived against all the odds.

My talks are educational, inspiring (hopefully), at times unbelievable, sometimes funny, and they are suitable for people of all ages! I give my talks at schools, colleges, hotel venues, literary gatherings, ladies' luncheons, educational conferences – any venue where people wish to hear about my true life account, that of a Holocaust survivor.

My passion is to build bridges between different religions. I am convinced that if people would listen to each other and compare their similarities rather than their differences, nations would learn to get along far better. Nobody has the right to persecute or kill others for being a different religion, race, creed or colour. Everybody has the same right for *living* and for *life*. It's not that I want to remember the Holocaust, but I simply cannot forget. This is part of my story. These are my memories.

FOREWORD

This book is a song of survival and success. It deals in resilience and resourcefulness on a grand scale. It traces the author's life through times of persecution, fright, rebuilding, international singing success and betrayal. At every stage the author's intelligence and quick-wittedness shine like the searchlights she used to evade; like the spotlights she later sang beneath.

Dorit Oliver-Wolff is Jewish by birth. For her, Jewishness is a thing neither to defend nor celebrate. It is just fact. To Dorit, many things are, and always were, more important than her racial identity. In wartime Europe, others felt differently. In the later stages of World War II, Jews were rounded up on an industrial scale and transported from their homelands to camps in Germany and Poland. From Hungary, where Dorit lived in hiding with her mother until the Russian liberation, almost two thirds of the Jewish population of some 725,000 was transported in the early months of 1944 to Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The vast majority perished. Dorit and her remarkable mother, through a mix of bravery, guile, ingenuity, intelligence and luck, evaded capture. They survived the Holocaust. But their troubles were far from over.

After having survived in Budapest on scraps of food stolen or begged for, and having lived in a series of safe houses, consulates or convents, Dorit's mother took herself and her vulnerable charges to Novi Sad in what is now Serbia (then part of Yugoslavia), where the Communist regime had newly occupied the political void. They were behind the Iron Curtain where life remained difficult, especially for Jews. It was not long before Dorit's resolute mother arranged for them to emigrate

from Yugoslavia to Israel under the bilateral treaty for ethnic migration.

Although Dorit had received a music scholarship in Yugoslavia, it was in Israel that her formal education really began. It was a place where she felt at peace but not a place where she was destined to remain. Her mother (by now remarried) took the family to Turkey. It was under her mother's tutelage that Dorit learned to dance. She became a member of her mother's dance troupe and toured throughout Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, not only dancing but also taking on singing solos. Her encounters with entertainers, showgirls, prostitutes and pimps provided great life-experience for a young teenager. It was in Cyprus that Dorit married and gained British citizenship: a decision that was to have a profound effect on the course of her life.

There followed years of singing, touring, recording, increasing fame and of motherhood. Dorit became sought after for singing engagements in Monte Carlo and Nice as well as throughout her adopted home country of Germany. Eventually, she was betrayed by those closest to her and lost almost everything. She kept possession only of her daughter. And then they found Frank.

When Dorit asked me to help with her book, I expressed some concerns. I was aware that the early drafts had been dictated and that Dorit's first language was not English; I feared the task would be all consuming. However, after agreeing to read the first three chapters there was no going back: I was captivated. It was immediately clear that her skill as a narrator would do justice to her remarkable story. Dorit's fluency in several European languages helps to create a writing voice and style which brings to life the nomadic existence of her early years.

FROM YELLOW STAR TO POP STAR

This book traces the author's experiences of deepest hatred and unexpected compassion; her encounters with new languages, cultures and customs. It charts her journey from Holocaust survivor to educated young woman and highly talented singer, performing throughout Europe and making successful records with celebrated musicians. Most of us know of people who have survived difficult times only to come through stronger. But the mountainous scale of Dorit Oliver-Wolff's lows and highs leaves one in awe.

Michael J Fleming

THE CONCERT

I could hear the compère announcing my name. The orchestra struck up my signature tune and even before I appeared on the stage, there was a standing ovation. All sorts of feelings flashed through my mind. Was I not that little Jewish girl who used to break out into a cold sweat and hide at the sight of a German soldier in uniform?

This concert in Bremer-Hafen was, for me, the most emotional and strange show business experience. The annual Dinner Dance was a spectacular event for the German air force. The organisers had insisted I should sing at this gala evening. It was a very special occasion. The ladies were in beautiful ball gowns and the gentlemen had on their best greyish blue uniforms. Many were wearing their medals. Some had so many they almost covered the left side of their jackets.

The seats were all taken, with the higher-ranking officers being seated in the first and second rows. The auditorium was decorated with the most amazing flower arrangements. When I arrived, I had walked the red carpet leading from the pavement where the chauffeur-driven limousines would stop at the entrance. I had never seen so much pomp and glitter before.

It was not surprising that the sight of so many German uniforms brought up a strange feeling inside of me, especially when the house lights were switched off and only the spotlight and footlights came on. I suddenly felt panic. Why had they insisted I should be the one who should entertain them? Why me?

Although I had hesitated I could not refuse this engagement. This would not have been professional. The fact that these were men in German uniforms spooked me. The memories just overwhelmed me. Here I was, standing on stage and the men in uniform were applauding me. I felt a lump in my throat. For a moment I could not move. I did not think I could sing. My smile must have looked like a mask. Suddenly my mood changed. I had this immense feeling of triumph.

My performance was very emotional. I knew it was good. I sang my little Jewish heart out. I was overwhelmed by the thought, yes, I have made it! I am alive. I have not perished in a gas chamber. Who would ever have imagined, out of all the other singers in Germany, it was I who had been requested to sing here tonight?

I did not finish with my usual song, but I chose 'Havanagilla', a Hebrew song. They all stood up and clapped in rhythm with the song. I cannot find words to describe my feelings that night. But I felt that I had made it, I had reached my dream. This was what it was all about. The irony! Many members of my family had been killed during the Holocaust and yet here I was a survivor, standing on the stage before the very people, whose parents, grandparents or uncles could have been responsible. That I could be here, alive, famous and successful and applauded; this satisfying, triumphant feeling will stay with me forever!

But I could never forget the dark days of my childhood. Time spent being hunted like an animal. That is the other side of my story.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

It was not until my mother and I went for a stroll in the park in Budapest on a beautiful sunny day when a big, fat, blonde woman approached us, spat at me and shouted '*büdös zsidó*' (stinking Jew) that I realised that I was Jewish. This was my instant introduction into Judaism. I was only six years old. Now that I am 79 I can write about my memories. Not that I want to remember. I simply cannot forget.

WAR – The bombing of Belgrade 1941

A horrendous noise woke us. The walls were shaking and the smell of smoke seeped through the windowpane. The room was filled with smoke. We could hardly see. My eyes were burning and itching. Tears were rolling down my cheeks. My mother and I, we both jumped out of the bed trying to look out of the window to find out what this noise was all about. Fire and black smoke were blinding us and the thuds and the horrible growling noises were deafening. We knew instinctively we had to get out.

We ran down the corridor, down the steps only to find other people trying to escape the burning house. We were all heading towards the front door of the building. People were shoving, screaming and shouting, calling out the names of their children, mothers or relatives to see if they managed to escape. A bomb must have hit the adjoining building as part of our block had big gaps in the wall. I could see the black sky through the hole. There was a lot of grey dust falling on us, like ash. Surprisingly no one got injured on the stairs. It was utter chaos. No one knew what was happening. The front door of the building was jammed, as everyone was attacking it trying to get out.

Eventually, somebody managed to open the front door and we were on the street which was full of people in their nighties or pyjamas with horrible grimaces on their faces. One could see the panic and fear. As we looked up we could see black smoke amongst the red flames that looked like furious red tongues licking anything in their reach, burning and destroying everything with fury, without mercy. Parts of bodies were hanging from the tram line wires which ran parallel above the houses as if they were washing on the clothes line: legs, arms, all still with the blood dripping down from them. This must have been the result of the bombs hitting the houses. People whose bodies were torn apart from the explosions had landed on the tram wires. Blood was dripping from the body parts onto the rubble on the ground. People trod in the puddles. Many people who walked underneath those limbs were unaware what was hanging from the tram wire above them; they too were drenched with dripping blood. We did not have time to stop as the people were simply pushing along in one direction all trying to get out of the burning town.

It really turned the stomach. You just wanted to be sick, unimaginably horrendous. A real horror film, except that it was reality.

But you couldn't stop even if you wanted to, or look back. There was only one way and that was in the direction that everybody else was heading. You had to be careful not to fall because you would never get up. People would just trample you to death. I could not see all that much because everybody was much taller than me. Everybody was panic stricken and running for their lives.

Such chaos.

I could see people's feet. Some had shoes or boots on but many had nothing but bare feet; Mum and I had slippers on. It was very difficult to run and not lose the slippers.

My mother had grabbed me by my hand and told me not to let go whatever happened. People were trying to get back into the houses, trying to break the doors, trying to get inside to rescue other people who were trapped inside the burning buildings.

Every few minutes an aeroplane dived onto the crowd and mowed the running people down with machine-gun fire. Every time the aeroplanes dived the people threw themselves onto the ground covering their heads with their arms and hands to protect themselves. Usually, the parents threw themselves over their children shielding them from the bullets with their own bodies.

I was petrified I was going to lose my mother or become separated from her or be trampled on. Mother kept on saying, 'Don't let go of my hand. Try not to fall down. Don't look back and keep close to me.' The running people were so close together that their bodies formed a solid moving wall.

In the middle of this chaos there was a horse making a terrible noise kicking in all directions, stamping on people and turning round and round. Its mane and tail were on fire and blood was coming out of its eyes and nostrils. That horse was standing on his hind legs, whilst thrashing uncontrollably in all directions with its front legs. Such a terrible noise, which I have never heard before or since. Some people tried to get hold of the horse but it was impossible. It was big, strong, in terrible agony and blind.

The Stuckas dived down again from the skies and the horse was the victim of their bullets, at least saving some people from being trampled to death. Everybody dived onto the pavement. People threw themselves on top of me and I could not move my arms or legs. I could not get up, I could hardly breathe. Someone was lying on top of me. A warm and wet sticky substance with a funny sweet smell was dripping all over me. I

could not shout or maybe I did but I could not hear my own voice. The body was so heavy and once the bombs stopped the body on top of me did not move. I was too little and too weak to be able to free myself from the dead heavy weight. Whose hand was I holding onto? Some people must have realised what happened. The weight was lifted. I was on my feet again.

There was no time to stop and inspect whether I was injured. As I was not crying or limping and continued to run with my mother, she took it for granted that I must have been unharmed. I was covered in red thick sticky blood but no one took any notice. My mother wiped some of the blood off and we continued moving.

By this time we were very tired, very hungry and very frightened. There was nowhere we could stop and rest. We did not have any food or drink. It was unsafe to take shelter, the bombed houses were collapsing. By now it was dark and there were no more houses around. We had left the city of Belgrade. We reached the woods where we were welcomed by the partisans.

They gave us food and drink. These woods were on high ground and we could see fire, red fire. The sky was burning, this was Belgrade in flames. It was really quite beautiful. I liked the look of it. As a five-year-old little girl how could I realise the monstrous atrocity and horror of this situation? How could I have known at that moment our whole life had changed and we had nothing, no home, no security, no money, no friends and no possessions except the nighties that we were wearing? Luckily we had each other.

By now people had formed into little groups. Some people took charge of others. People were looking for each other's relatives and friends asking strangers whether they had seen such and such. Hoping their loved ones had escaped.

I was so tired; all I wanted was to sleep. We were given blankets and hot soup with a slice of bread. We were told to stay in groups and not move from the spot which we were allocated.

I was so cold. I was shivering. I could hear my teeth chatter. I was so very frightened. I have never known or seen anything like I experienced that day.

April in Yugoslavia was still very cold. I was given a blanket where they cut out a space for my head and arms; a thick leather belt which was placed around my waist went around me three times. New holes had to be punched into the belt so that the buckle could hold it. Needless to say it was much too long for me. My mother found some scissors somehow and cut this blanket so that it could fit me. She and most of the others had the same outfit. She was shivering too. The blanket smelled quite horrible but we stopped shivering and this was nice, smell or no smell.

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Just four months previously I had been dancing and singing at the Yugoslav court in front of the young King Peter of Yugoslavia. This was at the Gala Concert in aid of orphans which my Mother organised for the Red Cross. The Royal family was hosting it. This was a fantastic party, lots of food, hot chocolate with whipped cream, lots of cakes, colourful balloons and clowns. There were long, long tables set with white tablecloths where the children were sitting and enjoying this lavish party. The Royal family and members of the Court were acting as waiters and waitresses.

I wore a white satin dress, the skirt was trimmed with white marabou feathers, and so was the neckline. I wore a little glittering tiara on my head. I danced a Russian *kazacok* and sang

accompanied by a 15-piece band. I was a little show-off. Everyone made such a big fuss of me. At the end of my performance even the young King gave me a kiss on my cheek. I was a little star, having so much fun. My whole family and friends were proud of me and I enjoyed every minute of it. I was such a happy little girl. And now, four months later, everything had changed. Never before had I known what fear was.

* * * * *

The woods were full of trenches and this is where we had to stay, where the partisans had established their headquarters.

My mother cuddled me in her arms and everybody was asleep. I could not sleep as there had been too much excitement. In the distance I saw pretty little lights not too far from where we were. These lights were going on and off. It was fascinating to watch. I woke my mother up to show her. She did not think it was so funny and asked me to stay and not to move or make any noise no matter what: she would come back for me. Mother crawled away like a snake on her tummy. She was very clever. How could she move without making any noise? I was very impressed. There were some more lights going on and off at different times but these lights were so near they were almost next to our hide-out. I could almost touch them. Then some lights shimmered far away. They were going on and off as though as if they were talking to each other. I was all alone in the dark. I knew I must not cry and must not be heard. I must not be discovered. Mother would come back for me. It was not so difficult not to be afraid because I do not really think I knew what it felt like to be afraid. I had nothing to compare this feeling with. How could I foresee that the next four years would be fear and more fear?

It is amazing how much one can see in the pitch dark as your eyes become accustomed to it. By now I was used to the quiet and I could hear any faint movement. My mother was suddenly holding me very close to her and a few men in uniform continued to crawl towards the place where the pretty lights came from. The little group which we were a part of were instructed to crawl, without making any noise, to another place allocated to us. Mother stroked my hair and kissed my eyes, put her arms around me. The bombings, the horrors and the tears of the last few days disappeared for a little while.

As we were moving towards the new place we saw an underground passage which looked like a bunker. There was a candle burning inside. We caught a glimpse of three soldiers and a pretty young woman in the middle of the group. Her hands were tied. She was holding a torch. I heard the soldiers talking very angrily to her but it did not make much sense to me. She spat into the face of one of the soldiers. In turn he slapped her face. They took the young woman away. She tried to wriggle out to no avail – they were bigger and stronger than her. After a short while there was a short sound of a bang. At that time I did not know what the bang was. I know now that this was her being shot.

Later the soldiers came and were very nice to me. They hugged and kissed me on both cheeks and shook me by my hand and told me I was a good little partisan, a little hero. I had saved many lives by noticing the lights. They were signals from a spy. The pretty girl turned out to be a traitor. She was signalling to the enemy to tell them where we were and how many people were hiding. If I hadn't alerted them we would all be dead by now. I felt very important and proud. The soldiers also rewarded me and my mother by moving us from our hiding place under the trees into a barn where there were many

more soldiers and it was much warmer. They gave us more food. I was the only child amongst all these men.

From that day on I became the little mascot of the partisans. I was spoiled and given bits and pieces of food whenever they could find some. They treated me with respect and as an equal. The woods were full of families with children hiding from the bombs and the Germans.

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Somehow we became reunited with my auntie Hedi, Zorica her two-month-old baby, and my grandmother. They must have also escaped from Belgrade taking a different route to get to these woods. It was a miracle that we all found each other and were reunited. A true miracle. We were all crying and hugging each other. Our happiness was indescribable. The only person who was not short of food was Zorica, my little baby cousin. Her food was ready on demand. As food was very short my aunt would sometimes press out some of her breast milk into a little beaker and I had to drink it. They said it was good for me and it would save my life. It tasted horrible and it also smelled terrible. But as my cousin Zorica was drinking it and liked it – it must have been good enough for her, so it must have been good enough for me.

Hedi was the wife of my mother's brother Nicola, called Miki. He was separated from us and had joined the partisans. Unfortunately he was caught and captured. He was deported to Budapest to a depot – some kind of a sorting place where the Jews were divided and transported to various concentration camps depending on their usefulness. This is where he was united with my father before they were separated again and sent to different concentration camps.

Oma, my grandmother, was very, very frightened and forever praying, her hands clasped and her fingers entwined together rolling her eyes to the sky towards Almighty God. She had lengthy conversations with this God who must have been up in the sky. 'Why oh why have you forsaken us? Please Almighty God have mercy on us. On my little family; save my little family.' Sometimes I could hear her clearly and loudly, but sometimes I could only see her lips moving and hear a mumbling sound often made with her eyes shut; the same words with a few variations. My grandma assured me that her God always hears her prayers and He acts in the most mysterious way and I must trust in God and that all prayers are heard and answered. I never heard any answer.

Our aim was to get to Budapest, as the Germans had not occupied Hungary yet where my mother and grandmother were both born and thus spoke fluent Hungarian. We thought we should be safe there. My aunt Hedi came from Vienna. She fled to Yugoslavia because the anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews had started in Austria.

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Arriving in Budapest my mother found a small apartment on the city outskirts, which consisted of one room, a bathroom and a kitchenette which only had two electric hobs. There were three adults and two children and we were so happy to have found a roof over our heads. We had no money, no possessions, just each other. The three beds were shared. Huddling together was warmer and we felt safer. Food was very scarce and as we did not have any proof of residency we did not get food coupons. I was not allowed to go out or play with any other children, as it was too risky. People asked questions and everybody was suspicious of everybody else.

If the police or one of the members of the Nazi party were to discover us and know we were Jewish we would be taken into a concentration camp or into one of those houses where the Jews were forced to live. On the doors of these houses was a big yellow star showing everyone that there were only Jews living there. It was a JEW HOUSE. Soldiers were at liberty to come and pick up anyone and deport them to a concentration camp or simply throw them into the Danube. The Jews were not allowed to shop in non-Jewish shops. The newspapers were all full of anti-Semitic propaganda with ugly caricatures of Jews grabbing money. Now it was punishable to employ them, even befriend them.

Jews were the enemy who were responsible for the war. Anyone who helped or harboured a Jew would be taken to a concentration camp. The Danube was said to have turned red from all the bodies of the Jewish people who were shot point blank and thrown into the river. Many Hungarians witnessed this but dared not do anything about it.

We mostly slept in our clothes. We only took our shoes off when we were in bed. We had to be ready to run into the air-raid shelter, fast. One time the sirens were sounded when the Russian bombers were already above us. No time to waste on getting dressed. We often ran with our shoes in our hands to the air-raid shelter.

We all had our usual places in the cellar; everyone respected each other's places. Somehow there was an order in the midst of this chaos. As we lived in a side road, strangers never came to our shelter, not like in the centre of Budapest where anyone caught in the air raid could get shelter wherever they happened to be at the time. We had only our regular people who lived in this block of 12 flats.

I can remember one old fat lady who had asthma and a weak

heart. She was coughing nonstop, holding her white handkerchief which she pressed against her mouth every time she had a coughing attack. She was very nice and I really liked her. She would always smile at me and talk to me. Sometimes she would bring an apple with her and give it to me. We had to stay in the air raid shelter often for a very long time until we heard the all-clear sound.

As there was no radio or any kind of entertainment I suddenly took it upon myself to start singing and entertain everybody. Surprisingly, nobody asked me to keep quiet. On the contrary, they encouraged me by applauding. They even placed a little wooden box in the middle, for me to stand on. I had requests and people started bringing me little bits of goodies like a piece of sugar, a biscuit. This was my pay.

They called me the little angel of the air-raid shelter. I knew I was destined to sing. When I was singing the fear disappeared. I was not even very hungry. I realised I made people happy. Some of the people, whom I had never seen smiling, suddenly had a little twinkle in their eyes and a little smile.

And then one by one they came and thanked me, giving me a little hug or a little kiss, sometimes on the top of my head. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to make other people happy. I don't think anybody realised we were Jewish or in hiding or if they did they kept it very quiet.

My mother was the only one who was the bread winner in our family. She had many jobs. When asked from where we came, the answer was: my uncle has been called up into the army and we came up from a small village to be nearer to him. We could not let anybody know, of course, that he had been caught by the SS and deported to a concentration camp.

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When the Nazis separated my father and uncle they were assembled into a group and asked who had a trade. According to the answer they were separated into two different groups. Electricians, plumbers, builders were in one group and in the other those who were doctors, teachers, engineers and musicians. Miki being an electrician and useful to the Nazis was in one group and my father, who was an architect and a brilliant pianist, was put with the other people like doctors, solicitors, accountants in another group. We never heard or knew what happened to them or to which concentration camp they were transported.

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When my grandmother went shopping I would go with her. We would always have to stand in long queues. People started queuing just after midnight for a loaf of bread, to be there early in the morning when the bakery opened. Once you established your place in the queue this was yours. If anyone tried to jump the queue or slowly wriggle through, terrible fights would erupt. Often it would not end with just verbal abuse. More than once it ended up similar to a mob lynching.

Some people from the same family or friends would change or take turns whilst queuing. Nothing but nothing was more important than this queue for bread. When the sirens were screeching, warning the bombers were approaching and everybody should go to the nearest shelter, only very few people would leave their place in the queue and run for shelter. The majority of us stayed and took the risk of being killed rather than losing our place. Bread was life. Some people humorously commented: 'At least we die with a full stomach.'

Often the only food we had was bread. If we were lucky we

had a little bit of cooking oil and a clove of garlic which would be chopped into tiny pieces and mixed with the oil. We would then dip the bread into the oil. How wonderful this tasted. We ate very small pieces so it lasted longer.

Some days my mother would take me with her into town. It was very cold and the ground was covered with snow. In the distance, on one occasion, I saw some men, maybe fifteen or sixteen of them, dressed in long black coats and black hats.

Some had beards, some were only young, and some were really old, doubled up and very shaky. They were in a group sweeping the snow from the pavement. They all had a big yellow star on the front of their coats. Some also wore a yellow band on their sleeves. They were guarded by two soldiers in grey uniform with bayonets on the rifles hanging from their shoulders. Mother would cross the road to avoid these people. Some people who were passing them would turn and spit at them. But they never tried to defend themselves or to spit back.

Not only did people spit at these men in black but they shouted at them: *'büdös zsidó'* (stinking Jew). The soldiers who guarded them only laughed but never stopped the attackers.

By this time I did know that I too was a stinking Jew; however, I did not know what a Jew was supposed to look like. In Yugoslavia only the very religious Jews were known as Jewish. The rest of the people like my family who were not religious, were never made to feel anything other than a local person. Religion was never an issue.

As we were approaching the group of men in black my Mother hissed through her teeth: 'Don't look, don't turn, and don't ask any questions,' gripping my hands even stronger. She walked on as if nothing unusual had happened. I could not believe when I heard myself asking her: *'Anyuci* (mommy) could we go over to the other side of the road and spit at those

people, too? My mother squeezed my hand so hard, as if she wanted to break it. 'No, darling. It is not polite to spit.' And she quickened her steps and I was very disappointed. How come everybody else was allowed to spit but not me?

Remembering this incident much later in life I felt mortified by this urge and deeply ashamed. But then again how could I understand what was happening? How unforgivable and undignified it must have been for those poor people to be spat at for no fault of their own – who happened to be born Jewish?

The newspapers were full of warnings saying every Jew must wear a yellow Star of David. If caught without it, this was punishable by death. Huge posters were everywhere, all with the same threat. When we got back home my mother, Hedi and Oma had a very serious conversation. I overheard my mother saying; 'Under no circumstances is any of us going to sew a yellow star on our cloths. I cannot understand' – my Mother said – 'why these Jews are so stupid and make it so easy for those bastards. They are so timid and frightened. No, we are not joining this mass suicide. We must keep a low profile and not let anyone know that we are Jewish.' Although it was a law punishable by death if you did not wear the yellow star – it was sure suicide if you did wear one. We did not move into the Jewish quarters, which were the ghettos.

We just mingled, hid, kept a low profile and hoped nobody would notice us; always a step ahead of the Hungarian police who were called the Nyilas – the Arrows. The Hungarian 'Arrows' killed more Jews in Hungary than the Germans did.

Our little family unit was multilingual. We all spoke German. Auntie Hedi had an Austrian accent as she came from Vienna. My mother and grandmother were both Hungarian. I spoke Hungarian, German and Serbo-Croatian, as in Novi Sad where I was born people were brought up speaking three languages,

because at various times Novi Sad was occupied by Austria or Hungary.

Later in life I often wondered why my mother and grandmother ever left Hungary. I suppose my mother met my father, got married and the rest is history. From the stories I can remember my father was a tall, handsome, talented, spoiled young man from a very wealthy intellectual family. Unfortunately, he did not live with us. Come to think of it, I only remember seeing my mother at the weekends. She was working in Belgrade, teaching dance in the Yugoslav palace. During the week I lived with my grandma, Miki and Hedi. The night when the war broke out in Yugoslavia it was my weekend to spend with my mother. That is how we were together that night. God knows how our lives would have turned out if it had happened during the week when I was with my grandma.

I never had a chance to get to know my father because he was killed at the age of 28 or 29. My family often commented how very similar I was to my dad in my mannerisms, my phraseology, and the love and talent for music. I would have so much loved to have a father. For years every time there was a picture in the magazines or newspapers writing about the Holocaust survivors, I searched and hoped to find him. I could never find out anything about him or learn about his life because all those who could have given me this information have been killed.

From such a big family, I am the only survivor.