

-TITLE- ROBERT GACHET
-I_DATE- 7/7/88
-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- FAIR
-IMAGE_QUALITY- GOOD
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES- ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Robert Gachet was born in 1918. His father died from gas from WWI.

He had a strict up bringing at an orphanage and then at a Catholic boarding school. He became involved in the resistance for nationalistic reasons, to get the Germans out of France. His involvement in the resistance came to include assistance to Jews, but this was only later. Before the German occupation in September 1943, Jews were not persecuted, and he even states that no distinction between Jew and non-Jew was held. Some Jewish families that he helped were families he had known, without knowing that they were Jewish. He knows that the people involved the resistance were few, but he sees his involvement not as heroic, but as something that had to be done. He feels that today's young people do not care about the war, but he too does not think about it much any more.

1:95 His actions were not courageous, they were normal, in the conditions of occupation.

3:00 His actions were patriotic-'when will we be free?'He learned of the Nazi atrocities after the war. At the time they thought that they were labor camps and prison camps. He knew the Jews were treated differently, but didn't know that they were being exterminated. He thought they were in Ghettos.

6:50 The free zone was very different [Italian occupied] in the occupied zone the Jews went into hiding and had to wear the stars, but he didn't know.

8:00 He said that this area is conducive to hiding because of the mountains. Denunciation of Jews by French was not necessarily anti-Semitic, but so that they could get their wealth. [he gives an account later that seems to disagree with this.]

8:70 He was born near Chambery in 1918. His father died from gas during WWI. The government gave his mother a pension, but it was not enough. He and his brother and sister were put in a Catholic orphanage.

10:70 He worked as an industrial designer before [and during] the war. He stayed at the orphanage from the ages of 7 to 13. There were 20 children there, and they were not treated well. His mother was Catholic also, he saw her very rarely.

12:00 His influence came from his studies. He believes that the strictness of the orphanage may have had a positive moral influence on him.

13:50 At the age of 13 he went to a Catholic boarding school.

14:00 Before the war the distinction was never made between Jews and non-Jews. He didn't think about it. He doesn't believe things immediately, and likes to experience them himself. He is independent.

16:00 He thought at first that it was for their wealth that the Germans were acting against the Jews; he didn't know that it was just because they were Jews. There were people they knew that they didn't know were Jews until the Germans came and the Jews needed places to hide.

18:00 He knew a Jewish woman, named Annette, whose family needed to get to Switzerland. He was working in the resistance, and through this, he knew a woman from Geneva. They went to the prefecture, where Jean Boete worked, to try to obtain false documents for Annette. A police officer saw the card and said that it was not her name.

20:20 He knew Annette because she lived near him. She and her family were in hiding for only several months. In September 1943 the Germans occupied France, and the Jews began to fear.

22:00 In March 1944 Annette went into hiding. One of the functions of the resistance group, Maquis, was to help youths to avoid obligatory service in Germany. The interviewer here states that the resistance was anti-German, but that helping Annette was a different kind of act, of kindness.

23:00 The chief of police had to rip up Anette's false identification out of fear of the Gestapo. There were 4-5000 German soldiers in the area, and consequently a hospital and a Gestapo office.

24:20 He gave his identification to Annette's brother-in-law, who went to Switzerland with the assistance of the woman from Geneva. They took a train, then walked to the border where they met a patrol that had links to the Swiss resistance. 15 days later he got his ID card back.

27:00 Switzerland, at one point said that they had too many refugees, and were only going to accept wanted members of resistance organizations. This was an administrative item, for they still allowed refugees.

27:80 He doesn't want to be honored. He has been already, by the legion of Honor

28:70 When Annette asked for help, because he was involved in the resistance, it was not unusual, and he even considered it to be part of the work of the resistance.

29:70 Every little act was risk. Some resistance people didn't help Jews. He said that his help was not because they were Jews: that he would help anyone.

30:30 Most people wanted to enjoy themselves- at the beach etc. He said that he sometimes envied them because of all of his worries. He said that he couldn't be inactive. The Germans didn't belong in France and he wanted them to be out.

32:00 He describes the process of a parachute weapons drop from England and the communications involved in arranging it.

35:00 He still had his job during the war. The militia came to his house at one time, and his mother said he was at work.

36:50 Youths today do not care [about the war] and his children don't listen. He doesn't think much about the war, his life changed so much since then.

37:00 He said 3% of people take risks, and that about 2% were involved in the resistance. He thinks that one of his motivations for the resistance may have been the challenge of saying 'I will not lose'. He had a patriotic-nationalistic education which no longer exists today.

38:90 He couldn't say what the best years of his life were- there are many planes on which this could be judged. He doesn't think he's been unhappy. He thinks that the ages of 15-20 were the most satisfying because he had no worries, he thinks this is true of everyone.

39:50 He was married in 1947.

40:00 What would he say to the children who will read this book? That there is no difference between people, and to accept them as they are. He learned this through his Christian education- never to be against another person.

40:70 There were many Jews in the area, they were only in hiding for a few months. The head of his resistance movement found someone who denounced Jews. This man had said "it's only Jews." The resistance head said to kill the man. Robert shivered because he knew the man. He was taken to another Maquis. When the Germans invaded, he tried to escape and was shot by the Germans.

43:70 He is glad he did what he did. Many shared the spirit but did not act.

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