Thursday, May 23, 2013

1:00-2:04 p.m.

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON: ALBERT GARIH

Held at:
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW
Washington, DC

(Remote CART)

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>> Bill Benson: Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us today. We are in our 14th year of the *First Person* program. And our *First Person* today is Mr. Albert Garih, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2013 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, to whom we are grateful for again sponsoring *First Person*.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through mid August. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Albert Garih will share with us his *First Person* account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If we have time toward the end of the program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask Albert a few questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Albert is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

We begin with this school portrait of Albert Garih taken in 1945. Albert's parents, Benjamin and Claire Garih, were born in Constantinople, Turkey, but had moved to Paris in the 1920s. Albert and his twin brother, who died in infancy, were born on June 24, 1938, in Paris, joining older siblings Jacqueline and Gilberte. We see all three siblings, including Albert with long hair on the left, in this

1943 photograph. Albert's father worked in a garment factory, and the family lived in the janitor's apartment at the factory.

In May, 1940, Germany invaded France and occupied Paris. The Garih family fled south, but they soon returned to Paris, where they were subjected to France's new anti-Jewish legislation. In 1943, Albert's father was deported to a forced labor camp, and Albert's mother and the children went into hiding with Madame Galop and her husband for the next six months. When they returned home in 1944, police were sent to arrest the Garihs, but agreed to say instead that the family was not home if the family would leave immediately.

Albert was placed in a Catholic boarding school for boys, and his sisters in one for girls, in a northeastern suburb of Paris. When Paris was liberated in August 1944, Albert's mother was able to bring her children back to the city. Claire and her children are shown together in this photograph. Albert's father, released from the labor camp, walked from Belgium to Paris, returning to his family in September 1944 on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year.

The Garih family remained in France after the war. Albert received his baccalaureate degree in 1957, then earned a degree in English and Spanish to French translation from the School of Advanced Translation and Interpretation Studies at the Sorbonne in 1962, and immediately began his career in translation, which he continues to this day 51 years later. His early work was translation of scientific and technical documents and publications and later translation of political and economic documents.

Albert's work took him from France to Cameroon in Africa, to Morocco, and then eventually to the United States. The organizations for which he worked included, among others, the International

Civil Aviation Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, The World Bank, and the United Nations. His work with World Bank brought him to Washington, DC in 1976. His current consulting work is for the United Nations.

In 1967 Albert married Marcelle Ohayon, who had moved to France from Morocco in 1960. Albert and Marcelle have three daughters, Judith, Dalia and Noemi. Their three daughters have given them 10 grandchildren, ages 18 years to 18 months. I'd like to acknowledge that Noemi is here with her father. Would you raise your hand? Thank you.

For pleasure, Albert describes himself as a real movie buff, loves photography and to read, and he loves to travel. Albert and Marcelle went to China last year and will travel to France and possibly Germany this summer. In France, Albert just told me, he will celebrate his 75th birthday with his one sister who will turn 80. Albert speaks French, English, Spanish and Judeo-Spanish.

Albert volunteers here at the museum with Visitor Services working at the visitor desk and he leads tours of the Permanent Exhibition. He also gives talks about his personal experience as a child survivor at the museum and around the country. He was recently a speaker at Quantico and also in Colorado at several cities.

With that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our *First Person*, Mr. Albert Garih. [Applause]

Albert, thank you for joining us and for your willingness to be our *First Person* today. You have so much to share with us, and just an hour, so we'll just jump right into it. Let me start off, Albert, asking about your family. And what you can tell us about your family and their community, what their life was like before the war? War began, of course, when Germany invaded Poland, September

1939, then Nazi Germany would invade France the following May of 1940. You were just 2 years old at that time. So you were very young. Tell us what you can about your family prewar.

>> Albert Garih: OK. My parents were born in Constantinople, which is now Instanbul, in Turkey, at the beginning of the century, in the 20th century, and they belonged to a Jewish families. They were -- on my mother's side, they were descendants of people that had been expelled from Spain in 1492 during the inquisition.

My father, his ancestors came from Iraq. They were both living in Turkey. They both moved to France in 1923, after the First World War. Turkey, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Empire had sided with Germany in the First World War, and as a retribution at the end of the war, the Versailles Treaty signed in 1919, the Ottoman Empire was dismantled. What was left was Turkey.

Then came this statesman who created modern Turkey, which was a secular country, actually. At that time, the Jews were a bit concerned of what might be in store for them, because they'd seen, they'd witnessed, the genocide of the Armenians at the beginning of the century, and when the Turks came to power to create this modern Turkey, the Greeks were living in one of the port cities on the Aegean Sea. They were also expelled from Izmir, and they went to Greece, they went back to Greece.

So the Jews were a bit concerned. They said, What is going to happen to us? A lot of them decided to leave at that time. That's what my mother and my father did. They met in Paris a couple years later. They moved to France in 1923, in Paris, and they met in 1927, and they married in 1928. And I was born 10 years later, but before my sisters were born in 1930 and 1933.

My father was an accountant. He was working in the garment factory, doing the pay of the -- the payroll of the employees. They were struggling, you know, with three children. It was not easy. At that time people were not making a lot of money, and it was very hard. My father was struggling two jobs at the same time. He was working full time in that factory during the day, and in the evening he was selling tickets in movie theaters in Paris.

One arrangement that my father had made with his employer, who was also Jewish actually, was for us to move into the janitor's apartment of the factory. So we were living there until 1942.

>> Bill Benson: Albert, you described your father to me as very smart, but very much self-educated. And your mother was quite educated. Tell us about your mother too.

>> Albert Garih: My mother, she went to school longer than my father. My father had to start working at a very young age to help his parents in Turkey. My mother managed -- she went to school, so did my father, actually, because they were both fluent in French. They'd been educated. The university was sort of an organization who opened schools, public schools, all over the Ottoman Empire, in Egypt, in Turkey, everywhere, and my parents were educated there in Instanbul. They were perfectly fluent in French. For them, it was a natural destination when they decided to move to go to France, rather than any other country. That's how they ended up there.

>> Bill Benson: Albert, as you said, your parents I think were married in 1928, 10 years later you're born in 1938. You described to me that 1938 was a particularly ominous year for your parents and other Jews, certainly. Tell us a little bit about that.

>> Albert Garih: I think, besides the war, 1938 was the worst of all years, actually. It started with the annexation of Austria by Germany. Hitler was born in Austria. He was not German; he was Austrian.

The first thing he did was annex Austria, to make Austria part of the Reich. That was the first move, in March 1938.

In September 1938, he convened a conference in Munich with the French foreign minister and the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and he promised, Hitler promised that if he was allowed to occupy the land that was part of what is now the Czech Republic, actually, if he was allowed to swallow this land, there would be peace, he wouldn't go any further.

So Chamberlain, the British prime minister, who was very naive, believed him and he went back to England saying, "We have peace in our time." Well, that was September 1938. In September 1939, the war broke out when the Germans marched into Poland.

So that was the second bad thing that happened in 1938. The third one was Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass. If you have visited the museum, you must have seen something about that on the fourth floor. There was a young Jew from Germany, living in France, in Paris, who had heard his parents had been moved to the eastern border with Poland, to the Polish border of Germany, and he was very upset about that, and in retaliation he killed a junior diplomat, German diplomat in Paris. That signaled to Hitler to unleash his Storm Troopers and his folks into a rampage on Kristallnacht. They killed 91 people. They destroyed synagogues. They destroyed businesses, shops, buildings, apartments and to add insult to injury they forced the Jews to pay for the clean-up and to do the clean-up.

So that was really an inauspicious year. Usually when I talk, to show that I am a bit optimistic I say I was born in 1938, my first daughter was born the year that men walked on the moon, 1969. I think that was a big step forward.

>> Bill Benson: Of course, the following year, September, Germany invades Poland, World War II begins, then of course the following spring, in May of 1940, Germany invades Paris, then occupies France, then occupies Paris. Your family with, I believe, as much as 80% of the population left Paris in what is known as the exodus. You said to me, I believe your words, it all began with the exodus?

>> Albert Garih: That's where we were first really directly affected by the war. There was already some discriminate maneuvers against the Jews. For instance, my father, I started the process of naturalization. They immigrated in 1923, and in 1939 they still didn't have the French citizenship. So everything was frozen. There was already some anti-semitism in France, so it was not easy.

In 1939, when the war broke out, when the Germans marched into Poland, according to the Munich conference it has been said that if they marched into Poland, that would be war. They marched into Poland on September 1, 1939, and September 3, France and Britain declared war on Germany. The trouble was that they were ill equipped. They were not armed like the Germans. We didn't have these Autobahns, the freeways Hitler built for a very specific strategy, purpose, to be able to move troops around in the country. In France we had 12 miles of freeway coming out of Paris at that time. That's all.

So yes, in 1939, when war broke out, nothing changed immediately for us. It's only in 1940, after Hitler, who was a very shrewd guy, who signed a pact with Stalin, to make sure Russia would not react when they invaded Poland, they would make sure they shared Poland, the western part going to Germany, the eastern part of Poland to Russia, then he decided to invade the whole of Western Europe. He started with Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. France was only invaded, only the northern part was invaded. But when the German soldiers

marched on the Champs Elysees in Paris, the people of Paris panicked and fled, and that was the exodus, what we call in French le exod, and everybody took to the roads, some by train, some by car. That's where my mother lost her mother, her brother, her sister and nephews when a bomb fell on their car on the bridge, the bridge over the river south of France, not even 100 miles south of Paris.

We went down to the river where my mother lost her relatives, and my mother told me, because I have no recollection, I was just 2 years old in June 1940, that we slept in a chateau. There were chateaus. The river is famous for the beautiful chateaus that are all around the river. They're magnificent. We slept in one of these chateaus. It was not exactly in a beautiful bed or anything like that. We were sleeping on the floor. My mother had nothing to feed me. I was always crying, because I was hungry.

My mother told me also an anecdote about that. At one point, I was crying so much, and I was preventing everyone from sleeping, so a soldier was there, some soldiers had managed not to be taken prisoner and to flee with the people of Paris, and there was one soldier there who gave her some schnapps. Said, "Give him some schnapps. It will calm him down." It did.

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Here you fled with literally tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people. Your mother lost her mother and other family members. Where did you end up after you left Paris?

>> Albert Garih: Well, we stayed in the chateau for a few days. I couldn't tell you whether it was a week, two weeks; I have no idea. Eventually, we had nowhere else to go, eventually we went back home.

>> Bill Benson: Back to Paris?

>> Albert Garih: Yes. Some people tried to go through -- France was divided, and there was a demarcation line dividing the occupied zone from the free zone. Well, also what I forgot to mention is that in June, June 20, France signed a separate armistice with Germany. That means that we were no longer at war, supposedly, but we were occupied. There was a government that set up shop in the free zone of France in VichY, just below the demarcation line. That government was collaborating, and actively collaborating, with the Germany occupiers.

When the round-ups started in 1941, those conducting these round-ups were the police, French police, not the Germans. You have a couple of movies that came out two, three years ago, one that tells the story about this big round-up that took place in July 1942. There was another one, which was really focused on that round-up, which was "The round-up," in French. It describes these episodes where 13,000 Jews were rounded up in Paris, including 4,000 children. Except for two, three who managed to escape before they were sent to the camps, 4,000 ended up in the camps, none of them came back.

>> Bill Benson: After the return to Paris, the family goes back to Paris, you would stay in your apartment until 1942. Tell us what you can about that two-year period, then what led to the events that forced you to leave Paris at that point, or leave your apartment.

>> Albert Garih: In 1941, the collaborationist government adapted what they called the Statute of the Jews, which were based on the Nuremberg Laws that were discriminatory against the Jews in Germany.

So we were not allowed to go to theaters, we were not allowed in public transportation. The lawyers were debarred. The doctors were not allowed to practice. It was a lot of restrictions, a lot of

discrimination against the Jews in France. That started in 1941. Also my father was working in a factory that belonged to a Jew, so it must have been at that time organized. They would confiscate the factory and give it to an Aryan, to a non-Jew, to run. My father's employer was a Jew, and he had to leave his factory like that.

At that point, I mentioned that we were living in the janitor's apartment of the factory, we had to leave that apartment. We had to move from that apartment. In no time, we had to find something, and we found a very small apartment. It was only two rooms, not two bedrooms, two rooms. A tiny kitchen, a toilet, and that was it.

>> Bill Benson: Not even a bathtub?

>> Albert Garih: Bathtub? No. That would have been a luxury. Not even a shower. Really, it was the very basic. So we had to move. We did that in July 1942. In the summer of 1942 -- as I mentioned before, the round-ups had started in 1941 in France. They didn't start sending the Jews to the camps until I think it was 1943, but they were held in a transit camp in a north suburb, northern suburb of Paris. And my parents were very concerned about that, and they wanted first to keep us safe by not staying at home, because of the danger of being rounded up.

Also, they wanted us to be better fed, because they had nothing to -- you know, everything was restricted. All we had access to was stale bread, sometimes they mixed with the flour, to make it more consistent. It was dark bread, stale, hard. If we were lucky we would find a couple potatoes. An egg was a luxury item. One egg, not a dozen. So it was very rare, very hard for them to feed us. So they decided to send us to a farm not far from Paris in a small town, where today there is a park there. In those days it was nothing of the sort.

Anyway, we went to that farm. There were two ladies. I remember the two ladies in that farm. I remember the name of the landlady was Madame Achtouise. My sisters would go to school. I was too young. I was 4 years old. I stayed home with the two ladies. I remember that winter, it was a very cold winter. There was a lot of snow. I remember Christmas there, and I remember actually when I hear a song that brings me back there. That's where I heard that song for the first time. Anyway, we stayed there for the winter and the spring of 1942-43.

>> Bill Benson: Your parents were still in Paris?

>> Albert Garih: My parents were still in Paris. They were concerned, but they stayed in the apartment. They couldn't come with us. But my parents had not told the ladies, Madame Achtouise and her sister, I think, that we were Jewish. One day in a conversation, I was 4 years old, talking to the ladies, I told them that we were Jewish. That's all it took for the lady to send us right back to our parents. They didn't want to have anything to do with that. So they sent us back to our parents. That was in the spring of 1943.

>> Bill Benson: So you're back now living in that small --

>> Albert Garih: In that small apartment, facing the danger of imminent arrest and deportation.

>> Bill Benson: I think you shared with me an incident your mother told you about, because every time you went out, of course, you were very much at risk are of being rounded up. There was an incident. Tell us about that.

>> Albert Garih: We were not -- as I mentioned before, we were not allowed to take public transportation. That was dangerous. I don't know whether it was really that we were not allowed, but it was very dangerous, because they were doing identity checks on people coming out of the trains.

Once my mother had to run an errand in Paris while my sisters were at school. They were older than me, so they were going to school. My mother would rather keep me at home. 4 years old, 5 years old, it was not mandatory for me to go to school. It was dangerous to send children to school, because sometimes they would go to the schools and round up the children and the parents would never see their children again. It was dangerous. So my mother kept me home.

That day she had to run an errand in Paris. We had to take the Metro. We took the Metro. On my way back, we were at the end of the line. There was an identity check. I have no recollection of that. My mother told me that many, many years later. She knew what it meant, because the French -- the Jews had a big J on their identity cards. So if they saw us in the train with a J on the card, they'd put us aside and send us to the transit camp. The transit camp was the platform to go to Auschwitz.

So my mother held me in her arms. She looked in her purse and she walked between, whether it was the policemen, must have been, because the policemen were not as bad as the militiamen. The militiamen were vehemently anti-Semitic and would not have spared her. These two policeman, they let her go through, or didn't realize. She walked through the two policemen, and we were safe. If one of them asked to see her papers, I wouldn't be here today. It was a very close call. We had a couple close calls like that during the four-year period of the war.

>> Bill Benson: In September 1943, your father was taken to forced labor for the Germans. Tell us what happened to him, where he was sent, then of course that meant that your mother then had the responsibility of her three children. What did she do?

>> Albert Garih: Yeah, in September 1943, my father was sent to a slave labor camp off the coast of Normandy in the small islands, called the Channel Islands, which were the only British possession that was occupied by the Nazis. Hitler wanted to invade Great Britain, but he never succeeded in doing that. So the only territory, the only British territory, that he managed to occupy were these small islands off the coast of Normandy in France.

So they were building the Atlantic wall that was supposed to stop an invasion from the Allied forces. My father was there with 900 detainees. There were several camps on that island. He was in the worst of them, which was for the Jews. There were people, Spanish political prisoners, in one of the camps, and so they were in the worst one.

He spent, not quite, about seven, eight months in that camp building. While he was there he had a big accident. He was carrying a trough full of cement on his head, on the scaffolding, and he stepped on a loose board, and the board came right to hit him on the head, and he fell off a cliff. He was picked up by the truck a couple hours later, I don't know, and he was sewn. When my mother heard about that accident, she thought that was the last time -- we would never see him alive again.

My father was very strong. He was much stronger than I am, and he survived that. But anyway, in the meantime, my mother found herself alone at home with three young children, with a constant threat of being rounded up and taken away. She was terrified about this idea, which is understandable, actually. One day, somehow, she met a lady in a street market. In France we have street markets where you buy the vegetables, whatever you could find in those days, which was not easy. She met this lady, and somehow she felt she could open up to this lady, and she told her her story, that she was terrified they could come at any moment to take us away.

This lady, Madame Galop, went home, and she told her husband the story about us. The next day, her husband came with the cart. He was pulling. He took whatever personal effects we could, and they took us with them and we lived with them for about six, seven months. That was in the fall of 1943, and we stayed with them until the spring of 1944.

The Galops had two daughters. I was 5 at that time, and the daughters were 4 and 3. So for me it was a great time, because I was too young to be afraid or to realize the danger or anything like that. The only thing I was suffering from was the lack of food, but otherwise I was not -- and I had a great time, because I had two companions with whom I was playing, and Mr. Galops was a sculptor, making sets for the movie studios. They had a big warehouse behind their house, where they were storing all of these sets. We had great hide-and-seek parties there with the two little girls.

For me it was fine. It was a happy -- probably the happiest time I had during that period was when we were at the Galops'. The Galops were absolutely adorable people. Monsieur Galop was very handy, making toys for us, piggybank. I remember also a plaster ball that he made for us. We felt really at home with them. It was wonderful in that respect.

That doesn't mean that when they had visitors we had to be careful. So we would go into the back room, my mother would hush me like that, and said "Shhh."

>> Bill Benson: It was a great risk to the Galops to do that.

>> Albert Garih: It was. If they had been caught, we would have been taken away, but they might have been taken away too, and their children too. So not only a danger for themselves, but for their children. These people, to me, are incredible. You know, the war brought out of the people the best and the worst. These are an example of the best that you can find in people.

So we spent about six months, and we would have stayed longer, but they were living in -- it was a small street, private houses, and each one was occupied by an artist. You had painters, sculptors. One of the painters, his wife was a sympathizer of the Germans, and probably anti-Semitic. Although, she liked me. I remember having a nice moment with her. One day she asked Madame Galop, "When are you going to get rid of that scum?"

So at that time, Madame Galop and my mother decided it was safer for us to go back home. Which we did.

>> Bill Benson: Back to your place in Paris?

>> Albert Garih: Yes. It was a suburb, actually. The Galops also lived there, because they met in the market, street market there.

>> Bill Benson: Go back to your apartment?

>> Albert Garih: We went back to our apartment, yes. Sure enough, a few weeks later we had the visit of two police inspectors. Knocked at the door at 8:00 in the morning. I was still in bed. My sisters must have been up preparing to go to school. Two police inspectors knocked at the door. "Madame Garih?"

"Yes?"

"We came to take you away."

That's one of the moments my mother was dreading. She started shaking like that. They said, "Don't worry. We're not going to take you away. We're going to report we didn't find you, but you cannot stay here. You have to find a place for riding again."

So the inspectors left, and my mother dressed me up. I was still in bed. I was awakened by

the noise of the two inspectors. My mother dressed me up immediately, and we went out. She went to see a social worker that she knew, and she explained. She said, "You have to find a place for us." The social worker said, "You know what? I'll do my best, but I cannot find something overnight. In the meantime, try to see if you can sleep at your neighbor's or -- but don't sleep in your apartment."

So that's what we did. We slept at our next-door neighbor, a couple of communist workers actually. One daughter about my age, three months younger than me, and they were working at night, so the night shift. So during the night we were sleeping in their bed. When they come back in the morning, we'd get up and leave them the bed.

Mr. Miniterie had been called to go to the Ministry of Labor Service in Germany and had not reported for duty, so he was also wanted by the Germans, and by the Gestapo. They were also in a dangerous situation, but they took us, at least my mother and I. My sisters stayed downstairs at the lodge keeper's apartment, a woman with three young children. Her husband had been taken prisoner, was part of the French army that were rounded up by the Germans when the French capitulated in June 1940.

We slept a few nights like that, until eventually the social worker told my mother, "I found a place for each one of you." So she placed my mother as a governess in a family with several children, eight 10, I don't remember how many, but a bunch of children near the Eiffel Tower.

We were placed in Catholic boarding schools, in a suburb east of Paris, called Montfermeil, which was made famous in "Les Miserables" where Cosette lived, and that's where Jean Valjean meets Cosette when she goes to get water. That's in Montfermeil. That's where we were, there, Montfermeil. It was a Catholic boarding school.

I remember that the headmistress was very nice with me. I was the youngest. I was just 6. You had children from 7 up to 14 there. She must have been the only one who knew about my situation as a hidden child in that school, actually. She was very motherly with me. She was always holding my hand. I was her protege.

The only thing that was bad there was the food. It was terrible. Really, it was so bad that I was sick all the time. We spent the summer of 1944. The summer of 1944 was particularly hot. I remember that. We spent most of the time, it was the summer, so we went to class maybe occasionally, and I remember when I was at the Galops', I had nothing else to do, so I learned to read and write. I could read. I remember I was very proud the day that I could read a full page. Don't ask me what it was about, I have no idea, but I could decipher every word on the page. So I could read. Since I was the youngest, and there were people who could not read in that school, they put me in the class with the babies, and I was making strokes like this. Whereas, I could have written anyway. But so it was not exactly a glorious time staying in that school, but it saved our lives. I remember seeing my sisters. We would go to church every Sunday.

>> Bill Benson: They were hidden in a different place?

>> Albert Garih: In a Catholic boarding school for girls. I was in the Catholic boarding school for boys, in the same place, in Montfermeil. We'd go to the same church on Sunday morning, to Mass. That's where I'd see my sisters.

>> Bill Benson: Where was your mom?

>> Albert Garih: Working as a governess, with a family with a bunch of children, near the Eiffel Tower.

>> Bill Benson: Was she able to see you during that time?

>> Albert Garih: Not at all. There was no train service, nothing. No, she could not communicate with us.

>> Bill Benson: Did she even know where you were?

>> Albert Garih: Yes, she knew where we were, because that's where, actually, we witnessed the liberation. One day -- I have to give you one anecdote also. We used to go play. There was a road nearby, and we'd go to play in the woods. One day there was a raid, air raid with the sirens blasting. We knew we had to run back to the shelters at that time. We were in the woods. We'd run back to the schools. The next day we heard that we're in the clearing in the forest, in the small wood there, it may be the wood where Cosette was fetching the pail of water. It could have been.

The place where we were, there was a big hole by a bomb that had fallen in the place we were. We rushed back, and it was very dangerous. The Allied landing had taken place in Normandy. There were air raids, German planes, American planes fighting over our heads. We used to go to the shelters. I was telling Bill before we started, one of my hobbies during that time was to collect shrapnel.

>> Bill Benson: When you got the all clear, you'd go up and collect shrapnel?

>> Albert Garih: Yes. You'd come out of shelter at the end of the air raid. At the end of the raid we'd go in the schoolyard, and that was one of our hobbies. I was not the only one. We were picking up the shrapnel. I had a whole collection of them when I came home.

One day, I did run away. Everybody was very nervous about that, because it was very dangerous. It was still war, you know. He came back the next morning saying "The Allies are

coming."

I don't know where he had been, but apparently he got that information. As soon as we heard that, we went down the Main Street, and we saw all the tanks, all the Jeeps, the soldiers. For the first time it was friendly soldiers. It was the first time I'd ever heard about Americans. I never heard of Americans before. I knew about Italians, Russians, British, Germans of course, and French. But Americans? I'd never heard of these people.

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: You were glad to see them?

>> Albert Garih: I was. They gave me chocolate. They even wanted to give me cigarettes. But the headmistress was holding my leash very tight.

[Laughter]

It was a wonderful moment. That's something that is hard to express, the explosion of joy we have in our heart when that liberation happened. You see that in the newsreels when you see the girls jumping on the tanks, kissing the soldiers. Really, it was really liberation in every sense of the word.

As soon as we were liberated, we were liberated probably a few days after Paris, because we were east of Paris. The troops were moving east towards Germany.

>> Bill Benson: August?

>> Albert Garih: August. Paris was liberated August 25, 1944. We must have been liberated maybe one week later. I don't know how long. As soon as they restored train service, my mother was on the first train, of course. One day, I was sleeping -- no, playing in the schoolyard. It was very hot, as I said. I was very weak, because I was underfed. I see my sisters coming. There was a side door on

the -- there was a wall surrounding the playground of the school. There was a side door. I see my sisters say, "Guess who's here."

You know, a 6-year-old, I'd not seen my mother for three months. I had almost forgotten about my mother. I said, "Who can that be?" I had no idea. I had to push my sisters aside. When I saw my mother, of course I jumped into her arms. She was appalled to see how I was. I was so skinny. I was sick. She decided to take me home right away, the same day.

I remember she had -- everything we had to buy with tickets.

>> Bill Benson: Ration cards?

>> Albert Garih: Exactly. She bought a loaf of bread. My younger sister, Gilberte, and myself, we swallowed the bread in no time. We were constantly starved, actually.

So my mother took me home right away. And for whatever reason, she couldn't take my sisters the same day, so she had to go back the next day. She left me under the custody of our neighbor, who had the key, who was checking on me once in a while. There was nothing to eat in the house except for a green apple. That's not exactly the kind of diet that I should have followed at that time, but that's all I had. I ate the green apple. I had hardly finished the apple when I heard the key in the door. She saw me, I was touching my teeth. She said, "What did you eat?" I said, "I didn't eat anything."

"Yeah, you did something."

Then she realized that I had eaten this green apple, which was very bad.

So my mother came back in the evening with my sisters. And my father, meanwhile my father, who was on the Channel Islands, there had been -- they had been evacuated from the

Channel Islands about a month before, just a month, May 7, 1944, a month before D Day. They had been taken to the Straits of Dover. You know, the Allies wanted the Germans to believe that the invasion could take place in the Strait of Dover, which is the place where the distance between Britain and France is short, I think 17 miles, which is very small.

So the Allies used to bomb all this area. Remember my mother once mentioning that they had bombed Bologna, which was right in the Strait of Dover. How I remember that? I don't know. That struck my imagination. I heard Bologna. She probably knew my father was in Bologna at that time. She was very concerned about that.

My father and 900 detainees were sent to the Strait of Dover to repair the fortifications, which were constantly destroyed by the Allied bombings. In early September, probably early September, they were put on a train bound for Germany, probably for slave labor, another slave labor factory, or maybe for extermination camp. We don't know about that.

As they were traveling across Belgium, the Belgian resistance, the underground, had blown up either the bridge or rail track, I don't know, but the train was stopped there. There was some confusion, some battles between the Germans and the resistance, and eventually the Germans released all their prisoners, and my father walked back home. That was about 200 miles. Walked back home. It took him between one and two weeks, I would say.

>> Bill Benson: He was in really lousy condition.

>> Albert Garih: He was in very bad condition. He had this bad fall, and he died much later, but he died of seizures. I can't help thinking that these seizures that he had in the final years of his life were related to his accident on this island.

Yeah, he walked all the way, and he was very skinny. He arrived on the morning of Rosh Hashanah, which is the Jewish new year. My mother was dressing me to go to synagogue for the first time, after the war. For us, for all practical purposes, the war ended in August 1944, but actually the war ended May 8, 1945. I still remember that day too, because we were home and I was playing with my friends in a building, a lone building. I used to play with the kids and running back and forth like that. Around 11:00 in the morning, the siren announcing the end of the war started blasting. I still remember at that time, I was with a friend, and my friend was much faster runner than me. That day I beat him. I was first on the finish line.

[Laughter]

It's hard to express, but it was something that we had to get off our chest, and that's what happened. That's how I got the impetus to beat my friend.

>> Bill Benson: Albert, that was May 1945, but as I said the war was, for all practical purposes, over for you and your sisters and your parents in September 1944. What was that period like, though, to try to resume life in Paris, knowing there's still the war going on until the actual end of the war in 1945?

>> Albert Garih: When we heard the war was over, it was like something -- like a balloon that had blown up. For us, for all practical purposes, we had resumed a normal life. I went to school in October 1944. I started elementary school. I was just 6 years old. I went to school, had a normal school year. I think I was a good student.

Not only way was I a good student, I was so motivated and happy to lead a normal life again. Of course, we still had to ration food, we still had tickets for bread and also for all sorts of things, and

that lasted for a few years after the war. After the war I was so skinny and weak that I had to be fed cod liver oil. I don't know if you ever try to give to your kids some cod liver oil. I don't think they would have taken it very easily.

Well, I was swallowing. It's like my body needed that. I drank cod liver oil, and I almost loved it. I also had UV rays, because I was lacking some vitamin D, I guess, or these -- lacking these suntanning parlors that people go to now to get a suntan. They put me on a bed, under a lamp to get UV rays, to develop, because I was really malnourished, in other words. It doesn't show, but I was at that time.

>> Bill Benson: Albert, we have a couple of minutes, I think, for a couple of questions from our audience, just a few, because we're getting very close to the end of the program. We'll see if we can get a couple questions, perhaps. I may have one more for you. We're going to give you a mic. Thank you. We've got a hand up right there. When you get the mic, try to make the question as brief as you can, and if I think that not everybody heard it I may repeat it before Albert answers it. But there you go.

>> Thank you very much for sharing your story with us. I myself am a citizen from Germany and I had a lot of education about the Holocaust, the war crimes, throughout my school time. My question to you is: Over the years after the war, how did your feelings towards Germany and Germans develop, especially in the sense of forgiveness after a few decades, and so on?

>> Bill Benson: The question is what are your feelings towards Germany and Germans after the war and the years and time since then?

>> Albert Garih: That's a very good question, and I must tell you I am going to answer by stages. First, of course, we hated the Germans. The Germans -- first of all, we didn't call them the Germans, we called them "le bushe," which I think in English is "the Krauts." It is a very derogatory word to call Germans at that time. We were very hostile, which is understandable, actually.

When I was in my early 20s I used to go to a farm camp in England to brush up my English, and it was farm camps open to students from all over Europe, and there were some Germans, and these were the children of the perpetrators. I remember that I didn't have much sympathy for them, because I found them very arrogant. They still -- they could not -- we couldn't even talk about the issue of the war. It was taboo; we couldn't talk about it.

I think it took two generations. I don't know if you have heard about the movie that came out in the 1980s called "The Nasty Girl," a movie about a young girl, 15, 16 years old in school. She starts scratching to try to find out, she asked her dad, "Dad, where was grandpa during the war?"

It took two generations to start.

I think also another event that really made a big impact in Germany was the presentation of the miniseries on the television, "Holocaust." That was in the late 1970s, I think. It was the same impact on the German population as "Roots" here, about slavery.

People were literally traumatized by seeing it. They said "My grandparents did that?"

I think today, today the Germans are totally different from the Germans of that period, and I think while you still have some skinheads and still have some neo-Nazis, but you have them all over the world, so it's not specific to Germany.

I remember there was an anecdote -- not anecdote, but an incident that happened in the 1980s

in Germany when a Turkish immigrant had been killed by some skinheads in Germany. And people were upset for the lack of reaction of the government, and there was a huge demonstration in Bonn, at that time the capital of West Germany, -- I forgot the name. Western Germany, anyway. There was a huge demonstration, like 300,000 people, Germans, demonstrating to protest the lack of response on the part of the government to the assassination of a Turkish immigrant.

I haven't heard anything like that happening in France or in Britain, the same kind of incident. I don't know. So I think the Germans have changed, and I think so. Today, I am a lot more open to a dialogue with the Germans, so much so that I was telling Bill that I'm going to Europe this summer, and I plan to go to Berlin.

>> Bill Benson: I think we're -- thank you for that answer, and thank you for that question. We're going to wrap up in just one moment. I just want folks to know that the Galops and the Minetraires that you stayed with. You got them honored later. Would you tell us that before we close.

>> Albert Garih: I was having lunch with a colleague of mine in the late 1980s, and I told her my story. She's an Israeli. She said, "Why don't you have them recognized?" I said, "I never heard of the program." She gave me the name of the person she knew in Jerusalem. She said, "You tell your story to that person. She's working on this and will get back to you." So through that person, I managed to have the Galops and the Minetraires recognized as righteous among the nations. We had ceremonies in 1992.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to turn back to Albert to close our program in just a moment. I want to thank all of you for being here, being such a great audience. I remind you we'll have *First Person* programs each Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August, so please come back if you

can.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* has the last word. So I'm going to turn back to Albert to close the program. If you have a question still after Albert is done, he will step off the stage. If you want to meet him, ask a question, get a photo with him, whatever you want to do, please, absolutely feel free to do that right after he closes.

>> Albert Garih: OK, well, to wrap up what I said, I remember you asked me that question last year, and I said I think this experience has made me an optimist, because I have been -- if I'm alive today, I'm the product of the cooperation of the Protestant family, the Galops, who were Protestant, a communist couple, and the Catholic boarding school. So I had the whole spectrum of people who joined forces to save my life. So that made me an optimist.

But since then, I must say that my conclusion would be slightly different, because I think that what inspired me, my conclusion is, the title of the new exhibit that we have in the museum today, "Some Were Neighbors." Because, as I told Bill, I had excellent neighbors, the Minitraires, who took me, despite the dangers. Not-so-good neighbors also, the lady when we stayed at the Galops', who told Madame Galop, "When are you going to get rid of that scum?" She was threatening us, threatening to denounce us to the Germans, to the Gestapo, the police or whatever. That was not exactly a very good neighbor.

We had also next-door neighbors, we were living here and they were living behind that wall, a couple, a middle-age couple. I was 5 years old, I was a kid, so the lady there liked me. One day she asked my mother -- we were sharing a balcony also. Our section of the balcony was separated from theirs by a railing. So she asked my mother to pass me over the railing, and she took me into her

apartment, and she gave me something that I'd never seen before, a yellow tomato. I ate a yellow tomato. I felt this lady was very nice and very friendly.

Well, after the war, we heard, we learned that her husband, who had been in the militia, a collaborator, had been gunned down in a theater. He was watching a movie, and at the end of the movie he didn't get up. He had been killed by some resistance in retaliation.

We had the worst and we had the best. I like to emphasize the best. That's all. But we had both.

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.
[Ended at 2:04 p.m.]