

**CHARLENE SCHIFF PAPERS, circa 1920-2004  
1987.A.0028.2**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Charlene Schiff papers

Dates: circa 1920-2004 (bulk 1945-1951)

Accession number: 1987.A.0028.2

Creator: Schiff, Charlene, 1929-2013.

Extent: 8 folders, 1 oversize folder (.5 linear feet)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The collection primarily documents the postwar experiences of Charlene Perlmutter Schiff, originally of Horochów, Wolyn Poland (Horokhiv, Ukraine), including her life in the Föhrenwald and Bensheim displaced persons camps (DP camps) and immigration to the United States in 1948. Included are documents, correspondence, and photographs.

Languages:

Polish

English

German

Yiddish

**Administrative Information**

Access: There are no known restrictions on access to this material.

Conditions of use: Material(s) in this collection may be protected by copyright and/or related rights. You do not require further permission from the Museum to use this material. The user is solely responsible for making a determination as to if and how the material may be used.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Charlene Schiff papers (1987.A.0028.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Bea Kleier, Halina Peabody, Stephen Schiff, and Charlene Schiff donated the Charlene Schiff papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1987, 1999, 2013, and 2016. The accessions numbered 1987.A.0028, 1999.98, 2013.338.1, and 2016.390.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at [collections.ushmm.org](http://collections.ushmm.org) for further information.

Processing history: Adam Fielding, January 2023

### **Biographical note**

Charlene Perlmutter Schiff (1929-2013, nicknamed Musia) was born Shulamit Perlmutter in Horochów, Wolyn Poland (Horokhiv, Ukraine) on 16 December 1929 to Simcha Perlmutter and Fruma Lieberman. Her father, Simeon Perlmutter (Simcha, 1900-1941) was a philosophy professor in Lvov (L'viv, Ukraine) at the Jan Kazimierz University (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv). Her mother, Fruma Lieberman (b. 1905), was an educator and ran summer camps for poor children in the city. Charlene had one sister, Tchiya (b. 1925). Simcha's mother and five sisters immigrated to the United States before World War II, and he had begun making plans for his family to emigrate from Poland prior to the outbreak of war.

After the German and Soviet Union invasion of Poland in September 1939, Horochów was occupied by the Russians. In June 1941 Germany declared war on the Soviet Union, and Horochów was occupied by German soldiers on 24 June 1941. Her father Simcha perished after the German occupation, likely in the roundup and execution of 300 Jewish men by the Gestapo and Ukrainian police on 12 August 1941. A ghetto was established in November 1941, and the Germans began conscripting Jews for forced-labor, including Charlene's mother and sister. Charlene was exempt from forced-labor because she was under 14.

In 1942, her mother Fruma heard rumors that the ghetto would soon be liquidated, and she made arrangements with several non-Jewish friends to hide herself and her two daughters in nearby Skobelka. Tchiya was to hide in one place, and Charlene and her mother in another. They escaped the ghetto via an unguarded shack on the river. Tchiya left first. Charlene learned after the war that her sister Tchiya was captured and returned to the ghetto where she was tortured and killed.

The Horochów ghetto was liquidated on 14 September 1942, and Charlene and Fruma, among others, began to flee the night before. Many were shot, and Charlene and her mother hid in the bulrushes. Charlene was in and out of consciousness, and at some point her mother disappeared. Charlene survived the liquidation, and spent the duration of the war hiding in the forest until liberation by the Soviet Red Army in June 1944. She never learned the fate of her mother.

After liberation, Charlene recovered in a Soviet Army hospital. She was unsuccessful in finding any surviving family members, and eventually made her way to Germany where she lived in several displaced persons camps including Föhrenwald and Bensheim. She also attended the University of Heidelberg for a year. Charlene was able to contact her paternal relatives in the United States, and immigrated there in 1948 with their assistance. She settled in Columbus, Ohio. She married Erwin (Ed) Schiff, a World War II veteran who served in the Pacific theater, in 1951. They had one son, Stephen.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The collection primarily documents the postwar experiences of Charlene Perlmutter Schiff, originally of Horochów, Wolyn Poland (Horokhiv, Ukraine), including her life in the Föhrenwald and Bensheim displaced persons camps (DP camps) and immigration to the United States in 1948. Included are documents, correspondence, and photographs.

Documents include a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) immunization card, notes, a copy of a legal document, and songs and poems. One poem, "I Remember" was written in 1985 and read by her at a Holocaust memorial service at Fort Belvoir, VA.

Correspondence primarily consists of post-war letters received by friends while living in DP camps in Germany and the United States after her immigration in 1948. Includes some letters written to Charlene by her husband Irwin Schiff.

The bulk of the photographs consist of depictions of life in the Föhrenwald and Bensheim displaced persons camps, including portraits, casual outdoor scenes, and weddings. There are also some prewar and wartime photographs, as well as depictions of Charlene's life after her immigration to the United States in 1948. Many of the photographs are inscribed or annotated on the back.

### **System of arrangement**

The collection is arranged as three series.

Series 1. Documents, circa 1945-1985

Series 2. Correspondence, 1946-2004

Series 3. Photographs, circa 1920-2004

### **Indexing terms**

Person:

Schiff, Charlene Perlmutter, 1929-2013.

Perlmutter, Simeon, 1900-1941.

Corporate:

Bensheim (Displaced persons camp)

Zeilsheim (Displaced persons camp)  
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

Topical Subject:  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Poland.  
Holocaust survivors.  
Displaced persons camps.  
Weddings.

Geography:  
Horokhiv (Ukraine)  
United States--Emigration and immigration.  
Bensheim (Germany)  
Lindenfels (Germany)  
Heidelberg (Germany)

Genre/Form:  
Photographs.  
Correspondence.  
Poems.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1. Documents, circa 1945-1985

Folder	Title
1 of 8	Immunization record, notes, songs, and poems, circa 1945-1985

### Series 2. Correspondence, 1946-2004

Box/Folder	Title
2 of 8	Schiff, Charlene, 1946-1949
3 of 8	Schiff, Charlene, 1950-2004
4 of 8	Perlmutter, Simcha, 1935-1937

### Series. 3. Photographs, circa 1920-2004

Box/Folder	Title
5 of 8	Prewar and wartime, circa 1920-1945

OS 1	Prewar and wartime, negatives, circa 1920-1945
6 - 7 of 8	Postwar, Europe and displaced persons camps, 1945-circa 1948
8 of 8	Postwar, United States and Ukraine, 1948-2004