

Marsha Segall, reel 11. Marsha, you were just telling me how John got to know that you were alive and well in Munich. Can you tell me the story about the little boy?

Yes. Well, first of all, my letter that I wrote reached him. And also the little boy, when he found out, he wasn't so little anymore. He was already a teenager.

How did he know you?

He knew me from the ghetto, as I told before, because there had been a family, his mother, sister, and himself. They escaped from a small town, from the massacre of the Jews. And he was with us in the ghetto.

So he was Lithuanian.

He was Lithuanian. And I always tried to help him because they had nothing. The ones who had been inhabitants of the town had things to change for food to supplement the ration, which wasn't enough to live on.

But they had nothing. They came-- they ran away as they stood. And I always used to help him to try he should get work with Germans but who could provide his food and medicine. And I helped his mother and his sister.

And then John was with him in Dachau in the same camp. So he somehow kept up this relationship because he was quite a big fish in the camp.

John was?

No, this boy.

This boy.

He was the boy who assisted the commandant of camp 10. And if he was annoyed with somebody, he could be very. Unkind but he was-- he kept up his good relationship.

Can you explain that to me again? This young boy was Lithuanian. You'd known him in the ghetto in Lithuania.

Yes.

Then he was in Dachau, where your husband John was.

Yes.

What was his relationship with the commandant?

I think the commandant-- but don't take it 100% but as the rumor had it that the commandant used him.

In what way? In the homosexual way?

I think so. Because he had big influence on the commandant. And John was the one who always used to correct him and tell him that he can't misbehave to other people.

And he was--

He did. Because he wasn't exactly cruel, but he used to behave badly to people who weren't nice to his mother in the ghetto, especially a doctor who didn't come to see her when she was ill. And he had a long memory because he was a young boy, and he suffered a lot.

And this was the boy you met again in Munich, who went with the smugglers.

He got to know that I'm alive, and he also used to go smuggling with the smugglers. And he wrote on a torn piece of paper from a copybook to John in a Yiddish very illiterate, full of mistakes. And he starts "aha, I told you she's alive. I told you she can't be dead."

And he told him that I am with my cousin, Dr. Greenberg, which John met before he went to Italy. Because [? St. Tertullian ?] already existed right from the beginning, and John knew him. Actually, he was the same age as John. He was older than I am, about 10 years.

So John received two notes saying you're alive.

Yes, I've got them. I've got them till today and many other notes. So John joined a group of smugglers, and he went through the Alps two times, because one time they lost the way, and they came back to Italy.

And he had presents for everybody. He had presents for everybody. And on the second time, they have been stopped by Yugoslav Ustasa. They have been collaborators during the German the occupation of Yugoslavia.

And they were frightened to go back, so they used to roam the mountains, also borders, and used to rob people. And John managed to save only one watch, a little Marlin watch, a square one. It was like a miracle when I got it because I didn't imagine that he'll have watches on both hands, so they just took from the left hand, and they didn't look at the right.

So that's the only thing he brought, because he brought underwear for me. Because in Italy, the shops were open. It was normal life, and for my cousins. But everything was taken.

And then he came on the border. And they went right on top of an American guard, and they produced a letter, a long letter which was stamped with the Jewish community verification, that the letter is really from me, that he really goes to find his wife.

And he was just looking at him and said, do you have to come across me? Go behind me. I haven't seen you. And that's how he came to Munich. And he knew exactly [? St. Tertullian ?] because he was there before. It was in the evening. It was about around 6 o'clock.

What date would that be?

It was right after my birthday. It must be about around the 20th of January.

'46?

'46.

Can you carry on the story now from where there was a knock on the door?

Well, to describe what one felt was very difficult. I only remember that I felt terribly embarrassed in the beginning to show my hands and feet. I remember it clearly. It was for me a very big dilemma, because he knew me otherwise.

Did John have any idea of the extent of your injuries?

I did write to him, but I don't think anybody can imagine anything till you really see it. But he was prepared. Whether he thought it's worse or better, we never discussed it. We didn't speak about it at all.

Did you feel it had an effect on your relationship?

Yes, not relationship. It had a very deep effect on me. I mean, till today. I mean, some people can get over better. Some can't. I belong to the second category.

I think especially hands, for a woman, are very important. It's expression. It's everything.

Did you feel that John was shocked when he saw your injury?

No, in this respect I was selfish. I felt what I felt. I couldn't tell what he felt because he didn't say anything, and he wouldn't. I mean, he never discussed it. Till today, neither did my children.

I mean, they accepted me as I was. My children don't know me any other way, but John did.

What happened then after that?

But I know that people who I didn't see for a long time, have been locked in Lithuania, in Russia and now came out, some-- all of them know because it's like a bush telephone, telegraph.

Everybody knew what happened, who survived, and what happened to them, each of us. It was a small country and small population. But some can't keep it back, and I heard it even now from people who knew me well which I didn't see from before the war, about 40 years, who will say, good God, what did they do to you?

So I really don't know people's reactions because the majority don't say anything.

Which would you prefer? Which reaction did you feel most comfortable with?

Neither. I know that the ones who don't say know. Everybody knows. And I find it was difficult to meet new people at all who don't know anything about me.

What's happened after this?

When John came, we got a separate room in the hospital, and because it was very difficult to get any accommodations in Munich. It was difficult because Munich was bombed. I mean, you walked in ruins, and buildings look to collapse.

So you were still living in the hospital?

Yes, but I had I found very good university friends in [? St. Tertullian. ?] One I was in the same camp, in Stutthof, and her husband survived. And I knew him before she knew him, a student. And he was a doctor, and he was my cousin's assistant.

And I believe they are now in America. But she is the most beautiful woman I knew, is mentally ill for the last 40 years.

And the other one I met not very long ago in Paris. Lives in the States. And her husband-- I went with her together in university. We studied humanities, so we're the same faculty.

And they have been absolutely marvelous to me, even before John came, because they had already acquired things, and they used to make parties-- from biscuits and condensed milk used to make cakes and gather all friends who are alive, and open their cupboards and said, I can share everything I have, and they have been a great help.

And when John came, we used to go all together very often to take a train. And generally you could take trains small distances and go to some lake in Bavaria in a little cafe, the Black Cat. And we had to come with our packets of lump sugar in exchange for ice cream.

And of course, everyone at that time wanted to start life afresh somewhere. We all knew that we don't want to be in

Germany. And when John came, and he was in Italy, it was clear to me that we want to go to Italy as soon as possible. And it was difficult.

I went for a short while. I got my cousin's house, which was given to his disposition to use-- he never went because he didn't have time-- in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which is in the Bavarian Alps, a famous skiing resort

It was the house of Baron von Renton, and his wife. And I went there with my friends and John. They've been there a short while, and I was so happy during the sunshine in winter that I got a very bad cold and had a very high temperature, and I was ill.

And one of my friends left her child, which was saved, and came to look after me, the one which is now in the States. And next door was also the villa winter resort of the armaments minister, Speer.

His wife was there, and she used to do alterations. It was, of course--

Did she know you were Jewish?

Oh, yes.

What was her reaction?

None.

Was it ever mentioned?

No.

Did you know who she was at the time?

Yes.

How did you feel about her?

Nothing.

Did you ever discuss it with John at the time?

No, we didn't even speak about them because we found there was an intrigue going on. Because my friend and this old Baron von Renton, he fell in love with her and used to polish her shoes every morning.

The baron used to polish her shoes?

Yeah, the baron. No, no, my friend's shoe, when she came to stay with us when I was ill. And it was scenes of jealousy of his old wife. So we've been so amused with the situation that we didn't react to anything around us because it was terribly amusing.

What was she like, Mrs. Speer?

Good-looking, very German. Good-looking. Very quiet.

Was she on her own?

On her own.

Did she ever say anything about you?

No. Well, actually in the beginning, we didn't know who she was. We only admired the villa. It was beautifully carved, the wood. In the Alps, the houses was really very lovely. And at the end when we told the Baron von Renton that's a very nice house, he says, well, it should be because it was designed by Speer. And she's the--

It was so full of Nazi collaborators and ministers everywhere, and I was so used to them, I mean, working for the Russians, that there was no reaction because nothing really was done to them. And in a way, they had more rights than we did. So it--

And at the time, we've been so busy with thoughts of leaving Germany. We knew one thing, that we must get out, that we couldn't be there. One day extra was too much.

And we wanted, John and I, very much to go to Palestine. I had also family there. I had an aunt and two cousins.

How long did you stay in Bavaria?

In Garmisch-Partenkirchen, about three weeks.

Then you returned to Munich?

And it was nice because everybody came to see us and visit us. It's a beautiful place.

Did you then return to Munich?

Afterwards, we returned to Munich, and we tried to get contact with the Bricha. And the contact which we got, because nobody knew really who the head was, was through my second cousin's uncle.

He told us not to worry, that we didn't have much. I hung to my things from Berlin. And whatever John told me that I don't need it, that I can buy in Italy, and that he had contacts from his-- he had a brother and a sister in South Africa, and they sent him some money, and I can buy everything new.

I didn't part. I didn't let him take it away. That was my whole richness, and I just kept it tight. And her uncle told me to bring my little case-- and John, he had nothing, just what he wore-- and to come to his-- he had a small flat in Munich. He was also working for the central committee, and he knew Dr. Greenberg very well.

I knew him from childhood. He was the young uncle. He was the youngest of a big family, so it wasn't a very big difference. He was the same age as John.

And when we came there, he introduced us to a very nice-looking man who gave us a tiny little piece of paper with a name written on it. I think it was, if I remember correctly, Ernst. He told us to be on a particular day, to take a train from Munich, and to get off two stations before Berchtesgaden, where it was Hitler's winter residence.

I don't remember the name of the place. I know somebody who does. He's a writer and poet in Israel. And to get off at this station, and somebody will say the pass and say something, and we should answer something. And the rest will be taken care of. They will bring us to Italy.

So they would approach you and say something, and you had an answer to give them?

Yes. Yeah.

What was the answer?

I don't remember. I don't remember what I had to say. I remember the girl. The funny part, it was a small station, and we

had a very peculiar incident in Germany on the way to the station. Because my second cousin's brother was all during the war in the Royal Navy.

He was in a avion carrier. Didn't know anything what happened to his family or anything what was going on in Lithuania.

He was on an aircraft carrier?

Yes. And because he was sent to England to study engineering, his father was a representative of Buick and Opel cars, and he wanted him to learn engineering. And he arrived in Munich, because when he heard through an aunt in South Africa that his sister is alive and his uncle, one uncle from a very big family, the answer was, what are you doing in Munich? Why aren't you home?

And then he got leave, and he arrived in a Navy uniform with on his shoulder written "Lithuania." And he was absolutely-- he was shocked because he didn't know anything, nothing at all. And he started asking, where is auntie, where is mommy, where is-- he didn't know what happened.

And then he asked-- he went to a Lithuanian high school, and he started asking about his friends, his best friend. And it appeared that his best friend was the top killer of Jews. I mean, to him it was something which he couldn't take in.

And when we went to Munich from his uncle's place to the station, he went in the tram with us. And when the conductor came to ask for money, he said that he is in the forces, in the occupied forces, and he doesn't have to pay the full amount.

And that I remember vividly, because he came walking to the station. They just shook him and threw him out of the truck because he didn't have money.

So they wouldn't let him travel?

No, he was sure that he doesn't have to pay, but it was otherwise. And we said goodbye at the station. I've seen him many, many years later. He was a car racer in Johannesburg. He died, a racing accident.

And when we came in this small place in the Alps, in the Bavarian Alps--

After a train journey.

Yes. We walked out, and we found ourselves that we weren't alone. There was another two couple. There were six of us.

Who'd been on the train.

Well, on the train we didn't know who there was. And when we came out at the station which we were supposed to come out, we were six. And a short plump little girl passed by, and somehow we all belonged to the same group, and we've been taken in a chalet, and there was a nice, warm, homely woman who made us the most fantastic sandwiches I ever ate.

Did you follow--

From American-- from American tin stuff. No, no, it was lovely, tinned salmon and fish and sardines and all. You haven't seen it for a long time.

So you'd followed the small plump girl?

Yes, yes. We all followed. And we've been allocated rooms. We've been very much spoiled, coffee in bed in the morning. And we were told that we must be prepared anytime, whenever they'll tell us that they are ready that we are

crossing the border to Austria, that we're going south to Salzburg.

And one night, she said, tonight is the night. And we dressed. It was winter, and I had trouble shoes. I couldn't get shoes because walking for me was terribly difficult. But she said that it's a very small, short walk. And on the other side, under the autostrada, the German autostrada, under a bridge, a lorry will be waiting for us to take us to Salzburg.

She experimented with us, and she tried to make a shortcut. And she lost her way. So we had to go back from the point where we started. And I still could manage, but when we came under the bridge, there was no lorry. They thought we couldn't make it, and they went back to Salzburg.

And all six started walking on the motorway to Salzburg while I collapsed, and I said, I can't go anymore. But it was early in the morning. Lucky, a cart with milk-- how do you call it? The big jars?

Jars.

Yes, came with big horses, which he brought milk for Salzburg. And he had pity, and he said, well, come up. And I sat next to him, and he brought me to Salzburg. And I was told that I must ask him to stop near-- it was a monastery.

There is a very famous, very old monastery where they used to brew brandy. And that is my destination. Then the rest came, and I found out that that was actually the headquarters of the Bricha in Europe.

What happened?

I also found out that the people that we came with have been very VIP. Once I didn't know about them then, I know about them now because I meet them. And some of them have been already a few times the same route. I didn't know it at the time.

And there we had to stay till the decision-- everything was by order and organized-- till they were sure that we can cross the border of Italy. And we had to wait quite a long time because the guard changed. And then we had to wait about three to four weeks in Salzburg.

We had to leave the monastery because it was a raid, and it is really-- Salzburg is a chapter on its own. But to make it short, we were given passports. They assessed everybody's looks and age, and we have been given passports of Hungarians. And these passports had to bring us to Innsbruck in Austria by train.

It was very complicated because we had to go through a French zone, which I think Austria-- was part of Austria. And Hungarian, if you know, is a very difficult language, and I could never learn my name and the place where I was born.

Marsha Segall, reel 12. Marsha, you were just telling me how you were in Salzburg and you had to wait approximately three or four weeks before you could cross to Italy. Can you tell me now about how you left Salzburg and what happened?

We have been given Hungarian passports for the train because we had to cross another border to Austria, which was at that time occupied by French forces. And it was the passport was given according to the size of the person and the looks, age. And on the way to Austria, when we had to cross the border by ordinary train, I was so worried in case somebody will ask me my name that I pretended that I have a headache.

And in fact, I got a terrible migraine. So when everybody came to Innsbruck and had a day in Innsbruck and went sightseeing, I was lying in a dark room on my own. I told John that he should go because he couldn't help me with anything.

So I don't remember Innsbruck at all. I only knew that I was there. The next morning with lorries we went, quite a lot of us, to Italy. And I was given a place in the driver's cabin, because it wasn't warm, and we had to go to the-- I think it was the Brenner Pass.

And John and the rest had been standing in the lorries, and I was inside, and I sat with two people who I only knew by first name. We didn't talk very much. And when we approached Merano, it was spring, early spring, and it was too beautiful.

It was all the cherry trees were in blossom, and it looked like a fairy tale. And it was Zone A, which meant very guarded-- an Italian carabinieri on motorbikes stopped the convoy. And when I was in the first lorry, one of the two men, not the driver, the other one, came down, and he had a big list with all occupied forces authority stamps, which were all false, and the list of names of people. And all he said was "ebrei, Napoli, America."

That is, Jews going to Napoli, Naples, immigrating to America. Well, none of us was going to America because we all had intentions, by some way or other, to reach the shores of Palestine. And it wasn't like you hear now that it was Zionist propaganda. It wasn't. It was our genuine wish because we were frightened to go again somewhere else.

And they saluted. They were quite happy that we don't stay in Italy, and we came to Merano. When we reached Merano, they told us that we are all free citizens, and each and every one of us can go wherever they want. And in the meantime, from the border where the carabinieri stopped us, to Merano, I spoke to these two fellows who had been much more talkative all of a sudden.

I found out that they're Italian-born, speak Italian fluently. It was all an act for the carabinieri. And they are members of the Bricha, and they bring many displaced persons this way. Some went to special places where they took them to tiny boats.

I suppose everybody knows this story. And they went towards the shores of Palestine. Big Navy cruisers used to chase them. The majority were caught. Some went through.

And it was organized on the shores of Palestine that they took and quickly, dispersed them amongst the population. The one who had been caught have been put behind barbed wire near Haifa, in Atlit in the beginning, but on the soil of Palestine. And eventually when they gave special allocation of certificates, they used to give it to those people first, in Atlit.

And then the British government decided that it's no good having them in Palestine, and the future boats that they caught, they put people in camps, also behind barbed wire, in Cyprus. And some from Cyprus have been actually free only when the State of Israel was created. They were there behind barbed wire the whole time, but I think this story you must have read in the book of Exodus.

What happened to you and John?

No, they didn't take us to these places because I was very bad risk. They didn't want to take me illegally.

Because of your injury.

Because of my injury. Because they had two reasons. We knew that top of the organization in Italy, which was Dr. Nehad from Jerusalem, and he was working in official capacity with the town major of Rome. And he told me simply that if we break through the blockade, I have to run in Palestine and hide.

And I had-- still when I took off my shoes, it was swimming in blood. And if they catch me, I can't withstand life in the camp. So it was no question. I tried very hard by all sorts of means and ways to get a legal permit, but we didn't achieve, and then I was bombarded with letters from my sister who was in Rhodesia, and uncles, why don't we come for a year or so to have a rest in Rhodesia?

Did John very much want to?

Oh, yes. Until-- we didn't want to go to Africa. Until till 1947 in July we've been in Italy. And--



Where did you live in Italy?

In Milan.

Did nobody question you concerning who you were and how you got there?

Well, when we arrived in Merano, John gave me the most wonderful day in my life. By the way, in Austria, in Salzburg, he got rid of my clothes. He told me that he got a fantastic sum. Somebody offered me-- he made a good deal in business to keep me quiet.

And it was a fact. I mean, he just gave it away to somebody. He threw it out. And when we came to Italy in Merano, he proved to me that it's really-- there are shops. There are restaurants.

He started from buying flowers to having a meal in the restaurant to buying little things, that it's normality, because Germany wasn't normal. And from there we took a train to Modena, where he stayed before.

And after a short time, we joined his cousin, who was in Milano. And Milano was also a center, became a center of Jewish displaced people. It was a special building and a special court in Via Unione, which is right in the middle of town which all the questions and problems were settled by trained people who were sent from Palestine to deal with. Also a lot came from United States, from England. And I think they had a reunion here, the ones who worked with displaced people.

And slowly, slowly, everybody found their nook. It wasn't easy. The majority went to Palestine. The second place that people went was the United States. Elsewhere was almost impossible.

Did you consider America?

No, I didn't consider anything. I only went to Rhodesia for a short time. And I had a sister, the only one from my actual family that wasn't touched by war. And we went to see the consul in Milan, because my sister sent me a long time before the application papers. And he was so sure that we wouldn't get into Rhodesia, he told me there is no immigration in Rhodesia, and especially not for aliens. Even from Britain people can't come there.

The normal way was that they used to send the papers to London to Rhodesia House. From here, they used to send it to Salisbury. He was so sure that we wouldn't get a permit to go to Rhodesia that he gave it to us. He signed it, put the consulate stamp. They were very sore at that time because the embassy in Rome was blown by the Irgun.

So they used to search us every time we came, and they behaved very offended and bad. And he gave us. He said, send it. So we went to the post office, and we sent it to Rhodesia. And in two weeks time, we got notification from the consulate that we have not only a permit but a permanent residence in Rhodesia.

My brother-in-law was a war hero. He was in charge of the North Africa Hospital in the Middle East. And he was together with the Duke of Gloucester in Nairobi in Kenya. He was a surgeon and a good friend of Sir Godfrey Huggins, who was the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia.

And my uncles knew him as well, and the permit was issued immediately. It was so quick that we got a telegram, reach Rome in about 10 days' time. Contact this and this address. Plane ticket reserved for Rhodesia.

We were very upset because we didn't want to go instantly. And I wanted something to have to wear. And I had a few dresses made. Because we had money we used to get sent from South Africa and Rhodesia.

From your sister?

Yes. And it was so easy to leave then because we didn't need anything, and we didn't have any ties. And I think that was

my therapy was Italy. We've been a year in Italy, and I was very happy. The people were terribly warm and nice.

And I learned the language in a month.

How were the Italian people? How did they feel towards the Jewish people?

Marvelous.

How did you feel about Italians, given that they had been involved with Hitler?

Yes, I know. But as people, they are terribly warm. And we had-- I don't know. I have got-- till today, I've got this warm feeling because it was like sunshine after a storm to see people who are helpful, who were very happy to hear if I could pronounce the word "next day." They used to tell me how clever I was.

And it was quite a lot of us in Milan, in Italy. And everybody was hopeful and hoped for a new life, for a new start. You always found people, some got a certificate, some went. It was somehow you didn't feel alone. And Italian people are nice, very nice, very nice indeed.

And so you--

We didn't want to go to Rhodesia. Rhodesia was not the right place for us. Definitely not. But in a way, we didn't have an alternative. Would we have known what will happen in 1948, we would have stayed another year in Italy.

How do you feel now about this whole experience that you went through? In what ways do you feel it affected your life?

Well, it changed my life completely.

Can you elaborate?

First of all, I was very ambitious about education, about degrees, about what I'm going to do in life and painted well. I also was-- I took history, and I was good at it. I had a very good life. I had everything in front of me, and everything was shattered completely. Beliefs which I believed are shattered. Everything.

I mean, to be honest, I never made roots after that. I don't have roots. I don't really-- sometimes, I don't know where I belong. Because even coming now to Israel, which I feel good, I don't feel I could start there again because it's too late, because my friends who went directly there are established.

They live there. They've got children there. They've got homes there. We don't belong there anymore, either. It's all right for a holiday, for a month. Two months, I feel terribly happy. But to live? I don't know whether I could change again.

I mean, you can change so many times and no more, and age doesn't help. So I feel now with age broken, very much so. The older I get, the worse it gets.

How would you answer the question that has been asked concerning why didn't the Jewish people organize or rise up against the Nazi oppressors, against the SS whilst they were in ghettos, whilst they were in camps? Why?

There's two reasons. Main reason is that the population we lived amongst for generations became our biggest enemies. So we had no escape in our own country. I mean, we had no outside help at all.

On the contrary, I mean, Germans protected us in the beginning from Lithuanians. Sounds odd, but it's true. And if you go into it, it went everywhere in Europe. Nobody helped Jews anywhere, neither the French, nor the Dutch. Nobody.

The Danes, but they had very few, and they shipped them to Sweden, and they refused to put on the Star of David. They

all did. But they were unique. The rest, we found ourselves we lived amongst enemies. And without outside help, we had no escape, none whatsoever.

And secondly, it was done gradually. I mean, we didn't-- we didn't have anything to fight with. I mean, you need organization. You need arms. You needed the population, basically, to help you.

Could it not have been done through the Judenrat?

No, they have been prisoners like we were. The only thing is that they couldn't negotiate with Germans but to postpone. But the end was the same to everyone, and single people or some managed to escape. But I mean, in our case, we escaped, and we've been denounced and found by Lithuanians.

I mean, we had to hide from our own citizens. I mean, that was a terrible eye-opener. And that's what makes me always so terribly afraid. Because what you lose is you lose trust.

Marsha, thank you very much for your time and all you've put into this tape.

I wish to thank you, really, for your patience.