

## MAURICE ASA

For part of the war, Maurice Asa was sheltered by a Gentile family, the Desrutins. Later, he hid near Lyon and in Provence, eventually joining a guerilla group.

*"In some ways, my children and my grandchildren are the spiritual descendants of the Desrutin family who helped me stay alive during the war."*

Maurice Asa was born in Paris in 1924. His parents had emigrated to France from Istanbul just after WWI and worked selling hardware to building contractors. The family, including Maurice's younger sister Ginette, lived close to many relatives and Maurice had many happy memories of life with this extended family

In September 1939 when France and England declared war on Germany the French government recommended that children be evacuated from Paris. Maurice's parents contacted a Christian French family named Desrutin who lived in Cusset, a village near Vichy. The Desrutins agreed to take Maurice and Ginette as boarders despite great risk.

In May 1940, Maurice's parents fled the German invasion, joining the children in Cusset. They stayed there until 1941 when the Vichy government passed laws forbidding Jews to live in the area. They then took refuge in Nice on the French Riviera. Germany invaded the city in 1943.

Despite the danger, Maurice's parents remained in Nice with his 80-year-old maternal grandmother. Maurice made his way back to the Desrutins and Ginette eventually joined him there. When staying with the Desrutins became too dangerous for him, Maurice traveled to the home of an uncle near Lyon. From there, he headed south to the mountains of Provence where he was hidden by French farmers. He joined an underground guerilla group and served as an interpreter when the Allies landed on the French Riviera. While on patrol he was wounded and taken to a US Army field hospital.

Maurice's parents and grandmother were arrested and sent to Drancy soon after sending the children to safety. They were deported to Auschwitz in the winter of 1944 and died there. Jean and Marthe Desrutin were awarded the Righteous Gentile medal posthumously in 1999.

After the war, Maurice returned to Paris and lived there with his sister until she was old enough to be independent. He immigrated to Australia and then to California where he briefly attended Stanford University. He began selling scientific products and eventually started his own company with offices throughout the Western states. Maurice remained in California where he married and raised a family.