

## Victor Zigelman

Photographed with his wife Lea

Wartime Experience: Participated in the Resistance

It is difficult when one is 77 years old to summarize one's life in a few lines. I was born June 12, 1926, in Paris in the 12th arrondissement and was naturalized as French at birth. My father, Isidore, was born May 25, 1898, in Czystochowa, Poland and grew up in Lodz. He left Poland in 1919, passed through Germany, and arrived in France in 1920. Being without any profession, he worked as a presser in the clothing industry and it was in a small workshop that he met my mother who was a clothing finisher. My mother, Cyla Tsipora was born in 1902 in Vilna, Poland and arrived in Paris in 1920 with her widowed mother and her sister. They joined her two older brothers who had been in Paris since 1910.

My parents worked in the same workshop and were good friends for three years before getting married in 1924. They moved into a small, dark and uncomfortable room without water or electricity. Their window overlooked a low wall on which I watched rats running- which amused me greatly. The uncertain and seasonal nature of my parents' work caused serious money problems. In 1933, we moved into a small two room apartment in the same neighborhood . In October 1938, my younger sister Jacqueline was born.

In our home, religion played no role at all, but that did not prevent our family from going to my grandmothers for meals at Jewish holidays. Politically, my father, without being militant, was a communist sympathizer and he habitually read the newspaper, "The New Press." As a child, every Thursday and Sunday, I went to "YASK" which was a Yiddish community club. For summer vacations, I was sent to a Jewish summer camp. There we learned revolutionary and antifascist songs. With the Popular Front in 1936, the economic situation seemed to improve. Thus in 1939, my mother, her sister, grandmother and children were able to leave for a vacation in the suburbs for a month, renting a room in a private home. Their husbands came to join us each Sunday.

At the age of 12, I left school with my primary diploma in order to go to work. In 1939, my father, who had been naturalized as French citizen in 1930, was drafted into the army. With the defeat of 1940, he found himself near the Spanish border. Demobilized, he returned home and worked temporarily in clothing manufacturing until August 20, 1941, when he was arrested at 6 AM by the French police. He worked on the opening of the transit camp at Drancy and then on March 27, 1942, he was a part of the first convoy from France sent to Auschwitz. According to my research, I learned that he died there on August 27, 1942, exactly fifty-one weeks after his arrest. In 1940, he had received a card from Poland informing him of the death of his father and that the whole family had been deported from Lodz to the area around Lublin Majdanek concentration camp. No one survived.

My mother continued to live in our home and worked, more or less, all the while wearing the obligatory yellow star. Helped by non-Jewish neighbors, my mother was able to hide my little sister who was three years old when my father was arrested with a woman who took care of young children and was located in the countryside. My mother's sister, my aunt Pauline, was arrested and deported on July 16, 1942. Her husband, my uncle Charles, was interned in the camp at Pithiviers from May 14, 1941, until being deported. My grandmother, who was very ill, was put into the Rothschild home for the aged where she died in 1948.

At the start of 1941, I was not yet 15 years old. Along with all my childhood friends who were mostly Jewish, we began to be active in the "Young Communists League." From June 1942, always in Paris, I was hidden with false papers, leading the life of all the rank-and-file members of the Resistance. At the age of 18, after the liberation of Paris on August 25, 1944, I joined the army for the duration of the war, but I never saw the enemy. Finally demobilized in 1945, I took courses in animated design in an art school.

In 1947, I became a cutter in woman's clothing industry and worked there until 1958. After many small jobs, I began work doing print layout in a newspaper. I eventually became an editorial secretary in a large daily evening newspaper, France Soir. In 1984, a change of management led me to retire at the age of 58.

In the spring of 1949 -- it seems like yesterday and yet it is already long past -- without money, and without prospects, but with love and the ignorance of youth, my wife Lea who came from the same background, and I began our life together. It has lasted 54 years, and I hope will last for much longer.

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Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris

Victor ZIGELMAN

né le 10/06/1926 à PARIS 12ème d'Isidore ZIGELMAN et Tsipora, Cyla NIEMENCZYNSKA émigrés de POLOGNE.

Enfant de déporté père déporté à AUSCHWITZ convoi n° 1 du 23/3/42

Parents arrivés en France dès 1910 et 1920. Logés dans le 11ème arrondissement de PARIS. Je fréquente le YASK, club yiddish et communiste. Colonies de vacances, j'apprends les chansons révolutionnaires. Mon père naturalisé français est mobilisé dans l'armée française. Démobilisé il revient à PARIS en 1940. Le 20/08/1941 il est arrêté et conduit à DRANCY. Il partira par le convoi n° 1 du 27/03/1942 pour AUSCHWITZ où il décédera le 27/08/1942. En 1940 la famille de mon père a été déportée de LODZ pour le camp de MAIDANECK. Aucun rescapé. 1941, 1942 mes débuts dans les «Jeunesses communistes» faux papiers et résistance. 1947 je travaille dans

la confection où je rencontre ma femme. En 1958 je rejoins le journal «France SOIR» en tant que secrétaire de rédaction.