

Ester Amato Giannotti

9.1.1922 – 1.1.2019



Ester Amato, daughter of Moses Behor Amato and Vida Piha, was born on January 9, 1922, in Rhodes.

She was captured and deported alongside her entire family, maternal and paternal, to Auschwitz concentration camps.

She was the only one from her family who survived. Her whole family was sent to the gas chamber.

Esther was brought into the women's sector of the camp to become "slave labor", with the tattooed number A 24260.

Inside the camps, overcrowding, poor hygiene conditions, and lack of food and water created the outbreak of diseases such as typhus and tuberculosis. She had typhus, high fever. She was washing with cold water to bring down the fever. She didn't want to show that she was sick. She was squeezing her cheeks, so she wouldn't look pale. The sick were sent to the crematorium.

She had watched many of her friends take a run and fall on the high-voltage electric fence to spare themselves from hardship.

In early 1945 the Nazis organized the “March of Death”, a March of humiliation, moving on foot thousands of prisoners. There was no provision for them. Neither food, water, nor shelter. Not to be able to sleep, with the cold and under the threat of being killed. A march that Esther managed to survive until their liberation by the Allies.

When she had been freed, they moved her to Milan, Italy, to a medical clinic. While she was there, she requested help to find an Italian officer, who she had met in Rhodes. She still had his home address in Perugia, his hometown, where he had returned after fighting alongside the Greek rebels. The name of the Italian officer was Enrico Giannotti.



A doctor was able to find him. Ever since they lived together, they got married and had 4 wonderful children, Elena, David, Giuseppe, and Roberto. Enrico died in 1992, 73 years old.

During her life, she often repeated: “Everything brings me back to the camp, whatever I do, whatever I see, my spirit always comes back to the camp, from the crematorium you never go out.” A phrase that many former deportees have repeated during meetings with school youth...

She was a “fundamental column” of the National Aned and Savona, one of the most important testimonies of racial and female deportation in the Nazi lager. She never shied away from her duty as a witness, to remember her murdered family and her fellow lager inmates. On 27th of January

2018, on Remembrance Day, the Prefect of Savona presented her with the Medal of Honor as a Holocaust Survivor.

In Rhodes, she didn't want to return. So many memories... But at one point her love for the island overcame her. She returned in 2014 for the 70th anniversary of the deportation.

A few days before the New Year's Eve, she had requested to be buried in her birthplace, Rhodes. On New Year's Eve, 1/1/2019 she passed away. And she did... On the 9th of January 2019, She was buried in the cemetery of Rhodes, 97 years after her birth.