Interview with Maurice Asa
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewers: Evelyn Feilden
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Transcribed by [illegible]

Tape 1 of 2

Q: TODAY IS JULY 10, 1990. I AM BARBARA HARRIS. I AM INTERVIEWING MAURICE ASA FOR THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. WE ARE AT THE HOLOCAUST CENTER OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA IN SAN FRANCISCO. ASSISTING US TODAY WITH THE INTERVIEW IS ROSALIE (STRUMMER). ALSO WITH US TODAY IS BARBARA ASA, MR. ASA'S WIFE. GOOD AFTERNOON MR. ASA, AND THANK YOU FOR COMING.

A: Good afternoon. My pleasure.

Q: WE WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY ASKING YOU FIRST TO GIVE US YOUR FULL BIRTH NAME, AND THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH, AND THEN THE CITY AND COUNTRY WHERE YOU WERE BORN.

A: My name is Maurice Asa. I was born in Paris on August 28, 1924, in the 12th (arrondisement). Paris is divided into 20 sections called (arrondisement). I spent most of my youth in the 11th (arrondisement), which you have heard recently about. It is a triangle between (pere la ches) cemetery, la bastille and Place de la republic. Recently during the uproar that followed the desecration of the tombs there was a march that went from la

bastille to the place de la republic which was showed on television.

My roots go back to Spain in 1492. My ancestors were exiled from Spain and took refuge into the Ottoman empire, which was by far much more generous towards the jews than was Christiandom at that time.

All I know is what my grandparents told me. One branch, the Asa branch of the family, my father's side, came from Bulgaria. My grandfather was (Moshe) Asa. He was born approximately 1860 and he died in France in 1939. My grandmother Asa, Rose Asa, was born in 1870 and died in France in 1957. They had 4 children; Isaac; David, my father, who was born in 1987 and died in Auschwitz in 1943; Rachel, a daughter, and (Nissim). (Nissim) is the only surviving son of my paternal grandparents.

They came from Bulgaria. Interestingly enough, my grandmother, Rose Asa, told me they came from a place called (Kassanlik) which is the area where the essence of roses is made. Bulgaria is famous for the essence of roses. She also told me that her grandfather told her that they belonged to the synagogue of the (Catalan). So, that means that our ancestry probably goes back to Catalonia in Spain.

On the mother's side, the family name was (Cherasee). Chiam (Cherasee) was my maternal grandfather. I never knew him because he was born in 1860, approximately, and he died in 1907. My maternal grandmother, (Straya Cherasee) was born in 1864, died at Auschwitz in 1943. She had three children; Robert, who is dead now, natural causes; Regine, who is dead, also of natural causes; and my mother, Rachel (Cherasee), born in 1900 in Turkey, and died at Auschwitz in 1943.

So my parents were David Asa and Rachel (Cherasee). Out of their marriage there were two children born; Maurice, born in 1924, that is me, and my sister Jeannette, born in 1929 who also lives in California.

I married Barbara (Joslin) who was born in Carmel, California in 1929, and came from a long line of yankees. A real native. She has records of her ancestors landing in Wooster Massachusetts in 1730. It is quite a contrast. We have two children. David, who was born in 1959 in Oakland, and Rachel, born in 1961 in Oakland also.

I spent most of my youth in Paris. I was born in Paris in 1924. I went to the elementary school, then I went to the lycee. We had a fairly comfortable life. My mother and father met in 1923 and I was born in 1924. The reason they came to France was as follows. There was a very large network of (L'alliance Israeli

Francais) which is a network of french schools throughout the middle east which was established around 1880 by the french government with the financial help of the Rothschild family. The aim was two-fold. The Rothschild family wanted to help the poor jews in the middle east - the poor jews of Greece, Salonika, Turkey, Palestine, Bulgaria. The french government's aim was to counteract the British influence in that area. So there was political reasons as well as social reasons.

The fact is, my parents were educated in french schools until 1914. They were supposed to continue a higher level of schooling, something like college or university, in France, but the war broke out so their studies were interrupted. However, they both immigrated to France after the first world war, and were married -- they met before 1923 and were married in 1923.

My father, when he landed in France, worked as a linotypist. Subsequently, I don't know how, he established a business for himself. He had a hardware store selling retail and wholesale hardware. He was quite successful until 1939. We had a fairly affluent way of living, at least by the standards of that era. He bought his first car in 1924, 1925, and in France that was really a sign of affluence. Perhaps not in the United States, but certainly in France it was.

So everything went well until 1939 when war broke out. In 1939, the French government advised parents to evacuate their children. They were afraid of air raids by the Germans on the capital.

So, my father had a brother who lived near Vichy, as luck would have it. He sent us there, but we didn't stay with him, we stayed with a French family in a small place called Cusset. I went to the local high school there to continue my studies and so did my sister. And we were boarded with that French family who subsequently played a great role in our lives. Their name was Desrutin.

In 1940, the Germans invaded, as everybody knows, western Europe, invaded France. France lost the war and had to capitulate. My parents managed to take their car and run away from paris and join us in Vichy when the armistice between France and Germany was signed somewhere early in June. Just a few days after that General (De Gaulle) launched his appeal to France not to give up the fight. That was on June 18, 1940.

At that time France was divided in two parts which I have outlined on that map [*indicates to hand drawn map he is holding*]. The section with the etch mark was the so-called occupied France. The section which has no cross marks was the so-called unoccupied part of France and Vichy was the capital of that part of France. Two things happened that people don't remember. At that point

the Germans, re-took Alsace Lorraine as part of Germany, which it had been until 1914. More important for us Jews, the Italians reclaimed Savoy, which is in the Alps, and the region around Nice as part of their territory. This would have subsequently great influence on us.

These two areas, Savoy and the area around Nice, were under the jurisdiction of the Italians, and not the French government. In 1941 the French government decided that the jews along Vichy were no longer welcome; they would spoil the purity of the french race. So, my parents decided the best place to go was Nice 1) because the weather was warm and 2) because we were under the protection of the Italians. And sure enough, every time the French government would pass edicts against the jews, they would be rescinded automatically by the Italian authorities. So we were fairly safe.

At that time I continued my studies there until 1942 when I took my exam for the french Baccalaureate, which is a fairly difficult exam. When I came to Berkeley in 1954 I showed this document to the University people, to the registrar, and they said this is equivalent to two years college in the United States. So I passed successfully my exam in '42. I have a document of that, a copy of that exam. From '42 to '43 I studied a little bit at the local University but it was a bit dangerous to be there.

By and large we did not know what was going on in France, in the occupied part of France. The French local newspaper in Nice would not tell, would not print the news of the French being deported from France into Auschwitz. We used to listen to the BBC on short wave radios when it was not jammed by the Germans, but the BBC never reported any news of this nature. If I may look at my notes for a second...

Yes, in his book, which I have, and maybe you're familiar with it -- (Le Memoriale de la Deportation des Juiv de France), The Memorial of the Deportation of the French Jews by (Serge Klausfeld), the first convoy that left Drancy for Auschwitz was sent to Aushwitz on June 1942. There were 1, 112 people on that convoy. Only 19 returned in 1945.

Much later, after the war, I learned that one of my Friends -- I have pictures in here, I have pictures of the Lycee, and I have pictures of a friend of mine -- (Isadore Greenburg). We were in the same class but he was a few months older. Much later I learned that he had participated in the French resistance in the occupied zone of France, and he had been caught by the Germans. He was beheaded as an example by the Germans. Not shot but beheaded. In '66 when I went back to France, in the hall of the Lycee there was a plaque with his name, surrounded by two French flags. I still remember him with emotion.

We didn't know that from June '42 to September '43, which is an important date, there were, according to (Klausfeld's) book, 59 convoys that left Drancy for Aushwitz, at an average of 1100 to 1200 people. That means that 60,000 jews were deported during that period of time. By the end of the war, according to the same sources, there were 75,721 persons who were deported from Drancy to Aushwitz. Of all nationalities. Not only French, Germans, Austrians, Czechs, Poles, Russians, Turks, but also Peruvians, Venezuelans, Asians, Swiss, American U.S. Citizens - 10 of them - British, even one Chinese. Incredible.

More horrible than this, one of the most horrible tragedies - I took some notes - was recently related by the French magazine *L'Express,* which is a well know magazine, and well respected in France. In its issue of May 4, 1990, they describe all the French authorities in 1942 rounded up 3500 jewish children near Orleans, a large city in France, a bit south of Paris, and sent them alone to Aushwitz where they were gassed immediately upon arrival. I have a photocopy of that article.

When Italy surrounded - I mean - We had a difficult life in Nice, but as long as the Italians were there we were fairly safe. As a result, there were anywhere from 30 thousand to 40 thousand jews in Nice in 1943. Italy surrendered on the 8th of September in 1943 and went over the allied side. The Germans invaded the unoccupied part of France to send their troops through the

northern part of Italy to face the advance of the allied forces which were coming from the southern part up [*holds up map*].

Now, this is where tragedy struck, because Nice became trapped. Nice is a bit like Berkeley. It has a road along the seashore, and behind there are very high mountains. It was very easy for the Germans to block the roads and the only railroad station to prevent the jews from escaping. This is when my parents were caught.

At that point in 1943 I was 19. My parents were in Nice with my maternal grandmother who didn't speak any French. She spoke only (ladino). At that time she was 76, 77 years old. My mother didn't have the heart to abandon her mother. My mother and my father - and my father didn't have the heart to abandon his wife. If my mother had left her mother alone, they could have probably escaped. They didn't want to do it. They were not sure what would happen.

As an adult of 19 - you grew up fast in those days, you were not a teenager at 19 - I had a sense of doom. I said if we stay here it is the end of us. My father had an uncle who lived in Marseille before the war, but had taken refuge in a small village about 100 miles north of Marseille in the mountains. A small village called (Entresho). A french family that was going to Marseille took my sister, who at that time was 14, with them.

They were french catholics so they had no problem getting out of Nice, visiting some friends who lived in Marseille. So they took my sister Jeannette. Jeannette managed to reach our great - our grand uncle, the uncle of my father.

Four or five days later I left very early in the morning. My memory is vague. I know that I took a train. I had no forged ID paper. I still had my name Asa, and Asa is not a french name. I managed to go through Lyon by railroad. I was very lucky because in Lyon - Lyon was the center of the Gestapo during the occupation. You all have heard of Barbie and the trial. The railroad station was covered by the French police, by the Gestapo, by the German Security, the SD. It was a real trap. It was by a miracle that I managed to go through without once being asked for my ID card.

I took refuge to the Desrutin, that family near Vichy where we had been boarded. They were righteous gentiles. Three or four days after I reached the Desrutin, that family there, they received a letter...I'd say two or three days, or maybe a week or two weeks, frankly I don't, time has collapsed and I don't really remember exactly the sequence. But I was with them when a letter arrived, sent by my mother, I believe, or by a friend of my mother, telling them they had been arrested and they were in Drancy. I knew that if I stayed with these people I could be traced back by the German police or the French police. The

French police were very nasty. I have a lot to say about that later on.

The Desrutin advised me to get out of there because sooner or later... And sure enough, the French police did come visit the Desrutin and asked about me and my sister. At that point, it must have been around November 1943 or there about, I went to Lyon again. Again, by luck I wasn't asked anything. I had a maternal uncle, Robert (Cherasee), who had taken refuge in the suburb of Lyon. I went to see him there. I stayed with him just a few days because it was obvious that I would be in danger there too.

I managed to hide in the (Jura), which is north of Lyon and close to the Swiss border. I stayed with some French farmers. There were some good French farmers. But this was probably around December, January, or February 1944. At that point, in the (Jura) there was a lot of resistance activity of the Maquis, so the Germans encircled that area. I decided it was very unhealthy to stay there. Somehow, I don't remember how, I managed to get back to (Entresho) which is north of Marseille. And I don't remember how for the life of me. I was dying to see my sister, first of all. She was my (only --?--). I knew that when my parents went to Drancy they wouldn't come back. I went to see her.

I saw her, but I could stay only one or two days with her and my great uncle. It was dangerous because, even if you were not a jew, in 1942-43, the Germans were beginning to bleed so badly in Russia that even when you were not a jew but once you were 18, you were forced to go to work in Germany. Not in concentration camps, these were Catholics, Christians, but to work in German factories. And of course if you were jewish on top of that, you were cooked.

So I stayed only a day or two or three and then I left for the mountains. I actually spent a whole week or thereabouts in a cave, hiding in a cave in the mountains. But I couldn't stand it. There simply was no food, there was nothing I could do. THere was a French family called (Cherasse) who took me in for a few weeks, hid me in their loft and fed me. They took a great chance, a great deal of risk, when they did that, because if I had been caught, if the Germans had...or if the French police had found that they were hiding a jew, they would have burned that farm, they would have shot me, and they would have shot them also. And this happened many times. It is not something I am just making up. Many french farmers were killed for harboring jews.

This was about April. At that point I did manage to make contact with the French Maquis. I joined the Makee in May '44. Here is the area where I was which is called the (drome) which is in the

southern part of the alps. [*Points on map.*] I spent there until, well I was in (la drome), until we participated in many attacks against the Germans.

On August 15, 1944 there was a second landing, near St. Tropez, of the allied forces. I remember one day, on the 20th of August, I was lying in a ditch overlooking a road. We were always on the high ground overlooking the road because the Germans were going back and forth here. It must have been four O'clock in the morning. I was asleep but I heard a rumble of cars. I woke up my comrade, who was an Armenian by the way, also hiding. We had all kinds of people, but I'll tell you more about that. I said, (Tatoo). His name was (Tatoo). That was his nomme de guerre. You know we all had nomme de guerre. We didn't know each other, because if we were caught and tortured we couldn't give any information. I said (Tatoo), the Germans are coming.

So we cocked our sten guns. We moved the safety pin of the hand grenade, and we crawled toward the road to see what was going on. We all said , "They don't look like Germans. What is that white star doing on that car."

Pause

Anyway. That was my first encounter with the 36th Texas division. They came up through... there is a road that goes along seacoast

and then from Marseille to (Orange) there is a big national highway that goes to Lyon and Paris. This was my first encounter with the 36th Texas division.

I had six years of english at school, at the lycee, so I could speak a little english. So immediately, most of the people in the Makee, actually, in that area were young french farmers who were hiding. They had not much schooling. I was one of the exceptions, with more schooling. I was immediately sent to talk to the captains. The Americans were moving in along the main highways. But this is a mountain spot so the Germans were taking refuge in the mountains, in the small valleys, in the peaks. So we had a lot of snipers. They needed an interpreter to guide them and find them. So I went with them on some missions, in their jeeps.

On one of them, I can still remember to this day, we had a jeep. It was a typical army jeep with a big heavy machine gun on the - you have perhaps seen that in movies - the machine gun on the hood, and the radio. We went up the mountain roads, and you know those were not paved roads. So the noise of the bouncing jeep was so high that all of a sudden we find ourselves completely rolled over. The jeep overturned. We hadn't heard, because of the noise made by the jeep on those roads, we hadn't heard two (mesashmitzers) followed us and strafed us for about 15 minutes. I was wounded on the left arm at that point, and one American was

seriously wounded. Finally, one of them managed, as I recall, to crawl back to the jeep. Fortunately, the radio was still working, so he called for assistance. Within 10-15 minutes there were two or three American fighter planes came and chased the (mesashmitzers). Another jeep was sent back to the rescue and we were all taken to the local hospital, in the tents.

Between {Orange} and (Montellimar), on that road which I marked in blue [*refers to map*], it is about 40 kilometers. In the last week of August, between the efforts, of course the B25s were flying and bombing all the time that road, and us preventing the Germans to move out in the mountains, we managed to destroy a complete German division. There were several hundred tanks and probably 10 or 15 thousand dead.

On the roads, the stench - I can remember driving that road several times with the Americans up and down. Because it was only 40 kilometers you did that in half an hour. The stench, I can still smell the stench of bodies in the heat of summer.

I stayed in the french army, but in February '45, when they learned that my parents had been deported and obviously dead in the concentration camps, they released me because I had a younger sister. They didn't want the whole family to be wiped out. Also they probably wanted to have somebody to support my sister. They didn't want my sister to be supported by the French government.

I want to mention at this point, since it is for the archives, that I never received one iota of financial indemnity from the French. We never received any help. Not for the death of my parents, or for my sister, who, in 1944 was only 15 years old. The French never gave us anything.

At this point I would like to mention a few things which might be of interest. When I joined the ~~Makee~~ Maquis I had never seen a gun in my life. Sephardic jews were not known for carrying guns, let alone submachine guns. Mostly all the armaments we got came from England and from America. The British had devised, you may have perhaps heard the term, the sten gun, which was a small machine gun. Very simple. It had the great virtue of working even when it was full of dirt and dust. Its drawback, it didn't really have a very good safety catch. So you could easily kill yourself if you dropped it inadvertently. In fact two or three people got killed that way in our group.

But anyway, the thing I want to mention is that, I didn't know, the front end the rear end of the sten gun is about that long. It had a big magazine of about 30 nine millimeter bullets. It's a German who taught me how to use a sten gun. His name is in the book. I have a book because somebody has written a history of our group. His name was (Gene Wolf). For me he looked, at that time, like an old man, but he probably was not much more than 35

or 40. He was a communist who had escaped the Nazis in 1933, and had taken refuge wherever he could. I don't know whether he actually had gone, participated in the civil war, in the international brigade in Spain or not. That I don't know. I don't remember. But he is the one who taught me how to use a sten gun. I find this very ironical.

We had in our group, besides the French, we had in our group a few Spaniards who had participated in the civil war against Franco, and had taken refuge in France in 1937 and wanted their revenge against the Germans. We had two Russians. And I mean Russians who had escaped. Russian soldiers. I remember a (big tall guy and a skinny guy with a big tall fat guy), who had escaped German prison camps and were with us.

The fellow, I met him once or twice during I was there. In the Makee we were in small groups of 15 and 20 and we were scattered. The area where I was would cover an area between San Francisco and San Jose. About that size. It was very hilly and full of little mountains and (hideouts). And we were in groups of 10 or 15 or 20 so when one group was encircled by the Germans the others were not. We were a total of about 400 in that particular section. The fellow who was the head of the whole group was named Captain Paris. And after the war, in fact fairly recently, he wrote his memoirs of our group. There are lots of

names here I recognize who were my friends. Comrades in arms you might say.

I just want to mention...where is that, on page 196...[*opens book and points out photograph*]...Here, the photograph of (Suliet na second lieutenant Garcia). His real name was David Golberg. He was mortally wounded during a mission there.

I want to mention another fact even more amazing. My parents were deported on convoy 66 I believe. Let me check my notes. Yes my parents and my grandmother were deported from Drancy to Aushwitz on convoy 66, January 1944. Their names are mentioned in the (Klausfeld) book because each convoy - Have you ever seen that book? -yes, because each convoy has the names of the deportees.

In Nice I had a very good friend of mine, Marcel Jablonovich, who since has gallicised his name to Marcel (Jablo). Many jews have done it after the war for reintegration. And who knows what can happen. He was arrested with his parents and his grandmother in Nice, and was deported on convoy 61, October 29, 1943. His grandmother died, he miraculously survived. He resides in France, and we are good friends. We write to each other frequently and we visit each other whenever we go to France. On occasion he has come to the United States.

I sent him a copy of that book [*holds up* <u>*Memoires de L'ombre*</u>]. I sent Marcel (Jablo) a copy of that book. Marcel is retired and to occupy his time he attends lectures at the Sorbonne. He was taking, in March or April of this year, he was taking a course on American political history from a professor (Caspi) at the Sorbonne. On page 190 of that book, there is mention of a lieutenant (Claybear), real name (Caspi) - (Claybear) was him nomme de guerre, his real name was (Caspi) - who had been encircled by the Germans. He and his group, about 10, 15 men had been encircled by the Germans. He ordered his group to escape to prevent the Germans from advancing and facilitate the escape of his group. He fought, he fired his machine gun until his last bullet. He was caught alive by the Germans. Horribly tortured. Bayonets, burns everywhere. It says here, when his body was found it was nothing but a mess of blood.

Professor (Caspi) of the Sorbonne knew that his brother had died in the Makee, but he never knew when and how. So when my friend saw that book, he showed it to professor (Caspi), and they got in touch with Captain Paris who lives in Orange. His real name is Lucienne (Defour). And they actually visited with him. It's a strange twist of fate 46 years later.

Q: YOU FOUGHT WITH SOME VERY BRAVE MEN.

A: Yes, um. As far as I was concerned I knew what would happen if I was caught by the germans so I had managed to get hold of a (mauser) revolver that belonged to a german. Ammunition...The british had been very clever when they designed that sten gun. They used the same type of caliber that the Germans used on their revolvers and on their own (mauser) machine guns. So we could, when we captured Germans we could use their own ammunition. Anyway, I had gotten hold, besides my sten gun, I had gotten hold of a revolver, and I knew the last bullet would be for me if I was captured.

At this point I would like to say something about the French. The Germans could not have deported so many jews if they did not have the complicity of the French police. The French police didn't give a damn about the jews. The last convoy, number 77, again it's in the book by (Klausfeld), left Drancy on July 31, 1944 with 1300 jews, just two weeks before Paris was liberated. I mean, the allied forces were within 20 kilometers of Paris at that time. On June...Yeah, convoy 76 left on June 30, 1944 with 1153 jews. This couldn't have happened. I mean there was no way the jews could have been deported without the complicity of the French police, and the French (Mileese). The (Mileese) were equivalent to the (Waffen), the French (Waffen) SS.

There were some righteous gentiles. I owe my life to, and my sister owes her life to some righteous gentiles. But really they

were few and far between. I would say that 50 percent of the French were anti-jews, 30 percent didn't give a damn, 20 percent were friendly, and I would say 3 or 4 or 5 percent really took chances with their own lives to save jews. But no more than that.

After the war, when the war finally ended... I was in Paris when I guess the war in Europe ended on May 5, 1945. My paternal grandmother... We were fortunate in a sense because the concierge, you know how in Paris the six story buildings are very even. It's not like here. And the large buildings in those days had concierge. You know, a lady who would watch what was going on and take care of the building. It so happened that the lady there was very anti-German. So for four years, she never let anybody know that our apartment was empty. So when we came back to Paris, my sister and I found this apartment with everything inside, including zillions of moths who had taken refuge in the armchairs and the sofas. I was crawling with worms. Imagine, for four years the windows had never been opened. But we were fortunate to have a place to stay.

My paternal came to live with us for a while. She cooked. I worked, supported my sister, and partially my grandmother. I got some financial help a little bit from an uncle and an aunt. But, after two years my sister couldn't stand france anymore. She left for England. Three or four years later I left for

Australia. I couldn't stand that... Simply living in France there were too many bad memories.

In 1951 I left for Australia. The people were nice. It is a nice country, but it was not for me. In those days, Australia has probably changed by now with the influx of so many foreigners, but when I was there, no one Asiatic was aloud to land in Australia. They had been so afraid of the Japanese that nobody was aloud to land there. Now there are plenty of Japanese factories in Australia. But anyway, it was a highly structured society where your chance of going up the social scale or the financial scale in the world was pretty well determined by your schooling, your accent, etcetera. It was also mildly anti-semitic. I mean, you couldn't tell you were a jew. You sensed you wouldn't be accepted if you said that. So after two and a half years of this I had had it.

I knew somebody here in the United States who was kind enough to... I wasn't ready to go back to France, so I knew somebody in the United States who gave me an affidavit. In those days you needed an affidavit. He gave me an affidavit and I came to the United States.

I spent two weeks in... I landed in New York City on the 28th of February, 1954. I spent two weeks in New York. I didn't like the weather. I didn't like the climate. Coming from Australia -

I had left Australia four months earlier. I left Melbourne in November of 1953 and it was the middle of summer there. Coming in New York the weather was really too cold. I said, it's going to be difficult to start a new life in the United States no matter where I go. So I might as well go to California where at least the weather should be warm.

I thought that San Francisco would be like Melbourne. It's not, let me tell you. Los Angeles is more like Melbourne but San Francisco is not. But anyway, I came to San Francisco and I stayed. I met Barbara at the Sierra Club in 1956 and we were married in 1957. We had our boy. David was born in 1959. He got the name of my father. And Rachel was born in 1961. She got the name of my mother. And that's about it.

Q: OK. I'M GOING TO GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE BEGINNING IF YOU DON'T MIND. WELL, NOT QUITE ALL THE WAY BACK TO 1492, BUT BACK TO YOUR CHILDHOOD. WILL YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD? YOU SAID YOU ATTENDED PUBLIC SCHOOL.

A: Public school, elementary school from age 6 to 10 and a half, 11. At that time it was a bit like the British system. If you wanted to go to high school which would eventually lead to university, you had to pass a test. If you succeeded, you were routed that way. If you did not, you went to trade school. With the great urging of my parents who could not believe their son

couldn't be either a doctor of a lawyer, I had to work hard to pass the exam. I hated every moment of it, but I succeeded.

Q: YOU WERE NOT VERY CRAZY ABOUT ACADEMICS THEN I TAKE IT.

A: Um, there were some subjects that fascinated me, like science. And there were some others that bored me to death. So I was, you might say, very uneven. I loved geography, I loved history. I hated latin. I hated French, I mean French grammar and the way they taught you French and all that stuff. I was not exactly crazy about mathematics but I could live with them. I loved chemistry and physics.

Q: HOW DID YOU FIND THE RELATIONS AS YOU WERE GROWING UP, BETWEEN JEWS AND...

A: That's an interesting question. First of all, we lived in the 11th (arrondisement) which was a working class and small middle class section of Paris. We lived in the better part of that (arrondisement). In the days of 1925-30, we had a fairly nice apartment in as much as it had two bedrooms, it had a bathroom, which was a great luxury in France, it had a living room, a kitchen and a dining room. So that was a large apartment for Paris, for those days.

I didn't completely feel absolutely integrated in the French society. For one thing, the education of my parents; Although they had their education in French schools in Turkey, it was way higher than the average education level of my friends or the parents of my friends. My parents spoke absolute perfect French. You couldn't tell they were foreigners.

From the time I was 6 or 7 or 8, I don't know how, but I knew that I would become a doctor or a lawyer. I mean, there was no question about that. I did not, but that is because of the war. But when people would ask me... you know when kids played in the streets, and we used to play in the streets because there were not too many parts where you could play in the streets in Paris, we played in the streets after school. So what do you want to be? My friends said, I am going to be a carpenter, I am going to be a plummer. I said, Oh, I think I am going to be a lawyer or a doctor. They would look at me funny, I mean, where did I get this idea.

Also, with my grandmother I had to speak (ladino). You know, (ladino) is to Spanish what Yiddish is to German. I had to speak it with her because she didn't speak French. I always felt uneasy when I was in the street and I had to talk to her in (ladino). I felt I didn't belong to that group. So I was integrated, but only partially integrated. Most of my friends were jews, and when to the lycee most of my friends were actually

(ashkenazi) jews. I don't recall having one sephardic jew as a friend in the lycee. There must have been some, but I don't remember them. And still I have photographs and most of them died in concentration camps.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES IN YOUR HOME?

A: Yes. Well in my home? No. Well, yes and no. My parents were what you might call ethnic jews, more than religious jews. As long as my paternal grandfather lived, we had, I remember, the seder. Because it was a huge affair, we had a fairly large dining room and we had a table that could accommodate 18 people. My mother had enough glassware and chinaware and silverware for everybody. I had my barmitzvah...in fact [*He reaches for a velvet bag, unzips it and pulls out its contents - a prayer shawl*]. There are a few things that have stayed with me in my life. This is the (talid) that my grandfather gave me.

Q: WAS THAT IN YOUR APARTMENT WHEN YOU RETURNED?

A: Yes. My (talid) he gave me for my barmitzvah. I was barmitzvahed but my parents did not really belong to any temple. They were not particularly observant jews. We did not follow the kosher laws in our house. It would take, I see that for instance... I have a cousin in France about my age. It's only her children who feel really French. It takes. It is not for

nothing that the exodus in Sinai took 40 years. It takes three generations. (My parent, who immigrated.) If I had stayed in France, I would still have a part of me which is not absolutely French. If I had married a French person, then my children would really French. It takes three generations. There is no doubt about this.

Q: SO DID YOU FEEL CLOSER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY THAN THE FRENCH COMMUNITY?

A: Yes. There is no doubt about this. All my friends were. When you are small, from age 6 to 10 and a half, 11, when I started lycee, all my playmates were little French kids. They were not jewish. They were little, the shopkeeper, the friends, we go to the same school. The only contact I had with jewish people were cousins, because we had a very large family. But when I went to the lycee where I could really pick up my friends, I would say most of them, or all of them were poor (ashkenazi) jews. I had one or two good friends who were not, I have to take that back. I would say 70 percent were polish jews. Although we never spoke about religion. We never spoke about Judaism.

You know, it wasn't... It's only now and in the United States and etcetera that you. We didn't have a hebrew school. They simply didn't exist. I mean, where you send your kid after class to learn hebrew and all that. It simply didn't exist. You were

ethnic jews. You knew you were jewish and it created a sort of unspoken bond. And that's about all it was.

Q: WHEN DID YOU START TO NOTICE THINGS WERE CHANGING FOR THE JEWS? WHEN DID YOU NOTICE YOUR FAMILY WORRYING ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH GERMANY?

A: When we were kicked out of Vichy we knew that...in 1941. We took refuge to Nice, which was, as I said, was occupied by the Italians. But we knew that was the last bastion if we could not... if something happened there was no other place to hide.

Q: YOU WERE ABOUT 9 YEARS OLD WHEN HITLER CAME TO POWER. IT WAS '33. THE NUREMBURG LAWS WERE IN '35. WAS THERE ANY AWARENESS WHERE YOU WERE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A: Yes, certainly much more my parents than a child of nine. I read the paper at a very early age. I remember very well the incident that triggered the kristall night, where a polish jew killed, I think he killed a German employee of the consulate or the German embassy in Paris. I remember this very vividly. I remember reading about the kristall night in the French newspapers.

Q: DID YOU RELATE IT TO YOURSELF?

A: No. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. It is as if there were like the same distance between us and Japan. I mean, there might have been 10,000 miles of sea between. You have to remember that in those days, nobody traveled. I spent all my childhood having some lovely vacations because my parents could afford them. But they were all in France. We never went to Spain or to Italy or to Switzerland. I mean, going to Switzerland, which was only a few miles away, was something absolutely unheard of. I think we went once when we took a vacation at Evian, which is near the, on the Lac de Geneve, and we took the ferryboat to go across. It was a big event. My god I was in a foreign country.

Q: THOSE WERE VERY DIFFERENT TIMES.

A: Very different times.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED? DO YOU REMEMBER ACTUALLY BEING TOLD THAT YOU HAD TO LEAVE VICHY?

A: Oh yes. It was an edict of the jews and to the Vichy.

Q: AND HOW LONG DID THEY GIVE YOU TO LEAVE?

A: I don't remember. Maybe a month. Maybe two months. I don't remember. At that time, remember, I know for sure that the United States hadn't gone in to war yet. Because I remember when

Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941. In fact, we were in Pearl Harbor in December last year spending a vacation in Honolulu. And it happened that we visited Pearl Harbor on the seventh of December.

Two things struck me. First of all, there was not a work about Pearl Harbor in the newspapers in Hawaii. Remember that the Japanese now own half of the Waikiki hotels, so we don't want to offend them. But the second thought occurred to me, and I mentioned that to Barbara. I owe my life to the Japanese. Because if the Japanese had not attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th. Eventually the United States probably would have joined the allied forces, but it might have been sometime in '42 or '43. And I wouldn't have survived another year. And few jews, or probably no jews would have survived. So I said thank you to the Japanese who attacked Pearl Harbor because they forced the hand of the United States.

Q: THAT'S VERY TRUE. YOU ALSO SAID THAT IN 1942 WHEN YOU WERE IN NICE YOU STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY... FOR A SHORT TIME THOUGH.

A: For a short time, yes. Because the French police at that time was looking for Frenchmen who were 18 and over to send them to Germany, to work in German factories. So once you were 18 in France, you were in jeopardy, even when you were catholic.

Because you had to show that you were in France because you were serving a useful purpose. Either you were a farmer, or you were working in a factory in France that was working for the Germans. If you were a jew you were in double jeopardy.

Q: WAS THERE ANY SYMPATHY WHEN YOU HAD TO LEAVE VICHY FROM YOUR NON-JEWISH NEIGHBORS?

A: I don't recall. I do not recall... anything.

Q: DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE ANYTHING WITH YOU?

A: Very little, because when my parents fled Paris, when the Germans where advancing, they fled with their car and whatever they could put in their car. All their furniture, all their chinaware, everything they had stayed in their apartment in Paris. So when we arrived in Vichy, all we had were a few sheets. They rented a quote unquote furnished apartment in Vichy, and then in Nice.

Q: HOW QUICKLY DID YOU HAVE TO FLEE PARIS?

A: My parents? Oh, I don't know. First of all, Paris is here. The Germans were coming from this part here [*indicates on map*], from this part of France. Not Alsace really. They came from

Belgium. The British were trapped in that area, and that is where 300,000 escaped. There was a continuing, increasing influx of people coming down to Paris. You would see them coming, and they would listen to the radio and they would know they actually had to flee. The Germans were within 10-15 kilometers. They had to flee. And it was a mess, because at that time the (Stutgards) were bombing all the refugees on the road to create more chaos.

Q: AT WHAT POINT WAS DRANCY ESTABLISHED?

A: I don't know. I suspect around '41 or '42. As I said, in that part of France, in the unoccupied part of France, the local newspapers were very careful not to mention that we would see a little... a few jews were arrested or there was a dragnet of jews, but they would never really tell you anything. We suspected something bad was happening, but we didn't know what. Or maybe we suspected that we'd be put to work somewhere in Paris, in French factories. At least this is the way I remember it. I may be completely wrong. Remember that it was a long time ago. But we didn't know the horrors that were going on. It was somewhere around '43 that we began to suspect that things were not. Because, I read somewhere in, I don't know which book I read recently, that one or two persons in '42 or '43 managed to escape concentration camps, went to Nice and told the jewish people what was going on, and nobody believed them.

Q: THAT WAS 1942.

A: '42. Nobody believed them. So you can see, we couldn't conceive such horror. It was not conceivable. I mean, we were shown all the time on the French newsreels in the movies, our victorious or unvictorious attempts. The German troops were, we could see all the hundreds of thousands of people killed, either Germans or Russians. But there was nothing of what was going on for the jews in that area.

Q: WHAT WAS YOU DAILY LIFE IN NICE LIKE?

A: I was hungry all the time. I was a growing boy and there was no food. Except for some vegetables. There was no sugar. The bread - by 1942 all the wheat flour was shipped to Germany so there was practically nothing left. Only the French peasants who managed to hide some supplies for themselves could fill themselves halfway decently. But in Nice all we had was turnips and carrots and salad greens. There was no, uh, an egg was worth a million dollars. We had maybe 20 or 30...an ounce of fat per month, per person. It was not a concentration camp. Make no comparison. But I remember as a kid of 16, 17,18 being hungry all the time.

How it was where I went to the lycee every day for my studies, we learned to traffic in cigarettes. Cigarettes were a black market currency.

Q: WHO DID YOU SELL THEM TO, AND WHO DID YOU GET THEM FROM?

A: I don't know where I got them. I got them from friends who had friends who... Oh, every adult was allowed a ration of cigarettes. Those who did not use them to smoke used them to barter for food or god knows what. Clothes, food.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO DURING THIS PERIOD? DID THEY WORK (FIVE) JOBS?

A: No. Absolutely not. I still marvel because I don't know how they survived from 1940 to 1943. You know, in those days parents didn't discuss financial matters with children. I know that in 1942 they managed to rescue... I take it back. My mother came with all her jewelry, and in their cars they had put some Persian or Turkish carpets that they had which were very valuable. So my mother, they obviously came with some money but I don't know how because to this day I don't know how they managed to survive for three years. Obviously they had some money. I know that at one point they sold some carpets. I know my mother sold some of her jewelry.

But when they were arrested in the building, they were living on the 1st floor, I think, of that building on Boulevard (Gand bay ta)? Gambetta, 32 Boulevard (Gand bay ta) in Nice, there was a doctor on the same floor. The apartment of a doctor. When my mother was arrested by the French police, she managed to throw all her remaining jewelry on the floor, which was picked up by this doctor family. I don't know how, but eventually my sister, in '45 or '46, was given the jewelry back. She wears one ring, and my wife wears the pendent that belonged to my mother. Not on her. It is a diamond pendant she has at home. It was obviously very hard and very worrisome for them, but in those days you didn't discuss that with children. At least not in our family.

Q: WERE YOU FEARFUL DURING THOSE DAYS OF THE GERMANS, OF EVENTUALLY BEING OVERRUN BY THEM? OR DID YOU FEEL FAIRLY SECURE LIVING IN NICE?

A: We felt secure until September 1943. After that we knew it was really a disaster. Because by then we had heard enough jews had managed to cross the line of demarcation that we knew the horrors that were happening in the occupied part of France.

Q: WHAT DID YOU BEGIN TO HEAR AND WHEN TO YOU BEGIN TO TALK TO PEOPLE AND ACTUALLY HEAR FIRST HAND WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A: First hand I never talked to anyone. It was by rumor. It was in the community. You heard it from somebody who had heard it. So you didn't know exactly to what extent it was amplified. It was true, but you would hear that so and so who used to live next door to us had been arrested by the Germans and sent to Drancy. At that point we didn't know, but we suspected after Drancy the next step was a concentration camp. But we were not absolutely sure. So there were enough rumors going back and forth.

Q: WHAT DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE CONDITIONS IN DRANCY?

A: I didn't hear anything about the conditions at Drancy. They were not good, but they were nothing compared to ... I have photographs inside the book of (Klausfeld) of Drancy where people are walking in their clothes and going about their business. I know it was not comfortable because in the two letters that my mother wrote, managed to smuggle out of the (---?---), she is asking for clothing.

Q: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR PARENT'S ARREST AND DEPORTATION? WHAT INFORMATION HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO PUT TOGETHER?

A: Very little. I don't know exactly. I think, I have the date of September 25th, but I'm not sure it is exact. It may have been October. I don't remember because I heard that they had

been arrested when I was somewhere here and they were there. And I was near Vichy. I don't know whether this is a fairy story or if this is true. And I don't remember how I heard that between the train from Nice to Marseille, Marseille to Lyon to Paris and Drancy, that my father had a chance, somewhere between Nice and Marseille, to jump out of the train. He wanted to take his wife, my mother, with him. She refused to let go because of her mother.

From a survivor of Aushwitz who knew my mother and my father, and they knew me because we lived actually in the same building in Paris. A young woman, her name was (Jennie Perez). After the war she told me that my grandmother and my mother were immediately gassed. My father was selected for work and must have died of exhaustion later on.

Q: ROUGHLY HOW OLD WERE YOUR PARENTS?

A: My parents, in '43, my father was 46, in '44 therefore when he was deported he was '47. My mother was 44.

Q: YOU SAID THAT YOU SENSED DOOM AND YOU DECIDED TO LEAVE. IS THAT WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU WERE GOING TO TRY TO FIND A RESISTANCE GROUP OR PARTISANS?

A: I had no idea what I would find. My first idea was to hide by whatever means. We knew very little about the resistance. Because remember, the French newspapers didn't publish anything that was against the Germans. All of a sudden we would hear that so and so has been accused of criminal activities against the Germans and has been shot. But who they were, where they were, was it their real name, we knew very very little about this.

Q: HOW DID YOU FIRST COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE MAQUIS?

A: I came in contact with the Maquis because the farmers who would hide me would also supply food to the Maquis, so on occasion one guy would come with whatever means at this disposal. An old car or whatever. He'd come and pick up a few bags of potatoes, a few eggs, and would leave. And that's eventually when I sensed I was endangering... you know, and first of all you sense that people want to put you up up to a point. They are taking their lives in their hands. I decided that I had no other way of escaping than to join the Maquis. If I could take revenge on the Germans, so much the better.

Q: HOW DID YOU FIND THE FAMILIES THAT WERE WILLING TO ASSIST YOU? HOW DID YOU APPROACH THEM KNOWING THE GREAT DANGER TO THEM AND TO YOURSELF?

A: I don't remember. I honestly don't remember. The (Charass) were friends of my great uncle and my great aunt who were in (Entresho). They were friends, and they were good people. That's probably how it happened.

Q: YOU DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT MOTIVATED THEM TO HELP A JEW?

A: They sensed a righteousness. That's all you can say. I don't know. I don't know. The hatred. There were some French who hated the Germans. I don't know if you ever have visited France, but in every village almost, to this day - and that struck Barbara when we were there for the first time together in 1966 - in every village you will find a monument that lists all the people who died in the war of 1914-1918. And you will find whole families, because you will have ten names with the same last name, whole families wiped. France, during the first world war lost 1.5 or 1.7 million people. At that point France had barely 35, 36 million people. I would say 30 or 40 percent of the men between age 18-40 were wiped out. A whole generation of men. And there was still, in 1939, 1940, 1945, a very strong hatred in some sections of the country against the Germans. Not everywhere, since they fought (Petan). (Petain) was the savior of their (dam) between 1916 which was one of the major battles against the Germans that made (Marshall Petan) famous. He was the one who collaborated with the Germans. So there was a (buskay) flip flop.

Q: HOW DID YOU ACTUALLY JOIN THE MAQUIS? DID YOU JUST SAY, HI I'M HERE I WANT TO JOIN? HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

A: Let me try to think of that. I remember I joined them in a little town called (Bruile les Baronee) which is the same area, (La Drome). In France things are very close, you know. In France if you are 10 miles away from one distance, it's a very long way. At least in those days. I don't know. They were all kids our age. They were 18, 19, 20. The chiefs, quote unquote, were 22, 23, 24. You know. I am there. I am hunted by the Germans. I am joining you. Come along, the more the merrier. I mean, they needed people.

Q: DID YOU NOT HAVE ANY DISCUSSION WITH THE GERMAN COMMUNIST WHO TAUGHT YOU HOW TO USE THE GUN?

A: No. No. Never. I don't remember. Or at least if I had one, I don't remember. All I know is that he was a communist. He hated the Nazis. They had hunted him to death like they tried kill all the communists, and he was going to get his revenge.

Q: THE GROUP THAT YOU WERE WITH, DID THEY HAVE A NAME? YOU SAID IT WAS A VERY SMALL GROUP.

A: Well, it was called - I still remember [*takes out a printed card*] that group. We have 90 survivors, and we have a little group, and I sent my money to join the group. It was called (Frontierers et Partisans Francais, Premiere Regimente de la Drome Sud).

Q: WHAT DOES THAT ALL MEAN?

A: "Frontieriers," is Guerrillas and partisans. French guerrillas and partisans. ("Amical") is society. First regiment. ("Drome Sud") is the location; the southern part of the (Drome). (Drome) is a section of France. A small department of France.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER WHO YOUR LEADER OR COMMANDER WAS?

A: Yes. Well I had several (in the space of one week). Because you didn't stay in one. Depending what you were good at they would put you there for one (moment), there another (moment). So you would shift. There were also other reasons to shift people around. Before they accepted you they wanted to make sure you were not a plant for the Nazis. Because on occasion it happened that people pretended to join the (~~Makee~~ Milice) and actually were working for the (Mileese) which was the French (Waffen) SS. So, they took their security measures.

Q: WHAT WERE YOU GOOD AT? WHAT WAS YOUR SPECIALTY?

A: I was good with a sten gun. I was also good, since I had wanted to become a doctor, or I was supposed to become a doctor, I was good a taking -- although I had no real training in medicine, I was good at taking care of bruises and light wounds.

Q: WAS THERE ANY KIND OF MEDICAL HELP WITHIN YOUR...?

A: There was mentioned in the book, a doctor (Ashari), who had been a doctor. He was probably 26 or 27. He had been a French doctor in the French air force before and during the war. He managed to escape the Germans and he was the doctor for our department. They established a sort of small hospital for seriously wounded in a small town as far as they could away from the Germans. And there were some catholic sisters who helped take care of the wounded. But God forbid the Germans would get hold of that quote unquote hospital.

Q: HOW WERE YOUR WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION OBTAINED? WERE THEY IN SHORT SUPPLY?

A: At times they were in short supply, at times they were not. It depended on the amount of droppings by parachute from the British. After the first landing in June 5,6, 1944, the drop of arms increased greatly. Before they were in short supply and we

had to catch them or grab them from the Germans who were killed. In fact many of the weapons we had were German weapons.

Q: WHAT KIND OF ACTIONS PRIOR TO THE ALLIED LANDING DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN?

A: I don't remember. Hide and seek mostly.

Q: WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT? WHAT EXACTLY DID THAT ACCOMPLISH? WHO WAS HIDING AND WHO WAS SEEKING?

A: Seeking where the Germans troops were. Remember, again, I was not a big shot. I was a foot soldier. But I presume this information would be passed to people who would radio. Find where the Germans were; if there was a convoy, or a train of ammunition, or a number of tanks coming down somewhere. Send that radio message to London, who would then send some bombers and bomb that particular section. So this was seeking where the Germans were, where their strong points were, how many Germans were there. And then hiding in order not to be caught, because if you were caught you couldn't continue the work of spying on the Germans.

Q: SO THE ENTIRE TIME, YOUR GROUP WORKED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BRITISH EVEN PRIOR TO THE LANDING.

A: Oh yes. Most of the messages you probably have been told, were sent by code to the British. Incidentally, the Germans were very good at radio detections. The average life expectancy of a volunteer who sent by morse code information to London was no more than six weeks.

Q: WERE THERE EVER TIMES WHERE YOU WERE IN DANGER OF BEING CAPTURED BY THE GERMANS?

A: Twice.

Q: CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THEM?

A: Once when a German column advanced towards (Bruile les Baronee). You have to realize that when the Germans advance, they advance with tanks. And although it was 1944 we, mostly the B25, destroyed probably 700 tanks. But when they advanced, even 3 or 4 tanks was a huge force against 10 guys who have a few sub machine guns and a hand grenade. So this was one case.

Another case was in (Sisterone). Another battle took place, where one of my friends lost a leg. His name is Dr. (Eve Russo). He wrote a very moving poem which I would like to read later on. He is mentioned in the book. There was a very close call.

The other third close call I had was when we were strafed by the (mesashmitzers). And there were others. I remember on one call, I am standing guard. The first thing we did when we invaded a place, when we went to a small village in France which was not "liberated" by the resistance and we knew that some of the collaborators and the (Mileese) were there, the first thing we would do was immediately go to the post office and get hold of the post office, because the post office in France controls also the telephone lines. It is called PT&T: Post, Telegraph and Telephone.

So the first thing we did... I remember, me and another guy going armed to stop, we were not going to shoot the French but we didn't want them to...we took the...usually there were ladies, on occasion men manning the telephone with the cables like this. I'd get them away and pull all the lines away to disconnect everything. I remember disconnecting this, and we shooed everybody away. We were standing in front of the post office door. All of a sudden I see one of the Citroens zooming, coming down the road from where we are... We were standing in front waiting for our comrades to come now that we have immobilized the telephone network. And I don't recognize the car. All of a sudden I see a sub machine gun coming out of the window. I just, I threw myself, but I threw my comrade, who hadn't seen it, on the floor. The, what do you call that, the...the spray of bullets went just above our heads. If I had been standing up I

wouldn't be here to tell the tale. I was so doggone mad that after that when they passed, I went after - I was crazy. You only do that when you are 19 - I discharged my complete magazine of 9 millimeter bullets into the car. You have to be crazy to do that. Or you have to be 19.

Q: WERE THERE OTHER JEWS IN YOUR GROUP?

A: There was one, but I don't remember his name. He was a French Jew. By this I mean he was from Alsace Lorraine. You know there has been a French pocket of jews there for centuries. There was one there. I don't remember his name. We never talked about religion. Nobody knew that I was a jew in the Maquis. We didn't talk about politics, we didn't talk about religion.

You have to remember that the intellectual level of most of the... It may seem strange in the United States because you don't have that stratification of classes that still exists in France. But, in those days, probably things have changed now because I see farmers in France using a computer, so obviously things have changed. At least I see that on American television. But there was a big gap between a farmer boy and someone like me who had finished the lycee which would be equivalent to two years of college in the United States. In those days that meant a lot.

We were very friendly. We protected each other. There was no doubt. In combat we protected each other. But from a social light, there was not much I could tell them or they could tell me that we could understand each other. I could not talk about history. I could not talk about French literature with them.

Q: DID YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON AROUND YOU? WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT? THERE MUST HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOU WERE SITTING AROUND, NOT FIGHTING.

A: Sure, sure. There were times. We took guard two by two, so that if one was falling during the night, if one would fall asleep the other one would give him a punch to wake him up. I remember talking about what we would do if we came alive out of the war. What would we find. What would the new world...

The thing that made me mad, when I was like this I would think... Strangely enough, I knew the Americans were in the war so I was not mad against the Americans. I said, Gee, when I am that much away from possible death, and right now in Rio, in Buenos Aires, there are people of my age group who are having a perfectly normal, enchanting life. And here I am, either starving or threatened with death at any time. I'm sure this is the same thing that the GI's who landed in Normandy felt. What the hell am I doing here when in the United States the people are having a

nice fine life. So I think it's a reflex. I'm sure it's common to everybody in that particular situation. You think, I am here in hell and there are millions of people who are enjoying life there. Why am I not there? What am I doing here?

I remember talking with the Spaniards. They told me long stories about the civil war in Spain. I had four years of Spanish in school. They give you a lot of studies in France because I had seven years of English, four years of Spanish, three years of Latin. When you get out of French lycee you really know something. It's not like coming out of an American high school.

I remember talking for hours about... They were people 10 years older than I was at that time, telling me their stories about the civil war in Spain which I found fascinating. I remember trying to, with the two Russians - They were in our group, and we could only talk by gesture - trying to develop a vocabulary to communicate. That's the way I learned that (Yabas loob loo) in Russian means "I love you." THey taught me that. And (Spaseeba) means thank you. A few words I remember from talking with those Russians.

Mostly our concerns were about where we would find food, where were the Germans, how could we destroy the Germans, how to avoid getting killed, where was our family. For the French...Most of the group in that area that I have shown you, most of the members

of the group were people who were the sons of farmers in that area. In fact, the society to which I belong, most of the people in that particular group still live in that area.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FEELING WHEN YOU SAW THE 36TH TEXAS DIVISION?

A: Elation. I said, now I may live. I wasn't sure I would survive the Maquis. The odds were against us. Let's say if it had been delayed for 6 months or a year. Not too far from where we were, maybe like 80 miles, the (Plateau des Vercourt) - I don't know if the name means anything to you; it is a plateau in the Alps - there were a large concentration of Maquis like us. Because it was even farther away from the roads than we were there was a concentration of maybe several hundred (Makees). At one time the Germans were fed up with this. So they sent paratroopers with gliders, and they glided on that plateau. They were better armed and better trained. They killed all of them. I mean they killed all of them including the wounded Maquis. People were actually killed by the Germans. Including the French women who came to help as "nurses" - were killed also there. So we knew that sooner or later, unless the allies landed, it was a matter of time until we would get caught. So when I saw that jeep. That first jeep I saw was a feeling of elation.

Q: YOU MUST HAVE HAD SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO SURVIVE ALL THAT. MAYBE A SKILL OR ATTITUDE OR SOMETHING IN YOUR UPBRINGING.

A: No. Youth. I mean, you can do physically things when you are 18, 19 that you can't do when you are 30 or 40. First of all I knew that if I didn't do them I wouldn't survive. And secondly, well, there was really no option. As a jew you had to go into... There are a few jews I know, who were in Nice, of my age who survived without going into the underground. But most of them either went into the underground, or ended up in a concentration camp.

Q: YOU SAID YOUR MOTHER GOT SOME LETTERS OUT OF DRANCY. WHERE DID THESE LETTERS REACH YOU?

A: They were sent to the family near Vichy, the Desrutin. One I am sure because it has the address. The others I don't remember how I got these. But the others are botched up. You can see that. Whoever received these letters obviously wanted to save them. At the same time, if they were found, they didn't want people who were mentioned in the letters... This is a large photocopies, but you see the blotches of ink everywhere.

Q: WHAT DOES SHE WRITE ABOUT? DOES SHE DESCRIBE THE CAMP AT ALL?

A: No. This is the first one she mentioned which was mailed out of Drancy on the 6th of November, 1943. She writes to Monsieur Desrutin, (Boulon de arrivier, enir la chateau a lier). This is

where the Desrutin family was living. But the letter is addressed to me. But she addresses it to him. I am translating now:

"My darling, just a few words to let you know that night and day we think about you. You are very courageous and our greatest desire is that you and Jeannette..." - Jeannette is my sister - "...take things very calmly. What has happened to us is tough, but with God's help, some day we shall see each other again. I would feel better if I knew that you were energetic. These are the times to show that you are strong. Think about your sister..." - She knew that we were not together at that point - "...think about your little sister..." - (Sourette), little sister - "...If you can, send her a little bit of food without spending too much..." - She knew we didn't have any money - "...I would love to know that she is able to eat a little bit of butter. It would please me like if I were eating it. Try not to stay without any money. Ask Uncle Robert..." - which was her brother - "...to give you some if you can. Be courageous my love. I am sad, I am sad..." - could you cut please.

[*Pause, and then he continues translating letter*]

"The slippers I was making for you with much love. I have them here with me. I think you are probably very cold. Be careful, take good care of yourself. Be sure not to get sick. Send our

regards to our friends and family. We send you love and kisses with a lot of passion. Courage, courage."

Forty-seven years have gone by and it still hurts. Please continue.

Q: YOU SAID THAT IN FEBRUARY '45 YOU LEARNED THAT YOUR PARENTS HAD BEEN DEPORTED.

A: In '45? No. I must have been mistaken or misstated the dates. I knew that by then, don't ask me how, I don't remember how, but by the end of 1943 we knew that when people went to Drancy, they would be deported to concentration camps. We had heard by then of Aushwitz. Aushwitz was the name that stands out. I don't know if we knew about Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Theresienstadt, Majdanek and all the other camps.

Q: YOU WERE, BY THAT TIME YOU SAID YOUR UNIT HAD BECOME PART OF THE FRENCH ARMY, HAD JOINED THE ALLIES AND HAD BECOME PART OF THE REGULAR ARMY.

A: Yes. After, in August 1944, at the end of August in 1944. In other words, as the Americans advanced, the local guerilla people were automatically... the French had always a few units with them so they would gather us together and integrate us in to the French army.

Q: BEFORE I FORGET, WHAT WAS YOUR NOMME DE GUERRE?

A: (Simon Le Senn). You are too young to know that, but (Le Senn) was a character in my days. In my days, he was a character equivalent to 007. There was a lot of detective stories written about (Simon Le Senn), and as a young kid I used to read them with passion. So when they asked me, What is your name? I said (Simon Le Senn). He was a great hero of mine. In fact, here is my discharge paper. [*Translates the following*]:

"(Certificate Apart de nom so force Francais de l'interior). The general commanding the eighth military region certifies that Monsieur ASA Maurice, alias (Simon Le Senn), born 28 of August 1924 in Paris, 12th (arrondisement), served in the french forces in the battalion of the (Drome) from May '44, until September '44, then joined the French army until the liberation. Was discharged on February 28, 1945."

There is a copy of that paper.

Q: SO AT THAT POINT YOU LEFT THE ARMY, WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT YOUR PARENTS...

A: Well, yes. My parents were deported. The French government, which actually at that point was operating in France...France had

been practically entirely liberated by February 1945. They were just about to invade Germany. The French had passed a law that any man who had parents who were deported was to be discharged out of the army. Even one parent deported, let alone two.

Q: HOW DID THEY GET THE INFORMATION?

A: (Klausfeld) found the information about all the Drancy camp in his book. I mean, it was well known. In fact, I have among all the papers I have a card that was given to me. In fact, here is the... This is ... When you get married in France you get a (livre famille), a family booklet. It shows the day the persons get married. It shows the name of the spouses, and the children that were born. It says here when the spouses were married. And it says the spouses, "Asa David..." - the French always put the last name first - "Asa David died the 20th of January, 1944, at Drancy." They took the date of the convoy. Obviously they didn't know when they died exactly. So (the role was attended to) the date of the convoy as the date of the death. My mother is here, again, "died 20th of January, 1944, at Drancy." So they knew. Obviously they knew. It is registered. I don't remember how they knew but here is the official document.

Q: GERMANS WERE METICULOUS RECORD KEEPERS. YOU TOLD A STORY ABOUT ONE OF YOUR GROUPS IN THE MAQUIS BEING ENCIRCLED.

A: Not mine, no. Was it (Claybear)?

Q: YES.

A: No. It was not my group. It was another group. His name is (Caspi). Another jew, obviously. He is the one who's brother, 45 years later, learned how his younger or older brother died in the Maquis.

Q: YOU ALSO MENTIONED THAT YOUR GRANDMOTHER SURVIVED.

A: My paternal grandmother survived because she was hiding in France with her daughter in a very small town which was left untouched with the Germans. There were little pockets where Jews were hiding that were not touched with the Germans. She was obviously very fortunate that they were hiding in that particular place.

Q: HOW DID YOU FIND EACH OTHER AFTER THE WAR?

A: Everybody went back to Paris.

Q: TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ALSO ABOUT YOUR SISTER.

A: Yes. She went to see my Great Uncle and Great Aunt in that little place called (entresho) north of Marseille. Being that

her name was Asa, and the Germans were looking. They knew, I don't know how, that my parents had two children, and the children had escaped them. So they were after us, among other people. But if they had found our name, our identification papers, they would know exactly who we were. So after a while it was unsafe for my sister to stay there very long. So she went to the family Desrutin again. She managed to travel - she was barely 15 - without any ID papers through Lyon. It was an absolute miracle. And she went with the Desrutin, and she stayed there with them until liberation.

But at one point, she told me about that recently, the house where the family lived was at the crossroad between two major arteries through which the Germans would be crossing in order to go north to face the invasion in Normandy. The local Maquis knew this, so they told the Desrutin to get out of there, because they were going to use their house as a stronghold, and put their machine guns there to fire on the Germans.

So they moved out a little ways, but the Germans caught on to the Maquis much sooner than expected. So for two days and two nights my sister and the Desrutins were hiding in a trench, a sort of small canal about 20 yards away from the Germans. They could see the feet of the Germans moving up and down. For two days they stayed completely flat into that ditch, without water, without possibly going to the bathroom or anything, without food for two

days. Seeing the Germans back and forth moving within 20 yards from you, and knowing that if they caught them they would kill them, whether they were jews or not jews; they would all be killed.

Q: WHEN SHE ARRIVED IN PARIS...

A: She didn't go to Paris immediately. She went back to Nice because she had a very good friend of hers who took her in. My sister didn't feel very happy living with our Aunts, who were not particularly, terribly friendly. She went to live for almost a year with a family in Nice after the war from 1945 to 1946. I think she spent a whole year there in Nice where she was quite happy with that family. I think they were like a second mother and second father for her. Then she came back to Paris.

Q: YOU WERE ALWAYS AWARE THAT SHE WAS ALIVE AND SAFE?

A: Not - There were periods - From October '43 to April '44 I didn't know where she was or whether she was alive or dead. It's only when I joined the Maquis she was nearby. We didn't speak, we wouldn't to each other. We could see each other but we didn't give any sign of recognition.

Q: WHY WAS THAT?

A: Because if one was caught, the other would be caught immediately. And you wouldn't know which French peasant, or farmer would tell, "Hey, that's his sister." Some were very righteous gentiles, some were collaborators to the Germans. You didn't know who was who.

Q: AFTER THE WAR, DID YOU HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME STAYING IN FRANCE?

A: Yes. I felt uncomfortable in France. Besides which I was not making a half way decent living either.

Q: WHAT WERE YOU DOING?

A: I was working for an Uncle of mine, Robert, who was the brother of my mother. He was in the textiles business like many jews were in New York or in Paris. He was in the textiles business. I was working there because I had to make some money, but I was not particularly interested in that kind of stuff. He died of a heart attack in 1949. I went to work for some time with - what was the name of that - dictaphone in France, but there were too many sad memories associated with France. I wanted to leave.

At that time Australia was advertising they needed immigrants. They were making a big pitch for immigrants, either from England

- from England first of all, and then France or Germany. So, why not? I'll try it.

Q: HOW DID YOUR WAR, YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH WAR, LOSING YOUR FAMILY, AND FIGHTING WITH THE RESISTANCE, EFFECT YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT JUDAISM?

A: That's an interesting question, because my wife converted to Judaism, and we raised our kids as jews. They had their barmitzvah and batmitzvah. When I came to this country I was very negative toward Judaism. Judaism had caused me too much problems. Too much misery. What was good to be a jew? If I had been a christian my chances of survival in France would have been several hundred percent better than being a jew. And my parents probably wouldn't have died. Mind you, there were quite a few French catholic that were killed during the war, I want to render justice wherever it is due, particularly the ones who resisted. And sometimes even the ones who were not among the resistance who were taken at random. When a member of the resistance would shoot one or two German officers in the street, oftentimes the Gestapo and the military forces would come round up the village and take at random 50 people and shoot them. Whether they were jews or not jews, it didn't matter. There were many Frenchmen who were killed. At least 20 thousand. Between 20 and 40 thousand French men died either in the resistance or because they were the unfortunate victims of reprisals.

But to come back to your question. When I left, I was an ethnic jew. I was not a religious jew. When I joined the temple, luck would have it, we joined Temple Beth Abraham. This was in the middle 60s, or there abouts. It was run by Rabbi (Shulwise), who was a brilliant, is a brilliant speaker. I don't know if you've ever heard of him. He got his PhD in religious studies at Berkeley. He convinced me that there is more than suffering in Judaism. So I started reading, and liking a lot of what I've read and learned since that.

We had - but I want to mention this for the record here. When my parents got married in 1923 my father's parents were still in Turkey. They came in 1925 or '26 to France. My father always regretted that his parents did not attend his wedding. To make up for this and because he could afford it, when I was barmitzvahed in 1937 he rented two huge halls in the (Le Kay Dorsay, or le Palais Dorsay) which has now been turned in to a museum. But it was a huge hotel. My barmitzvah was a big to-do, not so much for the barmitzvah but for the pleasure of his parents.

When my son became barmitzvahed, the morning before going to the temple I became quite emotional, and I was describing to my son what own barmitzvah. David told me something that, to this day,

puzzles me and makes me feel sad. He told me, "Dad, if your parents hadn't died at Aushwitz, I wouldn't be alive today."

This is a very forceful statement, meaning that if my parents hadn't died at Aushwitz, I wouldn't have come to the United States. If I hadn't come to the United States I wouldn't have met Barbara. If I hadn't met Barbara, David wouldn't have been born. Whether that was a spontaneous statement, or whether there was a sense of guilt in his statement, to this day I don't know.

My children always tried to shield me from whatever has to do with the holocaust. Whenever there was a movie about the holocaust they always made sure the television was turned off. But again, I want to say that it takes three generations to obliterate these four years. It is only the children of my children who will not be influenced by the holocaust. Although obviously my children were not influenced the way I was, they are still aware of that, and sometimes it has made their lives more difficult than it really should have been. It certainly has made the life of my wife more difficult.

Q: WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES? DID YOU TRY TO SHELTER THEM FROM THAT?

A: I don't remember. [*To Barbara Asa*] Would you remember? I think it was something slightly gradual. Children absorb things without having to tell them, simply by overhearing grown-up conversation. I think they both were proud that I stood up to the Germans. And that if I were to have died I would have died standing up instead of in a concentration camp. I would have died fighting instead of taking it in the chin. I think they are proud of that. There is no doubt it has influenced their life. Their feelings perhaps more than their lives. I mean, they are not living their lives any differently because I am a survivor of this great holocaust. Maybe I have influenced some of their feelings. At times it has been difficult for my wife, there is no doubt about this. And I must acknowledge the great support she has given me.

Q: DO YOU HAVE PERIODS WHERE YOU STILL EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES, NIGHTMARES OR PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE HOLOCAUST?

A: I can't say I have nightmares during the holocaust, no. It is when I consciously, during my waking time, like now, when the memories come back... There was a time, for at least 20 years, in many of my dreams - your question is interesting - in many of my dreams, I was always taking refuge, when I was being hunted by great monsters as you are in your dreams, something extremely threatening. I was always taking refuge by fleeing in the north

west direction. And this was the direction of England, with respect to France. Always in my dreams, my salvation was ....

END OF TAPE ONE

Interview with Maurice Asa
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: 7/10/90
Interviewers: Evelyn Feilden
Barbara Harris

Tape 2 of 2

Q: LET ME ASK YOU ONE OTHER QUESTION WHILE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HOW THIS EXPERIENCE AFFECTED YOU? HOW DID IT AFFECT YOUR VALUES, WHAT YOU WANTED TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

A: First my feelings. There was a great deal of anger. Essentially, anger at the death of my parents. Anger because, essentially, I lost a great section of my life. My life was, from 1939 when the war broke out until, my life, my normal life resumed when I married my wife in 1957. That's 18 years. A segment of 18 years of my life was essentially lost. Great anger about this.

What I taught my children? I don't think I consciously taught them, do this, or do not do that. I think they got it by osmosis. I mean, obviously we taught them to read and we made sure they were kept in good health. THey did their homework, they went to Boy Scouts or campfire girls. You know, that sort of thing. They participated in sports, they learned to swim, they were good kids. I am proud to say that none of my children -they are grown up, my son is approaching 31, the other one just became a lawyer recently, he's 29 - they never experimented with

drugs, they never got involved in all the plagues of today's youth. My bond with my wife is very strong. We have a very strong family We never divorced, and they had a strong, a lot of affection, a lot of love, so. I think it is not something where we told them, you do this, you love that person. I think they got it through osmosis.

Q: YOU SAID YOU HAD WANTED TO BECOME A LAWYER YOURSELF.

A: Well it's my parents. Either a lawyer or a doctor was another one. Every mother, even in France, wanted a boy to become a good jewish doctor. If you couldn't become a doctor, maybe you could become a lawyer.

Q: YOUR DAUGHTER HAS BECOME A LAWYER.

A: My daughter became a lawyer.

Q: AND YOUR SON A DOCTOR?

A: No, no no no no. He has a factory. He is in the plastic businesses, the (injection molding) business.

Q: AND WHAT DID YOU FINALLY END UP DOING?

A: I worked for many years, from ´54 to ´55 I did odd jobs. I must say that the french give you a good grounding when you leave the lycee. Because of the background I had in science and math I ended up by taking correspondence courses etcetera and things like this, and learning quite a bit about electronics. I ended up by being a manufacturer representative for scientific research equipment sold to universities and medical schools from 1958 to last year when I retired.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD A POEM?

A: I had two or three things. (*He brings up a photo - a class picture*) First of all, I don´t think it can be seen from such a distance. I don´t know. Here is my good friend (Isadore Greenberg). In the text I had prepared I had used the same word. He was among the best and the brightest. He was tops in latin, tops in mathematics. He´s a young man who died in 1942. This is (Pierre Almoter), he was one of my best friends. This is (Ajel Nick), he was one of my best friends. And here I am. I was always the small kid so I was always sitting in front.

Q: WE´LL TAKE A PICTURE OF THAT AFTERWARDS.

A: (*He reaches for a book*) Recently at the (Judah Magnus) museum there was an exhibit on the sephardic jews, and I visited that, obviously. I picked up that book here. The title is <u>And</u>

the World Stood Silent, Sephardic poetry of the holocaust. A lot of it is written in (ladino). It was translated by Isaac Jack Levy who is a PhD and professor of Spanish studies at the University of South Carolina.

This one, as it happens, was written in french, and it has, thank god, a translation in English. It was written by (Marcel Shalon), who happens to have been born in (Idiamay), which is a border town between Turkey and Bulgaria where my father was born. It struck a strong cord because it's a poem that was written...it says the title was "Nice," the town, "December 1943." This was the time when all the jews were rounded up. I will read it in English (***Transcriber's note: I am not attempting to guess at line breaks. Please see text in And the World Stood Silent for the poem's intended structure***):

> "There were three of them: the husband, the wife, and their baby. There were three with so many thousands. They picked them up one fine day. They put them behind the barbed wire. They were young and full of life. Full of life like all their brethren. The father's name was David. It is criminal. So open they traded their hearts like a cry. Their eyes burned with the never-ending salt of their tears. On the barbed wire they hang the bloody shreds of their pain. Oh, there were many, these brothers of misfortune who remembered

at night the bitter gall of their past times. Having only the moon to warm their hearts, their teeth shattering the icy wind, their hearts wilted like (?) flowers, they wash their hands in a water without history. By their forced marches to death, they fed the furnaces of the crematorium. Poor David, you are gone. That is your fate. Your fate, like that of so many others whose very numbers drive one mad. There you are, buried in the ice of death, in a century that dares speak of glory and prestige. Oh my poor, poor jewish brethren, you did not deserve to be struck down like dogs, and (reckoned) because of this wretched retreat of humanity."

It struck a cord because my father is named David, and it happened in Nice. And you know, in France - today it might be different - but in France when you were called David or Rachel or Samuel, it was not French quote-unquote. You were a foreigner. You were a jew. And there was a lot of Anti-semitism and xenophobia in France. Even now, you know what happened in May. That's why it says in the poem "The father's name was David. It is criminal" It was considered in France to be criminal. To be named David was a blotch on your honor.

The other one - I thought I made a translation of that because it is not translated in English. (*He pulls up a other book)* I'm

afraid I may have to put my glasses on because it's so, I translated it quickly just in my car before I came here. It's a poem. The title of this book is Memoires De L'Ombre, Memory of the Shadow, meaning memory of the fighting in the shadow, by Captain Paris, who was the nomme de guerre of Lucienne (Dufour) who was the commander of our group in (La Drome).

He was born - I am translating quickly from the back - he was born in 1920 in Paris, the eighth child of a family. He was self-taught. He was deported to Germany in 1941 and was wounded twice while he tried to sabotage the German war machine. In other words, from that I infer that he was sent as a worker to Germany. Many french workers tried to sabotage them. He escapes in 1943 and joins the Maquis in the southern part of France. He becomes Captain Paris and forms the first battalion of (Frontierre Partisan Francais), which is the one I was part of.

My friend Doctor (Iroso), he became a doctor later on, was a french officer in one of the french (war) schools in (Sumeer) in 1939-40. He escaped being taken prisoner by the Germans, and went back to unoccupied part of France where his family resided. And then he joined the Maquis. Because he had formal military training not all of them had, he became one of the heads of our group, lieutenant. His nomme de guerre was lieutenant Yves. He kept his first name, his name was Yves also. He was struck by a bullet in the leg and his (sciatic) nerve was severed. About ten

years later they had to amputate it completely. He resumed his studies and became an MD, and in fact, Barbara and I visited him twice, in 1982 and 1984 in France, and we are in correspondence. Once every three, four or five months we write to each other.

He wrote a lovely poem at the end of the book called "Comrades who died at age 20."

> "Comrades who died at age 20, where has our youth gone. Our fury, our tenderness, now that I am 60. Comrades who died at 20, we called each other brothers. We had the same anger, the same love, the same blood. Comrades who died at 20, we knew little about politics. We did calisthenics. We sang the same songs. Comrades who died at 20, we wore funny rages. We were dressed like gypsies or parrots. Comrades who died at 20, was your death useless? Could you have believed how many worthless politicians would come after you? Comrades who died at 20, who still remembers your acts of glory? Who thinks of your stories? The dead disturb the living. Comrades who died at 20, I saw your faces in the looks of those naughty little boys who could be my grandchildren. Comrades who died at 20, your youth is eternal. Our world lives in you, you are the living."

It is difficult to translate poetry, you know. In french it's superb.

A: IT'S A BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE THOUGH. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD, THAT YOU HAVEN'T COVERED?

Q: No, well, yes. I would like to thank the french people who saved me, who helped save me at great risk. My sister was in France in November of last year. By sheer luck she managed to find the Charrasse family who saved me, so I am planning to write to (Yad Vashem) to request that their name be entered among the names of the righteous gentiles.

Q: COULD YOU SPELL THAT FOR ME?

A: C-H-A-R-R-A-S-S-E. They live in the village of E-N-T-R-E-C-H-A-U-X. They live in the same farm my sister told me, but the farm has been completely remodeled and is a marvel of modern facilities.

I want to thank my wife and my children for the support they gave me all these years. And, I want to thank the United States. That's it.

GRAPHICS

A description of the graphic appears in bold type inside square brackets []. Any comments about graphics follow the brackets.

[Map]

[Family Tree]

[School - Class Picture] A: I was around 13, it must have been 1936, 1937. Lycee class. Here I am, in the front row. I was always a small kid.

Q: COULD YOU IDENTIFY YOUR FRIEND THERE?

A: (Isadore Greenberg).

Q: OK, NEXT.

[Drancy] A: This is the Drancy camp out of which 71,500 jews were shipped to their deaths to Auschwitz and other concentration camps. My parents were in convoy 66 and were sent out of Drancy to their deaths on January 20th, 1944. After the war I visited Drancy and took that picture. It was 1945 or 1946. There was a big ceremony to honor the dead.

Q: SO THESE PEOPLE ARE ALL VISITORS?

A: Precisely.

[Cell 17] A: This is the cell, cell 17 where my parents were in Drancy.

[Wedding photo of couple] Q: OK, THIS IS YOUR PARENT'S WEDDING PHOTOGRAPH?

A: Exactly. {Photo taken in} 1923, in Paris.

[Grandparents] Q: THIS IS YOUR PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS PHOTOGRAPHED IN TURKEY PROBABLY BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

A: Yes, because my Grandfather is wearing a fez, which was Muslim head gear. After the war when (Kamil Atar Turk) came into power in Turkey he outlawed the wearing of the fez.

[Woman] A: She was a beautiful woman - (Straya) Tcherassi - my maternal Grandmother who died in Auschwitz in 1944, as soon as the convoy reached Auschwitz. She was in convoy #66 with my parents. Even as an old woman - she must have been very beautiful because that picture was taken when she was 72, 73, and she still has extremely attractive features.

[Book] A: This is (Klausfeld's) book. My parents are there; convoy #66.

[L'Express xerox] A: A photocopy of the issue of L'Express - a very recent issue, May 4, 1990. This in only two or three months old. It relates how the French police deported 3,500 jewish kids, without their mothers, from Drancy to Auschwitz. The 3,500 children were gassed upon arrival. And it was the French police that rounded them up in (Petevier), which is not far from Paris - south of Paris. Those crimes should not be forgotten. Ever. LAnd this inquiry was not made by jews, it was made by french people.

["Memoires" book cover] A: Written by my commander in the Maquis. He wrote the book two years ago, relating the story of our fights in La Drome. "L'Ombre" means shadow. "Memoires De L'Ombre" means memory of the shadow. The understanding is that the underground fighting - you were fighting in the shadows; you couldn't come out in the open.

[Photo inside book, of author?] Q: AND THIS MAN'S REAL NAME WAS?

A:1 (Lucienne DuFour) is a man who is now 70, who lives in Orange in the south of France. He is retired. After the war he became a physical therapist.

[David Goldberg] A: I want to show, so he won't be forgotten. Lieutenant Garcia, who's real name was David Goldberg, was mortally wounded during one of our encounters against the Germans in the guerilla group I am still proud to be a member of.

[Two Documents] A: The large one is my discharge papers for the French forces, and certifying that I was part of the French Maquis. The second one is my membership in the - old codgers like us who still belong to the group of people who remain of the guerilla fighters from that particular region {Drome-Sud} in France. There are about 90 of us who are still alive.

[Musical notes on a wall] A: This is the graffiti that was in a cell at the camp of Drancy in France where the jews were gathered before being deported to Germany. And it reads, "Freedom is all the life." Some deportee wrote this before being deported to Auschwitz and I photographed this inside the cell when I visited the Drancy camp when there was a memorial ceremony there.

Q: AND IS THE PIECE OF MUSIC FAMILIAR? ORIGINAL?

A: No. Not at all. It's like a song, but the man who drew those notes may not even have known music at all. It was a symbol rather than a tune, I gather, but I'm not sure.

[Flag-draped Casket] A: These photos, later on there was a ceremony in memory of the deportees, with a symbolic casket draped with the French flag.

[Hand-written letter] A: This is the letter that my mother sent me from Drancy. It was written front and back. In that letter she expressed her love for my sister and I, and hoped we would be very brave. She ends the letter saying "Courage. Courage." Coming from a woman who was about to face death in a few weeks, you can have nothing but fantastic admiration. Were those words recorded?

[Document] A: This is my diploma of Baccalaureate in 1942, which I successfully passed. When I showed that to UC Berkeley upon my arrival in 1954, they gave me automatically two years credit if I wanted to continue my studies towards a bachelor's degree, but I didn't have any money. I could not continue my studies.

Q: I SEE YOUR NAME IS SPELLED DIFFERENTLY.

A: Yes, in order to have the sound /ay-sa/ with a soft "s" in French you need two "esses" between two syllables. In English it is not necessary, so I dropped one consonant, one "s."

[Book] A: A picture of the book, And the World Stood Silent: Sephardic Poetry of the Holocaust, by Isaac Jack Levy, who is a professor of Spanish Studies at the University of Southern Carolina. He gathered all the poems written by sephardic jews during the holocaust in memory of the 160,000 sephardic jews who died during the holocaust.

[Bulletin, in French] A: The latest bulletin I got from the society of the old guerilla fighters in my group. I don't know if you can focus on this, but at this point here my name is mentioned. They sent me that bulletin from France. My name is mentioned here. I had requested they publish a directory of all the members because they haven't done so yet. I know there are 90 of us surviving. I know some of them who were my friends in the Maquis, but I don't have the names of all the members, so I requested that a directory be printed and my name is there. Can my name be seen? It's an amazing camera you have.

[Family Photos] A: Those are pictures taken during the good holidays we had between 1930 and 1939. The bottom one, the large one is my father, my mother and my sister.

Q: DID YOU TAKE THAT PHOTO?

A: I don't remember. Probably, with a box camera. My father could have had a box camera in the middle 30's. Remember those little box cameras?

[Another family photo] A: This is a picture of my mother - if you can focus on that one - a picture of my mother, me here, my sister in the middle, my cousin, an uncle and an aunt. {It was taken} in (Jwa les fants), on the French Riviera.

[Another family photo] Forget these two here, if you can, focus on that one. It's my mother, my sister and I. I am sort of clowning, lifting up my cap. This is in the (Le Tourcay Par les Plage), a rather swanky resort in France.

[Two young boys] A: This one perhaps has significance. At the same place (Par les Plage, Le Tourcay), I made friends with a small Englishman who was four or five years younger than I am. Strangely enough, we saw him in the United States a year and a half ago. He had remembered where we lived. It's a small world.

[Hardware Store] A: Here is the hardware store of my father, in the 11th (arrondisement) in Paris. I am in a small chair, a stroller, I must be three years old.

[One Boy] A: Here in that fading picture on the top it's me. I must be six or seven years old.

[Woman and child] A: And in that one... I must be three of four years old. I am in the sand on a beach, I don't know where. I am sitting on the lap of my mother who is holding me in her arms. I would like to end up on that picture.

END