

Second Prize Writing: Middle School Division

Because Love Set You Free
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Survivor Testimony: Leon Weinstein

When I was little I never fully understood why my biological parents gave me up for adoption. I always thought they did not want me and then quickly forgot about me. But as I grew older, my mom went into more depth about my situation and I finally grasped a better understanding of my past. My biological parents did what they had to do for my survival.

When I listened to Leon Weinstein's testimony, it changed my entire perspective about the Holocaust and my own past, as well.

Jews resisted the Nazis in different ways, both spiritually and physically. Leon made it his priority to live through the nightmare not hoping for liberation and freedom, but for different reasons.

In his testimony, Leon Weinstein talked about giving up his child, Natalie, so that she might live through the war. His voice was full of emotion as he talked about making such a drastic decision to act. While it took a lot of persuasion, he finally convinced his wife that giving up Natalie was her only chance of survival. Before dropping her at a police station knowing that she faced an uncertain future, he placed a cross around her neck to show the police that she was a Catholic.

My parents have explained to me many times how I ended up in an orphanage. They've told me that my birth parents risked their lives by placing me, strangely enough, on the front steps of a police station, wrapped in a cozy blanket and placed in a basket.

My birth parents took a great risk in dropping me off at that police station, and I will be forever grateful that they made that sacrifice. They knew that their action would give me a better life with more opportunities and parents who could provide for me. Because of my own story, I have a deeper understanding of why Leon would give up his precious Natalie.

During the war, Leon was part of the Warsaw uprising. He and other Jews were trapped in a five-story building surrounded by Nazis. Leon had to make the choice of either allowing the Nazis to storm in the building, or take the risk of jumping. With only a few minutes to make a decision, he thought of his daughter. He feared that his wife was already dead and that if he died too, there would be nobody left to care for Natalie. Leon took a risk, took action and decided to jump.

In 1945, the war ended. Leon had survived. He had hope, hope that he would see his beloved daughter again. When he was able to return to Warsaw, Leon went straight to the police station where he had dropped off Natalie. He asked around, to see if anyone had clues as to where his daughter might be. For six months, Leon traveled well over 500 miles through Poland, going to every convent, searching for her. When he had almost decided to give up, he discovered her. They had an unbreakable bond that drew them to each other.

Watching Leon's testimony, I saw the physical and emotional pain expressed on his face. I cannot even imagine the impact the Holocaust had on his life, but I feel like I have a special connection with him. Leon helped me discover the true meaning of love. If you love someone enough you will do absolutely anything, take any action for them, even if that means letting them go.