

LEON WEINSTEIN
RG-50.005.0058 (recorded 1984 in LA)

Leon Weinstein was born in 1911 in Radzymin, Poland, about 18 k from Warsaw. He said more than 80 of his relatives died in Treblinka. One sister died in the Warsaw uprising and another in Radzymin who was only 17. Leon served in the Polish army from 1932-1939. By 1942 he was married and had an 18-month-old baby. Leon escaped the liquidation of the Radzymin ghetto because he was outside of it, trying to earn money. He had gone outside the ghetto with his wife and baby Linda. They made the decision to place the baby with a German cook while he and his wife went to a Russian POW labor camp. But they had to come back for the baby when the cook threatened to throw her to the wild dogs. They lived with a Polish gentile for a while; everyone in the labor camp killed except his brother in law. Leon said the Poles were worse than the Germans, and their attitudes changed as the war went on to deny the Jews any help.

Leon and his wife made the decision to put a cross on their baby and leave her on the steps of a wealthy gentile lawyer they knew. Leon watched as 2 policemen picked up the baby and took her to the police station. Leon said he would do everything in his power to make sure the baby survived. His wife got a job as housekeeper outside the War with gentile friends and Leon snuck into the Warsaw ghetto. He became a member of the Jewish underground and, until the April 13 uprising, snuck in and out of the ghetto buying arms and ammunition and food. Leon said about 20 thousand of the 80 thousand Jews in the ghetto were not registered like him, and therefore needed to find their own food.

Leon's wife Sima and two sisters went to look for him in the ghetto and were caught and killed. He didn't find out about his wife until later in the war. He can't describe the hell of the ghetto during the uprising. He had to jump from the 5th floor of a burning building and miraculously was not injured. The uprising was stopped on May 8. Leon was in an underground bunker for 7 weeks with others. Then they went into the stinking rat-infested sewers for 2 days and emerged near the ghetto. Leon tells of many close calls. When he found out his wife had been killed he had no more tears to shed.

Leon was taken into the Polish underground and given false papers. He was in the underground until the end of the war. Afterwards he went back to the police station where he had seen Linda being taken. The station was destroyed, but he found out from a nearby Catholic orphanage that she had been sent to another orphanage. It took him 6 months, but he finally found Linda who was sick but alive.

Leon eventually came to the US and remarried. He had a son who now lives in Texas and his daughter Linda is married with children.