

## Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study Collections

Witold Szymanski Collection

Finding Aid

- Creator:** Witold Szymanski and the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study
- Title:** Witold Szymanski Collection
- Dates:** 2000-2010
- Abstract:** This collection includes materials related to the life of Witold Szymanski and his efforts in occupied Poland during World War II. Compiled by Witold Szymanski and the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study, the collection contains correspondence, written and recorded testimonies, event materials, and audio/visual media.
- Extent:** 1 box, 0.5 linear feet
- Languages:** English and Polish
- Repository:** Drew University Library, Madison NJ

### Biographical Note

Witold Szymanski was born on September 9, 1918 to Polish parents in Berlin, Germany. He moved to Poland as a young child. His father died in 1923, leaving his mother to raise five children on her own. Mr. Szymanski suffered a difficult and poverty-stricken, including living through the worst of the great depression in 1933. Though he spent nearly all of his childhood in Poland, Szymanski was a German citizen since he had been born there. As a result, in 1939, when Szymanski was about 21 years old, he received an official summons from the Consulate General of Germany stating that he needed to report to Germany to serve in the army. Initially, Szymanski ignored the summons since he was living in Poland and considered himself to be a Polish citizen. Soon after, he and his family were evicted from their home and forced to leave their hometown of Poznan.

During the next few months, Szymanski and his family was placed in work camps along with other Polish families as well as Jewish ones. They ended up in Ostrowiec in southern Poland, from where Szymanski attempted to escape in December 1939. He was captured by German soldiers and sent to a Gestapo prison in Sanok, Poland. Szymanski spent 18 months in the prison, most of them in solitary confinement. He was subjected to torture and beatings during his imprisonment. In June 1941, Szymanski was in the process of being transported to a concentration camp on a train when he was able to escape and return to his family in Ostrowiec.

After returning to his family, Szymanski began working with an underground patriot network to subvert the Nazi control of the town. As a member of the Polish Underground, Szymanski helped steal food from the German-controlled warehouses and share it with those in the Jewish ghetto and resistance fighters who were part of the Polish Underground.

During World War II, Szymanski witnessed numerous acts of torture, punishment, and execution of Jewish people by the Nazis. As an active member of the Polish resistance,

Szymanski participated in numerous activities to help both Polish and Jewish people who were under Nazi control. He has been honored for his actions by Yad Vashem and other institutions. After leaving Poland, Mr. Szymanski resided in the United States for much of his life. Witold Szymanski died on July 16, 2010 at the age of 91.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Witold Szymanski Collection is part of the larger group of archival collections from the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study. The collection includes correspondence, periodical clippings, event materials, and audio/visual media. These materials are all related to the life and experiences of Witold Szymanski, a witness to the events of the Holocaust and World War II. Most of the documents relate to the “Conversations with Witnesses” program at the Center. The materials were produced by both Mr. Szymanski and the Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study at Drew University.

## **Arrangement**

Series I. Written and Printed Materials  
Series II. Audio/Visual Material

## **Administrative Information**

### **Acquisition**

Donated by Witold Szymanski to the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study, 2001. Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study Collections transferred to Drew University Library, 2014.

### **Restrictions**

One photo copy may be made of each document for research purposes. Permission to publish must be obtained from the Drew University Library. Researcher is responsible for further copyright restrictions.

### **Preferred Citation**

[Item, date]. Witold Szymanski Collection, Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study Collections. Drew University Library.

### **Processor**

Brian Shetler, 2015

## **Related Material**

Additional collections within the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study  
Collections include:

- Andrew Liput Collection
- Carol Rosen Collection
- Imre Farkass Collection
- *Moments in Time* Collection
- The Nuernberg-Fuerth Survivors Group Collection
- Records of the Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study
- Victor Wegard Collection
- Extraneous Materials Collection

Local resources and collections related to Holocaust studies include:

- Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education, Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, NJ
- The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ
- New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, Trenton, NJ
- Leo Baeck Institute, New York City, NY
- Sara & Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, Stockton University, Galloway, NJ

## **Index Terms**

### **People**

Szymanski, Witold, 1918-2010

### **Organizations**

Drew University (lcnaf)

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei (lcnaf)

Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) (lcnaf)

Yad ya-shem, rashut ha-zikaron la-Sho'ah yela-gevurah (lcnaf)

### **Subjects**

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) (lcsh)

Holocaust survivors (lcsh)

Jewish refugees—United States (lcsh)

Jews—History—20<sup>th</sup> century (lcsh)

Nazi Holocaust (lcsh)

Poland—History—Occupation, 1939-1945 (lcsh)

World War, 1939-1945 (lcsh)

World War, 1939-1945—Personal narratives, Polish. (lcsh)

World War, 1939-1945—Prisoners and prisons, Polish. (lcsh)

World War, 1939-1945—Underground movements—Poland (lcsh)

### **Document Types**

Clippings, newspaper (aat)

Correspondence (aat)

Periodicals (aat)  
Photographs (aat)  
Video recordings (aat)

## Container List

### Series I. Written and Printed Materials

**Series Description and Arrangement:** Series I Written and Printed Materials contains notes, correspondence, written testimony, promotional material, programs, and other files related to the witness testimony of Witold Szymanski. Szymanski, a Polish Christian who witnessed the atrocities of the Holocaust and served in the Polish resistance movement during World War II, participated in a “Conversations with Witnesses” event at Drew University in 2001. Much of the material in this series is related to this event. Highlights include correspondence between Mr. Szymanski and the Drew University Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study as well as a transcript of his witness testimony. The series is arranged in chronological order, with the bulk of materials spanning 2000-2010.

#### Box 1

**Folder 1:** Notes on Witold Szymanski from Ann Saltzman, 2000

**Folder 2:** Correspondence, 2001-2005

**Folder 3:** Publicity materials for the Witold Szymanski “Conversations with Witnesses”, 2001

**Folder 4:** Collection of Polish documents compiled by Witold Szymanski, 2001

**Folder 5:** Text of Witold Szymanski “Conversations with Witnesses” talk, 6 February 2001

**Folder 6:** Witold Szymanski “Conversations with Witnesses” brochure materials, 6 February 2001

**Folder 7:** Gillespie, Eugene. “A Different Victim.” *The Acorn* [Drew University, Madison, NJ] 9 February, 2001.

**Folder 8:** Witold Szymanski memorial materials, 2010

**Folder 9:** “In the Land We Shared” published texts compiled by Witold Szymanski, undated

### Series II. Audio/Visual Materials

**Series Description and Arrangement:** Series II Audio/Visual materials contains two items: a collection of slides depicting the life of Polish Jews before and during World War II and a VHS tape of Witold Szymanski’s testimony at Drew University. The series is arranged in chronological order. The materials in this series were created in 1987 and 2011. Please note that the materials in this Series are contained in the same box as Series I Written and Printed Materials.

#### Box 1

Set of slides entitled “In Memory of the Polish Jews,” 1987

VHS tape of Witold Szymanski’s “Conversations with Witnesses” program, 6 February 2011