



Video Story Transcript

A Jewish Woman and Her German Friend

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Link to YouTube Video:

<https://youtu.be/nOk3ZktFOJM>

Note: The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, my name is Cindy Rivka Marshall. In 1976, I was a young college student on a semester abroad in Paris. That's when I met Sabine. She and I became friends and began to walk all around Paris speaking in French to practice. I think that kind of helped me be a bit in denial about the fact that she was German and I an American Jew. But I think maybe that also drew us together.

It seemed surprising to have a German friend. Unlikely and even maybe illicit. I had grown up post World War II where anything German was associated with the Holocaust. And, I was surprised when I met Sabine. She and I talked about how we each had stereotypes about each other's nationality; Germans, well they're large and loud. Americans, they're large and loud. She and I were both small in stature and soft spoken, but we had to admit there was some truth to those stereotypes when we saw the tourists on the Metro.

As the semester ended, Sabine invited me to come to Munich to visit and I didn't know what to do. I had never thought of going to Germany. I had grown up where my grandpa always said, "I'll never go back. There's nothing left there."

My grandparents had left Eastern Europe in the early 1920s, but they had lost family members in the Holocaust.

Ultimately, I decided to go and see for myself. And, in Munich I found myself in conversation with all of these young Germans, who had been born in the late 1940s and 1950s, and in their schooling years had very little education about what had happened in World War II.

I found this kind of sickening. Things were changing. This was the 1970s, but they were eager to talk with me and to - they were questioning their parents their grandparents - What was their role in the Third Reich?

Sabine and I ended up going to Vienna. We were joined by my cousin Leah. We were tourists. We were sitting in a coffee house one day and we were speaking in English. Eating linzer torte and drinking strong coffee, when this woman, an older woman, at this table next to us started to speak loudly in German. I only caught one word: "Juden." I saw Sabine be shocked and then outraged and then she started speaking very loudly back to this woman.

We got up and left, and in the street she translated. She told us this woman had said, "Jews don't belong here in Vienna."

Sabine had spoken back. She said, "It is your attitude that doesn't belong here. These are my friends."

Sabine was my ally. And that made me feel safer.

It was 12 years before I saw Sabine again. She and I were traveling by car in the Alsace region of France near the German border, and just by chance we happened upon a sign to the site of a former concentration camp, Struthof. I'd never heard of it. I hadn't prepared myself to go visit. But, on the spur of the moment we went.

It was foggy as we entered the gate and I saw a monument. It explained that not just Jews, but also Christians who had fought in the French resistance to the Nazis, had been imprisoned here. We saw an exhibit. It was photographs of things I'd seen before. And yet, the inhumanity was none the less incomprehensible. The way that systematically the Nazis catalogued suitcases and shoes, human hair, the emaciated faces of the inmates.

We ran across this yard which was framed by the remains of watchtowers in each corner, and we came to a low building. Room after room was labeled Operating Room, torture chamber, isolation cell, crematoria.

I said, "I've gotta get out of here."

So we ran. Now the rain was pouring down. And as we ran across that yard, I felt like I was being watched. I felt like I barely escaped out that gate. And when we got to the car I was crying. Sabine reached her arm and gave me a hug.

"Toi et moi, ici, ensemble." Yes, you and me, here, together.

We each had deep wounds from a time before we were even born. Never to really be healed. And yet being there together with Sabine I felt comforted. And Sabine, she is my friend to this day.