

VLADKA MEED

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Vladka Meed was born Vladka Peltel in 1922 in Warsaw, Poland, to Hanna and Shlomo Peltel. She had two younger siblings: Chaim and Henia. Her father owned a small store and her mother would help

him sometimes when she was not taking care of the home. Vladka went to a private school and remembered seeing some Jewish children being beaten by non-Jews on the way to school. She also remembered that non-Jews would sometimes avoid the Jewish shops. When the Germans passed anti-Jewish laws, everyone in the family had to work to get food. For her part, Vladka would take off her armband and pass as a non-Jew selling valuables for food in the Polish part of town.

In the fall of 1940, the family was forced to move into the Warsaw ghetto. Shortly thereafter, Shlomo contracted pneumonia and died. The family continued to sell its belongings in order to get food. Vladka managed to continue her education by attending clandestine schools after curfew. She also joined some youth resistance groups that were forming inside the ghetto. In November 1942, she was smuggled out of the ghetto on the first of many missions to purchase arms on the black market. During one such mission, Vladka met her future husband, Benjamin Meed, who was also working for the underground smuggling children into hiding places outside the ghetto.

In 1943, Vladka's mother, brother, and sister were deported to Treblinka and killed in the gas chambers. Vladka was in a different part of the ghetto and because the street was blocked off, she could not save them; she

was left alone with her fiancé, Ben. Vladka continued her resistance work, helping Jews in hiding after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. She witnessed the uprising from outside the ghetto while printing posters intended to aid the Jewish cause. At the time of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, Vladka and Ben were hiding together in a town outside of Warsaw.

In January 1945, the Soviet Army liberated Warsaw and Vladka and Ben returned. She remembered that there was no town to come back to, only rubble and ruins. Vladka and Ben were married and then went to a displaced persons' camp in Germany. In 1949, the couple immigrated to the United States and had two children.

Vladka and Ben dedicated themselves to teaching about the Holocaust and the Jewish people. Vladka wrote articles for a Jewish newspaper in New York which led her to write a book about her experiences during the war called *On Both Sides of the Wall*. She also created a landmark program to bring teachers to Israel and Poland that focuses on Holocaust education and Jewish resistance in particular. Ben was instrumental in organizing commemorations and memorials and is considered a founding father of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. At the time of Vladka's interview in 1996, she and her husband had five grandchildren: Michael, Johnathan, Jenny, Chavala, and Jessica.



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