

Two interviews with Silvana Fabrizi
WWII Memories from San Donato Val di Comino (Italy)¹

1

**Interview with Silvana Fabrizi
& Maria Puzzanghero**

Recorded March 1, 1997 • Newtonville, MA

Interview by Marcelle Lipke, Paul Lipke & Peter Puzzanghero

2

Interview with Silvana Fabrizi

Recorded February 13, 1999 • West Newton, MA

Interview by Richard Seaman and Alan O'Hare

(Questions also by Marcelle and Paul Lipke)

**Verbatim transcription and annotations
by Marcelle Lipke**

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¹ Please see Appendix 4, Map 3

To the memory of my mother
and to all women who defied the Nazis
because their hearts were bigger than their fear.

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Preface

Unlike many people who lived through the traumas of World War II, my mother, Silvana Fabrizi, spoke freely about her experiences, so I heard her stories as a child. Furthermore, having grown up in a predominantly Jewish community, friends had tales to tell of their parents' time in concentration camps, which shook me deeply. Stories turned into seeds, long dormant, which grew into my passion to take on this project.

Those of us born in the fifties were “steeped” in the War; it was part of our collective frame of reference. Television certainly spewed out a steady stream of programs about its glories, but most importantly, whether our parents had fought or planted Victory Gardens, they had *survived* and had been changed by the War.

I needed to collect my mother's stories to understand my family's place in this cataclysmic event. These stories about the courage of women and children, and their solutions in the face of danger, inspire me even now--decades after I first heard them. This project is my humble contribution toward society never forgetting.

I transcribed the dialogue verbatim, as faithfully as the audio quality would allow. I created many footnotes to provide clarity and historical context for myself, my mother, and the rest of my family. To this end I sought reasonably reliable sources on the War in Italy.

Both interviews are enhanced by information from subsequent conversations with my mother, my aunt Maria, Katrin Tenenbaum and by family visits to San Donato.

--Marcelle Lipke (October 30, 2022)

*N.B., Historical footnotes in Interview 1 have not been repeated in Interview 2.

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Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum, who took the time to proofread these interviews and offered much useful feedback, which greatly improved the quality of my footnotes. Moreover, she shared precious interviews with her parents, which in addition to being a treasure trove, were particularly helpful for establishing chronology. Katja has continued to be as dear to the Fabrizi family as she was to the Cardarellis.

Fulvio Fabrizi (my brother), who proofread the interviews too many times, catching the minutest errors. His enthusiasm for “all things San Donato,” and his knowledge of the environs, made him a tireless companion in my research. In addition, Fulvio made a pilgrimage to San Donato in August of 2022 with my questions in hand (risking and then contracting COVID for the cause). He interviewed residents and took much-needed photos, including panels at the *Museo del Novecento e della Shoah*, which have been an invaluable resource.

Paul Lipke (my husband), who recorded both interviews and was a co-interviewer. He successfully decoded previously incomprehensible words on the tapes, and tirelessly proofread many editions of these interviews. For over 40 years he has been making me look good and this manuscript is no exception. Furthermore, he has been a constant cheerleader; his enthusiasm for this project has been truly unwavering.

Introduction

My mother, Silvana Fabrizi, was eight years old when World War II began. She did not know that her small town in Italy, San Donato Val di Comino,² would become a destination for Mussolini's forced internal exile of foreign Jews. Thanks to the altruism of my grandmother, Franceschina Cardarelli, two exiles would become members of the family. My mother would risk her life to shelter their baby while the Nazis occupied her town--and even her house.

Nor did my eight-year-old mother know that San Donato would be only fifteen miles from one of the hardest fought battles of WWII: Monte Cassino. As a result, the townspeople found themselves in grave danger from shelling, bombing...and eventually starvation. My mother's family spent six months sheltering in a basement.

What follows are two interviews about my mother's heart-stopping and heart-warming experiences during WWII. In the first interview she is joined by her older sister, Maria Puzzanghero, both of whom came of age amidst the deprivations and dangers of this horrific war.

The second interview is a conversation between my mother and two family friends: Richard Seaman and Alan O'Hare, who had personal and professional interests in these stories.

² “**San Donato Val di Comino** is a commune and town located in the Lazio region of Italy in the province of Frosinone. The town is...spread out over an area of 35 sq km and has a population of close to 2167.” “San Donato Val di Comino” Life in Italy, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.lifeinitaly.com/art-cities/san-donato-val-di-comino>

Interview 1

Interview with Silvana Fabrizi & Maria Puzzanghero

Recorded March 1, 1997 • Newtonville, MA USA

Interview by Marcelle Lipke, Paul Lipke and Peter Puzzanghero

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Side 1

Paul Lipke: Describe the room you woke up in, a room you woke up in.

Silvana Fabrizi: We would sleep in the basement of the house because of—we were within range of the artillery.³

Paul: Stop. You describe the same thing. We're just checking the mic.

Maria Puzzanghero: Where we slept was a cellar—within a cellar. So, we were...

Paul: I'm all set up.

Silvana: OK. As I remember it, we would sleep, as Maria said, in a sub... We were two stories into the ground—down, which was actually a wine cellar. We slept—we and our

³ The building where they hid (in the *cantina*) is directly across the street from Franceschina's house (8 vicolo Portella). Two rooms adjacent to the *cantina* were rented. In addition, Franceschina's family had a room for food and wine storage down there.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

family, plus neighbors. ⁴

⁴ In subsequent conversations with Silvana (my mother) and Maria, I learned that up to 24 people slept in the wine cellar (or *cantina*) and adjacent stall. Though men are listed below, the *cantina* was only for women. The men slept in the stall. (That said, Marco Tenenbaum very occasionally slept in the cantina, but he was apparently “discrete,” according to Maria.) The *cantina* was approximately 30’ long and a bed length wide. The mattresses were kept off the floor with bricks or some such.

Below is a list of occupants by family. Most surnames were not available, *Mangia Minestra* is a Sandonatese *cognome* or family nickname. (A *cognome* stays with the family through generations and serves as a quick way to identify someone’s lineage.) *Zio* and *Zia* (Uncle and Aunt) were used affectionately for older people who were not necessarily relatives. —Ed.

Number of people	Who
5	Zio <i>Mangia Minestra</i> (Carmine Leone?) & Costanza Rufo with three children: Donatina, Lucio + one other
4	Franceschina Cardarelli with three daughters: Maria, Pompea, Silvana
4	Nunziatella & Domenico (“ <i>M’n’gucc’</i> ”) with two sons: Pompeo & Antonio. (Domenico <i>M’n’gucc’</i> was always chasing Silvana to come back into the <i>cantina</i> .)
2	Nunziatella's in-laws (Domenico's elderly parents)
1	Mila Michalevic (Jewish intern from Yugoslavia)
3	Marco & Ulla Tenenbaum (Jewish interns from Poland and Germany respectively) with their daughter, Katja.
2	Lucia & Carmela (a mother and daughter, who were neighbors)
2	Zia Annuccia & Zio Gerard (They lived in the building where the <i>cantina</i> was situated and owned an oven. Zio Gerard kept a donkey in the stall where the men slept.)
1	Maddalena (a neighbor)
24	Total inhabitants

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: Neighbors. Yes.

Silvana: We would go down the two stories and we would step on each bed. There were at least 10 beds lined up one after the other. There was room enough just for the beds to be lined up. So, we used to sleep all the way down. So, we would step on all the beds to get to ours. OK? [Laughter] And there we would sleep. So, upon getting up in the morning, the first thing I personally would do... (I don't remember what you did.) I would go outside to see if it was cloudy or sunny because, if it was a bright sunny day, we would certainly see the American planes come. You know, and they would fly in formations of 24, 36. ⁵ I mean the whole sky would be covered with airplanes, and they would fly—would be flying towards Cassino, I guess. ⁶

Maria: Anzio. ⁷

⁵ According to war correspondent Christopher Buckley, "Sometimes they flew in formations of eighteen, sometimes of thirty-six. Sometimes it was the heavies, Fortresses and Liberators, sometimes the mediums, Bostons and Mitchells." Peter Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino : ten armies in hell* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012), 182.

Fortress=B-17; Liberator=B-24; Boston=A-20; Mitchell=B-25. —Ed.

⁶ "The 129 days of the Cassino campaign are calculated from the start of the British attacks of 17 January to the link-up with US [Army] IV Corps from Anzio on 25 May 1944." Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino*, 299.

⁷ Battle of Anzio: January 22- June 5, 1944. "Battle of Anzio," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Anzio>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: Anzio or they would be flying towards Cassino. That's where the—either the 5th Army or the 8th Army...⁸ (I don't remember which of the two.) They were stuck there for six months, and so the Americans just delivered all these bombs to the front lines, which is... That's how they incinerated everything. So, these planes... Did they used to terrify you? They used to terrify me.

Maria: It used to terrify us, depending on the sound.

Silvana: Well, you know—

Maria: Because if the sound... If they were gonna bombard us, the sound was different, and we had to learn the different sounds: if they're gonna pass over us or they're gonna come down on us. So, the sounds—we, we had our ears to the sound of the airplane. We knew exactly if they're gonna bombard us or pass by us.

Marcelle Lipke: Can you do an imitation?

Maria: No, I don't think I can do an imitation. *Sta picchiando! Picchiando!*⁹

Silvana: Well, what they did essentially, was, in order to deliver their, their bomb load, they would have to, you know, come down. They didn't just fly over and drop the bombs. They would...

⁸ Among the Allied players in the Battle of Monte Cassino were General Oliver Leese's 8th Army (British) and General Mark Clark's US 5th Army. Phil Edwards, "Battle of Monte Cassino," BBC, accessed September 19, 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/ff6_cassino.shtml

⁹ Translation: It is striking! Striking! (Italian)—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Marcelle: Swoop?

Silvana: Swoop down, so that would change the sound of the planes.

Maria: But we knew exactly if they're gonna throw bombs on us or not, by the sound of the airplane.

Paul: When you got up in the morning you had to climb over the beds to get out.

Maria: & Silvana: Yes!

Paul: Now were other people still in bed?

Silvana: Oh, it didn't matter if they were still in bed, you would step all over them. You know, they accepted it.

Paul: No, I know, but I'm just wondering whether... I mean, were you generally the first up or the last up?

Silvana: We would all pretty much get up, you know, at the same time. I think the adults got up first. They would start some kind of a fire to cook whatever was there. There wasn't much food left.

Marcelle: You're talking about 19...

Silvana: This is 1944.

Marcelle: OK.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: This was the winter, you know. Let's say, January through May of 1944, at which time, you know, the war ended for us.¹⁰ So, having taken a look outside, seeing that it was going to be a sunny day—and believe me, there were more sunny days than there were cloudy days. [Laughter] Because, just because we didn't want the sunny days, they came.

Maria: It's also the time of year when we get a lot of sun; you know, spring.

Silvana: And then at that point, it would mean that we would have to spend most of the day down below. Because you never—you really never knew... The planes, we could hear when they came, but the artillery—we were within range of the artillery. We didn't know when they were coming. We would hear this, like "Sssssssssssshh."

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: So, we knew that something was coming, and it would hit, you know in a second. So, we were pre-warned, but not—the warning wasn't long enough for us to take shelter.

Marcelle: And the artillery was just on a nice day?

¹⁰ The Allies came through San Donato on May 30, 1944, as per footnote 53.—Ed.

On June 4, 1944, the U.S 5th Army troops entered Rome. Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *World War II : the encyclopedia of the war years : 1941-1945* (Mineola : Dover Publications, 2012), 37.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: The artillery was all the time. It could be in the afternoon, in the morning, in the evening, all night. I remember once, March... Remember the March?

Maria: March 19th.

Silvana: March 19th?¹¹

Maria: We were bombarded for something like, what, 24 hours?¹²

Silvana: 24 hours! The artillery—

Maria: The artillery from the, from the Americans.

¹¹ Silvana later remembered that on March 19, La Festa di San Giuseppe, the lilies were usually in bloom.

¹² Subsequent conversations indicate that Silvana and Maria associate this 24-hour bombardment with the feast of St. Joseph (*La Festa di San Giuseppe*), March 19. Undoubtedly, they refer to the first day of the 3rd battle of Monte Cassino, March 15, 1944. (There were four battles in all. N.B., the Allies were bombing the Cassino area, not San Donato per se.) Please see below for an estimate of the munitions expended.—Ed.

Between 0830 and 1200, 15 March, 72 B-25's, 101 B-26's, 262 B-17's and B-24's—a total of 435 aircraft—bombed the Cassino area. The planes dropped more than 2,000 bombs, a total weight of almost 1,000 tons, in an unprecedented bombardment of awesome proportions....The Allied aircraft suffered no losses....A total of 746 guns and howitzers delivered 2,500 tons of high explosive immediately ahead of the assault troops and an additional 1,500 tons on hostile batteries and other preselected targets. Between 1220 and 2000 that day, artillery pieces in the Cassino area fired almost 200,000 rounds....More aircraft —120 B-17's and 140 B-24's—arrived over Cassino early on the afternoon....Between 1300 and 1500, 49 fighter-bombers dropped 18 tons of bombs on the railroad station in Cassino. Between 1345 and 1630, 96 P-47's, A-36's, and P-40's struck the base of Monte Cassino with 44 tons. Between 1500 and 1700, 32 P-40's and A-36's hit the forward slopes of Monte Cassino with 10 tons. And 66 A-20's and P-40's loosed 34 tons on various targets at different times during the afternoon. Martin Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino* (Washington, D.C. : United States Army, Center of Military History, 1993), 441-443.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: If you look at Settefrati.¹³ Settefrati? You can see it from Zia Ninetta's house? ¹⁴
OK, just beyond Settefrati, you know, that's where the battlefield was. Cassino was just beyond there. ¹⁵ So, the artillery was stationed there and, of course, they were trying to push the Germans out. That was the intent. And so, they just... What they did, was—they would just hit wholesale the whole area. Not the road, not a depot, not a, not a camp where the German's were. This is the way the Americans worked. They had the bombs. They used them wholesale, you know. That's it! So, when—do you remember anything about the March...? I remember being in there for 24 hours without being able to get out.

Maria: We couldn't get out, because the artillery kept going on and on and on. So, when it finally stopped, when we didn't hear it anymore, we get out—and we went out, little by little. We looked at everything that was burned and there were ashes all over.

Silvana: Yeah. I remember that.

¹³ Settefrati is 1 mile southeast of San Donato.—Ed.

¹⁴ Giovanna (Ninetta) Tocci, youngest sister of my grandmother, Franceschina Cardarelli. Please see Appendix 2: "Who's Who."—Ed.

¹⁵ The town of Cassino is approximately 15 miles south of San Donato as the crow flies and 32 miles by road.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: The ashes, the dust and everything. All the animals had been killed. The chickens had been killed, whatever was leftover, because the Germans took most of our animals. But we had a few chickens, they were left. Everything was killed because the chicken was probably, they were probably out, and, and everything was ashes, gray, the color of ashes.¹⁶

Silvana: Yeah. It was essentially from the, you know, the buildings that had been hit. You know, the stones...

Maria: The shells exploded. That was very, very scary...

Silvana: And our house was hit.

Maria: Our house had a big hole. And after it stopped, and after it stopped, the Germans came around to see—to measure the holes that these shells had made into the

¹⁶ What follows are three first-hand accounts by German officers of the devastation on March 15, 1944. –Ed.

Major Rudolf Bohmler describes the beginning of the assault: “The very first wave enveloped Cassino in a pall of dark grey dust, hiding from view the horrors below where men, houses and machines were being blown to pieces. In this hell, it seemed as though all will to resist must be quenched...and all life be brought to an end. As wave succeeded deadly wave, the inferno seemed endless.” Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino*, 182.

“No tree escaped damage, no piece of ground remained green,” wrote Gen. Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin. Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino*, 184.

Leutnant Schuster of the German Army recounted: “The crash of bursting bombs increased in intensity....We clung to each other....It went on and on. Time no longer existed, everything was unreal...Rubble and dust came pouring down into our hole....Crouching in silence, we waited for the pitiless hail to end.” Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino*, 184.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

houses.¹⁷ So that from that they would tell what kind of artillery the Americans were using—by the damage that was made.

Marcelle: Do you remember when the house was hit?

Silvana: Well, we—

Maria: We just heard a noise.

Silvana: We heard so much, so many explosions in 24 hours that we really didn't know what... It was an incredible attack. It was just an all-out attack!

Maria: I remember that when our house was hit, we knew it was our house because it was so close. And I remember *Mamma* saying one of her favorite expressions, "*Chi si cisa a te e mamt' e pard'!*"¹⁸

[LAUGHTER]

Paul: Remember what? I didn't hear it. [LAUGHTER]

Silvana: I remember that.

Maria: *Chi si cisa a te e mamt' e pard'.*

Peter Puzzanghero: One of her favorite expressions. [LAUGHTER]

Silvana: Yes.

¹⁷ Silvana remembered seeing holes as large as 24" wide.—Ed.

¹⁸ Translation: May you, your mother and father be killed! (Sandonatese dialect). Let it be known that Franceschina Cardarelli was a religious woman of strong moral principles and integrity. However, she did not hesitate to express her disapproval in colorful language to whoever crossed the line (including the U.S. Air Force).—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: There was a lot of fun just the same. We laughed also. There was humor.

Silvana: Oh, there was a lot of humor.

Maria: That's, I think, how we survived—because of the humor. That—we laughed at times too.

Silvana: So, then, then there would be some kind of a meal, which was very unpalatable because there wasn't any food left. There was cornmeal, some white flour...

Maria: We took a little bit of olive oil if we had a little bit of olive oil.

Silvana: So, in this basement, there was no fireplace.

Maria: No.

Silvana: Where did they light the fire? Do you remember?

Maria: At La Zi' 'Nuccia's oven. The oven.

Silvana: Where was the oven?

Maria: La Zi' 'Nuccia. When you go in the house, you know, across from our house to go into the basement, if you went up a few steps...

Silvana: Oh yeah, yes! I remember now.

Maria: She had one of those brick ovens—

Silvana: That's right.

Maria: —that she used to cook bread in, and so on. So, once in a while, we lit up that oven to cook something that we had to cook.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: But wasn't there a, a chimney from which they made a fire? Am I remembering this correctly that there was, you know, going down *la cantina*...

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: The door would be on the left, right?

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: The door into our *cantina* then?

Maria: There was no chimney there.

Silvana: No, I know there wasn't. But in that corner, didn't they used to light a fire?

Maria: They lit a fire right on the ground.

Silvana: Yeah, right.

Maria: So, this was like a *cortile* there. Do you know what a *cortile* is?

Silvana: Courtyard.

Maria: Courtyard and so, they, they lit a fire right on the ground to cook something.

Yeah, then people started getting sick and there were no doctors.

Silvana: Then the difficult thing for the adults was to keep the kids in. I remember the time my mother had, keeping me in.

Paul: Alright. So, you get up. You go outside. It's, it's a sunny day.

Silvana: A sunny day.

Paul: What do you feel? What do you think? What happens then?

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: The first thing I feel is today I'm going to have to be stuck indoors all day because I would not be allowed in.¹⁹ So, it would mean trouble. I, I had this urge to be out of doors. I could not stand being, being in this basement. This is the thing I remember most. So, I would get out, look at the sky. It would be a sunny day, then I would turn around, go back down, and pick up my bird. You remember my bird?

Maria: Pick up your what?

Silvana: The bird.

Maria: Oh yeah. Hans.

Silvana: Anzi? [LAUGHTER]

Maria: What's his name?

Silvana: Anzi. Anzi!

Maria: Oh, Hanzi. [LAUGHTER]

Silvana: Anzi! Anzi was the bird, which had been given me by, by the Tenenbaums (our

¹⁹ Silvana surely means "out."

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Jewish friends).²⁰

Maria: For your Birthday.

Silvana: For my birthday. So, I would pick up the bird and bring it out of doors.

Paul: What kind of bird was it?

Silvana: It was a canary, a yellow canary.²¹ So, he was everybody's pet. And, and if there was an air—we didn't have an air raid,²² but we, had we heard the planes

²⁰ Ursula (Ulla) Tenenbaum (née Steinitz) arrived in San Donato in August of 1940. Her husband, Mordechai (Marco) was then a prisoner at Ferramonti (an Italian concentration camp in Calabria). Marco was released to San Donato in a timely manner because Ulla deceived the authorities into thinking that she had tuberculosis and needed her husband to care for her. Ulla had studied to become a midwife and Marco had a degree in pediatrics.* [Mordechai Tenenbaum], "Biography," attached to photograph 49241, "Mordechai and Ursula Tenenbaum pose with their daughter Katja in the Cinecittà displaced persons camp," Photograph Number: 49241, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed September 23, 2022, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1140498>

* "My father had a general degree in medicine, never in pediatrics. He could not specialize because of the racial laws." Katja Tenenbaum, email message to Marcelle Lipke, April 22, 2022.

Though prohibited from practicing medicine, Marco continued to care for those in need. Maria later remembered, "They showed their gratitude by compensating him the only way they could, with food, such as eggs, a bottle of olive oil, flour and fruit. This helped to feed his family and mine."—Ed.

The Tenenbaums stayed initially with my paternal grandfather's aunt, Peppina Paglia, but it did not work out. Shortly thereafter they rented a room in my grandmother's house and became beloved members of the family. Katja was born during the Tenenbaums' exile in San Donato. While Marco and Ulla were in hiding, Franceschina and her daughters cared for Katja. Doing their best to disguise her identity, they had her wear a crucifix and concealed her blond hair under a scarf.—Ed.

²¹ According to Silvana, Anzi would sleep with them in the shelter at night and spend the days on the balcony. They fed him cornbread, which was all they had. One day Silvana forgot to bring him indoors, and he died of exposure.—Ed.

²² I think Silvana means "air raid sirens."—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

coming. My first thought would be, of course, to run out, pick up the bird and bring him downstairs. I went up and down doing this. One day, having forgotten the bird, I ran back out. I picked up the bird. I don't know if you remember this, and I fell, and I twisted my ankle. I mean, my ankle was swollen, bruised, you know. Of course, there was no doctor. There was no way to get to a doctor. I don't know what they did. I mean, cold compresses. Do you remember this?

Maria: Yeah. I came down with some kind of a rash and there was no doctor. Nowhere to go. Everyone, everybody was scared and everybody was in cellars to protect themselves. We used those for shelters. They became shelters.

Silvana: OK. So, then there would be a midday meal of some sort.

Paul: Wait, wait... So, you've gone outside. It's early in the morning. Right? It's sunny. You say, "Oh drat, I gotta stay inside all day." You go back down. What happens for the next... You haven't eaten yet.

Silvana: We have had... We probably had some kind of breakfast. I don't remember what breakfast consisted of.

Maria: It consisted of a slice of bread.

Silvana: Slice of bread.

Maria: That's all.

Paul: So, now you've got two or three hours, presumably, till lunch time.

Silvana: Of course, there would be other children.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Paul: So, how would you pass that morning?

Silvana: We essentially sat down...

Maria: We played cards a lot.

Silvana: We played cards. The only, the only recreation we had was playing cards.

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: I mean, we didn't have games as such. OK? So, there would be some card games. There would be adults sitting around and just telling stories or things. I mean, nobody—there was no activity of any kind. Once that meal was prepared, meager as it was, there was nothing else to do. You couldn't go next door and talk to your neighbor. Whatever neighbors—we were all concentrated in this space. So, we were just talking.

Paul: And what was your--what did you—did you sit in the dark? Did you have any light?

Silvana: There was, there was one window that looked down into this, which was...

We had boulders in front of the window for fear that shells would come in there.²³

Paul: Would come through it.

²³ There is a basement window visible from the street to the left of the outside door. Light was limited, as a boulder had been put in front of the window for protection from shelling. It is my understanding from conversations with Silvana, that this window lit only the floor above the *cantina*, and a grating in that floor brought light to the *cantina* below. Silvana's bed was directly under this grating, and as people entered or exited the building, dirt from their shoes fell onto Silvana's bed. (Her bed was always dirty!) They used candles and/or oil lamps for additional lighting.—Ed.

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Silvana: OK? So, the light was minimal. We would, however, get out from the basement and be in this small courtyard that was not bigger than, than this room.

Maria: A little bit bigger.

Silvana: A little bit bigger than this? But we, we were so far down that whatever light got down, was, was not much. I mean, we never saw the sun. The sun just didn't exist in the courtyard.

Maria: Just some light.

Silvana: Just some light. It was like a skylight, from which you'd get some light filtered down.

Maria: I mean, you know, stories, how many stories those buildings were?

Silvana: Those were, I think, about four stories.

Maria: Yeah, but, you know, high. One more effect that I remember—that being true that in the basement—that it started getting awfully damp.

Silvana: Damp, yeah.

Maria: —and odors, you know because of the dampness. Because—

Marcelle: Moldy?

Maria: Yeah, moldy. Because places like that do get moldy during the spring. In the winter they were OK. They were nice and dry and warm, but when the spring came, you know, they got, they got moldy and wet and damp. I remember that.

Silvana: And there was no heat.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: Huh? That really bothered me a lot. I remember it really bothered me a lot.

Paul: The smell?

Maria: The smell and the dampness.

Paul: Is that where you think you got your rash?

Maria: I don't know if the rash came from that, but that's where—when it came out.

Yeah, about that time. It must have been probably from that.

Marcelle: Where did you go to the bathroom?

Silvana: The bathroom...we, we still went into the house. We went into the house.

Maria: I think, we, we ran in and out.

Silvana: We ran in and out. Yeah.

Marcelle: Oh, so you actually had one.

Silvana: Oh yeah. We had a toilet.

Maria: We had one in our house. Yeah.

Marcelle: But you could get to it.

Maria & Silvana: Yeah.

Paul: And there was still water?

Maria: That's where we got the water. Because we had running water.

Paul: Running water.

Maria: So, we got water from there.

Silvana: There was water.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Paul: You didn't have to go haul it.

Maria: Nobody could take a bath or anything like that.

Silvana: So, this was still within reach of the house. This was directly across. This was not the basement of our house. It was across the street.

Paul: But you could duck across the alley.

Silvana: We could duck across and just go in the house and get water and whatever we needed.

Marcelle: Were there men in this basement or was it just all women?

Silvana: No, there were men. M'ngucc' was there. Zi' Gerard...

Maria: Marco.

Silvana: Who?

Maria: Marco.

Silvana: Oh, Marco. Oh, but Marco wasn't with us very much. He was in the mountains.

Maria: Because he was in the mountains. Now within this sub-basement there was another sub-basement, a smaller one where they used to keep wine and butter, and so on, in the summer because it got very cold there. So, when the Germans came around to pick up all the men to take them with them, some of the men that were with us, they went into this other—it would be a third...

Paul: Level down.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: Yeah. And then we put blocks or stones over it. So, they were really buried alive, these men, until the German's left and they came out. They didn't stay there very long, but for a few days. We gave some food.

Marcelle: So. they took everybody?

Maria: They took every man available.²⁴

Silvana: They took all the men. Oh sure!

Maria: —every man available.

Silvana: Yes.

Maria: Yeah—with them—any man who was able to work. They took them with them.

²⁴ “Above all, they were concerned to protect the male members of the family from being taken away by the Germans as forced laborers. The hills around Cassino...were seeing more activity than ever before. Italian soldiers were passing though on their way to their homes. Many had removed their uniforms to avoid identification, and all were fearful of being conscripted to work for the Germans.” Matthew Parker, *Monte Cassino : the hardest-fought battle of World War II* (New York : Doubleday, 2004), 36.

“In the Val di Comino there was also a company of *SS Feldgendarmarie*, a specialized body of the German military organization, specifically engaged in the search and raid of valid men to be employed in the construction of fortifications. By mid-November their headquarters was located in the area of Villa Latina....Many of the local men were rounded up daily and forced to labour for the Germans at gunpoint. This work involved loading and unloading goods and ammunition, chopping down trees, transporting building materials and constructing roads and field fortifications.” “Atina during World War II,” Atina and the Val di Comino, accessed February 25, 2020, site inactive on September 23, 2022, <http://atinaitaly.com/atina-world-war-ii-monte-cassino/>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: Now part of this winter, till now, I spent in the mountains with Katja.²⁵ There was a farmhouse up there, which I went back to this past summer—no, not this past summer, the summer before.

Maria: Who lives up there now?

Silvana: We were booted away from the house from barking dogs. It was so disappointing. You cannot imagine. But I went back to the house, and I would never have found it by myself. I thought I knew where it was, but _____ long enough, I would never have found it.

So, I spent—in this farmhouse—I spent, I don't know, several months probably, a

²⁵ “In the mountains” means “outside of the town,” but not necessarily at a higher elevation. Silvana and Katja went to Vorga (or “La Vorga”). Though 2.4 km southeast of the town of San Donato, Vorga is technically part of San Donato. See Appendix 4, Maps 1.—Ed.

Both San Donato and La Vorga are about 700 meters above sea level. Worldwide elevation map finder, accessed October 16, 2022,
https://elevation.maplogs.com/poi/san_donato_val_di_comino_province_of_frosinone_italy.421577.html

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couple of months, I don't know how long I stayed there. I don't remember.²⁶

Maria: A couple of months probably.

Silvana: —with Katja, 'cause the parents were in the mountains and it was much easier.

Well, at that time we felt it was safer for her to be up there in the mountains and the parents were close by. They would come and see her. But I was her baby-sitter.²⁷ Right?

You know.

Paul: How old was Katja at this point?

²⁶ “On September 8, 1943, Italy surrendered to the Allies and [in response] Mussolini, with German support, created the Italian Social Republic. Italy was occupied by the German troops while the civil administration remained in the hands of the Italian Social Republic. The Tenenbaums and most of the other internees fled to the mountains. Between October and December 1943, Marco and Ulla offered medical assistance, food, lodging, and supplies to P.O.W.’s of the Allied army who swarmed the mountains trying to reach the frontline at Cassino.” “Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau, 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

“The Tenenbaums took refuge at La Vorga,... They alternated the days in the mountains and the nights in the village where they slept in the basement of Costanza Rufo.” “Interview with Marco Tenenbaum by Domenico Cedrone,” 1994, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

“...because of the winter, sometime around the end of November and the beginning of December, the Tenenbaums remained in hiding and left Katja with the daughter of their landlady [Franceschina Cardarelli’s youngest daughter Silvana]...” “Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau,” 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

Shortly after the German occupation of Italy, “...the Tenenbaums were obliged to flee to the mountains. Katja remained with the Cardarellis; Silvana cared for her as a younger sister.” [Mordechai Tenenbaum], “Biography,” attached to photograph 49241, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

²⁷ Silvana cooked for Katja in the farmhouse. Ulla had instructed Silvana to remove the eyes from the potatoes when preparing them for Katja, saying she was too young to consume them and might react badly. Silvana said that Katja would cry when she heard the sound of the spoon hitting the bottom of the pan, because she knew that the meager meal had come to an end.—Ed.

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Silvana: Katja was two, three, two? ²⁸

Maria: So, you were there with Carmela.²⁹

Silvana: Carmela. Carmela and the, and the father.

Maria: The father, yeah.

Silvana: What was the father's name?

Maria: Don't remember.

Silvana: So, we would, from there—this place, this place was close to the mountain where you [Marcelle] climbed with Diego, on, on that side. ³⁰ OK? From there we had a full view of the town, of San Donato, and from there I watched the planes come down and bomb

²⁸ Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum was born in the Sora hospital (21 km NW of San Donato) July 1, 1942, “Birthdays and Anniversaries,” The Steinitz Family History on the Net, accessed September 24, 2022, http://family.steinitz.net/version_1.0/private/Birthday_frame.htm

²⁹ “We were on the mountains at the Vorga at the house of a farmer, a certain Michele who had a limping daughter.” “Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau,” 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

“Several interns find safety in the countryside, in the district of Vorga, in two country houses owned by Michele Tramontozzi, nicknamed “Zio Michele” by the Jews”... Wall text, *The Jews finding shelter in the Vorga by “Uncle Michael” (Zio Michele)*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

I am assuming that Carmela was Michele’s daughter. —Ed.

³⁰ Silvana refers to a climb I made with Sandonatese friends in 1972.—Ed.

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San Donato.³¹

Paul: What were you thinking? What were you thinking? What were you feeling? What were you seeing?

Silvana: So, at this point, I didn't know where the bombs hit. You know, you see the planes come down and, and you know, the bombs are exploded, but it's difficult to tell exactly where. You just saw the smoke. So, I didn't know who was alive, who was dead. I think somebody came. Some emissary was sent.

Marcelle: What a network!

Silvana: Yes, to tell us that, you know, that nobody had been killed and everything.

Maria: Oh yeah, word got around. It worked. If someone had gotten killed, yeah, they would tell us.

³¹ According to the *Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, in San Donato*, the town endured multiple air strikes and shelling, but not until January of 1944, as per two accounts below. Perhaps Silvana was still in Vorgia and witnessed one of these assaults on the town.—Ed.

“The military aircraft in operation above the Gustav Line is the Twelfth Air Force.... On the 12th of January 1944, they drop 10 tonnes of bombs onto the town of San Donato, including phosphorus shells. On the 15th of January, military aircraft starts strafing the houses in Maggiore Lane, and bomb Santa Maria, causing ‘significant damage to some houses’ and several injured.” Wall text, *San Donato attacked by allied military aircraft*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

January 15: air strikes, light injuries, damage to buildings; **March 9:** shelling, damage to elementary school: 1 German soldier dead; **March 14:** air strikes, damage to homes: 4 dead, 3 injured; **March 18:** shelling, light damage: 2 dead; **April 31:** air strikes on La Vorgia and the cemetery: 4 dead, light injuries; **May 12:** air strikes, much damage to buildings; **May 15:** shelling of town center: 2 dead; **June 1-5:** shelling from German forces, grave damage to buildings: 5 dead. (summary and translation from the museum’s list of San Donato bombings, Marcelle Lipke)—Ed.

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Marcelle: So, wait a minute...this was different from March 19 when you had the shelling.

Silvana: This was actually before. No, I think this was before March 19. This is closer to,

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closer to around Christmas. ³² Because after that...

³² Atina (8 miles south of San Donato) and environs were heavily bombed several times between October and December of 1943. No doubt, the people of San Donato were affected by these attacks, as precision bombing was technically impossible at the time.—Ed.

“Bombing accuracy was terrible. The average circular error in 1943 was 1,200 feet, meaning that only 16 percent of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. ‘Rather than dropping bombs into pickle barrels, Eighth Air Force bombardiers were having trouble hitting the broad side of a barn,’ said historian McFarland.” [John T. Correll](#), “Daylight precision bombing,” *Air and Space Forces Magazine*, Oct. 1, 2008, accessed October 16, 2022, <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/1008daylight/>

I’ve included the descriptions of the Atina bombings below to give a sense of some of the challenges people in the vicinity endured.—Ed.

On the 8th September 1943 Atina and the valley of the Ponte Melfa and Mollarino was invaded by the Baden-Württemberg 305^a Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht....

On the 19th October 1943 the first bombs were dropped on Atina by the Allies who were aiming for the bridge across the River Melfa. However, the bombs failed to hit their target....On sunny clear days the Allies continued their air raids, targetting [sic] roads along the important German communication centres, supply routes and gun emplacements. However, many of the bombs failed to hit their targets and the citizens of Atina suddenly found themselves directly in the firing line. There was another bombardment on the 1st November, All Saints Day.

On the 5th November there was a mighty rumble as a large menacing squadron of Flying Fortress bombers darkened the sky over the valley from the direction of San Bagio Saracinisco. This was quickly followed by the deafening noise of the mighty explosions throughout the town. There was no time for anyone to run and try to find a place of safety. The people were left stunned and incredulous. The raid left a shocking scene of devastation. There were several dead and injured, many buildings and civil habitation throughout the town had been destroyed or severely damaged. There were huge bomb craters where the explosions had occurred.

On the 12th November at around 11am a formation of 18 bombers again dropped their deadly loads onto the town of Atina, which resulted in severe destruction, and many more fatalities and casualties. Many outlying areas of the town were also hit.

On the 13th December, on the feast of Santa Lucia, Atina was heavily bombed as the Allies tried to hit the bridge over the Melfa. There were several more casualties and fatalities. Atina was bombed yet again on the 28th December. “Atina during World War II,” Atina and the Val di Comino, accessed February 25, 202, site inactive on October 20, 2022, <http://atinaitaly.com/atina-world-war-ii-monte-cassino/>

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Maria: No, Silvana. March 19 is toward the end. Then _____ at that point—

Silvana: This episode—this was—this happened before, before....

Paul: So, maybe the late fall, early winter

Silvana: Late fall, that's right.

Paul: Of '43-'44.

Marcelle: Once? This was just once? Was San Donato bombed just once?

Maria: Oh no, that was, was bombed for 24 hours continuously once, but then we still, still had bombings being dropped and artillery, but not the 24, 24 hours in a row.³³

Marcelle: That was March 19. ³⁴

Maria: Yes.

Silvana: For 24 hours was artillery. It was not bombing.

Paul: But you're saying, going back into the late fall of '43 or early winter of '43-44, you were up in the farmhouse and the bombing was going on then.

Silvana: That's right.

Marcelle: But was that a first bombing?

³³ Again, bombing and shelling are used interchangeably.—Ed.

³⁴ March 15, 1944.—Ed.

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Silvana: That was the first bombing in San Donato.³⁵ Yes. OK. So, we—to sleep in this farmhouse, to get to the bedroom, you had to come out.³⁶ So, there was no stairway that connected the downstairs with the upstairs. In order to get to the bedroom at night we had to come out, come around and go upstairs in the bedroom to sleep. So, there was this elderly woman with her father, much older than me and Katja. So, I remember specifically being afraid. I wasn't afraid of anything. I was afraid of meeting a wolf when we left the kitchen downstairs to go up the bedroom. It was dark, but we had a little candle or something to light the way. You know how dark San Donato gets? No lights up there, anywhere! Dark!

Marcelle: Yeah, yeah...

Silvana: Yeah, black! So, I... Katja slept in a crib. I slept in a little bed and Carmela and the father slept in another bed...together. I remember one night, the shelling...it was just non-stop. And you know, and the house would shake. Because actually we were closer to the front, where I was, than San Donato was. So, the shells headed to San Donato. The shells would come by. You'd hear them whistling: "Sssssh! Sssssh! Sssssh!"

Marcelle: Yeah, yeah, yeah!

³⁵ As per footnote 31, January 12th, 1944 was the first time San Donato was bombed.

³⁶ Out = "outside."

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Silvana: I, I was so scared. Oh, I was so scared! So, Carmela called me over and she said—"Come on." We picked up Katja. Katja and I both went to sleep in the big bed with everybody together. I'll, I'll never forget this. [LAUGHTER]. Poor Carmela. She was such a nice woman. So, during the day in the mountains, somebody would always come by. There would be all the men from San Donato that, that had not been drafted into the Italian army or some that had made it home. At this point the Italian, the army had collapsed, and the men pretty much find their way back home.³⁷ My uncle Mimino, how long, how long did it take him to get home? ³⁸

Maria: How long it took him to come home?

Silvana: ...to come home...

Maria: He walked from Sicily.

Silvana: He walked from Palermo—from Sicily. He walked! When he came home...

Maria: He had no more teeth.

Silvana: His teeth were all gone.

Maria: And no shoes.

Silvana: We went up to see him.

³⁷ "After the September 1943 armistice...German commanders throughout Italy triggered *Operation Asche*, the forcible disarmament and neutralization of the Italian armed forces....the army which could have posed a threat and aided the Allies was neutralized overnight." Caddick-Adams, *Monte Cassino*, 12-13.

³⁸ Beniamino (Mimino or Mimin') Tocci, one of Franceschina Cardarelli's younger brothers.—Ed.

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Maria: No shoes on his feet.

Silvana: And I didn't know who he was!

Maria: He was an old man.

Marcelle: So, you're saying, all the men were taken out of the town, but when? This was early on?

Silvana: This was-- No, this was not early on. This was later.

Marcelle: When they took the men?

Silvana: They began—as, as their... They began to realize that their cause was lost—the Germans knew at some point_____.

Maria: This was after the fall of Mussolini.³⁹ You know, the government had fallen.

Silvana: Well, the government fell.

³⁹ On July 24–25 the Fascist Grand Council met in Rome...and passed a motion asking the king to resume his full constitutional powers....The king dismissed Mussolini the same day and installed Marshal Pietro Badoglio....On July 27 Badoglio formed an interim government that consisted mostly of ex-Fascists. The Badoglio government agreed to an armistice with the Allies, and...Eisenhower...announced it on September 8, 1943....The Germans immediately took over Rome. In the previous few weeks, they had already taken over most of central and northern Italy....The king and his government fled...leaving Rome to the Germans. Chaos reigned among Italian troops, and thousands deserted, while others joined the Resistance forces. Badoglio officially declared war on Germany on October 13. Italy became a war zone. In the meantime the Germans had rescued Mussolini from his mountain prison and restored him in the north as ruler of the “Italian Social Republic,” a last-ditch puppet Fascist regime based in Salò on Lake Garda. “The Republic of Salò (the Italian Social Republic) and the German occupation,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 17, 2022 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/The-republic-of-Salo-the-Italian-Social-Republic-and-the-German-occupation>

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Maria: The Germans took over.

Silvana: You see what happened. Right. And, and so, Germany essentially took over Italy.

Maria: Yeah. We had a German headquarters in San Donato. Their, their headquarters in San Donato...⁴⁰

Silvana: But as, as the war progressed, and they, and they began to—I guess, reinforcements weren't coming, as they needed them, and they really put up quite a struggle in Cassino, you know, to hold the, the Allies' advance. At this point, they were no match for what was coming. Then there was the landing in Anzio, OK. And then eventually they knew that they--knew that they were—they knew of the landing in Normandy.⁴¹ I mean this—they knew it was going to happen.

Maria: Well when they... When the Americans went to Anzio, then the Germans were

⁴⁰ “In the early days of October, the German troops settle in San Donato following the installation of the main authorities [Kommandantur] at the fascist headquarters (Casa del Fascio/Tempesta-Cugini Palace), subsequently, the local station of the 305th Infantry Division at the Cellucci Building....the Germans confiscate supplies...from houses, buildings and country houses for their own offices, kitchens, officials' bedrooms...medical stations, weapon and supply warehouses, barns for the mules, workshops.” Wall text, *Militarization of San Donato*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

⁴¹ D-Day/Normandy Invasion, June 6, 1944—Ed.

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being encircled and they had to flee and that's how—when they left San Donato.⁴²

Silvana: Yeah, but wasn't landing, the Anzio landing...

Maria: That was in 1944. Wasn't it, Peter?

Peter: I'm trying to think.

Silvana: I thought the Anzio landing was—it was the army that eventually got to Cassino. No?

Maria: No, no.

Paul: So, when—

Silvana: The Anzio landing that happened after Cassino?⁴³

Maria: Yes. You see, they were in Cassino, the Germans were in Cassino all that winter.

Silvana: Yeah.

Marcelle: What, what year?

Paul: '42,'43-'44.

⁴² The Allies were “encircled” several days after their relatively peaceful arrival at Anzio. On January 22, 1944, British and American troops landed north and south of Anzio with 36,000 troops and 3200 vehicles. Their arrival was largely unopposed, as the Germans had abandoned Anzio to fight the US Fifth Army further south. Furthermore, a US patrol found that the way to Rome was open. Instead of taking advantage of the situation and marching into Rome, the Allied troops were ordered to wait for the Germans, who then arrived in large numbers. By January 25, 40,000 German troops had surrounded the Allied beachhead. “Anzio - The Invasion That Almost Failed,” Imperial War Museum, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/anzio-the-invasion-that-almost-failed>

⁴³ The Battle of Monte Cassino: January 17-May 18, 1944; The Battle of Anzio: January 22-June 5, 1944. They were (mostly) simultaneous.—Ed.

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Maria: '43.

Silvana: I don't remember.

Maria: And they were trying to—the Americans were trying to push them north. But since Cassino, Monte Cassino are a, a natural fortress, the Americans couldn't push them out, north. That's why they went to Anzio. They bypassed, all this time, they bypassed Cassino, and they went to Anzio. Now the Germans are getting encircled. So, they have to leave.

Marcelle: OK and it was, so was it at that point that they started rounding up Sandonatese men?

Silvana: Men, right.

Marcelle: As troops?

Silvana: No, they rounded them up as...

Paul: ...to protect the convoys

Silvana: ...was retaliation. Anger! They knew that they were—at this point they were angry, and, and they had had reinforcements of these young kids. They were—some of them they must have been— There was the Panzers, the Panzer Division, which were—

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oh, they were very different from the Germans who had been in San Donato before.⁴⁴

This is toward the end.

Marcelle: How were they different?

Silvana: They were mean! They were, they were unforgiving. They were bad. And they were very young. They were just running out of men. So, and it was also at this point that when they began to round up the Jews that were in San Donato.⁴⁵ This all happened pretty much around the same time—spring of 1944.

Paul: OK, so the men—when the Italian Army collapsed, and the men of San Donato began to return. (The ones who survived.)

Marcelle: Oh, so that's when they started...

Paul: When was that?

Silvana: I'm sorry, Paulie.

Paul: When did the men of San Donato start to return from the collapsed Italian Army?

When, when was that? Was it in the fall?

⁴⁴“**Panzer division**, German **Panzerdivision**, (“armoured division”), a self-contained combined-arms military unit of the German army, built around and deriving its mission largely from the capabilities of armoured fighting vehicles.” “Panzer division,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/panzer-division>

⁴⁵ “So, on April 6th, 1944, 16 of the Jews of San Donato were arrested by Wehrmacht soldiers, a mere 42 days before the Nazi capitulation on May 18th. They were first imprisoned in Rome, then sent to the camp of Fossoli (Modena) and finally deported to Auschwitz. Only four survived.” “Paper Lives,” Centro Primo Levi, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/paper-lives/>

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Silvana: They...

Paul: You said they used to come by the farmhouse.

Silvana: Right!

Paul: Or somebody used to come by.

Silvana: They just--they didn't come all at once.

Paul: Right.

Silvana: Some of them would show up from God knows where...

Paul: Right.

Silvana: ...depending on where they were stationed.

Paul: Right.

Silvana: So, in that winter of 1943/44...

Paul: ...'44, they would just show up.

Silvana: They--one of them would just show up. Like in the mountains there would be a lot of them. There would be Donato Coletti—would be there, the other two Coletti

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brothers.⁴⁶

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: OK. Marco, of course, was with them. Who else was with them? Do you remember?

Maria: No.

Paul: So, they would just sort of appear out of nowhere one by one, here or there.

Silvana: Our uncle Mimino, he showed up after, after the war had ended for us in Rome. Of course, this Anzio landing, it facilitated the liberation of Rome. Because Anzio is just right there and since, since Rome was, was "open city," they just marched on Rome.⁴⁷ There was no fighting. The Germans didn't fight.

Paul: So, these guys would show up, maybe at the farmhouse, you started to say...

⁴⁶ "Marco obtained a false Italian identity card dated in December and in the name of Marco Cedrone and Ulla obtained a false identity card in the name of Maria Cedrone. They also obtained another set of identity cards, with the same names, this time bilingual (Italian-German). The documents were provided by a medical student who was involved with the Resistance, whose name was Donato Coletti." Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau, 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

"Many Jews, scared by the constant checks carried out by the German military police force, attempt to leave San Donato obtaining false identification cards. The mayor Gaetano Marini allows the making of these false documents and signs them. The falsification of the documents is carried out by the employees of the communal registry...and Donato Coletti." Wall text, *The Council's and Fascist Secretary's Help*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

⁴⁷ "Open city: City declared undefended and free of military activity. For this guarantee, an open city is given immunity from attack or bombardment....Rome...was declared an open city by the Germans in the fall of 1943 as Allied troops advanced in Italy." Polmar and Allen, *World War II*, 603.

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Silvana: Yeah. So, in other words, right, this—during the day one, you know, some of them would show up and there would be, you know, a piece of bread that Carmela would have to give them or an apple or something.

Marcelle: Were they hiding, hiding too?

Silvana: They were hiding! They were hiding from the Germans.

Marcelle: All the men were.

Silvana: Absolutely!

Marcelle: OK.

Silvana: Absolutely they were hiding!

Marcelle: But would they have been killed if they were found or were, they—?

Silvana: They could be killed, or they would have brought them to either labor camps or eventually concentration camps. Who knows where?

Marcelle: Oh, OK.

Silvana: I mean, a couple of them never showed... You know, what's his name?

_____.⁴⁸ He never showed up.

Maria: Well, he... They said that he was brought to the Russian front.

⁴⁸ According to Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, a number of Sandonatese soldiers were deported to German concentration camps: Pietro Brusca, Lucio Macioce, Francesco Piselli, Nicola Rufo, Giovanni Tempesta.—Ed.

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Silvana: I mean, they never knew what had happened to him. He never, he never came back.

Maria: But the people of the town, I didn't see this. But the people of the town talked about an episode where this old man and his son were walking up in the mountains with a, with a donkey, and a couple of German soldiers saw them, and they wanted the donkey. And the old man said to him, "If you take this donkey away from me, you will have taken my livelihood. I cannot give it to you." So, the Germans shot the old man and the son, and they took the donkey.

Silvana: Yeah, that's—

Maria: So, that was—gives you an idea of what they did. You didn't have to be Jewish or anything. You know.

Silvana: You didn't have to be anything. But then on the other hand, they were—how much food did they bring us? They brought food, the German officers who lived in our

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house.⁴⁹

Maria: They brought food.

Silvana: They brought food. They brought oranges. They brought—they were gentlemen. They were wonderful.

⁴⁹ Two German officers commandeered a room in Franceschina's house. Each interview presents two convincing, but contradictory accounts as to when the German officers might have spent approximately two months living in my family's house. We are led to believe that Katja was not staying with my family at the time. As per footnote 26, we know that Marco and Ulla fled to the mountains with Katja in October 1943, and at the end of November/beginning of December, they left Katja with Silvana's family. If indeed the officers arrived in early October (as per Museo del Novecento e della Shoah below) and stayed two months, they would not have overlapped with Katja. In fact, it's likely that Katja was brought to stay with my family as soon as the officers had departed.—Ed.

“During the first few days of October 1943, units of the 305th Infantry Division arrive in the Comino Valley...” Wall text, *The Arrival of the Troops in the South of Lazio*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino

On the other hand, it's conceivable, but perhaps less likely, that the officers might have arrived in March of 1944 two months before the war ended in central Italy (as per the Museo del Novecento e della Shoah below).—Ed.

“On the 16th of March, following the evacuation of the town of Settefrati, San Donato becomes the last habited town closest to the battlefront. The town shows a large influx of German soldiers and evacuees coming from neighbouring towns: the population is doubled. The mayor, especially because of the extreme scarcity of food, requests an intervention from the German authorities for the removal of the evacuees.” Wall text, *Removal of the Evacuees, Dispositions, Sanctions*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

It's not clear whether Katja would have been still with Silvana's family in March, as her parents were in Sora, arranging to get to Rome. However, according to Ulla, she was smuggled out of Silvana's house in March. (See page 88 for story.)—Ed.

The Tenenbaums remained in Sora and were not able to leave for Rome until the end of April or beginning of May. They went to Rome on a medical transport with Marco as “Dr. Cedrone,” escorting Ulla (his patient) with her daughter. Interview with Alexander (Sasha) Gonik, Gonik Family, Geneva, 1990's, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

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Maria: They were, they were gentlemen, those two people, those two Germans.

Silvana: Absolutely.

Maria: Yeah, you gotta say that too. What they did before going to the front in the morning, they would get drunk at night and what they did—they, they had wine and they boiled the wine, and they concentrated this wine. They drank, they drank so much and then the next morning; they would go to the front. And some of them came back, and some never came back. They, in other words, could not really face going there in the morning so much.

Marcelle: So, were they staying in your basement too?

Maria & Silvana: No! No!

Silvana: At this point they had left.

Maria: They had left. No, they stayed. They took one of our rooms.

Silvana: The winter of 1944, 1943-44. The Germans that lived in our house had already left. They either had been killed. We never saw them again. They didn't come home. They didn't come back. So, at this point, the Germans, you know, they, they were retreating. So, what happened to the two; we have no idea.

Marcelle: But if they were drunk, you had to put up with them being drunk.

Maria: Yeah, but they shut themselves in the room.

Silvana: They slept.

Maria: And we went into the—you know our... Have you ever been in our house?

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Marcelle: Once.

Maria: OK, you know that door that, that separates the front of the house with the back of the house? OK, we would stay in the back of the house and lock that door. And they would stay on the front of the house. I mean, we were always scared. We were scared that they might molest us, but it did not happen.

Silvana: Oh, yes!

Marcelle: That's amazing. That's really amazing.

Silvana: Absolutely! I mean, you have to say what happened and this happened.

Maria: But these were officers and they used to say that the officers, officers were more gentlemanly than the regular soldiers.

Silvana: Gerard...Gerard.

Paul: That was one of the names?

Maria: I don't remember exactly the dates though when... This is coming back now.

Marcelle: How did they show up to invite themselves to stay there?

Silvana: Oh, what they did was, they would come, and they would take rooms.

Maria: They come in the house, if they like your house, they just take over the room or two.

Marcelle: So, what did they say?

Silvana: I don't remember what they said.

Maria: Nothing! I mean, we couldn't understand their, their language. They just—

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Marcelle: They just showed up?

Maria: They just show up, move their stuff in, take over. That's it. And we knew enough not to protest, not to do anything.

Silvana: Do you remember once they put me in bed? Mamma put me in bed. When another—it was the first German contingent that came. To, to make them believe that there was illness in the house. I would be there covered up with blankets. She told, she told the German soldiers that there was typhoid in the house. So, they would not take the house. And this time it worked. Next time it didn't.

Peter: Sure.

Silvana: I mean, if they were mean-minded, they would have shot me in the bed. They would do it; you know.

Marcelle: Actually, actually that could have been... That was a dangerous thing that you did. Because they could have...

Maria: You had to take chances.

Silvana: If you found a bastard, and there were some of them that were, you just never know what could have happened. They were crazy.

Maria: There are so many episodes that happened, I mean, that you cannot really remember them in sequence. You know?

Paul: No, of course not.

Maria: Yeah, it's just...

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Paul: What are the ones that float up...never mind the sequence? I mean, other incidents?

Maria: Other incidents that—I think one incident that I remember was... There was a woman in the neighborhood, this was before, you know, the Germans took over our houses, and so on. This was after the Jewish people were sent to San Donato and we had this couple with Katja living with us. Word went around that Mussolini was gonna talk to the nation, you know, on the radio and so word went around that he was gonna—it was going to be at 2:00 in the afternoon. So, there was one woman in the whole neighborhood with the radio.⁵⁰ So, we all gathered at her house to listen to the speech. And we did. You know, and being young girls, we didn't understand the whole thing. And you know... Some... You know, really in a certain way, we believed what Mussolini was telling us because we did not know any better actually. So, the next day,

⁵⁰According to the Museum, Giuseppa Rufo and Pasquale Tempesta had a radio, which they kept well hidden away. It's possible that Maria is referring to Giuseppa.—Ed.

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Mark,⁵¹ the Jewish doctor that lived with us was in...⁵²

Tape stops at 37:03:01

Silvana: It was in May of 1944. We went up from the basement in which we slept in the war—went 4 or 5 stories up. You'd go up to the top window and you would look down into the valley and it was all covered with poppies.

Maria: Red poppies

Silvana: I'll never forget that sight.

⁵¹ Marco.

⁵² The remainder of Side 1 was accidentally erased. (Fortunately, most of it had already been transcribed.) What was completely lost, I have paraphrased from my notes: Maria went on to say that Mussolini declared on the radio that the Jews were now their enemies. This idea was completely incomprehensible to her, given how close her family was to the Tenenbaums. Furthermore, Silvana and Maria told me many times that Italian Jews were simply “Italians.”—Ed.

“Both before and during the war, the Italians on various occasions displayed interest in German racial research, legislation and even in the organization of the concentration camps. Nonetheless, they did not erect concentration camps along the German model.

“All this changed in one fell swoop with the overthrow of the Fascist government in Italy. The Jews who had been interned in camps in the south were released by Allied forces; however, the great majority of the Jews of Italy were living in Rome and the north where the Germans now ruled. During the brief rule of the government of Marshal Pietro Badoglio (July 25-September 9, 1943), Mussolini was rescued from imprisonment in a daring operation and taken to Germany, Hitler now returned him to quasi power, and in mid-November, the Italian Socialist Republic was established under his leadership. On November 14, 1943, the Fascist Party Conference formulated the principles of the new regime. One of the eighteen clauses of the Verona platform stipulated, ‘Members of the Jewish race are aliens. During this war they are to be considered as members of an enemy nation.’

“As a consequence, on November 30 the minister of the interior issued instructions to arrest all Jews without exception, to incarcerate them in concentration camps, and to confiscate their property. This ushered in the second stage in the persecution of the Jews of Italy.” Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust : The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-45* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1991), 423-424.

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Maria: Because the field had not been cultivated. So, the poppies grew.

Silvana: It was red. Everything was red. A sight never to be seen again.

Maria: It was to symbolize all the blood that had been shed.

Silvana: Sure, if you think of it in those terms.

Marcelle: Well, in England they give out poppies on their Veteran's Day. Do they do it here too?

Maria: Over here too. Yeah.

Marcelle: So, this is when the Allies came in, you saw the poppies?

Silvana: It was May when they came, I remember somebody—I don't know who it was that came and said to Mamma, "Come!"⁵³ We were where the oven was in that room upstairs. What was her name?

Maria: What oven?

⁵³ "Finally on May 18, the German defenders of Monte Cassino raised a white flag in surrender and the Polish Division confronting them on the mountain...staggered up to take possession of the rubble that was once the historic monastery." Don North, "The Bloody Victory at Monte Cassino," Consortium News, accessed May 7, 2020, site inactive on October 9, 2022, <https://consortiumnews.com/2014/05/19/the-bloody-victory-at-monte-cassino/>

On May 30, troops from New Zealand's 21st Battalion Infantry were the first Allied troops to arrive in San Donato. "They find Mayor Gaetano Marini in Carlo Coletti Square together with many citizens happy to celebrate with all the Allied soldiers. With them are many young boys and girls with the hope of receiving some food." Wall text, *The Allies make their way to San Donato town centre*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

My brother, Fulvio deduced (from Silvana's description and maps) that the Allies must have come the most direct route up via Napoli (route 509).—Ed.

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Silvana: Where the brick oven was.

Maria: La Zi' 'Nuccia.

Silvana: La Zi' 'Nuccia. But somebody had come to say that they would be arriving maybe today. That Rome had been liberated. The first thing I thought of was, "I can go out! I could go out!"

Maria: I think I want to mention one more thing there that we were talking about. La Zi' 'Nuccia ⁵⁴ was an old woman and her husband was old. And there were quite a few old people in the neighborhood. So, whatever bread was there, it was distributed, not by the old people, but maybe by the sons and daughters, who could be around 40 years old at the time. So, they cut the bread and they give one slice to each person. That was the ration for the day. And I always cry when I think about this. La Zi' 'Nuccia would not eat her bread. They gave it to us. They gave it to the younger children. So, the old people went without food, so that they could feed the young people. I'll never forget that. And right after the war, just after the war, all of them died, one by one, as if their job was done. They sort of kept themselves alive to give encouragement to the younger generation, to the younger people. After the war, just a couple of months later, one by one, they just died quietly, as their job had been done now.

Silvana: I wonder how old they might have been...

⁵⁴ Maria once described her as "an angel."—Ed.

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Maria: They were in their late 70's I'm sure, but they starved themselves.

Silvana: Actually, there were lot of old people. There was la Zi' Annuccia...

Maria: Zi' Gerard, Zi' Mangia Minestra e la moglie,⁵⁵ e la Zi' Irena, la Zi' Maddalena...

Silvana: What about the ones at the very end?

Maria: You mean Zi' Mimin'?

Silvana: What was the wife's name?

Maria: Catarina.

Silvana: Catarina was the daughter.

Maria: If that had lasted a few months more, we would have really starved.⁵⁶

Silvana: Well, yeah because there was no food to be had. We couldn't grow any food.

Maria: We couldn't grow any. We couldn't buy any.

⁵⁵ Translation: Uncle Gerard, Uncle He Eats Soup and his wife (Italian). (Nicknames were very colorful.) The “wife” was Costanza Rufo, who will play an important role in the story later. For the record, the two were life partners, but not actually married.—Ed.

⁵⁶ “In the Southern regions, the food situation remained very critical until the first months of 1944....In May 1944, the Office of strategic studies reported how the lower and middle classes of Naples were ‘not far from starvation’ while, of that city’s population, only the wealthy had a satisfactory diet....During that year, thanks to the aid provided by the USA, the situation improved. It was estimated that, in the spring of 1944, about 84% of the population of liberated Italy received half of the food they ate from imports brought in by the Allies.” Vittorio Daniele, Renato Ghezzi. “The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy,” *Investigaciones de Historia Economica*, June, 2019, 123, accessed September 19, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321287906_The_impact_of_World_War_II_on_nutrition_and_children's_health_in_Italy/citation/download

According to Silvana, there were soup kitchens at the City Hall, i.e., a truck would pull up with soup, blocking the street. People would show up at the appointed time (not every day) with their own soup bowl in hand. They were usually served something like pea soup. As the baker’s wife, Natuccia gave out bread rations. Later she provided flour. (Sometimes she would give Franceschina twice the quota.)—Ed.

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Marcelle: Where did it come from?

Silvana: From whatever small warehouses were in San Donato.

Paul: Whatever had been hoarded.

Silvana: Yeah. There was no food. I mean, it wasn't coming from anywhere. Whatever had been hoarded. Gardens, there were small gardens that people planted. There were chickens. They provided the eggs.

Maria: Then the war was over and, of course, we had never heard of the atomic bomb, 'cause we didn't have newspapers. We didn't have radios. There was just this woman with a radio there. There was no news coming, then all of a sudden, we hear about the atomic bomb.⁵⁷

Silvana: Well, that was sometime later.

Maria: Yeah. That was later.

Silvana: I remember when the president died. I remember that news when Roosevelt died.⁵⁸

Paul: What do you remember?

⁵⁷ The bombing of Hiroshima: August 6, 1945—Ed.

⁵⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945—Ed.

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Silvana: I don't remember hearing it directly from the radio, but I remember the grief that pervaded the town upon hearing that he was dead. Apparently, there was an awareness of his incredible role.

Marcelle: Did the Allies bring food? ⁵⁹

Silvana: Oh yes. They were very generous.

Maria: They brought the white sliced bread, and we didn't know what to do with it.

[LAUGHTER]

Silvana: ...and peanut butter. We had never seen it!

Maria: We opened up the loaf of bread and you pick up the slice of bread and the bread goes like this. [LAUGHTER] We were used to nice, hard and black bread. And then they gave us the little hot dogs in jars,⁶⁰ and they were very, very thin, and we look at them and say, "*Ma*, what is this?" ⁶¹ [LAUGHTER]

Silvana: And chocolates, and chocolate. Chocolate!

⁵⁹ Silvana later recounted when the Allies arrived. First it was the Moroccans, then the U.S. Army. The townspeople handed them flowers and in return the soldiers gave out chocolates, candies and chewing gum. "It was quite a feeling seeing them. People cheered them. Everyone came out to see them. The kids crowded around the tanks. It was great to think that we could finally get out after supper!"—Ed.

⁶⁰ I cannot find references for hotdogs in jars per se. Perhaps Maria is talking about *canned* sausages.—Ed. "The little sausages were most popular in the 1940's and throughout the World War II years where they were sold in just about every base store. Early producers of the canned sausages included Libby, Hormel, Armour and Swift." "Vienna sausages," Gourmet Sleuth, accessed April 30, 2020, site inactive on September 19, 2022. <https://www.gourmetsleuth.com/ingredients/detail/vienna-sausages>

⁶¹ Translation: But (Italian), i.e. "But, what is this?"—Ed.

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Marcelle: So, was it their food or food for you?

Silvana: No, it was their food. They would gladly share it because they knew that they would get more. It was not a problem!

Maria: Weren't there rations?

Silvana: That army was well-equipped. There was no problem!

Maria: No! They were equipped.

Silvana: We couldn't believe it. That these people would have so much stuff. And they were by and large, very generous.

Maria: That they were!

*****End of audiotape Side ONE*****

Maria: Yeah, the Red Cross came in with a lot of stuff: medicine, clothing, detergent, soaps.⁶² The Red Cross, of course, gave it to the City Hall then it was distributed to the people.

Silvana: One thing about the Americans; they are generous. That was followed by the Marshall Plan and all that.⁶³ What they poured into these countries...

⁶² "Red Cross workers followed liberating Allied forces in Europe, providing food and clothing to people in war-ravaged areas." Polmar and Allen, *World War II*, 681.

⁶³ Former army general, George C. Marshall, "In his two years as secretary of state he developed still another monument to his genius, the European recovery program, a restoration of the Continent that became known as the Marshall Plan. For it he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953." Polmar and Allen, *World War II*, 532.

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Maria: They poured a lot more than we even saw because then we came here. We didn't even see what...

Silvana: And so, I don't like to criticize this country too much. I don't!

Peter: Yeah. That's nice. That's a nice sentiment.

Silvana: I know what it's like.

Maria: Then all of a sudden that war started, and we were kids. Then the war was over, and we had grown up. It seems that we grew up so fast. We didn't do what teenagers usually do. We couldn't.

SIDE 2 RESUMES:

The beginning of Side 2 was accidentally recorded over with music (after transcription).

TAPE RESUMES: 01:02:30.11

Silvana: No, we couldn't!

Maria: We were just...we missed all that.

Silvana: We were adults at the age of 13 or 14. I mean, we grew up awfully fast.

Peter: Yeah.

Marcelle: Do you remember the first day of the war?

Silvana: I remember Mussolini announcing, while we were listening to the radio.⁶⁴ I can remember that in 1939. I do remember that _____.

⁶⁴ "Italy entered World War II on the Axis side on June 10, 1940, as the defeat of France became apparent." "Axis alliance in World War II," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed October 9, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/axis-powers-in-world-war-ii>

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Peter: I'll ask a couple of things...in other words, when Poland was overrun, September of '39.⁶⁵ You remember that.

Silvana: Yeah. I remember that.

Peter: Sure.

Maria: And everybody was so—I remember that everybody was upset because we had just got through with the African—the war of Ethiopia.⁶⁶

Peter: Right, so '33.

Maria: '33. And this is another war coming now. You know? 'Cause nobody knew that it was going to be the kind of war that it was...it was going to last that long.

Peter: Right. Exactly!

Marcelle: But when did the doctor come?

Silvana: They came in 1940.

Maria: They came December, around December 1940.⁶⁷

Silvana: '40?

⁶⁵ September 1, 1939." Ian Dear and M.R.D. Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005), 1201.

⁶⁶"In October 1935 Abyssinia [Ethiopia] was invaded by Italian forces from the neighbouring Italian territories of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea, and in March 1936 Haile Selassie's forces were decisively defeated by Badoglio; the emperor was forced into exile in the UK." Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 3.

⁶⁷ It was the summer of 1940, as per prior footnotes.

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Maria: Or '41. What did I put on the, on the narrative that I wrote, was it '41 when the Jewish people arrived in San Donato?

Peter: Yeah. I think so.

Maria: What?

Peter: I think 1941.

Maria: '41. I think they came fall of 1941.

Marcelle: But when did you know that something was really...when did your lives change?

Silvana: Well...I guess the life... We began to see a change...not a dramatic change or any sort...life pretty much went as usual. We had the usual food. There was, you know, no particular shortage of food. We began to see these foreign people arriving.

Maria: I think our lives really changed. The change came when the Germans arrived at, at headquarters in San Donato.

Silvana: Yeah, but when, when all these displaced people began to filter into San Donato—this was something new.

Peter: Yes.

Maria: Oh yes.

Silvana: And...

Paul: And that was when?

Silvana: That was in 1941.

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Maria: That was, yeah, the fall of 1941. And they were called by the government, "displaced interns."

Silvana: *Internati*.⁶⁸

Maria: *Internati*. No, political, "political interns," they called them. Yeah.

Silvana: "Political interns." And so, when they came—and they were from Poland, from Czechoslovakia, from Germany.⁶⁹ Well, Ulla was German.

Maria: Ulla was German. Yeah.

Silvana: But they...Ulla and Marco were in Italy because they were...

Maria: They were at the University of Bologna studying.⁷⁰

Silvana: They had been there for several years studying. They were fluent in Italian and everything. And then when the war broke out, they were, you know, they couldn't go back to—they couldn't go back home.

Paul: So, where were they from? Poland?

⁶⁸ "In the summer of 1940, as Italy entered the war, immigration became more difficult as the fascists proceeded to intern all foreign Jews either in camps or in small village [*sic*] under custody of the local police." "Paper lives," Centro Primo Levi.

⁶⁹ "There were men, women and children who had arrived from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Ukraine, some of whom had been residing in Italy for years." "Paper Lives," Centro Primo Levi.

⁷⁰ "My mother attended in Florence a professional school for midwives. My father studied basically in Florence and then received his medical degree in Bologna." Katja Tenenbaum, email message to Marcelle Lipke, April 24, 2022.

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Maria: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany... La Signorina Bloch was from Austria.⁷¹

Marcelle: I thought that there were also Jews who were Italian, who were being, being displaced.

Silvana: But not in San Donato.

Maria: Not in San Donato.

Silvana: Yes, of course.

Marcelle: So, I hadn't realized they came from foreign countries.

Silvana: These, the ones that we had in San Donato came from foreign countries.⁷²

Marcelle: So, they were...

Maria: They were studying in Italy.

Marcelle: All of them?

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: No, not all of them. What about the Abramovich?⁷³ Were they studying in Italy? Do you know?

⁷¹ "Margarete (Grete) Bloch was one of the women who arrived alone in San Donato in July 1940. Originally from Berlin, she had sought refuge in Florence. "Paper Lives," Centro Primo Levi.

⁷² "According to an estimate by the Italian Ministry of the Interior, in 1938, as the Fascists implemented the Racial Laws, there were 9170 foreign Jews living in Italy." "Paper Lives," Centro Primo Levi.

⁷³ I am guessing they are talking about Szlama Adamowicz and his wife Feige Hornblaus, who arrived in San Donato on September 21, 1941. Born in Poland, they came to Italy as refugees hoping to go to Palestine. Anna Pizzuti, *Vite di carta*, (Roma : Donzelli editore, 2010), 215-217. (My translation and paraphrase—Ed.)

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Maria: That I don't know, but Ulla and Mark, they were students at the University of Bologna.

Silvana: Right. What about Leon and Lischa?⁷⁴ Where were they from?

Maria: You see, some of them left Germany on their own and came to Italy. So, they thought that in Italy they were--would have more freedom.

Silvana: They thought they would be safer.⁷⁵

Maria: They were safer. And they were actually.

Paul: Sure. If they had stayed in Germany, they'd probably be dead.

Maria: Right! Until Mussolini decided to put these people, you know, in towns. There were no concentration camps or anything like that.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ I don't know who Lischa was. It's possible that "Leon" was Leone Winter, who was born in Poland in 1910. He entered Italy as a refugee and was held in Ferramonti di Tarsia for two years before arriving in San Donato on September 17, 1942. Pizzuti, *Vite di carta*, 219. (My translation and paraphrase—Ed.)

Silvana later remembered that Marco and Leon did woodworking at noontime. Ulla used to call him to lunch in German, "*Marco, komm essen!*"—Ed.

⁷⁵ "Others began arriving as refugees from 1933 on, first from Germany, then from a wide variety of countries. Italy was one of the few countries to allow entrance to European Jews in flight from Nazi occupied territories. It was seen both as a place of relative safety and a departure point for further migration toward Palestine, the Americas and the Far East." "Paper Lives," Centro Primo Levi.

⁷⁶ Ferramonti di Tarsia: "Internment camp for Jews in southern Italy. Ferramonti, officially a concentration camp, was the largest of 15 internment camps established by Italian Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, during the summer of 1940. The Italians began building Ferramonti on June 4, [1940] less than a week before Italy entered World War II. The arrest of Jews began on June 15 and prisoners began arriving at the camp on June 20. From 1940—1943, over 3,800 Jews were imprisoned at the camp: 3,682 were foreign-born Jews, and 141 were Italians. In general, Italian-born Jews were not imprisoned unless they participated in anti-Fascist activities."

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Peter: No.

Maria: He put them in different towns and gave them a stipend because they could not work.⁷⁷ And they were not allowed to go out of this town. They had to be inside this town.

Marcelle: Like *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*.⁷⁸

Silvana: That's right. All you have to do is watch *Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli* and you get the exact picture. That's exactly what happened.

Marcelle: But he was Italian, wasn't he? He was a Jewish Italian.

Maria: He was a political intern.

Silvana: But it was not so much that he was Jewish, as that he was politically—he was to the left.

Marcelle: OK. And the government's idea in putting all these people in these little towns was to get them to stop working?

“Ferramonti di Tarsia,” Yadvashem, Shoah Resource Center, The International School for Holocaust Studies, September 19, 2022, https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205847.pdf

⁷⁷ “After selling their possessions, the prohibition to seek employment (even for doctors), put the Jews in a position of total dependency on the government and the charity of the local people. The government subsidy, a mere pittance at nine lira/ day for men, four for women and half a lira for children—arrived only sporadically.” “Paper lives,” Centro Primo Levi.

⁷⁸ Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Turino : Einaudi, 1945.) A film adaptation was released in 1979. *Christ stopped at Eboli*, IMDb, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079010/>

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Silvana: That's right to get them _____ to not interfere...to start things, OK, against the government. Levi—I mean, that's—in Carlo Levi's book, he's a, he's a political refugee because the government disagreed with his views. And so...

Paul: So, by sending them out, they were breaking them up and making it impossible for them to take political action.

Silvana: Right. Exactly. They didn't put them in prison.

Marcelle: This was their humanitarian gesture.

Silvana: That's right! In this case it was because many times they just got rid of them. You know, Mussolini _____ a lot of them...

Peter: Yeah.

Maria: Do you think, if Mussolini had not been in our lives, that Germany...
_____. But when you're allied with Hitler...He had to do something with the Jewish people.

Marcelle: When did that alliance happen? ⁷⁹

Silvana: Was it '39? Early on during the war. _____.

Peter: Exactly.

⁷⁹ "Pact of Steel, Mussolini's name for the military alliance between Italy and Germany," signed on May 22, 1939. Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 674.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: This was an alliance imposed to the Italian people because the Italian people did not care that much to be allied with Germany at all. The majority of people—it was imposed on them by Mussolini.

Silvana: The Italians were, were friendly towards this country.

Maria: Of this country—

Silvana: Not from Germany! Not to Germany!

Maria: When Mussolini saw that the Germans took over Austria, and Austria was just another border, he figured pretty soon he's going to walk into Italy and take over Italy.⁸⁰ He probably figured in his own way that it's better if I'm an “allied” of Hitler than not. That's the reasoning that we heard in those days.

Silvana: I have to learn a little more about what went on because I really don't know what went on.

Paul: So, so the, the foreign students, so to speak, showed up first and then the Jews later. Right?

Maria: Oh no, no, the foreign students were still Jewish, Jewish.

Paul: They were Jewish foreign students.

⁸⁰ “On March 11–13, 1938, German troops invade Austria and incorporate Austria into the German Reich in what is known as the *Anschluss*.” “German Annexation of Austria,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Timeline of Events, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/1933-1938/german-annexation-of-austria>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: Yes!

Paul: OK. But then Italian Jews began to show up.

Silvana: No, there were no Italian Jews.

Maria: Not in San Donato.

Paul: Not in San Donato. OK.

Peter: Another thing I want to ask you both. From May 1944 until the end of the war in Europe, May of the next year, basically 1945, did, did conditions for you folks in San Donato improve?

Silvana: Yes.

Peter: Of course, that's when the Allies came—

Silvana: Yes.

Peter: —bringing food. So, for the final year of the war, you were able to eat?

Silvana: We were OK.

Peter: And you were able to resume, not exactly maybe a normal life, but better than what you had to endure prior.

Silvana: We were able to go back into our homes.

Peter: Right!

Silvana: You know, we were free. No curfews anymore.

Peter: Exactly!

Paul: Alright.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: Can I ask one more question? Excuse me. OK. Yeah, what I wanted to say was, OK, the Germans, of course, had been driven out; the Allies were there. Did the, did the Allies occupy Italy or more so, just they didn't have to do that because Italy had capitulated earlier?⁸¹

Maria: They went through San Donato. They didn't stay in San Donato.

Peter: They didn't stay there. Right. They came through. They kept moving; they kept moving. Food was provided.

Silvana: They did have. There were headquarters all over Italy for the Allies.

Peter: Yeah, yeah, there was a certain presence.

Silvana: There was a presence.

Peter: Sure, there was.

Silvana: Most definitely.

Peter: Because here's why. Because my next question is—because there was no real Italian government to speak of at this time.

Silvana: That's right.

⁸¹ Though Rome was liberated 1944, the war continued in northern Italy as per below.—Ed.

“German forces fighting in Italy were the first to surrender unconditionally to the Allies. Representatives of the German command in Italy signed the surrender on April 29, and it became effective on May 2, 1945. Five days later, on May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the western Allies, ending the war in Europe.” “German forces in Italy surrender to the Allies,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed October 9, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/film/german-forces-in-italy-surrender-to-the-Allies>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: A vacuum, in a sense, would have been left.⁸² That's why the Allies kept a presence, so that if... They would have some—keep some kind of order.⁸³ Yeah, that's what I'm saying.

Silvana: They kept a presence in Rome. In the cities there was a presence.

Peter: Yeah, certainly. They didn't stay in San Donato, but certainly they stayed in Rome, Florence and places like that. One more thing, and finally after the war was over and during, like, the rebuilding of Europe, Marshall Plan, etc., etc., that's when the new Italian government must have started to be put together.

Silvana: That's right.

⁸² “There was no vacuum in Italy. It was still a Monarchy till the Referendum of 1946, when the majority voted for the Republic, before there were Badoglio’s governments, the CLN (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale), etc.” Katja Tenenbaum, email message to Marcelle Lipke, April 24, 2022.

In Italy, the Partisans and the Resistance “normally worked together in local Committees of National Liberation (CLNs), which coordinated strategy, cooperated with the Allies, administered liberated areas, and appointed new officials. Above all, they organized the uprisings in the northern and central cities, including Milan in April 1945, which fell to the partisans before Allied troops arrived.” “Committee of National Liberation : Italian Political Organization,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 17, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Committee-of-National-Liberation>

⁸³ New Zealand and British troops settled in San Donato to administer essential of services. They set up two kitchens and a medical center to care for the injured. The troops remained in town until the end of 1944.” Paraphrased from wall text, *The New Zealand troops arrange the essential services*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

In the summer of 1944 San Donato was in the hands of the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories’ administration. The AMGOT facilitated distribution of food supplies, public order, healthcare assistance, restoration of public utility services, public transport and circulated an “invasion currency.” Paraphrased from wall text, *San Donato under the control of the Allied Military Government (AMGOT)*, Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: Am I right? Along with...

Silvana: Yeah, when I left Italy in 1948, there was--De Gasperi was already in power.⁸⁴

Maria: Then there was the party called the, the Christian...

Silvana: The Christian Democrats, of which De Gasperi was the president.⁸⁵ But then there was also a very strong communist presence.⁸⁶

Peter: Oh yeah.

Silvana: Headed by Togliatti?⁸⁷ Yeah.

Silvana: In 1948, when I left, you know, there was—the Communist Party had gained an incredible amount of power, but never to the point where it ruled.

⁸⁴ Alcide De Gasperi, (1881-1954), “politician and prime minister of Italy (1945–53) who contributed to the material and moral reconstruction of his nation after World War II....Active in the resistance during World War II, he succeeded in reorganizing the PPI [*Partito Popolare Italiano*] as the Christian Democratic Party.” “Alcide de Gasperi,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alcide-de-Gasperi>

⁸⁵ “After Italy’s surrender in World War II (1943), old PPI [*Partito Popolare Italiano*] leaders with the support of many Roman Catholic organizations founded the Christian Democratic Party.” “Italian popular party,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Italian-Popular-Party>

⁸⁶ “The party was originally founded in January 1921 as the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*; PCI) by dissidents of the extreme left wing of the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*). The new party matured quickly, sending deputies to parliament before Benito Mussolini’s fascists outlawed all political parties in 1926. After that year, the PCI went underground to establish an organization that later proved important to the Italian Resistance.” “Democrats of the Left,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Democrats-of-the-Left>

⁸⁷ Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964) “led the Italian Communist Party for nearly 40 years and made it the largest in western Europe.” “Palmiro Togliatti : Italian politician,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Palmiro-Togliatti>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: That's it. Got it.

Silvana: It was the Christian Democrats who, who ruled, and, and they are still with us.

Peter: And they really have ever since. Yeah. Yeah.

Maria: Do you want us to go through how the woman—how she was saved?

Paul: Well, hang on. I got a couple of questions. First of all, we have to go back and finish the day. We only go to—we didn't even get to lunch.

Marcelle: We have a lot of loose ends here.

Paul: But the other is; but the other is, if you can...OK, so, in '41 your lives began to change when the political interns showed up.⁸⁸ So, what was the transition between that, when nothing really changed, I mean, the food was the same, the changes were, there were just these people among you, between then and the fall of '43 when things really went to hell? What was, what was that period like? How did it... How did the decay, if you will, of your lives, I mean, how did the increasing impact make itself felt over, over that time? And then go back to, to you know, alright, you've played your umpteenth game of cards, it's lunchtime. Both of those things we have to...

Silvana: Well, 1941 to 19--to the fall of 1944 is when the dramatic change happened.

There was really no dramatic change in San Donato, the life of San Donato until then, with the exception of the fact that food was not as plentiful.

⁸⁸ The *internati* arrived in San Donato in the summer/autumn of 1940. Ulla Tenenbaum arrived on August 22; Marco arrived on September 26, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: No, it started to get scarce.⁸⁹

Silvana: Scarce. We began to have shortages.⁹⁰ But don't forget that we depended heavily on our own fields to get food. So, up until the point when we were able to cultivate the fields, you know, there would be enough produce, enough food for the people of San Donato and the surrounding towns. Not, not... Food was not really imported in San Donato.

Maria: Well, meat. Some meat.

Silvana: Well meat was from the livestock that was around. You know—

Maria: Well, what was imported, I think we started missing sugar and coffee...

Silvana: Oh, coffee and sugar were out of the question _____.

Maria: There was nothing like that anymore. Coffee...oh no coffee.

⁸⁹ "For all his glorification of war as the making of men and nations, Mussolini had done almost nothing to prepare Italy for it. In a country that lacked basic raw materials and was far less industrialized than Britain and even France, it defied belief that no ministry for war production was established until 1943. By then it was too late for the ministry to have much effect." Tim Cook, et al., *History of World War II*, v.2 Global War (New York : Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 561-562, accessed May 16, 2020, no e-book available, October 9, 2022.

https://books.google.com/books?id=oD9Z3omHy3IC&pg=PA561&dq=For+all+his+glorification+of+war+as+the+making+of+men+and+nations,+Mussolini+had+done+almost+nothing+to+prepare+Italy+for+it.&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjxp4uJx6TnAhVChOAKHaWJB10Q6AEwAHoECAMQAg#v=onepage&q=For%20all%20his%20glorification%20of%20war%20as%20the%20making%20of%20men%20and%20nations%2C%20Mussolini%20had%20done%20almost%20nothing%20to%20prepare%20Italy%20for%20it.&f=false

⁹⁰ "During the war years 1940 and 1941, food production in Italy was maintained at about the pre-war levels. Food shortages become evident in 1942. In the subsequent year, due to military operations, and a severe drought in the southern regions, nutritional standards deteriorated..." Daniele and Ghezzi. "The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy," 120-121.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: And the, the greater awareness of the war. There was an awareness of the war now. _____.

Maria: Then they started giving us stamps, you know.⁹¹

Silvana: Yeah, right.

Maria: We could only purchase so much food. That's it, when the stamps were gone, no food. Then after a while there was no stamps either because there was no food.⁹² So—

Marcelle: So, when are we talking now?

Maria: I think 1942, '43. Yeah. '43 probably. Yeah.

Marcelle: When did you start realizing that something was really going wrong? That things were not looking good.

Silvana: Definitely 1942 or '43. We began to feel... But, but then the news, you know, was bad. What the Germans, the Germans... Germany was overrunning—you know.

⁹¹ In 1944, one kilogram of bread cost 48 times more than in 1940, one kilogram of pasta 95 times more and one kilogram of beef about 30 times the pre-war price....scarce foodstuffs were distributed through a rationing system implemented by national and local institutions. Daniele and Ghezzi. "The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy," 121.

The rationing system was established on May 6, 1940. Daniele and Ghezzi. "The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy," 121.

⁹² "Due to flaws in organization and distribution, and for the scarce supply of foodstuffs from agriculture to compulsory pooling..., the rationing system in Italy was far from effective....It has been estimated...that the food rations distributed to individuals covered barely 60% of normal daily needs...." Daniele and Ghezzi. "The impact of World War II on nutrition and children's health in Italy," 122.

In Daniele and Ghezzi's article there is a chart indicating the calories provided by average Italian rations: 1160 calories per day in 1941, 1020 in 1942 and 930 in 1943. Children were given even less.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: Then there was, excuse me, it comes to my mind, then there was the time when Mussolini wanted all the copper that you owned in the house: pots and pans.⁹³ He gathered all the pots and pans that were copper to make ammunition. And he wanted the women's--the wedding bands because it was gold. So, I remember Nonna going up in the attic to take off her wedding band—and went to hide it up in the attic.⁹⁴ So, women could not wear their wedding band anymore because if you had it on, that means you didn't give it to Mussolini. You didn't give it to the government.

Silvana: You were not...

Maria: The government needed all this to fight this big enemy. At this point we still don't know who the enemy is, do we?

Peter: That's a good question.

Maria: And I remember telling my mother, "Why are you giving these people all this copper? Hide some up there!" And she used to say, "What if they come and they go up there and they find it? Then what? Then we'll end up in jail!" So, Mamma took all the copper and gave it. And everybody else gave all the copper to the government.

Silvana: I remember when in the piazza...

Maria: So, that's, that's when it really started changing. We knew that things were bad.

⁹³ ..."in 1940, a register was to be drawn up of all the copper in the country...." Paul Corner, *Fascist party and popular opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012), 207.

⁹⁴ Translation: Grandmother (Italian). Maria is taking about Franceschina, her mother. She uses "Mamma" when speaking to her sister Silvana, and "Nonna" when speaking to Peter and me (Franceschina's grandchildren).

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Peter: Right, but you brought up something I find intriguing. At that time, who did you think of as the big enemy? Who, who was the big enemy? In your mind? That's...I find that intriguing.

Maria: Imperialism. Is that what Mussolini talked about?

Peter: Oh, sure. That's probably what he said.

Silvana: Well, not really.

Peter: No?

Maria: What was the enemy?

Silvana: It was the king who put him in power essentially.⁹⁵ So...

Maria: England. I think England.

Peter: England was listed as—yeah.

Silvana: Yes, because the Germans were fighting England. We were allied with the Germans, so England was the one enemy in Europe.

Peter: Isn't that something? Yes.

Silvana: Eventually the enemy was the United States because they entered the war.

Peter: Once they entered. That's right.

⁹⁵ "Victor Emmanuel III...king of Italy from 1900-1946...acquiesced in Mussolini's take-over of the state in 1922." Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 975.

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Silvana: Once they entered the war. But this was a most unnatural situation for, for Italy to be in because how many Italians had migrated to the United States? How many American soldiers were of Italian descent?

Peter: Exactly.

Silvana: I mean, the thing was, was crazy!

Peter: Sure!

Maria: I remember now, at the beginning, the enemy was England.

Peter: Yeah, sure.

Silvana: *Re Giorgetto d'Inghilterra!*⁹⁶

Maria: Huh?

Silvana: *Re Giorgetto d'Inghilterra!"*

Maria: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Marcelle: What does that mean?

Silvana: "Little King George."

Marcelle: Oh! Little King George.

Silvana: Never mind, never mind that our king was even smaller than, than King

⁹⁶ Translation: Little King George of England (Italian)—Ed.

"George VI (1895-1952), British King who inherited the throne after his elder brother Edward VIII abdicated in 1936." Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 340.

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George of England! ⁹⁷

Maria: Because England had so much land. That's what they put in...

Silvana: Well, imperial, "Imperial England."

Maria: They had colonies. They had this; and they had that. We didn't have anything. So that was the enemy, yeah.

Marcelle: OK, so, you gave all, gave all the pots and pans, and that's when you started...

Silvana: And in the piazza there would be somebody—as you brought these pots and pans—with a big thing. He would just punch a hole on the bottom. I remember them doing that. That, that almost was a physical hurt.

Maria: It was! Because these pots and pans—we had them hanging in the kitchen.

Silvana: They were gorgeous!

Maria: And we used to shine them with sand to make them nice and clean and hang them there and admire them and use them and cook them.

⁹⁷ King Victor Emmanuel III was 5 feet tall. "Italian king's reburial reopens old wounds." BBC News, 19 December 2017, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42400766>

King George VI was 5'9", "16 Royal family's Members' heights from shortest to tallest," accessed October 17, 2022, <https://littlethings.com/lifestyle/royal-family-heights>

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Silvana: Yeah but we had the big vats that our grandfather used because he had, he had the dry goods business. And they used to dye the, the yard goods in these big copper things. Those are the ones that we brought first. And they would put them upside down and just drill a hole through the bottom.

Maria: But can you imagine Mussolini wanting the wedding bands of, of married women?

Silvana: He was going to fight. I mean, my mother used to say, "How is he going to fight? He doesn't have anything to fight with?"

Maria: And then I remember that on the radio also. Mussolini would get on the radio and telling us we had to "tighten our belt" because now the food was beginning to be scarcer. "You should not eat as much! We gotta think of Italy. We have to think of the soldier. We gotta think of this big cause. So, tighten your belt in the morning, no? Have half of the breakfast that you usually have." So, instead of a slice of bread, have a half slice of bread! Remember Lucio *Mangia Minestra?*⁹⁸ [LAUGHTER]

Peter: There's one more thing I wanted to ask you.

Maria: One morning he came out.

Silvana: Oh, I remember this now. [LAUGHTER]

⁹⁸ Lucio Leone was the son of Zio *Mangia Minestra* and Costanza Rufo. He was very fond of my grandmother, Franceschina.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: And he was tightening his belt and tightening his belt. It was a little boy of maybe around 10 years old.

Silvana: Lucio from Delaware.

Maria: He could hardly breathe! My mother said to him, "What are you doing with your belt?" He said, "Well, Mussolini said we gotta tighten our belt." [LAUGHTER]

Silvana: We gotta tell him this sometime.

Maria: Boy, you can tell some stories too. So, the little things like that—and then we were beginning to think now—to know that things are...

Silvana: Reality began to sink in—of what was really going on.

Marcelle: So, you hadn't seen anything happen yet.

Maria: No, we hadn't seen bombs yet; we hadn't seen artillery.

Marcelle: No soldiers.

Maria: No soldiers yet. Only the Italian soldiers, they were--went to fight. You know.

Marcelle: So, your men were starting to leave.

Maria: Yes, and then of course, we have...

Silvana: The men, the men left, of course.

Maria: And then, then we got the news of Zi' Corrado's death.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Franceschina's youngest brother, Corrado Tocci, was enlisted in the Italian Army and killed by friendly fire toward the end of the war. Silvana said her aunt Ninetta went north to retrieve her brother's remains after the war. She was given a suitcase with his bones, which she had to carry on her head because of the weight. Much of her trip north was done on foot.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: Oh, but that was in 1945.

Paul: When did the men really begin to leave?

Maria: When did they started leaving? Well, in Italy, you know...

Paul: When did the men go off to fight?

Silvana: Shortly after war was declared, which you know--shortly after 1939.¹⁰⁰

Paul: '39.

Maria: And some of the men they were already there because there was a draft in Italy in those days. There was no voluntary army. So, the people who had been drafted, they remained in the army. So, that some of them stayed in the army for 6 years.

Silvana: Well, Zi' Mimino served 7 years.

Maria: They went in at 18 years old being drafted, then war came, and they kept them in the army. They are not coming home.

Peter: 7 years for Mimino, huh?

Maria: Yeah.

Silvana: He got old.

Peter: Of course, he did. Yeah.

Maria: He came home like an old man.

¹⁰⁰ Benito Mussolini declared war on France and Britain, June 10, 1940. Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 1022.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: Like an old man.

Maria: No teeth.

Peter: Yeah.

Maria: Old, wrinkled...

Peter: Amazing!

Maria: ...thin, no shoes on his feet.

Peter: Oh, that's terrible! And he looked like a young man when he left? Right?

Maria: Oh yeah.

Peter: Like any 18-year-old.

Maria: Yup.

Peter: Because that's how old he was when he left?

Maria: But at least....

Silvana: What about Zi' Daniele was he...¹⁰¹

Peter: And then he came back as a 25-year-old—

Maria: Zi' Daniele fought in the, in the Ethiopian war, so he didn't go. He was too old by now.

Silvana: He was probably too old.

¹⁰¹ Daniele Tocci was Franceschina's brother, the eldest son.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Maria: He was old, but Zi' Corrado went and he died. So, the news came that he had died. This was toward the end of the war...a few months before that. Yeah.

Silvana: Yeah.

Silvana: Well, the war ended in 1945. It had ended where he was too.

Maria: Yeah

Silvana: And his war was--I mean, his death was pretty accidental.

Maria: He still was a war casualty.

Silvana: Oh absolutely!

Marcelle: He still was what?

Maria: A war casualty. _____.

Silvana: He would be, he was Ben's age.¹⁰² He was born in 1921 or 22. So, in 1945 he would have been 23 years old.

Maria: He was 24 when he died.

Silvana: 24?

Paul: And when did the German's first show up in the town?

Maria: The town—they showed up—I wrote it down, Peter—was in 19... You got that thing upstairs?

Peter: I have it here. Do you have a copy?

¹⁰² Silvana is talking about her husband and my father, Benedetto Fabrizi.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Paul: It doesn't matter. I just...

Peter: I mean, I have it here.

Maria: I wrote it down _____. The Germans showed up probably fall of 1943—or '43 probably.¹⁰³ Yeah. They headquartered in San Donato.

Marcelle: So, just one day...

Silvana: The Germans came when the Cassino thing started. So, how long... They were stuck there for at least 6 months. Yeah. So, 19—

Maria: '43

Marcelle: So, just one day you just happened to notice that...

Maria: That they're coming. Yeah. The Germans are arriving. Yeah, and taking over the—and taking over the city hall. They had headquarters at city hall.

Silvana: After the fall of Badoglio.¹⁰⁴

Maria: And that's where... That's when all the Jewish people and the men started running up in the mountains.

¹⁰³ “On September 8, 1943, Badoglio announced Italy's unconditional surrender to the Allies. The Germans, who had grown suspicious of Italian intentions, quickly occupied northern and central Italy. ... SS paratroopers freed Mussolini from prison and installed him as the head of a pro-German Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*-RSI), based in Salò in northern Italy.” “Italy,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed September 23, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/italy>

¹⁰⁴ Badoglio was in power only until September 9, 1943. Please refer to footnote 52.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Paul: After the fall of where?

Silvana: I'm sorry.

Paul: After the fall of where?

Peter: You mentioned Badoglio [sic].

Silvana: Badoglio. General Badoglio was the one, he formed a government...after Mussolini. Fascism essentially fell and there was a provisional government headed by this General Badoglio.

Maria: Saying, "You gotta do it again once more."

_____.

Silvana: This didn't last long either because the Germans then took over.

Marcelle: So, when did the Jews start hiding?

Silvana: In the fall of 1943.

Marcelle: But had the Germans come already or did they have warning that the Germans were coming?

Maria: No, they had come.

Marcelle: So, the Germans came and then the Jews said, "Oh, we better get out of here."

Silvana: Yes, that's right. Exactly.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Marcelle: And so, were they living with you up until then?¹⁰⁵

Silvana: Up until then, they were living with us. And see, news was beginning to filter in on what was going on, about the concentration camps.

Peter: Oh, it was.

Marcelle: So, were they starting...

Peter: That's another thing I wanted to ask. You did start to hear about that.

Marcelle: So, were they planning? Were they saying, "Oh, we have to have a strategy?" Or did they suddenly wake up one morning and the Germans were there, and they had to figure out something to do?

Silvana: No, they woke up one morning and the Germans had come, and they figured, you know... Since there were some... News was beginning to filter in about the concentration camps. But there was yet no news of the death camps and the ovens and things like that.

Maria: Did we have news of that? I don't remember.

Silvana: This is all stuff that happened after the war.

Maria: After, yeah. We didn't have news of this.

Peter: You didn't have the information.

¹⁰⁵ See footnote 26.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: But we knew that there had been, you know, various incidents. I mean, there were incidents in Rome. You saw the movie "Finzi Contini."¹⁰⁶ You know, there were news of, of the *Fosse Ardeatine* where they shot, I don't know how many, people.¹⁰⁷ (You know the Germans.) So, with all of this--all of these things that they were doing—we were beginning to get wind of it.

Marcelle: And then they showed up.

Silvana: And then eventually when the front moved closer to Cassino, then the Germans occupied all the surrounding areas. They were all over now.

Marcelle: So, then what did--what did your doctors do?

Silvana: They ran into the mountains. And that's when I took Katja and I went up to the mountain with her to this farmhouse. OK?

Paul: How did they live in the mountains? Were they--were they, you know, essentially fed from the farmhouse? I mean, they...

Silvana: They were fed from the farmhouses. They would try to get food.

Maria: People from the town too went up with food and clothing.

Silvana: Yeah, I mean, people... If there was food...

¹⁰⁶ Book: Giorgio Bassani. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (Torino : Einaudi), 1962; Film: Vittorio de Sica, director. *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 1971.

¹⁰⁷ Ardeatine Caves. On March 24, 1944, as retaliation for a bomb detonated by an Italian resistance group, 335 political and Jewish prisoners were massacred by the Germans in the caves of Via Ardeatina, near Rome. "Ardeatine Caves Massacre," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed October 10, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ardeatine-caves-massacre>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Paul: Right.

Silvana: ...the farmhouses would share it.

Paul: Right. So, they would just... They would put it out or they would show up in the night or at some point and be fed and then disappear into the woods again.

Silvana: Absolutely. Yeah. Right.

Peter: I'd wanted to ask you another quick question. You had, had the ability to listen to radio the whole time? I mean, you know, even during the, the worst times when you were down in the cellar?

Silvana: No, no, we didn't have a radio.

Peter: So, you didn't. So that... You were cut off.

Silvana: There was no electricity, for one thing.

Peter: I see.

Silvana: There was some electricity. I mean there was some electricity from this little cabin there.¹⁰⁸ Right? But there was no electricity.

Maria: No.

Peter: OK. So, radio, you were able to listen to before that time. And after...

Silvana: That's right. But a lot of the news came from people who were coming from Rome or coming from elsewhere.

¹⁰⁸ Perhaps Silvana is talking about the farmhouse in Vorga.—Ed.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Peter: Right.

Silvana: They would bring...

Peter: Word of mouth.

Silvana: Word of mouth. This is how—

Peter: They had heard news on the radio, newspapers and things.

Marcelle: OK, so...

Pete: No, that's alright, I was going to say one more thing. I think we know now, even right what you were saying, certain things about the Holocaust filtered through, but much of the news of the Holocaust came via the Allies at the end of the war.

Silvana: It came at the end of the war.

Peter: Right, exactly

Silvana: We didn't know.

Peter: Even Eisenhower said his troops—they were surprised with what they saw at Auschwitz¹⁰⁹ and Buchenwald.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ “On January 27, 1945, the Soviet army entered Auschwitz and liberated more than 7,000 remaining prisoners, who were mostly ill and dying. It is estimated that at minimum 1.3 million people were deported to Auschwitz between 1940 and 1945; of these, at least 1.1 million were murdered.” “Liberation of Auschwitz : Special focus,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/liberation-of-auschwitz>

¹¹⁰ “On April 11, 1945, in expectation of liberation, starved and emaciated prisoners stormed the watchtowers, seizing control of the camp. Later that afternoon, US forces entered Buchenwald. Soldiers from the 6th Armored Division, part of the Third Army, found more than 21,000 people in the camp.” “US Forces Liberate Buchenwald,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/1942-1945/us-forces-liberate-buchenwald>

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: What we knew from firsthand experience and knowledge, was the fact that the Jews were being rounded up.

Peter: Yeah.

Silvana: That happened before our eyes. We didn't need the radio.

Peter: Right, right. I understand.

Silvana: We knew that this was happening.

Paul: The people who didn't leave into the mountains quickly enough, were rounded up.

Silvana: That's right.

Marcelle: Did you see that?

Silvana: I saw that. I saw them being rounded up, put into a truck.

Peter: Yeah? Wow.

Paul: Do you remember what you were thinking and feeling?

Maria: The Jewish people didn't believe it. It couldn't happen.

Silvana: Yeah, Ulla, Ulla was the first one to defend them! OK?

Peter: Defend whom?

Silvana: The Germans. She was German! She was a German Jew.

Peter: Oh, isn't that something.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: Yeah. She kept saying, "You know, this is not possible. These are civilized people. They are not doing anything."

Peter: Isn't that amazing? I mean, you know, now, certainly, to think about it after it all, it all happened. See, I'm sorry, at that moment, now if I can try to think in my mind, I can almost see how a German person could react that way that, "No, they won't do that!"

Silvana: No, they can't do that. I mean, after all, these are civilized people. You know.

Peter: Right. Right! I mean, can I—can I just extrapolate briefly for one moment here? I think it could almost be like, God forbid, but for if for some reason any group was singled out by our government, it would be hard to believe. Let's face it. It would be extremely difficult to believe.

Silvana: In this country...

Peter: Now the common thing now is that it will never happen. Hopefully it never will, but let's remember, you know, there was slavery and it took a while before that—you know what I'm trying to say. Between the formation of the country and the end of the Civil War, there was a whole process, that is, a different process. But I'm on a tangent slightly, but not that much. I can see how it was difficult for her to believe that at that moment. Now we have hindsight. We saw what the Nazi machine did—you know, to the extent of things. OK. Thanks. I just wanted to—

Paul: OK, so—

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Marcelle: I'm going back to the farmhouse. That's where I was going.

Paul: OK.

Marcelle: Do you have something else?

Paul: No, go ahead.

Marcelle: She keeps going back to the farmhouse, but doesn't finish.

Peter: OK.

Marcelle: So, they all took off. Whoever, whoever had enough foresight to take off, took off. And you took the baby up, up to the farmhouse.

Silvana: Right.

Marcelle: So, and you told us that you were there when the town was bombed. And you told us about sleeping in the night. Is there anything else you want to say about the farmhouse? And about... You talked about people coming by and giving news? And how did you operate? Did you think people were always watching you? Did you always feel like there were Germans all over the place? Or did you feel...

Silvana: No, we... I don't remember having a feeling of being threatened in any way. No. I was too young to really understand that too well. You know what I mean?

Peter: Sure.

Silvana: I don't think I really comprehended the severity of the situation. Did you?

Maria: Ah...I don't know. I was a little bit older.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana: She remembers better than I do a lot of things, because she was older than I was.

Marcelle: But she [Silvana] was the one who was hiding somebody.

Maria: She was hiding. Yeah, and we were back in San Donato in our home. But then she came back with the baby. That's when—then she came back to the house. Silvana came back to the house with the baby to stay with us because, I guess _____.

Silvana: I don't remember why that happened—that we came back.

Maria: Well, I think Mamma wanted you back too because she was scared. Mamma was scared that something might happen to you two. So, she decided, you and Katja—come back to the house. So, that's when Ulla, Katja's mother, that was up in the mountains, went to the farmhouse and Silvana and Katja were not there. So, she figured they must be over our house. And that's when she came to our house to see her daughter, Katja. So, that's when she was spotted by the German sympathizer.

Marcelle: A Sandonatese?¹¹¹

Maria: A Sandonatese. And she and... He reported her to the German commander.

Marcelle: Oh, so, you had a—I didn't realize...

Maria: Yeah, there were people...

Marcelle: Double agents.

¹¹¹ Someone from San Donato.

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Maria: Oh, sure there were! There were people there that defended the *fascismo*.¹¹²

They defended the Germans. Sure! So, they came. So, Ulla came inside the house, and we were all in there with Katja and we were in the back bedroom.

Marcelle: Were the Germans still living with you?

Maria: No, they had left. They had left by this time. So, she had just come in the house, Ulla, and there was a knock at the door. And, and Mamma went to open the door. And there—there were two armed soldiers, German soldiers, with this Italian guy.

Silvana: Who was this guy? Do you know who he was?

Maria: Mamma used to know. I don't remember. So, the guy asked—the Italian man asked Nonna¹¹³—he was looking for “La Signora Tenenbaum.” And Mamma said to him, “Oh, I don't know where she is. She left my house months ago. I don't know where she is.” And they didn't come in. Now this is a miracle that they did not come in—inside the house. And Mamma closed the door and they left. And when Mamma—Nonna came inside the house, she collapsed because she figured out what would have happened. If these people, these Germans, had come inside the house, we would have been all shot.

¹¹² Translation: Fascism (Italian).—Ed.

¹¹³ Again Maria is talking about Franceschina. Maria uses “Mamma” and “Nonna” interchangeably here. —Ed.

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Maria: So then, Nonna said—Mamma said immediately, and Ulla said, "I gotta get out of here because they are gonna come back." So, now they know that they have to take Ulla out of the house. How are they going to do this? They can't! So, Costanza, the neighbor (our neighbor), who was a strong woman—she and, and Nonna decided to put Ulla in this harvest basket.¹¹⁴ They covered Ulla with a cloth and on top of the cloth they put chicken manure that was around. So, Costanza puts the basket on top of her head and takes Ulla out into the fields.¹¹⁵ Now we got Katja in the house. So, Nonna says to Silvana, "You take Katja up to my parents, up, you know, *agl' castigl'*."¹¹⁶ So, Silvana takes Katja and goes way up to our grandparents to hide up there.

Marcelle: So, you just took her in the street holding her hand?

Silvana: Well, in the back. You know, there was a shortcut to my grandmother's house:

¹¹⁴ Costanza Rufo—Ed.

¹¹⁵ Silvana reported later that as Costanza balanced Ulla in the basket on top of her head, she asked the assembled women, "*Come vado?*" (How do I look?)—Ed.

"An ironic twist is that once deposited from the basket, Ulla, a resourceful lady, flagged down a vehicle full of German soldiers headed in her intended direction." Benedetto Fabrizi, "San Donato postscript," Newton : Community Forum, (September 2007): 6.

"...I asked him in bad German, I obviously I made up a very broken German, if he could give me a lift which he actually did... and just because I was sitting in a German military vehicle it would have been unlikely that I would be stopped for a control." Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau, 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

¹¹⁶ Translation: At the castle (Sandonatese) or via *Castello*, i.e., Castle Street.—Ed.

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*agl' Meviat'.*¹¹⁷

Maria: *Agl' Meviat'*. That's a little shortcut. Yeah.

Silvana: Yeah.

Maria: And sure enough, in the evening, the soldiers came back. They didn't knock at the door. They didn't try to come in.

Silvana: They just surrounded the house.

Maria: They surrounded the house all night long with their rifles ready to shoot. So, they figured this woman would probably start to escape at night.

Paul: But she was already gone at that point.

Maria: She was already gone. So, I remember Nonna and we were all looking out the window like that—dark, in our--in our house—no lights—looking out to see when these soldiers were gonna leave. At dawn they left and never came back.

Silvana: And then, I remember how this—the sequel to this story. Ulla and Marco then

¹¹⁷ This must be Sandonatese for “via *Mevati*,” i.e., via Mevati Street, which according to my brother Fulvio is an excellent shortcut for someone headed to the grandparents’ house trying to arrive quickly without being seen.—Ed.

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went to Castagneto.¹¹⁸ I don't know if you remember this. Do you remember Carolina? What was her name? Carolina Bettel' Do you remember her?

Maria: Yes.

Silvana: They were staying in her house in the fields in Castagneto, which is actually between Atina and Alvito.¹¹⁹ You know, Atina that's where—Alvito here falls in the middle, if you are looking from San Donato down into the valley? That's where they were hiding now. So, this Carolina Bettel' came to San Donato with a--with a mule and she took Katja and me. I had to accompany the child.¹²⁰ Because the child didn't know these people. We couldn't send her alone. I mean, we couldn't send her alone! Just

¹¹⁸ Ulla and Marco stayed in both Castagneto and Sora as they made their way toward Rome.—Ed.

“In April 1944, the couple decided to...try to hide in Rome....In Rome Ursula and Katja hid in a convent, while the local antifascist underground found a room for Mordko [Marco] in a nearby house. They lived there until Rome was liberated in June 1944.” [Mordechai Tenenbaum], “Biography,” attached to photograph 9241, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

¹¹⁹ Atina is 8 miles due south of San Donato; Alvito is 5.9 miles southwest of San Donato. Please see Map 2 in Appendix 4—Ed.

¹²⁰ Castagneto is approximately 3.25 miles southwest of San Donato (via current roads). Though a donkey can travel 30-35 mph, the average person leading a donkey might be hard pressed to do even 3 mph. This trip probably took close to two hours. Though much care was taken in the timing of this trip, it could have been extremely dangerous. In defense of the Gustav Line, German units were supposed to have been stationed in Castagneto and in the areas marked on Maps 4-5, Appendix 4—Ed.

“The Gustav Line was the main German defensive line that spanned from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic Sea....The line was defended by 15 German divisions fortified with small arms, artillery, pill boxes, machine gun emplacements, minefields and barbed wire.” The Gustav Line: the main German defensive line,” Monte Cassino Tours, accessed October 27, 2022, <https://montecassinotours.com/en/notizie/the-gustav-line-the-main-german-defensive-line/?sku=15>

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figure Emilia, you give her to a stranger to bring her to Castagneto.¹²¹ You know in, in war torn... There was shelling going on all along. OK?

Maria: You see, Nonna, to protect Katja, took a big chance that she might lose her daughter.

Silvana: Yeah. I mean, she sent me along and I went. I went willingly. It's not that I didn't want to go. I'd love to go. I mean, I loved this child dearly.

Maria: Oh, we all did.

Silvana: We did! So...

Maria: She called Nonna, "Ma." She called Nonna, "Ma."

Silvana: Yeah, like us. On the—on the mule, we went to Castagneto.

Marcelle: Now, this was merely to deliver her?

Silvana: To deliver Katja...

Marcelle: OK.

Silvana: ...to her parents.

Silvana: Because, I think at this point, there was already talk that the Allies were making—you know—they were advancing. They had finally Cassino.¹²² They had broken through there. OK? Do you know the way...

¹²¹ Emilia Fabrizi is Silvana's granddaughter, who at the time of this taping was seven, i.e., five years older than Katja at the time.—Ed.

¹²² Though optimism might have been in the air, Monte Cassino was not in the hands of the Allies until May 18, 1944—Ed.

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Marcelle: Why not just keep her?

Silvana: Well, at this point we couldn't keep her because we... Our house was being surrounded by German soldiers.¹²³ And they could discover this child at any, any day.

Maria: There was a chance that they would come back.

Silvana: They would come back, and they would find out who this child was.¹²⁴

Maria: Yeah.

Marcelle: OK, wait a minute. So, how much time elapsed since the original—since the Germans came looking for her mother and you went up to the grandparents.

Silvana: The same day we went up to the grandparents

Marcelle: No, but then...

Silvana: Maybe the next day or two days later at the most.

Marcelle: Two days later you took this trip.

Silvana: That's right.

Marcelle: Oh, so, this was quick.

Silvana: Yeah, and I felt like the, the "Flight into Egypt" on the donkey. [LAUGHTER]

¹²³ I think Silvana meant, "watched" by German soldiers.

¹²⁴ "Due to a denunciation of their relief activity with the POWs, the German Feld Gendarmerie made a night incursion at the Vorga before the Tenenbaums returned there. The Germans seized a suitcase that contained photographs of Katja. The family became wanted by the Italian and German authorities." Interview with Marco and Ulla Tenenbaum by Brigitte Schönau, 1993, courtesy of Katrin (Katja) Tenenbaum.

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Maria: On the donkey.

Peter: Yeah.

Marcelle: So, how long did it take to get there?

Silvana: Oh, it'd take maybe a couple of hours...something like that.

Marcelle: Did you pass soldiers?

Silvana: I, you know, to tell you the truth, I don't remember what we passed. I remember leaving and I remember getting there and spending a day or two there. I spent the day. Marco & Ulla were there and in fact, she was expecting another child, at this time, Sascha.¹²⁵ She was pregnant. Yeah. And then she [Carolina] brought me home.

Marcelle: Who brought you?

Silvana: The same Carolina. When she brought me home, I remember, Zi' 'Ngelina¹²⁶ was in our house or in the "across"—not in the house because we didn't live in the house anymore.¹²⁷ And my mother was besides herself. She was frantic because I wasn't

¹²⁵ Alexander Victor (Sascha) Tenenbaum was born January 17, 1945. "Birthdays and Anniversaries," The Steinitz Family History on the Net, accessed October 10, 2022, http://family.steinitz.net/version_1.0/private/Birthday_frame.htm

It's hard to pinpoint when this trip to Castagneto occurred. According to interviews with Marco & Ulla it could have happened early in 1944, but I think it would have been extremely dangerous to have traveled then. I am guessing that it was the end of March or even April. Furthermore, if Silvana remembers Ulla being pregnant, in April she would have just become pregnant with Sascha.—Ed.

¹²⁶ Zia Angelina (Zi'Ngelina, Zi' Angelina, Zi' 'Gelina) was a Quintiliani. (Franceschina's middle daughter Pompea married Donato Quintiliani. Zia Angelina was his aunt.) She had her own basement to hide in.—Ed.

¹²⁷ By "across," Silvana means "in the house across the street," i.e., the building where the *cantina* was.—Ed.

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coming home. She didn't know whether we got to where we were going. She had no idea. My mother was going crazy.

Maria: And Zi' 'Ngelina was...

Silvana: And Zi' Ngelina was telling her that she should never have sent me. Instead of trying to...

Peter: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Silvana: She's making her feel more guilty. I'll never forget my mother being so happy when I showed up.

Marcelle: Do you remember this?

Maria: Yeah.

Marcelle: Were you there for this?

Maria: Yeah, I remember Zi' 'Ngelina, this woman saying, reproaching my mother for what she had done.

Marcelle: What was Nonna [Franceschina] saying while Ma [Silvana] was gone?

Maria: Well, she was frantic. She was frantic. I don't remember exactly her words. I, I think she was praying more than anything else. She was praying that they would be delivered safe, and that Silvana would be delivered back to us safe.

Marcelle: Do you remember being worried?

Maria: Was I worried? Sure, I was worried. It was—then things were happening one after another in those days.

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Silvana: Oh, things then just began to happen.

Maria: It was just, yeah... And we were waiting for these Americans to come, and it seemed that they were taking an eternity to come by this time. No? Even one day was too long. I mean you were just at the end, you know, at the end of your wits.

Silvana: Oh yeah. I mean, it had been a long winter.

Maria: It had been a long winter. The stress was beginning to show...

Silvana: Yeah.

Maria: ...for everybody.

Silvana: And one more thing. Just one footnote and then we'll probably quit. During all this difficult period, fall of 1943, and winter of '44, we were continuously under the threat of being evacuated from our town. That was the thing that Mamma feared the most—that we would be evacuated, and we didn't know where they were going to bring us.

Maria: What happened to the people that were evacuated, not from San Donato, but different towns, they were all killed, because they evacuate you under all this bombardment or under this artillery. They didn't know where to take—where are you going to go?

Marcelle: What's the rationale for the evacuation?

Silvana: Because we were on the front line almost.

Marcelle: Oh, just to save your lives—theoretically.

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Silvana: Right. Theoretically yeah.

Maria: Theoretically to save your life. They would put your life more in danger because when you are in your own town, more or less, you know places to hide.

Silvana: At least you have a hole.

Maria: But when you go to a strange place, you don't know anything.

Paul: Well, and the people who are already there are stretched to the limit. So—

Maria: Exactly.

Peter: Who would give the order for evacuation? ¹²⁸ The Germans?

Silvana: The Germans were in charge now.

Peter: Yeah, at that time, they were in charge, so they would say—they would say that.

But the thing, well, well, I guess what I don't fully understand is why would the Germans take, take that upon themselves? In other words, why would they try to evacuate you or not?

Silvana: Because we... Not to—not to do us any favor...because we would be in their way. Civilians would be in their way.

Marcelle: Why?

Paul: Well, if there were going to be street to street, hand to hand fighting.

¹²⁸ According to Silvana, it was the Italian government who made the decision to evacuate people to safer towns, but at this point the Germans were in charge. People generally were not enthusiastic about being moved and in the end no one in San Donato was evacuated, but some left of their own accord.—Ed.

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Silvana: We would be—we would be interfering.

Paul: And also, I mean, if, if it actually came to fighting in close quarters—first of all, they, they couldn't be sure that the local population wouldn't turn against them.

Peter: Oh, good point.

Paul: Right.

Peter: That happened in France a lot. Yes, with the push after Normandy across France through towns. That's right. That's right and you're right, a lot of times the Allies and the Nazi's fighting it out in French towns, they were—they were evacuated or pretty close to it. There was hardly anybody around. Right. Good point.

Maria: If I remember other things, I'll jot them down. I'll get them down because see... I remember the copper.

Peter: Hey, good session!

Maria: And I remember _____.

Marcelle: Yeah, thanks, Pete.

Peter: Sure. You're welcome. Well done!

Silvana: I remember the copper. I remember the copper...

Conclusion of interview.

Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero, March 1, 1997

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Interview 2

Interview with Silvana Fabrizi

Recorded February 13, 1999 • West Newton, MA

Interview by Richard Seaman and Alan O'Hare

(Questions also by Marcelle and Paul Lipke)

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Richard: I've done lots of reading, seen films, and so, on...and talked to some people who were in the Holocaust--mostly Jews. But I've also, been reading, I don't know if you know, in your reading, if you've read about rescuers, and the Dutch Resistance and the Huguenots. I remember telling you about the French people who were so, helpful to Jews down there in Marseille, France.¹²⁹ So, we were just totally immersed in this, especially a year or so, ago. Was it a year ago or two years ago, we were really doing it?

Alan: Actually, in my interest over the past number of years, I've written a number of plays, and there was a particular Terezin that was in Czechoslovakia. *Theresienstadt* was the German name for it.¹³⁰ There was a place called, the whole village was enclosed in a wall, it was from the Medieval times and, they--what they did, there was a place where the Germans sent a lot of Jews, artists, scientists, and all of that, from all of the various

¹²⁹ "From December 1940 to September 1944, the inhabitants of the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon (population 5,000) and the villages on the surrounding plateau (population 24,000) provided refuge for an estimated 5,000 people. This number included about 3,000–3,500 Jews who were fleeing from the Vichy authorities and the Germans." "Le Chambon-sur-Lignon," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/le-chambon-sur-lignon>

¹³⁰ "Theresienstadt was the German name for the walled town of Terezin....56 km from Prague....Called a ghetto by the Nazis, it contained elderly Jews unfit for hard work...and privileged Jews....It acted as a suitable cover for implementing the Final Solution and representatives of the...Red Cross...were even allowed to visit it." Ian Dear and M.R.D. Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005), 865.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

European countries and it was the showplace of camps. So that when the Red Cross made it to do inspections, they would take them to Terezin. It looked like a small town. It was a small town. It was, actually, it was a way station before they would go on to other camps: Dachau, Auschwitz and all of that. There's a wonderful collection of...so, lots of children lived there. There's a lot of art and poetry written by the children of that time. The collection is called, *I never saw another butterfly*.¹³¹ It's a beautiful collection of artwork and poetry. And so, I worked on that a number of years ago and I've been doing some producing in class, and go to schools and do some performances with the children around getting them interested in a play. And then we actually started putting a cast together and working on the play last year, working on various stories about Terezin and all of that. So, it's been, probably been my passion for...just the research on it. And Dick mentioned the Huguenots. There's a film at a theatre in Brookline *Saving history and ourselves*. It's an educational program devoted to all that

¹³¹ Hana Volavková, ed., *I Never Saw Another Butterfly : Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. – (New York, N.Y. : Schocken Books, 1959).

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

took place in, in the Holocaust.¹³² And there's a film called *Victims... Witnesses to courage*, which is about this particular village in--near Marseille of Huguenots and it's just breathtaking.¹³³ It had been nominated for an Academy Award.

Silvana: And it's out now?

Alan: No, it was...they have it and they release it at particular times. and if you have any interest in getting that I could get it for you. It's just a very beautiful film.

Silvana: I'd love to see it. Have you seen the latest, what is it? The Italian...

Richard: "Life is beautiful?"¹³⁴

Silvana: "Life is beautiful."

Alan: I have not seen it. Have you?

¹³² "Facing History and Ourselves uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate...." Facing History and Ourselves. "About us," accessed February 3, 2020, site inactive October 19, 2022, <https://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers>

"This website is designed to complement the film *The Rescuers*...The film excerpts tell the story of the rescuers effectively, while the supplementary content helps students delve more deeply into the historical context and moral dilemmas surrounding their rescue efforts." Facing History and Ourselves. "The Rescuers," accessed February 3, 2020, site inactive October 19, 2022, <https://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers>

¹³³ I wonder if Alan might be talking about *Weapons of Spirit*, directed and written by Pierre Sauvage (1989). The film tells the story of the people of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon who saved as many as 5000 Jews by their collective efforts. IMDb, "Weapons of Spirit," accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100905/>

¹³⁴ *Life is Beautiful* (1997), directed by Roberto Benigni. "Life is Beautiful," IMDb, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118799/>

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Silvana: Yes. Have you?

Richard: I saw it, yeah.

Silvana: What did you think?

Alan: Did you like it?

Silvana: Yes, I think that--you see what happened. It's a more intimate look at, you know, what happened from the point of view of one family, you know, as compared to *Schindler's List*.¹³⁵

Richard: Yes, right. It's certainly...

Silvana: Yeah, right. Yeah, when I got out of the theatre, I was a little exhausted from his... He was so, hyper.

Richard: Yes. That's exactly what Edna said, my wife.

Silvana: Did she?

Richard: Oh, she couldn't stand it! He was wo-wo-wo-wo-wo!

Silvana: It was, you know--I was overwhelmed by it. But that's the way...I've seen other things that he has done and that's his personality.

Richard: Yes.

Alan: It's a Fellini movie...right?¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Schindler's List* (1993), directed by Stephen Spielberg. "Schindler's List," IMDB, accessed October 19, 2022, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

¹³⁶ *La vita è bella* (Life is beautiful) was directed by Roberto Benigni.—Ed.

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Silvana: Yes. And, you know, whether this could really have happened, that he could have carried on like this at the camp and eventually be able to save the child while the dogs are at the box. You know, they're taking him over to shoot him and he's still clowning, and the child is on the box looking at him. It's very moving, but...and the police dogs are there at the box and the Germans never opened the door, which is unbelievable. But anyway...

Richard: We won't spoil it for you

Silvana: Oh, oh! OK. That's right. I'm sorry!

Alan: That's OK.

Richard: But your experiences that Marcelle mentioned to me. _____. I'd love to hear about them.

Silvana: Sure. I'll be glad to tell you. San Donato was a very small town and a lot of these people came. Some were German Jews, some were Polish Jews. This particular couple that we got to know very well, he was Polish, and she was German. They were, at the time of the outbreak of WWII, they were at the University of Bologna studying medicine. And certainly, he wasn't going to go back to Poland. And you know, the war was already going on there. And they were married. And so, she was German and certainly she didn't want to go back to Germany. And so, they had no choice but to stay in Italy. And so, what Mussolini did, with the Jews, he just sent them, even with the Italian, political, unwanted people, people, they would stir trouble, he would just send

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them to various towns. And they would--we referred to them as *internati*, which means...

Marcelle: Interned.

Silvana: Interned? But that doesn't really... It just... *Internato* means there's a limit to your liberties and essentially you are in this town and you cannot go beyond the city limits. You can only stay in town and there was a curfew every night, 7:00--or something like that. They had to be indoors. So, a lot of them came. I think we probably had 25 Jews in San Donato, altogether.

Paul: And the town population then was about what?

Silvana: 2000.¹³⁷

Alan: How many Jews did you say?

Silvana: About 25.¹³⁸ Yeah. So, not very many.

Richard: They had come from...

¹³⁷ In 1936 the population of San Donato was 4591. It fell to 4255 in 1951. "Genealogy in San Donato Val di Comino, Civil Records in San Donato Val di Comino," ItalianSide, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.italianside.com/lazio/frosinone/san-donato-val-di-comino/genealogy/>

¹³⁸ There were 28 Jewish *internati* in San Donato. "Paper Lives." *Centro Primo Levi Online Monthly, Printed Matter*, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/paper-lives/>

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Silvana: They had come from...some had come from Yugoslavia. There was one woman, her name was Bloch,¹³⁹ who had been a girlfriend of Kafka, the writer.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the rumor was, that she had a child, it was Kafka's child.¹⁴¹ She was a small woman, very sort of timid, very low key, but everybody loved her dearly. Like she was just a wonder...kind and... You know, she was one of the ones that ended up... So, they stayed. You know, they arrived in 1940 and they lived in the various houses in the town, like this Tenenbaum, the couple that we knew, lived in our house and they had a child. Her name was, her name is, she is no longer a child, but she's still around. Her name is Katja. So, she was born in 1942. And you know, we were essentially, it was fine. There was no problem. We went on very nicely. The people were essentially comfortable. Mussolini gave them a stipend to live on because they couldn't practice their profession.

¹³⁹ Margarete (Grete) Bloch was in Florence when the war began and was sent to San Donato on July 29, 1940. She was arrested on April 6, 1944 and was incarcerated until she was sent to Auschwitz on May 16, where she died. Anna Pizzuti, *Vite di carta* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2010), 216 (paraphrase and translation by Marcelle Lipke).

¹⁴⁰ Franz Kafka, 1883-1924, "German-language writer of visionary fiction whose works...express the anxieties and alienation felt by many in 20th-century Europe and North America." "Franz Kafka : German-language writer," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franz-Kafka>

¹⁴¹ "In 1940, Grete Bloch wrote to a friend in Israel that years earlier she had given birth to a boy child who had died in Munich at the age of seven. On the basis of the dates given, the letter's recipient and Max Brod expressed the opinion that Kafka had been the child's father. Subsequent research has refuted that conjecture; on the contrary, a whole number of factors, including the integrity of the letter's author, prove it to have been a false assumption." The Franz Kafka Museum, "Grete Bloch," accessed October 19, 2022, <https://kafkamuseum.cz/en/franz-kafka/women/grete-bloch/>

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Richard: That's interesting.

Silvana: So, they had to have some money.

Richard: Yeah!

Alan: They were given a stipend by whom?

Silvana: By Mussolini, by the government, the Italian government. And so, even though Marco, he was a doctor, and he could not practice, but you know, he did do some practicing. He didn't get paid for it. There was one doctor in the town. Sometimes there were two doctors in the town. He was younger than these two doctors and I think he was a little more up to date with the latest thing what was going on in medicine and he was called to be consulted. And he helped. And he certainly took care of us. When--we got sick all the time, the neighborhood children and everybody else. And nobody said anything. Essentially, they, they were accepted by the town. They had a lot of friends and life went on pretty well until the war got closer to us, as they [the Allies] advanced toward Cassino. There was a big stumbling block there. I don't know if you remember anything, but you know, the abbey, apparently, which is up on a big promontory there, was very heavily armed by the Germans. You know, they, they had artillery and they just overlooked the whole valley. And so, the Allies tried to advance, but it, it was impossible because they were mowed down as they tried to move. So, they were stuck there for many months. So, at this point, then the Italian government fell, and so, the Germans took over. And Germans began to move into the town. So, this was

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probably...the Jews came...in, in 1940 or so...and by 1942, the Germans began to move in.¹⁴² And at this point, things began to change. I think for a period of time they [the Jews] were left alone, but as time went on, they [the Germans] began to make life difficult for them [the Jews]. In fact, just to go back a little bit, I think the curfew was imposed by the Germans. There was no curfew prior to that. So, they imposed a curfew and they began to round up men because they wanted, you know, any man, Italian men, not, not just Jews. They wanted them, you know, to work in their factories. And so, the men of the town and the Jews began to flee to the mountains. San Donato is in the mountains. The mountains are, you know, the Apennines chain. It's a great place to hide. You really have to climb, and so it was a good hiding place for all of them. For a period of time, we kept the little girl while Marco & his wife, and the rest of them, fled to the mountains.

Richard: And so, the girl was how old...at that time?

Silvana: At this time, the girl was probably 2 years old now. She was born in '41¹⁴³--not even 2 years old...younger than that--maybe a year and a half--something like that. And they [her parents] came to see her once in a while at night (or whatever) until we decided we knew some people who had a house in the mountains. You know, a lot of people, you know, they had, (Italy being so, mountainous) they had these terraces

¹⁴² The Germans arrived in San Donato between September 8 and early October, 1943.—Ed.

¹⁴³ Katja was born on July 1, 1942.—Ed.

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where they cultivated fruit and everything else. Well, they lived up there, they had a house. So, I took Katja and I went to stay up there so, the parents could come and see her more often. I was only 9 years old¹⁴⁴ _____., but I was the babysitter. So, we couldn't let her go alone. So, I went along with her.

Alan: And you were the only one from your family who went there?

Silvana: That's right. But my mother, of course, knew the family who owned the house there and _____. we were very comfortable. It was fun! And we could watch the raids onto the town from there 'cause we were way up and there were, you know, planes came every day and they just bombed. You know, so, things began to--I began to be fearful, you know, that my mother, my sisters, my family were killed or something. But people would come and tell us, you know, that everyone had survived, and it was OK. So, there were two or three raids on the town by the Americans, the Americans. But nothing serious really happened. There were, as far as I know, there were no casualties. There was a lot of property damage, you know, and--but nobody died. So, the bombing ended for some reason. I guess they realized, the Allies realized they really couldn't hit the town or whatever because by the time the plane came down low enough to throw the bombs, to release the bombs, they had already passed the town--because the mountain is so, steep. So, it was a very difficult target. But we, you

¹⁴⁴ Silvana was 11 years old in 1942.

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know, were within artillery range. So you know, it was incredible. Every day there would be canons raining on us. At this point, I think the Germans were now search--beginning to search the mountains. They found out that that's where people were hiding. And so, you know, they would be... What's the word?

Paul: Search parties?

Silvana: Search parties to look for the men--essentially for men, and the Jews. So, it began to be not very comfortable to stay on the mountains at this point. And my mother became very apprehensive about Katja and myself. So, we went back to San Donato. And there was hardly any food at this point. Food was hard to get. Because the fields...most of the food that we consumed was produced in our own fields. Since the fields had not been planted, people couldn't work in the fields because it was very dangerous because of the artillery. Food became very scarce. I must say that there were some Germans, they were very kind. German soldiers, they gave us food. Not all of them were bad. There's no question about that. Some of them were human beings. I think in general, you know, I could say, that they did horrible things and they did horrible things in San Donato as well, but when they saw need in the town and there were children without food or without clothing, that they would help. Some of the soldiers were good. So, at this point, we were back in San Donato. And so, Marco and Ulla had not seen Katja for some time now because, you know, they were hiding much

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deeper into the mountains. So, it became more difficult for them to come and see her. But one day she alone [Ulla] came to see Katja and word got around that she was in town. And there were of course, some German sympathizers, who were fascists in the town as well, and they told the Germans that Ulla was in town. So, she was in the house visiting with Katja and we were all there, and there was a knock on the door. And my mother answered the door and there were these two strapping Germans, you know, brandishing machine guns at the door plus a fascist whom we knew.

Alan: From the village?

Silvana: From, from the village. That's right. So, they said they were looking for Ulla Tenenbaum. My mother¹⁴⁵ said, "I have no idea where she is." And they said, "Well, we heard that she was in town." She said, "But, I haven't seen her in, in months." They came into (Actually, I don't remember this well.) but Katja told me her mother's story. As I said, I was 9 years old. I don't remember these things in detail as Ulla might and I don't remember them coming into the house, but Ulla said, yes, they did come into the house, in the vestibule. They looked around. She was in one of the back rooms with the girl, with the baby and they [the intruders] left.¹⁴⁶ You know, so, my mother closed the door. I remember this, and she passed out.

Richard: Your mother did.

¹⁴⁵ Francesca Cardarelli

¹⁴⁶ Ulla knew they were in the vestibule because she was hiding in a small room behind the opened front door.

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Silvana: My mother did--from... She was so shaken.

Richard: Yeah, yeah.

Silvana: So, we now had the problem of getting Ulla out of the town. So, at nightfall, the woman who lived right next door to us, who was a very strong woman, who worked the fields, put her in one of these harvest "chests" [baskets]. You know, they were, they were tall. She put her in there, covered it with clothes—with dirty clothes or whatever and on top of it, she put, put manure and put Ulla on her head, the chest on her head and just walked to the fields. Like she was going, you know, to do work in the fields. I mean, any German could have stopped her. It didn't happen. So, she was able to, outside the town limits, she was able to get away.¹⁴⁷

Alan: What was her name? The woman that did this.

Silvana: Costanza. Costanza was her name. So, she [Ulla] was able to get back to the mountains and, you know, reach her husband and the rest. So, this must have been, this was in the winter of 1940... This was in the winter of 1943, I think, when this happened. So, now we were left with Katja and at this point, we [Katja and I] went to stay with my grandmother to live, as I showed you in the town, way up in the town. Because my mother was afraid to keep her in the house. If word got around that the mother was here, I mean, in the town they knew. So, again at night, (We were doing all

¹⁴⁷ See Appendix 5: "Ulla's story" for Ulla's version of the story.

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these things under cover of darkness), we went to my grandmother. And she had, she had quite a big house, lots of places to hide and we stayed there for a while with Katja.

Richard: You stayed there with her?

Silvana: Yes, always.

Richard: Your mother too or just...?

Silvana: No, I stayed with my grandmother and Katja.

Richard: Yeah.

Silvana: I stayed with her because she was comfortable with me because I was her babysitter. You know, we were...

Richard: Of course.

Silvana: She called my mother, "Mother." This is the way it had been all along. So, we stayed there for a while. Meanwhile, the Germans came back, a day or so, after, at night. They surrounded the house because they felt that Ulla was in the house. I guess, you know, the person informed them that she was in the house. They felt, you know, "She has to be there." Where would she be? They, they just watched the house; they did not try to enter the house or ring the doorbell or anything. They just watched because there were other Jews, you know, that we knew who would come in and out of our house. They were watching. So, those... Another thing I remember very vividly, is that when they fled, when the Jews fled to the mountains, a lot of the women, let's say, Miss Bloch, who was Kafka's, who knew Kafka, stayed in town. A number of other

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women, Jewish women stayed in town. They didn't go to the mountains. Some of them were older and they probably felt, you know, that nothing would happen. But you know, as the war--as the, the Germans began to retreat and the Allies became close, came closer and closer, Cassino was beginning to fall. They--I think there was a contingent of SS that came to San Donato.¹⁴⁸ They are the ones who rounded up everyone [foreign Jews] that was left in town. This I remember that very well.

Richard: The SS, that was one of their main jobs.

Silvana: Right. And they [the Jews] were never heard from. They did not, they did not make it because Marco--Katja was telling me when we saw her this past Christmas. She said that all of those that survived, because they [the Jews] became very close knit in San Donato, all of them, all of those that survived had been in touch with her father.

¹⁴⁸ SS, abbreviation of Schutzstaffel (German: "Protective Echelon"), the black-uniformed elite corps and self-described "political soldiers" of the Nazi Party. Founded by Adolf Hitler in April 1925 as a small personal bodyguard, the SS grew with the success of the Nazi movement and, gathering immense police and military powers, became virtually a state within a state.

From 1929 until its dissolution in 1945, the SS was headed by Heinrich Himmler, who built up the SS from fewer than 300 members to more than 50,000 by the time the Nazis came to power in 1933. Himmler, a racist fanatic, screened applicants for their supposed physical perfection and racial purity but recruited members from all ranks of German society. With their sleek black uniforms and special insignia (lightninglike runic S's, death's head badges, and silver daggers), the men of the SS felt superior to the brawling brown-shirted Storm Troopers of the SA, to which initially they were nominally subordinate. "SS : corps of Nazi Party," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/SS>

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Richard: With Katja's father?

Silvana: With Katja's father. Yes.

Richard: And he's still alive?

Silvana: Oh yes! The mother is alive too. They are both alive.

Marcelle: All 3 of them.

Silvana: And so, through them we have found out that the others just never made it. So, we know that Ulla and Marco made it, of course we know that, and there was another woman, whose name was Mila. She was from Yugoslavia. She came back to Rome to visit with them. The others, those that had not fled to the mountains, were rounded up and never made it. None of them did. Another episode, as we came closer to the end of the war for us, we--San Donato, being on the flank of the mountains that overlooks the big valley, there were some parts, some parts of the valley south of San Donato, which had already been liberated. And so, we got word because people came back and forth, that Ulla and Marco were now on the Allied side.¹⁴⁹ That they had made it. And so, at this point, my mother decided that we would have Katja leave, be reunited with her family, with her parents. And there was a woman in whose house they were staying in the valley beyond the lines. And they wanted Katja to come. They decided that they would--it would be worth their while to try to get her across, and this woman assured

¹⁴⁹ In Castagneto.

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my mother that this could be done easily now. So, we, at this point, we took... This woman came, and on a horse or a mule or something, I took Katja and went with her (again) and we reached the house. There was no problem. And from that point on, she [Katja] stayed with her parents. I came back home, and my mother was in a frenzy because I was supposed to come back within a day or two, but the woman deemed that it was not safe to come back the next day or whatever. I mean, she knew what was going on. There were people, there were partisans working, and they knew what was going on in the area and so, it was not safe to come back the next day. And I think I stayed two or three days and when I came back my mother was besides herself because she didn't know what had happened. She didn't know whether we made it. You know, so it, it was a very happy ending to this story. After the war, both Marco & Ulla decided that they wanted to go live in, in Israel, and they did try it for a year or so. They were not happy there.

Richard: It was terrible in those days. Israel was so, economically depressed.

Silvana: They came back to Rome and this is where they settled. They've lived in Rome all these years.

Richard: Yes, absolutely.

Paul: Now the last time you saw them in '48, was that before they went to Israel or after?

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Silvana: It was before—it was when... Marco worked with the Americans, you know, as a doctor, immediately after the war. The war, you know, ended in '45. I, I left the country in 1948. So, for two years, two or three years he worked with them and they [Marco & Ulla] came to San Donato all the time back and forth. We went to Rome to see them. And then somehow, they corresponded with my mother a great deal and then for a period of time, we just lost contact, after my mother died, we sort of lost track of them. Even though, every time I went to Italy I called. I had their address, once I went to their house. They weren't there. Another... Every time I've been to Rome I called and there was never any answer, even though the phone number was correct-- because we double checked on the phonebook all the time to make sure it hadn't been changed. We knew their address had not been changed. They were in the same house and there was never any answer. We found out now what the explanation of that was. We usually go to Italy in the summer and they have a summer home and they moved to their summer home. So, there was no answer in Rome. So, last summer, again we were in Rome, I tried another time and this time there was an answer.¹⁵⁰ And so, we will be able to be in touch with them again, which is very nice. I didn't get to see Ulla and Marco because they were in their summer home and unfortunately, I made the phone call the day before we were coming home. We were just staying in Rome for

¹⁵⁰ Miriam, Katja's daughter, happened to be passing through her grandparents' house when Silvana telephoned. It was Miriam who put Silvana in touch with Ulla and Marco, who then told Katja that my parents were in Rome.—Ed.

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two days. And, but Katja was in Rome and she came to see us at the hotel. She told us that she would be in the United States for a period of time this winter and she would come to see us. And so, she did.

Richard: And you saw her in December, you said.

Silvana: Right. We saw her in Rome in, in the summer for one evening and then she spent two nights, two nights with us.

Paul: 23rd-24th [of December].

Alan: How long has it been, a span of time, from the time you had seen them?

Silvana: I had not seen her...I had not seen them since 1948.

Richard: Wow.

Alan: So, she lost you.

Richard: 50 years!

Paul: Exactly 50 years.

Silvana: She [Ulla] said to me when we talked in Rome on the phone. (I talked to the parents who were at their summer home.) and Ulla said to me, "Come and stay with us!" I said, "We can't because our flight leaves tomorrow morning." But she said, Katja's in Rome, so, I am going to call her. And I gave her [Ulla] my phone number, the address of the hotel. Katja called and she said, "I'm going to come to the hotel tonight to see you" and she said, "How will you know me?"

Richard: Good question!

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Silvana: I mean, she's 56 years old, you know.

Richard: I hear your tone of voice. It sounds like an Israeli, "How will you know me?"

Silvana: Right! Well, we sat in the hotel lobby and she walked in. And there she was.

Marcelle: But you told her you would recognize her eyes.

Silvana: I still get very emotional.

Richard: Why not?

Silvana: Right.

Richard: When you were a young girl and then you took her to the other house and then left her, what was that like.? That must have been very...

Silvana: Oh, it was just awful because we just loved to have her around. We just loved to have her.

Richard: But you were her mother.

Silvana: Yes. It was difficult. It was very difficult for me to leave her. So, I mean, the story ends very happily.

Alan: So, you got to meet Katja this, this December?

Richard: We heard about it. Was she here?

Silvana: Yes, she was here. She was here. She's a professor of philosophy at the University of Rome.

Richard: German philosophy, of all things.

Silvana: Yes. Right.

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Alan: Kant.

Richard: Well, but Kant was a Jew!¹⁵¹

Silvana: Yes. There you go!

Alan: And is her name Katja Tenenbaum?

Silvana: And yes.

Alan: She has not married?

Silvana: Yes, she's married. When I called, when I called her mother during the summer, she said to me, "Guess what?" I said, "What?" "Katja married a German¹⁵², of all people!"

Richard: A German Jew?

Silvana: I don't know. She didn't say anything. She just told us that she is divorced from her husband. She has a daughter and she didn't say much more.

Paul: She didn't offer anything.

Silvana: She didn't offer. I didn't ask. No, she's coming back during the summer. She's going to stay here, and she wants to bring her daughter.¹⁵³ She's [Miriam] never been to the United States. So, she [Katja] was in Philadelphia doing some research. She's at the University of Pennsylvania...doing her research on Judaic, Judaic Studies. She was at the

¹⁵¹ Kant was not Jewish—Ed.

¹⁵² Katja married an Italian. Her brother, Sascha was married to a German woman.—Ed.

¹⁵³ Miriam.

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Institute of Judaic studies doing some research. I don't know exactly what she was doing.

Richard: But you were such a young girl at the time this started. What was your understanding of what was happening?

Silvana: You know, I, I remember very clearly the fear that I felt. I did not understand, I did not understand what was going on between the Germans and the Jews. You know, I mean, what is this? There weren't any Jews in the town of San Donato, so, we had no contact with them. There were many Jews in Rome. I mean, we never referred to them as "Jews." They were Italians, and they were not "Jewish." They were people. They were Italians. So, it was, you know, but... My sister, Maria, who is older than I am, by four years, she remembers some of the things I don't remember too clearly. And she, what was the thing she was talking about? About Mussolini was talking on the radio and she went to listen. And she...

Marcelle: "Jews are your enemy."

Silvana: The Jews... Right! "The Jews are your enemy," Mussolini apparently had said in this broadcast, which I do not remember. And so, she came home, and she was puzzled, "Then is Marco and Ulla our enemies?" I mean, this was unheard of!

Richard: Yeah, and they were living in your house.

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Silvana: They were living in our house! They were part of our family. They were the most wonderful human beings you ever wanted to meet in your life. Both of them. Kind...smart... _____.

Alan: So, you have not seen them, Marco and Ulla?

Silvana: No, I have not seen them. On Christmas Eve, when Katja was here, we called them from here and they weren't home. But the following morning they called from Rome and I talked with them on the telephone again and he is 87 years old and in very good shape. I wish I had a photograph.

Richard: 87?

Silvana: 87, yeah. She is 83 and she has suffered a heart attack and she still sounds very, very upbeat and very energetic. She still sounds good, but I think she is a little more frail than he is. So, we are hoping to see them. Our reasons for going to Italy is to see them.

Richard: Wouldn't you think that, rather than put a 9-year-old in charge of the child, they would put your older sister?

Silvana: No, they didn't do that.

Richard: Do you know why?

Silvana: Because I was so taken by her.

Richard: Oh, I see. And she probably responded to you.

Silvana: That's right. That's right! Yeah. That was the reason.

Paul: And was Pompea more involved in helping your mom run the house?

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Silvana: Yeah, essentially Pompea was actually involved. My aunt Natalina, which you don't know because she died. She [Pompea] was staying with them because she had one or two young children and she was not in good health and Pompea was helping her.

Richard: I see.

Silvana: So, she was not at home as much. That's why.

Paul: So, it was really just between you and Maria.

Silvana: Right. And Maria was more involved...Yeah, you're right.

Richard: Maria was in San Donato.

Silvana: Yes.

Richard: And Pompea also?

Silvana: In San Donato. All in San Donato.

Paul: So, I was just wondering, as you said, why the youngest child would be the one, but obviously Pompea wasn't there a lot of the time and Maria was...

Silvana: That's right.

Richard: You had a lot of experience being a mother when you guys [Marcelle, Aldo & Fulvio] were born.

Silvana: Yes. That's right. I really, I remember when I was up in the mountains and I even, I used to cook her meals. I remember boiling potatoes, and Ulla would tell me to make sure that when you peel the potatoes...She, she was a born teacher--always telling you things. She was great--to make sure you remove all the eyes on, on the potatoes

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and she tried everything she could not to get this child sick because if she got sick...even though, even though the father was a doctor...there was a limit to what he could do.

And so, I remember religiously cooking the potatoes and making, making sure I removed the eyes and mashing the potatoes. And Katja was, was a healthy child and hungry. I remember I would put some milk in the mashed potatoes and that would be her supper--and mine. You know, that's it. We were lucky to have that!

Richard: Yes.

Silvana: And when I, when I used to... When there would be fewer potatoes in the dish, the spoon would make noise touching the dish, and she would start crying because she knew that the meal was coming to an end. I got to tell her this.

Richard: Now in ordinary times, how long would it take to walk from San Donato to walk up into the mountains?

Silvana: Oh, it would take 45 minutes, one hour.

Richard: You had to do it at night and make sure you weren't seen. It would take longer.

Silvana: That's right.

Richard: That's more frightening, of course.

Silvana: Yes, yes. And the night when, you know, there were...San Donato was just under fire all night either with artillery or bombing. I, I don't remember. You know, it was very...the artillery was extremely frightening because you, you heard it coming. You

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heard, you know, there would be a "sssssssssssssh!" and you knew it was going to hit somewhere, but you didn't know where.

Alan: Right, right. You didn't know whether it was going to hit you or the next...

Silvana: That's right. And you know, the American Army had all this material to use. They didn't spare anything. They would bombard for 24 hours at a time non-stop. It just kept going. It just kept going. They didn't often hit the target, but that didn't stop them.

Alan: It didn't matter!

Silvana: No, no. They figured, "Well we'll do it again tomorrow. We'll move a few feet away." And I was so, scared in my bed. Katja and I would have one bed and Carmela and her elderly father would be in another bed. I was terrified. I mean, the noise was just--it didn't stop. The explosions never stopped. They were not hitting us; they were hitting San Donato. We could see it from the window.

Alan: My goodness!

Silvana: So, I took Katja and put her in Carmela's bed. I climbed in bed with all four of us cuddled in this bed.

Alan: Who...is that what you were thinking?

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Richard: Who was really responsible for taking in the Blochs¹⁵⁴ for hiding Katja, and so, forth? Who was really responsible? Who is the person who wanted to do this?

Silvana: Well, my mother.

Alan: Your father was in this country at this time.

Silvana: Yes. Right. My mother was very courageous. You know, she took matters into her hands. Because my father came to this country when they had been married for a very short time and she just had to take care of everything. And she was pretty much in charge. Of course, with Ulla and Marco they made these decisions together. What to do, where to bring Katja, where should she stay and everything else. But my mother... Ulla and Marco felt secure about leaving her because they knew that she would be taken care of. My mother would do everything. She would consider her just like one of us. Absolutely!

Alan: Yad Vashem.

Richard: You know there is an organization in Israel which registers and recognizes non-Jews who helped Jews. You know, I forget. I can't recall or remember. There's another name. Would you? Are you listed? Is your family listed?

Silvana: Not as far as I know.

¹⁵⁴ Richard means "Tenenbaums."

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Richard: I mean not for the sake of them, as much as for... Another person whose name...I bet there are many like your mother and you mother's mother who are totally unknown.

Silvana: Absolutely! Absolutely! They are-- We were in Assisi not too long ago, and in fact something appeared on the Boston Globe not too long ago about this story of how some absolutely heroic thing that was done in Assisi. We never even known to save some Jews by people. The Italians, you know, took great care, that's the way the Italian people are like that. Whether you are a Jew or whether you are something else, what have you, you are a human being who needs help. The Italians will help. No question about that. Even, you know, even if they are putting themselves in danger. A lot of the times this happened.

Richard: The Dutch were similar.

Silvana: Yeah, I'm sure.

Richard: But there were a lot more German sympathizers. Well, I don't know how many German sympathizers or fascists there were in Italy.

Silvana: Oh, there were...

Richard: But there were a lot in Holland. But the underground, the resistance in Holland was pretty well organized and strong.

Alan: Do you, do you remember the moment that you heard that it was over?

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Silvana: Oh God, yes! Oh, do I ever! Yes. It, it was May when it ended and, as I mentioned earlier, the fields hadn't been plowed or anything because it was too dangerous to be in the fields. And so, when you looked up from any of the windows, because the town was up high, on the side of the mountain, you could see the fields. The whole valley was red--all poppies. Poppies because nothing had been planted. But I remember my mother having a very difficult time keeping me indoors because we slept in the wine cellar of the house, which was two stories down. That's where our beds were.

Paul: Two stories underground...

Silvana: Two stories underground and the window, the only window that looked down into this *cantina* (I was talking Italian.) was walled in because the shelling was so, incredible. You know, the shells would just come through the windows even if you were indoors. So, we really had to stay indoors. You never, you never know when the artillery would start again.

END OF SIDE I

SIDE 2

...like one of my, one of my uncles had walked from _____. You know the Italian government fell, the Italian army disintegrated, and they were just left on their

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own. I mean, they all tried to get home the best way they can, avoid the Germans, avoid, you know, being hit by shells and, and die from starvation. And he, he came. He made it back to San Donato and he said, you know, they just [the Allies] are arriving now. They're coming. And this is how we found out and the, the first soldiers to arrive in San Donato were from Morocco.¹⁵⁵

Richard: Moroccan soldiers? They were Moroccan men?

Silvana: Yes. You know they were part of the, which army, the 8th army.¹⁵⁶

Richard: The British Navy were there.

Silvana: The British, that's right. In fact, it must have been the 8th army, right? The 8th army.

Alan: The 8th army, I think was in that area. Wasn't it?

Silvana: I think so.

Richard: I think it might have been the 8th Army.

Silvana: You know, Paul's father was fighting right there in Anzio.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ The Goumiers or Goums were irregular volunteers recruited from the indigenous people of French Morocco. They distinguished themselves in the final battle for Monte Cassino, as they were considered savage fighters. However, they later inflicted their brutality on the Italian civilian population. Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 389.

¹⁵⁶ "The Eighth Army, formed in September 1941, was a diverse formation made up of units from all corners of the British Empire....By October 1942, the Eighth Army was made up of 7 British divisions and 4 Commonwealth divisions, including the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions, 9th Australian Division and the New Zealand Division." "A Brief History of The Eighth Army And The Desert War," Imperial War Museum, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/a-brief-history-of-the-eighth-army-and-the-desert-war>

¹⁵⁷ Herbert Lipke 1923-1983 (Paul's father) was not in Anzio, but he was fighting in Italy as part of the U.S. Army 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion.

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Paul: You didn't know my father, but he rarely, very rarely had a straight line in his life. And almost-- the first time he met Silvana and found out where she was from, he said, "Oh, I probably shelled your town!" [LAUGHTER]

Richard: That sounds like him.

Paul: Doesn't that sound like my father?

Silvana: You know the one that hit my house _____.

Paul: Probably, probably... The other story you should know...

Alan: So, he was, where was he located then?

Paul: He was in a chemical mortar battalion in, in Italy. First in North Africa and then Italy. He may well have been...

Richard: He was a real youngster then. I mean, how old was he? He must have been...

Paul: He was under age, slightly under age. He, he would have done most anything to get away from his mother at that age and even later in life.

Richard: Was he something like 17?

Paul: Yeah, probably.

Richard: Was he in the North African campaign?

Paul: Well, briefly...

Silvana: How old was he?

Marcelle: He was born in '22.

Paul: He was born in '22

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Marcelle: '23

Silvana: So, two years younger than Ben¹⁵⁸.

Paul: Yeah.

Silvana: Yeah. So, Ben was, well he was just out of college when... Because they waited for him to graduate before...his class

Marcelle: He wasn't finished. They took him out of school.

Silvana: No, what they did...They accelerated his graduation. That's what they did because in the yearbook he's in the year 1943-44. And so, he graduated in January instead of June and left right off. Yeah.

Richard: In the Italian Army.

Silvana: No, in the American army.

Richard: Oh!

Marcelle: He was here. He was in school here.

Richard: Oh, I see.

Silvana: The American army.

Paul: He was pre-med at Harvard. Pre-med students, they were valuable.

Silvana: They were very valuable.

Paul: They were valuable people.

¹⁵⁸ Benedetto Fabrizi 1921-2018 (Silvana's husband) served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps.

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Silvana: Right! So, he served in the Medical Corps in the army...

Paul: He was in England.

Silvana: ...in England and when he came home, he decided that he was not going to be a doctor.

Richard: Ah, that cured him. Huh?

Silvana: That cured him right away.

Richard: Yeah. Nothing like battle to do that to you.

Silvana: Right.

Paul: The other story you should tell--and I'm sure there are others...

Marcelle: I have a bunch in my...

Paul: ...is the bit about climbing over the beds...

Silvana: Oh.

Paul: in the wine cellar, just because it's a great story. When you were living in the wine cellar.

Silvana: My bed was, as Paul said, this was two stories down, in--underground. And the only light that came through was this window that was walled, you know, with bricks. No, no light came in. But to get to where we slept, which was on the second level way down there was an *inferiata*, (What do you call that? How do you say that in English?) There was a hole on the floor with a grating that sent some light to the bottom.

Richard: I don't know what that is in English either!

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Paul: Grating.

Silvana: A grating. My bed was at the very end. You, you went down, it was a narrow room and the beds were lined up. Mine was at the very end right under the *inferiata*. To get to my bed, I had to...some people had gone to bed before I did, you know, I would have to climb over all these bodies. And then after we were in bed, nobody would be allowed to walk upstairs or anything, because then there would be all kinds of stuff would be falling down.

Alan: You were under the grating, eh?

Silvana: Yes, I was under the grating.

Alan: Yeah.

Marcelle: And you had a basement below that.

Alan: Oh really!

Silvana: It was actually, it was actually a hole. And there we hid some of the men that were being sought by the Germans. It was like being buried alive. They were buried alive until, you know, the danger was deemed past and they could climb out of that hole again.

Alan: Then when they would come out of the hole, they would just stay in that room there?

Silvana: Right. They would only get out in, in the dark when no one would see them, or they would flee to the mountains in the cold. You know, this was all in the winter

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between the fall of 1943 and the spring of 1944. It was bitter cold. It's very cold in the winter in Italy. I--one thinks of Italy as being not a very cold country. It isn't, but the mountains are very cold. They are full of snow.

Alan: And so, those people who climbed into the mountains, even they were more exposed up in the mountains too. Right?

Silvana: Yes.

Paul: Were they mostly living in caves or something?

Silvana: Well, there were farm... There were abandoned farmhouses, stuff like that. That's where they would sleep.

Richard: I would think the Germans didn't go up to the mountains after them.

Silvana: Some did. Some did. But, you know, the advantage was that the Italian men were hiding and the Jews who had been there for some time had better knowledge of the mountains than the Germans did. So, they were able to hide.

Marcelle: Who were these men?

Silvana: The men that they were either too old to have been drafted into the Italian army. They were not--who they were...

Marcelle: No, no. I meant...

Silvana: Yeah, and so, you know, they were around. They were probably in their 50's. Because I think you served--one of my uncles served in the Ethiopian war, which was, I was a...

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Richard: 1936 or so?

Silvana: I mean, I was very young when that was going on. Because I remember at night in, in the prayers that my mother would have us say, there would be an inclusion of some war that was being fought. We would pray for that. There was the Spanish Civil War¹⁵⁹ at one point, then the Ethiopian war, then we had to, we had to pray for World War II. So, I prayed for, my whole child--, my whole childhood was praying for some war to end. But he [my uncle] served in, in the Ethiopian war. He got out and he was drafted again because World War II was beginning to happen. And so, he served a total of seven years in the army. When he came back, he was an old man.

Richard: You said, an uncle?

Silvana: My mother's brother.

Richard: Your mother's brother.

Alan: He had seen so, much.

Silvana: And one brother never made it. He was killed in the war.

Marcelle: You might also, talk about the time you had soldiers living in your house.

¹⁵⁹ "Spanish Civil War, (1936–39), military revolt against the Republican government of Spain, supported by conservative elements within the country. When an initial military coup failed to win control of the entire country, a bloody civil war ensued, fought with great ferocity on both sides. The Nationalists, as the rebels were called, received aid from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The Republicans received aid from the Soviet Union as well as from the International Brigades, composed of volunteers from Europe and the United States." "Spanish Civil War," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 20, 2022 , <https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-Civil-War>

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Silvana: Oh. There was--yeah! This was when we were getting close to the end.

Paul: After Katja had left?

Silvana: Katja had left and in the, in the interim there. Katja... She... I'm trying to remember when--where she was at this time. The Germans came late to live in our house. You know, they just took rooms. And Katja was either staying with my grandmother or she was staying in this farmhouse that we spoke of, where I took her. It was a very short period of time when the Germans were with us. There were two German officers. They, they would just come in and they needed a place to stay and they just took the rooms.

Paul: And so, was that just for a few weeks or something?

Silvana: Yeah. For maybe a couple of months.

Alan: And, how were they?

Silvana: They were very good; they were very good. And they especially helped out with food and all kinds of things. They, they were gentlemen both of them. And one of them especially would come and sit by the fire with us and just talk to us about his family and, you know, about his loneliness. They didn't stay that long and then the war, the war ended.

Marcelle: And they just didn't come back one day?

Silvana: Yeah, no. No, they just left. We knew that they had left. They were retreating.

Richard: They didn't want to get captured by the American troops, so, they got out.

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Silvana: They got out. They got out and blew the bridges as they went. You know, the mountain road that goes up to Pescasseroli.¹⁶⁰ The--each one of those bridges was blown by the Germans as they retreated north. So, they made it as difficult as they could for the incoming American army.

Marcelle: Any memories of the American army coming in?

Silvana: The Am-- We had the British came from Morocco and then there was a British contingent. Then later some Americans came. Oh, they were very, very kind, and they were extremely generous. They had things and they had food. And they had, God, they had so, much. I mean, I mean the Germans were very well equipped. There's no question about it. The German soldiers, but the Americans, you could tell. There was a difference: you know, in their uniforms, in the amount of clothing that they had, the amount of food that they had, that they were able to dispose of. It was incredible--very, very generous. They were very good; chocolates! Have you ever seen chocolates?

Alan: Chocolates was...

Silvana: Cigarettes! They had cigarettes! There were just cartons they would give away. They were very good. One, one soldier, one American soldier was from San Donato who came.

Alan: One American soldier was what?

¹⁶⁰ Pescasseroli is 20 miles north of San Donato in the Abruzzi National Park.

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Silvana: Was... He had been born in San Donato and served in the American Army.

Yeah.

Richard: That's similar to when the American troops, soon after they invaded Normandy and went on through to Paris, there was a whole battalion or so of French Americans that were allowed to be the first to go into Paris.¹⁶¹

Silvana: It must be quite a thrill to be able to do that.

Alan: Have you been to the Holocaust Museum?

Silvana: No, I haven't. I want to do that. I haven't done it yet. I have a bit of a difficult time, like I never saw "Schindler's List." I could not watch it. I could not watch it. This one, "Life is beautiful," I wanted to see because people assured me that there was no violence. The violence was implied.

Richard: You know...

Silvana: But there is... I know _____.

Paul: You have to be careful how people define violence.

Alan: Right, right.

Silvana: I cannot watch it. I cannot watch it.

Richard: I can see why.

¹⁶¹ August 25, 1944, Germans surrender in Paris. Dear and Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 1031. I can't find reference to this battalion of French Americans.—Ed.

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Silvana: I can't.

Richard: [to Marcelle] Now I know where you got it from.

Silvana: She got it from—yeah. I cannot—I... I'm sure you can understand that. I have never been to Germany. I have no desire to go.

Marcelle: And I went once briefly and said, "Get me out of here."

Alan: Really? What was it? What was the experience of being there?

Marcelle: We were mostly in train stations. so, you can imagine.

Paul: We were actually on a train, we were actually on a train between Italy and Sweden. A train ride...

Richard: That's quite a...

Paul: It was a long ride.

Alan: It was just the train station.

Marcelle: But nonetheless...

Richard: You were in "that" place...

Marcelle: Yeah, we were there for a few days.

Paul: In Hamburg we stopped.

Silvana: But we met in Frankfurt once.

Marcelle: No, this was on our honeymoon.

Paul: It was on our honeymoon.

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Silvana: We were coming from different directions and we met at the airport in Frankfurt. It's the only time I've been to Germany...

Marcelle: That's right you were there.

Silvana: I remember I was waiting for your plane to come and we were sitting by some windows and there were all these military planes taking off.

Paul: Yeah, it's a U.S., it's a U.S. base in Frankfurt.

Silvana: They were probably American planes

Paul: It's huge. It's one of the largest bases in the world.

Silvana: They were probably American planes this time. But to me it was reminiscing of the war. So, even that brief time in Frankfurt airport I didn't want to be there at all.

Alan: [That's not surprising]

Silvana: Yeah. I mean, I know that there are human beings in Germany. There's no question about that...

Alan: But you don't want to be there.

Silvana: I, you know, just... This thing, it's there, you know, imbedded in my being. Because, I have a hard time; I have a hard time.

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Marcelle: Just like when black shirts came in at Filene's.¹⁶² I'm sorry.

Silvana: Oh, right. Yeah. Same thing.

Marcelle: When they were fashionable last year or...

Silvana: Yeah, I can't imagine that people would just...

Richard: Ah, because the Gestapo wore black.¹⁶³

Silvana: Yeah, and the fascists, you know: *le Camicie Nere*.¹⁶⁴

Richard: That's right! I forgot that.

Silvana: They were known as the "Black shirts."

Alan: It's become stylistic _____.

Paul: You know, enough time has gone by. Probably 90% of the people never even...

Silvana: They don't even know about it.

¹⁶² "Filene's, formerly William Filene's Sons Co., a Boston department store that pioneered a number of retailing innovations. It was founded in 1881 by Prussian immigrant William Filene and his sons, Edward and Lincoln. Well-known for its high-quality fashion merchandise...." "Filene's : American Company," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Filenes>

Silvana did alterations for Filene's for over 25 years.—Ed.

¹⁶³ "Gestapo, abbreviation of Geheime Staatspolizei (German: "Secret State Police"), the political police of Nazi Germany. The Gestapo ruthlessly eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories and, in partnership with the Sicherheitsdienst (SD; "Security Service"), was responsible for the roundup of Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps." "Gestapo : Nazi political police," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gestapo>

¹⁶⁴ *Camicie Nere* or Blackshirts we members of "any of the armed squads of Italian Fascists under Benito Mussolini, who wore black shirts as part of their uniform." "Blackshirt : Italian History," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Blackshirt>

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Richard: They don't even associate it with fascism.

Silvana: They don't even know about it.

Alan: What I would say about the Holocaust Museum, having been there, it's... There are parts to it that would be OK to be in and there'd be other parts--hearing what you're saying about the experience, that you didn't want to watch "Schindler's List," I think it would be very difficult to be in. It's, it's very intense. I would--Catherine and I spent 7 hours in there because, because I was working on this piece, so, I wanted to.... But it was, just, it was like "in my bones" for about 3 days afterwards, I think.

Silvana: You see, I don't want to put myself through that...

Alan: Yeah, yeah. I think it would be too...

Silvana: Maybe it was because I was so young when this happened that...

Alan: Yeah, yeah. sure. _____.

Silvana: It was incredible fear.

Alan: Yeah.

Silvana: Yeah, I remember this feeling of incredible fear. I was just, I was just absolutely scared.

Richard: Sure. So, that means war movies and so, on are not...

Silvana: Yeah, they are not great either. No.

Alan: So, you were twelve when you came here to this country.

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Silvana: No, I came in 1948. I was seventeen. I was older than 9 years old. In 19... In 1941...They came in '40. In 1940 I was 9 years old. I was -born in '31. so, when Katja was born in 42, I was eleven.

Alan: Then you came by boat?

Paul: Well, that's the other piece that we... I don't know whether you remembered this, but talking with Katja this December. Katja said that it was Ulla who told your mother, who figured out for your mother, that you could come without a sponsor until you were 18.

Silvana: Right.

Paul: You and your sisters could come to the States.

Silvana: Right.

Paul: That, that it was legal. I don't know quite how it worked ... I'm not quite sure...

Silvana: There was a quota ...¹⁶⁵

Paul: Right.

Silvana: You know, in immigration at the time.

Paul: Right.

Silvana: And so, you could apply to come, you know, but it probably would probably take years before, you know, your turn would come...

¹⁶⁵ As a point of reference, the U.S. immigration quota for Italians in 1938 was a mere 5802. (Info taken from a chart from April 1940.), "Quota areas, Immigration Act of 1924," National Archives Catalog, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7460041>

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Paul: Right, but Ulla figured out that as, as the, the children of an American, a naturalized American...

Silvana: American, right.

Paul: Right. That you and your sisters could come.

Silvana: Right. And we came actually on an American passport...

Paul: Right.

Silvana: ...as American citizens.

Paul: But it was Ulla who engineered that. That's what Katja said.

Silvana: Oh, she understood. She was incredible. Yeah.

Paul: Yeah, you didn't... Don't stand in front of, you know, that freight train as it's going. You know, I mean...

Silvana: You can't imagine, you can't imagine what she is like.

Marcelle: And she got her husband out of a concentration camp.

Paul: A work camp.

Marcelle: A work camp?

Richard: Oh, he was eventually...

Silvana: This is before they came to San Donato. She arrived in San Donato first and he was in some kind of a work camp.

Richard: Excuse me, that would have been an Italian work camp.

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Silvana: That's right and she maneuvered to get him out. She managed, that she was very sick.

Paul: She got a doctor to certify that she had...

Silvana: She had T.B.

Paul: She had T.B. So, he got released to take care of her.

Richard: But she did or did not have T.B.?

Silvana: No, she did not.

Paul: She faked it.

Silvana: She faked it.

Richard: That's like, there was this movie...about a Hungarian woman. What was that movie a year or two ago? And again, it was a true story. But this was a Hungarian Jewish woman and "My mother's something..."¹⁶⁶ But she just went up to the German commandant and insisted that, that she shouldn't be deported. They didn't deport her.

Alan: Oh yeah. I remember.

Richard: It was incredible. So she's... But that's the type of stuff that people have to do all the time, fake, phony, and then come off as real.

Alan: Just amazing.

¹⁶⁶ *My mother's courage* (1995), "My mother's courage," IMDb, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117117/>

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Paul: One of things I remember Katja saying, well--was two things that I thought were interesting. She...on the 23rd, the first night we met with her. We didn't eat here, we met at your sister's house, and it was just after, she hadn't been there half an hour. I think we were still in the kitchen, and she described what her mother had described when the Germans came to the house looking for her. Now of course, she was too young to remember. Right?

Richard: Sure.

Paul: But, she stood by your sister's back door and described that her mother said there was a door. How did she describe it? She said when the German's opened the door to the house, to the, to the foyer or the...

Silvana: Yeah, there was a big foyer in the house.

Paul: That, that the door they opened, opened and hid another door in the side wall, if you will, behind which Ulla, her mother, and Katja were hiding.

Silvana: That's right.

Paul: So, so, but the interesting thing was that Katja described it, of course, from her mother's description, having never, you know, not remembering it herself and when your sister said, "Yes that's the way, that was the way the house was laid out." So, so, in other words, you opened the door. Right? And this door hides another door here on a side room.

Silvana: Yeah.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Richard: And that's why the Germans didn't come in...

Paul: Well, the other thing she said was that she wasn't convinced that they really, that they wanted to search the house.

Silvana: My, my... That was our feeling because I think the Germans, since the fascist informer had come along with them, they had to make a show of their...

Alan: They were doing their job.

Silvana: They were doing their job.

Paul: But they didn't want to push it.

Silvana: Because if they really wanted to push it, they could have searched the whole house.

Alan: They could have gone from room to room.

Silvana: Who was going to stop them?

Richard: Did you say machine guns?

Silvana: Machine guns. I mean, forget it!

Paul: So, part of that thing with the confrontation with the commandant, so to speak, is--was the individual to the individual. At what--the SS vs. the average soldier, you know, where were you able to make a personal connection and where not?

Silvana: But you know what was interesting?

Paul: What side of bed did the person get out on?

Marcelle: What were you going to say?

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Silvana: What I was going to say was the interesting thing about the SS and the contingents that came towards the end, they were very young.

Richard: Yeah.

Silvana: They were very, very young. They probably had no more men to draw from.

Alan: Well, sure.

Silvana: They were just drafting kids.

Alan: They _____, were at the Russian front.

Silvana: Right, exactly. They didn't care. You know, when you're that young.

Alan: Right.

Marcelle: They were nasty.

Silvana: Very nasty. They were the ones who were nasty. They were really the ones who were nasty. Yeah.

Richard: But it wasn't, it wasn't a trained nastiness. The older, the more mature Gestapo were nasty and knew what they wanted to do. They knew how to do it. They were professionals at nastiness. Whereas these kids were nasty, but they didn't have the training. But they can be terrible, though because they'll just shoot for nothing.

Silvana: Yeah, exactly!

Richard: Adolescents, adolescents with weapons? Jeez!

Silvana: Emotionally...

Marcelle: What did they do?

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Silvana: Well, they would. They--well, there was an incident in the town where they wanted a cow. I mean, they were looking for food also. There was no food. You know, they probably wanted fresh meat or something and the farmer refused to give it to them, so, they shot, they shot him and the son.

Alan: They shot him and the son.

Silvana: Oh yes.

Alan: This is reminding me, talking about this stuff, when I was a, a boy growing up in Dorchester. There was a beach there. And I can't remember whether this is made up in my mind or what. Were Italian prisoners of war brought to this country for some reason?¹⁶⁷ For some reason there were Italian prisoners of war.

Silvana: Unless for a time did, they have some Italians in like they did the Japanese, in concentration camps?

Paul: No, no.

¹⁶⁷ ...Camp McKay...was located on Columbia Point in Boston near what was the Bayside Expo Center, now a parking area owned by University of Massachusetts Boston....McKay was one of more than 500 POW camps set up in the United States during World War II. In March 1944, the first Italian POWs came to Camp McKay, after Italy ended its allegiance to Germany and switched sides, many of the Italian POW's stayed in Boston. There were still Germans in Italy and Mussolini still had supporters. Therefore, the Soldiers couldn't be sent home. Many stayed in Boston as 'Italian Service Units' where they would help load liberty ships and to do general base maintenance without much supervision. Camp McKay housed about 1,800 Italian prisoners during WWII." "Camp McKay in Dorchester housed Italian POWs during World War II," Bill Brett Boston, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://billbrettboston.com/camp-mckay-in-dorchester-housed-italian-pows-during-world-war-ii/>

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Richard: German prisoners of war were brought here. They were usually stuck out in the Midwest and so, on.

Silvana: So, there might have been some Italians. I don't know.

Richard: What do you remember?

Alan: Yeah, I'm just remembering. There was a big... What?

Richard: Community beach...

Alan: ...community beach. That--there was a barbed wire fence. This is where we would go swimming. Was a--and I remember one day when we were down there, they had established a barbed wire fence and on the other side were prisoners of war.

Silvana: And you remember them being Italian?

Alan: That's what I remember being told. It could have been German. But I remember we couldn't go to the beach, that particular beach again. The--I can remember seeing them on the other side of the barbed wire. They were just men, young men, teens, 20, 25, 30 years old under the sun. Probably like maybe 100 of them. Just all of a sudden, this image just washed back.

Silvana: Another thing I remember is what's his name, the American general.

Alan: _____.

Silvana: No.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Paul: Patton?¹⁶⁸

Silvana: Patton. A lot was said about him that, during his Italian campaign, 'cause he... I guess from North Africa he landed in Sicily and came up. I guess--this one, he was heading for Rome too. I mean, they were also, trying to get to Rome. You know, Montgomery¹⁶⁹ and Clark¹⁷⁰ and Patton. Patton, I guess was the one who really wanted to get to Rome. _____. But it was his policy not to take prisoners. Is that true?

Richard: I don't know.

Alan: It was his policy not to take prisoners? There were certain times when it was true. What I've read about him. Not as a general rule, but there were times, which he... It wasn't like an established law,

Paul: An official policy

Alan: But it was unspoken. There were times when he didn't take prisoners.

Richard: I guess he was "cavalry." Right? He would charge right in, kind of thing, even though it was tanks.

¹⁶⁸ General George C. Patton (1885-1945). Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *World War II : the encyclopedia of the war years : 1941-1945* (Mineola : Dover Publications, 2012), 620.

¹⁶⁹ Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery (1887-1976). Polmar and Allen, *World War II : the encyclopedia of the war years : 1941-1945*, 557.

¹⁷⁰ General Mark Wayne Clark (1896-1984). Polmar and Allen, *World War II : the encyclopedia of the war years : 1941-1945*, 212.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Alan: Because having prisoners would slow them down. So, rather than be slowed down...

Silvana: He just killed them. Yeah.

Alan: Yeah. Patton, Patton was quite ruthless.

Silvana: Oh, I guess so.

Paul: Ruthlessness and ambition!

Alan: Yeah, right. Right!

Richard: As a general, I don't know if he had larger ambitions. Did he?

Silvana: Is that what makes a great general? _____.

Paul: What, ruthlessness? Well, it doesn't hurt in some settings.

Silvana: I suppose not.

Paul: I mean, in the sense of being a general.

Silvana: I mean, he was one of the great American generals.

Alan: Right.

Richard: Well, yes and then he went on up. I guess his troops were part of the invasion of Normandy, through France and Germany

Silvana: And eventually Germany.

Richard: As fast as he could go.

Silvana: Right.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Richard: And there was a lot of tactical reasons for that. I mean, that's why the Germans did so well militarily early in the war because they had these mobile, the Panzer divisions with the tanks. And they--it was brand new, even though they had tanks in WWI, the way the Germans utilized their tank corps was to just rush in--and just took, took over right away. I guess Patton was using some of the same tactics.

Silvana: Right.

Richard: And when he saw he could do it, he just kept on going until it was done,

Alan: Well, the historians _____.

Richard: Quite an experience!

Silvana: Yes, it was.

Richard: It's amazing having a childhood like that!

Silvana: I don't wanna do it again.

Paul: Even with a happy ending.

Silvana: Yeah, yeah.

Richard: OK. We won't make you. Yeah, even with a happy ending.

Silvana: What's bad about this is that we don't seem to learn any lessons from history.

Alan: People keep, keep doing it.

Silvana: People keep doing it all the time, even though, I think they're fighting wars a little differently now. You know _____.

Silvana Fabrizi interviewed by Seaman and O'Hare, February 13, 1999

Alan: But the experience of the civilians in the war continue to be the same. I mean the wars may be fought...

Silvana: You're either going to be hit by a missile or by a tank or by artillery.

Richard: Starve to death and, you know, and be scared all the time...

Silvana: Be scared all the time, all day long.

Richard: ...from all the bombardments.

Marcelle: And you would have starved to death. Right? If it had gone on a little, a little bit longer.

Silvana: I'm sorry.

Marcelle: You would have starved to death.

Silvana: Oh, we would have starved. There was no food.

Alan: The food was either gonna be taken by the Germans or there was no food.

Silvana: No, the Germans, those that you knew personally, for instance the ones who lived in our house for a short period of time, they shared their food with us. I remember once I was sick, they brought me oranges and things. But no, generally there would not be enough food. The Americans did. The Americans had a lot more. I think...to give. And I think in general, they were more giving in some ways.

Richard: I think that was part of the spirit of the Americans.

Silvana: Yes, right!

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Richard: The German soldiers, at least for much of the war, were all these trained, authority and obedience to authority, and militarism. The Americans were just a bunch of guys who... Some of them were farmers and plumbers and all of that.

Silvana: That's why Montgomery didn't want them. That's why he didn't want any of them in charge! Because he didn't trust them! He didn't think they were soldiers.

Alan: He was right!

Richard: But you see, the good ol', the salt of the earth kind of people.

Paul: Yeah, but as a career military person, you come out of a tradition, particularly an English tradition, military tradition, a professional soldier, where you really know, you know, a commander knows what his troops are capable of and he knows, you know, he has a real sense. You're born, you're born into a military family, typically, that's a-- for somebody who is looking at a large military effort with tens of thousands of people, if they suddenly say to you... Like, if you run a business, and somebody says to you, "Well, you could have this group of people who were born to this service or you could have this group of people who six months ago they were on a farm in Iowa." You know, you want 10,000 of them or 10,000 of them?" Right? The trained military people would say, "Give me the old reliable anytime."

Silvana: I think one of the things that drew, what's his name, "Patton" to try to get ahead of Montgomery precisely to prove to the British that the Americans could fight. I

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mean, he kept it up until he got to Germany. He had to get there first. And I guess he did because he crossed the Rhine before Montgomery did.

Alan: Even there, I mean, there's the competition among the Allies. There's even, like a subtle war going on there.

Marcelle: A "sub-war."

Silvana: It's a "sub-war."

Alan: What are we doing here?

Silvana: It's unbelievable. I'd like to repeat an anecdote I heard about Patton. I don't know if I dare. But who was the commander? It was—oh, it must have been Bradley—against--Bradley was the commanding, the overall commander.¹⁷¹ I think Patton was taking care of his own battle and he was going to cross the Rhine before Montgomery did. So, upon, without orders, strict orders from Bradley, he went ahead and crossed. And so, he got on the telephone, having done that. He called Bradley and said, "Brad, (Excuse me for saying this.) I pissed... This morning I pissed in the Rhine. Send... Don't send food, send the munitions. We can eat our belts."

Richard: That sounds like Patton. And Bradley was pissed. But what can you do? He's already there.

Silvana: He's already there!

¹⁷¹ General Omar N. Bradley (1893-1981). Polmar and Allen, *World War II : the encyclopedia of the war years : 1941-1945*, 169.

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Richard: Right? They didn't court martial him, did they?

Paul: Well, they had their own issue. You know, he'd been first to cross the Rhine.

Right? So...

Alan: So, he brings glory to America.

Silvana: Yeah, yeah. As if there's any glory to be gained by a war. This is the thing. I mean, these are intelligent people! You know, still... Human nature is very funny.

Alan: We were just talking. We're having lunch and we're talking about something like this and Dick says, "I'm going to resign from the human race." I said, so, who are you going to? I was working with him on creating a script, a little monologue of resigning from the human race. So, who are you going to? And you know...

Richard: He found it very difficult to figure that one out.

Alan: And what do you, what do you give up if you resign from the human race?

Paul: You've gotta talk to a deep ecologist!

Richard: Yeah. You know, I have that and I skimmed over it. _____.

Paul: That which?

Richard: The--you sent me something.

Paul: Oh, OK. Did I send you something on deep ecology?

Richard: No, but related.

Paul: Oh, OK.

Richard: It's Norwegian or Scandinavian.

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Paul: It's the Swedish thing. Yeah. "The Natural Step."

Richard: I went to college in '46 to '50 and two thirds of our student body were veterans, because of the GI bill.

Silvana: That's right.

Richard: I was _____ and I listened to their war stories there. They would have bull sessions. You know, they'd talk about... I mean, these were men who--from all ranks, all branches of the service; fought in the Pacific theatre as well as the European. And so, we heard all kind of stories. And I'm just like ugh, you know... They were ordinary guys. But that's what made me say, "I don't want any more of it." Nuclear stuff and I got out of ROTC (Reserve Officer's Training Corps) --and then with--Korea happened...

Silvana: That's right.

Richard: ...right after I graduated, and I did everything I could to stay out of it. I managed to stay out of it, be "un-drafted" for 3 years before I finally got it, but the war was over. I didn't have any notion about conscientious objector, just because I was drafted and no, no major, no terrible experiences.

Alan: _____, so go ahead. Sorry.

Richard: No, just hearing about it, you know, through my teen years. All I saw was the movies that glorified...

Paul: Right. That's glorified...

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Richard: Glory stuff, whereas here these men were telling what it's really like. And some of them wouldn't talk about it, it was so, horrible.

Silvana: That's right.

Richard: A lot of them, a few of them certainly had post-traumatic stress disorder. It's wasn't called that then. Some of them would wake up with nightmares.

Silvana: You have to. You have to have nightmares. You just do.

Alan: Do you still have nightmares?

Silvana: Occasionally. I mean, in a way, I can blame all my problems on the War. Right?

Richard: Right!

Silvana: Two things I blame it on. Well, I should really say three things: One is that my mother did not allow me to play with a certain doll because this doll had been sent to me by my father and I should take care of it, which meant that I couldn't play with it! Imagine that! You know, it just had to sit somewhere! It was beautiful with the organdy dress and all of that. The other, is that I grew up without a father. That's probably more serious in some ways. I don't know. And the War.

Richard: I think it indelibly effects...

Silvana: It has to! It's got to!

Alan: It's part of the consciousness of way back. You say the "dream-like"...

Silvana: These are traumatic things! To be without a father and to go through a war. You know, so, I congratulate myself for being OK. I don't know if I am. I think I am!

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Marcelle: Oh yeah!

Alan: You seem better than OK.

Paul: I mean, look at my father who certainly was OK in many ways, but he couldn't talk about the War.

Marcelle: He couldn't.

Paul: And you look at photographs of him taken during the War. He's very--I mean the photographs anyway... (Of course, you don't know what the rest of the time was like.) When he was being photographed in the war, he looks like he was having the time of his life. Of course, he had such a horrible time with his mother in New York. I mean, he did sort of really run away to the war. So, he was clearly getting away from a very difficult relationship. But he read about the war. He obviously thought about the war.

Marcelle: He had me get books out.

Paul: But he wouldn't talk about it. And he would use that wicked sense of humor that he had. And any direct question and he would just change the subject or turn it on its head, turn it into humor. He never got through that, that barrier. I don't know whether you two ever really talked seriously about the war. I doubt it. Did you? I mean, other than those occasional jests...

Silvana: Yeah, not really. We never really did talk about the war. You know, we might have, I'm sure.

Paul: Maybe not.

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Silvana: We might have.

(Paul: [to my father in the background] Right by the basement stairs... Second floor stairs.])

Alan: As she was speaking_____. You mentioned, about your father not speaking about the war. My mother grew up in Ireland when the revolution was taking place in 1916-17, '18 when the south of Ireland was trying to secede, basically break from Britain. You know all about the war going on there. She was in Cork, and so it was close to Dublin, and so, there was a lot going on, a lot of action going on. She would actually-- wouldn't speak of it until her latter years. She was a schoolgirl, 11, 10, 11, 12 and they would have long dresses_____. She and her friends would smuggle weapons on their way to school. And they would drop various weapons off at the various farmhouses and they would bring them to the schoolhouse. I remember her telling me that. The story I remember, I didn't have a sense of her being in a war. I mean, I really--I knew she grew up in that period, but she never spoke of anything. So, I just assumed that she was, lived on a farm where nothing happened. And then she tells me the story of smuggling weapons. And then one day we were standing on the steps of a church, coming out of church one morning and she said, "It's just like that morning I told you about, when the sun was shining." I said, "What morning?" She said, "The morning

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when the Black and Tans¹⁷² came." The Black and Tans were Irish who were, I guess they were—they had sided with the British. And so, they were, they had been recruited by the British to infiltrate the villages and find out who was, who was really sympathetic to the IRA and all of that. I said, "What?" "We were standing there on the steps of the church and they came to the church to find the young men that were members of the IRA." And I said, "How old were you?" And she said, "I was 16." So, this story was unfolding, I had never heard this. She was like about 73 or 74. I said, "Wow, that must have been really...What was it like?" And she said, "It was very frightening!" Because these were people that they knew from the villages. They were taking young men out. I said, "What did they do with them?" She said some of them were arrested. Some of them were going to be executed. I was just listening, and I said, "So, what happened?" And she said, well they executed one young man. So, she was just telling this story. I said, "Did you know him?" And she said, "Yes." She had said, "His name was Coolio True." I said, "Where?" She said, "On the steps of the church." The villagers were there, and they actually killed this man on the steps of the church. So, we're standing outside of the, this church we had just come out of. And then—so, _____, we got in the car and I'm next to her. And she didn't--she was a quiet

¹⁷² "Black and Tan, name given to British recruits enrolled in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) from January 1920 to July 1921. Their colloquial name derived from the makeshift uniforms they were issued because of a shortage of RIC uniforms...." "Black and Tan," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-and-Tan>

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woman and she held a lot inside. So, I said, "So, you knew him?" She said, "Yes, we grew up together." I started to turn the car to drive away. I said, "So, you knew him well?" She said, "Yes." I felt like there was an hour that passed before she said again, but it was only a few moments, I'm sure. And she said, "We were engaged."

Silvana: Oh boy!

Richard: Gee...It always gets me.

Alan: I had never known this about her. Her fiancé was executed in front of the villagers on the steps of this church. It was the first time I realized...

Richard: Next to her?

Alan: Huh?

Richard: Next to her?

Alan: No, no. They took the fellow villagers aside and just put him on the steps of the church and executed him right there.

Richard: That was the British?

Alan: No, the Black and Tans

Richard: Oh, the Black and Tans.

Silvana: I never heard of an experience like that during the war.

Conclusion of interview.

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Appendix 1: Brief Biographies: Silvana Fabrizi and Maria Puzzanghero

Silvana (Cardarelli) Fabrizi (1931-2017) was born in San Donato Val di Comino, Italy. As her father immigrated to the U.S. shortly before she was born, she and her two sisters were raised by a single mother, Francesca Cardarelli. Silvana immigrated to the US in 1948 and worked as a professional seamstress till her retirement. She married Benedetto Fabrizi (also from San Donato) in 1953 and raised three children in West Newton, MA. She maintained a lifelong, intimate connection to San Donato.

Maria (Cardarelli) Puzzanghero (1927-2020) was born in San Donato Val di Comino, Italy. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1947 and worked as a professional seamstress. She married Peter Puzzanghero and raised four children in Newtonville, MA. Later in life she became a trained storyteller, and self-published three books based on her experiences living in San Donato: *The Wolf*, *A Procession of Stories* and *Katja*. Maria was interviewed by the USHMM in September, 2019.

Appendix 2: Who's Who

Cardarelli, Francesca (Franceschina), née Tocci (mother of Maria, Pompea and Silvana; born in San Donato, 1905-1990)

Fabrizi, Aldo (Ben & Silvana's son; born in Boston, MA, 1957-)

Fabrizi, Benedetto (Silvana's husband; born in San Donato, 1921-2018)

Fabrizi, Silvana, née Cardarelli (born in San Donato, 1931-2017)

Fabrizi, Fulvio (Ben & Silvana's son; born in Boston, MA, 1959-)

Lipke, Marcelle, née Fabrizi (Ben & Silvana's daughter; born in Boston, MA, 1956-)

Lipke, Paul (Marcelle's husband; born in Urbana, IL, 1956-)

O'Hare, Alan (friend of Fabrizi family)

Pitocco, Miriam (Katja's daughter; [born in Rome?], 1975-)

Puzzanghero, Maria, née Cardarelli (born in San Donato, 1927-2020)

Puzzanghero, Peter (Maria's husband; born in Boston, MA, 1923-1986)

Puzzanghero, Peter Jr. (Peter and Maria's son; born in Boston, MA, 1954-)

Quintiliani, Pompea, née Cardarelli (born in San Donato, 1928-2008)¹⁷³

Seaman, Richard (friend of Fabrizi family, 1930-)

Tenenbaum, Katrin (Katja) (Marco & Ulla's daughter; born in Sora, Italy, 1942-)

Tenenbaum, Mordechai (Mordko, Marco) (born in Poland, 1911-2009)

Tenenbaum, Alexander Victor (Sascha) (Marco & Ulla's son; born in Italy, 1945-)

Tenenbaum, Ursula (Ulla), née Steinitz (born in Germany, 1916-2008)

Tocci, Beniamino (Mimino), (Franceschina's brother; born in San Donato)

Tocci, Corrado, (Franceschina's brother; born in San Donato)

Tocci, Giovanna (Ninetta), (Franceschina's sister; born in San Donato)

Tocci, Daniele, (Franceschina's brother, born in San Donato)

¹⁷³ Pompea does not figure in this story because she was sent to take care of Zia Natalina's children in exchange for food. (Zia Natalina was unwell.)—Ed.

Appendix 3: A Selected Timeline

October 1935-March 1936	2nd Italo-Ethiopian War
1936-1939	Spanish Civil War
March 11-13, 1938	Germany annexes Austria
May 22, 1939	<i>Pact of Steel</i> : alliance between Italy and Germany
September 1, 1939	Hitler invades Poland.
1940	A register is drawn up of all the copper in Italy.
May 6, 1940	The food rationing system in Italy is established.
June 10, 1940	Italy enters the war on the Axis side.
June 15, 1940	The arrests of foreign Jews in Italy begin.
Summer 1940	Internment of foreign Jews in San Donato
August 25, 1940	Ursula Tenenbaum arrives in San Donato.
September 29, 1940	Marco Tenenbaum arrives in San Donato.
July 1, 1942	Katrin Tenenbaum is born.
1943	<i>Partito della Democrazia Cristiana</i> is formed in Italy.
July 25, 1943	Mussolini is overthrown by a coup; Field Marshall Badoglio is appointed head of the Italian government.
August 14, 1943	Rome is declared an "open city."
September 8, 1943	Italy surrenders to the Allies; Germans occupy Italy; Jews start hiding.
September 23, 1943	Italian Social Republic (Repubblica di Salò) A German puppet state led by Benito Mussolini.

October 13, 1943	Italy declares war on Germany.
November 14, 1943 November 30, 1943	Jews are considered enemy aliens in Italy. The Italian Minister of the Interior issues instructions for the arrest, and incarceration of Jews.
January 17, 1944 January 22, 1944	Battle of Monte Cassino begins. Anzio landing
March 15, 1944 March 24, 1944	3rd battle of Monte Cassino begins with a 24-hour bombardment of Cassino, the town Ardeatine Caves Massacre (Rome)
April 6, 1944	16 Jews living in San Donato are arrested by Wehrmacht soldiers.
May 18, 1944	Allied troops capture Cassino; Nazi capitulation
June 4-5, 1944 June 5, 1944 June 6, 1944	U.S. 5 th Army troops take possession of Rome. Battle of Anzio ends. D-Day/Normandy invasion.
January 27, 1945	Auschwitz is liberated.
April 11, 1945 April 12, 1945 April 28, 1945 April 29, 1945 April 30, 1945	Buchenwald is liberated. Franklin Delano Roosevelt dies. Mussolini is executed by partisans. German forces in Italy surrender (effective May 2). Hitler commits suicide.
May 7, 1945 May 8, 1945	Germany surrenders to Allies. Victory in Europe Day.
August 6, 1945	First atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima.

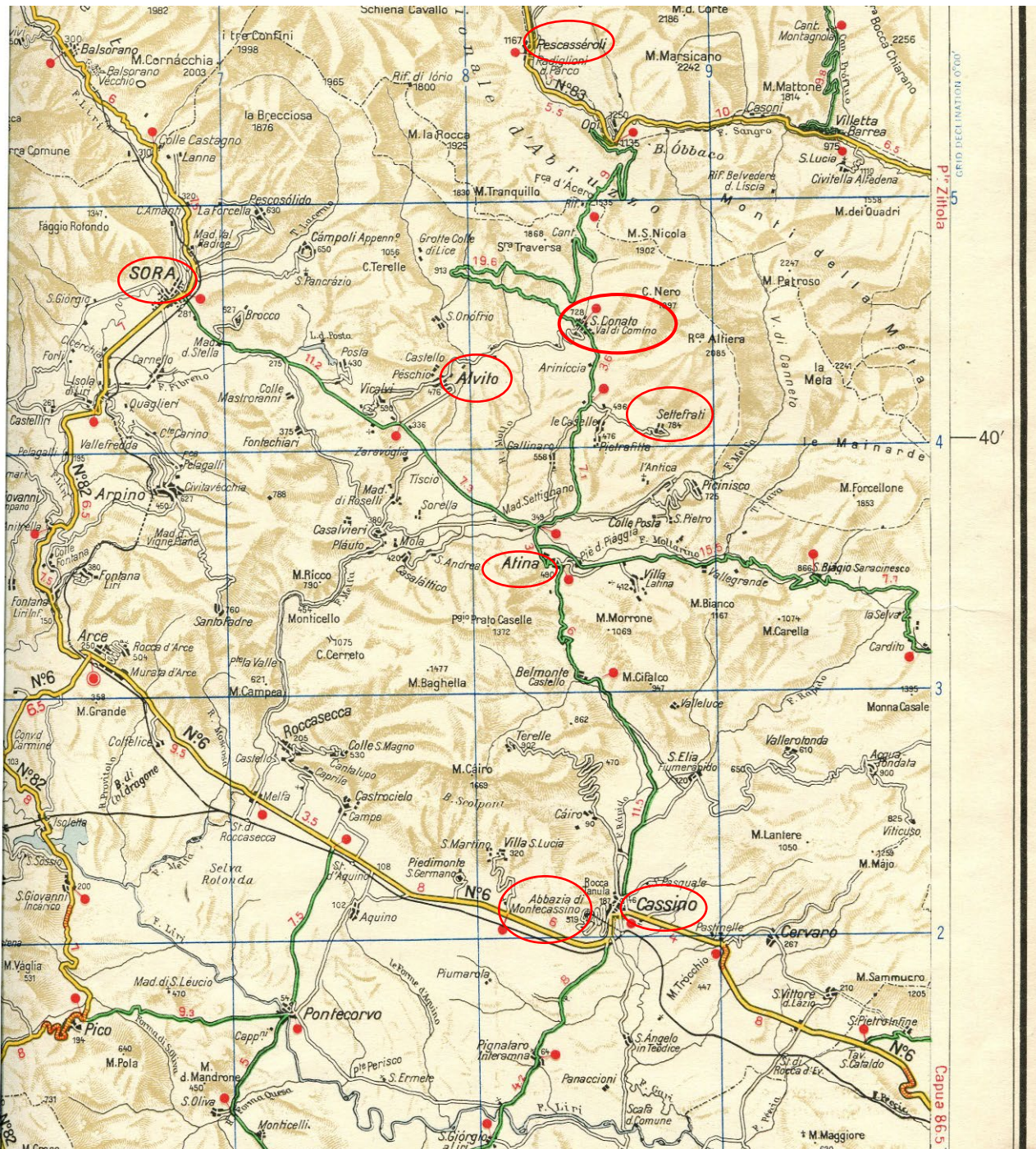
Appendix 4: Maps

Map 1: San Donato Val di Comino and immediate environs



from a Michelin map, accessed September 19, 2022, https://www.viamichelin.com/web/Maps/Map-San_Donato_Val_di_Comino-03046-Frosinone-Italy#

Map 2: San Donato and adjacent towns



from Sheet 17: A.M.S M592 1st edition 1943.

Prepared under the direction of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army 1943

from the Italian Touring Club Map no.17 1:200,000 scale

Revised 1943 by the A.M.S. from Istituto Geografico Militare, Italy 1:100,000 1923.28

G.S.G.S. 4164 Italy 1:100,000 1941; T.C.I. Road Maps of Italy 1:250,000 1939

ESSO Road Map of Italy 1939 and Intelligence Reports

Grid squares = approx. 6.4 miles

Map 3: Rome and San Donato

San Donato Val di Comino is approximately 85 miles southeast of Rome.



from a MapQuest map, September 19, 2022,
<https://www.mapquest.com/italy/rome-282492520>

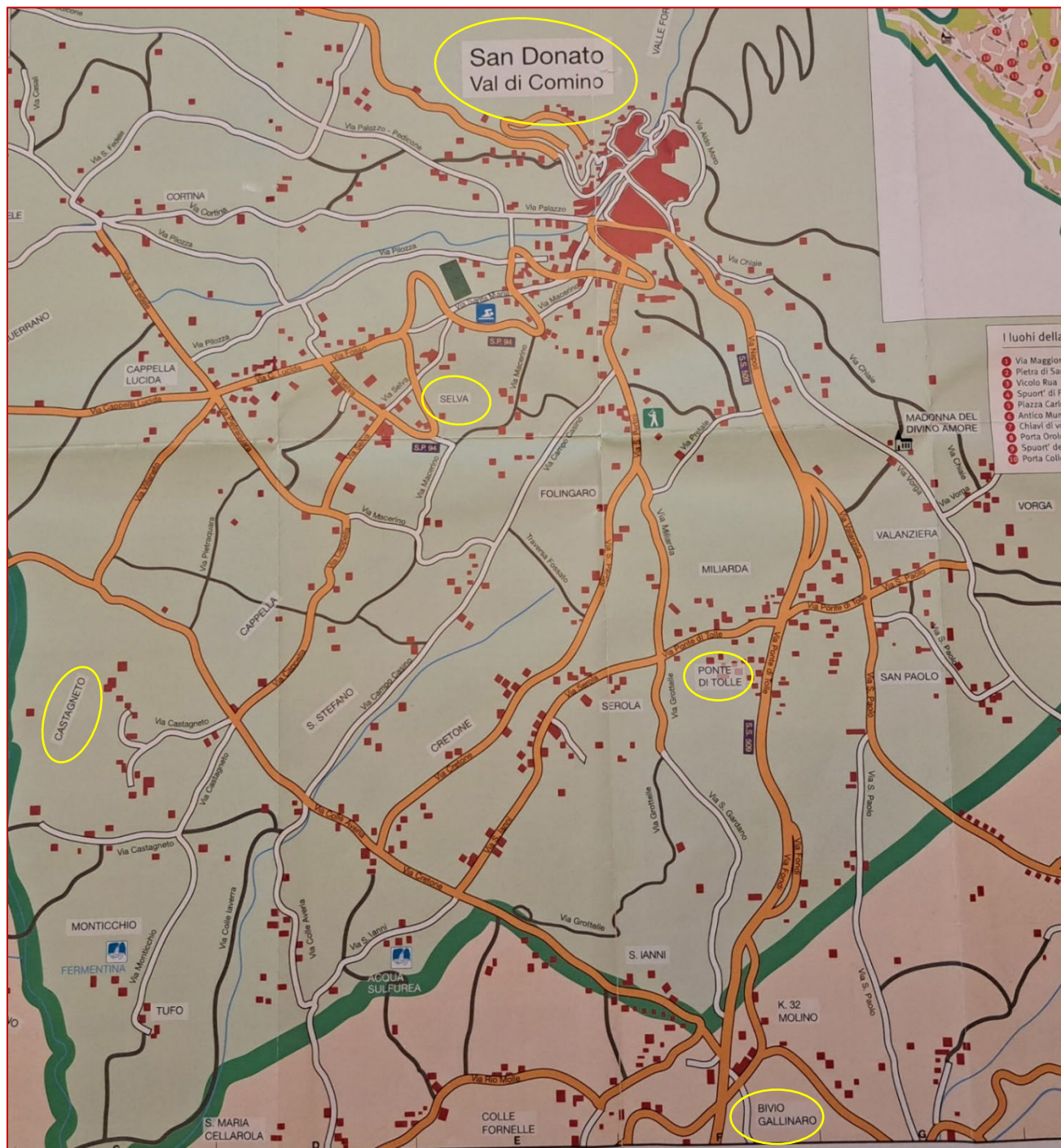
Map 4: The Gustav Line



From a Monte Cassino tours map, accessed October 28, 2022

<https://montecassinotours.com/en/notizie/the-gustav-line-the-main-german-defensive-line/?sku=15>

Map 5: The Val di Comino and the Gustav Line



Taken from: “San Donato Val di Comino, Parco Nazionale d’Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise : Carta turistica, guida e informazioni utili.”

The main German units in the area were in Atina and Ponte Melfa, on the mountains of Gallinaro and south of Settifrati. San Donato deployments were outside the urban area, some of which can be seen circled on this map: Castagneto, Grotelle, Selva, Ponte di Tolle. Taken from wall text, “*Construction of the Gustav Line*,” Museo del Novecento e della Shoah, San Donato Val di Comino.

Appendix 5: Ulla's Story

[Anna Pizzuti?]: Can you tell us about Signora Costanza?

Ulla Tenenbaum: We were renting and Costanza Rufo was our neighbor. She was a peasant woman, whose husband was in America. She had three children. She was a very kind, helpful woman.

Then, especially toward the end, there was a period when Germans in San Donato had put up posters that promised compensation to those who reported on us. She and our landlady, Franceschina Cardarelli, who had three daughters, were very close. We were hiding in the mountains and at some point the bombings began, as the Allies were approaching. At night we used to come down from the mountains, so as not be exposed to any bombing, even if it wasn't aimed at us.

We slept in Costanza's basement. At some point toward the end of the occupation, we decided to leave San Donato, to get closer to Sora, and then head to Rome. In Costanza's basement, we had hidden the only valuable object that we had: a valuable microscope. It was a very good brand that I had brought from Germany because I could not bring money into the country. In order to leave San Donato, we had to have something of value that we could then exchange for money. So, this microscope was indispensable to us.

So, very early one morning, as soon as the curfew was over, I went down to San Donato from the countryside, where we had been staying. I grabbed the microscope, but in the meantime, the day had dawned. Fascists and Germans were circulating, so it was dangerous for me to leave. So, we came up with a plan. Costanza put me (I weighed little, 44 kg.) in a big basket, the kind that was used for salting pork. To save me, she covered me with a towel, and she put manure on top.

San Donato women were used to carrying weights on their heads, up to 50 kilos. She got up, put it on her head and walked out to the countryside where she had land. She had made an appointment with one of the Yugoslavian internees, who helped her take the basket off her head. With the microscope in my backpack, I walked towards Sora.

Anna Pizzuti, *Vite di carta* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2010), 47-48
translation by Marcelle Lipke