

Madeline Peltin

Wartime Experience: Hidden

My mother Chaya Borensztejn was born in 1905 in Lukov, Poland. My father Joseph Peltin was born in 1896 in Warsaw. They left Poland for France, land of the Rights of Man, where they moved into a small hotel on August 14, 1930. I was born in Paris in the 20th district and declared French at the request of my parents, themselves Polish nationals. To my great regret, I was an only child. From 1930-1939 my family integrated into the country and the culture of France. They lived at 63 Fauburg Saint Denis, 10th district of Paris and had a workshop making clothing.

I attended the public school where my schooling progressed well. If my mother didn't have family in France, my father had three sisters in Paris. The oldest, Chana, married Moszek Rajman. They had two sons, Marcel and Simon, who played an important role in the Resistance. They were like my big brothers. Our two families were almost inseparable, sharing leisure, vacations, friendship but also sharing problems and worries.

In spite of a happy life, enriched by friendly encounters and family, the discovery of French culture and primarily hard work, anxiety arrived in 1938. The news from Germany was alarming, and my parents spoke of it often. My cousins Marcel and Simon listened to these conversations and were impressed. 1939 was the invasion of Poland, the declaration of war and worry about the family that remained in Poland.

My paternal grandmother, who lived in Warsaw, was "lucky" to die before the deportations. In 1940 fear increased with the capitulation of France, the installation of the Vichy government the anti-Jewish laws and the German occupation. On August 20, 1941 my Uncle Moszek Rajman was arrested in the roundup in the XI district and interned in Drancy. His sons Simon, 14 and Marcel 17, developed a ferocious hate for Nazis and French collaborators. From that time, Simon participated in the actions of the Resistance (issuing tracts, pasting notices, etc.) while Marcel took part in the FTP-MOI (immigrant group) and in the army.

In 1941, we were forced to wear the yellow star. At school I was subject to mocking but also some expressions of compassion. In June 1941, Uncle Rajman was deported to Auschwitz, from where he didn't return. On July 16, 1942, rumors of roundups circulated. My father believed that only the men would be rounded-up and took refuge with Mrs. Lavé on Boulets St. in the XI district. That admirable woman hid a dozen people that night. My mother and I, awakened at 4 am by a French policeman, had our lives saved because he gave us a reprieve of half an hour. We fled and were reunited by Mr. and Mrs. Pierre, an Italian shoemaker. They lived on top of their small shop with their daughter Francoise, and they saved our lives that night. My mother had the courage to risk herself with me, in the street full of policemen, the buses with the arrested families in the middle of their cries and tears. It was a terrible sensation to leave in the dark of night and to lose in a matter of a few minutes the security of happy times.

From July 19, 1942, to March 29, 1943, my parents lived, hidden at the home of the sister of my father, Szyfra Frydmann. She benefited from a relative and temporary security because she had a baby younger than two years old. At night they stayed with Mrs. Lavé.

At that time, I was 12 years old, and I attended the High School Lamartine where only the director knew that I was Jewish. I didn't wear the yellow star any longer and I escaped several roundups by going on the metro. Fear was present and permanent. My mother found refuge for me with different families, then at the home of my Latin teacher, Miss Cahen and her sister. They were deported later.

During that time, my cousins Simon and Marcel were active participants in the Resistance. Marcel was involved in army actions that inflicted heavy losses on the occupying Nazis. On March 23, the apartment of my Aunt Frydmann, where my parents were hidden, was denounced as sheltering the Rajman brothers. Five French police officers broke down the door, searched, but not finding my cousins, arrested my mother, my father, and his sister Régine. I saw them leave and never saw them again. Two days later, two inspectors came back to interrogate me and to make me say where my cousins were. I perfectly understood their agenda, but I didn't say anything and after about two hours they left. I was 12 years old and was courageous in spite of my despair. On June 23, 1943, I received a last letter from my parents from Drancy, "We are leaving for an unknown destination, courage." Deported to Auschwitz by Convoy 55, they never returned.

In November 1943, my aunt Chana (my second mother) was arrested along with her sons, Marcel and Simon. My Aunt died while being deported. Marcel, 20, was shot on Mount Valérien on February 21, 1944, with 21 of his companions of the "Red Posters" called "Manouchian group". Simon was deported to Buchenwald, and returned in May 1945. He was the only survivor of the family.

At the end of 1943 Madame Lavé, our guardian angel, who had protected us without fail, decided that Paris was too dangerous. She accompanied us, my Aunt Frydmann, her two daughters and me to a small village, Chalette-sous-Voire, where her sister ran a farm. There she found families who would take us in until Liberation. Finally in 1944, after Liberation, I returned to Paris. There I learned that my mother and father would not return.

Imagine all the distress of an only child learning she will never see her parents again.

In 1947 after two years of interruption of my schooling I achieved the high school certificate. But there was no question of continuing my studies. It was necessary to work. I was 17 and had done three months apprenticeship for stenography. I tried to find employment in offices then as a secretary. In 1953 I moved, alone, into an attic room. I had few resources because a French child of foreign parents didn't have any right to aid. That was a great injustice. In 1954, having had the habit of making my own clothes, I continued doing that and became a dressmaker. Having many clients meant I could hire a worker.

1960-1991 – I married Roger Meyer, son of deportees, a surgeon-dentist. Stéphane was born January 26, Fabienne on November 9, 1965. I didn't work anymore and raised my children. Stéphane is currently a magistrate at the Tribunal of Grande Instance of Créteil. Fabienne is a journalist at "Madame Figaro". She has two small boys, Tom and Anatole. Children and grandchildren are the grand joy of my existence and a beautiful victory over life.

1980 – I decided to return to work. I was several months in a real estate office, then with a decorative upholsterer. In 1987 I opened a gift store, which I had for 10 years. In 1990 I divorced Roger Meyer. On May 8, 1998, I went, with my children to the village that had protected us during the war. In the presence of the Mayor, Mr. Lécureau, son of the mayor of that time, I was able to thank the population. It was emotional at that meeting and the local press covered the event. On October 18, 1999, at my request, the Medal of the Just was awarded to Madam Lavé, our guardian angel during those dark years and given to her daughters, Odette and Andrea.

Organizations:

REMEMBERING THE JEWS of PARIS: participated in the exhibits and editing the trimonthly bulletin.

AMEJD 10th and 11th DISTRICT: ASSOCIATION FOR THE MEMORY OF DEPORTED JEWISH CHILDREN. Work in the office, for ceremonies and placing plaques in schools attended by deported Jewish children, speaking in classes to children to transmit messages of humanism and tolerance.

YAD VASHEM: Department of the Just – I joined following the ceremony on October 18, 1999. I am responsible in Paris for the organizing of the awarding of the Medals of the Just.

My involvement in these associations relieves the cares of witnessing and of transmitting this Memoir about things that should not be lost or forgotten. On October 20, 2003, my dear friend, Henry Bulawko, president of the UDA, (Union of the Deported) decorated me with the National Order of Merit.

I have also been involved for 20 years with a group of friends in the study of Yiddish and Yiddish culture. The studio of Alain Fisher presented performances of theater, of poems, radio shows with the purpose of preserving that language which was the one spoken by the majority of the victims of genocide.

Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris

Madeleine PELTIN

enfant cachée

née le 14/8/1930 à PARIS 20ème de Chaya BORENSZTEJN et Joseph PELTIN venus de POLOGNE en 1919 pour la France.

Enfant de déportés, mère et père convoi n° 55 du 23/06/43 pour AUSCHWITZ et enfant cachée

20/8/1941 : mon oncle par alliance Moszek RAJMAN est arrêté lors de la rafle du 11ème arrondissement de PARIS. Interné à DRANCY, il est déporté le 22/6/1942 par convoi n° 3. Juillet 1942, réveillés par un policier français nous réussissons à nous cacher chez un voisin cordonnier. Du 19/7/1942 au 23/3/1943 nous continuons à nous cacher dans divers endroits. Le 23/3/1943 mes parents sont arrêtés avec ma sœur Régine, conduits à DRANCY, ils seront déportés à AUSCHWITZ par le convoi n° 55 du 23/06/1943. Je ne les reverrai jamais. Ma tante Chana RAJMAN, arrêtée en Nov. 1943 mourra en déportation. Son fils Marcel sera fusillé au Mont Valérien le 21/2/1944 avec ses 22 compagnons du groupe MANOUKIAN. De la fin 1943 à fin 1944, je suis restée cachée à CHALETTE SOUS VOIRE chez des fermiers, parents de Mme LAVE, notre ange gardien qui nous avait cachés Rue des Boulets à PARIS 11ème. Fin 1944, retour à PARIS. En 1999 une médaille des Justes a été décernée à Mme LAVE et remise à ses filles Odette et Andrée. Depuis une vingtaine d'années je m'investis dans diverses associations, MEMOIRE JUIVE DE PARIS, ATELIER ALAIN FISCHER, AMEDJ des 10ème et 11ème arrondissements, YAD VASCHEM à PARIS. Décorée de l'Ordre National du Mérite le 20/1/2003, médaille décernée par Henri BULAWKO de l'UNION DES DEPORTES D'AUSCHWITZ.