

## Interview with Madame Donna DRAY, Montrouge, France on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Donna Pinto was born on August 28, 1916, in Tangiers, Morocco, to Samuel and Esther Pinto, née Serfaty. She had two older brothers, Jaime and Abraham, and a younger brother, Moses who was born ten years after her.

Donna's father and his brothers had emigrated to Brazil many years before and had done well harvesting and selling rubber from the Amazon. Samuel returned to Tangiers to marry Esther and they settled there, although Samuel continued traveling for a while. However, around 1924, the price of rubber fell drastically and business was poor. The Pinto family moved to Casablanca, where Samuel set-up shop dealing in grains.

The family spoke modern Spanish and many of the servants were from Spain. They spoke Judeo-Spanish (*haquetia*) when they had proverbs to tell or used it for terms of endearment.

In regards to religious practices, apparently Samuel was quite learned and went to the synagogue regularly, but his sons were not observant. However, a rabbi was called to the home to prepare each son for his *bar mitzvah*. The family kept kosher and observed the Jewish holidays.

At the age of 5, Donna was sent to kindergarten at the *Lycéefrançais* in Tangiers and learned French. She also received piano lessons at home. She maintains that she obtained her baccalaureate, but according to her daughter, she received what is known as the *brevet* at the age of 16 and did not complete her secondary schooling.

The family did not live in a specifically Jewish section, the *mellah*, but a section where middle-class European families lived called "Le Marchand", on the boulevard de la Gare. They attended school with non-Jewish students, but did not mix socially with them. Madame Dray does not remember any friction between Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic students. She does not remember any friction with Muslims at all, but her family was only in contact with Muslims at the market or with those who provided various services. The domestic help were Catholic from poor Spanish families. The Jewish families were large and socialized among themselves.

Samuel Pinto insisted on his sons getting a proper French education and he sent Jaime, a brilliant student, to Paris to board at the *LycéeLakanal*. On the boat to the mainland, Jaime befriended Jacques Dray, from Marrakech, who was headed to the same high school. Jaime went on to study architecture and Jacques studied law. Jacques Dray must have passed the bar exam in 1935 because there is a photo<sup>1</sup> of him in his lawyer's robe at that date. It is not clear if he studied law in France or Morocco.

He met Donna when he came to visit Jaime in Casablanca.

Jacques Dray and Donna Pinto were married at the Pinto home in December, 1940. Madame Pinto is a bit unsure of the sequence of events, during the war, but she definitely does remember that Vichy laws forbid Jews from practicing medicine or law. Her brother Jaime was not allowed to practice architecture. He became a manager<sup>2</sup> for a large sugar company, the *Sucrerie Saint Louis*. Her brother Abraham dealt in sugar and tea. Her younger brother Moses was expelled from his French *lycée* and obliged to enroll in a vocational school. Her father dealt in fabric.

Madame Pinto remembers there was rationing and that condensed milk was rationed. Her first daughter, Jacqueline, was born in 1942. She remembers the air raids and the night that the Allies arrived to liberate Morocco. Everyone descended into the streets during the bombing raids, she with her baby in her arms. She kept a flyer in French with an American flag and a message from President Roosevelt, probably dropped by Allied planes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See digital photo "Jacques Dray. Morocco. 1935"

<sup>2</sup>Madame Dray did not mention this during the interview, but Jaime became severely ill and knew that he had little time left to live. It must be too painful for her to evoke. He died in 1942.

<sup>3</sup>See digital photo "Tract"

Her husband was resourceful. He heard that during WW I, a lot of money was made catering to the Allied soldiers' laundry, so he found a locale and set-up a laundry and dry-cleaning business, which was quite successful. Their daughter Diane was born in 1945 in Casablanca.

When Madame Dray's husband was reinstated as a member of the bar and again permitted to practice, he decided to move to the town of Safi, where there was a penury of lawyers, in 1946. Madame Dray regrets that her daughters had to go to a boarding school in another town because they could not continue their studies in Safi. They then went to mainland France to attend the university.

Here, time sequences get quite confused.

The family seemed to have stayed there through the independence of Morocco in 1956 and moved to France in the early or mid-1960's.

At one point, Madame Dray says that the family moved to France not long after Morocco gained its independence, in 1956, but when she then says that the family moved to France around the time Jacqueline got married, it is obvious that it is in the second half of the 60's since Jacqueline would have been 13 years old in 1956. She also said that her husband already had a pension and could retire when they moved to France, which would not have been possible in 1956.

Madame Dray seems to have made the transition to France quite comfortably, since a large Moroccan Jewish community and her extended family were there already.