Holocaust Memorial Museum First Person
Albert Garih
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Ladies and gentlemen, please silence all electronic devices. Our program will begin in just a moment.
>> Bill Benson: Good morning, 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.
This is our 20th year of the First Person program, and our First Person today is Mr. Albert Garih, whom you shall meet shortly. This 2019 season of First Person is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.
First Person is a series of twice-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 August 8th. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests.
Albert will share with us his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows we will have an opportunity for you to ask Albert a few questions.
If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our online conversation: Never Stop Asking Why. The conversation aims to inspire individuals to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises. You can ask your question and tag the Museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and the hashtag #AskWhy.
A recording of this program will be made available on the Museum's YouTube page. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.
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, now Istanbul, Turkey, but

moved to Paris in the 1920s.
Albert and his twin brother, who died in infancy, were born June 24, 1938 in Paris, joining older -- Albert just had a birthday a couple of days ago, as a matter of fact.
In Paris, he joined siblings Jacqueline and Gilberte. We see all three siblings, including Albert on the left, in this 1941 photograph.
Albert's father worked in a garment factory, and the family lived there in the janitor's apartment. In May 1940, Germany invaded France and occupied Paris. The arrow on this map of France points to 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 continued until last year, 58 years later, when he reached the age of 80. His early work was translation of scientific and technical documents and publications and later translation of political and economic documents. Albert speaks French, English, Spanish and Judeo-Spanish.Albert’s work took him from France to Cameroon in Africa, to Montreal, 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 the World Bank brought him to Washington, D.C., in 1976.
In 1967 Albert married Marcelle Ohayon who had moved to France from Morocco in 1960. Albert and Marcelle have three daughters, Judith, Dalia and Noémi, who have given them eleven grandchildren, ages 24 years to 4 years. Albert describes himself as a real movie buff, enjoys photography and loves to read, and he loves to travel. Albert and Marcelle have been to China and South Africa. They went to Australia and New Zealand in 2018. And earlier this year, they went to Israel, Vietnam, and Cambodia.
Albert volunteers here at the Museum, speaking very often to classes of students from all over the country, sometimes by teleconference, in which he tells his story. And he sits at the Donors Desk where visitors can talk to him.
With that I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Albert Garih.
[Applause]
>> Bill Benson: Albert, thank you for joining us. Albert said, now there's nothing left for me to say, but I think we have a lot more for him to say.

[Laughter]
Albert, there is so much for you to say that we'll start right off because we have a pretty short time to go.
>> Albert Garih: I want to make sure that -- do you hear me?
>> Bill Benson: Yeah. I think you're on. Absolutely.
Albert, World War II began, of course, in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. But for France, the war really didn't come until the following May of 1940 when Germany attacked France. You were nearly 2 years old at that time. Before we turn to the war years and what it meant for you and your family and the Holocaust, tell us first a little bit about your family and their life in the years before the war.
>> Albert Garih: Well, my -- excuse me. My parents were born in Constantinople, which is now Istanbul, the capital of Turkey, which was part at that time of the Ottoman Empire. And they grew up there, and they stayed there until 1923.
The Ottoman Empire joined forces with Germany during the First World War, which meant that when Germany was defeated, there was a big conference in Versailles outside of Paris, and the Ottoman Empire was dismantled. And then came a strong man in Turkey who tried to salvage whatever could be salvaged from the Ottoman Empire, which was already degrading before the war.
So at that point, the Jews started to be scared, you know. They had seen the genocide of the Armenians. They had seen the Greeks. There was a big Greek community in a port city in Turkey. And they were not expelled, per se, but they were encouraged to leave, in other words. So they went back to Turkey -- to Greece.
And so the Jews started to be scared about, you know, concerned about their future. They said when they saw the Armenians and the Greeks, they thought maybe we're next. So at that point, a lot of Jews decided to immigrate. And my parents had been at school of an international organization, where education was provided in French. So my parents were perfectly fluent in French at that point. So when they decided to immigrate, they went to France.
And actually they went separately. They didn't know each other. They met in Paris in '27. And they married in '28. And my sisters were born in 1930 and 1933, and I was born in 1938, with my twin brother who passed away at the age of 6 months.
>> Bill Benson: Albert, you described to me that your father was very smart but self-educated. Tell us a little bit about him.
>> Albert Garih: Yeah. My father had to start working at the age of 10. So he didn't go to school very long. My mother went to the end of her secondary school education. She got what they called at that time the equivalent of the baccalaureate. So she was more educated than my father. But my father was very smart, and very strong man actually. So he managed to, you know, to self-educate himself.
>> Bill Benson: And when they got to Paris, and they met and they married, what was their economic situation like?
>> Albert Garih: Bleak.
[Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: Bleak.
>> Albert Garih: It was not good. My father had odd jobs, you know. He didn't have a big education. So he couldn't get a good job. But he managed to learn accountancy, and he became an accountant. And he was hired at this garment factory in a suburb of Paris.

That's where we moved at that point. The owner of the factory was a Jew, and he had allowed my family to live in the janitor's apartment of the factory.
So we were living on the compound of the factory. I remember the big cobblestones there. And I have faint memories, but there are some images that stick with me actually. And it was a long yard like that. On one side you had the offices. On the other side you had the workshops where they were making garments actually. It was ready-to-wear. But they were luxury garments, and they would sell to the luxury stalls at the department stores in Paris. And my father's boss allowed us to live in the garment factory in the janitor's apartment there.
And we lived there until 1942. I will come back to that when we get to that point. But it was fine. It was a nice apartment and everything. But, you know, when France was invaded, there was a battle. The French army was defeated. Most of the soldiers were taken prisoner. And --
>> Bill Benson: Albert, before you turn to that, let me ask you just one more question. Would your parents, having left Turkey and moved to France, what was their citizenship status?
>> Albert Garih: They lost -- as soon as they immigrated from Turkey, they lost their Turkish citizenship, and they were stateless.
>> Bill Benson: So they did not get French citizenship.
>> Albert Garih: No. It took them --
>> Bill Benson: Decades.
>> Albert Garih: Much longer. It took them a quarter century to get that French citizenship. But no. At that point they were stateless.
But they managed when we were born -- when I was born -- I don't know about my sisters. But when I was born, I know that my father made me French by naturalization at birth.
>> Bill Benson: At birth.
>> Albert Garih: So I still have the certificate, which is parchment, you know, and now falling apart, saying that I was made French at birth. So I was French. But my parents were not.
So when France was defeated, the government resigned and a new government was formed, which was a collaborationist government, under the head of someone who hired a prime minister who was a notorious anti-Semite. And a collaborator. And so they started collaborating actively. When I say actively, they were doing all of the dirty jobs for the Germans.
The Germans would ask for x number of men to go to work, to Germany, and they would oblige. They would provide the men. And there was a big, big round-up, the biggest of all on July 16 and 17, 1942. Where the Germans had asked for 20,000 men, men only, and the French government provided 13,000, but not only men. Men, women, children, elderly people, sick people, everybody was taken away. And they were parked in a stadium called the Velodrome, which was -- there was a track where they had bicycle races. One of the most famous races was called the Six Days. For six days they were turning around like that on the track.
And my parents -- not my parents. The 13,000 Jews who were rounded up during that big roundup were parked there. It was in the middle of July. It was very hot. They had no water. They had no toilets. They were out of order very quickly because they were

not equipped to withstand the presence of 13,000 people for several days. I don't know how long they stayed. Maybe one week in that stadium. And eventually they were sent to transit camps south of France and from there they were sent to Auschwitz.
And there were 4,000 children out of them. And none of the children came back from Auschwitz.
>> Bill Benson: Albert, that was July of 1942. Let's go back to May 1940 when Germany invaded France. Very quickly they marched on Paris, and there was a mass exodus from Paris. And one of the things that you said to me, for you and your family, quote, it all began with the exodus from Paris. Tell us about that.
>> Albert Garih: Well, this exodus, everybody was running away from the Germans. So some people would go by car. Some people on bicycles. Some people on foot. As far as I know, I think we went by train. We went south to a city on the river Loire. The river Loire is famous for its beautiful chateau actually. And we went to Orleans, and we stayed in a chateau there, a small chateau. It was nothing fancy or anything like that. We were sleeping -- it had been requisitioned to house the people who were running away. But we couldn't go very far because there was a demarcation line.
It was only the northern part of France that was occupied. The northern part and the south was the so-called free zone which was only relatively safe actually. A lot of people were deported. It was occupied starting November 11, 1942. They took the anniversary of the end of the First World War to occupy the rest of France.
So when we were in that chateau, I was just 2 years old. And my mother didn't have anything to feed me and I was crying, which, you know, a 2-year-old, if you don't feed him, the only way to express himself is to cry. And I was disturbing the peace. There was a lot of people in that chateau who were sleeping on the floor. But I was disturbing the peace.
And at one point one of the soldiers who managed to escape after the battle of France was there, and he had a flask of schnapps. And he gave a shot of schnapps to my mother and said, give that to him. That will calm him down. And apparently it did.
[Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: Albert, back to the exodus for a minute before you got to Loire. For our audience, the estimates are as high as 80% of the population of Paris fled Paris by foot, in carts. It was a massive --
>> Albert Garih: It was a massive event. It was total chaos. And we were under the fire of the Luftwaffe. And at that point, my grandmother who had gone to get some food for us, was killed by strafing. And my mother lost also a brother, a sister, and two nephews who were fleeing by car when a bomb fell on their car at a bridge in Orleans. So that was -- these were the first tragedies that struck us during the war.
>> Bill Benson: So quickly, your mother's mother and her brother --
>> Albert Garih: Brother and sister and two nephews.
>> Bill Benson: They were killed. Was your father with you when you fled Paris?
>> Albert Garih: No. My father stayed behind. I guess he wanted to keep on working. I don't know why he didn't join us. But he stayed behind. And after a few days, I don't know whether it was one week or -- I have no idea how long it was. It was just a few days. And my mother decided that we should go back home. And that's what we did.

>> Bill Benson: So you go back to Paris from Loire. And you would stay there for the next two years until July of 1942. Tell us about that period of time, those two years while you were living there.
>> Albert Garih: I don't have much to tell you about that because my recollection starts precisely in July 1942. In July 1942, you know, when France was invaded, it was a collaborationist government that was formed as I told you. And this government enacted a statute on the Jews which was modeled on the Nuremberg Laws that were depriving the Jews in Germany from most of their basic rights.
And we were also -- we were submitted to the same rules starting in July 1942. That's when they had the big roundup at the Velodrome. But the roundups had started in 1941, and they continued until July 1944, one month before the liberation of Paris actually. So we were under constant danger of being rounded up and sent to death camps because if they had taken us -- my father was a strong man. He could have survived in these camps. But my mother, my sisters and me, we would have been sent directly to the gas chamber.
So my parents were very concerned about that. And in 1942, in the fall of 1942, they decided to send us to a farm.
>> Bill Benson: And was that after they had moved to another apartment?
>> Albert Garih: Yeah. I forgot to mention, yes, we were expelled from the apartment. You know, the factory that belonged to a Jew was expropriated and he had to flee. And we had to find an apartment in no time.
It was a very small apartment, two rooms. Not two bedrooms. Two rooms. Two-room apartment. A small kitchen and a toilet. And that was it. No bathroom, nothing like that. So we were in that apartment.
And they started rounding up people. And my parents were very concerned. And at one point they decided to send us to a farm. We went to a farm in a place called Thoiry, which is outside of Paris, which is famous now. They have a famous park there. But in those days it was just farmland. So we spent the fall and winter of 1942-43 on that farm.
>> Bill Benson: Were you all together on that farm?
>> Albert Garih: Well, no. With my sisters. My parents stayed behind. My parents -- my father kept on working, and my mother stayed home I guess. And --
>> Bill Benson: Probably still in that small apartment.
>> Albert Garih: In the small apartment, yes, in the small apartment.
>> Bill Benson: Do you know anything about your time with your sisters at that farm, what was that like for you?
>> Albert Garih: Yes, yes, yes. I remember. Actually, you know, my parents had not told the ladies that we were Jewish. They said that, you know, they could not feed us properly in Paris because everything was rationed. You know, everything was with ration tickets. So to buy a loaf of bread, you had to give so many tickets and everything. An egg was a luxury item. Now we buy the eggs by dozens. Not one dozen but dozens. And those days one egg was a luxury item. So we didn't have eggs. We had a very small portion of butter and bread. And stale bread, which was made of flour, brown, and sometimes they put some saw dust to make it more consistent. So, yeah.
>> Bill Benson: So your mother -- your parents had told the family that you were there because they couldn't feed you. But you had to leave. Tell us about that.

>> Albert Garih: Yeah. My parents had not said -- it was two ladies who were tending the farm. I still remember the name of the lady. And it was two sisters, I think. And they had a big dog. And they were raising pigs and rabbits. And I was awakened in the morning because the pigs were -- the pig there was right below my bedroom. And they made a lot of noise early in the morning. And I would hear them. And that would wake me up. And during the day I was spending hours watching the rabbits.
So for me it was fine. The winter was very cold. There was a lot of snow. My sisters would go to school. The public school there. You know, it was a school for boys and girls. In those days it was unusual because boys and girls would be sent to separate schools. But in the countryside, they had one school with maybe one class, and each row was a different grade.
So anyway, my sisters would go to that school and I would stay with the ladies. And I was talking to them and, you know, 4 years old, what did I know? One day in the conversation I told them that we were Jewish. And they sent us right back to our parents. They didn't want to take any chances with the Jews. So they sent us back to our parents.
At that point, my father took me apart and said, don't ever, ever say that you are Jewish. So, you know, on a 4-year-old, you know, what do you think? You start wondering, is there anything wrong about being Jewish? You know, it was like a stigma. And so I was afraid. I was ashamed. I don't know. And I kept it a secret for quite a few years even after the war. I remember when I was 11, it was after the war, '49, and I had an appendectomy. And I went to a hospital. And the nurses were nuns. And the nun who was taking care of me asked me, are you going to catechism? Are you preparing for your first communion? And I said yes. I was -- you know, I was still afraid of saying that I was Jewish.
And I heard some anti-Semitic slurs on the playground at the school by the other kids using anti-Semitic slurs. And I would not react because I was -- I was afraid or I was ashamed. I don't know. It was a combination. It was very complex. But anyway, it took me quite a few years after the war, maybe when I turned around 15 or 16, that I started to open up. And since then I never closed.
>> Bill Benson: You never closed. Albert, in September 1943, your father was taken for forced labor.
>> Albert Garih: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: And then soon after that, your mother, your sisters and you went into hiding. Tell us what you can about your father being sent to forced labor and then about how your mother found a hiding place for her and her children.
>> Albert Garih: It was almost a miracle. But anyway, my father was summoned to go to a slave labor camp on the Channel Islands. They are small islands between France and Great Britain. And that was the only British territory under German occupation. And they were building block houses, bunkers, and fortifications to stop an invasion from the Allies. That was called the Atlantic War.
And my father during that captivity he once had a big accident. He was carrying cement on his head, on a trough on his head, and he stepped on the loose board, and the board came to hit him on the head, and he fell off a cliff. And he was picked up maybe a couple of hours later. He was losing his blood. And he was picked up by the soup truck. And eventually they cared for him the best he could. My father was bald. And you can

see the scars on his head. It makes like a big question mark, like this. And he suffered. He had -- I remember he had some migraines after the war. And he died of seizures. Much later. So it didn't affect him really -- it didn't stop him from having as normal a life as possible, but he died of seizures. So I guess it was connected to his accident.
>> Bill Benson: You shared with me, Albert, that one of your early memories is seeing your father leave when he was taken for forced labor.
>> Albert Garih: Yes. I still have that memory. It was in September '43, so I was 5 years old. And usually -- you know, he had to take the metal and he would go with his gas mask. It was a box like that. He was wearing it around his neck like that. And usually we would take -- to go to the Metro we had to take a bus. It was about an hour and a half away from our home. But that time we walked to spend a little more time with our father. And we saw him getting on the Metro.
And of course my mother was very desperate at that time. She had to -- you know, she knew that at some moment they could come and take us away. And one day she met this lady in the street market. She didn't even know her. She had never met her before. Madame Galop. And somehow she felt that she could open up to her. And she told her that she was terrified that at any moment they could come and take us away.
So Madame Galop went home, told her husband, and the next day her husband came to us with a cart and we took whatever we could and we went to live with the Galop family. It was in the same area of Paris. And we went to live with them.
The Galop family, the Galops had two daughters. I was 5 at that time. They had two daughters, 4 and 3. So to me, it was the happiest time I had during the war because the Galops were absolutely charming people. They had a very strong southern accent from France, which is very warm.
And Mr. Galop would tell us stories that was supposed to scare us, and we were laughing. So, you know, and he made some toys. He was very handy. He was a sculptor, and he was making sets for the movie studios. And they had a big warehouse behind the house where they were storing all of these sets. And, you know, the little girls, we would have great hide and seek games in that warehouse.
To me, you know, these people were wonderful. They didn't make us feel that we were at war. And that we were facing a great danger of being taken away. I was 5 years old. What did I know about the danger?
>> Bill Benson: The risk for them was huge.
>> Albert Garih: It was. The risk for them -- if they had been -- you know, if someone had denounced them, reported them as hiding Jews, we would have been taken away, but I'm not sure that they would not have followed us. I'm not sure. Because I think it was very -- you know, people were executed for hiding Jews actually. So it was -- I don't -- I tried to comprehend, how can a family with two young daughters take the risk for their lives and the lives of their daughters to save a family of people they didn't even know two days before? To me, that's amazing.
It's a really -- I have wondered whether, you know, in my life, if I had been in the same situation, if I had -- if I would have had the same courage that they had. And they were never making us feel that we were posing a danger for them or anything like that. They made us feel as comfortable as they could with them. And for Christmas they made some toys for us. I remember he made some piggy banks that were shaped like a safe. Out of wood. He painted them in green. I still see these piggy banks.

And, you know, in those days in France, we had coins that were absolutely worthless. It was old francs. You know, we moved two zeros to a franc. And a new franc was 100 old francs. These were the old francs, and they gave us some of these old francs. They were literally worthless. But they were typical -- they had a hole in the middle. And I remember these coins. That's what we would put in the piggy banks.
>> Bill Benson: You shared that for you as a kid, as you said, you played hide and seek. It was kind of a great time. But it was very different for your mother and sisters.
>> Albert Garih: My mother was in constant terror. You know, I remember when somebody would knock at the door, we would go to the back room and my mother would hush me, say, sshhh, don't say a word. And at that point I had no malice. I was keeping quiet.
>> Bill Benson: In the spring of 1944, your mother had to take her children, you and your sisters, out of the home of the Galops. Tell us why you had to leave the Galops and where did you go from there.
>> Albert Garih: Well, the Galop family lived in a small house, in a small street. There were about 10 houses altogether. It was mostly artists, painters, sculptors. And I remember one of the them was a painter. His wife, and I still remember the name, who apparently was raving about my way of speaking. Apparently I was 5 years old but I had very good diction. And she said that one day I will be a speaker. But anyway --
>> Bill Benson: And here you are.
>> Albert Garih: And here I am. Much later. But anyway, she was a great admirer of the collaborationist government. And those who would speak on the radio. And she was raving about them. And one day she went to see Madame Galop and said, when you are you going to get rid of that scum? We were the scum. So she liked me, but she didn't like the fact that we were Jewish.
And so at that point, my mother and Madame Galop thought it might be safer for us to go back home. Because, you know, we couldn't afford to expose the Galops to the danger of being denounced by this lady. So we went back home. And a short few weeks later, around 7:00 in the morning, we were in bed. There was a knock on the door. Two French police inspectors. Madame Garih? Yes. We came to take you away. That's what my mother had been dreading all along.
Actually, she was, you know, she was having nightmares about that. She started shaking. And for whatever reason, I think it must have been more or less just about the time of D Day and one of these police inspectors belonged to a Resistance network or maybe their conscience. And they told my mother, we are going to report we didn't find you. But you must not sleep in your bed tonight. You have to find a place to hide.
It's easier said than done. So I don't know. My mother had the name of a social worker. I don't know who gave her the name. And I still remember the name of this lady too. I was 5 years old, but I still remember these things. And so my mother dressed us very quickly because it was 7:00 in the morning. We were still in bed. And we went to see the social worker. And my mother explained that we had to go into hiding again.
And this social worker told my mother, you have to give me a few days. You know, I cannot find a place like that overnight. In the meantime, try to see if you cannot stay at some of your neighbors. And at that point, that was to me was also a shock. All the neighbors were ready to house us all the time, you know, until this lady would find a hiding place for each one of us.

So my mother and I, we would sleep at our next door neighbors who were communist couple. The Menetriers. Their daughter was about my age, two or three months younger than me. And my sisters stayed with the lodge keeper, Madame Papillon. She was a mother of three. She had two boys, 13 and 12, and a little girl 5 years old, and I never saw a husband. I think he must have been part of the soldiers who were taken prisoner during the Battle of France in 1940. So I never saw a man in that apartment. But she was the lodge keeper.
And my sisters would sleep at the lodge keeper's apartment. And we would sleep at our communist neighbor's apartment. It was very convenient with the Menetrier family because they were working on night shifts. She was working in a print shop, and I think he was working with her. He had been summoned to go to mandatory labor service in Germany and had not reported for duty. So he was also wanted by the Gestapo.
So it was -- we were facing danger by staying with them because if the Gestapo had come to take him away, they would have found us there. They would have taken us at the same time. So we spent a few days. I couldn't say whether it was two or three days or one week. I don't know. Until eventually the social worker came to my mother and said, OK, I found a place for each one of you.
>> Bill Benson: For each one of you, this time separately.
>> Albert Garih: We were separate, yes. My mother was placed as a governess with a family near the Eiffel Tower, right in front of the Eiffel Tower, actually. She was taking care of eight or 10 children. And we were sent to a Catholic boarding school in a suburb east of Paris. The suburb is Monterfermiel, which was made famous by "Les Miserables." That's where Jean Valjean met Cosette. But that's a beautiful story. Because she was used as a slave and she was getting water at night, you know, and was curious for a little girl, and that's where Jean Valjean met Cosette.
So we were in these Catholic boarding schools. I was in a school for boys and my sisters in a school for girls. And we would meet once a week, every Sunday, in church. We would go to mass, Catholic boarding school. We had to go to mass every Sunday. And that's when I would see my sisters.
The rest of the time I was -- I was 6 years old. I was the youngest in that school. The ages were from 7 until 14. I was the youngest. And I remember they had me say I'm sorry that I was -- you know, I was a kid, so I didn't -- I don't remember her name. I wanted to have her recognized as Righteous Among the Nations because I think she was the one that took me into that school. And she was always looking after me. She was always holding my hand. You know, I was 6 years old, cut out from your parents. It was not fun.
And plus the food was terrible. The food -- no, no. When I say terrible, believe me, it was not funny. It was rotten beans. It was disgusting. But one day the priest was suffering from some sort of cancer or ulcer or whatever, and they managed to get a couple of potatoes and a small piece of butter. And they made mashed potatoes. And even that, he could not swallow them. I was the youngest. They gave them to me. And, you know, I love mashed potatoes to this day.
[Laughter]
>> Albert Garih: I still love mashed potatoes.
>> Bill Benson: Albert, I was going to ask you, during this time after your father had been sent away to slave labor, was there -- was your mother able to at all stay in

contact with him for any part of that time? Did she know anything about his whereabouts?
>> Albert Garih: Yes. Actually, for -- you know, they were on the Channel Islands. Had he been sent to the east to Poland and all of that, he would probably have been finished in a gas chamber. But these were small islands. And that's the organization that they were not treated very nicely. But they could exchange some mail. And to this day I remember -- I don't remember the letters because my mother would not read them to me because I was too young, and if it was giving some details they would be for her. But I remember the postmark on the envelopes. It had the eagle and the swastika. And I was fascinated by these envelopes. Unfortunately they threw all of that away once the war was over. And I am sorry because I would have loved to give that to the Museum.
>> Bill Benson: Albert, D Day of course took place June 1944. Paris was liberated in August of 1944. You were 6. What do you recall or know about your liberation and the reunification with your mother and your sisters?
>> Albert Garih: I have no idea. I never heard about D Day, about the landing on the beaches in Normandy. To me, you know, I was 6 years old. So -- and we didn't have a radio. We were not allowed to have a radio. And even those who had a radio, the only thing they could listen to was propaganda radio. Those who were caught trying to catch London -- I remember London. It started with the first notes of the Fifth Symphony, like that, and then they would say [Speaking in French]
And there were messages -- and they gave some messages. And that's how the message was sent about D Day. They took two verses of a poem by a 19th century poet and gave the first verse and said, when you hear the second verse, that's the invasion is for tonight.
And so -- but we -- I was 6 years old. We didn't have any radio. I was in the boarding school. I didn't know anything about the invasion. I remember one thing actually because my father had been moved -- at one point, you know, the Allies were making everything to make the Germans believe that if there was going to be an invasion it would take place in the Straits of Dover, which was the shortest distance between England and France. So they were bombarding there all the time.
So at one point, the Germans moved the 900 -- there were about 900 inmates from the Channel Islands to the Straits of Dover and my father told me a story about that. You know, they were under the fire of the Allies, the R.A.F. and the U.S. Air Force. When they had bombardments like that, they didn't go to a shelter. When there were bombardments when I was in the school, we would go to the shelter. But my father, they had to lay flat on the ground and hoping to be spared. And one time, on one of these raids, my father was laying down on the ground next to a German soldier. And when the raid was over, my father looked over and the German soldier had been killed. So it was really touch and go all the time. And when the Allies landed in Normandy -- anyway, let's go back to --
>> Bill Benson: How you found out.
>> Albert Garih: Well, one day, in the summer of '44, the summer was very hot. We were underfed, and we had practically no classes because it was the summer. So summer vacation. So we spent most of the time on the playground. And I was very weak. And I will spare you the details because sometimes I didn't have time to reach the toilets. Anyway, so it was really bad.

One day one of the boys that had run away from the school, and he came back saying, the Allies are coming. The Allies are coming! So we all went with the school on the main road and we saw the tanks, the Jeeps, the trucks. Soldiers with different helmets. And it was the first time I have ever heard of Americans. I never heard of Americans before. To me, it was a discovery. I was far from thinking that one day I would be one of them, but that's another story.
Anyway, so yes, I saw these Americans who were giving us chewing gum that we had. And chocolate and even cigarettes. So there were –
[Laughter]
>> Albert Garih: They were very generous and smiling faces, friendly faces. And from that day on, we knew that the danger was over. We were no longer in danger of being taken away and deported and sent to the gas chambers. Because as I said, the convoys of people to Auschwitz lasted until July 1944, and Paris was liberated in August of 1944.
>> Bill Benson: Tell us about reunification with your parents.
>> Albert Garih: So after we had this memorable day of these liberation, as soon as they restored the train service, my mother was on the first train to come to see us because she had no way to communicate with us during that summer of '44. And we were completely cut out, you know. It was too dangerous to send letters.
And so as soon as the train service was restored, my mother was on the first train. And one morning I see my sisters coming to my school, to the playground, and they said, guess who's here? And you know what? At 6 years old, I had no idea. You know, how fast we can forget about our loved ones actually. I had no idea who could come to visit us, you know. And so I pushed my sisters. And my mother was short, so she was hiding behind my sisters. I pushed them around. And when I saw my mother, of course I jumped into her arms.
But when she saw me, I was so skinny that she was appalled. And she took me home the same day. You know, she had these ration tickets. She bought a loaf of bread. We swallowed the loaf of bread in no time. And we were -- you know, it makes me smile when I hear people say I'm hungry. They don't know what it means actually. They don't know what it is. I experienced hunger really. And it's not fun.
So anyway, she took me home right away. And she went back the next day to pick up my sisters for whatever reason. I don't know if she couldn't pick up my sisters the same day, so she had to go back. And she left me under the supervision of our next door neighbor, Madame Menetrier. And there was nothing to eat in the house except for a green apple. And, you know, I had an upset stomach. That was the worst thing I could have eaten. But I did eat it. And as soon as I finished it the apple, I heard the key in the door. It was Madame Menetrier coming to check up on me. And she said, did you eat something and I said no.
[Laughter]
>> Albert Garih: And of course I had. And it was not good. But, you know, I was so skinny that after the war I was fed cod liver oil. Have you ever heard of a child who loves cod liver oil? I tried to feed that to a child and it was rejected and they would start crying. I was drinking it, you know. I was -- my body needed that. And I was even given U.V. rays. I remember they put me like in this --
>> Bill Benson: Like a tanning place?

>> Albert Garih: Tanning collars and everything and put me on a bed with a U.V. ray lamp because I was really malnourished actually. So I needed that. So anyway, we were reunited. My mother came back the next day with my sisters. And that was late August, probably early September.
And meanwhile my father who had been sent to the Straits of Dover. From there when the Allies were pushing the Germans back towards Germany, east. One day the Germans put the 900 inmates on a train bound for Germany. I don't know what they had in store for them. Maybe they would send them to Auschwitz. Maybe they would use them in slave labor factory. We don't know.
But anyway, the train was stopped by Belgian Resistance fighters in northern Belgium. Not Belgium, northern Belgium. So there was a battle. And the Resistance fighters liberated really the 900 inmates. Or they were released by the Germans. I don't know which one it was. Anyway, my father stayed a few days with a family there. Apparently according to my sister, she gave me details that I didn't know. He was lucky to be housed by the baker. So he was fed. He had some bread. And although the bread was not good, but, you know, he was fed.
And after a few days of regaining some strength he started to walk all the way from northern Belgium to Paris. That was a 200-mile trek. Like going from New York to Washington on foot.
>> Bill Benson: Did you have any inkling that he was coming home?
>> Albert Garih: We knew -- my father was detained in that camp with a first cousin of his who had come a few days earlier. I don't know how he managed to come earlier. But he said that our dad was on his way home.
>> Bill Benson: First that he was alive.
>> Albert Garih: We knew that he was alive because --
>> Bill Benson: You knew that.
>> Albert Garih: Yes. But he was on his way home. So we knew that he was coming. But we in the meantime, you know, life was resuming as normal as possible. The war -- for us the war was over at the end of August 1944. It ended up -- the end of the war was May 8, 1945. But for us we were out of the woods in late August, early September. So on October 1 was going back to school day. That was my first day at school. And I was so motivated, so excited about going to school. And I remember that day like it was yesterday.
And in the meantime, my father walked from northern Belgium and he arrived at the end of September. He arrived I think it was the 22nd or 23rd of September, which was Rosh Hashanah. And my mother was dressing us to go to synagogue for the first time. So there was a knock on the door. But this time it was a good one. It was my father who was coming back. He was in bad shape.
>> Bill Benson: Do you remember that?
>> Albert Garih: No, I don't remember how he looked. I know from my mother and my sisters, they told me that he was -- he looked appalling actually. He was gaunt. And he had boils and all sorts of diseases. But he survived. He made it. So he could go back to work. I could go back to school. My sisters could go back to school.
And my mother started working right after the war. Because we needed two jobs to provide for the family. So that's how we ended up. We lost as I said my grandmother and an uncle and aunt and some cousins, first cousins. Plus my mother lost some

cousins also who were deported who were sent to the camps and never came back. So we lost some people. But our nuclear family was saved. My father, my mother, my sisters and me. We all survived.
>> Bill Benson: We are towards the end of our time. And we're going to -- Albert is going to close our program in a moment. But I do want to ask him one more question. You have had the opportunity to reconnect with the Galops. Will you say a little bit about that?
>> Albert Garih: Well, you know, after the war, we would still see the Galops and we would go to visit them. And I remember spending a couple of Christmases with them. They were Christians. We were not Christians, so we were not celebrating Christmas. But we were invited to their Christmas party. And I remember that.
But then we lost track somehow. I don't know. I feel uncomfortable about that because I think we should have kept -- you know, these people saved our lives. And we should have kept in good contact with them, and we somehow lost contact.
The Galop -- the parents, they retired in the south of France. They were from the south of France. So they went back to the south of France. And in 1992, I was in Paris at that time. I wanted to find -- to find out if I could find them. And there was a small computer which is a sort of electronic phone book where I typed Galop, and I found one. I called her. She was in Monterfermiel. And I said, are you Emmy Galop, a widow? Because I knew that her husband had passed away. He had throat cancer. And she said, yes. And I said, well, I'm Albert Garih.
And she was so excited when I -- you know, I said, Madame Galop, I live in the states. I won't be able to come to see you now because I'm going home in the next couple of days. But I promise the next time I'm in France I will come to visit you. And I was back in France a few months later. I took a flight from Paris to Monterfermiel in the south of France, and we were reunited. And it was a wonderful moment actually. She was so happy. And I was so happy too.
And I told her that I had started the process of having the Galop family as well as the Menetrier, our next door neighbors, recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. She said you have to hurry because I'm not going to last much longer. And actually she passed away before the ceremony. The ceremony took place in November -- no, in the spring of 1992. She had passed away a few weeks before.
>> Bill Benson: And that's formal recognition by the State of Israel for what they did.
>> Albert Garih: Yes. I think they may have been a Council of Israel in the south of France. There was a ceremony. And they gave them a medal, a medal of the Righteous, and the daughters were there with their husbands and with their children. Everybody was there except for the parents. So it was a very moving experience, very moving ceremony. And they asked me to say a few words. And I was not very eloquent that day. Anyhow, I could have said a lot more.
After I finished, I said I didn't think -- I didn't say this, I didn't say that, I didn't say that. I could have spoken like I speak now. And I didn't have that chance. So anyway, I saw the daughters, at least the eldest daughter, Janine, who was a head mistress in a Protestant school. Did I mention they were Protestant?
So there I was saved by a Protestant family, a communist family, the Menetriers, and a Catholic boarding school.
[Laughter]

>> Albert Garih: That gave me a very positive outlook on life actually.
>> Bill Benson: I'm going to come back to Albert in just a moment so please stay with us. I want to thank you for being with us, being at our program today. We'll have programs each wind and Thursday until August 8. The only exception is next week because of July 4, we'll have programs on the 2nd and the 3rd, which is Tuesday and Wednesday. All of our programs will be available on the Museum's YouTube channel. So if you can't come back for another program, you can certainly view any of the programs that you would like to view. So thank you for being with us.
When Albert is finished, because we did not have a chance for you to ask Albert questions, we invite anybody in the audience -- all of you -- to come up on stage afterwards if you'd like to, to meet Albert, ask a question if you'd like one, have a photo taken with him, say hi, whatever you'd like to do. It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person has the last word. So with that, I'd like to turn to Albert to close today's program.
>> Albert Garih: OK. I was telling you that last October, I had some friends -- you know, when I was a student I used to work as a tour guide in Paris. I was giving guided tours of Paris, at the Chateau Loire, where I spent some time during the occupation. And the beaches in Normandy where the landing -- where the invasion took place. And last October we had some friends who said to me, I would love to visit Paris with you because I know that it would be a different experience. I said, I'm going to Paris in October. If you want to join us, you're welcome. And they came with us. And we went to Paris. I gave them a guided tour of Paris. We went to some Chateau Loire, this beautiful chateau, and then we went to the Normandy beaches.
And we had them this past weekend at home, and she's still raving about the trip that we took together because it took a different -- it was a different dimension being there with someone who lived through that period. So that was a moving experience. And I took some pictures actually which I added to my Powerpoint about the beaches in Normandy. There are some with the crosses and some Stars of David also. And the beaches. Very famous rock that took so many lives to conquer, you know, on that beach between Utah and Omaha Beach actually.
So it was an experience. And I strongly recommend a trip to this area. If you ever go to France, take the time to spend two days in Normandy.
>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Albert. Thank you very much.