

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

PIERA SOLENDER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer:	Deborah Feingold
Date:	August 29, 1989

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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PS - Piera Solender¹ [interviewee]

DF - Deborah Feingold [interviewer]

Date: August 29, 1989

Tape one, side one:

DF: This is Deborah Feingold interviewing Piera Solender. The date is August 29, 1989. Mrs. Solender, can you tell me where you were born and when and a little bit about your family?

PS: Yes, I was born in Livorno. Livorno is in Tuscany, in the center of Italy. And I was born in a Jewish religious family. And what was happening between the Jewish people, but we had—in central Italy there are not too many Jewish people—we had a delightful, the life is not divided. We are all the same. We were friends. We were probably sometimes relatives too. There is not division.

DF: Between Jews and non-Jews.

PS: Jews and non-Jewish. And the only difference is a center, a lot of Jewish has a stores. Of course the Jewish stores are closed during the Jewish holidays. That is the only difference you can say. That they are open on Saturday, but they are closed during the major Jewish holidays.

DF: And what year were you born in?

PS: Pardon me?

DF: What year were you born in?

PS: Why?

DF: If that's okay.

PS: That's yesterday, World War I, a few years later. And so about, I grew in Livorno, and I barely made to be graduated as a teacher before, just at the time the Jewish, the laws against the Jewish came out. Because those laws forbid any Jewish student to attend the public schools.

DF: Okay. And that was, those were the laws in 1938?

PS: '38.

DF: Can you talk more about them?

PS: The laws? Yes, those laws, as long I can remember, they came just out of the sky. Because before there was not any restriction for Jewish people. As I said before, life was the same. A lot of Jewish people were part of the government, part of the Fascist, high part of the Fascist Party. And, so this law came. I imagine because of the lines between Mussolini and Hitler. And I cannot remember exactly all the things that we are forbid to do, but the most important was that no Jewish people could hold any government job, small or big, it doesn't matter. No government, no person, a part of the

¹née Dello Strologo.

army, no go to public schools. No teach in the public schools. And, no having any gentile servants. Of course there were more official which I cannot recall in this moment.

DF: And how did the restrictions affect your family?

PS: Well, you don't know the Italian people. The Italian people are not so obedient of the laws. Of course, we could not go to school, we cannot go to, but the laws like, let's say the servants, we could sneak the servants, the lady inside, let them, and clean. Of course we couldn't, see, at that time usually the maid stayed overnight, so it was a full-time maid.

DF: Right.

PS: And of course at that time nobody dared to do it because we didn't know to...

DF: Right.

PS: But, so the same lady came and for a few hours and cleaned. So, about school that was a no-no for this. And I remember at that time each Italian city had a, we call, Hebrew schools. It is not the same Hebrew schools we have here. It's like a public sc-, like a parochial school. They teach you all the subjects, more, they teach you Hebrew and religion.

DF: Right.

PS: And it happened that in Livorno there was one school. And I cannot tell how many teachers that were out of a job because of that. I as I said, I was just graduated and I taught in that school. That was the only time I was able to talk, to teach in an [unclear] school. And, for a few months, like a substitute teacher that was a terrible fourth grade. And I enjoyed that teaching. Maybe because it was my only one. Yeah, but I was very happy to get, to do this, this teaching, because as I said, that there was so many, so many teachers that were out a job. Because, yeah, one thing I want to point out that the Jewish life in Italy is very, especially then, is still very high. We're very high, I mean that there's a lot of professional people, educated people, lots of lawyers. So this, these people, these professional people were, or most of them, were out of jobs, because of the laws.

DF: And what did most of them do?

PS: What, probably, the lawyer worked offices behind the back of some gentile person. I don't really know. I cannot tell you. I had a fam-, a friend, family they were a, and they all, the father and his two sons were working in the bank. One of the bigger banks, so the, especially the father, was very high in his career. And they had to stop. So they weren't in the bank. They did the best they could. Each one I guess found a different way to survive.

DF: What was the response of your neighbors, your non-Jewish neighbors, and non-Jewish friends to the laws?

PS: It's hard to talk for me, because even as I said I was already in my twenties. See, because to be a teacher in Italy especially at that time, I don't know now,

we didn't have to go to college.

DF: I see.

PS: A high school was, especially a certain kind of high school, was enough. We got that diploma. It was not a degree, it was a diploma. Here there is a difference. In Italy yes, a diploma is from the high school.

DF: I see, okay.

PS: The degree is from the college or university. Now, and what I was saying?

DF: I was asking about the reactions and...

PS: Oh, yeah, and so, even in the sense I was already graduated and almost 20 years old, I, I was very young, in mind. Like were most of the Italian people at that time. The children were kept very young until, and, and I don't know, because the people was scared and the gentile people probably tried to help, but I cannot answer this question. I don't know.

DF: Okay. Now...

PS: So anything else you...

DF: Well we can, yeah, you can...

PS: So my family wasn't affect from those laws, because we had a store.

DF: You had a store?

PS: A store. We had two stores. One Italian, one was [unclear] store. There was no law for the Jewish [unclear]. We could keep the store...

DF: Okay. So you weren't affected.

PS: ...up to a certain point. At that time we could keep the store.

DF: Okay.

PS: And, so, was not any difficulty except the servant of [unclear] already legal. And not to go to school, that's [unclear]. But I mean for business or for financial...

DF: Right.

PS: ... there was no trouble.

DF: And, can you think of any examples of antisemitism before this time? Any time when you were growing up or...

PS: Not really. Because I couldn't probably remember that today you were talking in the family about this issues: this happened, this happened, [unclear] had happened. Especially my uncle I remember, he didn't live with us, my mother's brother. He was a panicky. Every time he read anything about persecution he locked himself in the house. He was just a maniac and probably he was right. I don't know. That was the only, because, you see, as I said, living all together, going to school, I was the only Jewish person in my class. There was another girl in another class. Two, only two Jewish, I say girls, because it was almost a girls' school [unclear]. And so really, so nobody did or said anything bad to us. When I moved from Livorno to Milano, a bigger city, yes.

DF: Can we come back to that? I just want to ask you...

PS: Sure.

DF: ...about the Jewish community in Livorno. How many Jews there were, if you went to synagogue...

PS: Right. Yes.

DF: ...that kind of thing.

PS: The Jewish community in Livorno was one of the, I would say the most important in Italy. It was one of the oldest. We had a very famous rabbinical school, which is closed now. And from then, from that school came out to the most famous of Italian rabbis. Between them I can name Rav David Prato², which is one of the most important, and then probably [unclear] Yehoshua. The rabbis, the rabbi of Rome now, Elio Toaff, and he is not only the Rome rabbi. He is the chief rabbi of Italian rabbis. He said that because he was from Livorno that he certainly went to that school, which is [unclear] unfortunately is closed now because they don't have the funds. Another thing is they closed that the school I mentioned. Livorno does not have any more a Jewish school. The kids go to the public school [unclear]. So that was important. There wasn't, Livorno is a small town. It's not a big city. It's a, so it's a city but is not that big. Comparing from the population of, general population of Livorno and the Jewish population at that time was very high in number. Was about, I think about 1,000 Jewish.

DF: A thousand Jewish people?

PS: We had only one synagogue, which was destroyed during the war by the bombing. And they rebuilt it but of course it's not the same.

DF: Yes.

PS: So only one Jewish synagogue, but smaller they called *shivah*, just *shivah*.

DF: Yes.

PS: For people who didn't like to go to the synagogue, they like small places. I don't know what this is. I never went to, I never wanted to [unclear]. And the people, they went to synagogue like they do here. For the holiday, even they went every Saturday morning, very few Friday night, so that was it. And another thing that Italian Jews are very assimilated. We cannot tell the difference between the Jewish or non-Jewish person. Sometimes, sometimes, if you have a very educated ear, you can find a certain accent that I never realized until recently accent in a remembrance of the Spanish accent. Because we are Sephardic. They are, most of the Italian Jews are Sephardic, and we are the people who came from Spain at the time of the Inquisition. And Livorno had that important big community because Livorno was built in 1700.³ And like

²Rabbi David Prato was born in 1882 in Livorno.

<https://www.sephardicmusic.org/artists/Prato,David/Prato,David.htm> accessed 9/12/23.

³There is evidence that Livorno existed as early as 1103, and "was fortified by the Pisans in the 14th century." In the 16th century, Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany gave asylum to many refugees including Jews and Moors from Spain and Portugal. Encyclopedia Britannica, "Livorno" accessed 11/22/2016.

Philadelphia, opened its door to everybody who wants to live there. So, a lot of people who were already around the world that didn't found a place to stay went to Livorno, especially it's not too far. See, Spain is here, and probably they went to France or something. They went to many places, and then wound up in Livorno.

DF: And how long had your family been there?

PS: Long, long time. I remember that my grandmother talked about her parents like they were there forever. And probably her grandparents told her. I imagine from the middle of the 1700, was the 18th century or 19th, beginning 19th.

DF: So when again did you say Livorno was...

PS: 1700.

DF: 1700. I see. Okay. Okay, we can move ahead, move ahead.

PS: All right. After the law started, of course it was hard to find jobs. In the meantime, let me think about this time, remember when it was. Probably. No, the store was still open. We had only one. We closed the one and still had one, but, so, I didn't want to stay in the store. And I couldn't find much of a job in Livorno, because the restrictions and everything. So I had somebody from Milano offered me a job like, to leading tutor, tutoring from the children. So I accept. I knew that wasn't a job for me, but just to go. I went.

DF: This was a Jewish family?

PS: No. It wasn't. As a matter of fact, this is a curious thing. As a matter of fact, they didn't know me. I got the thing through the announcement in the paper. And they asked me for the reference. So, I didn't have any experience for that job, but as then my experience, my diploma got it along, and then I knew a nun. She was the mother superior of the convent. See they had a school, and the kids, the girls, had to come to our school, the public school, to be at the final exams. So that's how I would get friendly with the nuns too. So after I graduated, I saw her in the street, I say, "Hello," I was talking to her, so I said, "My God, I can use your help." Like a stupid, I went to ask a nun to make a false certificate for me. And she did.

DF: She did.

PS: She did. She made a certificate that I have taught in her school and with good results. And so you make a good record.

DF: Yeah.

PS: But now I'm 67, and I said, "Look what I did to her!"

DF: She didn't have to say whether or not you were Jewish, though. Is that...

PS: No, I adopted a family saying I was Jewish[unclear].

DF: Oh, you told them that.

PS: Before to go there for them to pay for me for the, the...

DF: I see.

PS: ...way, and...

DF: Yes.

PS: And I couldn't go there and not tell them.

DF: I see. Okay.

PS: And, so she did it for me. So I went there, I stayed a few weeks, I mean it wasn't anything [unclear]...

DF: Right.

PS: I was young at that time.

DF: Okay. You were just saying that you left that job after a few weeks?

PS: Yes, I left the job after a few weeks, and I found a job as a bookkeeper's help. Because in the meantime, in our store, I learned the bookkeeping.

DF: I see.

PS: Which is a, I think was my, I should be a bookkeeper, and not an art teacher. And so I found and I stayed in Milano by myself for a few weeks or a few months until my sister and my mother came to Milano too and we stayed there.

DF: And do you have an exact time when, what year exactly or month it was when you went there?

PS: Yeah. When I went it was 1941. They probably came in, especially my sister, she probably came the same year a few months later.

DF: Okay. She was older or younger?

PS: Older. She's older. She's in Philadelphia. And so that was I said 1941, '42, and then the situation got worse. Rough situation. The war and the Jewish situation. But it was the Jewish situation, still we could do things besides the law. The law was still on. But we can, so it wasn't terrible. Nobody was looking for us, you know, but...

DF: Yes, how did it get worse?

PS: It got worse because we had a plane almost every night or every day bombing us.

DF: ...so the...

PS: I had heard there were those who couldn't find food, so that was, all the thing that comes with the war.

DF: Right. And in terms of the Jewish situation?

PS: The Jewish situation was about the same.

DF: Okay.

PS: Maybe the, maybe it was a little more antisemitism, maybe, I don't know. Because the, see the fascists knew that they weren't strong like before, and they had to tackle somebody from the, you know, the Jewish were the first people that everybody was stepping on. And so we stayed there, and as I said, we heard the bombing terribly, bombing. And we were commuting near the, near Milano we took a room when we were there. But then we, was too hard to come back to, to come every morning and for work. And so this is, reached the, August 1943. We were in Milano, working in Milano, but August it's a time everybody's taking a vacation, especially people live in the city like Milano, that is very, it's like Philadelphia. The sun is very hot, very humid, and so my

sister and I, we decide to go down the mountain to Valle d'Aosta, which is the, on the border with France. Beautiful, the Alps. And we went there. My mother she stayed, left, with my brother to go to Rimini. Now, one thing I didn't say. Livorno is in the Tyrrhenian Sea. On the Tyrrhenian coast. In the eastern— in the western coast. Rimini state is in the east coast, on the Adriatic Sea.

DF: Right.

PS: So my mother went to August here with my brother. My brother's family were there vacationing for August in the summer.

DF: And can you...

PS: Yes.

DF: ...spell the name of the place that you...

PS: The place, I don't remember the place in particular, but the region is spelled V-A-L-L-E. D'-...

DF: Capital?

PS: No. No capital. D- apostrophe. A-, capital A, O-S-T-A. It's very hard for me to spell. A-...

DF: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, okay.

PS: It's, the place, I don't remember.

DF: Mmm hmm.

PS: So anyway, we were there maybe two days when one night I'm about to go to sleep the [unclear] we heard the constant all night...

DF: You heard what?

PS: Noise. Noise. We heard noise, planes, coming and coming, constant, no stop. So in the morning we found out that Milano was bombed and there was a lot of damage between that, out of that. And so we weren't too upset, because we knew that nobody of the family was there. We knew. And...

DF: Your folks—was your father alive then?

PS: My father was alive. He was with my sister, my older sister. Later on, they went to Switzerland. They escaped to Switzerland. They found safety there. Cause, see Milano, Milano is here, and, yeah, I don't remember. Probably they weren't there at that time because we were in war before that. Milano is here, and Switzerland is just at the border here. From Milano, from Como, which is a very small city, we can take a boat and go to the lake. See the lake, the lake of Como, and be in Switzerland.

DF: I see.

PS: It's so close. The hard part that time was to be safe there, not to be caught during that time. And so from that Valle d'Aosta we didn't even bother to go back to Milano. We knew everything was destroyed and so we couldn't go back to work. So we joined the family in Rimini. There we stayed for a while. It was summer time. Rimini is like the Atlantic City, not the casino, I mean the beach. It's a beautiful beach. So we enjoyed the summer. Nothing else to do while you are there. And...

DF: And this was 1943?

PS: 1943. Now, let me think. I want to tell you what is after, what happened. After, during, no, let me think. That was summer. When it started to be about September or October we—started the rumor, wasn't a rumor, but the sources started to say that—see, in the meantime Mussolini was overthrown and the Germans were all over Italy.

DF: Right.

PS: That they were looking for Jewish people to be taken in work camps. Nobody knew what it was. We knew it was bad, but we didn't, we didn't think of what it really was. I knew nobody wanted to be caught because...

DF: Right.

PS: So we decided because there was my sister-in-law, my niece, she was only a little baby at that time, my sister-in-law's family, they are not Jewish [unclear]. And so we decided we were too many to travel together. To call to attention. And so we decided to split. My mother, my sister and myself, we dec-, we said, it would be nice to go back to north. To go south, at that time the allied army was stationed from long time here, near [unclear]. I don't know exactly where they were but we're in this zone, here, south. See, from Rimini, [unclear] where you wanna go. Very, very closer there's no joy in that. That's crazy talk because they said that they would attack us. But, so anyway ...

DF: The Allies.

PS: We had that to decide. Who could do that.

DF: Right.

PS: And, yeah, the point was, there was protection. There was no gasoline, so no cars. The train was very scarce. They were using a lot for the soldiers, the Italian soldiers. And a lot of time when you were in the train, somebody came in, "Show me your documents." We could not do that, because all our documents were stamped with a big red letters, like that, Jewish race.

DF: What were they...

PS: Jewish race.

DF: Can you spell that?

PS: Yeah, Jewish, race.

DF: Oh, race, I'm sorry. Okay. Jewish race.

PS: That's what all our documents had. So you don't have ID then for them. And so it was impossible. So what we thought was, we'll say, we're going by horse and buggy. So we found a man that, of course we pay him, was willing to take us south. And we started the journey. We went down and for maybe two days until we reached Senigallia. Senigallia is near Ancona. When we reach Senigallia, yeah, the poor little horse couldn't take any more. She fell down. And so the man revived the horse and she was all right but he said, "We cannot take you anyplace. I cannot even take you back to because you are too heavy for this horse." So we said, what we are going to do here?

DF: Mrs. Solender, did this man know that you were Jewish?

PS: No, I don't think so. No. No, wouldn't make any difference if he did. And we said, "Well maybe you can find somebody else. So he is taking us to wherever we want to go." Thank G-d, he did find. This man came to us. He was old, very elderly, couldn't walk. But something, thank God, something was coming out from him. We knew we could trust him. So we explained what we wanted. He said, "Of course I'll take you." We discussed the plan, not discussed it, asked the price. He asked a very, very low price. And we slept at his house for the night. In the morning, early in the morning, we start our journey. It took four days. We stopped during the night sleeping in barns. We could not go in an hotel or things like that, no documents. And we're very lucky in that a peasant had some food for us. It was very difficult to find food for us. So anyway we slept...

DF: So when you slept in the barns...

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

DF: ...use this tape also. This is tape one, side two. The interview with Piera Solender. This is Deborah Feingold. The date is August 29, 1989. And you were saying that on your way south you slept in...

PS: In barns.

DF: In barns.

PS: That means that we stopped, when we saw some farm after this small farm we stopped and asked if they had any room for us. Usually they didn't have a room. They didn't want to have the people in their house. So let us sleep in the barn, which was warm. I was terribly afraid of mice. And that is why I couldn't sleep very well, but it's all, the best we could have is the best they could give to us. And as I said that was for four days. Finally we reached—oh of course during the journey we heard some bombing, something. The men, so we tried to find a shelter, but this man, Luigi Corleoni...

DF: That was the...

PS: The man that...

DF: Can you spell his name?

PS: L-U-I-G-I C-, like the godfather, C-O-R-L-E-O-N-I. I think the godfather was Corleoni, with an "e" here I think, I don't know.

DF: Oh, yes.

PS: And so that Luigi Corleoni didn't want to leave the horse by itself because he was afraid the horse got scared and maybe take away or so, he didn't want to move from the horse. We didn't want to leave him by himself with just the horse, so we stayed with him under the wagon.

DF: And why didn't you want to leave him alone?

PS: We thought it was our duty to stay with him.

DF: I see.

PS: And so he was helping us, and we wouldn't let him die by himself. Yeah. And so we finally reached San Benedetto del Tronto.

DF: Okay.

PS: So, Luigi said that that was a—we are close enough to the front, then for him that was enough. That he would come back. He said, "Of course I don't leave you here and in the middle of the street I am going to look for the room for you." He went, but nobody want to arrange a room for three women that were going in country, the war, the worst way so they got suspicious. They didn't want to rent a room. Then when he come back he said, "Look, I cannot find anything for you." We got very discouraged, and I start crying. The poor man hugged me, and he said, "Don't worry. I am not going to leave you here. I am going to take care of you. I'll take you back to Senigallia, and I'll find a safe place for you." Nothing was mentioned about Jewish, not Jewish, nothing

was mentioned. “And I find a safe place for you. If you want to come back with me.” Of course we want to come back. So we offered him money for the way back. He said, “No, I don’t want any of your money. I had to come back anyway. I don’t charge you anything. It’s already in the price.” So he didn’t, there was no way for us to give him money. So, we went back to Senigallia, and he found a, he found a room for us in maybe one mile from his house. It was already out of Senigallia, like Suborno. And some relative, some relative that he had, we stayed there. Of course the accommodation was very primitive, but we thought it was safe like this. He provided the black market food for us. We could not use our coupons. And I don’t think that he made any money. All his family was, he had seven children, they were helping us a lot. Every day, if we didn’t go to them, they came to us. So we were very, very close. We’re very, very close. So, of course being there, so the money was gone. There was no way to make money. What we did, the school was closed because of the situation. Between my sister and I we had like a little school. She was teaching it in French. I was teaching the low grades. But they didn’t pay us in money. They didn’t have money to pay. They paid us in, we say in Italian, nature. Flour, dates, milk, things that we could not buy for money.

DF: Right. Who were the students of this school?

PS: The people from that place where we stayed. The children from that place. They could not go to school because the school was closed. And of course there were some, especially one, was such a good student, and so he wants to, he wanna know. He wanna learn. So we founded the way to learn something.

DF: And there wasn’t a fear that teaching would make you more visible?

PS: No, no, because these people were, we were part of them, we became part of them. One thing we made a big mistake. But turned out it didn’t have any consequence. When we arrived there, if it not the first Sunday, the second Sunday, between my sister and I said, “Maybe to make them believe we are not Jewish,” — as I said nobody was said, no mention— “Maybe we better go to a mass.” The mass, they didn’t have a church, was a little place, was so small they didn’t have a church. The priest came and they celebrated mass in somebody’s house. Was a big honor for the [unclear] family. So we went, but once we’re there, my mother wait a long time, my mother said, “No, I [unclear] go to mass already at another church.” So when my sister and I went, and we didn’t know what to do. We didn’t know the songs, we didn’t know when to kneel nor when not to kneel. And so after this maybe we went twice, and then we stopped. We said, “This is [unclear] not to go.”

DF: Right.

PS: Of course we found out later that everybody knew that we are Jewish, but nobody wanted to scare us. Nobody wanted to say anything because, so, saying probably was very uncomfortable for us. And...

DF: When you say you found out later that everyone knew you were Jewish, how did you find that out?

PS: After the war. After the German pass, so Philadel-, em, Senigallia was free, free from the German and was, so the first one was Luigi. He said, "I knew from the beginning you were Jewish. Why you gonna go to service?" [laughs]

DF: I see, okay.

PS: Yeah, that's all. That is Italian people. They are very, very lovely, not all, but the majority are very nice. So...

DF: So you were teaching.

PS: We were teaching. So it was about the— oh then came that the moment that the front was passing through Senigallia. I think was the Polish army passed through. And so we were afraid. We stayed for a month among these people from the village, in, you know, a mine, but not a deep mine. A mine that, they kept the material almost for the surface. *Estaba* [phonetic] in Italian. It's not a mine...

DF: A strip, like a strip mining?

PS: No, I don't think so. So anyway, it was like a tunnel.

DF: Ah.

PS: Like a tunnel there was a little train they used to bring the, the stuff, the merchandise. They dig it up from that place. So, of course nobody was working. I don't even, cannot tell you how many we were, but probably I will say at least 200 people living in this tunnel.

DF: This was, so you were in Senigallia before...

PS: Senigallia when the moment the army, the Polish army came out.

DF: And do you know...

PS: And the Germans.

DF: Okay. Do you have a date?

PS: The date?

DF: When you came back to Senigallia from your trip, when you went south and then came back.

PS: Oh yeah was in 1943, this was '43.

DF: You don't know which month?

PS: Yeah, about probably October or November. It was cold. Started to be cold.

DF: And you stayed there for about a month, you said?

PS: Oh no, no, this was not that, the other, this, what you mean, this is when I, we came back with Luigi, and he put us in that, in this relative's house.

DF: Right.

PS: Oh no. We stayed about a year. Maybe longer.

DF: Okay. And that was, when did you reach Senigallia for the second time?

PS: That is the time.

DF: In October or November.

PS: Yes.

DF: And you stayed for about a year.

PS: Yes.

DF: I see. Okay. And so you were saying that when the army came up you were—if you want to take it from there.

PS: Yeah. We live until they pass, we stay in that tunnel.

DF: I see. Okay.

PS: As a matter of fact, my sister and I we were very lightly injured from one piece of the bomb or some kind of weapon, and that wasn't just nothing because if we had to go out, this is how Italian people are. That was the first or the second day. There was a house near this where people that they were a little richer than the other ones, and they offered for anybody who needs water to go there and get it. Of course to go there we have to walk a few steps from the shelter that we had. So my sister and I went, and coming back, it happened this thing. The [unclear] just enough. You know, they didn't let us out any more. They went for us to get, to bring the water.

DF: They brought it to you?

PS: The people, the people.

DF: Because you...

PS: Because they enjoyed it. They want to protect us. So that is the kind of people that they were. I mean, they risked their life. All right they had to go for themselves too, but, so, why we should be different from the other ones? They help us, and whether we only women I don't know. Probably that they think we're a little more than they were. So they didn't let us go out of the tunnel.

DF: Now...

PS: Until everything finish.

DF: Okay. And how many people did you say were in the tunnel?

PS: I think that there were about 200. [unclear].

DF: And these were Jewish people.

PS: Oh no.

DF: These were, just everyone was hiding.

PS: They were not hiding. They, they were hiding some way, but they were taking shelter for the, the weapons from the, arms from the bombs that were coming every single day. They're using that. No, they were, there were some young men that they were hiding there. [unclear] be taken away. Not Jewish, but that they would because of the [unclear] too.

DF: I see.

PS: Yeah. I remember many times we were talking or sitting outside of the little houses. Somebody said, "Somebody's coming! Somebody's coming!" I looked to see a man went in the woods to hide. They were afraid to be taken. Yeah, and so finally the, at this time, they were finished but to [unclear] for us. We were for a few months, probably a little longer than few months, my sister and I we were working with the

American army. They hid civilian people from the [unclear]. And we were there for [unclear]. We had a very good time. As a matter of fact my sister met her future husband there.

DF: I see.

PS: Yeah.

DF: He was an American?

PS: She came as a war bride.

DF: I see. Okay. So these were the Americans then?

PS: Eh?

DF: This was an American soldier?

PS: Yes, he was in there. He was stationed there, with the [unclear]. And so that, this point the war finished.

DF: And this was the end of 1944 then?

PS: No, '45.

DF: Early in 1945.

PS: '45 the end finished, the war finished.

DF: So you were there from, you were in Senigallia from...

PS: A year and a half.

DF: A year and a half. Okay.

PS: And so that, it came the time when we had to go back to Milano. By the meantime we found out that the rest of the family had been living in Switzerland and they were all saved. So we knew each other was alive and well. And...

DF: I don't know if you know exactly, if you want to tell a little bit about how they got to Switzerland. Was it through, how you said earlier?

PS: Well I don't know exactly how they went. No, I don't think that they went through the lake. I think that they went from the mountains. There were there especial people who for money took these or most the Jewish Italian people and non-Italian, because a lot of people came from other countries to Italy thinking they were safe there, through some secret passage [unclear] to Switzerland. Unfortunately some weren't too loyal people, they saw it, they took the money from the people and they sold them to the Germans. So a [unclear] took them, they were all caught. Whether it was by accident I didn't find out. And some way that they saw them and they were caught and not everybody from Italy went to Switzerland safe but a lot of people, a lot of these people. And I know that there they had to work. They had a special type of work because see Switzerland, such a small place, and all these people inside, it is a rich place, a rich country, but they needed for them to do something. I know that after the war they went and they came back and they send like a bill that they have to pay for their stay someplace or so on. I don't think everybody paid, but so anyway, they were safe. That was the most important thing. So when they came the time that we were ready to go back to Milano, we had to say goodbye to the Corleonis. And we said to him, "You know, we

really feel so grateful to you. And you don't want anything from us." They didn't want anything. He didn't like this. He got mad. He said, "If you're thinking about money, don't go any further! I don't want to hear it!" So, we shut up. My mother had some jewelry, so she went to a jeweler's store and she make a memento, something like that. She put our names, the date, the day we went to, and he was so proud. He was wearing the vest with the pocket, he put the medal. His chain was silver, sterling silver. And he put the gold medal on the silver chain. And he was showing to everybody. "See what my ladies did for me?" So, but one of the times we did say goodbye it was very hard. And even now look how many years. And so we said goodbye. We corresponded for a while. And they, it was very hard for them to do, because Luigi, his wife couldn't write, and the children couldn't either and so it was very, they had to find somebody. And I don't really know what happened exactly. The parents which was already old at that time. The children, one died. One died before we met them. He was, by bombing. He was hit by something and so he died. And the other one was 17 years old while we were there. When the front came, and it was a constant passing of trucks, he was hit by one of those. He died instantly. We were there at that time. And so that is the story. It's finished. We went back to Milano. That's it. We tried to get in gear again. In the beginning wasn't so easy. Oh, yes, that's probably is interesting. When I came back to Milano, the first job I had was with the Jewish community. And I still am, I have a friend who was working with me. She lives in Jersey now. We still are very close friends. I know there is a [unclear] she was working there. And so we went back to Milano. That was the year I met my husband who was [unclear]. He was from Poland and he was in concentration camp, camps, for five years, five different concentration camps. And he was the only survivor of a large family, a big family. So we met and got with it.

DF: And did your family join you then, your father and your...

PS: Where?

DF: Did they come back from Switzerland?

PS: Oh yes, they were back before we did.

DF: I see.

PS: Yeah. We founded about the children through the Red Cross.

DF: I see.

PS: We inquired through them, because there wasn't no mail. First of all we didn't know where to write. They didn't know where we were. Yeah, the Blue Cross helped us to found each other.

DF: Okay. Well, thank you. I'm gonna turn this off. [tape goes off then on] Well...

PS: Just a while ago that friend of mine from Boston, the one I mentioned, she sent me an article that she found in some American paper. She didn't put the name. I don't know what paper it is. This article is talking about the antisemitism that is, is coming back in Italy. It's such an upsetting thing, because, it's in English, and because I

say, that the antisem-, first of all reading this article, this antisemitism is so, how can I say, ignorant. They hate the Jews to hate them. They insult them with such a stupid insult that doesn't, they don't make any sense. But beside that. The antisemitism is more dishonest where there are not Jewish. Doesn't this sound awful to you? To me it sound very upsetting because after they hate some people for some reason, I could even understand, but hating people who are not existing there, they don't know. So that means that somebody, some organization, some people, whoever they are, they are putting that voice on, inside them, for some reason. It's...

DF: So how many Italian Jews are there now?

PS: Now, at the time of the war there were 44,000. Now I don't know, because they are less than the region in like I was, the people who were born generation, generation. There are a lot of Jewish from Ethiopia now. I found in Livorno, I went four years ago for the Jewish holidays. They are related to me some of [unclear] and from Ethiopia. There are a lot of the Greek Jewish from Salonika. They came soon after the war and rested there. And you know that this strange thing that these people, they speak, I don't know if they speak Greek too, but they speak Spanish. Perfect Spanish. Their language is Spanish. That's funny to me.

DF: Yeah. Okay.

PS: Now this is really something else.

[Tape one, side two ended. Interview ended.]