

Résistants & Résistantes

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On 14 June 1940, after only six weeks of fighting, German military forces entered a defeated Paris where, much to the disappointment of the French people, Marshal Pétain, military hero from the First World War and now leader of the French government, surrendered to the German army.¹ On 18 June, newly appointed General Charles de Gaulle, spoke from London over the BBC, telling the French people that, "the flame of French resistance must not die and will not die."² Although this speech was not heard as widely as was hoped, his words did influence many across the nation. The Franco-German Armistice was signed on 22 June 1940, officially dividing France into two zones: the first in the North, under the occupation of the German military, and the second in the South, still under French control.³ Based out of Vichy, the "Free French State," or "Vichy France," in the South, was led by Marshal Pétain, and although it maintained the outward appearance of being an unoccupied territory, it maintained a policy of "faithful collaboration" with the German forces in the North.⁴ Vichy France survived for two years. Then, on 11 November 1942, Germany moved into the South to occupy the whole of France.⁵ The country remained under German occupation until the liberation of Paris in September of 1944, which abolished the German occupation, and all the Pétainist laws.⁶

¹ Lucie Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, trans. Konrad Bieber and Betsy Wing (Nebraska: Bison Books, 1993), ix; Gary Sheffield, "The Fall of France", BBC History, 3 March 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwofall_france_01.shtml.

² Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, ix.

³ "Vichy France," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 24 June 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Vichy-France>.

⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xiii.

⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Resistance movements started forming among the French people since the beginning of the occupation and the creation of the Vichy government.⁷ Anti-German hostility began with modest movements: the withdrawal of artists and writers from society, German posters being torn down or defaced, and symbols of Free French Leader, Charles de Gaulle, being graffitied in public spaces.⁸ As the occupation continued and worsened, the movements expanded to include small armed "Groupes-Francis" along with larger official resistance movements.⁹ These movements fought not only against the Germans, but also against the Vichy government, as its true intentions became clear.¹⁰ Connections were made by word of mouth through family, friends, and professional contacts.¹¹ The early efforts of Resistance fighters, or 'Résistants', included primarily the transfer of information and documents, and ensuring that the French public was provided with accurate information.¹² Clandestine newspapers, one of the first forms of resistance, were their main tool for distributing information.¹³ Over time, *Résistants* took on pseudonyms, went undercover, stole, counterfeited, and killed when necessary.¹⁴ Six months of near civil war between the Resistance, and German officials and the French government precede the D-Day Invasions of Normandy.¹⁵ Thousands participated in the French resistance. According to one French Resistance fighter, "General Eisenhower estimated the contribution of the French Resistance in this struggle as the equivalent of fifteen divisions."¹⁶

⁷ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xii.

⁸ Claire Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, trans. Jane K. Stott, (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 51.

⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica; Aubrac 7.

¹⁰ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xiv.

¹¹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xiv.

¹² Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xvi.

¹³ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xvi, xvii.

¹⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xvii.

¹⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica.

¹⁶ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 233.

We hardly hear about the women of the *Résistants*; relatively rarely is anything published by or about them, and in many ways, they are all but ignored by history. Did they really play such a minor role that they are barely noteworthy? Hundreds of dedicated women risked their lives fighting in the name of the French people. Part of the problem lies in the narrow definition of "*Résistant*" or "resistance fighter" which excludes many women and men who would otherwise be touted as heroes.¹⁷

Each *Résistant* has his or her own unique story and experiences, however at some point each one, no matter their gender, made the same decision: to risk their life and fight. These decisions were made despite fears for their own safety as well as the safety of their families.¹⁸ To better understand the impact that these brave men and women had on the Resistance, one must look at the *Résistants* individually, not just as one whole movement. We must look at the places they filled in society before joining the movement, what influenced them to finally join despite any concerns, and the roles they later played as resistance fighters.

Through an investigation of the roles each person played, both male and female, one can begin to understand what connects and defines a *Résistant* and how we are able to pick them out of the past. With this, one can begin to understand what may have set a female participant apart from her male peers, or what might have made her indistinguishable. In order to fully discern the impact of these female fighters on the Resistance, one must look at how their roles and experiences within the Resistance, as well as how their memories and feelings about the Resistance post-war compare to those of their male counterparts.

Though the resistance movement was made up of thousands of fighters from all over France, here we will explore just six of them, three men and three women: André Rougeyron,

¹⁷ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xx.

¹⁸ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xvi.

Henri Frenay, Jacques R.E. Poirier, Lucie Aubrac, Agnès Humbert, and Claire Chevrillon. Each of these fighters came from different places and different backgrounds before the war, but later found themselves intertwined in various aspects of the Resistance during the war. Through careful analysis of their personal writings we will consider each fighter: who they were, their reasons for joining, the roles they played, and their various experiences. We will also learn about how they feel about their role, and what, or who, still resonates with them about the Resistance today. These insights will aid in our understanding of what defines a resistance fighter, while acknowledging the impact each one had. The juxtaposition of male and female fighters will also aid us in answering our questions about female involvement: what roles did they play, was their fight equally important in the resistance against enemy forces as that of their men, and can these female fighters truly be called the *Résistantes* to the male *Résistants*?

Like all *Résistants*, these six individuals came from all over France, and had all different kinds of occupations and backgrounds. There were no prerequisite requirements for joining the Resistance besides the desire to help France in her battle against the German occupiers. Despite their differences in personal history, however, the majority of these *Résistants*, both the men and women, had very similar influences and reasons for joining the Resistance fight. It did not matter where they came from or what they did, they all felt the same drive to do something, and the same loyalty to France.

Lucie Aubrac remembers joining the Resistance and says it was "a voluntary move, aimed at recovering [their] freedom and confirming the dignity of the human being."¹⁹ A self-proclaimed pacifist in her youth, Aubrac worked as a history teacher at the Strasbourg lycée for girls in Lyon starting in 1938, and continued in her position throughout most of the war.²⁰ She

¹⁹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 233.

²⁰ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 3.

met, and married, Raymond Samuel, a Frenchman of Jewish decent, in 1939.²¹ Although in 1939 the newlywed couple were offered the opportunity to emigrate to the United States for Lucie to start a fellowship in 1940, after war broke out the two decided to stay in France close to their friends and family.²² It was with this decision to stay that Aubrac says that it was clear that their destiny was to "participate in the creation and development of a resistance movement."²³ Despite their deep involvement in various resistance operations, the couple were able to maintain their double life, one normal and professional, one clandestine, until early in 1943.²⁴

Things were different for Jacques R.E. Poirier, a young man of barely eighteen at the outbreak of war. He lived with his mother and brother while his father, a member of the French Air Force, was on active duty.²⁵ He was charged, by his father, with the duty of taking care of his mother and brother while his father was away.²⁶ Shortly after France's surrender, Poirier participated in a demonstration, people marching in the streets and singing the Marseillaise.²⁷ Poirier explains that, although he learned about the Resistance later in the war, it was at this moment, as he sang his loyalty to France, that he became a *Résistant*.²⁸ For Poirier, it was inconceivable that a Frenchman could tolerate foreign invaders on their soil, and found it hard to believe that others accepted the German occupation, and even harder to believe that some saw Charles de Gaulle as a traitor.²⁹ Though it wasn't until 1941 that he was introduced, distantly, to a real resistance movement (for which he ran small errands as needed) by 1942 Poirier was in England, beginning his work with the Special Operations Executive (SOE). The SOE was an

²¹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 3-4.

²² Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4.

²³ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4.

²⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4.

²⁵ Jacques Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, trans. John Brownjohn, (London: Leo Cooper, 1995), 9, 10, 11.

²⁶ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 11.

²⁷ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 13.

²⁸ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 13.

²⁹ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 13, 14.

organisation tasked with providing supplies and support to Resistance Groups in France and other occupied territories.³⁰ He would later parachute into France and find himself in the middle of the French Resistance.

At the outbreak of war, André Rougeyron, a previous member of the French Air Force, was appointed to an equipment factory in Colombes, just north of Paris.³¹ Due to the nature of his position, Rougeyron was a witness to many mistakes, and the sheer chaos that occurred during the period of evacuation, in the face of the German advance.³² In the early days of the German occupation in his town of Domfort, Rougeyron resisted in small ways: refusing to give up weapons and hiding them instead; taking batteries from German stores; and also thought about ways he would be able to retrieve information from German boarders in his house.³³ Rougeyron's role in the Resistance did not become clear until the summer of 1943 when he took on his first mission to locate and hide a downed allied parachutist, and then assist him in returning home.³⁴ It is this mission that Rougeyron views as his first "action as agent for escape."³⁵ It was this experience that led Rougeyron to build an official escape network for downed airmen, his position in the North of France making him the ideal man for the job.³⁶

From the very beginning, Claire Chevrillon, a young Frenchwoman who had a Jewish mother, was determined to be useful.³⁷ Like Aubrac, Chevrillon was a teacher; she was in charge of English studies at a few different schools.³⁸ However, this is where the similarity of their

³⁰ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 25, 29, 53.

³¹ André Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, trans. Marie-Antoinette McConnell, (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 1.

³² Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 1.

³³ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 9-10.

³⁴ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 16.

³⁵ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 16.

³⁶ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 44.

³⁷ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 72.

³⁸ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 4.

experience ends. Chevrillon explains that, despite her early efforts to help relocate refugees from the northern parts of France into the south, she did not hear anything of resistance movements until later in 1941, and that she did not hear the actual term "resistance" until after the Liberation.³⁹ Nonetheless, Chevrillon, despite her lack of knowledge of the Resistance, did soon find herself helping. Her early actions included the transfer of paperwork and information between other members of her resistance group, and, after a brief stint in prison, Chevrillon decided that the Resistance needed to be her "chief interest in life," and she decided to commit to it fully.⁴⁰ This decision came with the adoption of the code name "Christiane Clouet."⁴¹ Chevrillon then said good bye to her family, and soon found herself leading a code team for the Resistance.⁴² By the end of the war, Chevrillon was a central figure in her resistance group, and one of the most protected.⁴³

Agnès Humbert was a middle-aged, divorced mother of two who lived with her mother and worked as an art historian in a museum in Paris.⁴⁴ Immediately after the start of the occupation, Hubert began hiding various artworks in her home to protect them from the Germans.⁴⁵ After hearing de Gaulle's June speech, Humber decided not to give up hope.⁴⁶ She explains that the only way she knew to stay sane during the occupation was to "act together, to form a group of ten like-minded comrades, no more. To meet on agreed days to exchange news, to write and distribute pamphlets and tracts, and to share summaries of French radio broadcasts

³⁹ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 51.

⁴⁰ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 74, 115.

⁴¹ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 115.

⁴² Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 118, 119.

⁴³ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 119, 7.

⁴⁴ Agnès Humbert, *Résistance: A Woman's Journal of Struggle and Defiance in Occupied France*, trans. Barbara Mellor, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 1.

⁴⁵ Humbert, *Résistance*, 17.

⁴⁶ Humbert, *Résistance*, 11.

from London."⁴⁷ From this moment on, Humbert, along with some friends and colleagues, began their own movement. The group exchanged documents and information, started the clandestine newspaper *Résistance*, and took various measures to make sure that those outside the area of occupation knew what was going on inside.⁴⁸ Humber continued her participation in the resistance against Germany even after she was arrested in March of 1941, refusing to cooperate or collaborate with her German guards and doing her best to protect her colleagues from prison.⁴⁹

Finally we have Henri Frenay, a French soldier stationed in defence of the Maginot Line who was deeply insulted by the Marshal's surrender.⁵⁰ Frenay was immediately determined not to accept defeat and began to search for others who felt the same way.⁵¹ He was determined not only to fight Nazism, but to also fight against the French government that had failed the French people.⁵² Frenay then left the army and devoted all his time to constructing the "Combat" Resistance movement and its various branches, as well as creating a "Secret Army," an organisation of paramilitary troops.⁵³ Frenay worked deeply within the Resistance for three years before he was evacuated to England, where he continued to help with the external Resistance and eventually played a role in the provisional government after the war.⁵⁴

Whether their participation started with the surrender or they were integrated into a movement later in the war, all these *Résistants*, like other *Résistants* around France, were determined to keep fighting. Most of these six were deeply disappointed in their government, and some, like Humbert and Frenay, describe themselves as refusing to give up hope and being

⁴⁷ Humbert, *Résistance*, 11.

⁴⁸ Humbert, *Résistance*, 17, 18, 23.

⁴⁹ Humbert, *Résistance*, 41, 47, 52, 54.

⁵⁰ Henri Frenay, *The Night Will End*, trans. Dan Hofstadter, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 1.

⁵¹ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 14, 16.

⁵² Frenay, *The Night Will End*, xiv.

⁵³ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, xi, 114.

⁵⁴ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, xi, xiv.

determined to not admit defeat. They all show a deep loyalty to their country, with their early actions and refusal to cooperate. Be they male or female, single or married, young or old, they all made the decision to dedicate their lives to fighting for their country. As you can see, all of these fighters were either eventually evacuated for their safety or arrested for their actions; an event that occurred regardless of their gender.

Even though they all come from different backgrounds - soldiers, teachers, historians - they all made large sacrifices when they decided to join the Resistance. With their decisions, they agreed to take on whatever roles were required of them to help further the Resistance agenda. As discussed earlier, many historical writings about the Resistance, and much of our basic knowledge, traditionally attributes more serious and dangerous actions to men, and more "domestic," less dangerous, more superficial actions to the women. Research and public opinion pieces are only just starting to contradict the traditional view that the men "all resisted" and that the women "let the side down."⁵⁵ If we take a closer look at the experiences of each *Résistant* we can see that for the most part, both men and women took on many of the same roles at various points throughout the war. Those who joined the Resistance early on tended to have very similar experiences of early Resistance work, those who joined later were often integrated into larger plans as needed.

Some fighters put a lot of effort into finding the Resistance movement. Rougeyron explains that he tried in vain from the beginning to find resistance groups or get in touch with agents.⁵⁶ Even by July of 1943 he was having difficulty contacting intelligence services.⁵⁷ Despite this difficulty, Rougeyron continued to help downed airmen. On the other hand, those

⁵⁵ Anne Sebba, "The forgotten women of the French resistance," *The Telegraph*, 11 July 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/the-forgotten-women-of-the-french-resistance/>.

⁵⁶ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 10.

⁵⁷ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 30.

who could get in contact with a movement right away did not necessarily notice an immediate change in their daily life. Chevrillon reports this exact feeling in regard to her early Resistance work.⁵⁸ Despite the differences in initial experiences, the Resistance fighters all had feelings of joy and pride in the work that they were doing, no matter how small. Chevrillon reports that she was extremely happy to be part of "a great network," and to be fighting the enemy.⁵⁹ For many, it didn't matter when in the war you joined a Resistance movement, you were still important.⁶⁰ Many fighters, like Rougeyron who was unable to find a movement until later on, or Poirier who did not join the SOE until 1942, were still able to have a big effect on the success of the Resistance. Like the others, Poirier is also very proud to have served with the SOE.⁶¹ Even though each *Résistant* followed different paths of resistance, both the men and the women were dedicated to the positions they filled and were extremely proud of their impact on the resistance movement.

Each *Résistant* had a very different experience during their time in the Resistance, and filled positions within the Resistance that were best suited to them at the time, nonetheless, a great deal of the activities that took place between 1940 and 1945 were very similar. Most *Résistants* started out by transferring information or distributing various documents. Humbert explains that in her early dealings with the Resistance she was involved in smaller passive aggressive acts, like distributing pamphlets and tracts, or spreading information about the London radio broadcasts.⁶² For Chevrillon as well, her early experience included being a "mailbox," meaning she was a transfer point for documents and information between various

⁵⁸ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 74.

⁵⁹ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 74.

⁶⁰ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 2.

⁶¹ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 54.

⁶² Humbert, *Résistance*, 17, 18.

members of the Resistance.⁶³ It was not just the women who spread information throughout the Resistance. Poirier explains that his early involvement with a Resistance group, whose name he never knew, was transporting illegal radios to enable citizens to listen to BBC Radio broadcasts about what was happening on the outside.⁶⁴ Frenay also talks about his involvement, explaining how in creating his Resistance Movement "Combat," he helped create and distribute various clandestine documents.⁶⁵ The distribution of information was key to raising awareness and morale among the French, especially in the early days of occupation. Humbert's tells us that newspapers allowed writers to dispute the propaganda in the official censored press, and inform the French citizens that problems, like the food shortages, were not caused by the British, but rather by German looting and their disregard for the French people.⁶⁶ Clandestine documents were easily passed around and, even those not officially involved in the resistance began to spread the information.⁶⁷

As their involvement in the Resistance deepened, document and information work turned into acts that were much more dangerous. Most *Résistants*, both men and women, became involved in a secret underground system, hiding fugitives and allied soldiers, working under pseudonyms, and carrying and creating false papers. Humbert talks about hiding pilots at her house, where she lived with her mother, despite the risks that were involved.⁶⁸ Rougeyron too, was well known after the war for hiding downed airmen, and then assisting them in escaping and returning to their native countries.⁶⁹

⁶³ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 74.

⁶⁴ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 20, 21.

⁶⁵ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, xi.

⁶⁶ Humbert, *Résistance*, 24-25.

⁶⁷ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 35.

⁶⁸ Humbert, *Résistance*, 21.

⁶⁹ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 16, 17.

This type of work often meant using false papers and pseudonyms for both those in hiding and those providing shelter. Every *Résistant* and *Résistante* in this sample, at some point, used or relied on false identification for their own protection or that of someone else. Chevrillon discusses using false identification papers to both protect other people, such as when she finds false Christianity papers for a Jewish family, and herself, when she takes on a pseudonym of her own, Christiane Clouet.⁷⁰ Rougeyron also participated in the creation and distribution of false identity papers, explaining that they would use them to protect those wanted by the Germans.⁷¹ Aubrac and her husband lived through most of the war carrying false identity papers.⁷² She explains that the majority of the time she carried papers that referred to her maiden name and an address where she lived while in school.⁷³ This way she was able to protect her husband and their home.⁷⁴ Even Frenay, who spent a large portion of his time in the "Free Zone" in Vichy, adopted pseudonyms and used false papers as early as 1941 as a precaution.⁷⁵ Pseudonyms and false papers were a part of everyday life in the Resistance, and were used, distributed, and created by all members no matter who they were or where they came from.

All *Résistants* worked especially hard to protect the movement and their fellow fighters. Sometimes this required relatively minor actions, such as sneaking into someone's house after they had been arrested to remove anything compromising, as both Chevrillon and Aubrac did at various points.⁷⁶ For Aubrac, acts of protection included accompanying her husband to meetings in public places along with their son to appear less suspicious; visiting places like public parks

⁷⁰ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 129.

⁷¹ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 11, 12.

⁷² Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4-5.

⁷³ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4-5.

⁷⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 4-5.

⁷⁵ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 72.

⁷⁶ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 82; Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 71.

seemed like regular outings when Aubrac and their son tagged along.⁷⁷ Often however, actions taken to protect the movement were much more dangerous or difficult. Aubrac discusses times when she and her fellow *Résistants* worked together to free members of their group from prison or a P.O.W. camp.⁷⁸ These missions were extremely dangerous and took careful planning. In addition, *Résistants* were sometimes forced to "eliminate," or execute, someone who was viewed as a potential threat since the smallest confession could blow numerous covers and cost people their lives.⁷⁹

It was not just those outside prison who were working to protect the movement from potential threats. Those who were arrested also fought their hardest to keep information to themselves to protect their friends and colleagues outside.⁸⁰ Humbert explains how, once arrested, "the freedom of all [her] friends and the lives of most of them [were] at stake."⁸¹ Rougeyron experienced the same feelings, explaining that he was acutely aware of the repercussions for his family, the airmen, and his friends, if he was careless when interrogated.⁸² Often these imprisoned fighters were giving up a chance at their own freedom, and even risking their lives, in order to protect their friends and family. Both *Résistants* and *Résistantes* were at their bravest when working to protect their friends and families.

Not only did these Resistants share similar positions, they also shared a number of the same fears and concerns throughout the operations of the Resistance. Of course, many of these anxieties revolved around the fear of being caught by the German forces or by the collaborating French police. Chevrillon said she was always "nervous" and that she had an "extreme fear of

⁷⁷ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 62.

⁷⁸ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 29.

⁷⁹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 71, 100.

⁸⁰ Humbert, *Résistance*, 52.

⁸¹ Humbert, *Résistance*, 54.

⁸² Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 108.

getting caught."⁸³ Rougeyron explains that he had to "constantly be on the alert," and planning in case of arrest.⁸⁴ He explains that, for the most part, he was ready to kill any German or French police who came to his door in order to save himself and those he was protecting.⁸⁵ Aubrac revealed that she too was worried about being found out, and because of this she was extremely careful not to bring anything from her underground life home with her.⁸⁶ Frenay also expressed fears of being arrested and feared for the safety of his colleagues, and explained that whenever a member of his Resistance Group was arrested, he felt ashamed to be free because he was spared and they were not.⁸⁷ The risk of being caught or arrested never went away for those in the Resistance, even if you were careful about your own actions, someone else could give you away at any time. Aubrac explains that when her husband was arrested she was immediately at risk because, even though she trusted him, there was no way to be certain he would not give her away when tortured.⁸⁸ Chevrillon also talked about the risks brought on by someone else, explaining that at one point she was cut out of her own resistance group because someone untrustworthy knew about her contribution and her real identity; she was compromised and therefore a danger to everyone.⁸⁹ Rougeyron also revealed fears that his neighbours or fellow Frenchmen would turn him in to gain favour with the Germans.⁹⁰ He explained that you could never be sure that whoever you were working with was trustworthy; anything could be a trap.⁹¹

Résistants of all types also feared for their family's safety and sanity. Humbert described to us how, immediately after being arrested, she worried most about reassuring her mother at

⁸³ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 76.

⁸⁴ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 18, 28.

⁸⁵ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 25.

⁸⁶ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 28.

⁸⁷ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 131.

⁸⁸ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 86.

⁸⁹ Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 84.

⁹⁰ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 25.

⁹¹ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 36.

home.⁹² Her mother had been the reason that she had stuck around after finding out she was a wanted person.⁹³ Aubrac also explained that a constant fear for her parents and for her son, meant she was constantly ensuring that they knew very little about her life so that they would not worry for her and would not have to lie if she was arrested.⁹⁴ Aubrac went so far as to send her son away on occasion for added protection.⁹⁵ For Frenay however, his fears for his family were cut short early in the war. When his mother found out about his involvement with the resistance she threatened to expose him.⁹⁶ Although she never did, this severed the relationship between them until after the war.⁹⁷

There were also, of course, fears and concerns of the *Résistants* which were unique to the individual. For example, Aubrac explains that she spent a fair amount of time concerned that she would be seen hanging around prisons or other places that were not suitable for a woman of her position.⁹⁸ As a teacher, she held a fairly public role in society, and it could have been very bad if she had been recognised while on a mission.⁹⁹ *Résistants* also experienced threats of various forms unique to their particular circumstances: as mentioned before Frenay was threatened by his mother, a threat that would have hung over him for the entire war, however *Résistants* whose families supported them, or whose families did not know, would not have shared these fears. Humbert mentioned that after her arrest, her mother was directly threatened by German guards and Humbert lived in fear of something happening to her mother; those who were never arrested or did not live with their parents, may not have experienced these same fears.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Humbert, *Résistance*, 47.

⁹³ Humbert, *Résistance*, 41.

⁹⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 84, 179, 180.

⁹⁵ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 89.

⁹⁶ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 96.

⁹⁷ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 97.

⁹⁸ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 41.

⁹⁹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ Humbert, *Résistance*, 82.

Résistants also took on unique tasks in response to their circumstances. Sometimes these roles seemed relatively minor, and sometimes they played a significant role in the Resistance. For Frenay, many of his early days were spent recruiting and spreading his 'manifesto' hoping to create a large movement.¹⁰¹ Although many fighters would have recruited from time to time, it was not always in such a determined manner, nor with the assistance of such a detailed plan of attack, like Frenay's manifesto. Frenay eagerly wanted to start a movement and therefore needed someone to dedicate their time to mass recruitment, and so that is what he did.¹⁰² Rougeyron also responded to his circumstances, when the Germans requested all weapons he refused to turn them over, instead he buried them.¹⁰³ At other times, Rougeyron was forced to act as doctor for airmen who were not able to visit a hospital or doctor's office like a citizen could.¹⁰⁴ Aubrac spent some of her extra time sending extra food rations to members of the Resistance who were in prison, so that they might survive longer and put up a stronger fight during interrogation.¹⁰⁵ Aubrac also explained to us that after the birth of her first child, her doctor brought to her another child, a famished baby whose parents had been forced to flee and could not take it with them.¹⁰⁶ She nursed the baby, along with her own, to ensure its survival.¹⁰⁷

For each of these *Résistants*, writing their memoirs forced them to relive the moments that they faced during the war, and, as Henri Frenay says, it "awakened feelings" within them that they had assumed long gone.¹⁰⁸ These feelings come through in the deep sense of personal pride they all felt and in the way that each *Résistant* talks about their experience. While their

¹⁰¹ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 14, 16.

¹⁰² Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 17.

¹⁰³ Rougeyron, *Agents For Escape*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Rougeyron, *Agents For Escape*, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 112.

¹⁰⁶ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 439.

interpretation, feelings, and memories are unique to themselves there are always many similarities.

For both Rougeyron and Humbert, the fact that upon their arrest neither "talked," nor revealed any information about their fellow *Résistants* is a huge source of pride for both of them today.¹⁰⁹ For Aubrac, being able to provide additional cover to her husband in public spaces, and getting people out of prison became great sources of pride for her after the war.¹¹⁰ She was also extremely proud of those who took huge risks to help her husband escape prison, and those who helped both of them escape France.¹¹¹ It does not matter the role they played, each person who assisted in the Resistance looks back proudly at the loyalty and bravery that they, and their comrades, showed in defending their country. Besides pride, Frenay and Aubrac, also saw it as a period of "warm comradeship," "unshakeable faith," and a time that united more people than it divided despite differing personal views.¹¹² Aubrac described it as a period of "unassuming solidarity," and says that she still feels that connection with members of the Resistance even today.¹¹³

These feelings come through in the way that each *Résistant* remembers the Resistance. Frenay explains that the modern image of a dark, mysterious, sullen resistance fighter is not the truth.¹¹⁴ Instead, he explains that most fighters were young and happy, and although there were periods of sadness or stress, the majority of their time was spent joyously, enjoying each other's companionship and humour.¹¹⁵ Poirier states that he wants people to know that the resistance

¹⁰⁹ Rougeyron, *Agents for Escape*, 109; Humbert, *Résistance*, 47.

¹¹⁰ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 64.

¹¹¹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 230.

¹¹² Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 441.

¹¹³ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 209, 233.

¹¹⁴ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 439.

¹¹⁵ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 439.

was made up of everyday people fighting for France.¹¹⁶ Rougeyron also explains that it is important that people understand that the French did fight, despite what propaganda of the time might have claimed.¹¹⁷

Solidarity and comradeship were major factors in all resistance groups. It is most likely because of this solidarity that the *Résistants* want to make sure that people remember not only them and their role, but also those who helped them. Although it was possible for one person to resist on their own, the things that the major resistance groups did, the movements that they created, and the rescue missions they completed would not have been possible for one person alone. It took the help and determination of everyone involved to ensure that these tasks were completed without a hitch. It is this determination, faith, and solidarity that Frenay explains are the most important traits in each *Résistant*.¹¹⁸

So why, despite this large level of solidarity, and the significant similarities between the experiences and roles of all the *Résistants*, do women often get left out of the history books or treated as if they played such minor roles? For Frenay, a "true *Résistant*" was someone who joined from the very beginning, someone who was completely dedicated to the Resistance, and not someone who started to contribute late in the war, though it did not matter your position in society or your gender.¹¹⁹ For many others, such as Aubrac or Rougeyron, it did not matter when you began to participate, it simply mattered that you did.¹²⁰ For Aubrac, "*Résistants* were all French people who rejected the policy of collaboration with Germany and participated in the underground struggle against the occupation and its police forces."¹²¹ She gives added credit to

¹¹⁶ Poirier, *The Giraffe has a long Neck*, 1.

¹¹⁷ Rougeyron, *Agents For Escape*, 109.

¹¹⁸ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 439.

¹¹⁹ Frenay, *The Night Will End*, 449.

¹²⁰ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 15.

¹²¹ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 15.

those who didn't need to participate but did, those who were not Jews or communists and could have easily just sat back and waited for the war to be over.¹²²

In reality, it was not that women played a lesser role in the Resistance, nor that they did not participate. All *Résistants* filled roles as they needed to be filled, with both men and women taking on the same role in different areas. Rougeyron lived in the northwest part of France where the majority of the British and American planes crashed, meaning that it was much more logical for him to aid in their rescue, than it would be for someone from the south of France. In most cases the reason why women seemed to fill more 'traditionally feminine' roles was simply because men would not be able to fulfil the task without arising suspicion. Women in the Resistance were seen on a level equal to their male counterparts, their femininity sometimes provided them with the perfect cover.¹²³ Women who did fill major roles in the Resistance or provided a large amount of help to another *Résistant* are remembered equally along with the men. Assignments in the Resistance were based on ability to successfully carry out the tasks, therefore tasks like visiting prisons, which related to the tradition of women caring for their families, were therefore more successfully completed by women than men. The transfer of information was another task often more easily done by a woman, since paperwork and even weapons could easily be concealed in things like shopping bags, baskets, or baby carriages.¹²⁴ Tasks that better suited women were not necessarily less important or less dangerous, they were simply easier to orchestrate and more likely to be accepted when performed by a woman. In this way, many women were assets to the Resistance.

¹²² Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 211.

¹²³ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xx.

¹²⁴ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xv.

That being said, women were not restricted to these specialised roles. Both Humbert and Aubrac helped build Resistance Movements, like Frenay. Chevrillon became deeply involved in her Resistance movement, breaking codes, and leading an entire group of code breakers, making her just as important as the other men in her position. People in the Resistance did what needed to be done. When possible, tasks were completed by those best suited for the job, and when not possible the *Résistants* did their best to compensate and handle adversity. Over the course of the Resistance most members performed many of the same tasks and fulfilled many of the same roles, making all those involved just as important as anyone else.

Nevertheless, this still leaves us questioning why women appear to be left out of the history of the Resistance. Much of this can be attributed to the women themselves and to the fact that after the war, many women chose to return to their more traditional roles and took a step back out of the political arena.¹²⁵ Although some women, like Lucie Aubrac, Agnès Humbert, and Claire Chevrillon, continued to play larger roles in the post-war era, deciding later to publish their memoirs to help inform people about their experiences, others did not. One aim of the resistance was to return France to how it was prior to German occupation, this meant that in many cases women simply returned to their households, resuming the roles of mothers and wives, and staying out of the political sphere.

Despite the small amount of understanding we have today, due to the relatively little attention that has been paid to the female influence on the Resistance, and very few female-written memoirs, much of our understanding about the female involvement is still fairly limited, and it may continue to be that way.

¹²⁵ Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, xx.

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