

# Siggi B. Wilzig, 76, Executive And Survivor of the Holocaust

By KENNETH N. GILPIN

Siggi B. Wilzig, a Holocaust survivor who arrived penniless in the United States after World War II and went on to lead an oil company and a bank, died on Tuesday at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in Manhattan.

He was 76 and lived in Fort Lee, N.J. The cause was multiple myeloma, his son, Alan, said.

Born in Kronjanke in West Prussia, Siggi Wilzig was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp when he was 16. He came to the United States in 1947 and got his first job shoveling snow in the Bronx after a blizzard that winter.

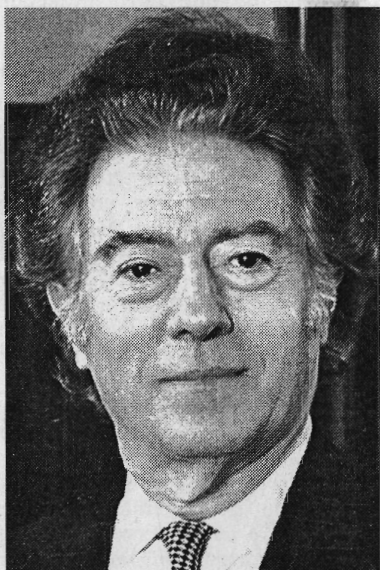
Mr. Wilzig stopped shoveling snow, and in the 1950's pursued a number of trades. Early on he was a gluer and presser in a Brooklyn sweatshop. He was a traveling salesman; he managed a furniture store in Hillside, N.J. But unlike others of modest means, instead of putting his meager savings in the bank, Mr. Wilzig invested in the stock market.

One stock Mr. Wilzig liked was the Wilshire Oil Company of Texas. The investment he and more affluent colleagues made in the oil and gas producer grew so large that in 1965 Mr. Wilzig was elected a member of Wilshire's board. Six months later, at age 39, he was elected president and chief executive.

During his tenure, Wilshire acquired a large interest in the Trust Company of New Jersey, a consumer- and small-business-oriented bank that was founded in Hoboken in 1896.

Mr. Wilzig became a director of the bank in 1969 and was elected chairman and president two years later. Since 1971, the bank's assets have grown from \$200 million to more than \$4 billion. The bank, now based in Jersey City, remains an independent bank.

In 1980, because of a change in banking law, Wilshire was supposed to divest itself of its holdings in the bank, but Mr. Wilzig won a two-year extension. Pressured further by the Federal Reserve, he subsequently did a tax-free spinoff that left him in control of both Wilshire and the



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Trust Company of New Jersey. The Wilzig family still controls Wilshire, which retains oil and gas interests, but is now primarily a real estate company.

Mr. Wilzig retired as president and chief executive in 2002 and was succeeded by his son, Alan. He remained chairman until his death.

In addition to his business interests, Mr. Wilzig was active in philanthropic affairs, particularly those related to the Holocaust.

In 1980, he was appointed to the Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington and lectured on the Holocaust at universities. He was a founding director and fellow of the Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School of Yeshiva University.

In recognition of his contributions to the United States, Mr. Wilzig received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 1998.

Besides his son, Alan, of Manhattan, he is survived by his wife, the former Naomi Sisselman, of Fort Lee; another son, Ivan, of Manhattan; a daughter, Sherry Wilzig, of Livingston, N.J.; a brother, Erwin, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; and two grandchildren.