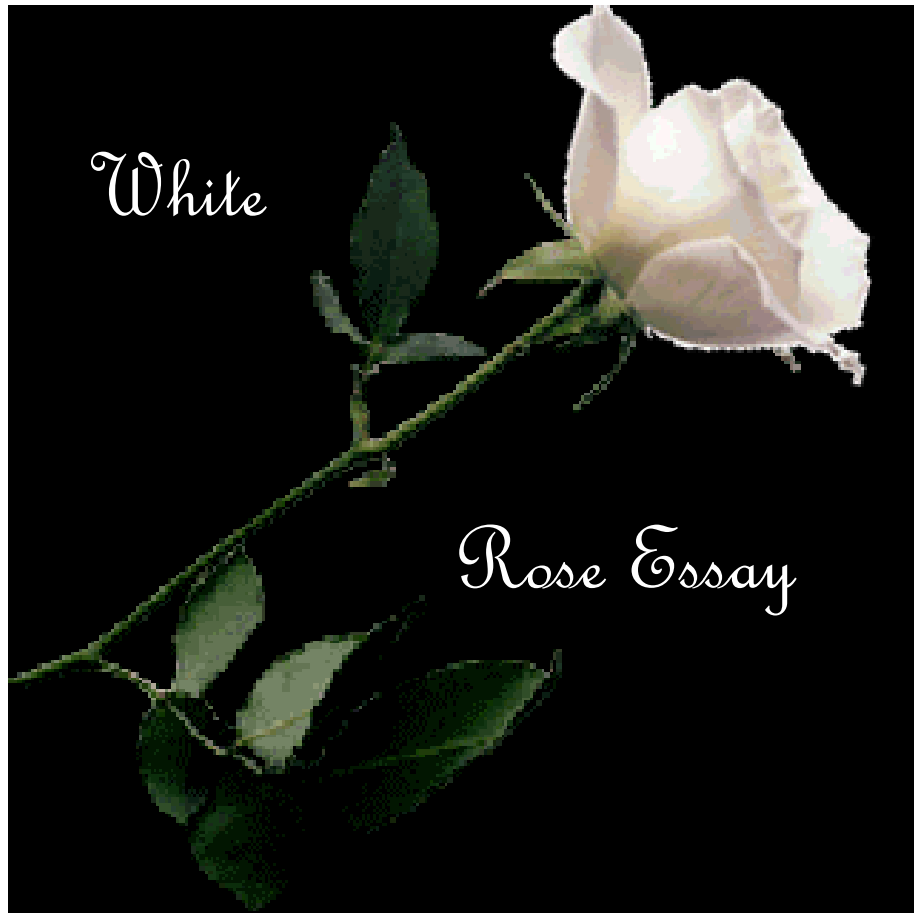


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## Simon Jeruchim

Born on December 12, 1929 in Paris, France and the second of three children, Simon Jeruchim was a proud French teenager. All was good in his hometown of Paris, even in the fall of 1939 when France declared war on Germany. A full-color, special edition newspaper was printed. It had pictures of all of the top military leaders that were going to lead France to victory. Simon felt very patriotic and proud to be French! However, that was before the Nazi occupation of France in 1940 when his family was either to hide or go to a concentration camp.

Simon had never been exposed to extreme anti-Semitism before, so when the Anti-Semitic posters started being posted around the various cities, he noticed that they “demonized Jews by portraying them as vermin, rats, to be eliminated” (Jeruchim, “White”). Simon felt extremely hurt and offended. His parents took immediate action when mass arrests of Jews in the Paris area were planned. They decided to go into hiding in part to protect themselves, but mainly to protect the children. Simon’s parents sent the children to different homes in Normandy with the hope that it might make them more inconspicuous and give them a better chance of survival. Little did the children know that this was the last time they would ever see their parents again. After the Jeruchim children escaped Paris, the Nazis arrested 13,000 Jews from the Paris area and suburbs around it and deported them all to Auschwitz. More than 2,600 Jewish children between the age of two and sixteen were deported from France to Auschwitz (Mazower, 437). The Nazis also arrested Simon’s parents, who were Polish Jewish immigrants trying to join their children in hiding. The Nazis sent them to the Drancy Internment Camp, then to Auschwitz where they were killed.

Simon hid at the farm of a Catholic farmer with two younger children who were too young to work. Therefore, the farmer expected Simon to do a man's job at age 13. He tended to the animals and did other heavy chores from dawn until dusk. It was a constant dilemma for him to hide the fact that he was Jewish while living with a Catholic family and everyone expected him to know the prayers and to say them every night. He did not know the prayers so he mouthed them. One day, before Simon started his daily chores, he borrowed the farmer's prayer book and while tending to the animals, memorized every prayer he needed to know. Simon stayed on the farm for nine months. He then lived with an elderly widow, who gave Simon his first watercolor set, in the village of Savigny-le-Vieux where he remained until the liberation. While there, Simon had less chores but kept busy cleaning the house, helping cook, feeding some of the small animals they kept, running errands, and providing water and wood because the house had no running water or electricity. Simon still did not have much free time, but it was easier living there than on the farm. Another dilemma of everyday life was not knowing what happened to his parents. All he knew, until after the war, was that they never came back to get him.

Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944, but liberation came ten days later. After being in hiding for two years and a month, liberation day came for the city of Normandy, which meant that Simon was finally free from hiding out. He recalls on that day, August 16, 1944, coming face to face with an American soldier and having excitement and tears of joy at seeing the brave allied soldiers. After liberation, Simon biked to Paris on his sister's bike. It took him over two weeks to ride about 200 miles. He lived there with a Christian family who had helped the Jeruchims before. Simon lived there for nine months and during that time, his sister joined him. It would be another six months before he and his brother were reunited.

Simon had not seen or heard from him throughout the entire war. Then, all three children lived in group children homes near Paris until the fall of 1949, when they immigrated to the United States.

One of the hardships Simon Jeruchim faced was living on a farm without heat, running water, and electricity when he was used to life in Paris. Also, he was not adequately clothed for the seasons. He left Paris during the summer with his summer clothes on his back and nothing else. He did not have socks, gloves, a sweater, a coat, or a hat to keep him warm while outside working. I think the greatest hardship was isolation; he had no one to talk with, nor his parents to turn to for guidance. I think this was the greatest hardship because he had to bottle up all of his thoughts and feelings. He had to live for about two years not being able to share thoughts and feelings with a friend or even the people he lived with. “I yearned for companionship; a friend, someone to talk to. And even though I saw my sister from time to time, she was also hidden on a farm not too far from where I was, I was not able to share my anguish with her, because I did not want her to worry about me”( Jeruchim, “White”).

Even after all of the hardships and silence while in hiding, Simon says he was just grateful that he was able to escape from the Nazis and be alive. After the war, Simon stayed in France for a few years and then came to America. The Korean War was going on then and he was drafted and assigned to a combat unit. He has since written two books, Frenchy and Hidden in France: A Boy’s Journey Under the Nazi Occupation. He has a wife, Cecile (who is a hidden child from Belgium), two daughters, and six grandchildren. He and his wife live in Pomona, New York. He graduated from the School of Applied Arts in Paris, then to the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He is a corporate art director and he owns his own design firm. He loves art and that was his way of journaling and getting his feelings out when he could not talk to

anyone. This proves that while in hard situations or impossible times, people can still get through them by believing it will happen and hoping for the best. If it has worked for so many already, it can work for many more to come.

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