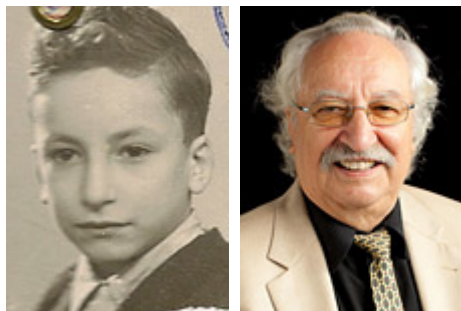


Marcel Hodak



Born August 25, 1937, Paris, France

Marcel Hodak was born on August 25, 1937, in Paris, France. His mother, Feiga, and father Jules, were Romanian Jews who had emigrated to Constantinople and later to Paris to escape pogroms in their native country. In Paris, they had three sons, of whom Marcel was the youngest, and one daughter. Jules worked as a presser in the women's garment industry, and Feiga was a seamstress.

First Person

Today at 1:00pm

Doors open at 12:45pm

When France signed an armistice with Germany in 1940, southern France came under German occupation with a new capital in the town of Vichy. It was at that point that things began to change for Marcel's family. In 1942, the Vichy government issued an edict revoking the citizenship of émigrés and their children. Marcel's brothers were born before his parents had gotten official citizenship, so although Marcel was considered a French citizen, his parents and brothers were not, and were therefore at risk for deportation.



In order to protect his family, Jules decided that they should move south to a town called Bride-les-Bains, where the family had spent summer vacations. Feiga used her sewing skills to earn income to buy necessities, and Jules found work as a lumberjack. Marcel's oldest brother Jean joined a French resistance group called Les Maquisards, or "Les Maquis" for short. The group fought against German occupation troops in the Alps, and would occasionally bring back rations that had been parachuted in from England. On these occasions, "Les Maquis" were greeted with fanfare and Marcel was allowed to carry his brother's rifle. It was too heavy for young Marcel to hold, but he dragged it proudly by its shoulder strap.

Marcel's family tried to blend in as much as possible with the people of Bride-les-Bains, so on Sundays Marcel was sent to the town's Catholic Church. He often forgot to remove

his beret, and as he sat in the pews the priest would come down the aisle and remove Marcel's hat and place it on his lap. In later years Marcel's brother told him that the priest was actually a Jewish member of "Les Maquis."

While Marcel's immediate family were living in Bride-les-Bains, his extended family also decided to flee Paris, scattering in all directions. Marcel's uncle, Usher Perelstein, and his wife were the only two to be arrested. They were picked up in a German raid and sent to Auschwitz where they were both killed.

The liberation of France began with the allied troops' landing at Normandy. In 1944, Marcel and his family returned to Paris, and Marcel watched from his father's shoulders as General Eisenhower, and Generals Charles De Gaulle and Philippe Leclerc led a victory parade down the Champs Elysees, accompanied by thousands of freedom fighters. The day of liberation was August 25th, Marcel's seventh birthday.

Marcel and his family left France for America shortly after that event and settled in Brooklyn, New York. He served in the United States Air Force from 1956 until 1967, and later became a software specialist. Marcel was married in 1958 and he and his wife had three sons and five grandchildren. Today, Marcel lives in Silver Spring.

Hear the words of Marcel and other Holocaust survivors in our First Person podcast series:
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/publicprograms/programs/firstperson/podcast/>