

Start again.

Yeah, go.

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Maria Cardarelli Puzzanghero, on September 28, 2019 in Newton, Massachusetts. Excuse me, I think it's September 29, 2019.

It is.

In Newton, Massachusetts. Thank you very, very much for agreeing to speak with us today to share some of your life during World War II and some of the experiences that you and your family had. I'm going to start our interview by asking you basic questions, and we'll go from there. And at the first part, I'm going to focus on a lot of your pre-war life, before the war even happened, so that we get to know a little bit about your family, your world, and the context in which things took place. Can we cut?

OK. So my first question is, can you tell me the date of your birth? May 30th, 1927.

May 30th, 1927. When you were born, what was the name you were given?

The same name I have now, Maria.

And your last name was?

Cardarelli.

OK. How do we spell Cardarelli?

C-A-R-D-A-R-E-L-L-I.

C-A-R-D-A-R-E-L-L-I?

Yeah.

OK. And where were you born?

San Donato Val di Comino, Provincia de Frosinone.

Oh, wow. I couldn't repeat that.

Italy.

(LAUGHING) In Italy. Where in Italy is that?

Pardon me?

Where in Italy is that? North, South?

Central.

You're central. Are you really central, not close to the oceans.

No, we're right in the center on the Apennine Mountains.

In the Apennine Mountains. Were you born in a town or a village?

I was born in my own house. OK. Good.

Now, is San, Antonio was it?

San Donato.

San Donato. San Donato-- was it a small place or a larger place?

Small.

Small. Did everybody know everybody else In it?

Yes.

OK. Do you know about how many people lived there?

No.

OK. So next question, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Two sisters.

And what are their names?

Pompea and Silvana.

Pompea and Silvana. Were they younger or older than you?

Younger.

They were younger. So you were the oldest sister.

I'm the oldest.

Pompea-- do you remember when she was born, what year?

A year after mine. So it would be '28.

And Silvana?

And Silvana was three years after my birthday.

So it would be 1930?

Right.

OK. Any boys in the family?

No.

OK, three girls.

Three girls.

Maria, Pompea, and Silvana.

And Silvana.

Cardarelli.

Cardarelli.

And let's talk a little bit about your mother and your father. What was your father's first name?

Donato.

Donato. And your mother's?

Franceschina.

Franceschina. And what was her maiden name?

You mean last name? Tocci.

Tocci, OK. And were both of your parents born and raised in San Donato?

Yes.

And their parents too?

Yes.

And their parents-- I mean--

Everybody was from San Donato.

OK, that was-- so your family had been there for quite a few generations.

Yes.

Has anybody traced back how many generations?

I tried the once, but I didn't get very far.

And how did people make their living in San Donato.

They work in the fields.

So it was a farming town?

Farming town. Olive oil.

Olive oil. OK. And your father, did he have a farm.

No, he was a tailor.

He was a what-- a tailor?

A tailor.

A tailor. So your family didn't work in the fields.

No.

OK. You lived in town.

Right yeah.

OK. And was your father's tailor shop close to home?

Yes, he could walk to it.

OK. And did he own his tailor shop?

No.

So he worked for somebody else?

Well, he worked for himself, but he rented the place.

I see, I see. So it's his own business.

It was his own business.

Did he have any help?

As far as know, he didn't.

He didn't. He didn't.

And I take it your mother then ran the household.

Yes.

All right. Tell me a little bit about the home that you lived in. Was it the same house that you-- did you move any time, or did you stay in the same place.

I stayed in the same place. I did not move. I was born there, and I lived in there until I left for America.

OK. So describe it for me a little bit. Describe for me this place, this house.

The house was made of stone with a tile roof, a beautiful balcony in the back that we got the sun all day long. We had running water in the house, and we had a bathroom. Not too many houses had that.

Well, that was-- you anticipated some of my questions.

Yeah.

I usually ask, was there indoor plumbing?

Yes, there was.

You had that. And did you have electricity?

Yes, we had electricity. But the electricity went on only for two hours at night.

Really?

Yeah. Then it was shut off.

So in the daytime there was no need to use electricity.

No. No.

How did you keep food cold?

What?

Did you keep food cold if you couldn't have electricity? Was there like a basement where you would keep food.

There was a basement, but they didn't put the food in there. The food was prepared and eaten--

Right away.

--right away. So there was nothing to be left over.

Did any other family live in this house, or was it a single family home?

It was a single family.

OK. How many rooms did it have?

It had four big rooms.

OK. Can you describe them to me? One was--

Yeah. You come in, you have a hall.

A hall.

Excuse me. To the left of the hall there was the kitchen-- a big kitchen. To the right there was a bedroom. Then you keep walking, and there's the living room and another bedroom.

OK. So was it a single story house?

Single story house.

And the balcony, it looked out on the front or the back?

The balcony looked into the other people's yards.

And do you remember the address?

Of my house?

I don't remember the number. Let me see. Vicolo Portella.

Vicolo Portella.

The number must have been 11.

Vicolo Portella number 11.

Yep.

And how was the place heated?

Fireplace.

Fireplace. OK. So not coal, wood.

During the winter, it did get cold in the evening. So we gathered around the fireplace to keep warm.

OK. Was the heat from wood burning or coal?

Wood.

Wood. OK. And what else can I ask you. I take it, if you had electricity only two hours in the evening--

In the evening. Yeah, and then it was shut off.

Did you have a radio?

No. We didn't have a radio in the family, but there was a family next door to us who had a radio. So we used to gather in their house sometimes just to listen to the radio. Especially if we knew that Mussolini was going to give--

A speech?

-- a speech. I see. Well, that's one of my questions is, how do people get news in San Donato?

There was a newspaper came once a week. Only a few people bought it. My grandfather used to buy it all the time. And after he read it, he brought it on my mother to read it. And that was once a week.

OK. What was the name of the newspaper? Do you remember? It's OK. If you don't remember, it's fine.

I don't remember.

OK. Did your parents, either parents, have brothers and sisters?

What?

Your mother, did she have brothers and sisters?

Yes. She had four sisters and three brothers.

Wow.

There was seven altogether.

Four sisters, three brothers. And so she was part of seven. One of seven.

She was the first one. It was part of seven.

OK. Well, you know my next question is, do you have do you remember all their names?

Let me try.

OK.

The first one was Franceschina, was my mother.

Franceschina.

Second was Betia, her sister.

Betia. OK.

Third was a boy, Daniel.

Daniel.

Fourth was Benjamin.

Benjamin.

Fifth, another girl. And her name was Felice.

Felice.

And then there was another girl, and her name was Jo Ann.

Jo Ann.

And then there was another boy, and his name was Corado.

Corado.

Corado.

OK. So did they all live in San Donato as well?

They all lived in San Donato.

OK. So did you know your aunts and uncles very well?

Yes, very well. We got together a lot.

OK. And did they all have their separate houses?

They had their own house.

OK. One or each one--

One. Yeah.

OK. All right. You mentioned your grandfather who would get the newspaper, and then read it, and bring it to your mother. Was this your mother's father?

Yes.

What was his name?

Nicola.

Nicola Tocci.

Tocci.

And was your grandmother also alive as you were growing up? Your grandmother on your mother's side.

Oh, her name was Rosa.

Rosa. OK. Let's turn to your father. Did he have brothers and sisters?

He had I don't know much about my father, because they lived in America.

Who did?

My father's brothers and sisters.

OK. So they had all left San Donato.

They had all left San Donato looking for work in America.

And was he the only one who stayed behind?

He stayed to behind and married my mother. And stayed with her for three years or maybe four, and then he left for America. And when he left for America, he forgot all about us, and he formed another family.

Oh.

Tragic.

Yes very. Very. So does that mean he left after you were four years old?

I was 3 1/2 years old.

When he left.

When he left.

And so, do you have many memories of him?

Very, very little I remember. I was 3 1/2 years old when he left, and I remember him all dressed up with a bow tie, holding my hand, talking with somebody. And that's the vision that I have in my mind of him-- that's all.

Did you ever see him again in your life?

No.

Do you know where he moved in America?

Philadelphia.

And was the idea when he left that you would all follow or--

Yes.

OK. So-- so it must have been a shock.

All throughout my life.

My goodness. When did your mother find out that he formed another family?

Well, the letters started coming not as often. My mother didn't want to think that he might have another woman. That would not enter her mind, because she had so much confidence in him and she loved him so much. But right after the war, then we really found out.

He sent-- she, the woman, who was living with my father, sent a picture to my mother with all the children. They had had five children together.

Oh, my goodness.

Can you imagine having-- opening the letter and seeing that? I remember, my mother was almost white.

Oh, my goodness.

So when I came to this country, I tried to get in touch with him, but he would never show up.

Really?

So we never saw him.

How bitter and how cruel.

Can you imagine them?

I can't actually. I can't.

I just-- I cry every time I talk about it. I never got over, in fact, that he didn't come to see me or the others. Why do you think he didn't come?

I don't know. Why do you think he didn't come?

I don't know.

Yeah. It's a question that you don't ever get answered.

So he's dead now. He died. And--

Did you ever have contact with your half sisters, half brothers.

No, my-- our mother didn't want us to have anything to do with them.

So all those years, after he left, after your 3 and 1/2 years old, she thought she was married to this man and that you have a family, even if he's in the United States.

Right.

And after the war which, would be like 15 years after he leaves, she finds out that it's not so. So effectively-- did he send money home at any point?

Once in a while an envelope arrived with a dollar inside.

A dollar?

A dollar. Well, you can't live much for that--

We never saw a \$5 bill. Never. So my mother was very intelligent.

What did she do?

Well, she was a housewife, but she went to school up to the grade of 8-- 8th grade-- with the nuns. And she got a good education so that you could help people with numbers. They used to come to mama to say, figure this out. I cannot figure it out. And my mother would do that.

The doctors-- when the doctor went around looking at patients, he wanted my mother to be with him, because my mother could write down instructions. So these people gave us some food. A dozen of eggs, some flour, some fruit, corn flour, stuff like that. There was no exchange with money.

I see.

No exchange with money.

It was only through goods.

Right. Right.

Now, when your father left and you were all still there and thinking that you're still a family, but your mother needs to be able to feed you all and eat, did her family help out at all? Did your grandfather, and uncles, and aunts--

They couldn't, because they didn't have much. They were poor too. The whole town was. Only a few people has some money or some stuff like that. But most of the people in town were poor.

And you'd say was your family poor then too?

Yes.

OK. OK. The home you describe, the house that you lived in, does not sound poor. It sounds like a comfortable place.

It was.

It was. So that was the one thing that was--

One thing that we had that we could-- at night, we'd put the fireplace, because there's no heating system. And the month of January, it could get very cold. So we put the fireplace on to warm up.

And was that just in one room, or in--

The fireplace was just in one room.

So all the other rooms are cold?

The other rooms are cold. We used to go to bed-- the sheets, they felt like ice.

Yeah. Did you have much furniture?

Yes, we did have beautiful furniture. That's one reason why my father had to leave. He had bought furniture, and he didn't pay.

Oh, gosh.

So the people went after him to the payment. And if he didn't pay, he would have ended up in jail. So then he went to America. He escaped to America.

I see.

The furniture was all walnut with pink marble tops.

Sounds lovely.

It was a lovely place. So it was a really--

It was a beautiful place. The furniture was upholstered in red. And there were curtains on the windows. And flowers-- my mother had flowers all over the place.

Did you have your own garden? Did you have your own garden?

Oh, yes. Of course.

And was that right next to the house? Was that right next to the house?

It was next to the house.

OK.

We had chickens.

That was my next question-- did you have animals?

It was chicken we had.

Chickens. So you had eggs sometimes.

Yes.

OK. How would you get milk? There were cows in town, and my mother used to buy maybe a little cup of milk for Silvana and Pompea. . I didn't drink milk.

You didn't drink milk?

No, I didn't drink milk. Mama took me to the doctor because she was worried. I was a little bit of a girl. And the doctor said, she's too young to tell you that milk doesn't agree with her. She's three years old. She doesn't need the milk anymore. And since then, I have never drank milk in my life. And I have no osteoporosis.

Hah! Look at that! Look at that.

That's all for the milk.

Yeah. Well, your mother then had one third less problems, because she only needed to get it for the other two.

Right. So they drank milk in the morning, and she used to give me an egg.

Not bad.

She used to give me an egg.

OK. And--

She was a wonderful mother.

Tell me about her. Tell me about her personality. Tell me about her nature and things like that.

It's very hard to me-- she was very intelligent. She went to school until the eighth grade. In Italy, it's like going to University of Harvard.

Really? Well, in those days--

Really, yeah. It was a nun school. And the nuns, they used to teach real well. So she went there for eight years. She graduated in the 8th grade.

And was this in San Donato, the school?

Yes.

OK. OK. Was your mother very religious?

I think so. She was, yes.

Did she go to mass every week, every Sunday?

There was a little chapel next to the house.

OK.

She would not go to the big church, because she didn't want people to see her.

Why?

She figures there to the people know what was going on with her. And she was ashamed. But there was a little a church near the house that celebrated the masses every Sunday. And she used to go to that church.

I see. I see. Was there talk in your family-- in your mother's family-- about why your father wasn't there? Did they bring this up, this topic of conversation?

I'm sure there was. But everybody kept it to themselves.

OK. And your father, did he have-- did you have grandparents on your father's side.

They're all dead.

Were they dead then?

They died before he even died.

I know. But did--

The grandparents died before my father got married, let's put that way.

Oh, I see. OK. So you never knew them.

I knew one step grandmother, because he remarried to my father.

OK. Your grandfather remarried?

Remarried. And I had occasion to be with my adopted, let's say, grandmother. She was wonderful.

Really?

Oh, she was great.

What was her name?

Genovefa.

Genovefa.

Yeah.

And it would have been Genovefa Cardarelli.

That's right.

OK. And she lived in San Donato?

No, she lived in Pescasseroli, a town beyond San Donato on the other side of the mountain.

Was that far, Pescasseroli?

It took me eight hours to walk--

Oh my goodness.

--to go to see her. Climbing the mountain, then you descend the mountain.

And did she have news of America, of what your father was doing? Did she know anything?

I really think they didn't want to believe it.

OK. OK. So if I understand, this side of your family, your father's side, if there were brothers and sisters, you never met them. They were all in America.

Right.

And your father then was there too, and the only person was step grandmother, because she was the second wife of your father's father.

Right.

OK. Did you see her much?

Oh, every summer.

Oh really? OK.

I used to go and spend the summers with her.

Oh.

The best years of my life.

Really?

Oh, she was wonderful.

Did you go alone or with your sisters?

No, sometimes I went with another man or another woman that were crossing the mountain, and I went with them.

Eight hours.

That's a lot.

It's a lot.

It's a lot.

But the rewards were so good.

Well, what was special about being with her?

Oh, my God. You could see that love coming out from here all over the place. She-- she asked me one day-- I was a little late coming in-- and I said, grandma, we saw wolf. We saw a wolf. The wolf was about this tall, and was gray, with ears like this. Stopped in the middle of the road, and looked at us, and then he took off. And the reason he took off is that he saw the horse.

This time, we went with a horse. And I think that the wolf got scared of the big horse. And he was alone.

So if he had been in a wolf pack, it might have been different.

Right. Right.

OK. So she must have been frightened when she heard that.

Oh, she was so funny. She said, "Maria." "What?" "How was the trip?" "Oh, grandma, we saw a wolf." "You saw a wolf?"

"Yes." "What did he do?" "He looked at us and then he took off." And she said, "when he saw Maria Domenica, he got scared."

[LAUGHTER]

Maria Domenica was dark and dressed in black.

Oh, I see.

A black kerchief, however. So when the wolf saw Maria Domenica, he got scared.

Now, did your mother have contact--

With her? Yeah. Yes.

OK. OK. Did they see each other also every once in a while.

Well, they were in different towns. So whenever they could. But I went every summer.

Every summer.

Every summer to spend with her.

OK. Did your sisters ever go with you?

They went, but not as often.

OK. Was there any public transportation?

No. Everything was by foot or by mule.

By foot or by mule. So if you come into San Donato, were the roads paved?

Some are paved now, but not then.

OK. And did anyone in San Donato have an automobile?

Any what?

Anyone in San Donato have an automobile?

Oh, no.

So even the wealthiest people wouldn't have a car?

No. First of all, the roads were so narrow. Very hard to go around with an automobile. It's a mountain village. You just keep climbing, climbing, climbing, climbing.

OK. So it sounds very isolated.

Yes.

OK. And I asked earlier about how large San Donato was-- I mean how many people there would be.

I cannot tell you exactly. But at one time there was 700.

OK.

I don't know if that number decreased or increased after the war.

OK. But when you were growing up in the 1930s--

Yes.

--would you say it was about 700 people then.

Well, OK. That's not so small, but it's not so big either.

No.

And it sounds like most people would know everybody else.

They did. They know everybody and everybody else's affairs.

Small towns do that-- or small villages, that's part of what the whole thing is about.

Yes.

So everyone else knows everybody else's business.

Right.

All right. Describe that town. First of all, describe your home. Was it in the center of town or was it further away?

No, it was in very, very outside of central.

OK. It was in the peripheral.

I don't know how to say that word in English.

Periphery?

Periphery.

Yeah, periphery.

Periphery. It's almost the same word.

Right. It's the same.

Yeah. The houses of the rich people were more up on the mountains. And the people worked in the fields, they were

more on the land--

More in the valley.

More in the valley.

OK. Was the land good? Was the land good? Was it fertile country?

The land was good, yes.

Yeah. And you said mostly olives were grown there-- olives trees?

Olives and grapes. They made wine. And what else did they have? Grain for their own consumption.

OK. And the olives and the wine, the grapes, was that enough? Was there enough there to sell to others?

Yes, especially the olives. Yes.

OK. So it was an olive-producing village.

Yes, right. OK. Now, in the center of town, what kind of shops were there?

There was a shop where you could buy pencils, and pens, and writing paper.

So sort of supplies.

Supplies.

Office supplies.

There was a shop for clothing. Very pretty.

Could you afford it?

Well, no. But I bought one when I went back--

Oh, really?

--when I was American.

Then you could afford it.

Then I could afford it. What else was there? A couple of restaurants.

OK. Was there a doctor's office?

Oh, the best.

Oh yeah?

We had such a good doctor.

What was his name?

Guido Massa.

Guido Massa?

Yep.

Is he the one who told your mother that milk doesn't agree with you?

Yes, he's the one. You have a good memory.

(LAUGHS) Well, it's-- thank you. Thank you.

And I take it there was a church? There was a church?

Yeah. Oh, there were three churches.

Oh, there were three churches? For 700 people. And do remember the names of those churches?

Yeah. The first one was the main church, Santa Maria Maggiore.

Santa Maria Maggiore.

The second one was la chiesa del convento. La chiesa del convento?

Si. Because the nuns lived there. And the third one was Sant Rocco.

Sant Rocco. OK. Was there anybody in the village who was not Catholic who lived there?

Not that I can think of.

OK. Everybody was Catholic.

Everybody was Catholic.

No Protestants?

No.

No Jews?

No.

Anybody who was not Italian who lived there?

No, they were all Italians. All Sandonatesi.

And were people intermarried in the village? If there were the 700 people, were many families intermarried with each other?

Right.

OK. Did you have other relatives there besides the ones I asked you about? Was there a larger family?

There were other relatives, but they didn't live in the town. A lot of them have lived in Rome, the big city. Not too far

from the town.

Oh, so Rome was not so far away?

Right. Rome was 2 and 1/2 hour's drive from San Donato.

Did anybody--

And then there was-- that's all I remember right now.

OK. So was it that-- the roads, you tell me, were not so good at that time. Narrow.

Narrow, crooked. You're always going uphill.

OK. Was there, let's say, deliveries to San Donato.

Milk and bread.

OK. So was there a bakery in San Donato?

Yes.

All right. Also in the center?

Yes.

One bakery or more?

One bakery.

One bakery. Well, that guy had a monopoly.

Everybody made their own bread.

Ah, got it. OK. And did anyone in San Donato keep cows? Did anyone in San Donato keep cows?

I didn't. Understand

Did anyone in San Donato, of those 700 people, have a cow?

Not everybody.

But some people did.

Some people did that lived more outside the town.

OK. But otherwise there would be deliveries of milk from some place else.

Right. And bread.

All right. Any kind of deliveries from Rome? Was there ever a bus that came through once a week or once a month.

Yes, there was a bus that went to Rome.

There was a bus that went to Rome.

Yes.

And one that came from Rome, yes?

Well, it's the same bus. It used to come and go.

OK. Were there villages that it would go to beyond San Donato? Or was San Donato the last stop?

For the bus, San Donato was the last stop.

Well then you were really isolated?

Oh, yeah.

The end of the line.

Yeah.

OK. Did you ever go to Rome on that bus?

Yes, after the war.

After the war. But not before.

No.

So the only place that you went to before was to visit your step grandmother on the other side of the mountains.

That's all.

That's it. OK.

That's it.

Was there a movie cinema? Was there a movie cinema in San Donato?

(LAUGHING) No.

No.

Did anybody ever bring movies? Did you ever see anything like that?

No. No.

So how did children entertain themselves?

Well, with Sunday school. And school after school.

So school?

Through school.

OK. Did you go to the same school your mother had gone to?

No. My mother went parochial school. She went to a much better school than I did.

And what kind of school did you go to?

First grade to fifth grade public school.

OK. And that was in San Donato.

That was in San Donato.

And the parochial school your mother had gone to, was that in San Donato too?

That was in San Donato, but the parochial school went up to the eighth grade.

And the other one didn't?

No. Only to fifth grade.

OK. And what was the reason why you didn't go to the parochial school?

Didn't have any money.

That's what I thought, but I needed to ask it. That's what I thought. And the public school was-- about how many children were in there?

In a class you mean?

Yeah. There must have been at least 30.

OK. So if we take 30 and we multiply it, the whole school would have been about 150 children?

Right.

All right. Did you like school?

I loved school.

What are some of your memories from school?

Oh, my God. I just loved my teacher to begin with. With

Now, over there a teacher you get on the first grade, she takes you through the fifth grade. You don't change teachers. And I just loved her.

So you were lucky. You had a good teacher.

I was lucky to have this particular teacher, yeah.

Do you remember her name.

Yes.

What was it?

Teresa.

Teresa. And last name?

Tiritilli. Tiritilli.

Tiritilli?

Tiritilli.

Tiritilli. Did I say it right?

Yep.

Tiritilli. Teresa Tiritilli. Sounds lovely.

She was tall for a Italian woman. She was tall. And she used to tell us, you see now, I can put nails on the wall without a ladder.

Did you have a favorite subject?

Yes, writing.

You liked writing?

Yeah.

OK. And did you learn anything about history or--

Oh, yes we did.

What kind of history lessons did you get?

Oh, the history of Italy to begin with. Yeah it was the geography. We learned geography. We learned not much math. Actually, no math at all.

Really?

Just 1, 2, 3.

So there already a difference with your mother's schooling, where she learned numbers.

Yes.

And so she was called upon--

Right.

--to help with that. OK. What else did I want to ask? Was there still the parochial school existing and operating when you were going to the public school?

Yes, there was.

And how large was it?

I cannot tell you how large it was, because it was in a different place of town. So I didn't see the kids going in. But couldn't have been too large, because you had to pay to get in. And there wasn't that much money in town.

So your grandfather had seven children on your mother's side.

Yes.

Did all of them go to the parochial school?

I don't know. I know my mother did and her sister. I don't know about the boys.

OK. OK. How did he afford it? How did he afford to send his daughter to parochial--

He had a store. He had a store that he sold food.

Did he still--

I don't know what do you call it in this country.

Grocery store?

Grocery store.

But a small one.

Small one. He made a little money.

OK. OK. And were you close to him?

Very.

Tell me about your grandfather.

Oh, my God. He was tall for an Italian man. Good looking. He used to come to the house at night to tell us stories. And he wore a big like a mantle. It wasn't a coat. It was like a mantle. You put it on, without sleeves-- what do you call that?

A cloak. A cape.

A cape.

A cape.

Long. He was tall.

Ooh, it must have looked nice.

So we used to play hide and seek in between the coat. And he used to sit next to the fireplace and tell us stories.

Oh, that sounds lovely.

It was the best time of the day.

I can imagine. I can imagine. And did you visit him at his home?

Yes, I did.

And what about your--

He had a nice garden.

Did he? Yeah.

Not too much land. But whatever land he had, he cultivated it. And he had a tree that produced simmons? Simmons? Marcelle?

Persimmons. Persimmons?

Persimmons?

Persimmons.

Persimmons. Persimmons.

And they're yellow, and they're about that size. He had planted a tree. So the tree grew and produced the fruit. And he put him on a shelf in the pantry. And we used to look at them, and I hope he gives us one. No, he wouldn't give us one. Those of us grandma.

Oh. Well, what about your grandma? Were you close to her too?

Not as much as the grandfather.

OK. Her name was Rosa, right? Or not? Grandma?

What?

Her name was Rosa?

Rosa.

Rosa. OK. So grandpa was the one you were close to. Now, did you visit him in his store?

Yes, I did visit him in the store. I visited him in his house, which was way up on the mountain. He had all kinds of fruit going on and a little bit of land. Because up on the mountain, you don't know how much land.

And how far was it from your own house?

It was a good walk. We had to climb something like 250 steps. It was climbing, climbing, climbing.

And did you have aunts and uncles between your house and his house who lived between those places or not really?

There was another, but it wasn't that close by.

Were you close to any of your aunts and uncles the way you were to your grandfather?

Yes, I was close to one aunt.

What was her name?

Ninetta. Ninetta.

Ninetta. Ninetta. And what kind of a person was she?

She was a very nice person. She used to make dresses for us. She used to knit dresses for us even though she had a very bad love story.

What was her love story?

Well, this man was going out with her, and at the last minute he just left her. Heartbreaking. I was close to her.

So she lived alone or she lived with your grandfather.

No, she lived in the big house with her parents.

OK. So she lived with your grandfather and your grandmother.

Yeah. Right.

OK. OK. And did your mother have close friends in the village?

Not too many. Maybe a couple.

OK. And why would that be?

She didn't want the people to know what she was going through. She was ashamed.

That her husband was in the United States?

Exactly.

Well, were there many--

She was ashamed that her husband had sort of left her, even though it was not her fault.

OK. Well, it was because of furniture. He hadn't paid for the furniture. He hadn't paid for the furniture.

That's right.

That's why he left. Was the village a gossipy village?

Every village has a little gossip. I'm sure there was. I don't know.

Fair enough. OK. Fair enough. Fair enough.

They were very religious. They went to church every Sunday, that's for sure.

OK. So it was a very traditional place.

Traditional place to go.

OK. Were there many people-- I mean your father's entire sibling group went to America-- who emigrated, left San Donato for the United States, other families?

Oh, yes.

Yeah?

Yes.

So it was not an unusual thing.

No, it was not unusual. No, a lot of people went here.

Was there a policeman? Was there a police station.

Yes, caserma. How do say-- Marcelle, how do say caserma.

You had a jail? Did you have a jail? Caserma or caserna.

I don't know.

You don't know. It's all right. That's all right. But was there a police station.

There was a police station.

OK. And about how many policemen were in the town.

I cannot tell you how many, but there was at least four of them.

OK, at least four. Did you know all of them?

No.

Was there much crime in San Donato?

Not too much crime. But when the crime came, it was bad.

OK. So what kind? What kind?

Well, one woman almost killed her husband. But she didn't make it. So she was picked up by the police man, and she spent 20 years in jail.

20 years.

20 years, because she did not really kill them. She attempted to kill him. And she spent 20 years in jail.

Were there many people who would-- did San Donato have a hotel?

What?

Did it have a hotel?

Yes.

It did. What kind of people would come to visit?

People from all the other towns from the valley. They would come, especially when we used to have a feast.

What feast?

The feast was called the Feast of San Donato, the name of the town. And people came from all the towns around for the feast. It was about a three-day feast.

And was it centered around the church?

Right. They had music. It was very festive.

Did you attend these feasts?

Oh, yes.

Were they fun?

It was a lot of fun. But I didn't have any money to buy anything.

You said that most people in town were poor and that your family was poor.

My family was poor.

Did you feel poor compared to the others in the village?

I don't know.

Did you feel like your clothes were not as nice as the clothes of the other children?

Yes. Even though your aunt was able to knit you some--

She was able to make some. Yeah.

OK. Did your mother have talent in that area of sewing?

Yes. He was a very talented tailor.

OK. That was your father. What about your mother? Could she sew?

No. She was a housewife.

OK. OK. So aside from your aunt, how did you get clothes. It was very, very hard to get clothes. Well, to go to school, we used to wear a frock-- a black frock, buttoned on the back, with white collar and white cuffs. So we didn't have to have any fancy clothes, because we put that on.

So it was a uniform.

Yes. And you just imagine, at the end of the week, the white cuffs, they were black. But that was the costume and we had to put it on to go to school.

OK. Was there a shoemaker in town?

Yes. Yes, there was a shoemaker.

And did you have a pair of shoes?

Hardly.

Really. So when you went to school, did you go barefoot? Well, not barefoot. But the shoes that I wrote, the weater used to come in and out.

OK. OK. And would the shoes be then be passed down to your sisters when you outgrew them.

Well, they were so badly worn out--

That it didn't work. OK.

Yeah.

OK. So shoes were a problem?

Yeah.

OK. How did your mother, after she was left alone with you, occupy her days? What would take up her time-- most of the time? Would it be housework? Would it be working with the doctor?

Well, since as a good education, people hired her to do books. She was good in math, and she used to help people with their problems. And so they gave her a dozen of eggs, or a bottle of oil, or some flour.

Did you have to grow up fast being the oldest one?

I'm the oldest.

I know.

Because your mother was alone raising all of you, did you have to take on chores that you might not have had to take on if she had other help?

Well, not really, because she was a very strong person, a healthy person. She did most of the work.

She did most of the work.

Yeah.

OK. What kind of food would you have for dinner? What was your-- your main meal was--

Usually pasta.

Usually pasta. OK. Meat? Meat at any point?

Meat. We had no meat at all. No meat. Eggs was the thing that we ate mostly and cheese.

Was she a good cook? Was she a good cook?

Yes. What else did I want to ask about your village. Did you go to catechism?

Yes.

Now, if you went to public school--

Yes.

--was that five days a week or six days a week?

Five.

From what time to what time?

We used to get in at 8:30 and come home in the afternoon. Well, they used to give us a one hour lunch. Come home, have lunch, go back until 5 o'clock in the afternoon. So it was a long day.

It's a very long day.

But we didn't go to school on a Saturday, no.

OK. OK. For children, that's a very long day. That's a very long day for a child.

Oh, yes it is.

On the other hand, it keeps you occupied.

Yes. Out of trouble.

What year-- how old were you when you started school?

Five maybe.

OK. So you went for five years. So you finished when you were 10?

Yes.

And if you're born in 1927, It meant that you were done with school by 1937?

Yes, right.

All right. And after 1937, what do you do if school is done?

I went to a tailor's shop and learned how to sew.

Oh, did you?

I was a very good sewer. I was a very good tailor. That's what I did in my spare time. And once in a while it gave a little money. And I was so happy, because I would give it to mama.

Yeah. So once you learned to sew, did you make clothes for yourself?

Oh, no. He had his own shop. I helped him.

I see, I see. So after the fifth grade, you start working.

Like a seamstress.

And sometimes you got paid for it.

Sometimes I go paid to work. Yeah.

OK. And your sisters were still in school? They were still in school.

When you were in school and they were teaching you the history of Italy, did the teachers also teach you about Mussolini?

Oh, yeah. We had big picture of Mussolini in the classroom, right on the wall-- a big one.

And what did you know about Mussolini when you were in school?

Not much. He was the best men around-- that's what we knew. That all the other countries were envious of us because we has such a wonderful leader.

[LAUGHTER]

That's what we learned.

And did people believe it?

Some people believed it, sure.

OK. Were there people in town who were really strong-- let's say, they really liked Mussolini a lot.

A lot of them did, yes.

A lot of them did. Were there are some who were a little bit not so much?

A lot of them hated him.

Really?

Yes. And they had to escape up in the mountains to hide. Because if they were find, they could be killed.

And this is before the war even begins?

Before the war even begin. Yeah.

Was there a communist movement in town?

A what?

A communist movement in town?

A communist-- were there communists in town?

Oh, well, after the war, the communists came out. During the war, it was just fascismo.

OK. All right. So before the war happens, there's no communism.

No. Nobody that you know--

I mean, if there were, they were keepign to themselves.

Got it. Got it. What about your grandfather?

Oh, he was a-- my grandfather, it makes me laugh. He was so much against Mussolini.

Really?

Oh! He couldn't stand him.

And did he ever say why?

Well, he didn't like his policies.

OK. But you're a little girl, and your grandfather doesn't like his policies. Does he ever explain what those policies are to you?

No, he didn't. What happened was the newspaper arrived in town once a week, and my grandfather bought it. He probably was the only guy with bought the newspaper. Read it. He brought it over to my mother to read. So we knew what was going on. He was against the Mussolini so much. He hated it.

So when he would come and bring the newspaper, he would tell your mother what he had read.

Well, he would bring the newspaper to my mother. And they discussed in between the two of them.

OK. Did your mother have political opinions?

Well, she didn't like Mussolini either.

And do you know why?

Oh, my God. I would have to write a book about it.

OK. I understand. But were there particular--

They didn't like his policies.

And what about his policies didn't they like? What about him and the policies--

First of all, they thought he was a liar, that what he was saying was trying to tell the people what was not. Secondly, the policy that he wanted to give to the people, the people didn't buy them. They knew he was an imposter. Then they were a few that liked him.

And were there arguments in town between those who didn't like Mussolini and those who did? Were there arguments-- open arguments-- between those who supported Mussolini and those who were against him?

Well, look all the good he's doing. He did this. He did that. He did that. He did some good. I'm not say that he didn't.

But the alliance with Mussolini with Hitler was the thing that people do not like. They don't like that.

So here's my question-- if San Donato is such an isolated place, where your neighbors have a radio, and who knows how many others, but probably not a lot if you have only two hours of electricity, how did people learn that there is this guy

named Hitler over in Germany?

Well, like the newspaper came once a week, and some people read it. Somebody had a radio. Once a week they listened to it. So a little bit of pieces here and there.

What about the village priests in the three churches? The priests in the churches, did they support or not?

They didn't support-- women used to go to them and ask for advice. Should we vote for this man, should we vote for the other man, or whatever. And the priest would say to them, do what your husband wants you to do.

OK.

In other words, the woman never mind. But that's the way it was. Most of them were illiterate anyhow, because only men went to school.

So are you saying men went to school beyond the 5th grade. Yes

Some, of them did. Yes.

Where did they go?

Private school.

So was it a parochial school or was it--

No. It was private school.

And there was a private school in San Donato.

Yes.

And how many grades did it have?

Oh, I don't remember.

OK. OK. So we know now about the public school that goes to grade 5. We know about the parochial school that goes to grade 8. And we know about this other school, which is private, but takes education beyond grade 5.

Right.

Was there anybody in town who went to University?

I don't remember the town name. Well, this was all in San Donato that we talked about.

That's right. That's right. But was there anybody in San Donato who then left it to go to University?

There must have been a couple of so of people, but I don't know them.

So the men that the priest would say-- the women that they would tell, vote like your husband.

Do what your husband--

Tells you.

--tells you to do. Keep peace in the family. That's what they learned from the priest.

I see. I see. Did you know any of the priests in town?

Oh, yeah. One uncle was a priest.

One uncle. Your mother's brother?

No, it was my mother's uncle.

OK. And what kind of a person was he?

He was good.

What was his name?

Luigi.

Luigi. Father Luigi.

Luigi Tocci.

Right. And did he say mass?

Yes.

Did you go-- when he said mass--

Yes, I went to his, because he was fast.

[LAUGHTER]

There are some things that are important.

Right.

And how fast you are is one of them.

Yeah, we were celebrating, Don Luigi good, let's go.

That's funny. OK. Now, on that radio, you said that sometimes you'd listen to Mussolini give a speech.

Yeah.

OK. Did you ever hear Hitler's voice on the radio?

Mussolini's voice?

Hitler's voice.

No.

No. It was only Mussolini's voice.

It was just Mussolini. Yeah.

OK. And in 1939, you're 12 years old. Remind me again, what's your date, the month you were born?

May 30th--

That's what I thought, it was May 30th. So if it was May 30th.

[PHONE RINGING]

Let's cut.

OK. So if you're born May 30, 1927, when 1939 rolls around, you're 12 years old. And do you remember people in the village talking about Mussolini and Hitler?

Vaguely.

Vaguely. Do you remember hearing about World War II beginning?

Yes.

What can you tell me about how you heard and learnt of it?

World War II. First of all, I was so much against war, I just could not picture myself, somebody shooting another person. That bothered me terribly. What was the rest of the question?

The rest of the question is, do you remember where you were when you learned that World War II had started?

Yes, yes. I had come home from school. In the neighborhood, we only had a woman with a radio. So she called everybody, because Mussolini was going to talk. And we gathered at her house to listen. And that's when I learned that we were engaged in war.

And as a teenager, I couldn't understand at all. I couldn't understand at all. No.

Well, on September 1, '39, Hitler attacks Poland. And that's when World War II starts. Because then Poland's allies, England, declare war on Hitler. And then it all starts. How did it affect San Donato when this started? Did life change at all?

No.

It went on.

It went on.

It was just, you know there's a war somewhere in Europe.

Where's Poland? Who knows?

Where's Pole-- exactly. Exactly.

It was a Catholic nation, but it was Poland. We never heard about Poland before. I could not understand the concept of Poland just let these German people walk all over them. Even though I was a young person, by listening to the report-- how did the Polish people-- what happened to them? They let the German walk all over them. No resistance, no nothing.

Well, there was, but failed.

It failed.

It failed. So what's the next that you hear or see of the war in San Donato? Well, then it was the people that started coming in, the Jewish people.

Right away?

Well, not right away, but I mean the--

What I wanted to know is, for example, were there any soldiers, any young men from San Donato--

No, there were no soldiers?

Were there any draft-- did anybody have to go to the army?

Yes, there was a draft.

There was a draft.

Yes, there was a draft. Yes.

And were there many young men who left for the Italian army? To join the army?

The Italian army was in such disarray.

Really?

Yes. Because a lot of people were starting get away from Mussolini. Because by this time they found out that he was an imposter.

I'm wondering, how does that make itself felt in a place San Donato. How does that sense, the trend that people more people distrust Mussolini-- what happens to make them distrust him?

What happened to the people who mistrust him?

What happened that they turned from trusting him to distrusting him?

Well, the ones that trusted him, they ran away. Because they knew things were bad for them. So up in the mountains again. The mountains were very populated.

So the ones who were against Mussolini--

Right.

--ran into the mountains. OK. And were there still people in town who supported him after the war begins?

Well, they started getting quiet. They stayed quiet. They don't talk much.

And why do those who don't like him go into the mountains at that point?

They ran up on the mountain, yes.

Why?

Because the people who did not like Mussolini would get-- they would pick them up and send them to Rome, or Poland, or any place like that.

Were there such things happening?

Yes. I don't know too much about this history thing.

I'm asking in San Donato, in your village, were there arrests of political people in San Donato.

Yeah.

Were there?

Yes. But they were not open.

OK. They began to feel that the war was not going right, so they were not open. They tried to get away and hide themselves.

OK. And these are the opponents of Mussolini?

Yes.

OK. The four policemen that are in town, do you know their names?

No.

OK. But could you recognize them if you saw them.

If I saw them?

Yeah.

Probably. I don't know.

OK. Was the jail any more full after war begins than it was before?

The jail?

Yeah.

No, it was the same.

OK. So no more people arrested or anything like that?

No, no.

So about for how--

They used to give them to drink-- what do you call it? You know when you cannot move your bowels and they give you something to drink? They used to give that to the people--

Who were arrested?

Yeah.

Well, that's kind of mean. Oh yeah, it was mean.

Let's cut the camera for a second. OK. So I wanted to get a little bit more clarity about the Italian army. And you told me it was in disarray.

Yes.

Did you know anybody who had been in the army?

Yes, my uncle.

And what which uncle was this?

My mother's brother.

And what was his name?

Mimino.

Mimino. Is that a nickname?

Yes, Benjamin Is the name actually.

OK. So you had told me that there was a Benjamin.

Benjamin, yeah.

So this the one.

Yeah.

Did he join the army or was he drafted?

He was drafted.

And when was he drafted? Was it before the war? Was it before World War II.

At the beginning I think. Probably at the beginning of war.

Did he serve in Ethiopia?

Yes.

And tell me, when did Ethiopia happen? When was the war in Ethiopia-- the Italian war?

Well, there were-- he didn't talk too much about it, you know. Had it been somebody else, he would have talked more about it. He kept it all to himself. So I cannot answer that question.

OK. OK. And were there other young men who fought in the Ethiopian war from San Donato?

There must have been, but I don't know them.

OK. And were there people in San Donato who wanted to escape the draft?

Yes. Some of them did in fact.

OK.

Up in the mountains.

All right. But this draft, when I stopped the camera, and I asked your children, and your niece and nephew about the draft, what they told me is that this actually happened before World War II begins because of the war in Ethiopia.

Right.

OK. And so, when the war starts, the European World War II, this had already, this draft, and this call for young men, taken place.

Right.

I wanted to know about food. When World War II starts, do you have as much food as you did before? Or does it start becoming--

Well, you know, it didn't affect us right away. It affected us as the time went by-- then we were affected by it.

OK. Tell me then, what kind of food did you not get then? What kind of food disappeared.

Well, we didn't grain. We didn't get potatoes. We didn't get pasta.

OK. You still were able to have olive oil, yes?

Olive oil was a product of San Donato. So people still had them in their homes, in the cellars, or whatever.

OK. And there still was some wine.

Some wine, yeah.

OK. And people had some-- was it easier or was it more difficult to get milk and eggs and things?

Eggs, we had plenty of them, because we had chickens. About milk, then we didn't use too much of it. I don't know how much the-- how free the milk was.

OK, let's cut. OK, what do you remember missing the most from food?

In the food? Everything.

Everything. When you--

When I got up in the morning, my two sisters usually had some milk that had been delivered. Since I didn't drink milk, I didn't have much to eat, unless there was some potatoes left over from the night before. Then I had a couple of cold potatoes. That was my breakfast.

Oh my goodness. And what would normally be lunchtime?

Lunchtime, that would be our main--

Meal.

--meal. Some pasta that my mother put together.

Would she make the pasta herself?

If she had the flour, she would make it. But there was no flour available.

So this is after the war starts.

Right.

Flour starts to become a shortage.

Shortage because of the army.

OK, OK.

It was bad. It was really bad. It was terrible.

Paint me a picture. Did you go hungry a lot?

Yes. We did go hungry.

Were there people who actually died because of hunger?

I don't know any of them that died, but they were dying out in the fields because they were getting shelled.

OK. This is as the war goes on?

As the war goes on.

OK.

It was awful.

Bring me back to-- after this neighbor gathers you all around her radio, and Mussolini says the war has been declared, does he say how Italy is going to be helping Germany in the war?

No.

OK.

No, he didn't mention Hitler.

He didn't mention Hitler?

No. Well, because he knew that most of the people were against that. Most of the people were very much against the war, and Hitler was the other guy.

So what was the view in the village about Hitler, and why? Why were people against Hitler?

The Jews. We knew that the Jews were being killed.

Even before there were Jews who arrive in town?

Right. We knew that.

I wonder how you found out?

Well, a little news slips around.

OK. Did you have a market day in San Donato?

Did I have what?

Was there a market day when people would bring their goods to sell at a market?

No.

OK. Was there in any other town?

I don't know. We didn't travel.

OK. So the news seeped through. And one of the reasons I ask about market is sometimes that's where people find out about things.

Right.

But in this case, it must have been-- it wouldn't be in the newspapers.

It wouldn't be--

Word of mouth.

Word of mouth. There used to be a food market before things got really bad. With no newspaper. Just people talking.

And that was in San Donato?

And that was in San Donato every Sunday.

Every Sunday?

Every Sunday after. We used to go to church on Sunday morning with no breakfast because we had to have the host.

Yeah, you would take communion and you had to fast.

You had to fast. So we used to go to church first thing, first. When the church was over, we all gathered at the food market. If you have some money, you buy something to eat. If you have no money, you buy nothing. And most of the time, we had no money.

OK. You mentioned before that there were only Catholics who lived in San Donato.

Yes.

So nobody knew a Jewish person?

No.

Nobody knew? Nobody had any direct knowledge?

No.

But you heard that they were being killed.

We heard that.

Did anybody talk about who the Jews were?

No.

What kind of people they were? What kind of religion they had?

No, they didn't.

They didn't? They didn't?

We just found out about the Jews when they start coming into the town.

Tell me about that. Tell me about when they start coming into the town.

They came in one morning. The sun had not made it over the mountains yet. And the town was still laced in the white light of dawn. We heard trucks arriving at our town. And they stopped in the piazza.

And the piazzas being the plaza-- town square?

Right, the center of the town. And they come out the trucks with microphones, telling the Jews, come out from your hiding places. We're going to take you home. We're going to give you this, and we're going give that.

And some of the Jews came out of the hiding places. And they were put into the trucks and trucked away. When my mother heard them, Ula and Marco were still in the house.

You're talking now later.

Yeah.

You're talking when people are coming to pick up Jews.

Yeah.

I am still asking about what was it like when they first arrived. Do you remember that, when they first came to San Donato.

When they first came was group of women. There were a couple of men in the group. And they stopped in the town.

How did they get there? By truck?

By truck. I don't know.

You don't know. You don't know. OK.

I don't know how they got there.

OK, so there was a group of women with a few men.

Yeah.

OK.

So they came-- they came and they stopped in the piazza, which is the center of the town.

OK.

And of course, they spoke German and they spoke Polish. Nobody understood what they were saying. Since the mayor of the town spoke German, they went to get him, and he could understand what these people were saying.

Was anybody-- was there any Italian soldier accompanying them?

No, just Germans.

Germans brought them in. Interesting.

Germans brought them in.

German soldiers?

Yeah, that's what I remember.

So was this the first time you saw a German soldier?

Right.

Tell me, what did he look like?

They were young men that are in uniform, rifles.

Were there many of them?

Not too many.

OK, OK, and do you know what year this was, when they came in?

Yeah, 1934 maybe.

1930-- you're talking--

1934.

'34.

Yes.

Couldn't be. '34--

Yes.

Because '34 is well before the war begins. Do you mean 1942 or '41? Let's pause a second,

Where's the book?

OK, I cut the camera because something sounded a little--

Not clear.

--not clear. Talking with your children and niece, they are saying that it was July 1940 that they came to town, the group of foreign Jews. And that it was not Germans who were coming with them. That it was the Italian government had--

Sent them over

--had sent them over. Does that ring a bell with you?

Yes.

It does. OK, so do you remember seeing Italian soldiers with them?

No.

No. OK, OK, so at least now we know that it's in July 1940.

'44

No, 1940. Not 1944.

'39 maybe.

'40.

'40. And there is a group that is sent. And do you remember your impression when you first saw them? Did you go to the piazza to take a look?

Well, I didn't go to the piazza, as I remember, to take a look. But the word got around that some Jews had arrived in town.

OK.

And that's how I find out. That's how we found out.

And so what happens after that?

Since nobody could understand, because they spoke German, the mayor of the town was fluent in German, so they went to get him. And he got to speak to them, and found out why these people were here, and so on.

What did they tell him?

They were sent there by Mussolini.

They were sent to the town by Mussolini.

By Mussolini.

And why?

They were going to-- because they were Jews. And they were going to stay there until further notice.

OK. All right, so they arrive, and they're just told to come here.

They just arrived here. They drove them here.

And then what happens?

Well, the mayor helped them to find places to go.

OK. Did your mother know the mayor?

No, my mother never went to the piazza. See, they arrived in the center of the town, which is called the piazza. My mother never went there.

So what happened? How was there a connection made?

Well, then the mayor told everybody that these people need a place to live. Can anybody take a couple of them? So somebody came to my mother's house and asked her, you got room, Sofia, why don't you take them?

And my mother said sure. Send them over. And that's how we got them inside the house.

And tell me who came to your home. Who were the people?

Marco Tenenbaum, Ursula Tenenbaum. Those two. Katja was not born yet.

So it was just two people, a couple.

Two people that came to the house.

And do you remember when you first saw them? What impression they made?

The impression I thought was Marco was a handsome man. He was tall and strong, and Ula was petite, and light complexion.

Were they dressed differently than you?

No.

No?

No.

And how did you speak with one another? How did you communicate?

Well, Ula spoke Italian.

Ah, Ula spoke Italian.

Because they had been in Italy to study, she and Marco, both of them. Well, Marco was not fluent in Italian, but Ula was.

I see. OK, so what did they tell you about themselves? Who were they?

When they told Mama, I wasn't there present.

OK, but as time went on, did you learn about who they were?

Right.

OK, then let me know, where did Ula come from? Where did Marco come from?

I was too young to ask those questions.

[LAUGHS]

OK. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Mama said to me they're looking for a room. And since we have an extra room, I'm going to give it to them. And I said, oh, that's great Ma. We wanted people around.

[LAUGHS]

And they took the room in the back of the house.

OK. Did they ever pay for anything in the house?

Yes, we did get some money from them, because they used to get paid, some kind of organization. I think it's a Jewish organization. Maybe you know the name of it. I don't.

OK. No, I'm not familiar at this point. But maybe later. So they were able to get a little bit of money.

They were able to get a little bit of money for their own needs. Yeah.

And so they would pay her rent--

Yes.

--for the room.

Yes. Very little. I don't know. I remember very little.

OK, and what about food? If food was hard to come by--

The food was hard to cover. Marco was a doctor.

Oh, he was a doctor.

He was a doctor. So every time he heard of somebody sick in the village, he would run and take care of them, which was against the law. He wasn't supposed to do that.

What did your local doctor think of that?

I don't know. I don't know. They stayed in their own place, I guess. So people gave him food to bring home. And he shared with us, because we lived like one family. We lived like one family, my house.

OK, so that became the new normal. In other words, before there was your three sisters, and your mother's living there.

Yes.

Now it was the four of you, plus Ula plus Marco. And was Ula pregnant when she came to your home?

She was pregnant.

She was pregnant. Many months?

I don't know.

You don't know. Do you remember when she gave birth to her child?

Vaguely. She didn't give birth to the house. She went to the hospital, which was not too far from where we lived.

So there was--

In the next town.

In the next town. So there wasn't--

And she gave birth to the hospital-- to that hospital. After the war, I was curious. I went to the hospital to look at the documents. And they had put down Jewish origin.

They had put it down.

Can you believe that? I was so upset.

Tell us why you were upset. What did that mean when they put down Jewish origin?

She was just one of us. To me, she was one of us.

OK.

So why should they put in the birth certificate Jewish origin. They shouldn't have, according to my thinking.

OK, now could that have gotten them into trouble?

I don't know if they went to look at those documents. Sure.

OK. So how many months were they in your home before she gives birth?

Oh, they were in my house for a long time, yeah. I cannot say precisely, but probably a year, or maybe less.

OK, before she has her baby?

Yeah.

OK, and then she has the baby. And then it's the three of them that are in the house.

Right.

OK.

Oh, my mother made a crib about the baby. She made a blanket. She made pillows.

What was the baby's name?

Katja.

Katja

The name of the book.

OK, and so it sounds like Katja became everybody's baby.

Oh, she was.

[LAUGHS]

We just loved her. We just loved Katja. We would have put our lives down for her.

Was there any one of the girls who was more involved with taking care of Katja,

Well, she loved my mother.

Did she?

She loved-- and she called her Mom.

Really?

Yes. So Mama care of her.

[LAUGHS]

She had something to do.

OK, now did other people in town know that you had this Jewish family.

In the neighborhood, they know. My mother kept them to be quiet and not to say a word. And my mother changed the name of Katja to Grazia.

Grazia.

Yeah. She was afraid if somebody-- we had Germans all around us. If somebody calls her Katja, the Germans might pick up the name. So she said to everybody, from now on she will be Grazia, not Katja. She thought of everything.

Sounds like it. Sounds like it. So did people see Ula and Marco coming in and out of the house?

The neighbors saw that we had them, and they were fine with it. No problem.

OK. Was there any kind of explanation that was given to other people as to why, all of a sudden, this--

They were saying the same, what the Jewish people sent to San Donato from Mussolini. That's all we had to say. They were accepted. The whole town accepted them.

And by this point, where they're still supporters of Mussolini in town?

Oh Yeah.

Really? Well, if Mussolini had sent them, so it's supposedly OK.

Yeah.

But were there people that you think were anti-Semitic in town?

If there were, I don't know of them. If they were, they kept to themselves after what's happening.

OK.

But the majority of the people were for the Jews.

Tell me a little--

You know, the old ladies, they were funny. "What did they do? Why do they deserve this? They're good people." They talk about themselves, you know? They couldn't understand why this was happening.

Tell me a little bit about Ula and Marco's personalities.

Oh, he was wonderful.

Tell me how.

He was a strong man with a smile on his face all the time. And he liked us. He liked the three of us.

[LAUGHS]

And we liked him. He was a warm personality-- very warm. Yeah.

Did he help around the house at all?

No.

[LAUGHS]

A real man.

[LAUGHS]

He was always studying to be a doctor.

So in other words, he hadn't gotten his certifications yet to be a doctor.

I don't know if he got the certification, but he had gone to the University of Bologna. One of the best universities in the world, resides in Italy. I don't know if you know about it.

Not much, no. No.

It's 800 years old.

Oh my goodness.

Older than Harvard.

Older than Harvard. That's for sure.

He had studied there, and he had the papers.

OK. What country had he come from?

Poland.

He had come from Poland. And what about Ula? What country did she come from?

I think it was Germany with Ula.

It was Germany.

Yes.

And did they say how they met.

In school.

So they met in Bologna.

Yes.

OK, was she also studying to be a doctor there?

She wanted to be not a doctor, but a nurse maybe.

OK, OK. And did they say how long they had been in Italy when they had come there? No?

Well, after the persecution of the Jews, they lived in Bologna. They start running around, not to be caught.

I see, I see. So it would have started pretty soon after the war starts.

Yes.

And did they ever tell you stories or anything about the places they came from?

Except it was very cold in Poland.

OK. Did he ever say where in Poland.

We didn't talk much about Poland at all, and I am sorry that I didn't ask questions. But I was-- you know.

Of course. You were a kid. It's not so much I'm asking what did he tell you, but what did he tell the family that you picked up? And I was wondering what they talked about. What kind of things-- what were the topics of conversation?

I don't know.

You don't know. It's OK. That's OK. It's perfectly OK. So I don't know if I asked already. What kind of a personality did Ula have? You said she was smaller, more petite.

Oh, she was a real German person.

[LAUGHS]

Really?

She was really German, yeah. She-- Marco was warm. Ula was cold, but she still loved us.

[LAUGHS]

How was she different than everybody else that you knew then?

First of all, she was very intelligent. She was extremely intelligent. And they put it up-- aside already.

OK.

She knew about everything. She knew everything, yeah. That's all I could tell you about her. She was wonderful.

Did she help around the house?

No.

[LAUGHTER]

No.

That was my mother's job.

OK, OK. Did they ever get to know your grandparents, Marco and Ula?

No.

Did they ever have any interaction with any of your neighbors?

Oh yes.

Yeah? What kind-- who were the neighbors-- what kind of interaction was this, and which neighbors did they talk to?

Well, the neighbors used to say they're people like us. Why do they have to go through this. They couldn't understand it, what was going on. "Why? They are people like us," they used to say. "Why have they got to go through this?"

And you say that when he'd learn that someone was sick, he would try to run and help.

He would run and take care of the sick people, which was against the law. He wasn't supposed to do that.

Did he help heal them?

Huh?

Did he help heal them, these people.

He helped the sick people. It was against the law. He wasn't supposed to do that. But he went. If he heard a person's sick, he would run to take care of that person.

OK, OK. Did he ever meet your grandfather? Did I ask--

No.

No. He never met your grandfather and grandmother.

Well, my grandfather lived up in the mountain almost. It was hard for him to come down where we were.

I see.

And in those days, people don't get it. Didn't go around. They stayed where--

Where they are.

Where they lived. Yeah.

Well, you had said there was quite a few hundred steps-- over 200 steps to get to your grandfather.

Oh, yes. You've seen the book.

Yeah, yeah. I would say--

It was climbing, climbing, climbing climbing, all the way.

Did Ula and Marco stay in their room most of the time, or did they walk around town much?

In those days, nobody did much working.

OK, so they stayed in their room.

Yeah, they stayed to themselves, yeah.

OK. I would say let's take a break right now.

OK.

And we'll continue later. OK, so we just had a little break. And I wanted to ask more about daily life when the Tenenbaums were in your home, Ula and Marco, and then later Katja. Was there a division of labor in the house as to who did what chores?

Who took care of Katja? My mother took care of Katja.

Your mother took care of Katja.

Oh yeah. Katja was her baby.

And did any of you girls help out?

Yes, we helped out. We loved to her help out. We just loved Katja. And we loved to be around her and play with her and stuff like that.

Were you-- you were the oldest.

Huh?

You were the oldest girl. You were the oldest girl, yes?

I didn't understand.

You are the oldest girl in that house.

Yes.

So were you the main babysitter?

We shared.

OK.

We shared. We all loved her. We just wanted to take care of her.

OK.

She was a doll.

OK. So were there other household chores that had to be done?

Once in a while, I washed the dishes and I cleaned the house, yeah. I did sweep and wash the floor and stuff like that, yeah.

And Silvana, did she do anything?

Silvana was in another-- oh, yeah. She worked. I'm sorry. She was the baby, too, so she didn't know many things.

OK, and Pompea

And Pompea, she was a great help.

OK, and so your mother is the one who mostly took care of Katja.

Yes.

What was Ula doing when your mother was taking care of Katja?

What were we doing?

What was Ula?

Oh, Ula, she'd just hang around.

She'd just hang around.

That's all.

[LAUGHS]

She had it easy.

That sounds like it. Who;d do the laundry?

That's one big thing we had a woman who used to come in and do the laundry. But at times, my mother did the laundry.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. Who would prepare the food, the meals?

Mama.

Mama.

Yes.

And did anybody help her?

She didn't want any help.

OK, OK, and Marco?

Marco was busy with his books. And the people, he had made some friends in town. He used to go and talk with her, even though he was not allowed. He took chances.

I see. So did he have connections with other of those Jews who had come to--

Yes, there were some. And they lived not too far from our house. One was Leon, and another one was Misha.

Misha. Leon and Misha.

Misha. He was Polish.

And did they come to your house?

They came to see Marco, yeah.

OK, did you get to know them too?

Yes, I got to know them.

And did they speak Italian?

Very little. Marco was fluent, but the others, very little.

OK, did you learn anything about where they came from and their stories? Yes, we know they were from Poland. That's when we learned more about the war. They talked to us about how they were occupied by the Nazis.

OK, so this is one way that you were learning.

That's one way that we learned, because like I said, there was no newspaper.

Yeah, yeah. There were no newspapers to tell what was really going on.

Yes.

Did Marco have any other-- I mean, did any of the women come to Ula, who-- other of the Jewish women who were in town? Did she have any interaction?

They kept to themselves. They were afraid to get out of their houses.

Except Marco.

Except Marco. Marco went anyplace. He didn't care.

OK. During the break, one of your children mentioned that actually, you were the second place that Marco and Ula had come to live with in San Donato. Was there another house that they went to before they came to you?

Marcelle just reminded me, I had forgotten. Before they came to my house, to live in my house, they lived in a different house. But they didn't like it. They didn't like their other house, so they came to us.

Do you know why they didn't like it?

Ula used to say when they got out from their bedroom, they'd go into the kitchen, nobody said a word and nobody smiled and nobody said good morning, and nothing like that. Says when I come over here in the house, everybody's smiling.

OK, so it was a warm home.

We were.

Yeah, and I take it, then, life goes on.

Life goes on.

Life goes on. So Ula and Marco are there. Katja is born.

Yes.

You girls play with her like a living doll.

That's right.

And what other major events are occurring at this time, because it's wartime, but it doesn't seem like much of the war has come to you.

No. There was a woman in the neighborhood who owned a radio. So then she know if Mussolini was going to talk on the radio. She calls all the neighbors to come at a certain time at her house to listen to Mussolini talk.

And what are some of the things you heard him say?

That we're going to be victorious. We were going to build a train from Rome to Berlin, one direct train.

One direct.

Direct. Roma-Berlino, Roma-Berlino. That was the name of the train.

Did any more Jews come to San Donato.

Huh? Did any more Jews come to San Donato after the first one?

The first group of Jews that came to San Donato were about 17 or 18, and they were mostly women.

OK.

After that group, a couple more came down.

Oh, really?

Yeah, but not in such a great group.

OK. And Marco and Ula, they were part of the first group?

Yes.

OK, and Leon and the other young man, they--

I don't know if they were part of the first group, but they started to come to the house to talk with Marco. And we found out that Leon was Polish, and Misha was Polish also. Misha was a veterinarian.

A veterinarian?

A veterinarian.

So did he do anything? Did he go and help with animals?

He was afraid. They were not supposed to work.

OK.

They were taking a chance.

You say that they got some money. They got a stipend. How would they get that stipend?

Through the city hall.

So they would go to the city hall?

They had to go to city hall every morning to sign some papers.

OK.

Mussolini wanted everybody to sign their names to make believe that they were in town-- that they had not escaped.

OK, so this was the method of internment.

Right.

All right, and did any of them escape? Did any of them--

No. They didn't even try to, no.

OK.

They didn't try to.

And was there more of a military presence in the town as time goes on?

As time went on, there was, yes, Germans.

When did the Germans come?

When did they come?

Mm-hmm.

When everything was going on.

So would this be 1943 or 1944?

Yeah, '43, '44.

OK.

Yeah. OK, one thing I wanted to clarify for myself, Ula, was that her full name or was that her nickname?

It was what?

Ula, her name, was that her--

Ursula.

Ursula was her full name.

Yes.

OK, and Ula was her nickname.

Tenenbaum was the name of the husband, so she took that name.

OK.

I don't know if she had a--

A maiden name, OK. They were married, when they got to you.

They were married.

Already, OK. Did you know any of the other internati? Did you know any other of those who came.

Misha was a veterinarian.

Yeah.

And--

Leon?

Leo was a carpenter.

OK, did you know any others who came with them?

No, these are the ones that they used to come to see Marco.

OK, was there a lady named Marguerite Bloch that you met?

Is what?

Marguerite Bloch Does that say any--

I heard of Marguerite Bloch, and she was in my town for a little while.

OK. Did you ever see her?

I saw her.

Did you meet her and talk to her?

No/ I just saw her in town. Somebody pointed to me that's Marguerite Bloch.

And why did they point her out to you? Was there something--

Because she was Jewish.

OK. Was there something about her? Was she a famous person?

I read a book about it. I don't remember now too much about it, yeah. She was the mistress of a book writer.

I believe it was Kafka.

Kafka, yes.

Franz Kafka. Yeah.

And they had a child together. She tried to save the child. I don't know if she did it or not.

But she came to San Donato. Then from San Donato, she went to Rome. And then we lost track of her. Was she captured?

Do you know? I don't know.

I don't know.

I don't know. Was there anybody in San Donato who she was particularly close with?

To her?

Yeah, to Marguerite Bloch.

I really don't know.

You don't know. OK, because someone told me she had a confidant.

She what?

She had someone that she trusted with information. You don't know about that?

No.

OK, OK. So when did-- did the Italian government continue existing as this is going on? Mussolini is still giving speeches? You're still gathered by the radio, and listen to them and things? Did he ever talk about the Jews? Did Mussolini ever say anything about the Jews?

I can't recall that. I remember somebody saying they are the enemy of the country, the Jews.

Somebody official?

Somebody official.

OK.

They are the enemy of the country. But I don't remember where it came from. That I don't remember.

OK.

But they talked about the Jews are the enemy of the country.

Over the radio?

Over the radio.

OK. How did people respond to that when they heard it?

Some believed it, some didn't. It's always like that.

Yeah.

So there were people, even in San Donato, who would say, oh probably.

Probably.

Do you know about when Mussolini falls from power? Do you--

What year?

Yeah.

La Marcia su Roma. That was 19-- 1924, I think.

No, there would be a long time before the war. It's written here that it's in July '43.

'43?

Yeah. Did life change for you in San Donato in July, that year, when Mussolini falls from power?

No.

No.

You know, we had no communication.

OK.

If it wasn't for this woman, if she had an old radio, if she didn't call us to listen-- or maybe she didn't listen to the radio either, we wouldn't know. The newspaper was one every week. And just my grandfather bought it.

Yeah, the one that-- probably your grandfather was amongst the few people who bought it. Yeah. When did the Germans come? How did they come to--

To round up?

Yeah, to Italy. I mean, first--

To round up the Jews?

Well, did they come just for that? Or did they come to San Donato because they're occupying Italy?

Oh, I see what you mean. Yeah. Well, we were not too far from Monte Cassino.

Monte Cassino?

Yeah, Monte Cassino. We were-- and also, the front was only 50 miles away from San Donato.

Oh, I see.

We were very close.

So you started to see a lot of German soldiers?

We saw a lot of Germans. Two of them came inside the house and took two rooms. The rooms in front of the house, they'd just them all. They were the kind of people, if they needed something, they'd just take it. They didn't ask anybody, can I have it.

Well, when they took those rooms, were Marco and Ula and Katja in the house.

Well, Marco and Katja were in the back of the house. This, we had a couple of rooms on the front-- the one we used, and there was an empty one. They used the empty one. They came and sleep in there, they drank. They used to boil red wine and drink it by the bottle.

Really?

Well, because they knew the next day they were going to the front, and they knew that more or less they would not come back.

Did they come back?

A lot of them, no.

The ones who were in your house.

Oh, they didn't go. They didn't go, no. They were smart. My mother told me, you stay right here. When they came to round up the Jewish people.

Well, what I'm asking right now, when the Germans came into your house--

Yeah.

--and some of them were in the house. Marco and Ula were they in the house as well?

OK, the house was divided by a room-- by a corridor.

OK.

And they were in the back of the house with the doors closed. So they didn't even know that these Germans were in the house.

And the Germans didn't know that they were in the house.

No.

Did this last a long time?

Not too long, no, because Cassino, the front, they were killing Germans left and right.

OK, OK.

They used to go five or six of them, or seven, come back in green bags.

The Germans?

The Germans. OK, so when the Germans arrive in San Donato, was it all at once, or was it in waves?

It was in waves.

It was in waves? Yeah? Was the town full of German soldiers?

I wouldn't say full, but there were a lot of them.

There were a lot. OK, and how did they treat the townspeople.

They did well. A lot of them were highly educated. They didn't want to fight anymore. They did it well with the people, yeah.

So they weren't so bad. No, they weren't so bad, except toward the Jews.

OK, so tell me about that. Was there a special group that came to round up the Jews?

It was morning-- early morning.

OK.

And we heard trucks broke into town. And the trucks stopped in the center of the town, which we called the piazza.

OK.

And they got out of the trucks, and with microphones as to say, "you Jews that are hiding. Come out. We have stuff for you.

We're going to take you back home. We're going to give you money to buy stuff. Don't be afraid." And they believed it.

There were Jews who believed this.

Yes, and they came out. And they got into trucks, and we never saw them again. When the news came to Marco and Ula, Mama said to Marco and Ula, you two, run up on the mountains and don't look back.

But they're going to give us stuff. They're going to give us back-- they're going to take us back to our house. But mother said to them don't believe it. I don't believe it. My mother knew.

So Marco and Ula also thought that this was a real thing? That they would get things?

This was a real thing.

They believed this.

Marco and Ula did not believe them, but they were like this until my mother said run. Both of you run up on the mountains and don't come back.

We're going to bring you food. We're going to bring your blankets. We're going to bring your water.

Was this summertime or wintertime?

It was spring.

So it wasn't that bad in the mountains.

It wasn't that bad, but it wasn't that warm either.

OK. Now, when they run up in the mountains, was there some place for them to sleep? Or was it on the earth-- on the ground?

On the ground.

On the ground.

They lived like nomads.

OK. And was there a set place that they ran to, or they just ran.

They followed the trail. There was a trail.

OK.

They followed a trail, yeah, so the people could find them.

OK, and who would bring them food?

The people from the town.

And did any of-- I mean, who would bring food to Marco and Ula?

Oh, they were in our house. Whatever we ate, they ate.

OK, but when your mother told them to run into the woods, and they run, later, who brings them food?

Then the town people knew what was going on. And they brought food.

OK, so it wasn't like you would bring food out for Marco and Ula.

No, all the town people.

All the townspeople did. Were there other people in the forests, too, or just the Jews?

There were other people.

So what kind of other people were hiding in the forests?

What can I say? People if they had, like, food. They were hiding it from-- I don't remember exactly. What I'm saying, it might not be true.

OK, I understand. I was wondering whether there were communists, for example, in the woods.

We didn't talk about communists in those days.

OK.

We had enough going on.

OK. This is true. Absolutely true. So about how long did Marco and Ula stay--

Until the end of the war, which took a few months, because this was the spring.

Of '44.

Of '44.

OK, and was it in early April?

Yes.

You think it was in early April '44?

Yes, yes.

OK. Would you have an idea of when in April it might have been?

The date?

Yeah.

I think it's in the book. I don't remember now.

OK, we'll take a look at the books later and see.

Yeah. Is there a place called Sora?

Yes.

What is Sora?

It's a nice little town.

OK, and is it a town up in the mountains?

No.

Where is that, then?

It's in the plain. It's--

In the valley?

In the valley, away from San Donato, right in the valley.

OK, is it more isolated than San Donato?

No. There were more people there.

More people.

More people there. It was like a little city.

Did Marco and Ula ever go there.

No, they didn't take a chance.

They didn't take a chance. They stayed in the mountains. OK. Someone told me that Ula had a microscope.

What?

Someone told me that Ula got a microscope from somewhere.

He got a way what?

Microscope-- that she had a microscope.

She had. They wanted to sell, yeah.

And did she come to San Donato with that microscope?

She came to San Donato, because had hidden the microscope. And she wanted to sell it, but didn't get around to do it.

And when she first came to San Donato, did she come with her microscope?

I don't know.

OK. OK, OK. Do you know anything about something called the Vorga homestead? Vorga? Does that mean anything to you?

Vorga?

Yeah.

V- O- R- G- A-?

Correct.

Vorga.

OK. That's OK.

What happened there.

I don't know a colleague of mine wanted me to ask you if you know anything about that place-- a Vorga homestead. No? If you don't, it's all right. It's all right.

The name sounds familiar, but I don't know where it was. It was a little town?

It looks like it's the name of a farm or something like that.

A farm? Maybe a farm. They say homestead. So "homestead" generally means farm.

Sure.

But it doesn't mean anything to you?

No.

OK, OK. Now, was there any-- do you know anything about a man named Arturo?

Who?

Arturo.

Oh yes.

Who was Arturo?

[LAUGHS]

He was a man of the town.

OK.

He did not lay with his wife?

Uh-huh.

That was unusual.

[LAUGHS]

What did they say about him?

Well, they say that he was a hairdresser?

No, he was not a hairdresser.

He was not a hairdresser.

No, he was a clock fixer.

He was a clock fixer.

Yeah, Arturo Carcone. Is that the name?

I just have Arturo. But his last name--

Just Arturo and I don't know.

Carcone, huh?

Carcone.

Carcone. Somebody said that he was the person that Marguerite Bloch--

That what?

That Marguerite Bloch talked to. That he was her confidant.

Could be.

Could be. But you never knew that connection?

No.

OK, OK. Did you ever know of someone named Mila? Mila?

Mila. Of course.

So who is Mila. Mila was-- she was not Jewish, but she was also running from the Nazis. She was from Yugoslavia. So I don't know why she was running from them. She was not Jewish.

Where did she live in San Donato?

She lived in San Donato, not too far from our house.

Did you stay there long?

Well, with the family.

With the family that she was living with?

Right, yeah.

Well, did she live there throughout the war?

Huh?

Did she live there throughout the war?

I think so.

OK. And when the Germans came, did she stay there?

I don't remember what happened to her.

OK. Did she ever come to your house?

After the war?

No. During the war.

Sure.

She did? Who was her friend in your house?

Well, they always loved Marco. Everybody loved Marco, so they came to see him.

OK, so she was one of the people who would come to see him.

Yes, yes.

OK. I have a note here that says that she's the one who finally smuggled out the microscope.

She what?

She took the microscope and smuggled it out, whatever that microscope was doing.

What does that mean?

I don't know. It's a question that somebody sent me to ask you of whether or not Ula had gotten the microscope, and that-- you say she wanted to sell it. And then how did she get rid of it? And the note says that Mila is the one who smuggled it out.

Maybe. I don't know.

You don't know anything about this?

I know about the microscope. I know that they had one and they wanted to sell it. But how they went about it, I don't know.

OK, OK, OK. When Ula and Marco fled into the woods, they must have fled probably in 1943 or something? When-- or '44, excuse me, Katja was a couple of years old. Did she miss her parents?

No.

No?

We had to keep her to ourselves. We were afraid that she might be found out. Oh, no, no.

She didn't go with them?

No, and her parents wasn't-- I got the whole story about when the mother came to see her. But that would another story.

But tell me that story.

Huh?

Tell me that story.

As Ula was up in the mountains, so Katja was with us. One day, Ula got this urge to come down into the town to see her daughter.

To see Katja?

To see Katja. So she comes down from the mountain in daylight and knocks at the door of my house. Well, Katja was inside the house. My mother said to her, Ula, do you understand what you have done? You have put yourself, the life of Katja, the life of my daughter, in jeopardy.

Ula said, "I'm sorry, but I didn't think about it." "Well, you should have," mother. And my mother fainted because we had Katja inside the house, and now we have Ula inside the house.

What if somebody saw you, and reported you to the Gestapo? She says, oh, don't worry. Nobody saw me.

But she had been seen. And about half an hour later, there's a knock at our house. And they said, Gestapo soldier.

So Germans.

Germans looking for Ula. My mother said, I don't know where she is. She left this house a long time ago. And she was right there in the house. My mother fainted.

Did they enter the house, the Gestapo? No, they did not. That was lucky that he didn't enter the house.

And were you there at home when this happened?

Yes. And so he left. And so my mother called her neighbor, and says, we've got to get Ula out of here because the German soldier will come back. How are we going to do it? And this is what they thought of-- putting all up inside a harvest basket.

Harvest basket?

Yeah, I got the doll over there. You can see it. Bring it over here. Oh, I see. Inside of a basket like that?

I did this.

Uh-huh.

I made the doll.

You made the doll?

I made the doll, the dress, and everything.

OK, and so this was the kind of a basket that a woman would have on her head.

So yeah, Ula was inside the basket. And somebody had to carry it on top of their head.

So somebody helped her to put it on top of her head. Ula did not carry it. A neighbor carried it. A strong mountain woman put the basket on top of her head and carried her out of town. Tried to deceive the Germans that there was manure inside the basket, not Ula.

And it worked?

And it worked. OK. Was there any suspicion that Katja--

Katja and I remained in our house.

OK.

So what my mother did with Katja, she dressed her in peasant clothes and said, oh, my sister Silvana. Bring her to your grandparents. Bring Katja to your grandparents and tell them to hide her until we let her know when she can let her go. And so that Silvana did that.

And is this after all a came to your house?

Yes.

OK, so up until that time, whole Ula and her husband are in the mountains, Katja is staying with you.

Right.

And she's called Grazia now so that nobody would think of hearing Katja.

Exactly-- called Grazia.

OK, and this only happened-- she's only called Grazia after the Germans arrive.

Right.

OK, so for the first year of her life, she's not called that.

No.

OK, OK. How long did Katja stay with your grandparents?

Since she was born, she was with us until she was three years old, until the war was over.

OK.

And then her parents picked her up.

OK. Did Katja cry when her parents left?

No. She loved my mother. She loved my mother. My mother was her mother.

So she didn't feel--

She didn't feel like anything.

OK.

She didn't feel anything. She was at home.

OK. It's the world she knew. This was the world that she knew, was your mother's house. Yeah.

She was at home.

OK.

She didn't know what was going on.

She stayed with your grandfather?

Yes, up in his house for a few days. This is when the war was coming to an end.

OK.

And the Allied were in Cassino. Now, Cassino is about 15 miles away from San Donato. So the front was right there.

Well, that was a very terrific battle.

Oh yeah. It lasted for months.

Yeah.

And-- so what was I saying now?

Well, I was going to ask you about Monte Cassino and about the battle of it. San Donato had German soldiers, and you'd say some of them would come back and these body bags.

Yes.

Green I think you said they were.

Green.

Green. Did the Germans keep San Donato or were they pushed out of it?

Did they what?

Were they able to keep their base--

No, no, no, no. When they come back and green bags, they will put in the German trucks, and they were trucked back to Germany.

OK.

The body went back to Germany.

And when the Battle of Monte Cassino was taking place, is that when bombs were falling on the fields?

Is that what-- oh, they were bombing all over the place.

Really?

Oh yeah.

At that time?

Oh yeah.

So did that mean that you had to leave your house sometimes?

No. We were 15 miles away from it. We were up on the mountains. We stayed where we were, because to get out and to get on the road was very dangerous.

OK, and what about casualties from the other side-- from the Allied side?

Oh, we didn't know about them.

You didn't know about that?

No.

OK.

We were on the other side of the wider battle.

Was San Donato ever bombed? Was San Donato ever bombed itself?

Yes, we were bombed. Yes, not too much. But we were.

And who did that? Who did the bombing? Whose bombs were falling on San Donato?

See, because San Donato was built against a mountain, the airplanes could not fly over it, because they didn't have enough room to go around and fly back. So we were saved by the geography of the place.

I see.

See, your airplane had to have a certain amount of space to turn around. They couldn't, because otherwise, they would go right into the mountain. That's it.

Oh, I see. That's right. I didn't think of it that way.

Yeah.

Did you ever spend any time, though, in the basement--

Oh yes. Six months.

Six months in a basement?

Yes. In the basement of my house. There was about 12 of us. The whole neighborhood was in the basement.

Of your house?

Yes. Not the house where we were living The house next door to us. My grandfather had bought more property, so it was the house next to us. So the basement was down two stories.

I see. And why were you living in the basement?

Because of the bombing. Because of the bombing. So nevertheless, it was enough danger that you had to--

Right.

OK, OK. Were there people in Sunday or not though who were killed by bombs?

Wait what? Were there people in San Donato who lived there, local inhabitants, who were killed by the bombs.

A couple of women got killed because they went out on the fields. And they got killed, yeah. Two young women.

I see. Did you know them?

Yes.

Do you know their names.

I don't remember their names.

OK. OK, it's fine.

There weren't that many casualties because of the geography of the town.

Mm-hmm. Did the Germans-- when did they leave San Donato? Was it soon after--

Well, when Cassino collapsed, and then the Americans right Freda. The Americans went right through Cassino. And they started their march toward Rome.

Do you remember seeing the Americans?

Yes.

What did they look like?

They looked like nice young men.

[LAUGHS]

Did they march on foot or were they in tanks?

See, when they arrived in San Donato, the Germans already left. So they were walking around, looking at the town. They were, what's this, what's that?

And the Americans, I have a note here that says they arrive on June 4, 1944.

Right, that's correct.

OK. So did they arrive by truck?

Yes. By truck.

Any tanks?

No tanks.

No tanks, but trucks.

Trucks, yeah.

Did they establish a base in San Donato?

Well, not too long, because they were on their march to Rome.

OK.

See, we were only about, I don't know, 50 miles from Rome. We were not too far from it. Rome was the place where they wanted to be. So yeah.

But does that mean that, for you, the war is over?

We figured the war was over for us. Oh yes.

OK.

We started wearing costumes, like he's wearing.

OK. More colorful clothes.

And dancing in the piazza.

[LAUGHS]

Really, yeah? And where were Marco and Ula at this point?

Where what?

Where was Marco and Ula? Where were they?

Oh, they were so happy. They had Katja with them, and they were around.

Oh, really? So they had come back?

Yes, they come back. Oh yes, absolutely. They had to take their daughter with them.

Yeah.

Yeah. Oh, they were so happy.

And when they came back, did they come back right when the Americans arrived or a little later?

Yes.

Right then?

Right then. Immediately.

Really?

Immediately.

OK.

They were waiting so much for the Americans. We were all waiting for the Americans. Not just them. We were all waiting for the Americans.

And they gave us the white bread-- a loaf of the white bread. And we opened up the loaf and we took the bread. And the bread was going like this.

[LAUGHS]

I said, what kind of a bread is this? This is not wheat bread.

[LAUGHS]

It was a different kind, huh?

Yeah.

And did the food situation get better?

After the war?

Oh, after the Americans come.

Sure. Yeah? What else did I want to ask about this? Did Marco and Ula stay still in San Donato with Katja.

Just a little short while. Then they moved to Rome.

OK.

Yeah, they moved to Rome. And that's where they had been right along.

Ever since?

Ever since. Now they're dead. Marco and Ula are dead, but Katja is there. And Marcelle was just telling me that she had a conversation on the telephone with Katja.

Katja comes and goes. She comes here. We go to Rome. We see each other all the time.

So you have maintained ties with Katja.

Oh, absolutely. She's our sister.

Oh. And does she remember her first couple of years living with you?

She remembers. She remembers my mother so well. Yeah. Oh, she's a darling.

So after the Americans come, how does life go on for you and your mother and your sisters? What happens?

After the Americans come, then Marco and Ula came out from their hiding.

Yeah.

And they stole their daughter from us.

[LAUGHTER]

The nerve of some people.

I know. What a nerve.

What a nerve.

[LAUGHTER]

We stayed in contact right along, yeah.

OK. Did you yourselves remain in San Donato?

Huh?

Did you and your mother and your sister continue living in San Donato?

Yes.

For how long?

Well, the war ended-- what year? 19--

'45.

'45. I came to this country in 1947.

That soon? How is it that you were able to come so quickly?

I was an American citizen.

How were you an American citizen? Really? Truly?

When I was born, my grandfather was an American citizen even though he lived in Italy.

Your mother's father?

My father's father.

Your father's father. The one who had the second wife?

Right.

OK.

So-- I forgot what I say.

OK, so your grandfather on your father's side was an American citizen.

My grandfather was an American citizen. He had been going back and forth to America selling wool blankets.

I see.

And so because I was a granddaughter, I was-- how do I say this? Marcelle, help me out.

Are you also an Italian citizen?

I had a right.

To American citizenship?

To American citizenship, right, because first of all, I was under 21. Secondly, he was my direct grandfather. And so I went to Rome to the place there and showed the passport of my grandfather. Right away, they gave me one of for myself.

Oh, I see. I see.

That simple.

So you had that right, and so did your sisters.

Yes, as long as we applied before the age of 21.

Did your mother have this right?

My mother had the right of her husband.

I see.

Because they were never divorced.

Oh my goodness. Never divorced?

No.

When she got that letter from his wife, I guess-- his second one, was she still living in San Donato.

Yes.

OK. Did your mother want to come to the United States?

Yes.

Did she.

Yes. She wanted to be with us. We were all here by that time.

OK, so did you and your sisters leave together, or did you come one by one?

My sisters and I, Marcelle's mother and I--

Silvana.

--lived together until we got married.

All right. Did you leave Italy together?

No. I came first, then Silvana came here after. Pompea came with me because she had married an American citizen, and so she could travel with her husband. So we came together.

OK. Was he a soldier?

No.

No.

He had been to this country, and he got his citizen papers.

So he was from Italy--

Yes.

--originally. OK, and when you came to the United States, where did you come to? What part of the United States?

We came to my uncle in Quincy.

Massachusetts?

An uncle, they provided us with the money for the passport-- well, not for the passport. That was free. For the voyage. And they said that we could stay at her house.

And was this an uncle on your mother's side?

Father.

So he was an uncle on your father's side.

Yes. So this is another--

Wait a minute. Let me correct myself. It was the aunt who was on my father's side.

OK. The aunt was on your-- so was she his sister?

Yes.

Did she know about his other life?

Oh yes.

OK. Did she try to make a connection between you and him or not?

No.

Did she ever talk to you about him?

No.

And did you stay with her long?

A couple of years.

How was that for you, because--

It was good. Yeah.

Was she a nice lady?

She was nice. Yeah. She drank a little too much, but she was OK.

[LAUGHS]

Well, she got you a visa.

She liked to have her cocktail.

[LAUGHTER]

She was nice.

OK. So did you stay in the Boston area then for--

No, this was Quincy.

I know. Did you stay in this general Massachusetts area?

Yes.

Ever since?

Yes. I think so.

OK. Did you ever go back to San Donato.

Oh yes.

All right.

Many times.

And when your mother came over, who did she live with?

What?

When your mother came, who did she live with?

Oh, Silvana and I had a little apartment, there was a room for Mama. She lived with us.

In Quincy?

In Brookline. yeah, you think this house is beautiful, you should see-- huh, Silvana? Where is she? Where is Marcelle? What a house we were in.

Yeah? It was a nice one?

Oh, what a mansion. I've never lived in a place like that since then.

[LAUGHS]

So this was a house that you had a small apartment in Brookline?

No, we were working. And this woman we were working with, she knew. She was Jewish.

She had escaped tragedies. She never talked about her husband or her son. Must have been tragic what she went through.

She was in this house. She says, Maria, dear, the first floor apartment is for rent. Why don't you take it when your mother comes? You'll be ready.

And we did. Silvana and I got the apartment on the first floor. It was beautiful. Marcelle, do you remember how beautiful it was?

I haven't seen it yet.

You've never seen it?

Not yet.

Oh, Marcelle.

This is just to let the camera know that a lot--

We've got to go and knock at the door. They'll let us in.

Maria's talking--

--I lived in this place in 1950.

[LAUGHS]

Maria is talking to her niece Marcelle, who is behind the camera. Just to let everybody know who hears this interview that you have your three children here-- Marcelle and her husband Paul, and your friend Faith, who are all here with us, listening to you tell us this story. So when you moved to the United States, do you keep up contact, then, with the Tenenbaums-- the Tenenbaum family?

To some-- oh yeah. Oh, absolutely.

Did you ever see them again?

Yes.

How many times?

Oh, I don't know. Katja came back and forth I don't know how many times. Ula came back once. Marco never came.

Marco do not want to leave Italy. He just loved Italy. And he said, you people want to go, go ahead. I'm staying right here.

[LAUGHS]

Really?

Right.

So when you left for the United States, you said goodbye to them, too?

Yes.

When you were in Rome. OK.

Yes. We said goodbye.

Did you travel from Rome by boat, or did you travel from Genoa? How did you come to the US? By boat or by--

By boat. Yeah.

Where did the boat sail from?

New York.

OK. From Italy-- what part of Italy did it sail from.

I'm not understanding what you're saying.

OK, when you left Italy, you came to the United States by boat.

By boat.

Where did it sail from in Italy.

Oh, Naples.

From Naples. OK, OK. And it was in 1947.

Right.

Was it a passenger boat or was it a military boat?

No, it was a passenger.

It was a passenger boat. OK, OK. How many children do you have?

Four.

Four. OK.

Two boys and two girls.

What are their names?

Peter, Paul, Anita, Marisa.

And did you tell them about your experiences during the war.

I don't know if they want to know about it.

[LAUGHTER]

But as they were growing up, did you tell them about your wartime experiences?

We don't talk too much about stuff like that. But they know now. I'm glad they came.

OK, OK. Well, we're coming close to the end of our interview.

Yes. And I wonder if you have any final words you would like to share with those people who are going to hear your story later on. What would you like to tell them? What would you like them to understand about what you saw, what you experienced?

Oh boy. This is hard to tell. You've got to trust in human nature. You better see things firsthand, not just listen. You'd better know firsthand what's going on.

And humans are good, unless something is put into their minds that makes them no good. I don't know. What else could I tell?

Well, those are important thoughts. Those are very important points.

Yeah.

That people should not necessarily believe everything they're told.

Do not believe everything they are told. You've got to go to the source, and then make up your own mind. People by nature are good.

OK.

And they try to help other people at the same time.

Which sounds very much like your mother was that kind of person.

Yes, she was that kind of a person.

Yeah. Thank you, Mrs. Maria.

Well, you're very welcome. I hope I was--

You were wonderful. Wonderful.

Now, after you leave, I'll remember all the things I haven't said.

That always happens. That always happens.

[LAUGHTER]

And in one interview, we can never capture everything.

No.

So not to worry about it.

No.

But thank you--

Some days, you seem to remember so much. The next day, you don't remember as much.

That's the way it is. But you have-- thank you. We have gotten a really nice picture from you today.

I'm glad. I hope you got something out of it.

Yes, we did.

Now, do you have the Katja book?

Now we do. Now, let me finish the interview.

Oh, I'll give you one.

OK. I would like your autograph on it.

OK.

OK? So for right now I will say this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Maria Cardarelli Puzzanoghero on September 29, 2019, in Newton, Massachusetts. Thanks again.

[APPLAUSE]

Wonderful wonderful.

Well, thank you.