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Summary

Madeline Dautartus was born in Strasbourg in Alsace-Lorraine region of France; she lived with parents, 2 sisters, 1 brother. Raised Catholic, attended Catholic high school. 1939 entire town was evacuated to Perigueux in Dordogne; father and brother were drafted into army. After German occupation family returned to Strasbourg; Alsace-Lorraine had been Germanized, books were burned, and jobs were controlled. Participated in the resistance; refused job in Germany; accepted job in the Social Security office and was given pass to enter the POW camp. Used opportunity to help prisoners –brought food, clothes and information to help them escape. Wanted to join French army in Africa; caught in 1942 while attempting to escape from Strasbourg with two young men; swallowed message she was carrying. In Sarrebourg prison 2 days then Strasbourg for one month; daily interrogations.

Taken by train to Schirmeck camp (10 km from Struthof extermination camp). Worked in laundry and sawing trees. A prisoner who laundered lingerie of female SS guards stole thread and made a rosary that prisoners shared. Contracted diphtheria and pneumonia; Struthof doctor visited isolation unit regularly to see who should be sent for extermination. Released after 1 yr, required to sign statement saying she'd never reveal anything about the camp. Returned to Strasbourg and went back to job; civilian boss, Mr. Loewe [PH] warned her she was being watched. Arrested two more times and questioned about resistance activities; was prepared to commit suicide when arrested 2 months before liberation but Gestapo building burned by US bombers. Never caught in an act of resistance, was caught trying to escape. Family hid two wounded US soldiers and two Arab soldiers from the French army in their basement until liberation. Brother was in a camp, transferred to Germany, then sent to Russian front, became Russian POW; released with help of Swiss Red Cross mid 1945.

November 1944 Strasbourg was liberated; served as civilian in the Bureau Militaire, then enlisted in French equivalent of the WACs. Posted in Stuttgart then Freiburg for five years. Encountered prisoner, former SS guard Rich [PH], from Schirmeck. He denied he'd ever touched a prisoner- she reminded him that he had tortured and killed two downed USA pilots.

August 1946, scouts carried statue of Mary from the south to Strasbourg. She prepared papers for a Lithuanian scout, who later became her husband, to come to Strasbourg. Served as secretary to General de Lattre. Continued working as a civilian in military until 1950 when immigrated to USA.