

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,620
This is tape number 5, side
A of an interview with Ernest

2
00:00:04,620 --> 00:00:08,460
Fontheim on March 13, 1997.

3
00:00:08,460 --> 00:00:10,080
The interviewer
is Randy Goldman.

4
00:00:10,080 --> 00:00:14,710

5
00:00:14,710 --> 00:00:18,670
So all that needed to be
done was to sew up the wound

6
00:00:18,670 --> 00:00:21,850
and send me home, I thought.

7
00:00:21,850 --> 00:00:24,730
But Margaret's
father was with me.

8
00:00:24,730 --> 00:00:27,970
We were in a sort
of a holding area.

9
00:00:27,970 --> 00:00:34,480
And a nurse approached
with a needle.

10
00:00:34,480 --> 00:00:37,360
And he knew something my--

11
00:00:37,360 --> 00:00:40,390
I mean, Margaret's father--
that I wasn't aware of, namely

12
00:00:40,390 --> 00:00:44,590

that after such an injury,
one needs a tetanus shot.

13
00:00:44,590 --> 00:00:50,230
And the tetanus shot is given
into a person's rear end.

14
00:00:50,230 --> 00:00:57,640
And so he knew immediately they
would ask me to lower my pants,

15
00:00:57,640 --> 00:01:04,569
and that would surely have
been a 100% giveaway to anyone

16
00:01:04,569 --> 00:01:08,890
in Germany who I really
was, once they would have

17
00:01:08,890 --> 00:01:11,440
discovered my circumcision.

18
00:01:11,440 --> 00:01:14,860
So he had a quick
presence of mind,

19
00:01:14,860 --> 00:01:18,820
and I was lying on a stretcher,
and he turned me around

20
00:01:18,820 --> 00:01:24,550
on my belly and then
pulled my pants off

21
00:01:24,550 --> 00:01:26,470
before the nurse
could get to me.

22
00:01:26,470 --> 00:01:30,430
And so I got the shot
into my rear end.

23
00:01:30,430 --> 00:01:33,330

And nobody saw
anything else of me.

24
00:01:33,330 --> 00:01:36,490

25
00:01:36,490 --> 00:01:38,630
And then I was sewn up.

26
00:01:38,630 --> 00:01:43,150
And since hospitals
anyway were short of beds,

27
00:01:43,150 --> 00:01:49,450
obviously because of the large
demand for wounded soldiers,

28
00:01:49,450 --> 00:01:52,450
they were glad that I
didn't have to stay.

29
00:01:52,450 --> 00:01:54,220
And we were glad
that I didn't have

30
00:01:54,220 --> 00:01:57,350
to stay for different reasons.

31
00:01:57,350 --> 00:02:01,750
I also want to mention
a cousin of mine.

32
00:02:01,750 --> 00:02:06,680
He was actually the
son of the couple

33
00:02:06,680 --> 00:02:10,870
where we stayed in that
apartment in the Jew House.

34
00:02:10,870 --> 00:02:15,190
He was several years older
than I. He was by that time,

35

00:02:15,190 --> 00:02:17,360

I would guess, in
his mid or late 30s.

36

00:02:17,360 --> 00:02:19,810

I was just 20 or 21 then.

37

00:02:19,810 --> 00:02:25,740

And he lived with his
girlfriend, Bella [? Rittov. ?]

38

00:02:25,740 --> 00:02:28,140

His name was Albert Mark.

39

00:02:28,140 --> 00:02:32,070

And Bella [? Rittov's ?]
husband had already

40

00:02:32,070 --> 00:02:37,150

been arrested and had been for
years in a concentration camp.

41

00:02:37,150 --> 00:02:40,170

And she lived now
with my cousin.

42

00:02:40,170 --> 00:02:44,580

And they decided to go
underground in Bavaria.

43

00:02:44,580 --> 00:02:48,990

And he told me that
before they left

44

00:02:48,990 --> 00:02:53,070

that he considered Berlin too
dangerous because he had lived

45

00:02:53,070 --> 00:02:55,350

there much longer
also as an adult.

46

00:02:55,350 --> 00:02:59,700
And they had figured out a way,
apparently, that they thought

47

00:02:59,700 --> 00:03:01,020
was foolproof.

48

00:03:01,020 --> 00:03:07,560
And that was that he had some
medical sort of statements

49

00:03:07,560 --> 00:03:11,610
from doctors that he was
suffering from some lung

50

00:03:11,610 --> 00:03:15,825
disease, which required his
recuperation in the country.

51

00:03:15,825 --> 00:03:19,770

52

00:03:19,770 --> 00:03:21,900
And then he had
some ID, I guess,

53

00:03:21,900 --> 00:03:27,780
on the name that matched it
and so had his woman friend.

54

00:03:27,780 --> 00:03:31,500
And we decided we wanted to
keep in touch, of course.

55

00:03:31,500 --> 00:03:34,500
And that was a big
problem because he

56

00:03:34,500 --> 00:03:36,870
was planning sort
of to move around

57

00:03:36,870 --> 00:03:40,210
from different sanatoriums.

58
00:03:40,210 --> 00:03:44,050
And I didn't want to
give anyone my address.

59
00:03:44,050 --> 00:03:46,590
So the solution was
that is something

60
00:03:46,590 --> 00:03:47,970
that can be done in Germany.

61
00:03:47,970 --> 00:03:49,590
I don't know that exists here.

62
00:03:49,590 --> 00:03:54,420
You can address a
letter to somebody

63
00:03:54,420 --> 00:03:59,430
under a code name at general
delivery at a given post

64
00:03:59,430 --> 00:04:00,150
office.

65
00:04:00,150 --> 00:04:03,210
I still remember my
code was the letter F,

66
00:04:03,210 --> 00:04:07,080
like in Fontheim, 58, F58.

67
00:04:07,080 --> 00:04:10,350
And at the particular
post office in Berlin.

68
00:04:10,350 --> 00:04:12,090
I mean, that was
also a risky thing

69

00:04:12,090 --> 00:04:17,820
because if somehow he had
been found by the Gestapo

70

00:04:17,820 --> 00:04:21,420
with such a letter, they could
have waited for me there.

71

00:04:21,420 --> 00:04:24,330
But I guess one did all
kinds of stupid things.

72

00:04:24,330 --> 00:04:27,690
So anyway we
corresponded that way.

73

00:04:27,690 --> 00:04:32,840
And then one day the
correspondence stopped.

74

00:04:32,840 --> 00:04:38,650
And then I got a letter
from Bella, his friend,

75

00:04:38,650 --> 00:04:42,730
that something happened to
him, and he is very sick.

76

00:04:42,730 --> 00:04:45,340
And she is returning
to Berlin alone.

77

00:04:45,340 --> 00:04:49,090
So that immediately told
me that he was arrested.

78

00:04:49,090 --> 00:04:56,320
And was a big tragedy actually
because what happened,

79

00:04:56,320 --> 00:05:01,900
she told-- and we met in Berlin,
and she told me that he--

80
00:05:01,900 --> 00:05:03,520
apparently, there
were some questions

81
00:05:03,520 --> 00:05:07,900
raised at the place
where they were staying.

82
00:05:07,900 --> 00:05:10,390
But they were still
able to get away.

83
00:05:10,390 --> 00:05:12,790
But they left all
of their assets.

84
00:05:12,790 --> 00:05:16,090
I mean, they had to carry with
them always certain valuables.

85
00:05:16,090 --> 00:05:17,410
I don't know what they were.

86
00:05:17,410 --> 00:05:20,080
But what they needed
to sustain their life.

87
00:05:20,080 --> 00:05:22,630
And he said he had
to go back quickly

88
00:05:22,630 --> 00:05:24,580
to retrieve these things.

89
00:05:24,580 --> 00:05:28,870
And she had warned him and
tried to keep him from doing it.

90
00:05:28,870 --> 00:05:31,030
His point was that
without the assets,

91

00:05:31,030 --> 00:05:33,730

how can they even
continue living.

92

00:05:33,730 --> 00:05:37,180

And she felt somehow
they'll make it.

93

00:05:37,180 --> 00:05:42,370

Anyway, the result was that he
went back and never returned.

94

00:05:42,370 --> 00:05:45,640

So obviously, he walked
into a trap there.

95

00:05:45,640 --> 00:05:49,850

So she was now alone in Berlin.

96

00:05:49,850 --> 00:05:51,760

And we kept in touch.

97

00:05:51,760 --> 00:05:53,770

We saw each other periodically.

98

00:05:53,770 --> 00:05:58,780

And when the time came that she
mentioned to me several times

99

00:05:58,780 --> 00:06:02,080

that she had a very good
friend who was a jeweler.

100

00:06:02,080 --> 00:06:08,520

And I needed some
money from that furrier

101

00:06:08,520 --> 00:06:11,050

where I had converted
all of the money

102

00:06:11,050 --> 00:06:15,340

into that lady's
evening handbag.

103
00:06:15,340 --> 00:06:18,250
And so I wanted to sell it.

104
00:06:18,250 --> 00:06:21,940
And she said that man gives
very good prices and so on.

105
00:06:21,940 --> 00:06:28,180
Anyway, my first intent was
not even to sell it immediately

106
00:06:28,180 --> 00:06:30,340
but just to get it appraised.

107
00:06:30,340 --> 00:06:34,000
So I gave the handbag
to her, and we then

108
00:06:34,000 --> 00:06:35,900
agreed to meet the next day.

109
00:06:35,900 --> 00:06:39,280
And she would bring the
handbag back and the appraisal

110
00:06:39,280 --> 00:06:41,890
price from her jeweler friend.

111
00:06:41,890 --> 00:06:42,970
Well, guess what?

112
00:06:42,970 --> 00:06:44,710
She never appeared there.

113
00:06:44,710 --> 00:06:47,380
I couldn't believe that
she would cheat me out

114
00:06:47,380 --> 00:06:49,060

of that handbag.

115
00:06:49,060 --> 00:06:51,680
I mean, it was just incredible.

116
00:06:51,680 --> 00:06:55,690
And as I found out shortly
thereafter, she didn't.

117
00:06:55,690 --> 00:07:00,620
The problem was, Stella
Goldschlag It turned out she--

118
00:07:00,620 --> 00:07:06,550
that Stella actually transferred
from Siemens where she worked

119
00:07:06,550 --> 00:07:09,280
and where I had met her
to a different factory

120
00:07:09,280 --> 00:07:10,730
for some reason.

121
00:07:10,730 --> 00:07:14,200
And at that factory,
Bella had worked.

122
00:07:14,200 --> 00:07:15,670
So they knew each other.

123
00:07:15,670 --> 00:07:19,720
And apparently, Bella
must have run into Stella

124
00:07:19,720 --> 00:07:24,130
and got snatched away.

125
00:07:24,130 --> 00:07:29,200
And she was arrested,
transported to Auschwitz

126

00:07:29,200 --> 00:07:31,318
and never came back.

127
00:07:31,318 --> 00:07:35,530
Can I ask you something here?

128
00:07:35,530 --> 00:07:40,090
Was there a different
feeling about being betrayed

129
00:07:40,090 --> 00:07:44,230
by fellow Jews than there
was by being arrested

130
00:07:44,230 --> 00:07:46,720
and deported by the Nazis?

131
00:07:46,720 --> 00:07:47,920
Oh, totally.

132
00:07:47,920 --> 00:07:51,280
I mean, as absurd
as it may sound,

133
00:07:51,280 --> 00:07:54,100
but that's what I
expected from the Gestapo

134
00:07:54,100 --> 00:07:58,810
to do, if they arrest me,
that they would deport me.

135
00:07:58,810 --> 00:08:02,320
But for a Jew to do that,
to turn on other Jews,

136
00:08:02,320 --> 00:08:06,400
that was such an
unbelievable act of betrayal

137
00:08:06,400 --> 00:08:09,400
that, I mean, it just--

138

00:08:09,400 --> 00:08:13,150

I mean, if you ask any
Jew who lived underground

139

00:08:13,150 --> 00:08:16,840

in Berlin whether
they knew her or not,

140

00:08:16,840 --> 00:08:18,790

everybody knew her
by name at least.

141

00:08:18,790 --> 00:08:21,460

142

00:08:21,460 --> 00:08:26,650

There's not one that I can
think of who would excuse her

143

00:08:26,650 --> 00:08:30,520

or even say that she should
have gotten anything less

144

00:08:30,520 --> 00:08:33,480

than execution after the war.

145

00:08:33,480 --> 00:08:35,309

I mean, she just
didn't deserve to live

146

00:08:35,309 --> 00:08:38,850

her life is based on
the lives of hundreds

147

00:08:38,850 --> 00:08:42,510

of people who are not alive
anymore because of her.

148

00:08:42,510 --> 00:08:45,390

I mean, to think of
it, even now still,

149

00:08:45,390 --> 00:08:47,880
drives me crazy
that she is alive

150
00:08:47,880 --> 00:08:50,940
and she has apparently
a pleasant life

151
00:08:50,940 --> 00:08:53,340
and has some sort of
a government pension.

152
00:08:53,340 --> 00:08:58,270

153
00:08:58,270 --> 00:08:59,350
Yeah.

154
00:08:59,350 --> 00:09:03,480
One thing, I have to
back up a little bit.

155
00:09:03,480 --> 00:09:09,440
On the 27th of February 1943,
that was just about a little

156
00:09:09,440 --> 00:09:12,740
bit less than a month after we
went underground-- remember,

157
00:09:12,740 --> 00:09:16,370
we went underground on
the 30th of January '43--

158
00:09:16,370 --> 00:09:22,970
on the 27th of February,
the SS made a general sweep

159
00:09:22,970 --> 00:09:28,100
of all factories which
employed Jews, under extremely

160
00:09:28,100 --> 00:09:29,600

brutal conditions.

161
00:09:29,600 --> 00:09:33,770
The 27th of February, of
course, was a winter day.

162
00:09:33,770 --> 00:09:36,880
And it was a cold day.

163
00:09:36,880 --> 00:09:39,320
The Gestapo simply
collected the Jews,

164
00:09:39,320 --> 00:09:41,870
without giving them
the opportunity

165
00:09:41,870 --> 00:09:44,000
to go back to their
dressing rooms

166
00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:47,810
to pick up their outer wear
of coats or whatever they had.

167
00:09:47,810 --> 00:09:52,550
They were just like that taken
to various transit camps that

168
00:09:52,550 --> 00:09:55,820
had been readied for that
because that regular transit

169
00:09:55,820 --> 00:09:58,460
camp obviously wouldn't
have taken these thousands

170
00:09:58,460 --> 00:10:00,000
and thousands of people.

171
00:10:00,000 --> 00:10:04,310
And then they were
shipped out in a series

172
00:10:04,310 --> 00:10:10,100
of transports in the
first week of March, 1943.

173
00:10:10,100 --> 00:10:15,410
And after that, Berlin
was essentially judenrein.

174
00:10:15,410 --> 00:10:19,580
It's a tragedy because, I mean,
it's a tragedy for everyone,

175
00:10:19,580 --> 00:10:22,640
but I also have to think
back again at my good friend

176
00:10:22,640 --> 00:10:26,660
Hans Fabisch who
had hoped that he

177
00:10:26,660 --> 00:10:29,210
was safe working in a factory.

178
00:10:29,210 --> 00:10:32,000
Well, he himself
wasn't safe anyway,

179
00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:35,350
but even if he would not have
been arrested on that day,

180
00:10:35,350 --> 00:10:38,480
it was the 18th
of January '43, he

181
00:10:38,480 --> 00:10:41,720
would have been arrested
a little bit later

182
00:10:41,720 --> 00:10:43,190
and without announcement.

183

00:10:43,190 --> 00:10:44,810

None of these people knew it.

184

00:10:44,810 --> 00:10:48,750

And incidentally, Stella
Goldschlag in that factory,

185

00:10:48,750 --> 00:10:54,470

she was smart enough, when
the Jews were herded down,

186

00:10:54,470 --> 00:10:59,570

apparently nobody thought
of bringing up the rear.

187

00:10:59,570 --> 00:11:01,610

And she stayed back.

188

00:11:01,610 --> 00:11:03,650

She worked there, by the
way, with her mother.

189

00:11:03,650 --> 00:11:08,250

She and her mother stayed
back and walked slower

190

00:11:08,250 --> 00:11:12,680

and then ducked into one
of the ladies' restrooms

191

00:11:12,680 --> 00:11:15,650

and then left at the
end of the shift,

192

00:11:15,650 --> 00:11:17,990

at the end of the day
when thousands of workers

193

00:11:17,990 --> 00:11:21,320

sort of streamed out
of the factory gate,

194

00:11:21,320 --> 00:11:25,400
and that way they
escaped being deported.

195
00:11:25,400 --> 00:11:27,650
And that day, then
they went underground

196
00:11:27,650 --> 00:11:31,250
and then sometime
later she was caught,

197
00:11:31,250 --> 00:11:34,445
actually by another
catcher for the Gestapo.

198
00:11:34,445 --> 00:11:37,420

199
00:11:37,420 --> 00:11:39,440
Do you want to just--

200
00:11:39,440 --> 00:11:42,350
I know this is jumping
forward, but because we're

201
00:11:42,350 --> 00:11:47,240
talking about
Stella, I understand

202
00:11:47,240 --> 00:11:49,280
she was caught after the war.

203
00:11:49,280 --> 00:11:52,750
How did that come about?

204
00:11:52,750 --> 00:11:55,750
That is all explained as a
book was written about her.

205
00:11:55,750 --> 00:11:57,700
I mean, she wasn't caught.

206

00:11:57,700 --> 00:12:01,840

I mean, she voluntarily
went to the Jewish community

207

00:12:01,840 --> 00:12:06,190

to get papers as a
victim of fascism

208

00:12:06,190 --> 00:12:11,350

and to take advantage of many
of the sort of restitution

209

00:12:11,350 --> 00:12:16,450

measures that were then
taken or given to the Jews.

210

00:12:16,450 --> 00:12:21,490

And that was an
unbelievable act of naivete,

211

00:12:21,490 --> 00:12:25,010

how she could have thought
to get away with it.

212

00:12:25,010 --> 00:12:26,920

I ought to say one other thing.

213

00:12:26,920 --> 00:12:31,120

You know, there were Jews
also during the years

214

00:12:31,120 --> 00:12:33,580

when Jews were
deported and picked up,

215

00:12:33,580 --> 00:12:36,640

there were Jews who
picked up other Jews.

216

00:12:36,640 --> 00:12:38,860

Like, my parents were
picked up by Jews.

217

00:12:38,860 --> 00:12:40,870

That can't be compared
to what Stella

218

00:12:40,870 --> 00:12:48,190

did because these Jews picked
up Jews who were not in hiding,

219

00:12:48,190 --> 00:12:52,540

who were basically you might say
at the disposal of the Gestapo.

220

00:12:52,540 --> 00:12:55,180

I mean, the Gestapo
knew where they were,

221

00:12:55,180 --> 00:12:58,180

and they could have
picked them up.

222

00:12:58,180 --> 00:13:02,110

Just through those Jews made
life easier for the Gestapo.

223

00:13:02,110 --> 00:13:07,840

But nobody believes that the
Gestapo would have given up

224

00:13:07,840 --> 00:13:11,020

the Holocaust or the
murdering of the German Jews

225

00:13:11,020 --> 00:13:17,230

even if these Jewish orderlies
would have refused the pickup.

226

00:13:17,230 --> 00:13:22,450

I know that quite a number of
authors, even Raul Hilberg,

227

00:13:22,450 --> 00:13:27,790

and particularly Hannah Arendt,
have criticized very strongly

228
00:13:27,790 --> 00:13:32,780
the collaboration by Jews
in the deportation process.

229
00:13:32,780 --> 00:13:35,830
And not only in Berlin
but in the Eastern ghettos

230
00:13:35,830 --> 00:13:37,550
and in other places.

231
00:13:37,550 --> 00:13:42,220
However, I think each case
has to be judged individually.

232
00:13:42,220 --> 00:13:49,420
And many of these orderlies were
simply not given any choice.

233
00:13:49,420 --> 00:13:53,500
They had a tragic
task to fulfill.

234
00:13:53,500 --> 00:13:55,810
Similar, in fact,
you can compare it

235
00:13:55,810 --> 00:13:58,480
to the so-called
Sonderkommandos,

236
00:13:58,480 --> 00:14:01,510
or special commandos, in
the concentration camp.

237
00:14:01,510 --> 00:14:04,450
These were the Jews
who serviced the gas

238
00:14:04,450 --> 00:14:13,150
chambers and the crematorium
and extracted gold teeth

239

00:14:13,150 --> 00:14:15,910

from the corpses and so on.

240

00:14:15,910 --> 00:14:19,000

They could have refused and
would have been shot probably.

241

00:14:19,000 --> 00:14:22,690

And the Gestapo still would
have or the SS over there

242

00:14:22,690 --> 00:14:27,550

would have obtained everything
they wanted to obtain.

243

00:14:27,550 --> 00:14:29,830

In the case of
Stella, these were

244

00:14:29,830 --> 00:14:32,800

people who otherwise
in all likelihood

245

00:14:32,800 --> 00:14:34,530

would have survived the war.

246

00:14:34,530 --> 00:14:36,670

So it is a totally
different thing.

247

00:14:36,670 --> 00:14:41,530

And in the strongest
terms, also in moral terms,

248

00:14:41,530 --> 00:14:46,750

make a strong difference
between her actions

249

00:14:46,750 --> 00:14:49,660

and the actions of
the orderlies who

250

00:14:49,660 --> 00:14:55,170

had the tragic task to pick
up Jews for deportation.

251

00:14:55,170 --> 00:15:00,000