

EDITH HAHN-BEER PAPERS, circa 1900-1997
1998.A.0079.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Edith Hahn-Beer papers

Dates: circa 1900-1997

Accession number: 1998.A.0079.2

Creator: Hahn-Beer, Edith, 1914-2009

Extent: 2 boxes, 1 oversize folder

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of Edith Hahn-Beer, originally of Vienna, Austria, including forced-labor in Osterburg and Aschersleben, Germany, living in Munich and Brandenburg an der Havel under the false-identity of Margarete Denner, and marriage to German Nazi officer Werner Vetter. The bulk of the collection consists of wartime correspondence between Edith and her fiancé Joseph Rosenfeld, along with family correspondence, biographical materials, and photographs.

Languages: German, English

Administrative Information

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

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Edith Hahn-Beer papers (1998.A.0079.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Dalk Feith, Drew Lewis, and Edith Hahn-Beer donated the Edith Hahn-Beer papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1998. The accessions numbered 1998.A.0079 and 1998.A.0196 have been incorporated into this collection.

Separated material: Portfolio cover (1998.146.1)

Related materials:

Oral history interview with Edith Hahn-Beer (RG-50.030.0392)

Ich will leben! : Briefe und Dokumente der Wiener Jüdin Edith Hahn-Beer : Arbeitslager und U-Boot in Nazi-Deutschland / Edith Hahn-Beer ; herausgegeben von Angleika Schlüter. DS135.A93 B44 1996

The Nazi officer's wife : how one Jewish woman survived the Holocaust / Edith Hahn Beer with Susan Dworkin. DS135.A93 B44 1999

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

Processing history: USHMM staff, 1998, 2012; updated by Adam Fielding, March 2023

Biographical note

Edith Hahn-Beer (1914-2009) was born Edith Hahn on January 24, 1914 in Vienna, Austria to Klothilde (1890-1942) and Leopold Hahn (d. 1936). She had two sisters, Maria Hahn (Mimi), and Johanna Hahn (Hansi, b. 1921). Her parents owned a restaurant in Vienna. Prior to the German annexation of Austria in March 1938 (Anschluss), Edith was a law student at the University of Vienna. She was also engaged to fellow law student Joseph Rosenfeld (Pepi).

In 1939 Edith and her mother were forced to move into the Jewish ghetto in Vienna. In April 1941 she was sent to a farm in Osterburg, Germany where she was a forced-laborer. In October 1941, she and other women from the farm camp were taken to a paper carton factory in Aschersleben, Germany. During her time in these camps, Edith managed to maintain a steady correspondence with her fiance Joseph.

In 1942, Edith received notice that she was to be deported from Vienna, and she fled and went into hiding. Her mother Klothilde was deported in June 1942 and likely perished. With the aid of a non-Jewish friend, Christine Margarethe Denner (b. 1922), Edith received false identification papers bearing Denner's name. She then fled to Munich where she worked as a seamstress and nurse. In August 1942 Edith met Werner Vetter (1912-2002). Werner was a Nazi officer and married, but fell in love with Edith and soon divorced his wife. She eventually revealed to him that she was Jewish and living under a false-identity. Edith and Werner settled in Brandenburg

an der Havel, and married in 1943. Their daughter, Angelika Maria (Angela, later Angelika Schlüter), was born on April 9, 1944.

Nearing the end of the war, Werner was drafted and soon captured by the Russians. He was sent to Siberia as a prisoner of war. Edith fled with her infant daughter to the German countryside. After the war, Edith and Werner divorced in 1947, and he returned to his first wife. Edith became a judge in the Soviet zone of Germany. She received pressure from Soviet authorities to spy on her colleagues, and she and her daughter fled to England 1948, where one of her sisters lived. In 1957, Edith married fellow Viennese refugee, Fred Beer. They lived near London until Fred's death in 1984, and then Edith moved to Israel. Her story was published in the co-authored book "The Nazi officer's wife" in 1999. Edith died in London in 2009.

Christine Margarete Denner was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1985 for her efforts to help save Edith.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of Edith Hahn-Beer, originally of Vienna, Austria, including forced-labor in Osterburg and Aschersleben, Germany, living in Munich and Brandenburg an der Havel under the false-identity of Margarete Denner, and marriage to German Nazi officer Werner Vetter. The bulk of the collection consists of wartime correspondence between Edith and her fiancé Joseph Rosenfeld, along with family correspondence, biographical materials, and photographs.

Correspondence primarily consists of letters and postcards exchanged between Edith and her then fiancé Joseph Rosenfeld (Pepi). Other correspondents include her mother Klothilde Hahn and sisters Maria Hahn and Johanna Hahn, and her first husband Werner Vetter. Also included are wartime letters written by Edith when living in Munich and Brandenburg an der Havel under the false-identity of Margarete Denner (Grete). There is a small amount of postwar correspondence.

Biographical material includes report cards, identification documents, clippings, and papers related to Edith's forced-labor in Osterburg and Aschersleben. Identification documents include her German passport (Reisepass) and German identity card (Kennkarte). Wartime material includes forced-labor payroll envelopes from Osterburg and Aschersleben, cardboard carton samples from Aschersleben, and a copy of her daughter Angelika's birth certificate, 1944. Postwar material includes clippings related to the publication of her book "Ich will leben!"

Photographs include prewar family photographs, including depictions of Edith's parents Leopold and Klothilde Hahn, along with images of Joseph Rosenfeld, and Werner Vetter. Also included are depictions of forced-laborers at a farm in Osterburg, 1941.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as three series.

Series. 1. Correspondence, circa 1933-1997, undated
Series 2. Biographical material, 1922-1996, undated
Series 3. Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1960

Indexing terms

Person:

Hahn-Beer, Edith, 1914-2009

Topical Subject:

Jews--Austria--Vienna.

World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor.

False personation.

Geography:

Vienna (Austria)

Osterburg (Germany)

Aschersleben (Germany)

Munich (Germany)

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

Correspondence.

Identification cards.

Passports.

CONTAINER LIST

Series. 1. Correspondence, circa 1933-1997, undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.1, OS 1	Hahn family and friends, circa 1933-1997, undated
1.2	Letters written under false-identity of Margarete (Grete) Denner, 1942-1945
1.3	Rosenfeld, Joseph, 1938-July 1941
1.4	Rosenfeld, Joseph, August 1941-November 1941
1.5	Rosenfeld, Joseph, December 1941
1.6	Rosenfeld, Joseph, January 1942-February 1942
1.7	Rosenfeld, Joseph, March 1942
1.8	Rosenfeld, Joseph, April 1942-May 1942

1.9	Rosenfeld, Joseph, June 1942-August 1943, undated
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Series 2. Biographical material, 1922-1996, undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.10	Aschersleben cardboard carton factory samples, circa 1941-circa 1942
1.11	Clippings, 1994-1996
1.12	Documents, prewar, 1933-1939
1.13	Documents, wartime, 1941-1944
1.14	Documents, postwar, 1946-1992
1.15	Education, 1922-1940
2.1	Osterburg and Aschersleben labor camp payroll envelopes, 1941-1942
2.2	Writings, 1946, undated

Series 3. Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1960

Box/Folder	Title
2.3	Hahn-Beer, Edith, circa 1934-1947
2.4	Hahn family and friends, circa 1900-circa 1960
2.5	Osterburg labor camp, 1941