

**REGINA WOLBROM PAPERS, circa 1920-1942**  
**1995.A.0484.2**

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**Appendix A. Biography of the Regina Rotenberg Wolbrom**

The following biography of Regina Rotenberg Wolbrom is housed in the donor files of the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum. The author of the biography is unknown.

## **Regina Rotenberg Wolbrom collection** **Coconut Creek, Florida**

Regina Rotenberg was born October 13, 1925 in Gera, Germany. She was the oldest child of Max (Moshek) Rotenberg, a storeowner (born in Lodz, on October 30, 1896) and Tema (Toni) Frankel (born in Busk, Poland, on February 3, 1900). Regina had two brothers: Wolfgang (born in Berlin, June 4, 1929) and Siegmund (born in Berlin, August 4, 1934). Regina attended a volkschule in Berlin. In October 1938, the Germans deported Max to Poland because of his Polish citizenship. Eventually he was released, and went to live with his sister in Lodz. Tema and her children had remained in Berlin, and in February 1939, Tema sent her children with the Red Cross on a kindertransport to Brussels. In April 1939 Max began his illegal journey across the borders, and Tema remained in Berlin until June 1939 when she illegally traveled to Belgium to join her children. The family was reunited in Brussels, and on September 11, 1940, Tema gave birth to Sonja. For a brief while, Regina was able to attend a professional school, however that ended in 1941. Max was not allowed to work, and so he worked illegally selling leather in order to provide for his family. Tema sent Regina to a dressmaker so that she could learn a trade. When the Germans began rounding up young girls for labor, Tema asked the dressmaker if Regina could stay with her. After a month, the dressmaker began to worry that they would both be caught, so she sent Regina to live with her cousin in the hamlet of Halmael, Belgium. The rest of the family then joined her, and they were able to pay the woman who took them in. Father Hubert Celis, the parish priest of Hamel, became friendly with the Rotenbergs. In October 1942, Tema had a premonition that something would happen, so she asked Father Hubert to help hide her children. Regina and Sonja were sent to stay with his father, and Wolfgang and Siegmund were sent to live with Father Louis Celis (Father Hubert's brother who was also a priest) with the cover story that they were from a neighboring town. Two weeks later, while Max was working in Father Hubert's garden, someone had denounced the family, and German gendarme came to get him. The German soldier went to the home to get Tema, and the Germans confronted Father Hubert, but did not arrest him. Father Hubert was worried that they would come after the children as well, so Regina took Sonja by bicycle to stay with a family who owned a flourmill who were friends with Father Hubert, and Wolfgang and Siegmund were temporarily relocated to stay with another priest in the region. Max and Tema perished in Auschwitz in October 1942. The family taking care of Regina and Sonja, were not able to take care of a two year old, Father Hubert, who was also working with the underground, found [a] place for her near the Dutch border with farmers. Regina had to bring her by bike to a train station and give Sonja to [a] woman dressed in brown. This woman then gave Sonja to three different people, and eventually the farmer. Only Father Hubert knew exactly where she was. Regina stayed with the family, and after a few more weeks, she rejoined Father Hubert's father, and her brothers returned to live with Father Louis's friends. Around Christmas, Father Hubert took Regina to see her sister by bike, she had [a] false ID in case they got caught. When they left, Sonja screamed so much that the farmer said for Regina not to come back for a few months until they let her know when it would be all right. Regina would later go on to visit her siblings one day a month using [the] false identity card Hubert made for her. On May 3, 1944, the same gendarme who took Max and Tema, came to the house and asked for the person who didn't belong. He asked Regina for her identity card, and Father Hubert's father said Regina was his niece. Knowing that she would be arrested if she showed him her false ID card, she told him that she could not find it. He searched her room and found the card, and arrested her. The gendarme took her to a cellar, and

interrogated her. She was asked where [her] siblings were, but she lied and said she hadn't seen them for two years. She also said that Max had made the false ID card for her when they were in Brussels in order to protect Father Hubert. Father Hubert's sister-in-law came to bring Regina some food, and Regina was able to tell her in Flemish (so the German guards would not understand) what her answers had been. Father Hubert was told this information, so when he was interrogated, he gave the same answers, and was released. The Germans took Regina to another town by taxi and placed her in prison for a few nights, then sent her to the Malines transit camp for about two weeks. While she was on a cattle car on her way to Birkenau, Regina was able to throw five notes down through the floor of the train. Two of them were found by a farmer who then mailed them to Father Hubert's father and the other to Frangiska Father Hubert's sister who was in a convent. [in 1945 Regina was in touch with the family who found the letters, and one of these letters was donated to the Museum's Archives in 1995] While in Birkenau, Regina was selected twice for forced labor. She contracted rabies while in the camp, and during a third selection she hid in the toilets to avoid detection of her illness. Regina also got jaundice, and was sent to the camp hospital. After her recovery, she was asked if she wanted to stay, so she remained in the hospital working with them removing dead bodies. In January 1944, Regina was evacuated and sent on a death march to Ravensbruck, then to Malchov and Leipzig. While marching near Leipzig, Regina was able to escape from [the] death march with her friend Frieda Midzinsky. They went into town and found shelter in a home, and two days later in Risa, Germany the Russians liberated them. After liberation, the Russians came to their house, and ordered that all the Germans go into [the] woods. After explaining who they were and that they were afraid, the Russians told that Frieda and Regina could stay and the two girls went from house to house getting food and clothing. After two days, the German residents came back into town. The girls wanted to be with the Americans, so they walked 150 kilometers over five days to the American zone. The Americans placed the two girls in a temporary camp, then they were sent by open train cars to Belgium. Regina's truck to Brussels passed through [the] town where Father Hubert's father lived, and so she was allowed to leave the truck and she went back to the house of his father. The family was surprised and delighted to see her. The following day, Wolfgang, Siegmund, and Sonja came to visit her for the day, and then they returned to their rescuer's homes. Regina began searching for any surviving family members, and she found two Aunts who were in Brussels. Wolfgang and Siegmund were sent to live with their Aunt, but that did not work out, so Regina was able to place them on the last children's transport to Palestine. Unfortunately, Regina was too old and Sonja too young, but Regina promised that they would join them there one day. Sonja continued to live with her rescuer family, and on the day of Regina's wedding to Izak Wolbrom (a fellow survivor) Sonja stayed with them. Regina and Izak became Sonja's legal guardians, and she stayed with them until her marriage in 1961. In keeping with Regina's promise, in 1949 the three of them joined Wolfgang and Siegmund in Israel. Regina and Izak's two children were born there Nechemia (later Norman) in 1952, and Tamar born in 1953. The family immigrated to the United States in 1956, with Wolfgang and Siegmund following in 1957.

All of the Rotenberg's family materials were hidden for the family in Belgium and recovered after [the] war.

## **Family members and friends identified in the Regina Wolbrom collection:**

*Note: This outline includes people identified in the photographs of the Regina Wolbrom collection. In attempt to create an inclusive genealogy, people not pictured in the collection have \* next to their names*

### **Regina Wolbrom's immediate family:**

Moshek (Max) Rotengerg, 1896-1942 - father  
Tema (Toni) Frankel Rotenberg, 1900-1942 - mother  
Wolfgang Rotenberg, 1929 - brother  
Sigmund Rotenberg, 1934 - brother  
Sonja Rotenberg, 1940 (later Koner) - sister\*

### **Father's family:**

Beinisch Rotenberg - Max's father\*  
Khaia Rotgenberg (née Grinevize) - Max's mother\*  
Chana Rotenberg - Max's sister (later Lokcinski, married David Lokcinski)  
Sigmund Rotenberg - Max's brother  
Bell Rotenberg - Max's sister  
Ita Korn - Max's cousin  
Marcia Korn - Max's cousin

### **Mother's family:**

Eisig Frankel - Tema's father  
Sara Frankel - Tema's mother  
Jacob Frankel - Tema's brother (married Marie Katz)  
Marie Frankel - Tema's sister-in-law (née Katz, married Jacob Frankel)  
Erna Frankel - Tema's sister (later Perlman, married Moritz Perlman)  
Wolfi Perlman - Regina's cousin, son of Erna and Mortiz Perlman  
Max Frankel - Regina's cousin

### **Husband's family:**

Chaim Wolbrom, 1913-1944 - Izak's brother  
Chawa Wolbrom - Izak's sister  
Chana Wolbrom, 1909-1944 - Izak's sister  
Regina Wolbrom - Izak's sister  
Izak Wolbrom - husband  
Nechamia Wolbrom, 1885-1943 - Izak's father

### **Regina's friends:**

Jutta Appelbaum  
Ruth Appelbaum  
Lotti Szampaniek  
Roushka Weingarten  
Witowski