

4 The wedding

My grandma Juli-Oma was from Darova. I was convinced that everybody from Darova was nice. I went there a couple of times. It was always a lot of fun. My grandma's parents' house was on the outskirts of the village. Just like our house in Sackelhausen. Sacklas. Săcălaz.

Back then I thought that all houses were on the outskirts. The outskirts in Darova were nearly as nice as in Sacklas. It was hilly, and you could ride up and down on the bicycle.

Once we were invited to a wedding. The bride's father was very proud. As proud as his cock which paraded on the dunghill. Both looked like they could explode any moment. But only the cock was proud and dangerous.

In Darova, a wedding was an event for the whole village. The whole clan from Sacklas presented themselves in their most beautiful dresses. My sister, Leni, was dressed up and did not budge. I got a new suit for the occasion. From Pohr Klosi, my godfather.

For weeks I was dragged to the fitting. His workshop was in a small backroom on 'Kleine Kreuzgasse'. Little Cross-Road. A desk, a radio and a couch. That's where he sat and sewed. At the time, my sister Leni used to read "The Valiant Little Tailor" to me. I was convinced that it was about Pohr Klosi. Later I always enjoyed going to the fitting. Because of the radio. Pohr Klosi sewed and listened to the Bundesliga. He always listened to the Bundesliga. He supported Hamburg. Hamburg was really bad at the time. But he listened bravely. I became a supporter of Gladbach. I don't really know why. Maybe because I didn't want to support Bayern Munich like half of the village and my friend Cicio. We sent letters to Germany and got autograph cards. For years and years the photo of Günter Netzer was under my pillow. The man who could shoot around corners! Shoe size 12. Long, blonde hair, and a fiery red Ferrari! A rebel with the ball! Cicio was always talking about someone called Beckenbauer. To heck with Beckenbauer! I also didn't sign up with CFR and instead played football at Poli. We never agreed about anything football. But when we were playing cards. When we both cheated at Getzje, everything was right again.

You could always count on my schoolmate and friend Zaki. He always poured oil on troubled water when we pushed the stakes too high. He also kept everyone away who wanted to give us a beating. We never had any problems getting back to our corner when Zaki, Herri and me were together. Zaki was strong. Herri and I were fast. Zaki also never supported Bayern. He was a supporter of Eintracht Frankfurt because his namesake Friedel Lutz played there. I always gave him a lot of credit for that.

In Darova, people didn't know anything about football. I didn't know anything myself at the time. I only saw the cock parading on the dunghill. I wanted to show it the new suit I got from Pohr Klosi. It attacked me. I grabbed it. My mother got a fit of rage. Through half of the village and into the church I walked in my track suit. I felt like Günter Netzer.

It was the most beautiful wedding I ever went to.

Glossary

Juli-Oma – Wilhelm Julianna, maiden name Dassinger, my paternal grandmother, born in 1899

Oma – grandmother

Darova – former German village in the Romanian region of Banat, located 40 miles east from Temeswar/Timișoara

Temeswar/Timișoara – town in the western part of Romania, capital of the Banat region, 6 miles from Sackelhausen

Banat – situated mainly in western region of Romania, where Romanian, Hungarian, German people and a few more nationalities live since centuries together; parts of Banat are nowadays as well in the eastern region of Hungary and Serbia

Sackelhausen/Sacklas/Săcălaz – my native village; Sackelhausen (German), Sacklas (Banat Swabian dialect), Săcălaz (Romanian), Szakálháza (Hungarian); former German village in the Romanian region of Banat, located 6 miles from Temeswar/Timișoara

Leni – Pless Magdalena, maiden name Wilhelm, my sister, four years older than me, born in 1950

Pohr Klosi – Pohr Nikolaus, my godfather, born in 1940

Kleine Kreuz-Gasse – Little Cross-Road, left and right of the Mainstreet

The Valiant Little Tailor – a German fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm

Hamburg – Hamburger Sportverein (HSV), German Bundesliga football club

Gladbach – Borussia Mönchengladbach, German Bundesliga football club

Bayern – FC Bayern München, German Bundesliga football club

Cicio – Piskay Peter, schoolmate, born in 1954

Netzer – Günter Netzer, former football player with Borussia Mönchengladbach

Beckenbauer – Franz Beckenbauer, former football player with Bayern München

CFR – Căile Ferate Române Timișoara, Romanian Second Division football club of the railway employees

Poli – Politehnica Timișoara, Romanian First Division football club of the university

Frankfurt – Eintracht Frankfurt, German Bundesliga football club

Getzje – Götz Mathias, schoolmate, born in 1954

Zaki – Lutz Hans, schoolmate, born in 1954

Herri – Seibert Herbert, schoolmate, born in 1954