

Interviewer: Would you please begin by telling me your name and where you were born and when you were born.

Taylor: O.K. My name is Francine Taylor, and I was born July 14, 1928 in Karchev, Poland. That's a suburb right outside of Warsaw. Thirty minutes by train.

Interviewer: And what was your Polish name?

Taylor: My Polish name was Frieda.

Interviewer: And your maiden name?

Taylor: Isenstach.

Interviewer: And what does that mean?

Taylor: Isen means iron. Stach means strong. And it means in German actually strong as iron.

Interviewer: Had your family been in that community for many years? A generation.

Taylor: Yes, yes. My mother's maiden name was Knesberg which is named after the city of Kenesberg in Germany also, but they were, as far as I can remember and told, they've been there for many generations in that vicinity or right around Warsaw.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything of that community or that

Taylor: Well, yes because first my family immigrated to Paris, France and I was only two years old in 1930. But it just so happened that in 1938, my mother my sister and I went back for three months vacation there. So, I was already ten years old and so I remember everything quite well. Even though, when I first came to France I couldn't speak Polish, but when I returned and was there for whole three months I speak Yiddish but I learned Polish also. It was a very lovely little place. Actually, I was born in Karchev. That's where my father comes from, and my mother comes from a little town that touches Karchev named Elvar---. And that was a resort town. It was very beautiful. Elvar--was sort of a rich little town where wealthy people came and spend their vacation, so the Jewish community there was a little bit wealthier than in Karchev. Karchev was a real -----like where the Jews were poorer and lived among themselves like in a ghetto. And my family was very observant, very orthodox and typical Jewish family. Was the shakles and the women seemed to do all the work and the men were studying the Talmud all day long and it was a very colorful summer. Yes, I remember it very, very well.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the political activity that might have been going on there in 1938. I know you were only a little girl--

Taylor: Right. I don't think there were any political activities that I can remember. They were too busy--the Poles--the Gentile Polish population were very anti semitic. I remember that very well. And they were too busy, the Jews staying away from the Poles and not getting in their way. In fact, I remember one incident where my uncle, I had an uncle, who was about twenty three--twenty-four years old, lived with my grandmother my mother's side. And the one of his friends was Polish not Jewish had gone out on the town that weekend and drank a lot. So he came back with a gun and proceeded--we were visiting there--he was going to kill us all. Jits he called us you know because we were Jews. And my uncle actually, who was out on the town too with Jewish boys, came in and saw him through the window and he had to over power him and knock him down or he would have killed us all.

Interviewer: Do you remember any other incidents, any things that happened in the streets or--

Taylor: No. That's the only anti semitic incident that I remember. I remember that there was some kind of Christian holiday, I don't know what it was, and there was a procession and the Poles were carrying a statue of the Virgin Mary and she was electrical in some way. I don't know just how. She operated with a battery. But she had tears coming out her eyes and the tears were made out of precious stones. I don't know how that worked. I mean, but I always remember that. And, because of the religious holiday--because of this procession--all the Jews sorta went into hiding. They say stay out of the streets because that's usually when the Poles like to beat up a few Jews. I remember that. But, other than that, you know we went to visit the grandparents and the cousins and all that and actually, you know, we were children. We had a good time. But, Jews lived among Jews and did not mix with Christians at all.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why your father and your mother chose to leave town in the first place, and go to France?

Taylor: Well, then a little later on my father had a little shop in Warsaw itself. And he, I understand, was doing all right. He was making a living. But anti semitism was very very strong and a man from France came to recruit labor. That's what my father told us, in Poland and he was talking in the main square in Warsaw saying come to France. There's plenty of work. No discrimination. No prejudice. Plenty of work. So my father talked it over with my mother and says let's leave this country, you know, it sounds so good. And all he had to do was ask for political asylum. As a Jew he could get it. I understand that France does that quite easily. So he came and when he arrived in France, he was told that my father was a tailor and as a tailor there was work for him in the coal mines. And they wouldn't give him a work permit as a tailor only as a coal miner. So of course my mother wouldn't let him work in the coal mines. So they remained in Paris throughout the work permit. He found work. They lived in a little fourth class hotel

room. Terrible place. And he was looking for work and he found work, but since he didn't have a work permit, like anything that would pay a dollar an hour, he had to work for twenty-five cents an hour. But he stayed. He remained. He didn't want to go back to Poland.

Interviewer: Did any of his family members come with him?

Taylor: Yes, well not with him. But a little later when he finally received a work permit, I don't know just what the procedure was--you know if he had to stay in France so many years, I knew they were there quite some time. Then he brought the younger brother from Poland and his family and then my mother had a brother who was supposed to be drafted in the Polish army so he fled Poland at the age of seventeen and he came to France and asked for political asylum. As a Jew you could get it. All they would say was that they were so anti semitic that they didn't want to serve. So he came also, so my mother then she brought my younger sister also and she introduced her to a young Jewish man, a Belgium, she married and she's still alive. She stayed in Brussels, Belgium. But you see my mother came from a family of four--I mean eight--four of them immigrated and four of them stayed in Poland. And my father, the same way, he came from a family of six. Two of them stayed in Poland. Four of them immigrated.

Interviewer: Did you go back again besides the trip in 1938?

Taylor: No. I could have gone back after the war but there was nothing to go back to. We --between my father and my mother, we had fifty-six people, including our grandparents who got shot by the Germans in Poland. And that's close family--uncles, aunts, grandparents, and first cousins. So, we didn't want to go back. There was too many sad memories and tragic memories really.

Interviewer: Tell me about France in the '30s as you were growing up in France and your experiences as a Jewish child.

Taylor: All right. Well, we lived in a neighborhood that was fifty percent Jewish and fifty percent French middle class. And my parents couldn't speak French when they arrived and so when we started school, we picked up French immediately but we spoke Yiddish in our house and we didn't encounter really much anti semitism. Oh they made fun of our name Isenstach because the French could not pronounce it. They said that was a name to break your teeth on. So (french) they say and that's, as children, that's the only anti semitism that we encountered. And it was nice. We were right in the heart of the city and the schools were good. and my father, as I said, once he got a work permit, and got work and then little by little he moved out of this terrible hotel and got a little apartment, it was quite nice on the boulevard, and well he became a clothes designer in his later years he didn't enjoy too much because the war came. But the life was nice. I went to public school--an all girls school. My sister and I walked to school and it was like a ten minute walk from where we lived and

Interviewer: And your mother was at home?

Taylor: And my mother was at home. She helped my father. When he was a taylor, she did all the finishing by hand and then when he became a clothes designer, he worked at home my father did, then she did also all the hand finishing with him. So she stayed home but as I said she was not employed but she worked because she helped him.

Interviewer: Were you a strict observant family in terms of religious practices?

Taylor: No not really I'll tell you because my mother and my father came from a very strict religious orthodox family and they were, I would say, almost the revolutionary of the time. They were pretty much against orthodoxy. Like they grew up in. In my mother's days had she remained in Poland and married they would have shaven her head. Put the shakle on her head. She thought that was horrible and of course the men didn't shave and my father didn't like that. He didn't like the attire you know-the black silk coat, but we-I wouldn't say we were observant but we were very Jewish oriented as far as observing all the holidays, and all the customs, and the language and reading and writing. My father taught us. But we really didn't go to schule that much. They didn't have the time I'll be honest with you. They couldn't observe Saturday. It was impossible for them you know. Shaddish you know but they did the best they could. I mean we were still brought up very much the Jewish way I'll say. Yes, very much so.

Interviewer: And as time passed and we get into 1938-39, when did things start to change,

Taylor: Well, things didn't start to change until the war broke out and we were always corresponding with the family in Poland and then all at once we couldn't. Of course, France was invaded. Very quickly they lost the war. We were in Paris. I remember pulling the shades down and then looking through the blinds and seeing the German army walking into Paris and the streets were deserted. There was not a single soul in the streets.

Interviewer: Do you remember any discussion in your family about leaving France to go anywhere else?

Taylor: Not at the time. Not at the time. We were getting letters from Poland that were censored then by the German government and they were saying "we're doing well. We have everything." They sounded real good but they were always talking about lemons. About having all these lemons. And we couldn't understand why they would say that. Finally one day my father caught on and he said-I presume he said-there is writing between the lines in lemon juice. And he put a regular match and you know the smoke of the match brought out writing between the lines.

Interviewer: And what did it say?

Taylor: And it said we are starving to death. We expect to be killed any time. The Germans are just horrible and we -every day brings a day of terror. And that was the last letter that we received. And that was the end. But we did not know what was going on at the time. We did not know until we-my father we found out after the war, was in the French underground. We didn't know it at the time. He would always talk to us. He would say, "Oh things will be all right. Things will be all right. Just be patient. We will win the war. We will win the war." And he never spoke to us about leaving Paris. Then one day we had to pick up the Jewish yellow star to sew on our garment and that's when my father sat us down and he said you know he said, "I cannot leave the city." He still didn't tell us why. He said but if anything happens, if the Germans sometimes decide to maybe come and get all the Jews, then we each have to run for our life. He said if one of us becomes separated from the other, he says, don't try to save your mother, don't try to save your sister, just run for your life. But so we didn't know whether he knew anything or he didn't. He never said.

Interviewer: Were you still going to school at that point?

Taylor: At that point, yes. We stayed in Paris until I think 1942. Yes. Because one day I became ill and the doctor said I had spots on my lungs and if I wasn't sent into the country for good food and fresh air, I would develop tuberculosis. So we knew of a little boarding place, there was an old couple that took three or four children in at a time, and it was a small village by Limoges, about two hundred kilometers from Paris.⁷

Interviewer: Which way?

Taylor: Going toward south. You've heard of the Rouen races forty kilometers from Limoges. And so they sent me there. And this was the beginning of the summer. School had just let out, to stay for the summer and in the meantime, all hell broke loose.

Interviewer: Could I back you up a little bit. Could you tell me what went on between the time you saw the German soldiers marching into Paris and the time you went into the country--those two years?

Taylor: Well, we went on to school. Then they put out a curfew--well first--first it was pretty normal. We went on to school and things were pretty normal. We found out later they were so busy with the Polish Jews, that they left the Jews in France alone for a while. Maybe a good year or so. I'm just guessing you know and then we had to go get our star-star of David and for the Jews there was a curfew at eight o'clock at night. Anybody caught with a Jewish star after eight o'clock would be punished. So, we had to be home. Everybody by eight o'clock at night. And Jews would disappear, you know, but we didn't know what happened to them. We didn't know if they fled cause, I don't know if you remember the history of France, the Germans only marched in so far into France.

There was occupied France and there was free France and the collaborating government in free France. And it stayed free, so called, for a good while and Jews would escape to free France. So we didn't know what happened to those Jews. And one day also, before I went away, there was a knock on the door at five o'clock in the morning and my mother asked who it was and they told her a telegram was to be delivered. So she opened the door and it was the French police and the Nazis. Instead of the telegram they came to do a search in the house and they stayed all day and searched the house. And even unwound all the thread, the bobbins of thread looking inside. We didn't know what they were looking for. Of course, we found out later that my father had been denounced as being in the French underground. And they were looking for evidence. But they found none. So they stayed all day then they left. And that's when my father's friend told him -you should leave Paris. They'll come back. They're watching you. But he refused. Of course we didn't know why, but that's why he refused. He was in the French underground. And so this actually was the life that went on in Paris until I left.

Interviewer: Was there food? Was food plentiful?

Taylor: No, No. Food--they took all the food. The Germans took all the food out of the country. Like-to get-just-we couldn't find any potatoes for instance. And the rutabagas was -if you wanted to get a couple of pounds of rutabaga you had to get up at four o'clock and stay in line til eight or nine o'clock til the store opened. And there was a black market. There always is, where you could buy some food and -but we had a ration card. Of course, the Jews had Jews stamped on their ration card. And the French law was that after the age of 15 it is a law you have to have an identification card. So all the cards were stamped also Jew. So everything was rationed. You know, we weren't starving, but we didn't have much. People would go out in the country a lot of time on bicycles to see if they could gather eggs or chickens or something like that. But we didn't have much to eat. No.

Interviewer: Was there a Nazi influence in the school that you attended after the occupation?

Taylor: Not really. We didn't stay that long after the occupation. You know, not really. I was still in grammar school. So you know, as a child and no it just went on pretty normal until they clamped down on the city. That didn't last very long and that's when I was sent out to the country.

Interviewer: Was your sister sent also?

Taylor: No. My sister went on to school because she was almost five years older than I am..

Interviewer: So you went to the country--

Taylor: So I went to the country and was supposed to spend the

summer there and then come back. I was a couple of months short of my fourteenth birthday. And one day, I received--we had no telephones in the houses--I received like a message from the post office, that I had a collect--I guess you call collect--a phone call from Paris. That I needed to go to the post office--that this party was trying to get me. So I went, this was a small village where I was, I went to the post office and it was a cousin of mine calling me from Paris. She was a gentile. And her husband was my father's first cousin. She was married to my father's first cousin who had been deported to a concentration camp already but not as a Jew, for hard labor because they hadn't gathered the Jews yet in France.

Interviewer: When he was deported for hard labor, did she know that or did he just disappear.

Taylor: No, no. She knew that. They were getting the young strong men. They were just picking them for hard labor. They needed labor. That wasn't just the Jews. That was everybody. The French too. So she called me and I thought she--that was the day of my fourteenth birthday. It was on the fourteenth of July which is also French independence day. And I thought she was calling me to wish me a happy birthday. I was so happy. The people I was staying with had fixed a cake for me and I started, you know, being very excited. She said--be quiet, she said be quiet, I'm not calling you for your birthday. She said, your father was taken and she said, your mother and sister are in hiding and I'm sending you three thousand five hundred francs, which was quite a lot of money there, in the mail. She said, you should get it tomorrow. It's going like express mail and also an address in Da---x, which is in the southern part of France. And she said, and from there you will get into free France and then you are to find your mother and sister around Toulouse that's also in the southern part of France. And she said, because she says, because the Germans have picked up all the Jews in Paris, have rounded up all the Jews--she said, women, men, children, she said

Interviewer: And this was July 14, 1942?

Taylor: It was July 14. I'm pretty sure it was 1942. Yes. I know it was my birthday. It was '42. So of course, as she says, as she says I can't talk any more. She says, I hope I'm not followed. So she says, tomorrow, when you get the money just do this. Follow my instructions. So, when I came back to the place where I was staying, there were, I think, five more children beside myself. They all started, you know, wishing me --singing me happy birthday and the cake was there and the surprise, and I started crying. And they all thought I was crying because of joy because it was such a wonderful surprise and I was crying because I had no mother no father and had nobody left and here I was on my own. And I could not, you know, communicate with them. All I knew was that I was supposed to meet them. So--

Interviewer: Did you know where your father was sent. Did you

know at that time or when did you find out?

Taylor: I found out after much later when I finally was able to get to my mother and sister that what happened is the Germans-while I was on vacation and before they took all the women and children, they-my father when he finished work around five o'clock or so always went downstairs went to the closest cafe, had a little drink and discussed politics-that was his routine, with some men. So around five or so there was a knock on the door and my mother said that when she opened the door there was these two big men in civilian clothes and she knew right away that they were SS even though they spoke very good French but, for some reason, you could recognize them and they asked for my father but he wasn't home. And they said, well where is he? She says, I don't know. What is it? So they said, well nothing important. We'll come back. Very polite and they left. And she said she watched from the window. They took off in a big black car and so she knew they were looking for him. So she went downstairs and she said she started walking to warn my father and stopped every few steps so she said she couldn't see anybody following her. And so when she arrived at this little cafe where my father always stopped he was standing on the corner of the street with two men. So she approached him and didn't even have time to say his name, that car pulled up behind her. The two men got out and picked him up and took him. And they put him in a jail called Ensee, my sister told me, and he wrote a little card from there.

Interviewer: This was in Paris

Taylor: That was right outside of Paris. The Ensee. That's where they put all the transit people before they took all the women and children, they picked up just political men, you know-like he was considered as a political because he was in the French underground. That's where they put him. So he wrote a little card and he said on the little card that he didn't want my mother to come because he knew she would fall apart. So he asked my sister to come and bring-no that was not the first time-he asked her to come and visit and he said, do come because I'll only be here five days and I'm allowed one card. So my sister went and that's when he told her he says, you know, he says, this is it. He says, he says I don't expect the women and children to be, you know, safe but just a few days. He says, bring me some soap and shaving cream and he says, and flee--flee Paris and he told her who to contact, in the French underground and he says, if for any reason you become separated he says, just flee for your own life, he says, it won't help you to try to save each other's life, he says, because this is it. So my sister came back and she gathered some soap and shaving cream and she said when she came back she never saw him anymore. They had already shipped him out. He didn't stay the five days. And they sent him to Biercano. Of course, we didn't know then but we found out after the war that the Germans had left some books with everybody's name and his name was on there-when he was shipped out and where.

Interviewer: When did you find out what happened to him at Biercano.

Taylor: We really didn't. After the war-when the war was over, a couple of people came back that were deported, and one person said they saw him. He only lasted two days. They said he didn't want to live. He said that -he just went to the gas chamber after two days and then they didn't see him being cremated-but uh, so my mother was always hoping well, he will come back, he will come back, then after the last person came back from the concentration camp and then the government started looking through all the books, his name was found. That was in the late 40's. So maybe right around 1950 that we found out.

Interviewer: How old was he when he was taken

Taylor: Forty-four.

Interviewer: Tell me about your trip from Rouen to your mother in the Toulouse area.

Taylor: All right. So anyway the next morning I had a bicycle and a small suitcase with my summer clothes and I received the money which was, in those days, quite a bit of money. And I went to Tours. Tours was not too farm from Limoges.

Interviewer: Did you have an opportunity to say goodbye or did you

Taylor: Yes, oh yes. I told them, of course they knew I was a Jewish child. The people were not Jewish but they knew I was a Jewish child and finally, when I stopped my crying and I told them what happened, everybody cried and I told them I had to go. That I had this address and Dax to cross the Rhine, so Limoges did not have a direct train and Tours was not far from Limoges so they advise that I take my bike and to Tours and get a direct train from Tours to Dax. Dax was a small resort town right on the border that separated occupied France and free France. So I did that and when I arrived in Tours to buy a ticket and find out when my train was leaving, and that was like late afternoon, I didn't have a train until the next morning and the station was crawling with Germans. I mean just it was a strategic point of some kind and so for a lot of Germans and I became afraid because my only ID card which I didn't have because I wasn't fifteen, was my ration card. And my ration card had a stamp Jew on it. So I couldn't show it. They were asking for ID s because by that time, you know, like I saw, they were looking for Jews trying to escape to free France. So I became afraid and I decided well, I had money, I'll go to a hotel and spend the night. So I went to a hotel and they give me a card to fill out so I filled out my name and everything and at the end it says age and identification number. Well I didn't have an identification card of course but I didn't need one, so I told the lady, I said, but I did look older than my age. I was about fourteen I may look like a sixteen year old, so I tell the lady I don't have an ID card. She says, why not. I said well I'm not

old enough. So she says, you're not old enough. She says, well what are you doing in a hotel at your age. How old are you. I said fourteen. She said what are you doing, you know, spending the night. And I said, well. She says, are you Jewish. Well, I said oh no I'm not Jewish. Of course, I was very lucky we're all quite light and blue eyes in my family. At that time the Germans were all looking for dark dark people. That changes. They realized that plenty of Jews were not dark. But that happened and I said, Oh, no, no I'm not Jewish. So she said, well what are you doing in a hotel. So she said, oh you ran away from home. I know. So she said, I'm going to call the police. And she tried to grab me so I became very afraid of course and I grabbed my bag and I ran out and I ran back to the station and I spend all the night in the bathroom until the next morning. The next morning I put my bicycle in the last wagon like luggage you know and in those days you had a compartment where eight people sat together-four on one side and four on another- And I got on the train and was very happy. Didn't have a pocket book with me. Everything was in my pocket. I'll tell you why I said that. And we were on the train maybe fifteen minutes the train stops in the middle of nowhere. So one lady says or one man says, I wonder why we stopped here and somebody answers you know they do that all the time. She says, the Jews are fleeing occupied France going to free France and she says the Germans stop the train in the middle of the country and they look for Jews. So here I was thinking if you tell them you don't have an ID card I knew that, you know, they automatically special if you look older that fifteen they say well she's Jewish or he's Jewish and couldn't show them my ration card because it had Jew on it so they came to me, two German soldiers came into our compartment and asked for everybody's ID. Everybody showed them the ID and came my turn, I took the man's arm that was sitting right by me and I said Je suis avec monsieur, I'm with this gentleman. It worked. Just worked they passed on by. Of course I had some explaining to do to the gentleman. Of course I wasn't going to tell him I was Jewish cause you never knew. He may help you and he may not. So he looks at me I said well I said you know I said I lost my pocketbook. I didn't have a pocketbook with me. And I said you know how these German's are. I said, if you tell them you don't have any ID they automatically take you for Jews. He said you're right, you're right. He said, you'd better get off at the next stop and go to the Gendarme, that's like the police station and tell them your story and he said so they will make you some kind of temporary piece of paper he says because he say you won't be so lucky the next time. They do this all the time. So the next little town I got off. Took my bicycle off the luggage and proceeded to ride my bike from around Tours to Dax which is like two thirds of the length of France. It's like close to a thousand kilometers. And I did it.

Interviewer: And how did you live on that bicycle trip.

Taylor: Well, I had money. You know, I had money. And I would not stop in hotels. I would stop and slept in what you call (french word) where you store the hay. I slept there and I

Interviewer: Did people sell you food.

Taylor: Yes. well you see I had my ration card. so I would just give them stamps out of my ration card.

Interviewer: The stamps were not marked.

Taylor: No the stamps were not marked. Just a card and a lot of the times people would buy false--stamps you know, that were not that were like false money you know. So a lot of the time they would ask you for the cover but every time they asked me for the cover, I would say I lost it because I always stopped in little dinky country places where - so they'd say well look here -you know they were not so particular as long as you give them the stamps. I was lucky that way. It was a long long journey and it took me probably close to a month to get there.

Interviewer: Did you encounter any Germans along the way after you got off the train.

Taylor: Yes, yes. But I didn't look suspicious. I was just, you know, riding , you know a bicycle with a tiny little suitcase. So that part was pretty peaceful. As I said I slept and I had money so that part was pretty peaceful til I arrived in Dax. Well when I arrived in Dax it was crawling with Germans.

Interviewer: Dax is in what part of France.

Taylor: It's in the southern part of France. It's a little resort town close to the Atlantic on that side and close to the Pyrenees close to Spain. And that was crawling with Germans because the Jews were coming to that town, a lot of them, to find themselves across the border into free France. So I had this address but of course I didn't know the town so I said well maybe I should but there were no taxis but of course there was no gas in the country. The Germans took all the gasoline out so the transportation was horse and buggy so you hired a horse and buggy. I arrived to the little train station where all the horse and buggies were in line there and comes out of the train station a family from Paris that I went to school with the oldest girl. A mother father five children. The oldest of the five children was my age. Of course we were very happy to see each other. What are you doing here, what are you doing here. We were all doing the same thing. So they said where are you going. They had an address too but they didn't know where it was. So they said, well lets all get in the same when I say buggy they were big big buggies. So we called one and we showed them where we are going and he said well he says it is on the way he says he says to me if you didn't have your bike I would take you but he said your bike I can't take all that and a bike too. So we said so long hoping to see you soon and I went to the buggy right behind me where two nuns were sitting and he said o.k. he would take us together --you know the three of us and my bicycle. Their buggy took off ahead of me and was stopped immediately by German soldiers and took the whole family and of course didn't stop us.

So that was an unbelievable escape for me . So I arrived at this address that I had and this lady happened to be a lady who wanted a little business and she was just doing this, she was not making any money, she was just helping Jewish people.

Interviewer: She was not Jewish.

Taylor: She was not Jewish, no. and I was pretty dirty by that time. I hadn't had a bath all that time and so the first thing she did was let me shower rest and let me spend the night there and the next day these two young men would come and would take me across the border. And sure enough the next morning two men came. They were not much older than I was. Maybe fifteen or sixteen. They were little peasant boys. They were also not Jewish but I paid them but not much. It was more like a little you know like you would give a boy some money to go out on the town on Saturday night. So they took me and we walked fields and across rivers and we slept in barn and then the next morning a five o'clock they said, we were on a small country road, they said here you are. You're in free France. I didn't have much money left anyway but so you know

Interviewer: Did you know then where you were in free France/

Taylor: No, No

Interviewer: Just out in the country .

Taylor: Yeah, but they told me just follow that road and they said you will arrive in Pau. Which was a good size city.

Interviewer: And at this point you were on foot. You didn't have your bicycle anymore.

Taylor: Huh

Interviewer: You did not have

Taylor: I still had my bicycle. No I kept my bicycle. My little suitcase with clothes and so they said, you follow this sign and when you arrive in Pau then you can call your family. You won't be very far from Toulouse and I had an address in Toulouse and my family my mother and sister was supposed to be in Goreau which is a suburb of Toulouse. So I was very happy. I got on my bike and was riding on this little country road. And it was real soft and I noticed that signs was trees cut trees across on one side of the road saying attention attention actung actung if you cross at this point you will be shot on sight and then there was a lone German soldier standing guard in a little guard house. And this went on for quite a couple of--quite a little while and I realized that the other side was free France. I was still in occupied France. So I don't think they did that--well, I'm sure that they didn't do that on purpose I think they were just you know like kids. Whatever they made the mistake there was no reason for them, you know, to

lead me on wrong. So I knew--the other side was woods--so I knew I had to get on the other side. I rode for a little while and realized that these guard houses were pretty far apart. So I grabbed my bag at one point and I said I have to run across these trees these cut trees and go down the other side. And I did and in the process of doing that, all I remember was shots and that's all I remember. And before I --I suppose several hours had passed by - it was dark and somebody, I didn't know it was a man at the time, I was laying on my face, and somebody was just like touching my shoulder and shaking my shoulder a little bit and saying don't be afraid, don't be afraid you're in free France, you're in free France. and I looked up and there was this old peasant. And he said , don't be afraid but don't make any noise. He says, are you Jewish? I said yeah. So he said well he said you're in free France. He says you got shot at . He says, I heard the Germans he says but I couldn't come and get you til it got dark . He says this happens every day. He says come. So I still had my bicycle but I had lost my clothes. The suitcase I guess when I cross. So he said, come and he took me to the house and I had blood all over my face. What had happened, the fall on my face knocked me out and knocked all my teeth loose. So I was bleeding from all my gums and you know the dried blood. Like I said, several hours had gone by and they had shot at me and tore my whole blouse with a bullet but never entered but ricocheted and had a big, like, a big scratch on my back and that's how I fell. So he gave me a little, some water and told me to wash up. It was in the middle of the night and then his wife came in and she says to him you got you got a Jew in here she says you know what's going to happen? Be quiet, be quiet. Can't you see she's just a child. How old are you? Fourteen. She says, but she say, you know that they come, they come across the line, the Germans, they look for the Jews. They know there are some hiding here. And if they find her here, they are going to kill us all. They had several children sleeping upstairs. So he begged and she let him give me bread and cheese and some food and some peasants clothes. That they gave me a handkerchief full of food and they sent me on my way. So I, they told me to sleep in some barn not on the ground. The ground. She wouldn't let me. He wanted to but she wouldn't let me. She was afraid. So I went home with my bicycle. And

Interviewer: They point you in the direction for Toulouse?

Taylor: Yes, yes. I went on to Pau and then on to Toulouse. And it was not all that safe even in free France back then because there were no Germans at the time but the Gendarmes, they had a certain amount of collaborators with the Germans, were picking up Jews and putting them into camps if they had an address where they could stay it's different. But somebody like me, you see, they put them into camps and kept them there because they knew that eventually the Germans would come further down and get the rest of the Jews.

Interviewer: Now this would have been around the middle of August?

Taylor: It was later. I think it was it was about September. Yeah. About September. So I was between, So I arrived in Toulouse where I had an address. I had several addresses. And then I arrived in Toulouse at this address. My mother and my sister had come through there a couple of months before and the people, who weren't Jewish, told me that they hoped my mother didn't commit suicide because she was so beside herself that she abandoned me, even though she didn't really, you know. They had to flee Paris. With the help of this cousin by the way. She helped them get to the train station because they said that she figured that I hadn't shown up for so long that I was dead. And so I stayed there for a night and they fed me. They put me on the train to go to --- (French name). It was not really a train, it was a bus, there was no train. On a big- like a Greyhound bus. And so I arrived in Gorlet and

Interviewer: Gorlet was a small town?

Taylor: Yeah, it was a town of ten thousand-a population of ten thousand. What had happened -see a lot of the Jews had fled Belgium because the Germans had invaded Belgium and all of occupied France, to the south of France and a lot of Belgium Jews settled in Gorlet because they had the tannery that's where they treated the raw leather and a lot of these Jewish people from Belgium knew that trade and they knew this little town. So they could get work there with permission. Jews also had to register as Jews there even in free France but they could get work. We had cousins there from Belgium who had fled Belgium so that's how we, my mother and my sister went to this little town. So when I arrived with my bicycle like two months later and my mother saw me and she had lost like thirty pounds and she fainted. And she said that she had become so depressed you know, that everybody was so fearful for her life that you know because she felt like I wouldn't survive and she felt like it was her fault. She felt like it was her fault that my father was taken, too. So a husband first and a child after would have been too much for her. So I made it. That was my first experience during the occupation.

Interviewer: And then did you stay in Gordet with your mother and sister for a little while?

Taylor: We stayed for a little while. As women, we couldn't work. We didn't have--as Jews for some reason -the men could work- the women couldn't. Well I guess the men could work because they had this specialty they could do but the women couldn't. And after fourteen the age of fourteen there was no school. You had to be sent to a boarding school and my mother didn't have any money to send me to boarding school. So my sister was five years older and had gone to a very good, if guess you call a commercial school? So she had learned to be a stenographer in Paris. So she, we knew, in that little town we knew this non Jewish man, very influential. He owned the newspaper in the town and he was also, he had access to city to city hall and the official stamp so he, at first he said to her, why don't you go back to Paris under a false name and I'll

make you a false identification paper. A fake name but that person exists you know. You see the Germans got wise. They knew that Jewish people were getting false identification cards. So what they did if they made a control you know and they said show us your papers if they suspected you might be Jewish. They would look up in the archives if you were really registered there. And if it was false and you weren't registered there if it was just something out of a blue sky, they would still take you, but if you were registered there then you existed. So this man was very clever. He would pick names from like 2,000 kilometers away not from that same town where it was so easy for the Germans to find out because you might meet that person. That person really existed. So what he did, he was also in the underground, he was helping Jewish people, so he made her a false identification card of a person that existed in Mira. Twas like in the other part of France and he told her to go back to Paris and get a job and work as we had no money. you know, and maybe help us. So, she did. She went back to Paris and got a job and worked as a Christian and got a little room like at the YWCA you know. Course I was about fourteen so she was nineteen years old. Still I couldn't go to school so

Interviewer: Did you and your mother stay in Golet?

Taylor: We stayed in Golet. Yes. My mother had a strong accent anyway when she spoke French. She had a Polish accent. So you couldn't make her any false ID's. I was too young you see. So we stayed there a good little while. We had no money left at all. And in the meantime the Germans were crossing the border into free France and at night they would pick up one or two Jewish families because they were not supposed to take the Jews but they would disappear. So this same Monsieur Jetal who made an identification card for my sister said you know he said he called there were about twenty or twenty-five Jewish families he sorta took them all under his wing and he called a meeting at his house and he said, you know if you don't leave this town he says, you will all be picked up. So he says, we'll all have to make some kind of arrangement. And there were other things that happened in between you know, so much has happened it's hard for me to try to keep everything following everything. My mother, since I couldn't go to school while she was there, she had a brother who had served in the French Foreign Legion because this brother who had asked for political asylum wanted to serve in the French army when the war broke out between France and Germany that since he had become a man without a country he lost his nationality, his Polish nationality, when he deserted he had be come what they call a patried. The French would not let him serve in the French army but they said, if you want to serve in the France, then serve in the French Foreign Legion. So he volunteered in the French Foreign Legion and he did the whole north African from (foreign name)_____ you know what is it (foreign name----, the desert Fox that they were fighting. So he did all that campaign and then he got out of the Foreign Legion and came to Marseilles. He had a little butcher shop up in Paris that the Germans did not take from him because he went away in the army. So he closed up his shop, you know and it just stayed closed. So he

came back to Marseilles and my mother sent me to Marseilles to him so I could go to school.

Interviewer: So this was what October, November?

Taylor: No this was later than that because I had been in Ge (this place) for several months I would say maybe six months to a year.

Interviewer: Maybe spring of 1943

Taylor: Yeah, Yeah, So he had a hotel room. He had a job you know. Not very good job you know but in a butcher shop, but anyway she thought that would be best for me. Well, come to find out the concierge, which was the keeper of the building, would not let me stay with him, because that was rented for one person and she just would not let me stay with him. So what I did, I went to school every day and every night I would do my homework on the bench on the boulevard and we would wait til she turned her light out and went to bed and then he would smuggle me in to his bed and sometimes we were lucky, it was ten o'clock, and sometimes it was two o'clock in the morning. So that's how I spend my time with him for a while but it was not possible. I mean I could not live like that. I just would drag myself to school. Sometimes with two or three hours sleep, very little food. So

Interviewer: Marseilles was in free France?

Taylor: Marseilles was in free France, yes. So my mother heard that on the sixteenth the Red Cross was sending children to the United States. They were able to get the Jewish children under sixteen to be sent to the United States from free France. So she asked me to come back as she was going to send me to the United States. Well of course I would never think of leaving her. I started crying and I said where ever she goes I'll go. She said, remember what your father said, but that did not count. So I refused to go to the United States. So I stayed with my mother a little bit in Golet and in the meantime our Belgium, the Germans picked up all the Belgium Jews that had fled Belgium. There were about six families so our Belgium cousins were picked up to be deported to concentration camps.

Interviewer: Did you see them again?

Taylor: No, no. There were three brothers who were about my mother's age. Their wives. One had a son and a daughter and one had two sons who were when the Germans came the two sons were not home. They came in the morning early and they didn't take my mother and me. They were just looking for Belgium Jews. I guess they had a system, you know. The two sons were not home. One was eighteen and one was nineteen. One was spending the night with the son of the French family, the non Jewish family that was employing them with leather goods. And one had gone out, he had a little garden in the fields. We knew where they were so of course the Germans didn't say that they were taking these people to some

concentration camp. They were simply going to interrogate them about Belgium though we knew of course.

Interviewer: How did you know?

Taylor: Because we had already fled Paris and my father had told us all this and then we had gotten all these letters from Poland. We really didn't know they were burning Jews. No we still didn't know they were actually burning Jews in concentration camp. But we knew they were doing away with them you know. They were mistreating them. They were working them to death. I mean that much you know we knew. So my sister went to the field. Oh, my sister had come back from Paris because with her work she could not support herself. She just did not make enough money, you know, to pay for everything. So she had written and she said that she-my mother even had to send her food that we didn't even have, you know once in a while. So she said maybe I could come back there and hide, you know, and so my sister had just come back because we had had this meeting with this man. He was going to help us anyway. She said maybe we'll do whatever he decides to do that we should do we'll do it together. So she happened to have just been back, so she fled to the field and told one of the two brothers what had happened. Well, he start to crying, wanted to come back home and go with his parents and she wouldn't let him. She pushed him into out door house. You know that they have. And she said, I'm not going to let you go, I'm not going to let you go. you know being killed. And the other boy, the people that he was spending the night with hid him and then after a few days went by my sister finally he quieted down, he stayed in that out house. And we would take him food every day. And for a few days and after things looked sorta quiet, the French people who were hiding the other boy took the two boys and sent them to Savoie, its in the Alps. To the French underground and they survived. They stayed in the French underground til the war was over. They survived.

Interviewer: What happened to your sister and your mother?

Taylor: All right. So this same Mr. Letios called a meeting and this was this period here. This is me at fifteen, my sister, that's Mr. Letios daughter and she was going with him, Maurice, he was a Jewish boy hiding in that little village from Paris. These two are -----(names) are also Jewish children. She was my age. He was maybe sixteen. They were deported. So

Interviewer: This picture was taken

Taylor: This picture was taken in 1943. I didn't get it til last year. This Maurice married her and I hadn't seen him for forty some odd years and I we had a reunion last year when I was in Paris. He told me about the picture and he had one made for me and for my sister. So I just got it in May. Actually not last year. This year in May. So he called us and he says go into the town house, get the official stamp out and he says I'm going to buy ID cards, blank ID cards, this is the also the period--this is my

false identification card and this is a blank ID card. You buy it like that then you put your picture on there and he says, I'm going to get list of from people who exist, each one should correspond to your age he says. He says, looks I don't know because he didn't know those people. He says but age wise they have to be,--I wasn't fifteen at the time. They have to be fifteen to have a ID card. I have to have someone that is at least fifteen. Then he says you all have to leave and go back into free, I mean occupied France. He said free France is more dangerous than occupied France because all the Jews that were not taken in free France were now sitting ducks in free France. So he says now as gentiles and you go back to occupied France you'll be much safer. Well, this uncle who was in Marseilles had met a Jewish girl there also hiding from Paris and they had become engaged and they had the same problem. They were like sitting ducks in Marseilles. So the whole family was hiding outside in a little hamlet also not far from Limoges and she said to him you know they're hiding there as non Jews. And she says the peasants were very good and didn't know anything about Jews and her father was a shoe maker. She says why don't we try to get false identification paper and go hid over there. So he was already there in that little town called Sfranbeau. It wasn't a town. It was a hamlet. It only had thirty five houses and so he was already there with his girl friend and her family and he is the one who said well come and join me. I'm over there saying that I'm a butcher by trade and I fled Paris because the Germans wanted to send me to Germany for hard labor and I didn't want to do that and of course the people were more or less anti German and they were very good to him. So he says why don't you explain to Monsieur Letab that my mother could not get a false ID as a French native because she had an accent. So to make her a card as a Polish born Christian and you are her two nieces. You don't have any family. You don't have any mother or father. That your mother and father were killed in the bombing outside of Paris. Paris was not bombed but the outskirts were. And he said and you will tell them that story that you were bombed and you had no house so I'm bringing you over here to sit it out because everybody was sure that the Germans would loose the war. We just knew that they couldn't possibly win the war so

Interviewer: When you say you knew they couldn't possibly win the war was that just optimism in the face of what you were going through.

Taylor: Yes

Interviewer: Were you getting any information

Taylor: Not really, Not really. We did try to listen to radio England you know. What they called free English. But it had become so dangerous to listen to that radio because there were always people, announcing people, you know, maybe not a whole lot but even a small percentage so we really --all the newspapers were all censored. No it was just optimism that's what kept us--they couldn't possibly win you know . That's what kept us going. So we

joined him. So Mr. Le-- made us false identification cards and then we took the train and went back into occupied France and my uncle came to pick us up like a real cousin. He wore wooden shoes and there was straw in the shoes and the beret and just real french peasant and he then introduced us. He was renting a room in these peasants house. He was a wooden shoe maker and she was actually a hired hand. She went from farm to farm and put in a day's work and then came back home. So he-the house was not much but it was big but it was like the ground floor had no floor it was earth floor but he had lots of room. So he rented us a room too. My uncle had room there and we had a room there and we told him that we got bombed and he believed everything we said and so to earn money for our keep, our uncle would butcher cattle because see what happened, the Germans they came and counted the cattle heads in each farm and that was requisition. When that cattle was raised to where it could be eaten they came and got that cattle so if the peasants wanted any for themselves they had to, if for instance a little cow was born you know, they wouldn't tell them a cow was born. So that's what they'd do to have meat for themselves. My uncle would butcher the little calf and then for payment they would give him meat. They didn't have any money really. They were just little peasants and my mother would go everyday from farm to farm and do mending-there was really nothing but mending little clothes on old clothes and I my sister and I would spin the yarn and make socks and sweaters. We were very good at that. And they would pay us with food. And since the people who were sheltering us were not-all he did he would grow he would have a vineyard and make his own wine for himself but he did not have any farmland so we would share the food which at the time we had plenty of with them and that would pay for our room but however we had to eat from the same table because there was just one tremendous kitchen and there was just one table you know. So we were there for several months and yes we were there several months because Normandy D. Day had already- now there we could listen to the English radio because we were so isolated. As I said it was just a hamlet for thirty five people. And there was a little chapel in the middle of the square that was thirteen hundred years old and it wasn't used it was just sitting there you know. And so we knew that the Americans had landed and of course it was just a matter of waiting.

Interviewer: So you were there almost a year./

Taylor: Well uh, altogether, altogether yeah altogether almost a year. So yeah we were there close to a year I guess.

Interviewer: June 1944 when D Day wasn't that D Day June 1944.

Taylor: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: And then you stayed there in that village that hamlet a little longer.

Taylor: Well we were there I'll say, when this incident happened. O. K. they had already landed but it took them several months

before they came that deep because we weren't far from Paris actually see. So we were sitting at the table eating, all of us and he was the man, his name was Monsieur ---, was poor peasant because the mother of a French peasant had very little education, and he was fairly well educated because he had studied to be a priest one time in his life and he didn't finish but he was well learned. Now she wasn't. She couldn't read or write so he was reading the paper. He was my mother's age. He was right around forty I guess forty-one. And all at once he said you know he says that everyday in the paper there was Jews, Jews, Jews he would say cause they were censored papers of course he said you know, he says, if one of them, he says, comes on my property, he says, I will get my, what do you call that prong that you pick for, pitch fork, I will take my pitch fork he says, and he says, he says I'll get him right against the wall and I'll hold him there and he says and he keeps on rattling and my uncle thought he was funny, my uncle back then was about thirty-two years old. He was a bachelor but of course but we did too, but my mother you didn't think he was so funny so my uncle says to him well how would you know, he said, if he was a Jew. He says, I would know, he says, they have ears like this and noses like this and says they look like this anyway. You know, he was describing, he said, well did you ever see one. He said, I don't have to see. He hadn't even anything but what he saw in the paper. I don't have to see them, I know I know. That night, of course, we talked among ourselves. My mother said, well she said, I hope you never find out. You know what is waiting if he does find out. And you know, that went on. Well, shortly after that its when D. Day has already happened maybe a couple or three months after that you know because we stayed there a whole year all together. We my sister and I there was no running water there. There was no bathroom. The bathroom was outside. So we would take a little bowl of water and go brush our teeth on the stairs of the little chapel. That was that's how we cleaned up in the morning in pretty weather so we were brushing our teeth and this man came by on a bike, a Parisian looking for food - they did that a lot came in the country. And we came face to face with him and he was a neighbor of ours in Paris and he was a well known collaborator with the Germans. And of course, we said what are you doing here. And what are you doing here. So of course, he knew what we were doing. He knew that we were Jewish and he turned right around and got on his bike and left. So we came in the house and told my mother. She says Oh she says that's it she says he has gone to the nearest commendature to the Nazis and they were getting a good bit of money for each Jew that was denounced. So we called my uncle you know and we told him and we said you know that's it. What are we going to do. When he finds out, Monsieur Folk, you know I mean, You know how he feels about Jews and my uncle said, no he says we have to tell the truth. He loves us. He did like us a lot especially my uncle. He says, he doesn't know what a Jew is. He says where are we going to go. He says either he turns us over or he hides us. So he calls him, he says, Monsieur Fous, you know he says I told you so in so and so and so well that is a lie. We are Jews he told him. He says, you're not. He says, yes we are and he says, you're not. Look he says, now we don't have much time he

says. I'm going to tell you what happened. He tells him we were discovered here and he says and what are we to do and the man falls to his knees and he starts to cry like a baby. And my uncle couldn't quiet him and he thought maybe he was afraid and he says look you have to get yourself together. If you want us to leave we'll leave. No, No, no, he says--forgive me forgive me he says I am so mortified. He was so mortified because of what he had said at the table. And he felt so bad that he had said that about the Jews and this is why he was crying like a baby. So anyway he said, he was quite smart, he said look they only saw the girls. They didn't see the mother. He says, you, he says, does he know you. My uncle says does he know you. He says , no he doesn't know me. All right we have to think fast. He says if you went to the closest commendante-gendarme well he will be back here in about two hours. He said we have to hide. So he says I will go-he made his own wine and he had like a little elevation and he had made a cellar under there so he went in there and emptied three barrels full of wine, put each one of us in a barrel--my mother in one, my sister me in another And he told my uncle, now you and I sit down and we'll ignore the whole thing and have a drink. And that's exactly what happened. They came in but it was not the Germans. It was the French gendarmes came back . And they said where are the girls? so Monsieur said, what girls? So the first thing they, so of course I didn't see that you know because we were hiding, but he told us, the first thing they did was just hit them over the head with the back of their guns you know and then asked my uncle where are the girls of course. They beat them up and then Monsieur --- he thought that they were really going to really-who knows- so he said oh, he said the girls, the girls he said, that's right a couple of hours he says a couple of Parisian girls came by and he said they were looking for food, you know how these Parisians come looking for food. And he said, I don't have any . I'm not a farmer. He said, but they stopped and they brushed their teeth. In fact he said I run them off . I run them off. He said they were brushing their teeth on the steps of the Chapel. He says, and I thought that was not nice. you know. and He says and they left and he says I don't know where they went. He says that if the Americans hadn't already landed in Normandy God knows what they would have done to him. That they were afraid you know to do any more harm, so they left and then they waited until dark and then he came in and you know we stayed there almost five days in those barrels. Because we were afraid we were watched and we made it.

Interviewer: What happened after that

Taylor: Well after that shortly after that the first two Americans came in a Jeep and they were lost actually because they never came to the hamlet. They landed-they came as far as Limoges. Cause this place is really unbelievable. It's forty kilometers from a train station you know. It had no mail. The mail is seven kilometers the closest town. But two Americans were lost and came in a Jeep. And our cat was having kittens and we named the first kitten Yankee. And they stopped and they said, we landed in Limoges I mean we're already in Limoges. And they said, you're liberated

you know and we well yes and no the Germans were still there but they were defeated. So in fact they were pretty mean at the time. They did some horrible things. While they were defeated we saw them march you know coming through and the Americans were after them. In fact they burned a town called, at that time they passed a town a little town called Deshon, it's become a national shrine and they were defeated the Americans were after them and that just unbelievable they did such a thing. They rounded up everybody up in that little village locked them up in the church and put the church afire and burned everybody alive in there. They did some pretty horrible things. But you'd be surprised-so we were liberated and we had always, my uncle had always told them that, they had a son and a daughter these people, also farmhands and the son was very gifted drawing and I was very gifted and we used to draw together on his day off. So my uncle always said well if I survive this and I go back to Paris and I'm lucky enough to open my butcher shop and make a living I will make it up to all of you . We will all make it up and we did because we did. And so we were liberated and we came back to Paris. We had no place to live. Our little apartment where we lived before - also I have to tell you this- There was a little business downstairs. It was a lady never been married and her father and they had a little apartment attached to the business. Well, they always liked our little apartment on the second floor. So she took, the lady took that apartment and would not give it back to us and there was no place, you couldn't find a place to live in Paris. We didn't have much money anyway. So we had no place to live.

Interviewer: When you came back to Paris did you see those people that you saw that you knew, were they surprised you were still alive I mean did they.

Taylor: Well we really didn't see anybody to begin with. Oh you mean the people where we lived. Yeah they were surprised. They were . But the Janitor, the concierge, she said she thought we would always come back. She had the see where my parents lived the Germans, I forgot to tell you too, the concierge hid my mother and my sister for five days because we had a policeman who lived above us and then we had a policeman who lived on the fifth floor/. The policeman who lived above us was a collaborator . The one who lived on the fifth floor was not. So the one that lived on the fifth floor had come down to the concierge and told her there were three Jewish families in that building. And told her, you know, he says, tomorrow we have order to go with the Germans and pick up every Jew in the city. So we have a list, every woman, child and man so he says if you can go to these three families and hide them because that place at five o'clock tomorrow there will be a knock at the door. So the concierge hid, you see I was with friends I was with the Hagle street families and of course my father was already taken, but she hid my mother and my sister and she hid a family with three daughters and another family with a son and a daughter. She had on the same floor where my parents lived right across the hall there was two apartments on each floor there was a gentile family whose husband was a prisoner of war. She went

back with her little girl to live with her mother and she left her keys with the concierge and the concierge hid them all in that other apartment. So when the Germans came and knocked on the door that morning and there was no answer they pushed the doors in and they were so angry to find cause my mother she said you could hear everything because it was on the same floor. She said they were so angry they threw all the furniture out the window and they even ripped the electric wires out of anger because they didn't find anybody.

Interviewer: So when you went back after the liberation and you finally found a place to live in the same neighborhood.

Taylor: No No. So we had no place to live my uncle had gone back a little ahead of us and he wanted to see if he could make a living. Well sure enough his butcher shop had been closed and it had a big sign on there Went off to war--and it just stayed like that all these years because you see if you were a prisoner of war if you went off to war they just left the businesses until you came back. I mean he was not, they did not investigate whether he was Jewish or not. He went off to war. So all he had to do was open the butcher shop and walk in and he just made a real good living immediately because there was just such a demand for all kinds of food. I mean he would go you know slaughter his own cattle outside of Paris and bring it back but he couldn't find-- so he found a little hotel room close to the butcher shop and he could not find us a place so finally he told the lady who owned the hotel, it was a terrible hotel fifth class hotel and I hate to tell you where all the pimps and prostitutes were there, but that was the kind of dirty hotel. But he told her well if you give me a room- if you let me rent a room for my sister and her two daughters I will give you meat you know and I will this and that. So anyway she found us a room on the sixth floor for the three of us and there was this bribery and there was no running water to go to the toilet forget the shower the bathroom to go to the toilet you had to go on the main floor with six people you had to share that and it was a real--we all slept in one double bed and it was not much bigger than my bathroom the whole thing. and with the walls, this very very old hotel was full of bed bugs. So the first night we stayed there, we stayed one whole year in that hotel room. The first night we spent there the bed bugs came out of the walls. That's a horrible experience. So we decided to leave the lights on so for a few nights they didn't come out. So then they got used to the lights so they started coming out. So what we would do is one night out of three, one would stand watch and smack the bed bugs with a newspaper while two slept. So those were very hard years because we had no money. I went back to school, my sister went to work, my mother found a job in a sweat shop. Like I said she could sew well-finishing doing work but it was--for some reason we thought the war was going to be over and everything was going to be just fine--my family coming back--well so we always lived for that and all at once it wasn't like that at all. And also I wanted to tell you when the Germans invaded France, my father by that time you know had a pretty nice job and he had saved up some money and

he had enough to buy six hundred dollars with his French franc buy six hundred dollars because the rumor or whatever said your French franc will be worth nothing. People with a little money should buy dollars. That may save your life later or whatever. So he had bought six hundred dollars and but we were not allowed to have that money in dollars so he told my mother he said in the binding room in the apartment he opened what do you call the strip of wood.

Interviewer: The shoe molding

Taylor: The shoe molding you know its pretty high shoe molding in the apartment So he said he opened that up and he hid the six hundred dollars and he said you never know we're not going to touch it. It may save your life anyway. So he hid that six hundred dollars and when August came and he was taken and my mother had to hide she forgot to take that six hundred dollars out and when we came back after the war first she went to see the lady who was occupying the apartment. She said will you please let us move back. She said you do have an apartment now downstairs. We live in this horrible hotel room and she refused but she looked at the apartment and the lady had done quite a bit of remodeling and it looked like to my mother like that the shoe molding was not the same you know. It looked like, cause there was a lot of wood half way up the wall and that was gone see. So she knew that the money was gone too. So she said forget it . But when we finally, after a year moved into the apartment and that was the first thing she did that money was still there. We lived in that hotel like I said for a whole year. And we had some tragic hilarious unusual experiences because here we were three very nice women living among people like almost like Les Miserable. It was practically the same thing. I'd like to tell you one experience in the hotel that was hilarious. So I went back to school and my sister went to work and my mother did too. My mother noticed that every time she went to draw water on the main floor, this Arab was always coming to draw water too. And she says so she told us she says I think that this Arab maybe likes you girls and whatever she said and we were afraid you know. She says be very careful when you walk in and come to the room. Put the chain have the chain a safety chain she says because she says and if he's out there don't hang around the water even if you can't get any water. So sure enough we noticed he was always there and one day my mother said there was a knock on the door, she opened the door with the chain on there was this Arab standing in the doorway with his waxed mustache you know slick black hair with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. And she said my daughter's not here and he said I didn't come to see your daughter. She said my big daughter is not here. She said my little daughter is not here either. He said will I did not come to see your little daughter. She said well what do you want. He said well I want you. So anyway she became very afraid and she said well she says whatever and she close the door and she says go away. And that evening she told my uncle she says this Arab came with flowers and I'm so afraid and all that So he says to her well you let me handle it. I was in the French Foreign Legion you know he says and I know how to handle these people. He says because if he starts with you

ladies, he's not going to leave you alone. He may think you're one of these ladies of the night so I have to set him straight. So he disappeared. He was gone a good while. He came back he was white as a sheet. He said let me sit down and give me a stiff drink. He says I went and talked to him and he says but he says let me tell you I thought I knew how to handle them and he says I went to him and I said look you know those three women, that's my sister and my two nieces and their not prostitutes. They are nice women. And he said well I know that's why I came with flowers. I know they are nice women. That's why I liked them. So he says they're not your kind of women. He says I was in the French Foreign Legion and I says you're not supposed to bother women like that. He said if I see you such as look at them he says just look at them, he says, I have a knife that long which he didn't have of course you know with the one that you bock. I will open your stomach from here to here. Of course you know he said he was shaking all inside because either he was going to be afraid in the room or he was going to open the knife on him too. Anyway that's how he got him to leave us alone totally.

Interviewer: Would you tell me about your experience later on when you applied for reparations

Tailor: I went to school for a little while and times were just too hard you know because even with all of us working we had no furniture we had nothing. So my sister found a job at Orley Field as a secretary and then they needed a file clerk and she found me a job as a file clerk which I didn't know how to do but they taught me I was pretty bright I must say and she had taught me English when we were hiding here so my English was not too bad. Because she could speak English, she had gone to England a couple of times and so we all went to work and then we got our apartment back and then I met my husband with Orley Field. He was an American stationed -in those days it was the Air Force at the Orley they didn't have an air force. We lived together for about three and 1/2 half years and he brought me back to the states and we got married and then it came out that many years later I was already here maybe 10 or 12 years I don't remember a long time and she says that the French government had received a lump sum from the German government to give to all the French Jews that had lost their whatever-some people had only lost furniture, some people had lost a business and they give it to the French people and the German government is also ready to pay reparations by not that dramatically. You had to apply for it. She wanted me to apply for it. Well I wouldn't because it involved, you know, a lot of paper work a lot of research whatever and I just didn't want to be bothered. So she did it for me and for Edsel and she applied for reparations for herself and my sister and me but I didn't get it through this country. I got it in France and so what happened they agreed to pay a widows pension for killing my father and they agreed to pay not big pension but a small pension that goes up a few percent every year for cost of living to my sister and I for all the mental anguish that we had to suffer because of them and physical too you know And then as years went by my mother was

called by the French police and she was showed the letter to where my father was denounced After, I father was not taken because he was Jewish he was denounced because he was in the French underground listening g to the English radio and the man who denounced him lived in the same building on the sixth floor. Where he was a collaborator. So they asked her if she wanted to press charges and she said yes. And he got fifteen years in Jail and she received, oh yes I wanted to tell you so all these years that we lived in France, my father applied for French citizenship because my father served in the Polish army. He did not flee so he had his Polish citizenship so after a few years I don't know how long exactly he was called to for an interview to become a French citizen but they refused him because he didn't have any sons. So they wouldn't give him any citizenship. But after the war, since my father died for France then they asked to give the citizenship to my mother.

Interviewer: Do you have a document in reference to your reparations.

Tailor: Oh yes. So after many years like I said this is the document where I was accepted to receive reparations. I don;t even remember what year but it's on there. 1963. And every month I get a pension from them And my mother until she died the last year , she was three years short of being 88 years old. The French government also gave her a pension because all they did they gave her French citizenship after the war-many years after the war also a pension because my father died for France. Actually in her old age she was comfortable enough with two pensions and socialize medicine and all that and she remained in Paris and my sister still lives in Paris with her family

Interviewer: Would there be anything else you would like to

Tailor: Yes I would like to say that we often talk about talking about in later years anti semitism in France. Well of course in passing there is anti semitism all over the world but look at us and other members of our family my father had a brother and three children and a wife that survived also in Paris because they were saved by non-Jews. They stuck their necks out for us. They didn't make any money I mean it not just their neck I mean their house, their wife their family so a whole villages have hidden Jews and we only seem to speak of the anti semitism and we don't speak much a bout the ones that saved all the Jews.

Interviewer: You said that uncle had promised to make it up to the Tell me how that too place.

Tailor: All right. After the war when he opened up his butcher shop. First he told the man and wife that he would bring them to Paris that he would b ring them to Paris. They had never been on a train and never been on a car only a horse the only transportation. And he would take them all over Paris and show them the biggest time. He got them to Paris and they arrived in

fact the suit and the dress they got married in they had put aside to be buried in and they dug that out to come to Paris so it was absolutely fabulous. He took them to all the night clubs to the Follies Berger and they just did not know that such a thing existed. But that was not the most important thing. He brought the daughter around my age, maybe a year or so older into his house because he got married and two children they were young. She stayed she helped them a little bit in the house but she was really like a child of the house and she met a very nice young man, quite a wealthy young man and she got married and of course she could have never have done that well. And we brought the son and he went on to school after we got all the apartment back. It wasn't all that big an apartment but my mother made a little room for him. And he went on to school and became a draftsman and became a draftsman and got a really good job with Renault. And he just retired. The parents are dead and he went back to the village. In fact I've just heard from him. Well I've been back to the village. But I'm going to see him and his wife when I go back and he's done very well of course. And he never could have done that if it hadn't been for us you know at least we were able to pay him back at least. They were wonderful people. My mother, every year when we made the wine, from the grapes she went back every year and she would be there because it is a very happy time of the year when they make the wine. And we always stay a whole week and the first time I went back, the very first time, is when my boys and I went back on a vacation. one was five and one was 8 and I went back it was my mother and so the ---and his wife toured the whole neighborhood and the mayor of the next town-because the mayor when we told him we were Jewish knew also knew that we were Jewish. It had become a family affair. see everybody know that we were Jewish and everybody was supposed to say that they didn't know anything about us. So the mayor came and the told about how many ducks and how many chickens and how many rabbits and we had feast of about fifty people you know and we stayed there several days with my sons. Lovely lovely. Coming back to advice there is anti semitism I wanted to stress that there isn't anti semitism no more than anywhere else in the world. You know and I would like to say there are plenty of good French people that are not anti semetic to this date to this date.

Interviewer:

Well thank you very very much.

--