

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**  
**RG-50.030\*0533**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Andre Zalc, conducted by Peggy Frankston on July 23, 2009 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in New York, NY and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## **ANDRE ZALC**

### **July 23, 2009**

Question: This is the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview conducted by **Peggy Frankston**, with Mr. **Andre Zalc** on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 in **New York City**. Thank you for coming today Mr. **Zalc**.

Answer: Yeah, so – so I start with my parents and where they come from and everything else?

Q: And can say when you were born?

A: Yeah, yeah, I'm born in **Antwerp, Belgium** in 1931, in December 1931, 27 December 1931, and first the reason – shall I start with the second World War, where – when I went to **France** and everything, and then later I'll talk about my parents, okay?

Q: Start with your childhood.

A: Yeah, yeah. I'm – I'm wa – I went to school in – in **Belgium**, in Flemish school. The only language I spoke when I was a kid was Flemish and Yiddish, Yiddish, because – and then I lived there since 1940 and – and in 1940 the war broke out. And I – when the war broke out, I saw the – the mobilization, the – the Belgians were trying to defend the country and they were mobilizing the people on the street, and were mobilizing the horses, everything. And they – they were preparing for the – for this – for the war. And a couple days later – my uncle had a bakery, and they

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

decide of going to fra – of leaving **Belgium** because of the war. And they – and they – and – and – and they got the tickets for all – for the entire family to go to **France**, and the next day we left **Antwerp**, we left everything and we went to **Brussels**. And in **Brussels**, there were like a – a lot of people mar – was a – was a rush to the railroad station, and up the – we – we had to go from the **La Gare du Nord** to **La Gare du Midi** in **Brussels** to go to **France**. And it was a – a – an – at a – at the railroad station in **Brussels**, we got on the train, and the train left for **France**. And we had our suitcases and everything, we wore our clothing, with all kind of things. And we went to – and the train took off, and the – everything was in the – in the – on alert, no? And a lot of people had gas masks. The f – the Flemish people, the Belgian people had gas mak – gas masks, but the – the Jewish population, they were considered as foreigners, because their parents were not born in **Belgium**, so they didn't issue them gas masks, so we were without gas masks. And the train was supposed to go to **Paris**, but **Paris** was already in a state of alert, and everything was closed up, so the train passed by **Paris** and went to the south of **France**. And our – and on the – on the way, after we left **Paris**, the – there – the German planes o-overflew the – the – th-the train and bombed – and bombed. And one train got hi – the tr – one of the c-car of the train got hit, so they distr – dislocated the train and they left this, th-the bad part of the train, they removed it from the rails and they

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

reconnected the train, and we – and wa – and we ke – and we kept going towards south of **France**, where wa – south of **France**. And on the – on the – on the road, the train stopped a couple times, and they gave us food. They ga – they gave us bread and little can of **pâté de foie, pâté de foie** they gave us, and that was our food until we got to **Toulouse**, to **Toulouse**. In **Toulouse** th-the train took another road, another, and we went to [**indecipherable**] that's near **Montpellier**. And up there we – we got off the train, and the people were – made dinners for us. They had like – outside – outside the railroad station was big tables and they – they gi – they made food for us. And they – and we all ate, and then they took us to places to sleep, was like garages, big garages, and like where depot where they – where they kept merchandise. They removed the merchandise and they made mattresses so we could sleep. So we slept there and they – they fed us, and they gave us – they helped us, they gave us clothes and everything. And we stayed there for about maybe two weeks. And then the French army was in retreat. The French army was in retreat and the French army came into town and they took over the school. And they made food, and they fed us too. The French army fed us too. And then I saw – then they had big lines, and the – them – the f – the French government made an armistice with the German, half of **France** wer – **France** wa – became divided. Half of **France** went over to the Germans, and the other fr – part of **France** was free, was a

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

part of **France** which was free. And we remained in the free part. And then the French army, they wanted the – they gave all the weapons, they rounded up all the weapons from the French soldiers, and they turned the – they put it on a little truck, and they – and it went to the – to the armistice line. They gave it to the Germans, the weapons, they surrendered, the French surrendered, and the French was left – the fr – army was left without any weapons, yeah. They g – they g – sur – ga – surrender all the weapons to the enemy. And – and then we remained in **France** there, and the free French, and – and then a lot of – a couple weeks later, a lot of – a lot of people th – the – went back to **Belgium**. They repatriated a lot of people because they had the armistice, so they had no more war, so they repatriated a lot of people. So most of the Flemish people, the Christians went back to **Belgium**, and some – and the Jews remained in **France**. Some Jews went back too, you know? And my family remained in **France**, so we – we decided to go to **Toulouse** to look for an apartment. And when we went to **Toulouse** we got arrested in the streets, from the French **gendarme**. They arrested us in the street, and they asked us a paper. And my father showed the paper and th-the poli – the **gendarme** said, oh, they are Polish, they are **Polonais**. We said wa – they asked us what we are doing, we looking for [**indecipherable**]. So he says yeah, **Po-Polonais**, so he says, the wi – the woman is **Polonais** too, because she is married to him, she must be Polish too.

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

So my mother didn't want – didn't want to be Polish. So she start f – arguing with the police that she's not Polish. So my father said, in Jewish, he says, don't – leave it alone, because they don't understand the difference anyway, between Polish and Russian, they're French, you know? So she insisted she didn't want to be Polish, so it started a fight. So the pa – the **gendarmes** said, wh-what is going on, what they fight? So we – we said, because she don't want to be Polish. Oh, she says, okay, so – so that ended the argument and they took us to a – to a special camp, it used to be called reci – **Recebedou**. And in that camp, they would treat us very nice, they gave us even hot chocolate for the kids, we – they gave a hot chocolate and everything. And we stayed there about maybe a – a couple weeks in that camp, and they gave us where to sleep and food and everything, because it was for the foreigners. The French kept the foreigners on the side, they didn't want to be – they – mixed with the foreigners, the foreigners, they had their own place for the foreigners, they had camps for the foreigners. And then from **Recebedou**, they took us to a camp, it's called **Brenz(ph), n-a-r-b**, in th – **France**, and it was an island. You had to cross a bridge to get there. And on that island was surrounded with – with rivers, very strong rivers. You couldn't swim in the river. When you threw a piece of wood, the piece of wood just – the river used to take away a piece of wood and break it, you know, it was like very, very strong river. So we stayed in that camp of **Brenz(ph)**,

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

we stayed maybe four or – four or five months. And from – from **Brenz**(ph) they took us to **Rivesaltes**. They – they may – had trains coming in and they loaded all the people. It was like a – wagons, you know, for the horses, like, and they took us to **Rivesaltes**. And the **Rivesaltes** was by the coast, by the sea. And – and **Rivesaltes** was a – a strong camp with – with a – a wire, you know, it was – and had guards with rifles and everything. And – and **Rivesaltes** is separate the women from the men. The women went to a different part of the camp and the men to a different camp. And there was no school or nothing, and we – the kids, we used to play together and oh, every day was the same. And the camp had a lot of lice. After being there about a week or two, we were like loaded with lice. The lice went in the clothes, and where the – where the clothes is stitched, that's where the lice used to hide. And the – it was very un – we used to scratch all day, you know, and finally we used to find the lice and kill the lice. And there was no food. The f – every day the kitchen – we had three meals a day, breakfast, we had the little piece of Swiss cheese, with bread, and at lunchtime we had **navet**. **Navet** is called – is – it's turnips. It's turnip soup and a little – very – not even bread, turn – only turnip soup. And a – in the night, about six o'clock, we had another soup, turnip. Turnip soup. And we used to eat that every day, that was the food. And – and then we used to come back to the barracks. The water – well, there was no water in the barracks,



**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

you had to go like about maybe a har – 200 meters from the barracks, there was water. And we used to have like a – a – an empty si – can of – a ration can, you know, from the food. And in there we used to keep our water, we used to put a wire round, and that was our water. Okay, we used to wash too, we used to wash up there. It was cold water, there was nothing else. And we had no soap either, there was no soap. And we used to use that water a – for – for drinking, everything. And – and then it used to get very windy in the camp, like from the sea, from the **Mediterranean**, used to get very windy. That way, you walk down to the barracks, you couldn't stay out long, the wind used to – used to blow you. Used to blow you away. So we – we remained in the barracks most of the time. And it was a army barracks from the French army from years ago, from the second World War. That's why they kept the French troops, used to come from north **Africa**, where they used to – used to come to help **France** fight the war. And – and the – the guards used to – used to watch, there was no way of – out of the camp. And then my father, they used to take the men for hard labor. The men we used to see how they walked them to – to work every day. And the – and the – we kids, we used to play, you know, we used to play in the camp. And – and they – one kid used to tell stories. He – and he used to make te – he – about the cowboys, and he used to make the noise like the horse. He was like – he knew how to tell a story and make the sound too, from the –

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

the – how the horse runs and everything, you know? And he was like the main – the main kid who used to tell the stories. Every day used to tell different stories of different movies. That was our entertainment, no? And – and – and then my – and then my father got a job as a – I was – I was in the barrack with my father, and – because the women were in different side of the barracks. And in the camp was also a – a si – part of the camp were Gypsies, Gypsies. And the other part of the camp were Spanish people from the Civil War. They were like big numbers, the Spanish people from the Civil War. There were maybe in the thousands. And – and my father got a job as a plumber, out fixing the roofs, he was a roofer too, so he used to fix the roof. And in – in between, he knew how the – the – the road of – of escape from the camp, he used to know the road of escape. So he used to – some people used to pay him, and he used to take them out of the camp and he used to make a couple dollars, used to buy a little food outside and bring it back. He had like a little carriage from the – from our sister, little carriage on four wheels, where the kids sit in there, you know? And in there he used to smuggle food on the way back, you know, you know? And I – I stayed in the camp for about a – about a year I stayed in the camp, and tow – towards the end, he told me that he's gonna leave, because somebody squealed at them that he takes out people. So I told him, take me with you. So he said no, it's too dangerous, I can't take you with me. So I insisted and he

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

took me with – with him, and then on the – on the way out, he took out an old woman – no, no, an old man, a woman, and a – and a – 45 - 50, and a – a little boy from that woman. And the woman had family in **Marseilles**, so – so we went – she knew – she told us, when we get to **Marseilles**, we can stay by her brother, okay, he lives in **Marseilles**. So we're – at night – we got out at night, and the truck came in, and they saw us leaving, they fired at us, we – we – we got in the – in the ditches, and n-nothing hit us. And th-the smoke of the truck, the dust of the truck on the sand blinded – blinded the people on the truck, and we made it to the town **Les Papiniere**(ph), a small town, and up there we got a train. We got a – we got on the train and my father paid some money to the – to the guy in charge of the train, like the railroad chief. He gave him some money and we – we left, we got to **Marseilles**, and we pass **Carcassonne**. And I remember **Carcassonne**, the walls of **Carcassonne**. And we get to **Marseille**, we couldn't get out of the rail – of the railroad station because the – the railroad station was all guarded with – with the – the French gar – the **gendarme**, and the people from **Vichy**, the guards. They're all guarded. So we had to go to the restaurant, and we had to – the women knew who to ask for, a name – a m – a man named **Harry – Harry**. And he is – was a waiter in the restaurant. And we got to h – and we got him, and he told us, just have your coffee, and I'm getting a cab and we're gonna – gonna take us out of the railroad

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

station. And then we got on the cab, and we – we got out of the railroad station and [indecipherable]. And we got out and we got to his house, and they made something dif – to eat in the house for us, and there – his wife took me, she was g – to buy bread. She took me with her to shi – and she took me to the – to the bakery, and I-I was like a dream, because I didn't see bread for more than a year, I didn't bread like that. And the smell, and the ra – in the bakery was like unbelievable. And then we bought some bread, we took it home, we ate. And we start living in **Marseilles**. And in **Marseilles**, we stayed like a couple days by those people, and then we went to – we got a room in the Hotel **Delavain**(ph). That was the hotel in r – in – in **Marseilles**, where most of the foreigners used to go and sleep there. And – and the hotel used to be also raided by the French police – by the French police. And my father was a plumber, he knew the building, and he knew in the – in the wall, or in the ceiling there's a empty, like – was like a attic. So we slept in the attic. We slept in the attic, and in the night, they came and they took a lot of people from the hotel, they arrested a lot of people, but we lived in the attic, and they didn't – they didn't get us, in the attic of the room. And we stayed in the – in this Hotel **Delavain**(ph) a ca – a couple weeks, and then he got – my father got work in – in the region of – of **Aix-en-Provence** by the – by **Tresse**, he got the job there as – as

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

a **bûcheron**, is a – is a – to cut wood and – wood no – how you call that in English again?

Q: Lumberjack.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And he start working in the – in the woods, cutting in the woods, and I was left in **Marseilles**, and every week he used to come back to see me, and used to give me a little money to actually buy food. And I used to eat in the a – in the **Salvation Army** by the nuns. For one **franc** they used to give you a dinner. They used to give you a soup. And once you ate that soup, you were not hungry all day no more. And then I made my – I met some little f – little kids, friends, I made myself some friends. And they used to take me home to the house, the friends, because I was living all by myself in the hotel there. And the – the mother used to wash me, she noticed I'm dirty. She used to wash my face, and comb my hair. And I got myself like little friends, sometime I slept by them. And I stayed there maybe about two months in **Marseilles** until a – an-and I used to go to the **o-zay**(ph), to the **o-zay**(ph), they used to – they used to give me some money to buy food, and things like that. And **R-Rue de Talli**(ph) it was. **Rue de Talli**(ph) in **Marseilles**. And they used to – and I used to eat in the **Salvation Army** until they – they told me they gonna take me to – to a place where – where I'm gonna be taken care of. So – so after – after couple weeks, I – my father came and I told him I'm

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

gonna go, he said good. So I'll be working there, and once you get there, you write to me. You write to me, to **Tresse**, you know. And a – a – a – a – when th – and they gave him the address where I'm gonna be. And this woman, like a – I showed you the picture of, she took me there and she left me there. And I was very unhappy to be there, because I didn't know where I was. And that woman, Mademoiselle – Mademoiselle **Milan(ph)**, she stayed with my mother, **Milan(ph)**, and she took over. And I became her like – her – I became her – I say I live in there by her. And – and Ma-Mademoiselle **Milan(ph)**, I went – she took me to school and she – and a – I became – she took me and she – she got me in the fr – in French school in the town there. But I couldn't speak French, I learned French there by Mademoiselle **Milan(ph)**, and – and I stayed by Mademoiselle **Milan(ph)**, me and her, and there was a dog, too, a dog. And then later – later her sister came to live with us, and she brought her two sons. She came from **Nancy – Nancy**. And she lived with us in **Jellafi(ph)**. And in **Jellafi(ph)** – in **Jellafi(ph)** I – I went to school and I learned the language, she has a lot of friends who came to the house, and she had a maid too, who used to cook the food, and the made name was **Mart(ph) – Mart(ph)**. And – and then Mademoiselle **Milan(ph)**, at every month she used to make me go home with the maid. The maid come from a little town in the mountains, from a farm. And there wa – in just days she couldn't buy food in the store, like – like ham, and

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

meat. So I used to go home with her, and the maid used to [**indecipherable**] I stayed by the maid a couple days at the farm, and when we used to come home from the farm, back to the Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph), she used to load the – load the – on the – on the back, you know, on the – on – in the rucksack, she used to load the food, and we used to bring home the food because in those days you couldn't buy food in the store, there was no food. You needed tickets for food, yeah. So we used to bring back some food from there. And then I got used to the – to her boys from her sister, and from the – the neighbors, **Cushinaire**(ph). That was the – that was the people who came to live by Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph). That was her sister, yeah, yeah.

**End of File One**

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

**Beginning File Two**

A: So in school – in school at that time, the ruler of **France** was **Marshal Pétain**. And all the kids – all the kids in school had to – used to get a picture from **Marshal Pétain**, and they used to have to write a letter to **Marshal Pétain**. And – and then he used to send th-the kids a picture on a white horse. And also the – the letter was to go to **Marshal Pétain** was also – in secrets, they used to know how many kids go to school, what their names was, and everything. It was like – like a giveaway. So – so everybody wrote a letter and I wrote a letter too, but I never got an answer, because the principal must have torn up my letter, because he was – Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph) had a – used to know him very good, and she must have told him, don't send a letter from the kid to **Marshal Pétain**, because, you know, it's gonna be a giveaway. So wa – I never got a picture from **Marshal Pétain**. And as a kid I felt – I felt bad, so the principal gave me an extra letter he had, and it – it was a – was a picture where it had on the – on the – **Marshal Pétain** on the white horse. When you are a kid that means a lot to you, you know, yeah. So – so I went to school in that school, and everything was nice in school there, and every morning in school in those days, you had to sing **La Marseillaise**. They used to put up the flag. If you came late, you couldn't go in the yard, you had to stay outside the school until the – they sing the **Marseillaise** and they put up the flag. Was very pu – patri – patriotic



**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

s-school. So I went to this school, and a yo-younger kid from **Cossionair**(ph) went to school with me, went to school. His brother didn't go to school with me, he went to **Montélimar**, to a private school. So – so then, a little bit later is –

**Cossionair**(ph), the father was a commander in the French army, and he was a prisoner in **Germany**, and the German government released a lot of – a lot of French prisoners, all the officers, they were released. So he came back and we had to pick him up in **Montélimar**, we had to pick him up. And when we picked him up, he came with other prisoners, but their uniforms were all torn up, they only had one uniform. And when they were in camp in **Germany**, they wore that uniform. So when he came home, his to – his uniform was all torn up. And I remember that, that we picked him up and we brought him back home. At home he took off his uniform and he wore regular clothes, and he could play piano. On the weekend he played piano, was a – was a nice atmosphere in the house. And then – a-a-and then in the – in the – in the summer, some other kids came to – to stay with us. All are kids from French officers, from French officers. They came for the summer because their parents were busy, so they came, they had like a vacation with us, you know. And the house was very nice, around the house was a lot of chestnut trees, chestnut trees. And we used to – we used to take the chestnut and eat the chestnut. And – and we used to play games outside, you know, with a ball, you know, the – called **ba-**

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

**balloon prisonnier**; was a special game we used to play. Th-They had two party, like the two camps, and the ca – the guys in the middle, they were in the middle and we had to hit them with the ball, you know, yeah, it was like a football, you know, like a big ball. And it was very nice there, but th-the – I got along very good there with the – the – the – the big boy who used to come back for – in the summer, he had no school. He was – he wanted to be the boss of everybody, and if you didn't listen to him, you had friction with him. I used to get into fights with him sometimes, you know. **Bernard**, his name was. But – and then later, maybe a couple weeks later, a kid came from – he was a son of a French officer, a navy officer, and he slept in my room. And he – I got friendly with him, and he saw that I have friction with **Bernard**. So he said, well – well, what does he want from you? I say, he wants to be the boss. He said, leave him up to me, you know. Because there was a – a girl came from **Paris**, and she – **Bernard** used to – used to be like his cousin, but the gi – the fr – the kid from the French officer who came – stayed with us, he liked – he tried to make conversation with the girl, and **Bernard** got mad at him. So that caused – caused friction, so he had a fight with **Bernard**, and after that **Bernard** became like a – like a lamb, he didn't – he had no more power, you know, because he took over the power, know? And he was my friend, he slept with me in the room, you know. And we used to – we used to get a – a ba – a wash once a

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

week, the – a – a shower. The – the dau – the sister of Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph) used to be in charge of lam – washing the kids once a week, you know, we used to get the shower. And the rest of the week we washed – washed our teeth by hand, you know, with cold water. And – and I stayed by Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph) like about almost two years, you know, almost two years I stayed with her. And my father used to write to me letters. It was in the – in Yiddish, but not written in Hebrew, was written in Latin, know? [**indecipherable**] So I used to get those letters from him, and then – and – and then they deci – my mother got out of the camp and she joined my father in **Tresse**, and I was then – I was – they brought me back to – they send me back to **Tresse**. And when I left, I didn't see Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph). She was a – because she actually thought I was her son after a while. She's a – knit things for me, sweaters and everything. And when I left, I left with a sister-in-law of a sister, who came to stay with us, and she took me to **Marseilles**, to [**indecipherable**] and I met my mother there, at the railroad station. She came to **Marseilles** to pick me up with **Lucie**. And my mother couldn't speak French, and I couldn't – I had forgotten the Jewish – Yiddish, you know, I'd forgotten Yiddish. So I couldn't – I had a hard time speaking to my mother. I spoke in French and **Lucie** translated. **Lucie** learned French, you know, she [**indecipherable**] and **Lucie** translated to my mother, and it took me a couple weeks to get back to the language,

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

to Yiddish, to speak, because my mother didn't speak Flemish, she spoke only Yiddish. I spoke Flemish because I learned Flemish as a kid in **Belgium** in school. So – so I came – I came to **Tresse**, and in **Tresse** – I – I went to school in **Tresse**. And I had to – I – my Mademoiselle **Milan**(ph), they spoke of – her – th-they had a Parisian accent in their French. So when they heard the Parisian accent, the kids used to make fun of me like I'm a Parisian. So it took me months to get back to – to get – to get back the accent of – to get the **Marseilles** accent, you know, like the kids in school. And then I was part of the kids in school, you know, the – the French accent. So then a – ash – in tre – in **Tresse** I stayed, since I came back from Madame **Milan**(ph), maybe four or five months, and then the **ozay**(ph) came to us, and they took me and **Lucie** and they took us to **San Raphael** to – for – for the summer, for two months. So I went to [indecipherable] in **San Raphael** in the – in the – I forgot the name of the – of the camp in **San Raphael**. You – you remember the name?

A2: Villa **Marianne**.

A: Yeah, Villa **Marianna**(ph). And up there was a nice villa, where every day we used to go to the beach to swim. But we had no food, it was hu – we were hungry. And at the beach, we used to wait for – French couples used to come on the beach, and they used to have melon. And when they li – left the place where they stayed,

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

the blanket and everything, they left the melon, you know, cut, the melon. And when they cut the melon, they just cut the top, and there was like melon left. So we used to take that and eat that. That was – that was a – a big thing to us to grab the melon from the people when they le – when they left. And in **San Raphael**, we – we used to go to school, we had to march to school, maybe about four miles every day to school. We had to march in – in steps. If you didn't march in steps, the – the **cadres**(ph) who used to wa-watch you, they used to hit you, you know? One day I had the fight with one of the **cadres**(ph). Because I wasn't in step, he got mad at me and we had a big fight. And another **cadre**(ph) came and he fou – he helped him hit me, you know, like – had like a big fight with him. And in school, we used to eat lunch in school, we used to br – they used to give us a sandwich in school, used to – used to take with us a sandwich. And in school there was the kids who came from the farms, and they had big sandwiches. So we used to give them marbles sometime and they used to give us a sandwich, because they were not hungry, the kids from the farms. So I used to have a kid who used to give me his sandwich. And I used to give him marbles, different things, bells. And then finally one day he came to school, he wouldn't give us his sandwich. Cause the sandwich, I used to split it with my other buddies from the – from the – from the Villa **Marianna**(ph). So – so he [**indecipherable**] I say, why didn – why didn't you give us sandwich? He said, my

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

mother says I shouldn't give to m – the sandwich to strange kids, because you people are not French, she say, you know, like he was a little racist. So – so, when he threw away the sandwich, I got him, and it was like a big barrel in the yard, and I – I pushed his head in the barrel, you know, in order to get the sandwich. So he told his mother that I roughed him up, because we took the sandwich from him. So the mother came to school. In those days there was no gasoline, they had horses, and the mother had a nice carriage with a horse like a racing horse, and she had a whip, an umbrella, and she had her – her father on the carriage too. But the father was senile, he was very old. He was on the horse too. And she went to the principal, and sh-she argued with the principal that we beat him up, the kids from the Villa **Marianna**(ph) beat him up. So I had to go to see the principal. So the – the principal said to me, what's the matter? How come you hit him beca – and took his sandwich? So I said no, he gave us his sandwich, then he didn't want to give us his sandwich no more. So we – we were hungry, so we took the san – so the principal explained to the mother that the kids in – in the – in the home, they don't have too much food, so they dependent on that sandwich. And he – he gave a – he gave them the sandwich and then he stopped giving us the sandwich. So the principal made before that, all that stuff happened, he made conversation with me, and he was in the second World War in **Belgium** as a soldier, a French soldier. And he was very

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

friendly with me because h-he knew **Belgium**. So he explained to the mother that she gotta speak to the son, it's not – they're not malicious kids, they're like hungry, you know? So the mother changed – changed, and she told the kid to give us a sandwich. So, since that time, we used to get a sandwich from the kid. It was a big, big country bread. Th-The French used to make bread, round bread like that, like the Italian country bread, y'know? And the m – he used to give us a sandwich, and ri – in the beginning we didn't want to take a sandwich, we didn't want no trouble with him. He said, no, no, no, the principal knows about it, you can take the sandwich and have your sandwich. My mother said I should give you the sandwich. So there was a – a success there with the sandwich, you know, in that school. And then a – and then a – at – I stayed there maybe another month, and then I went back to **Tresse**, to my – to my father and my mother. And – and I used to – I used to go see my father in the mountains, you know, where he used to cut the woods? And that became like the – the resistance. It became like a stronghold of the resistance. And then one day – my mother used to give me food to bring to my father, you know, like food that she made that he liked. And I w – I was on the way to leave town to go to the mountains, a German patrol were in town, German troops. And the patrol, they went with me for awhile, you know, and they ask me where I'm going. I said to, you know, my grandmother, I'm going to see my grandmother. So,

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

th-they walked a little bit with me. Maybe somebody squealed that I'm going to see my father. So – so the – the German patrol, the German officer heard like noise in the bushes, because there was a lot of lizards there and even snakes. So he says in German, I understood what he said, he says [**speaks German here**]. Let's – let's go back. Let's not go with them, because it's dangerous areas, like a jungle, he said. [**speaks German**] It means it's like a jungle. So he – th-the German patrol stayed in town, they ac – they walked a little bit with me, maybe 200 meters, and then they went back. So I went by myself up to the mountain. It was a big climb, was like maybe four or five hours until I got up there. And at that time, they derailed a German train. And when they derailed the German train, there were sardines, they captured a lot of sardines and weapons. There was trains going to **Italy** that they derailed. And there were – there were – the train had sardines and sweet milk, because the German women who used to go to **Italy** to meet their husbands, who were in the German army, used to have sweet milk for their babies. And when they derailed the train, the French resistance captured a lot of sardines and the sweet milk. So up there I used to eat bread with sweet milk and sardines. And then my father gave me some sardines in a jar, in a jar, sardines, because he didn't want me to bring the cans in town, then th – th – if they find the cans, they will know that they derailed the train. So he says, and when you're finished eating the sardines,



**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

you bury the jar. So I did that, I buried the jar. But I didn't bury the jar deep enough, so the next week, German troops came and they surrounded the town, and they made – they took us all on the **Place de la Gare** in the town, and they used to search the houses for the – search the houses for weapons, because they know in the town there's resistance who derailed the train. So th – so I buried that – the jar on the – on my landlady's yard, next to us where we lived. And he used – he went with the dog on the yard, and the dog smelled the sardines, so the dog was barking. So he didn't want to dig up the yard, you know, the sardine there, so he says to the dog, **du verrückt hund**. It means, you crazy dog, why are you smelling here? **[indecipherable]** and he kicked the dog. And – and the dog cried a little bit, and he l – he left with the dog. But if he would every **undug** that place, he would have find the jar from the sardine, and that could have been dangerous. So the Germans, all day they kept the people prisoner, and they searched the houses, but they didn't find nothing, so they left, they left. And then – and then we st – in the town we ast – we – we stayed under the German occupation. And they came – they didn't come all the time, the German, they came once in awhile, and they – but a lot of Germans went through town to go to **Italy**, the German convoys. They went to **Italy** to fight the war, they were fighting the Americans and the British in there. And then they landed in **Normandy**. They landed in **Normandy** and then – the south of **France**

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

was still occupied until August – until July the 15<sup>th</sup>, they landed in **San Tropez**, and they – and they came up towards – towards **Tresse**, but they stayed on the national road. **Tresse** was liberated by the resistance. And then the [**indecipherable**] papers [**indecipherable**] you called, that the people should go to the mountains, should go to the mountains because the town is gonna have – can be fighting in the town. So the entire population went to the mountains, the civilian population. But the people went to the mountain, they had food with them. And then we went too, my mother, my two sisters, my father was in the mountain, he didn't go with us. So we went to the mountains. So we stayed there about two days, and we had no more food, so my mother says, take the wheel carriage from your sister, you know, the carriage, and go to town an-and get us – bring some food. In the – in the closet, I got some chi-chi beans, you know, some the beans, and – and some melons. And take it, take it o – so we have enough food until – until the liberation, you know. So I got to town, and as I got to town with a friend of mine, a kid, he came with me, the town was all empty. It was like a no man – like a – like you see from the – in the town of the cowboys where everybody's gone. So we got to town, and we got to the house and we loaded the wagon with the food, the melons and the – and the beans, and as we want to go get out of the house, two German armored cars come in, and they – and they go – they o – they – all the bars were locked, yeah, so they go to one the bars,

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

restaurant, and they ripped the doors open. They ripped the doors open and they take out the drink and they put the table outside and they start drinking, the Germans, you know? And they were the Germans who were supposed to protect the town, maybe about 30 Germans with – had – with the machine guns, the – all, you know, ready to – to fight the war. So my friend say, what we gonna do now? We can't get out. He said, we stay here until night time, at night time, we'll get out of the town at night time. So we stayed there until it got dark. And as I walked out, the – the carriage made noise, because there was no oil. It made eh, eh, eh. So – so he says, what are we gonna do, it makes too much noise. So we – we picked up the carriage and we dragged it a little bit, but then we let it down again, and it made noise. The Germans heard the noise, they came running with the machine guns in the dark. We saw them. As kids, you can see good at night. So – so w-we walked up the hill, we had to – from the fountain, we had to walk the hill towards the mountain. So we saw the German pointing at us, and he – he starts shooting. So we left the carriage go. The carriage went against a tree, th – and broke and the melon starts rolling. So the German starts shooting at the melons, he didn't know what it was. He starts shooting at the melon, and we escaped, you know, we got up in the mountain, we came back to the woods. So the kid told the French families that we went down and there is full of Germans. So they said, what are you doing in town?

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

So he explains to them, we didn't have enough food. Said, why didn't you ask us? So they gave us food, know? And overnight, at night, there was a big for – a fight between the Americans and the Germans, like artillery and everything. And then – and then the next day they told us that the – the town is liberated. So we didn't know, we thought we were the only two in the town, but there were the – the resistance was in town too, and they killed all the Germans, the 30 Germans, and they lined them up on the sidewalk like sardines, they're sardines. And they took everything away from them in a blanket. You know, their possession, their rings, their lighters, their – their rifles, everything, their machine guns. They're the **Schmeisser** machine gun, that was the – the best machine gun. And they took everything away, and they were all dead. And then they – they buried them outside the town, you know, they buried all the Germans, and when we came down from the mountains, they were all dead, y'know? And – and then they captured about hundred – 200 Germans, prisoners who surrendered to the – from the – from another part of the town. And they had them prisoner, and the resistance had to interrogate them. Every German was interrogated. There was **[indecipherable]** from the resistance just to write everything down. So they used to use me as translator, know, and interrogate all these German, everything was written down, all the – where they're born, how m – how many years in the army and everything.

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

And then one German, he was very scared, and he said that he comes from a socialist family, because he noticed that the resistance had the h-hammer and the sickle on their he – on their y – beret, you know? So – so he says to – to me, we c – I – we – I come from a socialist family, don't kill us, don't kill us. So he was afraid the French resistance would kill him. So I told him, he says, yeah, today they're all socialists, you know? And before, they were all Nazis, now they're socialists, the guy – the officer of the resistance said. And then – and then as I interrogate the Germans, they took away this guy was very scared, and we interrogate them separately. And he says, the officer of the resistance, he says, ask him where the officers are. He said the officers, they in the wood, they wouldn't surrender. He say, in which wood? He say, in the same wood where you captured us. So we surrounded the woods, and – and the offer – one officer came out, they had no food, he came out to eat some grapes outside the woods were – were grapes. And that was the time when the grapes are ripe, you know, August. So he – he took in the helmet some grapes and he came back. And they told him to stop, he wouldn't stop, so they shot him. So the other officer came out, he said, **Hans, Hans, was ist los?** It mean, **Hans, Hans**, what happened? So they – so they told him to stop, so he wouldn't stop, they shot him too. So they brought back the two German officers on the truck. The French truck, by the wheels they have like a – like a – the wheel is separated

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

from the motor. There's like a separation. So they put one officer this way, and one officer that way, and they brought them back to town. And they were bleeding all on the road, y'know, because when they got shot? And in town, the people were touching them with branches, you know, the – was like a big news, that the officers got shot, know? And then – yeah, see? Again?

Q: I'm sorry, we're –

A: It's all right.

Q: [indecipherable] one more time, sorry.

**End of File Two**

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

**Beginning File Three**

Q: Were they dead, the – the soldiers?

A: Well, finished with the liberation.

Q: Yeah, let's –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Well, no, but you talked about the soldiers and how the people touched them with branches.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were they already dead, or were they –

A: They were dead.

Q: They were dead.

A: They were dead.

Q: Just wait.

A: And –

Q: Wait.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: We're all set.

A: Yeah? So they touched them with branches, and they were on the truck. Then the – the French resistance took off the boots. The boots were leather, and leather was like gold in those days. So most of the kids were barefooted, there was no – we had

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

no shoes. So they gave me the boots to make su – to give it to the shoemaker to make some – some shoes. So they gave me the boots, and one boot was full of blood. So we – I tried to wash it with my friend by the fountain with powder and everything, but we couldn't get it clean. We couldn't get it clean, so that boot we had to throw away. But the three other boots, I gave to a Spanish shoemaker who lived in the town, he was from the Civil War, he was very good sa – sh – shoemaker. He made me sandals for me and **Lucie**, you know? Sandals. And the sole, he used the sole from the – the belt from the mines, you know, the rubber belts that they used in the mine for the coal? He used. And the top was all leather from the boots. And he kept the leather, leftover leather he kept it for himself to make shoes, so he didn't – it didn't cost us nothing, the sandals. So he made sandals for me and **Lucie** and we had the sandals way back to **Belgium** we had those sandals. They were made like unbelievable. And that was the – the profit because through me they got the German officers. If not they wouldn't know the German officers were in the woods, you know? So – and then the – they had the German prisoners, they didn't kill them. They turn them over to the Americans much later, know? They use them. Because I met some of those German soldiers who were – that I interrogate, I met them later in **Marseilles**. They used to clean the beach, the mines on the beach. And then in **Marseilles** – I came to live in **Marseilles**. From **Tresse** I



**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

went to live in **Marseilles**. In **Marseilles** there was no room, there was no apartments. Through a friend of my father, from the resistance, he – he was – became like the mayor of – of the [indecipherable] **Marseilles**, and he got a apartment for us, next to the [indecipherable]. And – and he s – and this – this – this fellow was like the mayor of that district up there, he told my father – my mother was still in town in **Tresse**, she didn't come yet to **Marseilles**. And then later she came to **Marseilles**, but before she came to **Marseilles**, he send me to **Septème**. **Septème** is a little town not too far from **Marseilles** by **Aix-en-Provence**. And I stayed by the mayor of **Septème**, you know, because he was from the resistance too. And the mayor from **Septème**, I slept in his house and I became friendly with his son. And the son used to – used to go hunting for rabbits and everything, I became his friend. In those d – in that time, **France** was like a civil war. The French were fighting the French. The French from the resistance were fighting the French who were with the Germans in the second World War with **Vichy**. And – and in the next town where I stayed, the – the French people from **Vichy** killed the mayor – killed the mayor. So he was the – the son of the mayor was afraid they're gonna come and kill his ow – his father, so we slept all night with a rifle, he had rifles. We slept all night with the rifles underneath the bed. And I was scared, I thought something's gonna happen. So I didn't sleep all night, I fell asleep

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

in the morning, you know, in the morning. And then – and then all the woods were cleaned from the – the guys from – the people wi – with the Germans, you know, the **Vichy**, they cleaned all the woods, and there was – everything was good, you know, there was no more enemies in the woods, because they cleaned the woods. They used to clean all the woods, the resistance. More resistance came from **Marseilles**, and they helped cleaning the woods, yeah. And then I went back to **Marseilles** where – then my mother came from the town, and I start living in **Marseilles**. And in **Marseilles**, I ma – we were playing soccer, you know, by the railroad station. And the ball went across the fence, to a place where – where ja – there were German prisoners. German prisoners. So my friends used to know that I speak German, they used to say, **Andre**, go get the – go get the ball for – so I went to ge – ask them for the ball. He says, I'll give you the ball if you do me one favor, the German prisoner says. Th-Th – well, I got it from Americans, yeah, and the Americans said, don't speak too much to them, know? I said was just want to get the ball. Oh. So at that time I couldn't speak English, you know, we had like explained to him. So we got the ball and he says he wants – he wants I should buy him some beer. He says, I have no money, he said, but I give you my gold ring. He took out – he took his wedding ring, a heavy gold ring, and he gave me the gold ring. And I am gonna take the ring, I figure [**indecipherable**]. So – so I – then my

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

buddies, they said to me in French, what does he want? I say, he wants a – a couple bottles of beer. He wants to give the ring. So they said, take the ring, take the ring from the guy, you know. They're my buddies, you know, so I took the ring, and I bought him – I bought him some beer. I bought him with some beer and I kept the ring, I took the ring home, I gave the ring to my mother. And my mother had the ring th – the rest of her life she had the ring, yeah. And then later I took out the inscription, the German inscription in the ring. And it is just a – th-they – like once they were prisoners, the Germans, they were like – they were like helpless, you know. So then from – later from **Marseilles**, we went back to **Belgium**. We went back to **Belgium**. We lived there about one year in **Marseilles**, and we went back to **Belgium**. And from **Belgium** we came to the **United States**. My aunt made the papers for us, she insisted we should come there. And my mother didn't – didn't saw her aunt – my – her sister since the Russian revolution she didn't see her sister. Her sister lived in the **United States**. Because originally she came to **Belgium** when she was a young girl to take the ship t – for **United States**, and then she met my father, she remained in **Belgium**, you know. She got married, she went in **Belgium**. And – and my father didn't want to go to the **States**, but he had a lot of arguments with her, finally he gave in and he wen – we came to the **States**. And that's how I ended up in the **States**, yeah. And in the **States**, I lived here about two years, I got

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

drafted in the American Army, you know, and they send me to **Korea**. From **Korea** they send me to **Germany**, because I spoke German, they se – they said, they send me to **Germany** on occupation duty. And I came out of the army, I-I stayed in the **United States** because my parents lived here, and th – and that's the story, yeah.

What else? Is it –

Q: When – how was it when you arrived in the **United States**?

A: When I arrived in the **United States**, it was tough because I couldn't speak English. Took me time to learn English. And it's a good thing I – I had a trade, you know, I start working right away. I-I learned to be a jeweler in **Belgium**, you know. And I start working as a jeweler. But I looked younger than my age, and they wouldn't hire me. They wouldn't hire me, they didn't believe me that – and then finally they hired me and I start working. And then I got drafted, you know. And I don't know, what else? That's it, yeah.

Q: Do you have a family here in –

A: Yeah, ye-ah. I got – when I came out of the army, I – I – I go – I got married to somebody born from here, you know, an American wo-woman. And I live with her twe – 20 years, I got two daughters with her. And then later, after we divorced, I met my second wife, which is from **Guatemala**, you know, and I'm married her

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

now 10 years, I think. I learned to speak Spanish [**indecipherable**] in our country, you know. That's it, that's it, I-I guess.

Q: Do you have anything else you'd like to add about the war or being at

**Rivesaltes**? Do you have some other things you might want to add?

A: Yeah, one thing, yeah. When [**indecipherable**] so in – when I lived in **Tresse**, my mother got a letter from a woman living in **Marseilles**, that she knew from camp. And the woman says, there's no food here, maybe you people can bring us some food. In **Marseilles** there was no food. So my mother made like a par – like a package of food, and I took the bus to **Marseilles**. In those days, there was only one bus going to tr – **Marseilles**, and one bus coming home. That's the communication there was there, from the town to – to **Marseilles**. So I came to **Marseilles** and I looked – I left a – the package in the **consigne** in the – by the bus stop there was a **consigne**. You leave the package, and when – when you're ready, you go there, you take it out and you gi – bring it to the people. And I looked for the people. So I came to the house where the people live, and I see the – the apartment is empty, nobody lives there. So, I – there was a kid playing in front of the door, marbles, so play marbles with him. I said to him, where are the people who live here? He said oh, he said, the French police took them a couple days ago. He says they – he says, because they were Jews. I said, no kidding, you know, like I made believe I don't

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

know what – I say, what is that? He say, yeah, they believe in another religion. He say, they're not like us. So he said to me, where you from? I say, I'm from **Notre-Dame de la Garde** in **Marseilles**, you know, the mountain, the church. He says, oh, play with me marbles, and then next time I'll come to you. I want to play marbles in your neighborhood. So I play marbles with him, and then I saw that – so I said, well I got to – I got to go. He said, I'll go with you. I said, no, I want to – I got to see my grandmother. If my grandmother knows that I played around, she's gonna get mad at me. He say, I'll see you next time. He said, yeah, I'll come and meet you in **Notre-Dame de la Garde**. So I-I went back to the rail – to the bus stop, and I know I can't deliver the – the package. So I stayed in the town, and the town was full of Germans. They were all going to **Africa** in those days, they were fighting in **Africa**. That was like in 1940 – end of 1942. And the town was full of Germans, and then there was two Italian ships leaving, with the Italian troops. And the Italian people came there with their babies to say goodbye to this – to the soldiers. And they were holding up the babies to the – to show the soldiers, the Italian soldiers that – their baby – and they were yelling, **bambino, bambino**. And the – and the German soldiers were guarding the harbor and they were laughing, they were making fun of the Italians because the **bambino**, you know, they were showing the babies, you know. And I wi – I witnessed this then, know, in **Marseilles**, you know. And th-the

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

Germans were buying things in the harbor and everything, because they were also leaving on ships to north **Africa**, you know. That was the closest I came to the – to the German troops going to **Africa**, you know, and **Marseilles**, yeah. And then at night I went back to my town. And when I went back to my town, the – a patrol came up on the b – on the bus and checked everything. And he showed me – he said to me, what are you doing with the food? They notice I got food. I say, yeah, I say, I'm – my grandmother gave me some food to bring to my mother, you know. Yeah, you had to know what to say to them, yeah, because they couldn't speak – they couldn't speak French. That was the only thing which saved everything, because the French couldn't speak German and the Germans couldn't speak French. There was sometime one guy who could speak a couple words, but he didn't know – you say grandmother, he knew was **grosmutter**, yeah. Oh, **grosmutter**, **grosmutter**, yeah, okay. So was a – there was a look, because they couldn't – they couldn't communicate, yeah, yeah.

Q: There were other people in **Tresse** from north **Africa**.

A: From north **Africa**? There was a doctor from north **Africa**, a Jewish doctor from north **Africa**. There were no other people in **Tresse** [**indecipherable**] that I know, no.

Q: You talked to me about **résidents** [**indecipherable**]

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

A: Who?

Q: You said about somebody was under house arrest.

A: Oh yeah, that was the – the – the – in – in **Tresse**, when we came to **Tresse**, the woman was our landlady, she owned the Hotel de **France**. And in the Hotel de **France** was three prisoners. The king of **Morocco**, **ben Yusef, Bourguiba**, who wanted to – to have freedom for **Tunisia**, and there was a guy, **Ali**, his last name I don't remember. And he was – there were three Arab chiefs who wanted independence from **France** and the French wouldn't give them independence, and they kept them there as prisoners. **Résidents Français**. Every day they had to sign by the police, by the **gendarme**, and they were prisoners there. And being that I lived next to the hotel, she – the woman who owned the hotel was our – our landlady too. Her name was Madame **Laville**(ph), and she was very friendly with us. I used to go to the garden with her, with a donkey and a – a carriage. And then we used to come back from the garden, she had a garden outside the si – the town, she has a couple miles of – of **vin**, you know, what's her name? Grapes, a couple miles of grapes she used to own. And she used to – we used to bring back grapes or peaches. And she said to me, the peaches bring to **Bourguiba**. The grapes bring to **ben Yusef**, the king of **Morocco**, and the cherries, whatever, the other stuff, she said, bring it to **Ali**. They had their own rooms, I used to bring it to them. And the



**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

king of **Morocco**, he had a man watching him. He had like another man – Arab watching him. And the women who used to clean the room, they told me that he was blonde. He wore a little hat so you didn't see his hair, so they told us that he is blonde, he is the only guy, he's a blonde guy. So we didn't believe [indecipherable] and he was watching the king, **ben Yusef**. **Ben Yusef** couldn't speak French, he only spoke Arabic. **Bourguiba** spoke French and he helped me with my homework, yeah. And later, one of my friends became the mayor of **Gassin**, in **France**, next to **San Tropez**. And we went to **ga** – when I went to **Gassin** to see my friend – he used to come to **New York** to see me too – he said to me, I want to write to **Bourguiba**, I wrote to **Bourguiba**, he won't answer me. But if I write a letter, you sign it, he will answer you. So he wrote a letter to his office, and I signed it, and **Bourguiba** answered the letter, that's the letter I showed you there, that you have now. Yeah. So – yeah, that's it now, that's about it now. There's a – that's it, yeah.

Q: Well, I want to thank you –

A: Yeah, thank you.

Q: – for –

A: Yeah, thank you too.

Q: – having the interview today.

**Interview with Andre Zalc**  
**July 23, 2009**

A: Yeah, and I could have said it in French, but I figure, in English, this way they under – everybody understands it.

Q: Great.

A: It would have been more boring –

**End of File Three**

**Conclusion of Interview**