

Adriana Pacifici
April 8, 1994
RG-50.106*0006.00.01

Abstract

Adriana was born in Rome, Italy where she was hidden in a convent and served as a partisan during World War II carrying messages.

Tape 1 of 1

00:00 Adriana was born in Rome, Italy on July 28, 1923. Her family consisted of her mother, her father, and an older sister, Maria. Her father was born in Northern Italy and her mother in Rome. Her father had a lumber firm with two brothers-in-law. They were middle class and lived in an old section near the former ghetto. Her mother's father, Giuseppe was very observant. Her mother was the youngest child and she had five brothers and they lived comfortably. Her father was a merchant who traveled from town-to-town and met his Catholic wife in a convent. She ran away and they married and had five children. Their town was destroyed in an earthquake and they lost many relatives. Although the grandmother was Catholic, the children were brought up Jewish. Adriana lived in an apartment near the synagogue. There were a few Jews in the apartment building and most of her friends were not Jewish. She had no problems with anti-Semitism until the Fascists came.

05:00 The family practiced Judaism in Italian-style by going to synagogue, observing Passover and the High Holidays, and becoming Bat Mitzvah but not keeping kosher. The Rabbi came to their house to teach Hebrew to her and her sister in preparation for their Bat Mitzvah. She recalls dressing in white for her Bat Mitzvah and taking part in the service that her Catholic relatives attended. The family spoke Italian. Her Fascist education began early as she was required to join the Fascist party in order to attend school. In 1935, at age 12, she enrolled in the Gymnasium where she studied Latin and Greek. Neither she nor her parents had any incidents with anti-Semitism until that time. Her husband had experienced an incident in school so ran away, and the parents reported it to the teacher. Although educated in separate schools, she was friends with her future husband during their childhood. Sanctions began around 1938 to 1939 with the war against Ethiopia. Jews could not attend public school, have a maid, own a radio, and marriage with a Catholic was forbidden.

10:00 Earlier, in 1936 to 1937 they would go to their father's birthplace in the summer to visit relatives. The changes in 1938 puzzled her. Her family did not want to be baptized nor leave the country. They decided to stay and make the best of it. Jews from other countries came to live nearby and attended her synagogue. These people warned them of trouble, but her family felt that giving money to the synagogue was sufficient. One of the newcomers married her cousin. Her family felt that the trouble Jews had in other countries would not

happen in Italy. She enrolled in a Gymnasium with Jewish teachers who had formerly taught at the university so had good experiences with them. After a year, she had to leave school and hide. She studied English with nuns in case she needed to know the language in the future. Adriana felt rejected as she could not study at the public school but thought it just a temporary situation.

15:00 Her mother never worked and her father was able to work during this period. The Nazis occupied Rome and asked the Jews for gold as a bribe to leave them alone. She donated her Bat Mitzvah ring and her parents donated their wedding rings. Nevertheless, the Germans got their names from the synagogue and on October 16th went to the homes of the Jews. Her sister was pregnant at the time. They heard the machine guns and woke up. A neighbor warned them to run away as Jewish families on the street were being taken away. The neighbor, Carmela Famaguera (?), a pharmacist, was the one who warned her so now she visits the son when she is in Rome. The men were already in hiding as they knew it would not be safe for them in the apartment.

20:00 A Catholic cousin sheltered her sister. First Adriana and her mother fled to a friend's home but they were already gone. Their cousin did not answer her phone so they took a trolley to the hospital where her father was in recovery. All seemed normal on the streets as they did not witness Jews being taken. There was only room at the hospital for her mother so she slept at their maid's house and later went to a convent. She was 18 at the time and had not taken any belongings with her when she fled her home. She was blond and did not look Jewish so felt safe as she traveled the city.

25:00 Adriana did not have proper ID papers so went to see Father Phillips, a Dominican priest, who corrected her last name from Funero to Fumero to make it appear less Jewish. Her father called his architect friend who had recently built a hostel for women near the University. The Mother Superior accepted both Adriana and her sister but they were taught prayers as they desired to convert them. The cousins no longer sheltered the sister as posters indicated that it is illegal to shelter Jews. Adriana felt the need for prayer as it was comforting. It was November and December and the rooms were cold but comfortable. Audrianna's apartment had been confiscated and a family from Southern Italy was living there. Her helpful neighbor took all the clothes and personal belongings and placed them in packages which Adriana picked up from time-to-time at the pharmacy. She remained at the convent for nine months.

30:00 During the day she visited her parents and her boyfriend. She had a 6 PM curfew. Through her friends she got into contact with the Christians for Freedom, a Partisan group, and became their courier. They met for coffee. She did not feel that her life was in danger. She would speak Italian to the German soldiers. At the end of '43 and early '44, she heard the Partisans shooting continuously and the Allies landed in Anzio. They had two bad air raids as they lived near the Jewish and Catholic cemeteries where the Germans kept their

supplies. She saw airplanes dropping bombs which made the windows break. The nuns were getting nervous and did not want the sister's baby to be born there. The brother-in-law's family rented an apartment by using a false name, so her sister had a home and gave birth to Stefan in April 1944.

35:00 For nine months Adriana worked for the Partisans during the day and at night got together with the others in the convent and sewed clothes and made socks from yarn. They had sufficient food though it had worms. Sometimes she got bread and cheese from the hospital where her parents stayed. Her father left his wound open to show he needed to be hospitalized. His Catholic accountant kept the business going although they were not busy. Adriana came down with typhoid fever and the family doctor, an elderly Catholic, helped her and brought her medicine. This was her second bout with typhoid fever.

40:00 Her father was a socialist so it bothered her to wear a Fascist uniform, sing Fascist songs and recite Fascist poems even as young as 7 and 8 years old. Earlier Mussolini was friendly with Jews so they did not worry until he made an alliance with the Germans. In '44 the Partisans got organized and killed 32 SS Germans, and in retaliation the Germans killed 120 Partisans including Giuseppe. The Germans were all around the city which scared the citizens. After Anzio and the allies advanced, she went to her sister but was not allowed to stay.

45:00 One could see the Germans were defeated as they were bleeding and drinking. She returned to the convent and stayed with a Jewish lady as she was scared to be alone. In the morning she saw the Americans had arrived. They were liberated. She spoke to them in English and was given chocolate and gum. A New Zealand soldier brought food from her father's client in Southern Italy. She and her parents returned home and cleaned their apartment. They learned some good and some bad news about relatives. Audrianna's future husband had fled to the US in 1939 and returned and in 1947 they married. Her wartime boyfriend followed the Allies North and she left him. In Italy the custom is that girls don't work when they get married so her life was difficult once her husband died. She had married in a Temple in Italy and they moved to California in September 1947. In a year and a half she had twins and visited her mother in Italy for three years.

50.00 Then she lived in New York for 21 years and recently returned to California. She had a restaurant in New York. The War influenced her life in two ways: one was lack of education. After her husband died, she took classes in the Queen College Italian Department which her brother-in-law headed in order to train to be a teacher of Italian. She had four children and Robert was 30 so decided it would be too difficult an undertaking. The second way the War affected her was to feel more religious although she does not attend synagogue. She feels honored to give this interview. She still has nightmares of the death of her cousin and two children. She did not convert despite the nun's influence. She feels that all her children kept the faith even though some did not marry Jews. She visits

Italy but only desires to live in the US where her children live and all are professional. She does not receive reparations. She talks more of her experiences now as she wants her children and grandchildren to have the knowledge.

55:00 Audrienna feels the Jews went like sheep as they did not have guns and were too innocent. She believes that Israel is right to defend itself. She is proud of being Jewish. She wants the world to know that Italian Jews suffered the same as other Jews in the Holocaust.

57:00