

## Dora Benkemoun

Wartime Experience: Concentration Camp Survivor

Written from information she provided

Dora was born January 15, 1922, in Warsaw, Poland. Her father Moishe Czapnikowicz worked as a shoemaker. Her mother worked at home as a dressmaker. Dora had two brothers, Maurice, Marcel and one sister, Annie.

In 1921 after a large Pogrom, Dora's father left Poland clandestinely and went to Paris. Her mother and the rest of the family followed also clandestinely. Dora was nine months old. Her sister Annie was born in Paris.

Their life in Paris was very hard, even though both parents worked. Things began to improve just before the war and the family lived and worked in the traditionally Jewish section of Paris where Dora attended school. She was naturalized as a French citizen just before the war.

In 1942 Dora's father was arrested by the French police in a roundup in the streets near the city hall. Her brother Maurice had gone to the South of France to see his girlfriend and was arrested in a general roundup of Jews in Marseille, but he jumped from the train and escaped. He was hidden by a French family and then returned to Paris, got false papers, and then returned to Marseille.

Dora, her mother, and sister went to live with an aunt in Chambéry, in an area in France that was occupied by the Italians where life was not too difficult. The family obtained false papers but did not take many other precautions. They were probably denounced by Christian neighbors after the Germans occupied the area.

Dora, along with her mother, sister, who was 10 years old aunt and cousin were arrested and sent to Drancy just outside Paris. They remained there for several days and were deported to Auschwitz. Upon arrival, Dora was immediately separated from the others. Of that family group, she was the only one to survive.

Dora remained alone in Auschwitz for over a year. She was sent to Bergen Belsen and was liberated there by English forces.

After the war, Dora returned to Paris. There she was reunited with her brother, who had married during the war. She lived with her brother and sister-in-law in Paris for about two years. Amazingly, their parent's apartment had been left intact.

She met her husband Joseph, and they were married in 1959. They have one daughter and three grandsons. The family lives in Paris.

Dora has recorded her history with Steven Spielberg and often speaks in schools in the Paris area.

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

Dora Benkemoun

Dora ou Dwojra BENKEMOUN née CZAPNIKOWICZ le 15/01/1922 à VARSOVIE (POLOGNE) de Moïshe ou Moïse CZAPNIKOWICZ et de.....

Déportée le 29/04/1944 par convoi n° 72 pour AUSCHWITZ, rescapée, et enfant de déporté

En 1921 son père vient à PARIS. Le reste de la famille suivra ultérieurement et clandestinement. Dora a 9 mois à son arrivée en France. Elle sera naturalisée juste avant le début de la guerre. En 1942 son père est arrêté par la police française, déporté par le convoi n° 3 du 22/06/1942. Son frère parti dans le sud de la France est arrêté à MARSEILLE mais il sautera du train et sera caché dans une famille française. Il retournera à PARIS. Muni de faux-papiers il retrouvera MARSEILLE. Dora et une partie de sa famille seront arrêtés et conduits à DRANCY. Après quelques jours ils seront déportés à AUSCHWITZ. Seule DORA survivra. 1 année à AUSCHWITZ puis BERGEN-BELSEN où elle sera libérée par les Anglais. Après la guerre elle revient à PARIS. Elle se marie en 1959. Elle a rencontré Steven SPIELBERG pour son témoignage. Depuis elle témoigne dans les écoles proches de PARIS.