

My Life Story



Claudine Arend Cox



DeAnn B. Holt, Storykeeper

Acknowledgement

As we near the consummation of the Ethnic Life Stories Project, there is a flood of memories going back to the concept of the endeavor. The awareness was there that the project would lead to golden treasures. But I never imagined the treasures would overflow the storehouse. With every Story Teller, every Story Keeper, every visionary, every contributor, every reader, the influence and impact of the project has multiplied in riches. The growth continues to spill onward. As its outreach progresses, "boundaries" will continue to move forward into the lives of countless witnesses.

Very few of us are "Native Americans." People from around the world, who came seeking freedom and a new life for themselves and their families, have built up our country and communities. We are all individuals, the product of both our genetic makeup and our environment. We are indeed a nation of diversity.

Many of us are far removed from our ancestors who left behind the familiar to learn a new language, new customs, new political and social relationships. We take our status as Americans for granted. We sometimes forget to welcome the newcomer. We bypass the opportunity to ask about their origins and their own journey of courage.

But, wouldn't it be sad if we all spoke the same language, ate the same food, and there was no cultural diversity.

This project has left me with a tremendous debt of gratitude for so many. The almost overwhelming task the Story Keeper has, and the many hours of work and frustration to bring forth a story to be printed. I salute you.

To the Story Tellers, thank you for letting us share in your heart and soul. It is my prayer that some or many of the stories will influence many young persons to another level, to be enmeshed in the pursuit of learning of other cultures that make up our community and the world.

This has, indeed, been a project of "Many" for the Community. Thanks to the following who have played a role in helping to achieve the goal. The list is practically endless, first names only. You know who you are and what you did . . . sincere thanks to each of you:

Caroline, Charity, Charlotte, Bob, Dana, De Ann, Ed, Eric, Erman, Jim, Joha Oke, John K, John M, June, Kay, Kendall, Maria, Mark, Michelle, Myra, Norma, Pat, Rachel, Rob, Starr, Susan, Valerie, and special recognition to Jim Coombs, SMSU, Map Department.

Jim Mauldin
Coordinator
Ethnic Life Stories
'01 '02 '03

The Ethnic Life Stories Project...

...giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders.

Liewe Se Storie Afrikaanse

Afrikaanse (2)

ŌSŌ GAY HǼY WŌ TAN

Apache

قصص من الحياة

Arabic (2)

Ga-no-du Ka-ne-he-lv-s-gi

Cherokee

自傳

Chinese (2)

Life Stories

English (5)

Histoires De Ma Vie

French (2)

Lebensgeschichten

German

סיפור חיים

Hebrew

Mayer rah-Khaan Knee-Hindi

Hindi

生きてきた道

Japanese

나의 살아온 이야기

Korean

DZĪVES STĀSTS

Latvian

ജീവിത കഥകൾ

Malayalam

OPOWIESC zŻYCIA

Polish

Imanawangtanan Wawanaycasjas

Quechua

Povestea Vie Ţii Mele

Romanian

Жизненные истории

Russian

Historia De La Vida

Spanish (8)

မိမိ၏ နိမိတ်

Thai

Kuwento Ng Aking Buhay

Tagalog

CHUY-N [© Tj]

Vietnamese

געשיכטע פון מאן לעבען

Yiddish

Birthplaces of the Storytellers

2001 2002 2003

Yohannan Abraham
Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India

Janet Akaike - Toste
Kofu, Japan

Tony Albuquerque
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Martha Baker
San Antonio, Texas

Grace Ballenger
Shanghai, China

Ruth L.V. Burgess
Poona (Pune), India

Sara Fajardo Calderon
Guatemala City, Guatemala

Olga Codutti
Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina

Claudine Arend Cox
Boulay, France

Adalyn Cravens
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Taj Farouki
Wadi-Hunayn, Palestine

Malca Flasterstein
Holon, Israel

Edgar Galinanes
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

Reynaldo Gumucio
Cochabamba, Bolivia

John Hernandez
San Antonio, Texas

Yung Hwang
Okjong, Kyungnam, Korea

Madge (Jackie) King
London, England

Edward P. Ksara
Tangier, Morocco

Hyman Lotven
Kapulah, Russia

Regina Lotven
Nancy, France

Sterling Macer
Mason City, Iowa

Gwendolyn Marshall
Jackson, Mississippi

Maria Michalczyk-Lillich
Sandomierz, Poland

Edith F.L. Middleton
Glasgow, Scotland

Loan Vu Nigh
Thai Binh, Vietnam

Jorge Padron
Pedro Betancourt-Matanza, Cuba

Ruth Penaherrera-Norton
Archidona, Ecuador

Eric Pervunkhin
Moscow, Russia

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Bucharest, Romania

Josefina S. Raborar
Manila, Philippines

Juan Salazar
Tuman, Peru

Eligio Sanchez
Mexico City, Mexico

Tong Trithara
Audhaya, Thailand

Cyril Vermooten
Beaufort West, South Africa

Joy Vermooten
Nqaberie (Natal), South Africa

Ilga Vise
Riga, Latvia

Hiltrud M. Webber
Domnau, Germany

Tobby Yen
Chung (Zhongshan), China





DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this story to my two daughters, Suzanne and Julie, and to my French family.

My deepest appreciation to DeAnn without whom this story would not be possible. She listened, she transcribed and spent many hours developing this story.

And Jim Mauldin who never allowed me to postpone this story. He pushed and begged and took action. His dedication to this program has been admirable.

Claudine Arend Cox
February 3, 2004

FOREWORD

Claudine Guldner Arend Cox is a woman of many talents. She has had a very interesting life with high highs and low lows. Born in France the privileged, adored daughter of the town's physician, her childhood was idyllic. Her life changed drastically when her mother died, Germany invaded France and she came to Wichita, Kansas. Claudine learned to be stoic and deal with disappointment and heartache. In spite of setbacks and grief, as a single mother she was determined her daughters would receive an education to prepare them for productive lives. It has been my pleasure to record Claudine's story and to become her friend.

Thanks to Jim Mauldin and his crew of hard working volunteers who make possible the publishing of these stories to place in the libraries of Springfield. This enables all of us to get to know folks who are enriching our city with their presence. Too often we aren't aware of the people around us and how much our perspectives can be expanded by getting acquainted.

DeAnn B. Holt, Storykeeper
January 28, 2004

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INTRODUCTION

As a little girl born in France and growing up in the 1930s, I felt very secure. America was a fairy tale, over the ocean, far far away, Hollywood like, and something we read about or pictured. A spacious home, loving parents, two brothers who were away at Jesuit boarding schools but came home for vacations to tease, torment, and love me. We lived in a small town on the Maginot Line which protected us from enemy attack. I attended a parochial school where the nuns adored my father, the only doctor in the community. Hitler, the war, my mother's sudden death, and the nomad life I lived for several years could not be imagined!



Claudine and brothers, Jeannot and Lou Lou

CHAPTER ONE: FAMILY HISTORY

My Name and Birth

My full maiden name was Claudine Suzanne Guldner. When my uncle came to America many years before the war, everyone mispronounced it, so he added the “o” to make it phonetically correct. Thus our name became Gouldner. My last name now is Arend Cox. Arend for my first husband, Max Arend, and Cox for my second husband, Lyle Cox. Both are deceased. My Saint’s name is St. Francis of Assissi.

I was born in Boulay-Moselle, France on October 4, 1929. The name of “Suzanne” has been given for generations. The first girl in the family uses Suzanne as first or middle name. My mother’s first name was Suzanne. My middle name is Suzanne. My daughter is named Suzanne Elizabeth. My granddaughter is Danielle Suzanne. Danielle keeps teasing me, “Grammy, if I have a girl I have to call her Suzanne?” I say, “Oh yes, you can’t break the tradition.” My father being a medical doctor was in the hospital delivering another baby when I was born so one of his associates attended my birth.

My Homeland

Boulay-Moselle is a small town of probably 4,000 people about the size of Nixa. It was wonderful growing up in a small town as everyone knew one another. We had wonderful friends with whom we socialized and we were free to go anywhere in town! It is located in northeastern France about 10 miles from the German border. France covers 210,000 square miles. Switzerland lies to the south. Luxembourg to the north. About 60 million people live in France.

The Maginot Line, the fortification to keep out the Germans, was at our doorsteps. This fortification, built after World War I, was a barbed-wire barrier with towers at regular intervals. Underground were rooms for communications and living quarters. Many times I would play around the towers which projected out from the ground and be amused by it. For history’s sake the Germans were wise enough to invade France by coming around the Maginot Line so it served no purpose. We were also about an hour’s drive from Luxembourg, a very small country probably just a little larger than southwest Missouri. This is where we spent our summer vacations.

You have heard of Alsace Lorraine which are two departments of France. Departments are similar to counties here. That part of France was the prize given to the victor after winning a war. In 1872 after the Franco-Prussian War, Alsace Lorraine was given to the Germans (Prussians back then) having been the victors in that war. It remained German until after the First World War which was won by France so Alsace Lorraine was returned to the French. Then in the Second World War before D-Day the Germans occupied France so Alsace Lorraine was German again. After the Americans liberated us, it became French. So you see we are a jewel which has been tossed back and forth – like who gets the lollipop? Therefore you have to understand why Alsace Lorraine people are very patriotic towards France and despise the Germans because of the atrocities of war-time.

Alsace Lorraine has the best farmland in France and is famous for its wine. The Moselle wine, which can be purchased here in the United States, is cultivated in my country. One of the greatest deposits of iron ore lies beneath the soil of eastern France. Coal is mined along the Luxembourg corner. Beds of clay, used in making porcelain, are also located there. You probably have heard of Villeroy and Bloch china. It is made at a factory in Luxembourg. Daum glassware is made at the factory in Nancy, which is not too far from my hometown. The Vosges Mountain district supplies lumber, coal, and salt. Its streams provide hydroelectric power. Alsace Lorraine also supports a textile industry. We have beautiful chestnut trees, cottonwoods, oaks, and especially poplars which line the highways and make a charming aspect of traveling French roads.

During World War II much fighting took place near my hometown. The Battle of the Bulge was fought in bitter winter weather around Metz and Luxembourg. General Patton is buried in Luxembourg in an American cemetery with at least a thousand other white crosses. It is a sight that someone never forgets as it signifies the depth of the fighting and the long-range war that occurred there. The people in the area were so grateful to the Americans for liberating them and maintain that cemetery as if it were their own.

The land is very similar to the Ozarks with the Vosges Mountains surrounding the flat terrain. The Moselle River runs through Metz which is 15 miles south of Boulay and where most of my mother's family lived. It is very beautiful country, very agricultural. Whenever my relatives visit me, after having been to New York and Chicago, they arrive in Springfield and think it is just like being back home. I keep telling them that New York and Chicago are not the United States of America. You have to come to the Midwest to know the people, to feel what we really are instead of being in the big cities on the east coast.

The climate is much cooler than in Springfield. Boulay is at the latitude of Montreal, Canada. It may get to 70 degrees in the summer time and probably 5 to 10 degrees in winter. Just like in Springfield we may have some very harsh winters with snow for one month. Then again we may have a mild winter with not that much snow but it will always be cold. There is no wind but from November 1st to May 1st it is cold. The difference is we wear much heavier clothing than you do here. You have seen those very heavy sweaters that are beautiful but you just can't wear them because it is too warm in the house or it is too warm under a coat. This is what we wear every day because our homes are kept much cooler probably not more than 68 degrees. Naturally, we have no air-conditioning because it is pleasant in the 70s so we do not need air-conditioning. Now the first-class hotels have air-conditioning purely to please the tourists, especially the Americans. French wouldn't have an air-conditioned car – that is just unknown! I caution my relatives not to visit me in July or August because they wouldn't be able to withstand this heat!

My Language

My native language is French. Every area speaks a dialect, especially in Luxembourg and Germany. In Luxembourg the dialect is used at home, but schooling is in French. In Germany, when I was studying German, they called the real German, "*Hoch Deutsch*" which means "High German". The German spoken at home is a dialect. I think in France

we probably have some phrases or words that are local but the French language is similar to the French language taught here. It is a difficult language to learn as it has so much grammar, verbs, masculine and feminine. The desk is *le pupitre* which is masculine but the chair is *la chaise* which is feminine. Now don't ask me why! When I took my two daughters to France my uncle remarked, "Just teach them 500 words vocabulary. Don't worry about the verbs. Teach the word along with the article then they won't think about 'Why is it masculine?' 'Why is it feminine?'" So for six months we learned the vocabulary. When they went to France that summer within a couple of weeks they were speaking French without any thought of the grammar, the subjunctive, the future, or all the tenses that you are taught. I have always felt that a foreign language should be taught with half of the study period in the grammar and half in conversation then you would be able to speak the language as well as know a little bit of the grammar. Also you should never study a language for just one or two years. If you make up your mind that you want to learn French or Spanish take it at least four years then you will develop an ear for it. I also made my daughters take Latin because I had studied Latin. Many teachers will tell you that it is a dead language. In Europe we are taught that Latin is a basic language so is just part of your curriculum because it teaches you the roots of so many words. If you go into medicine, law, or many other professions Latin is still the basic language so you wouldn't waste your time taking one or two years of Latin.

My Family

My father, Edmund Guldner, was born at Thionville, north of Boulay about ten miles from Luxembourg, on May 25, 1890. He was one of four children - two brothers and two sisters. He was tall six feet, 2 or 3 inches, and slim, very stoic, rather quiet but observant. Medicine was his life and his family was second. He was a very intelligent person. He liked to read, was always studying or researching something. His oldest brother was first a lawyer and then a doctor and came to the United States to Wichita, Kansas, many years before World War II.

*My dad as a
medical student*



His sister, *Tante* Germaine lived in Strasbourg and was a wife and mother. *Tante* Gabby, who introduced my father to my mother, was a beautiful, wonderful woman who played a great part in World War II. She is credited with saving the lives of eleven American fliers and six British fliers who were downed in occupied France. She also gave the Allies information on German troop movements with a hidden radio and was active with the French underground. The Gestapo arrested her in 1944 and kept her confined for four months. Then she was sent to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp and forced to do work in the infamous Cell Block 10 where Germans used women as guinea pigs for human endurance tests. In 1945 she and ten other women who were held hostage by Germans were rescued by the Swedish Red Cross. She had lost 50 pounds while in prison. She was awarded the United States Medal of Freedom in 1947 and the French Legion of Honor by French President DeGaulle in 1963.

My father graduated from medical school in Strasbourg which was German at the time. One of his classmates was Dr. Albert Schweitzer. It was during the German occupation of Alsace Lorraine so father spoke German fluently. He also studied in Freiburg and Vienna. My paternal grandfather, Joseph Guldner, was in the lumber business. He imported woods from eastern Europe and made a small fortune. He died in his late forties leaving a widow with four teenage children. They lived in a handsome villa near Metz and attended Catholic School. Then the Scandal – Grandmother fell in love with a teaching priest! She was ostracized by society and by family as well. The boys left school and the girls were sent to an uncle. Grandmother finally married the defrocked priest – another family scandal! They lived in a small apartment in Metz and my mother never allowed me to know them. After Mother's death I visited them several times. Grandmother was already bedridden and passed away shortly thereafter.

My mother, Suzanne Marie Josephine Muller, was born March 1, 1900, in Metz. She was the fourth of six children and the favorite of the family. She was blond, blue-eyed, slim, and outgoing with naturally curly hair. My aunts and uncles tell me that I am the picture of Zazanne, their nickname for her. Mother was very affectionate, soft-spoken, and loving. She liked to knit and taught me how when I was four or five years old. I used to sit by her and knit scarves for the Red Cross with her left over yarn. Anything that was left over I could knit and pearl into scarves. She did a great deal of volunteer work. She never passed her driver's test. I think of her many times when I get sick about having to do something because Mother would always become ill or have a migraine headache on the day she went to take her test, so, unfortunately, even though we had two cars, Mother was never able to drive. I was always grateful for the excellent train system in France because you can take trains just about as easy as you can drive anywhere. Mother was a family person and often entertained her family.

My maternal grandparents were from Luxembourg. They were called *Pépère* and *Mémère*. They were so loving and spent every weekend with us. *Mémère* wore a little grosgrain band around her neck with the color corresponding to her dress. That always fascinated me! *Pépère* loved to play cards, or checkers, or backgammon and taught me every card game that you could ever think of. He dealt in investments and had a large office at home with two large desks. I was told not to disturb him when he was in his office. He was

always neatly dressed in his dark suit, with a tie, a homburg hat, and carrying a cane. That cane gave him power! He just needed to swish the cane and you knew you had to behave! They were picture perfect grandparents and very close to me.



My mother in our garden in 1938

I have two step-brothers - Jean and Louis Phillippe. Their nicknames were Jeannot and Lou Lou. My brothers, being older than I, were always in boarding school at Nancy so I only saw them on school vacations and in the summer time. I enjoyed the summer with them and they used to tease and torment me but I appreciate them now. I have become much closer to them in our adult years. Jeannot has visited me many times. He still lives in Paris, free-lances and does consulting work for Waste Management. He travels between France, the United States, and Africa. He comes to Chicago or Atlanta for a day or two and will call me. Once I met him in Chicago. Lou Lou is retired now. He was an attorney for the French railroad and did all the legal work for the railroad. Their mother passed away when they were five and eight years old and Father married my mother in 1928.

My mother passed away suddenly February 4, 1938, which was my brother's 16th birthday. I was eight years old and was taken to my grandparents' home and told that my mother was sent to my uncle in the United States to get her well! My father passed away December 22, 1977 while practicing medicine at Lamar, Missouri. He was still attending his patients a couple of days before his death. My mother's siblings were still living when I returned to France several times. It was like being back home with my family when I took my daughters to France in 1970.

Pépère and Mémère



My mother was very, very close to her family. Although we spent every Thursday with my grandparents, *Pépère* and *Mémère*, they would take the train every Saturday and spend an overnight with us in Boulay. After Mass my grandfather and father would go to the beer hall and play *Belotte*, which is a card game, have a couple of steins of beer and enjoyed one another. My grandmother would sit with my mother and probably spoil me as much as she could. My mother entertained her family with dinners or so forth, but actually when we were really all together was at the farmhouse in Brouch in Luxembourg.

I feel still very close with my mother's family whom I left when I was 10 years old to come to America. I have nine cousins, two are deceased - one was lost in the Algerian War in the 1980s and the other I just lost to cancer this spring. I try to return to France at least every two years, every year if I possibly can, because this band of cousins who grew up together and spent summer vacations together are very, very close. We enjoy reminiscing and exchanging pictures, laughing about certain things and crying about some others. Whenever I get lonely for my family, here I am on that plane, going back to France to visit my cousins and my brothers who both live in Paris.

CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

Visiting Grandparents

Since in France you just go to school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, Thursday is your holiday. Every Thursday we took the train to Metz to visit my *Pépère* and *Mémère*. There would be my *Pépère* on the platform of the train dressed in his black homburg and his cane ready to receive us and escort us to their home. Mother would spend the day with her siblings to go shopping or have lunch with them. I would play cards and be entertained by my grandfather. I remember one funny thing. At four o'clock before we took the train home we always had a little snack. *Pépère*, who had quite long mustache, always loved cottage cheese. He would get it in his mustache and it would amuse him when I would say, "I need to clean your mustache." Whenever I eat cottage cheese I think of that! For snacks we would have bread and butter, which we called, "*tartine*", with either apple sauce or cottage cheese on it, or we would have a nice long bun with a bar of chocolate. I also remember taking dancing lessons on Thursdays. My grandparents doted on my mother and me and were heart broken when she died so suddenly. They took me away for six months as they were upset with my father.

My Pet

We had a little Manchester dog named Mirtzel. He either went with Father on calls or would follow me to school. When we were away from home and took Mirtzel with us to go to church or a restaurant, Mirtzel was so small he would fit in my father's overcoat pocket. He would be very still but you would see that little head peeping out. I remember at church once when the priest saw Mirtzel, my father just put his hand over Mirtzel's head as if to say, "He isn't here, you are just dreaming!" I did not have any other pets.



Our home in Boulay

My Childhood Home

My father built our home in 1930. It was a beautiful house with 18 rooms. Now don't think it was grandiose because my father's medical offices were on the ground floor and we lived upstairs. The exterior was of pressed concrete with a slate roof. Many of the homes in France have a slate roof which lasts a life time. It was built by the river on about three acres. Since my mother loved roses, we had flower gardens, also a vegetable garden and fruit trees. We had a gardener. I loved to pick strawberries and radishes in the garden. Between the gardens were gravel walking paths. A line of poplars surrounded the grounds. Poplars are beautiful tall trees, slim looking but very majestic.

My father's offices occupied about six rooms - a large waiting room, several examining rooms, an x-ray room. Just think about it he handled his office by himself - no receptionist, no nurse, no x-ray technician - and he was one of the best diagnosticians in the country! Downstairs, in addition to my father's offices, were the maids' quarters, the kitchen, the wine cellar, and furnace room. The wine cellar was big and temperature controlled with at least 600-800 bottles. We had special wines for certain occasions. Whenever I return to Paris, my family serves the special wine, from 1991 perhaps, for *connoisseurs*. The wine served with each course becomes a main topic of conversation. My cousins in Provence will spend a day visiting different wine cellars to taste the wine. I have had the opportunity to go along and fun it is!

We had two maids. One was named Marie. She took care of the cooking and laundry and considered the kitchen her private castle. She did not want anyone to enter the kitchen or tell her what to do! Then there was Katie. She took care of cleaning of the house, served us at the table, and, if Marie needed help with the ironing, Katie would do that. The kitchen was very large. It had a big coal stove for cooking and where the iron was heated for ironing. On the right side it had a deep container of boiling water so if you needed boiling water for anything it was always ready. Besides that we had a gas oven which was really quite something in those days. In the room next to the kitchen was the electric refrigerator, also something quite special. Some of the other food was stored in an ice box which the ice man filled every day. The dumb waiter carried our food from the kitchen to a pantry upstairs to be served in the dining room.

Upstairs we had our lodging with five bedrooms. Beautiful outdoor stairs led to the front door where you entered into a large foyer, circular with doorways to different wings. The floor was parquet hardwood as was most of the living area. The bedrooms were carpeted and the bathrooms tiled. On one side of the foyer were three bedrooms. My father and mother's bedroom was a large room with a balcony and master bath. My bedroom, about 15' by 18', with flowered wallpaper and two large windows and balcony, was where my friends could come and play, where I would study, sleep, and play with my dolls. In France your bedroom is your private suite, where you receive your friends. You don't go into the living room with your toys! Here we have a family room but in France only a salon. The third bedroom on that side was for the doctor who replaced Dad when he went on vacation. On the other side of the foyer were two other bedrooms. One for my two brothers when they were home in the summer and vacation time. The other was for my grandparents who came to spend every weekend. You think about it - here were five

bedrooms but only three baths because a bathroom is not as important in France as the bedroom or the dining room. On the upper level we also had a formal area which was the dining room, the living room, and the library. Those were the rooms for my parents to entertain their guests. We also had the everyday dining room where we took our meals. It was a very large dining room with a big couch where I spent most of my time with my mother.

To think that this house was evacuated and ransacked! Not only did the German soldiers live there but the French, American, and British. They took up the parquet floors in the foyer and many other rooms to use the wood in the fireplace for heat in the winter, I presume. When I went back after the war I didn't want to see the interior because I have such fond memories of our home that was so beautiful and where I grew up. As it turned out we finally sold it to an electric company for office space. When we returned to France after the war nothing was left of all the furniture which my father had stored! There were only kitchen pots and pans – no living room suite, no bedroom suite, nothing! From what we hear the German officers took all these furnishings back to Germany. So where it is, who knows? So all my memories of our home are in my head. I have no silver, nor linens, nor Persian rugs. Everything is gone forever! The war, the loss of my mother and two husbands have taught me one thing - not to value material things. To be happy is not to have the biggest house or the biggest car but to have one another is the most important thing in life.

My Typical Day

As far as my typical day, when I was a little girl - I would get up about seven o'clock and, after dressing, go to the kitchen to have my breakfast. It consisted of *café au lait*, which is about 1/3 hot chicory coffee with hot milk, in a soup mug with a croissant or some toast of left over baguette from yesterday. You never use left over French bread the next day except as toast or bread pudding.

I left for school at 7:30 am. I walked or rode my bicycle four times a day. It was about one mile because we lived on one side of town and the school was on the other side so I had to go through town to get to school. On my way home for lunch, I picked up the baguettes at the bakery for the day's meals. Usually I was so hungry that I would munch on a baguette and end up with half a baguette gone by the time I arrived home. Our main meal was lunch. It consisted of soup, an entrée of either meat or fish with a vegetable, a salad, bread, and cheese with fruit for dessert. I did not drink any milk, only water. As I grew older every year my father would add a teaspoon of wine in my glass of water at Sunday dinner. By the time I was nine years old I was having about two teaspoons of wine in my glass of water. I looked forward to my birthday for another teaspoon of wine added to my glass of water!

Mother and I lunched and dined together most of the time. My father left for the hospital at 6:00 o'clock in the morning and came back to see his patients who were sitting in the waiting room from 7:00 o'clock on. When he left the office late afternoon he made house calls and often times would stay in a home at night to deliver a baby. Probably the only time I saw my father was on Sunday for Sunday dinner or whenever we took a vacation.

We took beautiful trips of two or three weeks in the summer time to Yugoslavia, Hungary, or Germany. We had two cars: the Renault my father used for house calls and a long black Ford with red velvet seats. It had those extra jump seats in the back. That car was used for family trips.

When I was in school, I came home at four o'clock. I had my snack which consisted of a big roll with cheese in it, or a chocolate bar, or sometimes a cookie. Then I played outdoors in the garden with my friends, ball or croquet, since I was such a tomboy! I came in for my homework at six o'clock. After that Mother taught me handwork - embroidery, knitting, darning. I still enjoy doing any type of handwork. We also read a little. I did not eat supper until 8:00 o'clock. Supper generally consisted of a soup and perhaps cold meat and potato salad, hot potato salad, or baked potato. Then for dessert we would have a custard. Or we would have pasta and an egg dish like Quiche Lorraine, which is served in this country but originated in my native country. That is sometimes served for dinner. Then I went to bed. My father and mother usually didn't dine until nine or ten o'clock after I was in bed.

With two maids I really didn't do much around the house but I had the job of setting the table. That was very, very important to me. When my brothers came home in the summer they had to take their turn setting the table, but they wouldn't do it. They bribed me with an ice cream cone if I would set the table. You know you will do anything for an ice cream cone! My father was very strict with the boys but mother was very easy. The two things we had to remember were not to go into the formal area and to play in our own rooms. This was not really too difficult!



My schoolmates in Boulay

School

I attended parochial school with the nuns all my life because I was Catholic. I became Presbyterian when I married my husband Max. I really liked the nuns very much. First they were strict. I was fearful of some of them because their habits with their headgear made them seem to be such astute persons. As a little girl I always wondered if they had any hair under that headgear! I did finally find the answer years later. Sister Mary Therese was so kind to me after my mother passed away. My father was Doctor for the nuns and therefore they spoiled me a little bit. When I was not feeling well I would be allowed to go to their kitchen and have a bowl of hot milk and honey. I still use that as a remedy when I have a cold. You should try it - it is very good! After my mother passed away, I stayed for study hall from four to six. My father would pick me up on his way home from the hospital which adjoined the school.

School is very different in France from the United States. First we enter school in the 12th grade and it goes down in numbers instead of starting in the first grade. We do begin school at four years old with preschool. We are six when we attend the 12th grade. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday are school days. Thursday is a day off. I think that is a good idea because it breaks your week in two, but then you don't have the long weekend. Our school day was from 8:00 to 11:30 and from 1:00 to 4:00. Our school year is from October to July. We wore uniforms. In elementary it was just a black cover up, sort of an apron which buttoned on the left side. Ordinarily we just wore a heavy slip beneath it. In the winter we wore knee socks and when it was very cold we would wear full wool socks. Now as I grew older we wore jumpers or skirts with blouses. To this day I dislike a jumper because it reminds me of my boarding school days!

Since I attended parochial school the classes were much smaller but our curriculum was much harder than in the United States. First we had no choices. We had to study what was scheduled every year. First was catechism, then penmanship, reading, arithmetic, history, geography, and science but very little physical education. We had a recess in the morning at 10 o'clock and again at three when we played volley ball or what ever other sport. Sports are not very important in France. In the United States we put so much emphasis from the time a child is young on being on the Little League, football, or soccer. Now soccer is European and is quite a popular sport but academics are much more important than sports. I enjoyed school and being with my friends. We memorized a great deal. When you think about it we had seventeen centuries of dates to remember when you have only two or three centuries! We would walk home saying our multiplication tables or asking one another history dates. Science was my weakness and languages were my forte. I studied Latin and German when I was nine years old. A perfect note was ten and then grading went down from there. Anything beneath a seven or six was not very good. I am proud to say that I usually made a nine or ten and still have my report card – first over seventeen students. We were graded on conduct, promptness, order, courtesy, where I also had nines and tens.

After elementary school comes *Lycées* which is considered the high school with a high academic standard. At *Lycées* you prepare for the *bachot* which is your baccalaureate. Most girls attend private schools. The baccalaureate is taken at the end of your twelfth

year. It is a week of exams composed of three days written and two days oral. It is very, very stiff. One of my brothers passed on first try. The other failed the first part and took it again in September. If you fail you must wait another year for the month of June to try again. After passing the baccalaureate you are allowed to apply to a university to study law, medicine, or engineering. At the university you had some other tests because the competition is stiff but good jobs in civil service will always go to someone with high scholastic records. In France the public universities are state owned and there is no tuition. The Sorbonne in Paris, the old University of Paris, has the law school and medical school. The *Ecole Polytechnique* is considered our best engineering school in France. Let me tell you, whenever you graduated *Ecole Polytechnique* you had a job anywhere!

Again I want to emphasize that in France, or anywhere in Europe, we are compelled to study at least one or two foreign languages. It is a helpful tool. I don't think that they impress upon students in the United States to study a foreign language because America is so large and we figure that everyone speaks English all over the world. But, no, it will help you if you can study French or German or Spanish. Do not study it for just one year. You need to study a language at least three or four years. You need to learn the art of conversation as well as the art of grammar. Just learn the words and if it is possible to spend a month in that country you will be speaking it just like a native! Also try to decide which language is your forte and study every subject connected to it like science or history. You will use it and excel in it.

When I came to America I attended private schools, Notre Dame DeSion in Kansas City and Mount Carmel Academy in Wichita, where I graduated at 16½. My father was always opposed to public schools because it was coed. He was interested only in academic study and felt the boarding school 200 miles away was the only place for me. My sophomore year at Notre Dame DeSion was very strict. Mail was opened and censored. We could not go shopping on Saturday or see a movie without having a senior escort us. A letter of permission from parents was required to spend an overnight with a day student. We slept in dormitories in a cubicle about 10' by 10' with bed and dresser and white showerlike curtains you drew around for privacy. The shower and bathroom facilities were down the hall. It was very hard on me and I cried myself to sleep nearly every night. I promised myself I would not make my children attend boarding school. Perhaps it was beneficial for my studies but certainly not for love of family. I went home only for holidays. My father would not listen to me. The next year I attended Mount Carmel Academy in Wichita where I was a senior and had a private room. My stepmother's family lived in Wichita and she had graduated from Mount Carmel Academy so I was happier spending weekends with family members. I took some additional classes at Wichita University for credit to be able to graduate in three years. I finished high school in three years because my father wanted to return to France after the war to settle his assets and see what was left of our property. He asked me to continue my studies in France or Switzerland. In 1946 I returned to Lausanne, Switzerland, and France for my college studies at Strasbourg University.

I wanted to study languages and continue to speak French fluently and naturally English. I speak French with an Ozarkian accent and English with a French accent! I am fairly good

in German. I always wanted to study languages and go into embassy work but that did not happen. I became a travel agent and my knowledge of geography was an asset.

I played the piano but never felt like I had any musical talent. Nevertheless I have always envied friends who can play anything on the piano. When I grow older I may take up the guitar.

Holidays in France

Being Catholic we observed many religious holidays as well as the national holidays. We celebrated within the family. December 6 is Saint Nicholas Day. Now this is a big difference between the United States and France. Saint Nicholas comes to visit us in school wearing a golden robe and big headgear. He brings oranges and candy. Accompanying him is the little man with the big black cape and switches. If you had not been good you get the switches! Today grandparents treat Saint Nicholas Day like Christmas and usually have a party for the grandchildren and offer them gifts. December 25 is Father Noel, *Pere Noel*. On Christmas Eve the children go to bed around 8 pm and the adults go to midnight mass. Upon their return they ring bells and come to awaken us. It is through the belief that Jesus was born at midnight and the statue of Jesus is not included in the nativity scene until that time. Then it is sheer magic. We dress and join the party. We come in and see the beautiful Christmas Tree which had been set up in our formal living room. I never saw the Christmas Tree until after midnight mass. There was the ten to twelve foot tree with the manger. Perhaps I would get a doll, a school briefcase, or one thing I particularly wanted. This was from the *Pere Noel*. There were no gifts from my grandparents or from anyone else. We had a traditional meal on Christmas Day with extended family. It included the *Bûche de Noël*, (Christmas Log) which is a jelly roll cake filled with ice cream. We usually would have a turkey with chestnut stuffing. Neither cranberries nor pumpkin pie are served. Thanksgiving is American Pilgrim Day. The Christmas Tree and decorations are not put away until Epiphany January 6th when the Wise Men returned home. On Epiphany we have a big feast with a cake in which the Three Wise Men statuettes are inserted. If you are lucky enough to get that piece of cake you get a prize, be what it may. On New Year's Day you visit friends and perhaps take them a little gift to wish them, "Happy New Year." In recent years Christmas holiday and New Year's Day have become ski vacation time and the entire family doesn't get together. On the contrary young adults will leave for a few days of skiing. Remember in Europe distances are not as great as here. You can be in the mountains within three or four hours via train or car. Christmas vacations last two or three weeks so you can travel.

We did not observe Valentine's Day but it is gaining in popularity. Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday, is a big celebration in France similar to New Orleans in the United States. We have parades and all the candy we can eat as Lent begins the next day when we always gave up sweets. In Nice on the Riviera they have parades of flowers like we have here on New Year's Day in Pasadena. Easter Day is pretty much like our holiday here. We go to church and come back to look for Easter eggs, be it chocolate or candy eggs, in the basket. July 14 is Bastille Day which dates to the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution. It is the biggest feast of all when they will dance in the streets all night with annual fireworks at 10:00 o'clock and at midnight. I was in Paris a few years ago on July

14. We saw the tanks coming down the Champs Elysées. You are able to rent little step stools that you stand on to see. I believe you paid like five dollars for a stool. All Souls' Day is like your Memorial Day, but it is the night before Halloween. On that day we decorate family graves. The last few years when I have gone back I have observed some Halloween decorations in shop windows. Perhaps that is beginning to take over there, just like McDonalds on the Champs Elysées! There are a few American customs that are being enjoyed by the younger people.

Marriages are again a very special occasion, because you always have the civil ceremony at the Court House the day previous to the church wedding. There is a big dinner that night and the next day is the church ceremony so most of the weddings take two days. Baby christening is also a big occasion when the godparents are given the child and a family dinner is served with gifts offered.



The Family at our Sunday performance in Brouch



*La Vieillotte,
Luxembourg*



My cousins on beach at Deauville

Summers in Luxembourg

My vacations in the summer time, aside from going with my parents for several weeks to Yugoslavia, Germany, or Italy, were spent in Brouch, Luxembourg, at my grandfather's farm. The name of the farm was *La Vieillotte* (The Old Place). Those were the most memorable times of my childhood. Brouch is about an hour's drive from the city of Luxembourg. The village, probably not any bigger than Sparta, had one grocery store which did big business in the summer time with about twenty of us there, a church, a farmer's Co-op, naturally a tavern where the men could sit and have their beer, the farm, and the cemetery where my mother is buried. Whenever I go back to France I always go and lay some flowers on the family grave in Luxembourg. The farm had few amenities. We had an outdoor toilet. I was always fearful to go out at night to go to the bathroom! The water was pumped in the kitchen. But, you know, to all of us children who really led a very comfortable life, it was very charming. We thought it was something we didn't get to do every day so we enjoyed it. There were five bedrooms upstairs with no bath because you only used the wash bowl in your bedroom to wash off. We probably didn't take many baths during our stay in Brouch! When our parents came to spend the weekend all eight of us slept in a single bedroom which was right next to the cow barn. We could hear the cows moo and the hay was right there! We were eight cousins within a few year age span - Cissia and Francine; Suzette and Jacqueline; Marie Claire and Claudine; Jean and Jacques. Our ages ranged from four or five to eight or nine. We spent six to eight weeks there. Sometimes the parents would vacation with adults then come to spend a week there or mother's sisters would be there. Someone from the family would always be there besides my grandparents and the maids who would constantly argue in the kitchen.

Marie Claire and I had our little cabin in the woods where we played house and served tea just like little girls do here. The big girls would hide from us. They would run as soon as we finished our lunch so they wouldn't have to play with us. There was a big cow bell that rang when we were all to come in, wash our hands, and sit at this big oval table with *Pépère* and *Mémère* for our meals. We were bedded down before the adults took their

evening meal. On Saturdays one bachelor uncle would take us on an all day hike. I am sure it was to eliminate us being around our parents who were having a wonderful weekend together. We left generally around ten o'clock in the morning with our lunch in our backpack. We were not to return until about six o'clock. I remember sitting on top a hill overlooking the farm saying, "Oh, we are so hungry and we are so tired!" Our uncle kept looking at his watch and saying, "We cannot go home until six o'clock!" Then we immediately washed up, had our dinner, and went to bed. On Sunday after church and our big Sunday dinner, we all performed for our parents. Be it a musical or be it a skit. During the week we would get to milk the cows by hand, collect the eggs, ride horses, play in the hayloft, so we really never wanted to go home. It was just a wonderful time and I think has led to our cousins being so bonded to one another. It is sheer joy for me to return to France every other year or every year, if possible, to spend some time with each one of them.



My cousins welcoming me in Paris in 1998

Actually all of my family in France are my cousins and my two brothers living in Paris. But still with three generations living we have reunions of 40-45. Whenever I return it is a big celebration. They plan whom I visit and when. I feel like a queen! It is hard to leave them as they are my family. Many ask me why I do not move back to France but I became an adult here and am accustomed to life here. I also have my two girls, two grandchildren,

and my friends here. Besides my cousins say I wouldn't be treated like a queen if I lived there!

Transportation in France

Our transportation was mainly by bicycle and by train since my mother didn't drive. The railroad system in France and all over Europe is just marvelous. We have first-class and second-class. My father being a doctor for the railroad we had a free first-class pass for France and part of Europe. Trains are so convenient because you are served meals, the trains run on time, and the station is in the center of town. Nowadays they have the TGV, a train which travels 160 miles an hour so you can go from Paris to Nice in six hours. You have to realize that many people in France do not own a car. To have a car in Paris is just a big burden because you cannot find a parking place, just like in New York or Chicago. Gas is very expensive in Europe like six dollars a gallon so that is why they drive small cars. Actually why drive a car when you can take the train? Most people depend on trains and public transportation to get to work. The only annoyance are strikes. The French people, the working class, will go on strike when they don't like something imposed on them. They will just decide that tomorrow we aren't going to go to work – be it the pilots, be it the baggage carriers, be it the bus drivers. You just wake up and there you are -- they are not working! Strikes make for complete chaos in the city but one survives.

Religion in France

The religion in France is mostly Catholic. But now Catholics are called, "non-practicing Catholics" because going to church is not very popular in France. There are some Protestants but the French as a whole are indifferent to religion. Be it that you go to church or you don't go to church is of no importance. Sunday has become a day for visiting an art exhibit or going to the country.

Entertaining in France

Your home is your private castle. Aside from family and very close friends you are rarely invited into the home. The lady of the house will meet friends for tea at a pastry shop about three or four in the afternoon where you will see all these beautiful pastries - little tarts, Napoleons, cream puffs and so forth. You choose your pastries which you put on a little plate and then you order your tea or coffee. The man of the house will have an aperitif or beer with one of his partners if he wants to talk a little bit away from the office. Often times when the weather is nice it will be at an outdoor cafe. That's what you think of in France is the outdoor cafes. As children, or as young adults, we meet friends for a movie or, if they do come and visit us, it will be in our own private room. In later years we are dining out much more but generally without the children. Children still are seen but not heard!

Meals are taken very leisurely. Lunch time, generally from twelve to two, all shops will be closed. Department stores like *Galeries Lafayette* will stay open throughout the day. Any private shops will re-open at two o'clock and remain open until six anyway. Dinner will take place nine pm or later. Whenever I return to France, we are invited out for dinner at 8:30. After being served an aperitif, dinner will not take place until ten o'clock. Now you

can imagine if you go from two until ten without food! This is why I have to have my little snack around 4:30 whenever I am in France.

Meals are served in courses. First you have soup or an appetizer, then an entree of fish or fowl or meat, then a salad, and last a large tray of creamy and hard cheese and bread. You will end the meal with fresh fruits of the day - be it Bing cherries, apples, pears, oranges - or a tart. Fruit tarts are just delicious with some sugar over the fruit! I often times make a plum tart or an apricot tart. You have a clean plate for every course. This comes from the days of having a maid, but still today you will not be served salad on the same plate as your entree. The salad is a definite course after your main course. You will have water to drink along with your glass of wine. You may be served a white wine with one course and with the next course a red wine. Generally after the meal we will all retire to the living room to have a demitasse of coffee and if you wish a little liqueur with it.

Whenever you are a guest in a home you have your own napkin given to you the first day. That napkin is placed in a cloth envelope or a napkin ring. That is your napkin for several days. It will be changed but every meal this is your particular napkin. You know which ring or casing you use. As an invited dinner guest, you always present your host with a gift, perhaps flowers or chocolates.

Most of my family still has a maid - mostly Portuguese help. My cousin has had one since 1993 who prepares the supper and will serve dinner if my cousin is having guests. She will even set the table for breakfast. When she arrives at nine in the morning she will do the dishes from the night before. Now they do have a dishwasher, an electric refrigerator, and use a great deal of frozen foods but they still go to market every morning. It is beautiful thing to do especially in Paris and all these little provincial towns. You go to the fish market, to the vegetable market, to the fruit market, and after a few times they all know you so say to you, "Oh, you must have this!" or "You must have that, it is special today." At the cheese market they will say, "No, now today that goat cheese just isn't ripe enough, you will have to wait three or four days and it will be better." You carry your little tote bag. Believe it or not the next day you start all over again! We don't purchase for two or three days! It is the lady of the house who goes to market every day. I enjoy doing it whenever I am in France. Nowadays markets also sell linens, arts and crafts, or handmade articles. When you come home, the maid will prepare lunch from your purchases. The maid leaves around three or four pm. She will prepare supper or, if you have guests, stay to serve dinner.

In France meals are much more important as it is a time for the family to be together. Again, due to the many courses, it is not quick. Whenever French travel their restaurant selection is more important than their hotel room. They will travel out of the way for a four or five star restaurant. Reservations must be made days ahead as only 25 or 30 can be seated and food will be prepared for only that number. If you wish a certain special entree you must ask for it at RSVP time. Nowadays I find that restaurant prices are much higher than in United States, especially Springfield. Dinner can be \$30 to \$40 for the meal without wine. Sandwiches or continental breakfast about \$10 or \$15. One difference is the tip is included although for special favors you leave a gratuity.

CHAPTER THREE: THE WAR YEARS

My mother passed away in February 1938 and I went to live with my grandparents for six months. Since I was in mourning, I wore gray with black trimming on my jumper or dress. In France when in mourning men will wear a black band on their coat sleeve and women will wear black for six months. It was a very sad time in my life as I did not know what had happened to my mother. After mother's family was in mourning I was finally told by my aunts. It was a very strange feeling as I realized I would never see my mother again. What is heaven or hereafter to an eight year old? I was confused and wanted my mother! In the fall, my father wanted me home and hired a governess. She was very kind but, oh, how I missed my mother! Since war was raging Dad sent us to St. Jean-de-Luz near the Spanish border. It is a beautiful town on the Atlantic coast where we had close friends. I went to school there that winter. In the fall of 1939 my father asked us to return to Metz as he had evacuated our home and felt war was imminent. The furnishings of 18 rooms were stored, never to be seen again! When we returned to France in 1946 all we could find were pots, pans, and kitchen accessories as the German officers had taken everything.

When Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany. All was quiet for six months. This was called "the phony war." In April 1940 the Germans invaded Denmark, Norway, and rolled in to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Luxembourg fell in one day. On June 5 the Germans invaded France by going north of the Maginot Line and the French retreated. Paris was declared an open city so it wouldn't be damaged and the Germans entered Paris on June 14. As we were returning to Metz by train, our train was sidelined for 24 hours. We were bombarded and laid on the floor of the train. Now I knew what war really was! With homes gone people were walking down the road with just a backpack! Can you imagine leaving home with what you can carry on your back? My father had moved to Lorquin to practice and upon arriving there we were immediately taken to a large underground cave with several hundred persons where we sought shelter from bombing for three days - eating soup and bread, sleeping on blankets, listening to the bombs! Often times you would see elderly people hugging and kissing one another as if it was going to be the end! When we finally came out German soldiers were marching in the streets. To this day I can hear the clicking of their boots and visualize them with their German uniforms and their Nazi attitude. Upon arriving home there were three horses shot down in our front yard. I was frightened to death and hid in the closet for days! We moved again in Metz to live with my paternal grandmother's husband, Mr. Boniface, the ostracized priest. It was an old apartment, relatively small, heavy furniture, lots of drapes, and always in semidarkness. My brothers were in Africa serving with the Free French Army. My father was sequestered by the Germans at the hospital at Thionville about thirty miles away where they needed doctors.

Nazi occupation was harsh. Nazi soldiers were everywhere, watching to arrest you and take you in. You were fined or imprisoned if you listened to BBC or any free wave radio. Pictures of Hitler were everywhere. I had to go to public school where our day began saying a pledge to "Heil Hitler". On Sundays we were not allowed to attend church. Children were dressed in black skirts or pants and white shirts and marched in the streets singing German songs. We were rationed on all foods. Being a child I was allowed one

egg, a pint of milk, and half pound of meat per week. Often times after standing in line for one to two hours, nothing would be left when it was your turn. Many tried to buy things on the black market or move to the country where they could raise their own produce and buy dairy products from the farmers. We had blackouts at night and lived often times by candle light. My closest friends were taken by the Nazis to their camps in Germany to be educated therefore they have disappeared. I was constantly in fear that they would take me away too. My governess walked me to school and picked me up. The German soldiers came to the apartment next door to us and requested the two children, age ten to twelve, to pack a bag and be ready in ten minutes while they waited. Their parents were sent elsewhere the next day. Then a seal was placed on the front door lock and within the next week a German officer and his family moved in. Teenagers from ten to eighteen, as well as adults, of origins contrary to Hitler's regime were given fifteen minutes to pack one bag and be bussed away to Germany. What happened to them? Who knows? They came to take me, as I was in that age bracket, but because my father was a doctor I was spared! My governess tenaciously would not let me out of the house!

During the German occupation there were three zones in France - a forbidden military zone in the north, an occupied zone directly administered by the German government in Paris which extended throughout northern France down to Lyon approximately, then the so called, "Free Zone," in all of southeast France administered by Pétain under collaboration of the Vichy regime. Actually Pétain collaborated with the Germans but at least one didn't have German soldiers staring you in the face at every corner so you felt a little bit freer. Most of my mother's family had fled to Marcigny about 200 miles south of Paris near Lyon. Marcigny is a small agricultural village where they rented a large home for several families. The wives and children lived there during the war while their husbands were trying to survive in Metz. As I have said some of the family who remained in Luxembourg created a refuge for American and English fliers and helped them through the underground back to England.

After spending six months under German occupation my father decided to join the family in Marcigny. By special permission he was allowed to drive our car packed with all we could possibly take for my governess, my father, and me. We took clothing, pots and pans, and whatever we needed for housekeeping with a mattress tied on top the car! We were able to rent a four room apartment with two bedrooms, a bath, and a kitchen. Space-wise it probably wasn't any bigger than our formal living room at home but we were free of the German occupation. We could purchase milk, eggs, chicken, and cheese from the farmers. I attended parochial school and, at least, didn't live in fear! I found my cousins and we were a family again. My father practiced medicine on a small scale. All my father's assets were frozen in Luxembourg and in Switzerland.

As the German occupation and the world news worsened, my father felt that eventually Hitler would rule Europe under a dictatorship, never to be free again. He asked his brother, Dr. Gouldner, in Wichita, Kansas, if there would be any way we could come to America. Knowing Jean Borotra, the treasurer of Pétain's government, and Dad's brother being willing to subsidize us in Wichita, we were able to fulfill the requirements and have the paperwork available. Then we had to find transportation. The only point of exit was

through Portugal which was neutral at that time. They assured us of passage by ship in a year and a half and by clipper in six months. Well, naturally we took the clipper. After a time we left our car, took a train for three days through Spain, and arrived in Lisbon in August 1941. For a little girl who had never flown on an airplane, everything seemed bizarre. The clipper was an awesome plane that landed on water. We stopped in Azores and Bermuda. I cannot remember the length of time in flight but we slept aboard the plane in *couchettes* (sleeping compartments).

*My father and I
upon arriving in
the United States*



We finally arrived in New York City. Never could I have visualized this huge city with skyscrapers, stores filled with merchandise, supermarkets, cars, and different nationalities. When you think about not being able to understand or speak a word to anyone, it is a very strange feeling for an eleven year old child! I was used to seeing tanks, refugees, and railroad stations filled with people. This was paradise but still scary as I felt that I never would see home again. We were with a group of strangers. Here we were a fifty year old man and his eleven year old daughter not speaking a word of English! Daddy had one thousand dollars in his pocket to his name and one suitcase of wearing apparel. The past three years had been hard for me and I felt very insecure. My uncle and aunt met us and took us back to their home in Wichita, Kansas. Needless to say upon our arrival in Wichita we were interviewed by the newspaper and asked our thoughts and feelings. "I like America," someone would say, "Do you love ice cream?" In France we used the word "love" for a person. I noticed that in America if you like something, you love it, and yet I

don't think you should love material things. But I would say, "Okay, okay." That was my favorite word! Immediately I suffered through the heat of around 100 degrees, the mosquito and chigger bites, swimming too long in the sun that caused third degree burns with blisters and being bedded for a couple of weeks. Quite an introduction to the United States!

Soon school started. I was fortunate to attend Mount Carmel Academy where there were only two students in the seventh grade. I was tutored in English. It doesn't take a child long to acclimate, especially with everyone helping me. My father had a more difficult time and learned English from my ABC books.

After Pearl Harbor Daddy decided to try to practice medicine again. He had to learn the English language, pass his state boards after having practiced in France for 25 years, and take his residency back East. Meanwhile he married his sister-in-law, who became my stepmother and raised me from 12-18. After having raised three boys I was a new experience! She was busy helping Daddy and I was away at boarding school. Then they settled in Lamar, Missouri, and he became "the French doctor." Again his offices were on the ground level of our home. It was a farming community and patients were sitting on the porch at 6:00 am. There were no appointments. There was no hospital in Lamar so Dad went to Pittsburg or Carthage to assist his own patients on surgeries. He preferred being a diagnostician but in the 1940s a general doctor was what was wanted. He made house calls and often slept on a couch waiting to deliver a baby. Can you imagine back then he would charge three or four dollars for a physical and even give you a bottle pills to take home with you!

In 1945 when the war was nearing the end my father decided we would be returning to France the next year. So in 1946 my stepmom, Dad and I drove our Pontiac to New York City. In the car we took flour, sugar, and other dry staples for our family. We had forgotten we must empty the car for shipping and so had to enter the Picadilly Hotel on Times Square with cartons and bags of food. How embarrassing! When we left on the ship the next day we carried all our supplies. The car was shipped on a freighter several weeks later.

France in 1946 was ravaged by the war. We docked at Le Havre where the port was nearly to the ground. Everywhere people were trying to rebuild bombed out buildings. Railroad stations were just half operating with nothing working very well. Everything was a war zone but the people were so grateful to be free. Most of the valuable paintings from the museums had been stored away in hiding places. It took several years for these to be returned. My father, finding our home culled out inside, sold it to an electric company for offices. His assets in Luxembourg and Switzerland seemed to be saved. We call Switzerland the banking center of Europe as it has always remained neutral. Besides a volunteer army it has natural barriers, the Alps, so it has never been involved in a war. My father studied ear, nose, and throat so he could return to the states and specialize. I also attended school in Lisbon, Portugal. For a seventeen year old girl it was pretty exciting! I enjoyed my year of study, made many international friends, and saw the rest of my family but seeing the devastation I wanted to return to the United States. France was not what I remembered!

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

Upon returning to the United States I was to attend Chevy Chase University in Washington, DC and major in foreign languages. My dream was to work with the embassy but instead I had to manage my father's office and home in Lamar, Missouri, since my stepmom and father had divorced. Quite a disappointment! Especially when my father informed me that he was marrying a woman 20 years younger than he with three children ages six, eight, and ten, and that I was to return to Switzerland at Christmas time to escort them plus a governess to Missouri! This was the fourth marriage for my father and I felt that the new marriage and stepchildren were more important than his own children from former marriages. I was devastated as I wondered where my future was. I did not care for the woman and at 18 who wants another stepmother! My former stepmother and I were estranged after the divorce.



My husband Max and I in 1962

My Husband Max

I met Max, my first husband, when he called on Dad as a pharmaceutical salesman. We dated while I managed Dad's home and office so dates were a late dinner or a Sunday outing. We eloped to Bentonville, Arkansas, as there was no one at home to make this event a big celebration. We were married on December 6 and I had to take the ship to France two weeks later to return after Christmas with my father's new family. So although I was married I played the role of Claudine Guldner as my passport and papers were in my maiden name. Sometimes I thought my being married to be a dream but still it lasted 24 years before Max died of cancer. He was a loving, thoughtful husband, calm and friendly

but reserved. Max looked you over before committing to a friendship while I would invite strangers off the street for dinner because I have always enjoyed people. We had a wonderful life together and I grew up with him being very protective of his family. He traveled a great deal so it made me learn to make decisions and handle a family without him so prepared me for his early death.



My daughters Julie and Suzanne

Our Daughters

After we had been married six years, I had suffered two miscarriages, and my desire to have children continued, we decided to adopt a baby. Although Max was hesitant the greatest day of our life was when they placed that beautiful baby in our arms! We know this was a gift from God. Still today I feel Suzanne and Julie are my two angels who have given me so much love and joy. Without them I would not be whole! I could never have felt closer if I had carried them. They are part of Max and me, someone we created, nurtured, and raised, and who gave our lives purpose. I always told my children, "You were chosen because you were so extra special." They were Max's dream and he became very selfish with his family. It took years for me to understand that being away all week, he just wanted to be home on weekends. We played volley ball and croquet in the back yard. After Max passed away we treasured those memories. Max gave the girls horses when Suzanne was eleven and Julie eight. That's all they ever wanted from Santa Claus. Have you ever tried to explain to a child that Santa couldn't bring a horse down the chimney? Those horses became their siblings, especially after Max's death. Daily after school as well as Saturday and Sunday, Suzanne and Julie put on their horse clothes and out to the barn they went. Those horse stalls were much cleaner than their bedrooms!

After Max's death I decided to try to get a degree at SMSU but I was more interested in using my languages for business than teaching French so I sought a job in the travel business. Travel was really "my cup of tea" and after attending TWA school in Kansas City I felt equipped. In those days, before computers, we hand wrote airline tickets and customized our own tours through wholesalers. I planned tours for Drury and also for the public. It was challenging and most rewarding.

We three girls were busy. Suzanne was studying at Drury and Julie at Parkview High School. I was planning tours at Thomas Travel. I think this responsible work helped me through my grief. I think as I grew older and wiser the trauma of losing my mother at such an early age, of the war, and of leaving my homeland have left great scars. To read about a war is one thing but to survive through it is painful. Then my happy years with Max and losing him to cancer when our girls were 13 and 16 hardened me to realities of life. It certainly firmed a bond between us three girls and I was more determined than ever to raise and educate them as Max and I would have.

My Husband Lyle

Then seven years later I married Lyle Cox. Lyle, Max's friend, had lost his wife suddenly to an aneurysm. We courted for several years and he gradually became part of the family. He would come over on Sunday to play cards with Suzanne's friends or we would all play golf together. To please three women he had to be extra special. Like Max he was quiet, laid back, and always an appeaser. He was a handsome man who dressed well and loved his family. He had a daughter, Jan, who had three teenagers so we became a big family of twelve to fourteen for holiday dinners. We built a large home in the country on 1½ acres of land with 144 trees. It felt like 1000 when leaf mulching and walnut picking time came! It was a house of joy and happiness until Lyle passed away suddenly two years later. We had married my two daughters in that house so I felt very much alone with empty nest syndrome and depression. Without my faith and my special friends I would not have been able to survive. So you can see, I have had much given to me but the loss of a loved one is like losing a part of yourself. It takes time to heal and rebuild, but I climbed the wall and lived in that beautiful house for 25 years after Lyle's death.

My Daughters as Adults

Suzanne now lives in Jefferson City and runs her own riding stable, Saddlebrook Stables, with thirty horses and about fifteen students. Suzanne has a Maltese dog named Tootsie, a cat named Layla, and a parrot named Wilson. They all live under the same roof and get along but you can imagine how chaotic it is! Suzanne also is a Realtor and developed 100 acres into Saddlebrooke Estates, 33 lots with a 30 acre lake, all adjoining the equestrian facility. She still has some lots available, if you want one. She is a busy woman, with riding lessons, breaking horses, selling lots, and remodeling properties.

Julie, my younger daughter, lives in Springfield. She is petite, blond headed, and my other angel. She has been in the decorating business and worked in Kansas City many years as an interior decorator. She is very talented and makes upholstered headboards, upholstered mirrors, and pillows. It has been fun watching her develop her talent. As a matter of fact, right now she is helping me decorate my new home. She does not have any children. She

has a dog Riley, a golden retriever, who is the biggest baby in the whole wide world. Whatever Riley wants, Riley gets! I am so glad that Julie and her husband Dave live in Springfield and that Suzanne is only 2½ hours away.



Julie and Suzanne at Christmas time in our country home

My Grandchildren

Suzanne has two children. A daughter, Danielle Suzanne, who is 18 years old and has always ridden horses and participated in many shows. Last summer she helped her mother with Saddlebrook Stables and is now a freshman at William Woods College. Suzanne's son, Brice, is twenty-two and thinks he is going to be another Elvis Presley with his voice. Brice hasn't quite made up his mind what he would like to commit himself to doing. He is a typical young American boy! I enjoyed my grandchildren so very much when they were small because they would often come and spend a week with Grammy. We would go to the zoo and Silver Dollar City and had the little wading pool in my yard. We would go to the grocery store and choose frozen dinners for each day of the week. I found out that was much easier than slaving over the stove for a couple of hours and then that was not what they wanted to eat! As they have grown to be teenagers they are more attached to their friends at home so it my turn to go to Jefferson City to see them. They have been a great joy in my life!

*Brice and Danielle
at Halloween*



Religion in My Life

Religion has always been part of my life. I grew up Catholic, attending church and parochial school with mass every morning and celebrating Catholic holidays. All in all it gives one a great foundation but it was regimented and scheduled. I became angry with God over losing Max and Lyle and wondered why God was punishing me. But no, God gives us choices and we chose to live as we do and make poor choices at times. I shunned the church for a few years and then returned for a retreat which awakened many feelings. Through my Christcare group, "Disciples" Bible study, and Gary Stratman, our minister, I turned to God for support. I found peace, love, and a new relationship with God who nurtures me daily. Many times I feel a hand leading me or someone urging me to make or not make a decision. Pray and talk to God, retire to a quiet corner, and you will be led.

I have lived in Springfield since 1948 and am residing in my fourth home - two I built myself. I love the country, nature, trees, flowers and find therapy in nature and working with my hands. I do try to return to France every year or two to keep in touch with my French family and to enjoy French customs.

I have held many jobs from receptionist and nurse in my father's medical practice to bookkeeping for Max who owned a pharmaceutical company, Arend-Miller Pharmaceuticals. Then as a single parent I managed Thomas Travel. I loved the business and still have an affinity for it. I enjoy helping friends plan their trips to Europe and urge people to travel while they are able.

I retired from the travel business in 1976 upon marrying Lyle. I helped decorate his supermarket in Forsyth and opened a basket, floral, and greeting card department. Since Lyle passed away I have kept busy caring for my yard and house. Since I lived in the

country my friends found my home a happy meeting place. I always enjoyed entertaining. For five years I planned and scheduled trips for Southwest Missouri Museum Associates (SMMA) to different art exhibits. Off we went to Chicago, Dallas, Fort Worth, Memphis, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Jackson, Mississippi, to view special art exhibits, at the same time making a nice profit for SMMA. I have done volunteer work such as Meals on Wheels, Wonders of Wildlife, Library Gift Shop, and Reading Docent. For leisure I enjoy playing bridge and golf, am an avid reader and gardener, and always have some handwork nearby. Now I am busy decorating my new house.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE MISSION

Earlier in my life I think my mission was at times just survival. Especially after Max's death the determination to make a home and educate our daughters was my only mission. Being apart from my family created a void and I have been very lonely at times. I am a "people person" and it was difficult to learn to be by myself. But I am finding my mission in my later years through volunteer work and church work. I learned I can be a good listener helping people who are on a "tight rope" and need a listening ear. I can support them, love them, and listen to them. I am also finding I am still important to my two daughters as a confidante and, at times, giving guidance to my grandchildren.

My greatest accomplishment has been raising and loving my two girls, teaching them to care for others, to be grateful for what we have. Material wealth can be replaced but when loved ones are gone we are left with only memories.

The lowest point in my life has been the last few years with family problems and no one to turn to. I became a recluse and could not see an outlet. I turned my life over to God. What an awakening to find my spiritual life leading me to inner peace and living today without worrying about tomorrow! We have many high points and many low ones. My happiest moments have been my two girls, my years with Max and Lyle, and my grandchildren. But life is like two steps forward and one back. If we didn't have trials we wouldn't appreciate the high points. Watching my girls grow, mature, and make progress and now watching my grandchildren is especially rewarding. I still wish I had a big family here so everyone could sit around the dining room table on holidays and reminisce.

Influential Person

I think my husband Max had the greatest influence on my life as I grew, gained self confidence, and experienced so much with him. As a traveling salesman he was away five days out of seven so everyday life, raising the children, and decisions about daily problems became my responsibility. He was always helpful, calm, and explained things to me. I valued his advice. He made me feel I could accomplish anything and to never give up.



*Brice ala
"Elvis Presley"*



*Danielle with
Big Joe*

CHAPTER SIX: MY SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

I am fortunate to have wonderful friends here in Springfield. We are like sisters as we feel for one another and support one another. We travel together and spend our spare time having fun.

After my marriage to Max, a native of Monett and Aurora, we wanted to live in the city, so moved from Lamar to Springfield. For a few years I traveled with Max five days a week. Sometimes we drove to Kansas City and St Louis for the weekend. Then I began to stay at home and looked for friends. I am a “people person” and enjoy meeting new people. Everyone has something to relate!! My French accent always was a conversation starter and soon acquaintances would tell me about their travels or ask about France. I was asked to speak at clubs. Later on trips to China, Africa, or Scandinavia I kept a travel journal to use in relating my experiences.

If I could change my life I probably would have gone back to school to become a pharmacist after Max’s death. At the time it didn’t seem practical so turned to the travel business to get my girls through college. I don’t want to relive my life as the secret of tomorrow makes us appreciate today. It has been a good life with ups and downs. I have loved and won and lost but “To Love is to Risk.” We must always try or we will never succeed!

I think we should maintain some culture of our native country. I try to share my French cooking, holiday celebrations, and certain customs which I enjoy. Having lived in the United States as a teenager I pride myself on being French American. All my family still resides in France. I enjoy returning “Home” every year or so. It rekindles Body and Soul to feast with my dear cousins and see the world from the other side of the water. When the French act selfishly as with the Iraq situation, at first I am angry but then upon second thought I realize America is the “Big Apple” but all these small European countries want their voices heard. They like to argue and make up their own minds, be it right or wrong. I never thought the Euro would succeed but it has. But a United States of Europe? No, the Dutch, French, Germans, Italians, and others are proud of their ancestry, their culture, their language, and do not want to be grouped under one head. Think how many wars and treaties have been signed, and lines of demarcation changed! And it will go on forever!

I think Springfield is becoming more open to different cultures and learning from them. Our colleges offer learning to so many nationalities which eventually permeate our city. If we can show these young people the true warmth and acceptance of our Midwest, they will return to their homeland speaking positively of the United States. We as individuals are responsible for this – not the city government. You may think you cannot change the world but one by one we can. Traveling around the world has made me realize we are all God’s creatures. Black or white, European, Asian, or African we need to communicate to bring about the best through one another. Getting to know people of different cultures is fascinating. They each have something to offer and if we would try to understand one another, we could be at peace.

For future generations I wish peace and acceptance of one another's beliefs. There is some good in each one of us. Travel as much as you can and learn about other cultures. Communicate with foreigners as they are eager to learn about you. Do not be critical. Be positive and take action. Love your family and friends as, after God, they are the most important thing in your life.



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