

Leo Bach

Leo Bach was born Leon Silberbach on May 22, 1927, to Gitla and Jacob Silberbach in [Cracow, Poland](#). He had one brother, Karol, and one sister, Anna. Leo's father owned a kosher butcher shop. Leo went to an Orthodox Jewish school and he remembered that he and some of his friends were beaten on the way to school. He later transferred to a public school because he could not keep up with the other children who spoke more Yiddish than he did.

When the [Germans](#) invaded Poland in September 1939, life changed drastically. To keep the family business afloat, the family had to find a non-kosher meat dealer because they were no longer allowed to sell kosher meat. [Anti-Jewish legislation](#) required Jewish storeowners to put a Star of David in the windows.

In January 1940, Jews were forced to wear a [white armband](#) with a blue Star of David. A year later, all the Jews in Cracow were expelled. Leo and his family hid in a small, rural farming town outside the city. They stayed with a Polish family there and Leo found work at a nearby airfield loading and unloading freight cars. In August 1942, the family was forced to move into the Cracow [ghetto](#). In the process, Leo and his father were separated from his mother, sister, and brother. Gitla and Anna were never heard from again. Karol, however, later managed to find Leo and Jacob in the ghetto.



Visual History Biographical Profile

In July 1943, Leo was selected apart from his father and brother and sent to [Krakau-Plaszow](#), a labor camp nearby. In November, he was transferred to Starachowice, another [concentration camp](#) in Poland, where he was selected for forced labor building barracks. He remained there until July 1944, when he was transferred to [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#). There, Leo was processed as a prisoner and deployed for [forced labor](#) again. He worked on railroads and in a chemical factory until January 1945, when he was forced on a death march to [Buchenwald](#). A few weeks later, all the prisoners were transferred on a train to [Dachau](#). The [United States Army](#) liberated Dachau at the end of April 1945. Leo was sent to a [displaced persons' camp](#) in Stuttgart, Germany before returning to Cracow.

When he arrived, he was reunited with his father and discovered that his brother had died in the camps.

In January 1948, Leo immigrated to the United States. He lived in Delaware for a few years and then moved to Manhattan where he attended night school and graduated from The City College of New York. In 1956, Leo moved to Los Angeles, California, and met his future wife, Evelyn Wexler. They were married in 1961 and had two children, Gloria Ann and Julian Karl. At the time of Leo's interview in 1992, he had been retired from his job with the United States Postal Service for eleven years.