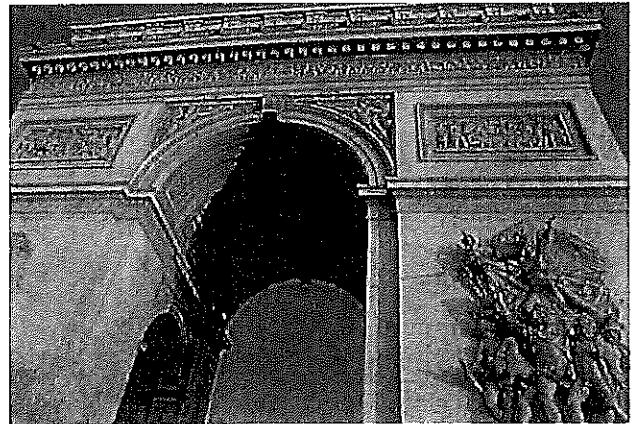


*The
World War II Years
of Marguerite*



Marguerite Fraser née Brouard



To dear Elizabeth
in memory of our AFFES
Reunion in Dayton, Ohio 2004
with love
Marguerite Brouard Miller

the
WORLD WAR II YEARS
of
MARGUERITE

Written by:
Marguerite Fraser née Brouard
n.o.w., MILLER.

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2002

Written for my daughters
Elisabeth and Jennyfer,
my grandchildren, relatives, and friends,
to honor my parents,
Alice and John Brouard,
who endured the horrors of
World War II in France.

CONTENTS

Page

	Dedication	
i	Contents	
ii	Acknowledgments	
1	Section 1--My Years Before World War II	
3	Section 2--The War Years	
	3	World War II Begins
	6	The Brouard Family Loses Its Freedom
	7	Life In Besançon
	8	Back To Paris
	13	Joining The French Underground Movement
	19	Our End As Helpers
	19	The Liberation Of France
25	Section 3--The Years Following World War II	
	25	After V-E Day
	25	Living In Guernsey
	26	Awards For Mother Alice
	26	Life Moves On
	27	Remembering The Evaders
	28	Memories Remain-- Even In The Twenty-First Century
29	Annex A:	Airmen Housed In Paris By The Brouard and Couve Families
30	Annex B:	Correspondence From The Brouard Women To Charles Fisher

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THE WORLD WAR II YEARS OF MARGUERITE

Section I

My Years Before World War II

It is now the year 2002, and my name is Marguerite Suzanne Juliette Fraser, but when I was a little girl and a teenager way back in the mid-1900s, I was Marguerite Suzanne Juliette Brouard, sometimes called Maggie. I am here today writing this story not on my own behalf but on behalf of both my mother, Alice Brouard who passed away in 1999 at the age of ninety-five, and her close friend, Maud Couve who passed away in 1992 at the age of eighty-two. Since both my mother and her friend are now in their eternal reward, it will be my daughters and their children, several relatives, and close friends who will read this short account of my World War II adventures.

I was born on February 15, 1928 in the very small, peaceful village of Biéville sur-Orne about four miles from the coast of the English Channel and about the same distance north of Caen in the Normandy section of western France. The Normandy area is about 125 miles west of Paris. When I lived in France, I used kilometers, as all Europeans do, to tell distance, but in this story I will use miles so my American and British relatives and friends can better understand.

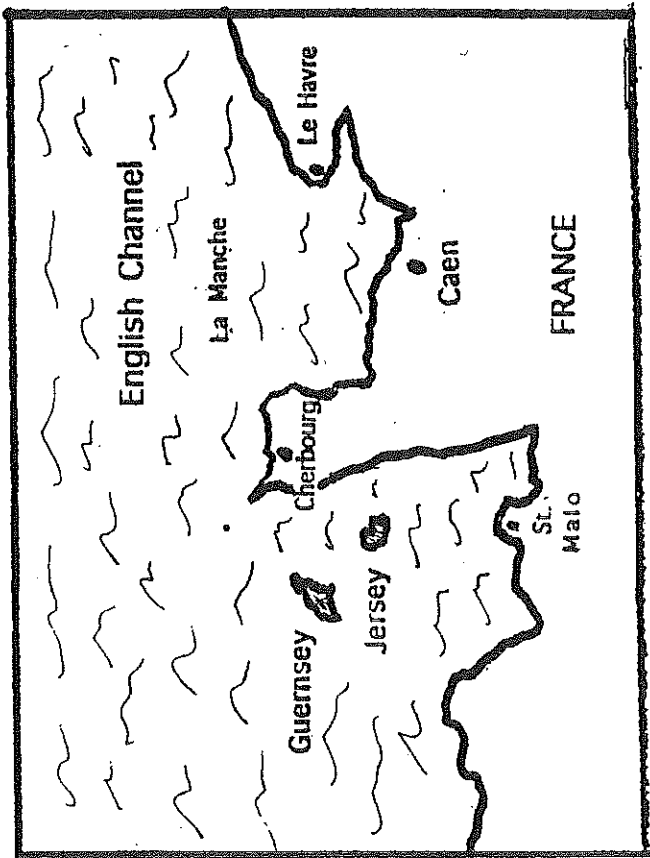
My parents were Alice and John Brouard. Although of French descent, they were British citizens as they were raised on the English Channel island of Guernsey. Mother was actually born on the island of Jersey, but her family moved to Guernsey when she was only six months old. Father was a native of Guernsey. Soon after their marriage in the Catholic church at La Chaumière, Guernsey in November of 1926, they moved from Guernsey to France and originally settled in Biéville sur-Orne. The Orné is a ninety-five mile river that runs from Sees in the interior of France northwest and then north through Caen into the English Channel. My parents remained there for two years. They had relocated from Guernsey to France in 1927 so that my mother could be closer to her family who was then living in France. In 1930, my maternal grandparents, Monsieur and Madame Henri Daniel, bought a home near the village of Epron which is in the same general area as Biéville but just a little closer to Caen. And so at the age of two, I had started my worldly travels.

My father worked as a chauffeur when we first moved to France, but then after some time he changed jobs, although he remained a driver. Father found a job at a slaughter house in Cambes-en-Plaine, a village near Caen and only about one and a half miles from our house. At first he drove cattle from the farms to the slaughter house as well as to the "Halles" in Paris or in English, the Paris large markets. Later he became the supervisor in charge of the refrigeration plant which was part of the

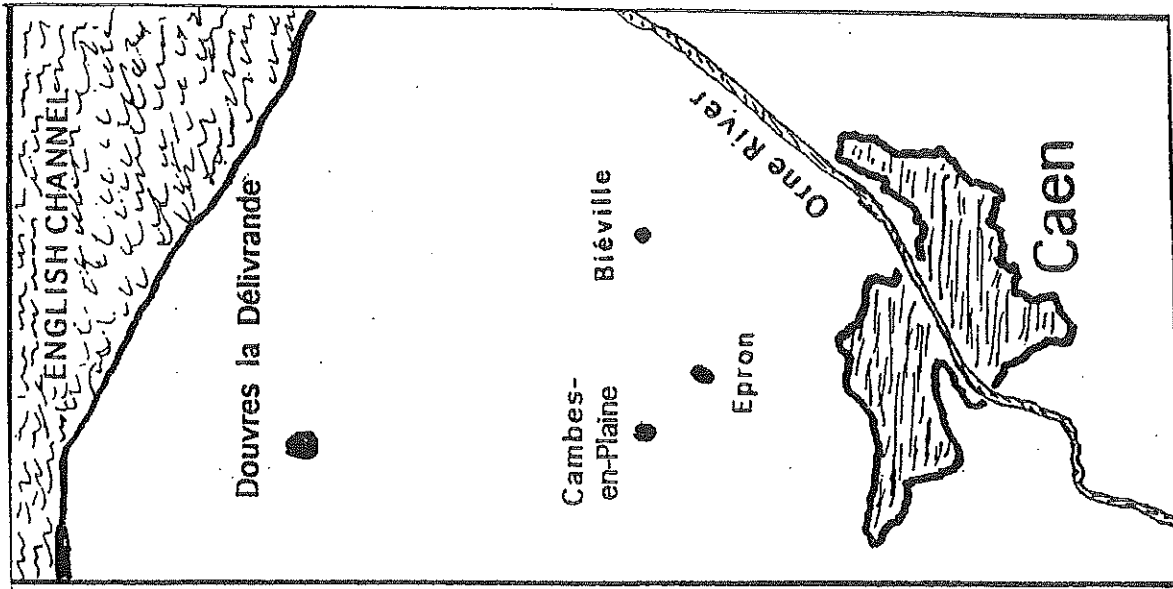
slaughter house. Just before the war broke out, Father and Monsieur Garnier, the owner of the plant, were to share a partnership, but it was not to be. Father remained in this job until incarcerated by the Germans after the start of World War II.

Mother and Father became parents for the second time on January 11, 1930, and now I had a baby sister named Christine. Our family was growing, and I had a little sister to play with. Mother and Father were very proud and happy over this event. Unfortunately 1930 also brought my mother a terrible loss. Her older brother was a Catholic seminarian of the Salesian Order and was about to be ordained a priest when he unexpectedly died six weeks before saying his first Mass.

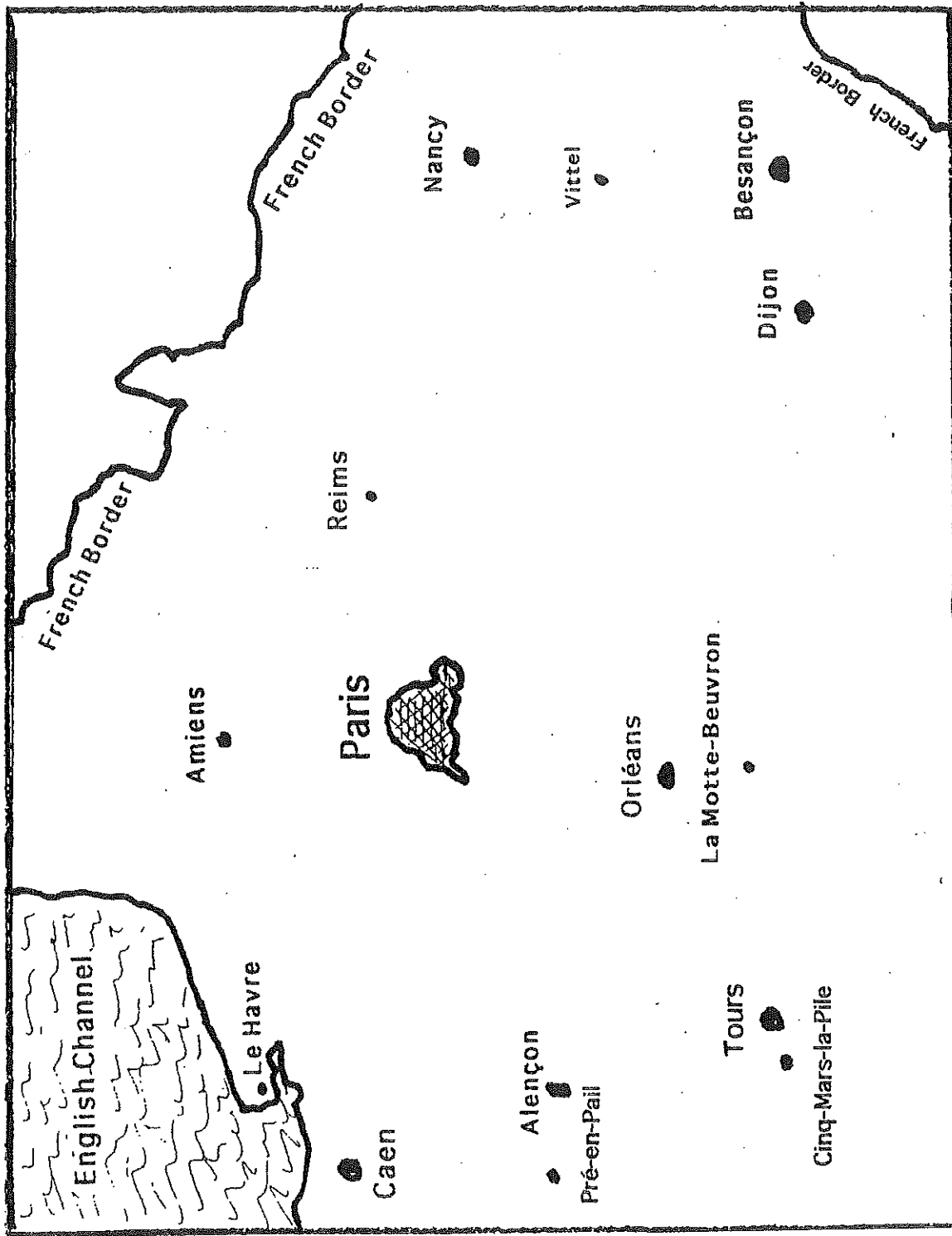
By 1936, both my mother and grandmother were very sick. Mother was quite ill with diphtheria, but I can't remember what was wrong with my grandmother except that she was bedridden. Anyway, it was decided that I would be better cared for if I went to stay with my great-aunt in the capital city of Paris. In the summer of 1936, at the age of eight and a half, I was on the move again. I moved in with my great-aunt, Alexandrine Méry, who I think was close to sixty years old, and her twenty-three year old niece, Suzanne Derriennic, and her husband, Roger. Suzanne was also my godmother. They lived in an apartment in the heart of Paris which was a big change for me coming from a small rural village. Suzanne had a "confiserie" or confectioner's shop. My parents had decided to keep my little sister, who was now six and a half years old, with them while I would stay in Paris. The intention was for me to remain in Paris for a month or so, or until my mother recovered from her illness; however, when the time came for me to return to my family, my great-aunt wouldn't let me go. It was the beginning of a nightmare, but that is another story.



Above
The United Kingdom's Channel Islands, Guernsey and Jersey, plus France's Normandy coast region.



Right.
Caen and the surrounding villages where the Brouard family lived and worked.



A map of northern France, with select cities as reference points. Marguerite lived in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile just before the start of World War II. After the Germans invaded France, John Brouard was first interned by the Germans in La Motte-Beuvron while Alice and her daughters were temporarily interned in Besançon which was apparently relocated to Vittel later in the war.



The Brouard Family – mid 1940s



John



Alice



Marguerite



Christine

Relatives of Marguerite



Henri and Great Aunt Alexandrine Méry.
Date of photo is unknown. Marguerite
lived with Alexandrine before and during
the early stages of WW II.



Grandparents Daniel in the late 1930s.

Section II

The War Years

World War II Begins

It was now 1938, and I had been in Paris for two years already. The international situation continued to deteriorate primarily because of Hitler and his Nazi party who controlled Germany. Due to Hitler's aggressive attitude, the Munich Agreement was signed by several European nations in September 1938. This agreement ceded to Germany that part of Czechoslovakia which had a large German population known as the Sudetenland. This action whetted Hitler's appetite and in March 1939 he ordered his army to take over the rest of Czechoslovakia without a declaration of war. I remember talks of war around me, but my great-aunt and godmother didn't seem to be affected by it thinking that France wouldn't be involved or we would win if there was a war with Germany.

In the summer of 1938, great-aunt Alexandrine thought that she and I should leave Paris and move to Cinq-Mars-la-Pile, a small village about ten miles west of the city of Tours south of Paris. She owned a house there, and one of her nieces lived in that village with her husband and daughter. We moved, but Suzanne and her husband remained in Paris. Aunt Alexandrine and I settled in and when it came time for school to start, I was enrolled and began my studies. The year passed rapidly, and soon it was summer again.

In late July of 1939, Alexandrine and Suzanne with her husband took me with them to Corsica for a month. This Mediterranean island where Napoléon Bonaparte was born was a real treat for me. After we left the island, we drove westward along the Côte d'Azur all the way across southern France, and then turned north and drove up the west coast. As we were driving back to Cinq-Mars-la-Pile, Hitler declared war on Poland on September 1, 1939 and sent his army attacking across the German-Polish border with the tank force leading the way and supported by the luftwaffe (air force). This was what became known as Blitzkrieg warfare. On September 3, 1939, both Britain and France declared war on Germany in hopes of stopping Hitler's quest for more land.

As soon as Aunt Alexandrine, Suzanne and her husband Roger, and I arrived in Bordeaux, we saw signs everywhere on the walls that France had declared war on Germany on September 3. I'll never forget that! We didn't know what to expect! Roger drove as fast as he could all the way back to Cinq-Mars-la-Pile. Suzanne and Roger decided it was better for them to return to Paris, so they left soon after arriving at our house. Aunt Alexandrine thought it would be safer if she and I stayed in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile rather than in Paris. Due to several factors at that time, I was not allowed to return to school that year.

Germany quickly defeated Poland and then not much else happened. Britain sent a few troops to northern France while France sent troops to the Maginot line, a barrier along the French-German border built after World War I. It was made of steel and concrete fortresses and many underground bunkers and facilities. The French thought that the Germans could never break through this strong defensive line. While the French and British were deploying troops, the Germans sent some troops to reinforce the Siegfried Line. There was no fighting and this period in history became known as "The Phony War". My great-aunt and I lived comfortably at Cinq-Mars-la-Pile during this time, and I don't remember anyone in the family being too concerned over the issue of war. All this changed on May 10, 1940.

The tenth of May saw the Germans bypass the Maginot Line and attack the Low Countries in a Blitzkrieg attack. By May 28, all this region was conquered. As early as May 12, rumors spread rapidly throughout France that Germany had invaded France and the French army had been destroyed. We heard about the French army but still hoped it wasn't so. The rumors weren't all true as the Germans had only entered a portion of northern France through Belgium, thus bypassing the Maginot Line and destroying the French hopes of keeping the German army out of France. The French army was still intact as the main German thrust was against the British forces trying to escape to England from Dunkerque, a French port only ten miles from the Belgium border. Most of the British forces escaped but some did not and all the equipment was captured. This action ended on June 4. The main German assault on the rest of France began on June 5.

Because of the news of Germany's invasion of the Low Countries and northern France and the fear that the German army inspired, many people, including my parents and grandparents, left their homes to flee in the opposite direction and away from the rapidly advancing enemy forces. As much as possible was loaded on my grandfather's car before the family left Epron heading south. I don't know exactly how my uncle and his family left, but somehow they did. My family had friends who owned a château at La Cour de Bouée and that is where my uncle and his family went. Everyone was still hoping that the French army was not yet totally defeated. People took as many personal belongings with them as they could, praying that the Germans would be stopped, but it was not to be. Instead, many unarmed French citizens were machine-gunned by the advancing Germans as they fled along the roads. It was horrible!

As I said before, I was with my great-aunt in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile. We heard that the Germans were approaching, heard about the thousands of people on the road being machine-gunned, and heard of other terrible happenings, so we knew that we should be preparing for the worst of it. I was only twelve years old at that time but quite mature for my age; therefore, I appreciated the difficult times in store for us as I felt there wasn't anything I could do to stop these awful events. My great-aunt had a lot of gold coins dating back to the kings of France that I buried in the garden so that the Germans wouldn't get them. That was one small thing that I could do. Now we awaited the arrival of the Germans. Since I never returned there, I have no idea of

what ever happened to these gold coins of Alexandrine. I assume my great-aunt dug them up sometime after the war was over as they were rather valuable.

Meanwhile the German army, which had begun its Blitzkrieg attack from northern France on the fifth of June, entered Paris after only nine days of sweeping the French army aside. It was June 14, 1940, when German soldiers paraded victoriously through the streets of Paris. It was a devastating day for all Frenchmen! One of the most significant historical photographs of that event shows a Frenchman in obvious emotional distress crying in public at the sight of the Germans in Paris.

France was forced to sign an armistice with Germany on June 22 and the French army laid down its arms. By November of 1940, France was occupied by the Nazis, except for the southeast part where Maréchal (Marshal) Henri Pétain, a World War I French military hero, had set up a free zone with Vichy as the capital. This government became known as Vichy France.

While Paris was being captured by the Germans, Aunt Alexandrine and I were still in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile. There were many houses built into the cliffs in that area and also many caves. We had a cave that went way under the cliffs, so we took mattresses and blankets and food and water etc. into that cave and waited. It was a very stressful time not knowing what was going to happen! Although we slept in the cave, we spent the days in our house. One day we saw Suzanne, my godmother, and Roger approaching our house. They were on foot and had walked all the way from Paris together and were in a terrible physical and emotional state after that 135 mile journey. Both were terrified and would insist on sleeping in the cave. So far the German military had not arrived, but then one day we all woke up and the Germans were everywhere. What a shock! Fortunately there were no problems during the weeks that followed their arrival, and that was a relief.

We were now all under German control in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile. Suzanne and Roger were so frightened of the Germans that they continued to sleep in the cave even when Aunt Alexandrine and I resumed sleeping in the house. I worried continually about my parents and sister and wondered where they were and if they were in danger from the German forces.

In fact, as the Germans fought their way southward from northern France, my family continued fleeing away from the advancing Germans. My family's destination was St. Nazaire, a port on the Bay of Biscay some 160 miles south-southwest of Epron, where they hoped to be able to escape by boat to Guernsey. Circumstances, however, impeded my family from reaching St. Nazaire, and they were forced to divert to the area near Nantes. They eventually found themselves at the castle in the small village of La Cour de Bouaye just southwest of Nantes itself. The Château de la Cour de Bouée was owned by some friends of my parents, Monsieur and Madame de Formigny de La Londes. They were the people my parents worked for when they first arrived in France over twelve years ago. My family remained at the château until it was decided they would have to retrace their journey back to Epron. Mother, Father, and Christine, together with my grandparents Daniel, dejectedly started their journey

back to our home which was by then occupied by the German military. Others fleeing the Germans had to do the same. It was indeed a sad time for everyone!

Meanwhile, back in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile, my godmother and her husband had rested up and had felt better after their long and hazardous trek from Paris. After a family discussion, it was decided that we would all return to Paris, so we packed up and drove back there to our apartment. Aunt Alexandrine's niece, Aimee Goueffon, her husband, and her daughter, Jeannette, remained in Cinq-Mars-la-Pile where they owned and operated a "café".

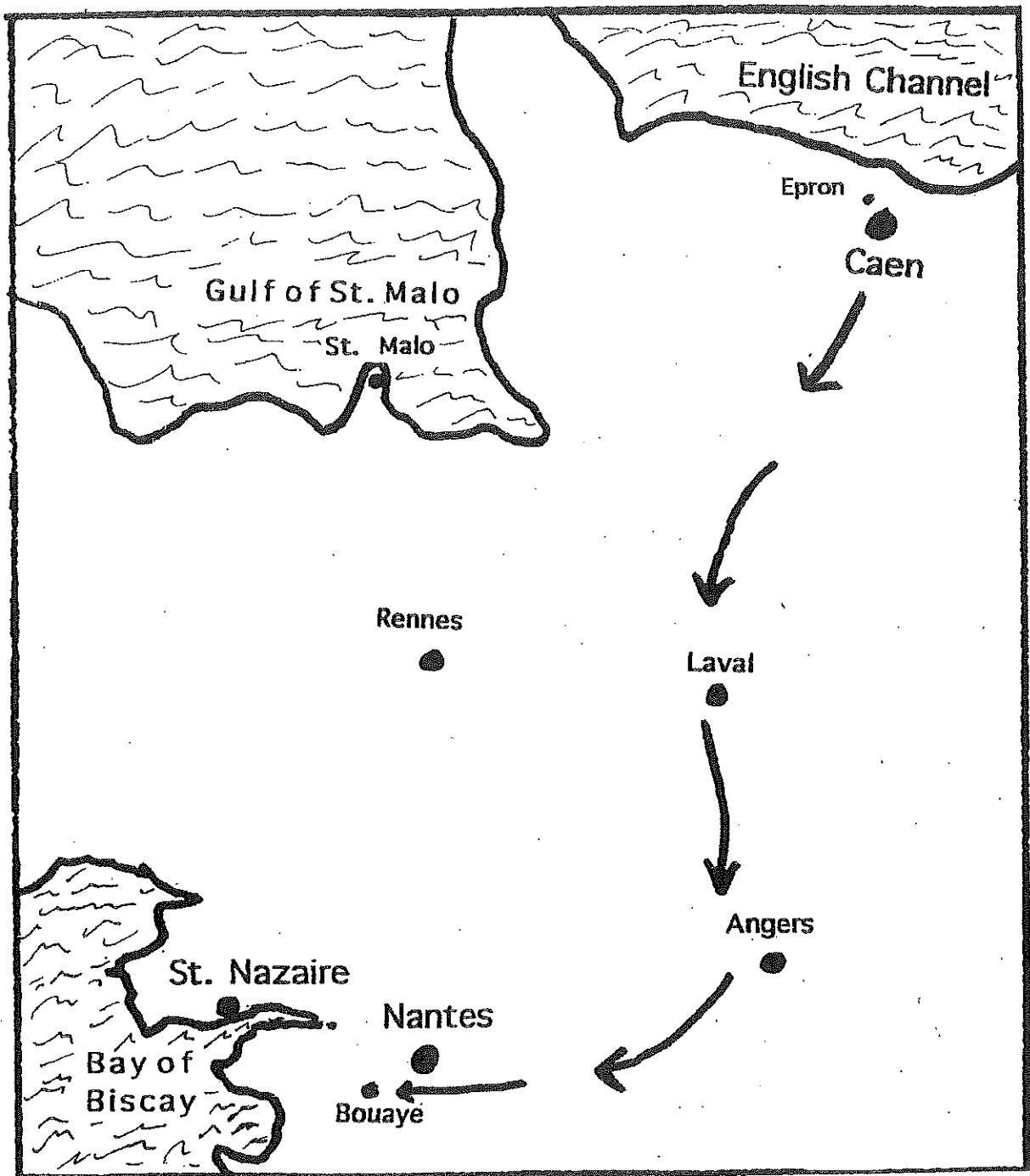
Upon our return to Paris, we found things had changed considerably. One of the changes was the ration system we now had to live under, and this forced Suzanne to slow down her confectionery business due to limited items like flour and sugar. Once again, Aunt Alexandrine did not enroll me in school.

The Brouard Family Loses Its Freedom

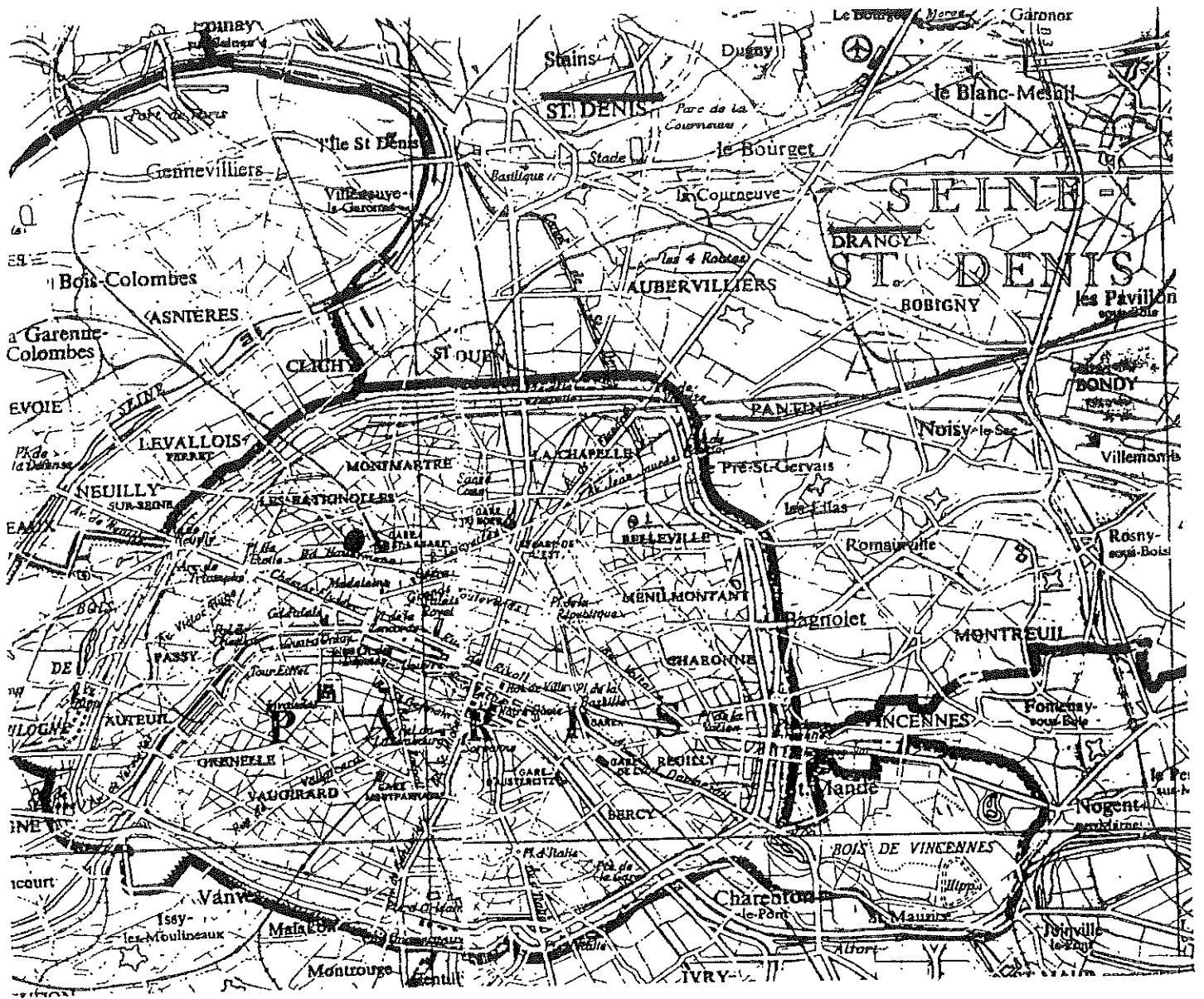
Towards the end of 1940, Mother, Father, and Christine were still living in Epron. It was at this time that the Germans began arresting all male British nationals living in France. During the month of November, Father was taken away by the German authorities, and we didn't know where he was as the Germans would not tell us. It was only after three months that we learned he had been initially imprisoned in La Motte-Beuvron, a town about eighty miles south of Paris. Then sometime in 1941 he was transferred north to the German camp at Drancy, just a few miles northeast of Paris. Mother obviously was distraught with the situation and worried about Father being in the hands of the Germans. The chief of police in Caen, whom my parents knew, advised my mother, Alice Brouard, to go with my younger sister, Christine, to Paris for more safety as it was further from the coast. Mother had relatives there, including my great-aunt Alexandrine, with whom she could stay. At that time, I was thirteen years old and still living in Paris with Aunt Alexandrine and my godmother, Suzanne, and her husband, Roger.

Mother and Christine moved into Aunt Alexandrine's apartment so our family was reunited. A week or so after my mother's arrival in Paris in late November of 1940, there was an early morning knock on the door and a French gendarme (policeman) summoned my mother, my sister, and me to follow him to the police station. It was by order of the Kommandantur (the German commander of Paris) and there were no explanations. We asked him whether we should take clothes, food, papers, or anything else. The gendarme didn't know, so we went with him with only the clothes on our backs. Mother, my sister, and I were all very apprehensive and scared as we left the apartment with the gendarme as we had no idea what would happen to us. We would soon find out, and it was not pleasant!

At the local Paris police station, there were already dozens of men, women and children who were British nationals. There were also nuns, even cloistered ones, women expecting babies at any minute, and priests who had been arrested. Finally we were told we were to be deported to camps in Germany. We were shocked! That was on



When the Germans invaded France in 1940, John Brouard and his family plus his in-laws, Monsieur and Madame Daniel, fled from Epron trying to escape to England. After arriving in Bouayé, they had to return to Epron.



A map of Paris and the Seine St. Denis area where John Brouard was interned. His second internment camp was at Dancy while his third camp was in St. Denis. The small circle shown in Paris is the location of the Couve apartment in Paris where Marguerite and Alice lived with Maud Couve and her two children.

December 6, 1940, a date I shall never forget. First we were placed in a local French prison. After spending a day in prison, we were taken to *Gare de L'Est* (the East train station in Paris) and put into old trains. For the next three days we were imprisoned, locked in dirty and overcrowded compartments. There was little food and nothing for us to do except worry about what was happening. We were never allowed to go home to get any more clothes or anything else. The reason for this delay was that the Red Cross, I believe, didn't want us to go to Germany. After three days of discussion and debate between the Germans, the French, the British, and the Red Cross, it was agreed that all British nationals, including our family, would go instead to Besançon which is a city in the eastern sector of France. It is two hundred miles southeast of Paris, thirty-five miles from the Swiss border, and seventy-five miles from the German border. And so, after a train ride that lasted nearly all day, we arrived in Besançon.

Life In Besançon

After arriving at the railroad station in Besançon, we were told to get off the train. There in the snow and cold rain, we were first formed into a formation of sorts and then under close guard by armed German soldiers marched to *La Caserne Vauban* barracks where five thousand French soldiers had been stationed not long before. The caserne was surrounded by barbed wire to prevent anyone from escaping. When we arrived, some of the soldiers were still there as prisoners. Imagine the state of filth it was in. It was awful! All of us on the train were to be housed in buildings, some of which had small rooms while others were large dormitory type rooms. Mother rushed us girls to find a small room to live in rather than a large dormitory. Luckily she found one room to be shared with several others including a Russian lady and her daughter. Her husband was British and was serving in England. She spoke Russian, English, and French so we had no problem in talking with her. There was also a Scottish lady and her son plus a single British lady. It wound up that there were eight of us in that room. The Scottish boy was about ten years old and very quiet. He had to learn to live with seven women and girls, but actually he spent most of the time with his mother. I was also very mature for my age so I don't remember playing with the younger children in the room. There were four double bunk beds with straw mattresses inhabited by lively bed bugs and one small black smoky stove in the middle of the room. We were given some blue and white checkered cases to put the mattresses in. The first morning after using them, we all woke up "blue". What a surprise! The blue dye was rubbing off onto us as we slept.

This was now home for the eight of us. Some other rooms were like dormitories and housed up to twenty people, so I guess we were lucky in having a room with only eight of us. We did meet other people, both in our building and in other barracks. It was then that we became acquainted with Maud, her mother, her children, and her two sisters. Maud eventually became a close friend. Mother and I met some French soldiers from another barracks and at times we'd get together and

play cards. There was a wide circular area in the middle of the various barracks where we would walk for exercise. The caserne also had a hall for religious services, and I recall the midnight Mass at Christmas. There were nuns in the camp, and they were a very active and helpful group. They even found a way to make some kind of soap, but don't ask me how. The Germans didn't seem to interfere with their activities.

Our alarm clock each morning was someone playing his trumpet in what Americans call reveille. The French call it *Soldat, lève-toi* or *Soldier, time to get up*. After this, German nurses would come around about 7 a.m. and call out names to see if everyone was present.

To eat, we had to go outside in the yard to a pile of dirty metal trays of all kinds. Then, after getting a dish, we would queue up for the meals which were served out of copper pans, some of which had *vert de gris*, copper sulfate flakes, which resulted in making some people seriously ill. I believe the cooking was done by German soldiers with perhaps some help by French prisoners, but I truly don't remember. However, I do remember that the food was not very palatable to put it mildly!

To wash, one had to use the communal washroom like the soldiers had. There were cement washbasins in a circle in the middle of the room with only cold running water. We never had the luxury of hot water. Showers? There weren't any so we just washed up as best we could. Toilets? Ha, ha! We had to use rows of wooden toilets outside as in the old days, separated by boards. The flooring was made of planks through which one could fall into the water and waste ponds below. And it did happen and unfortunately some of those who fell into the cesspools drowned. I don't have any idea of what they did with the bodies as I don't think there was a cemetery on the small camp.

However unpleasant, life went on and people started to think of ways to pass the time and make life a little more pleasant. For clothes we were given uniforms of World War I soldiers which were made of a rough sky blue cloth. Later we did receive a small amount of clothing from our families. Through the Red Cross, we started receiving food packages a few weeks after our arrival. How welcome they were: so beautifully packed and with such good things to eat. What a welcome surprise as the daily food was not good or really nourishing. We learned that many of these packages had been put together by the American Quakers and sent to Switzerland for the Red Cross to deliver. We all certainly appreciated the Red Cross, and the Quakers too! Then one day in early 1941, we had some wonderful news. We were told that my father was interned in Drancy which was just a few miles north of Paris, and we were finally allowed to correspond with him. That helped us a lot!

Back To Paris

It was now late spring of 1941. After nearly four months at *La Caserne Vauban*, we were told by the Germans that all mothers with children under sixteen would be freed with their children if they had relatives or friends in Paris or an area far

away from the coast who could vouch for them. It was probably April when we were released and went back to live at my great-aunt Alexandrine's apartment in Paris. The Germans had conditions that we had to report to the nearest French police station every single day and sign our names, that we could not be out before daylight or after dark, and that no radio or telephone was allowed where we lived. My mother was not permitted to work, but fortunately she got a small monetary allowance from the British government, although I don't remember how.

While in the concentration camp in Besançon, we had become friendly with another young British woman named Maud Couve who had two young children, Jimmy and Betty. She was originally from the island of Mauritius which was ruled by the British at that time; however, she was of French descent dating back to the French rule of the island before 1814. Her husband was in England flying for the R.A.F., the British Royal Air Force. It was about March 1941 when Maud and her family were freed. It was just a little before we were released. When we were finally allowed to leave the camp, the Germans provided us with vouchers so we could buy train tickets to return to Paris.

Maud had her own apartment in a nice residential area in the heart of Paris. The address was 25 Rue de Madrid, 8th Arrondissement of Paris. Paris is divided into various arrondissements or, as we might call them, districts. Maud's apartment was on the third floor of a five story apartment building that had a cellar and elevator in it. Before she left the German camp, Maud suggested that we live with her after we were released and returned to Paris. Upon our return, we all went to Aunt Alexandrine's apartment, but Mother and my sister could not remain there because the apartment was too small and although Suzanne's confectionery shop also had an apartment downstairs, it was equally too small for anyone to stay there. Unfortunately there were also personal family problems, so Mother and Christine moved in with Maud.

Being really afraid of my great-aunt, I stayed with her. Alexandrine wanted me as she was used to me as her unpaid housemaid. Actually she demanded I stay. Again I was not enrolled in school. My mother had to contact a social worker to get me back, but you know those things take time. I was still willing to go, but I was still so afraid to leave that I didn't. My poor mother couldn't do anything but wait. After one year, Father wrote me from the St. Denis internment camp and told me I was old enough to make a choice between my great-aunt and my parents and that I had to be strong. This advice from my father gave me the courage to do what I had wanted to do for so long. In the summer of 1942 when I was fourteen and a half years old, I bit the bullet so to speak, and told Aunt Alexandrine that I wanted to live with my mother, and I was leaving now. You can imagine how that went over. I started to gather my possessions but Alexandrine told me in a very authoritarian voice that I was not allowed to take any of my possessions with me, and then she kicked me out of her apartment. I was terribly upset with her but happy that I was finally out of that horrible situation. It was a very difficult time, but I found the courage to keep going and swiftly walked to Mother's apartment where I was received with open

arms! Then I too moved in with Maud and her children and my mother and sister. Maud was wonderful to me and my life changed completely. At last, I was allowed to enroll in school, and I now truly enjoyed my life with my family.

I found myself still living in the 8th Arrondissement in Paris not far from St. Augustin's Church which was our parish church. I'll describe the apartment a little later in the story. There were no other children in the building besides Maud's son, daughter, and Christine. The concierge had a son, but we never associated with him. Shortly after moving into Maud's apartment, I learned that there was a Germany lady living in the building and on the same floor. She was married to a Frenchman and was well liked by the other occupants of the building. It must have been a very difficult time for her with members of her country of birth occupying her adopted country where she lived with her husband.

We knew of a young man who lived on the top floor of the apartment house with his wife and baby. He was a photographer in Paris who was a Jew but his wife wasn't. One day he didn't return home in the evening. We later learned that the Germans had apprehended him, so we never saw him again. He was probably sent to a Jewish internment camp to await his fate. Since his wife was not Jewish, she was not arrested. The Germans allowed her and the baby to remain in the apartment. I was surprised the Germans didn't take the baby as well since the father was Jewish. Not only had I heard of Jews being mistreated by the Germans but I actually saw many being arrested, some committing suicide in the area where I lived, seeing little Jewish children without their parents etc. It was horrible!

Mother enrolled me in a Catholic school run by the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul. Those of you who have attended Catholic school run by nuns can identify with my daily school routine. Christine was young and also weak due to a continuing illness, so she did not attend school. Maud was a very devout Catholic; however, her son, Jimmy, went to a local public French school as it was a good one. I don't know if there was a Catholic boys' school near us, but he became an altar boy at our parish and was brought up a good Catholic. Maud's daughter, Little Betty, who had cerebral palsy and could not walk, stayed home as she had not yet reached school age. Later she had a private tutor since she couldn't attend a regular school.

While attending the Catholic school, I made friends with a nice Roumanian girl named Denise Noditza. She was my only close friend. After Mother and Maud agreed to be part of the French Underground, I couldn't bring anyone to our apartment. Even Denise didn't know what was going on when she came to the apartment which was very rare. I had to find excuses for her not to go into the room where the Allied airmen were. After the war, she told me she suspected something was going on. We remained friends for years. Unfortunately we lost touch around 1948, and I have never heard from her again, but I would love to find her.

Near our apartment was the Parc Monceau where children could go and play or walk around. It was nice to get out of the apartment for awhile and go do things in the park. We lived very close to one of the German army headquarters so there were always German soldiers all over the place. We'd see them marching, singing, arresting

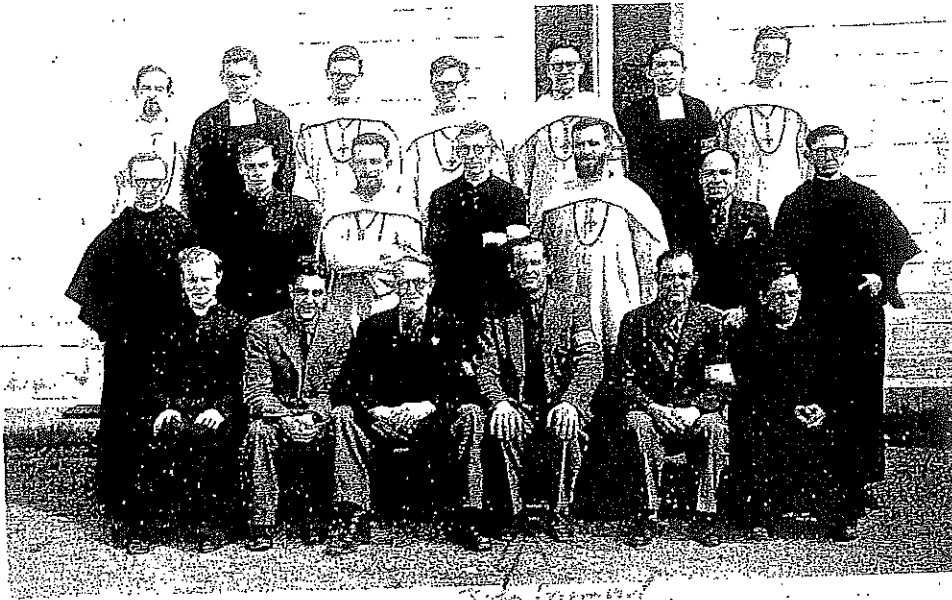
The Brouard and Couve Families
Paris 1942



Left: Jimmy Couve, Alice Brouard, Maud Couve, Marguerite Brouard, and Betty Couve in front.

Right: Maud, Alice, Marguerite, and Betty in front.

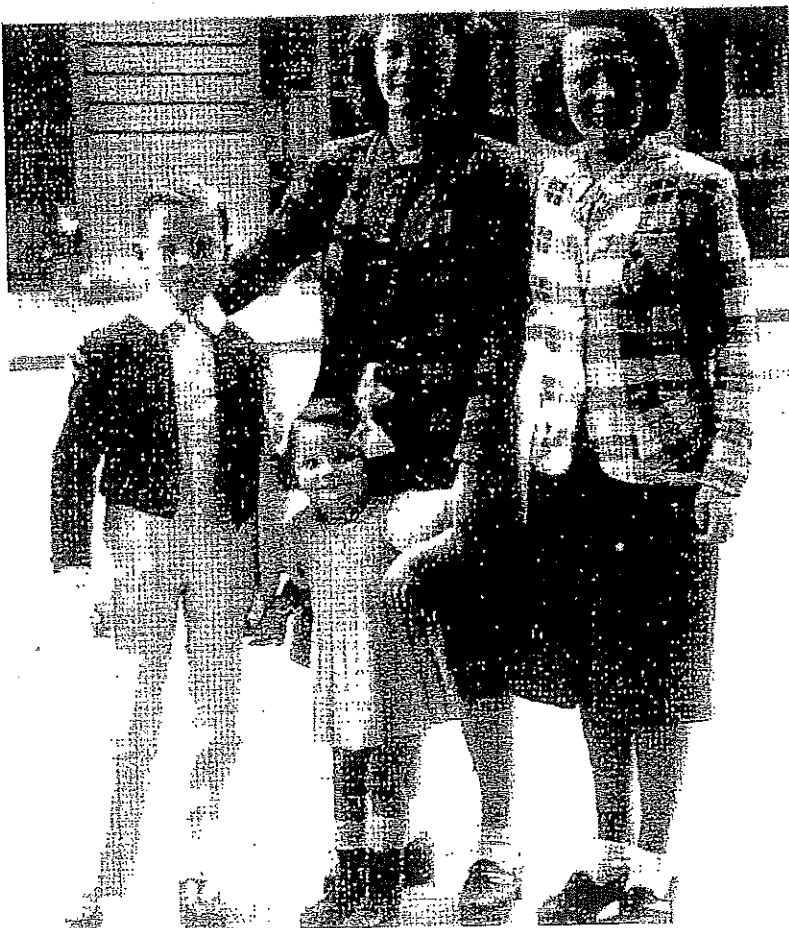




Internees at the German camp at St. Denis, France in 1942. John Brouard is seated in the front row, third from right. Jess Arndol, John's best friend, is to his right.



L – Alice Brouard
R – Maud Couve
1941 or 1942



Left – The day of Jimmy Couve's first communion. Jimmy is on the left and Mother Maud on the right. Marguerite stand behind Betty's

people, etc. Like soldiers everywhere, the young German soldiers were always looking for pretty girls. My mother and Maud were young attractive women and, without boasting, I was a pretty young teenage girl, so we were at times spoken to by Germans trying to start a conversation with us. Of course we always ignored them. It was very sad to see our beautiful capital city infested with so many enemy soldiers!

As I have said before, the Germans had imposed rationing on the population and it made life very harsh at times, particularly in the winter when there was no fuel to heat the apartment. There were times when our family would go to the métro (the subway system), buy tickets, and just ride around the métro system for hours just to keep warm. It was hard to leave the warmth of the métro and return to a cold apartment, but that was typical of the life we led under German occupation.

In 1942, my father was transferred from the internment camp at Drancy to another camp just outside Paris at a place called *La Grande Caserne St. Denis* which was about six miles north of the center of Paris and a couple miles north of Drancy. There were five thousand prisoners there, at least that is what we thought. Today it seems to me there couldn't have been that many there. Now we were allowed to visit Father for one hour every other week, and it was always a treat to go see him! In order to visit him, we had to take the métro to the northern edge of Paris and then ride a bus to St. Denis. After arriving at the camp, we were searched before being allowed to enter. Once inside, we were all taken to a large room. There were benches and long tables all around the room. Visitors like me and my family would sit on the outside benches and wait for our relatives. The prisoners would then come in, be searched by the German guards, and then allowed to sit on the inside benches with the table separating us. The German guards with guns would stand outside the room as well as inside. It was great to see Father and talk with him and tell him what we were doing. He'd tell us what he had been doing, but he couldn't tell us everything. Luckily we were permitted to hold hands with him as well as hug him and kiss him. The tables were not that wide so we had no problem being close to him. My father remembers that there were times when there was so much noise in the room that we practically had to shout to hear one another.

Once we'd seen Father, we learned that he and the other prisoners received packages from the Red Cross which contained "goodies". While visiting with us, Father would try to give us some of the "goodies" he had received as he knew we received nothing. Many of the prisoners would try all kinds of ways to smuggle a little bar of chocolate, some butter, etc. to their families. If they were caught, the visits were canceled, so the whole visit was kind of spoiled as my father would be trying to pass the "goodies" to Mother. If caught, it would have been very difficult for him, and we would not have been allowed to visit for one month. Fortunately, once in awhile Father was able to pass "goodies" to us and never got caught. After the visiting hour was over, the Germans did cursory searches on the families as they left, but it didn't seem to be a very serious matter with the guards. They never found any of the "goodies" Father had passed to us. In retrospect, some of the guards must have looked the

other way as items were passed between prisoners and their families quite often. As we left, I couldn't wait until we could come back and see Father again.

The camp where Father lived was crowded, and the men had only a small courtyard in which to exercise. The prisoners had bed bugs in their beds which made things quite uncomfortable. There was little room to do anything, but the men organized different activities such as the creation of a library stocked with books we and others would bring. My father belonged to their own internal police to try and keep everyone peaceful and to avoid in-house turmoil. He was also involved with the many priests, "Pères Blancs" or the White Fathers religious order, and monks who were in the camp. Life was very difficult for everyone, and some of the prisoners couldn't tolerate it and committed suicide for one reason or another.

While a prisoner, Father made beautiful things out of wood. I'm not sure where he got the wood, but perhaps one of the German soldiers got him some. He carved them with only a knife and nails as he had no regular tools, but the objects he made were perfect. He even made me some jewelry boxes and many other things and Mother some frames and other items. I still have the beautiful jewelry box he made for me and a couple of smaller items. The rest of the items were sent to our grandparents who were living in our house in Epron. Unfortunately all that was destroyed when the house was blow to pieces during the D-Day landings by the British and the German counterattacks. I wouldn't have believed it at that time, but after Father was liberated, he told us that some of the German soldiers were sorry for the prisoners and were quite nice and humane to them.

As for my younger sister, Christine, she was not very well as she had anemia with resulting fatigue, so in the summer of 1942 my mother asked the German authorities for permission for her to go and live with my maternal grandparents Daniel in Epron where the air was better for her and where there would probably be more food. Our house in Epron was called "*La Grâce de Dieu*". Permission was granted, but my mother was not allowed to take her. The Germans authorized me to take her but under conditions that I would come back to Paris soon after I delivered Christine to my grandparents. They granted me only a couple days to get Christine to Epron and to return to Paris. This was a scary experience for me and also a very emotional one as I had not seen my grandparents in years.

Mother bought us train tickets, and I had to have a pass signed by the German authorities as I wouldn't be able to report daily to the Paris police. Christine and I enjoyed the train ride and after a few hours, we arrived in Epron. From the train station, we had to walk about three miles carrying Christine's suitcase to get to my grandparents' house as they didn't know we were coming. Upon our arrival, they were shocked to see us alone thinking that something had happened to Mummy. Our grandfather was in good health but our grandmother was not. She was very tired and weak, but in those days, people didn't go to see the doctor like they do now. Anyway, they were happy to have Christine with them, but of course they worried about Mother and me. Mother's brother, my Uncle Robert Daniel, and his wife Christiane and baby Christian also lived in our house. I really enjoyed being there and

away from Paris for awhile, but I could only spend two days there before I had to return to Paris so Mother and I wouldn't get into trouble with the German authorities.

Joining The French Underground Movement

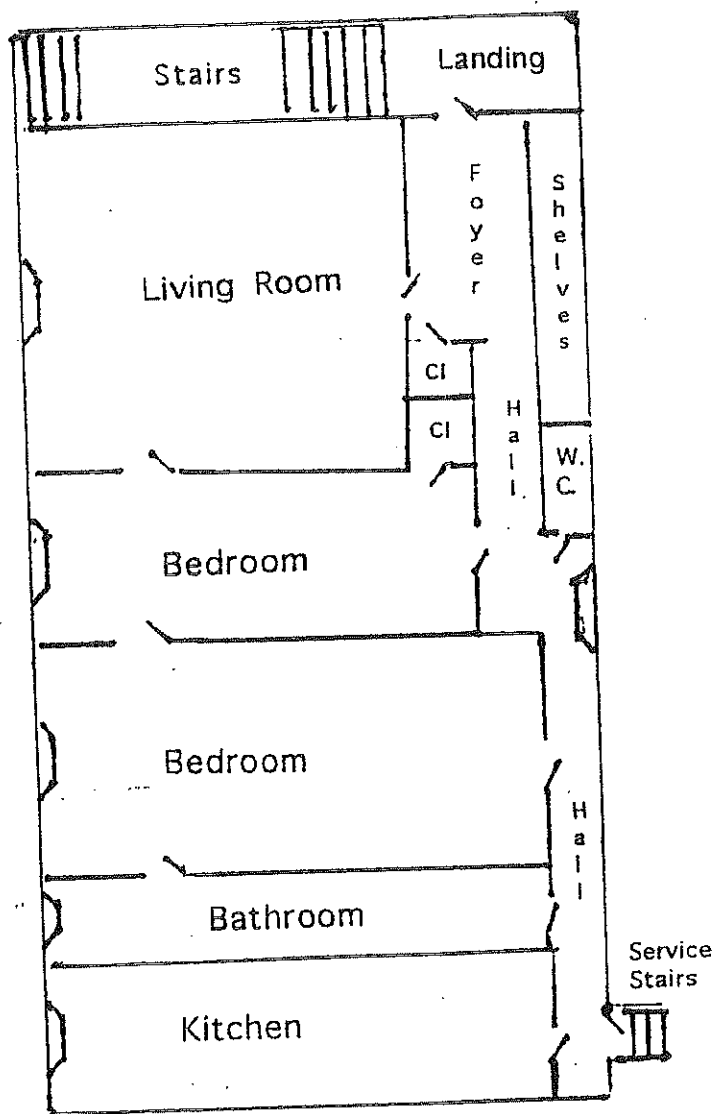
During 1942, the French Underground Movement was getting stronger and was very well organized. When the Allied air raids over Germany started in 1943, the Underground was well prepared to help airmen who survived when their planes were shot down and crashed or forced-landed. One day, Maud Couve was asked by her dentist if she and my mother would agree to hide Americans and any other Allied airmen who had been shot down. My mother and Maud discussed it and agreed they would help. Since Maud's son, Jimmy, was only eleven and a half years old and was going to school, she had to make sure he would never say a word about hiding Allies. He was great and very patriotic like his mother and proud to be part of the helpers. Maud's little girl, Betty, was only four and a half years old and was handicapped with cerebral palsy and couldn't walk and thus was always with us. Still, as little as she was, she too never said a word and understood the gravity of the situation. Betty was so sweet, but when we passed Germans on the street, she would turn her head and say, "Cochons", pigs in English.

Once Mother and Maud had agreed to join the French Underground Movement, we received a visit from the leaders of our group, Monsieur Robert and Madame Marie, who explained we would have to harbor two Allied airmen at a time and for about three weeks so they could have identity papers made and civilian clothes and shoes found to fit them. Don't forget that the majority of the French people were not as tall as Americans and finding clothes and shoes to fit them was often a problem. Also arrangements had to be made for airmen to be taken to the Spanish border, usually by train, then across the Pyrénées Mountains into Spain which was a neutral country. There the men would be kept until arrangements could be made for them to go to England, usually through Gibraltar at the southern tip of Spain. It was a very difficult and frightening experience for them.

In addition to housing evaders, Mother and Maud were also responsible for occasionally escorting downed airman not staying with us from one place in Paris to another. After the war, Mother even corresponded with several of the men she had escorted around Paris.

During the war, there were several evasion lines established by the French Underground to move Allied military personnel to neutral countries or back to England. It was only years after the war that I became aware of these lines such as the Burgundy line, the Comète Line, the Pat O'Leary Line, and the Shelburne Line. All these lines housed Allies in Paris at one time or another. While Mother and Maud housed Allied airmen in our Paris apartment, we were never told that we belonged to any specific line. It was only in the very late 1990s when I met Michael Moores LeBlanc from Ontario, Canada, a younger man who was doing intense research of the French evasion lines during World War, II that I learned of the lines. It was he who provided

much of the data about the airmen's units and ranks for the roster of men we housed which is in Annex A of this book. According to LeBlanc, the men we housed were usually evacuated by members of the Burgundy Line who got our men to Spain so they could return to England for reassignment.



The floor plan of the Brouard/Couve apartment
25 Rue de Madrid, Paris
Plan not to exact scale.

Note: In a French house or apartment of the 1940s, the W.C., short for Water Closet, contained only a toilet and a sink. The bathroom contained the bathtub, a bidet, and a sink. There were generally no showers in the bathrooms. During the war years, there was no hot water at all.

I'll never forget the first time two Allied airmen were brought to our apartment. It was probably in June or early July of 1943. Gordon Spencer was a Canadian of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Since Frank Greene was evading with him, I just assumed that Frank was also a Canadian, but I don't ever remembering discussing his nationality with him. Many years after the war, I heard that Frank was an American, but I have never learned for a fact which country Frank was actually from. Both had been crewmen on bombers which had been shot down. Gordon and Frank had been paired up by the Underground and were evading together. How nervous they must have been! Maud and Mother, who were both perfectly bilingual in French and English, did their best to make them feel comfortable. We called them by their names, and they called us by our real names. Most of the Underground helpers used pseudonyms as a protection just in case the Allied airmen were ever caught by the Germans, but for some reason we didn't and luckily it worked out all right that way.

Mother and Maud showed the men the apartment which consisted of three rooms, a bathroom, but with no hot water, and a kitchen, a large entrance, and a corridor that went all around the apartment. A very important feature of the place was a service entrance which could be used to escape if necessary. Gordon and Frank were given the master bedroom, and the rest of us shared the living room while sleeping. We had mattresses which we pushed together. Then Mother, Christine, and I would sleep together with Maud, Jimmy, and Betty just to keep warm. It was pretty cozy to say the least.

Maud had a large library with many English language books which allowed the young men to spend much time reading. Sometimes we played games with them such as cards, monopoly, etc. We also listened on a forbidden radio to the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) which had English news. Also, through the radio we learned the latest English and American war songs which we sang with the airmen to help pass the time away. The airmen also had a good time playing with Jimmy and little Betty. It probably made them feel more like they members of the family.

There were many alerts when the American Flying Fortresses or British R.A.F. aircraft would fly overhead on a mission. The sirens would sound, and we were supposed to go into the shelters or caves, but of course we could not because of the men in the apartment. There were times we'd look out the window and see Allied planes falling down in flames. We also, on occasion, saw parachutes drifting down and sometimes they were being shot at by the Germans on the ground. We always hated to see this sight!

Then the day finally came for our first set of evaders, Gordon and Frank, to say good-bye. Either Mother or Maud or both, I don't remember who, took them to the railroad station via the metro. Because German soldiers were everywhere, Gordon and Frank were not supposed to talk to Maud or Mother or to each other, and they had to walk a little distance from each other. How scared they must have been! In spite of the apprehension while going to the train station, both men made it successfully and were last seen getting on the train which was the first leg of their trip

to Spain. We had gotten their North American mailing addresses so we could communicate with them after the war. We did this with all the evaders we housed.

After Gordon and Frank left Paris, there were other Allied airmen who came to our apartment where they stayed until it was time for them to leave for Spain. The men who stayed with us were never allowed to leave the apartment. Since the war, I have met evaders whose helpers took them sightseeing or out for eating or drinking, but Mother and Maud felt that was far too risky. They didn't want our evaders to be caught due to some chance incident with a German.

There were times when I guided men to the railroad station with Mother or Maud. The Germans were everywhere, but we were lucky and they never accosted us. We always got the airmen safely to the railroad station so they could begin their journey to Spain. We always felt relieved and a little proud of ourselves after we had gotten our men to the railroad station without any problem.

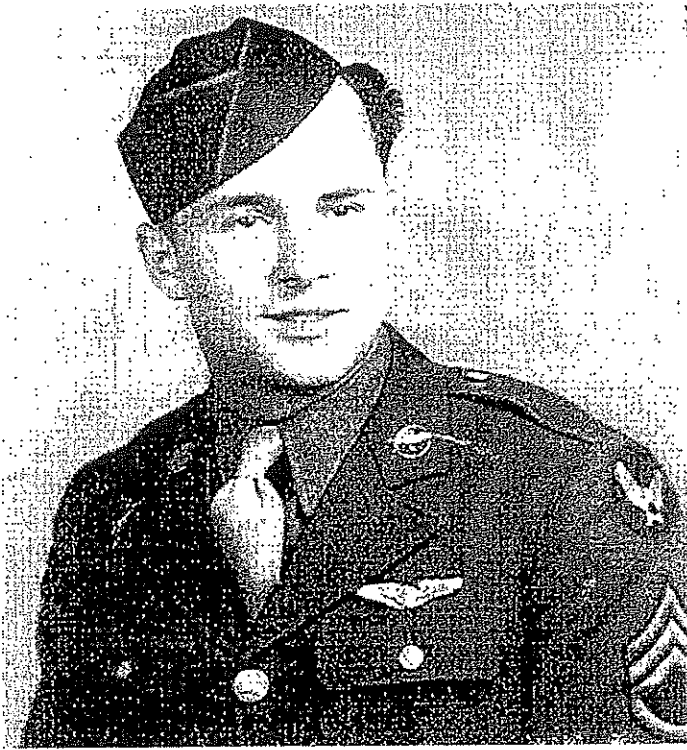
By now it was the summer of 1943, and I was fifteen and a half years old but unfortunately not really fluent in English. Actually I could barely speak it, but I was learning it assiduously; however, I still managed to communicate with the airmen. All of them were very nice, respectful, and helpful. I remember one of them, Tony Marandola, who loved to cook. One day when we were lucky to have a few vegetables, he made us some kind of minestrone soup. I can still see him chopping the vegetables into tiny pieces. How we enjoyed that soup!

Our biggest problem was in fact food. Many people think we received either food supplies or monetary help, but we never did. We had coupons which allowed very little food and sharing it with two young men was not easy. Like us, they must have been hungry many times, but we managed. The "Resistance" couldn't help being in the same situation.

We were able to buy bread everyday with our ration tickets, but only a small loaf, and frequently rutabaga, also known as Swedish turnips. If we could buy any vegetables, we often made soup, but it was pretty watery most of the time. Cabbage and potatoes were seldom available, but when we could buy some, it was a real treat! Meat? Hardly ever. About once a month my Grandmother Daniel from Normandy would cook a small piece of meat and send it to us, but as I remember, it couldn't have been more than three inches by three inches, just enough for everyone to have one small bite of meat. Wine was also an item we never had. I hope this description of our daily food gives you an idea that no one in the cities or towns ate well during this wartime period. In fact it was not like eating at all, it was more a mere subsistence diet; that is unless you had money to buy on the black market or knew some Germans who could obtain rationed items for you, obviously for a price.



Not only was food a scare item but so was new clothing. Clothing may have been rationed, but I really can't say that I remember ration cards or anything. I do know that we had to take very good care of our clothes by mending them or changing them a little when we grew some. Very infrequently, someone would give us some used clothes. I do remember that often replacement shoe soles were made of wood so that we really clomped around when wearing them. It was not a good time!

Technical Sergeant Charles A. Fisher



Left: Charles A. Fisher prior to deploying to England in 1943.

Right: The Identity Card provided to Fisher by the French Underground prior to his leaving Paris on 12 October 1943.

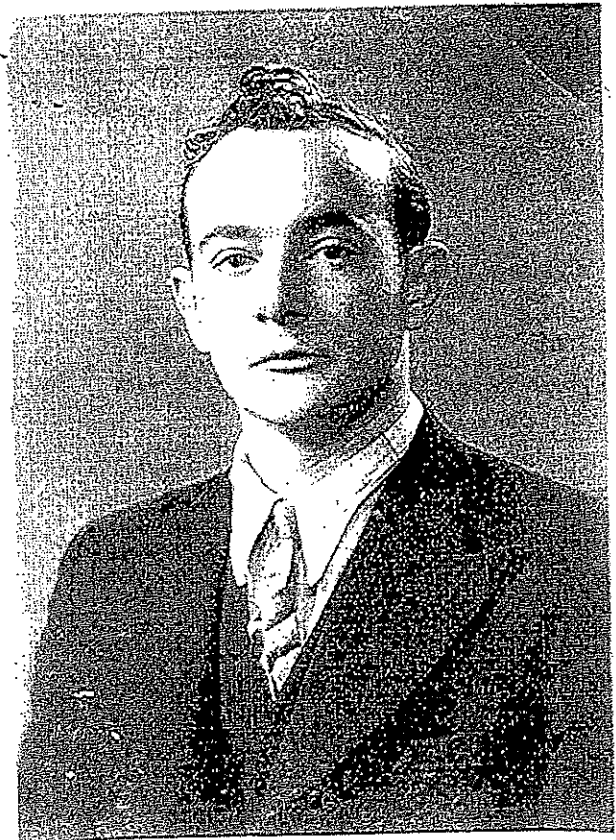
	N° 357	Série B	
	CARTE D'IDENTITÉ		
	NOM	<i>Loriot</i>	
	Prénoms	<i>Charles Edouard</i>	
	Profession	<i>cultivateur</i>	
	Né le	<i>15 Juillet 1919</i>	
	à	<i>Lez</i>	
	Département	<i>Ardenes</i>	
	Domicile	<i>Lez</i>	
		<i>Ardenes</i>	
SIGNALEMENT			
Taille	<i>1 m 75</i>	N°	<i>1007</i>
Cheveux	<i>br</i>	Forme générale du visage	<i>11</i>
Moustache			
Yeux	<i>bleu</i>	Trait de	
Signes particuliers			
Empreinte digitale	Signature ou initiales		<i>Ch. Loriot</i>
	Nationalité		<i>française</i>
	Date de naissance		<i>1919</i>
	Prénoms		<i>Charles Edouard</i>

Staff Sergeant James Wagner



Left: Sergeant Wagner was a B-17 gunner on the same bomber as Fisher. Wagner and Fisher evaded together after being shot down over France.

Right: A photograph of Wagner taken by the French Underground for use on his French ID card.



As the months went by, we kept having more Allied airmen—eleven altogether. They were mostly in their late teens or early twenties. Eight were Americans while one was Canadian and one was British. There was also one airman that I am not certain as to his nationality. He was either Canadian or American. There were also two German spies trying to infiltrate the French Underground system so they could turn the members in to the German Gestapo. By the time the evaders came to our apartment, they already had been given French clothes to wear. Most of them would stay three weeks. The British airman stayed only one night. The two German spies left after three nights. Others were moved from one place to another for a short while.

One of those who stayed for some time was, and still is, my friend, Charles Fisher. He and his crewmate, Jim Wagner, spent four days and nights hiding in a haystack as well as in other Underground houses before being brought to our apartment on September 19, 1943. On the way to our place, both men were taken to a French photographer so the Underground would have their pictures in order to prepare a French ID card for each of them. Charles was escorted by Raoul, one of the Underground workers, but Jim was brought to us separately by another Underground helper named John. Raoul and John introduced the two airmen to Mother and Maud, chatted for some time, and then left. The Allied airmen were now our responsibility. Both men were delighted to hear English spoken and this helped them relax some. We soon became very good friends.

For three weeks Charles and Jim stayed with us. The men read books from Maud's library and often played with Little Betty even though she could speak only French. The men also played with Jimmy when he was home. I can remember Charles teasing me and calling me Maggie, but we were really good friends so that was OK. In the evenings, Charles and Jim would talk with Maud and Mother and there were times when all of us would play cards. We all got along very well.

Perhaps Charles remembers one night watching R.A.F. planes from the windows and seeing one plane being shot down and falling in flames and watching some parachutists trying to escape the burning plane. We prayed they wouldn't be shot. Every day and night we'd hear these planes go by on their way to bombard Germany.

The day after watching the R.A.F. plane shot down, the Underground brought some papers to the apartment for Charles and Jim. Each man received his *Carte D'Identite*, work-excuse permit, and travel papers. When Charles and I looked at his new French identity card, we saw he was now Charles Edouard Loriot, a French farmer. Charles had to sign his ID card before he could use it. Obviously, it wouldn't be much longer before Charles and Jim would be on their way to Spain. On October 11, they received instructions that they would leave the next day. We were all sad that they were leaving, but we were happy that they would be on their way home.

On the morning of October 12, Mother escorted Charles and Jim to the train station very early in the morning so they could begin their journey to Spain. After the airmen left our apartment, we never knew if we'd hear from them again. Following the war, we did make contact with all of them; however, Charles Fisher is the only one any of us actually saw again. What a joy that was!

All throughout the war, members of the resistance organization would come quite often to check if everything was OK. However, we did have a few scary experiences such as German soldiers ringing the doorbell to check on us at any time of the day or night such as 6 a.m. One time, two supposedly "Americans" were brought to us, and we were asked to watch them closely as their behavior had been somewhat strange in the previous home where they were staying. Their English was perfect, their stories seemed normal, but they asked a lot of questions, went through papers when we were out and they were alone, and even left the apartment on one occasion. We knew all of this as our apartment was being watched by one of our men in the Resistance. We pretended everything was normal and treated them like the others, but after a few days, our Resistance comrades decided it was too risky. The two men were told that for safety reasons they couldn't stay with us any longer and would be moved to another place. One day my future mother-in-law, Madame Rospape, who was also a member of the Underground, and one of the Resistance men came and took the two men away. Madame Rospape told them she was taking them to some other Underground members for their safety. She and the Resistance man escorted the two men to the Seine River where they were turned over to men of the Underground. After Madame Rospape left, the men shot the two suspected Germans. The leaders in the Underground had decided they were very probably German spies, and they couldn't take a chance on their exposing the escape routes, so they were disposed of. This may seem cruel to some, but it was the only way to protect many Underground helpers and evaders.

Another scare came one morning in July or August of 1943 when the doorbell rang in a certain fashion so we'd know it was one of the members from the Resistance. If the ring wasn't according to the code of the Resistance members, any airman being sheltered was immediately led to a cellar hideaway until the coast was clear. This time, however, we knew it was one of our friends. Maud opened the door, and two men walked in supporting a third one who was almost in a faint. It was Raoul whom we knew very well and the individual who had brought Charles Fisher to us. He had been shot in the lung and was having a great deal of difficulty breathing. His two friends didn't know where to take him or how to get a doctor. Again, through Maud's dentist friend, we got a doctor who made arrangements for Raoul to be transported to the Hospital Laennec under a false identity. Raoul's real name was Pierre Bertin. He remained in the hospital for six months as there were complications after he had the bullet removed from his lung. While Pierre was in the hospital, I often visited him. After his recovery, he returned to the Resistance. In February of 1944 when I turned sixteen, Pierre, who was twenty-three, asked me to marry him, and I said yes but my mother wouldn't allow it. In fact she was quite mad at Pierre. Later he wrote a letter asking permission to become engaged to me, but again Mother intervened and I was not allowed to answer the letter. That terminated this little romantic episode in my life.

Our End As Helpers

In late 1943, we had a surprise. The Underground brought us only one evader rather than the two we usually received. The evader's name was Jim Kennedy. We were never told of his exact position as a member of the British service. I'll never forget the poor guy since he was scared to death since his name and picture were plastered all over Paris with a notice offering a large reward to whoever would say where he was. He only stayed with us two days before being taken away to safety. The Underground said it was too dangerous to leave him with us any longer. Neither Mother nor any of us ever learned where the Underground took him nor what happened to him. We both prayed for his safe return to Britain, but never found out if he made it or not.

It was probably around the end of 1943 or the beginning of 1944 when we were told that we would no longer have anyone else to house as it was getting too dangerous. The Gestapo was finding out about our group. One of our friends, Germaine Batchpie, was taken to Buchenwald where she was tortured and died. Monsieur Robert was arrested and died also. Another friend noticed that she was being followed so she had to cease Underground activities. My future mother-in-law, Madame Rospape, who was also part of the Resistance had to move for awhile and dye her hair. She had hidden a couple downed airmen, but I don't know how many overall. She had to stop as she was suspected by some people around her she couldn't fully trust. I do not know if her son, Alain, was involved with the Underground or not. He was just a teenage friend of mine at that time. The concierges of our building, a husband and wife, were talking about Mother and Maud and wondering what kind of business they were in since they were seeing so many men going up to our apartment. That was another reason we stopped sheltering airmen. Life became less exciting, but also less dangerous, for us after the Underground decided to shut down our operations, but it was close to D-Day.

The Liberation Of France

In early 1944, the end of the war was within sight, or so we thought. Actually it would drag on for another year. In February of 1944, I turned sixteen and that was when I was supposed to go back to an internment camp, this time at Vittel, France. Since my family had left Besançon, the Germans, for some reason, moved the internment camp sixty miles north to the village of Vittel. I worried but the wheel of victory was turning to disaster for the Germans, and they forgot about me. I was taking a secretarial course with a small group in a private home. As my teacher's son was also involved in the Resistance, I was able to type many documents for the Underground. I even carried plans on the German V-2 rocket and delivered them to one of the heads of our group.

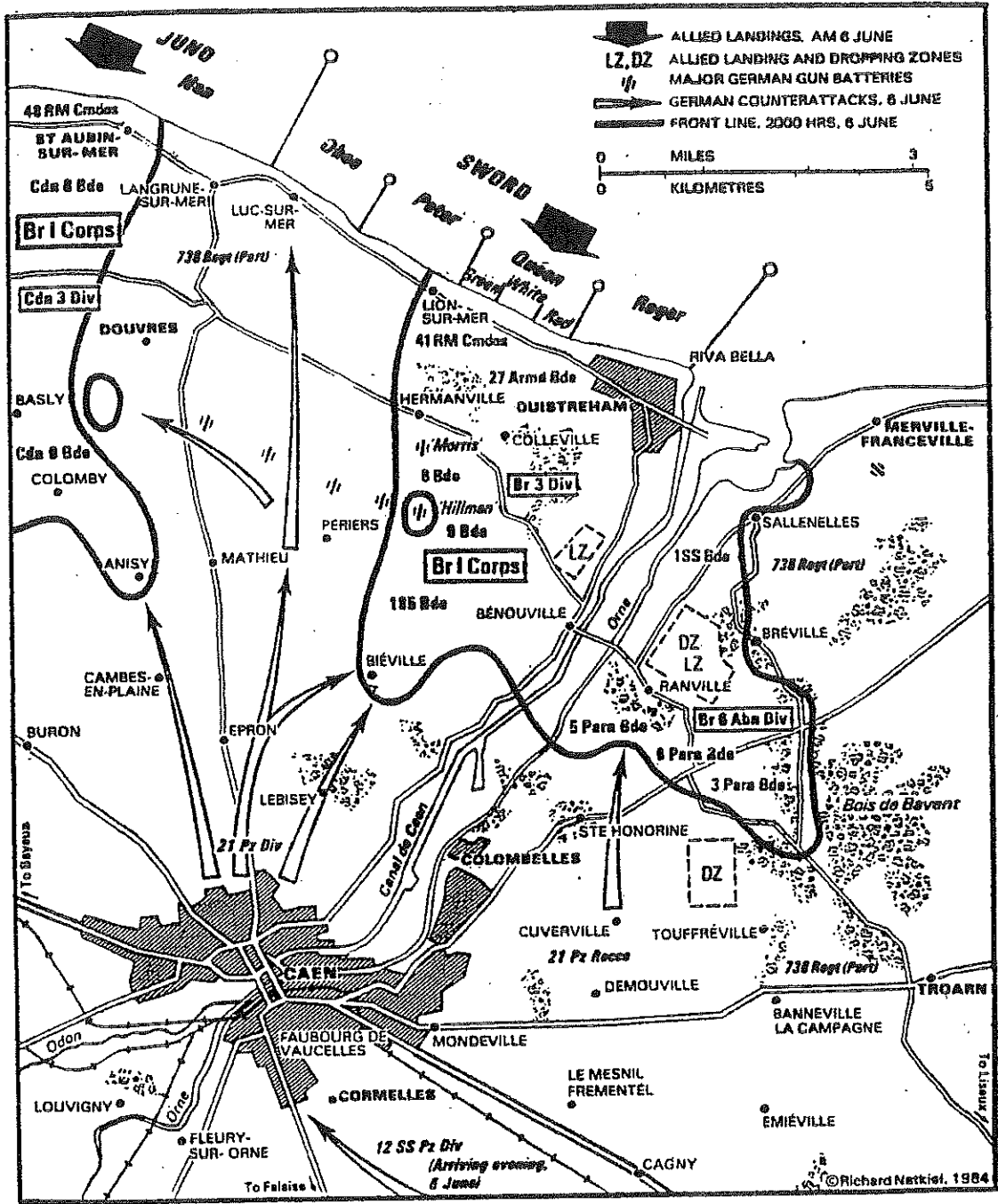
It is amazing how one could do these things without any sense of fear whatsoever. We would do anything to be free. Only afterwards do you realize how dangerous it was. Even my little friends, Maud's two young children, never whispered a word that would endanger us. My father, thankfully, was unaware of what was going on. One day during a visit, Mother mentioned our activities to him, and he almost went out of his mind feeling so helpless and scared for us. He threatened to escape if we did not stop immediately, and we knew he would be shot in the process of doing so. Obviously we pacified him and promised we would stop, but of course we did not at that time.

June 6, 1944 was D-Day, the long awaited invasion of Continental Europe by the Allies. What Mother and I would soon learn created fear for the safety of Christine and my grandparents in Epron. Let me tell you about it.

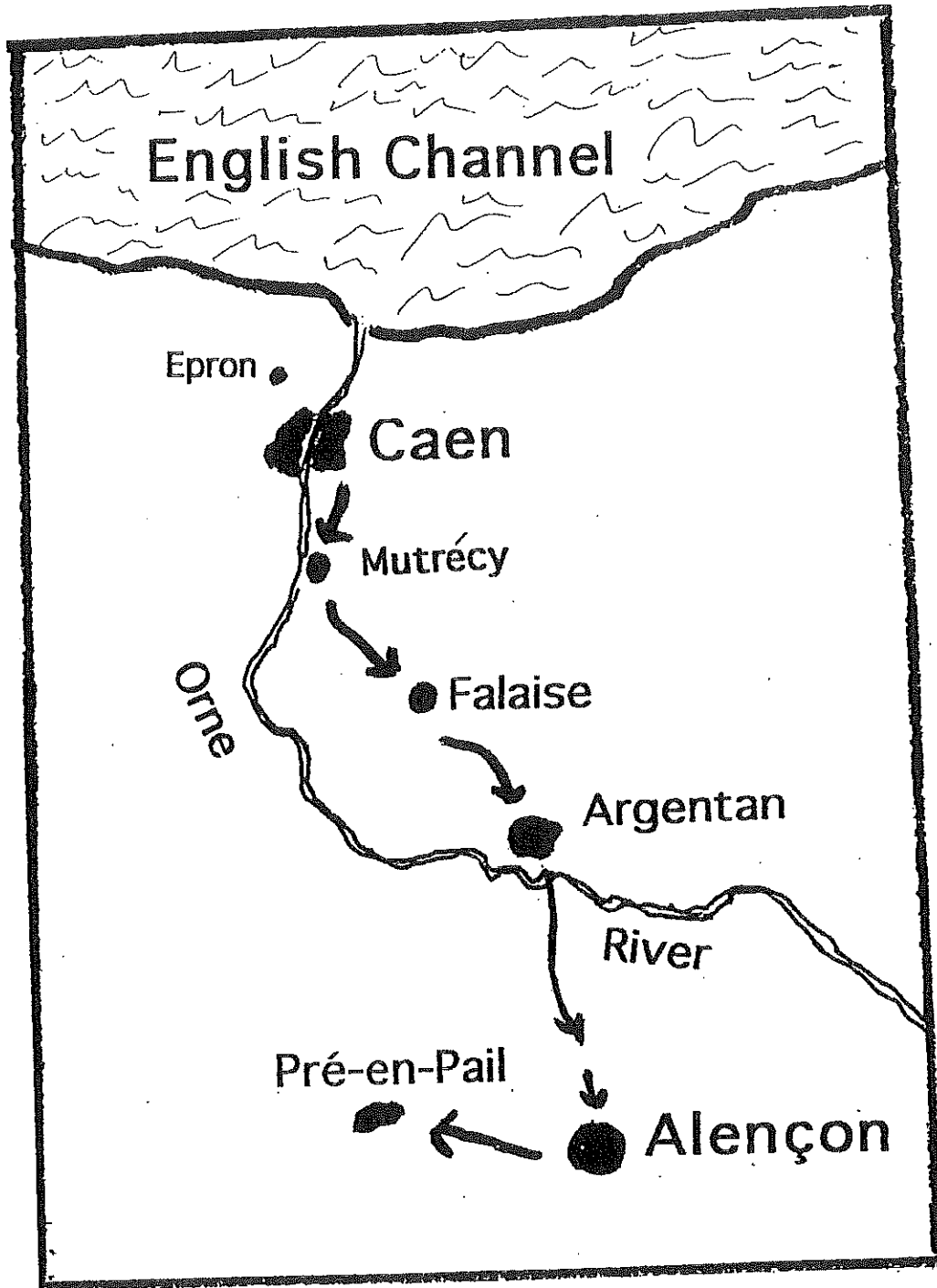
Mother's family lived not more than two or three miles from a large number of German units. Every day they saw German soldiers and tanks so grandmother and grandfather probably realized that sooner or later there would be fighting in this area when the Allies came to rescue France from the Germans. Little did they realize when they went to bed the night of June 5 that within hours their world would be turned upside-down.

Allied action began quietly shortly after midnight when British airborne troops parachuted into the area between Caen and the English Channel and captured two bridges across the Orne River. By about 4 a.m. a few German soldiers were on their way towards the British soldiers. I doubt my family heard all this, but at 6:15 a.m. they did hear the start of the British navy bombarding German positions along the coast. By 7:30 a.m. the bombardment ceased and the British amphibious assault began. At the same time, the R.A.F. began bombing and strafing German positions all around the Caen area and these attacks were coming very close to my grandparent's house in Epron.

On the morning of June 6, the Americans and British conducted a huge amphibious assault along the northwest coastline of France in the Normandy area. The center of Caen was only about seven miles inland from the northern most British beach sector known as Sword and about ten miles inland from the more southern British beach sector known as Juno. The British I Corps forces started landing on Sword and Juno starting at 7:25 a.m. and began moving inland. German units went into action. The 716th Infantry Division, the German unit on the northwest side of Caen and fairly close to our house, began moving troops into battle positions and by 8 a.m. the 21st Panzer (tank) Division was also on the move towards the British units. Both German divisions would suffer a large number of casualties during the next few days of fighting. Later in the day, the German 12th SS (Schutzstaffel) Panzer Division deployed from its positions and arrived in the Caen area during the evening. By sundown on June 6, there were three German divisions in the area, one infantry division and two Panzer divisions. These German units were trying to stop the British forces north of Caen and the fighting was fierce. Panzers rumbled through Epron, Biéville, and Cambes-en-Plaine most of the day turning these villages into very dangerous places



D-Day at the Caen sector. Christine Brouard and her grandparents Daniel were caught in the battles as British troops drove towards Caen while continually fighting German forces. This map is taken from Max Hastings' book *OVERLORD*.



Six days after D-Day, Christine and her grandparents fled the battle zone around Caen. Their journey took them from Epron to Caen, Mutrécy, and then south to a farm near Pré-en-Pail.

and of course our family could see all this action. The lines of contact between German and British forces surged forward and backwards and our village of Epron in Normandy was taken back and forth six times while battles were raging all around. Life was very dangerous for Christine and my grandparents as they were right in the way of both enemy and friendly forces! We in Paris wondered how our family in Normandy was faring and if we would ever see them alive again. Oh the agony of those waiting months before we knew!

After two months of heavy fighting, the Allies were driving the German forces eastwards towards Germany. We could hear the news of the Allied advances on the BBC radio programs and knew that they would be coming to Paris any day now. Finally on August 24, 1944, Paris was liberated when French tanks drove into the middle of the city. It was the next day when the German general, General von Choltitz, surrendered all German troops in spite of Hitler's orders. He had been told to fight the Allies until the entire city of Paris was in total ruins as they were not to capture Paris intact. Had he done so, Paris would have been destroyed and many Frenchmen would have died, maybe even me and my family as well as Maud's family. General von Choltitz's decision to surrender without ruining the city saved the lives of thousands of German soldiers and French people plus prevented our historic and beautiful city of Paris from being demolished. Paris was extremely fortunate that von Choltitz was not a fanatical Nazi who would obey Hitler to the last.

France's military chief, General Charles de Gaulle, entered the edge of the city late in the day on the 25th. The following day, Saturday the 26th, he walked through the heart of Paris which was lined by the troops of the French 2nd Armored Division and the whole city went crazy. When Paris was liberated, all of a sudden while still in our apartment, we heard first a murmur and then a large shout of joy coming from everywhere. Everyone rushed to their windows where they began shouting and waving. Then they started running down the stairs and out into the streets. It was incredible! I also ran and became part of the crowd in the street. Everybody was crazy with joy, and we were kissing the soldiers we met, even while there was still a lot of shooting from the roofs and everywhere. People were shouting, drinking, singing, and celebrating our liberation. It was a wild and happy time!

For a few, however, it was not a happy time. Some French women were arrested and their hair shaved off their heads because they had befriended Germans. Some of these women were even stripped of all their clothes and made to parade down the streets in shame since they had been German collaborators. History books have photographs of all this activity.

On the 29th of August, the American 28th Infantry Division paraded down the Champs Elysées and through the Arc de Triomphe on its way to a new battle. Of course we all turned out again to see this parade and to cheer our American friends and liberators. There was still a lot of shooting from the roof tops, streets, etc. and just being outside was dangerous, but no one thought of it. The first American soldiers I saw were covered with lipstick. We hugged them crying with joy! It was a

very happy time for us in Paris! Paris was at last freed, and we knew we would survive the war.

Father was freed from his prison in St. Denis on Friday the 25th of August. He immediately made his way to our apartment in Paris for a tender and wonderful reunion. None of us could have been happier! Right away we tried to get news from Normandy. We heard Caen was destroyed and most villages around there too. We thought our family members were all dead. It was an awful feeling!

I can't remember exactly, but it was probably a few weeks later when we received a message through the Red Cross that our family in Normandy was safe, but we still didn't know where they were and therefore could not contact them. Days seemed an eternity. Then came another message from the Red Cross. Our family was at a farm in the Mayenne region, some 190 miles south of Caen. Since there were no British headquarters troops in Paris, Mother contacted the American authorities there who were wonderful. A jeep with a soldier driver was put at our disposal to take Mother, Father, and me from Paris to the village of Pré-en-Pail near the town of Alençon.

We arranged with the jeep driver the day we wanted to leave Paris. On the morning we left, we said a sad good-bye to Maud and her children and promised to keep in touch with one another. They left for England as soon as they were allowed to. With that, we crowded into the American jeep and away we went. After an all day ride, we finally arrived at the farm owned by the Préels where our family was living. What a joy to find my sister and grandparents alive!

After we got settled at the farm, my grandparents and Christine told us about their ordeal. Here is their story.

The day the Allies landed in Normandy, June 6, 1944, the Germans soon forced my family out of our house and occupied it. It was large and well situated and provided a good observation post for them. Our family, consisting of my sister, my grandparents Daniel, and my uncle and his wife and baby, lived in a trench for six days while the battles raged around them. My uncle had to jump out of the trench once in awhile to milk a nearby cow to feed the baby and the family. That was until the cow was blown up right beside him while he was milking her.

After six days of intense combat, the Germans lost the battle in our village of Epron and had to retreat. Our family home had been bombed and was destroyed.

The Germans came and gave us only five minutes to collect any personal belongings we could find in our destroyed home and then forced all the local civilians to move out ahead of them. Christine said she took her cycle with her and that they went towards the town of Caen, two miles away. Here the family stayed in the Church of St. Etienne for about three days. Christine also told us there were ten thousand people at Caen and the Red Cross served them soup, bread, and coffee. The next leg of the journey took them south to Mutrécy on the River Orne which was about ten miles further inland. Here the family stayed for three weeks. Caen was still in the hands of the Germans when Christine and my grandparents started fleeing again, this time for Alençon, some forty-seven miles to the south-southeast. Christine said they walked

for days going through this terrible ordeal. She has said she would rather die than go through that again. It was only after arriving at Alençon that my family learned that the British had finally driven the Germans out of Caen on July 10. Our village of Epron was now once again free, but in ruins.



Our bombed-out house at Epron.

However bad the trials, my grandparents and sister finally arrived at a farm near Pré-en-Pail owned by Monsieur and Madame Prél. This couple and their two children were wonderful people and took them in as if they were family. Fortunately, being farmers, the task of feeding my family was not nearly the problem it would have been had they lived in a city. My grandparents and Christine were there for many weeks and helped as much as they could on the farm.

By early August, both the British and Americans forces had fought their way inland from the initial landing sites on the Normandy coast. The American Third Army under the command of General George S. Patton Jr. was engaged in a large sweeping maneuver and was rapidly advancing inland south of the British forces. On August 12, 1944, General Patton's troops drove German forces out of the region near Alençon as well as capturing the city itself. Some of Patton's units had moved through Pré-en-Pail and by the Prél farm where they had encountered Christine and her grandparents. Christine told us what a great day it was when those American soldiers freed them from German control. The soldiers were delighted to hear grandpa and grandma speaking to them in English, and they gave them plenty of food and somehow came up with a cycle to give grandpa. It was indeed a day to remember! It was still another

couple weeks after the Americans freed the Alençon region before my parents and I finally found Christine and my grandparents through the Red Cross and the Americans. And so ended our family's story of that difficult time in their lives.

It was late August 1944 when both our families decided to leave the Prèel farm and return to Epron in Normandy. The first stage of our returning to Epron was that mother and father cycled from Prè-en-Pail to Epron while the rest of us stayed with the Prèel family. After many days of cycling, my parents reached Epron to learn that our house had been destroyed so it was necessary for them to find a house where our family could live after we were reunited again. Luckily, my parents found one and father was able to get a job and return to the refrigeration plant where he had worked before. After resolving these issues, father notified us to come home.

As best I can remember, mother and father had arranged with the Americans to provide transportation for us. One morning an American jeep driver arrived at the Prèel farm. My grandparents, Christine, and I loaded our few belongings into the jeep's trailer, expressed our heartfelt thanks to the Prèels, and said our good-byes. We then climbed into the jeep and started our journey back to Epron.

After arriving in Epron, we saw our home totally destroyed as a result of the combat in that area after D-Day. Our driver drove us to the village of Douvres-la-Délivrande, between five and six miles away from where our old house had been, and found the house my parents had moved into. This house was only three miles from the coast. We unloaded our few belongings from the jeep's trailer and thanked the driver for all his help. The American then waved good-bye and started back to his unit. We settled in at our new home. Fortunately father had been able to return to his old job at the refrigeration plant at Cambes-en-Plaine which was now being operated by British military forces.

Section III

The Years Following World War II

After V-E Day

The year 1945 came, and we were still living in Douvres-la-Délivrande, Normandy. We and everyone else were expecting the Allies to win the war very soon. On May 8, 1945, German forces finally surrendered to the Allies and the war in Europe was over. This day has gone down in history as Victory in Europe Day or more simply, just V-E Day. Everyone in the area was so thankful the war was over and of course we celebrated the event. We knew that the day when we could return to Guernsey couldn't be too far away.

It was about July of 1945 when the British government finally moved us from Normandy back to Great Britain. Unfortunately we couldn't return to Guernsey immediately as the Allies hadn't yet moved the German garrison off the island. We, therefore, had to temporarily go to Scotland. We were housed in the Lintwhite Hostel in a refugee camp located in Bridge-of-Weir in Renfrewshire, a small village about ten miles west of Glasgow. It was here our family was to stay until we received clearance to proceed to Guernsey.

The Red Cross helped us with clothes, otherwise we received no help at all. The Scots were wonderful to us which certainly helped. Father was able to work in a leather factory, and I taught French to a rather wealthy couple. Mother wasn't able to work at this time. At last, in October of 1945 we were able to return to Sarnia Cherie, that is the ancient name of Guernsey Island.

Living In Guernsey

It was wonderful to be back on Guernsey Island! The island has only two towns, St. Peter Port, the capital, and St. Samson. The rest of the island is divided into parishes. Guernsey had a population of about forty thousand in 1945, but that has now increased to about sixty thousand. We first lived with the family of my father's sister on their farm near St. Peter's in the Wood. Father worked with another brother-in-law in hothouses in which tomatoes were grown and on the farm. This lasted one year. After a few months, however, my parents and sister moved to Father's other sister's place at Cobo. After several years, Father eventually bought his own hothouse to grow tomatoes and some flowers.

Christine became ill with TB and had to go to a sanitarium on the Isle of Wight due to the conditions she lived in at the end of the war. She finally recovered and returned home.

I had decided to be a nurse, but there was no nursing school in Guernsey at that time. There was only one general hospital on the island, and it was named The Emergency Hospital, but it was at times referred to as the C stel Hospital. The hospital was in desperate need of nurses immediately after the war. When I arrived in Guernsey, I applied and was trained in the hospital by working my way up. Nursing and medical theory were taught at night by the physicians and senior nurses while during the day we practiced what we had been taught by working on the wards. No trained nurses could yet come from England. I moved into hospital housing right away after arriving in Guernsey and lived there during this period in my life.

My training allowed me to work in various professional departments of the hospital and the operating theater. The hospital had the following departments: medical, surgical, maternity, children, and mental. I worked six months in each department except for the mental. I worked six months on the men's wards, six months on the female wards. etc.

As part of the C stel Hospital, there was a section devoted to mentally ill patients, but I never worked in that section. Mother also became a nurse, and we worked together in the hospital. Unfortunately, Christine was still recuperating from her wartime illnesses, so she wasn't working at all.

Awards For Mother Alice

After the war ended, Maud and Mother were decorated for the service they had rendered the Allies by housing downed airmen while in Paris. Among their decorations were the British King's Commendation, which is a silver laurel leaf. It was presented to them in 1946 by Air Chief Marshal Lord Tedder, Deputy Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Forces. On February 4, 1948, Mother also received the Medal of Freedom from America which was presented to her in the American Embassy in London by Maj. Gen. Bissell of the American army. That was a real honor as there were only twenty-nine such awards by the Americans. And finally she was awarded certificates from France, one of which was a Diploma headed *R publique Fran aise. Honneur, Patrie*. Father, Christine, and I were very proud of Mother! However, Mother and Maud felt they were only doing their duty and did so little compared with so many others in the resistance movements. I was invited to the American Embassy with my mother the day she was awarded the Medal of Freedom. I was so very proud of her when the general awarded her the medal!

Life Moves On

As the years went by, we grew older and our lives changed. In 1948 I married Alain Rospape whom I had known as a young man in his early twenties back in Paris during 1943 and 1944. While in Paris, I certainly wasn't considering marriage, and Alain was only a good friend. Alain, obviously, had other feelings as he kept in contact with

After World War II



MG Bissell presents Alice Brouard the American Medal of Freedom at the American Embassy in London on 4 February 1948 for her efforts in rescuing downed American airmen during WW II.



L-R: Alice and Marguerite Brouard, Cousin Bert Hill, Christine, and Grandmother Eugénie Daniel on Guernsey Island, 1948.



Marguerite and Alice at the Emergency Côtel Hospital on Guernsey Island, 1948.

And Now --- The Twenty-First Century



Marguerite Fraser



Christine Wallis

Daughters
L - Elisabeth Caruso
R - Jennyfer Mueller

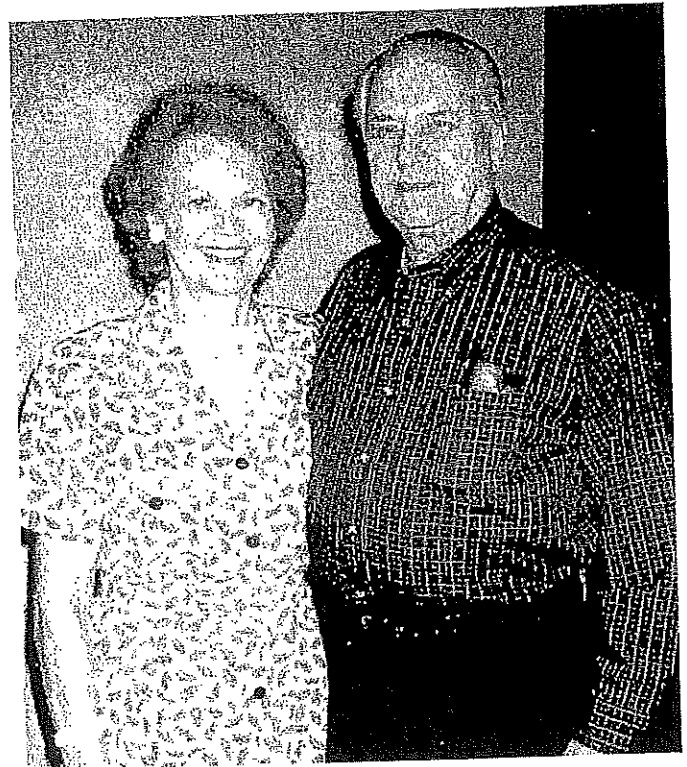


Helper
Marguerite
Fraser

Evader
Charles
Fisher

2000 AFEES Reunion

Mother and daughters



me and gradually wrote and sent romantic letters to me, and finally in 1948 he proposed marriage. I accepted and this time Mother didn't say no. Alain and I were married in October of that year. I was twenty and Alain was twenty-five. I left Guernsey and took up residence with my new husband in Biarritz, France which is along the western coast very near to the Spanish border. It was here that our first daughter, Elisabeth, was born on August 10, 1949 followed by Jennyfer who was born in Paris on August 20, 1952.

Christine remained in Guernsey recovering from the TB she contracted during the war. She finally recovered her health and in 1954 she married Eric Wallis. They had three children and still live on the island.

Father and Mother remained in Guernsey. Father continued to grow tomatoes and flowers while Mother worked in the hospital for a few more years. Father died in 1993 and Mother followed him in death in 1999 as I have already told you. My Grandmother Daniel died within two years of V-E Day due to the illness she incurred during the tribulations of the war.

Maud remained in London while her children were growing up. Jimmy eventually became a head steward for British Airlines, and Betty got married. We all have remained close friends over the years.

Remembering The Evaders

The years went by, but Mother, Christine, and I never forgot the airmen we had sheltered in Paris. After leaving our apartment in Paris, we know but for one, Jim Kennedy, that all the airmen made it home safely. Jim was the one we thought was a British spy, and we never did find out what happened to him. We prayed he safely made it home eventually. The men we had hidden and helped had risked their lives to save us from the tyranny of the Nazis, and they were people from far away countries who had fought so we could regain our freedom. We can never thank them enough!

After World War II, we wrote and heard from all the airmen we sheltered. Mother and I wrote Charles Fisher a letter on 15 March 1945 telling him what we were doing and asking him to write and to send us a photograph of himself.

After receiving our letter, Charles sat down and wrote us a very nice letter and he also sent me a photo. I was very excited when the photo came! It was a picture of him taken in 1943 while he was undergoing aviation training since he didn't have any wings on his uniform and had a little insignia on his cap that indicated he was in still training. I really liked that photo and still have it even today. It reminds me of those days so long ago.

In the years following the war, Mother and I heard from all the airmen we had sheltered, but Charles was the only one of them we actually ever saw again. Several years after the war, my mother, Alice, did fly to the United States for a reunion with Charles Fisher. In 1970, Charles reciprocated the visit and brought his wife, Norene, and one son to England to visit Maud and her family. Then they traveled to Guernsey

to see Mother, and then they finally came to France to visit me. Everyone enjoyed seeing Charles again! Fortunately I am still in contact with him.

In 1974, my husband and I decided to leave France and live in North America. After an eight months stay in Montreal, Canada, we moved to the USA in 1975 and settled in the state of Massachusetts. Shortly thereafter we divorced. In 1976 I married a retired engineer and became Marguerite Fraser. I was widowed in 1998. I remained in Massachusetts until 2001 when I moved south to Florida and a warmer climate and to be near my daughter Jennyfer.

Memories Remain--Even In The Twenty-First Century

I am now a grandmother and a widow living in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with my daughter Jennyfer, but I remember the World War II years with Mother and Maud and her children Jimmy and Betty, very clearly. I have kept in contact with Charles Fisher whom we helped in 1943. We saw each other and talked over old times at the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society, AFEES, meeting in Columbia, Missouri during May of 2000 and again at the AFEES meeting in May 2001 which was held in Spokane, Washington. After the reunion, Charles and his wife and I joined other AFEES friends on an Alaskan cruise. That was the last time I saw him alive, although I spoke to him on the telephone several time after the cruise. It was with great sadness that I learned Charles had died of cancer on September 13, 2002 just as I was finishing this book. My heart went out to his wife.

It is always nice to see old friends, and the AFEES group keeps our memories alive. AFEES is a wonderful organization as it provides me an opportunity to visit with other European helpers as well as the evaders, all of whom experienced many of the same things I did. And so I end this short narration of my family's days in France during World War II. I pray none of you will have to experience ever again the horrible trials and tribulations that my family and I went through during that terrible war. And now, au revoir and God bless.

Marguerite Fraser



Annex A

Airmen Housed In Paris By The Brouard And Couve Families June 1943 to January 1944

Usually two Allied evaders were paired up while living with the Brouard and Couve families. Eight were from the American Army Air Force (AAF), one was from the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and one from some British intelligence agency. Neither the nationality nor unit of one airman was ever confirmed (NC) Their usual length of stay was three weeks. Here is a list of those airmen.

Flight Sergeant Gordon L. Spencer	405th Bomber Squadron RCAF
Sergeant Frank Greene	NC

Staff Sergeant Harry Eastman	94th Bomb Group AAF
Staff Sergeant Richard Davitt	94th Bomb Group AAF
Crewmates	

Technical Sergeant Herman L. Marshall	96th Bomb Group AAF
Sergeant Alfred Jerowski	Bomb Group unknown AAF

Technical Sergeant Charles A. Fisher	384th Bomb Group AAF
Staff Sergeant James Wagner	384th Bomb Group AAF
Crewmates on B-17 <i>Slightly Dangerous</i>	

Technical Sergeant Glen Wells	96th Bomb Group AAF
Staff Sergeant Anthony (Tony) Marandola	Bomb Group unknown AAF

Jim Kennedy Rank or status unknown. Thought to be a member of the British Intelligence Service or the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Because of the intense German effort to capture him, he was alone and only spent two nights with the Brouard and Couve families. Kennedy was the last Allied evader housed.

Two men Names are not remembered. They were suspected of being German spies infiltrating the Underground system. They spent three days with the Brouards and Couves before being removed by the French Underground and executed. These were the last men housed by the Brouard and Couve families.

Annex B
Correspondence From The Brouard Women To Charles Fisher

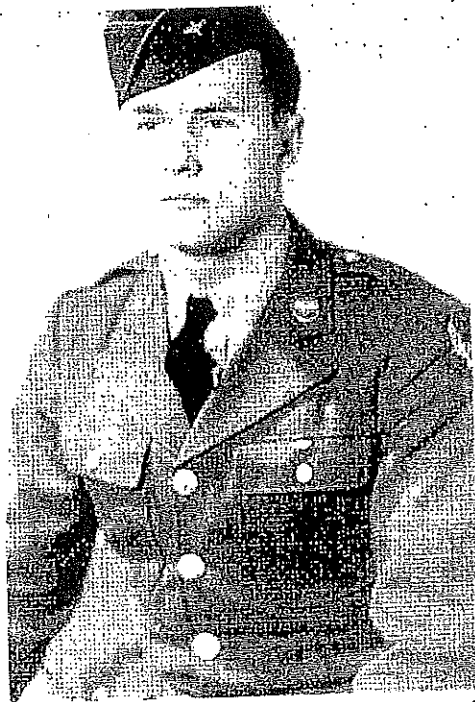
March 15th, 1945

Dear Charles,

I am so happy to be able to write now. It is so marvelous to be free and to know that you and all of the boys that we had have all arrived safely. Oh, how glad we were and I hope these few words will reach you and find you in the best of health. You must write and let me know all about you and send us your photo you promised. Well, Maud has probably written to you, she is in London with Jimmy and Betty since November and I hear from her every week. I am with my husband and Maggie and Christine in --- you know my house used to be 3 miles from Caen but it has been all smashed up. We have found another house 6 miles from our home and 3 miles from the coast. My husband is working with the British Army, soon after the war we shall be going back to the Channel Islands. Well, longing to hear from you soon. Best of luck and best regards to your parents.

Alice and Maggie

This letter was written by Alice Brouard to Charles Fisher in early 1945.



This photograph of Charles Fisher taken during his aviation training was sent by him to the Brouards in response to Alice's request.

The following letter from Marguerite to Charles Fisher was written in the spring of 1945 but was not dated.

Dear Charles,

You cannot imagine my joy, also Mummy's when a few hours ago we received your such nice letter. Oh, how very pleased we are to know you well, although we know that all the boys we have been hiding have arrived safely. How sweet of you to send your photo, you look quite well. I am enclosing just a little one of mine taken last year. What a lot of things have happened since you left us. We had five other boys and several others just to sleep one night, then we had to stop unfortunately. Well, since you have gone, Charles, I have worked hard at my English, so now I enjoy writing it and also reading. Do you still have remember your French name? And when we got you ready for your departure? How sad that day was for us. We were so anxious for you. Well, the liberation of Paris was marvelous and to see the Germans going, packing up and leaving and then the two first Americans. We simply cried with joy, we shall never forget such a day. But when we heard of the landing in Normandy it was also a marvelous day, but mother and I were worried because my grandparents and my sister were just seven miles from where they landed. They had a pretty rough time, they lived in a trench six days and nights then they had to evacuate at Caen and then after several days they had to evacuate again. Four months after we went to see our home, but of course nothing was left of it. So we are now staying in a little furnished house one miles from where the landing was, but I hope to start bathing next week.

My father is working with the British in a Field Butchery, and we are hoping to be repatriated to Guernsey island in a few months and rebuild a new home. So, dear Charles, when you answer this letter you had better address it to our Guernsey address. So I'll have your letter quicker. We are expecting a letter from Jim. We have also written to him. So he is married and you are a bachelor. Well, I would call a bachelor over 30 years, but I expect you are having a good time and you are lucky to see all the lovely countries.

It is very kind of you and your family to ask if you could do something for us, but all we needed was a letter from you and so thankful to know you arrived safely home. Excuse me to call you Charles but I think it is a nicer name than Chuck, and would you kindly call me Marguerite because I hate the name of Maggie. Don't laugh but I guess that I am a funny girl. Well, I shall end now, I hope to hear from you very soon and other photos you promised. Mum and I send you all the best of luck. God bless you.

A little friend
Marguerite

The transcriptions of the above letters written by Alice and Marguerite were gratefully furnished by Charles Fisher for use in this book. Many thanks to him!