



## In Memoriam: Prof. Nelly Alix

Prof. de classes élémentaires de 1959 à 1966 († 3/8/1966)



Nelly and Francis Alix



Mme. Alix & her three sons (all LFNY students) in 1961

Each lifetime is entitled to at least one big adventure. Nelly Suzanne Alix -- born Ringot in Ardes, in the Pas-de-Calais, in 1922 -- found hers when she was drawn into clandestine activities during the Second World War. In the winter of 1942, an ordinary-looking Frenchman sat down across from her in a small café at lunchtime. This was in Douai, a railway crossroad in the north of France.

Gently, persuasively, the man outlined a course of action that would engage her as an agent for the underground. He was a recruiter for British Intelligence, operating behind enemy lines, with a mission to help Allied soldiers return home and to collect statistics on enemy troop movements or war material.

Possibly Nelly Ringot was chosen because she had shown herself trustworthy as an accomplice in other events (the escape of British soldiers, for example), or maybe she was chosen because she worked for the railway service. She explained later that she couldn't say no to an opportunity to help her country (France). So she collected the required data for the following months. She would smuggle carbon copies of documents out of the office and into the hands of the small five-person network group to which she was assigned.

In early summer of the same year, the Germans arrested her for espionage. The dread knock on the door at five in the morning, and she was huddled off in her pyjamas to the German command post. There, as custom, she was ordered to scrub the latrines, before being taken to a cell. Her interrogation transpired quickly, the Germans had all the information they needed since her whole network was already in their hands. She signed a document that earned her the right to live, and spent three years imprisoned in Belgium and Germany. The U.S. Army released her from Stadelheim, a fortress in Munich, Germany.

She was repatriated to Paris and continued her work for Allied military intelligence. She met Francis Alix, an American born, French-Canadian driver for the "MIX" (military intelligence), engaged in closing down operations and rendering justice. She learned that her whole network had been betrayed by a traitor. (She pleaded for his reprieve from capital punishment.)

She married Francis Alix in 1946 and accompanied him to the U. S. where in 1950, 1951, and 1956, she gave birth to boys. She began work as a grade school teacher at the Lycée Français de New York in the late fifties.

Until her death on March 8, 1966 from a sudden stroke, she taught several generations of students the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. She was well-liked by her students and colleagues, and may have inspired more than one talented student to follow in her footsteps.

She was awarded a certificate of commendation by the British Allied Command and was thanked in person by General DeGaulle in September 1945, who also awarded her a certificate. She received back pay for the years spent in confinement under the Nazis.

John Alix, her first son, graduated the Lycée in 1968 and Michel, her second son, graduated the Lycée in 1969.

**Text prepared by Michel Alix ('69) in January 2009**