

**GERDA AND SYLVA LÖWENSTEIN PAPERS, 1921-1951  
1995.56.5**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
Tel. (202) 479-9717  
e-mail: [reference@ushmm.org](mailto:reference@ushmm.org)

**Descriptive summary**

Title: Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers

Dates: 1921-1951

Accession number: 1995.56.5

Creator: Löwenstein, Gerda, 1928-

Additional creator: Löwenstein, Sylva, 1921-1973

Extent: 0.5 linear foot (5 folders)

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

Abstract: The Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers consist of identification papers documenting Gerda Levy in Berlin before the war; a birth certificate, photographs, and student records documenting Sylva Löwenstein in Berlin before the war; and a diary and poetry written by Sylva Löwenstein while imprisoned in concentration camps during the Holocaust and at the Deggendorf displaced persons camp after the war.

Languages: German

**Administrative Information**

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Gerda Löwenstein donated the Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1995 and 2012. The accession formerly cataloged as 2012.349.1 has been incorporated into this collection.

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, February 2016

### **Biographical note**

Gerda Löwenstein was born in 1928 in Berlin to Edgar and Dora Levy (nee Brasch). Her father was a salesman and World War I veteran. Her mother lost two brothers in World War I. Both parents perished at Auschwitz. Gerda was sent to England on a *Kindertransport* and lived with the Wilkies family in Coventry. She studied nursing in Bristol, immigrated to the United States after the war, and married Bodo Löwenstein (1922-2004), who had immigrated to the United States from Berlin in 1938. Gerda's parents are believed to have been killed at Auschwitz.

Sylva Löwenstein (1921-1973) was Gerda Löwenstein's sister-in-law. Sylva was born in Berlin to Arthur and Edith (nee Schulz) Löwenstein. Her brother, Bodo Löwenstein, immigrated to the United States 1938. She and her parents were deported to Theresienstadt in July 1942. She and her mother volunteered to join her father on an October 1944 transport that was supposed to be a work transport to Germany but that really went to Auschwitz, where her parents were immediately sent to the gas chamber. Three weeks later Sylva was transferred to Birnbäumel on a work detail. In January 1945 she was sent on a forced march to Gross Rosen, where she was liberated the following month by the Russian Army. She was taken to Poland where she lied to the authorities in order to be allowed to return to Czechoslovakia and was later taken to Winzer and then Deggendorf to wait for her chance to immigrate to the United States.

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

The Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers consist of identification papers documenting Gerda Levy in Berlin before the war; a birth certificate, photographs, and student records documenting Sylva Löwenstein in Berlin before the war; and a diary and poetry written by Sylva Löwenstein while imprisoned in concentration camps during the Holocaust and at the Deggendorf displaced persons camp after the war.

Gerda Löwenstein materials include her German identification card and the children's identification card she used to leave Germany and enter the United Kingdom on a 1939 *Kindertransport*.

Sylva Löwenstein materials include Sylva's birth certificate, student records, diary, photographs, and poems. Her diary dates from August 15, 1945 through September 20, 1946. It begins by describing her prewar life in Germany, Nazi persecution of Jews, her deportation to Theresienstadt with her parents, her transport to Auschwitz with her parents, the murder of her parents, her transfer to a labor camp at Birnbäumel, her forced march to Gross Rosen, liberation by the Russian Army, her decision to immigrate to the United States, and being taken to Winzer and then Deggendorf to await her chance for immigration. This narrative is interspersed with poems she composed during the Holocaust. The diary then picks up with periodic descriptions of her daily life working in the Deggendorf displaced persons camp, dating, going to movies, receiving mail from her surviving family members, and making plans to immigrate. The diary includes cultural programs Sylva taped into it. This series also includes two

photographs depicting Sylva in Berlin before the war and in Bavaria after the war, additional copies of the poems copied into Sylva's diaries, and several more poems she wrote at Deggendorf.

### **System of arrangement**

The Gerda and Sylva Löwenstein papers are arranged as two series:

- Series 1: Gerda Löwenstein papers, 1939
- Series 2: Sylva Löwenstein papers, 1921-1951

### **Indexing terms**

Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)

Auschwitz (Concentration camp)

Birnbäumel (Concentration camp)

Gross-Rosen (Concentration camp)

Jews--Germany--Berlin.

Kindertransports (Rescue operations)

Concentration camp inmates--Poetry.

Holocaust survivors--Diaries.

Berlin (Germany)

Terezín (Ústecký kraj, Czech Republic)

Deggendorf (Germany)

Photographs.

## **CONTAINER LIST**

### **Series 1: Gerda Löwenstein papers, 1939**

<b>Folder</b>	
1	Identification papers, 1939

### **Series 2: Sylva Lowenstein papers, 1921-1951**

<b>Folder</b>	
2	Birth certificate and student records, 1921, 1934-1938
3	Diary, 1945-1946
4	Photographs, 1938, approximately 1946
5	Poetry, 1942-1945, 1951