

**Interview with Mr. Guy TAÏEB on March 15th, 2019
in Paris, France**

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Guy Taïeb was born in Tunis on November 21, 1934 to Maurice Taïeb and Hilda née Smadja. He is Annie Goldmann's (née Taïeb) younger brother.

He maintains modestly that he does not have many memories of the pre-war and war-time period, but those he has are quite vivid.

Mateur was a small town of around 12 000 people? The Jewish community had only about 100 members and they all seemed to live in the same part of town, in several buildings, so they were easy to find, and eventually target.

Mr. Taïeb remembers that one of his elementary school teachers really disliked him and he attributed this to anti-Semitism. She continually accused of him of doing things that he did not do and to punish him, made him run around the schoolyard. There were not many Jewish students, but for some reason, she picked on him. Perhaps, she knew that his father had a pharmacy in town and considered him a rich merchant.

Mr. Taïeb has a vivid memory of the arrival of the German army in his town. He and his friends from school heard the armored vehicles and tanks rumble from afar and were wondering if it was the Allied troops or the Nazis.

So, apparently, contrary to the Vichy laws that were put into place in Algeria, the Jewish students did not have to leave the public schools in Mateur. Mr. Taïeb said that even after the arrival of the Germans, the Jews could remain in school.

Mr. Taïeb remembers that a German officer often dined with his family – not at the same table, but in the same room, separated by what he described as a “glass cage”. He left his gun near-by and he remembers that he was allowed to play with it when the soldier was there.

Mr. Taïeb thinks that his father's cordial relations with this German soldier may have allowed him the freedom to enter the forced labor camps surrounding Mateur and bring in supplies. He also remembers that his father gave refuge to two young Jews who had escaped being sent to these camps and were hiding.

On March 2nd, 1943, there was a violent air raid and the family took refuge in the bomb shelter which had been dug-out in the *boules* or *pétanque* playing area near-by. He remembers that the bombs fell so close, the metal cover on the shelter was pierced.

As soon as they could leave the shelter, his father, mother, grandmother, sister, the two young refugees, and Guy piled into Maurice Taïeb's two-seater and headed for Tunis. They were put-up for one night with a French family before reaching Tunis.

Mr. Taïeb said that his family was not religious, but that he did celebrate his Bar Mitzvah. He joined the Jewish boy scouts, the *Eclaireurs israélites*, but dropped-out when they wanted him to learn Hebrew.

He attended the *Lycée Condorcet* in Tunis. After his baccalaureate, although he was more interested in scientific studies and theory, he studied to become a pharmacist. By then, the family had left Tunisia. His father abandoned his pharmacy and his factory and they moved to Paris.

Guy Taïeb was drafted for military service in the 1950s and was sent to Algeria, finishing the war as an *Aspirant* in Constantine. He remembers that, after Algeria obtained its independence in 1962, he was ordered to destroy all medicine stocked in the hospitals in Algeria. He disposed of some of them, but the ones that were important and hard to obtain, he entrusted to a priest to put in a safe place for the Algerian population.

After teaching pharmaceutical science at several French universities, he continued his scientific studies and specialized in the laser, just created in 1962. He joined the CNRS in 1963 and was at the forefront of advances in this field. He enjoys teaching.

Mr. Taieb says that he has kept in contact with the country where he was born and the CNRS laboratory in Orsay, outside of Paris, where he worked has collaborated on projects with Tunisian researchers.