

## **Summary of Oral History: Suzanne Coppel**

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**This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [03/2022]**

Suzanne Coppel was born Suzanne Marin on July 3, 1933 in Mannheim, Germany to mother born in Leipzig, East Germany and father from Rheen, Germany. Suzanne recalls her father carrying her on his shoulder when taking a walk in Mannheim, and later, in Milan. Her father was permitted to direct a shoe factory though Jewish, until 1935 when the SS demanded his dismissal. He went to Milan, Italy and with a partner, opened a business and requested Suzanne and her mother join him. They took a train through Switzerland to Italy. In 1938 all immigrants were required to leave Italy and her father obtained a position in a shoe factory in Amsterdam. They took a train to Lugano and went across the border to Zurich and flew to Amsterdam where they were denied entry due to the "J" on their passport. Suzanne had an accident and required a physician who recommended they fly to Paris rather than return to Milan. In Paris they got permission to remain for three weeks and then permitted to reside in Caen for six months. Suzanne and her mother stayed in a hotel and her father joined the French Army. Soon the Germans occupied Caen, so they fled to Le Mans where they remained until 1940 when it was bombed. Her father accompanied them to Castelmoron Sur Lot in the South which was unoccupied. They walked there, trying to appear like they were taking a leisurely walk and hid in a tobacco shed and slept on straw several nights. They were lucky that farmers fed and sheltered them though they had no ID. They moved into a primitive place in Castelmoron Sur Lot which had dirt at the entry, used wood in the fireplace and stove, and had no bathroom. They were the only Jews in the village. Suzanne went to school and her parents worked in a belt factory. The police would warn them to hide when the SS was expected to search for Jews. Once she was left with the hotel owner and her parents hid elsewhere. She attended Catholic Church services and catechism but refused to be baptized. Her parents returned from hiding in '41 and her father joined the Underground. In '42 it was rumored that the Vichy would not arrest pregnant women so her mother got pregnant and Annie was born August 5, 1943 in Villeneuve Sur Lot where the nearest hospital was located. Her father kept hiding in the woods periodically during '42 and '43. Her school attendance at this time was spotty due to her hiding at times so her grades suffered. She was always nervous when she heard vehicles at night as knew they picked up Jews at night. Her mother picked tobacco and other vegetables while she took care of the cows. There were farm animals in the kitchen and Suzanne and Annie frequently had head lice. Her father sometimes brought them luxuries such as soap, milk and toothpaste. After the war, her father received the Medal of Honor and Medal of Volunteer Fighter of the Resistance. After his discharge from the Army, her father became the tax inspector of the Saar Region and co-owner of a shoe factory. After her father passed away, Suzanne found the following poem in German which he wrote:

Suzanne wanted to get away from war-torn Europe and had cousins in the US so her parents permitted her to leave by ship when she was 16. There she met her husband, Werner, who had fled Germany in '35. They became engaged in '52 and Werner was drafted and sent to Germany. In '54 Suzanne and her future mother-in-law took the Queen Elizabeth to Europe and she got married in Saarbrücken, the Saar. After her husband was discharged from the military, they lived in Williamsport, PA. They had two sons: Gary and Steven. When the Saar was returned to Germany, her parents and sister moved to Strasbourg, France where her father was Director of an Import/Export Distribution. He passed away March 11, 1997 at 91 and her mother passed away April 3, 2011 at 103. Her sister got married and has a daughter and lived in Annemasse, France. Suzanne's worst memories include the rats running around, and when her father was arrested by the French police. Suzanne wrote her story about the war for her synagogue's Yom Shoah's celebration.