

**RG-50.647.0038**

### **Summary of Oral Interview with Michèle Temime-Levy**

The interview takes place in Charenton, France, where she has a store.

**Born:** March 2, 1943 during WWII in Saint-Eugène, Algeria, with her grandmother as the midwife.

**Father:** Nissim André Temime, born in Algeria, on December 19, 1922 (year is not exact).

**Mother** Elise Beaugeorgette (?) Benyamin, born in Algeria. She was seven years younger than her husband and she died at age twenty-two. When Michèle was born her mother was twenty. She doesn't have much information regarding those years (**Note:** This explains some of the uncertainty regarding dates). Her mother committed suicide when Michèle was 16 months old. Her father was in London but came back to Algeria. He owned a large store, "Les 100,000 Chemises", on Barbizon Street, that he inherited from his grandfather Albert, who had several stores. It was a family business and a well-known institution. Her father had sisters, and among other articles of clothing, the store also sold *trousseaux* for women.

Michèle left Algeria in 1962 at age nineteen after having studied at the Lycée Lazerges. Her grandmother Adrienne took her to school and they had a good life in spite of everything. She was a great lady. Her father left in December 1961(?). He was a member of the *OAS* and was threatened. (**Note:** *OAS: Organisation armée secrète* = Secret Armed Organization that carried out attacks to stop Algerian independence from France.) Her father remarried, and with his second wife Esther they had a son, who went to Israel. Esther raised Michèle, who was torn between her grandmother, her father, and his new family—both groups wanted her to be with them. Her half-brother, Jacques David Temime, has six children, lives near Naharia, Israel since the six-day war and served in the Israeli Army. He's a real Israeli. She was there in 2007 for the marriage of one of her daughters. She has good relations with her brother and his family, and they are in contact with each other. Her brother lived with Michèle and her husband for a time, working in her husband's business.

Her father didn't talk much about the war but she was aware of it, hearing other people talk about it. Her uncle, René Benyamin, was involved in some of the events at the time. Her father was an important person with many friends. She doesn't remember specifics regarding her early life. Her father was part of the Resistance in Algiers and had to leave in a hurry. She doesn't have any papers or documents that her father left. Michèle left after him, preceded by her father's wife and her son. She stayed with her grandmother and grandfather in Marseille for a few months and then left in a hurry. They went to Nice and had a flower shop with an apartment above the shop, but it didn't work out and after a couple of years they closed the business. In the interim Michèle met her husband. They then went to Paris to join her father, who divorced Esther and married a Breton woman who converted to Judaism. He had met her in Paris and they had a house in Brittany.

Michèle subsequently worked as an intern in the advertisement division for the newspaper *Les Echos* and then was in charge of editorial work in publicity. She stayed with *Les Echos* for four years, working on the Champs-Élysées. Her mother continued working as a mid-wife and also

made house calls for injections and health care. This was in Paris. Esther, her father's ex-wife, was in Dijon with Michèle's half-brother. Although Michèle had no special training, she managed to get a job. She worked her way into real estate, which suited her very well, and had her own agency. She got a professional license but didn't need a diploma.

Her husband was a carpet dealer with a store in Paris and they made a good living. She has two daughters in Paris. One is in real estate and the other one has a ready-to-wear store. She talks about her relationship with her daughters, who don't know much about Michèle's early life. She doesn't have documents about the Resistance and her father. She mentions people her father knew who were among his friends: René Mottie (?), Morallie (?), Atlan, Bouchara, and Jean Gosselin. Michèle's husband is Tunisian and there was a break with everything relating to Algeria. She didn't keep up with contacts in Algeria but other family members did.

Nevertheless, she has good memories about Algeria, her youth and adolescence there. In particular, she remembers receptions at their house and the houses of their friends—high society affairs with fancy dresses and jewelry. This was before the war when she was a teenager, and young people lived their lives and weren't afraid.

She remembers being harassed by the *FLN*, *OAS*, and the French army. (**Note:** *FLN*-- *Front de Libération National* was the National Liberation Front directing the Algerian War against France.) For example: she was followed, received menacing phone calls, etc. Her father wasn't there anymore and she was taking care of the store. The harassment was usually in the evening when she got home, and most threats were from young Muslims from the *FLN*. They wanted her to close the store and leave. It was near the Casbah, under arcades. There would be two or three youths on the pillars watching what was going on but she wasn't afraid and doesn't know if they protected her or not. To her knowledge, her father wasn't threatened but he was stopped by the French police. He had protected her from all this and she spent a lot of time at her grandmother's house. A friend who was a pilot told her she had to leave quickly, so she left with the crew and was later joined by her grandparents in Marseille and Nice. She went to Paris to stay at the house of her father's sister, Lucienne, until her grandparents came, and then went to Marseille, later to Nice. She had spent three months of every year in France so there was no problem integrating. She had gone to a village near Dijon since the age of three with her step-brother and stayed with the family of her father's second wife, Esther. Esther stayed in Algeria but would visit them. They had property there. Her father had met Esther after the death of Michèle's mother. She raised her like her own daughter.

November 8, 1942 (**Note:** the Allied invasion of North Africa): She discusses hearing about it, especially regarding events at the Sports Stadium and references to a weapons stash. The Stadium was a meeting place. Her father participated in sports such as body building and boxing. She remembers the delivery of a very large trunk to their villa during the Algerian war—not sure what was in it. It was placed in a large hole dug underneath the staircase leading to the villa. The hole was then covered up. It may have been a shipment of arms. This was in her village La Shaliah at 21 Chemin Vidal, Elbia (?).

In conclusion, Michèle Temime-Levy mentions that they celebrate major holidays but are not very religious. She didn't encounter anti-Semitism when she was in school in Algeria. She felt it more in France because they were *pieds-noirs* and Jewish. (**Note:** *pieds-noirs* are people of

French or European origin born in Algeria during French rule.) But she thinks it is more a matter of one's country of origin, not so much religion. She feels especially integrated in the Tunisian group she frequents, but is nostalgic for the receptions and get-togethers she had with her family in Algeria.

Translated by: Felicia Berger Sturzer, May 2020