

SHEILA BAXTER
RG-50.154.0006. (recorded 1992 Sarasota)

Sheila Baxter was born in 1922 on the Isle of Wight, England. She was a dancer from an early age. She was part of the Sadler Wells Children's Company and then was asked to go to Paris to take lessons from Olga Privachenska for the Mariinsky Theater. She married a dancer from the Comedie Francaise, Michaud. His father, Claude, was Jewish; he was a playwright and in the French army and he managed to survive the war. Sheila tried to get back to England when the war broke out, but she was turned back and returned to Paris where she danced in the Avila ballet. Her mother was taken to Bergen Belsen because she was English and therefore an enemy alien. She was there for 2 years but was released after she became ill.

Sheila relates that many of her friends were Jewish and that some just disappeared. Many of her friends were White Russian artists who were escaping the Soviets. Often refugees would run into the theater where she was dancing, and the company tried to hide them. She remembers that Remy Blum, the impresario of the Ballet Russe at Monte Carlo, was taken to a concentration camp where he died.

Sheila's husband, Michaud, was taken into the French army when he was 19. He came home on leave twice, but then she never heard from him again. She remembers that at the end of the war Hitler wanted Paris to be blown up, the German in charge deflected the plan and didn't set off the bombs.

After the war ended Sheila returned to England. She met and married a naturalized American doctor with the American army in Munich. They lived in Garnish, then Vienna, and finally moved to the United States. She attended some of the war crime trials while in Europe and she was astounded to face the evil of the Germans who denied they knew anything about the treatment of the Jews.