

Active Resistance in the Thur Valley and the maquis in the Vosges

C. The family SAC:

(Photo from the bulletin de la Haute-Moselle, Sept/Nov. 1944, N° 14, cover page).



Jean-Paul SAC

Georges Sac born on 22nd October 1898 in Le Thillot (Vosges), primary school teacher, shot on 24th September 1944 at the Steingraben.

Germaine Sac, born Luttringer on 18th May 1898 in Ranspach (Alsace), primary school teacher, deported to the Schirmeck security camp, after the assault of the farm at the Drumont, on 2st September 1944. Died in 1987.

Jean-Paul Sac, born on 14th December 1927 in Mulhouse, died on 28th November 1944, barely 17 years of age. Seriously injured on the legs by enemy, while he guided a group of the Corps Franc Pommiès (Irregular Force) at the place known as Plain du Repos, he died of his injuries at the hospital of Bussang.

Some details about the parents:

Georges Sac, born in 1898 in Le Thillot, was mobilized in 1917 and later awarded the Military Cross in 1918. Called up again in 1939, he was taken prisoner in 1940. Released in 1941 for health reasons, he left Alsace with his wife and his son, to join Le Thillot and to work there as a teacher.

The three of them very soon entered the Resistance by joining the maquis headed by Emile Lutenbacher in Bussang.

The whole Sac family was present at the moment, when the farm at the Drumont was assaulted by the Gestapo, on 21st September 1944.

Georges Sac was arrested, imprisoned in Bussang and then shot at the Steingraben on 24th September 1944.

Germaine Sac started her career in 1919 as a primary school teacher in Munwiller, near Colmar, and then until 1940 in Illzach (near Mulhouse).

In 1940, she left the occupied Alsace and taught with her husband in Le Thillot.

Arrested on 21st September 1944 while she was with her husband and her son at the farm, Germaine Sac, like the other present women, was confined to the prison of Mulhouse and then deported to the Schirmeck security camp, but finally released on 23rd November 1944.

When she came back from the camp, she was told that her husband had been shot at the Steingraben, on 24th September and that her son had managed to escape and was hiding somewhere in the Vosges.

But she was not yet aware that her son will die on 28th November, a young hero.

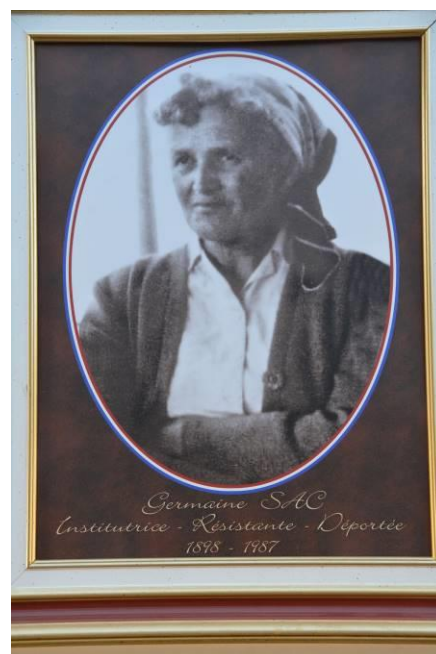
Despite all misfortunes she had to suffer, indeed she lost her dearest ones in a short time, she kept her moral strength, went on with her life and with her career as a teacher in Fellingering from 28th April 1945 till October 1957, when she retired.

Every Thursday – free school day at the time – she went and meditated at the memorial of her husband and of the 11 other Nazi victims at the Steingraben, as well as at her son's stele, at the place called Plain du Repos, near the road leading to the Drumont.

Photos of the parents



Georges SAC



Germaine Sac's portrait at the entrance of the elementary school in Fellingering.

A square was named in her memory by the association “Souvenir Français” and by the community of Fellingring.

Square Germaine Sac – Teacher- Resistance fighter – Deportee -1898-1947.

The square was inaugurated, on 5th December 2004.



During the inauguration, M^{rs}. Annick Lutenbacher, Mayor of Fellingring and county Counsellor, as well as M^r. Roger Bringard, president of the association “Souvenir Français” in the Thur valley, related with warm terms the important events in the life of this resistant and deported woman, afflicted by the grievous loss of her husband and her son.

They depicted her as a very modest, discreet and helpful person. As a teacher, she was very conscientious and concerned about her pupils’ school achievements. She was always dressed in black.

Despite a cruel but outstanding destiny marked by great pain, Germaine Sac succeeded in finding the interior strength which allowed her to continue to live and to dedicate herself with faith, courage and dignity to her teaching.

M^{rs}. Sac’s picture is hanging at the entrance of the Fellingring elementary school.

Elementary school Georges Sac in Illzach
(Mulhouse), 7 rue de Modenheim.

Photo, Internet, school's website.



Jean-Paul Sac:

He was a very good pupil at the school in Le Thillot and later at the secondary school in Vesoul. He was conscientious, indeed open to the world and patriot in the best sense of the term, like his parents.

He dreamt of becoming later an officer in the French Marine. However, the tragic events of 1944 will decide otherwise.

Arrested by the Gestapo like his parents inside the inn at the Drumont, on 21st September 1944, he was imprisoned in the former textile factory Fréchin in Bussang, with his father, Nicolas and Paul Lutenbacher and many other Resistance fighters of the Vosges.

During the execution at the Steingraben, on 24th September 44, he miraculously managed to escape despite the heavy fire of the SS and to take refuge into the forest hut, near Bussang, where he lived hidden thanks to the Curien family.

“Exhausted, hurt and upset, ignorant of his mother’s fate and aware of his father’s death, he cried out: I’m glad, because I gave my father his last joy: he saw me jump and slip away, he saw that the Germans did not take me!”

(From the testimony of Simone Sarthe, Bussang).

His life was spared, but unfortunately for a short time only!

In fact, when the Corps Franc Pommiès (Irregular force) reached the place near the forest hut, where Jean-Paul was hidden, he offered spontaneously his help and guided the group since he perfectly knew the whole region.

A fighter from the Corps Franc Pommiès wrote in following detailed account in his logbook:

“Jean-Paul gave information to the maquis in the forest of the Drumont. He never was afraid. He accomplished his mission without ever failing although it was perilous (...).

He takes with him all the commando group towards the Plain du Repos, where it takes position (...) The enemy is all around, mines are exploding (...). Suddenly, a machine gun blows up at the bend of the path.

The little guide has been seen. He has been shot on the hand. He wants to look for shelter, he gets up a bit (...) too fast...a new burst reaches him. 3 bullets in the kidneys.

Jean-Paul falls – not a cry –

2 soldiers take him away into a little wooden hut. He says nothing; he isn't complaining. And then suddenly:

- *“Oh, my hand, it's nothing, it's nothing!”*
- *“Will it be serious, do you think, the other bullets?”*

The nursing Sergeant leans over. He knows, that the boy is seriously injured:

- *“No, everything will be fine. Do you want chocolate? Chewing gum?”*
- *“Chocolate! Oh...don't worry about me, boys! There are others who need you. As for me, it's nothing. Don't worry, please! (...)”*

The ambulance took him to the hospital of Bussang, he was in serious condition. There, he pronounced his last words in presence of the chaplain:

“I wanted so much to be the first to cross the Alsatian border (...) Never mind (...) And if I had to do it again, I would do it again (...).

Tell Mum not to cry since I died for France!”

Jean-Paul Sac was posthumously awarded on 21st January 1945 the War Cross, the Resistance Medal, the Military Medal, with following mention,

"Young man of Le Thillot, refugee at the municipality of Bussang, has spontaneously offered his services, to guide in the mountains advanced elements of the Corps Franc.

Fearless and courageous, happy to serve France, has rendered immense services, allowing the Corps Franc units to take their positions and attack the enemy. Was seriously wounded, while guiding a detachment through the woods of the Drumont massif (Vosges) ”.

Stele in honor of Jean-Paul Sac, at the place named Plain du Repos, on the road leading to the Drumont.





INAUGURATION DU MONUMENT JEAN-PAUL SAC



*(d'après la documentation de Monsieur Marcel JACQUEY
et les témoignages de Madame Georges SAC
et de personnes qui ont connu J.P. SAC)*

Monument du Plain du Repos

Monsieur Marcel JACQUEY, président de l'amicale des anciens élèves du cours complémentaire et de l'école des garçons de Le Thillot inaugure le 18 Mai 1950, le monument édifié à la mémoire de Jean-Paul SAC sur les pentes du Drumont, au Plain du Repos - en présence du Préfet des VOSGES, du Général ZELLER, de l'Inspecteur d'Académie, de l'Inspecteur de l'enseignement du 1er degré, du Proviseur du lycée de Mulhouse, des Membres de l'enseignement, de l'Inspecteur des Eaux et Forêts, de l'Adjoint au maire de Mulhouse, Vice-Président du Conseil Général du Haut Rhin, du Président de l'Union Départementale des Déportés et Internés de la Résistance, des Conseillers Généraux du Thillot et de Cornimont, du Président Départemental des Déportés, du Maire de Bussang et des Dirigeants et Amis des différentes sociétés patriotiques de cette ville.

B. GROSJEAN



The third village hall of Le Thillot, named after Jean-Paul Sac and inaugurated on 23rd November 2014 during the 70th anniversary of Le Thillot's liberation.

Photo, Internet.

Sources :

Documents lent by Jean-Jacques Lutenbacher :

Excerpt of an article entitled « Père et fils, héros de la Résistance ou le jeune « Bara » de la Résistance vosgienne », Simone Sarthe's testimony, January 1962, Journal L'Echo de la Résistance, N° 75.

- Speech of M^{rs} Annick Lutenbacher, Mayor of Fellingring and county counsellor of the Haut-Rhin, during the inauguration ceremony of the square Germaine Sac, 15.12.2004.
- Internet website of the Corps Franc Pommiès, cfp49.ri.free.fr/Vosges_Alsace.html.
- Article written by Eric Le Normand, AERIA, Strasbourg, « La famille Lutenbacher ».
- Bulletin of the Haute-Moselle, Sept/Nov. 1944, N° 14.

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2015-2016. Allemand, Marguerite Kubler.



