

Fred Jarvis

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Summary

Fred Jarvis was born in Freiburg, Germany in 1935 as Manfred Judas. His father's name was Leo, his mother's name was Hilda, and his brother's name was Irving Joseph Judas. His father was a horse dealer and a World War I veteran. His mother was a homemaker. Fred relates a pleasant childhood in a middle-class family of four. He had many friends with whom they had fun playing pranks, fun when his father took him sled riding in the wintertime, had many toys and he played in the spring and summertime with the neighbors. Then one morning the Gestapo knocked on his door, and, at gunpoint, they suddenly had to leave. Fred was five and did not know there was a war going on. His grandmother flushed paper money down the toilet, because they could only take the equivalent of 10 dollars per person. They were brought to the central staging point, a railroad station, where they met several hundred other German Jewish people. That evening they were loaded into cattle train cars and shipped to southern France. They were taken to a concentration camp called Gurs at the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains, a range of mountains that separates France and Spain. They were assigned wooden barracks. Hard labor and starvation killed many people, including his grandmother, Bernadine Sussman. A couple of years ago, Fred visited her grave, and the only thing left of Gurs was a forest they had planted where the camp was and the cemetery. His father was in a nearby camp, also Gurs, separated by barbed wire. Fred could visit him by going through the barbed wire. There were many other children in his barracks with their mothers. The children had nothing to play with. The prisoners were probably all German/Jews. Several times during the day they had to fall out for Appell, (counted the prisoners). His parents tried to get visas to emigrate. His father had a sister in United States but the United States would not admit Jews at that time. Fred was at Gurs for about a year when the family was shipped to another concentration camp, Rivesaltes which was closer to the Mediterranean and very windy. He was together with both parents. His father's brother, Leopold and his wife, Carrie, and their son, Kurt Judas was with them. The starvation diet there was much like Gurs. His father was in charge of horses in Rivesaltes and took a team of horses into the neighboring town of Perpignan several times a week to pick up the mail for the camp at the Perpignan railroad station. It gave him an opportunity if he had any money, or if anybody else gave him a little money, to buy a little food. They stayed in Rivesaltes for about two years. Fred had a cousin named Erik Forst, who was born in Germany and moved to France in 1939 with his mother and sister. He visited them in Rivesaltes, dressed brilliantly like an undercover Nazi. He was dressed in, high thigh boots, in flowery, horseback riding type pants, a shirt, tie, a jacket, and a French beret. He was 21 years old and he visited them frequently with no one stopping him to plan an escape for them. One night, Fred and his parents, his aunt, uncle and cousin went through the barbed wire, to meet Erik in an automobile with a driver. They drove for two nights and days until they reached the town of Caussade where they hid in a small farm. They had one horse, one cow, one dog, chickens, ducks, geese and penned rabbits, which they

ate. They grew corn, potatoes, vegetables, and grapes, as their food. They remained on that farm for seven months until the French police came with the Gestapo, and rearrested them and sent them back to Camp Rivesaltes. The men in his family were placed in the camp's jail. Cousin Erik, his mother and his sister lived in an apartment in the town and got warning from a friend with the police that the Gestapo was coming to pick them up so they escaped over the Spanish border. His parents stayed there until they were sent to Auschwitz via Drancy in June, 1942. Organizations that came into the camps to help people were the Red Cross and the OSE. Fred's mother told him to escape and he was contacted by a 17-year-old girl who worked for the OSE, the Secours Enfant. The girl took him and Kurt to an orphanage in a castle, which probably had about 500 boys, all of Spanish origin, survivors from the Spanish Civil War. Fred learned to speak Spanish from them. A few months later he went to a home in the Alps, which was a closed orphanage where they were given food and health care by older children. They had refugees from Germany and various countries. After that he was taken to an OSE home called Montantan, a castle in the Limoges region with about 600 children. Again, older children took care of them and gave them food and health care. There were religious occasions and they learned Hebrew songs in French. Because of Nazi designs upon the home, the children were taken out and dispersed among the countryside. He and his cousin Kurt were paired off. They were given new names. Fred's name was Maurice Julia and Kurt was (?) Julia and were given a personal history of where they were born and why they came to this area. They were sent us to a small town called Neyron in Ain, about 10 miles outside of Lyon, France's second largest city. They were hidden on a small farm in the area. Madame Burra, a Christian woman, took care of them. They worked the farm, went to church with her on Sundays and attended school. They spoke well enough French not to be able to be found out as Jews. Their story was that they were from Dunkirk and their parents sent them to Madame Burra, their aunt, for safety. They listened to a radio in the attic so had some understanding of the war. (Fred sings a song in French) that he and other schoolchildren sang. Fred was joyous when liberation came in Neyron in September 1944. The OSE came and reclaimed the hidden children, and Kurt was taken to Lyronde, an orphanage in Lyon, and Fred was sent to the Hotesowa in La Chaumiere, an orphanage in the mountains to cure his respiratory ailment. Then Fred joined his cousin and received his first lessons in aspects of being Jewish. His Aunt Hannah Ramsfelder, his father's sister, found him and his brother Joe, in England, and they wanted him to move to England. The aunt wanted to bring him to America and he agreed so he boarded the Ile de France, France's largest luxury liner, and headed to New York City. Neither his parents nor Kurt's were found so they were presumed dead. Forty years later he found out they had gone to Auschwitz where they and were immediately gassed and burned in the crematorium. At a survivors' meeting he found a book by a French lawyer who had found German records and reconstituted them. The book was translated into English the following year and Fred learned into which transport his parents arrived and what happened to them. Fred arrived in NY on May 26th, 1946 and was met at the pier by his Aunt Hannah, her husband and his first cousin Inga Furlish who had survived the war in Switzerland. Inga had come to the United States before him and spoke fluent French and fluent

English and became his translator and close friend. Fred started elementary school with no help from anyone in the languages and then went to junior high school and then to a Vocational High School. There he studied baking and baking technology in the morning and academics in the afternoon. After four years he graduated as a pastry chef and worked as a baker and cake decorator for 40 years, 18 hours a day. He never got a raise so quit the baking union, and started as a baby photographer. After about a year he opened his own photography store, and was a photographer in New York City for 10 years. The synagogue his aunt belonged to in New York City provided free Hebrew lessons for him and Kurt because they were Holocaust survivors and his aunt did not have assets. Fred was Bar Mitzvah in 1948 in Shaare Hatikvah synagogue, an Orthodox synagogue. The synagogue was full of people, and they had a small party afterwards. Fred feels that OSE indoctrinated him in Judaism and it was first in France that he had a firm belief in God. He has not given up his belief in God because of the Holocaust. It has strengthened and reaffirmed his belief, and he feels that the Holocaust was the cost for the Jewish people to reclaim Israel. Fred joined the Marine Corps during the time of the Korean War. At 18 he went through boot camp at Paris Island. He was in artillery, 105s and 155 Howitzers and was also a rifleman. He was sent to Korea after the armistice and became a chaplain's aide for the Jewish Marines. When he returned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, he became acting Jewish chaplain and had 2,000 Marines in his congregation. He wore sergeant stripes but had officers' plates on his car, slept in the officers' quarters, and ate in the officers' mess. When he came to the US his name was Manfred Judasa and he became Fred Jarvis when his uncle sent him to school. Fred was very upset that his name was changed because he wanted to have his father's name. In the Marine Corps, he reclaimed his name but was taunted by a lot of people because of it and being a Jew. When he was discharged, he legally changed his name back to Fred Jarvis which he used when he got married and raised two children. He spent 14 years in the Marine Corp including four years in active duty and 10 years in the reserves. He returned to being a baker when he came back into civilian life. He made cakes for stage, screen and television in NY including Ed Sullivan. Fred returned to Rivesaltes twice as it had been a very important part of his life. First, he wanted to see Gurs and then he wanted to go to Rivesaltes but could not get in so went to Caussade, where he had been hidden on a farm. In 2008, he read that the French government had purchased around 40 acres of the Rivesaltes concentration camp and planned to build, with the partnership of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a 40 million dollar memorial to the former prisoners. He wanted to see what the camp looked like before they built a memorial so he visited and took between 1500 and 2000 photographs. There was nothing recognizable left in Rivesaltes after 65 years. He also went to Auschwitz, to see where his parents were murdered, and photographed everything he could. His photography business was in the Bronx, and they burned the Bronx down, including his business. He was unable to start business in other boroughs so moved to North Carolina, and bought a bakery, and a restaurant, and he worked that for 10 years, and then his wife left him. He moved from North Carolina to Rockville, Maryland where he met his present wife, Mary, a gentile lady who had six children, Mary's children had a business in Tennessee, and Fred and Mary decided

to retire there. After they built a house in Whiteville, Tennessee, her children moved to Bristol, Tennessee, where they bought a business. Fred worked in Whiteville until he lost the business there and then went to work in Bristol. He traveled 200 miles round trip every day until he had an accident and decided to move to Bristol. There he enjoyed working for King Pharmaceuticals for 20 years. He is connected to the small Jewish community there which celebrated their centennial. Fred was chairman of the centennial committee and invited Elie Wiesel among others. Upon Wiesel's influence, Fred has spoken at local schools and churches about his Holocaust experience for the past five years. Upon conclusion of the interview, Fred shows photographs:

- 1) A photograph of his family. On the right is his father, Leo Judas, on the left his mother, Hilda Judas. In the back is his older brother, Irving Joseph Judas, and in the front himself, Manfred Judas. This photograph was taken in Freiburg, Germany, in 1939, shortly before his brother was sent on the final kinder train to England.
- 2) A photograph that was presented to him by his aunt shortly before she died. His father's face was in complete shadow, but they were able to remove the shadow. The gentleman in the front on the left-hand side on a horse is his father and it is a military parade after World War I. His cousin Erik is on the right and Erik's sister Ilse on the left.
- 3) This is a photograph taken in Rivesaltes, probably in 1941. On the left-hand side is his father, and on the right side is his father's brother, Leopold Judas, and in the center is his Cousin, Erik Forst who probably did not survive the war.
- 4) This is a photograph of Madame Burra in Neyron, France at her small farm.
- 5) This is a passport photograph of his first cousin, Kurt Judas. This photograph was taken by a professional photographer in the city of Lyon, France.
- 6) This is Madame Burra with her goats, in Neyron, Ain, France.
- 7) This is a picture of Fred and his aunt, Hannah Ramsfelder in the United States.