

Yvonne Mignot de Royere
October 2, 2002 in Excideuil, France
Tape 1 of 1
RG 50.106*0158

SUMMARY

Yvonne Mignot de Royere, née Roux, and her father Joseph Roux, saved 21 Jews during World War II. In 1939, the Veils, French Jews living in Alsace, were evacuated along with the entire population. They sought refuge in Clermont d'Excideuil and went to Mayor Roux's home after escaping from Gurs, an internment camp in the vicinity. Yvonne worked as a municipal clerk and had access to forms and papers and provided the Jews with forged identity papers and ration cards. They lived in safety hiding in the village rectory. Eventually Yvonne with her father's help, saved the families Robertso, Schwab, Wertz and another Weill family. Three of the families were hidden in the caretaker's house at the Chateau du Noyer and Yvonne helped them secure food and keep them safe. She occasionally left the Mayor's office unlocked so that the families could secure additional ration cards and watched carefully over their safety. They lived in Excideuil from 1942-1944 after which the Jews returned to Alsace to rebuild their lives. They stayed in touch with Yvonne de Royere until they died. Yvonne de Royere and her father were honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among Nations in 1982.

5-7: The name is Yvonne Mignot de Royere, née Roux, born in Clermont d'Excideuil France on February, 22, 1925 in the Dordogne.

8-10: In 1939, Strasbourg was evacuated and the Jews began to flee. The Robertso [SP] came to Excideuil, where Yvonne's father was mayor of 250 villagers. Yvonne became a clerk in the Mayor's office.

15-21: In 1942, the Free Zone was occupied and Yvonne's father said the Germans put Jews in camps and they starved to death. This was all they knew in 1942. The Veils [PH], from Bitche-Villers [TN: a town in Alsace that was part of Germany during the war.] were interned in the Gurs internment camp and saved themselves when Hortense Veil gave a guard her engagement ring. They wanted to go to Spain but had been detained when the Free Zone was occupied. Hortense's first child died in the Gurs internment camp.

24-29: The Veils came to their house and Yvonne's father agreed to house and feed them. He hid them in the church rectory which had a back door from which they could escape. Arlette Veil was born in 1943.

36-44: Yvonne was 17 and worked as a clerk. She forged ID papers. She used the town stamp for her forgeries. She put a cigarette paper in between the stamp and the documents so that "Excideuil" could not be clearly visible. She said the Gestapo then would not know which village within Clermont was the source of the forged papers.

47-55: Yvonne started to forged documents to save the Veils. She doesn't know how they got to her house from Gurs. Yvonne asked the Veil's surviving daughter, Rosette, who lives in Bitche-Villers today, how they got to her house. Rosette says that she doesn't know. Only her sister knows and her sister is dead.

57-64: Yvonne knew the Jews were put in camps and were starved to death. The Veils came from Gurs where Hortense had given her engagement ring to a guard. Mr. Veil was a rope maker. They knocked at her door and that is all she knows today about how the Veils got there.

73-76: Arlette Veil was born in 1943. In early 1943, Roger Veil arrives with his family. The owner of the Chateau du Noyer let her father use the caretaker's house. There were three apartments in this house. The caretaker was a resistance fighter who has died. [TN: name not provided.]

83-92: The Veil family moved about freely because they had forged papers. The militia was there when the Free Zone was occupied.

95-98: The Schwab family came: the husband, wife and two children and were put in the caretaker's house. The Schwabs had arrived when the Free Zone was still free.

100-104: Yvonne talks about the hostility of the villagers. They didn't know her family was hiding Jews but they knew they were hiding people and were afraid for themselves.

109-113: Yvonne provided ration cards with forged names. There were no Jews in the town of Excideuil.

123-130: There were six houses in the village. Pierre Veil would come to town and ask for food for Hortense.

131-135: The village photographer was named Martial [PH] and took photos and the village printer, named Lesmarriers [PH], made the forged ID cards.

142-50: The police often came to the Mayor's office. They wanted to do a census of the Jews, which was required, according to a Vichy law. Yvonne told the police there were no Jews in the town so the census couldn't be done.

151 Yvonne forged the papers before the Mayor's secretary arrived in the morning for work.

158-164: Yvonne and her father saved the two Veil families [TN: first mention of the second family.]. One family spelled their name with one "l" and the other with two; the Schwabs, the Wertzes, and the Robertso.

174-183: They saved a total of 21 people in four families [TN: If one includes two families named Veil and Veille, that would be five families.] There is no explanation for the discrepancy.]

186-188: After the war, the Veils returned to Alsace where he re-started his rope making business and they had two more children, Rosette and Pierre-Jacques.

195-205: Pierre-Jacques came from Haifa to meet Yvonne. He dropped to his knees to thank her for saving his life. Yvonne replied that his mother saved his life. Pierre-Jacques is a fish farmer

210-216: Arlette went to a kibbutz when she was 18 years old and became a French teacher. She came to see Yvonne in 1979. They stay in touch.

235: Roger Veil died of cancer.

239-245: All of those saved by her and her father passed through Excideuil trying to escape to Spain. Only Pierre Veil and Hortense were caught and sent to Gurs. The others found safety in Excideuil when they learned that they couldn't make it to Spain.

246: Yvonne's mother didn't know at first that she and her father were hiding people. Yvonne says her mother talked too much.

255-267: In 1944, Yvonne's father took Hortense to a hospital in Perigueux to give birth. The hospital was called Strasbourg Hospital although it was located in Perigueux.

276-285: When Yvonne was denounced by an unnamed individual, the militia appeared at the Mayor's office in 1943. But Yvonne had learned of their arrival and went to the Chateau du Noyer to tell the three families who were there to leave.

312: Yvonne, along with her father who had since passed away, was given a Righteous among the Nations medal.

313-319: In 1943, Yvonne told the families to escape. The Gestapo went to the chateau du Noyer but the families had left.

320-338: The Gestapo went to Le Petit Noyer, a small farm in the area, and killed a Jewish electrician who worked there. The owners said later to Yvonne that it was either the electrician or their family. Yvonne said she would have sacrificed herself.

340-345: When Yvonne got married her mother-in-law knew what she was doing. Pierre Veil died leaving Hortense a widow. He is buried in a Jewish cemetery in the Vosges.

SIDE 2 OF TAPE 1

12-18: Yvonne's father took Hortense to the hospital in a horse-drawn buggy to give birth. They went through the woods. Her father and her mother-in-law put their lives at risk to save Hortense.

19-29: She saved the Schwabs. They died; She saved the Wertzes; they are now gone. Nobody was deported amongst the families she saved. Arlette saw the Schwabs in California. Arlette was a French teacher and died of cancer.

33-39: Her neighbors were hostile because of what she did. After her father's death, she made a headstone for him with the Yad Vashem medal.

40-51: In Perigueux, the militia was active. The Prefet Rouppes [PH] was a Resistance fighter and member of the FTP [TN: Francs-Tireurs et Partisans]. She says nonetheless that the FTP in Perigueux often settled scores with individuals they opposed. Their motives were not always honorable, according to Yvonne.

62-68: At the end of the war, the families in hiding left and returned to Alsace, even though they lost everything. They rebuilt their lives.

71: Arlette died September 21, 2002.

72-77: Yvonne and her father were not in touch with the Resistance movement in Perigueux. She says the Resistance groups tended to act alone.

88-96: There was a train linking Perigueux and Excideuil once a day. People would come from Perigueux to Excideuil because there was food there. Every day, Pierre and Hortense would garden in order to eat.

107-110: Yvonne and her father hid these families for two years, from 1942-1944.

111-118: Yvonne went to Paris when her husband was sent by Vichy to youth forced work camps. He was sent to Germany but returned home because his father had died.

120-130: Her husband then was sent to Argenteuil to work in an airplane factory where the workers sabotaged the factory processes. Yvonne says the engineer was named Mr. Villars [PH]. She and her husband lived in Asnieres, near Paris.

132-138: In June 1944, the airplane factory was bombed by the Allies. Yvonne was pregnant and her first child died at birth.

146-152: She worked at the time at a pharmaceuticals company. In 1946, her daughter was born. Her daughter now lives in Perigueux but Yvonne does not keep in touch with her daughter.

154-165: Pierre-Jacques came to see Yvonne along with his wife who speaks no French. He told her he left home at 18 and became a dentist in Haifa.

171-177: Life during the Occupation was difficult but they survived.

187-192: Before the Occupation, they nothing about Jews. Her father told her the Jews were all businessmen and because there was no business in Excideuil, there were no Jews.

210-214: They didn't know about the concentration camps until 1945. Yvonne says the Americans knew well before 1945.

225-230: She had no trouble feeding those families who hid in Excideuil. She would leave the Mayor's office unlocked on several occasions so that the families could steal ration cards. She says she did it about 4 times.

293-299: Yvonne wasn't paid for what she did. She did it freely to save the Jews.