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Holocaust Survivor Shares His Story



FATHER'S DAY GIFT – David Wiener with documentary filmmaker Loren Stephens.

By John L. Seitz

For 60 years, long time Beverly Hills resident David Wiener remained silent about an important part of his life. However, on Father's Day, the real estate developer and philanthropist related his story for the first time with the help of Loren Stephens, an Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker and memoirist.

"I have an obligation, to myself, to tell this now...It's the right time," Wiener said.

His story, which he calls *Nothing To Lose But My Life*, begins with his childhood in the Polish cities of Lodz and Krotoszyn, where he and his eight siblings were part of a vibrant, religious Jewish community. At 13, when the Nazis invaded Poland, he left, virtually alone, and wandered from ghetto to ghetto before being taken to a

slave labor camp and then transported to Auschwitz.

Working in the Messerschmitt airplane factory and the mines, he and 300 other prisoners were sent on a death march. Running for his life, he was saved by American soldiers three weeks before the war ended.

Wiener began a new life in America, arriving in 1951 with just \$2 in his pocket, but built from scratch several successful businesses in Los Angeles.

Wiener was in the furniture and textile business, heading Western Fabrics, Fine Line Furniture and Cosmos Upholstery. He entered the real estate field in 1980, establishing DW Development in Beverly Hills.

He and his late wife of 50 years, Renee, had two children; Helene Shapiro, and Michael Wiener, both BHHS alumni, and

each of whom have two children.

The 81-year old continues to be an avid supporter of Israel, and has actively worked on promoting interfaith exchanges among young Jewish and non-Jewish students in Israel and Eastern Europe through concerts.

Wiener contacted Stephens to help tell his story. Stephens is president of Write Wisdom, Inc. Through her company, she is successfully dispelling the notion memoirs are only appropriate or available to a select group of famous individuals.

"Before, the memories were too raw, and people just didn't want to hear about it, or believe me," said Wiener. "Writing this story down, and time, has mellowed me. I was a bitter person before...Everyone has a story to tell."

"The war made a cold man out of me, robbing me of the best years of my life. But I look at things with different eyes now. Life forces you to accept certain things. Time and writing it down, helped with that."

Stephens added, "Most people would rather have an actual story about their parents or grandparents to provide themselves with some real insight into who their family members were, what they valued, and what incidents shaped their decisions and lives."

"This was far more important than giving or receiving another pair of earrings, a necktie or a bottle of cologne for Father's Day."