

# Couple met in New York City in the 1940s and married soon after

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new country. So, he decided to start an organization for people just like him, called the Zionist Youth Group, which became a success in more ways than one.

"Our group had a home on Second Avenue on the lower East Side," he said. "We decided to beautify the place. Anny, who became my wife, volunteered to sew the curtains. And that was the beginning."

The war interfered in the couple's courtship. Although Landsberger had tried to enlist in the service, he had been rejected because of a foot condition.

But Uncle Sam had other, more pressing plans for Landsberger. In 1943, to his great surprise, he was drafted.

"I was sent to Trinidad, Colorado," he said. "I became an interpreter."

Landsberger documented his three years of interpreting and interacting with German prisoners of war in his acclaimed book, "Prisoners of War at Camp Trinidad, Colorado, 1943-1946: Internment, Intimidation, and Country Club Living".

Country club living?

The author explained that the camp where prisoners of war were being interrogated was the first of its kind in America. And the captives did not always give up the privileges of their former rank as officers during their stay in Colorado.

"The combinations of officers and enlisted men imprisoned together was a serious error committed by our generals in charge of prisoners of war," he wrote. "I understand that ours was the only mixed camp and the results were not pretty. According to the Geneva Convention, officers are entitled to have orderlies and we obliged them. The orderlies had to take care of the officers, cook for them, shine their shoes, wash for them and do all the menial work. Even those not employed as orderlies had to do the officer's bidding."

Meanwhile, Landsberger and his future wife were writing letters to one another every day. When it was time for his first furlough, he rushed home with one goal in mind: marriage.

"We were married by a rabbi in New York, in his house," he said. "It was July 25, 1943."

Landsberger recalled his unusual wedding events — a late night pre-wedding party with his fiancée, intense heat, a borrowed jacket and a pig farm.

"After our wedding, we went to a

famous Viennese photographer to have our wedding photograph taken," he explained. "It just so happened I had dated his daughter and that later on that day, she was to be married. We were invited to the wedding, and had a very nice free meal."

And the jacket?

"The groom had no jacket to wear," Landsberger said. "I lent him mine."

After the newly married Landsbergers left the wedding, where they had feasted on the appetizers, the couple sat through a movie in order

to kill some time, since they had nowhere to go until later that evening.

"We saw 'What's Buzzin, Cousin?' and right in the middle, they announced that Mussolini had resigned," he said.

After spending many hours impatiently waiting for the empty apartment promised to them by Anny's mother, they finally made the long hot trek to Secaucus.

"There were still pig farms in Secaucus in those days," Landsberger recalled. "And it was very hot. We had the windows open, and

the terrible smell of those pigs came right in our room every time the wind blew."

Landsberger still laughs at his wedding night memories, and said his wife is still as beautiful today as she was 65 years ago.

Looking back at his prosperous career as both a businessman and an author, Landsberger said he has much more to accomplish.

"Every year I put money into my foundation," he said. "Even though my hiking days are pretty much over, I will always support environmental causes."

The energetic octogenarian still works full time, juggling numerous careers and hobbies.

During the week, he still travels to his business, Bel Art, writes a column for the Essex County section of Worrall Community Newspapers, and manages his foundation.

He also makes sure to continue adding to the Verona Library's impressive collection of Holocaust books, the largest of its kind in New Jersey.

But, according to Landsberger, his greatest success is his happy marriage.

When asked the secret to his long and joyful marriage, Landsberger smiled.

"When you are living in a foreign place, where everything is unknown, and you find someone who is so much like you, then it tends to work," he said. "If your marriage didn't succeed, it would be surprising."

After a slight pause, Landsberger added: "Plus, I love her."

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## A life still filled with adventure, mirth and discovery

By Diane Lilli  
Staff Writer

For a man with so many talents and accomplishments — author, successful business owner and philanthropist — Kurt Landsberger still claims he wasn't very successful as a young immigrant who had fled Austria just ahead of Nazi occupation and arrived at Ellis Island in 1939.

"I could never keep a job," he said, referring to the numerous and often humorous positions he held back in the 1940s.

He sold household items door to door, stuffed dolls with a fiber that made him sneeze, shipped parcels, engraved little pats of butter, and even worked in a match factory.

"My job was to stand with a hose full of live steam, because fires could break out," he said. "And that happened all the time."

Looking back at his remarkable journey into the work force of America in those days, Landsberger could never have predicted he'd become so successful that he'd be able to support one of his most beloved causes — environmental preservation.

At the age of 83, just over four years ago, he became the founder and director of the self-named Landsberger Foundation, an entity that he personally finances.

One of his recent donations was \$18,000 to the Essex County Environmental Center in Roseland. And Essex County Executive Joseph Di Vincenzo Jr. is appreciative.

"Kurt has been a very big supporter of ours at the Essex County Environmental Center," DiVincenzo said. "He not only contributes dollars, but also time. There is nobody better than Kurt."

The charitable Verona resident supports numerous Essex County organizations, but knows exactly where the money is headed.

"I do support different things," he said. "I make sure the funds go to specific things."

Other programs benefiting from the Landsberger Foundation include the Passaic River Summer Camp program, which received \$10,000, and Newark Youth Leadership, which received \$6,400.

But decades before Landsberger began his foundation, he had to tackle the double whammy of living in a foreign country and making a living.

"The furthest west we got from New York City was Brooklyn," he explained.

Landsberger, always moving from job to job, said he was lonely in his

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Photo by Barbara Kokkalis

Kurt and Anny Landsberger, married 65 years on Friday, in their Verona home.