

-TITLE- CLAUDINE GILAIN
-I_DATE- JULY 7, 1988
-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- FAIR
-IMAGE_QUALITY- GOOD
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

:04 Claudine first saw war when she was nine years old.
She lived near a place where many people were killed during World

:05 War I, 30 km from Monchise (ph) in the east.

:06 Her two older brothers were sent to Tunisia (ph) because of the war.

:07 Her father escaped the army because he didn't want to do service. In his eyes the Alsace-Lorraine (ph) was twenty years German, twenty years French, etc.

:08 He was later captured and put into a concentration camp but, eventually let go.

:09 Her father worked in a big factory which made bricks. In 1917, they returned to Monchise (ph).

:10 The family was not together in Tunisia (ph) where they stayed for two years.

:11 Her two older brothers died, but her little brother (18 months old) which the mother kept, did survive.

(Q:Claudine, when you kept Roger (the Jewish boy that you hid from the Germans during World War II) did he remind you of your brothers?)...Yes, of course.

:12 Roger was seven when he came, Claudine had known Roger's mother. He was very beautiful.

:13 She told only two friends that he was not really her nephew. These two also knew that he was Jewish. These two were Jewish also. Their parents had been deported. She didn't know why it happened. They live in Paris now and one time after the war, they went to see Claudine.

:14 (Q: What were the lessons for moral living that you learned from your mother and father?)

:15 Her mother used to make her do needlework...which was very time consuming.

:16 Her father used to do a lot of strike work because he was in the trade unions, but she didn't know it at the time. Her father was catholic and her mother was very protestant. She wanted for her daughter to join a religious order.

:17 Her mother was very religious...very pious. She used to make biblical teachings (ph).

(Q: Did you want to be like that?)....No.

:18 She wanted to go to Medre Salute (ph) to sell charity.

:19 Her mother didn't want her to go because she would be able to marry there and her mother wanted her to be in a religious order.

:21 (Q:What was your father's occupation?) Her father was a mason. They were middle-class...not very rich.

:22 (Q: Was your mother altruistic?)....Yes.

:23 She cannot remember very well, but once when a women was pregnant, she used to knit for the baby.

:24 Claudine's two brothers were not very religious. Claudine doesn't really practice (religion) much after seeing two World Wars.

:25 This has changed her.

:26 Once her little brother went to see the Pastor and said that he didn't want to do it any more. The Pastor said, "What, you don't believe." He said, "No." The Pastor asked if he told his mother and he said,"No, I am afraid."

:27 Her little brother then asked if the Pastor was going to tell his mother and he said,"No, it would make her too sad." She never knew that he didn't believe. Claudine went to school from the ages of two to twelve until she

:28 was nearly blind because of the measles. Her sight improved by age fifteen.

:30 She met her husband at the age of twenty in Norcit (ph). He worked in the factory. They were married in 1932.

:31 Even then, she conscious of the problems of war. She remembered working with the wounded and seeing the first person killed.

:32 (Q: Was your husband political?)...Yes...left wing...very political. She was not really political before she met him but her father was left-wing also. It was a hard time in 1932.

:33 (Q: When did you first sense what the Germans were doing?). She hated the young Germans early on.

:34 She was really conscious of the Germans even at the age of 10.
(Q: Did you know any Jews when you were growing up?)...No.

:35 There were only Catholics and Protestants in her village.
(Q: When did you first meet the Jews?)...1936 in Paris.
(Q: Why did you go to Paris?) Her husband wanted to.

:36 (Q: Where did you live?) They lived in a Jewish neighborhood. Her cousin found the apartment. She worked very hard.

:37 She worked at home making clothes because of her son who was born in 1935.

(Q: When did you first meet Roger's mother?)

:38 In a park where she used to go with her son in 1936. She also knew Roger's aunt.

:39 Roger's father had been taken prisoner by the Germans in 1939.

(Q: What happened to your husband?)

:42 Claudine's husband was deported in 1940.

:43 He was caught improperly manufacturing German goods in the factory and for political reasons. When he was arrested, Claudine decided to go to the country. In 1941, Claudine's husband was captured for a second time.

:45 After the first camp had been liberated, the Resistance didn't know

:46 what to do with the prisoners, so the Germans were able to quickly recapture them.

(Q: When did Roger come and stay with you?)

:48 In 1941, Roger came to stay with Claudine in the country. Roger's mother told Claudine that he was coming to see her but didn't say for how long.

:49 Soon after Roger came to stay with Claudine, Roger's mother was taken by the Germans (1942).

:50 Claudine heard of her deportation through Roger's aunt.

(Q: Did you try to warn the Jews?)

:51 She did her best, but it was difficult because they were not being taken by the Germans but by the French. She saw many go.

:52 (Q: Why did the French collaborate?) They thought Germany was going to win the war, so they allied themselves with them. Many were also against the left-wing movement in France and therefore wanted to help the Germans.

:53 (Q: How did you feel about having Roger here?) She was always afraid that someone might tell. Fortunately, Roger's mother did not tell the Germans where he was when she was captured. She was also afraid that she might be caught with Roger while he was living with them in the town.

:55 (Q: What made her do it?)...It was normal. Why not. Anyway, you're obliged to be afraid, not only for oneself but for others.

:56 (Q: Besides fear, was it hard to keep another child in the family?)...Not at all. The boys were friends in Paris. It was not a problem. Roger was very nice as a boy.

(Q: How long did Roger stay?) He came at the age of seven and stayed two years until the end of

:57 the war. His mother used to put him outside of Paris at a person's house but couldn't anymore because the person worked.

:58 She sold suites in the market.

(Q: Again, weren't you afraid to take in a Jewish boy?)...No.

:59 She was afraid, but it was normal.

1:00 There was no question in her mind.

(Claudine, tells us a story about Roger.)

1:01 Once she was told by the Jewish family in the town that it was Yom Kippur (ph) and that Jews had to fast on this day. Claudine then told Roger that he could not eat or his parents would not come back. He said, "No, I want to eat," and did just that.

1:02 Rogers always did the contrary to what he was told.

(Q: When Roger went to school was there ever any questions about

1:04 him being Jewish?)...No, he even had a Norman accent....Roger

1:05 was always laughing.

1:06 (Q: Did Gerald (Claudine's son) ever question or resent Roger coming to live with you?)...On the contrary. They were friends in Paris.

1:07 (Q: Did Gerald know that Roger was Jewish?)...Yes, he knew.

1:09 (Q: Did your mother know about Roger?)...Yes. She agreed with what Claudine was doing.

1:11 At the end of the war, when the Americans came, Claudine told Roger that he would be able to see his parents again. Then, she told people that Roger was a little Jewish boy that she hid from the Germans and nobody opened their mouth. She thought it was incredible. They didn't seem to care. Nobody ever talked about it.

1:12 (Q: What does she think they would have done if they knew?)

1:13 She doesn't know. After the war, nobody spoke about it...It never existed.

1:14 One day, a woman did ask her if she was conscious of what she risked. She told her that she and her child could have been deported. Claudine answered, "Yes, I knew it."

1:15 Claudine, herself, was not normal in the town. She was a Protestant in an all-Catholic town. Here Protestants were like Jews.

1:16 The village was very isolated and here Jews were like "people from Mars."

1:18 --(Claudine then tells two stories: one about a Madame Chantelle (ph) and the other about Roger liking planes but not German planes-

1:24 (Q: Did the Germans ever come close enough to the town that you had to worry?)...Yes. There were Germans in the town. They drove by all the time.

1:26 During Normandy (the allied invasion), they came by often and three months before the village was liberated, the Germans were there a lot.

1:26 The last train full of prisoners and Jews left on June 4, 1944. ("D" Day was on June 6 only two days later). Right after Normandy, the family went to stay at a

1:27 farmhouse outside of town.

1:28 (Q: When did Roger go back?)

1:29 In September or October, when she returned to Paris and after his father had been liberated.

(Q: What did it feel like after Roger had left?)

1:30 Soon after he left, she had her second son, Christian. So it was OK. She then moved back to Paris and saw him very often until he went

1:31 to the U.S. when he was 25.

1:32 (Q: When was the last time you saw Roger?)...In 1986.

1:33 (Q: Did his parents show enough appreciation for what you did?)

1:34 She didn't think so, but "then people are what they are."

(Q: - To Christian (Claudine's son who was there) - Did

1:35 you learn anything from what your mother did during the war?)

1:36 He agrees with what she did.

1:37 (Q: - Again to Christian- Do you think you would do the same thing?).....When you are in a situation, you do what is natural.

1:38 Claudine's mother saved a Resistant during the war. This way was important for them.

1:43 (Q: What did you, Claudine, learn from this experience?) She is more and more revolting with all the things that go bad.

1:44 She has not learned a lesson from it because she feels it is all the same story.

(Q: Did you hope when you did this, that the world would be different?)....Yes, fortunately we have no more wars with Germany.....Anyway, the world is not better....Many people have forgotten too much.

1:45 (Q: What would you want to say to children about your experience?)...Not to be wicked toward each other.

1:46 (Q: Will you tell your part Jewish granddaughter what you did?)... I will probably be dead first.

1:47 She doesn't want to tell the other grandchildren because she doesn't want to scare them.

1:48 One of the boys was afraid of what he had found out.

1:50 Claudine feels that the Jewish problem sometimes gets mixed up with world problems. Claudine then said to tell the children not to be racists.

1:51 The racist problem in France now is not Jewish, but Arab.

1:52 "People have a tendency to hate strangers," she says. Claudine

always preferred the Jews to the Catholics.

1:53 She remembers that when she was living in Paris people were

1:54 saying that the Jews were everywhere and in all the work
places.

1:55 (Q: Did you know any Jews that didn't survive the war?)...
...Yes, two nice girls who went to school with Gerald.
.END.