

Long, Arlette de
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One Videocassette

- Abstract:** Arlette de Long (Bergman) was born June 15, 1937, in Brocout, Sarthe, France to the town's only two doctors. Arlette was only two and a half years-old when their town was invaded by the Germans and her father had to go off to fight. They moved to Paris in 1947 and it was there that Arlette found out that her family was Jewish. Although her father started going to the synagogue, she was baptized and attended a Catholic school. She describes her life in their town after the war. After the war, she lived in Paris suburbs until she was 18. In 1962 she travels to the United States, learned English and married a Methodist. She explains that she did not identify with her Jewish heritage until she was much older and had children herself.
- 1:30 Arlette de Long was born June 15, 1937 in Brocout, Sarthe, France, a village of 300 people. Her maiden name was Bergman. Her parents were doctors, and they lived a little better than most families in the village. They had a house with indoor plumbing and a telephone. They were very safe. She was an only child but remembers her maternal grandmother and grandfather lived with them. They were the only Jews in town.
- 2:10 Life changed dramatically in 1940 when Germans invaded France and occupied their village. The village was 30 kilometers from the English Channel. Germans built blockhouses to send V2 bombs to England.
- 3:24 Arlette was only two and a half years old when her father went to fight in 1940. Many of the area villages were evacuated. Her mother took the family out of the village. She remembers being under the table and still has dreams of the earth being on fire. They came back about a month later.
- 5:02 Many parents had a strong sense that being Jewish was unsafe. They erased "Jew" from Russian and Polish passports. The Germans assumed no one was Jewish. But it was hard for villagers not to suspect that they were Jewish because of their name and because they had all come from different places.
- 6:28 Somebody did go to the Germans and denounce them. Father said it was an outrage. Father treated Germans as well as French. Arlette's parents were the only doctors in the village.
- 7:34 Arlette found out she was Jewish when she was ten years old. Her family had moved to Paris and her father went to the synagogue.

- 8:29 Arlette's parents were very private. They denied feelings and just believed you "go on." She had no awareness of how dangerous it was to be Jewish.
- 9:25 Arlette's parents had her baptized. The Priest knew that she was really Jewish. She went to church regularly and went to the Catholic school when she was young. Arlette's parents didn't like the words of songs on the radio.
- 11:10 Relief came when the war was over. Just before the end of the war, a small resistance group in the village had killed some Germans, and Germans wanted to take all the villagers to Germany. However, the priest talked them out of it and the Americans came a few days later.
- 12:30 I don't remember exactly when I was told I was Jewish... I identified with the church. If you are good, God loves you. Jewish religion was not as comforting. Arlette didn't like the synagogue her family went to in Paris. It was cold. Women sat upstairs, and everyone was somber. The Rabbi was small, dark, and bearded. He looked fierce, and I was afraid of him. I never talked to him. I did not like being a Jew. I even married a non-Jew. But I never converted. I was never comfortable in a synagogue.
- 15:03 What happened after the war? It was a tremendous relief. But there was a witch hunt for all the collaborators. She remembered that food was still scarce, but they did not feel deprived.
- She remembers Americans gave many children chewing gum.
- 17:10 Arlette's parents never relaxed. Her mother had bad feelings about the village, even though they went back to living a normal life.
- 18:31 In 1947, Arlette and grandmother went to a suburb of Paris. Her parents came later. We did not keep kosher, but celebrated the major Jewish holidays, especially Yom Kippur. Arlette was still reluctant to go to a synagogue.
- 19:31 She did not know about the Holocaust, nor did she want to know. When Arlette's own daughter was 16 or 17, she wanted to know about the Holocaust and began to read books. She had nightmares. Arlette felt that she owed it to her daughter to find out about the Holocaust.
- 21:27 Arlette went to the Lycée but was the only Jew in a class of 30. She did not experience any anti-Semitism. She was teased by boys, because she had developed breasts.

- 22:35 Arlette joined the girl scouts and went to a priest. Her mother said to tell him that she was Russian Orthodox. The priest said she lied because she could not answer his questions so she joined the Protestant girl scouts.
- 23:45 Arlette lived in Paris suburbs until she was 18. She then went to London for a year. Then she went to America in 1962 on vacation for a year to learn the English language. In America she met an American man whom she married.
- 25:39 Her husband was Methodist. Arlette went with their children to Ethical Culture, but did not like it. She then went to another synagogue and loved the Rabbi but left when he retired.
- 26:51 Arlette joined the Children of Hidden Survivors. Her daughter is very involved with Judaism, and now works with Soviet Jewish refugees in Tucson. Her son does not consider himself Jewish.
- 27:43 Her friend/lover is Jewish and very identified. Through him, Arlette has learned so much about the Holocaust. She feels more connected. She became connected to other Jewish people and no longer thinks of Jews as an abstraction.
- 28:47 Her parents had came to their village in 1935 after they had finished medical school. They were poor and looking for small place to start a practice.
- 30:62 Arlette's parents met in medical school. Her father did not get into medical school in Vienna and came to France. Her mother came from Harbin. She always wanted to be a doctor but did not want to study in China. She came to Paris, learned the language, and went to medical school.
- 31:12 Not much change in their lifestyle. No sign of Hitler's war against Jews in the villages.
- 32:27 Villagers hated Germans and being under occupation. She remembers living next to an old woman who lived alone and had a beautiful garden. The Germans took her house and made her move. A year or two later, Germans made Arlette's family move from their house and live with a spinster. This was difficult. Germans had access to everything they wanted. Villagers felt like they were servants in their own homes. It was humiliating. Villagers called Germans "Bosche" behind their backs.
- Toward the end of the war, an American pilot was shot down and killed when he parachuted into a tree. Villagers cut up the parachute and made

clothes. Arlette always felt guilty wearing a jacket her mother made for her out of the fabric.

From 1940 to June 1945 was not a peaceful time. As war was ending, Germans became more frightening. Everyone felt helpless.

38:42 Arlette thinks of Elie Wiesel and how he said that if people remember about the Holocaust, it will not happen again. Now she thinks about Bosnia and feels that memory does not help.