

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Nicole Long
January 28, 1993
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PREFACE

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NICOLE LONG
January 28, 2003

Q: Good morning, Nicole.

A: Good morning.

Q: Nicole, what was your name at birth?

A: My name at birth was Nicole Jeanne Celina Denier.

Q: A long name!

A: It's really – my name, chosen name from my family is Nicole, Jeanne my Catholic grandmother, Celina my Jewish grandmother, and Denier the name of the father, which is a very pedestrian French name and played a lot in my fate.

Q: Uh-huh, and...

A: And because your identity paper carried your name. If I had been named Levy, my whole fate would have been different. Because you are constantly asked – it seems funny now that Americans think it's such an extraordinary thing to have to have an I.D. You had to show your I.D. all the time in France to get into buildings and so. And there I was: Nicole Denier. Nicole, Nicole Horowitz would have been much different. And if you are Jew those skunks pushed your I.D. – not only showed *juif*, but it was put through.

Q: Each page...

A: No, you have a yellow... It was a sort of a card. But the word *juif* – you could not erase it.

Q: I see.

A: Or cover it up because it was made with spikes. And it cut through the card and you could not hide it. They thought of so many ugly things.

Q: What was the date of your birth?

A: January 27, yesterday, 1921.

Q: So, we just missed your birthday.

A: Yes.

Q: [Laughs] So, we can wish you happy birthday.

A: Thank you. Happy 82nd birthday.

Q: Yes. Tell us a little bit about your, your family.

A: I have two sides of my family. My mother's side was the Jewish side. It was a well-known Jewish family from Avignon. The Jewish popes, popes...? No, the Jewish – yeah, in the 11th century, the Jews from Portugal and Spain came to be protected by the Jewish Pope at Avignon. And all my family comes from that region. And they are well-known; it's Crémieux – C-R-E-M-I-E-U-X, so that there is a village named Crémieux in Avignon, and so...

Q: Now, explain why you say this is a Jewish Pope.

A: Because, at the time, the Pope in Avignon protected the Jews. And they came to live in Avignon. And that means that when the Germans asked about the Jews, you had to prove that you were a French Jew. And the French Jew had to have five generations. And five generations, you have to go way back to cover five generations, but it was easy for my mother because she was a Pope Jew.

Q: And your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was Marcelle and then she took my father's name. Crémieux was the original name of the family. And she became Denier when she married Pierre Denier.

Q: And her first name was Marcelle?

A: Marcelle.

Q: Marcelle?

A: M-A-R...

Q: And her last name? Maiden name?

A: Maiden name?

Q: Yes.

A: Was Monina. M-O-N-I-N-A.

Q: And your father...?

A: My father was a Catholic. They met during the First World War. She was a – you know – bourgeois nurse. And they fell in love and married. And he was an interesting fellow. He wasn't born to be a father. He deserted when I was three months. And my fa... my

brother was only, was only 12 months older, so he was 14 or 15 months. He took off and went to Argentina. And became a great scientist. He has a museum named in his honor in Argentina. But he was a real skunk.

Q: So, he never kept in touch with you?

A: Never! Never wrote a letter, never sent a penny. But his parents took over. Those are my Catholic grandparents. And they were very influential in my life, intellectually.

Q: So let me ask you something, your mother is left with two babies.

A: And no money.

Q: And no money.

A: So, she comes from a powerful family with a lot of money.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That cousin who married Mendes-France is from those other people with castles and what would be now millions. And they supplied her with money.

Q: So she did not work?

A: She did work.

Q: She did work, too?

A: She did work. And she lived with her sister. Her sister lived with us, if you want, and her mother lived with us. So we had a warm family. And it was in a neighborhood near the Luxembourg, which up to this day I like very much. Which my daughter, when she visited it, thought was ridiculously poor. But she didn't realize that at the time I thought it was a little jewel. My mother had great taste and it was a small apartment but extremely sunny and opposite the elementary school where I went. And I had a cozy family...

Q: So you felt secure at the time?

A: Most. And the interesting thing about the Catholic grandparents is that my grandfather never allowed the name of his son pronounced in front of him the moment he left us, never. He... the mother was more tender-hearted and kept in touch. But he never would like to see the letters; he was not interested in ever hearing from that man.

Q: So, did you think that your mother and her mother-in-law spoke about – that her mother-in-law told your mother about what her son was doing? So she – so your mother knew? Or do you think not?

- A: I don't think... It's interesting, when – much later, when I went into her papers, when she died and I went to settle things, I found love letters of Pierre Denier that she had still kept. I don't think his name was ever mentioned in the house of his parents because they felt so shameful, but they certainly took over. They had a house in Brittany, and they spent three months of the year. The whole summer they spent in Brittany with the grandparents.
- Q: So there was no break with the grandparents on the other side?
- A: Oh!
- Q: On the contrary, they were very much involved.
- A: Oh, very much and intellectually. He – my grandfather was for his job but extremely intellectual. He made his money by making up, what you would call, the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. And then once a year, he would go – he never went out; they were very sedentary. But once a year he would get dressed, go out and compete, there was a competition and that made the money for the rest of the year.
- Q: Really?
- A: So his money was made really from crossword puzzles. Either winning the competition – that was a yearly thing – or making them up in the name of the guy who signed for them, for something that would be *Le Monde*, that was a great newspaper of the day. And that meant that he was *encyclopédique*. When he died, there was a fight over who would get his dictionary, because the dictionaries were annotated and it counted a lot. He trained us, he taught us in Latin, in French. He had groups of our little friends come every... once a week to study with him and he was great. I mean, they were just great. And it was very, very modest life. They did not have any hot water. They did not have any running water except in one faucet in the whole house. So you can read those *breaux* (ph) that you see now, people collect them. But for us it was a necessity of life. You had to heat your water and then have them pour it and then you had those big bowls and you wash like that.
- Q: So the difference between your mother's family...
- A: And the other family.
- Q: And the other family was very different financially.
- A: Extraordinary. But from the other side, we got some financial help, but we saw them for the first of January or something, but not...
- Q: But not on a regular basis?
- A: Oh no, it was not at all. Because the caste system is such in France that you live in a different part of the city, you never, never...

Q: So explain this caste system, as you understand it.

A: Well, you have the working class; we had nothing to do with that. We were bourgeois poor, but we had a maid. We always had a maid. It was done that way. And she had what is now the students' quarters in the building where we used to live, because they had the, had the view. It was on the sixth floor. All that floor was maids. And now it's all students and they all fight...

Q: To get that...

A: ...to have the view because it's over the roofs.

Q: So, there's a strict kind of class system that was in place?

A: Yes. And you were not aware of it; it's built in you. You talk differently. I married a man who is that way and I mean, he spends his time watching T.V. and they say "who" when they should say "whom", and he says "whom" aloud. I can hear him from my room because he is incensed. It's built in you, that you speak well, but you wear their discard as clothes – except for shoes; the rich never give their shoes. You can't wear other people's shoes.

Q: Uh-huh, but you can wear other people's...

A: All the rest was discards, all the time. And I remember the time when I begin to wear my own clothes and it was a sensation and that was – I was in my twenties.

Q: But now you said that your grandparents – which grandparents had had the house in Brittany?

A: The poor ones.

Q: The poor ones?

A: But all their money was put in buying land in Brittany. Now, we go back, it's like having a mansion to us, an acre of land on the sea...

Q: Really?

A: ...in Brittany. Because the mansion Constanty (ph) was near Bély (ph). It's mentioned constantly on the news because of it.

Q: Now your, your mother is obviously young when her husband leaves her. Did, did she ever divorce him?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: She did, but she didn't remarry?

A: No, you didn't in those days, a woman did not. And she didn't take lovers either. She really... it destroyed her.

Q: So, she was very much in love with him?

A: I think it was a passion – it makes me feel choked.

Q: Yeah, yeah, hmm.

A: It's interesting because when I got involved with an American, and another one of those love-at-first-sight and fast-move type. It ran in the blood. She was devastated in a way; on the other hand, she saw that I was going to be happy. And she let me go and never regretted it, and I wrote every week and never missed a week. And he wrote, too, so they had two views of our lives. When we were at the University of Chicago, we would write. And they also wrote – both of them – and I still have their letters, wrote every week. So, there is a way to keep in touch. We didn't have phones and so...

Q: Right. So you wrote to the grandparents and you wrote to....?

A: Oh, I have the letters of my grandmother.

Q: You do?

A: We didn't write, but she wrote.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She died when I was 30. You see, they got married much earlier and so they had children early. So, I was lucky to have her 'til I was 30. And I remember in Chicago when they told me very carefully...

Q: That she had gone. Tell me what you remember about your mother. What she was like for you as a mother?

A: She was a roly-poly.

Q: Which means, what, heavy?

A: She was... We called them the "fatties", my mother and aunt. We were not respectful. We were loving, but not respectful. *Ce sont les petites grosses* – "the little fatties".

Q: And you called her that to her face?

A: Oh, sure.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I called her *mamoun*, also. People call me *mamoun* now, too, but they were the two “little fatties”. They were fat, small, but she didn’t look Jewish at all. I had my nose, I was the Jewish one looking, but I had perfect papers. It was a queer mixture.

Q: When you – you were not baptized? Or were you baptized? When you were, when you were a baby?

A: No, because neither of the grandparents – although grandmother had been raised in a convent and him by monks – they were not believers. So, I had a perfectly non-religious childhood. When I was – when the German occupation came, the Jewish issue came to the fore. The day the Americans started their war, seventh of December, 1941. Then the Germans began to force the French Jews, the Jews in France, let’s say, to wear the star, the yellow star. And the people lined up, but I didn’t know my mother was Jewish until then. It was never mentioned; we never went to the temple or to the church. It was completely *laïc*...

Q: So until you were twenty, you didn’t, you didn’t know there was some background of the family? Nobody said...

A: Oh yes, I knew that there was some Jewish background, but it meant nothing.

Q: It meant nothing? Because there was nothing in your life...

A: There was nothing culturally. I had never seen a word of Hebrew until I was in my 50s practically. And it meant nothing to her. And it was strictly separation of church and state, so it was never mentioned. In school, I never heard anything, any mention of even Catholicism, although 90 percent of them _____ Catholic.

Q: Did you celebrate any holidays?

A: Well, Christmas.

Q: Christmas, but as a non-religious holiday.

A: As a non-religious holiday.

Q: But not Easter?

A: Is there, is – there was a chocolate.

Q: Chocolate?

- A: Chocolate eggs.
- Q: Uh-huh.
- A: That's all.
- Q: So you never attended synagogue? You never attended church?
- A: Never attended either. Never set foot in a synagogue.
- Q: Interesting.
- A: And then the Germans came.
- Q: Okay let's talk a little bit more. Your mother is a "fattie" you say, she's "roly-poly". But what is her personality like? She's a warm person? She's an intelligent person?
- A: [Sighs] You have to go back, way back. That would be 19th century. She was from Marseilles, from Avignon. She was so prosperous that the apartment house where she lived in is still there, standing up at an apartment house; that means something. It's a beautiful, stone, powerful apartment house. She never – she was sad, she was destroyed.
- Q: Because of the father leaving...
- A: She was destroyed for some reason. I never saw my mother but somewhat sad. My aunt was the joy of our childhood.
- Q: Her sister?
- A: Yes, she was playful. But I had a brother; I had a brother who was only 11 months older. We played and played and played. And we were happy. We managed to – they were extremely loving. I found my mother, her sadness was kind of frightening, but she was so loving that we didn't...
- Q: And what was your aunt's name that lived with you? Her sister?
- A: Tante Yvonne.
- Q: Tante...?
- A: Tante Yvonne. Tante Yvonne – Tantine.
- Q: Tantine?
- A: Tantine. Mamoun and Tantine. And we... and she was married to a Monteux. You know Pierre Monteux?

Q: Yes.

A: It was his son or whatever. So, she married well, and he... for... and he left suddenly and disappeared from, from all of our lives.

Q: Another one?

A: Another one. So, it was really a family of divorce.

Q: Oh, my.

A: It isn't built in the genes.

Q: No it's not [laughs]. And were you close to your brother?

A: We lived in twin beds, in the same room. We played together. He resented me when I began to be 10 or 11. Because, that was maybe genetic, I was my size at 10. I grew up faster and there was one or two years there that he was smaller and he deeply resented that. But then later we became friends again.

Q: Okay.

A: When... when I began to be an excellent student and go to those highly competitive oral exams that the French torture the young with, he came to see me perform, bringing his best friend who is still one of our closest friends – he lives in France. And so that showed me that he loved me in a clumsy way, but he did. And then, he and my husband got along very well and we remained friends through the rest of his life and he wrote regularly, also – we corresponded. And when he died you, you could see that, you would say that we were the closest thing. When he came to Cleveland to have his arteries bypassed, he asked me to come with him. Which was quite a thing to ask because, by that time, I was teaching college. I had to take the 11 days that it took him to stay in Cleveland. And I was friendly with his – to, to this day I am friendly with his kids. Now adults, they come and visit us and stay with us at the beach. We rent the biggest possible house and all the nephews from France come. I'm very family-inclined. I think it's part of the happiness of life.

Q: And obviously you had a very close set of relationships, even from the...

A: Yes, yes and money had nothing to do with it. Which is a pleasure.

Q: Can I assume that you loved school, or not?

A: I adored school and I was recognized, and they had things – they had prize at the time, you know the *prix d'excellence*, prize of excellence, and I made a point of getting. But

what I was more pleased with is that they had the *prix de bonne camaraderie*. The good chum of the year and I always got that one.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: That's lovely. What a nice idea.

A: I was – and I am – a good chum and I still have friends from childhood. We write regularly and, and their children are close friend. I have a letter, I got a letter yesterday from the daughter of my closest friend. She's extremely close to us.

Q: Was it wonderful to grow up in Paris as a child?

A: Yes, although we had no money, so we did not go to... I went once in my life to a restaurant, in my life, in my childhood, when I was 12. I remember it and it was a cafeteria. But to this day, I remember it as a day of extraordinary thing. We – things that are normal for Americans now were not in existence. It didn't matter. I don't think my friends went to restaurants, either.

Q: And who cooked in the house? Did your mother cook?

A: We had a maid.

Q: You had a maid who cooked?

A: I never entered the kitchen until I was 18.

Q: You never entered the kitchen?

A: I remember that because it was a sentence in my biography, that my husband remembered. I never entered the kitchen.

Q: Isn't that extraordinary? It seems extraordinary, doesn't it?

A: For an American, but...

Q: So, was she a good cook?

A: In my grandmother, you remember, I said my...

Q: Yeah, yeah

A: ...was a good cook, yeah. My mother was a good cook and I am a good cook. But I – Jew – that may be genetic, or it may be whatever, it could be taste.

Q: So, if you had a maid who cooked, did your grandmother cook in the house, too? And... you're talking about your father's mother?

A: No, no, no, no, no, I'm talking about the one who lived with us.

Q: Okay, so she also went, but she went into the kitchen then?

A: Oh she did. Maybe the others did. I just didn't.

Q: You just didn't?

A: No.

Q: Did you have a favorite food as a kid?

A: Uh-uh.

Q: No?

A: It didn't matter too much.

Q: It didn't matter to you?

A: Nah, I don't remember food.

Q: Despite of the fact that France is so known for extraordinary...

A: And I went once to a cafeteria and I thought it was a great celebration. No, I don't.

Q: Did you go to museums as a kid? Or were they not there, maybe not?

A: I probably did. No, I wasn't very... I had an uncle, my brother... my husband had an uncle who was a painter. So, I am in some of his paintings and I was in some museum. And he gave us some paintings. And some paintings of his are still in Paris museums.

Q: You don't mean your husband's brother?

A: No, I mean my father's brother...

Q: Brother, is a painter?

A: Yes. And he was a stay-at-home. My grandmother had two children, one who stayed at home and never left the house practically, and the other one who took to... went to, to Argentina. And they were also only 18 months apart. Like night and day.

Q: And this is to skip time, but did you ever make contact with your father or did your father ever try to make contact...?

A: Ah, that is an interesting thing. When I was 60...

Q: 60?

A: When I was 60, my son in town called me one day and said, "I have Jeannette" – my grandmother was named Jeanne, remember? – "I have Jeannette on the phone." And I said, "And who on earth is Jeannette?" At that point I was in – directing Continuing Education for the women in the college. And I was at my desk, surrounded by secretaries and "Who on earth is Jeannette?" And he said, "Your sister." I didn't know I had a sister. And so he put Jeannette on the phone and Jeannette was in town. She was researching her family. And to this day, we are very close. We went to Argentina; she had the six children that I would have loved to have. And when we met that evening, when she came to Washington to see us, we went to a restaurant and the children said, "That we have to see, the two sisters." I was 60, she was 40. We were the same person. We laugh at the same thing, we adore each other. If she lived next door, I would talk about my sister as the lady in the house here talks about her sister.

Q: So he remarried.

A: Well, six times.

Q: Six times?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. So, he moved around a lot.

A: Moved around a lot. I recently got, got something, yeah. I mean, he was really a woman chaser. Great charm, great gifts. But my sister is quite a thing. Yes, I have that half-sister. I never see her because... but we sent her money at the time when Argentina was in trouble. She's delightful, married, six beautiful children.

Q: Very interesting. Did you go to the movies as a kid?

A: Yeah.

Q: Ah-huh.

A: My grandmother, the one we lived with, loved movies, and at the time you paid according to the quality of the seats. So we were poor, so were always sitting in front. But every Thursday afternoon, she took us to the movies.

Q: And did you have favorites? Did you see American movies?

A: You have American movies in the 30s in Paris?

Q: I don't know, they were – they were in Poland, but not in Paris?

A: No, no, they were... maybe on the Champs Elysées, but not in my neighborhood. But I saw the old French movies and some them are excellent. And it was completely... There were no rules of age, you know. I must have seen extraordinary, risky things and I never... To the innocent, everything is innocent.

Q: That's true, so every single Thursday with your grandmother?

A: Yes, that was the...

Q: So, it was very special.

A: And every Sunday, we went to the Catholic grandparents' and we had a big dinner. It was a feast, and they played with us. One funny thing my grandfather had is that he played at our level. So he played checkers, chess. We played games. There was a game where you throw dice, whatever.

Q: So, in addition to teaching you languages...

A: All, all afternoon we played games. And they were surrounded by great books. They had first edition, all the Oscar Wilde in first edition. They were collecting first editions. I mean, they were not collecting, but they bought the books. So, it was a very, very bookish, intellectual household, completely full.

Q: We are going to have to stop the tape now.

A: You are getting tired? [Laughs]

Q: No, no, no, we just have to change the tape. I'm not getting... [Laughs]

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

A: Then the war came.

Q: Nicole, when you were growing up were you conscious politically of what was going on? Was there talk in the family or what it – were you more intellectually...

A: I was conscious and I liked it, I liked the political life. I liked the fact that my grandfather would, was... left, as he got older. And we were for the worker movement, whatever it was, not communist but let's say center-left. And we were somewhat left, more left, I mean, don't forget that there were newspapers in that household all the time. So, we followed the political life very much so. And then it continued and still to this day, I'm very conscious of political things and...

Q: So, when Hitler takes over in Germany, in January of '33.

A: I was...twelve.

Q: You were twelve?

A: Twelve. The French were blissfully wanting to be unaware. Remember, there was a movement to try to appease, to do as if nothing was happening. So, we went to send people visiting and they came back saying, "Don't worry, don't worry, it won't happen." And we felt insulated, and when it came, it came only because the Americans entered the war. The Germans invaded France and France completely capitulated and it was shameful and I was very aware of that. But, as I mention in passing, the French protected their thoroughbreds, and so they sent to unoccupied France. And I had a scholarship that paid not only my mother for, for my upkeep, it paid for books for me. So, whenever I wanted to buy books, the government would pay. And during the war they kept feeding us money, because of my continuing to be such a good student.

Q: Okay, let's go back a little bit. So, so prior to...

A: Unaware.

Q: ...the Germans taking...

A: Unaware.

Q: You're unaware. But when refugees begin to come into France and certainly at first...

A: Not in our milieu.

Q: Not in your milieu? So you didn't know this...

- A: They didn't move into that neighborhood at all. Not any more than they would move into Bethesda.
- Q: So you're not conscious of this? You're not feeling this?
- A: No, no, no.
- Q: So, it's '36, it's '37, '38...
- A: No, happy in high school and working very hard. Okay, yes, I began to be aware of them in '40 when France fell.
- Q: But what about '39?
- A: '39, I was, again, I had, I had my vacation paid by the government in a youth hostel in Verdun. And I visited the German battlefields and the German cemeteries. And I made a German friend.
- Q: Who was a pianist, yes?
- A: Yes, and he remained a friend until he died, and...
- Q: Now this is, you are talking with him and visiting these World War I...
- A: Yes, and he is a German...delight. And that, I think, helped me through life, not ever generalizing about Germans because I knew that Hans Mattern existed in Kaiserslautern and if maybe there was one, there was more than one.
- Q: And his name is Hans?
- A: Hans Mattern. M-A-T-T-E-R-N.
- Q: And he was a concert pianist?
- A: And he was a concert pianist and I still have his letters at home. And we corresponded, and he came! When Germans invaded and my mother started having to wear the star, Hans announced that as a German he was playing for them in the army. He came to visit and he came to visit Jews, a German in uniform coming to visit Jews! And he did, he never changed.
- Q: So, you are, in 1939, under... you're outside of Paris.
- A: Paris. And we were very worried because my mother and aunt were government employees and we were worried for them, but...
- Q: And what were your mother and your aunt doing?

A: They were working for the government.

Q: As... Doing what? As secretaries, or...?

A: No, more than that, but they were not very high level. You know, at that time, women in that milieu didn't study very hard. So, I don't think that their jobs were very important at all.

Q: Was there worry that the war would turn west? Here, Hitler had gone east and Austria was taken and Czechoslovakia and now Poland.

A: We didn't give it a thought.

Q: You didn't give it a thought?

A: No.

Q: Nothing? Was your brother concerned about being taken in the army at this point?

A: And my brother turned 20 in 1940. He was born in '20. And he was a medical student already, extremely good student himself. We were both on heavy, heavy scholarships. Our parents received money every month because we were such good students. And if we had not kept our grade up...

Q: You would have lost it.

A: We would have lost the scholarship. Which means that my mother would have practically lost her way of life. So, we were always studying hard. And he left Paris walking and he walked to, to the Pyrenees. At some point, the Germans were before him – he met a German on a bridge, stopped him and had pity on him because he was 20 years and was wearing a brand new uniform. And he said, "Hurry up, or else I'll make you a prisoner." And then he went all the way to the Pyrenees and he stayed in the provinces during the rest of the war years. He never came back Paris during the war years.

Q: Uh-huh, this is obviously before the occupation that he left.

A: No, in '40, they did occupy France.

Q: Right. They come in, in...

A: '40, French, French lost in, in 1940, the spring. The Germans just ran over them.

Q: But that, was that a shock to you? That, that France was going to be attacked? I mean there must have been some build up between '39 and '40.

- A: I was studying so hard, you know. Those were the studies I don't even – I have good students among my grandchildren, I don't see the same intensity of the... competitive study. I was in my books up to here, and that was, I was specializing in Ancient Greek, so I was _____ and that was when the Germans invaded France.
- Q: So explain something to me. You were in high school.
- A: Yes.
- Q: And that's a little bit different than the high school here, you're a bit older...
- A: Way above level. Let's say that at the time, definitely the graduating class would be junior college level here. I have checked it since, since I was teaching college all through my adult life here. And so we were really advanced and so during the war years, and we talk 21 – when I was 21, I was studying for what you would call a master's. But I was studying independently, although I had been – but fate was very tied with my grades. Because I had been accepted at *École Normale Supérieure*, which would be like the Radcliffe, the chaplain was sensitive to the fact that the Germans were working against the Jews, and gave me the baptism certificate that saved both my life and the life of my mother. So, from then on, I had a baptism certificate but I was never baptized.
- Q: And the baptism certificate was dated when? Way back...
- A: Way, way back? Sure, it was a perfect piece given by – practically given by a chaplain. It was not made by him because it would have been suspicious. He wrote to somebody in the Loire Valley, in a little village that guaranteed that at age 3, I had been 3 months, I had been baptized in that village. It was new in the church, it was very complex. And I had my baptism certificate, which was the life of the whole family in the future.
- Q: Yet you didn't ask for this. It was, it was...
- A: The chaplain...
- Q: Suggested that this was a good idea.
- A: Yes. That it was, it was going to be needed.
- Q: Did you feel vulnerable?
- A: No, I felt blissfully out of it. Maybe because my roly-polies were optimist and I definitely was an optimist – it pays in my life to have been an optimist, to this day.
- Q: I'm going to ask you a little bit about the money that you got because you were such a good student. This was like a stipend?
- A: It was a real salary.

Q: It was a real salary?

A: It was a real salary that you could live on.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, I mean they really, to this day, pushed for the people that they wanted to save. And there were laws that they created to protect people like me – were created with Petain, you see, Petain and Laval, was where those people protected their people. They, they sacrificed in a disheartening way. At that point, I began to be disheartened about it. But that would be '41, '42. The Petain Law – Petain took the second half of France, you remember Vichy and collaborators. And the Vichy laws are the laws under which I came, protected people like myself. As against the Poles, that were refugees, the Polish, the Hungarian, the names that you see in the book you can notice, for years, there is not one French name.

Q: If I'm correct, a few days before the occupation of Paris, didn't you take a train to the south? As I understand it, your mother asked you to leave? Do you remember this? There were a lot of people leaving.

A: It was... yes, but she was... and the Germans didn't appreciate it, she was a devoted government employee. She stayed at her job.

Q: So she did not leave?

A: No, she didn't—and also she was an optimist I don't think she saw, that, that was... In fact, to the very end, she was having, ready for the deportation, a little bag, a small black bag with a chamber pot in it. She thought it was going to be a working camp. And that... she may have problem going to the toilet but that would be all and that she would survive; otherwise, she would not. When they came to pick us up, she still had that.

Q: Why did she ask you to leave?

A: Ah, the children were different.

Q: So, she was worry about you as a child?

A: Yes, as a, she was a very, very worried mother. And that train was full of children and women. There wasn't one single man on that train that went to southern France. That was in '39, right?

Q: I don't, I don't know. I think it was...

A: Or '40.

- Q: I think it was '40 because Paris fell on June 14th and this was a few days before.
- A: Yes, right, right, yes.
- Q: So did you have questions? "Why am I leaving and you're not leaving. I have a baptism certificate and you're a Jew?"
- A: No, no, no I was not thinking of the Jewish issue at all.
- Q: Nothing?
- A: No, the Jewish issue did not come up until... '40?
- Q: Until later.
- A: Until '40 December '41. Then you had to register as Jews.
- Q: But then why is she asking you to leave, do you think? I know that thousands of people are going south.
- A: To protect, to protect me. I don't know what against.
- Q: From the war?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Do you think, from the war?
- A: From the possibility of the bomb or whatever happened.
- Q: Then you get stuck?
- A: Yeah, and I learn that eleven, that's the longest line. Nobody has lined up that long. Eleven hours to come back!
- Q: But this is after a couple months? You're away for a couple of months.
- A: Yeah, right.
- Q: And where are you for these couple of months?
- A: I was at the house of a friend.
- Q: So, you got off the train? This, this was an intentional place that you were staying?
- A: Yeah, in Limoges.

Q: In Limoges?

A: Central France, God forsaken city, and I stayed there for a month or two and then lined up for eleven hours in order to get a ticket back to Paris.

Q: So, then, okay, so now, why do you go back?

A: Because my mother was there.

Q: And did she say to you that it's okay? You were writing to each other, and she said, she said that it was okay to come and you said "that's enough already".

A: I forgot...

Q: You forgot.

A: I remember the line up, I remember the train.

Q: Do you remember German soldiers?

A: I remember the first German soldier. My aunt was the funny roly-poly, so saw the first German soldier. And she came back to the house to say – somebody saw a German soldier and said, "I have seen a German soldier." And my aunt said, "It must be English, it must be British." She never understood the war; she never understood what was going on. But it was a blessing. I remember the first one I saw. And they said... You know what they did? They sent smashingly good-looking soldiers for the first wave. Boy, were they handsome, and they behaved perfectly. The French, you know, touched you, the Americans played around. The Germans never touched a woman. They were impeccable...bastards. Impeccable. Never, never. They would have been killed if they had done anything wrong in their behavior. Perfectly handsome, awful bastards.

Q: And do you remember seeing a German in Limoges or do you remember in Paris when you came back?

A: Oh, no, no, no. It was in Paris.

Q: Was it shocking to come back to Paris occupied?

A: It was a pleasure to see my mother again.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, the occupation, I took... You took... When... There was a funny rule: you didn't look at them. What arms do you have when you have no arms, while you are good-looking, 21-year-old, and you never, never looked at the German in the face. That's the

way. You look at their belly button where they have the sign saying “God Meet Us” (ph). That’s what you look at. You never laugh, you never... but you never even look at them. They do not exist. So, that was the game. I mean there were many games that were played like that. I never looked one in the eye, I saw, I saw they were there.

Q: And that was as a way of ...

A: Of resistance.

Q: Of resistance?

A: It must have been... disheartening. There were many things that must have disheartening. You can dishearten somebody just by being very passive, “You don’t exist, I see through you.”

Q: Were you afraid?

A: I was not.

Q: No?

A: No. We believed... they never, never were brutal or friendly or anything. Don’t forget, that was their rules. Impeccable.

Q: Do you think this was true all over?

A: Paris.

Q: In Paris?

A: And, as a typical French... Except for Paris, there is no French.

Q: [Laughs] You think that.

A: Yes, to this day, I still feel that way. There is a culture – You asked me if I went to the theater. I went to the premiere because, for the premiere, I had free tickets. So, if there was a play in Paris, I was at the premiere, the perfect orchestra seats. That was really perfect.

Q: Can you explain what the premiere is?

A: The first show.

Q: The first show?

A: Yeah, when, the show opens, at the opening hours. I had some tickets. So we had only the journalists and some, some people had those tickets in the best seat.

Q: Did you understand how privileged you were?

A: I was proud, I was proud. I was working terribly hard for it. I remember then, I remember being told you had only one room that you could barely heat. So that was the dining room for the French. They had no kitchen practically and that was the maid. The dining room and the dining room table was where you worked, so I remember working with my brother at the dining room table. We never, never, never stopped before midnight. Never. We were... and we never interrupted each other, either. He had his books and I had my books. You know, we were... and that was a way of life.

Q: And did you discuss your work with your mother?

A: No.

Q: No, no, that wasn't what it was, but you did with your grandfather?

A: Yes, but that was earlier. Oh yes, he, he trained us. He, he would, he would give us little things to translate. Yes, yes.

Q: So, when the occupation begins, you're going to school and you remain in school. You, you, your life does not radically change until later.

A: Until '41, the Americans entered the war. We were plenty in, in anticipation of – we knew they were going to be the saviors. But it started elsewhere, but it didn't matter. The 7th of December, 1941, you did enter to the war. And you were to come eventually. Much later, but you did eventually come, and at that point, the Germans pounced on the Jews. And requested the star. They requested that you register if you were a Jew, and that you wear a star. And that is where the lined up at the *mairie*, where I was later to be married. You lined up as a Jew and that's where the Dashund (ph), who was a big philosopher, already in Switzerland completely safe, came back to register as a Jew. People were proud to be Jewish and didn't realize what it was going to entail. You just didn't deny the fact that you were Jewish, "Damn it, yes I am!"

Q: But now you had a baptism certificate.

A: No, I went with my mother to line up, my mother lined up.

Q: Yes, I understand that. But you didn't, you were not lining up...

A: I was lining to be with her because I was afraid what was going to be... I was afraid that she might be attacked in the street, who knows? I, I, I began to sense danger, but for her, not for me. I was in no way in danger. Although I... we always joked that I, I really had

the Jewish nose. If the Germans were any more intelligent, they should have been after me, not after my mother.

Q: And did it seem, I mean, you'll have to pardon me for, for raising a question like this but, your mother is Jewish.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: So, you, of course, are born of your mother, even though you have a certificate that says you are baptized; nevertheless, your mother remains a Jewish mother. Is that of no significance under the circumstances?

A: I had no idea what being Jewish meant.

Q: Right. So, for you it had no...

A: No significance. A sense of danger for her, definitely, very, very broad-based, you know. Intangible, but there. She was... and that star was very ugly.

Q: Do you ever say to your mother, "Let me try to get you papers; you don't look Jewish"? No, she doesn't ask?

A: There was little that was said and intuitively that I heard others say, "Why didn't they resist?" And you reach a point where you are so deep in the hole that you don't resist. Nobody is going to resist. It was, it was an enormous wave that was engulfing Europe. There was nothing you could do.

Q: [Quietly] What do you see in your head now?

A: Hmm?

Q: What, what are you seeing in your head now?

A: I see...

Q: I can see that you see something.

A: Yeah, I see the lining up.

Q: And that really upset you?

A: Mm-hmm. I don't know what I would... I mean, you, you wouldn't tell them anything now because it's so far away. But I understand deeply why they didn't revolt. It was too big to resist.

Q: But you feel the pain of seeing that line now.

- A: Oh, yeah. But now I have only American enthusiasm behind me, you know. I am not... But...
- Q: When people were lining up in, after December '41.
- A: Then they were given, then they were given a piece of cloth. And it was sadistic – you had to cut up your own star; you had to sew up your own star. It wasn't a star; they didn't give you a star. They give you a big piece of cloth with stars on it. And you cut it up and you cut up around the star and you had to carefully sew so that it looked only like a star. It was sadism.
- Q: And you could have them put on your...
- A: It had to be put on the left-hand side, outside at all moments. If you were in your pajamas and going out, it had to be on your pajamas. If you were outside on the street, the moment you were outside on the street, you had to have the sign of your Jewish denomination, beginning at age six.
- Q: And what... I understand that you were not either feeling Jewish or understanding what it meant to be Jewish, but you saw Jewish people including your mother and your aunt...
- A: Mm-hmm.
- Q: ...your grandmother.
- A: My grandmother by that time was... She died in '38.
- Q: So, you see Jewish people wearing stars...
- A: It doesn't make me feel Jewish.
- Q: No, but were you angry? Were you upset? Did you think, "What are they, why are they doing this to these people?"
- A: No.
- Q: No? Was your mother aggravated--... angry or fearful because she was wearing a star?
- A: No.
- Q: Was she proud of it?
- A: No.
- Q: No. This was just what happened?

- A: It was just really the reality of the day. Maybe it's survival instinct. But she was not going to deny it, although it meant religiously nothing.
- Q: So, something in her was...proud?
- A: Proud.
- Q: Proud, but of what, you're not sure.
- A: No, because they were not sure either, to this day, what is it that it meant by being Jewish. According to that, in fact, my granddaughter who lives in McLain (ph) coming from the women is Jewish.
- Q: What do you hear... oh, I think I'm gonna to stop. This is the question I'm going to ask you as we start with, after we change the tape. What did you start hearing about what was happening on the eastern front?
- A: Never.
- Q: Never?
- A: Never. As I tell you, if my mother had learned that there were extermination camps, she would have not kept her little chamber pot ready for deportation.
- Q: She would have?
- A: Not! Would not!
- Q: Not.
- A: Because it wasn't... If we had known that we were going to be stripped bare before we even hit the train... It was blissful ignorance. Until the end of the war we didn't know, until saw the news of the liberation of the camp, we did not know about the extent. We did not see those cadavers piled on top of each other, not until '45.
- Q: Okay we have to change the tape now. So, let's stop the tape?

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: When your mother lined up, when the, when the Jews were lining up, you remember this as 1941, not 1942? And is registration... that they were registering the same time they were getting the Jewish star, as far as you remember?

A: Yes. The two actually went together. Then there was a period of time my brother and I were really worried for her and that started when she began wearing the star. So, we escort her. That's the time they begin to have laws – in the subway there were no cars left, as I told you. And you had to take the... and the Germans had reserved for themselves the first class. So, the one little way, one of the little ways the French resisted was that nobody went in the first class. And the Jews were forced to go in the last train. And so the word was in Paris that everybody had to go in the last train. It was a sort of an extraordinary joke, because you couldn't get into the Jewish trains. And this is where I have my little quote about my mother and the French anti-Semite. I escorted her very often because I was afraid for her. So, I was once in the train with her, and we were in the last train, and she came in the train, push shoving and there was, of course, no sitting place free, until a very tall gentleman, very *distingué*, de Gaulle-type, you know – very strange to be that tall but very *distingué*. And he got up all his height, bowed to her very low and gave her his seat and said to her, and I remember that was my war quote: "Ah, Madame, when are we going to be allowed to be *anti-sémite* again?" [Pauses] I love that.

Q: What did you think when he said that?

A: I thought it was true. That's the way they were, when we were caught finally after – but that's – I am going ahead of myself. When we were caught, the French came to arrest us. Finally, they caught up with me and then they came – well, it was morning, in the early morning hours (ph), I was out and the French, the French policeman came to our arrest, not the Germans. The French were doing the dirty work.

Q: But when you went... when this man said this...

A: Yes.

Q: So, the French are going into the last car not because they care about the Jews, but because they hate the Germans.

A: Probably.

Q: So, it wasn't to necessarily help the Jews at all.

A: It was not allowed to them, mentally, morally, patriotically. It is not the moment where they can even contemplate being anti-Semitic, because the Germans are anti-Semitic. It had nothing to do with the Jews, probably. It hadn't much to do with my mother; she laughed, and took the seat.

Q: She laughed at them?

A: Yeah, she had a sense of humor. And she took his seat.

Q: Were you anti-Semitic, do you think, in some way?

A: I've been accused of it by an American friend – that was much, much later. I don't think so. If, by helping people, you feel superior, then maybe that was certainly the case. But I certainly didn't feel superior to my mother.

Q: I didn't, I didn't mean that as disrespectful. I meant that, given what you said about the French, and you were brought up in France as a secular person.

A: No, oh no, oh no, no.

Q: So, you would not have identified with what this guy was saying?

A: Oh, no, no, no, no. No, but I knew that "So be it", that's the way, at that point, the French were and you better take it. But it was putting it into words – and beautifully.

Q: Yes.

A: But it wasn't allowed then. I mean, the French, as I said, when they finally caught us and then let us go, again, because of my baptism certificate... The French were overwhelmed with what they were doing with us at that point. They were even in Paris, and the beginning of the deportation was already terribly ugly.

Q: But let's stick with '41 for a moment.

A: Yes, yes. Mm-hmm.

Q: '41, you... you remain living with your mother during '41?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: And your aunt?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: And your brother, or he...?

A: No, my mother... My brother was married, married very early and moved into an apartment. He married a Catholic and so he was completely out of any problem because he was out of the circuit, you see. They couldn't trace him.

Q: Really, why couldn't they trace him? Didn't they...?

- A: Well, Germans were both extremely organized and completely disorganized. They were concentrating, but they were sort of single-minded, you know, they had their eye on this one. They weren't going to go to somebody else in the family who was married to somebody from a long line of Catholic. That would be too complicated, no, please.
- Q: But he was in Paris.
- A: Yes.
- Q: And he was studying...
- A: And practically every day he came to see if we were still alive. There was a mixture of realism, worry and completely aberrant behavior. Everyday he came to see if they were still around, rather than tell them to move out. But that's the way it is. You asked me how it was and that's the way it is.
- Q: Did you have a phone?
- A: Nah.
- Q: No phone? So if you...
- A: Ah, wait a minute we were – no, no, I don't – I remember, I remember when the phone was installed. I see myself in front of the phone, but I can't place it, but it... I spent my youth without a phone definitely.
- Q: But it must have been somewhat dangerous for your brother to be coming to find out if you were there?
- A: Yes, that's what I said. But it was aberrant.
- Q: So, you're both... you're living at the same... almost side by side with at least two emotions. One is you're worried about what will happen to your mother and your aunt.
- A: Yeah, but it didn't take much of my life.
- Q: But it didn't take much of your life?
- A: No, completely oblivious and they were, too! I think completely unknowing of the extent of the horror of the camp. _____. Put that in a big box because that was what kept us going was the fact that we didn't realize the extent of it.
- Q: Do you hear rumors?
- A: There were no rumors in Paris.

Q: No rumors...

A: No rumors in Paris. My mother was working with the Jews with the U.G.I.F. – that's the French association of the Jews. She had a friend that was with her when she lost her job with the government because they were Jewish, at the same time her job went. So, she bumped into the Jews and worked with them. And then that's the way she got the dates when the Germans were going to take, to take the kids. It was the Jews who gave the information.

Q: So she, she lost her job because there are now rules against Jews holding certain kinds of jobs, right?

A: No, the Jews were bounced out of all administrative jobs.

Q: In the, in the government?

A: In the government, that's it, lost her job.

Q: Yeah. Okay. So then she gets this other job...

A: So, she gets the job working with a Jewish agency in Paris.

Q: And what are you doing besides school? Are you, do you get involved...

A: Dating.

Q: You're dating? You started dating young?

A: I was, it was...very *chaste*, but very liberating. They were, don't forget also... I don't know if I was already dating because there were no men. They were either prisoners or they were in hiding or they were in the Resistance in the fields somewhere outside of Paris. I wasn't going to... Who was there, who was there to date? Anybody, anybody between the age of 20 and 25, there was none living or they were sick. Prisoners, killed, sick, Germans prisoners of war, or else there was nobody. I mean, there was a few, but very few. Of course, I dated, but at the Sorbonne, mildly. But that's the other part of the Resistance I got involved in.

Q: At the Sorbonne?

A: At the Sorbonne, that was delivery arms. It had nothing to do with the children of the Jews.

Q: So did, did you do that first, or at the same time? At...

A: It was the same time...approximately.

Q: Two different groups for whom you were working?

A: The... The Resistance, it was extremely... First, it was very romantic – the only thing you knew, you had somebody that hired you, and you depended on somebody above you. And you only knew – you only knew of that person was that the name he went by was not his name. I was Michelle during the Resistance. Nobody knew where I lived, who I was. You met in subways. You had to know nothing because of the torture. You had no information to give. I had no idea who the guy was; it was very, very seclusive (ph). I had no idea where he lived; I have not seen him ever. But he gave me orders and I filled out the orders.

Q: But how did it start? I mean, you were going to school...

A: I met a guy at the Sorbonne. He was also a student. He was slightly older and he was involved. And I had a teacher, a history teacher, who was later, much later, the witness at my wedding. He was teaching at what would be the Radcliffe of the time and he was a big... He was a min... He was in the Cabinet, in fact. Minister... he was the Secretary or the Minister of Information, or whatever. And his son put me in touch with that guy and that guy would give me the orders. But he knew nothing about me and I know nothing to this day about him either.

Q: But he must have known enough to trust you.

A: Because he knew where I came from. In other words, that teacher and his son had recommended me as somebody solid. And there was also an element of that you had to, to risk.

Q: And were you at all hesitant when you were approached...

A: Oh, I loved it.

Q: You loved it?

A: Oh, it was funny.

Q: Why?

A: Wasn't it? I mean carrying, carrying arms.

Q: And how, how would you do that, underneath your skirt? Or in a bag?

A: In a bag.

Q: In a bag?

- A: It wasn't... You know, at that time, they were not huge things; they were just little pistols.
- Q: And so, where would you get the pistols, in the subway or something? Did someone pass you one?
- A: Well, most of the meetings were in the subway, because everybody was in the subway. To this day, they are still in the subway.
- Q: So, how would you know? You're told to go to the subway.
- A: Oh, you had to wear clothes – You had to wear your, your right-hand label is going to be this way or you are going to wear – a flower, of course, or some sign, by which you would be recognized. And the only thing you knew, that you would meet that person once and never again. And his name was not his name, and if you fell in love with him, too bad for you, because you were never going to have an appointment with that one again. Very, very stimulating.
- Q: So, you would meet this person, usually a boy, a man.
- A: Always a boy.
- Q: Always a boy.
- A: Oh, I know, one thing, also. Very French, and very... something that the Germans never understood: You would meet a boy and you knew that he was simpatico because he was involved the same cause as you were – and if the Germans were around, then you would huddle.
- Q: As if you were kissing, as if you were lovers?
- A: That's right, in a corner of the *porte-cochère*, and the man always protecting you. The man always with his broad back, so that if anything happened he was going to be hurt and you were not going to be hurt. It was just delightful. And never again. Once or twice, I would have given something to meet those guys again. But never again, it was never twice the same.
- Q: So, these were very passionate moments and very exciting?
- A: They, they were exciting moments and they didn't last.
- Q: Okay.
- A: But to this day, I remember them.
- Q: So explain... I see that – that you remember.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: Explain why you were boy and girl together. And who would be carrying...

A: Because then, then it was less, less dangerous. Then, the Germans were fooled. They really thought they were witnessing a love affair. And who would dare interrupt a boy and a girl, twenty-one or -two, kissing in the corner of a door? Not a German, no, they were too well behaved, no, no, no.

Q: And who would carry the bag with the arms in it? Would you, a girl?

A: Well, at that... probably, at that point, I had passed it on...to the man.

Q: And how long would you be walking?

A: Oh...

Q: Do you think...a half hour or an hour or what?

A: Yeah, one hour. All through Paris... not quite all through Paris. We really stayed around the Latin Quarter. I was very much a student, my group was.

Q: And would he then leave you, or you'd...?

A: Yeah, forever.

Q: He would take it?

A: He would take it and then that was it...never see him again. And the next day, I would get an order to meet somebody else, elsewhere in Paris, and...

Q: And do it again.

A: And do it again. Mm-hmm. But that was nothing; that had nothing to do with the Jews.

Q: I under-... that this was just fighting the Germans. Do you, do you know the name of the, of the group with which you were associated?

A: Mm-mm. No.

Q: No, there was no, no knowledge of them.

A: The less, the less you knew, the better off you all were. That's the sort of thing you go by.

Q: If you can, explain this to me again, because I am a little bewildered about something. You go into the subways; you meet somebody who has...

A: You had an appointment; you had an appointment that... oh, and you never are ahead of time more than five minutes, never, never. Never late, but never ahead of time. You arrive promptly, you really – time was of the essence – you arrive at a certain time and you do your job and you disappear and disperse, take another direction in the subway or whatever.

Q: And you don't want anybody loit-... loitering. It looks suspicious, I suppose.

A: You don't want to be too involved too long. In other words, the faster that can go, the better.

Q: But here, here's where my question is, 'cause I'm not understanding something. When you meet this guy, does he have the gun?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: So, you were just...

A: No, I have the gun.

Q: Oh, you have the gun.

A: Usually, I am bringing the arms to...

Q: To him?

A: To the other.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay. So where then do you get the gun from then?

A: Somebody...

Q: Somebody has given it...

A: ...or else at another place which I don't know. The man I don't know, and I will never see him again, the same thing. And it goes a chain of command, and it goes way up and I have no idea where it goes past a certain level – the guy I got my orders from. And even that guy, I don't know who he is or who he was.

Q: The guy who's name was Jacques, you don't know?

- A: Jacques or Pierre or Robert. And he knows he's going to meet somebody called Michelle and that was who I was at that time and we would never see each other, each other again. And you were not supposed to try to see each other again. [Pauses] We made it romantic.
- Q: It's romantic, but lonely.
- A: Oh, it was lonely in a way, but I was studying hard so that I wasn't lonely.
- Q: Did your mother know you were doing this?
- A: No. Ah, no! Ah, no! I know because she would have been endangered and that's the one thing I wanted to avoid. And also she was a babbler.
- Q: So you couldn't trust her?
- A: No, oh no, no.
- Q: Did you tell anybody? Did you have any close friends that you said something to?
- A: I don't think so.
- Q: I'm assuming you had close friends at this time.
- A: [pauses] '41, '42... I moved out of my mother's place because I was endangering her. So, I took lodging at the student... it's still there.... on Boulevard St-Michel there was a student house. And I had, I had some friends that I had from the competitive years, you know. Student friends, who knew nothing about my activities. No, it was... I mean, really, if you call that lonely, that part was the silence.
- Q: And it's quite possible that people that you knew, with whom you were friends, were also doing it, but nobody was talking, because you weren't supposed to.
- A: Yes, I don't know that... But maybe they were. Maybe they were. But we never discussed it afterwards. That was not something – but fun – it's done, it's disappeared, you don't write about it, you forget about it. When I go to sleep, we were talking about thinking of... I think of all the times in Brittany in childhood. I don't think of those years at all. I never think of those years. Probably because they were so fleeting, the whole thing had to be fleeting in order to be safe for everybody.
- Q: Why do you say that you were endangering your mother? Since she was Jewish and you had a baptism certificate and you were not suspected of being Jewish. Because of your activities?
- A: Mm-hmm. If I had been caught... that would have endan-... Because I was not hiding who I was, and therefore, she as a Jew would be endangered in another, at another level.

Q: So, how did you explain to her why you left?

A: That's why I didn't live with her.

Q: I know, but why did you, how did you explain to her why you were leaving?

A: Because I wanted my independence; that's why I had moved out.

Q: And did you live nearby?

A: Mm-hmm. Practically next door.

Q: But in a, but in another building?

A: In another building.

Q: So, you saw your mother still very often?

A: I must have, yeah. We were very close, we were very close.

Q: Do you think she suspected you were doing something, or she believed you that you were being independent, to be living...?

A: No, I don't think she was involved in my behavior. She thought I wanted to be independent.

Q: And were you working at this time? You had finished school, in '41, or not, or were you working?

A: I was on that scholarship and then again through school, I got a plum job, which consisted [laughs] of teaching, but teaching people like, for instance, Dominique de Villepin, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, had a father, whom I taught. Teaching people from great families who were... failing. You know, they have that *baccalauréat*, which is difficult. And so it was three or four hours in the morning, during which we would tutor them 15 minutes at time, and see them all day long, always the same guy, teaching him everything for strictly that exam. And we had a practically 90 percent success level. And that was very much fun, it was intensive teaching. I guess it... I never heard of it here too much. But over there, I think that school had some others created after it, same intense – intensive teaching.

Q: Was this a government job?

A: No. And extremely well paid, oh boy!

Q: Really?

- A: A fortune, they paid you a fortune. But those were the, the, their parents were in the Cabinet. They were the nerds' children – the guy at the school called them “Children of Degenerates”, degenerates, children of degenerates and they were the cabinet members' children, I mean, they were all...
- Q: [Laughs] Children of degenerates?
- A: Yes, that's the way we greeted them in the mornings. We were rough.
- Q: [Laughing] Did you give, did you give some of your salary to your mother?
- A: No.
- Q: She didn't need it?
- A: Or I was egotistical, I don't remember any passing. Later on, I would help her in life, when I, after I was married. But, at that time I think that I was well-dressed, and...
- Q: So, did you, did you...
- A: And I paid... You know, it's far away, but I must have paid to stay at that student house.
- Q: You had to spend some of it...
- A: Mm-hmm.
- Q: Do you remember about how much it was?
- A: No, but it was royal.
- Q: So, you were now rolling in money in a way you hadn't before? Is that true? I mean, you had...
- A: If it... because of the set-up of life in Paris, nothing changed. There were no cars to be had, there were no... the great luxuries didn't exist, there were no furs... Yes, I had no... I was very slim, so I didn't even need to eat much. What were you going to spend your money on, simply clothes?
- Q: So, so let's talk about that a little bit. You have to have coupons to buy clothes and to buy food, to have food. Was there, were there rations?
- A: That was late.
- Q: Or that was later?

A: Yes. No, that was, that was then. We had coupons for bread, we had coupons for... heh, we had coupons for wine, and, and coupons for cigarettes. I remember those three things. I remember the episode because my mother was the most unlikely chain-smoking roly-poly. She was a chain smoker. And the postman did not smoke but he sure liked to drink, so she exchanged all her wine for all his cigarettes. That was, that episode I remember, so there were tickets. Also, well I gave my tickets away... to young men I loved, who had mothers who were sick, or whatever. I didn't, I didn't have many needs... What can you do? There wasn't that much in the way of luxury to spend on and I had never been born or raised in luxury. It meant nothing to me.

Q: Your... your room that you had, was it a room with a bathroom and a kitchen? Or did you have to share with...

A: No, no, I don't remember that, no. No, it was a student hostel. It's still there, on Boulevard St-Michel, and I think it was a room. And you know, they were not very heavy on bathrooms, and definitely no kitchen.

Q: Did you have heat?

A: I guess so. I don't remember being deprived in any way...

Q: You don't?

A: No. Not at that time. Not in those circumstances

Q: Well, we've come very close to the end of the tape. So, I think we'll take a break and then...

A: Mm-hmm, but we are not talking about the thing that I came here for.

Q: We are getting...

A: We are getting there?

Q: We're getting there.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

- Q: Nicole I, I don't want us to worry about whether something happened in 1941 or in 1942, because I'm not sure anybody's memory can be clear about when things happened. But do you have any recollection of whether, when you were smuggling the guns, that you moved out from your mother, or was it... do you think it was later?
- A: No, I think I was still living with my mother when I did it. Because I used not to come back to the house, as I told you, not to come back to that apartment, not to involve her, not to have her know about my activities. And so... And also for the date, I know that what really shook me was that Vel d'Hiv... when the word came out, and it came out, not that I saw the inside of the place, but rumor began circulating because, as I said it, was so close to where everybody lived. And at that point, I thought I had to do something. But I just sort of had to do something.
- Q: More than what you were doing? 'Cause you obviously were doing something.
- A: Yes, but that had nothing to do with children and when they began touching children...
- Q: Then that bothered you.
- A: ...which was late, then I had to step in and do something. Because I was in a unique position to probably be able to do something.
- Q: So, how did it happen that you started to try to save children, once you found out that they were going to take children?
- A: My mother working with the Jewish organization had – thanks again to the organization of the German – an inkling or knowledge of the dates of the specific raids and the addresses of the specific raids. And that's the way I knew where to go to get the children.
- Q: But was... Do you have any idea how, why the Jewish organization knew? Were they in some sense assisting with the Nazis?
- A: Well, when you think of it, they were terribly close to the enemy. It probably was. There was a point there where it was unhealthy. But for my sake, it was practical. I think after the war, there was some sort of disapproval of that sort of knowledge they had and the relationship that they maybe shouldn't have had.
- Q: But when your mother... Your mother would give you the information...
- A: I guess that's the way I got it.
- Q: You think that's the way it came?

A: Because there was no other way I could get it. And I know of what transpired after the war about the U.G.I.F and how close they were with the Germans, because they knew of the German work as it took place.

Q: When your mother would give you this information, did she realize that you were going to do something? I mean, at that point, is she knowledgeable? 'Cause she's just not giving it to you casually.

A: Probably, probably.

Q: But you don't...

A: But everything, everything was so...shrug your shoulder. You do it and then that's it. I thought it was normal, in other words, I never made... until you shook me up, I never thought of it. Definitely normal behavior. What are we going to do? Sit back and let it be. So, I moved and in the same way, she thought it was absolutely normal that I, being the type of person that I was, would feel that I had to do something. And I was in an unusual position that I could do something. Because of the way the French government was going to protect me, one way or the other.

Q: So you felt...

A: Compelled.

Q: [Coughs] I'm sorry. You felt compelled to do something, but you also knew that the French government would protect you, which didn't mean that you were totally protected because the Germans might do something, yes?

A: Well...

Q: There was some danger.

A: That came, that came – for instance, when I think of it, the vivid image I have is that moment on the train in the middle of the night when a German soldier opened the compartment door, and I felt at that point, I felt a very deep fear, because if the kid or whoever it was that I was transporting – and it was a kid capable of talking – had given out anything to verify that I was not with the mother, I was dead – I was just as good as dead at that point. So, when I went into it, I didn't know the extent of the danger and most of the time, probably, I wasn't discovered, so there was no danger. It worked well.

Q: Right. But now you're doing this in connection with the underground group that you...

A: No, it had nothing to do with the arms.

Q: So, it's a different group.

A: Completely different. That had to do with the Jewish U.G.I.F.

Q: All of it?

A: The, the taking care, the taking children away, yes. Because otherwise I would not know where they were to be had, to start with, Paris being a big city.

Q: So this was a Jewish underground...

A: Yes.

Q: ...organization that you were connected with.

A: It wasn't really underground. It was the Jewish... administration of the Jews, at the time...

Q: The U.G.I.F., yeah, but this particular action was certainly not something that the Germans... You were not doing this openly?

A: No.

Q: Right.

A: And the only people that would have any inkling that I was doing it were the Jews, was the Jewish organization in Paris.

Q: So your mother – You recall your mother giving you the names and addresses of people you were going to be taken. And they clearly, they were taking large groups of people at once? Or they were taking a few at a time that they...?

A: They came, they came individually. They would come to your apartment and ring, and if the bell rang at four o'clock in the morning, you knew who it was. And what happened is that after the Vel d'Hiv – this is when the Vel d'Hiv come in – they would not anymore – I didn't see it in the book – but they would not anymore tackle young children. So, the Germans were delighted to have somebody take them off their hands. Because it created such an endless fear of revolt among the French that they were afraid that at some point the whole city would rebel against them. So, in some ways, I was in the middle. It was a sort of a *cloaque*, you know, of ugly things. It was some very shady participation there. 'Cause it had, at some point, to have the German willingness to give the babies, and that happened at the very specific date. "Enough with the babies! If there's one thing that we don't need in Paris, it's that problem." And I stepped in and took that problem away from their hands.

Q: Was anyone else doing it, do you know?

A: That I would...not that I know of.

Q: Not that you know of?

A: I never mentioned it and nobody mentioned it to me. It was rare... It could have been obvious, you know, all those people taking a train.

Q: So, let's talk about the process, you get names, and you...

A: Addresses.

Q: Addresses.

A: Times, times, time, I guess.

Q: These people did not necessarily expect you. You're just, you're just as surprising as the Germans knocking. For a different reason, but you're a surprise to them.

A: Yes, and there is some persuading to do, because the women, as we know from personal experience, do not give away their children. So I had some persuading to do to them, which was the difficult part. It was in two parts: first, "This is it, you are doomed".

Q: You would tell them that?

A: I don't know how I did, but I passed on that message. "As far as you are concerned, let it be, there is nothing anybody can do. But there's something that that German soldier is going to allow to be done and that can be done: that I take that child away, and your child is safe." And then I would get the child. And the same day, he was in Italy, he or she, I remember.

Q: Did you usually have one child?

A: One child at a time.

Q: One child at a time.

A: I couldn't handle...

Q: How long, how long would it...?

A: I think the Jews – the Jewish association took care of them until the train time.

Q: No, I mean, when you went to someone's apartment...

A: I got the child. I got...

Q: But how long would it take you to convince people usually? You would sit there for an hour, two hours or much less?

A: [Scoffs] No, much less.

Q: You don't have that much time?

A: Much less, the Germans are not going to let me. They don't have the message. I have the message from the Germans at large; they don't. So they are brutal. They, they want the whole thing finished and also maybe they have some human feeling that the whole thing is ugly, so they want it over with. So, I don't have much problem with them, I have the problems with the woman.

Q: You don't have problems with whom?

A: With the Germans. The Germans have been given the message: "No children, no dealing with children under the age of three". So, I had no problem with the German at that point. I am in a small apartment in nowhere in Paris, usually a poor neighborhood, not especially a Jewish neighborhood and confronting a woman, and that's the woman that is the problem or could be the problem.

Q: Is the husband usually there, or not...?

A: No, there were no men in Paris.

Q: No men.

A: He is either a prisoner of war or in the Resistance or he's out.

Q: So, these women are alone?

A: Women.

Q: So, would it be very often very quickly that the people would say, "Okay, take the child"?

A: Yeah, I think when they saw Germans come in, they had a feeling that... of the ugliness of it. Even if they were uncultured and uninformed, they would sense the enormity of it and it wouldn't be a battle. I don't remember a battle. And then you would have to get the identity of the child in order to after the war to be careful to have kept track.

Q: Of who the child was.

A: Of who the child was! And at that point, he was in Italy, the child was in Italy, in a convent. And that's when another battle started with the Italians.

- Q: Were there mothers who refused to give you their, their children.
- A: Nope. Never did.
- Q: All of them – all of the mothers got...
- A: That's right. They would... all of the mothers would give a chance to the child. Immediately... what happened was that immediately they realized that there was no chance for them... with the Germans. There was no chance for them and if they took the child with them, I told them in no uncertain terms "That child will not save you. The fact that you have a child even at the breast will not save you." And the, the ugliness of the German soldiers was such that they felt it. And that I came from the, probably, I don't remember, but I came probably from the, from the Jewish agency, and that was reassuring for them. I had their identity, I had their card, and they trusted it. And then they were, were in such a....state that they had to trust somebody.
- Q: Did you, by this time, understand sort of what was happening, that these people would be killed?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: So you...
- A: I had a deep understanding. It didn't give me... I was 21. I thought everybody was dead at 25 or should be dead...
- Q: Anyway?
- A: ...anyway. And that it was the time limit for living, and that I was immortal, definitely. I never felt that there was any – felt deeply that I was immortal.
- Q: So, did you think these Jews were going to be killed in a camp?
- A: Hmm. [nods]
- Q: You did.
- A: At that point, I had the feeling, because of the...because of the confrontation between the German soldier and the, and the women, I had the feeling that it was going to be very ugly.
- Q: Now, do I understand you that the German was there with you sometimes?
- A: They, they were arresting the women.
- Q: At the same time?

A: That's when I came.

Q: You came at the time that they're arresting...?

A: That's right.

Q: Oh, oh, I see...

A: Because otherwise, the kid would not be left behind in the apartment all by himself.

Q: No, see, I thought that you came prior to the Germans, that you would try to beat the timing of the Germans. So you're there just as the German...?

A: I wouldn't have had a chance.

Q: Because the mothers wouldn't do it?

A: They wouldn't do it. But when they see – saw the Germans come for the family and they're willing to let go of the child. Then they realize the danger they were in, and they were willing to let go of the child.

Q: That's quite amazing. I didn't – I had no idea that it was...

A: Well, when you think of it, it's the only way it made sense.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And it was not very difficult because they really banged – they didn't knock at the door – they really banged at the door. And they looked... very... you would have to have a picture them – they were Gestapo soldiers; they were not regular German soldiers. Or they were French policemen. But the whole, the whole episode was very dramatic and the women felt it.

Q: So, when they knocked at the door or...

A: They banged at the door!

Q: ...banged at the door, were you standing with them? Or did you, after they got in, you went in with...? I mean, how... where were you...?

A: I guess I must have been with them.

Q: It's quite amazing when you think about it, no?

A: The whole thing is amazing, that it took place and I... and we survived.

Q: Was there a lot of screaming and crying, with the children...?

A: At other times, at other times, when I was taken with my mother, it was, it was another thing. When they finally got my number and came for me early morning. At that point, there were a lot of hysterics. But when it was individual, the mothers were very protective of the child and if you have a young child, you don't want to be hysterical in front of the child, so they kept the face.

Q: But often, the child feels the terror...

A: They feel it but they freeze.

Q: But they freeze?

A: Which is what saved my life in the train when the Germans came in the compartment was that the reaction of fear in that child then is going to be freezing and not yelling.

Q: But what happened to you when you, you... On the one hand, you're going to probably save the child. On the other hand, you know that this child's mother is going to be killed and that the child will never see the mother again.

A: It was very *dichotomique*. Yeah, it didn't faze me.

Q: It didn't faze you?

A: No.

Q: Was that because you were saving someone, or just because you...?

A: I think, you had to be anesthetized (ph) or you're not going to work for the procedure.

Q: You had to what?

A: To be anesthetized.

Q: Anesthetized.

A: In some way, if you are very deeply involved in the whole procedure of the Germans, you're not going to do it. You're going to miss it; you had to keep your composure.

Q: So, the mother is taken, you have the child...

A: Then, I give it during the day to the Jewish thing because I have to get my train ticket. There is a procedure.

- Q: So you go to the U.G.I.F. and they keep the children, the child.
- A: They keep the children until...
- Q: Until you leave?
- A: Right, until train time comes. And then I get my ticket, the children were traveling free, and then I get my ticket, always in the same direction: Paris-Nice.
- Q: Paris-Nice?
- A: Paris-Nice, which is the Paris-Méditerranée. That's a very straight train, it is an overnight.
- Q: An overnight train?
- A: It's an overnight train, so it was nice.
- Q: Now, were most of the children actually babies or...?
- A: The ones I took care of were all under three.
- Q: Were all under three? But some of them could talk a little bit?
- A: Yes. But not in front of Germans, they wouldn't.
- Q: They talked to you?
- A: Oh, babbled, yes.
- Q: Babbled.
- A: But they knew I wasn't their mother. But they were in pretty bad shape, bad day, you know. They had had a bad day.
- Q: And did you try to comfort them?
- A: Sure, I was... warm and nice, but I was only 21. I hadn't even slept with a man; I was out of it. In the deep sense that I would have been when I had my own children in my arms, completely different, which probably helped.
- Q: Yes I...
- A: I would have become hysterical myself otherwise.
- Q: So, you'd be on the train, did you...?

A: Then I took the train and...

Q: Did you have... If there were babies, did you have diapers, did you have changing clothes?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes the U.G.I.F. organized... I had, I had the stuff.

Q: Did they teach you how to change diapers?

A: Oh, well. [shrugs]

Q: Or did you know?

A: At the time, you know, it was during war years, you did what you could. And they are not that keen on cleanliness. But the child was safe. And I – they had – they had those long banks, which are fairly padded. And I would give my warmth, in other words, I would put the baby on me so that, you know and I would wrap my arms around, so that the child felt protected at the end of a difficult day. It was a difficult. I, I tried to feel for the baby. It must have been very horrible. But they fell asleep and that's... until they stopped and they...

Q: So, then you would get off at Nice, yes?

A: Yes, I had that episode when the Germans came in and the child...

Q: Uh-huh. And then what happened?

A: Because one time, the Germans, they were patrolling the train. I don't know what for, but for... And at that time, I was frightened. Because my life was really on the line, if the kid gave me away. But I can remember, they absolutely froze; they never said a word, they were just stiff with fear. They remembered the morning episode, the separation of their mother. It was the end of a terrible day. So, I didn't have any problem with the children, and we arrived in Nice finally. And I still remember, I still remember the view of the Italians. The Italians were cowards made live and had declared war with France, their neighbor, in June '40 and had moved militarily to Nice. That's all. [Laughs] That's all they could manage. And so they occupied from Monaco to Nice, which is 30 kilometers of France territory. But for those kids it meant life and death because when you saw an Italian soldier, you knew that they were not going to kill any babies. So that's it. And I know that they took them to some religious institution in Italy.

Q: Now, was this established that the Italians police – oh, not the Italian police – the soldiers would take...

A: No, they were in the train station.

Q: They were just there and you just gave it to them? You just gave it...

A: Yes, yeah, yes. But at that time, the, the Jewish organization in Paris must have communicated. They had contact near the frontier, and those children were taken to convents. And I know that because there was an enormous ruckus between those convents and Israel, at the end of the war, because Israel wanted those Jewish kids to come to Israel. And the Italians wouldn't give them. At that point, I thought it was a huge joke, I couldn't care less... what happened, they were alive. Whether they were Israeli citizen or Italian citizen or no citizen, they were safe.

Q: Now, how did people keep track of which child was, was actually who... you know what I mean? ...the identity of the child?

A: Well, well I... that would be given to whoever was handed the child. I would give the pap-whatever written scribbles I had about the identity of the mother.

Q: I see. So, that would go with the child and then that would be given...

A: Then that could be their problem.

Q: Yeah.

A: I got rid of that problem with the child.

Q: So, as far as you knew, these soldiers would bring these babies...

A: Oh, as far as I know from documentation, from movies, from everything that has been written, there was not one child killed by Italians.

Q: And you would then stay overnight in Nice? Or go right... Or turn around and...?

A: I had a feeling that I had to come back if only so that my mother wouldn't be worried and suspicious, and so that I could continue in my studies or whatever I was doing. But that was the least of my worries, so I don't really remember. I don't think I stayed in Nice – I didn't have any money.

Q: How long a trip did it take?

A: Hmm?

Q: How long a trip did you have?

A: It's an overnight.

Q: It's an overnight, so that if you would come in the morning...

- A: Yes, I guess I must – must have stayed somewhere. Maybe there was a day train. I have no idea of the return. That was...
- Q: But you think that you were still staying at mother's house, or you were in the other place?
- A: I had another place and one night, I was so tired coming back early, I came to sleep at her place and that's when the Germans got us. So it was a...
- Q: You were going back...
- A: I was going back and forth.
- Q: Did your mother ever become suspicious? Ever say anything to you?
- A: Well, she must have known there was something going on. She knew better than to ask.
- Q: Do you remember approximately how many trips you took?
- A: No.
- Q: Five? Ten? No? You have no idea?
- A: No, probably not more than ten. I remember just a very few of them, and definitely part of the job was not to count.
- Q: Do you have in your head pictures of some of these kids?
- A: Hmm?
- Q: Do you have in your head pictures of some of these kids? Do you see yourself on the train with these babies?
- A: Yes, yes, yes, that I do. Some moments are very clear.
- Q: Are you crying about this?
- A: No, that they were children and they were in my lap and they were sleeping and that damn door flew opened.
- Q: It was pretty scary when the Germans...?
- A: Oh, yeah, that was for me, too. But the people in the compartment never knew much either. They didn't like – nobody liked to be asked by the Germans about their I.D. in the middle of the night.

Q: So, one night instead of going to your little studio apartment...

A: ...I went back to sleep in my bed.

Q: Right.

A: And that night, that morning, they came. Unmistakable knock at the door. And they were, those were French policemen, two little French policemen almost my age.

Q: Little ones? Almost your age?

A: Yes, they were maybe 23 to my 21, but very young. And I remember them – they were almost my size and they followed me... to where I washed. They watched me wash, supposedly because they were afraid I was going to commit suicide.

Q: So wait, wait, wait a second; they come to your mother's house...?

A: They come to my mother's house.

Q: Why do they come – for you do you think? What do they say?

A: To take me to the Germans.

Q: Take you? So do you think that they were...?

A: And my mother.

Q: ...tracking you...?

A: Oh yes.

Q: In terms of your work?

A: I think, I think that they were, yes. I think they were tracking me finally.

Q: So they... Well, some Germans knew what you were doing because you were at the door with them.

A: Yes, right.

Q: However, you thought this was okay...

A: Well, as I said, I was blissfully lackadaisical. I... it is a tendency I have kept through my life. I think it helps with the bumps of life altogether.

Q: Now, do you think they were coming for you and your mother, or you, and they happened to pick up your mother at the same time?

A: They happened to pick up my mother [laughs] at the same time.

Q: So all along, it's your mother who you think is in danger...

A: Mm-hmm. And at that point mostly... What was lovely at that point was that the only papers that she carried was my baptism certificate. And she let those little soldiers, those little policemen, French policemen follow me and see as much of me as possible. She didn't say, "Leave her alone. Don't go to the bathroom with her." No, she wanted as much intimacy between those two little guys and her little daughter as possible. And that, at the end of the morning, is what saved our lives.

Q: She was smart.

A: Because then we were taken to the Germans. Then we were taken to the Marais and the German scene was very... That's when the women were hysterical. And there were 52 of us, as I remember, and they knew that I was going to get out. And they all gave me their lists of addresses and people to notify. And not one of single one of them came back alive. So, what happened is that the scene got uglier and uglier and at some point, as you see in movies, you are pushed into a courtyard. And in the courtyard, there is a truck and the back of the truck flips down and at that point, you're pushed in. And at that moment, it was bedlam. The women were hysterical. The whole tr... the whole thing was crowded; there were too many people for the courtyard. And my mother kept after those two little guys – and she was much more in danger than you can imagine – was keeping after them saying, "Let her go, she shouldn't be here, let her go!" And at some point, they said, "The hell with you, get out of here!" And at that point, I lost all my courage. I began to cry and she found all her courage back and she was, that little roly-poly with no gumption at all, was smiling and said, "Okay, let's get out." And she knew how to get out and she knew how to find the café. And she stood there at the Jewish café, which is still there, it's a Jewish café, and she plunked down and she had to have her *café*, in front of all the trucks going by.

Q: We have to stop.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

- Q: Nicole, I would like to bring you back to when these two guys, the police – the French policeman and French detective, am I correct? Or are they two French police?
- A: Two French policemen.
- Q: Two French policemen, no detective. When they come in, the bang on the door, were you – are you actually sleeping yet?
- A: Sure.
- Q: You are sleeping.
- A: It was four or five in the morning.
- Q: And...
- A: They take you to the subway.
- Q: No, but what do they say? Do they say anything? They're in the house, but not very long. They just say...
- A: They, they, they...
- Q: "Come out."
- A: The same thing that they must say around the world, "I.D. verification." I.D. verification, whatever that meant, or whatever.
- Q: So, your mother has the presence of mind to take your baptism certificate.
- A: Oh, that! She was carrying it...
- Q: All the time?
- A: All that morning. She practically slept with it. Yes, it was very meaningful to her that I would survive those experiences.
- Q: So, she has that.
- A: Yeah.
- Q: But they know she is Jewish of course because she...

- A: Yes, she wears the star, mm-hmm. It's five o'clock in the morning and we go on the subway and it's filled with working class people. And they don't like it at all. You could feel that they do it very early, but still get the lower class, working class people and those are the least prejudiced probably. And they don't like what they are seeing. They, they know it's going to be ugly and they had those two women surrounded by those two police officers.
- Q: Are you finally frightened at that moment?
- A: No.
- Q: No, you're still not frightened?
- Q: Takes you, takes you a while. So, they bring you to Marais?
- A: To the Marais.
- Q: The Marais?
- A: To the hotel in front of Flambaum, which is still there. A beautiful *hôtel particulier*. And there, they take us to the... There that the Germans are, and then it becomes ugly, ugly, I mean, they start... My mother puts her hand on the table and they whipped her. So, that sort of behavior I hadn't seen before.
- Q: And do they ask you questions? Is there an interrogation or not?
- A: Well they ask for I.D. and I showed the I.D. and so they, they know that it is I and it is my mother. And then we went into a waiting room with 50 other people, all women and children that morning, by the way.
- Q: And at this point, do you know that they're going to deport you? Do they say anything? They're going to take you somewhere?
- A: I guess so. There was no other thought that you could have; that was it.
- Q: Do you remember what you were wearing? Did they, did they allow you to change your clothes from your pajamas or nightshirt or whatever you were wearing?
- A: Yes, since they watched me wash, they watched me dress! I was wearing the same thing I wore during the whole war years. I spent a lot on shoes. As I told you, the rich don't give up their shoes, so the luxury for me was to have shoes made to *mesure* – custom made. And no stockings because there were no stockings to be had during the war and, you know, I remember the coat, which was very handsome. It was cut up from the beautiful coat of a man cousin of mine, the rich cousins. So, I was simply well-dressed, no hat.
- Q: They watched you get dressed?

A: They watched me get undressed...

Q: And dressed?

A: Wash...

Q: And dressed.

A: They went to the bathroom with me. So they watched me wash, bare.

A: They sat around the sink with me while I washed.

Q: Because...

A: They didn't speak, but they were with me. And I came back and I snuck to the bathroom and that was so small they couldn't get in. But they stayed at the door of the bathroom. I went to the bathroom and I went to my room and I got dressed and they were there when I got dressed. Then that's when they got attached.

Q: And that, in part – they may have done it anyway – but your mother knew that that was somehow... might, might work that they might get attached if they...

A: I don't think that...

Q: No?

A: I don't think it was a conscious thought.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They would have done anyhow. I mean, that was part of the...humiliating you. You know, it's humiliating to have somebody watch what you are washing your behind are two young people, snickering. They didn't snicker. They didn't say anything, do anything, just watched...but they were French.

Q: But they were French.

A: They were in a French uniform. And then we went to the subway, in second class, not specially in a compartment. And those were French people going to work very early in the morning. Therefore, those are not the bourgeois; those are the working class people. And you feel that they didn't like it.

Q: Did they... anybody say anything?

- A: No! That was dangerous. Those French people were a... police people are... well, they had their *bâtons*, at least, you know; it was dangerous to say anything.
- Q: When your mother was hit on the hand once you were in...
- A: She just took her hand off.
- Q: And that's all they did? They didn't, they didn't beat her; they simply didn't want her hand on the table, do you think?
- A: Just a whip.
- Q: Yeah, and it hurt?
- A: Probably, she didn't say anything.
- Q: So, you were then put in this room with about 50 other people, mainly women – or all women and children, no men.
- A: Mm-hmm, it was just women and children, no men at all.
- Q: And is there someone in the room guarding you?
- A: It's supposed... There is a room where the Germans are. And then there is the other room. There is no need; there is nowhere to go.
- Q: Because the only exit...
- A: Would be through that room, which had their desk.
- Q: Any windows?
- A: I think there was, going into the courtyard. Nobody tried anything. They were kind of, you go into a sort of what you would call a state of shock. You are not quite at your most vivid at that moment.
- Q: So, people are not talking?
- A: People are not talking, but they are passing pieces of paper to me with their name and addresses to contact.
- Q: But that's only when they knew that you were leaving?
- A: No.
- Q: No, they just did it.

- A: From the word go, they knew I had a baptism certificate. And my mother was flaunting it probably and talking about it. And they knew that if one person had a chance of getting out, I was the one, and therefore I could contact, because they had no way of contacting their relatives. So, I came out with a list of names and addresses.
- Q: [Background person says something to interviewer] Okay, so we're now back after that little interruption. So...
- A: Yes.
- Q: So, people are handing you names of relatives that you can contact because they think, if anybody gets out, it'll be you.
- A: Yeah. And it was. Fifty-two of them, not one of them otherwise.
- Q: So, all of you go out to the courtyard, the truck comes, that little...
- A: Flips down.
- Q: Flips down.
- A: I saw a movie once that, that depicted that. That's the only movie that was about the time that was realistic to me. It shows the truck – that's when you knew – and the back flips down, and you're pushed in, and then that's it.
- Q: And was it, was it very rough? Was it a very large truck or smaller...?
- A: Was enough to get...dozens of people. It was a big truck. It took the courtyard. And the policemen were going on the side of the courtyard toward the exit...and by that time they were petrified.
- Q: And were people screaming?
- A: The women were somewhat hysterical. They were crying; if you were screaming, you would be whipped. But sobbing probably and it was not pretty.
- Q: Now are you in the back? One of the last ones so that your mother can find...? I mean these two policemen...
- A: At that point, my mother was following the policemen, so we must have gone to the side of it. And she was talking to them constantly, saying, "Look at her, she should not be here, let her go".
- Q: Then they finally said...

A: Then they said...

Q: "Get the hell out of here".

A: "*Eh, merde, foutez le camp! Foutez le camp!*"

Q: What did they say?

A: "*Merde! Foutez le camp!*" They were tired of the whole scene.

Q: Were there Germans there also?

A: Yes, there were Germans, but it was such a confused set-up. There were only a few German soldiers; there were two French policemen who stayed out of the way; and there were 52 – I counted them – 52 Jews. With a lot of commotion, because it's a lot of crying of babies and yelling of mothers; they forecast the worst.

Q: So, when these two guys said...

A: "The hell with you!"

Q: "Get the hell out of here."

A: "Get the hell out of here."

Q: Right. Where do, where did... how do you get out?

A: That's when my mother suddenly recovered and became a very clear-eyed mother again. And I became nothing in tears.

Q: At that moment...

A: At that moment, the change of personality was unbelievable. She became the mother-in-charge and I became the child good-for-nothing and in tears. And then she pulled me out. Well, you'd have to see the *porte-cochère* – It's a very specific thing for those enormous mansions, where they used to have the carriages come in with the four horses and a cart, right? So that's the courtyard and the *porte-cochère* is opened – it had to be opened – and that's the entrance that's an enormous entrance, enough for the truck to come out.

Q: And you went out the same way that the truck...

A: Yes! We went out by the truck! The truck was occupying the whole courtyard and we just sneaked away and the Ger-... the... two little French policemen were there and we went out.

Q: No Germans saw you as far as you know? Certain...

A: They were very busy. It was bedlam.

Q: And as soon as you get out...

A: My mother goes to Flambaum. She crossed the street and I said, "You are out of...!" And we see the truck going out... with the 50 people inside. And she's at the café terrace – terrace! – not even inside! On the terrace! She said, "I have to have my coffee," and she has her coffee. And Flambaum is patting her hand and saying, "Oh, *madame*, things will be all right". And so the whole scene was preposterous.

Q: Did people in the Flambaum know who, know what...

A: There was nobody.

Q: There was nobody...?

A: It was very early still.

Q: But somebody was there to serve you.

A: Yes, but it wasn't a crowded terrace like the Montparnasse in...

Q: And why do think that she went there? Was she just so exhausted from...?

A: She just...yeah, I don't know, emotionally, she was drained, what you would say.

Q: Yeah.

A: Funny how you can have your highs and then suddenly are completely wiped out. And she always drank, drank coffee. She was a chain smoker and a heavy coffee drinker.

Q: Now, did you stop crying as soon as you got out of that courtyard?

A: Sure.

Q: And why did, I mean, you may not know the answer to this question, but why at that moment when the two police said, "Hell, get out of here!", you leave, why were you crying then?

A: I think it was, the whole thing was a little too much.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I was overwhelmed. It was because it was such an ugly scene.

Q: And you had never seen that...

A: Yeah, can you imagine 50 women knowing they are doomed? And here I had talked with them five minutes before. And they were young women with their children. They were getting them younger and younger.

Q: Hmm. [Long pause] You still see it, don't you?

A: Hmm?

Q: You can, you can see it now, can't you?

A: Oh, sure. I'm not making any effort to... [Chuckles].

Q: To hide it. [Laughs] Did you get angry?

A: No. No, not really. I never was angry, all through it. I rarely, rarely get angry...doesn't help.

Q: But you got sad.

A: Oh, that I do. And I don't get revengeful either. I remember when Paris fell. The Americans marched down the Champs Elysées. And I wanted to see the redition (ph) of the Germans; so I went to the Arc de Triomphe. And the behavior of the French, who had been so non-committal during the war, was atrocious. They were spitting at... you know, by that time the Germans were putting in arms some people who were 18 and... nothing little fellows, who had seen nothing, done nothing. They were just marching, and they had to have their head – their hands on their head to shame them. And the French – I was preventing the French from hurting the Germans. These were the wrong ones, anyhow. But the scene was very ugly. The French didn't ever behave well.

Q: No matter what was...?

A: No matter what was happening, they were wrong, on the wrong side.

Q: On the other hand, you speak of at least some of the war years, where the French are angry enough at the Germans to have a certain kind of...

A: Those are popular classes that don't go to the Champs Elysées to see the Americans march down.

Q: Okay.

A: It's very funny how it is a city, the city is divided; those are not the same people.

Q: Mm-hmm, so when you say the French...

- A: They were... We were at Passy. You see the Americans march at the Arch of Triumph. That's near where we were, at my grandparents' house in Passy. Those are the exquisite, broad avenues, and... little working people were not anywhere.
- Q: Let's go back to the café. You're in the café and you're seeing the trucks... One truck? More than one truck?
- A: No, one. I remember only one because that was the one where I would have gone and where the women I was talking with were going.
- Q: And did... How long did you sit there with your mother?
- A: Not long, just until after they had gone. And then, then she decided she wanted to go back to her apartment, where we had been captured the day before – the same day! To get her silverware, of all things, I mean, she never... She always was one train behind, you know.
- Q: So did you go?
- A: Sure!
- Q: You went back, so...
- A: And the Germans, in their disorganization, never went back to that apartment. They had done their hit.
- Q: But you thought that they might come back to...
- A: Well I... It wasn't the most comfortable place for me to be. And to see that little fatty... And have you ever – and the crystal ware – have you ever piled crystal ware in a box? It breaks as you put it down. It was utterly absurd; it was very much my mother. And then she gave it to the neighbor downstairs to keep for the rest of the war. And one day, all after the war, it was all there. But the Germans never came back to that apartment.
- Q: So, she packed what she thought was valuable...
- A: Yeah.
- Q: ...and gave it to the neighbor downstairs.
- A: Right.
- Q: ...And then, did you pack any clothes? Did you pack anything?
- A: We didn't have much.

Q: Uh-huh. And then you went Passy to...

A: Yes, to live, and we lived out the rest of the war there. And when there was the liberation of Paris, I remember that I went from Passy – it was a very short walk to the Eiffel Tower – and I remember the American who flew under the Eiffel Tower. They were having so much fun liberating Paris. They were the anti-German. Imagine, flying under the Eiffel Tower. They had fun.

Q: Small plane.

A: Small plane, but still...

Q: You went to the apartment of your...

A: ...grandparents.

Q: Father's parents, right...

A: Yeah.

Q: Right? That side of the family?

A: That's right.

Q: And they were in Brittany. They had gone...

A: They stayed in Brittany all through the war.

Q: So you, your mother had keys to that apartment.

A: Sure.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: Then there was a concierge. And what is funny is that the concierge never gave us up. You had to... you were in danger all the time. All that was necessary – Passy was surrounded by Germans; all the beautiful apartment buildings were occupied by Germans.

Q: So, if this is the case, are you any longer doing any work with the underground?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember?

- A: What we did then was hide people in that apartment.
- Q: Then you hide people?
- A: Yes, but they were older then. But people who were in danger of being deported. I had a bed; it never was empty. I was heavily dating, the curfew was midnight, so I would come back at midnight, get into my bed and it was full of people. Not full of people, but it was at least one person here, one person there, it would be...
- Q: Now, wait a minute. Now, now it's getting complicated.
- A: They were people who were hiding.
- Q: Right, but how... how would they come to you...?
- A: They knew...
- Q: They knew your mother?
- A: They knew my mother and they knew me and knew that we had survived and we were at Passy, they had the address and wanted an apartment for overnight. So, it served as a sort of a refuge.
- Q: For the night and then they would leave?
- A: Yes. And then they would have to find a permanent place where to hide until the liberation of France. And that I found for them. I found among my friends people who would be willing to take women, children, whatever, for years to come. And it was magnificent. At that point, among friends, that you found people who were willing to help, really to help. And I kept, kept those friends on both ends. The people who took care of the people who were taken care of – I saw them until they died.
- Q: And, and how...?
- A: In the living room, I remember one. I was talking with friends of the fate of a young woman that I knew whose husband had been taken, and nephew had been killed at the age of 18 months. The whole family was absolutely destroyed. And she was beginning a pregnancy so she really wanted that child, because her husband just had been taken. And she came to live with us at Passy. And then I saw a friend one day when she was there, and I said, "Who on earth is going to be able to take you, pregnant, for the rest of your pregnancy, to salvage the child?" And the friend said, "I will!" And she had her in her living room – she had a very small place – for the remainder of the year. And they became the best of friends after the war. They did – had two houses with joint backyards. But then, they never forget. I will. So, there were some individual cases of French devotion.

- Q: So, how many people did you help, you and your mother, do you think?
- A: [Sighs] That was a flow...I don't know how long... you had the... we have to think of dates, that was '43, '44. It was just one year...
- Q: Right, one year.
- A: One year. And then the Americans debarked and that was over. Although they continued deporting, but I didn't know it then.
- Q: But you were not hiding. You were heavily... You describe yourself as heavily dating! So, you're going out? Who are you going out with?
- A: If you... you can...If you were cute, you can always find a man [Laughs].
- Q: Were these boys in the underground? I mean, there's not a lot of men...
- A: Medical, medical doctors like my brother, anybody who was in one of those higher schools of higher learning were there.
- Q: Did you fall in love a lot?
- A: Hmm?
- Q: Did you fall in love a lot?
- A: Constantly.
- Q: Constant...
- A: The door opened and there I was. [Laughs]
- Q: Yes?
- A: Yes, I dated...I remember, I dated several times during the evening. And the best date was around ten o'clock. Six o'clock, not very good; eight wasn't really better, but the ten o'clock date was really the serious one of the evening. That was... my heavy dating, nothing ever happened, but it was very exhilarating.
- Q: So, you would date three guys in one...?
- A: Oh, yes, uh-huh.
- Q: So, what would you do? Dinner with one and drinks with another...?
- A: Yes, right.

Q: I see.

A: Mm-hmm. And Paris is a lovely city where to walk.

Q: Was... were people sexually free during this time or not?

A: Not I.

Q: No.

A: No. I don't think it was at all the morals of the generation. You are talking to somebody who is in her 80s. That was 60 years ago, you know. I think that behavior is only in the last... It became much more lax in America with my daughter's generation. But I had not seen it in my generation.

Q: So, when you say it was more... the 10 o'clock date... I don't know if you planned it like this, but 10 o'clock, it was more exciting. Is that because the...?

A: Kissing.

Q: Uh-huh, so there was a lot of...?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, of course, very exciting.

A: So, that's why it had to be that time.

Q: So, did you choose people you were dating at the particular hours? You knew what was going to happen, sort of?

A: Well, we made an appointment.

Q: Were you frightened of being caught? Or you didn't care?

A: Anyhow, when you are out with a guy, you don't feel that frightened. No, I didn't have the tendency to feel frightened.

Q: Were you now carrying around your baptismal papers or not?

A: I could not find them for the life of me. They are not important. [Laughs]

Q: What did your I.D. card say? Nothing? Just your name.

A: That, I probably could find it. I have it.

Q: You do have it?

A: I had it; it did say my name. I never destroyed papers, so somewhere in a box, I might – if I find it, I'll send it to you.

Q: Yeah.

A: At the museum.

Q: And how, how are you getting coupons for food? I mean, you're not working, right? Or are you working?

A: No, but my mother could collect for, for us.

Q: Because she's working for... She's still working...?

A: No, no you could not. No, no, this is the official French government that gave them at the *mairie* and *mairie*, at the...

Q: Was giving coupons?

A: Yes, you get your coupons every month. Everybody did.

Q: So, is your mother at home all the time now?

A: When?

Q: After, after the arrest, when you go to Passy?

A: I forgot, I tell you. The food, as I said, was very, of very minimal interest.

Q: Was this a hard time, that year?

A: [Shakes head]

Q: It wasn't?

A: No, I... The hard times was the German occupation, you know. For instance, during the... when the Americans liberated us, we had – it was '45, the Battle of the Bulge – one of the hardest winters we ever had. We had no heat whatsoever and it didn't matter. I remember when we invited an American for dinner. He was the one who introduced me to my husband. He came, he was flabbergasted that we had absolutely nothing. You know, it was a polenta-type of thing. And from then on, he brought us the supplies; he was very generous and fun. But we didn't suffer. We ate whatever there was to be eaten.

Q: And that...

A: It isn't that important in life. The freedom was what mattered.

Q: We're going to take a break and ...

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

- Q: So, you're telling me that after the arrest, that year, until liberation – not after liberation, which may have had all sort of difficulties attached to it – that it wasn't so difficult.
- A: After liberation?
- Q: No, no, no, no. That...
- A: The year...
- Q: From '43, when you were arrested and...
- A: We felt safe.
- Q: You felt safe.
- A: After... If you were going to be given in by the concierge, it's going to take place in two weeks.
- Q: Mm-hmm.
- A: If not, she's not going to say anything.
- Q: Something. Was there any communication with your grandparents in Brittany?
- A: Sure.
- Q: You were writing?
- A: Sure.
- Q: So, they knew whether you were okay or you were not okay?
- A: They must have, I must have the letters...
- Q: Was there censorships of letters? Were the German...?
- A: Yes, there was, but you... there are ways of going around it. If they were family – I should have brought you one I have--I found a hil- hilarious one of my brother's from the Pyrenees experience in France. It was... they were typed; they were printed by the Germans. And I better give them to you because the print is disappearing. If it isn't good paper, you know, the printing it becomes very, very white out. But it's all printed so is *tué*, killed. It's for people like war killed, *tué*, *blessé*, *fatigué*, *décédé*, *provision*. I mean, the things that really mattered. And you had no right to write anything that had not to do with the immediacies of daily living. I mean, people find a way of... And you, you find a

way of writing. You should see how microscopic your handwriting can be. And they let it, they let it ride. And you can imagine the German spending his day looking at those cards going by.

Q: And your grandparents were okay during the whole time, in Brittany, as far as you know.

A: Oh, unfazed.

Q: Unfazed?

A: Unfazed. I mean, they had a property, they were solidly established. They spent, I told you, they spent most of the year in Brittany, most of their older lives. And although it was very uncomfortable, it was a beautiful set-up and they were safe. I don't think they worried.

Q: Now what, what news were getting about the progress of the war and also what the Nazis are doing to Jews? Are you now getting more...?

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing? Nothing!

A: Nothing, I think... I don't remember.

Q: Are there newspapers? There are newspapers. Did they say anything?

A: The newspapers were censored. [laughs] The correspondence between people may have been censored but if there was one thing that was censored, it was the newspapers and... so you learn practically noth-... In fact, I knew nothing about the American debarkation from the German-French and French newspaper.

Q: And you're not getting rumors?

A: I didn't hear one word of rumor.

Q: It's funny...

A: We were expecting, expecting, expecting. It was kind of joke. I remember a neph-... a nephew of mine – two, two and a half – and he was spending the night at Passy with me, at the place we were. And he was learning to speak and he was bouncing on the bed. And I remember the thing that he was saying, "*Les Américains sont à Paris.*" or whatever; he was bouncing on the bed. I mean, there was some knowledge, but it was after the fact; they were already there.

Q: So, didn't know anyone who had a radio of some kind that could get...?

A: BBC?

Q: Yeah.

A: The Jews, their radios were taken. Oh, they, they were very thorough. To have no radio, no communication, the, the subway was full of radios. You know why? Because the Jews put their radios in the subway, and we put one in the subway.

Q: But how about non-Jews? They had radios.

A: Yeah, I have seen that in the movies, but I don't remember in France sitting around the radio listening, I don't.

Q: So, you are blank, you have no idea how long this was going to last, how short it's going to last? You can't tell?

A: It had to end.

Q: It had to end?

A: It had to end; you were getting kind of tongue sticking out and panting. By that time, it had lasted quite a long but...we knew... When was it? I didn't think that...I remember one episode. I wrote it... It's after the American landed. Somebody... saw a truck, an American truck, and touched the wheel, the, the, the tire. And the tire was real rubber. And he communicated to everybody that the Americans were going to win the war because we were sick in *ersatz* by now. Nothing was real you know; everything was *ersatz*. Those were people with real rubber, they had it made.

Q: [Laughs] That's funny. You never got depressed?

A: I'm not a depressed type. No, with old age, when I had that massive stroke, that was a time when I was depressed. It was very depressing to find myself completely paralyzed. But then, you bounce back.

Q: So, nothing during the war, even those...

A: No.

Q: You would get sad or you would...?

A: No, depressed is not the word, no.

Q: No? What word would you use?

A: At some point, I was overwhelmed.

Q: Okay.

A: I was overwhelmed because, to this day, it is beyond my humane understanding to see that extent of cruelty. That was, that was unbelievable... That a nation could then inflict that on their neighbors... and a nation civilized. I was a student; therefore, the idea that those guys were usually learned people, they were not savages from the depth of the jungle, they came from universities. And they could live through it.

Q: So what did it...?

A: It's not individually. As a nation, it overwhelmed me. And that wasn't depression; that was just amazement. To this day, I don't... I don't understand what went on.

Q: Did it in any way at that time, not now, but at that time make you cynical about human beings and about education? Did it make you wonder what was the point of education if people...?

A: Oh, no! That I never wondered, no, because that was also my salvation... You get lost in a good book – that's it, you found your salvation.

Q: But then it seems that education doesn't protect someone, to be... to remain civilized.

A: No, but I never felt thought philosophically about it; I just acted when needed.

Q: Mm-hmm. And your... well, go ahead, you're thinking of...

A: Hmm?

Q: You're thinking about something. What do you want to say, something?

A: No. I don't know. My short-time memory is gone.

Q: Did your... I know that said that after your... Go ahead.

A: No, I was having a funny thought. I was thinking one thing that came of the war. I told you how cold people were. It was unbelievable that the walls were dripping wet. Dripping wet from humidity, you know, no heat in the building for five years and then there were the walls. And... what was I thinking? Oh, you lived in bed. To this day my favorite place is my bed. You absolutely lived in bed because that was the warm place you could control and you could do practically everything. Not talking about even the love part, which we didn't make, but you could eat, you could read, you could write, you could talk. And when I met John, I received... I received my dates in my bed. They sat around, and I remember John, covered with his uniform because the apartment was so cold, sitting by my right side and we had conversation. That's the way I entertained.

Q: So, there was no heat the whole time?

- A: Uh-uh. I think there were two week... two weekends... I, I know that before that there were two weekends. That's almost nothing. In one room, one room.
- Q: Then there's no hot water?
- A: No hot water ever. No stockings. That came with the Americans.
- Q: So were you always cold even...?
- A: Yeah, you, you were always feeling damp and cold, yes. That was the... to me, that was the worst part of the war.
- Q: Just a constant physical discomfort.
- A: Of the cold.
- Q: Of the cold.
- A: Not the hunger at all.
- Q: I wonder then...
- A: It takes, no, it takes nothing to fill you up. You can eat a little bread and you are satisfied. And I was young and slim.
- Q: Did you lose weight during the war?
- A: No, I kept my weight.
- Q: Really?
- A: No, you... you had a very unhealthy but fattening diet. Bread is fattening. We had bread and flour. That we did have – a sort of polenta.
- Q: Hmm. What did you drink mainly, coffee or wine, or both?
- A: I told you, there was no coffee. Come on, coffee is an exotic thing. You can't coffee any more than you can have tobacco. They don't come from France. France doesn't cultivate that sort of plant. So, what... We did have wine. There was, I told you, a ration of wine. I didn't drink any. Water, so I only drank water.
- Q: Hmm.
- A: There were no soft drinks. Ah, that's a magnificent thing that they did to us. You kept your figure. There was nothing – the sugar was out, there was no sugar. There was no,

what's that, no butter, no fats. No fats. One time a week, I mean, there was nothing to be fat – a lot of vegetables and fruit. It was the perfect slender diet.

Q: But you did have vegetables and fruit?

A: In France, we sure did. And we went to farms to pick them up. You picked up your cherries. You had friends who lived in the country and you... I went 50 miles a day on my bicycle to pick up cherries from the tree, to pick up strawberries from the ground. It was a very... They were precious things that you had. But no fat – no fat on you. Nobody – that's the thing – there was, at the end of the war, not one obese person in France. They all died. They couldn't take the diet.

Q: But your mother you said was fat.

A: She lost... she lost it. She was extremely thin by the end the...

Q: She was thin by the end of the war?

A: Sure.

Q: Did she gain it back?

A: Some.

Q: Some.

A: A Jewish mother, she would manage.

Q: So, how did you have the time to bicycle out to the country?

A: Well, there were weekends.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Even if you work, you have weekends. I would do, I would do the whole thing in one day. I remember, I would do the 50, 50 miles a day.

Q: But how would you keep the food? There's no electric, there's no...

A: The balcony.

Q: I see, outside. And in the summer, then what?

A: You ate it.

Q: You just ate it fast.

A: It isn't that warm in Paris.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I remember when we first, when I was first married and we had a maid. We had to have... I had an American husband; we had a magnificent apartment overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens. And he absolutely insisted we have an icebox. I had never heard of that. So, we had an icebox. She said, "What are we going to put in it?" I still remember, "Madame Nicole, what are we going to put in the icebox to please Mr. John?" So, we would think, and we would find something to put in the icebox to please the American. But she would put... You see, they had those, those things in the windows. To this day, if you go to Paris to an old apartment, in the kitchen, there is an opening in the window in the kitchen and it is sort of a meshed window, and all the food was there. That's... the refrigeration, and it works for them. For that sort of very moderate weather, it works. And then also you have the shops. You shop everyday. It's a different way of life.

Q: So, when do you get an inkling that the Germans are finished? Only when the Americans march in?

A: When we saw the rubber tire. The Americans were overwhelming. When you saw them come down the Champs Elysées, you know that it could not be resisted. In a, in a different way... it was a maelstrom of strength and a fresh strength. By that time, the Germans were beaten. They were down to their last troops, to their youngest soldiers. They were demoralized...

Q: And you saw that?

A: And you could see that in the type of soldiers that they would send in the streets.

Q: Now, you said earlier that you tried to stop people who were throwing... were spitting at the soldiers?

A: At... that was at the liberation of Paris. What was the name of the...? There is still that hotel. There is the Arch of Triumph and then there is a street... L'Attala... No, not l'Attala; it was another name. There was a huge hotel facing the Champs Elysées and the Arch of Triumph at an angle. And that's when I saw, all that, and then the Avenue Foch and that... They were marching.

Q: Am, am I correct that you also saw women whose heads had been shaved?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you...?

A: And I protected them.

Q: You protected them? From what?

A: Yes, from that. I shamed the people who was doing it because they were wrong. There were the same ones who would sleep with the Americans. They would sleep with, they would sleep with... These were not the, the ugly fighters. They were just easy to catch and it was ugly and it was demeaning of the people who did it as well as the people, and it was very ugly to watch...very ugly to watch.

Q: But it happened all over...

A: And it... and the people who were doing it probably were the people who had done nothing to resist the German occupation. But they hit on... maybe they were worthless but it was nonsensical; it was beside the point. And they marched them the same way that they marched the young soldiers with their hands on their... head.

Q: That they did it in public, it was very humiliating.

A: Again around at the Arch of Triumph, the same route.

Q: So, the time was ugly, the time after was ugly...

A: There were... Yes, I don't want to give you the impression that the whole life was ugly. But those were very ugly scenes. It seems that people took their worst possible feelings and they had a way of expressing those very ugly feelings. And they took an opportunity and it hit at the wrong target.

Q: Did anyone threaten you when you tried... when you were protecting these women?

A: No.

Q: Really?

A: They were ashamed.

Q: They were?

A: They were ashamed at what they were doing. I saw Arletty, you know, the... the great actress who... She had a fabulous word, they shaved her head. She slept with Stülpnagel, was the name of the general in charge of France. And her answer was, "*Mon cœur est à la France, mais mon con est internationale.*" And I thought that was good. My heart belongs to France, but my cunt is international. [Laughs]

Q: [Laughing] Yeah.

- A: That is sort of a woman who... she would have... So, she slept with a general occupying the... She would have slept with an American general if he had been more than that rubber tire _____. She would have been better than many. [Laughing]
- Q: [Laughs] So, what is it like, those first few months of liberation?
- A: [Sighs]
- Q: It's still not easy.
- A: No, but who cares about the physical when you are 21? It was...
- Q: Actually, you're a little older by now.
- A: By now '40, 23.
- Q: 23, yeah.
- A: And I don't accept the, the, the *couvre-feu* was still at midnight. They kept, they kept you out of the streets at night. The streets were dangerous. But your dates – my dates always took me home. I remember, my mother was waiting on the balcony, so they all knew that; they stopped at the corner of the street, because my mother was going to pounce on them. [Laughs] It was fun. Yeah, I didn't... We didn't think in those terms. We didn't think in terms of – it's now that we're thinking in those terrible terms. We just lived with it and were swallowed by it. The same way when I look at the Martin Luther King thing, this is history at the time. You live through it; we didn't make such a point of saying, "This is the march of the...this is the year where we are beginning to end this sort of racial..." You don't think in those terms.
- Q: The war is not finally over, however, when France is liberated, when Paris is liberated. There's still...there's still time.
- A: Then the Battle of the Bulge comes in. Then we party. What happens... but what was very interesting is that you never stopped the partying. What happened is that it was everybody brings, so everybody brought something. And if you didn't have much, you didn't have much. You had the party and you had the dancing, you had the music, you had the youth. And then you walked home. It's walkable, again. You can you go to a party practically – and also the people, you know, are all in the same milieu, so they live... I can circumscribe Paris. Somebody, oh, Mendes-France is having a boulevard named after him in the 13th. I don't even know where is the 13th in the city. I never set foot in the place. The 4th arrondissement is where the Marais is; that one there, never again. I know 14th, the 15th, the 16th, the 17th is wealthy but I never go, the 18th is Montmartre, I never set foot in it, and the 19th is where the young live now but it's awful. The 20th and 21st, never heard of it.
- Q: So you went...

- A: And again, the Opera, I mean, it is small and you can see that you really, when you think of it, you go to Tuileries Garden, it's the same, very circumscribe arrondissement. I'm not a specialist in Paris.
- Q: Hmm. So, you partied?
- A: Sure, everybody partied.
- Q: Including people who were more adult than you, older? Your mother? That generation? No, not...?
- A: It was, oh no, no, no, no, no, I'm talking about the 20-year-olds. No, because, then you had to go... Then, you had to walk home... You have to walk home, because it's really pitch dark. There's the blackout, and the blackout means that you see nothing in the street. And you don't have any electric light or anything.
- Q: Now...
- A: So, you tripped.
- Q: [Laughs] So, you have to be young.
- A: Yes, it's, it's for, it's for the young. You don't find anybody past their 40's.
- Q: Does the organization of your life changed drastically when the Americans come in? Obviously, you're... you're free.
- A: Because of my mother, yes.
- Q: And what does that mean?
- A: That was lifted, she was safe, I mean, we all...
- Q: So you didn't have to worry?
- A: No. That's a huge change.
- Q: Right. And is your aunt still with her?
- A: Oh, sure!
- Q: So they're all the...
- A: You know, lived all through their lives together.

- Q: Together. So, now you know you can go out and party and do what you will? You don't have to worry about anything happening?
- A: Well, I could – I always did go out and party, except now the worry is lifted. But I never was that much of a worrier. My brother was more the worrier than I.
- Q: Did he come back to Paris once the Americans came?
- A: No, he settled in Normandy. He wanted... I wanted to be a small fish in a big town; he liked to be a huge fish in a very small town. So he settled in the provinces where I would never set foot.
- Q: And where was his, where was his wife and child at the time? Did they go with him?
- A: Yeah. They bought a big estate and settled and bought a big mansion and settled private hospital.
- Q: But where was his wife and child during the war? 'Cause he had left and gone across to the Pyrenees, yes?
- A: Well, he wasn't married then. That was '40. That was...
- Q: Okay.
- A: That was the coming... the moving in of the army. He married in '42, '43...
- Q: But during the war, he married?
- A: Oh, yeah.
- Q: Uh-huh.
- A: And he had children during the war. Since they were playing with us at the liberation.
- Q: And so, when was the first time you saw your brother after 1940? '44? '45?
- A: He came back [laughs]... I remember, when it is over, him coming back. He had had – I saw it somewhere in an article recently – he had had one towel for the whole time when he was out, so he used the same towel. It was so dirty, it was stiff! He brought it back! That's what I remember of his return. But he returned in maybe '42, '43.
- Q: Really? So before the liberation he returned?
- A: Oh, yes, since he was, he was a doctor, so he was safe.
- Q: That's right. That's 'cause he was coming everyday to make sure that...

A: He was again...what do you call that? A horse? A running horse... He was intern, you know. To be intern in medicine is more than to be an extern, or to be just a plain doctor. He was really competitive and very good at, at his job, so he was completely safe. He was named Michel Denier and he...

Q: Did he have a baptism certificate too?

A: He didn't, no.

Q: He didn't?

A: No, but he had been with the, the... He had been a scout and that was with the Protestants. And the Protestants, the moment they tried to touch him, they pounced back and said, "Not at all, he has been a scout since he was the age of nine, don't touch him".

Q: Really?

A: So, he was protected by the Protestants and I was protected by the Catholics.

Q: And your mother was, who knows? [Laughs]

A: [Laughs] She swam through, probably didn't know how to swim.

Q: All right, we have to change the tape.

End of Tape #6

Tape #7

Q: How, how did it happen that you started working in Switzerland? What, what... was...?

A: In fact, there were five girls – because we were all in our... between 20 and 25 – who were chosen by the French government to thank them for their work in the war, to go to Switzerland, which was paradise and chocolate, to take care of the remnants of people from the camps. They landed... they couldn't... they were untrans-... People could not be transported. They were too sick to be sent to their country of origin, were sent to Switzerland, and who had... which had remained nastily... neutral during the war. They are still fighting the issue in 2003. But they were “neutral” during the war, but at least they offered the hospitals. They had fantastically modern hospitals, in particular in Davos, that you see now on the T.V., which is a ski resort, agreed, but it had best tubercular hospitals in Europe. And so they accepted... the stretcher cases were sent from the camp to Switzerland. And I was sent to Switzerland to take the... to wait until they were no longer stretcher cases and then transport them back to Paris.

Q: How were you five chosen? Who... This is in... This is in '46?

A: That was after the... '45.

Q: This is '45. So who chooses you? I mean, what... who in the government knows that you're doing this?

A: Oh, I had a boyfriend.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Who was high in government.

Q: Do you want to name him or you don't want to name him?

A: He was named Jean Illovissy (ph) and now he's working at the U.N., probably is dead.

Q: So, he mentioned your name?

A: Well, I had a reputation; I had the papers, I had the figures to prove. But he pushed certainly.

Q: So the... is... you had not met your husband to be yet?

A: No I met him, I met him in December '46. No, December '45.

Q: So this is...

A: '45.

Q: This is '45 and you're in Switzerland for about six months, am I correct?

A: Yes, six months. I was working in Geneva and then Saint Martin (ph) and then Davos.

Q: And what were you supposed to do for these folks, these people?

A: I was what you call a social worker. My job was as vague as the job of a social worker, which infuriates my daughter, who's an active lawyer. I was a social worker, so I'd would vi-... visit them, cheer them up...take them out, make them walk, and... visit with them. I was with them when they died and I encouraged them to go out, walk and get back into life.

Q: These were not just French... These weren't French citizens?

A: Yes.

Q: They were all French citizens?

A: At that time, they were all French citizens. They were – no, excuse me, there were a few other nationalities, but almost all of them were French. And some of them had tuberculosis and some of them were completely emaciated. I probably fell in love with one. It was absolutely glorious. Switzerland can be glorious. I didn't like them. They would, they would say... what did they say? They had such a terrible sentence. "One of your... one of your deportees..." Oh, what happened is that they stole. They came back from the camp and they had been hungry, and they were in the land of plenty and you would put a marvelous table and they stole from each other. And it was almost instinctive and they did. And the Swiss, I remember them saying to me, "One of you deportees has stolen again." And it really hurt me because it was a complete misunderstanding of who they were. They were like animals; they had been hungry for so long that they couldn't resist. You had to have the understanding that the Swiss didn't. But they had the food. And the fresh air. So that they got better. And they had very good hospitals, very good hospitals, and the hospital care was great. And my job was to be, you know, to come in the room and be fresh and available. And some to them would die and I would call the family and be there when they died and comfort the family and be present at the funeral. The presence was enormous for them at the time, a friendly presence.

Q: And there were five of you from Paris doing this?

A: Hmm?

Q: There were five young women doing this?

A: No, they were sent to different...

Q: Ah, they were sent to different places. And you were the one sent to Switzerland?

A: I was the one sent to Switzerland.

Q: And what happened to the boy you had fallen in love with?

A: I... euh...he died very recently. I kept in touch. I became very friendly to his wife. He was a marvelous fellow. He was not a Jewish deportee, he was a political deportee. And he wasn't from Auschwitz; he was from Mauthausen, which was second worst. Those were death camps.

Q: So, you're there in '45. Have you yet seen photographs, newsreels of anything that happened in...?

A: In Switzerland? [Shakes head]

Q: Before you went, nothing? So, the knowledge that you have is from people telling you what happened?

A: And dealing with them, seeing the way they look and seeing them die. The amplitude of it was there because they had suffered it. But I had volunteered to be taking care of children survivors and that's because there were no children survivors that I had been sent as a sort of compensation to take care of other people who had survived. Then I would accompany the convoy back to France.

Q: You mean, when people would get well, that you would...?

A: When they were feeling well, then I would...

Q: You would take them back.

A: Take them like a nurse.

Q: But you wanted to take care of children, but there were no children...?

A: There were none. I was told there were none, there were not. When you look at history there were not convoys of surviving cases taken care of by the Swiss. There were not.

Q: There were hidden children, but they obviously didn't come to Switzerland.

A: No.

Q: And why did you stop working in Switzerland? You were there for six... Was it only for a certain period of time, or everybody from France was okay, or unfortunately had died and then you came back?

A: Yeah, after six months...

Q: Did you then meet you husband or is it then that you were with UNRRA.

A: It was... in December '45 that I met John for... It was at the end of... It was after my return.

Q: From Switzerland?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: And you fell in love with him... quickly?

A: Right off, as well. But then the other one was in my life, and they met in the subway. I remember, they didn't like each other at all.

Q: The two men you were involved with.

A: Yes, the deportee...

Q: Uh-huh. I see.

A: They didn't like it. I still remember the meeting. They met in the subway, they greeted each other. But there was no...

Q: But they didn't like each other.

A: No, no.

Q: And did you like John immediately better then you liked this other guy? Or were you not sure?

A: The other guy lasted in my life a long time.

Q: He did?

A: In my life, I mean, not in actuality, but in flirting. Because he had been a real hero and that he had a halo that John didn't have. John spending one night on the beaches, it was enough for him, you know, he absolutely loathes discomfort. I don't think he was ever without a real breakfast once in his life. But he still will talk about that night on the sand. And I told you that he would, he would burn a tree and he'd burn the furniture to be warm. No, he was no great hero. But one reason I married John was that he was a strong character. He came from Tulsa and he was a conscientious objector. And in... He had one of his closest friends, I mentioned to you, that Mauricio Freidman, who was a genius, a Jew, was also a conscientious objector, but he was for religious reasons and John was for philosophical reasons. And in Tulsa, they said, "Philosophical reasons, five years of hard labor." So you went to the, the prison where the assassin is, wherever, a prison in

Oklahoma, which is the pits. And he spent one year there. And he got to the library and he started organizing the coming of the books to read. He thought he would cover a lot of reading in five years. And then he was pardoned, and in one day, he was shipped overseas. So, that's the way, you know. But then he had, he had done something with his life. And he is quite a character.

Q: How was he shipped if he was a conscientious objector?

A: Because they pardoned him. They first condemned him for hard labor, and then, after a year, or whoever was the President pardoned him, they got him; the same day, he was shipped overseas to England and then from England to France.

Q: So, you figured this was strong character.

A: Well he, he was. He was and I told you the way he understood the suffering of my mother.

Q: How do you understand...?

A: And he would hide, he would hide rations. You know, we had those beautiful curtains, silk curtains. And after John had gone out, we would look and there were those sardine boxes, hidden beneath the folds of the country curtains. He was generous and he had a feeling for, for suffering, and he had never seen or done anything himself. Except once, we went wherever it was, we went where they have the most... in San Francisco they have a terrible prison. What was the name of it?

Q: Alcatraz?

A: Alcatraz. We went to Alcatraz. We went with a group of judges and John was a top lawyer, and we were there with the judges. And we were in a cell in Alcatraz. And they put you in the cell individually and then they lock, to give you the feel of what it means to be a prisoner in Alcatraz. And John said to me in passing, "I'm the only one in the crowd who knows what it is to be in a real prison with a locked door." For he had spent one year in it.

Q: What, what do you think is, what is it about John that enabled him to understand the suffering that you and your mother went through, or that... what happened? Do you have any idea?

A: Do you call that a big heart? I don't, I don't know. He's a liberal at heart. Anything that smacks of... imposing your will on you because of the race or anything... He was born a liberal, and his family, too. His... our grandparents and his parents just adored each other. They spoke not a word in common and they babbled away, Catholic grandparents. It was a joke! Well, my grandmother had been raised with some English, so she could speak a few words. How you can go with people just on feelings without any vocabulary is amazing, gestures.

- Q: So, did you see John for about a month in December?
- A: Very little, very little. I was heavily dating elsewhere, and it was absolutely spat at to date somebody in uniform in Paris. We were... We'd go to a theater together; we received insults when we would come down the aisle. Really, insults. Because I was dating a soldier. You just did not date the conquering soldier. It was spat upon by the French.
- Q: In spite of the fact that these were soldiers who had...
- A: Oh, the French never liked to be... It is not easy to be liberated by somebody that you do not respect intellectually, and also someone so new. To this day I'm getting the articles about how, the same thing, they think we are young and innocent in a bad sense of the word. So, they were very... antagonistic. So, when we would go out outside, it was courage to go out with a then-American soldier because you did get passing insults.
- Q: So, did you ask him not to wear his uniform? Or he had to wear his uniform all the time?
- A: Well, of course, and I... He was liberating us.
- Q: Did he propose to you very quickly?
- A: He proposed to me very quickly, if you count... He stayed three weeks in France and then they were shipped back to the States. That had been from... He was gone by the time of 27th of January; he left around middle January. So, if you count the time where I am very busy dating, it's December to the third week of January. And then he said he was interested. And then, again, we hadn't touched each other; we hadn't even kissed on the cheek. He had sat by my bed and we had discoursed for a long time in the evening, and what happened and what is what I deeply believe in – I don't know that my children do, but, but that's their lives – I believe that to marry somebody you have to have the same political opinions, if not religious opinions. We were both at ease, and both left – not too far left, but for the poor. Okay? You have two things in common, you have it made. With Toulet (ph), he was Catholic, practicing Catholic and far right. As we said to each other, "We don't need to go out for election, we stay home" and we would cancel each other. We cannot marry and make it, and make a 60-year commitment, as I with John, with somebody who destroys your vote when you go to the voting booth. So that counted a lot. We were really very close, so I said, "No, I am not going to touch, marriage-wise, anybody in uniform." I had seen the French uniform, the English uniform, the German uniform, the American uniform. "You go back home and come back dressed properly." So, he went back to wherever it was in the States, got demobilized, got into his uniform and then he came back. Then he came back and he rang the bell. And my mother, who had cried – Oh, he sent to me from... He came back by boat; at the time we didn't have the planes – So, he sent me a telegram and said, "Reserve the 14th. Signed, the Huron" which is the critical term that Voltaire has for guys from the Pampa. And he came back... Oh, do my dates make sense? He left in December, we wrote to each other, he came back on the 13th of July and the 13th in the evening we were then engaged.

Q: You mean in January he came back?

A: No, no.

Q: Oh, he came back months later?

A: He comes... he came back...

Q: Six months later.

A: Six months later it took him time to get...

Q: Right.

A: Not only out of uniform, to get a job. So, he got a job at the same hotel where they... that had been occupied with the Germans, was then occupied by the Americans and he got a job as an assistant to the Brigadier General, whatever, in charge of American things in Paris. And then he had a job and then the day he was back, we had got engaged. I never believed in waiting. As I said, there is an element of luck, and also, don't let it pass by – grab it. So we did. And the 13th or the 14th we were engaged. And when we were married, the French did not like at all officially the idea that a French woman would marry an American, not done. So they had us wait and the first date we could get was in September, so we were married in September '45.

Q: It's an amazing story.

A: Is it?

Q: Yes, I think so. You hardly know this person! You spent...

A: I knew the essential.

Q: Clearly. That was... you...

A: Okay, you had the physical attraction. I found him handsome... He was making himself available. He was very interested. And we had the same opinion: no God. And the same democratic of the left political view and what there is to, so jump in.

Q: And he seemed a sweet person...and a generous person.

A: And also, also very kind, yes.

Q: Yes, so your mother liked him?

A: Oh, my mother when he called back, no she was de-...devastated at the idea that he was an American. It's 3,000 or 6,000 miles away, her daughter, her only daughter. She had lived with us, you know. We were extremely close. So, when he called, she had opened – she was completely without decency of fear. She had opened the telegram and I had read it right around, so obviously she knew he was coming back. But when he called to ask for the appointment, she said, "Oh, what a surprise!" And he laughed because he knew she was laughing... er, she was lying. But she knew I was going to be happy and it was nice, it was important for her. She had had such a terrible... Oh, at first she would say, "Oh," she would say, "it's only one month." Then she would say, "Oh, it's only three months." Then after that she stopped saying, "It's only..." She knew it was going to work out. And then she became very fond of him, yes. And when she died... she wanted him to, I mean, later on in life when she wasn't feeling well at all, she was as much interested in having him come back to see her as she was in me coming.

Q: That's nice.

A: Yeah, he was a good – and he still is – a good fellow, yeah. It's not easy to live 60 years together. Mostly tail years, tail end years.

Q: What is – what was that, when?

A: The tail end years.

Q: The tail end are difficult.

A: Are not that easy... part of the game. So, it's a life.

Q: What language did you have between you, French?

A: I never know.

Q: [Laughs]

A: I... Don't ask me, because sometimes it's English and sometimes it's French. He would say that it is more French because it flatters him. But I think it's mostly English.

Q: Did you, did you speak English?

A: Not a word.

Q: When you met, not a word?

A: No, but I read fluently. With my background... The French background of school, schooling was very bizarre. You studied language but not a word of spoken language, all literature. So I knew the grammar. I knew the literature very well. And I remember that I expressed myself with a great difficulty. I practically didn't speak a word of English. But

when you have the grammar the vocabulary and what else? And it comes. Three months in the country and you speak fluently.

Q: But when you met in France...?

A: Then he spoke French.

Q: He spoke... and he was fluent in French, clearly... Sort of.

A: Yeah, I mean he has... as our children say, "Both our parents have an accent." I have an accent and he has an accent in French. They don't; they are fluent.

Q: They are fluent. When did you work for UNRRA in Paris?

A: UNRRA? UNRRA is after the war.

Q: Right? Is that, was that between the time you meet John and you get married or after?

A: UNRRA sent something to me, I didn't work for UNRRA.

Q: You didn't?

A: People in my family did, but I didn't, not that I remember. Which is it's very... What does it spell out? United...

Q: That you were visiting survivors in hospitals? Maybe, maybe only, that you only did that in Switzerland?

A: Only in Switzerland.

Q: Only in Switzerland?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: So then, in between the time you meet John and he comes back, are you working? You've come back from Switzerland...

A: I probably was teaching.

Q: Uh-huh. So you went back to teaching? And when he came and you got married, where were you living?

A: 187 Boulevard St-Michel, above the École des Mines, above the Luxembourg Garden. We were the...

Q: So it's near where, where your mother was living?

A: No, no, no, no, no. We sometimes lived with her at first, but as soon as we could, we got our own apartment.

Q: So where was she living now? The old apartment?

A: My mother?

Q: Yeah.

A: During... She was still living in the old apartment. During the time when we lived in Boulevard St-Michel she was visiting us for dinner or... but keeping us... I mean, we were very private; we didn't live with her.

Q: Yeah, but when you were growing up, you were living near Luxembourg...

A: Up 'til 12 years of age, then at Vaugirard and that's where I was caught by the Germans with my mother.

Q: Okay. So how long... You are in Paris with John until 1948? For two years? Three years?

A: Mm-hmm. Yes, and then we came back in '48.

Q: And was it good living in Paris? I mean, your mother must have been very happy that you were there.

A: I guess! We were living in Boulevard St-Michel, we had a maid, I had all my friends. Yes, it was great. It was difficult to let go...

Q: To leave! Yeah, I would think...

A: Yeah, it was a great sacrifice. Mostly, when you consider my culture, my background, that was huge. But you don't realize it until afterwards. I don't think anybody would do it now. Not with my background. I offered for him to stay there and work there and find a job, but he didn't want to.

Q: He didn't want to?

A: No, he should have, but that's after the fact.

Q: And wh-...

A: He had no studies finished. I had earned my degree already, I was already teaching. He was just a student studying at University of Chicago. He had... He wanted to enter law school and he wanted to go to Chicago Law School. So, happily, I have enough degrees and good records that immediately I kept _____, so I went with him.

Q: So you left and...

A: But Chicago, I tell you, when we are in Chicago, he had made a mistake and he drove through a slum area, and to come from Paris and think you are going to live your life... It was a mistake, but it was still overwhelming.

Q: He... You... so he drove you through it?

A: No, it was a mistake. He took the wrong turn. We lived by the university, which isn't that...

Q: Right.

A: ...glorious.

Q: Right.

A: But at least it was an apartment, you know, a graduate student apartment, which was decent. Although the neighborhood isn't very great. But it's mostly nowadays. It was all right back then. But those slums--from Chicago, I don't know if you know them. They are, they are worse than Harlem by a long...

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape #7

Tape #8

Q: Okay. Was your mother very upset when you decided that you were going – both going – to leave Paris?

A: Of course, she must have been. But she was enough of a good mother to realize that by that time, we had been deeply married, and we were really kicking, so that was more meaningful for her. Also, his mother came to visit, and although again there was a complete barrier of language, they liked each other, and she liked how, you know, learned and sedate the mother was. Sort of give her the idea of the stability that she absolutely had not had in her love life.

Q: So you, you ended up having something that she wished she had had, but she never wanted to destroy it?

A: Oh, no she would not.

Q: She did not...

A: She would not interfere.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it's extraordinary because she was completely... she didn't know the word of discretion. You know, when, when we lived together, there was that master bedroom that was the end of a long hall – they are specialist of long halls. That's the only places where they put their clothes is in the long halls. And then, then the bath, she would barge in any time, never thought of it. Don't forget, she had been without a man for all her life. She did not know what married life meant. Or, either she was nosy, or she was very indiscreet. Both of them, true.

Q: So, you come to Chicago and you... John goes to law school. Am I correct? Or he finishes his B.A....

A: Goes to law school and I am accepted for a... with a teaching fellowship for a doctorate in Ancient Greek.

Q: Ancient Greek.

A: And we live in a graduate student apartment. Which is not bad. And I learned to cook.

Q: You finally get into a kitchen?

A: I have to. John was in charge – we shared always, to this day, we do share – so, at the time, he was in charge of the dishes and I was in charge of the cooking. And now, I'm trying to make him in charge of the cooking. 'Cause I think it's, I think it's more

constructive for old age. It's more stimulating for him. I take over the cleaning up and the dishes, which is not much fun.

Q: Was this the first time you were in a kitchen?

A: Where, in Chicago?

Q: Yeah.

A: Probably. I didn't make a huge point of it but I have – I have pictures – I might send you one, where it is obviously he in the kitchen and not I.

Q: Did you like being in the kitchen? Did you like cooking?

A: I had a gift.

Q: You had a gift?

A: My mother, grandmother was a good cook, I told you my mother was a good cook and I turned out to be a good cook. I, yes, I like it because I like to entertain. So to this day, we have friends and I cook. And all the friends know that I am a good cook, so it's a pleasure to come. Good conversation and good food, so...

Q: It can't be better.

A: It's all right.

Q: And why Ancient Greek?

A: It was the field I was the least proficient in. And when I came here I was so proficient in French and in Latin that it would have been ridiculous for me to... And I am glad because it's a one-on-one – at that level, it's a one-on-one relationship for the PhD. So, it would have been devastating to have a relationship – and they were... I didn't like them very much. And they... the little bit of the relationship I had, they already were very resentful that I was so superior. I mean, you think of it, I had had fourteen years of Greek by the time I reached Chicago.

Q: Fourteen?

A: Fourteen, because you start in *quatorzième*, *quinzième*, *seizième*, *philosophie* and then I went through all the competitive...

Q: So, you're saying that the other students were resentful?

A: Yes, and the teachers also.

Q: The teachers.

A: I didn't get along at all well. You know, I had to have special – for a PhD, you have to have, whatever you call it, in each field. You have to have an exam and the French person didn't like it, didn't like me, I felt. It was very difficult to teach me. What is he going to teach me? I remember, I showed some authors and he... he wasn't interested in them. I wasn't the run-of-the-mill student that he was expecting. But – and those were the rough years. The weather was... Talk about yesterday, you know. That plus was the day in and day out.

Q: Cold, very cold.

A: Oh, biting cold and we, we had to cross the Midway. And I told you, that's one thing I don't like is cold. And you could not escape it without a car in Chicago.

Q: So, Chicago was much colder, even though it was extremely uncomfortable during the war. It was not this cold, or was it?

A: Paris, [laughs] when they say they have a cold wave, it's a joke. I told you, there is one inch of snow and the Luxembourg will close its gates. And they take pictures of all the museums with the little statue with a crummy little inch on the shoulders of the statue and they have a snowstorm. No, so even in the depth of it, Paris is livable. Chicago was, was really biting cold.

Q: Were there... I'm assuming there were very few women PhD students in 1948, even in Chicago. You must have been not only a superior student in Ancient Greek, but there weren't, women were not going and getting... a lot of people weren't going and getting PhDs. But certainly not women, so you must have been...?

A: I was, we were isolated. We were very self-sufficient and busy studying and I have pictures in that student apartment where I with my great dictionaries and John with his law studies. We were happy and self-sufficient. I, I don't... I had some...they had some war... He had a G.I. Bill. We lived on that G.I. Bill. And he had some friends in law school who lived in war... it was sort of huts in the middle of Midway. And we thought it was paradise that they had a place. You know, we, we had not really, in the States, a real apartment of our own. But it never was a problem for me not having much to live on, as long as I had the books and studies and John.

Q: How long did it take you to get a PhD?

A: I never finished it. By that time, I was closing in and starting having to write a thesis since I passed all the exams, and I had to pass one in French, which I remember 'cause John said it was a big joke 'cause it took me a long time. He didn't realize it was a test on my English, not just my French. Dr. Smith took off and I was left in the lurch, and at that point, I said, "Look, who needs it? I have a certificate of proficiency in all the fields..." even in German – that's when I studied German. And if I had time, that's what I would

study. I'm fascinated by deepening the German language. I had to study German for the PhD in Greek because many of the learned books on Ancient Greeks are in German. So, I passed the German proficiency exam; it was a written exam not a spoken one. Oh, I remember going to a course and there was a guy teaching the course. And I was distraught at the idea of coming from the war, having to study German, and he began to say something in German to the class and I utterly disliked it. And he sensed it and he called me after class and he said, "Don't you feel that way. I am a Jew. So, you don't have to be so frightened of me." But I was delighted that I had only to write, to know how to read. And I love the literature. And I love the literature... I have to find those books. Anybody that can find those books for me is my love. There was a series of books, nine in number, which are extremely well done by cognates. You, you have to realize that 75 percent of all of the languages have common Greek and Latin roots. So, you start with the literature; it's all written in German. And you read the nine little books and at the end, you are reading German.

Q: Really?

A: And there is no grammar at all; nine little books and no grammar. You have the same in French. I think I have the French series. And it's a very clever way of doing it 'cause you get yourself into it without noticing it. Then you'll be able to read it. So I read it.

Q: Your professor left University of Chicago and they had no replacement.

A: No, no replacement. She was taking a break, but it was really not a moral thing to do. She shouldn't have in the middle of the year then that...

Q: Right and with only one, one PhD student.

A: [Laughs] Well, that's probably why she took the pretext that there wasn't much for her to stay. So, I didn't miss it, you know; I always went by without...All – It's called All But the Thesis...

Q: A.B.D.

A: A.B.D., whatever.

Q: And you, did you stay in Chicago or you moved elsewhere? Did you move east or west?

A: I always found a jobs and we moved with my jobs.

Q: Really?

A: So I wrote and found and we moved wherever I found. And I wrote to the University of Maryland and hop! they jumped at me. So I began teaching at Maryland and we came to the area, and that's the way we started.

Q: And did you love teaching?

A: Not at Maryland. I don't know if I dare say that. The – their student body was very poor. And the faculty wasn't much higher. Johns Hopkins was – I taught at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced Studies – that was interesting – on Massachusetts Avenue. American U. wasn't very interesting either; the teachers were better but the students were still very mediocre. There isn't really... It is not really an area of great universities. It's not very stimulating. But, by that time, I was teaching also in the daytime. Those were only evening jobs, I told you, because by that time we supported both my mother and aunt in their retirement. Their retirement from government was very pitiful so we supplemented it. And I was teaching during the daytime at Mount Vernon College and I – The Greek died, the Latin died, the French at that time began to die off. And they said, "What are we going to do with you?" I said, "There is one thing you don't have." It was '63. "It's a program of Continuing Education." And I opened in the area the first program of Continuing Education for – I called that for women and men. And now the whole college is living out of its programs for women. But it, there was no program for women at the time.

Q: Then how did you come to that? That was a very new idea at that time.

A: Because I was going to lose my job. "How did you come to that?" [Laughs]

Q: [Laughs]

A: That is a very good incentive. I still have the first program. I made it, pasted it by hand. And I was very imaginative. I started, I had started with non-credit courses and I had the most imaginative program in the city. I had a friend of John, and he was a builder, you know, he had built his own house. So, I had a course. And I had another one, he was very good with tinkering with car, a course in auto-mechanics. I had a course in home repairs at the time when, on Foxhall Road, you had, you had people flocking for the home repair. And people flocking for the car repair course. And I had, you know, the bet-... and I paid them very highly as I had been highly paid in France and they enjoyed it. It became humongously successful.

Q: It was very smart.

A: It was a clever idea and I enjoyed it and they enjoyed it.

Q: And when did you have your children?

A: I placed them. I missed, I missed the summer months in both cases. I was a teacher, so three months, that was perfect. Missed both cases and I hit on Christmas. So, I had two Christmas vacations and I had Silvia. My daughter was born on the 21st of December, and I went back to school on the fourth. I never missed a beat. I went to the hospital – I was so pregnant you could have pushed me I would have rolled down the hill – and I had her without pain. I mean, the children were the least problem of my life. And when I had

Olivier, the first one, in Paris, I was in the delivery room and John was outside and he heard the baby cry, and he stopped the nurse and said, "That was, there, there, what's that?" and she said, "You must be teasing me. She's been there for 15 minutes." He said, "Was there, is there another baby there?" She said, "No, I checked and it was..." Fifteen minutes for one and no pain for the other. I had lost the first one. The first one of them all was... lost at birth. It was an abnormal child, and it was devastating. That was '47, devastating to have an abnormal child. It couldn't be... it couldn't be salvaged. It was a *spina bifida*. And they said now that the war deprivation, finally it got to me. It was a lack of certain nutrients in my body, that I could not produce a child with a growth spine.

Q: Uh-huh. Wow!

A: That was difficult, but...

Q: I can imagine.

A: But we didn't miss a beat after that. I waited because we had study years, and I couldn't – I had to wait for five years – but then we did it after that.

Q: But 15 minutes for each.

A: Second, for the second.

Q: Still, even so. That's really...

A: And no pain for Silvia. They would put in my room the other women to, to see what it was like to have a child without... thinking it was anything.

Q: And who took care of the child, your children?

A: I had a maid, a black woman who was devotion... I had checked among my friends. And I checked and we once visited a friend. She had a nursemaid, an old maid that took care of the children, and when the maid left, the children had a tantrum and wanted to go with the maid. I said, [kisses her finger] "This is the one for me." Never mind the degree of whatever the... That's the recommendation and I had that one and she... we lived I don't know where and at 7:30, I left the children knowing the she would be there.

Q: Really?

A: And she was there until... I have pictures of her with Silvia. She was there for years, and I had my mother-in-law living with us. But she never lifted a finger, so it was Annie Mae who took care of the children.

Q: I have two questions to ask you. You're born of a Jewish mother and a Catholic father. I understand that you're an atheist. Do you have – if someone asks you what your

background is – do you say you're Catholic, do you say you're Jewish, or do you say you're nothing?

A: I say nothing.

Q: Nothing?

A: Because it's truly, it is nothing. I cannot claim anything else. I would lie to say I was raised a Catholic because I really... It was built on a false paper that I got when I was 21. And Jewish, I... If you asked me where is a synagogue in Paris, I have no idea and no curiosity. But if my children had married a Jew, I would have been perfectly satisfied. I don't even know what they married. They married somebody who claims to be a Catholic but... And the other one married somebody interesting in that his father – she, she delved into pastor's sons, she loved pastor's sons, I don't know why. She married the son of a pastor and her mother-in-law, the wife of a pastor, never set foot in the church, not even for the baptism of the children did she set foot in the church.

Q: Really?

A: But I never ask what she believes or not but her husband is a pastor. A delight, a very nice guy. My son is divorced, but I remain friendly with his ex, who's the mother of my grandchildren. Also, I have an extremely bizarre trait, once I have loved somebody, I can't stop. I mean, you cannot pull the plug and say, "I am going to the next chapter of my life. You drop this one, and I'm going to be in love with..."

Q: So, you have many loves in your life.

A: I have many people that I have loved for a long time and I hold on to them – not in a possessive way, because it's so far away – but they are still meaningful. I am not a person with different chapters and close doors. I don't close doors.

Q: Does that come from your family you think?

A: Hmm?

Q: Does that come from your family? Is this how your family is?

A: No, remember, my mother...

Q: But your mother was forced to close a chapter in certain ways.

A: Yeah, my father's family... He left... I don't know. It's probably genetic, but I have no idea where it comes from.

Q: You never met your father. You met the daughter, you met Jeannette.

A: I tried to meet... It's a big loss in my life. At the end of the war, in '47, you had the right to ask the Red Cross about anybody around the world, and they would contact that person and give you news and I asked about Pierre Denier. I hadn't heard about him since... '40. I know in '40, I was 18; when I was 18, he married somebody my age. And he must have been an interesting character and I wanted to see him. And I was told that he was dead. And that was a big shock, I remember. And they said he died of lung cancer. And I had never, never even heard talk, anybody talk about the fellow, so I asked my mother, "Pierre Denier" – I never called him father, I always called him Pierre Denier if I mentioned him to anybody – "Pierre Denier, was he a smoker?" She said, "Three packs a day," but I knew nothing about him.

Q: Did Jeannette help you to get...?

A: Hmm?

Q: Did his daughter that you met, your sister...

A: You mean Jeannette?

Q: Yes, Jeannette, did she give you some sense of what he was like?

A: It's interesting. It's interesting because I was very interested in what he was like. And if you follow... If I follow the schedule, he married – he had many mistresses and then he married Jeannette's mother, who is a delight, loved me, I mean, we wrote the letters and it was very funny. And Jeannette said that Pierre Denier died when she was 10 months old. And so we had one picture of Pierre Denier with Michelle as a baby on his shoulder, but he was at a casino – it was because of the game and the women that he was there. And she made the comment – you asked the question – she made the comment, "Do you realize that, out of the three of us, Michelle is the only one who had had her picture with her father?" He really is a character.

Q: So, there is a picture of Michelle?

A: But if you go to... if you go to, to Resistencia _____ in Argentina there is a museum named after him, he became a big scientist. He suddenly blossomed when he was there. And it's funny because I knew several divorced men who ended up in Argentina it was the wild *pampa*.

Q: For Nazis and for refugees.

A: Maybe that, I mean, many people took refuge in the last frontier, and it is an extraordinary and huge country. He felt free, maybe.

Q: Let me ask you one last question. I think it's the last question. Do, do you think that it... that there are... that there's some effect of having been through the war and your experiences on you.

A: That there is some effect?

Q: Effect on you from the war, that you, that you can piece together. Did it change you in some way, did it...? Or is it simply this is just part of what you went through?

A: You know what came to my mind? What came to my mind is that it probably enriched my life. To have thrown at you so many experiences that call for a reaction, it gets things out of you that probably would remain dormant and unused if not for the catastrophe. Does it make any sense?

Q: Yes, it does. Is there anything you'd like to say that you haven't mentioned?

A: [Shakes head] No, I think I am talked out.

Q: You think you're talked out? Well, I can't thank you enough for...

A: I hope you get something out of it.

Q: I, I did. And I'm sure other people will. And I'm really grateful. You're a wonderful storyteller and you have a great story to tell.

[Picture of Nicole as a young woman is shown]

Q: What's this?

A: This is a picture of Nicole looking out of the window. I was 11 or 12 years old. My hair looks very nice but it's a fake. I pretended that my hair was naturally curly; it wasn't. The maid rolled it up with an iron, a curling iron every morning in the kitchen and that's why it is this way.

[Another picture of Nicole is shown]

Q: And this one?

A: This one I cannot date. I must have been 22 or 23. It's taken in a studio. But it had to do with, as I said, installing of the phone, and the... it was a marketing ploy that they invited you to have your picture taken in the studio right afterwards.

End of Tape #8

Conclusion of Interview