

Annette Bessmann née Muller

USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive

Interview conducted in Paris on June 21, 1995, by Maya Poirson

In 1995, Annette and her three brothers, Henri, Jean and Michel, provided testimonials to the USC Shoah Foundation. The text below is a translation of Annette's testimony, interspersed with excerpts from her brothers'. This four-voice account attempts to reconstruct, as closely as possible, the childhood of these survivors as they depicted it 50 years after the events. It also tries to reproduce the indefectible complicity that bonded "this clan" until the end. Unfortunately, it does not answer all the questions that readers may have. Only *La petite fille du Vel' d'Hiv'* provides all the keys.

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Copyright: Mélanie Péron acknowledges the USC Shoah Foundation for allowing her to transcribe into French and to translate into English the following testimonies: Annette Bessmann Muller (1995), Henri Muller (1995), Jean Muller (1995), Michel Muller (1995).

Tape 1

Interviewer: Today is June 21, 1995 and we are in Paris. I will be conducting the interview with Ms. Muller-Bessmann. My name is Maya Poirson. Annette, can you tell us where you were born and maybe a few words about your parents, their origins and their life before you were born?

Annette: I was born in Paris on March 15, 1933. My parents came from Poland, from the Krakow region¹. They came to France around 1929-1930 and settled in Paris where they were both tailors and soon had four children born between 1930 and 1935. Three boys and one girl.



Picture of Rachel and Manek taken circa 1930 in France.²

Courtesy of Henri Muller.

¹ Manek Schneps (Muller) came from Biecz and Rachel Weiser from Wojnicz

² This picture was sent to Manek in the 90s by a former resident of Tarnow who eventually emigrated to the U.S. Rachel is wearing the rain coat Manek had offered her when they first dated in Tarnow. Manek is wearing the coat he made with the fabric his maternal uncle Moïsché Zeiden gave him.

Pre-war 1929-1939

Interviewer: Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about their family background actually? What kind of family did they come from? Were they big families?

Annette: They were very large families. They were from two different villages, so as I said, not very far from Krakow. On my father's side, there were seven boys and one girl named Anna (Hana), that's why I was given that name. And on my mother's side there were three boys and three girls and my maternal grandfather was a fiddler. He played the fiddle at weddings and told jokes.

Interviewer: They were religious Jewish families?

Annette: Very religious. Both, as well on my father's side of the family as on my mother's and the religious practices were even very constraining, especially for my father who would have liked to associate with the Polish peasant women of his region and was forbidden to approach them.

Interviewer: When they came to France, did they come together?

Annette: They came to France³ together but life was so difficult at the beginning that my mother had to return to Poland, pregnant with my second brother, while my father tried to earn some money. For example, in the apartment, rather the kind of attic where they lived in the 20th arrondissement, they realized that the bed of my older brother, who was a baby at the time, was full of bedbugs.

Interviewer: Why did they actually come to France? Why did they leave Poland?

³ Interestingly, like many immigrants, Manek had come with a tourist visa that did not allow him to work but was valid for a cure in... Vichy.

Annette: They left Poland not because of the pogroms as one might imagine. My father's family was relatively well integrated because they were millers⁴, they provided the flour to make matzo in the surrounding villages. It was because my father had fallen in love with my mother and because on the day, I believe, of Yom Kippur, they were walking through the village in a modern way instead of going to the synagogue. My mother was beaten by her brothers⁵ and they ran away to come to France. In fact, they came out of love for each other.

Photo taken by Rachel Muller⁶

Courtesy of Henri Muller

⁴ It is therefore possible that the new surname given to Manek Schneps on his emigration papers comes from the family profession. The German for miller is indeed Müller.

⁵ In his 2009 testimony, Manek explains that Rachel's younger brother Israel beat his sister severely after catching her on Manek's arm in the streets of Tarnow. He emigrated to the United States where he became the cantor of the liberal synagogue of Long Island.

⁶ On the left side of the picture stands a friend of Manek's who came from Biecz to Paris to study medicine. He died of carbon monoxide poisoning in his poorly heated room before the war.

Interviewer: And, so very quickly there were these four children and your parents' life in Paris. So they were tailors at home, did they have friends? How was the social and family life?

Annette: As far as I am concerned, I have kept a very pleasant and tender memory of family life because they worked at home, but at the same time they sang, they were young. There was a lot of joy. I remember that my mother told us many stories, especially from the Bible. And she was very popular in the neighborhood because she used to do the hair of the girls who lived on our street, she let the children from school, our friends from school, come to the house and let us dress in her own clothes. She would just open her closet and drawers and we would dress up in her things. There were a lot of other kids from school who came to the house. They weren't Jews. We weren't that much involved in the Jewish community.

Interviewer: It didn't matter? Your parents were not parents who wanted the family to be in ...

Annette: No, they certainly had [Jewish] friends - whom we went to see on Sundays, by the way, who lived in Bobigny next to Drancy - but they let us... we were what they call integrated children. They wanted us to succeed in school. In fact, we did very well. My three brothers were all, all three, in three different classes, top of the class. I was probably less brilliant, but we were really what we call integrated children. At home, though, my parents spoke Yiddish. So that's the language I spoke until I was 3 years old, but afterwards I practically forgot it.

Interviewer: In school, did you have Jewish classmates or did it not matter at all if they were Jewish or French?

Annette: It didn't matter. It didn't matter at all.

Jean: We were friends with everybody, no matter what their origin was. We had Jewish friends, Catholic friends, we entertained each other, we went to each other's houses, there were absolutely no restrictions.

Interviewer: And the neighborhood, which neighborhood in Paris was it?

Annette: It was the Ménilmontant quarter. It is the 20th arrondissement.

Interviewer: Can you say a few words about the Ménilmontant neighborhood in the 1930s?

Annette: It was a very popular neighborhood where we, the children, played in the streets. The street in front of our house⁷ had big cobblestones. It was a neighborhood, sung by Maurice Chevallier. It was a little village, where there were street singers who sang and to whom we threw coins out of the windows. It was a very lively neighborhood.

Jean: We lived in a very modest neighborhood, the Ménilmontant neighborhood, very, very modest. All the people who lived there, all our friends, whether they were Jewish or Catholic or whatever, came from rather modest conditions without being poor, but rather modest. We played a lot in the street. It was a dead end. The street was very short - it was maybe 60-70 meters long - and it was a dead end. There was no vehicular traffic even then. And we played, yes. Until dinner time at night.

Henri: In the neighborhood, there were a lot of buildings where there were Jewish families. And in fact, the Jewish families all lived in the same way. It was a bit like my parents' house because I used to go and see my friends at their house and they all had workshops at home, well small workshops, a sewing machine (...) It was not a bourgeois neighborhood (...) In fact, it was more the immigrant Jews who came to Belleville. And it was the Jews who worked in the clothing industry, in the shoe industry. That's pretty much what the lifestyle was.

Michel: Yes, we used to call the lower part of Ménilmontant-Belleville "the little pletzl". The rue des Rosiers was "the big pletzl". It was indeed a Jewish neighborhood, but above all a working-class neighborhood.

⁷ The Mullers lived on the second floor of 3 passage de l'Avenir, now rue de l'Avenir. In spite of these two urban denominations, the street looks more like a dead end.

Interviewer: So when you were a child, you identified with the neighborhood, with the school?

Annette: Absolutely!

Interviewer: Being Jewish was not something that you experienced in a positive or negative way.
It wasn't important?

Annette: What was more important was the fact that I was the child of immigrants because my parents had a Yiddish accent and that accent bothered me.

Jean: My parents spoke a very, very broken French because of their lack of vocabulary and their accent, but little by little, year after year, they improved naturally. Between them, they spoke Yiddish. But to us, it's a particular phenomenon among these communities, they never spoke Yiddish to us. Except to scold us.

Annette: And I remember one time my mother slapped me because I had carried the bread back from the bakery on my head, which she considered dirty. So she was not happy and I yelled, "Go back to your country!" I was maybe 7-8 years old at the time and considered her to be from a different country than mine. So of course I was punished by my father too. But anyway, I resented more the fact that they were immigrants than...

Interviewer: ... ethnic affiliation?

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: You said your brothers were bright in school. Did that matter?

Annette: It was very important. My parents were very, very proud, especially since the principal⁸ of the school, who lived right next door to us, came to my father and mother and said, "Honors to the Muller family!"

Jean: We finished school at 4:30 p.m. to go home and do our homework. It was very important for our parents that we did our homework. They were very committed to our work at school. Very very... and very strict. So, at the end of the year, we were, the boys, in three different classes, in the same school and we were first all year. And at the prize distribution, for example the last prize distribution we had at this school in 1942, the director... so the whole school was assembled, the prize distribution was for the whole school with all the parents present and he said this historic phrase "Honor to the Muller family!" And that's what created a kind of complicity between my parents and this principal, which later became apparent.



Henri in front of the entrance to the boys' school.

On the right, under the number 24, the plaque in memory of the children of the school victims of the Shoah.

Photo taken on June 20, 2021 by M. Péron

⁸ M. Lakiche, principal of the communal school Olivier-Métra

Interviewer: So what year was that? More or less? How old were they?

Annette: It was at the beginning of the war.

Interviewer: Ah it was already at the beginning of the war. Just before entering the war period, do you remember who came to your home, family wise? Were there other members of the Muller family who came?

Annette: Yes, I had my father's younger brother [Pierre] who arrived later from Poland and who came very frequently to the house.



Pierre Schneps

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Henri: He came from Poland around 1938 [and] lived with us for a while (...) rue de l'Avenir. And yet it was a small place. But there was a kind of small storeroom with sliding doors that we opened so that he could have a little air and he slept there. He didn't stay very long because he went to the free zone quite quickly. That's what saved

him. After the war he came back to Paris and worked in the leather manufacturing. He worked in the glove industry. But he died in 54⁹. You see unfortunately very early.

Interviewer: Did your parents have friends, other friends that you went to? You mentioned friends near Drancy.

Annette: Yes, they were Polish friends, Polish Jews whose daughter was more or less engaged to this young brother of my father's.

Interviewer: So the first time you heard the name Drancy, it was under completely different circumstances. In other words, it was under friendly circumstances?



Drancy - The first skyscrapers near Paris. Public domain.

Credit: <https://www.archinform.net/projekte/8526.htm>

⁹ Henri corrected this date during our interview on June 21, 2021. Pierre died in 1968 from a brain tumor at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital.

Annette: It was not Drancy. It was Bobigny. But Drancy... from a certain point on the way, as we went every Sunday with my parents, at a curve in the road, we could see the towers and, at that time, the Drancy camp was framed by 14-story towers that were very impressive because there were no other housing projects that high in the neighborhoods. And as early as 1941, we already knew that it concerned the Jews and that men and adults were locked up there, young people of 18 years old and for us, that was very frightening. We knew that "Jew" had something frightening about it and that these towers symbolized it. In fact, these towers were not the camp. They were the homes of the policemen, the mobile guards.

Interviewer: So you have a perfectly happy, normal childhood. Your parents work a lot, at home, so they are present. You have friends, your mother, you say, was very loved in the neighborhood. She did the girls' hair. Can you tell us a little bit about how people knew she was doing it? Why would she do it?

Annette: She was very outgoing. She would go to each women's homes, she would bake cakes and give them away. She had a reputation for being fashionable. She was a beautiful woman, very lively, very cheerful, very charming, and in fact, at school, I remember, because it made an impression on me, the girls at school said to me, "How come you're so ugly and your mother is so beautiful?"

Interviewer: You told her this?

Annette: Oh it's possible I told her.

Jean: So my mother, she was the ultimate Jewish mother. Very present, very present, from morning to night. My mother paid constant attention to us. She was the one who ruled the house. She ruled the whole family, my father, my brothers, my sister, everyone. She was the Jewish mother in all her glory and when one talks about Jewish mothers today, I always think of my mother. She loved to sing. She sang Yiddish songs, French

songs, songs of the time [he sings "Une fleur au chapeau"]¹⁰ with a dreadful accent. Sometimes we made fun of her. It's very difficult to imitate, because she had a strong accent. I don't remember everything, but she sang first thing in the morning. (...) A lot of people came to the house, young girls came to her house to have their hair done, she loved doing hair. I think she should have been a hairdresser, she loved to do my sister's hair. (...) And my sister, I can still hear her complaining. "Come on!", my mother would say, "to be beautiful you have to suffer! To be beautiful you have to suffer!" That was my mother. She also loved to cook. A lot of cooking, a lot of cakes, a pastry chef, that's where I get this tendency to binge on pastries, strudel cakes, cheesecakes and all that but I have never found a cake that tasted like my mother's.

Interviewer: In the building where you lived, was there a diversity? Were there French people and immigrants or was it a majority of foreigners?

Annette: There were several Jewish families in that building which was a building that was not bad. I mean the stairs were waxed, there was a carpet, it was nice. So on the second floor there was a Jewish family¹¹ whose two older sons, 18 years old, had disappeared pretty quickly. They must have been arrested... I don't know if both of them were, but in any case one was arrested and "disappeared" in Drancy because people used to say that those who went to Drancy, they disappeared, we didn't know what happened to them. Plus a girl my age. And there was another Jewish family on the fourth floor, with an older girl who did sewing and where I would often go.

¹⁰ This song was an old popular song promoted by the Vichy Régime. It is used in a propaganda film promoting Pétain's [National Revolution](#). See also mention of the song in the testimony [Henri G.](#) made for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

¹¹ The Borencz family. Annette is friends with their daughter Rachel (c.f. July 15, 1942)

	Szule	Jozef	1898	Pologne	Lobnaia	H. Ch.	Bijoutier	Patron	202
	Esther		1898	"	"	M. Ep.		J. P.	
	Slama		1921	"	"	C. F.	typographe	Gosset	112
	Szuma		1926	"	"	C. F.			
	Henri		1932	1 P.	"	C. F.			

The Szules, who lived on the 4th floor, listed at 3 rue de l'Avenir on the 1936 census.

Credit: Archives de Paris

Interviewer: Did your parents earn a good living?

Annette: They worked a lot. They worked a lot

Jean: My father worked for a clothing company, he would pick up work from this company, cutting work, and then he would assemble, he would finish the clothes at home with the machine. My mother did the finishing by hand (...) They worked mostly on children's clothing, so the volume of the pieces was much smaller. (...) We saw them working, we helped them for example to remove the threads from the finished garment (...) It was somewhat our work. That gave us the impression that we were helping our parents. And, I remember very well that the leftover buttons became our soldiers. Because there's always a little bit of extra supplies, the buttons were used as toy soldiers. There were buttons with different colors so they were different armies. And that's how we kept ourselves busy a bit.

Annette: [I think] we lived poorly. We didn't have T.S.F., for example.

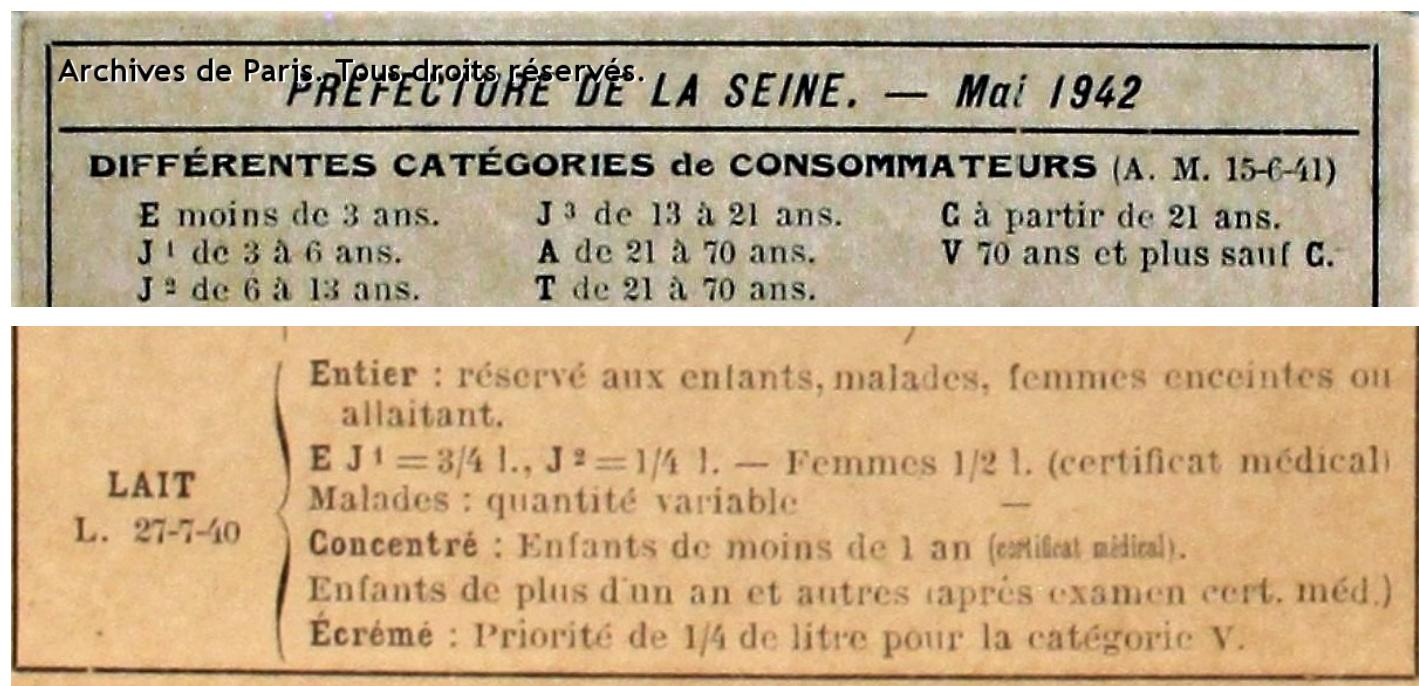
Interviewer: T.S.F.?

Annette: The radio. To listen to the radio, we went to the neighbors'. They often went to the cinema, they told us the film afterwards. We lived poorly. For example, before meals, my mother gave us a snack that already fed us well.

Interviewer: So they were very careful with expenses?

Annette: Certainly. I never felt hungry or ... well, I did, after, at the beginning of the war.

Jean: I can tell you about a typical day in 1942 during school time. So my parents were up well before us. We woke up around 7:15 a.m. to wash up. We took turns because the apartment was quite small. And then we had breakfast. Very, very good breakfast in fact. My mother, in spite of the restrictions, was very resourceful and attached great importance to food. (...) For example, at that time, in the morning, we ate chocolate -it was not chocolate as it exists today. It was an ersatz chocolate because there was still scarcity, restrictions, et cetera - with milk. We had the right to have milk. We were J-1 or J-2 so we were allowed, I think, a quarter liter of milk per person. So there was a little bit of milk left over that she mixed in. And then toasts either with jam or butter. And then we went to school because we had to be at school by 8:30. And at noon, we ate at the school canteen because our parents didn't have time.



Categories for ration cards (May 1942)

Credit: Archives de Paris, PEROTIN/609/52/1 1

Interviewer: And what are your first memories of the war? But just before, can you tell us which school you and your brothers attended?

Annette: It was the public school on Olivier-Métra Street in the 20th arrondissement, which still exists.

Interviewer: And there were a lot of immigrant children at the school, given that it was a neighborhood where there were many immigrants?

Annette: I discovered that there was another little Jewish girl in my class when we had to wear the star. I had no idea she was Jewish.

Interviewer: So it wasn't something, at the time, that [inaudible]?

Annette: Not in my family. Moreover, my mother, in order to leave us with our school friends, let us go to the Catholic oratory. When the war broke out, we took refuge in a presbytery in the Sarthe. I had the impression that my mother was more or less attracted to... or at least, she didn't criticize the fact that we were already in a certain Catholic atmosphere through this oratory. I remember that we used to play with stilts there. These are sort of big wooden things that you climb on, but I don't remember any prayers or anything like that.

Jean: [I] still remember, it was called the Jeanne-d'Arc of Ménilmontant.

The War 1939-1942

Interviewer: Okay. And how old were you exactly when the war broke out? First, for you, did the war start like in Poland on September 1, 1939, or was it later?

Annette: No, for me the war was in September 39. I was 6 years old. And my mother takes us to the town hall of the 20th arrondissement and we read the notice posted on the door of the town hall and people are worried and my mother cries.



Parisians reading the general mobilization order in September 1939

Credit: [ECPAD](#)

Henri: At the time of the declaration of the war, we were in La Roche-Guyon¹², we were still on vacation. We were there with my parents, because at the time, we did not go very far on vacation, it was about 60-70 km from Paris. We rented rooms at locals' houses, you see? But I still remember a notice, there was a kind of hall where there was a indoor market, and I still remember the notice where there was the famous declaration of war. And I remember, I see my mother crying. I remember that very well. Yes, I remember that. So of course it did something to us. That's when we certainly started to feel that there was something bad brewing.

¹² The place and date differ between the two testimonies. We can assume that Rachel had the same reaction to the notice back in Paris.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Credit: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estamps et photographie, [ENT QB-1 \(1939\)-FT6](#)

Interviewer: Is this your first memory of the war?

Annette: Yes, and right away, there was the trying on of the gas masks which scared me a lot. And soon after, because we were a large family, we had to take refuge in the Sarthe, it must have been at the end of [39] or beginning of 40, I don't remember the dates very well.



Credits: ©Agip/Bridgeman Images

Interviewer: Why did you go to the Sarthe? Do you remember how it happened? Who decided?

Annette: I think that, at the beginning, it was all the large families with more than 2 or 3 children who had to leave because Paris feared the arrival of German troops.

Interviewer: Did you leave with the whole family or just your mother and the children?

Annette: Well, it was my mother and the children. And my father joined us from time to time.

Interviewer: How did you leave? By train?

Annette: By train, yes. I remember very well this departure when we spent hours laying down in front of the station, it must have been Gare Montparnasse. And in the sky, there were some kind of black balls. It was probably meant for passive defense against airplanes. It was impressive for a child.

Interviewer: The Sarthe, how far is it? Is it an hour away?

Annette: I can't say. It must be a little more, maybe 2 hours. It's next to Le Mans.

Interviewer: So it's about 1 ½ hours. Was the train crowded?

Annette: The train was crowded, people were shouting, calling out to each other. I can picture a woman holding a chamber pot, in which her kid had peed, over our heads. I mean, it was a mess.

Interviewer: And why in the Sarthe? Did your parents know people there?

Annette: No, not at all. We arrived in a small village called St-Biez-en-Belin. So we were housed in the presbytery. My mother found work as a maid in a castle. And in this little town, there were a lot of Parisian refugees and a lot of Jews. Many Jews, yes.

Interviewer: You remember that it was important that there were Parisians there and that they were Jews?

Annette: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Was it your mother, your parents who talked about it?

Annette: No, it's because I met some of them again at the camp, afterwards, in Beaune-la-Rolande. And that is how I understood that they were Jews.

Interviewer: How long did you stay there?

Annette: We stayed there for a few months but I don't remember exactly how long¹³.

¹³ The family returned to Paris after the Armistice was signed on June 22, 1940.

Interviewer: You think that was early 1940? You don't remember if you are cold [inaudible] in the winter?

Annette: It must have been early 1940, yes. I remember more of the heat than the cold. Oh yes, it was winter because there had been Christmas. It must have been winter.

Interviewer: Did you go to the village school?

Annette: No, we didn't go to school yet¹⁴. I remember that the greatest memory I have of that time is that I learned to write my name and I wrote it everywhere on the walls of the house. It was my brothers who taught us to read and write.

Interviewer: So to get back to your move to the Sarthe with your family, why the Sarthe? Do you know if it was a choice of your parents?

Annette: I don't know, but it seems to me that it must have been imposed by the city hall of the 20th arrondissement. There were a lot of refugees in the area where we were.

Interviewer: When you arrived there, you were in the presbytery that was made available?

Annette: We were the only ones in the presbytery but people were in other places. There were people everywhere who, by the way, were forced to leave afterwards to accommodate the Germans who arrived later.

Interviewer: Because the Germans arrived there?

¹⁴ Jean and Henri completed their school year at the village school.



Evacuation of children and large families at the Austerlitz train station on August 31, 1939

Creator: Haringue | Credits: Roger Viollet via Getty Images

Annette: Yes, first we saw the French troops who were fleeing, who asked us "Have you seen the Germans?" And soon after, we saw the Germans arrive in a way that literally fascinated us because, unlike the fleeing French, they were beautiful and very nice. They were giving candy to the children, I remember that they were playing with my little brother, whom they made jump in their arms, they had handed out food. And it was a German who befriended my mother because, since she knew Yiddish or German, I don't know, he was always with her. He took a picture of my mother with the children on the steps of the rectory. I'll show you the picture if you want later.

Interviewer: So your first memories of the Germans were of kindness? They were very informal. It wasn't the German army as we represent it. They were really soldiers who made friends...



Picture taken by a German soldier in Biez-en-Belin in 1940.

Picture courtesy of Henri Muller.

Annette: They were friendly with the population, but I think that initially all soldiers were friendly with the population. And my father, who at that time had come back to St-Biez because he had tried to enlist but was turned down, was given the job of sewing decorations on the Germans' uniforms.

Interviewer: At that time, do you think that being Jewish was known [or] important?

Annette: I don't know. Other than the fact that we spoke Yiddish in my house, I didn't know what it was to be Jewish. For me, being Jewish was part of who I was, I was born that way. It was an identity that raised no questions.

Interviewer: Can we go back to your father? You said that he had wanted to be a soldier and that he was not accepted. Can you tell us something about that?

Annette: No, I can't say any more. [It is probably because] [h]e was a father of a large family.

Interviewer: He wanted to join the French army?

Annette: Yes, well, I don't really know. All I know, he told me afterwards, is that when we were refugees in St-Biez, the young women of the village were not happy. They did not understand why he, a young man - because he was very young at that time - was there while their own husbands were in the army. And he told me recently that the women even attacked my mother. There was a violent argument because of that.

Interviewer: When you were in the Sarthe?

Annette: Yes. But my mother, I don't think it was something that shook her. I know that at that time, still in her very lively way, she was learning to ride a bicycle through the streets of the village. People were laughing. They seemed to be laughing at her and she was laughing harder than anyone else.

Interviewer: So it was an overall happy stay?

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: And what happened next?

Annette: So afterwards, we knew that the Germans were settling and the refugees had to return to Paris. Besides, it seemed that the danger was more or less over. We returned to Paris and my father's absences became much more frequent. I remember the hunger, the cold, my mother coughing all the time - she had some sort of bronchitis - and my father always being absent because he had to work at the Rothschild company chopping wood. Still because he had a large family. He didn't work here anymore, the sewing machines didn't work anymore.

Interviewer: At the Rothschilds to cut wood?

Annette: It was near Paris, I don't remember the place but it was near Paris. Afterwards, my father was put in a camp for immigrant workers¹⁵.

Interviewer: As a...?

Annette: As a foreign Jew because my father and mother had applied for naturalization. And at the beginning of the war, this process was blocked. We, the children had been made French by declaration before a justice of the peace. Although we were born in Paris, we were not automatically French.

Interviewer: When was this done?

Annette: 36.

Interviewer: So you don't remember?

Annette: No, I simply received the declaration of French nationality, but despite this declaration of French nationality, for the deportation convoy, I will show you the list, when we were at the

¹⁵ At the end of 1942 when Manek is in the free zone.

camp of Beaune-la-Rolande, my little brother and I were listed as Polish and not as French. In other words, our nationality had been taken away from us.¹⁶

Interviewer: Your father's absences. And your mother, does she work in Paris with you? What do you live off of?

Annette: I don't remember. I know I don't see my mother working. I don't hear my mother singing anymore, whereas she used to sing all day.

Interviewer: In 1941?

Annette: Yes, in 1941. I remember the cold, I was often sick, and we couldn't go to the library anymore.

Jean: There was a little less work. There were lots of worries. We saw our parents worried. So we talked among ourselves, the children. We would say, "Look, Mom is nervous. Be careful! Dad too." "Oh yes, because there is no work." We didn't know exactly. In fact, it was partly the lack of work, but it was also the situation that was getting worse. The situation was getting worse. I realize that now. I realized it afterwards, but you could feel that there was a permanent concern. I would even say an anguish. At the time, we were not able to determine the causes, the origins of this anguish but afterwards we knew it.

Annette: We still go to school. I don't have any memories of being excluded from school. And I remember the anxiety that starts to develop because there is a lot of talking about the Jews. And from that moment on, I feel that the word "Jew" is threatening because it's whispered around us, we talk about this problem in hushed tones, we feel that there is something oppressive and worrying. What also happens at this time, it is that there starts to be bombardments on Paris. So we go down to the basement and the war is very concrete.

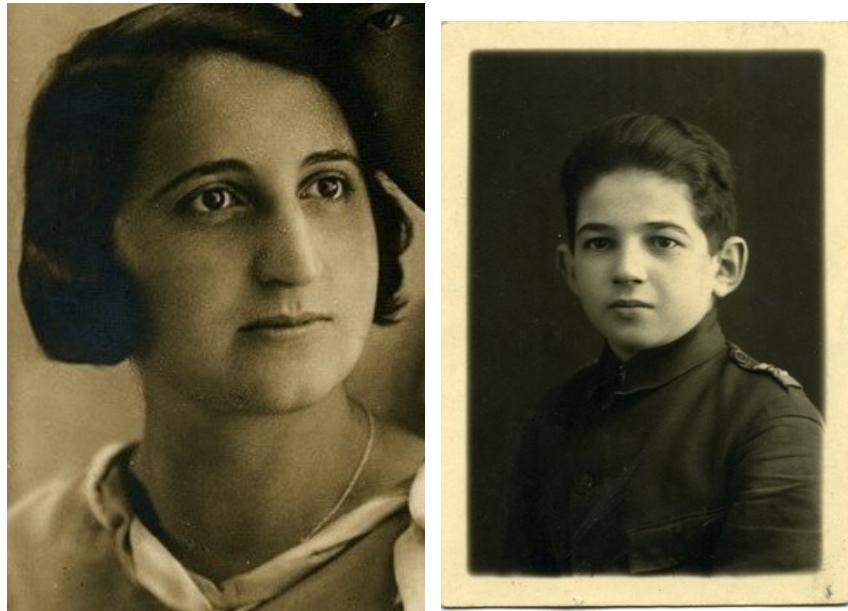
¹⁶ According to Tal Bruttman, to whom we asked the question, the fact that Annette and Michel were registered as Polish on the entry forms for the Beaune-la-Rolande camp is most likely due to administrative laziness or even an oversight. Nothing indicates that they were officially stripped of their nationality.

Interviewer: And so you still go to school, there is anxiety in the air. What happens afterwards? When do things become more and more specific?

Annette: Things become more and more precise in 1942. At the beginning of 1942, and what happens is that people disappear around us. There are practically no more men¹⁷. One very vivid memory is that my father had contact with his family in Poland - my grandmother had sent me a very pretty Polish jacket with lots of rhinestones that I liked very much - and one day they received a letter. And we see them, my father and mother lock themselves in and they cry. They spend all day crying. And they must have received some very bad news. Of course, I found out later that my grandmother with my two youngest uncles, who were 18 and 20 years old, plus - I found out later - my aunt as well, had been rounded up in their village with all the Jews from the village of Biecz and all those who had a somewhat notable job like the grocers, the miller - so that concerned my grandmother - the baker, the horse trader, all of them had been shot at once and the others sent to Belsen. And my family who remained in Krakow or Tarnow were either shot or sent to Belsen or Auschwitz.

Henri: I can still see my father crying with my mother when he told us. Incidentally, they said it in Yiddish.

¹⁷ Reference to the roundups of the Green Ticket in May 1941 and that of August 20, 1941, which mainly affected the 11th and 20th arrondissements



Chana (Hana) et Elek Schneps, soeur et petit frère de Manek.

Courtesy: Samuel Muller via [geni.com](#)

Tape 2

Interviewer: So it's early 1942 when things get tough. Do you remember - apart from the news of the family from Poland, the bad news - is there any discussion about the Jews, the dangers in France?

Annette: We talk about it but in a hushed tone. We, the children, at the time I was 9 years old, felt a danger but it was taboo for us. It was not something we talked about. We were not told about these things. I never knew what was really going on.

Jean: Sometimes we would hear comments without our parents addressing us directly. They were careful not to frighten us, not to scare us. We were psychologically very, very

sheltered. Especially by my mother. We were able to know things but we were still kept out of it.

Annette: And that's how it was until June [1942] when we were still going to school. I realized that I was no longer allowed to go to the library¹⁸. We were no longer allowed to go to the park because it had become forbidden to Jews and dogs.

Interviewer: Who told you that? Did your parents tell you?

Annette: The signs. There were signs. So sometimes we took the subway, for example when we had to go to Bobigny on Sundays, and there we had to take the last subway car. What made me suffer the most was the ban from the library because I used to go there regularly. And that was a great loss for me.

Interviewer: Do you remember talking about these things either with your friends or with your brothers?

¹⁸ Access to libraries is forbidden to Jews by the 9th German Ordinance of July 8, 1942



Playground for children. Forbidden to Jews.

Credit: RogerViollet/Lappi

Annette: Never, never. We didn't talk about it. The only thing is that we had to wear the star in June 42.

Jean: Well I will tell you about it. There was this decree that forced Jews to wear the star. You had to go get the star, pay for it, it wasn't free. So my parents went to get the stars and my mother, who was a seamstress, sewed them on our clothes with great care. With tiny stitches. The star was a big rectangular square with the Star of David in black, she cut out the branches, did the little hems nicely and sewed them beautifully. Really, it was first class work, the work of a fashion designer, a great designer.



Credit: coll. Génériques /[Odysseo](#)

AD77, M4149-1

Annette: I remember very well that my mother put us in our Sunday clothes, because in those days there were Sunday clothes. I had a little sailor suit and my brothers had little golf suits, and she had sewn this star on very tightly. She had put on her Sunday flower dress and she made us parade with her through the streets of Ménilmontant, for a long time, all over the neighborhood. And there was almost nobody in the streets. She told us to stand very straight, proudly. There was a kind of provocation in walking around with her children who displayed the star on their clothes.

Jean: Eight days before the date of the requirement to wear the star, she dressed us in Sunday clothes with the star well sewn on and went all around the neighborhood to show that for her it was not an offense and that, not that she was proud of it, but since it had to be done, it had to be done ostensibly before the starting date. And she forced us to walk straight, very proud and that lasted all afternoon.

Annette: And I was a little apprehensive. I said to myself, "Well," I was reassured to be with my mother, but how was it going to be taken when I went back to school with that star? And when I got to my class the teacher said, "You have two girls in your class" - you see we were not many Jews - "two girls in your class who have a star sewn on their clothes. Be nice to them. Don't say anything." And that's when I realized that there was a second Jewish girl. I had never known that this little girl was Jewish. She didn't live in the same neighborhood, she was from a more upscale neighborhood, at least what I imagined to be more upscale. I think she lived in the H.B.M., the low-cost housing, and at that time it was the ultimate luxury to live in this type of housing. This is what I experienced about the star.

Jean: At school, we didn't have any problems. In fact, the principal of the school made an announcement when the wearing of the star was made mandatory, he said - this was already a demonstration of courage - he said, "Some of your classmates will wear the star but for us nothing is changed."

Annette: But at that time, we had a friend who was a custodian who lived not far from us and to whose house we often went - by the way, she was the one who hid my father afterwards - and as I was leaving her house, I heard two local women talking about the star and they said, "Do you realize a man who looked so proper, his coat opened, and guess what? I saw the star! Can you believe it? And yet he was a man who looked so decent." So there for the first time, I understood that being Jewish was something not right and that wearing the star was something degrading. My Jewish identity, I became aware of it then when I heard these two women talking.

Jean: Some turned away from us. My sister had a boyfriend, who was also our buddy, whose name was Pierre, Pierrot I remember, and who turned away from us. And that shocked us. We talked about it - "Why don't we see Pierre anymore? He doesn't come up to the house anymore" - so we didn't go to his house either.

The July 16, 1942 roundup

Annette: And then very quickly, there were rumors of roundups again and we thought that, once again, the men would be arrested. At least that's what people thought in my house. Still, my mother was worried because I spent a whole day with her where she tried to get us to go away on vacation, to the place where we had been the previous year.

Interviewer: So in the Sarthe?

Annette: No, it wasn't the Sarthe, it was not very far from Paris, in the Seine-et-Marne¹⁹ or something like that. She tried and she called around. I remember that we were at the Post Office of the Place des Fêtes, she tried to phone²⁰ - I was next to her - she was annoyed, not at all available and she was on the telephone for a long time. She must have made a lot of phone calls but nobody wanted us. So she went home.



¹⁹ La Roche-Guyon in Val-d'Oise, not Seine-et-Marne

²⁰ As of July 8, 1942, telephone booths were forbidden to Jews. Rachel took a considerable risk by calling to find a refuge for her children.

Credit: Mémorial de la Shoah

Interviewer: She wanted to send you to boarding school?

Annette: Sending us on vacation, it was the summer break. School was over, I was very happy. I was very happy because school was over, I had a school award and next year it was planned, because of my very good results, that I would skip a grade, that I would go to a higher grade. I was very proud to tell my mother that. I had won awards. My brothers had gotten awards. And by the way, my older brother had won the *Life of Guynemer* award - at that time the school year ended in mid-July - and he remembers he would put that book under his pillow because we were reading at night. My brothers and I slept two in a bed, in a big bed, you can imagine the conditions. All four of us slept in the same room. My parents slept on an unfolded couch at night in the dining room. And so, there were rumors of arrest.

Jean: Already the day before this roundup, the school principal, Mr. Lakiche, came to see my parents, and he said, "You have to run away because tomorrow there will be a roundup, I heard." (...) And I can still hear my mother saying "Yes, thank you, Mr. Lakiche. But I don't think we're going to arrest everyone, it's not possible to arrest a mother and her four young children, it's unthinkable. My husband, yes. My husband, yes." And my parents decided to part ways that night (...)

Henri: My father was able to go to a neighbor's house, a French woman²¹ who lived exactly 6, place Guignier, not far away - five minutes from our house - and who was able to hide my father, as well as a neighbor. There were two of them, the neighbor living on the same floor who also had a daughter²² who came to our house during the night of July 15th to the 16th. Since her father was not there, she came to sleep at our place.

Annette: And my mother said [to Madame Fossiès] - but I didn't know this until afterwards - "I entrust you with my most precious possession."

²¹ Léonie Fossiès, custodian of 6 Place Guignier

²² Rachmil and Rachel Borencz

Place du Guignier	H	{	Torwende	Georis	1877	F	-	m ch.
				alice	1869	Q	m ch.	
			Robinet	Pauline	1866	F	V ch.	
				Huguette	1892	F	C F	Gastron P
				Leon	1899	F	C F	monum Des
	6		Fossiès	Leonie	1883	Nord	V ch.	couverts
			Filippi	alexis	1910	Monaco Monfalcone	m ch.	monoyage Illustration
				Rene	1914	St Claude	m ch.	flam dad.

Léonie Fossiès listed 6 place du Guignier on the 1936 census

Credit: Archives de Paris

Jean: [Her] house was on a street where there was a market (...) twice a week. So there was a shed at the back of the house, in the courtyard, which was used for the peddlers who came there to avoid having to take their merchandise with them every time. So my father had a hiding place. And my mother accompanied him to this hiding place (...) with my older brother. So she had an idea, why did she take my older brother along? Because she thought maybe we would need to know exactly where she was going. You see, I realized that afterwards, after the events, because it served us well afterwards (...)

Annette: My father spent the night and so we stayed home. My mother took in the little neighbor because her father had gone into hiding in the meantime. Her mother had died of grief when her two older brothers were picked up. Well, I think so. Anyway, one of them and the other one had disappeared maybe to hide. She got sick, she died. So the father was left with this little girl named Rachel. The two men, my father and Rachel's father, went into hiding and so we stayed at the house where I remember very well that there was a kind of unusual atmosphere, with a better meal. I remember the meal very well, very precisely and we went to bed. So my three brothers slept together and Rachel and I slept in the same bed. And I was very happy that she slept with me because I could tell her a lot of secrets. The secrets were that soon I would be ten years old and that my mother had promised me that I would learn to dance, that I would learn to play the

piano: all sorts of wonderful things would happen to me when I was ten. And for me, I was looking forward to that age.

Borensz	Rachmil	1897	Polonoise	Polonoise	M ch.	Baileau	Patron 202
Sajna		1894	"	"	M Ep.	"	
Anzel		1923	"	"	C F,	"	
Israel		1924	"	"	C F,	"	
Rachel		1934	Deuse noire	"	C F,	"	

Famille Borensz – Rachel, - listed 3 rue de l'Avenir on the 1936 Census

Credit: Archives de Paris

Jean: [And] then we fell asleep quietly. I mean we. I don't know what state of mind my mother was in.

Interviewer: So it's July of '42?

Annette: It was July 15, 1942, and the next morning very early, it must have been maybe 4:00 a.m., I don't know, we were awakened by pounding, terribly violent, against the door.

Jean: We heard deafening bangs on the door, of an unheard-of violence. Blows... punches, kicks. Because the agents who came had certainly started by knocking softly, but as my mother did not answer, the intensity of the racket increased as time went on. And then finally, she opened. They appeared. Two agents. One in uniform and one in civilian clothes.

Annette: At that moment, I remember two men entering the apartment. To me, they were in civilian clothes. I was told that there must have been one in uniform; I don't remember the uniform. I have a memory of men in civilian clothes, [of] my mother throwing herself at their feet, dragging herself at their feet. It was the first time I saw my mother stooping down,

humiliating herself, crying, saying, "Spare my children!" It really hit me because I don't even remember my brothers. I only remember my mother dragging herself on the ground at the feet of the police officers and the police officers pushing her away with their feet, telling her "Don't waste our time!" and ordering her to pack things for two days.

Jean: [I] had gotten up too, my older brother too, the little ones were crying because they were starting to panic, especially my sister - and they said to my mom, "Well, hurry up and get dressed, pack some things, and we'll take you!" My mom said, "But how... that's not possible!" She started to talk, to plead. It lasted I don't know how long. It was painful to listen to because, on the one hand, my mother was pleading, she even knelt down in front of this individual who pushed her back with his foot and said, "Madam, please, don't make it harder for us!" "Don't make it difficult for us!" It's rather extravagant for an executioner to ask for help from his victim. "Don't make it difficult for us!" That stuck in my ear, you see. I can't help it, it's indelible how this individual spoke to my mother and how my mother bowed down. It's the worst thing ever. Today, I am still ashamed. And I think my sister is too. It scarred her for life. My mother, who was the rock and who finds herself like that in a pitiful position, begging. It was a shock, a terrible shock. We all felt it to various degrees, but we all felt it. All four of us.

Annette: Then there is a kind of panic. She takes sheets and she puts everything she can find in them. They tell her, "Take two days worth of food." I remember that what struck me was that she even put dried beans, like that in the sheet.

Henri: As far as I'm concerned, my mother wanted to take a blanket and there was no blanket at home. And what surprised me was that she said, "Can my son go get a blanket?" And they said yes... Looking back, I'm thinking how come they let us out like that? And in spite of everything, we went outside and I must have discussed with Jean because I remember that we didn't go after all because we would have had to go to my father's house and I was afraid that they would follow us. I remember my mother saying, "Don't come back anymore! You go look there and you go see your father and most importantly try to save yourself and do not come back to the house!" My mother had kept

this idea always... in fact, the proof is that afterwards, it worked. So we came back. She was really disappointed, I remember. She said "Well, why didn't you try to leave?" She spoke to us in Yiddish

Annette: At that time she wanted to comb my hair because back then I had ringlets. They were long curls that my mother took a long time to comb. And she couldn't find the comb - did she do it on purpose? I don't know.

Jean: She wanted to comb my sister. It was a habit. We couldn't go out dirty. It never happened. You had to wash, you had to comb your hair and you had to dress properly. And we didn't have time to do all that.

Annette: She said, "I need Annette to go to the haberdashery and get a comb." Time had certainly passed and the police let me go.

Interviewer: They were waiting while...?

Annette: While I went to get it, yes.

Interviewer: And then, even before, they were in the room?

Annette: They were in the room. They didn't leave the room.

Interviewer: They were watching you?

Annette: Yes, they were watching us and saying, "Hurry up! Hurry up!"

Interviewer: So what time is it? 4-5am?

Annette: Yes, but the time....

Interviewer: So it's later because you're going to get [the comb]

Annette: But very early because this haberdashery was also a newsstand. It must have opened very early. So I go to the street and there I see a lot of Jews, people that I suppose to be Jewish and then there were the stars, and they were pushed brutally by policemen with their cape, the kepi, the white stick and really they were shoved and I go to the haberdasher. She said to me, "Run away, don't go back home!" She did not say to me, "Come, I will hide you." Run away where? I went back to the house.

Interviewer: Was your mother surprised to see you come back?

Annette: No, she was not surprised.

Interviewer: You come back with the comb?

Annette: I come back with the comb and when I came back there was a complete mess in the house. Everything was out of place: the beds, the blankets, the closets were open, everything. And I remember that I had my doll, which I loved very much, and I wanted to take this doll with me because I knew that we were going to a prison, a Jewish prison. I was curious to see what this prison was like. What was going to happen? To a child, in the end it was...

Interviewer: An adventure

Annette: Yes, it was an adventure. And as I tried to take my doll with me, the policeman yanked it away from me.

Jean: "You don't need a doll! You don't need a doll!" Just like that. He was a monster.

Interviewer: Why?

Annette: I don't know and he threw her on the beds. And for me, it was a very big heartbreak to leave without my doll.

Interviewer: How do you know it was two policemen? They were in plain clothes.

Annette: They must have said, "Police, open up!" I don't know, I don't remember everything. And then, when we went to the concierge's door -we were on the second floor, the concierge lived just on the same floor...

Interviewer: Was it the concierge who was a friend?

Annette: No, it was another one. She was a friend... I thought she was a friend because my mother often went to her house to do her daughter's hair. They had a very good relationship, they were our immediate neighbors. She wasn't a friend at all in the end because she tried to turn in my father afterwards and she completely looted the apartment. But my mother, before leaving, said to the police, referring to Rachel, "She is not Jewish." And she asked the concierge to keep her. The police agreed and we were taken away. So then, we were on the street.

DÉSIGNATION DES RUES dans les villes	NUMÉROS PAR RUE			NOMS DE FAMILLE	PRÉNOMS (un seul prénom)	ANNÉE de NAISSANCE	LIEU de NAISSANCE (Département ou nation)	NATIONA- LITÉ	SITUATION par RAPPORT au chef de ménage	PROFESSION	Pour les patrons, chefs d'entreprise, ouvriers à domicile, inscrire : pa- tient				
	des maisons	des ménages	des individus												
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Rue de l'Avenir	1	(aux) Bednard		Victorine	1894	B. du Rhône		M ép.		J. P.					
		{ Hertz		Jeanne	1877	L'ouïe inf.		V ch.		Macrière	artisan				
		{ Tournier		Louis	1879	oise		V ami		nacrier					
	3	{ Rémondet		Alexandrine	1900	S.		M ch.		macun	Borgel 16 ^e				
		{		Marcelle	1905	Hérault		M ép.		concierge	Gaborian mughien				
		{		Clémée	1927	Jaune et.		C t.							
		Bel		Juliette	1884			V mere			A.B.S.				

Marcelle Rémondet listed as concierge of 3 rue de l'Avenir in 1936 census

Credit: Archives de Paris

Interviewer: So the custodian also agreed to keep this little girl?

Annette: She must have agreed. Yes, she agreed. Yes.

Henri: So we left her with the custodian. Afterwards, in any case, she was saved and not deported, so it ended very well for her.

Interviewer: So you went downstairs?

Jean: So we had to close the door thoroughly. And since [my mother] had two keys, she gave one to my older brother. Despite everything, she still had a sense of practicality. And then we left.

Annette: We go downstairs. And very often afterwards, I dreamed that I was going back up those stairs. From that roundup, I have this memory of going down the stairs and I have the feeling that if I go back up the stairs, it's going to be over, that life is going to resume in fact. And then we're in the street and there are people cheering.

Interviewer: People?

Jean: Ah, some people. Not everyone. Some people cheered. Yes. This is how it was.

Annette: At the windows ...

Interviewer: What people?

Annette: The people in the neighborhood and they were clapping. So are they clapping to support us or are they clapping because they are happy to see us go? I know that deep down I have a memory of contempt from these people.

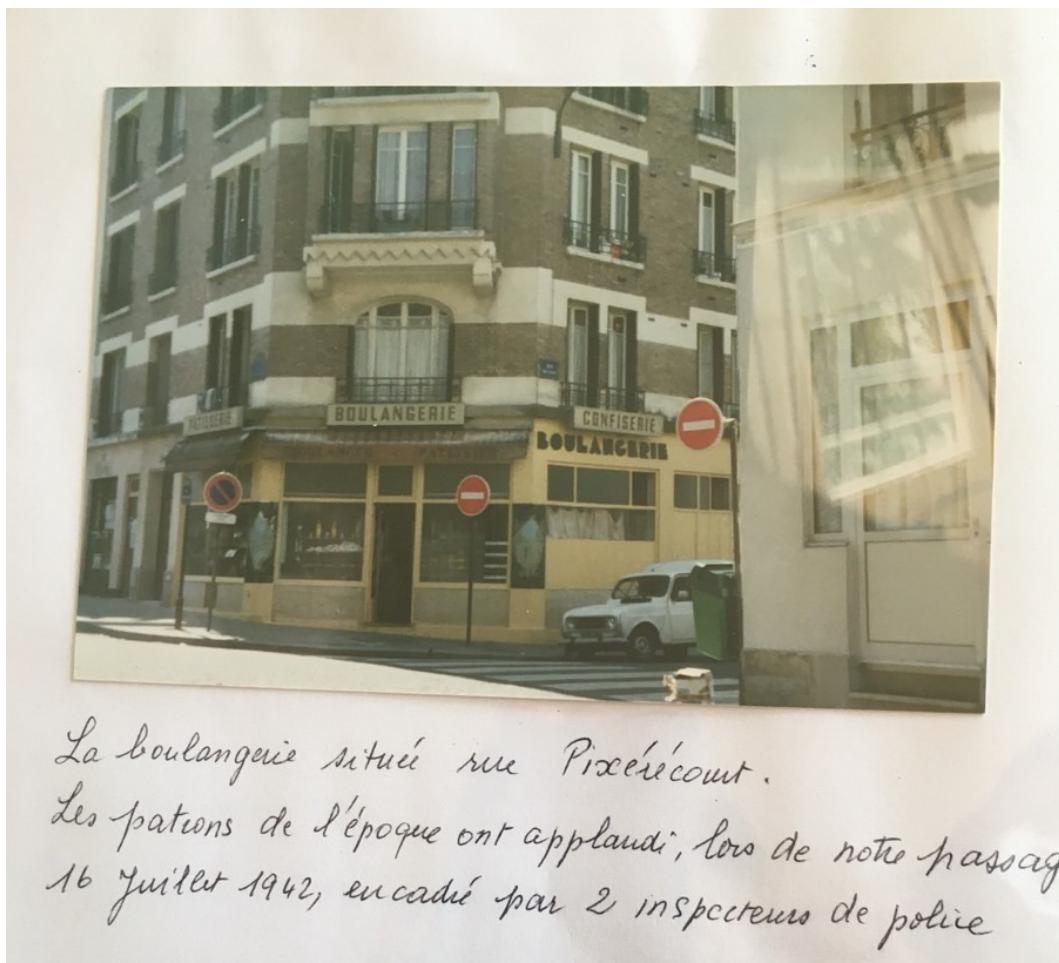
Michel: At one point we passed in front of the bakery, I have a very precise memory of that - where I used to go to get bread, I always bought two pennies worth of

roudoudous²³ with the change - and the baker cheered as we passed. So I don't know if it was us she was cheering for or the cops. And that really struck me.

Interviewer: So at the time, on the day itself, you felt that people were cheering because...

Annette: ... they were happy.

Henri: Evidently cheering in the sense of "Let's pick up this garbage! Let's pick up those Jews! It's a good thing!"



Picture taken in the 70s by Henri Muller who wrote:

"Bakerie located on Pixérécourt street. The owners of the time applauded when we walked by on July 16, 1942, surrounded by two policemen."

Courtesy of Henri Muller

²³ type of candy

Annette: Because from the moment we wore the star, what I forgot to say is that there was - I felt that, my brothers maybe not - a quarantine around us. I mean that the friends who used to come to the house, I had a friend who was my best friend, she never came back. I also had a boyfriend who would come to play, same thing. He was forbidden to come and play with us.

So my older brother had this book under his pillow, it was *The Life of Georges Guynemer* that he had read the day before, the 15th, and he thought, "That way I can continue tomorrow." Obviously, he never recovered this book. So we are in the street where the policemen tell us to move very quickly.



Itinerary walked by the Mullers from their home to the Bellevilloise located at 21 rue Boyer on July 16, 1942.

Henri: So, we went outside with our bundles and we took the street to go to the grouping center. We went down rue de l'Avenir, where we lived, I remember, rue Pixérécourt, rue Ménilmontant. We crossed the intersection with rue des Pyrénées. And we got off at a street called rue Boyer. I still remember, at 21. And there was a kind of large room, you see.

Jean: We were panicked. We had never had to deal with the police, agents. We were not delinquents. At school, we were not grounded. (...) We were, psychologically, very, very, very sheltered. Too sheltered for events like the ones that happened afterwards. We were not prepared for these events. How did these agents...? But we didn't know what it was! We saw them on the street regulating traffic but they never called on us, never gave us a reprimand, never!



La Bellevilloise (@labellevilloise) | Twitter

Credit: @labellevilloise, Twitter

Annette: They put us in a sort of courtyard first, not too far away. To me, it seemed like a very long walk, but in fact it wasn't very far.

Jean: And my mother, my mother, she was there. She had to show her dignity in the street. It was her pride. She was very upright, but you could see that she was... she didn't have her usual complexion. She didn't have any makeup on, she didn't have her usual complexion. That's for sure. Because I looked at her before leaving one last time... I had only one hour left with her when we left, an hour or an hour and a half. I could see her, I

could see her well. She had changed color. She had aged... she was no longer the same (...) And so we arrived in this center, in a frightful, frightful mess. People with their bundles in a jumble, people who were feeling sick, children who were vomiting... It was awful, AWFUL. All of a sudden, we were thrown into an atmosphere that we didn't even suspect existed, that we didn't even suspect...

Henri: And I remember, we were more or less in the center, next to my mother of course, and I remember ... well it's a small thing, it's a small detail, but she had peaches with her -because it was the summer season- and she said to me, "Eat a peach" and I said, "I'm not hungry. I don't feel like it." She said, "Enjoy it because, you know, you're not going to eat another one." Well, something like that.

Annette: (...) there was an indescribable chaos. I remember a long table with people lying on it, dragging themselves, screaming, convulsing, vomiting, shouting, screaming non-stop. There was such a mess and people calling out to each other and children running around.

Henri: And at one point in the back, there was a large table, it's a room a little bit to the side, where there were already cops who were sitting and calling people by name and they made them go up on a small terrace. A small terrace where they grouped the people. So after the call certainly, we ended up, my mother and my brothers and sister, up there.

Annette: And it was such chaos that my two older brothers who were 10 and 11 - my little brother was 7 - my mother managed to get them out.

Henri: At one point, my mother tried to tell us again, "Run away!" This time we were a little more convinced because my mother most certainly scolded us, telling us that we shouldn't stay, etc. And she asked us to go get some bread [because] we thought we would go out alone again like before. And a cop accompanied us to Boyer Street. It didn't work so we came back again. And then she insisted with another cop, actually a police officer, and luck was on her side.



Regroupement sur la "terrasse" intérieure avant le
Transfert au "Vel d'Hiv" en autobus.

Picture taken in the 70s by H. Muller who wrote:

"Grouping together on the interior "terrace" before the transfer to the Vel' d'Hiv' by bus"

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: How did she do it?

Henri: She had a lot of nerve to do that because she tried every way she could. She asked him, "Try to get my two kids out. At least the two out of four and they'll be fine afterwards." It worked, and as luck would have it, a woman, I remember very well, who had a POW husband, was allowed to get out.

Annette: My mother did it because there was a woman, I learned about it afterwards, whose husband was a prisoner of war and she passed my two brothers off as her children -because the wives of prisoners of war could be released from the roundup at that time- with the help of a policeman. So my two brothers passed themselves off as her children and with a bedsheets, with a bundle, my mother had told them, "If once you're on the street... you'll say you're going to the washhouse." And there was another child from the neighborhood, a little boy who escaped at the same time. This little boy, his mother pushed him along. And this boy, whose name was Joseph, he could not stand being away from his mother and he would go back to the police station where he asked to be brought back to his mother. And this little boy returned to his mother because I saw him again in Beaune-la-Rolande and both of them vanished in Auschwitz²⁴. Though he had been freed.

²⁴ Joseph Brandwayn (born March 23, 1932) and his family lived at 17 rue Pixérécourt. On July 17, he was rounded up with his mother Leja and his younger brother Roger (born July 15, 1939). They were deported from Drancy on convoy 40 on November 4, 1942.



*La Terrasse, c'est là que nous avons quitté notre
mère, Annette et Michel*

Picture taken in the 70s by H. Muller who wrote:
“The rooftop. This is where we left our mother, Annette and Michel.”
Courtesy of Henri Muller

Jean: My mother knew a woman whose husband was a prisoner of war who was there but was arrested. She had her documentation: her husband was a prisoner of war, her family record book. She had three children on this family record book. But she was not with her children. So she accepted my mother's proposal to let us go out with her. As she had three children on her family record book who were about the same age as Henri, me and an older child, we took another friend of ours named Joseph Brandwayn.

1264

20^e Belleville

DÉSIGNATION DES RUES dans les villes	NUMÉROS PAR RUE			NOMS DE FAMILLE	PRÉNOMS (un seul prénom)	ANNÉE de NAISSANCE	LIEU de NAISSANCE (Département ou nation)	NATIONA- LITÉ	ÉTAT MARIONNAI-	SITUATION par RAPPORT au chef de ménage	PROFESSION	Pour les patrons, chefs d'entreprise, ouvriers à domicile, inscrire : pa- tente Pour les employés ou ouvriers, indiquer le nom du patron ou de l'entre- prise qui les emploie. Pour tous, indiquer le lieu du travail (voir ins- tructions spéciales).			
	des maisons	des ménages	des immeubles												
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
Rue Pixérécourt	17			Brandwayn	Leja	1905	Hollogne	Belgique	M	ép	S.P.				
				"	Joseph	1932	19		C	fils	S.P.				

Joseph Branwayn and his mother Leja listed at 17, rue Pixérécourt in the 1936 Census. The father, Abram, is on the previous page.
 Credit: Archives de Paris

And then we went out with her, all three of us. This woman lived on Rue des Amandiers, 39 Rue des Amandiers. I don't remember her name. I remember the address because I told her, "Listen, Madame, after the war, we'll come and see you." But I don't remember her name. Anyway, after the war, she didn't exist anymore. Nobody knew her anymore. She didn't come home because she was arrested afterwards. And we went out with her. The officer who checked the papers turned a blind eye. They were police officers. We were guarded by the police and the gendarmerie. Not by the Germans. We didn't see any Germans. It was the French Police and the French Gendarmerie essentially. Not a single German.

Henri: The cop went with us. As if nothing was happening. Because the cops were obviously guarding the entrances to this terrace to go down, you see, we couldn't get out because when it's closed, it's closed. There's nothing to do. And so the three of us went out and the cop accompanied us to rue Ménilmontant, which was just fifty meters away from rue Boyer, and that's when he said, "Okay, it's up to you now, go!" And that was that. So I remember we were carrying bundles, my mother had given us little bundles, and I remember us asking where the washhouse was.



Picture taken in the 70s by H. Muller who wrote:
"Staircase to freedom for Henri and Jean."
Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: Your mother wanted your two brothers to leave...

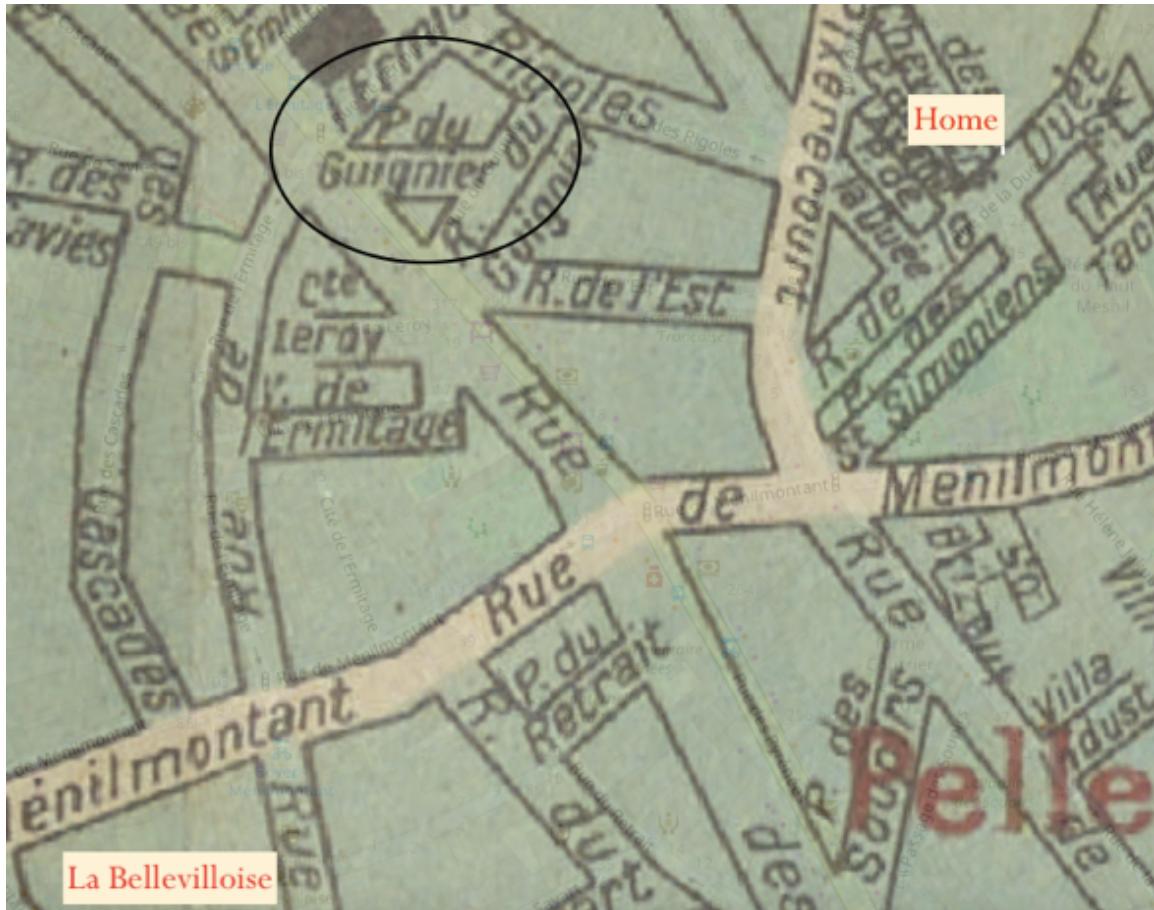
Annette: Yes

Interviewer: ... because then she was already ...?

Annette: She thought that they were old enough to find my father and then fend for themselves. We, Michel and me, at 7 and 9, she thought we were too young. She assumed that she couldn't get any more people released.

Jean: And we, of course, knew where to reach our father. That's when we understood. So, she gave us a bundle, that is, a sheet with our things, a few things. And then she told us -

you can see how much she thought about details - "If anyone asks you where you're going" - next to the Place Guignier, there's a street called Rue de l'Ermitage where there was a washhouse - "You'll say you're going to the washhouse to bring laundry to be washed." And so we went to find my father.



And we said to this friend Joseph, who also had to find his father, "If you don't find your father, here is where we are: 6, place Guignier. The lady's name is Madame Fossiés." We heard after the war that he had been deported. I have always had the suspicion that, not having found his father, since the latter had perhaps already left or hidden elsewhere, he went to Place Guignier and the concierge told him, "No, we don't know those people." I can't take that suspicion out of my head, you see. Now, it's very difficult to accuse, but it's still not normal that this boy who was given a very precise address, very precise, and who didn't find his father, couldn't... he was arrested the day after. We found out after the war.



Joseph Brandwayn. Credit: Yad Vashem

Henri: As soon as we got out of the grouping center, as soon as we ran out into the street, we immediately removed the yellow star.

Interviewer: Did you know what would happen to you?

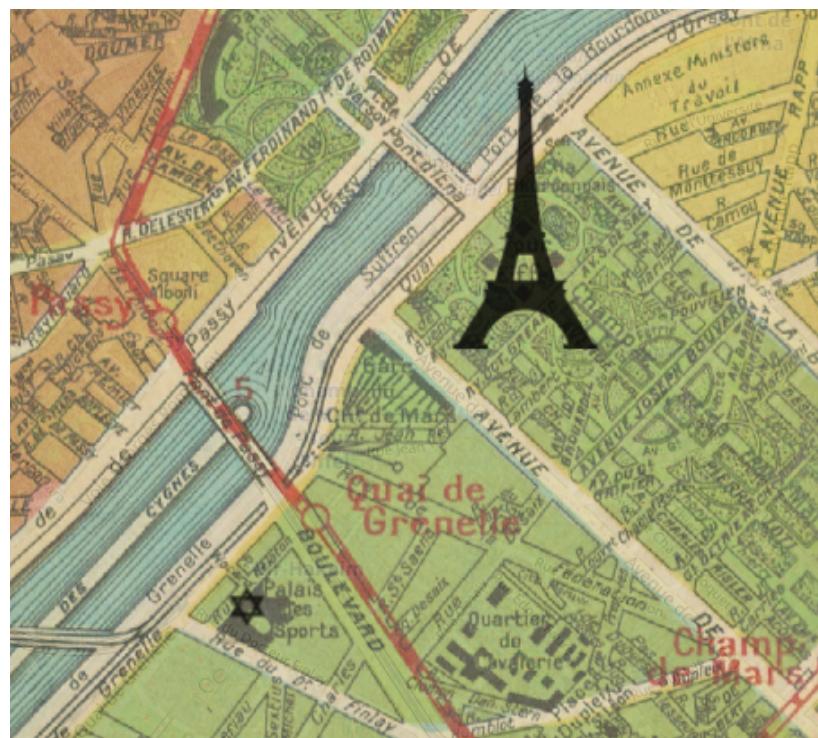
Annette: Not at all

Interviewer: Did anyone know where you were going? What was being said? What were people saying?

Annette: We weren't saying anything. I mean for me, I was only 9 years old, we didn't say anything. They put us on Parisian buses afterwards.

Interviewer: After how long?

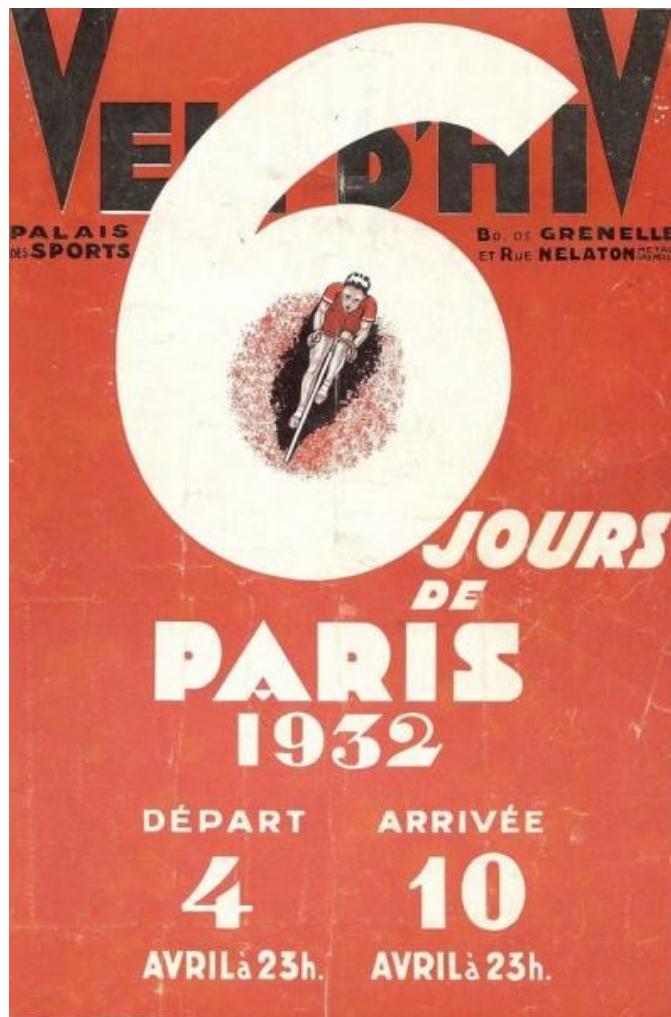
Annette: We stayed a few hours in that chaos. Then, they put us on buses and in these buses, they took us directly to the Vélodrome d'Hiver.²⁵



Michel: There is one thing I remember very well, it is the Eiffel Tower. The Vel D'Hiv was really close to the Eiffel Tower. And that struck me greatly because the Eiffel Tower could be seen from the top of Ménilmontant. It is practically the highest point of Paris... well, Télégraphe is not far, but from the top of Ménilmontant, you can see all of Paris. And I was fascinated every time. And I would see the Eiffel Tower, but I had never been there and I had never seen it from so close. I said: "Oh my! I didn't think it was that big!" We drove past the Eiffel Tower and it seemed huge to me.

²⁵Listen to the testimony of Marcelle Duval who was sent to the Vel d'Hiv as a Red Cross volunteer on July 16, 1942 (c.f. resources section): <https://occupiedparis.penns.org/testimony/mduval>

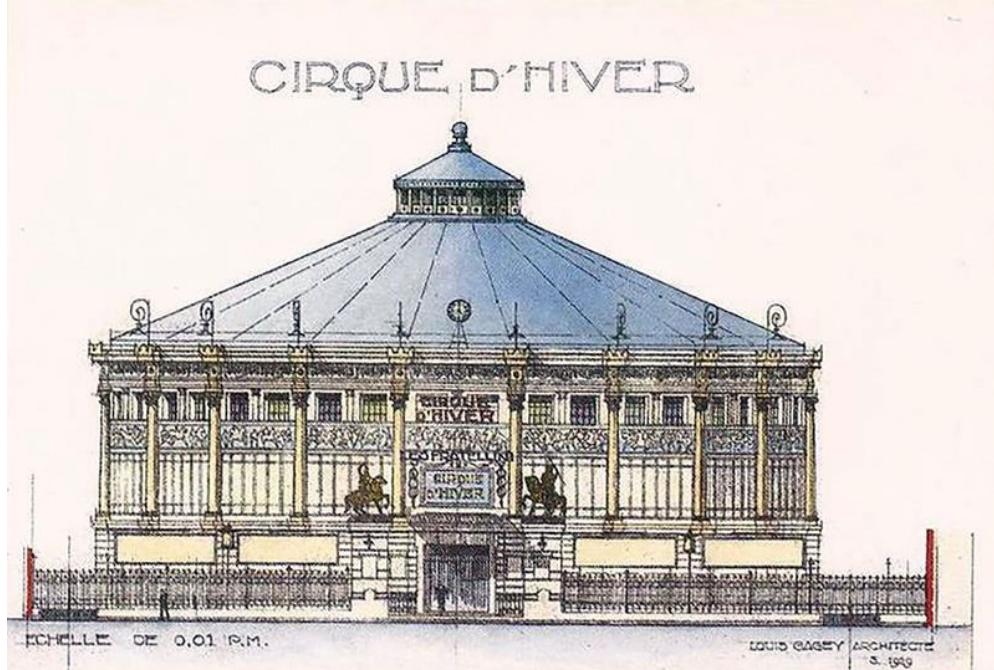
Annette : At the Vel d'Hiv, we are crammed into the bleachers. There is tremendous activity down there. So the Vélodrome d'hiver, it was the place where there were parties, meetings, popular festivals and especially a famous bicycle race that lasted six days.



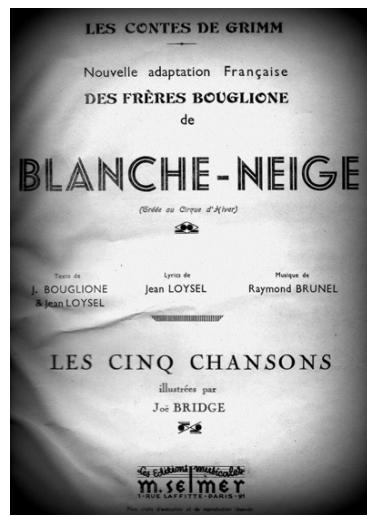
Credit: Auction.fr

So there was a kind of sloping track for the cyclists and bleachers for the people who came to watch. We were installed on bleachers where I remember that there were luminous sconces that never went out, neither at night nor during the day, and I told myself that when it was going to go out then a show was going to start. I remembered that, the year before, I had been in a similar

place, it was at the Cirque d'Hiver, where it was the same, circular. And when the lights went out, *Snow White* had started. So I was waiting for the lights to go out.



Credit: Circopedia archive Credit: Le bloc-note de Cirk75



Credit: [Le bloc note de Cirk75](#)

But otherwise, there was constant shouting. There were loudspeakers calling names over and over. So people were craning their necks to the speakers because I understood that the name

meant release. In the end, I think that, since afterwards we were transported to the Beaune-la Rolande and Pithiviers camps in successive waves, perhaps the names were used to group people together and organize their departure. So there, we had practically no food or drink.



Public Domain. Credit: www.Multicollection.fr

Michel: We were given sardines - there were ladies in blue who must have been social workers - and it must have been the second day, sardines and madeleines.

Annette: And the toilets - there were so many people and so much chaos - were immediately clogged, so that people relieved themselves on the spot and we were wading in excrement.

Michel: You know, we have an olfactory memory more than of... For me, the Vel d'Hiv, it's an awful smell of urine.

Annette: So a terrible heat - it was still in the middle of July. There was a glass roof above. There were women who committed suicide. There was one that died next to us.

Interviewer: How did they commit suicide?

Annette: They threw themselves.

Michel: I remember one woman who threw herself from the top of the bleachers. That freaked me out a bit.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of people? Was there a big crowd?

Annette: Oh, it was packed! Plus the luggage. It was crowded because the Vel d'Hiv roundup lasted from July 16 to 17 and there were more than 12,000 people arrested, including more than 4,000 children. All the children and women with families were at the Vel d'Hiv. The adults and the young people over 18 years old were sent directly to Drancy. So at the Vel d'Hiv, there must have been about 8,000 people including 4,000 children. So children were running around on the slopes, sliding down, and you could hear the loudspeakers threatening the children with the worst reprisals if they didn't keep quiet. Then the mothers calling.

Michel: I was very, very shocked by the screaming, so we and our friends weren't too worried. We were playing on the track because there was a cycling track and there were two turns that were very, very steep. We had found bibs of cyclists and we had fun sliding where the curve was the most raised and we were yelled at.

Annette: I got sick very quickly because I was sick when I was arrested. I had just had jaundice so I was still in very bad health and the heat, the thirst and all that and I was very quickly very sick to the point that I had to be taken downstairs where there was the infirmary.

Michel: My sister got sick so we found ourselves down below. So, in the booths, in the cubicles. There was a cot, which made it a little more comfortable because the bleachers, you had to get settled, there was nothing. And there I shared the cot with my sister.

Annette: There, there were women with veils from the Red Cross and that's where I saw things that shocked me enormously. In this sort of infirmary, where people were a bit left out like that, I recognized a man whom I had seen surrounded with respect. I used to go from time to time to his house, which was not very far from our house. He was a paralytic. He had a family, I don't know, he must have had seven or eight children, who surrounded him with deference. And this man, it was the first time I had seen that, he was all naked, all white and he was moaning.

Interviewer: He was on the floor?

Annette: He was on the floor. And for me, all of a sudden, I said to myself... I had already seen my mother, which had shocked me, dragging herself at the feet of the police officers. I didn't understand at the time that she was trying to save us. This naked man, completely vulnerable, in such a state... for me, I was no longer a child and the adults, I felt contempt for them, contempt and I told myself that they are not capable. They can't be relied upon.

Interviewer: "They won't be able to help me" maybe?

Annette: For me, the adults were on a pedestal and all of a sudden it was... it was that. And so we stayed. I felt a little better.

Interviewer: What did they do to you? They took you down

Annette: So instead of being laid on the bleachers, we were thrown on a cot where I slept with my little brother. There was a woman next to me, in this kind of box, who was grumbling, I never heard a word. And my mother was sleeping on the floor.

Interviewer: Were you given something to drink?

Annette: We were given...I remember one time we were given a madeleine and a sardine with tomato. And to drink, I don't remember. But maybe. But I don't remember. And nevertheless, when we were on the bleachers before, I nonetheless experienced something that impressed me

deeply. There was a very young woman, very beautiful, next to my mother, with whom my mother bonded.



Hinda Rajchenbach

Credit: Mémorial de la Shoah

And she was always kissing a little 2 year old boy with pink cheeks, all curly and it amazed me to see this mother who was hugging her child so tightly and he was laughing constantly. And it affected me a lot because this child was the first child to die, almost eight days or ten days later, in Beaune-la-Rolande. He died almost immediately.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Annette: Two years old and he is buried in Beaune-la-Rolande. And actually I asked myself for years if I had really lived all that. And it's when I went back to Beaune-la-Rolande and I looked

for the grave of this child - because I said to myself "I didn't dream it, I remember it well" - I found his... I only had his first name, his name was Henri²⁶ and I found his grave. Well, he wasn't alone, there were other children who had also died in the camp. It brought everything back to me, in fact.

Interviewer: The book you wrote, we'll talk about it later, but it begins with a poem. Did you write the poem?

Annette: Yes, yes, yes. When I saw that little boy's grave again...

Interviewer: Could you read it? Because it is very beautiful. Could you maybe read it now since we're talking about this little boy...

Today, I went to the cemetery

of Beaune-la-Rolande

So many years later

A strange force pushed me there

I wandered among the graves

some of them very old

one by one I looked at them

I was looking for

a name, a memory

Did it even exist?

And suddenly, in a corner

secluded and sad,

I saw a grey stone slab

and among some names

his was written

it was him, I knew it

Henri

1940 - July 27, 1942

Henri

my joyful elf of the Vel d'Hiv'.

Henri with pink cheeks and brown curls

my little laughing neighbor

Nights and days in the noise and the screams

²⁶ Henri Gabermann, who died from diphtheria on July 28, 1942 . His mother was Hinda Rajchenbach who was deported on August 28, 1942 (convoy 25) and whose last known address was 47, rue des Blancs-Manteaux in the 4th arrondissement.

in the filth and the stench
Sitting next to me on the bleacher floor
his beautiful mother tenderly embracing him
on the bleachers of the Vel d'Hiv

Henri, two years old, the first dead child of
the
camp
before the thousands of others...

But he stayed in Beaune

He never took the train
leading to the long journey

And I, lying on the rotting straw
swept by the white lights of the watchtowers
I remember, I was nine years old,
all night long, her mother screaming mad
in Beaune-la-Rolande



Henri Gabermann
Credit: Mémorial de la Shoah

So in fact, on the grave of this little boy - for me, this little boy is the symbol of Vichy, because he was not killed in Germany, he was killed in France, in a camp guarded by the French, because all the time I was detained, I only met French people - and on his grave, it was written "Killed by Hitler's fascists." Not too long ago, his grave was redone and it still says "Killed by Hitler's fascists". But I think that he is a victim, well, it's Nazism that is primarily responsible, but it's still the Vichy policy that caused this child to be arrested and to die at the age of two in the Beaune-la-Rolande camp.

Interviewer: At the Vel d'Hiv, you did not see any Germans at all?

Annette: No, never. Neither at Drancy, nor at Beaune-la-Rolande.

Michel: No. So, this, really, I'm very formal. We didn't worry too much because we only saw French cops in Police uniforms. And then when we arrived at Beaune-la-Rolande, it was gendarmes. But I didn't see a single German soldier.

Interviewer: So the only Germans you had seen up until then were the nice soldiers who...?

Annette: Yes. No, there were still German inscriptions in the streets. But let's say that the arrest, the mistreatment, that was done directly by the French.

Interviewer: The order to wear the yellow star, sorry to go back a bit, how did one find out? Where was it written? How did you know? Do you remember that?

Annette: No. I believe there was a decree

Interviewer: A German decree²⁷?

²⁷ The yellow star was imposed on all Jews over 6 years old in the occupied zone by the 8th German order of May 29, 1942

Annette: No, it was decrees, I think, French - it was French laws, French decrees but certainly under German orders.

Interviewer: It was published by the French administration?

Annette: No, in any case, the French administration went beyond that because when it instituted the Jewish Statute in 1940, it anticipated the demands of the Germans and went even further in defining the Jewish identity because it put forward the notion of race and not religion.

Tape 3

Interviewer: Can we get ahead of things? Can we go back to the Vel d'Hiv? So this is the first night. You're sick. You're in bed with your brother and your mother next to you.

Annette: It's not the first night. It's after about three days.

Interviewer: Okay, three days have passed?

Annette: On the bleachers.

Interviewer: Okay, on the bleachers and this is the third night or so that you've been sick.

Annette: That's why we had to leave practically last, in the last ones from the Vel d'Hiv because they had to evacuate the sick at the end.

Interviewer: So as you are there, people are leaving. Do new ones arrive or not?

Annette: No, no, no.

Interviewer: So the Vel d'hiv was emptying?

Annette: I don't remember much. For me, the conditions of the departure, the only memory that I have is that we can breathe because it was unbreathable, it was really unbreathable. And then suddenly, we had hope. For example, I don't remember the train, when we took the train at the Austerlitz station in the cattle cars. But just the fact of leaving the Vel d'Hiv, if only to go to the train station, just at that moment, it's a moment when you breathe a little. And then, I just hear people saying, "We're going to Beaune-la-Rolande," and then they start saying, "But there are others who are going to Pithiviers." So they knew very well where they were going. And about those who were going to Pithiviers, people would say, "They're lucky! The people who are going to Pithiviers are going to be released," and maybe those who were going to Pithiviers said the opposite. There was always this hope that the fate of the neighbor was better than the one that awaited us.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-S69236
Foto: o. Ang. | 1941

Pithiviers as seen in 1941
Credit: Bundesarchiv, Bild via Wikimedia Commons under CC BY-SA 3.0

Michel: So again, we were taken by bus to the Austerlitz station. So we traveled across Paris again. It was good because ... well it was good, yes, because there we had a little more air. I remember being able to stay on the platform. We were very tight in there. And so we got to the freight station and they put us in cattle cars. I remember it was very hot. We arrived in this little town, Beaune-la-Rolande, which was 50 miles from Paris. But the trip was quite long. And then we got off the train and walked to the camp, which was not very far from the village.

Beaune-la-Rolande²⁸

Annette: So we arrived in Beaune-la-Rolande.

Interviewer: So how did you leave? You don't remember what date?

Annette: It's at the end of July, the 21st.

Interviewer: So from the 17th...

Annette: No, the 16th.

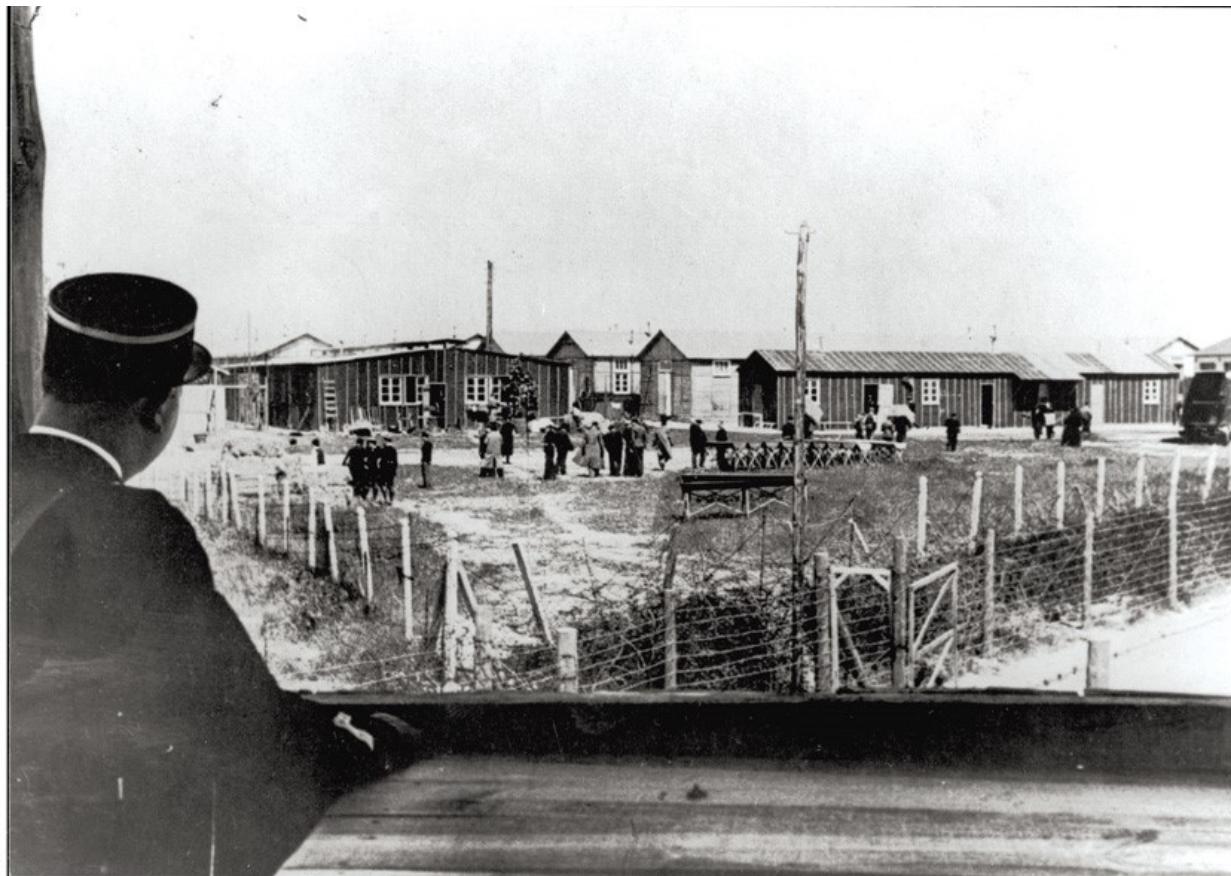
Interviewer: So four days later. Five days later on the 21st of August...

Annette: Five-six days.

Interviewer: And you don't remember the departure from the Vel d'Hiv? You remember...

²⁸ Listen to the testimonies of **Micheline Cahen**, one of two social workers in the Beaune-la-Rolande camp (c.f. resources): <https://occupiedparis.pennnd.org/testimony/mcahen>

Annette: That breathing moment. I don't remember the train trip and the arrival at Beaune-la-Rolande, but I still see that look in the eyes of the people in the village because we had to walk through the whole length of it, from the station to the camp. The camp touched the village. So I remember the arrival at the camp. It was a camp surrounded by barbed wire. There were watchtowers with gendarmes with guns.



French policeman watching the Beaune-la-Roland camp
Credit: Mémorial de la Shoah

Interviewer: French policemen?

Annette: Oh yes, that was all there was. From the camp, what I remember very well is that we could see the village church, which seemed very close. We were really close to the church. And then we arrived in this camp surrounded by barbed wire and we were given our own barracks. They were wooden barracks with beds. But as we were the last to arrive, there were no more

barracks with beds... in the barrack we were in, number 11, we slept on the ground. There was straw directly on the floor and in the middle, on each side, people were practically touching each other.



Beaune-la-Rolande camp. Barrack 11 where Rachel, Annette and Michel lived.
Credit: Cercle-Musée mémorial des enfants du Vél' d'Hiv'

Interviewer: Were there many of you in this barrack?

Annette: Oh it was, I can't say how many but there were really countless of us in that barrack. And really on top of one another.

Interviewer: When you arrive, you get off the train and you walk? You were talking about the look...

Annette: I have this memory because it was afterwards that I felt it more. What I remember is that there were a few water points and immediately the women tore off their clothes to wash themselves and they started fighting over access to the water points. There was really violence around...

Interviewer: Great tension? Was this the first time you could wash? Since the 16th?

Annette: We needed it. So afterwards, we go into the barrack and there, it's the same, to see these women fighting, it shocks me, it shocks me enormously. And then...

Interviewer: You are with your mother and your little brother?

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you talk? Does your mother talk to you about your two brothers who...

Annette: No, no, not at all. I mean maybe but I don't remember.

Interviewer: Okay.

Annette: I remember we had the bed against the door and it must have rained because water was falling on my mother. And my brother and I had a fight because she asked us to come over, she said, "Who wants to sleep next to me?" And then my brother and I didn't want to sleep next to her because, since she was getting water on her head, we didn't want to get wet. That's something...

Interviewer: It was a first night ...

Annette: It was the first night. Also, I had to go pee at night. There was a ban on leaving the barracks and I begged my mother so much that she went with me. There were the watchtowers, the floodlights sweeping the camp, and I don't know, I made a wrong move and got my finger

stuck in the door. I was going to scream and my mother put her hand over my mouth to keep me quiet. And the fact that I was not allowed to scream, that scared me a lot too.

Interviewer: She put her hand over your mouth so you wouldn't scream, so you wouldn't wake people up.

Annette: No, so as not to attract the attention of the watchtowers, of the gendarmes, because it was forbidden... we were pointed at.

Interviewer: Who was in this camp? Were there men too?

Annette: There was a barrack of men where we sometimes went to see what it was. Because the Beaune-la-Rolande camp was reserved for foreign men at first. Since 1941, Parisian Jews of foreign origin had been locked up there. But from March or April [1942], they were sent to Auschwitz. They were among the first to be sent to Auschwitz to clear out, to make room for the Jews of the Vel d'Hiv roundup. Nothing was prepared for the women and children, not food, not anything at all. Nothing was prepared to accommodate them.

Interviewer: And so there were mostly women and children who were together. And a men's barrack next door. Do you remember if it was mostly foreign Jews? Were they people who had a strong accent?

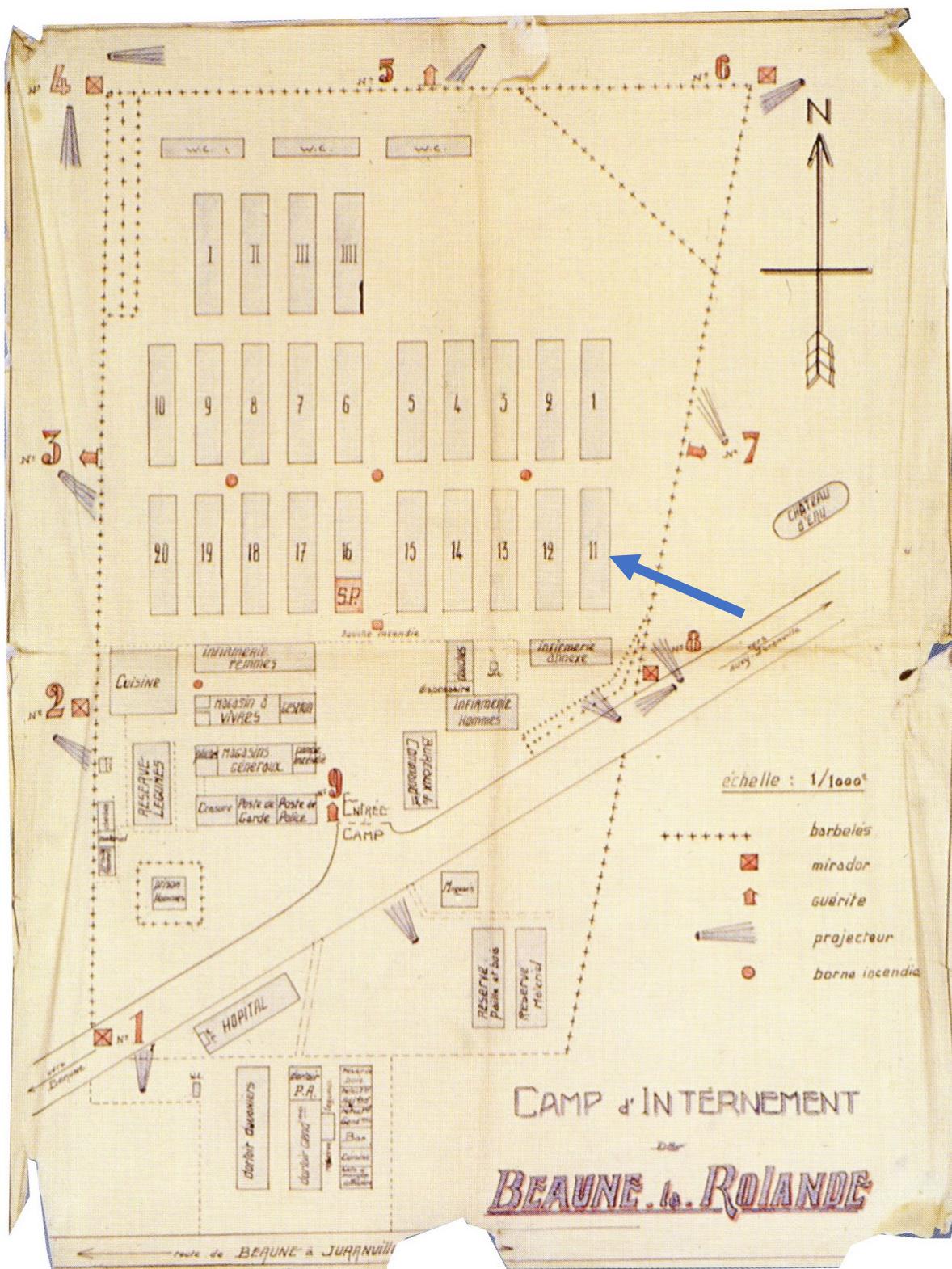
Annette: Yes, yes, but the children were all French. They were practically all born in Paris or perhaps they were foreign Jews, especially Polish. But on the other hand, some of them had had their naturalization withdrawn, since naturalization had been withdrawn, I believe... they had to be over ten years old.

Interviewer: And so the first night?

Annette: Yes, so, as long as my mother is there, as long as my mother is there... she is very available. All of a sudden, she who was always... I don't know. The fact that she's there or maybe she feels something, she's always playing with us.

Interviewer: How long are you there with her?

Annette: With her, we're there until August 7th.



Credit: <https://www.memoiresdeguerre.com>

Interviewer: So about ten days. And what do you do during these days?

Annette: I remember mostly playing with my mother. We're on top of her. She's in bed...we tickle her. She's right there. She's physically playing with us.

Interviewer: Inside?

Annette: No outside, we were never inside. So also what shocked me when we were there, the first day, was that in front of the barracks, there were holes without doors or anything, they were the latrines, without doors. And there, the adults, like the children, did their needs in front of everyone. That is to say, there was no more modesty left, nothing at all. We were like animals. We got used to it.

Interviewer: Do you remember being shocked...

Annette: To have been very shocked...

Interviewer: ... when you saw it.

Annette: And on top of that, we were afraid because there were big maggots at the bottom of the latrines. Maybe they were latrines that had been installed before.

Interviewer: It must have smelled bad?

Annette: It smelled very bad. It smelled very bad. Incidentally, afterwards, just on an anecdotal level, my brother had the opportunity to meet a farmer who lived next door who complained that, when the camp was evacuated, the shit of the Jewish internees had polluted the area... So there we are. And there began to be departures of women, we were told. So we were not allowed to receive mail, nor to receive packages of course. I know that my mother managed to get a letter

through because there was a smuggling business around the barbed wire. There were constantly gendarmes and locals coming to watch us.

Interviewer: That's where that look...

Annette: That look. But that look is there all the time.

Interviewer: How is that look? Is it curious? Is it hostile?

Annette: A look of disgust. That's how I felt. But I must say that we must not have been very clean and very pleasant to look at, without a doubt. Unquestionably.

Interviewer: So who was in the camps? Who was in charge of the organization and the distribution of water?

Annette: So there were gendarmes, customs officers.

Interviewer: What did the customs officers who were guarding do?

Annette: They also guarded. But I didn't know that until later. For me a uniform was a uniform. And I knew that they had recruited people from the area who were also paid for certain activities.

Interviewer: Which ones?

Annette: For example, the local women accepted, for a fee, to search the women. There was a day rate, a night rate. They didn't hesitate to do it, to rip off the earrings of women who were going to be deported.

Interviewer: To do what with them?

Annette: Normally it was to give it back to the camp management, which certainly had to give it to the Gestapo perhaps, but they kept a certain quantity of things.

Michel: There were gendarmes, auxiliaries and customs officers. I found out about this later, but I saw people in uniform. And then there were also women who came, the day before the adults left. Especially women. There were women from the village who came to help with the search because they were not supposed to carry any valuables. They volunteered, they were paid to search the women and it was terrible because they were undressed and then they didn't let it happen easily, they were screaming. Like I say, a Jewish mother screams loudly, it was really...

Interviewer: So women were not allowed to have jewelry?

Annette: No, that was when they were leaving for Auschwitz.

Interviewer: So around August 7?

Annette: No, my mother, it was the last convoy. From the beginning of August, there began to be convoys. So convoys of women and children over 12-14 years old because for the Vel d'Hiv round-up, the orders were very strict: the Germans did not want children. Normally, it was over 16 or 18 years old. But the Vichy government, under the pretext of being kind and not wanting to separate families, demanded that the children be kept with the families, with the women.

Interviewer: So that they could leave?

Annette: So that they would be deported. In fact, they wanted to get rid of all the Jews of foreign origin, of foreign immigrant origin. So what happened was that, since Berlin didn't give an answer about the children, they started to send the women away first, accompanied by the older children, starting at the beginning of August.

Interviewer: So you arrived around August²⁹ 21 or 22? And a short week is spent in the camps...

²⁹ July

Annette: ... where the epidemics start.

Interviewer: Tell us about the epidemics...just the first few days you're playing with your mother outside but there are those latrines. What is life like, the organization of daily life?

Annette: We look for food. It's the search for food.

Interviewer: What are you looking for as food?

Annette: I don't know, I know that I'm confusing with after my mother was gone... I know that we had beans. We only ate beans in cans. There was no lid, you know, there was no cutlery or anything. We had cans that probably contained these beans, and we used them as a bowl and then we ate the beans. So we had dysentery.

Interviewer: There are customs officers and gendarmes. You talked about women searching the women to be deported. And was there anyone else? Was there the Red Cross?

Annette: There was maybe some administrative management of the camp because I know that my mother, when she knew that she was going to leave, she tried to see where... but where you couldn't see them. So now you had the older kids helping in the kitchens and then in the infirmary.

Interviewer: There were kitchens, there was an infirmary?

Annette: Yes, but I don't remember.

Interviewer: You don't remember very well. So it was at the beginning of August that the convoys began?

Annette: Yes, but I don't remember the others. I only remember my mother's convoy.

Interviewer: And just before coming to that time, the story of the jewelry, the women who left were not allowed to take jewelry?

Annette: No jewelry, no money, nothing at all.

Interviewer: So that was taken away from them. Were they given a receipt or was it just confiscated?

Annette: I think I remember there's always a little table in the middle of the camp and always someone from the administration writing.

Interviewer: You don't know what they are writing there?

Annette: No. So I can tell about my mother's departure. So it was the last convoy. She must have already been warned about the other convoys that had left since the beginning of August and there was a gathering in the middle of the camp, the women were stripped naked. I suppose that it was just to search them. I know that before, already the day before, my mother had tried to make me leave with her, at least that's what I understood, saying that I was sick because I think I must have had a fever, she could tell by touching my forehead. And then it didn't happen. They didn't want to.

Interviewer: Who didn't want to, do you remember?

Annette: There was a camp director.

Interviewer: You went with your mother?

Annette: I went with my mother. There was a camp director named Madame La Rochelle or La Rochette³⁰ who had a reputation for harshness, which was verified by the way, which was verified. So was she a representative of the Red Cross? She must have been the secretary who had to deal with all the problems. And then I know that my mother went to a lady -because some women stayed behind in the camp with, perhaps, sick people, younger children- and she gave her a little piece of soap that she had managed to keep and asked her to take care of Michel and me by washing us with this little piece of soap. And she had sewn some money into the shoulder pads of Michel's little jacket. Maybe also in mine, I don't remember. I remember more about my brother. Obviously, we never recovered anything.

Interviewer: So this was already when you were staying?

Annette: It was the day before.

Interviewer: But she knew that she was going to leave and that you were not going to leave with her?

Annette: She knew that she was going to leave and that we were not going to leave

Interviewer: Can we go back to the moment, if you remember, when she goes to see this Madame La Rochelle or La Rochette to ask her for help?

Annette: She dragged me, tried to see her and it was impossible.

Interviewer: She was told no, she must leave you behind?

Annette: Yes, it was impossible.

³⁰ Miss La Rochette / La Rochelle would in fact be Miss La Chapelle. In a letter from the Delegate Prefect of the Loiret to the President of the French Red Cross dated August 25, 1942 (20760, Archives départementales du Loiret), Miss La Chapelle is mentioned as the superintendent of the Beaune-la-Rolande camp.

Interviewer: Okay, she leaves that money and that soap to someone

Annette: No, the money, she sews it.

Interviewer: And the soap to this woman. Does she know that she's going to leave alone? That this little piece of soap...

Annette: She knows that she's going to leave alone. So I remember this departure that took place in a terrible violence, meaning that there were screams, screams that pierced the ears because we, the children, we clung to the mothers. In addition, since it was the last convoy, the tension had risen even more. So the women were stripped naked, beaten, with the children, with rifle butts, and to separate us, because it was impossible to separate us, the gendarmes sprayed the women and children with cold water. And finally, after a while, the camp calmed down.

Michel: Then the gendarmes brought in a German machine gun. And that brought silence.

Annette: So there were all the children on one side -I remember holding my little brother tightly- and the women and older children on the other. The gendarmes in the middle. And there, I can see my mother in the front row, I can really see her as if she was still here now, waving at us. And with her eyes, she is signing to us. That was the last time I saw her. So, I learned afterwards, because it was someone from the town who told it, the women were put in the trucks and taken to the Beaune-la-Rolande station.

Interviewer: The women already dressed?

Annette: Yes, they were made to get dressed. And then they were taken to the Beaune-la-Rolande station to go to Pithiviers. Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande left together...

Interviewer: In the cattle cars?

Annette: Yes, and there was someone who lived right above the station who saw the women taken out of the truck by the gendarmes and pulled by the hair, and then treated with violence. So what we, the children, realized when the camp was emptied was that the holes in the latrines were filled with jewelry. Before leaving, the women knew where they were going, many of them threw their wedding rings and earrings into the shit. And afterwards, we also discovered this later because there was a very documented book on this subject because there were strict measures, the locals sifted the latrines to recover the jewelry.

Michel: The day before, there were a lot of women - rather than giving their money or their jewelry - who had thrown it into the latrines. There were latrines, that is to say that they had dug a kind of pit. It was horrifying because it was in the open air and it scared me a lot because, this is an awful detail, but there were big white maggots like this (Michel gestures to show the length of the maggots). And I saw some women from the village who were rummaging through the shit to get some jewelry. I saw them, and we laughed about it because it was shiny.

Interviewer: So your mother left on the last convoy³¹ and you stayed?

Annette: So, the convoy of August 7³² where there was an extremely large convoy, I can't say how many, more than 1,000. And on that convoy, I believe that, at the end of the war, there were two survivors.

Interviewer: Two people, two women who survived?

Annette: No, I don't even think they were women³³.

Interviewer: Two people survived. And so the convoy went to Auschwitz?

³¹ Convoy 16

³² Listen to the testimony of **Annette Monod** who was a Red Cross social worker and who witnessed the deportation of the mothers (c.f. resources): <https://occupiedparis.pennds.org/testimony/annettemonod>

³³ The Yad Vashem site lists 1,069 people deported and nine survivors

Annette: Directly to Auschwitz where the children... well those over 12, maybe they were kept for a while for work. My mother, she was 33 years old at the time, she was 33 years old, she was robust. Well, it's true that she must have been considerably thinned out by the conditions of the Vel d'Hiv and the early days of Beaune, but she was a vigorous woman, so some people told me that she would have been taken to work for a while, but I don't know anything. I don't know anything at all.

List of deportees from the Convoy #16

Credit: Cercle-Mémorial de la Shoah

Interviewer: So you stay...

Annette: So we, the children, we remain alone, we remain completely alone because nobody took care of us. It went very badly. First of all, I got completely sick. I didn't want to leave the barracks anymore. I was on the strawbed. I thought I had done something wrong

Interviewer: Why?

Annette: For being separated from my mother. The fact that I didn't want to sleep next to her, I thought it was normal what was happening to us.

Interviewer: You didn't want to sleep next to her because it was raining?

Annette: Because it was raining. I had this remorse about that and I thought we must have done something that made us deserve what has happened. So I didn't want to go out anymore. I was letting myself die.

Interviewer: Were you afraid or not?

Annette: I was helpless, completely helpless and it was my little brother who pulled me out for air. He was seven years old and I was covered in dysentery and he was cleaning me, wiping me, cleaning me. And well, the weather was nice and so we started to wander around the camp with my little brother. I remember that we were pulling up grass to eat because there was nothing, there was nothing.

Michel: We tried to make salads like that. But there was no oil or vinegar, but we said to ourselves, "Let's try!"

Interviewer: Who stayed in the camp?

Annette: Children and maybe some women, but we didn't see them. And the gendarmes who seemed very threatening to us. The gendarmes from outside who were guarding us and who

spoke to us brutally. And we were there, the children, and the camp seemed very big to us, and in fact, the children switched barracks. The camp was ours. We had a song at the time. We sang: "At Beaune-la-Rolande, we're not too bad, but we always eat beans." And we were worried, before the separation, if we were going to be able to go back to school. That's what we, kids, were worried about.

Interviewer: Go back to school where?

Annette: To return to Paris. For us, after all, it was the summer vacations.

Interviewer: So there are only children. Can you remember now how many there were? 50 children?

Annette: There were more than 2,000 children.

Interviewer: How many?

Annette: 2,000.³⁴

Interviewer: You were more than 2,000 children... And do you remember many children your age?

Annette: Yes

Interviewer: And no organization of any kind?

Annette: No, nobody. You know I've heard a lot of people who have said, I've even met people who have said to me, one woman who said to me, "You know, do you remember when I was

³⁴ Micheline Cahen, social worker at Beaune-la-Rolande, talks about approximately 75 children. See her testimonies in resources.

taking care of you?" A lot of people have said to me, "We were taking care"... That's not true! Because those who had a gesture towards the children, towards us, *that I remember*. Whether it was in Beaune-la-Rolande or in Drancy, I never saw anyone take care of us. No one. It's not true, those who say, "We took care of the children in some way," it's not true. We were really abandoned, completely abandoned, completely alone. My little brother, as he was 7 years old, had read that children under 4 years old - he was very little - had the right to some milk. Was this before my mother left or after? We had managed to get a bottle of milk, *he* had managed. He was very resourceful. And all day long we would shake that bottle and try to make butter out of it. But because the milk was cut with water, we never got it right. It was the only thing that we had other than the beans. That's why we used to sing that song about the beans. So we must have stayed like that for a couple of weeks.

Michel: Annette got sick again, so she was a little delirious at one point and so I had to feed her. When the soup was distributed, it was a lot of beans. We had a song about eating beans. And we didn't have any bowls, so they gave us empty cans and we would go and get food that way. But I was very small. I'm not a very big adult, but at the time I was very small and I could never manage to get to the pot because it was so crowded. So sometimes I came back with an empty box. But then I had read - there was an infirmary and there was a little sign - that children under 5 years old could go and eat in the infirmary. So, as I was very small, I passed myself off - I was seven and a half but I didn't look it - I passed myself off as under five and I was able to go and eat in the infirmary. I was also able to bring food to my sister. (...) And I remember, there were babies and I had stolen a bottle from the infirmary and I had come back to the barracks and with my sister, we had tried to make butter because I had learned at school that by churning milk, by shaking it, you could make butter. But it was not very good quality milk, so we never managed to make butter.

Interviewer: The woman your mother gave that piece of soap to, did you ever see her again?

Annette: No, never, no. We became fearful...being without a mother, we were afraid. We had no one to lean on. One day, we were rounded up, we were pushed into the barrack, and there was a

man with clippers who started shaving our hair, our heads. There were lice, there were vermin, there were diseases. We were all covered with pimples, we were very dirty, very, very dirty, and the vermin were swarming. The straw... Beaune-la-Rolande was not very far from Paris. It's [near] Orléans. It's an hour from Paris. And so we were shaved. They started with my little brother. So he was in tears because, maybe nowadays young people like to be shaved, but in those days it was a tragedy to be shaved. For my brother who had beautiful blond hair with a curl there (*she points to her forehead*), he was crying. And I remember that. I can still see him, he is shaved and the gendarmes laugh at him. Instead of shaving his head completely, they made marks on the top ...

Michel: I have the memory - it struck me too - of a gendarme who was shearing us, a man in uniform anyway, and he pinned me between his knees and sheared me, saying, "We're going to make him the Last of the Mohicans," and he sheared a wide strip in the middle of my head, leaving my hair hanging down like that (he gestures to the sides of his head). I was ashamed. I had managed to steal a beret, I don't know where, from a friend probably, and I was always wearing my beret around. It was pure humiliation. That's how I felt.

Annette: They made marks, so he looked even more disgusting, and from that moment my brother too disgusted me. We disgusted each other. Well, he disgusted me. I was so aware of this look in people's eyes because of our filth that even my own brother didn't look human anymore. And so the little boys were looking for berets to stick on their heads. I too was shaved, but I remember more my brother. And then afterwards, we were dragged into a shower. Was it in the same barrack, I don't remember. There were big buckets, that's the way I remember it...with yellow paint and they painted stars or were they just marks? I mean marks on our clothes. I remember the paint dripping.

Michel: It was necessary to be well marked - so, obviously, there were no more yellow fabric stars - so they painted them on our clothes, with yellow paint. So it was dripping everywhere. We had yellow paint everywhere. But we had stars on all our clothes.

Annette: Afterwards, we were all rounded up, the children. We were told to get our bundles and we were taken to the station. And that's when I really saw the people looking at us because we walked for a long time. The station was far away. Two or three kilometres to walk. We dragged ourselves. We were holding hands. I was careful because I had a little sandal with a broken strap. And above all, we were only afraid of dragging behind, of losing a brother or sister. And I discovered - but I don't remember this, but people told it later - that the children, when they were taken to the station to go to Drancy, they sang. Because the children, including me, were sure to be reunited with their mothers. So they sang with the idea of finding their mothers. So there, we were put in the cattle cars, all of us, piled up in total darkness in these cattle cars. How long did the trip last? I don't know. It wasn't too far, but it could take a while and we were taken directly to Drancy.

Interviewer: Just before that, when you were shaved, 2,000 children is a lot. There were 2,000 children at that time in the camp?

Annette: There must have been maybe 1,500. Oh yes, lots of children.

Interviewer: You would think that there were a lot of gendarmes to escort 1,500 children.

Annette: Ah, there were quite a few gendarmes; they guarded the children. So you know, with the children, I don't remember that, but there were roll calls.

Interviewer: There were roll calls?

Annette: Roll calls.

Interviewer: Every morning?

Annette: Every day.

Interviewer: And what were you doing?

Annette: I don't remember that, but I found out later. Someone found all the documents, the archives, in Orléans in fact, very meticulously arranged where there were the daily reports about the children. And obviously, there were children who didn't even know their names.

Interviewer: Because they were small?

Annette: Well yes, they were small, there were very young people.

Tape 4

Interviewer: How was it between you and your brother?

Annette: We were always together. There was no solidarity between the other children and ourselves because there were arguments about food. So, for example, the older children would push the younger ones around, but between brothers and sisters, there was mutual aid. It was like that, you know, in carceral conditions, generosity quickly stops at the immediate circle. You know, I'm going to add something, and I don't know if I said it already, but I had the feeling at the time that everything that happened to us was normal because we were Jews. These things had to happen. It was not surprising, we got used to it.

Interviewer: When you looked at your brother, who is ridiculously shaved and starting to disgust you, were you wilfully sharing the food with him?

Annette: I loved him even more. That was for me... how can I put it? I felt tremendous pity for him.

Interviewer: Disgust, pity, that doesn't mean you loved him at all...

Annette: Tremendous pity for him, for his grief.

Interviewer: So your brother is 7 years old, he must be very small if he can pass off for a four-year-old. Were there really very small children?

Annette: Yes, very small. There were very small children. Very small.

Interviewer: What happened? What was happening to them? Do you remember?

Annette: There were really children from 2 to 3 years old. Normally at the beginning, they left the mothers with the little ones, but then...

Drancy (August 19- ? September 1942)

Interviewer: So you're going to...?

Annette: So we arrive at Drancy.

Michel: I remember arriving, seeing these large grey buildings. And then we were on the left side because there was a sort of courtyard in the middle, it was a large rectangle, a quadrilateral. It was a large rectangle, a quadrangle. And they were unfinished buildings. That is, there were no partitions, it was all concrete.

Annette: We arrive at Drancy where, when we arrive, the memory I have is that we are in the middle, in front of these buildings, in the center and we are handed a kind of chocolate or liquid the color of ...

Interviewer: A drink?



Drancy camp

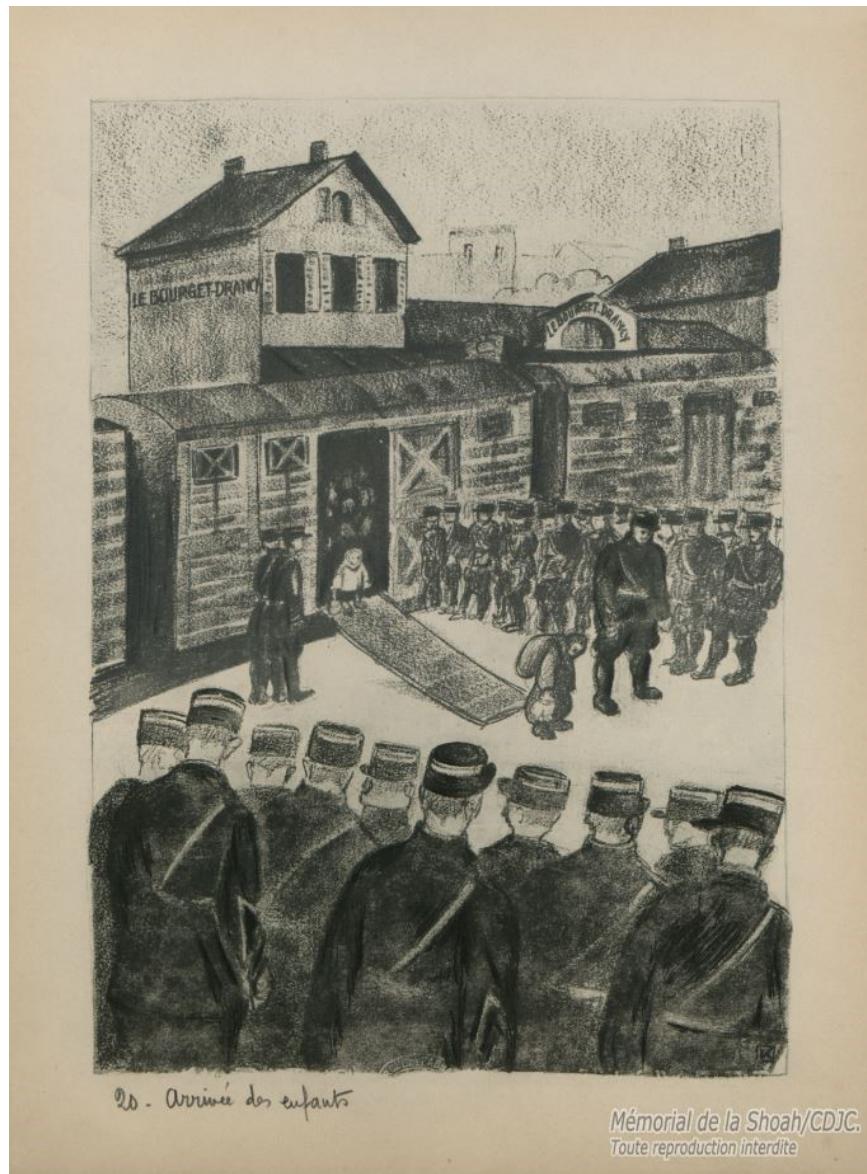
Credit: USHMM [Encyclopedia](#)

Annette: A drink. For me, every time there was a change I thought it was maybe going to be better. Yes, the fact that there was this distribution of drinks was comforting, it was a camp that was going to be very good, but still... I had known Drancy from the outside because I would see it from afar when I used to go to Bobigny, and there it was, an ugly building because it was unfinished. There were these kind of windows that looked like holes and we, the children, were immediately put on the fourth floor, well on the floors located to the left of the camp, directly on the ground.

Michel: We were all in a huge room where we sat on straw, on the floor again. And then we were on the fourth floor.

Annette: I don't even remember the straw but maybe there was some. We were all crammed into rooms, covered with dysentery.

Michel: There were a few adults, women who came to take care of us a little bit, but very few. And then, it was horrible. Because with all the crap we had eaten, and especially the beans at Beaune-la-Rolande, we all, almost all of us, had diarrhea. And the toilets, if you can call them toilets, were not only outside but in the yard. And by the time we got there... it was pitiful. We were covered in vermin and feces. It was all over the stairs. I don't want to tell you what it smelled like. I have a precise memory of it. Memories of smells.



"First arrival of children at Le Bourget-Drancy station, without parents or help"³⁵

³⁵ Listen to **Annette Monod's** testimony about the children from Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers leaving for the Drancy camp (c.f. resources): <https://occupiedparis.pennds.org/testimony/annettemonod>

Credit: Shoah Memorial

Annette: Actually, the arrival of the children, all these children including myself, was even described at the Eichmann trial³⁶, I heard it, so horrible was the state in which these children were, state of filthiness and misery... And I remember that we couldn't even go down to the bathroom because we were so sick and the stairs were slippery with excrement. That's the conditions we were living in. And from that point on, I have almost no memory. We stayed for a while, but I must have gotten sick again. What I do know is that almost all the children who arrived with me left the next day and the following days in successive convoys to Auschwitz where they were immediately gassed. I found their names. You see, I have a list with the names of the children – list on which my brother and I actually were - the number of the convoy, and in Serge Klarsfeld book, these children have the sign "gone". But what happened to my brother and I was that we were taken off the list at the last minute and...

Interviewer: From the list of deportation to Auschwitz?

Annette: Yes, from the list of deportation, our names were taken off. I will explain why. But someone left in my place because not long ago I met a bailiff in Orleans who wanted to see me. He had heard about my book and I wondered what he wanted from me. He said to me, "I wanted to see the person whose name was crossed out and my little sister went in her place." Because he managed to get the lists. He saw my name crossed out, well not just my name, there was my brother and me and it was his mother and his little sister... no, it was his stepmother because he was born right after the war, his father remarried. This little girl, who was two or four years old - I have her photo, by the way - she celebrated her birthday the day she was gassed in Auschwitz. No, three years old. She would have left on the next transport. In any case, for the Germans, the convoy had to be full, so when one's name was scratched off, someone filled their place.

Interviewer: When did you arrive in Drancy?

Annette: We must have arrived between August 20th and 25th, 1942.

³⁶ During the Eichman trial, Dr. Georges Wellers, who was interned in the Drancy camp, gave a poignant testimony about the arrival of the children on August 19, 1942 (see timeline)

Interviewer: And the convoys leave right away?

Annette: Yes, the very next day, with children.

Interviewer: And why was your name crossed out?

Annette: Because my father was in hiding...

Interviewer: So we're back to the moment when your mother entrusts her husband as her most precious possession to the concierge? Okay, so this is the day before the Vel d'Hiv roundup?

Annette: That's right, in the evening.

Interviewer: Okay, so what happens?

Annette: After the passive defense, because the Jews were not allowed to go out in the evening at such and such a time, just as they were not allowed to go shopping at such and such a time, but that's how it was. So my father went out in the morning to join us home and then he saw an old couple, two elderly people, who were being pushed by gendarmes. It scared him. Not far from the concierge's house, there was a barber shop. He hurried back to the barber shop and hid his star. And there was a German and he couldn't help it, he asked, "What are they going to do with these poor people, these poor old people?" And the German, my father remembers this, replied *Seife* - soap. That was in '42. So my father stayed for a while and he didn't understand at the time and when he wanted to go back to my house, well to the house, there was the custodian at the window who shouted, "Stop him! He's one of them!"

Interviewer: Is this the so-called friendly custodian from before?

Annette: Exactly. That said, he had been hidden by another custodian. We shouldn't generalize about the role of custodians. And she looted the apartment as soon as we left.

Interviewer: Your father runs away?

Annette: He runs away. Thereupon, he returns to this Mrs. Fossiès, the custodian who had hidden him. My two brothers...

Interviewer: ...who in the meantime had left

Annette: Yes, until they find him. They find him and my father tries to hide them first. He asked everywhere.

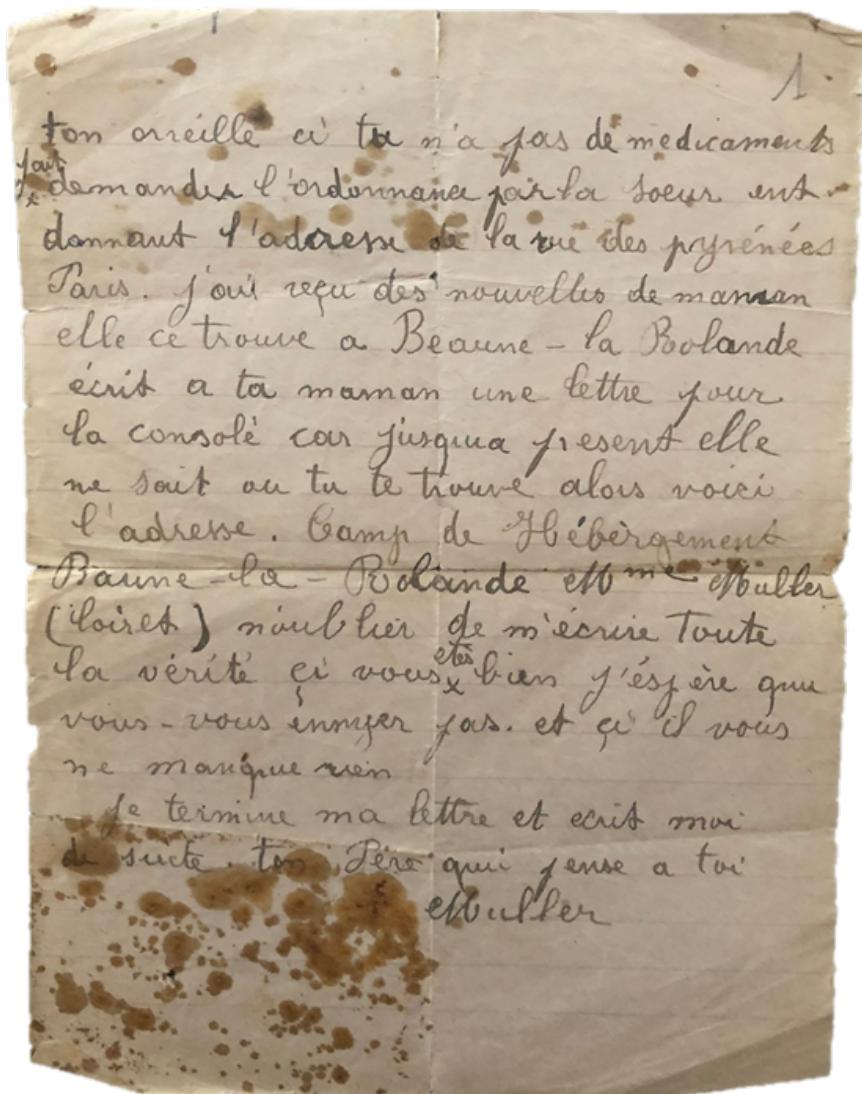
Interviewer: He finds them in the house of the concierge who had hidden him?

Annette: I think they knew. They expected each other.

Henri: So, we went to Place Guignier, to number 6 where my father was hidden the night before. He wasn't there. We waited for quite a while. And so we went to wait for him at the Pyrénées subway station, which was not far away, and I remember that on Pyrénées Street we saw a kind of garage again, it was a garage near a large school, a large garage where the Jews of the neighborhood were also gathered. So we waited for our father, he wasn't there. We came back [to Place Guignier] and finally were reunited with him around noon. We explained to him, of course, everything that had happened and he really never thought we would be caught.

Jean: We found our father. We stayed hidden there. He was overwhelmed. The custodian had said to him, "You know, they are arresting women and children." So he was very happy. He said, "What about...what about your mother? And your brother and sister?" "We don't know." We were unable to tell him where they were. Unable. So that's when he decided to find a place for us to live. We couldn't stay in a shed with no amenities, no water, no toilet. It was very cramped and anyway the custodian told my father, "You can't stay there. You can't stay there. You have to find a solution."

Annette: So my father, he knew, but not much. He knew but he didn't know where we were. He never knew that we stayed six days at the Vel d'Hiv. For him, we were only there for a few hours. And afterwards he didn't know where we were at all. He was looking for us. He only found our trail in November 42³⁷. He knew, because my mother had managed to sneak out a letter before leaving, saying that we were in a housing camp in Beaune-la-Rolande. But after that there was no trace.



³⁷ In November 1942, Manek learned that his four children were finally reunited and safe.

Courtesy of Henri Muller.³⁸

And he tried first of all to find a place for my brothers. He went to the Red Cross, where the Red Cross official immediately said to him, "But you're not wearing your star!" and she started reaching for the telephone. He understood that she was going to report him. So he ran away. He took my brothers to a summer camp we had been to before and the director of the camp said, "No, I don't take Jewish children." He went where my mother wanted to send us [to Bonnières] where we had spent a vacation, [with the woman] who ran a café for bargemen. She couldn't keep us either.

Jean: In Bonnières, we ate, we slept and then we stayed for a day, two days I think, I don't remember exactly. The notion of time had disappeared because we no longer had the same schedules, we no longer ate at a fixed time, we no longer slept at a fixed time, we didn't sleep... it was a very disordered time for us who were used to a very, very, very regimented life. (...)

Interviewer: And they still stayed with her?

Annette: No, not at all... he dragged them back on the train every time. He wandered around with them.

Jean: My father left us in this hotel [in Bonnières] and went to Paris to find a solution. And then he came back. There was no solution. And the owner of this hotel, this woman we called auntie, also told my father, "Listen, we can't keep them." Because, incidentally, Bonnières was next to La Roche-Guyon... a large German military center, so inevitably, there were a lot of Gestapo and police. She said, "You can't stay here." So my father took

³⁸ "I received news from your mom. She is at Beaune-la-Rolande. Write to your mom to console her because she doesn't know where you are. This is her address : Housing Camp Beaune-la-Rolande Mme Muller (Loiret) " Letter written by Manek to Henri and Jean on July 28, 1942

us back on the train. We went back and forth three times, maybe four times, but let's say three times Paris-Bonnières and back.

Annette: He wandered around until he met a nun and all this took about a week. It wasted time for my mother. That's what he blames himself for all the time. He met a nun who gave him an address. He went there. He knocked, there was a nun - it was on Rue du Bac at the headquarter of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul - he said to her, "Help me!" She told him, "Tell me the truth, if God wills it, I will help you." And then from there, she took matters into her own hands. She put my brothers in an orphanage. And my brothers at least were taken care of.

Interviewer: And how did he actually find this address? It was through another nun that he met, that he approached... How did that happen?

Jean: [On the train] we were no longer afraid. We were no longer afraid. We were at the end of the rope. We were tired, we were dirty. Sometimes we were hungry, sometimes we ate too much - because we only ate once a day. We were adrift. My brother, me, my father. (...) And on the train that was taking us back to Paris, there was a nun who approached my father.

Henri: Well, he talks quite a bit... he's not shy, as we say, and when he's around people, he talks. Whenever he can, he talks and he's kept this habit a little bit. And so he started talking to the sister and I think the sister - he may not have dared to tell her our situation right away, but I think the sister managed to get him to admit. She must have been trying to understand his situation and my father explained to her the situation we were in.

Jean: It was a nun from the Little Sisters of the Poor order who said to him, "Listen, you are in trouble, you are in trouble." Right away, my father said no. Everyone was afraid. She said to him, "Listen, Sir, I'm going to give you an address. You don't have to listen to me, but go to this address. You will certainly find help there." And the address was the address of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul. The Daughters of Charity 140, rue du Bac in Paris. It was already late. Maybe 7:00, maybe 8:00 in the evening. We arrived at the

Saint-Lazare station. He said: "Ok, we're going!" So we arrived at 140, rue du Bac and then my father knocked on the door. It's a big door, like in a convent. And then there was a little barred window that opened in the door and a nun appeared. "What do you want?" My father said: "We'd like to meet..." "Oh no, no, it's late! No, no, come back tomorrow." He said, "Look, I'm begging you. If only to let my kids use the bathroom and get some rest." Finally, she opened the door. And she took us to the visiting room. She said, "But you can't stay, you know. Just for an hour. It's late, you gotta go." And, we were sitting in chairs. We were dozing off, actually. I know this because the nun who caught us told me about it afterwards. And it was a nun named Sister Régereau, Sister Clotilde, who walked by and asked, "But who are you? What are you doing here? You can talk to me but tell me the truth." So my father said, "Well, we're Jews. We don't know where to go." And so this nun said, "Listen, for you, I can give you an address where you can spend the night. The children, from now on, I'll take care of them." And that's how it happened.



Sister Clotilde Régereau
Courtesy of Henri Muller

We were in a terrible state. We were tired, we were dirty, we were hungry, we were not what we had always been. And we saw this very tall woman, gigantic for us, for our little eyes. But... beautiful. Features... She's an apparition. And just like that, spontaneously,

all of a sudden she says: "These are my children." Everywhere, we had been chased away. Everywhere we were rejected. Everywhere, even among the best, they told us, "Yes, okay, stay for a day, but you have to get out." And she said, "No, I'll take them." It's fabulous. So that was love at first sight, for my brother as well, which still lasts today. It's still going on today. (...)

That evening she took us by the hand. From rue du Bac, we walked past the Hotel Lutetia, which was a German nest - an oh-so-German residence - because the first boarding school she put us in, since we couldn't stay in the convent on rue du Bac, was on rue de Sèvres. (...)

Henri: A small orphanage that was next door at 67, rue de Sèvres, which no longer exists. It's been demolished. And we stayed there for two or three days. We were kind of locked in. There were other children but we didn't see them. We could see them in the courtyard, you see, we could see them playing in the courtyard. We might have been on the second floor. We were in a room, we were brought food, that's all. We didn't see the other kids.

Jean: Right away, we were given food and then we were put to sleep. We were surprised because we were usually used to washing ourselves first. But there we went to bed right away. (...) We slept maybe 24 hours in a row because we were so tired, my brother Henri and I. And during that time, my mother stayed with my younger brother and my younger sister. They were taken to the Vel' d'Hiv'. The infamous Vel' d'Hiv'!

Annette: (...) Well after the war, Sister Clotilde went to Israel where she took care of orphanages, children in difficulty, both Jewish and Palestinian, Israeli children. This year she was awarded the medal of the Righteous. Her name was Sister Clotilde and later, when she was in Israel, in memory of us, she was called Sister Myriam. She passed away and we have remained very close to her family. I mean, very close, we see each other from time to time.

Interviewer: And so she planned for your brothers...

Annette: No, so she hid my brothers, but my father, once he was appeased about my two brothers, he took care of saving us. He had heard that, on rue de la Bienfaisance, there was the headquarters of the Union Générale des Israélites de France, which had been created by the French government and the Germans to supposedly serve as an interlocutor and to help the Jews on a social level. And there, he knew that there was a person in charge called Israelowicz who was from the Krakow area.

SERVICES DE L'U. G. I. F.

L'U. G. I. F. est ouverte :
 Tous les jours (samedi et dimanche exceptés), de 9 à 12 h, et de 14 à 18 h.
Heures de réception. — Au siège : 19, rue de Téhéran
 (LAB, 79-84).
 M. BAUR, Vice-Présid., ne reçoit que sur rendez-vous.
 Mardi, vendredi, de 16 à 18 h. M. STORA.
 Mercredi, vendredi, de 14 à 17 h. M. EDINGER.
 Mardi, de 9 à 10 h. 30, M. le docteur WEIL-HILLE.
 Lundi, jeudi, de 9 à 11 h. 30. M. MUSNIK.
 Mardi, vendredi, de 14 à 17 h et mercredi, de 10 h à 12 h. M. KATZ.
 Lundi, jeudi, de 9 h. 30 à 12 h. M. Marcel LEVY.
 Lundi, jeudi, de 14 à 17 h. M. GODCHOT.
 Lundi, mercredi, jeudi, de 14 à 17 h. M. LANZENBERG.
 Tous les jours, sauf samedi et dimanche, de 10 à 12 h., ou sur rendez-vous, M. ISRAELOWICZ.
 Lundi, jeudi, de 15 à 17 h., MM. Albert WEIL, ACH.
Service de placement. — Toutes les demandes d'emploi sont désormais centralisées, 24, rue Copernic, Paris-16.
 Les réceptions ont lieu tous les jours, samedi et dimanche exceptés, de 14 à 16 h.
Service de correspondance et de recherche des familles (Service 36), 4 rue Pigalle, Paris-9, reçoit de 10 à 12 h. et de 14 à 17 h. (sauf samedi et dimanche).
La rédaction du Bulletin reçoit: 9, rue Guy-Patin, les mardis et vendredis, de 10 à 12 h.
Consultations Juridiques (Service N° 11); 29, rue de la Bienfaisance. — Tous les jours, de 15 à 17 h., sauf samedi et dimanche.
Assistance sociale: Direction du service social (Service 5) 29, rue de la Bienfaisance. Mme STERN, M. KA-MINSKY. — Lundi et Jeudi de 10 h. à midi.
Heures de réception du centre de la rue Rodier N° 60 (TRU, 12-23, TRU. 05-74 et 05-75) (Service N° 18). Pour les habitants des:
 1^{er} et 2^{er} arrt.: les mercredis, de 14 à 17 h.
 5^e, 6^e, 7^e, 8^e arrt.: les vendredis de 14 à 17 h.
 9^e arrt.: lundis, de 9 à 11 h.
 10^e arrt.: jeudis, de 14 à 17 h.
 16^e et 17^e arrt.: les vendredis, de 14 à 17 h.
 18^e arrt.: les lundis et les mercredis, de 14 à 17 h.
 19^e arrt.: les mardis, de 14 à 17 h.
 20^e arrt.: les mardis, de 9 à 12 h. et de 14 à 17 h.
 les vendredis, de 9 h. à 12 h.
 Banlieue: les lundis et jeudis, de 14 à 17 h.
Heures de réception du centre de la rue des Tournelles N° 21 bis (TUR, 71-91) (Service N° 22). Pour les habitants des:
 3^e arrt.: les lundis de 9 à 11 h.; les vendr., de 14 à 17 h.
 4^e arrt.: les mardis et vendredis, de 9 à 11 h.
 5^e arrt.: les lundis, mercredis et jeudis, de 14 à 17 h.
 6^e arrt.: les lundis et vendredis, de 9 à 11 h.
 13^e arrt.: les mardis, de 14 à 17 h.
 14^e et 15^e: les mardis, de 9 à 11 h.
Consultations Dispensaire de la rue Juleen-Lacroix N° 37 (MEN, 67-73) (Service N° 25).
 Médecine générale: les lundis, mardis et jeudis, à 9 h.
 Maladies des yeux: les lundis et jeudis, à 14 h.
 Malades des femmes, nourrissons: mercredis, à 14 h.
 Maladies des enfants: les jeudis, à 14 h.
 Nez, gorge, oreilles: les vendredis, à 14 h.
 Dents: les lundis et mercredis, à 9 h.
Dispensaire "Pour nos enfants", 35, rue des Francs-Bourgeois (TUR, 93-73) (Service N° 27).
 Médecine générale: lundi, mercre, vendredi, de 9 à 11 h.
 Maladies des femmes: mercredis, de 9 à 11 h.
 Nez, gorge, oreilles: mardis, de 9 à 11 h.
 Maladies des yeux: lundi et jeudi, de 14 à 17 h.
 Maladies des enfants: jeudis, de 9 à 11 h. et 14 à 17 h.
 Maladies de la peau: les vendredis, de 9 à 11 h.
 Maladie de la bouche, dents: mardis, mercredis, jeudi, de 9 à 11 h. Chirurgie: mercredis de 13 à 17 h.
 Pièges, ventouses, rayons ultra-violets, panements:
 Tous les jours, de 15 à 18 h.
Le Dispensaire est fermé les samedis, dimanches, lundis.
 Les vaccinations ont lieu les 2^e et 4^e jeudis du mois.
 Se faire inscrire au bureau.

Service 50 - Anciennement "La Terre Promise" 22, du Quatre Septembre (RICHELIEU 64-98). Tous matins, du lundi au samedi; de 9 à 9 h. 30 dimanche, de 10 à 11 h. Le soir, sauf vendred dimanche, de 17 à 17 h. 30.

Service des Internés. — Renseignements (Service N° 29, rue de la Bienfaisance). Tous les jours, sauf samedi, dimanche, de 14 h. 30 à 1 Service de blanchisage du linge des Internés (Service 5, rue Chaumont; Linge propre, 6, rue Chaumont; Linge sale). Tous les jours, de 9 à 12 h. et de 14 à 17 h. Service des colis alimentaires (Service N° 23). 120, boulevard de Belleville. — Les lundis, de 12 h., et les mardis, jeudis, samedis, de 9 à 11 h. Centre éducatif (Service N° 19): 60, rue Claude-Bernard, Paris-5^e. — Tel. Port-Royal-02. Tous les jours, de 16 à 18 h. 30: Étude surveillée pour les écoliers.

Pour les enfants de 6 à 12 ans, jeudis et dimanche: 60, rue Claude-Bernard. — 10, rue des Deux-Ponts 35, rue des Francs-Bourgeois. — 14, place des Vosges 75, rue Juleen-Lacroix — Les Jeudis: 9, rue Vaucouleurs. Pour les enfants de 12 à 18 ans, se faire inscrire les jours au CENTRE ÉDUCATIF, 60, rue Claude-Bernard, de 14 à 18 h.

Service social des jeunes: (Service 60). 60, rue Claude-Bernard. Permanences: 1^{er}, 2^{er}, 9^e, 10^e, 18^e Ar., Banlieue Nord-Est: le lundi de 14 à 17 h. 3^e, 4^e, 5^e, 6^e, 12^e, 13^e, 14^e, 15^e. Banlieue sud mercredi, de 12 à 15 h. 11^e. Banlieue Est: le jeudi, de 14 à 17 h. 19^e, 20^e. Banlieue ouest: le vendr., de 14 à 17 h.

Bulletin de l'Union Générale des Israélites de France (June 25, 1943)

Courtesy of Henri Muller

One of my mother's sisters had been a maid in his very rich family. So with that, he went to see him. That said, he found a rather confident young man, a rather arrogant young man who sent away in a very brutal way a child who had been picked up alone, wandering, and he had said, "You just have to drive him back to the police station." But he listened to my father. In other words, he sent one away and listened to another. Relationships are very complex, but my father paid him. My father had savings and he paid. He gave him gold coins. I don't know how much. He had some gold Louis that he had to...I think he had about ten that he gave him. And he let himself be convinced. First of all, because they were from the same region and because, as my father said, the gold coins made the relationship thighter.

Interviewer: And what could he do?

Annette: He intervened with the Gestapo. The UGIF had a long arm at that time... for a certain period because this Israëlowicz, the year after, was deported himself. Maybe he had a long arm while he was in charge, but he was just waiting his turn.

Interviewer: And he intervened...

Annette: He intervened by saying what exactly? I don't know.

Interviewer: In what way?

Annette: By saying... Oh yes he made us pass off as furriers because at that time they needed furriers for the German army. So my brother and I, 7 and 9 years old, we were supposed to be furriers. But for my mother, it was too late.

Interviewer: But your father didn't know that yet?

Annette: He didn't know, but by the time we were found, between the Vel d'Hiv-Beaune-la-Rolande and then Drancy, time had passed and it was a miracle that we weren't put on that convoy, because our names were crossed off really in-extremis. Proof my mother could have been saved. And that's what my father blames himself for and for losing time. But that was the time.

Interviewer: So here we are in Drancy. How do you find out about this?

Annette: So we see them leave, but I don't remember much. Time must have passed, because there was school. The older ones in Drancy taught the children again, so the school year started in September ... no, it was in October.

Interviewer: Was it organized by the children?

Annette: By the young people, by the younger people. And I have the memory that we were called. It's a blur for me.

Michel: When there were departures, they put the deportees the day before in a separate staircase. And then, they usually left in the morning. There would be a roll call and as soon as there was a call, there was anxiety. And I must say that the calls were always worrying. And some time later, we got called. We were a bit worried. I remember that they took us to the secretary's office at the entrance of the camp. There was a police bus. It wasn't a bus but a police bus. We wondered where we were going and we were transported.



"More than 120,000 Jews are deported"

Credit: Mémorial de la Shoah

Annette: They called us and I thought... I was afraid, I was always afraid of what would happen anyway, and I thought it was to fix my shoe. And then they told us, "You're going to leave." At the camp gate, we filled out paperwork. Everything was always done in an administrative way. They put us on a police bus. Two children, aged 7 and 9, in a police bus with four cops.

Interviewer: Just the two of you...

Annette: Just the two of us. We didn't know where we were going. And then we were convinced - an extraordinary relief - my brother and I, that we were going home. We were going to find my brothers, my father and my mother. We were sure of that, so we started imagining what we were going to do, that we were going to hide, ask the custodian for the keys, hide under the table and surprise them at mealtime, suddenly appear. We were sure of that and we were talking, talking feverishly and I turned around at one point and saw the cops crying. It struck me these men with their cheeks covered in tears and that's when I understood that we weren't going home, that no more happy things were going to happen to us because they were crying. They were crying, but they took us to the Lamarck asylum, which is a center administered by the UGIF but under the direct control of the Gestapo, especially when it concerned the children who arrived from Drancy. They were called "blocked children," which means that there were calls every day and we were obliged to report on these children, whom the Germans were picking up to fill the trains.

Interviewer: But why? Why was there this passage by...

Annette: Maybe it was an improvement. The conditions were still better, but it was still an annex.

Asile Lamarck (September - end of November 1942)

Interviewer: Were there many children?

Annette: There were many children but there were two categories of children: there were children who had been placed by their parents and who had more freedom of movement and there were the blocked children who had arrived from Drancy and who had been arrested and were still considered to be prisoners.

Interviewer: Were you as hungry in Drancy as you were...

Annette: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: There was always this problem of hunger or...

Annette: Oh yes, we were skeletons, we were skeletons. I have a picture taken at the Lamarck Asylum where you can still see my brother and me with shaved heads, where you can see how thin we were.



Annette and Michel at the Lamarck Asylum

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: So you arrive at the Lamarck asylum

Annette: So the Lamarck asylum is in Montmartre, that is to say in the centre of Paris. At that time, there was a liveliness in Paris, a certain *joie de vivre* for some, and there was this place where the children were in that state.

Interviewer: How many children were there more or less?

Annette: I don't know, it was full of children, it was full. Some came from Drancy. We were shaved there too. They kept shaving us because there were lice. There was an epidemic of scarlet fever and diphtheria. The atmosphere was a bit crazy.

Interviewer: Were the conditions better? Could you wash yourself?

Annette: There were showers.

Interviewer: There were showers?

Annette: Yes, there were showers. I remember that.

Michel: What struck me was that they wanted us to have a Jewish culture. At home, for example, my parents were no longer practising. So we weren't brought up to be religious at all. I didn't even know what it meant to be Jewish. (...) So at Lamarck, I was not well regarded at all because we didn't know the prayers. Before starting to eat, we had to say the prayer but in Hebrew and I didn't know them. Looking back, I find it incredible that in 1942, people in charge of, children in any case, insisted on keeping religious traditions when the management of that organization must have known what was happening. And I found out later that there were other children who had managed to escape. There were other organizations. Among others, there was what is known as the Rue Amelot, which sought to smuggle out children and the O.S.E. (children's aid organization) and the U.J.R.E., which were Jewish communists. They tried to save the children. They were more successful in the non-occupied zone than they were in the occupied zone. But there were a few that they managed to save. I later learned that the UGIF had taken them back in so they would not be staying with Catholic families. And that, I find it terrible.

Interviewer: You had more food?

Annette: Yes, but they put a product on our food, a kind of powder -I never knew what it was- that gave the food a bad taste. And among us children, we used to say, "They're doing experiments on us. You shouldn't eat, they're experimenting on you." We already knew that children were being experimented on. And then, in the courtyard of Lamarck, which overlooked the street, there were tables and people threw food over to the tables. I remember because we would dig to bury the food

Interviewer: To bury the food, why?

Annette: So that others didn't take it away from us.

Interviewer: Do you remember doing that?

Annette: Yes, and what I also remember doing is my brother would put his head on me and I would look for lice. We would kill each other's lice. And then, it was my turn. We spent our days killing each other's lice. I was enrolled in school at that time, with the yellow star and the shaved head. I was terribly afraid. Since I was ahead academically, I was put in a higher class. They gave me a short exam.

Interviewer: Who did that?

Annette: School.

Interviewer: The school administration? Was there a school next door? A regular school?

Annette: In fact, it was on rue de Clignancourt, the communal school. So we were put in this school, the boys on one side, the girls on the other ... maybe it wasn't the same school for the boys. And I remember that on the first day, with my shaved head and my star, it started with a gymnastics lesson in the school yard. I was in a filthy state, surely not very nice to be around and the girls stood around me and started to make fun of me calling me "the dirty Jew", "the shaved ball" or "the louse". I was so desperate at that point that, to make matters worse, I peed on myself. Of course, this made the mockery worse. Out of fear, terror, that's what I did, and at that moment the teacher arrived - and that's why I'm telling you that those who had a gesture, I remember them and I remember all the gestures towards me - and she took me in her arms and she cradled me, she comforted me. I never saw her again, but I'll remember that for the rest of my life.

Interviewer: And then you went back to that school?

Annette: Never, no.

Interviewer: You were 10 years old?

Annette: I was 9 years old.

Interviewer: Yes, and this is September or October?

Annette: November, already November. We were late. The end of November, because shortly afterwards, we left the Lamarck asylum.

Interviewer: And your brother was also there in that school?

Annette: No, he was in a boys' school.

Interviewer: So, there was only one day that you went?

Annette: I think so.

Interviewer: So there was still a way out of the camp?

Annette: They put us in school, I don't understand why.

Interviewer: You could have run away if...

Annette: Oh no, we were supervised and accompanied because we were "blocked children". So we weren't left alone.

Catholic orphanage in Neuilly-sur-Seine (November 1942-Spring 1945)

Interviewer: How long do you stay?

Annette: I don't know. I know that I left at the end of November, picked up by the nun and the custodian who had hidden my father.

Jean: So we arrived at l'Hay-les-Roses, in the orphanage. (...) Sister Clotilde told us, "Most important, don't compromise yourselves, don't say that you are Jews because... ". It was a time of denunciation too. A child could tell his father who came to visit him and so on. You had to be careful.

Henri: Besides, when we arrived, I still had the Jewish star in my pocket. And the Mother Superior of L'Hay-les-Roses immediately took it from us. She put it aside, well she certainly hid it. And there was no longer any trace of our being Jews. Absolutely none. Except that, obviously, (...) we had been circumcised and when you're Jewish, that's proof. But during the war, what was surprising was that we never found ourselves naked in front of the other boys. Among the sisters, it was taboo, you know, to wash naked in front of the others. In fact, I don't remember taking a shower during the war. There were no showers there at L'Hay-les-Roses. And when we did our washing, it was in small sinks. We washed well. And afterwards, we went to the toilets to wash our private parts, as they say. So there was nothing to fear on that end... there was never any risk. We felt really safe.

Jean: We said our mother is in the hospital. You know, in an orphanage, people don't tell each other their personal story because it would be endless. It's like after the war, nobody told what happened to them. Everyone had a story. If we had, we would only have had bad memories. I don't remember having any problems...

-Where are you from? What do you do?

-Well, our parents can't keep us for the moment, we're here. (...)

The orphanage, for the time, was nice. Naturally, we were out of step at first. We, who lived with attentive parents, there were about thirty of us in this orphanage, so ... There was not only discipline, it was a bit austere too. We followed the rites. We adapted very quickly. It's true that in a boarding school within a Catholic convent, there is prayer in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, in the evening, before going to bed. It is always. We abided by that discipline. At least I did. Perhaps I had my little crisis of mysticism at that time and it suited me well. I felt very at ease.



Jean and Henri in L'Haÿ-les-Roses

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Henri: And we immediately learned the catechism, we learned the prayers. And we learned them very quickly because the prayers with the sisters were from morning to night. We got up in the morning and that was the first word. The sisters would wake us up saying "Long live Jesus". Then we would mumble like that, stupidly... well, half awake, we would continue the prayers. You see, there was a kind of prayer that we read in the morning. Then she would list all the saints. There are quite a few saints. All the saints, St.

Paul, so "St. Paul, pray for us", "St. Joseph, pray for us", "St. Peter, pray for us". You see, that's how it was. We lived in prayer. And then afterwards, right away we would go and wash, I think. Then afterwards, we were on our knees and then we had to say the morning prayer, which was quite long. Then before eating, a prayer. After eating, another prayer. You see, at each meal, a little prayer. And then at school, we would arrive and there would be a prayer. And then after school, another prayer. You see, it was prayers all day long. The rosary was also a very long prayer. We had to recite the prayers all day long. But to put it simply, we quickly got used to all that, in fact. We participated very actively in this kind of thing and it's not that we forgot our parents and life but, you know, a kid gets used to it very quickly. We got used to it very quickly.

Jean: That panic that we had experienced, that I had for a few days was gone. I was protected, you see. We lived protected. Well, we were still worried. For example, I remember writing to my father, when we knew where he was, "Have you heard from Mom? Have you heard from Annette and Michel?" He wrote to us in the same way. At first, we didn't know. That was a black spot because this family was fragmented. We had always lived in a very small space, so that increases the bonds and then, all of a sudden, we find ourselves only two. There were four people missing. And that's a lot. But, you know, children have a way of adapting that many adults don't have. We adapted. (...)

With Henri, we talked about mom, we talked about dad, we didn't hide anything. Then we even asked each other: "Do you really believe in all this? The Holy Virgin? The Saints? Jesus?" So we were Jewish. We remained, at least in the beginning, Jews. We asked ourselves the questions we had to ask. Personally, I was rather credulous. I was very gullible. My brother was much more skeptical.

Henri: So, my father, I remember, he came to see us as soon as we arrived in L'Hay-les-Roses. He came to see us once - I remember because we were in the visiting room - just to see us, to tell us that he was trying to see about my mother, about Michel and Annette. He told us, I remember that, that it was going well, and that he thought they would soon be free. (...) He knew that my mother was in Beaune-la-Rolande because we have a letter

that he sent us at the time in which he told us that we had to write to her in Beaune-la-Rolande. So he simply told us that it was on the right track.

Jean: At L'Hay-les-Roses, we stayed for a year. And then we went to Neuilly-sur-Seine because my father found the trail of Annette and Michel. (...) Sister Régereau went to get them.



Courtesy of Henri Muller

Henri: Sister Clotilde took them to Neuilly-sur-Seine, not far from the American hospital at 88 Boulevard Victor Hugo, I still remember. A house that no longer exists. It was called the Queynessen orphanage at the time. And it's right next to the American hospital. Right across the street. We used to walk by it all the time, I remember. So why did we put them there? Because it was co-ed.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about that day?

Annette: They came to get us. The nun, she had on her big cornet.



Sister Clotilde with her cornette
Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: Were you called first?

Annette: Yes. We were in a sort of parlor. She had to give guarantees. She had to sign a guarantee, a release I think. There was a lot of paperwork involved. Maybe she said she was only going to keep us for a while. I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you saw her?

Annette: Well, yes. But she took us straight to Rue du Bac.

Interviewer: And the custodian, did you already know her?

Annette: Yes, well, I knew her but she left immediately. But this nun took us to where we saw my brothers and there were hugs and tears. I thought I had seen my father again at that moment. But no, I was mistaken. I did not see my father again at that time.

Jean: Ah, it was a very, very, very emotional moment. We were reunited. Sister Clotilde took a photo of the four of us to send to my father to say "Here are your children together." And there is a little anecdote, when she got Michel and Annette, they had shaved heads. So to take the picture, she said, "But Annette, a little girl, she's going to be ashamed to be in a picture with a shaved head." So - see this nun, the goodness she had in her - she went to a haberdashery to buy a ribbon. A big, wide ribbon to tie around her head, with a big bow to hide her shaved head, to send our father a photo. And then, our father sent us, "I am so happy that you are reunited. Unfortunately mom... but we're going to find her." (...) It was a crazy time. We threw ourselves into each other's arms. We couldn't get out of each other's arms. Even Sister Clotilde still remembered it. She said, "I'll never forget when you were reunited." It was a moment, a great moment of happiness. Annette and Michel told us what happened. And then we started to repeat the recommendations, "Between us, we can talk about everything, but we must never talk outside about the Jews. Even with the best boyfriend or girlfriend."

Interviewer: They were your two big brothers. And you hadn't seen each other since...



Annette and the head bow made by Sister Clotilde.

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Annette: Since July 16. And then we were immediately taken to an orphanage in Neuilly-sur-Seine where the boys were kept on one side, we were separated immediately. The first night we were in the cellar because there was a bombardment and that's where I saw my brother's shaven head. I have a very clear memory. He had just arrived and there was an older boy who was beating him, still in the cellar, saying "Shaved ball, shaved ball!". He was making fun of him and that was only the first day. Afterwards, my brother was able to defend himself because he was very charming. But then, on the first day, the kids are cruel and I remember silently crying that my little brother was being mistreated.

Interviewer: Are you staying in this orphanage?

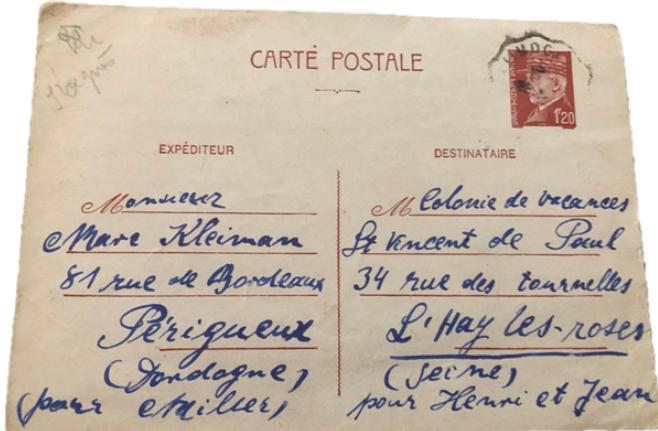
Annette: I stayed in that orphanage for three years but we were evacuated from the orphanage. We were not numerous, we were eighteen. In fact, the Kommandantur was next to the orphanage. We were in a very dangerous place, but perhaps the fact that we were so close... In fact, the Prefect of Police was the direct patron of the orphanage. He was actually killed -we even went to his funeral- during an attack. Chiappe.³⁹ We were really in the lion's den. But perhaps the fact of being in the lion's den...

Interviewer: Eighteen children with your three brothers?

Annette: No, the girls. The boys on the other side. We were completely separated. We saw each other at Mass because my brothers were altar boys so I saw them at Mass.

Michel: Our father used to write to us regularly and it wasn't his handwriting because he was afraid of making spelling mistakes. Now, he writes French well, but at the time he wrote as he spoke and it was one of his childhood friends who ended up in Périgueux, who later got caught and was therefore deported, but he wrote French very well and wrote letters. But he sent us packages. He sent us packages at the sisters', and it was terrible because when the package arrived, we had to open it. It was the sister who opened it and she helped herself first. Not the one who had saved us.

³⁹ Is it Jean Chiappe who died in November 1940?



Postcard from Manek to Henri and Jean written by his friend Marc Kleinman (November 2, 1942)

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: So at the time you were told that you shouldn't say you were Jewish?

Annette: Yes. So the fact that I was shaved, I was told to say that I had a disease, that's just the way it was, that there were certain diseases that obliged to shave the hair and then never to say that I was Jewish. So from that point on, I never said that I was Jewish.

Michel: I know that when I found my brothers and especially my younger brother, who took care of me a lot, he told me, surreptitiously, "Never say that you are Jewish." I didn't know what that meant. We integrated well to the group. I remember that big dormitory. It was awful because it was very cold. And those dormitories weren't heated.

Interviewer: And so you are evacuated?



Village where Annette was evacuated to in 1943

Credit: Wikipedia

Annette: So we were evacuated to a convent in the Auvergne region, but that's where we had to work to pay our way. It was a convent for the children of peasants in Auvergne who were very numerous. I don't know if there weren't 500 or 600 people in there. So in the morning, we did the peeling to feed the whole convent and in the afternoon, we did some sewing. We made trousseaux, trousseaux for the young girls of the country, which then were sold. We worked all day.



Annette in Saint-Rémy-sur-Durolle
Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: Did you go to school?

Annette: No, I didn't go to school practically for the duration of the war.

Interviewer: And you stay there for three years?

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you see your brothers regularly during this time?

Annette: No, because when we were in a convent, they were evacuated to another place. They were evacuated to the Seine-et-Marne⁴⁰. We very rarely saw each other. My father managed to come and see me once.



Village where the boys were evacuated to in 1943

Credit: Wikipedia

Jean: And we met up, the three boys together, in the Marne, in Drouilly-sur-Marne. It's a small village near Vitry-le-François. (...) In the countryside we ate very well. As we were going to help the local farmers, we ate at their homes, we were not really hungry for the time. Of course, we lacked the pastries that my mother used to make us, the sweets, but we had no problem eating properly. Besides, we weren't skinny. I remember being well fed.

⁴⁰ It was in fact in the Marne.



Jean (back) and Henri (first row, left) in Drouilly 1944

Courtesy of Henri Muller

The end of the war 1945-1947

Interviewer: Can you say in a few words what happens chronologically after and until the end of the war? And how you find your father?

Annette: Yes, so at the orphanage, we were baptized.

Michel: Yes, we were baptised, very quickly. We were even altar boys. I'm very learned in Catholic religion. Much more than the Jewish religion. We really integrated very quickly. We integrated very quickly. At the time, we were still doing mass in Latin, and I really liked that.

Henri: My father, according to what he told us, Sister Clotilde had written to him saying that it might be necessary to baptize us because the situation was starting to become harder for the Jews and so on. So he accepted perhaps in spite of himself. Finally, he had to agree. And anyway we wanted to do it.

Annette: I took my private and solemn communion. I had become deeply Catholic. My brothers, the same. We found my father after the war and I remember that we were all polite to him. We were no longer able to say *tu*⁴¹ to him. And the first thing we said to him, one of my brothers and I, my brother said, "I want to be a priest" and I said, "I want to be a nun." Well, after the war he managed to get us out and we were put in a children's home for deported children.



Annette at her Communion in St-Rémy-sur-Durolles (April 6, 1944)

Courtesy of Henri Muller

⁴¹ informal form of *you – tu* is usually the pronoun children use to address their parents

Interviewer: You say, he gets us out? Why "managed to get us out"? Was it difficult? He was still your father, did he not have the right to take you out?

Annette: I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay with the nuns.

Interviewer: The fact that "he managed to" was against your will ?

Annette: Yes and no. That is, yes, there was more life. I was convinced that I would find my mother after the war. Besides, I was still with the sisters, he would take me by the hand to wait for my mother at the Hotel Lutetia, almost every day.

Tape 5

Interviewer: Were you happy with the sisters?

Annette: I was happy in the sense that I was a believer. I had become a believer, so for me, the misfortunes that we could have at the sisters' house, for example, we ate very badly, we were not allowed to play. There was a sort of toy room donated by the rich people of Neuilly-sur-Seine but it was locked. We weren't allowed to play because we were told, "You'll be allowed to play when the war is over." So we worked but that was everybody's fate.

Interviewer: Sister Clotilde, did you see her again?

Annette: From time to time, for example for baptism, for communion, that's it, but we rarely saw her.

Interviewer: Do you remember sisters who were kind, who were affectionate or not at all?

Annette: Yes, there were problems but I didn't feel like an orphan. There were orphans but I knew I had a father and a mother. As far as I was concerned, I was convinced that I would see my mother again. Towards the other girls who were there, there was an orphan mentality. That is

to say, the sisters told them, "You are orphans, no one is interested in you. You are fortunate to be alive whether you eat or not" because we ate so badly - we sorted beans, the black ones were for us, the white ones were for the nuns. That was the way it was. For example, I only took one bath in three years because the topic of the body was dirty, you didn't have to wash, you just had to clean your face a little.

Interviewer: Did anyone else know that you were Jewish?

Annette: Sister Clotilde and perhaps the Superior.

Interviewer: And so the war ends and what happens? How does your father get you out?

Jean: When we were liberated, Sister Clotilde Régereau gave the order to the Sister who was taking care of us to have us return to Neuilly. Immediately, instantly, because my father went to see her after the war and asked her to get his children back. She said yes, immediately, instantly. We arrived in Neuilly. And once we were in Neuilly, she came to get us, she took us to 140 rue du Bac where my father had left us and he found us again, the three boys. The girl had not yet returned from Saint-Rémy-sur-Durolle.

*Henri: I remember it very well. I said **vous**⁴² to him. I remember it shocked me right away. Well, it's funny because I hadn't seen him for two years and there was... not a coldness but when people get separated... (...) Two and a half years had passed. Well, of course we wrote letters to each other. "Dear Dad... We love you". But then, yes, something had happened... and then... immediately, we must have cracked up a joke.*

Jean: And then my father took us to an orphanage at 36 rue Amelot. It was a camp. It was a Jewish home in Versailles. And he took us there because he was all alone. He didn't have an apartment. The apartment had been occupied by a police officer. He was having trouble getting it back. He was living in a hotel. He wasn't allowed to go home.

⁴² formal form for you

And even when he came home, maybe another year later, I think, there was nothing left in the house. Nothing. Not even a light bulb. Everything had been looted, literally looted. So he couldn't take us back right away. He put us in this children's home in Versailles. We were about 20-25 children, all of whom had a story of deported parents, arrests, hidden children. (...)

Henri: So in Versailles, we were in a Jewish house but we went to high school. (...) So in this little house, it was a little orphanage. The atmosphere was completely different from that of the Sisters'. There were exceptional freedoms, they let us go out as we wanted. The director was really great. I remember them very well. And there was really a feeling of total freedom. They were Russian Jews. There was a policy of total freedom. We really did what we wanted, we went out when we wanted, almost at the time we wanted. It really changed from the Sisters'. We could go to the movies, we could go out at night. Really, it was great.

Jean: Then Annette came back. But in Versailles, it wasn't co-ed, it was all boys. So my father looked for a Jewish children's camp. He went to the O.S.E. and they sent us to Le Mans.



At the Méhoncourt castle run by the O.S.E. The boys received their uniforms from an American charity

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Annette: So we go to this home for children of deportees where we reunite. It was in Le Mans. It was run by the O.S.E. (the children's aid organization). Something happened there: the children who had lived all sorts of lives - hidden by peasants or put in orphanages - we couldn't stand the discipline at first. All of a sudden, we couldn't stand being told, "You have to act like this." Some of the staff put up banners saying "Long live life! Long live joy!". We didn't believe in all that anymore. We had become very cynical. We didn't believe in all that stuff. We, the children, had become very hardened. At that time, I was grounded and deprived of dinner almost every night. I ran away 3-4 times. Everything was jarring. And then, there was something, it was that the children's home was helped by the Americans. The Americans directly supported and helped it. And the Americans came -there were a lot of soldiers who were in Le Mans- to pick out children. They invited us to eat, some to choose children, to adopt them since they were orphans. The children hardly waited for their parents to come back anymore and they chose. We were lined up in rows and they chose the most beautiful ones. It was once again a humiliating measure,

meaning that anyone who wasn't beautiful, who wasn't found pleasant, was once again excluded. There was once again this sort of selection, this market.



First post-war family picture

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: Are you there alone or with your brothers?

Annette: I am with my three brothers at first, but because of their undisciplined behavior, they are sent away one after the other.

Jean: So in '45, I was fourteen years old. So, there's also a problem, during my years in the convent, with the Catholics, I became a Catholic. Very religious. Very religious, with the idea of being a priest. I started the seminary and it was a big problem for my father. He had always been an atheist, and he was worried that I would continue to practice religion. I was going to Mass. That's one of the reasons why he took us out of Versailles to go to Le Mans. It wasn't just a matter of finding a co-ed camp, a co-ed house, it was also to uproot me, to remove me from the proximity of Neuilly, of L'Hay-les-Roses where I had kept my ties, and that lasted a long time. A long time. It was one of the consequences of the war. It lasted a long time. He was very worried because I was

already very, very involved. I didn't want to do anything but study religion. So high school was fine and I was learning Latin because Latin was the language of the church at the time. And the day I no longer had this belief or it was less strong, I didn't feel like doing anything. I didn't want to work, go to school, or... anything. It was over. There was a break. In my mind, it was quite diffuse, quite confused. But from the day I could no longer be a priest, I could no longer be anything else. (...) It was a tear. It was a heartbreak. And I put that down to the aftermath of the war. It disturbed me all my adolescence because it ruined my adolescence. There came a time when I said to my father:

-Uh, no, I don't want to go to school anymore.

-Well, you're going to work.

-No, I don't want to work.

I didn't have a goal anymore. The goal had been taken away from me. And that lasted a year, two years. It was heartbreaking.

Annette: My little brother is put in another home for difficult children.

Michel: They transferred me because I was unbearable. I had fought with the director, I had ended up with a black eye like this (he gestures with his hand). For him to hit me, I really had to do a lot. And that house in Fontenay-aux-Roses was a home for difficult children. When I say difficult children, there were some who were really very, very difficult and some who came directly from the camps. There was, among others, in my room, the bed next to it, a Pole named Vladek. We knew that. He had managed to get out because he was very, very strong, very tall. He was fourteen years old, but he looked eighteen. And as soon as you came near him, he would hit you. And strangely enough, except for me, because I was really small. He was like a wild animal. So he took a liking to me and he started to speak and he learned French. But very quickly. And then we lost touch with each other because many of the children who were there were adopted by Americans, Australians, Canadians. So they left one after another to their adoptive families. And I remember, I was a bit jealous because I dreamed of going to America. (...)

In Fontenay-aux-Roses, there was a director⁴³ who was an exceptional guy, a psycho-pedagogue, as exceptional as Korczak, about whom much was said in the Warsaw ghetto. It was more or less based on the same model. It was a Children's Republic in Fontenay-aux-Roses. He absolutely insisted that we run ourselves. And it was quite extraordinary. We acquired a sense of responsibility quite quickly, even though there were only extremely difficult children. And we drew a lot. There are some drawings that I found when visiting the Struthof camp, for example, of children from Fontenay-aux-Roses, including myself.



Ernst and Lida Jablonski (center), staff of the Fontenay-aux-Roses children's home, pose with some of the youth who lived there.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Lida Jablonski

The teaching was done inside the children's home based on the active education methods. When, for example, we did investigations, we had a laboratory. All this was financed, of course, by the Americans, because it was a superb 18th century house which had been the house of the editor of La Fontaine in the 17th and 18th centuries. And there was a large park. There was a tennis court and whenever we wanted something, we had it. We had a printing shop. [The work] was always done in groups of three. We found out that it was the house of the publisher de la Fontaine [by going] to look in the archives of the town hall. I had managed to find [documents] from that time. We worked like that, through investigation, which was quite unusual.

⁴³ Ernst Jablonski



Children work in the gardens of La Forge, an OSE children's home in Fontenay-aux-Roses.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Andre Limot

(...)Afterwards, this house had to close down because the Americans were financing it but since all the educators came from the Jewish resistance and they were obviously all Communists, so it was not a good idea. We had a very Marxist education. But, in spite of everything, those who wanted to practice religion could practice. (...) You could work on Yiddish, not Hebrew. I don't remember it but there was really a Jewish culture. (...) They always told us: "We need each of us to say, "I am a Jew and this is my honor." »

Interviewer: And your father?

Annette: My father is in Paris. He managed to get his apartment back but with great difficulty. It took him months to be welcomed with a rifle because a policeman was put in our apartment and he didn't want to leave. And besides, there were serious problems at the Liberation: the Jews left, the apartments were given to people who did not want to leave when the Jews returned. And there were demonstrations by committees of tenants claiming to be robbed by the Jews.

Interviewer: And so that was also exactly what happened to your family in the sense that it was difficult to get the apartment back?

Annette: In fact the people who took over the homes, the French - well, for my father it was a policeman - refused to give them back.

Interviewer: And so, you mentioned earlier going with Sister Clotilde to the Lutetia Hotel. Can you say a few words about that?

Annette: No, it was with my father that I went to the Hotel Lutetia. So I went back to school afterwards, when we came back [from Saint-Rémy]. It was a private Catholic school, and I remember that I always had the Cross of Honor. And at that time, we were given a sort of sash when we had the Cross of Honor. And my father wanted me to wait for my mother with the Cross of Honor and the sash so that she would be impressed to find her little girl a good student. But every day we waited and of course she never came back.

Jean: We asked every day. We would read a newspaper in Yiddish, I don't remember the title, that listed the people who were coming back. And we waited. Mrs. Muller? There was no Mrs. Muller. And that, little by little, ended.

Henri: On Sundays, my father would come and then he would take us to the Lutetia hotel, I still remember, to see the deportees when they arrived. And then with photos of my mother to see if anyone knew her. You see, it was very sad, but in the end, we had to. We asked. We went to see the deportees who arrived to see if there were any But we thought that our mother would arrive. (...) the deportation, we had already seen films about it. There were already newsreels. I remember the newsreels where we saw, already at the time, General Eisenhower who had visited a camp there in Germany. I don't remember which one it was exactly, but they showed all the crematoria, the camps... well the barracks... everything that... and the dead deportees. We knew what it was. We had no illusions. But we thought she would come back.

Interviewer: When did you know that...

Annette: I always hoped she would come back. At one point I even thought, "That's because she doesn't want to come back because I did something." I always had this feeling that she didn't want to come back, that I hadn't been a good girl. That's what it is. But I hoped. I started to understand that she wouldn't come back, but I was already practically a teenager.

Michel: In any case, as far as I'm concerned, I hoped for a long time, telling myself that perhaps she had been repatriated to Russia

Jean: We found out a year later. Well, it's over, there are no more returns so... The last ones to arrive, we still had hope. The last ones to arrive were very sick people that had been kept back for a long time. We said: "Oh well, she will be very sick but she will come back." And then, well, she didn't come back. At one point, my father told us: "It's no longer worth talking about... she won't come back. Your mother's not coming back." We didn't have a death certificate. We had no death certificate. She's not coming back.

Henri: How did I know? Certainly later because I remember in '45, in July or August, we went to Le Mans and at that time they made us write poems. So I had to write a poem at the time and I had written something about my mother, when I was certainly still hoping. I had done a little poem at the time about that. Well, until August-September. After that, it was over. There was no hope.

Post-war

Interviewer: At the end of the war you were 11 years old, so what happened next?

Annette: So I had an interruption in my schooling. I went back to my father's when I was 16, but it wasn't the same. My father didn't remarry, but he settled down with a very nice woman, a childhood friend, whose husband had been deported⁴⁴. I didn't want to go on with school. I

⁴⁴ Pauline Kleinman, whose husband Marc was Manek's childhood friend and who often wrote the mail that Manek sent to his children

dropped out, I gave up. I went to a nursery school for a while, which I also dropped out of. I did different jobs, I got married very young...



Pauline Kleinman

Courtesy of Henri Muller

Interviewer: At what age?

Annette: I met my husband at 17. I got married at 18. I had my sons when I was 18 and 19. I wanted to have my own family. I had left home. Each of my brothers had left under violent conditions. We couldn't stand family life, family discipline. And then, when my children were a bit older, I worked at home, I made leather gloves, sewing, a bit of everything and then I started to study again. I passed some sort of baccalaureate when I was nearly 40 and then I went on to study until I had a Bachelor's degree. Once I was a civil servant, I became a local attaché and I was responsible for all the professional training of the municipal staff...

Interviewer: In the city where you live?

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: And you retired a few months ago?

Annette: I retired at the beginning of April.

Interviewer: And you were in charge of training for ...

Annette: Vocational training. Not only vocational training for the staff, but also the placement of young students in company internships.

Interviewer: Did you see your brothers ... I mean, in the beginning, everybody left in bad conditions, did you see each other?

Annette: We get along very well. We don't see each other much. We phone each other.

Interviewer: Excuse me, not now, before, in the early years... 10 years after the war?

Annette: No, we don't see each other, we see each other little. After the war, when I returned to my father's house, with my brothers, there was a bad relationship. We didn't get along.

Jean: I was the case. The case who did not live well the transition [of] returning to family life. Just as I had had a hard time initially making the transition from family life to boarding school, so I had a hard time making the transition from Catholic boarding school to family life. Very badly. So I am, in a way, a victim of the war. Not on the same level as the people interned or deported, but still, it disturbed me, deeply disturbed me. (...) I had no taste for anything.

Interviewer: And so, now you don't see each other much

Annette: We don't see each other much, but with my father and my brothers, there is a great deal of mutual family support.

Jean: For example, I speak with my father on the phone at least three times a week. With my brothers and sister at least once a week. But we each have our own life and our own relationships which are not the same for each other. But we're still very tight. Very, very, very tight and very united above all. Very united. That's how it is. (...) It's a clan. Everyone notices when we're together. We are unassailable as a clan, no matter who our opponent is... or who our friend is, it's the same.

Interviewer: Okay.

Annette: We know that we care a lot about each other.

Interviewer: You have two sons, do you feel that in some way they have paid for what you went through as a child?

Annette: Yes, absolutely. I have a son, the eldest son, who totally refuses - maybe he's starting to evolve a little bit - he totally refuses anything to do with Jewish identity. You can feel that it's something he doesn't accept at all. I mean, he's starting to. He married a Catholic woman who is perhaps more open-minded than he is, but perhaps he is evolving a little. And I have another son who has serious psychological problems, who is haunted by Auschwitz, and in fact he studied history. He is very, very concerned by all this.

Interviewer: So in a way for you, it has always continued?

Annette: I myself think that I did not have a balanced attitude towards them and they must have felt it.

Jean: I would like to add a word for my mother because all this, this memory that you are asking me to evoke, is especially for my mother. Especially for my mother. And I am disturbed by the end of her life. She was a happy, harmless woman. Harmless. In the neighborhood, she was known, well-liked by the shopkeepers and neighbors alike, she

was a... harmless woman who didn't know how to be mean, who didn't know how to be mean. And who was hurt the most, on several occasions just like that. Slowly, she was killed slowly. She was killed slowly. She died when she was separated from her husband, she died again when the roundup was announced. Her life was taken from her piece by piece. (...) And another piece of her life was taken when we left the rue Boyer center on the day of the roundup. And another piece of her life was taken away when Michel and Annette were torn from her skirts, in conditions of rare savagery. And then, well, she found herself all alone, she who was in charge of five people, she found herself all alone. I say, she was dead when she was killed. She was psychologically dead when she was killed. And that's why I'm always very cooperative about memory: it's especially for my mother, especially for my mother. (...)



Picture taken by Manek in the Square des Envierges in 1934. It shows from left to right Rachel, Annette, Henri, Jean on a family friend's lap.

Courtesy of Henri Muller.

And I would also like to have a moving thought for this nun, Sister Régereau, Clotilde Régereau, who (...) first gave me her protection, and then her affection, and afterwards she gave me what she held most dear in the world, her religion. I can tell you that, in her life, she never had an interested thought. She never did. And for that reason, I like to talk about her because she is a unique case, especially at that time. Especially at that time. People that dedicated and risked their lives anyway. She did a good thing. And I wanted to talk about that.

END



Annette back at 3 rue de l'Avenir in 1947

Courtesy: Henri Muller