

May 5, 1988

TESTIMONY OF RENA GREENUP

- 0:00 Background
Born: 1936, Salonika, Greece
Father: Zionist, snobbish, aristocrat
Family: Sephardic
Mother: Ashenezik - had to work since 12
- 1940: Germans changed things:
Father took immediate family to Athens, tried to "get lost."
- Salonika: Germans asked Rabbis for lists of all Jewish families.
In Athens, same request, Rabbi did not comply.
Salonika most densely populated area of Jews in world.
- Athens: In basement/hiding.
- 5:00 Father in British army in World War I. Encamped in Greece;
Oxford graduate; using wireless, messages going back & forth.
Gestapo, trying to find these radios. Had to flee. Next, rented
apartment in Athens using Greek Orthodox names.
- 7:00 Hungry (said in Greek):
Nightmares about it:
1941 - 6 years old. In morning wagons come to pick up corpses.
School for first time:
Had chickens for food (eggs):
Harder for Jews, knew nothing about family in Salonika. Cousins
went to mountains to be with Resistance.
Rumor: Jews going to Turkey and then Palestine. Father worked to
do this, getting more difficult to hide.
- 12:00 End 1943: Little vilage/farm. City (a port) to take boat to Turkey.
- December/Boat Trip
- 15:00 Difficult trip - 10 days almost no food and water. Saw huge rock
with beach on other side. Headed toward beach. German gunboat
came. Uncle tried to drown himself.
Taken to beach - Island of Lenos in Greece/Rock was Turkey and
safety. Interrogation Moudreau village.
- 20:00 Father taken to capitol of island Castro.
Uncle, mother she, engineer - Greek person in Moudreau not like
concentration camps: primitive prison, cells on one side -
wall opened to hallway - no bathrooms.

- 20:00 Each in different cell (6 or 7 years old). Round hole in front on door. High near ceiling were bars to window - very frightening. Mother screamed about leaving child alone - let her stay with mother in same cell.
Mother devised games, doll from hankerchief. Had child's view-master - suspected they were spies.
3 months - interpreter - learned they were Jews.
- 25:00 Gestapo commander Austrian - prided himself in culture. Found her mother very cultured - like to talk with her. Promised to keep them in Lenos for his tour in return for any jewelry, etc.-secret. Mother protested child in prison.
- 30:00 Put Rena with German sympathizer family - very poor - visited mother daily.

Father thru contacts had communication with mother.

End 1944: New Commander - father ill. Ironic, Germans wouldn't kill you if you were sick.
- 35:00 Meeting of Gestapo officers in ? Father informed on this, British sub blew them up.

Again, Germans had to wait for new commander.

1945: Germans know losing war. Greeks also know.

Rethink position - 2 large destroyers take all German soldiers and take out German sympathizers, etc.

Then Germans plan to blow-up village. I was told to go with villagers; if safe after, will meet at the beach; I hid in woods.

Greek police left cell blocks unlocked. Village blown-up.

Destroyers left, people ran to Gestapo headquarters to find things of value, food, toys.
- 40:00 They were booby-trapped. Christmas tree incident. Re-united with family, father, mother, uncle.
Not able to back to house. Communists had taken over. Had nothing; but decorated tree, used it every year.
Always have biggest Jewish Christmas.
- 50:00 Everyone of us has a book inside. Back to Salonika - Greek Orthodox turned communists.
Civil War in Greece - We were given one room for 4 of us in our house. Germans had used it as officer headquarters. Basement was officer's club. Father was aggressive: threw out Greek officer, neighbors helped. Saved furniture, gave them back.

50:00 Made skirt from flag; father worked at YMCA.

55:00 Father in 1945 borrowed tents from British army. Started camp for children of survivors (Jewish).

People that had hidden in their house were killed in Auschwitz.

Others in family made it, some to Israel: Others killed on boat to Israel, torpedoed.

Big clan - cousins killed, some escaped.

Tape #2

Hitler changes us. My family before open, became closed and bitter, did alot for the children in Salonika.

Library named after him. Father was very strict with me.

5:00 Went to Greek American school. President of Senior class, but very restricted by father.

Didn't want her to go to University. She needed to get out.

Won Fulbright Scholarship - went to Michigan State University.

Name sequence: (Rena Joseph Abravonel)

5:10 Reason for telling story:

Both parents dead; I'm the only one. Thank you all for gift, given opportunity to tell her story.