

September 12, 1991

Slate #1349-016

Interviewee: Ms. Francine Taylor

Interviewer: Ms. Jania Sommers

Notetaker: Rose Shames

0:00 - Francine Taylor born July 14, 1928 in Karchzew, Poland (near Warsaw). At age of 2 years old left with parents for life in France.

2:00 - In 1938, returned to Poland for visit with extended family left behind. Description of Orthodox Jewish life of Poland of family.

3:00 - Description of antisemitic experience.

5:15 - Why did Jews go to France from Poland? Opportunities for work in France; difficult life in Poland; French gave political asylum to Jews from Poland.

9:15 - Description of France in 1930s. Family life in Paris. Neighborhood 50% Jewish and 50% French. Yiddish spoken in home.

10:15 - Pleasant life. Description of public school. Father a tailor and Mother a finisher.

11:00 - Family gave up strict religious observance, but maintained holidays and traditions. No Shabbat observance.

12:30 - German army coming into Paris. Letters from Poland described starvation, waiting for death - suddenly letters stopped coming.

14:00 - Father in French underground but Francine did not know at the time. Had to wear the Jewish star.

15:00 - Father instructed family to scatter if arrests came. Stayed in Paris until 1942. Changing conditions in Paris after Nazi invasion: curfews, wearing star, Jews began to disappear, house searches, food scarce, lines to wait, Black Market, ration cards stamped with Jew.

20:45 - Francine went to country (Leman) in 1942 summer to recover from illness. Received news that cousin had been sent to hard labor and also that Father had been deported. Mother and sister gone into hiding. Instructions received to find Mother in Toulouse (sp?) > Some money sent. Jews had been rounded up.

24:30 - Father had been picked up and taken to jail. He wrote card and asked for visit. Sister went to see him and he gave them orders to run and who to contact in the underground.

27:45 - Father was sent to Birkenau short time later and killed in gas chamber 2 days after arrival.

29:00 - Description of Francine's travels to find Mother. Going from occupied France to Free France.

33:30 - Train ride. Stopped to search for Jews. Through trickery she escaped.

35:25 - 1000km bicycle ride took one month. Slept in barns. Ration stamps to get food. Arrival in Dochs (sp?), a southern French resort.

39:16 - Reached underground contact. Non-Jews helping Jews to escape. Escape into Free France. Francine under fire at the border. Helped by peasants, given food, clothes, and sent on way. People were unwilling (fearful) to hide her.

46:15 - Arrival in Toulouse in September 1942. Looking for Mother. Took a bus to Grolay which was Belgian Jews escape point. Found Mother - description of emotional reunion.

49:50 - Finding work in Grolay. Obtaining false ID papers from non-Jewish underground worker.

51:38: Sister went back to Paris to work. She lived as Christian with false ID.

52:45 - Underground told them to leave because Jews being picked up.

55:00 - Francine sent to Marseille in 1943 to be with Uncle and go to school.

56:00 - Red Cross was sending children under 16 to US but she refused to go.

56:45 - Her Belgian cousins were picked up and taken to concentration camp.

61:00 - Needed to go back to occupied France where it was now safer for Jews to hide. New false ID cards made. Identity now Polish born Christian.

63:20 - Small hamlet (Safranburgh (sp?) where Uncle worked as a butcher. Mother found work mending clothes. Francine and sister knitted in order to get food.

68:45 - Life in hiding for almost a year. News about D-Day!

70:00 - Description of French peasant with whom they stayed. He did not know that they were Jews because of their false ID papers. He often expressed antisemitic feelings. Created very tense situation.

72:50 - They were discovered by German collaborator who recognized them from Paris. Forced to reveal themselves to peasant, admitted that they were Jews.

Hoping for his mercy to help them. His reaction was to fall to ground and cry, asked for their forgiveness for his anti-Jewish words; he was ashamed.

75:30 - Plans made to hide from police. Peasant put them in wine barrels.

76:30 - French police arrived. Beat uncle and peasant for information, but they kept secret. Stayed in barrel for five days.

77:44 - Americans arrive! Liberation!

80:00 - Went back to Paris.

85:35 - Spent 1 year in hotel room. Bed Bugs! Trying to get life going but very hard times.

94:30 - Applying for war reparations through French government.

96:07 - Man who had denounced Father for role in underground leading to his arrest and death was eventually arrested himself and sent to prison for 15 years.

98:15 - Closing remarks- many French people helped Jews, we should not forget.

100:49 - Francine eventually repaid peasants who hid them.