

Leon Biber



This is my uncle, Leon Biber. I do not know who took this picture but it is a studio portrait and it was taken in the USA after the war.

After the war Leon and his wife moved to the USA and settled in California.

After my parents got married, my mother's brothers moved in with them. At the age of 13 one of the brothers, Leon, took offence at my father. I will tell you how this happened. It was 1920 or 1921.

My father was an electrician, and he wanted to teach Leon the trade. He took him as an apprentice, but Leon did not like the arrangement.

What he especially did not like was that my father would make him carry his briefcase when the two of them went over to people's homes to repair the lighting.

He was insulted by this; he told me so himself, over 40 years later. And he ran away from home.

There was no news from him until 1938. That's when a telegram came to our house, from Spain. My mother took this telegram, read the word 'Leon' but then she couldn't read any further.

She asked the postman to read it to her. It turned out the telegram was in Spanish. But the postman misunderstood one word in it. He thought it said 'dead.'

My mother fainted. And I ran downstairs to our neighbor, Rozia Bekier, a very close friend of my mother's.

She saw that it was in Spanish and told me where to go, who would translate it for me. It turned out that the telegram said: 'Everything is fine. Leon.'

In any case, I can feel it even today - my heart pounding, as I ran over to Zawadzka Street, because that's where this person lived who knew Spanish. And I could find this apartment even today.

This is how strongly I felt about it. Soon afterwards, a letter from Leon arrived, and it turned out that he had taken part in the war in Spain.

He needed some documents, such as his birth certificate. This is why he suddenly remembered that he had a family.

My mother's brother, Leon, went to England, leaving Spain after the civil war, and he was in the Polish army. He married an Irishwoman, Minnie, and they had a son, another Daniel.

After the war they settled in the USA, in California, in Los Angeles. He worked as a salesman in a shoe-store. He was 55 when he quit that job due to the conflict with the shop owner.

I remember that Aunt Ruth thought he had gone mad, because at his age he would never find another job. I remember that Mother told this story when she returned to Poland, and nobody could understand.

He never came back to Poland again. They were not doing very well. And besides, Los Angeles is a bit further from Poland than New Jersey, which is where Ruta lived.

After his wife's death he moved to Israel and he died over there in the 1980s.