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I'm Sidney Elsner. Today, November 14, 1984, we're interviewing Marguerite Morris, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. Marguerite, tell us first where you came from and what countries you survived.

I came from France. I was born in France. And I was in France throughout the war.

At what age?

I came to the United States when I was 17 and a half.

And when the Germans came to France, how old were you?

I was a little less than eight years old.

And what year would that have been?

1940.

OK. Now, tell us a little bit about your arrival in Cleveland, what you do. Do you have family here? Are you married?

I came to Akron first. I was sponsored by cousins who live in Akron. And I lived in Akron for several years. I came to the United States in 1950. I was married in 1952. And we moved to Cleveland the end of '55.

I am married. I have two sons, two grown sons. I'm a CPA. And I've been working full-time as a CPA for the last seven years.

CPA is certified public accountant?

Right. Right.

Tremendous.

Well, I went back to school after my children were grown. And I had, prior to that, had an associate degree in accounting. When I first came to the United States, I went to a business college. I had the equivalent of a high school education in France and then I went to business college. And I had an associate degree and had worked as a full charge bookkeeper.

And then when my children were grown, I-- in between, I was doing organizational work. I was very active in Pioneer Women and a number of other local organizations. And then I decided to go back to school because I felt when my children would be grown and away, I wanted to have a career of my own.

What do your children do?

My oldest son is a physician. He's living in Chicago. He's an internist. My younger son is married. And he's living in Ossining, New York. He is a financial analyst with General Foods in White Plains, New York.

Now, you were in Paris. That was your home in France.

Right. Well, we were in Paris until 1942. And then we fled from Paris when the Germans began to pick up women and children. And we moved to a small town near Limoges called Oradour-sur-Vayres.

OK, now, going back to your early girlhood in Paris, tell us what life was like before the war, what your family life was like, where your parents had come from if they were not born in France, and how long they had been in France.

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My parents came from Poland, both of them. My dad came, I believe, in 1924. And my mother came in 1928. And I was a little girl when the war broke out in September '39. I was seven years old.

And I don't remember very much, except that my mother was reminding me-- as an only child, I was a very spoiled little girl. I had some ear problems. And so I led a very protected life, really, until the war started.

My dad enrolled in the French army when the war broke out.

In '39?

In '39. And he was demobilized when the French army disbanded in the free zone and then smuggled and came back to Paris to be with us. And he was with us until 1941 when he became-- was taken to a concentration camp in France first.

How did your family make a living before the war?

OK, my dad was in wholesale and retail produce in-- it was like a suburb of Paris. It was not Paris. It was called Neuilly-sur-Seine, which is a suburb of Paris.

In which direction?

It's really-- how do I-- I don't know quite how to explain it.

OK. Well, how would you describe your family's life? And how did you and your family get along with your friends and your neighbors, Jews and non-Jews?

Well--

And was there much of a the Jewish population where you lived?

Well, in the area where we lived, there wasn't a very large Jewish population. However, there were other Jews. There was a synagogue nearby.

The bulk of the Jewish people that lived in Paris lived near Saint-Paul. There was a whole area that had a very heavy concentration of Jews. But we had enough Jewish friends within the area. And we had a lot-- many non-Jewish neighbors that we were very close to, and non-Jewish friends.

In fact, some of the people that when they found out that my dad was taken to a camp were very surprised. They said, we didn't realize that he was even Jewish. I mean non-Jewish, I guess, he didn't make a point of publicizing. Not that he was trying to hide it because we had a very warm Jewish life. But he just didn't make a point of publicizing it the way we do here.

Was your family Orthodox?

My mother came from an Orthodox family. However, my early childhood, we were not Orthodox. We kept holidays. We kept kosher. But we were not Orthodox. My mother later became again very Orthodox after we survived.

And what was the main language spoken in your home?

Mainly French.

Any Hebrew? Yiddish?

Well, my parents would speak some Yiddish.

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Polish?

Polish was never spoken in our home because my father despised the Poles and just didn't want to have any relationship with the Poles at all.

Well, now let's--

Although he remained very active. There was a small-- there was a group called the Society of Biala Podlaska, which was his hometown, in Paris. And he was very active in that. But that was because he was other Jews that came from the same town.

Going back to your childhood, let's talk about personally. How do you remember yourself as a very young child in those days?

Are you saying before the war started?

Yes.

It's sort of difficult to remember because it goes back a long time.

Well, do you or don't you recall any instances of discrimination of antisemitism?

Before '39--

Correct.

--or after? Before.

Before the Germans came.

Before the war, not really because-- maybe because in the area of Paris that we lived there weren't many Jews. I don't really remember any particular instances.

OK. Did you go to Jewish schools or public schools? Or were they private schools?

Well, I went to both. I went to a public school-- in France, there are separate boys schools and girls schools, at least when I grew up. And I went to public school for a while. When I came back after the war, I went to a private girls school. So I went to both actually. And as far as my Jewish education, I was too young before we left Paris. I did go to Sunday school when we came back.

What do you remember about the beginning of World War II? Now this is September 1, let's say, 1939. And exactly how old were you at that moment?

I was less than seven.

OK. So whatever memory you have would normally be dim, but maybe the years have sharpened them. Is there anything outstanding about the beginning of the war? Any fear on the part of your family?

Not in '39. But my mother was reminding me that when the Germans invaded Paris, which was in 1940, there was a lot of apprehension. I remember seeing them marching into the city and just having a feeling of fear. And I also remember my mother knowing that her parents were in Poland and trying to send packages to them and figuring out ways to keep some sort of communication with them. But really, my first recollections would be from the time that the Germans invaded Paris, which was in 1940.

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Now your father, naturally, a married man and a parent volunteered. He wasn't drafted into the French army.

He was not, because he was not a French citizen. So he was not required to go into the French army. But he considered himself as wanting to help France win the war, and he volunteered. He felt that he had a duty to go as if he were a French citizen.

What was his full name?

Well, Jacques is the name that he used in France. Jankel is his Polish name. And Yaakov would be his Hebrew name.

OK. And what was your mother's family name, her maiden name?

Zak. My mother came from a very religious and very prominent family in Biala Podlaska. Her father was a rabbi and also a businessman and was very well known in the town of Biala Podlaska.

All right, after the beginning of the war and before the German occupation, did you notice any changes in the way non-Jews acted toward you and your family? Any incidents at school?

I don't recall any. The time when I began to worry about incidents was when I was required to wear the yellow star, which was later on. But not at that stage.

OK. Now, tell us about more open acts of antisemitism as the war went on. All right, it's 1940, and June, if I remember correctly, when Paris fell.

Mm, hmm.

All right, what happened that you know of that changed attitudes?

Well, first of all, within a short time, these things were happening gradually within-- I don't remember the exact dates. But I know that within a few months, we were required to register as Jews. And we were not allowed to have any businesses or any-- in other words, if we had a business, we had to disband it.

My mother had tried to run my dad's business when he was in the army. She had to close the business, not because of antisemitism, but because of the rule that as a Jew, she was not allowed to have a business. This was the official rule that she was not allowed to have a business.

Now, your father, you said, was discharged in the free zone.

Right.

But your family was still in Paris. You hadn't gone into the free zone.

My mother and I-- no, my dad actually came back to Paris. And the way I remember the date is because he came back around my birthday, which is October, of 1940. He worked his way back to Paris. My mother recalled that she had correspondence with him. And even though we were registered as Jews, I suppose we were naive. And she didn't think that there was any danger for him to come back and therefore encouraged him to come back, which was something that she was very, very upset later on when she realized what transpired later on.

Just to establish a record here, France was split into two portions--

Right.

The German occupied to the north and the so-called free French to the South.

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Right.

Not free French, but the free zone.

Right.

Headed by the government of Vichy. And you were under the German domination.

Right.

OK. Now, tell us, what happened when you decided to leave Paris when was that? And how did it come about?

Well, we didn't leave Paris until 1942. In between the time we're talking about and the time we left France, in May 1941, my father received a notice to go to the police department of our little suburb to have his papers checked. And I guess he was not suspicious because there had been no pickups before then.

And when he arrived at the police station, he found that there were Germans stationed there, as well as the policemen. And he was being detained. And from there, he was shipped to one of the French camps called Beaune-la-Rolande. We went a couple of times to visit with him.

And as long as he was at Beaune-la-Rolande while he was not free to leave and he was humanely treated-- let's put it this way, I'm not sure that he had as much to eat as he would like and things like that. And we had frequent correspondence with him. When we left Paris was shortly after the July 16 and 17 pickup of women and children.

In what year?

This was in 1942.

Your father had been picked up in May--

May '41.

'41.

And he was one of the last ones to be shipped out from Beaune-la-Rolande to Germany. As a matter of fact, it was the last convoy that went out before the-- the book that I have here that describes the deportation the French deportation refers to the date that he was shipped as July 17. And what they did is they were trying to empty all of the French camps in advance of the pickup that they were going-- the mass pickup that they had of women and children.

What is this book?

This book is-- the French is Le Memorial de la Deportation des Juifs de France, The Memorial of the Deportation of Jews of France.

And who wrote it?

It was written by Serge Klarsfeld, whose father was killed in a concentration camp. And he and his German-born wife, Beate Klarsfeld, have devoted their lifetime to prosecuting the Germans that were responsible for this deportation. And the reason for writing this book is that he has the listing of every one of the convoys, name, first name, country of birth. And he felt that this was going to be a memorial to every one of the 75,000 Jews that were deported from France.

And if he did not prepare this book, many of the records were on onionskin papers and they were almost erased. They were very hard to read. In some cases, the records were lost. And they had to look in many-- it took them two to three

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years of a whole crew of people working to be able to prepare this. In addition to the names, he has testimonials of people who actually were there at the time. And he felt that this was something that was very important to produce.

OK. Now, you were in Paris until 1942. Your father was sent to Germany in--

'42.

In '42 also. First, let's continue with your father. What happened to him?

Well, we never had direct word about him. The closest that we came to have any indication of where he was or what happened was that we did speak to a survivor who returned after the war and said that he had arrived at Auschwitz shortly after my father had gone into a hospital with typhus and had not come out. And to the best of our knowledge, my father lived about six months in Auschwitz.

And it was through the testimony of this particular person that we were able to get-- to have a witness to know that my mother was actually a widow. And in fact, even for the French government, to obtain compensation as a widow of the war, it was to this testimonial because we never heard directly from any other source. And this book does mention that he was shipped to Auschwitz--

By name?

By name.

And convoy number?

Right.

And date. Now, tell us, please, Marguerite, what happened in Paris in this big roundup of 1940-- of July 1942? As you've told me previously, the French officials would not turn over Jews as Jews. Tell us exactly what the French officials did and did not do, please.

OK, well, as the book says and from my recollection, what happened was that the Germans-- as I mentioned earlier, we were required to register as Jews. And as we were registered, they had the listing of the various people in various areas.

They being the Gestapo, the Germans?

The Germans had the listing. And they made up a listing and gave to the police department of the various sections the names with the understanding that the French policemen would supplement the Germans in going to the various homes to pick up the women and children. Up to that point, no women and children had been picked up.

Now, was there a distinction between alien resident Jews and French citizens?

OK, it's my understanding that the Vichy government never officially turned over names of French Jews, that there was a distinction in the sense that they felt that they did not have the same moral obligation to non-French Jews as they did for French Jews. So all of these people that were picked up on the 16th and 17th, the only French Jews that were picked up were if someone who was a traitor would turn in their name, or if they would be-- there would be times when the Germans would cut off certain sections and systematically speak to everyone and try to determine whether they can pick up. So when we look at the list, we do see French names. But they were not-- the names were not systematically given the same way as for non-French Jews.

So in the German occupied zone, a Jew was fair game for any German? They could pick up-- they would get anybody they could lay their hands on?

And once they got their hands, the French could not do anything.

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Could not do anything, right. And then in the unoccupied zone, under the Vichy government, the Jews who were aliens, the government gave them the lists and protected the French citizens?

Well, actually, after-- I don't know. Sometime in 1942, the Germans occupied all of France. And then there was the same way in both parts. There was no more free zone and occupied zone. And the rules were the same.

The only difference is that when they were in Paris, there was a high concentration of Jews. When they got to the free zone, we were scattered in a lot of little towns. And it was not quite as easy to round up as many people at once.

Tell us, going back to your father, Marguerite, when he was picked up, he had some conversation with the police chief of the area. Tell us all about that.

As I mentioned earlier, my dad had gone to the police station not realizing that it was a trap. And while he was waiting there to be processed, my dad, being a businessman in the area, knew the chief of police very well. And he had the opportunity to speak to him for a few moments. And he asked him, can you do anything to help me escape?

And the chief of police said, I'm not sure I can do anything. And even if I would try to do something, I'm afraid that they might take-- maybe they are watching your house and they might pick up your wife and child. And so my father didn't try to do anything about it.

In the meantime, this was in May 1941, as time progressed and more and more people were being picked up, I think that the chief of police himself began to realize that this was a much more serious matter than he had even realized at the time. And a day or two before-- this probably was around the 14th or the 15th of July. I don't know the exact date-- he was given the list of the people that were supposed to be picked up in his section to make up teams. And he saw my mother's name on the list.

And so he sent his wife to warn us. And she came to see us. And that I do remember. And she says, my husband has to send a crew to pick you up tomorrow morning. So leave, don't give any indication that you're going to travel. Don't take any suitcases. Act as if you're going to visit some people. And just leave, and don't come back.

And one of my mother's sisters was living with us at the time with her little boy. So the four of us left. And my mother also got word to another sister, who was living in another section of Paris, by telling her we didn't know whether we had been singled out or whether that was going to be a mass arrest at that point. But we tried to warn her to also leave her home, which she did, but unfortunately decided to come back to get clothing for the children and was trapped.

And when she came back, she came back with her children and a French maid. And somehow she was able to convince whoever came to pick her up to allow the children to go with the maid. We never spoke to her. So I don't really know how the conversation went. And the children were too little to be able to tell us. And she's also listed on one of the convoys on this book as being shipped.

Those two children survived?

The two children survived.

Your cousins.

Yes.

Are they still in Paris?

One is in Paris. And one is in Israel. There's a very sad story about one in Paris because it turned out that the French maid was antisemitic and tried to brainwash the children. And the little girl somehow never was able to be brainwashed. But the boy after the war was spouting very antisemitic remarks. And when his father, who was in the free zone, came

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back, he said-- it was really very sad because he realized not only was his wife killed, but his son was a total stranger to him.

He never did convert. But he never associated very much with Jewish people. I guess some of the poison never completely left him.

So we have the strange experience of this-- two years after this your father was taken, the police chief felt guilty and made a point to warn your mother to get out.

And without him I'm sure we would not have been aware of it because it wasn't a matter that there were rumors. This was a very secret--

Organized.

--organized. The book does mention-- see, the pickup was over two days. And I guess the first day was a surprise. But after that, it wasn't so much of a surprise.

And the book does mention that while the Germans had a goal of 28,000 women and children, they were only able to pick up about 13,000. And according to this book, there were other instances of people who were forewarned, either through somebody who had heard, or even through Frenchmen who had seen names or heard about the pickup.

What happened to the mothers and the children? You said something about the children were left behind.

OK, are you speaking about my aunt?

No.

Oh. OK, well, what happened was that the Germans, because they had a quota of that, had made sure that they would have a certain number of trains available to ship to Germany. And I don't recall, but again, according to this book, they had not received permission at that point to ship children. I don't understand why--

French children?

French children. Maybe they felt that the French population would be in uproar. So in order to fill the trains, they separated the women from the children. In order to have enough adults to ship, they separate that the mothers. And there are several pages that describe the horrible scene of little children, two years and up, where the older child is trying to help the younger one, being very bewildered because they're not understanding what is happening.

And then, within a short time, they somehow got clearance to ship the children by saying that they were going to reunite families. That was usually what they would say, that they've shipped the parents and they will be shipping the children to reunite the families.

Do you know where they were shipped to?

Well, I think that most of the people from France were shipped to Auschwitz. I don't know why the connection. But it seems that all these convoys that they're mentioning, most of them went to Auschwitz.

We know what happened.

Well, it's interesting because the convoy that mentions my father, they're saying 980 some people left and 18 came back. And another convoy, 1,000 left and 5 came back. It's only the latter come--

Back at the end of the war?

Right. Now, the thing that is interesting, the last convoy that left Paris was August 17, which was-- 1944-- a couple of days before the liberation. And they needed, as they're saying, they needed the trains for other purposes. But the machinery had to go on, regardless of whether they were doing it at the expense of military supplies and things of that nature.

OK. Your mother and you had been warned to get out. Exactly what happened? Where did you go? How did you do it?

OK, we first went to stay for a few days with some friends that we had another part of Paris. They were-- I think for a few days, we stayed with Jewish, but they were French Jews. And we were concerned that we might be putting them in jeopardy. And for a few more days, we stayed with non-Jews.

And what my mother did is-- I not sure how she found out how to do that-- but there were people who, if you paid them, would arrange to smuggle you out to get over to the free zone. And the way was done is that through little trains, because the large trains were all being raided, through small trains.

You don't mean-- so nobody's confused-- the physical size of the train. But you mean small--

Local train.

Not the main lines.

Local trains. Local trains. I'm sorry. Local trains.

The slow ones.

Well, the main lines were watched very carefully. So I guess they had someone who was working in smuggling people had found out ways, which trains maybe were not watched as carefully. I'm not sure how.

But I remember that we got on and off several lines. And we went to Angouleme, which was near the border of what was still the part of the other side, the free zone. And what they did is they took us to a house. And it was arranged that a group of us would stay in that house until dusk. And then there would be cars that would take us to the edge, to a forest. And then we would be walking through the forest. And on the other side of that forest was the free zone.

How many in your group, roughly?

Oh, I'd say maybe 20, 25, something like that. There's a story to that also because I developed whooping cough. And the guide of that group did not want my mother and me to go with the group because he was concerned-- the Germans were occasionally patrolling that forest. And if they would hear noise, it might alert them. And it would endanger everyone.

And I guess my mother-- and he said, why don't you stay overnight and I'll come back and get you tomorrow? And you won't endanger other people. I will take you across. And I guess my mother became frightened to stay overnight because she just didn't like the fact that this was a house where there were a lot of people. And what if somebody decided to tell the Germans about it?

And when the last car came to take, she just pushed me. And we just got in. And they didn't want to create a commotion. So we went ahead. And I remember being very careful and trying not to cough as best I could, you know, muffling my coughing.

And what happened the next day, another group was supposed to come. And the group did not come. And we tried to find out what happened. It turns out that there was a maid in that house that was fired. And she was very angry against the owner and went to the Gestapo and told them that the owner was hiding Jews.

And they came. And they raided the house and picked everybody up. I guess there was another group of people that had come and picked them all up. So that was one of several times that I guess it was beshert to survive.

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How did you get across the border?

Well, we walked through the forest, as I mentioned. When we got-- in fact, there were farms around there. And some of the farmers were waving to us and wishing us good luck because I guess they must have seen other groups before.

And we crossed through the forest and, I guess through the guide, went to-- from there worked our way to Limoges. I'm not sure how because my aunt who was with us, one of my mother's sisters, her husband lived in Limoges. He had been also demobilized and had stayed in the free zone. And we were not permitted to stay in Limoges because, I guess, they were overcrowded there. And so we began to look for housing in small villages around Limoges.

Well, I just want to get this on the record here. Did the French authorities in the unoccupied zone allow you to come in freely and let you stay once you got by the German lines? They didn't try to send you back?

No, but--

They registered you and gave you ration cards or not?

They gave us ration cards. But the one criteria was that we had to have housing because they didn't want people-- we had to show that we had housing. They didn't want-- unless, if we didn't have housing, I shouldn't say, then we would have to stay with-- there were some transient camps. And for a while those were being kept.

The danger of that was that there was constant rumors that the Germans were going to march on an occupied the second part of France. And obviously, if you were in a transient camp, you would be-- you would be the first ones to be taken by the Germans, which they did shortly after. So what we did is we tried to travel around in little villages around Limoges because there was no housing in Limoges per se to try to find some sort of housing, which we did find and settled.

How did you pay for it?

Well, we had some money with us. It wasn't-- that we had taken with us from Paris. Towards the end of the war, there's a story about that, where we ran out of-- and I don't know if you want me to jump that far ahead.

Why not.

We did run out of money because of inflation and because we hadn't had that much money with us. And my mother knew that one of our neighbors had some of the valuables that we had, because we had given her a key when we left and asked her to take out some things. And we were concerned-- we needed the valuables. She couldn't send them to us. And we had befriended a French woman, who would have been willing to go and get them for us by herself.

In Paris?

In Paris. But we were concerned that this neighbor, not seeing one of us, and also because of the mood in the country because obviously with all the German propaganda, we were never sure how other people would react, we were concerned therefore that she would not give the valuables to this friend of ours. And so she agreed that I would go back with her, go back to Paris with her. And I would pretend that I am her daughter. And--

This is a Gentile woman?

This was a Gentile woman. And she lived in a farm near the little village where we were living. And as a matter of fact, she told us that any time we wanted to come and hide in their farm and stay as long as we needed, that we would be welcome to.

The way we became acquainted with them is because we would go to-- we had gone to the farm originally to get some

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milk and eggs and produce. And as we began to talk, we became closer and closer. And she offered, she says, anything that I can do to help, I want to help you. It's terrible what is happening in this country. And I want to help you. And that's how we came up with the idea that if both of us went back, we would be able to bring back some valuables, which my mother was able to sell to have enough resources.

So you went back into German occupied Paris at what time?

This, I would say, was probably early '44 because it took quite a while until we ran out of resources. I can't give you the exact date. But I would think early '44. August '44 was the liberation.

Yes. You took the trains back to Paris.

We took the trains back. And I remember the Germans coming on the train and, you know, asking for papers. And she showed them the papers. And they said, who is this? She says, this is my daughter.

Did you have papers? Forged--

No, because--

I mean forged papers.

Personally, I didn't need forged papers because children do not have papers. And I was still a child at the time. My mother had forged papers, but we were never really sure how good they would be because while my mother spoke good French, she had somewhat of an accent. But being born and raised in France, I had no accent. And I didn't particularly attract any attention as looking particularly Jewish.

So I guess the Germans accepted her explanation. And the identification papers evidently must not have listed what children she had. Or maybe she had other children listed on there.

And you passed for one of them. And so you got back to Paris. And how did you get your valuables?

Well, we went to this neighbor. And this neighbor was always very fond of me. She had been-- she had tutored me when I had ear infections when I was a little child. And, of course, there was no question when we came and she saw me that she gave them to us. And then we took them back with us. And we were able to sell them and use them for living expenses.

So you made a trip back and forth to occupied Paris. Did you have any fear, any incidents, and anything that you--

Oh, I'm sure--

--passed through--

I'm sure there was fear, because there was a feeling of-- and I have to say that my mother was very apprehensive about letting me do this because don't forget, I was an only child. My dad was away. But she realized that it was a matter that we had to do this in order to be able to survive. And it was not a situation if we didn't pay for rent that landlords would let us stay there or anything like that.

What were you able to bring back from Paris?

I don't remember. I think-- I remember particularly a fur coat. It might have been silverware or things that kind of valuable. Because if it would have been jewelry, my mother would have probably worn it, although she didn't have that much jewelry. But I remember particularly like a fur coat and some silverware.

And this you could sell and barter? OK. Now, let's return to the point where you first arrived at the village in lower

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France. And tell us what happened. You got off the trains. You're hunting for housing. And you finally found somewhere. Under what circumstances?

Well, we finally found some sort of a little apartment in a small town called Oradour-sur-Vayres. And that's where we moved.

Was that within, let's say, 10 miles of Limoges? Or--

Maybe 20, something like that. It wasn't very far. Because periodically, even though it was dangerous, there were several times that we had to go into Limoges because it was such a small town. If we needed medical attention, we couldn't get it in that small town. We had to go into Limoges.

And we led sort of a semi-official life in order to get ration cards. We were registered in the village, which had certain risks because there were times where-- the Germans didn't always have time to come to every little village to find out who was registered as a Jew. But there was always the concern what if they do come and ask for our name?

OK. You registered when it was still the unoccupied zone.

Right.

You were registered as Jews.

Right.

OK. But when the Germans took over the whole zone, you were still there living openly or did you go into hiding?

Well, somewhat. We were still living there. But we would often-- if we would hear rumors of Germans coming, we would be staying with this farmer friend. So we were not in hiding the whole time. The difference was also that in the free zone, we never had to wear any kind of outward identification that we were Jews.

No yellow stars?

No yellow stars. In Paris, if I walked around even as a French Jew, if I walked around I had to wear a yellow star, which immediately would alert the Germans that I am a Jew. The yellow star system was never instituted in the free zone, even after the occupied.

Oh, even after the Germans occupied it?

There was never a yellow star in the Vichy area in the free zone.

Hmm. Tell us please, Marguerite, about your life. You were a young child. You were probably about 10 at this time. Did you have any schooling? What did you do during the day? Did your mother have any kind of work or occupation? Or did you have secret hiding places prepared, like basements or backyards or anything?

I did go to school. There was a small school in that particular small town. I probably encountered more-- and not probably, I encountered more antisemitism in that little town than I had before because we were outsiders who had moved in after the war. When I was in Paris, even when I wore the yellow star, I was within the school where the kids knew me before. And they, not all of them, but most of them had some sort of empathy for me.

In that little town, we were like intruders. So not that we were physically harmed, but there would be-- in fact, to this day, when my husband met me and he wanted to give me the nickname Margot, and I says, uh, uh, you can't do that because they would call me Margot the Magpie, you know, and give me names. And there was no question that they resented us being there.

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My mother was not able to work because there really wasn't any jobs available there. And they weren't about to give jobs to Jewish people. So it was really a surviving on resources that we had from before. Somehow some money filtered through Jewish agencies. And we were able to get some things through Jewish agencies as well. And I'm not sure how the money got there. But I know that at towards the end, when we were really short, we were able to get some assistance through Jewish Agency in Limoges.

Were there other Jews in these areas in the same circumstances?

In the same village where we were, not many. But I would say maybe 20 families. I mean because I remember that we made friends with some other people in that same area.

Of all these experiences, what was the most painful for you?

I think the most painful was the feeling of loss of family because I remember when the war was over and everyone was dancing in the streets, and in some respects, we felt that we finally could be free and didn't have to worry what tomorrow would bring. But then it was also bringing the realization of a tremendous loss of family.

I mean when we came back to our apartment, everything had been taken out. The Germans emptied the apartment. It didn't even faze us. It was the tremendous amount of human-- loss of human lives.

And I have some French poems that I wrote after the war was over. And when I look at them I'm sad that a 13-year-old would have this kind of thought, saying our life is over. The war is over, but so is our life because we realize our dear ones are gone.

And there was a feeling of fear. I mean, I can remember having a bad cold and running a fever. And my mother saying we have to walk over to this neighbor because we've heard a rumor the Germans are coming. And we're walking at night, and we got lost and finally found our way to reach that place, and not really knowing what tomorrow will bring.

And the feeling that if somebody didn't get there when they were supposed to be-- there was an instance where my aunt and I went in to Limoges to the doctor. I went to the doctor, and she had to go to the dentist. And a little train came back to Oradour.

And we were not on that little train. And my mother was frantic because she heard that little train had been raided. And she was sure that we had been taken. It just so happens that the doctor's appointment ran late and we missed it. And we took the next one. But these are the kind of things where you never knew where everything was going-- what was going to happen the next day.

Have you been able to keep up any contact with, let's say, call them, the Righteous Gentiles in the village?

Unfortunately not. My mother had kept up contact for a while. And then the lady moved. And then we just have not been able to-- I have not been able to locate them. And I know my mother had lost contact. And when she was alive, I tried to ask her. And there was just no way. And I feel very sad because these people really-- this woman really risked her life when she was either hiding us, or if the Germans on that train would have realized that she was hiding me or protecting me, we would have both been taken, not just myself, but her as well.

And there was just many instances. I suppose when you say what was the most painful, the most painful was to see that as a child, the whole world around that feeling of uncertainty. But I suppose there was also a feeling that there were human beings that still cared about me. And I think in some ways that kind of concern helped me be the kind of human being that I am today because I think through that concern I don't have maybe quite the same amount of bitterness that some of the people have that survived the Holocaust. I was fortunate enough to be still surrounded by my mother's love and to see some sign that all of humanity had not gone mad, that there were still people that cared out there.

Marguerite, last Monday, there was a program narrated by Abba Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister, in which he traces the history of the Jews. And on it, he mentioned a town that sounded very much like your village where the

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Germans had come in and killed practically everybody as a reprisal for nobody knows what. Eban, as I remember, said that nobody knew why the Germans had done this. I think they had done it in early August, late July of 1944. Can you shed any light on this?

I watched that program. And I was very taken--

What was the name of the village?

Well, the village that was burned was called Oradour-sur-Glane.

And your village where you lived?

Was Oradour-sur-Vayres.

Near each other?

They're very, very close to each other. And I was very taken aback when I saw this because I recalled not only when it happened, because I remember we were shocked, but we were even more shocked because when it happened, we were sure that it was our village that had really been targeted, not Oradour-sur-Glane because just a week before, the village where I was, there was some partisans, resistance.

And about a week before, a German car had driven by the main street of the village. And there were people shouting at them. And there was resistance shouting at them. And when this happened, a week later, that the village what, Abba Eban was saying, is that they drove into the village. They shot the men. They took the women and children, put them in a church and set fire to the church.

And there was really no reason why that particular small town would be singled out except to say that we felt, at the time, that it was in reprisal for what had happened because the two villages were very, very close to each other. And when you-- we had even figured out that when you come from Limoges, there's a main street. And then there's a fork in the road. And you can go either to one or the other.

And luckily for us, it happened very close to the liberation. And if the Germans had intended to burn our village, they did not have the time to come back to do it. But I remember, we were extremely shocked.

Again, it's one of these other miracles that I guess we were meant to survive. In this particular case, we would not have been targeted as Jews. We would have been targeted as part of a French village.

That's one atrocity that the Germans committed in error. They got the wrong village, so to speak.

But it was interesting of all the communities that Abba Eban should have mentioned, Oradour-sur-Glane, and I knew we were having the interview today, and I thought it seems like it's a coincidence that he should mention it just a few days before we were going to speak today.

We'll take a pause now. And we will return. Thank you, Marguerite.

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