

DOUGLAS, Marcelle E.
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Abstract

Marcelle Douglas was born a Catholic on December 5, 1922 near Paris. She left university at age 16 and started work as a designer. At 18, she followed her father into the Resistance during World War II. Her responsibility for 2 ½ years was to give refugee Jews a fake pass and escort them to Southern France. After saving about 100 Jews, she stopped doing this work in 1942 when it became too risky. She survived the rest of the war by trucking furs to Cannes. She took only food for her work, not bribes. In 1948, she married her first husband who was half-Jewish. They had a couture shop. She wanted to be accepted as a Jew, but was not, because she had been born Catholic. After five or six years, she left for London because she did not get along with her husband. She met her second husband, Max Douglas, an American attaché in Paris. They came to the United States in 1962, and lived in Scottsdale, Arizona where she gave birth to Lorraine. Marcelle worked as a saleswoman in San Diego, California and retired four years ago. She believes that people should respect each other, and have no more wars.

- 115 Marcelle Douglas was born Marcelle Bourguin on December 5, 1922 in a town 170 kilometers south of Paris. Now she is called "Betty." Her father was Marcel Bourguin, and her mother was Reine Bernadette Blanchard Bourguin. She was their only child. After World War I, her father worked as a railroad dispatcher.
- 300 When she was three months old, the family moved to Paris because her mother had gone home to have the baby. Her mother worked for a short time as manager of a glove company. Marcelle attended private school from age seven to 13 or 14, then spent two years at another private school. She spent just a short time at a university, due to the war.
- 600 She studied designing with a fantastic professor whom she followed after she left the university at age 16. Her home was in the neighborhood of Masen (phonetic) a very nice middle class neighborhood with a fort surrounded by a forest. They had few foreigners in the neighborhood, many military and Kodak factory workers. She was born Catholic but dropped it as was upset with them. When she told the priest that her husband was half-Jewish, she was told to leave. There were 75 students in her boarding school. A nun taught sewing, but it was not a religious school. Her grandparents lived in Orleans, and her parents lived near there when older. Many relatives were killed during the First World War, so she is the last survivor. Her grandfather was in three wars: 1880, World War I and World War II.
- 1205 She was sent to boarding school because she was a difficult, independent, rebellious child. When young, she heard about Hitler and detested him. She didn't participate in politics but politics were discussed all the time at home. In 1939, her father predicted

- that they would go to war in six months, and he was correct. He said that he would do anything to help his country. He was the dispatcher at Austerlitz Station where he managed many trains.
- 1625 He told Marcelle not to cry if gets killed. He asked her to help with the Resistance when she was 18. They saved the lives of many people who came from many countries including Belgium, Denmark and Germany. After 1942, conditions were terrible.
- 1810 In 1940, she was involved with designing and people talked so she knew what was happening to the Jews. They had to wear yellow stars. She knew who was Jewish. Her father worked with the Resistance. Since her father was with the railroad, the entire family had a pass to take any train at any time.
- 2024 At that time, France was divided in two, with occupation in the North and Vichy in the South. People had to show identification at the border which was dangerous because Germans were there. Many Jews would take a bus, train or car to the border. Taking a bus or train was dangerous because people might have to show identification. She gave the Jews fake identification papers to help.
- 2246 From Tours, they would cross the river at night. Twice she went to the Spanish border, and many times to non-occupied France. She did this work many times for 2 ½ years. When it became dangerous and too Communistic “very red”, she stopped. She knew her father was in the Resistance. She did not know names of others in the Resistance. Messages were placed in a box. In 1940, she was working for Lanvin.
- 2653 People heard of her by word of mouth and she got a name and made a fake passport. Her parents had an address in Bordeaux in unoccupied France, and since she was younger than 21, she could visit them. Until 1942, the Germans were not very well organized, so her work was less risky.
- 2845 The risk was that the system should be infiltrated. The Resistance members had numbers, never names. Some got caught. One friend her age was sent to Dachau. When he returned after liberation, his mother did not recognize him. He was like a skeleton.
- 3153 She helped Jews get to the south of France. She helped only Jews. Some had so much money, so much jewelry, but they had to leave everything behind. They could take only one small bag. They had to wear a certain color, and were told the meeting place – near the railroad or elsewhere. She was not given groups with children or the sick because she was young. Children would be taken to a house before crossing.
- 3632 She does not know how many Resistance members were involved, and could not be friends with them. Some men in the Resistance carried guns, but she did not. There were other women in the Resistance. She dressed in very ordinary clothes, and made believe

- that the Jews were part of her family, perhaps an uncle. She knew all the entrances and exits to the train stations, so they could easily escape being seen or searched.
- 3850 Some of the Jews did not carry their passports with them, and instead mailed them to Spain. Her father and others committed sabotage, but she did not.
- 4143 She was too upset to give details about her father's work. She said once a bullet went into his "cast" (helmet), but did not penetrate it. She kept the bullet. She reported that when liberated, she was riding home on a bicycle, and Germans on rooftops were shooting at her. During the war, she did not know what people were going to say about her, but she had no problem after the war.
- 4626 Although her mother was not involved in the Resistance, she was petrified of her family's work. Marcelle did not tell her friends about her Resistance work. The Germans started to check the passes, but they did not look too closely at the poor printing.
- 5047 Now with computers, everyone has your picture. They would take a horse and buggy from the train to the river and cross with a rowboat and take another horse and buggy to a train or farm. The train would be emptied before crossing the border, and the people would need to get on another train to continue their journey on the other side. Therefore, they got off the train before the border, and crossed the river at night.
- 5542 They might stay in the city overnight and then go to Spain and Portugal, or take a ship to England. Some people took a submarine to Brittany.
- 5820 They took a train to the Pyrénées, the mountains between France and Spain. The family had friends who lived in a house and liquor store on the border on top of a mountain. With the help of the Basques, they saved hundreds of Jews. The friends left at the end of the war, because they were afraid that they would be killed because they knew too much. Eighteen years ago, people came to La Jolla to see her. In England, she saw one couple who was saved.
- 10033 In 1943, she picked up a big truck in Lyon and did not know it contained furs. She was told only not to be caught, or the Germans would kill her. She drove to Cannes, and put the furs in a safe. She never bribed anyone nor took money, just took food.
- 10304 She was offered a car but did not take it. In 1941, from the eighth floor of Lanvin, she saw Germans with machine guns kill two old Jews. "Why, why?"
- 10649 In 1942, the Germans took a young, beautiful English writer to Dachau. "We never saw her again. Why, why," she repeated. Marcelle understands war, but civilians should not be killed.

- 10856 If one German got killed, the Germans would randomly kill ten French people. “You were petrified.” She missed the fun of being a teenager such as going to movies and dancing. In 1962, she came to the United States. She first came in 1960.
- 11051 She knew her second husband in France, but they married here. There were no Resistance meetings, just notes that they burned. They could not trust anyone, even the cleaning woman or themselves. “Don’t trust yourself too much because you could make a mistake.” When she first joined the Resistance, she had to swear to God that she would not tell anything. They were never given any names.
- 10403 Her father taught her to keep secrets. During the two years she worked with the Resistance, she helped about 100 people—as many as ten at a time. After 1942, Germans were more organized. Also, they were mixed with French on trains, so the work became too dangerous. The Resistance was becoming Communistic. So she stopped.
- 11909 She left Paris for two years and then went for a visit which was dangerous. Her father died in 1989. She retired four years ago. In 1948, she married Nider who was half Jewish.
- 12511 They had a couture shop, making dresses, in Cannes for five or six years. She left for London because the marriage did not work out. She lived with Jews she knew from the marriage until she came to the United States, and learned a lot. She was born Catholic, so she was never accepted as a Jew. She survived the war in France because of her husband’s fur shop. Her husband survived because he lived in unoccupied Southern France. She met an American, Max , in Cannes, and came to the United States. His brother was Ambassador to England, the Court of St. James, around 1953 to 1955.
- 12850 Her second husband was an American attaché in Paris. They had one daughter, and they moved to Scottsdale, Arizona. She worked with Marks & Spencer as a buyer in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Later she worked as a saleswoman for I. Magnin and Saks in La Jolla, San Diego. Her friends in Cannes had introduced her to her second husband.
- 13155 Their daughter, Lorraine, was born in Phoenix, Arizona. French was her first language, and English her second. She works as a hotel supervisor. It was easy to adapt to the US. It is harder to go to England, because they do not accept French speakers, but she still loves the English.
- 13341 It was too hard to be a woman alone in England. Marcelle was very upset during the war, so after the war, she left Paris. She was happy when the war ended, and continues to be mostly happy. She misses her adolescence, but lived well afterwards, working, playing, and traveling.

- 13542 She questions the way humanity acts as you can be a soldier, but you don't have to kill Jews. She doesn't respect humanity; shouldn't have war. The English shouldn't have cut the Israeli borders, because that caused war, and more people got killed.
- 13854 She went to Dachau after the war, and it was awful to see. She told her experiences to her daughter. Other people helped more than she did. From 1941 to 1944, she had no money at the end of the month.
- 14045 Friends came to her house to eat as her grandma came with butter and eggs from the farm. The chief of Resistance hid people in the attic. She spent three days a month with them. This helped them move the people.
- 14358 She wants to pass on to the next generation the concept that there should be no more war so a Resistance would not be needed -- just have peace. Germans and French are always against each other. People must have guts. Religion is wonderful because it teaches that people should not detest people. People should not hate each other, but respect one another.
- 14641 People aren't happy when they are afraid of war or feel they don't have enough money. It is all right to live in a place where you don't need a car or a computer. She felt she worked for the Resistance for the love of her father who was very French and detested Germans. She no longer detests them, and goes to Germany.
- 15005 She did anything she could to help France, her country. Now she feels American but still likes France. After the war, she never heard of any casualty of those she helped.

Six photographs are shown:

1. Picture of Marcelle Douglas at two.
2. 1947 picture of her and a dog, an English retriever in Southern France.
3. In Paris, a photo for a passport in 1964 or 1966.
4. Father, mother and daughter at nine or ten months of age in a cottage near Orleans where her father died. Her parents, Marcel Beau and Reine Bernadette, had been born nearby.
5. James Douglas, a brother-in-law, in 1977 in Scottsdale, Arizona.
6. Lorraine (Marcelle? Or who is Lorraine? Douglas at her wedding with Hugh Douglas (a brother of Max, Marcelle's husband?) on the left and James Douglas, a brother still living.