

**KURT AND JOHANNA FISH FAMILY PAPERS, 1936-1991  
1996.28**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: The Kurt and Johanna Fish family papers

Dates: 1936-1991, bulk 1938-1945

Accession number: 1996.28

Creator: Fish family

Additional creators: Fish, Kurt, 1917-2008  
Fish, Johanna, 1919-2011  
Fisch, Henry, 1904-1973

Extent: 3.0 linear feet (3 boxes, 3 oversize boxes)

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

Abstract: Consists of documents, correspondence, and published materials related to the Holocaust experiences of Kurt and Johanna (née Strauss) Fisch (later Fish), originally of Vienna, Austria, and their extended families. Includes extensive correspondence between Kurt, who immigrated to the United States and later joined the American military, and Johanna, who escaped to London and worked as a nurse, as well as correspondence with family members in Vienna prior to their deportations and in the Opole ghetto. Also includes published newspapers and clippings from Kurt Fish's experiences in wartime and post-war Italy and Austria, military scrip, written testimony, and German passports.

Languages: German, English

**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), Kurt and Johanna Fish family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Kurt Fish donated the Kurt and Johanna Fish family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1996. His daughter, Judith Fish, added material to the collection in 2013.

Related materials: Kurt Fish also donated two rubber stamps captured from the Hermann Goering Division in Italy, cataloged as 1996.28.18 and 1996.28.19. His daughter, Judith, also donated a stamp captured from the Hermann Goering Division in Italy, cataloged as 1996.28.20.

Processing history: Rebecca Erbelding, November 2013, and Julie Schweitzer, January 2014.

### **Biographical note**

Kurt Fisch (later Fish) (1917-2008) was born in Vienna to Pinchas and Rosalie ("Sali") Fisch (née Schächter), both of whom were born in Poland. His older brother, Heinrich, was born on October 23, 1904, also in Vienna. Pinchas worked as a stockbroker in Vienna until World War I, when he began to sell wholesale meat. He later worked in a bank. Kurt was educated in Vienna and, along with his high school sweetheart, Johanna Strauss, entered medical school at the University of Vienna. In the spring of 1938, with the Anschluss, both Kurt and Johanna were forced out of school. Kurt was able to get an affidavit to the United States from his paternal great-uncle, and immigrated to the United States, arriving on February 4, 1939. He lived with a relative, Paula, in New York City, and tried to find a job, working to clean discarded women's clothing and selling umbrellas. Pinchas and Sali Fisch were deported to Theresienstadt in June 1942 and Markus Schächter (Sali's father) in September 1942. Pinchas perished there in August 1942 and Markus in March 1943. Sali was transferred to Auschwitz in January 1943 and perished. In 1942, Kurt joined the Army and fought with the 88th Infantry Division in Italy. He was wounded in combat, and at the end of the war, transferred to the Army of Occupation forces in Vienna, where he did intelligence work. He returned to the United States in 1946 and reunited with Johanna, whom he married on April 2, 1946 in Philadelphia, PA. Kurt and Johanna had three children: Susan, Ronald, and Judith. Kurt Fish passed away in 2008.

Johanna Fish (née Strauss) was born on September 25, 1919, in Pecs, Hungary to Alexander and Emma Strauss. When she was young, her parents moved Johanna (known as "Hannele") and her younger brother, Edward, to Vienna, where they were educated. Alexander passed away of natural causes while his children were still quite young. With her high school sweetheart, Kurt Fisch, Johanna entered medical school at the University of Vienna. In the spring of 1938, she and Kurt were forced out of school. Johanna, unable to immigrate to the United States, was able to escape to England by promising to train as a military nurse. She spent the war in London working as a nurse. Emma, sensing the need to emigrate, obtained a phone book and wrote to people in the United States with the last name "Strauss." One of the letters sent to Cleveland, Ohio, was given to a man named Joseph Hirshstein, who signed an affidavit allowing Edward to immigrate to the United States in the summer of 1939. Edward moved to Cleveland, Ohio, married Else, and had a son, Sheldon and later, a daughter, Sherry. Emma escaped into Hungary in 1941, but was deported to Auschwitz and perished in 1944. In May 1945, Johanna was able to emigrate to the United States and though Edward was fighting with the American military, stayed with his wife and son in Cleveland. Johanna reunited with Kurt, whom she married on April 2, 1946 in

Philadelphia, PA. Kurt and Johanna had three children: Susan, Ronald, and Judith. Johanna Fish passed away in 2011.

Heinrich (Henry) Fisch (1904-1973) married Charlotte (Lotte) Fisch (née Schwartz) and had daughters Erika (1927-approximately 1942) and Ruth (1933- ). Henry operated a dry goods store. In 1939, the family sent Ruth to England on a Kindertransport; she remained there throughout the war, living with a Jewish family. Henry was able to emigrate to the United States in February 1940. The affidavit Kurt arranged for Lotte and Erika which was delayed multiple times for multiple reasons, including by censors and new State Department requirements for proof of transport. Henry and Kurt booked Lotte and Erika passage out of the Netherlands and then out of Italy, but those routes were quickly blocked by German invasion and Italy's entrance into the war. Lotte and Erika were deported to the Opole ghetto in March 1941 and were likely deported in 1942, along with the other Jews who had been deported to Opole, either to Belzec or Sobibor where they perished. Ruth Fisch joined her father in the United States after the war. Henry Fisch never remarried and worked as Orthodox rabbi in the United States. He passed away in 1973.

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

The Kurt and Johanna Fish papers consist of correspondence, testimonies, documents, and published materials. Testimonial materials include a narrative written by Kurt Fish entitled "A Player to be Named" in which he tells his own family history and wartime experiences through a pseudonymous friend in the military named "Connie," as well as a transcript of an oral history interview with Kurt, which was conducted by Rosemary Lawson in 1978. Kurt edited and made corrections to the transcript in 1991.

The vast majority of the collection consists of correspondence between Kurt, in Vienna and later in the United States, and Johanna in Vienna and later in England. The collection also includes correspondence written from Heinrich and his family in Vienna to Kurt (with text written by Heinrich, Lotte, Ruth, and Erika), and later just from Heinrich after he immigrated to the United States. There are several folders of correspondence from Pinchas and Sali Fisch to Kurt before their deportation to Theresienstadt, and correspondence from Sali Fisch's siblings, Iro Schacter and Regi Schwarz.

The collection also includes correspondence from Lotte and Erika Fisch to Heinrich before and after their deportation to Opole. In Lotte and Erika's letters, they describe the ghetto's poor sanitation conditions, food supplies, minimal employment or moneymaking opportunities, and poor schooling, as well as their suffering, sense of hopelessness, and religious feelings. The collection also includes a 1943 letter from the Red Cross stating that Lotte and Erika's whereabouts were unknown.

The collection includes published materials, likely collected by Kurt prior to his emigration and while he was serving in the military in Italy and Austria. Kurt's German passport from 1939 (Reisepass) as well as a German passport (Reisepass) of a distant relative (the husband of Johanna's paternal aunt Hermine), Adalbert Frankl, are also included in the collection, as well as military scrip Kurt obtained while overseas.

### **System of arrangement**

The Kurt Fisch family papers are arranged as six series:

- Series 1: Testimonies, 1978-1991
- Series 2: Correspondence between Kurt and Johanna, 1936-1945

- Series 3: Correspondence between members of the Fisch family, 1937-1945
- Series 4: Documents related to Lotte and Erika Fisch, 1941-1943
- Series 5: Documents and photographs related to Kurt Fisch, 1937-ca. 1947
- Series 6: Newspapers, newspaper clippings and published material, 1938-1945

The collection is arranged chronologically within each folder. The folders constituting series six are arranged alphabetically by the title of the publication, with issues arranged chronologically therein.

### **Indexing terms**

Fish, Kurt, 1917-2008.  
Fish, Johanna Strauss, 1919-2011.  
Fisch, Henry, 1904-1974.  
Fisch, Charlotte Schwartz, -1942.  
Fisch, Erika, 1927-1942.  
Fisch, Ruth, 1933-.  
Fisch, Pinchas.  
Fisch, Rosalie.  
Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)  
United States. Army. Infantry Division, 88th.  
Jews – Austria – Vienna.  
Jewish ghettos – Poland – Opole – Correspondence.  
Jewish refugees--Great Britain.  
Jewish refugees--United States.  
Opole (Poland)  
Vienna (Austria)  
London (England)

## **CONTAINER LIST**

### **Series 1: Testimonies, 1978-1991**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	
1.1	"A Player to be Named", ca. 1985
1.2	Kurt Fish interview transcript, 1978, 1991

### **Series 2: Correspondence between Kurt and Johanna, 1936-1945**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	
1.3	Correspondence from Kurt to Johanna, 1936-1937
1.4	Correspondence from Kurt to Johanna, 1939
1.5	Correspondence from Kurt to Johanna, 1940
1.6	Correspondence from Johanna to Kurt, 1940
1.7	Correspondence from Kurt to Johanna, 1941

1.8	Correspondence from Johanna to Kurt, 1941
1.9	Correspondence from Kurt to Johanna, 1942
1.10	Correspondence from Johanna to Kurt, 1942
1.11	Correspondence to Kurt to Johanna, 1945

### Series 3: Correspondence between members of the Fisch family, 1937-1945

Box/Folder	
2.1	Correspondence from Heinrich (Henry) Fisch to Kurt, 1939-1940
2.2	Correspondence from Heinrich (Henry) to Kurt, 1941-1943
2.3	Correspondence from Pinchas and Sali Fisch to Kurt, 1939 January-June
2.4	Correspondence from Pinchas and Sali Fisch to Kurt, 1939 July-December
2.5	Correspondence from Pinchas and Sali Fisch to Kurt, 1940
2.6	Correspondence from Pinchas and Sali Fisch to Kurt, 1941
2.7	Correspondence from Regi Schwarz to Kurt, 1937-1945
2.8	Correspondence from Tibor to Kurt, 1938-1939
2.9	Correspondence from Ino Schachter to Kurt, 1941-1942
2.10	Correspondence from Emanuel Scharf to Kurt, 1939-1941
2.11	Miscellaneous correspondence, 1938, 1945, undated

### Series 4: Documents related to Lotte and Erika Fisch, 1941-1943

Box/Folder	
3.1	Correspondence from Lotte and Erika Fisch, 1941
3.2	Red Cross letter, 1943

### Series 5: Documents and photographs related to Kurt Fisch, 1937-ca. 1947

Box/Folder	
3.3	Kurt Fisch passport (Reisepass) and tax document, 1939
3.4, 4.1, 5.1	Miscellaneous documents, 1937-ca. 1947 (3 folders)
3.5	Photographs of destruction in Vienna, 1945-1946

### Series 6: Newspapers, newspaper clippings and published material, 1938-1945

Box/Folder	
3.6	Propaganda leaflets, 1944 January—May
4.5	<i>The Advance</i> , 1943 January
5.2	<i>Arbeiter Zeitung</i> , 1945 October 27
3.7	<i>Basic News</i> , 1945 November 28
4.6	<i>Der Montag mit dem Sport-Montag</i> , 1938 December 5
4.7	<i>Neues Österreich</i> , 1945 October 14

5.3	<i>Neues Wiener Journal</i> , 1938 March 24
6.1	<i>New York Journal</i> , 1939 August 24-25
6.2	<i>New York Post</i> , 1941 November 1
3.8, 6.3	<i>New York Times</i> , 1939 August—1945 August (2 folders)
6.4	<i>New York World Telegram</i> , 1941 August 30
6.5	<i>Le Petit Marocain</i> , 1944 March
6.6	<i>Philadelphia Record</i> , 1942 February—1943 July
3.9, 4.8	<i>PM</i> , 1941 September—1945 January (2 folders)
3.10, 5.4-5.18	<i>Stars and Stripes</i> , 1944 June—1945 October (16 folders)
4.9	<i>Stuttgarter Illustrierte</i> , 1939 April 30
3.11	<i>Volks Zeitung</i> , 1944 June 20
5.19	<i>Wiener Kurier</i> , 1945 August—1945 November
4.2-4.4, 6.7	<i>Yank</i> , 1945 January—1945 September (4 folders)
6.8	Unknown clipping, 1943 July 26