

## **Viviane Clausset Transcription**

My name is Viviane Clausset and I was born in Nancy, France in 1936. I was a little girl when the Germans occupied France during World War II. My father loved to garden and grew food in our yard, but had to leave us to join the French Army. He spent time as a German prisoner of war; it was a difficult time for all of us. When I was 8 years old, the Allies liberated France and General Patton's Third Army came through our town. American GIs were everywhere and our family hosted some of them in our home. They were happy to have home-cooked meals and gave me Hershey bars. They weren't as good as French chocolate but I was happy to have them. They also gave me peanut butter and canned pineapple. We didn't have those things in France and it was very unusual. I remember their kindness. This was my first encounter with Americans, and I liked it.

After high school, I was looking for adventure. In addition to French and German, I was proficient in English, so I took a job as a secretary for the US Army in 1953. I married an American GI and returned with him to Virginia, Minnesota in 1958. My mother died a few years before, my father had remarried, and I knew then that I was leaving France forever. I was sad to leave him and my little sister behind, but excited to start my new life in the US.

People in the US were very welcoming to me and I made a lot of friends. I was a bit of a novelty with my French accent and French clothing. I brought some of our family keepsakes along, but what I really missed most was the food, especially the pastries. You get used to the type of food from your home and some of the things in Minnesota were very unusual. The first thing I tasted here was cherry Jell-O with mayonnaise...yuk!

Most of the people I met were Finnish-Americans and their foods like pickled herring, hot-dish, and oatmeal were so strange to me. I had never seen people eat corn on the cob, because in France, it was fed to animals. There was nothing here like the potato-leek soup, French bread, croissants, and pastries from home. To cure my homesickness, I purchased a French cookbook and taught myself to cook and bake. Soon, I was making pate en croute, cream puffs and of course, croissants. It was the 1960s and 70s. Most of my American friends had never tasted real French food, so to them it was very different from what they were used to eating. But it didn't take long for my family and friends to adapt. When my kids were younger, they wanted me to make Betty Crocker Angel Food cakes for their birthdays, but today, they ask for homemade French meringue tortes. Over the years, my tastes adapted as well. I learned to enjoy pizza, hamburgers, sushi and yes, even corn on the cob. French food helped me through the transition. I appreciate my French heritage. I still enjoy a glass of French wine, but I am an American now.