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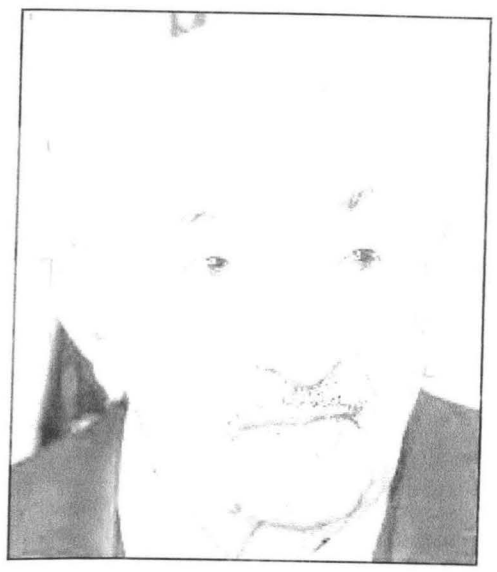
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# Holocaust Survivor Simon Wiesenthal Dies at Age 96

## Helped Track Down Numerous Nazi War Criminals Following World War II

LOS ANGELES (Sept. 20) - Simon Wiesenthal, the Holocaust survivor who helped track down Nazi war criminals following World War II, then spent the later decades of his life fighting anti-Semitism and prejudice against all people, died Tuesday. He was 96.



Wiesenthal died in his sleep at his home in Vienna, said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

"I think he'll be remembered as the conscience of the Holocaust. In a way he became the permanent representative of the victims of the Holocaust, determined to bring the perpetrators of the greatest crime to justice," Hier told The Associated Press.

"When history looks back I want people to know the Nazis weren't able to kill millions of people and get away with it," Simon Wiesenthal said.

**Broadband Video:**
Nazi Hunter Dies at 96

**Talk About It:** Post Thoughts

Wiesenthal, who was an architect before World War II, changed his life's mission after the war, dedicating himself to trying to track down Nazi war criminals and to being a voice for the 6 million Jews who died during the onslaught. He himself lost 89 relatives in the Holocaust.

Wiesenthal spent more than 50 years hunting Nazi war criminals, speaking out against neo-Nazism and racism, and remembering the Jewish experience as a lesson for humanity. Through his work, he said, some 1,100 Nazi criminals were brought to justice.

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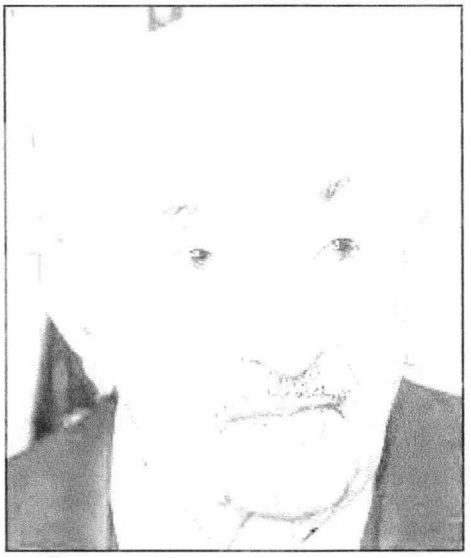
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"When history looks back I want people to know the Nazis weren't able to kill millions of and get away with it," he once said.

"The most important thing I have done is to fight against forgetting and to keep remembrance alive."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that Wiesent "brought justice to those who had escaped justice."

"He acted on behalf of 6 million people who could no l defend themselves," ministry spokesman Mark Regev "The state of Israel, the Jewish people and all those w oppose racism recognized Simon Wiesenthal's unique contribution to making our planet a better place."

Calls of remorse poured into Wiesenthal's office in Vie where one of his longtime assistants, Trudi Mergili, str to deal with her grief.

"It was expected," she said. "But it is still so hard."

Wiesenthal was first sent to a concentration camp in 1941, outside Lviv, Ukraine, accord the Wiesenthal Center Web site. In October 1943, he escaped from the Ostbahn camp ju the Germans began killing all the inmates. He was recaptured in June 1944 and sent bac Janwska, but escaped death as his SS guards retreated westward with their prisoners fr Soviet Red Army.

Wiesenthal's quest began after the Americans liberated the Mauthausen death camp in A where Wiesenthal was a prisoner in May 1945. It was his fifth death camp among the do camps in which he was imprisoned, and he weighed just 99 pounds when he was freed. I he quickly realized "there is no freedom without justice," and decided to dedicate "a few that mission.

"It became decades," he added.

Even after turning 90, Wiesenthal continued to remind and to warn. While appalled at at committed by Serbs against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in the 1990s, he said no one sho confuse the tragedy there with the Holocaust.

"We are living in a time of the trivialization of the word 'Holocaust,"' he told AP in 1999. happened to the Jews cannot be compared with all the other crimes. Every Jew had a de sentence without a date."

Wiesenthal's life spanned a violent century.

He was born on Dec. 31, 1908, to Jewish merchants at Buczacs, a small town near the p day Ukrainian city of Lviv in what was then the Austro-Hungarian empire. He studied in P and Warsaw and in 1932 received a degree in civil engineering.

He apprenticed as a building engineer in Russia before returning to Lviv to open an archi office. Then the Russians and the Germans occupied Lviv and the terror began.

After the war ended, working first with the Americans and later from a cramped Vienna apartment packed floor to ceiling with documents, Wiesenthal tirelessly pursued fugitive criminals.

He was perhaps best known for his role in tracking down Adolf Eichmann, the one-time S who organized the extermination of the Jews. Eichmann was found in Argentina, abducte Israeli agents in 1960, tried and hanged for crimes committed against the Jews.

Wiesenthal often was accused of exaggerating his role in Eichmann's capture. He did not sole responsibility, but said he knew by 1954 where Eichmann was.

Eichmann's capture "was a teamwork of many who did not know each other," Wiesentha AP in 1972. "I do not know if and to what extent reports I sent to Israel were used."

Among others Wiesenthal tracked down was Austrian policeman Karl Silberbauer, who h believed arrested the Dutch teenager Anne Frank and sent her to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp where she died.

Wiesenthal decided to pursue Silberbauer in 1958 after a youth told him he did not belie Frank's existence and murder, but would if Wiesenthal could find the man who arrested I five-year search resulted in Silberbauer's 1963 capture.

Wiesenthal did not bring to justice one prime target - Dr. Josef Mengele, the infamous "A Death" of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Mengele died in South America after eludin capture for decades.

Wiesenthal's long quest for justice also stirred controversy.

In Austria, which took decades to acknowledge its own role in Nazi crimes, Wiesenthal w ignored and often insulted before finally being honored for his work when he was in his 8

In 1975, then-Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, himself a Jew, suggested Wiesenthal was part o "certain mafia" seeking to besmirch Austria. Kreisky even claimed Wiesenthal collaborate Nazis to survive.

Ironically, it was the furor over Kurt Waldheim, who became president in 1986 despite ly about his past as an officer in Hitler's army, that gave Wiesenthal stature in Austria.

Wiesenthal's failure to condemn Waldheim as a war criminal drew international ire and c with American Jewish groups. But it made Austrians realize that the Nazi hunter did not everybody who took part in the Nazi war effort.

Wiesenthal did repeatedly demand Waldheim's resignation, seeing him as a symbol of th suppressed Austria's role as part of Hitler's German war and death machine. But he turn proof of widespread allegations that Waldheim was an accessory to war crimes.

Wiesenthal's work exposed him to danger.

His house and office have been guarded by an armed police officer since June 1982, whe bomb exploded at his front door, causing severe damage but resulting in no injuries, acc the Wiesenthal Center Web site. One German and several Austrian neo-Nazis were arres

He pursued his crusade of remembrance into old age with the vigor of youth, with patien determination. But as he entered his 90s, he worried that his mission would die with him

"I think in a way the world owes him and his memory a tremendous amount of gratitude said.

Wiesenthal had more distinguished foreign awards than any other living Austrian citizen. the city of Vienna made him an honorary citizen. He also wrote several books, including memoirs, "The Murderers Among Us," in 1967, and worked regularly at the small downtc office of his Jewish Documentation Center even after turning 90.

"The most important thing I have done is to fight against forgetting and to keep rememb

alive," he said in the 1999 interview with The Associated Press. "It is very important to le know that our enemies are not forgotten."

Wiesenthal's wife, Cyla, whom he married in 1936, died in November 2003.

A memorial service is tentatively planned to be held in Vienna's central cemetery on Wed Funeral services will be in Israel, said Avra Shapiro, the Wiesenthal Center's public relati director.

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