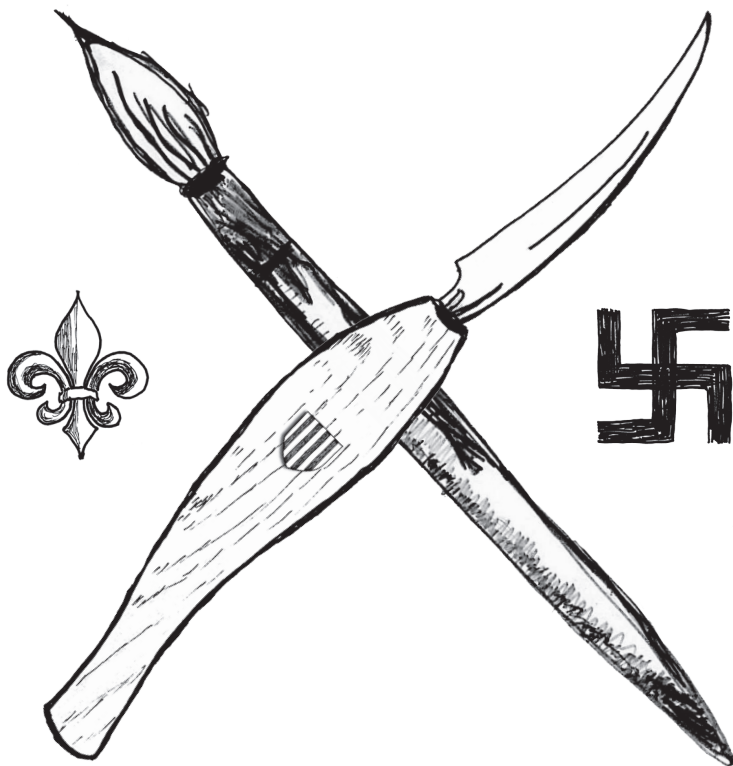


THE
MAN IN THE
RUE CARDINALE



BY JAY HARDCASTLE

Illustrated by Wilson Hardcastle

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Happy Birthday 2017

Composed for the Coffee House Club

*Presented to the Alliance Française Soirée,
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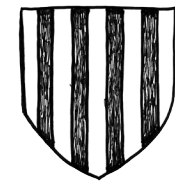
Prologue

 June 2008, Aix-en-Provence

I join the group in the plaza next to the *Saint Saveur* Cathedral. The plaza just to the south was, for most of its existence, known as *la place de l'archeveché*, the Plaza of the Archbishop's Palace. Our guide for the reunion calls our attention to a marble plaque on the wall of the Plaza and translates the legend above the 74 names:

*The City of Aix-en-Provence
Her dead, deported, or shot during the resistance.*

Some were French: Gaston Chaunet, Paul Girard, Noel Veran, Marcelle Cremieux, and a father and son team listed only as *Fontenaille, père et fils*. Two families of Amars must have been Arabic. Tedeschi sounded Italian. Among the murdered, many were likely Jewish: Henri Abraham, Helene Levy-See, Paul Lauzenberg. There are very few places where the name John Smith sticks out, but there he was, between Gustave Nivou and Alexandre Stephanini. John Smith—a Brit? An American? Was this some sort of French idiom for a John Doe of British origin? I began to wonder who this fellow was, and how he came to be shot by the Nazis in Aix.



☛ January 1983, Brussels

I take the first train to Paris. It is green and boxy and looks like something from my grandfather's Märklin set. My friend Scott and I—each 20—are on our way to Vanderbilt's program in the South of France. Devoid of the distaste most southern American males have for all things French, I cannot wait. I will speak French. They will love me. I see a cart of sandwiches being pushed toward our cabin. The porter stops. "Jambon ou fromage?" he asks. I freeze. "*Jambon ou fromage?*" he says again, louder. The terror wells up. My lips move like a fish's. Nothing. "Ham or cheese!" he barks in unaccented English. I take the fromage and burn with shame.

★ August 1939, the Polish-German Border

In the late summer of 1939, a man dressed in a Polish Army uniform attacked a German radio installation at Gleiwitz, a town on the German side of the border. Hitler declared the attack an act of Polish aggression and invaded Poland. In fact, the man was a prisoner—likely a petty criminal—incarcerated in one of Hitler's internal concentration camps. Dressed to look like a member of the regular Polish Army, he was removed from the camp, taken to the transmitter, and shot by the Gestapo on August 31, 1939 in an attempt to fake a Polish attack on the German radio set up. Hitler had his pretext, and World War II its first victim.

The German Army forsook the trench warfare of World War I and instead adopted a new tactic. Heavy air bombardment would destroy the enemy's air force on the ground. Then, aerial bombardment would destroy railroads, armories and ammunition dumps. Next, dive bombers would attack infantrymen, and aircraft with machine guns would attack fleeing civilians. Simultaneously, the tanks roared in: first the light tanks and artillery, then the heavy Panzer units. The world had seen its first blitzkrieg.

On September 27, 1939 at 2:00 p.m., Warsaw surrendered.

☞ January 1940, London

Robert Smith breakfasted with his son, John, in the family's London flat. Robert Smith read the financial pages of *The London Times*. John Smith did not read the financial pages of *The London Times*. John Smith did not read the financial pages of any paper, a fact which irked his father to no end. John Smith cleared his throat. "Father," he said, "I'm going to resign from your firm in



the City." Robert Smith ignored him and spread marmalade on his muffin. He had heard this rot before. "No you are not, and that's final." "Father," John said matter of factly, "I am going to be a painter." Robert Smith heard, "I am a Communist." John kept at it: "I am going to the South of France to learn how to capture the essence of light and form on canvas, like Cézanne did with those peaches." Robert Smith heard, "I am a Communist and a moron." But this time, John Smith was serious. He had made a bundle on a few very lucky trades working for his father's firm in the City, and had enough to leave. He whistled "God Bless the Child that's Got his Own," and left the table.

☛ January 21, 1983, Aix-en-Provence

Scott and I get off the train and hail a cab. I have the address on a crumpled piece of paper in my jeans pocket: 15 Rue Cardinale. I practice saying it, quinze Rue Cardinale, quinze Rue Cardinale. The cabby drops us off, and we are met at impossibly old wooden doors by a member of the faculty. The townhouse is in the Mazarin Quarter, *le quartier Mazarin*, designed in the 17th century by Archbishop Mazarin, brother of the famous cardinal by the same name.



This is the new part of town.

We lug six months' worth of luggage up two long flights of stairs and step into Vanderbilt's campus: one sitting room, one library, one office, one classroom. I am 16 miles north of Marseille, 411 miles south of Paris, 4,662 miles east of Kirkland Hall, and about 1,000 paces from the Plaza of the Archbishop's Palace.

★ May 1940, the German border with Belgium and Holland

On the 10th of May, 1940, the German Army raged into Belgium and Holland. Leiden and The Hague saw 16,000 German paratroopers land in their cities. At 7:00 a.m. Belgium and Holland officially asked London for help. Around 4:00 p.m. a division of German panzers crossed the river Meuse, a natural barrier to the heartland of Belgium. Thirty-minutes later Neville Chamberlain was reorganizing his war cabinet habit and insisted that a broad coalition government was the only government that could rise to the occasion. Labor saw Chamberlain as ineffective and refused to cooperate. Chamberlain resigned and Winston Churchill became Prime Minister and Minister of a Defense.

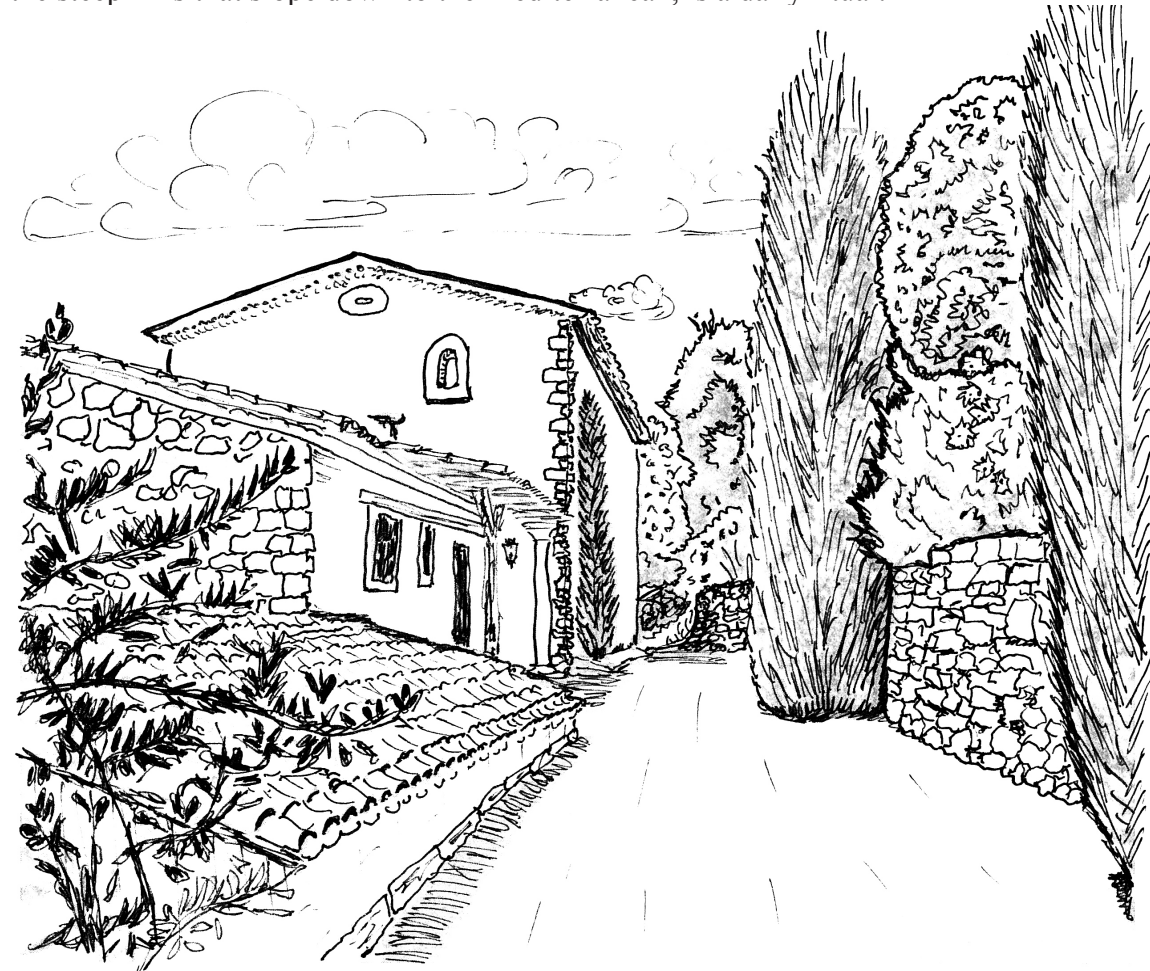
On the afternoon of May 13, 1940, Churchill addressed the House of Commons and declared "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." His goal, he announced, was victory. "Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory

however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.”

The next day Rotterdam collapsed and with Rotterdam’s collapse Hitler was in control of the Netherlands. Belgium would follow a fortnight later.

✿ **May 1940, Cassis, France**

The seaside town of Cassis is not really a port. The only ships that dock in her harbor are pleasure craft. The hotels and cafés lining the dockside are impossibly quaint, always full, and serve soupe de poisson and bouillabaisse throughout the day. If a student has a little pocket change, he can order a dozen oysters or a *moules frites* after the soup. Even in meager times, a bottle of the local rosé, made from the Grenache grapes growing on the steep hills that slope down to the Mediterranean, is a daily ritual.



The artist colony was located just west of the harbor, on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean. There, a retired art history professor from the Sorbonne relieved mostly foreign students of a few francs each week, and in return provided a place to flop, breakfast, art supplies, meager and barely competent instruction, and some of the most spectacular views in the world.

John Smith plopped down his bags, paid his fare, and entered into the tutelage of *Monsieur le Professeur*, such as he was.

✿ **February 1983, Cassis**

Scott and I visit Cassis with three girls from Texas: two evangelicals working to save the soul of my atheist friend and an anorexic girl from Dallas. We hire a boat to take us the calenques, the series of deep fjords that begin just west of the port. We are late for our appointment with the boatman. No problem, he draws, “*Ici dans le midi, il n’y a que le soleil et la patience.*” “Here in the Midi, there is nothing but sun and patience.” The girls swoon; we roll our eyes. I think the skinny one will sleep with him.

✿ **May 1940, Cassis**

“You have actual talent,” the professor told John Smith. “Most of my students come for the sun and the romance; you have come to paint, and you do it damn well.” John Smith’s smile shone with all the sun of Provence. “I am sending you to a real art teacher.” He handed Smith a frayed calling card. It read: *Gaston Chaunet, Professeur aux Beaux Arts, 18 Rue du Quatre Septembre, Aix-En-Provence.* On his last night in Cassis, John Smith listened to his shortwave radio, and worried.



✿ **February, 1983, Aix-en-Provence**

I make small talk with my landlord, M. Aberlen, in the garden. He would simply be *Monsieur* to us for the next five months. He is erudite, a retired professor of English at the local high school, a widower. Dandruff collects on some sort of scarf/ascot/bow tie contraption he wears around his neck. He is enormously proud of his home, which he calls *Clos St. Andre*. A *clos* is a walled vineyard, but there is no wall, and no vineyard, only a series of high hedges enclosing a garden. His house, handsome and dilapidated, is a jumble of books, ashes, used coffee cups, and dirty wine glasses. He is helpless without his late wife.

I admire the sculpture in the garden in my halting French. “Another student carved it for me, American boy. French name. He was from Nashville, too.” He paused and searched his foggy memory. “LeQuire,” he said. “His name was LeQuire.”

Scott takes a girlfriend that I had had my eye on, and I am jealous.

★ May, 1940, the Belgian-French border

As Rommel’s panzers plunged into the heart of Belgium over the River Meuse, Guderian crossed the border into France and ploughed through the allegedly impenetrable Ardennes Forest, which had been left relatively unfortified on the mistaken assumption that tanks could not make it through. The Germans advanced through the northeastern French town of Sedan. British bombers failed to stop the German attack, and the French troops on the ground faltered. So began the Germans’ flanking of the Allied lines. A huge British expeditionary force, sent to defend Belgium, Holland, and ultimately France, was in danger of being cut off from the French Army and stranded in western France.

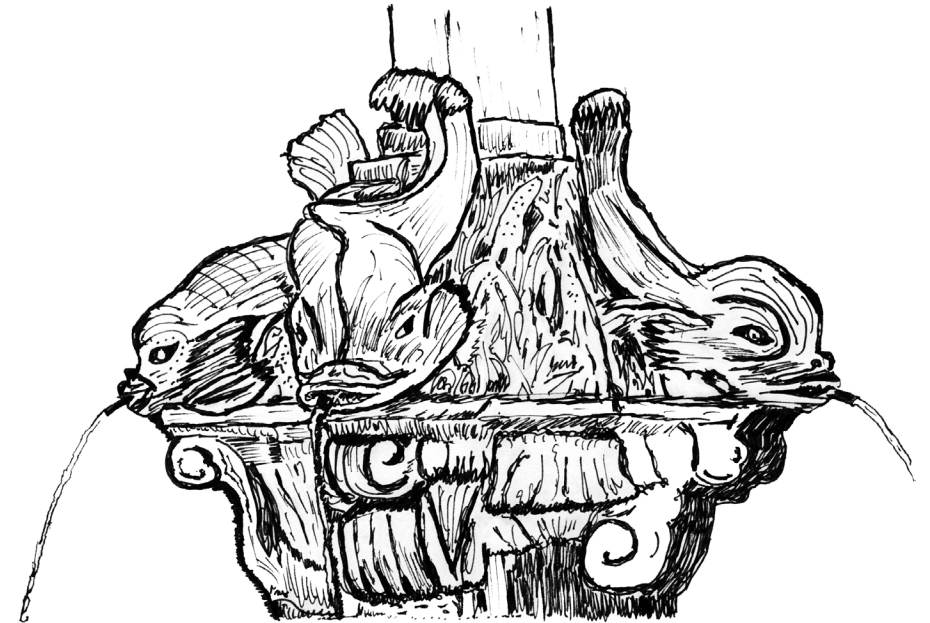
The administration in Paris began to lose heart. The French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, called Churchill on May 15 and told the British Prime Minister that the French had failed to hold the German attack at Sedan. Reynaud spoke openly of the possibility of defeat. On May 16, Rommel headed 50 miles south into French territory, and Guderian continued toward Sedan.

Paris panicked. Guderian turned north toward Origny on the River Oise. A French colonel and a pioneer of tank warfare attacked and held Guderian for awhile, but was ultimately overrun. His tenaciousness earned him a promotion. Colonel De Gaulle would continue to fight, but next time as a General.

On May 19, Churchill again took to the airwaves, urging the rescue of a “group of shattered States and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must; as conquer we shall.” As Martin Gilbert, Churchill’s official biographer put it, “How Britain and France could conquer was, at that moment, quite unclear.”

☛ March 1983, Aix-en-Provence

We leave class and walk down the Rue Cardinale. Next door to No. 15 is No. 17, the address where the writer M.F.K. Fisher stayed after the war with her daughters and wrote *Map of Another Town*, her memoir of life in Aix. Further down the street we hit the intersection of Rue Cardinale and Rue du Quatre Septembre, named for the date in 1870 when Napoleon III fell and the third French Republic came into being. At the



intersection sits the most famous feature of Rue Cardinale: the Fountain of the Four Dolphins, *la Fontaine des Quatres Dauphins*. Built in 1667 and designed by the local architect Jean Claude Rambot, the Fountain is anchored by an obelisk flanked by four dolphins in full relief, one at each compass point, each spewing water into a basin below. We sit on the edge of the basin and photograph each other. We continue, taking a right on the Rue du Quatre Septembre, and head toward the Cours Mirabeau.

★ May and June, 1940, France

The British Expeditionary Force in France was miraculously evacuated from Dunkirk between May 26 and June 2. A total of 340,000 troops were brought safely to England by military vessels and a flotilla of volunteer civilian ships. Hitler moved his headquarters to a town near the French border in Belgium and sent 143 German divisions against 65 French divisions. The battle began at 4:00 in the morning on June 5, 1940. Knowing what was in store, Reynaud appointed General De Gaulle as Under-Secretary of State for War. On June 6, Hitler broke through the French defenses. As Gilbert noted, “the scent of a total German victory was in the air.” On June 12, 46,000 French and British troops surrendered to Rommel. Later that day, General Weygand of France ordered the French Military Governor of Paris to declare Paris an open city.

Churchill pushed Reynaud to seek help from Roosevelt. Roosevelt offered arms, but

would not seek a declaration of war. On the morning of June 14, 1940, the swastika flag hung on the Arc de Triomphe.

On June 16, Prime Minister Reynaud asked Churchill to release France from her agreement not to make a separate peace with Germany. Reynaud resigned in the ensuing discussions, and Field Marshal Petain, the hero of the Battle of Verdun from World War I, formed a new government. On the same day that the new government was formed, the French asked the Germans for an armistice.

De Gaulle, in exile, expressed his disgust on the airwaves, urging all French forces not shattered by the Nazis to resist. As Gilbert put it, “A 49-year-old Brigadier General in exile was challenging the authority of the Marshal of France,” and people took note. At 6:50 p.m. on June 22, French negotiators signed the armistice. Hitler was now in control of Poland, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, and France. Churchill knew they were next target, and took to the airwaves again on June 18 to steel his country for the coming onslaught.

✿ June 18, 1940, Aix-en-Provence

John Smith turned on his shortwave radio and tuned in the BBC. Churchill was wrapping up his speech on the defeat of France. “What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire... Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be freed and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’”

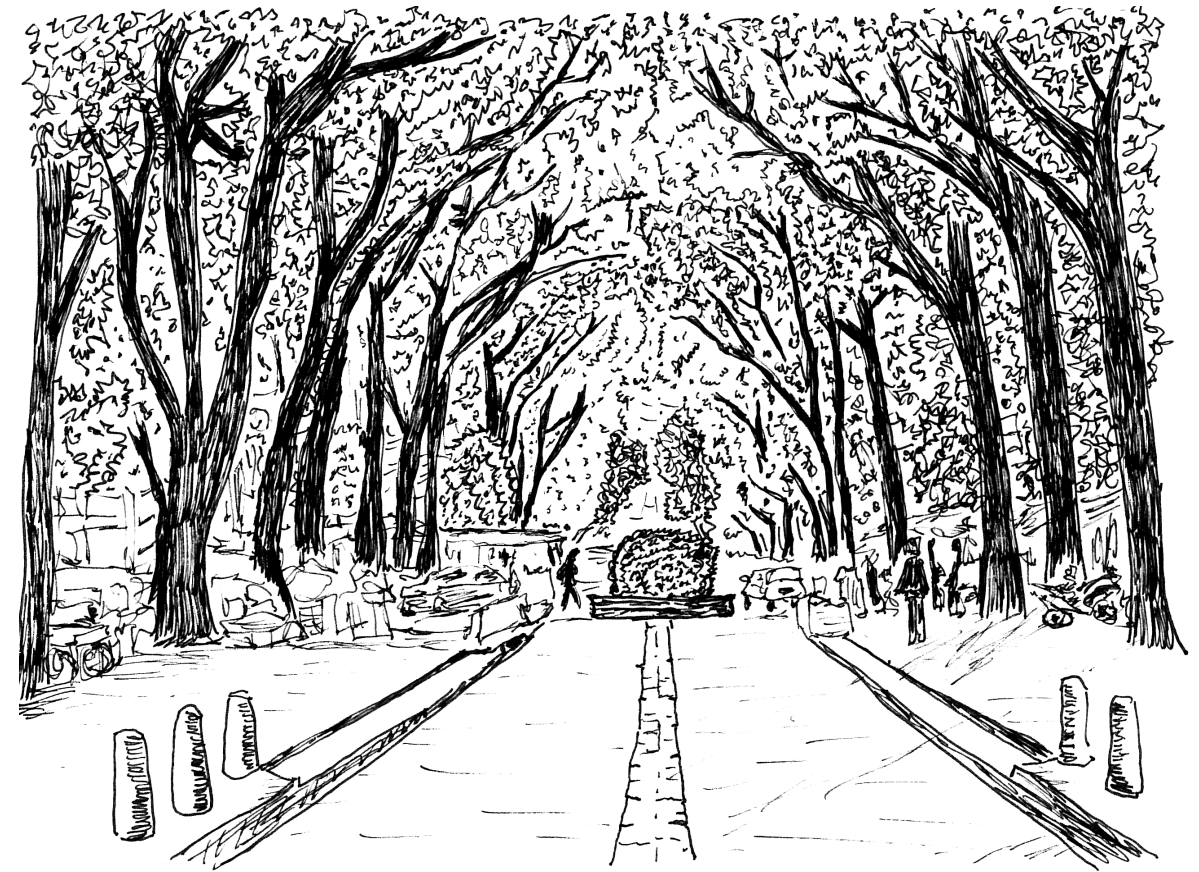
☪ March 1983, Aix-en-Provence

We leave class at lunchtime to buy picnic supplies at the Monoprix, Aix’s answer to Target. We head down Rue Cardinale to the Fountain of the Four Dolphins, take a right on Rue du Quatre Septembre, cross Rue Goyrand, then Rue Mazarine, before finally setting foot on the Cours Mirabeau. The Cours is hard to describe, even hard to photograph or capture on video. You can describe it in a clinical sense: it is about

440 meters long, about 120 feet wide, flanked on either side by 17th and 18th Century mansions with rows of Sycamores between the mansions and the edge of the street. But the clinical does not do it justice. The Italian and French facades, the procession of four fountains that form a sort of broken median down the middle of the Cours, its planned and careful proportions, and the bonhomie created by the sidewalk cafés that line its north side all combine to make the Cours “the most beautiful main street in the world,” to quote M.F.K Fisher, quoting just about everyone who has walked down its length.

Fisher tried to capture its charm:

The Cours has teased poets and painters with its ineffable allure for more than 300 years, but words and lines and colors do not capture the reasons why it is beautiful and not pretty, serene and not soothing, dignified yet gladsome, even in the stripped austerity of winter.



It is probable that almost every traveler who has ever passed through Aix has been moved in some positive way by the view from one end of the Cours or the other, by the sounds of its fountains in the early hours, by the melodious play of the pure clear sunlight of Provence through its summer cave of leaves. Some of them have tried to tell of their bemused rapture, on canvas and sketch pads and on scratch-pads and even postcards, but they have never been satisfied.

We enter the Monoprix and buy wine, bread, and cheese. We avoid anything that can't be cut, spread, or uncorked with a swiss army knife and eaten with bare hands. I steal a glance at the condoms and wish I needed them.



✿ April 1940, Aix-en-Provence

John Smith was almost out of paint, and paint, like everything else was scarce. But he had enough to finish the portrait of the young model Professor Chaunet had supplied. She was dark haired, dark eyed, with fair skin. Smith figured her to be about 23. After several sittings he found himself growing fond of her. After the fourth sitting, he got up the nerve to ask her to lunch at Les Deux Garçons on the Cours. They talked through the afternoon, sharing their stories—his, the life of the self-styled rebel artist, son of a City banker; hers, the story of the daughter of a secular Jewish professor of English at the University of Aix-Marseilles, Max Levy, and one of his gentile students, Marie See, who had left for a visit to her family in Nice when Helene was three and never returned. After the sixth sitting, they were lovers; after the eighth, she became a regular fixture at his cramped quarters on the Rue du Quatre Septembre. Smith wondered what his father in the City would think of Helene Levy-See, the half-Jewish philosophy student who shared his bed.

✿ March 1983, Aix-en-Provence

Monsieur taps on our door at two in the morning. My mother is a math major but cannot add seven hours to the local time to arrive at the time in France, and likes to call in the middle of the night. “Jay,” he would say, as politely as he could, glasses perched halfway down his nose, “*C’est ta mère.*” But this time he has another message. Scott’s father has had a heart attack and is gravely ill. We drive to Marseille in the middle of the night and put Scott on a plane. I steal his girlfriend.

★ July 10, 1940, Vichy

The Germans occupy the north of France. In the south, a collaborationist government is established at the spa town of Vichy to administer the rest of the country and to some extent the occupied north. The Third Republic ceases to exist.

✿ April 1941, Aix-en-Provence

Helene did not trust the Vichy government. She dropped the Levy from her name, told her landlord she was moving to Marseilles, moved in with John, and sold all of her belongings that would not fit into the apartment on the Rue du Quatre Septembre. She ventured a final visit to her father who lived near the university on the Rue Pignonnet. She brought John with her. They met Professor Levy in his study, carving a block of ebony into a chess piece, as was his hobby. “I have been dismissed from the University, as I knew I would be. I am afraid they will come for both of us in time.” The old man twiddled the half carved Bishop in between his thumb and forefinger. “I am old, but you, Helene have a life. Find a way to get out.” The old man looked at John, and did not see the strong protective type he would have hoped for under the circumstances. He reached into a multi-drawer hobbist cabinet and produced a wooden carving knife, one of an identical pair. It had a blade of about five inches, fitted into a burnished rosewood handle. Carved into the handle was the crest of Counts of Provence. It was apparent that the old man had made it himself. The professor slipped the blade into the leather sheath. “Take this—it is not much, but if they come for you, you might rid the world of one more Vichy traitor before they take you.”



✿ **May 1941, Aix-en-Provence**

The art professor went to seed. He lost weight. His temper grew short, and he startled easily. Professor Chaunet asked Smith for a walk after class one evening. They headed down the Rue du Quatre Septembre toward the Rue Cardinale and quickly hit the intersection. Chaunet beckoned Smith to sit on the basin of the Fountain of Four Dolphins. The splash of the water hid their conversation. “You know they will come for Helene, and you know what will happen when they do. You are English; they might come for you too.” Smith knew enough from the short wave to know what happened to Jews in Vichy France when they were deported. The older man began: “I am going to take a risk. If you betray me, it will mean my certain death.” Chaunet stayed silent for several minutes, and Smith listened to the fountain burble. “I am a member of the resistance.” Smith sat on the edge of the Fountain as the fear swept over him. “We lost Stephanini and Tedeschi when they were picked up in Marseille by the SS. Lauzenberg was deported to the death camps. Girard and the Amars were found with maps marking targets and were shot on the spot. Veran was betrayed by an acquaintance that he spoke too freely in front of. He hung himself with a shoelace before the Gestapo could interrogate him.”

“We are few now, a handful of men and women working in loosely connected cells, all in and around Aix—one here in the Quartier Mazarin, one near the Cathedral St. Saviour, one in the Faubourg Notre Dame. We operate not quite independently and meet when the signal goes out. We are not truly one organization, but we are held together by common cause, like grout holds together tile. Our identities are all secret, but the word is out that we exist. The town’s people call us the *Resistance Mosaïque*, the Mosaic Resistance.”

He continued: “There is a fountain in the Plaza of the Archbishop’s Palace, la Fontaine D’Espeluque. I will tell you where we meet; when there is a sprig of lavender floating in the fountain just before dusk on a Saturday, you will know to go there the following Sunday at midnight.” The older man whispered an address in the younger man’s ear. John Smith said nothing, and the water from the Fountain of the Four Dolphins splashed into its basin as it had for almost 300 years.



☛ **March 10, 1983, Aix-en-Provence**

We eat dinner with the family that supplies our meals: Mme. Ricavy, her daughter Nicole, and her granddaughter Marie Sol. Madame has provided small gifts under our napkins in honor of my coming 21st birthday. There is no tradition in the Ricavy family of marrying—or even mentioning—the men with whom one bears children. Scott is in Nashville tending to his father. I still have his girlfriend.

★ **June 22, 1941, The German-Russian Border**

The Germans bombard the Soviet cities of Sebastapol, Minsk, Odessa, Kovno, and Rovno, and open up an assault along a 930-mile front.

✿ **July 1941, Aix-en-Provence**

On a moonless Sunday night when the clouds blotted out the stars, John Smith broke curfew and left the sleeping Helene alone. He walked toward the fountains, then up the Rue Cardinale toward the Eglise St. Jean. He paused at two impossibly old wooden doors and smacked the heavy knocker against the brass plate. Three quick knocks, then a pause, then a fourth. The door creaked open at 15 Rue Cardinale.

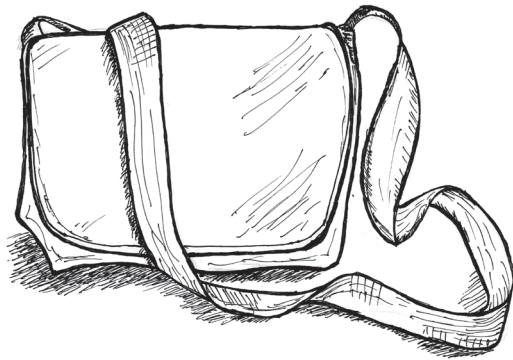
Smith was ushered upstairs. A barely lit room full of men and women faced an old high backed swivel chair. In the chair, facing away from the room, sat a figure in a dark cloak. Even though the figure faced away from the room, Smith could see that a hat was pulled over his features, and a scarf was pulled up over his mouth, further hiding his face and muffling his voice. Obviously the patron, the man in the Rue Cardinale began handing out assignments. While he was talking he fiddled with something in his hands—whether nervously or menacingly Smith couldn’t tell. For a moment the lone candle in the room cast a glint on whatever it was. From the chair came a trace, faint but unmistakable, of lavender.

★ **December 1941, Pearl Harbor**

Japanese bombers decimate the American fleet at anchor. The next day President Roosevelt declares war on Japan.

✿ August 1941, Aix-en-Provence

John Smith heads toward the Plaza of the Archbishop's Palace, a worn rucksack over his shoulder. Perhaps it was his nervous air, perhaps luck—the uniformed officer of the local Vichy police force taps him on the shoulder. “And where are we going, Monsieur?” he asks. The officer thumbs through his British passport but a visa approved by the local arm of Vichy seems to be in order. The officer roots through his rucksack: two half empty tubes of paint, a pallet knife, a rolled up section of canvas. The gendarme rolls his eyes. Five minutes later Smith is on a bench by the Fontaine d'Espeluque in the Plaza of the Archbishop's Palace, seated by a man whom he has met only once before. They chat, their conversation inaudible over the clatter of shoes on the cobblestone square. No one notices that Smith leaves with the other man's pack, weighted with plastique.



★ December 11, 1941, Washington DC

The United States declares war on Germany immediately following Hitler's declaration of war against the United States.

✿ 1942-1944, Aix-en-Provence

John Smith's artist's hands are good with wires, timers, and plastique. Mission after successful mission, he gains the confidence of the Mosaic Resistance.

★ June 6, 1944, the Beaches at Normandy

Twelve thousand aircraft bombard the coast of Normandy, clearing the way for approximately 7,000 ships to cross the English Channel. One hundred sixty thousand men throw themselves at the coast of occupied France.

✿ July 1, 1944

John Smith is elated. The scent of liberation is in the air in Aix. He takes Helene to Cassis for a weekend. There is no gas; they ride their bikes. They stop to see Professor Levy. Back in Aix he begins to paint again. On a Saturday, he sees the lavender floating in the Fontaine D'Espeluque. The following night, he knocks four times on the door of 15 Rue Cardinale, and the impossibly old wooden doors open once again. Among his comrades in the Mosaic Resistance, he tells his master that he is good for one more mission.

He returns on Tuesday and pushes open the door to the apartment on the Rue du Quatre Septembre. He stares at the broken furniture and the overturned desk for a long while, before letting his eyes drift up to the wall marred with a single word, written with his own paint: *Juif*.



★ August 15, 1944

Allied troops storm ashore at Cavalaire-sur-Mer, Saint-Tropez, and Saint Raphael east of Marseille, all part of Operation Dragoon. The operation is designed to complement the invasion of Normandy. Allied troops lead by three American divisions and the French 1st Army Division, all under the command of the American Lt. General Lucian Truscott, lead the way north into Provence. Seventy-five miles from the landing site at Saint-Tropez sleeps the town of Aix-en-Provence.

✿ August 16, 1944, Aix-en-Provence

John Smith presents himself at the Vichy Controlled Hotel de Ville in Aix. It is not quite abandoned. Two Vichy gendarmes are arguing in the Mayor's office. Smith bursts in unannounced. “Where is she?” he asks coolly.

“Where is who?” comes the reply.

“The girl from the Rue du Quatre Septembre.”

“Ahh, *mon ami anglais*, it is too late for her I am afraid. We are low on ammunition, and there are no more trains. We had to use a garrote.”

The war had hardened Smith, so when he fell to his knees in apparent despair, he was in complete control. When the first officer moves toward him to wrench him to his feet, the officer never notices the knife until he sees its rosewood handle, emblazoned with the crest of the Counts of Provence, buried in his own chest. The second officer fires his one remaining bullet into John Smith's body.

★ August 17, 1945

Allied Troops swarm over the south of France and into Aix. A young American officer finds the body of a French policeman in the mayor's office in City Hall with a knife in his chest. He follows a red trail into the next room. There, he finds another dead gendarme, this one so thoroughly strangled that he is almost decapitated. Next to the second body he finds another body with an English passport, a bullet wound in his chest. Next to him, on the tile, by the still hand of the Englishman, he sees the words "*pour que je te suive*" written in blood and wonders what they mean.

Blood pools in the grout between the tiles.

♣ Bastille Day, 1946

The streets of Aix are alive with revelers. The cobblestones of the Plaza of the Archbishop's Palace just down the street from Saint Saveur are sticky with spilled wine and littered with confetti. A chorus of drunken celebrants sing *La Marseillaise*. An old man, again a professor of English at the University of Aix-Marseille, sits alone and carves a chess piece with an interesting knife, the crest of the Counts of Provence visible to passers by. He heads toward the fountain at the end of the Plaza, and places something in the water-filled bowl. An onlooker thought to himself that the old man had the air of a priest dipping bread into wine, and wondered, when he passed the fountain, why the old fellow had left a sprig of lavender to float, then sink, in the fountain's waters.

Epilogue

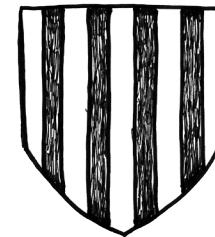
🕒 June 2008, Aix-en-Provence

Our reunion guide announces that it is time for a refresher class in French back at the campus, but we stare with our guide at the plaque for a while in the plaza by the Archbishop's Palace, now known as the *La Place des Martyrs de la Resistance*. We run through the names again: Gaston Chaunet, Paul Girard, Noel Veran, Marcelle Cremieux, the two Fontenialles, *père et fils*, two families of Amars, a Tedeschi, an Abraham, a Lauzenberg, a Nivou, a Stephanini. And Helene Levy-See and John Smith. Our reunion group takes the Rue Gaston de Saporta until it turns into the Rue Marechal Foch at the Hotel de Ville. We wind our way to the Cours Mirabeau, and cross where the Rue Clemenceau becomes the Rue du Quatre Septembre. We bear left on Rue Cardinale at the Fountain of the Four Dolphins and head towards the Eglise St. Jean. We ring the buzzer at 15 Rue Cardinale, and pass through two impossibly old wooden doors on our way to class.

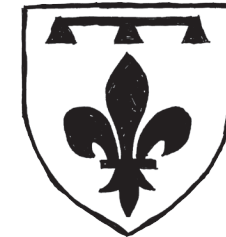


A few notes:

The accounts of World War II are derived from Martin Gilbert's *The Second World War: A Complete History*. Most of the descriptions of Aix come from my own memory, but some are derived from *Aix-en-Provence et le Pays d'Aix* by Jean Paul Coste. The description of the Cour Mirabeau and the quotation from M.F.K Fisher comes from *Map of Another Town: A Memoir of Provence* by M. F. K. Fisher. The Resistance Mosaïque was real; the account of it in this paper is, obviously, fiction.



Crest of the
Counts of Provence
1112-1246



Crest of the
Counts of Provence
1246-1486

A few more notes:

Every few years it's my turn to be the speaker at bookish sort of club I am a member of. The hardest part is the selection of a topic. We have no rules in this regard. A few months before it was my turn to hold the podium, I went to Aix with my wife to revisit the town as part of a reunion group for those who had been on Vanderbilt's program there. When our tour guide showed us the plaque on the wall of the *Place des Martyrs de la Résistance*, pointed out the 74 names and called to our attention the name of the standout Englishman, I knew I had found my muse, and his name was John Smith.

I called the *mairie* and inquired if there was a town historian who could help me research the local resistance movement. I was bounced around from clerk to clerk, until I found someone willing to help. No, there was no such historian, but there was a graduate student who wrote his thesis on the resistance movement in and around Aix. His name was Jean-Claude Pouzet. The awesome power of the internet let me know that his thesis had been turned into a commercially published book, *La Résistance Mosaïque*. I ordered a copy from a bookseller in Atlanta. It never came. I ordered another copy—the only other copy I could find anywhere—from a small town bookshop in France. The day of my presentation crept closer, and still no source from which to write my paper on John Smith and the Mosaic Resistance. So I made up this story. The day after I gave my speech, the mailbox at my house bulged with a parcel from France.

You might be interested in what really happened. That, alas, is a story for another day.

But a few things you might want to know: The name *Résistance Mosaïque* was given to the loose collection of resistance cells operating in and around Aix by Pouzet—it was not a contemporary moniker. It consisted of resistants working for the *Franc Tireurs et Partisans*, the principal communist-affiliated resistance organization; the so called *maquis*, the rural guerilla irregulars; the MUR, the *Mouvements Unis de la Résistance*; the ORA, the *Organisation de la Résistance de l'Armée*; and others. To paraphrase Pouzet: the resistance around Aix consisted of disparate groups of different ideologies and colors, which, when viewed from a distance, give the appearance of tile held together by the grout of patriotism and common cause to create a unified and beautiful whole, like the mosaics in the vaults of Byzantine cathedrals.

And what does Pouzet's book tell us of the persons whose names appear on the memorial plaque? Marcel Cremieux's son, who survived the war, tells this story in Pouzet's book: "When the situation became more serious, I searched my personal papers for proof that I was a comtadin jew [a special class of jew that enjoyed papal protection for centuries], because it was said that they wouldn't touch us. But that was wrong. To get out of my situation and to save my three children I converted to Catholicism, thanks

to the Curate of Gardanne and then to the Fathers of Light. They pursued me anyway. My father Marcel, who didn't want to convert or hide himself, was taken." And then a sentence that needs no translation: *Il est mort à Auschwitz*. One of the Fontenailles, I don't know if it was *père* or *fils*, was arrested on April 14, 1943 and shot or deported some time thereafter. One of the Amars was a member of the *Franc Tireurs et Partisans*, the French communist resistance movement.

And so it goes on, for 596 pages, but of John Smith and Helen Levy-See, there is no mention.

—Jay Hardcastle



• 15 •

Où tu vas, je te suivrai.