

Francine Taylor

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>> Taylor: -- send me Marseilles to him so I could go to school.

>> Interviewer: Now, this was what, October, November of '42?

>> Taylor: No, this was later than that because I stayed -- I had been in Graulhet several months. I would say, maybe, maybe six months. I'm just -- yeah.

>> Interviewer: So spring of 1943, maybe?

>> Taylor: Yeah, yeah. So he had a hotel room, and he had a job. You know, not a very good job, but -- in a butcher's shop, but anyway, she thought that would be best for me. Well, come to find out the concierge, which is, you know, the keeper of the building of the hotel, would not let me stay with him because that was rented for one person, and she just wouldn't let me stay with him. So what I did, I went to school every day, and every night, I would do my homework on a bench on the boulevard, and I would -- we would wait till she turned her light out and go to bed, and then he would smuggle me into his bedroom. Sometimes we were lucky; it was 10:00. Sometimes it was 2:00 in the morning. So that's how I spent my time with him for a while, but it was not possible. I mean, I could not live like that. I just would drag myself to school sometimes with two or three hours' sleep, very little food.

>> Interviewer: And Marseilles was in Free France at that point?

>> Taylor: Marseilles was in Free France, yes. So my mother heard that under 16, the Red Cross was sending children to the United States. They were able to get the Jewish children under 16 to be sent to the United States from Free France, so she asked me to come back, and she was going to send me to the United States. Well, of course, I would never think of leaving her. I started crying. I said wherever she goes, I'll go. She

said, "You remember what your father said?" But that did not count. So I refused to go to the United States. So I stayed with my mother a little bit in Graulhet. In the meantime, our Belgian -- the Germans picked up all the Belgian Jews that had fled Belgium. There were about six families. Also, our Belgian cousins were picked up to be deported to concentration camp.

>> Interviewer: Did you see them again?

>> Taylor: No, no. That was three brothers who were about my mother's age, their wives. One had a son and a daughter, and one had two sons who -- when the Germans came, those two sons were not home. They came during -- they came in the morning, early, and they didn't take my mother or me. They were just looking for Belgian Jews. I guess they had a system, you know. And the two sons were not home. One was 18, and one was 19. One was spending the night with the son of a French family, a non-Jewish family that was employing them, those leather goods, and one had gone out -- he had a little garden in the fields. We knew where they were. So of course, the Germans didn't say, you know, that they were taking these people, sending them to a concentration camp. They were sending them to interrogate them about Belgium. But we knew, of course. So we --

>> Interviewer: How did you know?

>> Taylor: Well, because we had already fled, you know, Paris, and my father had told us all this, and then we had gotten all these letters from Poland. I mean, we really didn't know they were burning Jews. No, still didn't know they were actually burning Jews in concentration camps, but we knew they were doing away with them, you know. They were mistreating them, working them to death. I mean, that much, you know, we knew. So my sister went to the field. Oh, I forgot to tell you, my sister had come back from Paris, come back from Paris because with her work, she could not support herself. She just did not make enough money, you know, to pay for everything, so she had written, and she said that she just -- we -- my mother even had

to send her food that we didn't even have, you know, once in a while. So she says, "Maybe I could come back and hide there," you know. And so my sister had come back, had just come back -- because we had had this meeting with this man. He was going to help us anyway. She says, "And maybe we'll do -- whatever he decides to do that we should do, we'll do it together."

So she happened to have just been back, and so she fled to the field and told one of the two brothers what had happened. Well, he started crying. He wanted to come back home and go with his parents, and she wouldn't let him. She pushed him into an outdoor house, you know, where they have -- and she says, "I'm not going to let you go. I'm not going to let you go. It's just, you know, being killed." And the other boy, the people that he was spending the night with hid him, and then after a few days went by, my sister -- finally, he quieted down, and he stayed in that outhouse, and we would take him food every day and for a few days, you know. And after things looked sort of quiet, the French people who were hiding the other boy took the two boys and sent them off to Savoie. It's in the Alps, and -- to the French underground, and they survived. They stayed in the French underground till the war was over, and they survived.

>> Interviewer: What happened to you and your sister and your mother?

>> Taylor: All right, so this man, Mr. Lautard, called a meeting, and this was the period -- this was this period here. And this is me at 15; my sister. That's Mr. Lautard's daughter, and she was going with him, Maurice. He was a Jewish boy hiding in that little village; from Paris. These two, Henri [phonetic] and Suzanne [phonetic], were also Jewish children. She was my age. He was maybe 16. They, they were deported. So --

>> Interviewer: And this picture was taken, what, in 1943?

>> Taylor: This picture was taken in 1943. I didn't get it till last year. This Maurice married her, and I hadn't seen him for

40-some-odd years, and I -- we had a reunion last year when I was in Paris. He, he told me about the picture, and he had one made for me and one for my sister. So I just got it in May. Actually, not last year, this year, in May. So we -- he called us. He said -- I -- he says, "I will," he says, "go into the town house, get the official stamp out," and he says, "I'm going to buy ID cards, blank ID cards," and this is also the period of -- excuse me -- this is my false identification card, and this is a blank ID card. You buy it like that, then you put your picture on there. And he says, "I'm going to get a list from people who exist, and each one should correspond pretty much to your age." He says, "Looks," he says, "I don't know," because he didn't know those people. He says, "But age-wise, they have to be" -- I wasn't 15 at the time, but they have to be 15 to have an ID card. So he says, "I have to have somebody that's at least 15," and he says, "Then," he says, "you all have to leave and go back into Occupied France." He says, "Free France now is more dangerous than Occupied France," because all the Jews that were not taken in Free France were now sitting ducks in Free France. So he says, "Now, as Gentiles, and you go back," he says, "to Occupied France," he says, "you will be much safer."

well, this uncle who was in Marseilles had met a Jewish girl also there hiding, from Paris, and they had become engaged, and they had the same problem. They were like sitting ducks in Marseilles. So her family was hiding outside of a little hamlet also not far from Le Mans, and she said to him, "You know," she says, "they're hiding there as non-Jews." And she says, "The peasants are very good and don't know anything about Jews." And her father was a shoemaker. She says, "why don't we try to get false identification papers and go hide over there?" So he was already there in this little town called Saint-Fraimbault. It wasn't a town; it was a hamlet. It only had 35 houses. So he was already there with his girlfriend and her family, and he is the one who said, "well, come and join me. I'm over there as a -- saying that I'm a butcher by trade and I fled Paris because the

Germans wanted to send me to Germany for hard labor, and I didn't want to do that." You know, and of course, and the people were more or less anti-German, you know, and they were very good to him. So he says, "Why don't you explain to Monsieur Lautard that" -- my mother could not get a false ID as a French native because she had an accent, so -- "to make her a card as a Polish-born Christian, and you are her two nieces. You don't have any family. You don't have any mother or father, that your mother and father were killed in a bombing outside of Paris." Paris was not bombed, but the outskirts were. He said, "And we will tell them that story, that you were bombed, you have no house, so I'm bringing you over here, you know, to sit it out," because everybody was sure, you know, that the Germans would lose the war. I mean, that's what, you know, kept us. I mean, we just knew that they couldn't possibly win the war.

>> Interviewer: When you say you knew they couldn't possibly win the war, was that just optimism in the face of what you were going through?

>> Taylor: Yes.

>> Interviewer: Were you getting any information?

>> Taylor: Not really. Not really. We tried to. We did try to listen to the radio from Radio England, you know, what they called Free English Radio, but it had become so dangerous to listen to that radio because there were always people denouncing people. I mean, you know, maybe not a whole lot, but even a small percentage. So we really -- and the newspapers were all censored. No, it was just optimism. That's what kept us -- I mean, they couldn't possibly win, you know. I mean, that's what kept us going.

So we joined him. So Mr. Lautard made us cards like that, false identification cards, and then we took the train and went back into Occupied France, and my uncle came to pick us up like a real peasant. He wore wooden shoes with straw in his shoes, you

know, and the beret and just a real French peasant. And then he introduced us. He was renting a room at these peasants' house. He was a wooden shoe maker, and she was actually a hired hand. She went from farm to farm and put in a days' work and then came back home. So he rented -- the house was not much. It was big, but it was -- like, the ground floor had no floor. It was earth floors. But he had lots of room, so he rented us a room too. My uncle had a room there, and we had a room there, and we told him that we got bombed, you know, and he believed everything we said.

So to earn money for our keeps, my uncle would butcher cattle because, see, what happened, the Germans had a new -- they came and counted the cattle heads on each farm, and that was requisitioned. They came, and when that cattle was raised to where it could be eaten, they came and got that cattle. So if they peasants wanted any for themselves, they had to -- like, for instance, a little cow was born, you know, they would not tell them that the little cow was born. So that's what they would do to have meat for themselves, and my uncle would butcher the little calf, and then for payment, they would give him meat. They didn't have any money, really. They were, you know, just little peasants.

And my mother would go every day from farm to farm and put -- do mending, you know, or -- well, really, nothing but mending from old clothes, you know, on old clothes. And my sister and I would spin the yarn and knit, make socks and sweaters. We were very good at that, and they would pay us with food. And since the people who were sheltering us were not -- all he did was, he would grow -- he would have a vineyard and make his own wine for himself, but he did not have any farmland, so we would share the food which, at the time, we had plenty of with them, and that would pay for our room. However, we had to eat at the same table because there was just one tremendous, big kitchen and one table, you know.

So we were there several months. It was -- yes, we were there several months because Normandy, D-Day, had already -- now, there we could listen to the English radio because we were so isolated. As I say, it was just a hamlet with 35 people. And there was a little chapel in the middle of the little square that was 1300 years old, and it was not used. It was just sitting there, you know. So we knew, you know, that the Americans had landed, and, of course, it was just a matter of waiting.

>> Interviewer: So you were there almost a year.

>> Taylor: Well --

>> Interviewer: Because D-Day --

>> Taylor: All together, all together, yeah. All together, almost a year. So, yeah, we were there close to a year, I guess.

>> Interviewer: So it's June 1944 when D-Day -- wasn't that D-Day? It was June 1944.

>> Taylor: Yeah, I think so.

>> Interviewer: And then you stayed there in that village, in that hamlet, a little longer?

>> Taylor: We stayed -- well, we were there, I'd say -- when this incident happened, okay. They had already landed, but, you know, it took them several months because they came that deep because we weren't far from Paris, actually, see. So we were sitting at the table, eating, all of us, and he was a -- the man -- his name was Monsieur Herteau -- was, for a peasant -- because a lot of the French peasants had very little education. He was not -- he was fairly well educated because he had studied to be a priest one time in his life. He didn't finish, but he was well learned. Now, she wasn't. She couldn't read and write. So he was reading the paper. He was my mother's age, so he was right around 40, I guess, or 41. And all at once he says, "You

know," he says -- every day in the paper, it was Jews, Jews, Jews. He would say -- because they were censored papers, of course. He said, "You know," he says, "if one of them," he says, "comes on my property," he says, "I will get my" -- what do you call that prong that you pick up --

>> Interviewer: Pitchfork.

>> Taylor: Pitchfork. "I will take my pitchfork," he says, and he says, he says, "I'll get him right against the wall," he says, "and I'll hold him there." And he says -- and he keeps on rattling. Well, my uncle thought it was funny. My uncle was, back then was like, what, 32 years old. He was a bachelor, but of course -- and we did, too, but my mother, of course, you know, didn't think it was so funny. So my uncle says to him, "Well, how would you know," he says, "if it was a Jew?" He says, "I would know," he says. "They have ears like this and noses like this." And he says, "They look like this." Anyway, you know, he was describing them. He said, "Well, did you ever see one?" He said, "I don't have to see." He didn't know anything except what he saw in the papers. He said, "I don't have to see one. I know. I know."

So that night, of course, we talked among ourselves, and my mother said, "Oh," she says, "I hope he never finds out." She says, "You know what's waiting if he does find out." And, you know, that went on. Well, shortly after that, shortly -- well, shortly after that is when D-Day had already happened, so maybe, I'm saying, maybe a couple or three months after that, you know, after that because we stayed there a whole year altogether.

We -- my sister and I -- there was no running water there, and there was no bathroom. I mean, the bathroom was outside, so we would take a little bowl of water and go brush our teeth on the stairs of the little chapel. That was our -- that's how we cleaned up in the morning in pretty weather. So we were brushing our teeth, and this man came by on a bike, a Parisian looking for food. They did that a lot, you know, came in the country,

and we came face to face with him, and he was a neighbor of ours in Paris, and he was a well-known collaborator with the Germans. And of course, it was, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here?" Well, of course, he knew what we were doing. He knew we were Jewish, and he turned right around, got on his bike, and left. So we came in the house and told my mother. She says, "Oh," she says, "that's it." She says, "He is going to the nearest *kommandantur* to denounce us." And they were getting, like, you know, I don't remember, a good bit of money for each, each Jew that was denounced.

So we called my uncle, you know, and we told him, and we said, you know, "That's it. What are we going to do? When he finds out" -- Monsieur Herteau, you know -- "I mean, you know how he feels about Jews," and my uncle said, "No," he says, "we have to tell him the truth." He says, "He loves us." He did like us a lot, especially my uncle. He says, "He doesn't know what a Jew is." He says, "Where are we going to go?" He says, "Either he turns us in, or he hides us." So he calls him, and he says, "Monsieur Herteau," he says, "you know," he says, "I told you" -- so and so and so. He said, "Well, all that is a lie." He says, "We are Jews." He told him just -- he says, "You are not." He says, "Yes, we are." And he said, "You're not." He says, "Look," he says, "we don't have much time." He says, "I'm going to tell you what happened." He tells him that we were discovered here, and he says, "And what are we to do?"

So the man fell to his knees, and he started crying like a baby. And my uncle couldn't quiet him, and he thought maybe he was afraid. He says, "Look," he says, "you have to get yourself together." He says, "If you want us to leave, we'll leave." He says, "No, no, no." He says, "Forgive me. Forgive me," he says. "I am so mortified." He was so mortified because of what he had said at the table, and he felt so bad that he said that about the Jews, and this was why he was crying like that, like a baby. So anyway, he said -- he was quite smart. He said, "Look," he says, "they only saw the girls. They didn't see the mother." He

says, "You" -- he says, "Do they know you?" My uncle -- "Does he know you?" He says, "No, he doesn't know me." He says, "All right," he says, "we have to think fast." He says, "If he went to the closest *kommandantur* or gendarmerie, he will be back here in about two hours." He says, "We have to hide." So he says, "I will go" -- where he had -- he made his own wine, and he had, like, a little *colline*, which is like a little elevation, and he had made a cellar under there, you know. So he went in there and emptied three barrels that were full of wine, put each one of us in a barrel, my mother in one, my sister in one, me in another. And he told my uncle, "Now, you and I sit down, and we ignore the whole thing," he says, "and have a drink."

And that's exactly what happened. They came in, but it was not the German. It was the French gendarmes came back. And they said, "Where are the girls?" So Monsieur Herteau said, "What girls?" So the first thing they -- of course, I didn't see that, you know, because we were hiding, but he told us. The first thing they did was just hit him over the head with the back of their gun, you know. Then they asked my uncle, "Where are the girls?" Of course, you know, they -- so they beat them up. And then Monsieur Herteau said he thought that they were going to really -- who knows? So he said, "Oh," he said, "the girls, the girls." He says, "That's right." He said, "A couple of hours ago," he says, "a couple of Parisian girls came by," and he said, "they were looking for food. You know how these Parisians come, looking for food." And he says, "I don't have any, you know. I'm not a farmer." He said, "But they stopped, and they brushed their teeth. In fact," he says, "I ran them off. I ran them off," he says, "because they were brushing the teeth," he says, "on the steps of the chapel." He says, "And I thought that was not nice, you know." And he says, "And they left." He says, "I don't know where they went."

So I don't know -- he says that if the Americans hadn't already landed in Normandy, that God knows what they would have done to him, but they were afraid, you know, to do any more harm. So

they left, and then we waited till dark, and then he came in and brought us some water, and, you know, we stayed in there almost five days in those barrels because they were afraid that, you know, we were watched. And we made it.

>> Interviewer: And what happened after that?

>> Taylor: Well, after that, shortly after that, the first two Americans came in a jeep. And they were lost, actually, because they never came to that hamlet. They landed -- well, they came as far as Le Mans because this place is really unbelievable. It's 40 kilometers from a train station, you know. It has no mayor. The mayor is 7 kilometers, closest town. But two Americans were lost and came in a jeep. And our cat was having kittens, and we named the first kitten Yankee. And they stopped, you know, and they said, you know, "We landed in Le Mans" -- I mean, "We're already in Le Mans." And they said, "You're liberated," you know, and then we -- well, yes and no. I mean, the Germans were still there, but they had been defeated. In fact, they were pretty mean at the time. They did some horrible things. While they were defeated, we saw them march, you know, coming through, and the Americans were after them. In fact, they burned a town called -- at that time, at that time they passed a town, a little town called Oradour-sur-Glane. It's become a national shrine. And they were defeated. I mean, the Americans were after them, and that was unbelievable that they did such a thing. They rounded up everybody in that little village, locked them up in the church, and put the church afire and burned everybody alive in there. They did some pretty horrible things. But you would be surprised.

So anyway, we were liberated, and we had -- I always -- my uncle always told them -- now, they had a son and a daughter, these people, also farm hands. The son was very gifted, drawing, and I was very gifted too. We used to draw together on his day off. So my uncle always said, "well, if I survive this and I go back to Paris and I'm lucky enough to open my butcher's shop again and

make a living," he said, "I will make it up to all of you. We will make it up." And we did because -- so we were liberated. We came back to Paris. We had no place to live. The little apartment -- our apartment where we lived before -- this, I have to tell you this -- there was a little, little business downstairs. It was a lady who had never been married and her father, and they had a little apartment attached to the business. Well, they always liked our little apartment on the second floor, so she took -- the lady took that apartment and would not give it back to us, you know, and there was no place -- you couldn't find a place to live in Paris. We didn't have much money, anyway, if any. So we had no place to live.

>> Interviewer: When you came back to Paris, did you see people -- those people that you saw that you knew, were they surprised you were still alive? I mean, did they --

>> Taylor: Well, we really didn't see anybody to begin with. I mean -- oh, you mean the people where we lived?

>> Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

>> Taylor: Yeah, they were surprised, they were, but the janitor, the concierge, she said she thought we would always come back. She had -- see, where my parents lived, the Germans -- all this, I forgot to tell you too. Okay, the concierge hid my mother and my sister for five days because we had a policeman that lived above us, and then we had a policeman that lived on the fifth floor. The policeman that lived above us was a collaborator. The one that lived on the fifth floor was not. So the one that lived on the fifth floor had come down to the concierge and told her -- there were three Jewish families in that building -- and told her, "You know," he says, "tomorrow we have orders to go with the Germans and pick up every Jew in the city." He said, "We have a list: every woman, child, man." So he says, "If you can," he says, "go to these three families and hide them because their place is -- at 5:00 tomorrow, there will be a knock on their door."

So the concierge hid those -- see, I was in France; I was hiding -- hid those three families, and, of course, my father was already taken, but she hid my mother and my sister, and she hid a family with three daughters and another family with a son and a daughter. She had, on the same floor where my parents lived, right across the hall -- there's two apartments on each floor. There was a Gentile family whose husband was a prisoner of war, and she went back with her little girl to live with her mother, and she left the keys with the concierge, and the concierge hid them all in that apartment. So when the Germans came and knocked on the doors that morning and there was no answer, they pushed the doors in, and they were so angry to find -- because my mother, she says you could hear everything. It was on the same floor. She said they were so angry, they threw all the furniture out the window, and they even ripped the electric wires out out of anger because they didn't find anybody.

>> Interviewer: So when you went back after the liberation and you finally found a place to live -- in the same neighborhood?

>> Taylor: No, no. What happened -- all right, so we had no place to live. My uncle had gone back a little ahead of us. He said he wanted to see if, you know, if he could make a living. Well, sure enough, his butcher shop had been closed. It had a big sign on there, "Went Off To War." And it just stayed like that all these years because, see, if you were a prisoner of war -- if you went off to war, they just left the businesses, you know, till you came back. I mean, he was not -- they did not investigate whether he was Jewish or not. He went back to war -- he went off to war. So all he had to do was open that butcher shop and walk in, and he just made a real good living immediately because there was just, you know, such a demand for all kinds of food. I mean, he would go, you know, slaughter his own cattle, you know, outside of Paris and bring it back, but he couldn't find -- so he found a little hotel room close to the butcher shop, and he could not find us a place. So finally he told the lady who owned the hotel, which was a terrible hotel --

it was like a fifth-class hotel, and I hate to tell you, where all the pimps and the prostitutes live, but that was the kind of, you know, dirty hotel, I mean, but, you know. And he told her, "Well, if you give me a room, if you let me rent a room for my sister and her two daughters, I will give you meat," you know, and I'll do this and I'll do that.

>> Interviewer: Okay.

>> Taylor: So anyway, she found us a room on the sixth floor for the three of us with this bribery. And there was no running water to go to the toilet. Forget the shower, the bathroom, but to go to the toilet, you had to go on the main floor, you know, where six people shared it, and it was just, just a real -- we all slept in one double bed, and it was not much bigger than my bathroom, the whole thing. And it was -- the walls -- it was a very, very old hotel -- were full of bed bugs. So the first night we spent there -- we stayed one whole year in that hotel room. The first night we spent there, the bed bugs came out of the walls. That's a horrible experience. So we decided to leave the lights on. Well, for a few nights, they didn't come out, but then they got used to the light, so they started coming out. So what would we do is, one night out of three, one would stand watch and smack the bed bugs with a newspaper while two slept.

So those were very hard years because we had no money. I went back to school. My sister went to work. My mother found a job in a sweat shop doing -- like I say, she could sew well -- doing, you know, finishing work. But it was -- for some reason, we thought, oh, the war was going to be over and everything would be, you know, just fine. My father would come back. So we always lived for that, and then all at once, you know, it wasn't like that at all. And also, I wanted to tell you, when the Germans invaded France, my father, by that time, you know, had a pretty nice job, and he had saved up some money. And he had enough to buy \$600 from -- with his French francs, buy \$600 because it was -- the rumor or whatever said, you know, your French franc will

be worth nothing, you know. People who have a little money should buy some dollars. That may save your life later on, whatever. So he had bought \$600, but we were not allowed to have that money, that -- in dollars, in dollars. So he told my mother, he says, you know -- in the dining room, in the apartment, he opened the -- what do you call that strip of wood that runs --

>> Interviewer: The shoe molding.

>> Taylor: The shoe molding, but it, over there, you know, it's pretty high shoe molding, like, in the old apartments. So he said -- he opened that up, and he hid the \$600, and he said, "You never know, you know -- this, we are not going to touch it -- may save your life." Anyway, so he hid that \$600, and when all this came and he was taken and my mother had to hide and all that, she forgot to take that \$600 out. And when she came back after -- when we came back after the war, she -- and went -- first, she went to see the lady who was occupying the apartment. She says, "Would you please give us -- let us move back?" She says, "You do have an apartment downstairs. We live in this horrible hotel room," and she refused, but she looked at the apartment, and the lady had done quite a bit of remodeling, and it looked like, to my mother, like that shoe molding was not the same, you know. It looked like -- because there was a lot of wood half, halfway up the wall, and that was gone, see, so she knew that the money was gone too. And so she said, "Forget it." But when we finally, after a year, moved into the apartment, and that's the first thing she did, that money was still there.

But we lived in that hotel, like I said, for a whole year, and we had, we had some tragic, hilarious, unusual experiences because here we were, you know, three very nice women living among people like, you know -- it was like "Les Misérables." It was practically the same thing. And I'd like to tell you at least about one experience in that hotel, just really hilarious. So I went back to school. My sister went to work. My mother did

too. And my mother noticed that every time she went to draw water on, you know, the main floor, this Arab was always coming to draw water too. And she said -- so she told us, she says, "You know," she says, "I think that this Arab maybe likes you girls," or whatever, she said. We were afraid, you know. She says, "Be very careful. When you walk in and come into the room, put the chain." You know, it had a chain, a safety chain. She says, "Because," she says, "if he's out there, don't hang around the water, even if you can't get any water."

So sure enough, we noticed he was always there, and one day, my mother said there was a knock on the door, and she opened the door with the chain on. There was this Arab standing in the doorway with his waxed mustache, you know, and his slick, black hair with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. And she said, "My daughter is not here." He says, "I didn't come to see your daughter." She said, "well" -- she said, "My big daughter is not here." She said, "well, my little daughter is not here either." He said, "well, I didn't come to see your little daughter." She said, "well, what do you want?" He said, "well, I want you." So anyway, she became very afraid, and she says, "well," she says, whatever. You know, she closed the door, and she says, "Go away," and all that, and then that evening she told my uncle. She says, "You know, this Arab, you know, came with flowers, and I'm so afraid," and all that. So he says to her, "well," he says, "you let me handle it. I was in the French Foreign Legion," you know, and he says, "and I know how to handle these people." He says, "Because if he starts with you ladies, you know, he's not going to leave you alone. He may think you're one of these ladies of the night," he says, "so I have to set him straight.

So he disappeared. He was gone a good while, and he came back. He was white as a sheet. He says, "Let me sit down, and give me a stiff drink." He says, "I went and talked to him," he says, "but," he says, "let me tell you," he says, "I thought I knew how to handle them." And he says, "I went to him and I said,

'Look,'” he says, “‘those three women, that’s my sister and my two nieces, and they’re not,’” he says, “‘prostitutes. They are nice women.’ He said, ‘well, I know. That’s why I came with flowers. I know they’re nice women.’ He says, ‘That’s why I like them!’” So he says -- but he says, you know, he says, “They’re not your kind of women.” He says, “I was in the French Foreign Legion.” And he says, “You’re not supposed to bother women like that.” He says, “If I see you just look at them,” he says, “just look at them,” he says, “see, I have this knife that long” -- which he didn’t have, of course, you know, the one that you block, you know, he was telling. He says, “I will open your stomach from here to here.” Of course, you know, he says, he was shaking all inside. He said because either he was going to be afraid of him or he was going to, you know, open a knife on him too. So anyway, that’s how he got him to leave us alone totally.

>> Interviewer: would you tell me about your experience later on when you applied for reparations?

>> Taylor: All right. So I went to school for a little while, and times were just too hard, you know, because even all of us working, I mean, we had no furniture. We had nothing. So my sister found a job at Orly Field as a secretary, and then they needed a file clerk, and she found me a job as a file clerk, which I did not know how to do, but they taught me. I was pretty bright, I must say, and she had taught me English, too, in our hiding years, so my English was not too bad because she could speak English. She had gone to England a couple of times. And so we all went to work, and then we got our apartment back, and then I met my husband at Orly Field. He was an American stationed -- in those days, it was the air force of the Army. They didn’t have an air force. And we went together for about three and a half years, and he brought me back to the States, and I got married.

And then it came out -- my mother started -- well, many years later. I was already here maybe ten or twelve years. I don’t

remember, long time, and she says that the French government had received a lump sum of money from the German government to give to all the French Jews that had lost their -- whatever, you know. Some people had only lost furniture. Some people had lost a business and all that, and they give it to the French people. And the German government would also -- is also ready to pay reparations, but not automatically, that you had to apply for it, and she wanted me to apply for it. Well, I wouldn't because it, it, it involved, you know, a lot of paperwork, a lot of research, a lot of whatever, and I just, just didn't want to be bothered. So she did. She did it for me in France, and she applied for reparation, you know, for herself and my sister and me, but I didn't get it through this country. I got it in France. And so what happened is, they agreed, you know, to pay a widow's pension to my mother for killing my father, and they agreed to pay -- not a big pension, but a small pension that goes up a few percent every year for cost of living to my sister and I for all the mental anguish that we had to suffer because of them and physical, too, really, you know.

And then as years went by, my mother was called by the French police, and she was shown a letter to where my father was denounced. Actually, when my father was taken, he was not taken because he was Jewish. He was denounced because he was in the French underground, listening to the English radio, and the man who denounced him lived in the same building on the sixth floor. He was a collaborator. So they asked her if she wanted to press charges, and she said yes, and he got 15 years in jail. And she also received -- oh, yes, I wanted to tell you. So all these years that we lived in France, my father applied for French citizenship because my father did not -- my father served in the Polish army. He did not flee, you know, not to serve. So he had his Polish citizenship. And when -- after a few years, I don't know how long exactly, he was called for an interview to become a French citizen, but they refused him because he didn't have any sons. They told him plain, he didn't have any sons, so they

wouldn't give him the citizenship. But after the war, since my father died for France, then they wanted to give the citizenship to my mother.

>> Interviewer: Do you have a document in reference to your reparations?

>> Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. So after many years, like I said, this is the document where I was accepted, you know, to receive reparations. I don't even remember what year, but it's on there. Well, is it -- I don't have my glasses -- '63, 1963, and every month I get a pension from them. And my mother, until she died last year -- she was three weeks short of being 88 years old -- she received then -- the French government also gave her a pension because my -- not only did they give her French citizenship after the war, many years after the war, but also a pension because my father died for France. So actually, thank God, she was -- in her old, old age, she was comfortable enough with two pensions and socialized medicine and all that, so. And she remained in Paris, and I still have -- my sister lives in Paris and her family, so.

>> Interviewer: Well, would there be anything else you would like to, like to add?

>> Taylor: Well, yes. I would like to say that we often talk about, in later years, anti-Semitism in France. Well, of course, there is anti-Semitism. There's anti-Semitism all over the world. But look at us and other members of our family. My father had a brother and his three children and a wife that survived also is Paris because they were saved by French non-Jews. They stuck their neck out for us. They didn't make any money. I mean, it was not just their neck; I mean, their house, their wives, their families. So whole villages, you know, have hidden Jews, and we always seem to speak only about the anti-Semitism, and we don't really speak much about the ones that have saved all the Jews.

>> Interviewer: You said that your brother had promised to make it up to that family.

>> Taylor: Oh, my uncle, my uncle.

>> Interviewer: I'm sorry, your uncle, right. And how did that --

>> Taylor: He did. We did.

>> Interviewer: If you could, tell me briefly how that took place.

>> Taylor: All right. Well, after the war, then he opened up his butcher shop. First he told the man and wife, the parents, that he would bring them to Paris. They had never been on a train and never been in a car. I mean, just a horse was their only transportation. And he would take them all over Paris and just show them the biggest time. So he brought them to Paris, and they arrived -- in fact, the suit and the dress that they got married in, they had put away to be buried in, and they dug that out to come to Paris. And so it was absolutely fabulous. He put them -- he took them to all the night clubs and the Folies Bergère, and, and they just did not know that such a thing existed.

But that was not the most important. He brought the daughter, who was around my age, maybe a year or so older, into his house because he got married and had two children later on, and she stayed and helped him a little bit in the house, but she was really like a child in the house, and she met a very nice young man, quite a wealthy young man, an engineer, got married, and, of course, she could never have done that well. And we brought the son, and he went on to school after we got our little apartment back. It was not a big apartment, but my mother made a little room for him. And he went on to school and became a draftsman and -- became a draftsman and got a very good job with Renault. And he just retired, and he went back -- the parents are dead, but he went back to the village. In fact, I just heard

from him, and I'm going to -- well, I have been back to the village, but I'm going to go see him and his wife when I go back. And he's done very well, of course. And he never could have done that if it hadn't been for us, you know. So at least, at least we were able to pay them back, at least. And they were wonderful people.

My mother, at the time -- every year when they made the wine from the grapes, she went back every year, and she would be there because it's a very happy time of the year when they make the wine and always stay a whole week. And the first time I went back, the very first time is when my boys and I went back on a vacation. One was five, and one was eight. And I went back with my mother, and so these -- Monsieur Herteau and his wife told the whole neighborhood, and the mayor of the next town -- because the mayor, when we told him we were Jewish, also knew we were Jewish. It had become a family affair, see. They knew -- everybody knew we were Jewish, and everybody was supposed to say that they didn't know anything about us. So the mayor came, and they killed I don't know how many ducks and how many chickens and how many rabbits, and we had a feast, like, for 50 people, you know. And we stayed there several days with my sons. It was lovely, lovely.

But, like, coming back, yeah, coming back to anti-Semitism, I want to stress that there is anti-Semitism, no more than anywhere else in this world, you know, and I would like to say that, you know, there are plenty of good French people who are not anti-Semitic to this date, to this date.

>> Interviewer: well, thank you very, very much.

00:48:18