



## From France To America: As Told Through Fashion

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This project was submitted for a course on twentieth-century fashion history. I researched my family's fashion using primary sources (photographs and interviews) to determine how closely family members followed fashion. We used the fashion curve published in Solomon and Rabolt's *Consumer Behavior in Fashion* (2004) to determine fashion adoption.

My project focused on my *Mémé* (grandmother), Janine Goode, who was born and raised in France. I used six photographs dating from 1942 to 1957, and I interviewed my grandparents. The photographs included schoolchildren in Nazi-occupied France, adolescents and young adults in post World War II France, marriage to an American who was a member of the U.S. Air Force, and raising a family in New England during the 1950s.

The first photograph pictures *Mémé* in the first grade with her classmates in 1942. She lived in Deols, France with her mother (Marie), father (Marcel), and grandfather, until the Nazis captured Marcel as a prisoner of the war. Government rations on fabrics resulted in *Mémé* wearing mostly what she could find or what her mother could make. The children are wearing hand-me-downs. One student is wearing an old-fashioned Norfolk jacket. *Mémé*'s mother made her wooden clogs, which are called *sabots*. These were sensible shoes as her family lived on a farm where they could grow their own food during the war. Growing up in Nazi-occupied France was very hard for *Mémé* and her family.

After the war ended Marcel was released from captivity, and *Mémé*'s family moved to Chateauroux, France. The second photograph was taken in 1948 and depicts *Mémé* when she was twelve in an all girls' catholic school. A year before this in 1947 Dior came out with the "New Look;" in the photo some of the schoolgirls and *Mémé* (who were interested in fashion at this point in their lives) adapted to the "New Look" very quickly and some did not.

Photo three is a picture of *Mémé*, Donald (her future husband), Marcel, and a family friend in 1953. They are in Butan, France visiting *Mémé*'s aunt. *Mémé* and Donald rode down on motorcycles so their outfits reflect what sportswear of the 1950s looked like. Marcel had

adapted to the men's fashion of the time, which was a "neat and narrow" look. The family friend in the photo is dressed in what may be a subcultural style in France at the time; the subculture called themselves *zazous* who wore oversized clothing similar to the American zoot suit.

Photo four is Mémé and Donald BenDavid's wedding in Chateauroux, France in 1954. Mémé's dress is a perfect example of what a fashionable woman would get married in during the

1950s. It is conservative with a high neckline and a stand up collar, long sleeves, and a long veil. Her dress reflects two royal weddings of the time, which were Princess Elizabeth of England and Grace Kelly of Monaco.

After their marriage Mémé and Donald moved to the United States. They bought a house on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts where most of my grandfather's family lived. In photo five Mémé is at one of the local beaches with her two sisters-in-law, Florence and Evelyn, and their babies in 1956. Mémé and Florence are wearing boned swimsuits with low necklines to show off their bodies. Most women of this time were starting to wear revealing apparel.

In 1957 Janine and Donald had their first child, my mother, Michelle. Marie, Janine's mother, came to America to help Mémé and see her first grandchild. Photo six depicts Marie on the French Line, *Liberté*, with the other passengers. She and the other women are wearing sheath dresses; most of the men have the "neat and narrow" look.

Despite the fact that historical events affected my family's clothing choices, I concluded that Meme and the others in the photos were fashion followers based on comparison to published sources on twentieth-century fashion.