



Video Story Transcript

FROM MOON COOKIES TO MARTIN AND ME

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://youtu.be/lthiEIPuvSE>

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.

My name is Lyn Ford. And when I was a little girl, we lived with my Grandma Cooper in Sharon, Pennsylvania on Mercer Avenue. In those days Grandma Cooper didn't watch TV because there wasn't one. And she didn't always listen to the radio. But she spent a lot of time on either side of her yard, gossiping at the fence with her neighbors. One of the neighbors was a little woman, no taller than my Grandma Cooper, who always had a kerchief wrapped around her head, sometimes tied under her chin, and she wore long dark sleeves, which would kind of showed when she leaned on the fence. My grandma Cooper leaned on the fence beside her, she kept those sleeves pulled down. But sometimes in the warm weather she would slide them up. And her name was Mrs. Rosenberg.

Mrs. Rosenberg would use words that Grandma never used and they sounded like music to me. She would add exclamations to what she was saying, Oy, gevalt! or Oy, ve is mir! ! She would say things about someone else who is a bit narish, bit narish, and it sounded like music to me. So I would say things to my cousins "Stop being so narish. Oy, gevalt!" Sounded kind of funny, I am sure coming from a little African American child and I didn't even know what it meant. But it seemed to work and I was impressed with that language. Mrs. Rosenberg also made these wonderful crescent shaped cookies that were filled with nuts and sometimes with golden raisins instead of brown ones and sweetness ... and I loved those. Every now and then she would call me to the fence "Darling, come here. I have something for you." She would hold out her hand and I would get that moon cookie. I loved those moon cookies.

And I know that I got into trouble for something when I was that age, because I always did, and I had to stay in the house and I pouted and I wanted something to make me feel better. And I thought about those moon

cookies. So, I thought I would call Mrs. Rosenberg and I picked up that big black receiver on that big black phone and started to dial on that circular dial. And all I got was an operator, a real person compared to what you get these days. He told me that I needed to try again or to hang up the receiver.

Well I know I was permitted to escape from the house the next day and I did something I hadn't done. I went to Mrs. Rosenberg's door and I knocked on it and she came to the door and I can't remember exactly what she said but I told her that I had tried to call her. I wanted more of the moon cookies. I wanted to see if she would give me a moon cookie, but the number didn't work.

And Mrs. Rosenberg said something like, "You know my number? You called my number? What number did you call?" Then I said, "Well, I dialed the numbers on your arm, but it didn't work." I thought the numbers on Mrs. Rosenberg's arm, the arm that I seldom saw, except when she pushed up the sleeves on her long dark shirts, was her phone number. I thought she'd written it there, maybe she couldn't remember it. Written it there the way some of the older girls in my family and in the neighborhood would write things on their hands, like boyfriend's phone numbers, the answers of the questions for a test.

Mrs. Rosenberg became very solemn. She didn't fuss, she didn't yell. She just quietly said, "Those are not my number, that's not my number."

I honestly don't remember if she gave me a moon cookie I just remember going home. And after that she didn't come to the fence and grandma didn't talk to her and I didn't see her in her garden. A garden where I heard her sing many, many times, a song that she would explain to me – [*she sings a Hebrew Song*].

I didn't hear her singing and I didn't see her; and the only way I knew what had happened was that I overheard Grandma Cooper telling someone over the phone, that some of Mrs. Rosenberg's family had found her. And then I felt bad because I had never known that Mrs. Rosenberg was lost.

APRIL 4, 1968 Memphis, TN. Assassination of Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King Jr

Well, time passed and I grew and Mrs. Rosenberg was practically forgotten. And April 4th, 1968 came along. I was a junior in high school and that Thursday was devastating and we thought that we wouldn't have school the next day. We thought that schools would be closed and flags would fly at half mast, the way they had for John. F. Kennedy.

But we heard on the news the next morning that we had to go to school. Some of the other schools in other communities were closed, but we had to go to school there in Sharon, Pennsylvania. And our parents sent us off and when we got to school, some of us decided that we were walking out at lunch time. We couldn't stay.

Everything felt wrong and so we got up our courage and gathered together and started to walk toward the doors where the Principal stood in front of the doors, and he looked at our faces and then he stood near the doors and he said that we, "should be ashamed of ourselves for being so disruptive" and I remember he said specifically to me, "Your mother and father would never do anything like this. I know your family." And I said "I'm not my mother or my father," and the doors were opened by my friends and outdoors we went and a couple of people put the flag at half mast, which I am sure made the maintenance men very angry, and if I had not been on the strong arms of two of my bigger friends, I might not have made it down the stairs because I was shaking so badly.

As we made our way down the street called State Street, heading toward the church that most of us attended, some of us glared at the few African American students who were too afraid to leave. And we ignored those

European American students who were jeering and taunting and calling us names and we ignored some of our European American friends who wanted to walk with us to the church and we told them no.

We sang “We Shall Overcome” as we made our way down that street.

Some cars passed with students from another school and they jeered and taunted us and then we heard the sounds of our friends running down the hill behind us, crying red-faced, those European American friends linking arms with us and singing “We Shall Overcome”.

And we marched down that hill, black children, white children, and as we sang, to my left somewhere on a low hill, I heard a song [*she sings that same Hebrew Song*] and I tried to turn, but I was propelled, held by my friends and moving forward with that song and all of our energies and emotions.

And I knew that Mrs. Rosenberg had been an old woman when I was very small, but there was that song of hers and I couldn’t see who was singing it. When we got to the church... we had not vandalized, we had not fought, we had not cursed, we had not jeered or taunted...and we walked in to the church together black children and white children and sat and cried and prayed and talked and that song kept going through my head blending with the song “We Shall Overcome”.

And I remembered Mrs. Rosenberg’s explanation of her song’s meaning ...

“Oh! How wonderful it is, when we can walk together ... come together in unity and peace.”