

HUGUETTE FRANK

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Interviewer: Betty Ann Fishman      Notetaker: Debora Shelkan Remis

Minutes

Born October 17, 1925. Typical French family, felt French before Jewish. They were in Normandy when the war started. 1942 or 1943. Went to Paris. Brother in French army. Father got so upset, heart attack, died. Sent children to free zone, south of France. Mother joined them. Lived there for year. Germans occupied, then mother arrested with grandmother. Mother went to Drancy, then Birkenau. Brother arrested, but escaped. Aunt decided they should live with her. She stayed for 6 months.

May 2, 1944, came to arrest them. Jail in Marseille for two weeks. Sent to Drancy May 20. Cattle wagon. Very little food. Two women died. Arrived in Birkenau. Shave our head. Took clothes. Mother and grandmother were gassed immediately.

5 min.      Met French girl. Helped me. Didn't realize what happened immediately. I had to survive. Good life in Paris before war, upper middle class family. Brother fought for underground. Not ashamed being Jewish. Didn't suffer antisemitism. Governess lived with them. Stayed for rest of life. Risked her life. As a non-Jewish person, couldn't believe what happened. Wrote letter to Pope. She wanted to put yellow star on her.

10 min.      Left Drancy, convoy #74. Convoy 73, two cousins were in it. Nurse told them not to go. All were killed. She was punished. Had to hold brick on her knee and stand for 12 hours because she did bad work. Push wagons, dig trenches, repair shoes. Not dressed for work. Almost no food.

She met a friend, Julien. Only one arrested in her family. Doesn't know what happened. She became sick in Birkenau and Auschwitz. By giving up, victory for Germans. Have to survive.

HUGUETTE FRANK (continued)

- 15 min. Mother was arrested in Nice before me. Brother prisoner in Australia, escaped, fought in underground. Older brother had TB, came back, no family. In 1944, didn't hear war was over. Had feeling something terrible would happen. Spent year in camps. Russians liberated. Treatment not good. French soldiers took care of them. Supposed to go to free zone. Russians wouldn't let me. Julien raped by Russians. They gave food. Tired of walking. They hid and slept. She had a frozen foot.
- 20 min. They were full of lice in skin. In Paris, went to special center. Hard to get rid of it. Death marches. America coming closer to Poland. Germans took from Birkenau. Walk days and days without eating or drinking. Near potato field, tried to get them, beaten badly. Put in cattle wagon. Walk again. Border Germany and France, then liberated in American Zone. One doctor cried, we looked so bad. French people came. Put on train to Paris.
- 25 min. She found her governess. Started rehabilitation. Two brothers, prisoners of war, back. Other still in army. Remain in Paris until 1948. I studied there. Came to America. Met husband. Married. He was a Swiss citizen and became American. Brother joined army too.
- 30 min. Governess lived with brother and took care of his first baby. Second child died when two. Governess never got over it. Went back to Czechoslovakia. Good friend of my mother did a lot of things to help Jews. People thought if Germany wins, we should get along. Studied English and Sociology, then sculpting. Husband went to M.I.T. She did sketch and sculpture of camp from memory. She's pessimistic about future. Most people don't realize or know. Didn't admire Schindler, he did it to save his skin.

When arrived back in Paris, Paris looked good. People well dressed.

HUGUETTE FRANK (continued)

- 35 min. Nobody understood anything, became cynical. Some people in camp five years. Not human. Two children were gassed. Left mother. German kicking little baby. Small minority who did anything. Listening to Beethoven, educated people. No reason to forgive them.
- 40 min. Train with Gypsies. Whole train to gas chamber. In general, they went like cattle. Once I was so sick, they put me in hospital. Julien told me to get up, they were gassing everyone. Himmler came, he said, "You look like swine, you should all die".
- 45 min. Two children (sons), husband biggest help you could have. Terrible nightmares. When they were twelve, I told them. Their children talk about the Holocaust. I still have a hard time sleeping. "How can this happen in a civilized country?" Never discussion about leaving France, my father such a patriot. Governess smarter than all of us. She saw clearly what would happen. Lives in Brookline. You become cynical.
- 50 min. Not surprised when people say it didn't happen, story Jewish people made up.
- List of convoy #74. Showed her card deportee. List of people in Convoy 74 who came back.