

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Adriana Pacifici

April 8, 1994

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PREFACE

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Transcribed by Aimée Suhie, National Court Reporters Association.

ADRIANA PACIFICI

April 8, 1994

Question: The following is an interview of Adriana Pacifici. It is being conducted on April 8, 1994, on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. What is your full name?

Answer: My name is Adriana Funaro Pacifici, and I was born in Rome, Italy, on July 28, 1923.

Q: Who were the members of your family?

A: Yes. My mother, Sara Del Monte Funaro; my father, Pacifici Funaro; and my sister, Maria.

Q: Was your sister older or younger than you?

A: Yes, she was two and a half years older than I.

Q: And were your parents born in Italy?

A: Yes, they were both born in Italy. My father was from a region called Abruzzi; it's in the north of Italy, and my mother was born in Rome, yes.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father was in the lumber business. He had a firm with his two brother-in-laws.

Q: And how would you describe your family, middle class or upper class?

A: Middle class.

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

A: I lived in Trastevere; it's a very old section of Rome, right in the center of Rome and not far away from the ghetto where my mother's family was coming from.

Q: What do you know about your mother's family, any information that you know about them?

A: Yes. My grandfather -- Giuseppe was his name -- he was very religious man, and he brought up all his children, you know, in the Jewish faith. And there were -- my mother was the youngest, and then she had five brothers. And they lived comfortably in this section of Rome.

Q: What can you tell us about your father's family?

A: My father family instead -- his mother was -- her name was Maria Svizzero. She

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was Catholic. She was in a convent in this region of Abruzzi, and she met my grandfather -- name was Ettore Funaro. He was a merchant, and he -- you know, he was going from town to town selling merchandise. And he met this young girl in the convent, they fell in love and she ran away and they got married, and they had five children. And they lived in the small town called Avezzano which unfortunately was destroyed by earthquake, so my father lost all his family in this earthquake. And also his grandmother was Catholic, but she had decided to bring her children, the boys in the Jewish faith and the girls in the Catholic faith. So my grandfather was Jewish, and my father also was brought up in the Jewish faith.

Q: Did you live right in -- within the city or on the outskirts?

A: No. I lived in the city, not far away from where the synagogue is in Rome, yes.

Q: And did you live in an apartment?

A: An apartment.

Q: Who were your neighbors? Were they Jewish or non-

Jewish? A: Some -- Some Jewish family, yes, yes.

Q: Was it predominantly non-Jewish?

A: Predominantly non-Jewish, yes.

Q: And -- So your playmates were non-Jewish? The children that you played with?

A: Mostly, yes.

Q: Any problems that you noticed with your neighbors when you were a young child?

A: No, no, never until, you know, the racial law started.

Q: But when you were little --

A: Which was later on, yes. But when I was little, no, no. I don't think the Italians are anti-Semite, you know, as a nature.

Q: How religious was your family?

A: The Italian style, you know. We used to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach. But we were not kosher, no. In Italy, I don't think hardly any Jewish family keep kosher in the homes.

Q: Did you go to synagogue?

A: Yes, yes. I by -- bat mitzvah, yes. And I had religious education. I got it in Hebrew; you know, the rabbi used to come to our house and teach us Hebrew and prepare for the bat mitzvah.

Q: This is you and your sister?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you describe your bat mitzvah? Or do you remember?

A: Yes. It was a lovely bat mitzvah, dressed in white, with curly hair and, you know, very pretty. And my father gave a big party. Also our Catholic relatives came, and it was a very nice celebration, yes.

Q: And did you take part in the service?

A: Yes. On Saturday morning I had to, you know, go to temple and for the full ceremony, yes.

Q: What language did you speak in in your home?

A: Italian. Only Italian, yes.

Q: And what was your first school that you went to?

A: My first school was in the neighborhood, in the same neighborhood, in Trastevere. And then later on when we moved to another house, I went to the school which was built during the Fascist time, so it had a Fascist title, was called October 28 from the date, you know, the Fascists entered Rome. And that's where, you know, my Fascist education started because in order to enroll in a school, you had to belong to the Fascist party.

Q: So you were in your first school for how long?

A: Two years. And then I continue my elementary education in this other school.

Q: And what else did you study in the other school?

A: It was a regular elementary school, yes. Then when I went to the gymnasium, then we started to study Latin and Greek.

Q: How old were you when you went to the --

A: Twelve years old.

Q: And so that was in 1935?

A: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Q: And up to that time, up to the time that you were 12 years old, did you have any unpleasant experiences --

A: No.

Q: -- because you were Jewish?

A: No, never. No. It was very well accepted.

Q: Did your parents have any experiences that they told you about?

A: No, never. Never. As you know, I was brought up in a family that was half Catholic, so I never noticed really.

Q: Okay. It's 1935, and you're now in the gymnasium.

A: Yes.

Q: And any changes there, anything that you --

A: Personally, not. But my husband, for instance, he was -- you know, he had a very, very bad experience with one of his friend in school, and he decide not to go to school for a while, and he ran away, ran away to Naples without telling his family. And, of course, he was punished by his parents, and then they found out the reason so you know, they went to the teacher and told her about. But that's how it started really.

Q: Did you know your husband at that point?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Oh.

A: We were -- We grew up together.

Q: So was he in the same school with you where you have --

A: No. My brother-in-law was, but not my husband, no.

Q: So where he had a problem was in a different school?

A: Yes.

Q: And you had no problem?

A: Yeah.

Q: Anything that you remember from 1935 that was of importance?

A: Well, you know, the start of the Abyssinian -- the war against Ethiopia, and that's how our trouble started, the sanctions, you know, from England and that's -- was a very difficult period of our lives, yes.

Q: And how aware were you of all this that was going on?

A: I was pretty aware because it was very important to us, yes.

Q: And your personal life changed when? When did you first notice the first change in your personal life?

A: Well, when I had to leave my school, you know. We couldn't have any maid in the house.

Q: When was this?

A: That was in 1938, '39. We had to get rid of our radio; marriages, you know, with the Catholic were forbidden and especially the school, you know, I had to go to a special school that was organized for Jewish children.

Q: But in 1935, '36, '37 your life went on as usual?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do in those years aside from school?

A: Well, we used, you know, go to my father's place of birth, you know, during the summer, spend time with our relatives, vacation. And it was pretty normal.

Q: It was a normal --

A: Yes.

Q: -- life? And you mixed with Jews and non-Jews?

A: Yes.

Q: Friends?

A: It didn't make any difference to us, yes.

Q: And then came 1938, you said --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and these changes began?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember what your feelings were in the very beginning in 1938 as a young child? You were only --

A: It puzzled me. It puzzled me. I couldn't understand why, you know, because I'd never noticed a difference before.

Q: Did you talk this over with your parents, the changes?

A: Well, yes, but we decide, you know, to stay in our faith; we didn't want to do anything of baptize or things like that. And we didn't want to leave our country. You know, we were very Italian, and we decide to stay and make the best of it, never thinking that, you know, the worst would come. But then Jews from other countries

started to come, and they used to go to our synagogue. And, in fact, one day they rang our bell, you know, and I opened the door, and I was very scared because this person became, you know, very nasty toward me, say that he needed help badly and that we were blind not to see the danger, that we would go through the same thing. And so I told my mother and my father, and they say, you know, we're giving our help to the synagogue, and these people probably are exaggerating.

Q: When was this? Do you remember when this was?

A: Well, we were still in our house, so must have been before 1940, yes, mm-hmm, 1939, '38, 1939, yes.

Q: Any other experiences in 1938 that you remember?

A: This I remember very clearly because it was really shocking to me. But we knew, we knew -- In fact I have a cousin who was from Poland; you know, many were coming. And one of them married one of my cousin, for instance. And so they used to tell us a story what was happening in a way.

Q: And did you and your family believe what you were hearing?

A: Yes, but we thought that that would happen only in other country, not in Italy. That's what we thought.

Q: And then you said you had to leave your school?

A: Yes.

Q: And where did you go?

A: For one year we went to the school that was organized in Rome and --

Q: What kind of school was it?

A: It was the gymnasium in the lyceum; that was what it called, you know, the high school. And we had Jewish teachers, you know; they also had to leave the university, so they became our teachers. They were very skilled, and it was a very positive experience for me. But then unfortunately I had to leave it because, you know, we had to hide so there was --

Q: So you were in this Jewish gymnasium for how long?

A: Only one year.

Q: One year?

A: Yes, mm-hmm.

Q: Did you sense any apprehension among the other students in this new school?

A: It was a very, very happy experience for us. We finally found, you know, our friends -- Jewish friends. We had parties in the afternoon, you know, and were just enjoying being together.

Q: And you felt free to go to anybody's house still?

A: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: At that time?

A: Yes.

Q: No, no restrictions?

A: Yes, mm-hmm.

Q: Okay. So then the year passed, and then what happened?

A: And then I continue -- I went to -- just for to learn English in a private school just in case, you know, we should leave the country, my father thought it would be important for me to know another language. So I went to a private school.

Q: Was this a private Jewish school?

A: No, was nuns, in fact, was --

Q: And you were permitted to go?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Now, you and your parents were still living in your same apartment?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And you went to this school for how long?

A: Well, as long as we didn't have to hide so probably year and a half or two and then --

Q: But there was no problem that you as a young Jewish girl getting into the school?

A: No. These were French nuns in Rome. Also I went to the English nuns who have -- who give a certificate, you know, to learn English. That's where I went, yes.

Q: And they were very accepting?

A: Yes. We thought, you know, to go into a religious school wouldn't last much. And the public school we were not allowed.

Q: How did you feel as a young child not being allowed to go to public school? Was that very upsetting to you?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: What were your thoughts if you remember?

A: Well, I felt like, you know, rejection, yes, a rejection. And I thought that this would pass and that I would be able to go back, but I never did. And that changed my life completely.

Q: So you were in this school -- this school run by the nuns learning English?

A: Yes.

Q: And still living in your apartment?

A: Yes.

Q: With your parents?

A: Yes.

Q: And was your father still able to work?

A: Yes.

Q: So he was still going to work?

A: Yes.

Q: Did your mother go to -- was she -- did she work?

A: No, she never worked.

Q: She stayed home.

A: No.

Q: And then what happened? What was the next --

A: The next was, you know, when the Germans started to ask -- you know, the -- Rome was occupied, you know; meanwhile we had gone through all the -- you know, the changes, and Rome was occupied by the Nazi. After they got this relation of Badoglio and the king and -- And so they ask for -- you know, for gold.

Q: They asked the Jewish community?

A: The Jewish community telling us, you know, that if we would give 50 kilograms of gold, they will leave the Roman Jews alone, you know, and we would continue our

lives. And so in 36 hours we were able to collect the 50 kilograms of gold. It was said that the Pope, you know, Pacelli, had help us to fill, you know, the difference, but it wasn't true. We were able to do it all by ourselves. And -- but unfortunately, you know, they --

Q: So this was family jewelry?

A: Everything that we could get, yes. Yes, everything.

Q: Did you as a child have to give up anything --

A: Yes, yes. I gave up my bat mitzvah ring and things, you know, that I collected, yes. My family, they -- you know, their wedding rings, everything.

Q: Were you very upset as a child to do this?

A: Of course. But we were trying, you know, to save our lives, you know. We started with our lives; we had to do what they told us to do. There was no choice, so we had to do it. And -- but then, you know, they went to the synagogue and actually went to the synagogue, and evidently they got all our names, and they never kept their promise because on October 16th, that's -- you know, they came in each house.

Q: They came to your house?

A: Yes.

Q: And were you home?

A: I was home. You know, I was home with my mother and my sister. My sister was -- just got married, and she was four months pregnant. And in the morning at 6 o'clock they went all over the section of Rome called Trastevere with machine guns and -- Excuse me for a moment. This, you know, remembering makes me -- And we woke up, and our neighbor, such a nice person, she came to our door, she say, "Run, run because the Nazis, the SS are downstairs, and they're getting all the Jewish families, and I don't know what they're going to do with them." So we never had the chance to get dressed; we just ran out of the house. And we saw, saw the soldiers right at the corner of our building, but we ran. We ran away and --

Q: How big was your apartment building?

A: I wish I brought the picture with me. But it was, you know, like a apartment house. And there were about, I would say, three or four more Jewish family. And fortunately they didn't come up. I don't know why; maybe they didn't have our address or what, but they just stopped right in front of our house.

Q: And you looked out your window and saw them on the corner?

A: Yes. They took families I didn't know across the street.

Q: But they did not come into your building?

A: They didn't come in our -- in our house. They didn't.

Q: What was your neighbor's name who came to warn you?

A: Her name was Carmela Pellegrini; she was a pharmacist. She owned a pharmacy not far away from us. And when I go to Rome, I always go to say hello to her son because they have become our friends forever, yes.

Q: So it was you and your pregnant sister?

A: Yes.

Q: And your parents?

A: And -- no. My father -- My father realized, you know, that it was dangerous for the men to be in the house because they were collecting men to bring them to the war zone for labor.

Q: When did they start to do that?

A: They started soon after the collection of the gold, started right away. So the men were not in the house anymore; only the women were left in the house.

Q: And where was your father?

A: And my father decide to have a hernia operation; he had been needing it for a long time, so he thought this would be a good time to have it, you know, and stay in hiding. And that's where he was that morning.

Q: Of October?

A: Yes. October 16. My mother and I ran. And my sister -- one of our cousin who was Catholic had promised, you know, to shelter her if, you know, there was need, so she went there.

Q: Your sister went to her -- your Catholic cousin?

A: Yes, she did. And my mother and I first stopped to a friend's house, you know, where we used to live to see if they were home. But the house was empty already; they already taken them. In fact, they died.

Q: What do you mean where you used to live?

A: Before, before this apartment where we lived, you know.

Q: Oh, you had lived somewhere else?

A: Yes.

Q: Where?

A: The same section of Rome, not far away from us, yes. So we stopped there, and the house was empty; they already had gone, yes.

Q: And what did you do then?

A: So my mother took the telephone, and she thought of calling, you know, our cousin because she had told us that she would go back home. She was hiding, and she had decided to go back home because the children didn't like the hotel where she was staying. And she was already, you know, been taken out, so she wasn't there; she didn't answer. Then we got really, you know, scared, and we got into a trolley car, and we went to my father's hospital.

Q: Was there much confusion on the streets?

A: No, no.

Q: Was it quiet?

A: Everything was normal. Everything was normal, just, you know, we would see -- but we always used to see, you know, the SS going all over the city, so we didn't -- I didn't see any, you know, other Jews, you know, taken, no, I didn't fortunately.

Q: So you decided to go to the hospital?

A: Yes, yes. So we went to the hospital, and we knew, you know, the nun that was taking care of my father -- Suor Alfonsina was her name -- she was very, very nice. And she told my mother that she could stay but there was no room for me or for my sister; you know, was a small hospital room so --. So then my father, you know, tried to find a place. Meanwhile, the first few nights I slept all over I could. I slept in my maid's house; I slept in another convent; I slept wherever I could, you know.

Q: With your mother?

A: No, no, alone. My mother stayed in the hospital but --

Q: You were the one that had to --

A: Yes. I didn't know where to go.

Q: How did you feel being separated from your mother? Because you were how old then? You were --

A: About 18, I think.

Q: Eighteen?

A: A few years old, yes. i don't know -- I just -- You know, I didn't have any clothes. I didn't have a -- I just slept wherever I could; I ate where I could, you know. I just -- I tried to get in touch with other of my relatives, cousins, to see where they stayed. In fact, I found my cousin, they were staying in a convent. So she says sleep over, you know, here for tonight and then see what happens tomorrow and --

Q: Were you able to stay in touch with your parents?

A: With my parents? Yes, I could go --

Q: You could stay in touch?

A: Yes, I could go there whenever I wanted, but I couldn't sleep, you know, was impossible because other people -- you know, other nurse or doctors would come during the night, they would, you know, find it unusual that, you know, there would be three in a room, so I could not stay.

Q: Did you look very Jewish?

A: No, I don't think I do. Do I? Well, due to the fact that I'm blonde, so nobody thought that I would be Jewish but --

Q: So when you walked down the street, it wasn't obvious?

A: Yeah. No. No. In fact, all my relatives, after we found each other, they used to tell me "Could you go to my house, you know, and get me this and get me that?" And I would go and not realizing, you know, how dangerous it was because nobody would think that I was Jewish.

Q: What kind of papers did you have when -- at that point when you were 18?

A: Well --

Q: Did you have any special papers?

A: No, I didn't, but I needed an identification because they used to stop you in the street and ask you for identification. So somebody told me to go to this convent which is in the center of Rome near Piazza di Spagna. And I went there, and I met this Father Filippo; that's all I remember about him, but he was very nice --

Q: Did the convent have a special name?

A: I don't know. It's the Dominican priest, but I don't know; I don't remember the name. Yes. And he gave me this identification. He took my identification practically, and he changed the name from Funaro with an "n" to Fumaro with an "m."

Q: And why did he do that?

A: Because Funaro is a very Jewish name, but Fumaro could puzzle other people, you know, not knowing that it had been changed so -- I don't know how safe could that be but --

Q: So he gave you fresh papers?

A: No, no. He just corrected mine.

Q: Oh, he changed the "n" to an "m"?

A: So it looked, you know --

Q: So you had your original paper?

A: Yes.

Q: And on the original papers did it say that you were Jewish?

A: No.

Q: No. That wasn't --

A: No, no.

Q: -- listed?

A: They didn't ask for religion.

Q: Okay. So he changed that. And then what did you do? Where did you go?

A: So meanwhile, my father was trying to find us a place. And, you know, I told you he was in the lumber business, so he got in the construction of many buildings. And he called up one of his friend who was an architect, and he didn't have to explain much; he understood right away. And he said that he would, you know, find a place for us. They had just built this place near the University of Rome for women coming out of town, you know, and attending the universities. And there was brand-new building still there. I don't know if you've ever been in Rome --

Q: Like a dormitory, you mean?

A: Yes, like a hostel, you know, for -- And the Mother Superior said yes, she had already hidden other people for political or racial or so. She said yes right away. And

meanwhile my sister had been sent out of the house of our cousins; they didn't keep her, yes, so --

Q: Because they felt it wasn't safe?

A: No, it wasn't safe because, you know, they put posters all over Rome that, you know, whoever would shelter Jews would be sentenced, so --

Q: These were posters on the street?

A: Yes, yes. So they got very scared, and they sent her out, and my sister was very upset, of course.

Q: And she was far along in her pregnancy?

A: Four months pregnant, yes. So she came with me to the convent. Her husband also was hiding in the country near Rome, so she didn't know where to go, and she stayed with me in the convent on and off, yes. And --

Q: Your experience up to this point with the Catholic church was very positive?

A: It was, yes. Yes. They were very understanding. Of course, they tried to convert us, and my sister had to play the organ in church. You know, we had to go to sing, the prayers, you know, and everything.

Q: Was this familiar to you? Were these rituals and ceremonies familiar to you since you had Catholic relatives?

A: In a way, yes, you know, we were familiar. But we had to learn all their prayers, yes.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: I felt that I was praying my God. I felt so much that I needed pray that I didn't care if I was in the church or in the synagogue. They have, you know, the confessional [indecipherable], you know, was very comforting to me.

Q: So you and your sister were together, she was four months pregnant and you went to this dormitory, you said?

A: Yes. We had very comfortable rooms, and it was very cold, very cold, terribly cold and --

Q: What time of year are we talking about?

A: We're talking about November, December, you know. From October, you know, by the time we went there was November.

Q: And it was cold?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: What did you have with you? Did you have --

A: I didn't have --

Q: -- clothes?

A: No, I didn't have anything yet, you know. But finally our neighbor, you know, she took everything from our apartment because our apartment was -- how can you say -- taken by the Roman --

Q: Confiscated.

A: Confiscated. And they put in it -- in the apartment people who had come from the south of Italy. You know, during the occupation of the Americans some of the Italian Fascists, you know, ran north -- or anti-Fascists, I should say, ran north. And so we had to give the apartment, you know, to them, because the way they continue the war, the raids, they couldn't live in Naples or in other country of the south. So our apartment was occupied by this family, but our neighbor took everything, you know, our clothes and our valuables --

Q: Personal things?

A: Yes, personal things in her apartment. So once in a while, I used to go to the pharmacy, you know, that she owned --

Q: To your neighbor's pharmacy?

A: Yes, and she would, you know, give me a package with the stuff that I needed. So slowly I got, you know, my stuff back. And I stayed in that convent for nine months, you know.

Q: And what did you do during the day?

A: Well, during the day we could hardly -- you know, go anywhere because the curfew was at 6 o'clock. So I used to run to my mother and see my mother and my father. And I had already a boyfriend, so I used to go to see him if I could. And then I got into -- you know, get in touch with some of the partisans; already, you know, they were formed. So I belonged to some kind of organization that was called a Christian, you know, for freedom, something like that. And we used to help each other, bring news from one place to another and see that everybody would be sheltered, they would need food, things like that.

Q: How did they get in touch with you or how did you get in contact with this partisan group?

A: Well, we'd meet, you know, somewhere for coffee -- or there was no coffee, but for something. Not in the homes, it's somewhere and --

Q: And you heard about the group through friends originally --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and you got involved?

A: Yes.

Q: And these were young people like you?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you say you had regular meetings or you --

A: No. No. Never, never, never.

Q: And it was just informal how you got information?

A: Yes.

Q: And you carried messages?

A: Yes.

Q: Who did you carry messages to?

A: Well, other people that, you know, might need help.

Q: Did you ever feel your life in danger --

A: No.

Q: -- when you were a courier?

A: No. No. No. I talked to German soldiers all the times. I --

Q: In what language? In Italian?

A: Italian, yes.

[Pause in the recording.]

Q: Courier with the partisans and you were talking to German soldiers?

A: Yes. Occasionally, occasionally, but occasionally. If I would meet somebody, I would never, you know, show what I was or what [indecipherable] and not realizing, you know, how dangerous it was.

Q: Did you have any particularly difficult experiences at this time, the end of '43, beginning of '44, any frightening experiences, anything that was difficult?

A: Well, of course, you know, at night especially we could hear shooting continuously. You know, the partisans were starting to fight also in the city. And also the Allied had landed in Anzio, so we could hear the war advancing very closely. And we wished they would come already, but meanwhile we didn't know our destiny, we didn't know if they would go -- if they would keep their promise that Rome was open city or not. Would they destroy it? We didn't know. We didn't know what was expect. And that was very scary, you know. And also we had two very bad air raids. I lived in the section of Rome called San Lorenzo near the Catholic and Jewish cemetery. And seems like the Germans were hiding, you know, their supplies in there. So we had two very bad air raids and --

Q: Where were you at the time?

A: I was, you know, coming down the stairs. Right in front of the window I see this airplane coming, you know, and the bombs falling. And I got on the ground, you know, and I was very, very scared, yes. And my whole family, in fact, got very scared because they knew that I was the only one living there. But all the windows broke in the building, but fortunately, you know --

Q: How was your sister making out being pregnant at this time? How were things going?

A: Well, she was very brave, but the nuns were getting very -- the nurses -- the nuns were getting very nervous; you know, they didn't want a baby born in their convent. So every night they used to knock at our door, "Is your sister feeling all right? Do you think she's going to have a baby?" And what. My sister said, "I don't know what to do. Where should I go?" Well, finally my brother-in-law's family, they decide to rent an apartment in a very nice section of Rome with false names, making believe they also were refugees from the south. So my sister was able to go to live with her husband's family, and she had the baby in April.

Q: Of '44?

A: Yes. And my first nephew Stefano was born, you know, during this period with the false name. And I remember very clearly that we were in the room and somebody came to visit us; we never knew who this person was --

Q: This is in the hospital?

A: Yes, because my sister felt that I knew her and --

Q: You thought she knew her?

A: And we didn't want to say our names so was --

Q: Did you ever find out who it was

A: No, no, no. But, you know, we were very -- you know, pretty scared, but thank God, you know, everything was fine and then --

Q: And then she and the baby went back to her in-laws living under the false name?

A: Yes.

Q: And so you were living by yourself still in this dormitory?

A: I was alone, yes. Yes. I stayed there all the nine months, yes.

Q: And you -- during -- you were working for the partisans during the day?

A: Yes.

Q: Because there was a curfew at night?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you -- What else did you do, or was that full time?

A: At night we would get together because there were many, you know, other people hiding.

Q: In this dormitory?

A: Yes, also children, yes. And we used to get together --

Q: These were Jewish children?

A: Yes. And meet and sew and, you know, do things because we could not buy clothes. So we used to buy yarn and knit our stockings and sweaters and things like that.

Q: What was the food situation like?

A: The food situation was full of worms. You know, was kept in the -- probably in the basement of the Vatican somewhere and -- but it was enough, you know, it was enough to keep alive. Of course, I was very young, and I was very hungry. But I used to go to my mother and my father's hospital and open up the room and if I would find them, take

a little piece of cheese or bread or whatever I would find and leave a note I was hungry. And I eat and go back to the convent.

Q: How was their health at that time, your parents' health?

A: It was okay. You know, my father kept his wound open for a long time in order to stay in the hospital.

Q: Kept his wound open?

A: Yes.

Q: How did he do that?

A: The doctor, you know, kept it open so that he could show that -- you know, that he was still needed the hospitalization. And then finally he had to get better. Also he needed, you know, to get in touch to protect his business. One of our accountant, he, you know, kept the firm going on while we were hiding; he was Catholic, and he took care of it, yes.

Q: What was the name of your father's business?

A: Ditta Del Monte.

Q: Was the name of the lumber business?

A: Yes. Mm-hmm. And --

Q: So he got in touch -- you said your father got in touch with this --

A: Accountant, yes.

Q: And how were things going?

A: Well, there was no business at that time. But at least, you know, we kept it going for a while, you know.

Q: When -- Before the war was your father's business catering to all different kinds of customers, Jews, non-Jews?

A: Yes, carpenter, construction, any kind of people needing lumber.

Q: How was your health during this time when you were living in the dormitory?

A: I got very sick, you know; I don't know if it was from the food or what. It was typhoid fever. I was very sick.

Q: Did you get good medical attention?

A: No, I couldn't call anybody. But our family doctor, he was a holy man; he was very, very, very nice. He was Catholic, but he belonged to some kind of Catholic organization. I think he was taking care even of the Pope sometimes and --

Q: What was his name?

A: His name was Pietro Borromeo. Borromeo is a very noble family in Rome; it's, you know, very well-known family. And he came to take care of me, yes.

Q: And he brought you medicine?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Was that a tremendous risk for him?

A: It was. It was, yes. And he was a very old man, so I really appreciated what he did, yes, for me.

Q: And so then you recovered?

A: Yes. Well, I was, you know, very young and healthy. So fortunately, you know, I recovered. But as I had typhoid previously during the beginning of the war.

Q: You came down with typhoid?

A: Yes. It was very serious the first time, so --

Q: This is when you were living with your family?

A: Yes.

Q: And he took care of you at that time also?

A: Yes, mm-hmm.

Q: I wanted to ask you just to go back a few years in time, you said that when you changed schools and you had to learn the Fascist philosophy, how did you feel about that as a young woman?

A: My father was a socialist, so we grew up, you know, in a different atmosphere. You know, I was very liberal about -- you know, I didn't believe in Fascism. That's I was brought up. So of course it bothered me to wear uniform, you know, and to sing the songs or recite poems that I didn't believe in it, but you had to.

Q: You were a young teenager at the time?

A: Well, I was even younger because in elementary school, I was seven, eight years old, yes.

Q: I see. Was that a frightening experience for you or just upsetting?

A: It became, it became frightening once, you know, we knew that Mussolini was, you know, getting -- his alliance with the Germans then became dangerous. But at the beginning Mussolini had many Jewish friends, you know, so we didn't believe that he could ever get into that situation, yes, mm-hmm.

Q: Okay. We're back, back to '44 again. So you recuperated. Your family doctor helped you recuperate. And then what happened? What was the next experience you remember?

A: Well, the next experience was the expectation, you know; we were hoping that the war would advance, you know. But meanwhile, the partisans were getting, you know, very organized in Rome. So that's when it happened, the very bad incident of via Rasella. The partisans killed 32 Germans, SS Germans and in the reprisal, the Germans decided to kill 320. Yes, there were many Jews that had been, you know, taken in the street, from the street, because we also had Jewish spies, you know, that would point out, you know, who was Jews.

Q: To the Germans?

A: Oh, yes. So one of my cousin was in Regina Coeli at that time which is, you know, the jail in Rome. His name was Giuseppe Del Monte. And he was taken, you know, to fill --

Q: The three?

A: And so they were taken, you know, one day and taken to the -- in the place in the Appian Way, that's called Fosse Ardeatine. And they were killed en masse, you know, and buried there, that's it, you know, without any fault, without any -- you know.

Q: This was the reprisal?

A: Yes. And we didn't know what happened to him, you know. We didn't know, you know. We got in touch with his brother or the sister, what happened, he has disappeared. Where is he? We know that he's in jail; maybe he's in via Tasso. You know, via Tasso is where they interrogate the Jews where they did terrible things to them. We could hear the screams from what they were doing to them. So we didn't know where he was. And then, you know, we found out that he had been killed, yes.

Q: How aware were you of these terrible things that were going on?

A: Yeah, there like --

Q: You said --

A: Yes. Somebody would tell "You know what happened? You know what happened?" But we never knew if it was really true, and we were afraid to find out because, you know, who could we ask?

Q: So there was the reprisal?

A: Yes.

Q: And then --

A: It was just, you know, very scary to see the way, you know, the Germans were all over the city, you know. And people were very scared. They were very -- what can I say? -- frightened.

Q: Now, did your parents leave the hospital?

A: No.

Q: They stayed?

A: They stayed, yes. They didn't know where to go.

Q: And you were still in this dormitory?

A: Yes.

Q: And then what was the next --

A: Then finally, you know, they -- the Allies started to advance; after Cassino, after Anzio, you know, they started to advance. So we knew that they would come, but we didn't know what would happen at that point. So that night, you know, I called my mother and my father, and it was too far away to walk then. There was no transportation at that point; there were only, you know, Germans going out, you know, like a war in the city, impossible to walk. So I called my mother and my father, and I say, "What should I do?" Do you think you should try to go to your sister, maybe you would stay; you know, they live in an apartment, should be safe. So I went there, and I asked if I could stay, you know, at least overnight because maybe during the night, they would decide what to do, you know, the -- if -- stay in Rome and -- you know, and fight or just go through. We didn't know. But I was not wanted there. They said that they didn't have enough food and it would be very dangerous, you know, I was young and attractive, maybe, you know, some Germans would come in the house and follow me. So it was near the curfew; it was 6 o'clock, and I had to go out, much regret of my sister, but there was nothing I could do about. And so I went, and that was a very terrible experience because that was the end of the war; you know, you could see the defeat in the soldiers' face. They were drunk; they were bleeding all over. You know, and I run, you know. I stopped somebody, and I said, "Please take me." You know, where I say

please, please don't bother me, just to reach my house. I have to do it by myself. And finally, you know, I reached the convent, and I collapsed on the ground, but the nuns came out, you know, and they took me inside. And I decide that I didn't want to sleep alone, so I had these two very dear friends; they were two old Jewish lady, and they were so nice to me. And they say stay in our room, and I stayed and I spent the night there. And, finally, you know, when I woke up in the morning, I could not believe it that when we look out the window, we saw soldiers that they didn't look like Germans; in fact, they were the Americans. And then the joy exploded, you know. We ran out, and I was very lucky.

Q: So that was the day of your liberation?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: And you went out to the American soldiers?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And you could speak English because you had taken English?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Do you remember any of your meetings, what you said to them?

A: Oh, we hugged and kissed and, of course, you know, the usual scenes you can see in the movies, give them chewing gum and chocolate. But after we moved back to our apartment, we were very fortunate to have the assistance of some soldiers from New Zealand, New Zealand, who brought, you know, us lots of food from one of my father's clients from south Italy. So we heard, you know, that we had been starving, and they brought cases of food. They were really very, very nice to us.

Q: Did you go immediately back to your apartment?

A: No. No, I still didn't feel like I wanted to go back, you know; it was like, you know, it didn't belong to me anymore. I just, you know, had bad feelings, but finally, you know --

Q: So you stayed in the convent for a little bit?

A: For a little bit, yes.

Q: Then went back and your parents were there?

A: Yes. We took care of the apartment, cleaned and everything. then we finally got back, and my father was able slowly to start his business. Then we started to find out all the bad news, of course, you know, but also the good news because our friends, you know, the one that had, you know, gone to other country, you know, especially to

America, they started to come back, you know. And that's how I met for the second time my husband. He had left, you know, Italy in 1939. So we found each other again, and we were able to get married, yes.

Q: When did you get married?

A: In 1947.

Q: What did you do when you got back to your apartment and you got settled, then what did you do? This is before that. Did you go to school or did you work?

A: No, I didn't. I was supposed to get married. You know, I had been, you know, engaged, but my boyfriend decide --

Q: To somebody else?

A: No, no.

Q: To your husband?

A: No, to somebody else. I was engaged to my boyfriend that I had during the war, yes. And -- But he became volunteer. He went; you know, he followed the Allied troops, and he went north. So when he came back, you know, I left him and --

Q: So did you -- were you working --

A: No.

Q: Or did you just stay home with your family?

A: The Jewish family, girls are not supposed to work which was very terrible for me. I lost my husband when I was very young, and I didn't learn much.

Q: So you stayed home with your family, and then the war was over?

A: Yes.

Q: And, as you said, you found out sad news of relatives. And then you got married?

A: Yes.

Q: And you got married in Italy?

A: Yes, a beautiful ceremony, yes, yes, in the temple, and our families were very happy. And then I left with my husband. In one month. He came in August; in September I got married. Then we went to live in California.

Q: Oh, you went to the United States?

A: Yes, and I --

Q: This is September 1946?

A: '47.

Q: '47.

A: Yes. And I had three children in a year and a half, yes, I had twins.

Q: And you have stayed in California?

A: No. Then I went back to Italy. And then I went to New York where I lived 21 years.

Q: You went back to Italy to live?

A: No, just to be with my mother, yes, for two years, yes.

Q: And you are still living in California?

A: No, we never went back to California until recently. Yes. We went to New York. We lived there 21 years; we had a very nice restaurant in New York.

Q: Can we talk now a little bit about some of your thoughts about your experience during the war? What are your feelings today about how the war influenced you?

A: It totally changed my life.

Q: In what way?

A: Well, first of all, I told you about the school that, you know, I feel the lack, you know, of education. I wish I could have continue which I did. Later on I went to Queens College, and I continue. My brother-in-law is the head of the Department -- Italian Department, Queens College. Maybe you have read his book, Sergio Pacifici. He has written many literature books, so he -- after my husband died, he advised me to continue college to be able to teach Italian. But unfortunately, I was unable. I had four children, you know, and lost -- already engaged, you know, and they were in university. And I had a very little one; after 14 years, I had a little boy, Robert, who is now 30 years old. So I had to follow him; it was too much for me to continue. So that influenced a lot because, you know, my education. Besides that, you know, I had -- I became more religious, I would say, ever. You know, I don't go much to synagogue or things like that, but my feelings are so deep now, I feel that I've been so honored to talk about what happened to me because I have nightmares, still have nightmares, you know, of what happened to -- especially to my cousin Giulia who, you know, died with a husband and two small children, Carla and Michele; they were only five and three years old. And I constantly pray for them, you know. And this kept me, you know, in my faith. All sisters tried to convert me; I would never, never, never, never, never. And that's very

important to me. My family now, they're all married. My young one is married to a Korean, but he got married in the Jewish faith. My other son is married to an Irish, but he has kept his faith. My other son, you know, he kept his faith. And also if we don't show, I hope that I have, you know, taught this to my children that, you know, how important it is. I don't care what's, you know, they're outside going to synagogue or serving, what the faith will be, and that's very important. Also, you know, I appreciate the fact that this brought me to live in this country. I go often to Italy, but I could not live there anymore. I feel that this country gives the opportunity, you know, to keep your faith, to work. I didn't have any education, but I was able always to support myself. My husband didn't leave me rich, but I was able, you know, to have all my children have their degree and their professions. And I could never have accomplished if I had stayed in Italy. I myself, you know, I decided office work wasn't for me, and I took care of my catering and my chef work, and I have been very successful. So thank God for America.

Q: Do you receive reparations, war reparations?

A: More what?

Q: War reparations, payments.

A: No. Never. Why should I? Should I? I don't know. No. I never asked for it.

Q: Never applied? So you said you communicated to your children about your experiences during the war? You were open?

A: Yes. This is now lately especially it is like an obsession to me. I have to publish something about it, and I want to -- you know, my children, my grandchildren to know.

Q: Why?

A: Because they have not been, you know, so unaware what's going on in this world. They have to be prepared. We were not. They came with gun, and we just went, like sheep. That wasn't the way to do it. We should have reacted. And when they say that now in Israel, you know, they are too -- you know, too war-minded, things like that, I approve because, you know, we have to defend ourselves. We were -- You know, we just went; we were too innocent about it, so I want my children to be very aware of this.

Q: Did you share your feelings with anybody else besides your children?

A: I say to friends I'm never ashamed to say I'm Jew. Sometimes I'm to lose the friendship, I don't care. Yes, first thing I say I am Jew and I am, you know -- I'm very proud of it.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share, any thoughts, any feelings you would like to share?

A: Well, one thing, you know, I experience here they think that in Italy when -- everybody says, "You, you're Italian, you're Jewish? How is this possible?" Yes, there were Jews in Italy, and we went through exactly what everybody else in Germany and Poland that they -- you know. They were very brave, and there were very many important people; their culture was, you know, high, extended and the world should know, yes, there were Jews in Italy. That's very important.

Q: Any other thoughts that you --

A: I think that I'm very lucky to be here. It's like a dream, and it's like a miracle. I never thought -- You know, I was right in the States, and I would say oh, I wish I could go to the -- you know, and tell somebody about it, but I never would thought would come, so I'm very grateful to Louisa that took me here.

Q: Well, thank you very much for the interview.

A: Thank you.

Q: This has been an interview of Adriana Pacifici. It has been conducted on April 8, 1994, on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Conclusion of Interview