

## Odette Borlant

Sister of Henri Borlant and Léon Borlant each photographed both separately and together

Wartime experience: Hidden

My father Aaron Borlant was born on the 1st of April 1888 in Novo Mayatchika (Russia). He was a tailor by profession - he died in Auschwitz (Poland) deportation camp in 1942. He was the son of Hersch and Guittel (born Krovatska)

My mother Rachel Beznos was born on 25th of March 1900 in Saroky (Russia) and died on 7th of November 1967 in Montreuil s/Bois France. She was a dressmaker by profession. She was the daughter of Hersch Beznos and Sarah Grenitz.

My parents got married on 30th of January 1917 in Paris.

Their children were:

Leon born 1917 in Paris

Denise born 1921 in Paris. She died in Auschwitz 1942

Bernard born 1925 in Paris, He died in Auschwitz 1942

Henri born 1927 in Paris, deported in 1942 and returned in April 1945

Roger born 1929 in Paris

France born 1934 in Paris

Madeleine born 1936 in Paris

Raymonde 1939 in Saint Lambert du Lattay (Maine et Loire)

I was born on the 18th of March 1931 in Paris. Before the War I had four brothers and four sisters. We were a big family and there was much love amongst us. When the migration from Paris started, the Red Cross was charged to help us to be sheltered. That night my little sister Raymonde was born in the village where we arrived as the first refugees who came from Paris. We stayed there until the deportation of my family.

My father was born in Russia the 1st of April 1888 in a village called Novee Mayatchika next to Odessa, he was deported and died in Auschwitz in September 1942. He was a tailor. My mother was born in Bessarabia on 25th March 1900, she died on 7th of November 1967 in Montreuil sous Bois, after the ceremony of marriage of her last daughter. She worked with my father as well as being a housewife. She knew how to do everything with her nimble fingers.

My parents met and got married in Paris, they were a happy couple, they were handsome and looked distinguished. I loved them very much. My father was full of health, the image of him which stays with me is that at any time of the year he opened the windows and did gymnastics and then began his work. All festivities of the family took place at home, for we were too many to go out. We formed a very close family with lots of love amongst us. Mama was known in the family for her multiple talents of cooking and special baking. Mama spoke several languages:

Russian, Yiddish, and French after she arrived in France. She was a woman who was interested in everything. She was very intelligent.

The raids of the 16th of July 1942 took place all over France. That night my life turned into a nightmare, but why? Because we were Jews. The Germans destroyed my happiness. They took my father, two of my elder brothers and my eldest sister Denise, who had helped my mother with the housework. She was like a second mother to us. Concerning my eldest sister, I don't have any memories, there is only a black hole. I try hard to remember but nothing, nothing. If I hadn't had photographs of her, I could believe she'd never existed. I remember the day when the Germans came to take away my people, I could not cry for about ten days, I was as if frozen at not being able to change anything.

Following that drama, Mama fell very ill, and I understood that I was the one who should take care of my brother, my younger sisters and my mother. The nurse, who was a nun, came in every day to look after my mother, said to me "My little girl, you have to learn how to do the injections, because one day I will be unable to come and you have to know what to do." That was the way I was promoted to being my mother's nurse. I learned quickly how to sterilize by boiling the syringes, to cup her back and how to distribute the drugs for the day. In July 1942 I was eleven years old, but very quickly I became an adult facing all these responsibilities. Mama lived 15 years with oxygen bottles next to her bed, from there she advised me how to prepare the meals, and little by little, day after day, she transmitted her savoir-faire of her lovely little meals, our delight.

For the rest of us life continued. We had no news from our deported internees for three years. Mama had just received two small postcards written by my brother Henri. Two months after they had been sent to concentration camps, we had to leave the home we lived in to hide. The Germans had inquired about us at the French state police force. Mama instantly contacted the French Resistance Force and we left to hide. Several times we changed our lodging and our identities. From the moment on we left Saint Lambert du Lattay to live in hiding, Mama was at the end of her material resources. She had no ration books and we were six people to survive. She sold the little jewelry she possessed. We had to buy everything on the black market from 1942 until the liberation of Paris. We could not go to school. For myself the only object was to keep Mama alive till the return of the rest of the family. At least the miracle happened, my brother Henri was back amongst the first internees. What a good luck, what a joy!

Mama and all of us recovered our taste for life We hoped so badly for the others to come back, but later we understood that this would not happen. Henri was aged 15 when he was arrested and 18 when he returned. He learned to speak several languages in the concentration camps: Russian, German, Polish and Yiddish and he loved to converse with Mama. After several stays in different convalescent homes, he went back to study and became a Doctor of Medicine. He is married and has children and grandchildren. My sisters and my brother continued to study, they got married and had children.

I am grateful to my brother Henri. Thanks to him I started working in the wholesale business, I got married to a former internee whose origins were Austrian. I have two children and I am a grandmother of three beautiful grandchildren. I have been a widow since 1988.

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**Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris**

Odette Borlant

Odette BORLANT épouse FELSENBURG née le 18/03/1931 à PARIS 13ème de Aaron BORLANT et Rachel BEZNOS (RUSSIE)

Fille de déporté convoi n°8 du 20/07/1942 d'ANGERS pour AUSCHWITZ et enfant cachée

Avant-guerre, vie très heureuse dans une famille nombreuse non pratiquante. Exode, la CROIX ROUGE nous aide à quitter PARIS pour un village de province. Nous y sommes restés jusqu'à la libération. Mon père, déporté, est mort à AUSCHWITZ. Ma mère et lui s'étaient rencontrés à PARIS et mariés. Rafle du 16/07/1942, tout bascule. Mon père, deux de mes frères et ma sœur Denise sont arrêtés par des Allemands. J'avais 11 ans et je suis vite devenue adulte. Cachés à ST LAMBERT DU LATTAY, nous avons dû quitter cet endroit et nous cacher dans divers lieux avec l'aide de résistants français. Sans ressources ni cartes d'alimentation il a fallu vendre quelques bijoux. De 1942 jusqu'à la libération, nous devons tout acheter au marché noir. Mon frère Henri est revenu parmi les premiers déportés. Quelle joie.