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Rachel Jedinak née Psankiewicz

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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: **Rachel Jedinak Psankiewicz**(1995)

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[Interview 4442](#) conducted in Paris on August 2nd, 1995 by Daniel Bessmann.

TAPE 1

Interviewer: Ms. Jedinak, please introduce yourself, tell us who you are and maybe spell your name?

Rachel: My name is Rachel Jedinak J-E-D-I-N-A-K. I was born Psankiewicz P-S-A-N-K-I-E-W-I-C-Z

Rachel. I was born on April 30, 1934 in Paris 12th. My parents were originally from Warsaw, Poland. My father, Abraham, and my mother Chana Zyro. We were 4 people, my home was composed of 4 people: my father, my mother, my sister, Louise who is 5 years older than me and this is it. We lived in Paris, in the 20th arrondissement, until the war.



Abram, Chana (née Gitla Zyro), Louise and Rachel in 1935

Credit: R. Jedinak

Interviewer: So your parents were originally from Poland as you just explained. What was or were their profession(s)?

Rachel: So my mother did not work. My father was an employee, a worker in a furniture factory in the Saint-Antoine district. I remember the smell of wood when I went to see him. And when I go into a furniture store, the smell of wood is immediately associated with my father, with the image of my father.

Interviewer: When did he come to France? I mean your parents?

Rachel: My parents came to France relatively young, I think, in the years 1920-1922. 1922 for my mother. 1920 or 1921 for my father, I think.

Interviewer: They met here?

Rachel: They met and married in France, yes.

Interviewer: And then, tell us about your early childhood, the first memories you have in Paris, well...

Rachel: Okay. So, childhood memories, I have few, it seems to me because I was 5 years old when the war was declared, I was born in 1934, so these are the memories of my first 5 years. I have flashes of that time rather than words. My ... I remember the kindergarten where I went, rue des Cendriers¹. I didn't like going there very much, the walls were grey, sad. I often acted to my mother not to go there, it seems to me. I

¹ 20 rue des Cendriers

have the memory... I have the memory of tenderness, of a tight-knit family, and maybe that's what helped me to live afterwards. I used to go downstairs in the evening, when my father came home from work, I would go downstairs and wait for him in the street and when I saw him coming down the street, I would run and throw myself into his arms. And then I remember, we lived in a modest home, in the 20th arrondissement of Paris, but I have memories of happy moments, really. It's more of a feeling and I think it must have helped me to live afterwards.

Interviewer: So you were with your older sister, your 5 year older sister, you said. What street did you live on exactly, your little apartment?

Rachel: So as I told you, it was a modest apartment at 26 rue Duris in the 20th arrondissement of Paris.

Interviewer: And so, you spent your first years there, you went to kindergarten but afterwards? You had time to go to another school, I suppose.

Rachel: Yes, but by the time I went to the big school, to the elementary school, it was already in 1940. It was already at the time of the war.

Interviewer: Rue de Tlemcen, right?

Rachel: Rue de Tlemcen². A school for girls.

Interviewer: So your childhood was spent immersed in family tenderness, as you have just explained to us...

² 9 rue Tlemcen

Rachel: Yes, yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: What happened when the war was declared? That's the starting point, I think, of your adventure, if I may say.

Rachel: Absolutely. I can just add for that time, my father certainly had...my parents had a hard life and I remember the word Birobidzhan³. My father may have been talking about going to Birobidzhan but that's the only memory I have. I remembered that word from some of the news stories that have been happening recently. That's it. Then, the declaration of war comes. The image I can keep as a 5 year old child are the big posters on the walls, the solemn faces. That's mostly what I remember. A certain effervescence, the meeting of friends and neighbors at my parents' house, I felt a tension. I didn't know what was going on, but I felt a certain tension. And then my father volunteered. My father volunteered in the 2nd Foreigners' March Battalion in France. And he went to the front.



Abram in his military uniform circa 1939
Credit: R. Jedinak

³ Jewish autonomous republic, established in 1934 by the will of Stalin on an uninhabited territory in the easternmost part of Russia.

That day, I remember his departure, that is, I remember that my mother and my sister accompanied him to the station. I remember the tears of my mother, the tears of the other women who accompanied their husbands, the children. I was sad but I do not remember more of that time. I remember the arm raised, the "goodbye, see you soon". And then began an extremely difficult period for us. My mother, who didn't work until that time, had to find odd jobs to support us. So I didn't see her much. And my sister, who was 5 years older than me, took care of me a lot, as a child of her age could do. I had the measles, and my sister took care of me by giving me food that didn't suit me at all. But I had the tenderness of my sister who was there. There were difficult moments if I remember correctly. My mother, at that time, I don't remember much about it, but I think it was at that time that my mother received a letter from Poland - because she had a large part of her family... she was from a family of 9 children, she had a large part of her family that was still in Poland and another part had gone to the United States including her parents.



Maternal grandparents Lejzor and Chana Zyto who migrated to the United States before the war
Credit: R. Jedinak

She also had a sister⁴ in Paris, married with children. And she received a letter from Poland that made her cry a lot. I think it was at the time of the installation of the Warsaw ghetto.



From left to right, 1st row: Simon, Sarah, Louise and Rachel. 2nd row: Herschl, Ruschka, Abram and Chana

Credit: www.convoisduoiret.org

So this is an impression. This letter is no longer in my possession, of course. Life went on with difficulty because we were waiting for news from our father. My mother was afraid at one point. There were rumors that my father was wounded, but no, he was not wounded. And, he was demobilized. I don't remember when he was demobilized. Unfortunately, I would have preferred that he were a prisoner in Germany, that would certainly have saved his life. And, life... no, what I forgot to say is that when there were alerts, we ran with the class to the shelters, that is to say we went down to the Père-Lachaise subway station, when the planes arrived to bomb. Well, my father came back from the army and there, I remember happy moments, fleeting moments but happy moments because the family was reunited. For me, I felt safe. I had my father, my mother, my sister, so everything was fine.

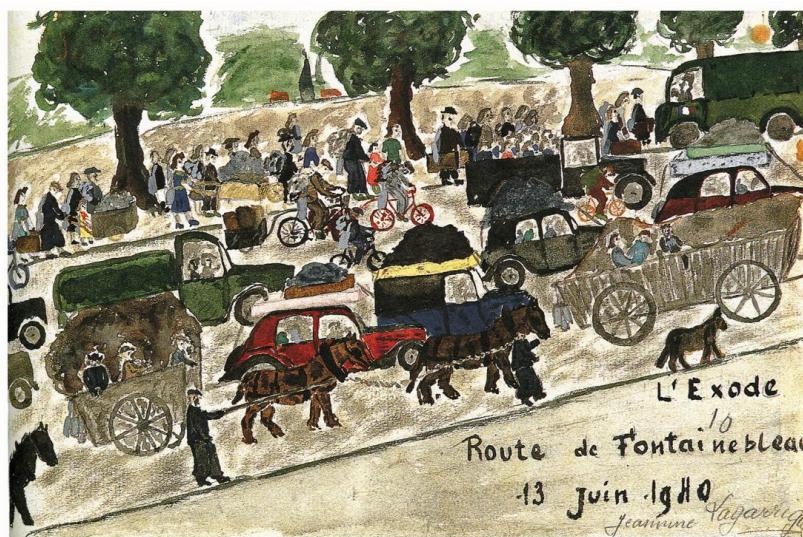
⁴ Ruschka married to Herschl Fajnzylber. The couple has 3 children: Sarah, Simon and Marcel. They lived at 10 rue Maître-Albert in the 5th arrondissement. Herschl, Ruschka and Marcel (born on February 6, 1935) were arrested during the Vel d'Hiv round-up. Herschl was sent to Drancy from where he was deported in the same convoy as Chana (convoy 12). Ruschka and Marcel were deported from Beaune-la-Rolande. Ruschka left on August 7, 1942 by convoy 16. Young Marcel was deported on August 21 by convoy 22. Only the two older children survived.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you a little clarification before going back, why did your father consider going to Birobidzhan, before the war?

Rachel: I can't answer for him. Nevertheless, I think that life in Paris was difficult. They had a difficult material life, I think. And that must be the reason, I think.

Interviewer: So he was demobilized and when he came back, did he go back to work and what was the transition like between his return and then what happened next?

Rachel: So, I don't know. I don't remember if he actually went back to work. I think he did, but I also forgot to mention that in the meantime I fled Paris.



« The exodus on the road to Fontainebleau (Seine-et-Marne) on June 13, 1940 » by Jeanine Lagarrigue
Credit: www.reseau-canope.fr/cnrd

I fled because the Germans were coming and, I have an uncle, an aunt and 4 children who were all deported⁵, who took my mother, my sister and me on. So we went on the roads, in a truck. So my

⁵ They are Abram's sister Sarah Psankiewicz Lenczner (1906), her husband Isaac (1895) and their four children: Fanny (1926), Régine (1928), Marie (1932) and Bernard (1938). The family lived at 258 boulevard Voltaire in the 11th arrondissement. Sarah and the children were arrested during the Vel' d'Hiv round-up. They were deported from one of the two camps in the Loiret on August 31, 1942 (convoy 26). Isaac was arrested

childhood memories there are precise, for certain things. We were, for example, under fire. We were machine-gunned by Italian planes that swooped very low on us to machine-gun us. I saw dead people... I was 6 years old, it was hard. And I... I also remember that we were in that truck, we were driving with our lights off at times, at night. One morning we woke up, we had ended up in a cemetery. And finally, we knew that the Germans had caught up with us, so we turned around and went back to Paris. Now, I can't tell you much about that period that I... I know that my mother, she went back to work, my father came back and life went on.



Sarah and Isaac Lenczner with their daughters Fanny and Régine



Marie, Régine, Fanny and Bernard Lenczner
Credit: [Mémorial de la Shoah](#)

later and deported from Drancy on June 23, 1943 (convoy 55). In 1945, Hendla received a telegram from Odessa in which Isaac told her that he was coming home. Rachel remembers that a few weeks later a survivor came to the door to tell them that Isaac had meanwhile died in his arms.

Interviewer: Did your parents declare themselves when there were the first laws...?

Rachel: Certainly, certainly since they were deported. I also remember a time when we tried the gas masks.

It was awful! They put these big tubes with rubber that smelled bad. But hey, they didn't do much good, fortunately. There were still alarms, I think, but life went on, haphazardly.



Gas masks are distributed to Parisians in 1939

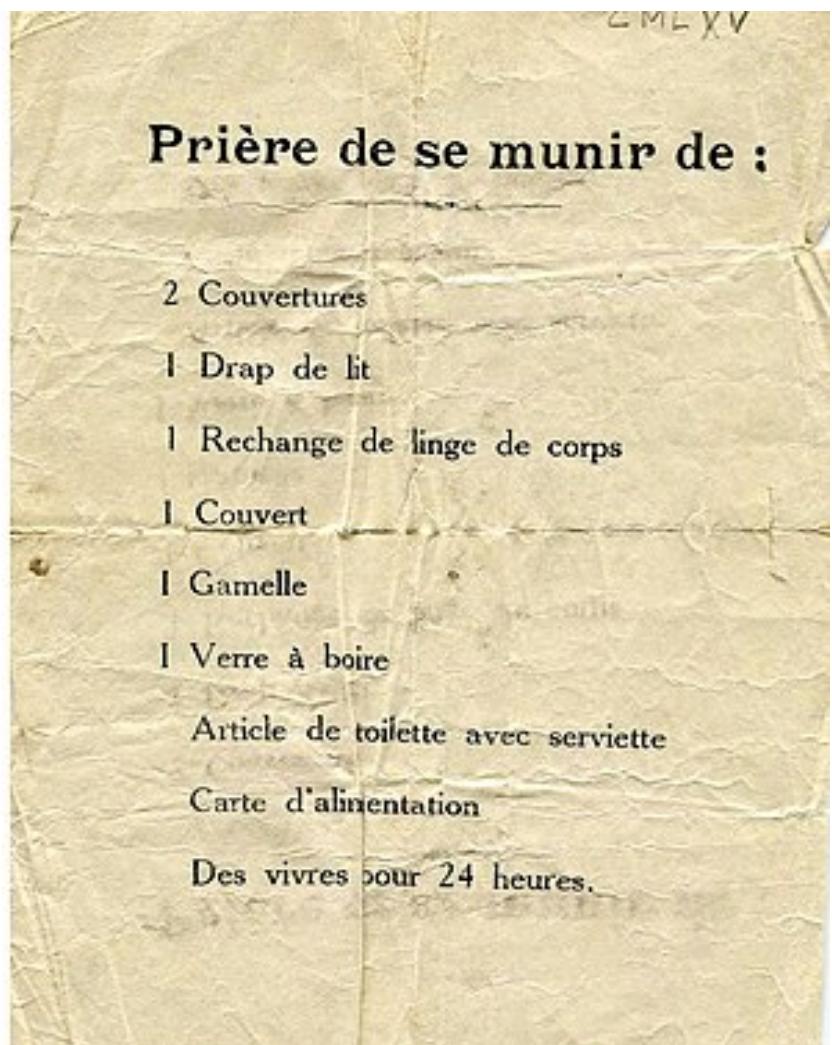
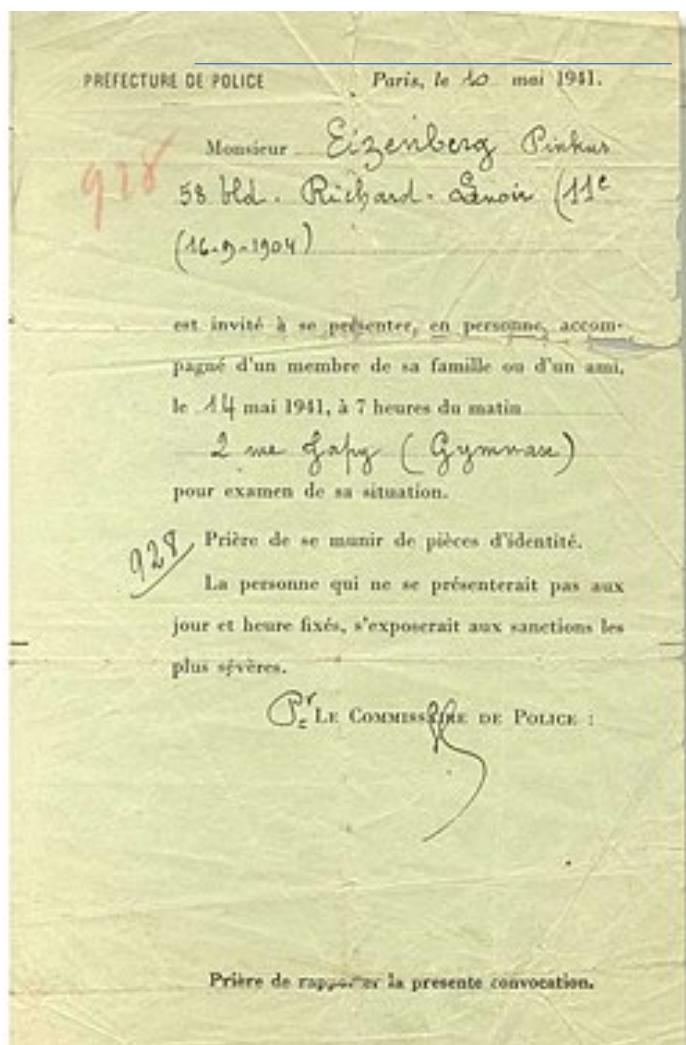
Credit: Agip/Bridgeman Images

Interviewer: So your parents are living...getting on with life as best they can with their two daughters.

What happens when your father, I think, was arrested?

Rachel: Yes, I remember some things there too. I have to tell you that, if I remember some things, it may be surprising because I was very young. Nevertheless, I have a daughter, grandchildren. I have a grandson who is currently 12 years old, Kevin, who has been asking me to write my testimony for two years. He is a child who is extremely aware of everything that has happened to me and everything that is happening in the world. He has been insisting for a while that I write my story, for later on, to give it to his children. And,

therefore, I had to bring to the surface everything that had been buried for a very long time, everything that was very painful. Excuse me. [Rachel cries] And so, it allowed me to restore some of the things that I had completely covered up. My sister lives in the United States. She's five years older than me. She came to see me a little while ago and I asked her some questions. And between the two of us, we were able to reconstitute a part of our childhood. That's why I have precise memories. So, regarding the little green ticket that my father received, he was summoned⁶ on May 14, 1941, that is to say a few months after his demobilization.



Green ticket and list of items to be brought back by the accompanying person
Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

⁶ Abram is summoned to the Tourelles military facility located on the boulevard Mortier in the 20th

And, he thought he was going to be released right away. I remember, I was still in my little bed one morning, he left very early, he kissed us but it was a kiss like a kiss that could be repeated. He thought he was coming home. And that's it, there began the painful moments, there began the very painful moments. He was interned in the camp of Beaune-la-Rolande. He went to Beaune-la-Rolande. He stayed there for thirteen months, until his deportation.



Men boarding trains to the Pithiviers or Beaume-la-Rolande camps after the Green Ticket round-up on May 14, 1941.

Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

Life was very difficult for us. I didn't see my mother very much. I was going to school, to the big school as they used to say in those days. I had to fight several times; I was called a kike. I went to a girls' school, of course. I became aware of my difference, I was forced to be different. My sister reminded me recently that I used to spend hours and hours in front of the mirror making everyone frustrated with me. But in fact, if I

remember correctly, I spent hours in front of the mirror because I wanted to understand my difference, what is it to be Jewish? Why am I different from other people?

Interviewer: Did you feel humiliated that you were suddenly not a little girl like the others but a " kike " as you said?

Rachel: Absolutely. Yes, I did. I think that when you are a child, you want to be like everyone else. And being different, I was forced to... I felt it every day. Then there was the wearing of the Jewish star. I was required to wear this Jewish star. You had to walk around with this star. You couldn't go to the playgrounds. We couldn't play with other children; parents didn't want them to play with us.



Playground strictly for children. Forbidden to Jews.

Credit : [Mémorial de la Shoah/CDJC](#)

Interviewer: What was the relationship between your mother and the others, of course, with the neighborhood and the people you knew in your building?

Rachel: I would have to say that in the neighborhood where I lived, there were a lot of Jews. So a lot of the neighbors were like my mother and a lot of the kids were like me. There were some French neighbors, Catholics, but with whom I had good relations, with whom we had good relations. Neighbors who hid for several days afterwards, that's to come. And I think I felt as much kindness and compassion as hostility. I felt these two sides of France.

Interviewer: Madame Jedinak, when your father was interned at Beaune-la-Rolande, did you have the opportunity to see him with your mother and your sister ? Tell us.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-250-0939-04A
Foto: Dieck | 1941

Beaune-la-Rolande camp in 1941
Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

Rachel: We went to see him twice in Beaune-la-Rolande. We left, I don't know which station we arrived at, and then we took a horse-drawn carriage to Beaune-la-Rolande. When we arrived at the camp, my mother had to leave her identity card at the entrance, and a gendarme took her identity card. And then I think we were allowed to walk around with our father for a few hours. So I have to tell you that I

remember crying, arguing between my parents. The two times we went. My sister explained to me what actually happened. My mother wanted us to run away... she wanted to leave her identity card, and my father, my sister and I would run away with her, we would run across the fields, we would go and hide in the homes of peasants. She would say to my father, "We'll work, we'll try to hide with the children." My father was adamant. He didn't want to hear about it. He thought we would not do anything to the women and children and he thought he would put our lives in danger. And he flatly refused.

Interviewer: What was the attitude of the French camp administration because there were only gendarmes, only customs officers, there were no Germans guarding?

Rachel: No, I only saw French policemen.

Interviewer: So what was their general attitude towards you, if I may say so, the civilians, the non-internees? If you have a memory...

Rachel: I have a memory of harsh words but I don't have any more.

Interviewer: So you came back... you come back to Paris and your father was deported in 1942?



Picture of Louise and Rachel in March 1942 to be sent to their father in Beaune-la-Rolande
Credit: R. Jedinak

Rachel: So, my father was deported on convoy number 5, on June 28, 1942, to Auschwitz. And from there, a very, very difficult but brief life continued. On July 16, 1942, the Vel d'Hiv round-up took place. My mother had heard the rumors probably because she had sent us the day before to my paternal grandparents who lived about a hundred meters from us⁷.

1	Psankiewicz.	Nachman	63	Pologne. Polonais M	Ch.	Monsieur	Fondre Delar.	Paris
	Hendla		72	Pologne. Polonais M	Ep.			

Nachman et Hendla Psankiewicz listed at 15 rue Tlemcen (Recensement de 1936)
Source : [Archives de Paris](#) (D2M8 705 – Père-Lachaise - vue 161/209)

⁷ On 15 rue Tlemcen in the 20th arrondissement

And she had stayed alone in the apartment. And someone came and got my mother, of course, and knocked on my grandmother's door. Very hard. In fact, I have to tell you that when I hear a knock on the door, even now, I have an anxiety that comes. I can't stand knocks on the door. I knew that the concierge had denounced us, that she had indicated where we were and the police came to get us. There was a policeman in uniform and a policeman in civilian clothes. They took us back to our mother's apartment and from there we left with small bundles to a regrouping center. I can give you some impressions, if you want. On the way there, we went on foot, I met many children, many people being taken the same way, many women and children. And I saw, I looked at the people massed on the sides of the sidewalk, at the windows, some people were making the sign of the cross, others were laughing, pointing at us, sometimes even insulting us. We arrived at this grouping center, on rue Boyer⁸ in the 20th arrondissement.



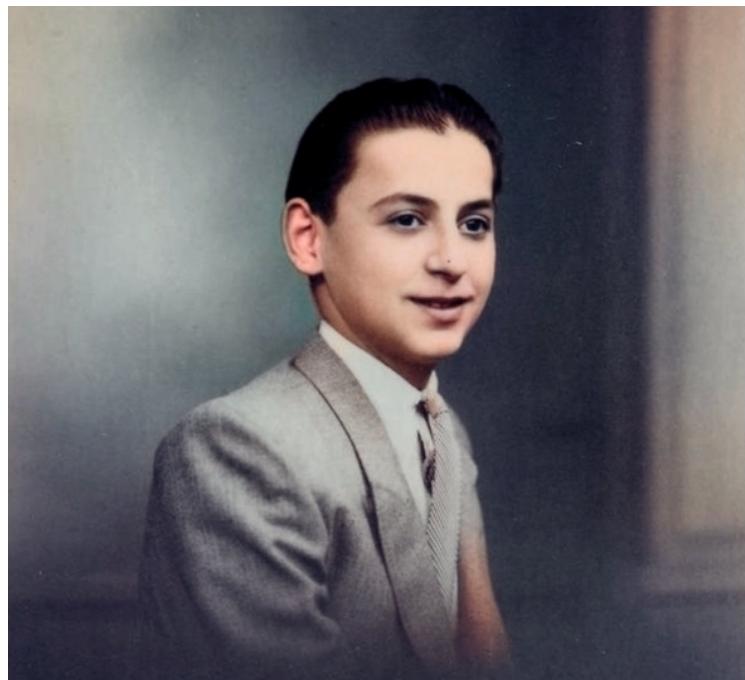
LA BELLEVILLOISE, COOPÉRATIVE OUVRIÈRE DE CONSOMMATION, PARIS, AVANT 1914. LE BÂTIMENT DES 19-21 RUE BOYER OÙ SE TROUVAIENT LES SALLES BABEUF (AU REZ-DE-CHAUSSE) ET JAUME

La Bellevilloise

Credit : [La Bellevilloise](#)

⁸ 21 rue Boyer

We were crammed together, very uncomfortable. I saw my sixteen year old cousin⁹ who was deported.



Paul (Peysach) Psankiewicz
Credit: R. Jedinak

And my mother couldn't bear to have us with her. She went from one woman to another saying, "If they take us and the children, it's not to make us work. It's not possible."

Psankiewicz	Ignul	94	Eagne	H	ch.	casquette	p.	lve
	Bajla	95	O	H	ep.	ip.		
	Maurice	20	X	C	F.			
	Paul	25	O	C	F.			

Recensement de 1936.

Source : [Archives de Paris](#) (D2M8 702- Père-Lachaise - vue 20/249)

⁹ Paul (Peysach) Psankiewicz was born on December 8, 1925 in Warsaw. He was deported by convoy 7 on July 19, 1942 and died in Auschwitz. His family lived at 71 rue des Amandiers in the 20th arrondissement near rue Duris and rue Tlemcen. He was the brother of Maurice who was interned with Abram in Beaune-la-Rolande before being deported to Auschwitz on the same convoy 5. Credit: [Mémorial de la Shoah](#)

So she told us, "I want you to run away." I believe we tried to escape through the back doors, but when we went to the bathroom, a policeman stuck his foot in the door. We couldn't close it. So we came back to my mother and she was lamenting. And I remember, she was holding her hands, she seemed very agitated, very, very nervous. And a neighbor came up to her and she said-I remember the name of that neighbor, her name was Mrs. Brajtszajn¹⁰-that neighbor said, "My kids just walked out that door, the police officers turned their heads when they stepped out."

Braitszajn	David	96	Pologne	Bielawa	H	ch.	tailleur	sp.	20e
	Brana	99			H	ép.		sp.	
	Hana	25			C	F.			
	Lea	29			C	F.			

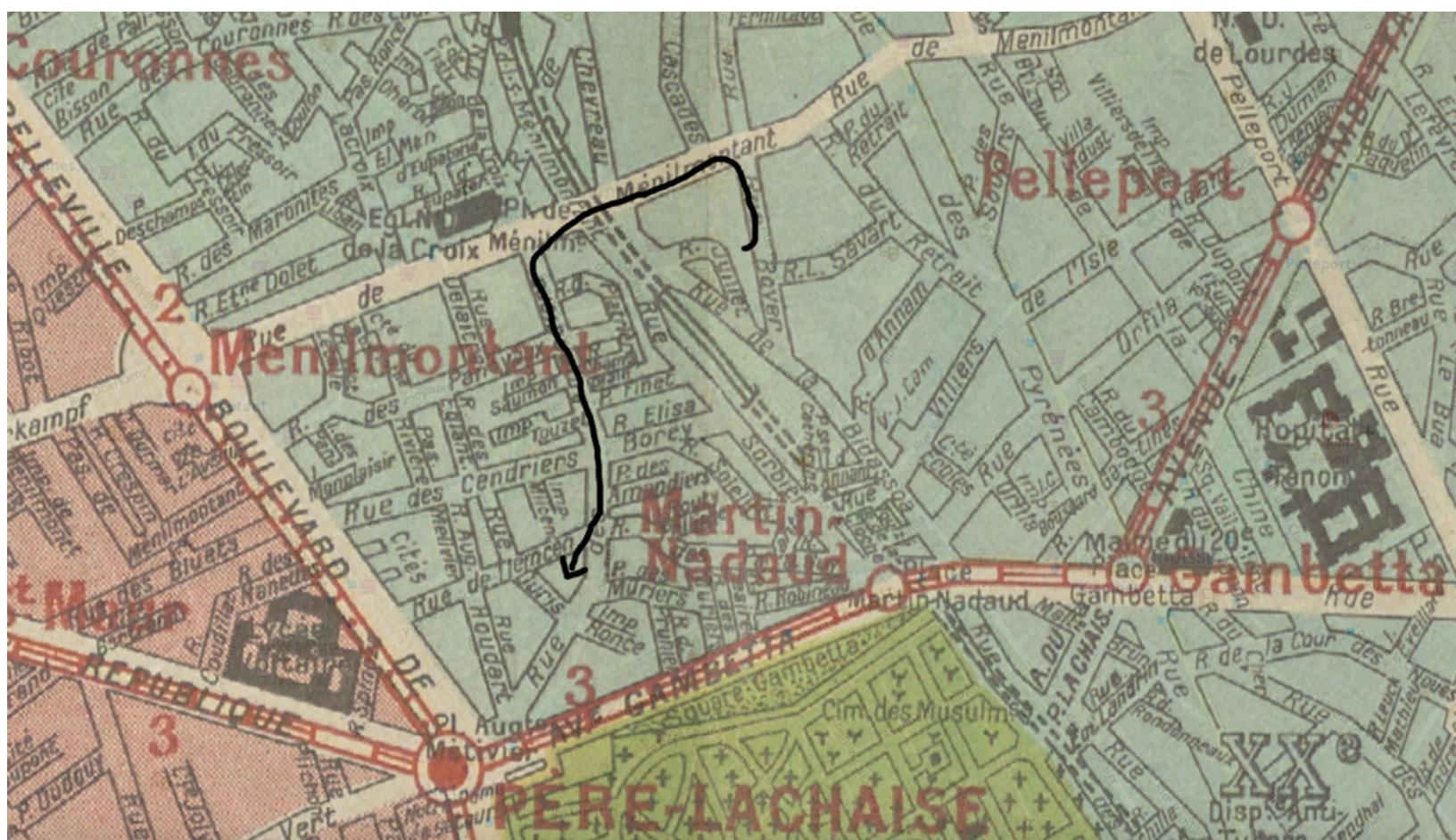
The Brajtszajns at 62 rue des Amandiers (1936 Census)
Credit: [Archives de Paris](#) (D2M8 702–Père-Lachaise - vue 41/249)

So my mother told us, "You go! You're going to grandma's house!" We didn't want to at all. We clung to her, we were stuck to her. I was 8 years old, I was quite unaware of what was going to happen next, but my sister had a very sad face. She didn't want us to leave our mother. And my mother did what she thought she had to do, which was very difficult, which is hard to talk about, she gave my sister a couple of slaps. She must have understood her reaction, my sister, who was a young girl of 13, got offended, grabbed me by the hand, we left for those doors. I don't know if it was a fire escape but what I remember is that we walked through the door, indeed the two policemen turned their heads away.

¹⁰ The family lived at 62 rue des Amandiers. The daughter, Léa, was a friend of Louise's. Like Chana Psankiewicz, Brana Brajtszajn (née Benkel) was sent directly to Drancy from La Bellevilloise. They were deported to Auschwitz on the same convoy 12. She did not return either. Both her husband and son had gone in hiding the day before and survived. Rachel continued to see Léa and her brother after the war.

Interviewer: So that means that your mother, probably against her nature, very deliberately slapped your sister across the face so that she would get angry and eventually leave?

Rachel: That's exactly right. My sister and I both know that for sure. Then, when we went outside, we heard the buses. The buses were coming to take us to the Velodrome d'Hiver. But we, we did not know the destination.



Itinerary Louise and Rachel took from la Bellevilloise back to rue Tlemcen

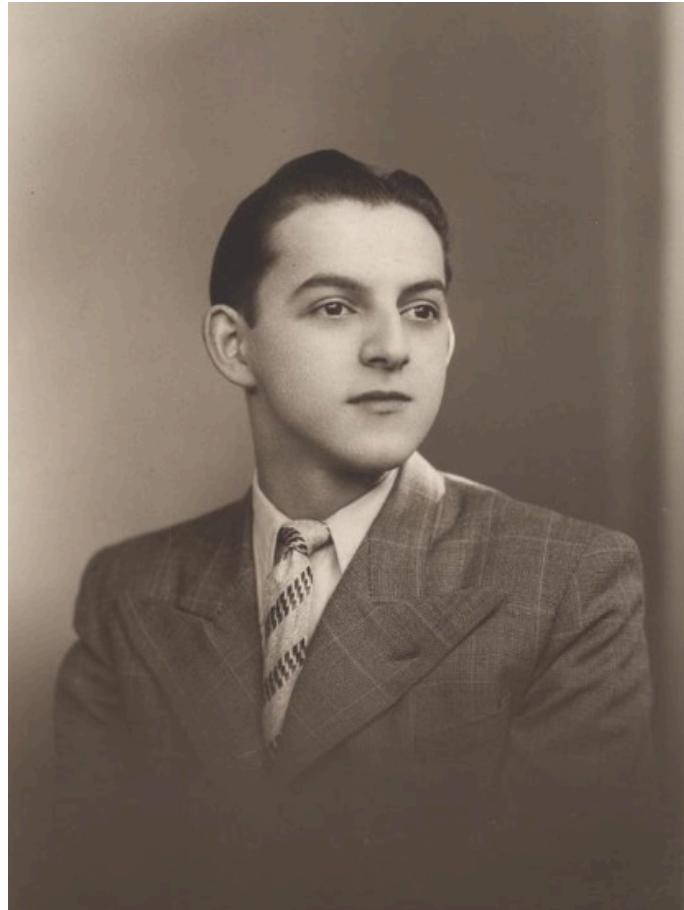
My sister took me by the hand and we rushed down the hill of Ménilmontant by the rue des Amandiers. We arrived out of breath, climbed to the 5th floor to our grandmother and grandfather's place.



Rachel's maternal grand-mother, Hendla Psankiewicz
Credit: R. Jedinak

My grandfather was paralyzed. My grandmother, my grandmother was... we threw ourselves in her arms. We cried a lot together, I remember that. We were in a small room; my grandfather and grandmother lived in a single room without any comfort. There was also an uncle and an aunt there, my father's older brother and his wife, his... their older son¹¹ was in the Beaune-la-Rolande camp with my father and he was deported at the same time as him. I learned from deportees that he died in my father's arms at Auschwitz.

¹¹ Maurice (Moszek) Psankiewicz, born on October 30, 1919 in Warsaw, was arrested during the Billet-Vert round-up. He was interned with Abram in Beaune-la-Rolande and deported with him on June 28, 1942 by Convoy 5. He did not return from Auschwitz. Credit: [Mémorial de la Shoah](#)



Maurice (Moszek) Psankiewicz

Credit: R. Jedinak

And, their younger son, whom I had seen at the gathering center, was also deported. He went to Drancy and he was deported. I can point out that, I mean my cousin Paul, the younger one, in 1943 sent a card from Birkenau -I don't know how it got to my uncle and aunt- saying, "I'm fine," there wasn't much, "I kiss you." I later knew that the Germans forced some people to write these cards to deceive public opinion. Well, and then life was organized as best it could in that room where we lived at six, with great difficulty. I remember when we were at the table, we were counting the pieces of potatoes on the plate. I went up one night with my sister, with an electric lamp - we took an electric lamp and went up to our apartment, my parents' apartment, to get some clothes. And we got on all fours so that the concierge wouldn't see us going past her window. And we took some clothes, we went back to our apartment. But there, we realized that

our apartment had already been looted by the concierge. There were already many things missing in our apartment. We saw her again afterwards because we lived in the same neighborhood and my uncle had told me and my sister to say, "They let us go because...they let you go because you are French." That was the right thing to say. I think he was right to tell us that. And life went on with great, great difficulty. Fear of being rounded up at night, fear of sleeping... An extremely difficult life in cramped conditions.

Interviewer: Were you still wearing the star or not? Were you still going to school?

Rachel: Yes, I was still going to the neighborhood school. My sister was not going anymore, she had passed her school certificate, she was not going to school anymore. I went to school and I have a memory of that too. The headmistress¹² had gathered me with several students, I think other Jewish students, a few, we remained a few in the school, and she told us: "If the service lady comes to get you, don't ask any questions, you follow her!" And we rehearsed going to the basement. We went, I think, twice, I'm not sure, but at least twice. She wanted to save our lives. We stayed there... I stayed there a few more months of course. One day, I came back from school, I quickly went upstairs with my schoolbag to my grandparents' place, and oh surprise, in one of the neighbors' apartments, on the same floor as my grandmother's, a team of movers was taking away the furniture of the neighbors who had been deported earlier. There was a German soldier with them who was leading them, commanding them, I think. I didn't want to stay on... to watch and I quickly went back to my grandmother's place. There I realized that everybody was very afraid. And my sister told me, reminded me, she said, "If there's a knock on the door, everybody hides behind the big bed and you open the door. You answer the door. You say you're scared." I was 9 years old. And there was indeed a knock on the door, very loud. Ah, those knocks on the door for me, what a memory! I see this

¹² Mademoiselle Fiancette

German, very tall, with a pair of huge shoes that probably belonged to the man who had been deported, saying to me, "Tag Schuch." I said, "Thank you, afraid, afraid" and I pushed the door behind him. He came back a few minutes later with a package of beans, full of bugs, and he handed it to me, laughing very, very hard. I pushed the door open again and said, "Scared!" And I could still hear him laughing in the hallway. Finally, they left. But it's a memory that's still alive because I've dreamed about it many times.

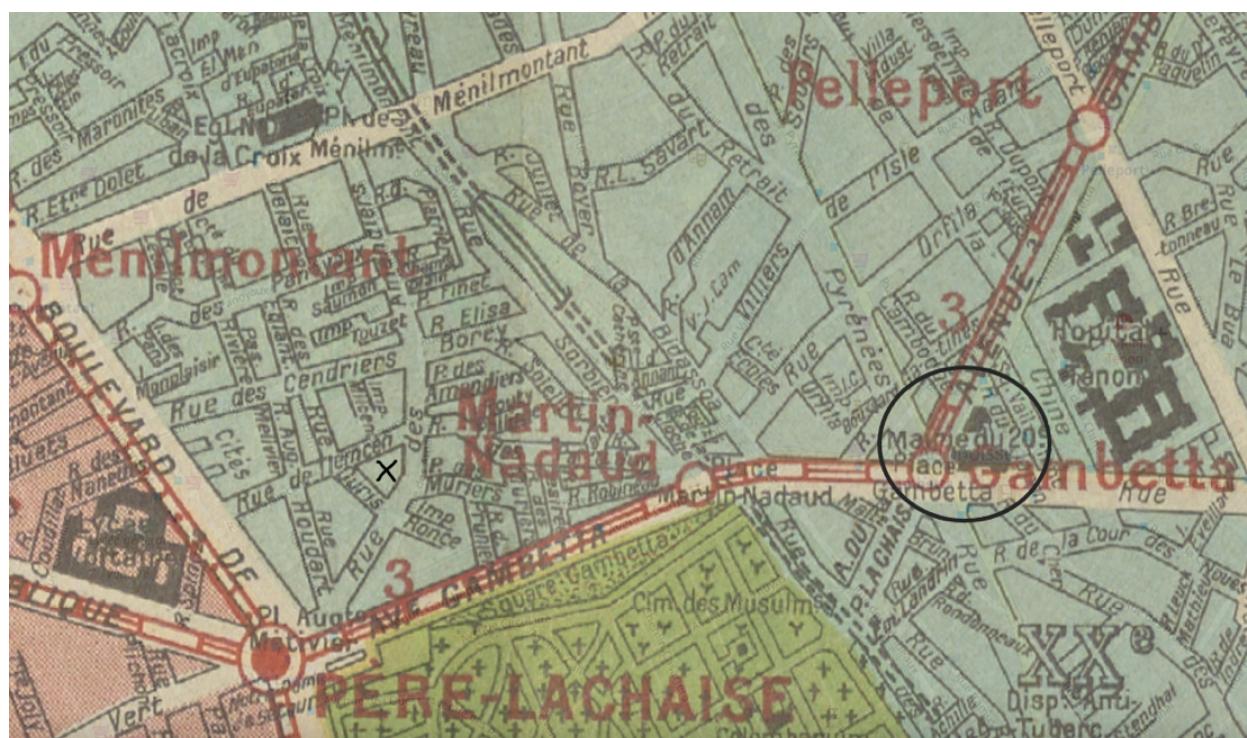


Looting of Jewish property led by the Möbel Aktion
Credit: [Akadem](#)

Interviewer: And after that, I think, you were arrested a second time, in early 1943.

Rachel: Absolutely. February 11, 1943, my sister remembered the date very well, she would write everything down. On February 11, 1943, we were sleeping in my parents' apartment so the furniture was still there. We slept in my parents' apartment and...with my grandmother so my uncle and aunt, with my grandfather, had more room. I remember I had chicken pox at the time on February 11, 1943. And

someone must have told that my grandmother was in my parents' apartment, because we were picked up. It was the "old people's round-up". They took us with my grandmother. They took us back to her apartment. My aunt and uncle were not there. They must have slept in the apartment that had already been looted. They must have spent the night there. On the bed, my grandfather was crying. I remember my grandparents' farewell. It was heartbreaking.



From the grand-parents' home (left) to the police station (right)

And we were taken with my grandmother to the police station of the 20th arrondissement in the Gambetta district. There too, on the way, I remember people looking at us. Some laughing, others sad and crying. And, they made us... I don't know if it's a very precise memory, they made us go down through a kind of trap door. In fact, it seems to me that we were in a basement. There, we were only with very old people, old men. We were the only two children. And, my sister told me, "We're going to try to get out of here!" There were policemen with us. There were policemen going up to the police station. We could hear a

commotion. There were a lot of people in that police station room, people who certainly, I later thought, were not in compliance with their papers, there were certainly people hostile to the...to the state at the time and we said goodbye to our grandmother. We said, "We're going to try to follow the agents when they come up." And we burst into the room where there was the Commissioner, I think it was the Commissioner. Immediately, we heard people cursing, "Poor children! Poor kids! Bastards!" and so on. Then the Commissioner, in a rage, said to us, "Get out of here!" Then my sister said, "Get out of here but... I can take care of my sister, I am old enough now, I am 14 years old, but we have luggage..." So an agent went with us. I went back to my grandmother's. My sister thanked the policeman and she helped me, I think, with the suitcase. She said, "Stay with Grandpa. Explain to him what's going on, I'm going to République", it was two or three subway stations away, "I'm going to tell an uncle and an aunt." My sister left quickly to warn my uncle and my aunt, and my grandmother... we managed to get her out. So that's another story.

TAPE 2

Interviewer: Ms. Jedinak, before you go on, what was the fate, the life of your mother since the arrest on July 16, 1942, so you were, I think, at the Bellevilloise.

Rachel: Exactly.

Interviewer: So what happened to your mother?



Drancy camp on December 3, 1942

Credit: [Yad Vashem](#)

Rachel: Oh yes! I forgot to tell you. Because she found herself without children in this center, she left alone, as a single person. So she went directly to Drancy and, in Drancy, she stayed there for a very short time, until July 29, 1942. So from July 16 to July 29, 1942 when she was deported to Auschwitz by convoy

12. We went to see her from a distance. We took the subway and, at Jaurès or métro Jaurès, we took the bus to go to Drancy. And when we arrived, there were a few people we knew, I don't remember who, and they lent us binoculars. The people were waving briefly and we saw my mother appear several times, from the top of a tower, I think, and she waved at us. And she must have been in a bad shape because at one point she collapsed, we were signaled to leave. And then, she would gesture to us, "Go away! Go away!" And once, my sister claims it was the morning of July 29, we went there. There we saw buses leaving and my sister says, "I saw half of mom's face with her arm waving goodbye. She saw us go by." I didn't see her. So that's my mom's journey.

Interviewer: When you came out of the police station a little later, as you have just told us, you went back home with your sister?

Rachel: Well, at the time of the arrest in February 1943, my sister went very quickly to my uncle and my aunt who... it's an incredible story I must tell you, like many things at that time! My uncle and my aunt knew a Jewish man who knew the Commissioner of the 20th arrondissement and he had told my uncle and my aunt, I found out later, "If something happens to me, if I am arrested in the 20th arrondissement, I will not be deported. On the other hand, if I am arrested in another arrondissement, I will be." This gentleman was arrested in the 6th arrondissement. Later, he returned from deportation. And I know from my sister and my aunt that they collected a certain amount of money very quickly, in a few minutes or an hour, and from neighbors, friends, and they put in everything they had and, I don't know, I can't say what the transaction was that was made. But what I can tell you is that this gentleman said, "I had lunch with the Commissioner," and my grandmother was released on a phone call. She was released a few hours later. Before being taken to Drancy.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you, when you were with your family, especially your grandparents and then your parents too, what language did they speak? Before we go on, what were the traditions, let's say religious or non-religious? Finally, what was your life like culturally, if you will, with your parents and grandparents?

Rachel: I think my mother was from a religious family. So she kept some small traditions, very subtle. My father, no. He didn't practice. He didn't practice. My grandparents, a little, definitely. My grandmother, yes, I saw her saying prayers and, no, my grandfather did not practice.

Interviewer: What language did your parents speak?

Rachel: So my parents, my father spoke French pretty well. Better than my mother. They often spoke in Yiddish. My sister and I always answered in French. And they realized, very quickly, that we understood everything in Yiddish, so when they didn't want to be understood, they started speaking in Polish. My paternal grandparents, with whom I lived for some time, did not speak French at all. They had come to France quite late, so I had to learn Yiddish completely.

Interviewer: What was your life like with your grandparents?

Rachel: After my grandmother and we were arrested and released, we realized that it was not possible to live with our grandmother. The noose was tightening. It was no longer safe. So in the meantime, my aunt and uncle had gone into hiding, living in a house in Val d'Or in Suresnes, a suburb of Paris, a very close suburb. I should also point out that I had an uncle, an aunt and their four children, those with whom I had gone on exodus, had been all deported. Other aunts and uncles on my mother's side, too, with their

children. So we, my aunt and uncle went into hiding in the suburbs of Paris. They were working. They had put their children, they had four children, they still have them, they had put the three youngest since 1942 in a foster home, in a village in Touraine, and the eldest daughter was with them.¹³ Well, because she was already older and she stayed with them. And so my uncle and my aunt worked, and I think they supported the whole household because the people who had taken them in had a large family of refugees who came from all over France. There were, I think, many of them in this house and I believe that my uncle and my aunt were supporting the whole family. These people went to pick up the goods and deliver them. My uncle and aunt made clothes, so they worked all day in that house and the people who were staying with them would pick up and deliver the finished clothes. I couldn't stay with them, nor my sister, because there wasn't enough room for us. So this is a rather confusing period for me, but I think that I was sheltered with my sister, sometimes alone, for a few days with some people, for a few days with others. In particular with this family who lived on the other side of the courtyard, with this Catholic family who made me sing songs to them when I was very small, before the war, and unfortunately, they couldn't keep me. Life was too different. I spent a few weeks with another family, a few days with another family. Anyway, I seem to have changed places a lot. And then my aunt and uncle, not knowing what to do, took us to a children's center, had us go to a children's center. I stayed there for a while with my sister. I don't keep happy memories of it. I was miserable. But then I seemed to become aware of something. I realized that I had to act like an adult, that I couldn't rely on anyone, that I had to grow up and take responsibility for myself. I understood that at a very young age.

Interviewer: What was the name of the children's center you were talking about ?

¹³ Jacob and Bajla Kupferstein had four children: Georgette and the three youngest hidden in Touraine Maurice, Gabriel and Helene. It is with them that Rachel lived in Bourges after the war.



Lamarck Asylum
Credit: [MAHJ](#)

Rachel : It was the U.G.I.F. center on rue Lamarck. We stayed there until the beginning of March 44. My aunt and uncle didn't want us to stay there, so they made us leave. We escaped, I believe, during a visit and went to their home. They had provided their old address and we went to meet them in the house where they were hiding in the suburbs. I stayed there for a few days, it seems to me, and my cousin Georgette, the eldest, on the orders of my uncle and my aunt, was asked to take me to the village where my other cousins were staying with a very nice foster mother. And so I went to Château-Renault, in Touraine, in this village where I stayed a few months. So my cousin had falsified my papers. From Rachel Psankiewicz, I became Rolande Sannier. I remember the fear on the train, the fear of being caught. And when I arrived at the home of my cousins' foster mother, she took me to her mother-in-law's home. Rolande, Rolande here, Rolande there. Rolande sometimes forgot her first name. I must have looked like a fool. Sometimes, at this foster

home, there was... it was an elderly woman who had a husband who coughed a lot. He had been gassed during the First World War. She had two daughters, four grandchildren of her own, and I remember some very, very difficult times. She beat me, she told me I was stupid, that I didn't even know my prayers. I was making up stories. I was told to tell lies about where I was born, Brest. I didn't look like a Breton, but it didn't matter. I had to lie, to fabricate. I realized that it was vital. And I don't remember how I must have asked my aunt and uncle to send me my schoolbag. And they sent me school notebooks with the name Rachel Psankiewicz. So I made up a story, but I was not believed. And then I was beaten, beaten a lot, mistreated and my sister, in the meantime, I forgot to tell you, came to this village shortly after me, as a maid. She was fifteen years old. That saved her life too. She ended up with a very nice couple. By the way, what is curious is that I don't remember the name of my foster mother at all. I have blocked out that name. On the other hand, I remember very well the name of the people who took her into their home, Mr. and Mrs. Proust. These people felt sorry for me, sorry to see me. I was covered with lice, vermin, and my sister's employer, I mean her employer, when I came to see my sister, often washed my head and removed the lice with a fine-tooth comb. My cousins' foster mother sensed that I was very unhappy with her mother-in-law. She would look for me, she would tell me: "I am looking for a place to take you, don't worry, Rolande." She was a very good woman. I saw her again a short time ago. I will tell you later how and why. And I stayed reluctantly with this foster mother. It seemed to me that it was a very long time because I was very unhappy there. I remember the bombings. We were maybe 100 meters as the crow flies from the train station and the Americans bombed a train, a German train and I remember the bombs, the corpses. It was a time of war. We were asked, the children were asked to go and get stretchers to put the corpses of the Germans on. And so I stayed with this foster mother, miserable, and my sister tells me that I stopped speaking for a few days. Was it the fear of the bombings? Was it because I was very unhappy at that foster home? Was it a combination of both? I don't know. She was very alarmed about me and finally, I left that foster home one month before the Liberation. My cousins' foster mother placed me with her sister. And

there I spent a month, nearly a month of happiness I could say because there were people who were kind. They knew my situation so everything was different. They had two girls who were older than me, who sang songs to me, who pampered me, who gave me I think affection. I can name something anachronistic for a ten year old. I was invited to the baptism of the doll of a little chatelaine who lived a little further away. Why was I invited there? I don't know. There were about twenty children there. When I had already lived through so many dramas, the doll of this little girl was being christened. It was a game, of course. But there, I had a royal meal, of course, and I realized how much, I who had to keep my name and my situation secret, I realized that a world separated us, separated me from these children. And then the Liberation came. We already knew, we would hear on the radio that the Americans were approaching. The Americans arrived. So I remember the children screaming, "The Americans are here! The Americans are here!" I ran out into the street. They were based...it was certainly the vanguard. Very few American trucks or tanks. A car came down the main street, a German machine gun that was shooting everything in its path. A hand tackled me to the ground. When I turned around and got up, there was no one behind me, I don't know who did it, who saved my life. Maybe... And that's it! The Liberation, the Americans, the bulk of the troops arrived. They settled down. They set up camp. So I remember that there was a... I knew an American soldier who spoke Yiddish and I could speak Yiddish. My little friends were looking at me. They thought I spoke English! But no, I didn't speak English. And he told me that he had a little girl about my age in New York. I remember his name. His name was Al, probably short for Albert. Al gave me chocolate and gum and it was a slightly relaxed time. And there was hope. Maybe the war was going to end. We were going to see our parents again. We often got together with my sister and cousins. We would hug each other, my sister and I, and hope. Then came the Liberation of Paris. My uncle came to get my sister and my older cousins, the eldest, and my aunt came to get us shortly after, the following week. We left for Paris, perched on an apple truck. It was the beginning of September 1944 and I remember one thing: the foster mother, with whom I had been miserable, wanted to approach the truck and I spat in her face. And there was not a word exchanged

neither by her nor by me nor by the others. It was a silent scene. And we left for Paris. There, hope began, fragile hope, but hope all the same. Because there were rumors about the extermination camps, but we didn't want to believe them. The war was not over. I went back to school. There I have a very moving memory. We sang the Marseillaise and the headmistress listed the names of all my little friends who had been deported, and there was a long list. I returned to live in the apartment, my grandfather had died in the meantime. He died in 43 shortly after my grandmother's arrest.

PSANKIEWICZ

3058

Le onze octobre mil neuf cent quarante-trois , cinq heures, est décédé,rue de la Chine 4, # Nachman PSANKIEWICZ , domicilié à Paris , 15 rue de Tlencen , né à Gregei (Pologne), en * * mil huit cent soixante-trois , sans profession , fils de Schumel PSANKIEWICZ , et de * * # Prichmann , époux décédés ; époux de Endla NIAMANN .- Dressé le onze octobre mil neuf cent quarante-trois , quatorze heures trente, sur la déclaration de Eugène Marie LE GAUDU,trente-six ans, employé,rue de la Chine 4, qui, lecture faite, a signé avec Nous, Lucien BERHET , * Officier de la Légion d'Honneur,adjoint au maire du vingtième arrondissement de Paris ./ N

Alphonse

Herbst

Nachman Psankiewicz died at the Tenon Hospital on October 11, 1943

Acte de décès, 1943, 20D380, vue 29/31

[Source: Archives de Paris](#)

And we went back to live - my grandmother and my sister - in my parents' apartment because we were more comfortable there. But when we came in on the first day, we tore the seal off the door. There was no furniture, nothing. Moreover, in order to take away the chandelier, I was shocked, someone had torn the rod from the ceiling. There was nothing left. Not even a small keepsake. And then life got organized as best it could. My uncle and my aunt sent us, with their children, sometimes a basket full of provisions because we were still hungry after the Liberation. We had no relatives. My grandmother was very old. We lived on subsidies. And we were hoping, we were hoping! And my grandmother used to say to me, "When your parents come back, you're going to do this, you're going to do that," but I felt that it was without conviction. She often cried, she was very sad. My aunt and uncle were also very sad. I liked school a lot. I liked going to school because there I was like the others. And then came the end of the war. The end of the

war was a time of great joy. We danced in the streets of Paris for several days, several nights. The adults, the children, the young people, all the people danced in the street. So it was the end of the war, it was hope that was perhaps returning. And the first deportees returned from captivity.

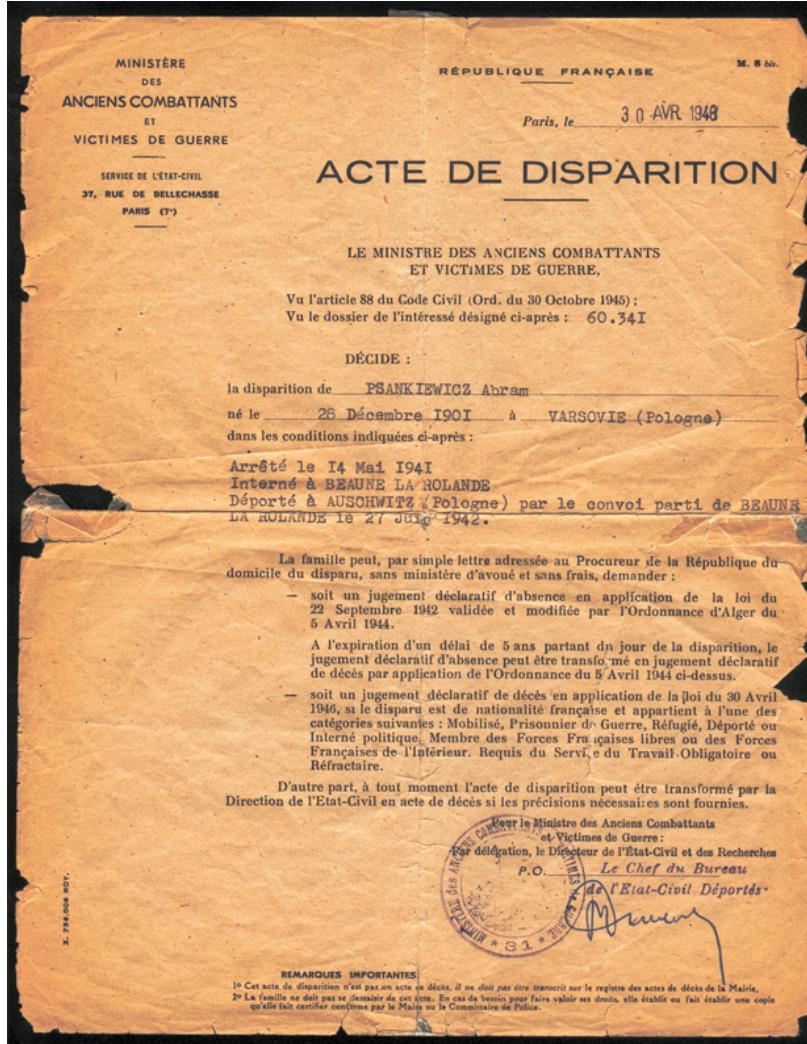


Camp survivors studying the notice board at the Lutetia hotel

Credit: [Lutetia](#) / Getty Images

So then, my sister took me several times to the Hotel Lutetia to see the lists of the deportees who had returned. We thought, we hoped, we hoped that they would come back. And the hope diminished day by day. When we saw the condition of the returning deportees, it was a horror! And then, little by little, we understood that we should not hope for anything more. Nevertheless, I had a fertile imagination, I would make up stories when I went to sleep. I said to myself, "No, my parents are in Russia. They have forgotten, they have lost their memory, they are... one day I will see them reappear." I had been robbed of their

death. I didn't see them die. Excuse me [crying] and the hope was completely gone. Then we got the missing persons' certificates, the deportation cards, all the official papers. We were orphans.



Act of a missing person established in the name of Abram on April 30, 1948

Credit: R. Jedinak

We organized our life as best we could with the help of our uncle and my aunt, and life was very, very difficult. The hardships were still very severe and finally, I stayed with my sister and my grandmother until 1948. So from the Liberation, from '44 to '48, I stayed in my parents' apartment with my grandmother. At that time, my sister got married. She was very young but she got married. My sister occupied my parents' apartment and I was to be put in a children's home, an orphanage. The word orphanage scared me very, very much. In fact, it was presented to me in the wrong way. I regret to this day that I didn't go to a

children's home, because I later found out that many of us were able to continue our education there, to have an almost normal life. I didn't. And so I had to stop going to school at the age of 14. That was my heartbreak. I would have liked to continue.

Interviewer: So your sister got married in '47 or '48?

Rachel: In '48.

Interviewer: But she was with you. She was in Paris, where she actually left from?

Rachel: She stayed in my parents' apartment with her husband. I couldn't stay in this two-room apartment with this couple. So my sister took me to Belgium, to my father's cousin. I didn't know her. I had heard about her. Her husband had been deported with her two sons. In fact, it seems to me that one of the sons had been shot in front of her and the youngest of her sons was deported, and he came back from deportation, from Auschwitz. I stayed with her for a few months, almost a year, I think. I didn't feel very comfortable there because I didn't know anyone. I was working, she was selling clothes in the market, men's suits, so I was helping out. In the very cold weather, I remember, I was at the market selling men's suits, guarding the stall and then I didn't have any friends. I worked with her on Sundays. I felt quite unhappy there. In the meantime, in 1948, the creation of the State of Israel, my brother-in-law, my sister's husband, had sisters. He himself had had his mother deported with younger children, but two of his sisters went to Israel directly from Germany. They went to Israel and they asked him to come and join them. So I heard from my sister that they were going to Israel and I stayed with this cousin in Belgium. But I liked it less and less. I only had one thing to do: to get away from there.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Rachel: In Charleroi. And so I decided, following a letter from my sister who told me "Come and join us. You'll be happier here," so I decided to go to Israel. So I went back to Paris. There I stayed for six months with a maid of one of my aunts who had been deported. I slept in the same bed as her and there I learned to pull the needle, that is to say, to do finishing work in ladies' clothing, and I worked for six months in order to afford some small effects. I joined a Jewish movement, to go to Israel, to emigrate and I left after six months. So I left to join a group in Marseilles again in '49. It was in June of '49. I took the train and the train took twelve to thirteen hours to arrive in Marseille at that time. Seeing no one, a delegation was supposed to wait for me in Marseille, seeing no one, and as I had been a resourceful person for years, I took a cab and I went to the designated address and it was called the Villa Gaby, on the corniche, in Marseille. And when I arrived there, and when I introduced myself, they said to me, "But how did you come all alone and a whole delegation went to look for you?" I said, "I didn't see anyone. I came alone." And I stayed there for six weeks, I believe, in that place. So there we had a start of military training and I was with a group - more than a group because there were at least 200 kids. There were a lot of kids at least. They were all children from North Africa. Jews from North Africa: from Tunisia and Morocco. And in the evening, when I went to the girls' dormitory, in one of the dormitories, they were singing songs in Arabic. For me, it was the far end of the world. I had never heard that before. I felt very isolated again, and the next day I set myself apart. I had not been able to integrate right away. And the director of the center who was a German Jew, I think, asked me, "Are you bored?" I told him yes. So he said, "Come with me!" There was only one little girl like me who was from Strasbourg and he took us into his office. I was filing papers for him and I stayed there. Finally, I managed to get used to this group of young people and we left for Israel, by a boat like the Exodus because it took us a week to get to Haifa. We slept - the cabins were reserved for families - and we slept in hammocks at the bottom of the hold. We saw mice and rats running around, so we took our

blankets and went to sleep on the deck. It was July or August. It was very hot so we always slept on the deck. And we arrived in Israel. There, my sister was waiting for me on the dock with her baby in her arms, because her son was born in Israel. He was two months old. She shouted at me, I was still on the boat, she shouted at me, "We are going back to France!" I replied, "Why did you bring me here then?" Anyway. I stayed on the boat for a few more hours because they wouldn't let me leave with my sister. They wouldn't let me go with my sister because I had made a commitment to go with a group to a kibbutz. My brother-in-law took me back with great difficulty, by surprise, and I went to live temporarily with my sister and my brother-in-law.

Interviewer: Where? In Haifa?

Rachel: In a village, I don't remember. Not far from Tel Aviv. We lived in an Arab room, without any comfort. It was very hot and my brother-in-law had installed, as best he could, with a small watering can, a semblance of a shower and I stayed with them for about a month. Then I went to live with my father's childhood friends from Poland, in Tel Aviv, because these people had several children. They took me in as if I were one of their children, I must say. They found me a job immediately. I worked in one of the main streets of Tel Aviv. I was making lampshades and I stayed there for three months. I wanted to go back to France. I had the little family I had left there. There was my grandmother, my uncle and my aunt, my cousins, so I wanted to return with my sister. I didn't know many people. Of course this lovely family had taken me in but all my memories were in Paris. So we went back to Paris, we went back with a lot of difficulty because we didn't have money for the trip, for... I remember, when we arrived in Marseille, my sister left me in a hotel room. My brother-in-law joined us afterwards so he could sell the few things they had saved up. And my sister left me with her baby, who was five and a half months old, in the hotel room, and she went to sell, I don't know where, her ring, the ring she wore on her finger to be able to pay for our

return trip. And we left for Paris. I was 15 years old at the time. And we went to an aunt's house, the one that was hidden with us at our aunt and uncle's house, that was hidden with us with my grandfather and grandmother in '42, and we couldn't stay at their house either, because they had a very small place. And at my other aunt's house, there were a lot of children too. So there began again a difficult life. I was taken in by a person who worked for my uncle and aunt who had been deported. A woman who was adorable. I slept with her. There were three of us in the bed, sometimes four, and I slept in the same bed as her. I stayed there for a few months, I think. And then my aunt and uncle wanted to take me back, but really it was too crowded in the house. I think I stayed in several places. I remember hardship, great hardship, and finally my uncle and aunt moved to Bourges, in the Cher department. They bought a small clothing store for men and women and they took me with them. My cousin, the youngest, and I went with them. I stayed there for a few months, I think, and I didn't like it. I didn't know the province well and I missed my sister. I didn't want to stay there. So I convinced my cousin, who was two years older than me, to get my uncle and aunt to let us go back to Paris.

TAPE 3

Interviewer: Mrs. Jedinak, so you came back, you still had a difficult life until 1949-1950. So what happened after that?

Rachel: So I stayed in Bourges with my aunt and uncle. And my sister lived in a small apartment, very small, on rue de Lancry. She left to live with her husband in Lyon, and so I only had one idea in mind, which was to get the small apartment and settle there. So my uncle and my aunt did not want to let me go back to Paris. I was sixteen and a half years old. So I went up to my cousin, who was two years older than me, and said, "We won't be able to make a life for ourselves in the country, in this little town." And finally, my aunt and uncle agreed. She came to live with me, my cousin came to live with me, for a short time. And then I lived alone in this uncomfortable apartment. I was working in ladies' wear. I... I had, in the meantime, taken evening shorthand typing classes because I was good at French so I didn't have to take French classes at the same time. And I could have found a job in a bank. A bank had asked me to come and work, to come and learn and work in this bank. I couldn't because I had to support myself. I was living alone. I had to pay for everything. I had to feed myself, clothe myself, pay my rent and all the expenses. So I couldn't. It's a combination of circumstances, and maybe that's what pushed me to choose this job that I didn't like, but I was paid by the piece. So I couldn't be exploited because of my age. And this is what allowed me to live, perhaps more badly than well, but to live and to subsist. And, I have to tell you, at that time, psychologically, I broke down a few times. So I tried to talk, to tell but at that time, I was told: "Come on, it's over! Let's talk about the future, let's not talk about that anymore. It's not worth it anymore, we can't go back to the past." So I buried all that deep inside myself. I covered it up for a very long time.

Interviewer: Was it in Jewish circles what you bring up? This attitude of "We don't talk about the old days anymore" and "It's over"?

Rachel: Both in Jewish and non-Jewish circles.

Interviewer: There is a desire not to talk anymore...

Rachel: To stop talking. Around me, it's been like that anyway.

Interviewer: So what happened next?

Rachel: So I worked. I changed places a few times. I worked in women's clothing and I got married in 1955. I had known my husband¹⁴ for a long time because he was a childhood friend of my cousins. He also had his parents and two younger sisters¹⁵ who had been deported.

3	1	Zedynak	Jacob	95	Pologne	François M	ch	tailleur	Patron X
8	"	Mirla		93	Pologne	"	H sp.		
3	"	Natan		11	Pologne	Polonais	par.	tailleur	Patron X
4		Charles	08	Pologne	Polonais	c	par.		
5		Dora	22	P. Seine	Franc		/		
6		Lola	26	P. Seine			/		
7		Max	28	P. Seine			/		
8		Paulette	30	P. Seine			/		
9		Jacqueline	31	P. Seine			/		

The Jedynak family living at 6 rue Dieu (1936 Census)

Source: [Archives de Paris](#) (D2M8 586—Porte Saint-Martin - vue 168/314)

¹⁴ Max Jedinak. Due to an error by the employee of the Berck-sur-Mer town hall where he was born, his surname is spelled with an /i/ instead of the /y/ present in the name of all his family members.

¹⁵ The Jedynaks lived at 6 rue Dieu in the 10th arrondissement. Jakob was deported from Drancy on June 22, 1942 (convoy 3). Mirla was arrested during the Vel d'Hiv round-up with her two youngest daughters, Paulette and Jacqueline. She was deported from Beaune-la-Rolande on August 5, 1942 (convoy 15) and her daughters on August 28, 1942 (convoy 25). For more information https://www.ajpn.org/fichiers-travaux/1414948403_persecutions_juifs_berck.pdf

So we were both children of deportees, of father and mother, and we tried to build a life. And I had my daughter, Evelyne, who was born in 1958, who gave me a lot. She was sensitive. I didn't tell her my life story right away, but she tells me that I had to tell her a lot of things because she says she was traumatized, as a child, as a young person, by what I told her. She was very sensitive to it, so it hurt her. And then, there was a time when I didn't talk about it anymore, because I felt that it was too heavy for her, we didn't talk about it much. But she was aware of everything that happened to me, of course. We went back to all that afterwards. But I know that many, many times I couldn't talk about it. People weren't prepared.



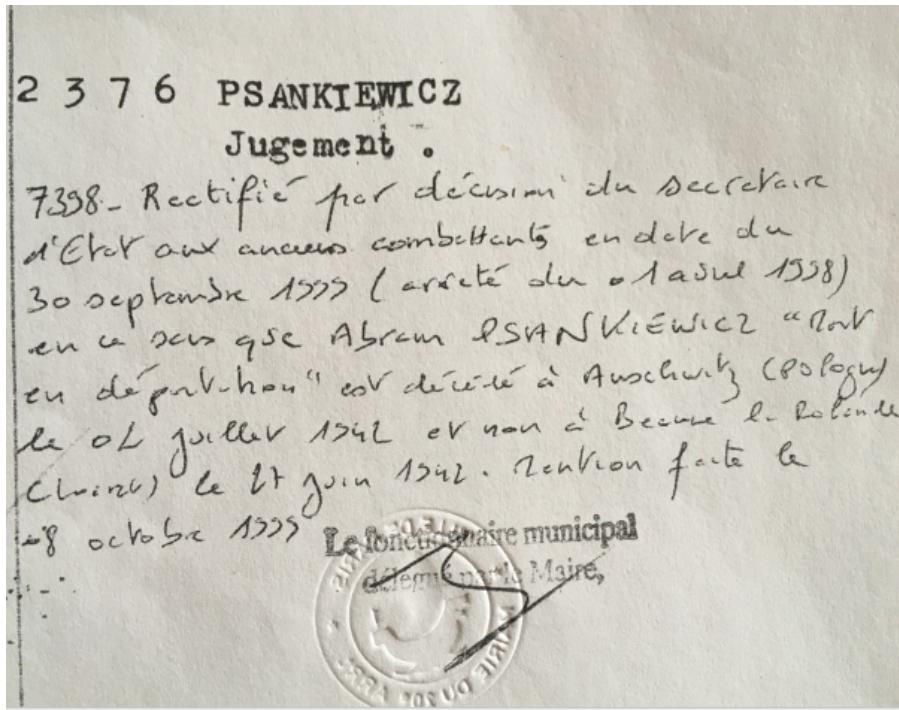
Jacqueline, Paulette et leur mère Mirla Jedynak (née Fajgold)

Credit: [Mémorial de la Shoah](#)

Interviewer: But you've finally been talking for a relatively short time. This desire to open up now...

Rachel: So it's true. I think it's a collective realization. I've matured, I've gotten older. I realize that I am one of the last of the youngest of the Shoah. I would like so much that what I experienced never happens again. I know that this is utopian. When I hear about Bosnia now, the ethnic cleansing, I am revolted, I find it dreadful. And I have two grandsons. The eldest, Kevin, is twelve years old and for two years he has been

after me to write my testimony. That's why, thanks to my grandson, I was able to bring back so many memories. And I think I owe it to my grandson, to my grandsons, to the other children. To tell what happened, to tell what we lived, what we suffered, I believe that it is extremely important for the future, for future generations. Everything has been so concealed, it revolts me. I must tell you that I have death certificates of my parents. The death certificates of my parents are false in my opinion because, but I became aware of it only a short time ago, they were declared deceased at the town hall of the 20th arrondissement by a ruling declaring their death. Now, I have these death certificates and it is mentioned that, given the particular conditions of internment, we think that they did not reach the end of the journey, and that they are, the date of death is taken as the date when their convoys left France. And in the margin, there is nothing. So, in a few generations, if historians want to look at the records in the town halls, what will they see? They will see that Mr. Psankiewicz, Mrs. Psankiewicz died on such and such a date, in Paris or in Beaune-la-Rolande or in Drancy. And that means nothing. In fact, they died in captivity in Auschwitz and it appears nowhere.



1999 Correction: Auschwitz is listed as Abram's place of death

Credit: R. Jedinak

So I want to counter the Holocaust Deniers. I would like to leave my testimony. It is a modest testimony, but one of many. I am currently active in several Jewish organizations. In particular, I belong to the Federation of Sons and Daughters of Deportees, which Serge Klarsfeld chairs. I know that he has done a lot, a lot for us, for the memory. Memory is very important to me. I am also a member of the APFMA, the Association for the Auschwitz Memory Foundation. I believe that memory is absolutely necessary and absolutely essential for civilization. To avoid barbarism, I believe that only memory can allow us to change the course of things.

Interviewer: Don't you have the feeling... from what you've explained to me, that your grandson Kevin, the eldest, is very, very sensitive to this past. Do you feel that you are passing on the torch of memory, of Jewish memory, to him at this time?

Rachel: I'm absolutely certain of that. He is an extremely alert and curious child, a child who asks me lots of questions and I said to him one day, "It's amazing, you ask me more questions than your mother." And he said to me: "Mom, she was too much closer to you. She spoke with her heart and I think with my head." It so happened that when there were violations in the cemetery of Carpentras, 4 years ago, I believe, my grandson Kevin was 8 years old and the next day, questions were asked about what had happened. Kevin raised his hand. He said, "I'm Jewish," and he went on to talk about the concentration camps, the deportation, the crematoria, the gas chambers. And when I got home from work, I went up to my children's house and Kevin told me about it. "I talked about it all." My daughter, my son-in-law and I were very surprised. In fact, he had heard us talking. We never hid and he picked it up. And because he was quite a performer, he told us, "I made the whole class cry and even the teacher." Then my daughter got a phone call, I think from the teacher, asking her questions. She said, "Yes, I think so, I don't have anything to take

away from what my son told you. He told what he knows and he told the truth." He explained that all of his great-grandparents had died in Auschwitz. He said to these little children, "You know my grandmother who is coming to pick me up? She too was taken in the roundups. She too lived through it." So I think I passed the torch. The youngest is only 9 years old, less talkative, but registers everything. I can see it in his eyes. I think it's very important to pass it on, to pass it on to the kids, to pass it on to the young people.

Interviewer: And even to past generations, I thank you for that. Do you want to add something?

Rachel: Well, I don't have much to add to this story other than my dearest wish is that we never hear things like this again.



Picture of Rachel taken by the Americans in 1944 or 1945

Credit: <https://rememberme.ushmm.org/>