

## **Summary of Oral History Interview with Raymond Federman July 1990**

Raymond came from a middle-class Jewish family. He had two sisters, the eldest named Sara and the youngest named Jacqueline. His father was born in Poland and came to Paris in 1918. He was a painter, and Paris provided him more opportunity in his profession. On his mother's side, the grandparents were living in Palestine and eventually moved to Paris. They had nine children, six of whom were born in Palestine and three of whom were born in France. Among them was his mother, who was born in 1901. In 1910 France was devastated. His mother stayed in an orphanage (Rothschild orphanage) for nine years until she was eighteen years old. His parents' marriage was arranged for them. He was born in 1928. His father became ill with tuberculosis, and he suffered physically and intellectually. By then they were living in a one-room apartment. His father did not get along with his mother's family, and they did not think well of him. They called him lazy and irresponsible. When the Nazis took over France the Jews had to declare themselves, and the restrictions against the Jews started. They were forced to wear Jewish stars, were not allowed to use the libraries or go to the movies, and had curfews. The French police and the Gestapo were looking for his family. They came to his house, but at the last minute his mother pushed him into a closet where he stayed until the next day. His parents and sisters were deported to Auschwitz. From this convoy only five arrived. When it got dark he left the closet, removed the star, and was very hungry, but he had no ration coupons and no place to go. He walked until he got to a Jewish neighborhood where his aunt lived. When he arrived they were ready to be deported. They had papers, for which they had to pay, done for them. They left, and he was left behind. Raymond was put with others on a freight car where they were without food or drink for two days. Some were crying and complaining but to no avail. He pushed the doors open, and jumped out to get some food. He got some raw potatoes from the field and put them into his pockets and tried to go back, but the train had left. He did not know where to turn, but luckily he was not too far from Paris, so he went there. A woman that knew his family fed him and wanted to turn him over to the police in order to be reunited with his family, but he managed to get away. During his escape, he met two men from Belgium, and together they went to Bonn. They stayed a few days in Bonn and then ended up on a farm. At fourteen years old he was orphaned and had to work very hard. He could not communicate with anyone, so he talked to the dogs. He stayed on the farm for two years. Then he learned that the Swiss Red Cross was trying to get children out from France to America. The children had to pass an inspection and then put on tags with their names on them, so the Americans would know who they were. Something went wrong with the arrangement, and the older children were sent back. In 1945 the Jewish family did not know what to do with him. They tried to find relatives, and eventually he received letters and packages from David Maycard from Detroit. He worked at Chrysler and also attended the Nordon High School. In 1949 he got his high school diploma and still worked in the factory. In 1950, he went to New York, and in 1951 he was drafted into the army. He was in Korea and Japan. When he got back he went to college at Colombia, then got his PhD from UCLA. His tuition was paid by the government, and he became a French professor in 1963. He wrote a couple of books. One of them is "The boy in the closet." When asked what kind of a message he has, he replied "You somehow have to smile when looking back."