

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/7934,I-AM-PROUD-OF-MY-MOTHER-the-story-of-the-late-Helena-Majewska-a-holder-of-the-Ri.html>

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“I AM PROUD OF MY MOTHER”... the story of the late Helena Majewska, a holder of the Righteous Among the Nations title

One of the statutory tasks of the IPN is to disseminate knowledge about Polish history. What better way to do that than by presenting the stories of individual witnesses of history, their feelings, emotions and first-hand experiences?

On 24 March, Poland celebrates the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Rescuing Jews under German Occupation. On this occasion, we encourage you to watch “I AM PROUD OF MY MOTHER...” - the story of the late Helena Majewska (the Righteous Among the Nations) and her husband in the recollections of Ada Krystyna Willenberg (one of the rescued Jewish children) and Bohdan Majewski (the son).

In 2020, as part of the commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the IPN initiated “The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg” large scale exhibition and educational project on the basis of Samuel Willenberg’s sculptures, depicting people and situations he remembered particularly vividly during his imprisonment at Treblinka. These unique sculptures, constituting the world heritage of the Holocaust, were brought by the IPN from Israel for the purposes of the project. The exhibition was made possible thanks to the kindness and great trust placed in the Institute of National Remembrance by the Widow of the Artist, Mrs. Ada Krystyna Willenberg, who has been tirelessly continuing her husband's work, aimed at preserving the memory of the Holocaust especially among young generations.

More information on the project

During the German occupation of Poland Helena Majewska lived with her husband and infant son in a bedsitter in Warsaw’s Koło district. She and her husband were involved in illegal oil production. At the beginning of 1943, after her mother was deported to Treblinka and her father was killed, Ada Lubelczyk (later Willenberg), a 14-year-old ghetto escapee, was brought to Majewska’s home. Majewska had not met the young Jewish girl before, but she took her in with kindness and told the neighbours she was a relative. She took care of the girl with great commitment, making sure she felt like a member of the family. Ada Lubelczyk babysat Majewska’s little son and helped her with household chores.

Another little girl brought to Majewska's home was 4-year-old Marysia Jarzabek, the daughter of a Jewish school teacher from Warsaw. As the result of a tip-off Majewska's home was searched, and because Marysia looked Jewish the policeman ordered Majewska and the girl to go with him. Luckily, at the last moment he changed his mind and left the flat.

For purely altruistic reasons Majewska found a safe refuge for Marysia Jarzabek(later Chorzelska), who stayed in Poland after 1945. After the war, Lubelczyk emigrated to Israel and maintained very close relations with her savior Helena Majewska.

The film was produced by the IPN's Office of the President and Social Communication in connection with the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Rescuing Jews. It is based on a documentary from the opening ceremony of the exhibition "The Image of Treblinka in the Eyes of Samuel Willenberg" (2020) and interviews with Ada Willenberg and Bogdan Majewski conducted at the time by the IPN's National Education Office.

Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata, Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu, Polska (Fundacja Instytut Studiów Strategicznych, Kraków 2009) ed. by Dariusz Libionka et al. [English edition: Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust in Poland, Yad Vashem 2004] was used as a source of information in the film.

Samuel Willenberg's sculptures will remain in Poland until the end of the year. They are currently on display at the Cultural Center in

Opatów. In the spring (April), the exhibits will arrive at the "Świętokrzyski Shtetl" Educational and Museum Center in Chmielnik, located in the former synagogue.

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