

BEATRICE MUCHMAN PAPERS, circa 1900-1999
1998.A.0269.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Beatrice Muchman papers

Dates: circa 1900-1999

Accession number: 1998.A.0269.2

Creator: Muchman, Beatrice

Extent: 1.0 linear foot (2 boxes and 1 book enclosure)

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

Abstract: The Beatrice Muchman papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, diary and poetry books, a memoir, photographs, and a prayer book documenting the Westheimer family of Berlin, their flight to Brussels, Beatrix Westheimer's survival in hiding in Ottignies, her parents' deportations to Auschwitz and deaths, and her immigration to the United States to rejoin her surviving relatives.

Languages: German, English, French

Administrative Information

Access: This material can only be accessed in a Museum reading room or other on-campus viewing station. There are no additional access restrictions to this material.

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Beatrice Muchman papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Beatrice Muchman donated the Beatrice Muchman papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2023. The accessions formerly cataloged as 1998.A.0269, 1999.A.0054, 2000.360, 2002.294, 2004.101.1,

2005.557.1, 2012.66.1, 2018.603.1, 2019.384.1, and 2023.82.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Related materials: Beatrice Muchman also donated a Kippah (2007.471.1), two tefillin storage bags (2007.471.2 and 2007.471.3), a tallit (2007.471.4), a set of tefillin (2007.471.5 a-b), a miniature Torah scroll (2007.471.6), an issue of Life Magazine featuring the story of the Exodus (2007.472.1), and a copy of *Der Struwwelpeter* (2009.313.1) to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. An oral history interview conducted with Beatrice Muchman on September 19, 1997 that forms part of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive can be viewed onsite at the Museum. The Museum's library holds a copy of Muchman's autobiography, *Never to be forgotten: a young girl's Holocaust memoir*.

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

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, April 2015; Revised by Morgan Voth, July 2023

Biographical note

Beatrice (Trixie) Muchman (1933-) was born Beatrix Westheimer in Berlin to Julius (1901-1943) and Meta (née Boas, 1904-1943) Westheimer. Meta was born in 1904 to Orthodox Jewish parents, Bernhard (d. 1932) and Johanna Baruch Boas (1873-1960), and had three sisters, Hella (later Tausk, 1906-1986), Margot (later Lewy, 1903-1979), and Frieda (later Hurwitz, 1900-1990). Hella moved to New York with her husband and daughter, Walter (1907-1990) and Flory (1935-), before the war. Beatrice and her parents fled to Brussels in March 1939 along with her grandmother, Johanna, aunt Margot, and Margot's husband and son, Werner (1905-1990) and Bernt (1932-) to join her aunt Frieda and her husband and son, Walter (1894-1943) and Henri (1934-). Margot's family left for New York in December 1939.

Julius Westheimer and Walter Hurwitz were arrested when the Germans invaded Belgium in May 1940. Walter was sent to the concentration camps at St. Cyprien and Gurs and was deported to Auschwitz in 1942 where he was killed. Julius was sent to the camps at Agde and Rivesaltes, but escaped in February 1941 and returned to his family in Belgium.

In July 1942, Beatrice and her cousin Henri (Dieter) were entrusted to the care of two Catholic sisters, Jeanne and Adele Duchet, in Ottignies in the Belgian countryside, and posed as their niece and nephew. The children were baptized as Catholics on October 2, 1942. The priest, Father Vass, knew of the children's situation and helped keep them safe in the village. In February 1943, Julius and Meta were detained at the Mechelen (Malines) transit camp. They were placed aboard the April 19, 1943 transport "XX" to Auschwitz which was attacked in a rescue attempt outside Brussels. Julius was shot while trying to escape and later died. Meta was recaptured, placed on the next Auschwitz transport, and was killed. Frieda Hurwitz and Johanna Baruch Boas survived in hiding in Brussels.

Belgium was liberated by Allied Forces in September 1944. That December, Beatrice and Henri returned to Brussels to live with their grandmother and Henri's mother. In May 1946, Beatrice and her grandmother Johanna, immigrated to the United States, where Beatrice was adopted by her aunt and uncle, Margot and Werner Lewy.

Scope and content of collection

The Beatrice Muchman papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, diary and poetry books, a memoir, photographs, and a prayer book documenting the Westheimer family of Berlin, their

flight to Brussels, Beatrix Westheimer's survival in hiding in Ottignies, her parents' deportations to Auschwitz and deaths, and her immigration to the United States to rejoin her surviving relatives.

Biographical materials include birth and marriage certificates, vaccination records, identification papers, report cards, petition of adoption, and citizenship and immigration papers documenting Beatrix Westheimer, her parents, her mother's parents, and her aunt's family who adopted her.

Correspondence primarily consists of letters, postcards, and telegrams exchanged among Johanna Boas, her daughters, and their families and documents the Lewy family's immigration to the United States, the detention of Julius Westheimer and Walter Hurwitz in French concentration camps, living conditions of the remaining family members in Europe and efforts to locate them and bring them to the United States, and the deaths of Walter Hurwitz and Julius and Meta Westheimer.

The diary and poetry series consists of two small notebooks maintained by Beatrice Muchman from 1944 to 1946. The diary contains eleven French language entries she made between November 1944 and October 1946 documenting her mourning for her parents, her love for her foster mother in hiding, her celebration of Liberation and her birthdays, her preparations for American immigration, and her new life in America. The poetry book includes seven poems she wrote in French and one in English between September 1944 and May 1946 that mourn her parents and celebrate her foster mother, Belgium, and the Allies. This series also includes a loose poem she wrote during the same time period.

The memoir, photocopies, and translations include an eighteen page memoir by Beatrice Muchman introducing most of the correspondence in the collection as well as the correspondents themselves, translations of many of the letters and postcards in the collection, photocopies and translations of most of the biographical materials in the collection, and a handful of correspondence about the collection.

Photographs depict members of the Baruch, Boas, Hurwitz, Lewy, and Westheimer families at home in Germany and Belgium and on vacations before the war, Beatrix Westheimer and Henri Hurwitz in hiding in Belgium during the war, and surviving family members after the war in Germany and Belgium.

The prayer book, *Gebete und Gegensprüche*, includes a sticker from C. Boas Nachf. Buchhandlung, the printing business owned by Beatrice Muchman's grandparents.

System of arrangement

The Beatrice Muchman papers are arranged as six series:

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1906-1952
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1920-1953
- Series 3: Diary and poetry, 1944-1946
- Series 4: Memoir, reproductions, and translations, circa 1999
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-1957
- Series 6: Prayer book, circa 1930s

Indexing terms

Gurs (Concentration camp)

Malines (Concentration camp)

Jewish families--Germany--Berlin.
 Jewish refugees--Belgium--Brussels.
 Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Belgium.
 Hidden children (Holocaust)--Belgium.
 World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue.
 Jewish children in the Holocaust--Belgium.

Berlin (Germany)
 Brussels (Belgium)
 Ottignies (Belgium)
 United States--Emigration and immigration--History--20th century.
 Germany--Emigration and immigration--History--1933-1945.

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1906-1952

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Boas, Bernhard and Johanna, 1932, 1938-1939
1.2-1.5	Lewy, Werner, Margot, and Bernt, 1906, 1917, 1929-1939 (4 folders)
1.6 2.14, 2.17	Westheimer, Julius, Meta, and Beatrice, 1932-1952 (3 folders)
2.13	Westheimer, Stammbuch, 1932-1945

Series 2: Correspondence, 1920-1953

Folder	Title
1.7	American Friends Services Committee, 1942-1944
1.8-1.11	Boas, Johanna, 1939-1945 (4 folders)
1.12	Cohen, Max and Gretl, 1942-1943
1.13-1.14	Celebratory telegrams, 1920, 1929 (2 folders)
15	Hurwitz family, circa 1941-1945
1.16-1.17	Lewy family, circa 1939-1953 (2 folders)
1.18	Messer family and Cahn, Walter, 1941-1946
1.19	Post receipts, 1940-1946
1.20	Tausk family, 1941-1944
1.21	Westheimer family, circa 1940-1945
1.22	Miscellaneous to Lewy family, circa 1939-1943
1.23	Miscellaneous, circa 1941-1949

Series 3: Diary and poetry, 1944-1946

Folder	Title
1.24 BE 1	Westheimer, Beatrice, 1944-1946

Series 4: Memoir, photocopies, and translations, circa 1999

Folder	Title
1.25-1.29, 2.1-2.3	Memoir, photocopies, and translations, circa 1999 (7 folders)

Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-1957

Folder	Title
2.4	Baruch, Benno, Berthold, Richard, and Golda, circa 1900-1947
2.5	Boas, Bernhard and Johanna, circa 1900-1945
2.6	Boas, Margot, Frieda, Meta, and Hella, circa 1915-1939
2.7	Hurwitz, Werner, Frieda, and Henri, circa 1930-1957
2.8	Lewy, Werner, Margot, and Bernt, circa 1930-1945
2.9	Westheimer, Beatrix and Hurwitz, Henri, circa 1939-1945
2.10	Westheimer, Julius, Meta, and Beatrix, circa 1920-1941
2.11	Miscellaneous, circa 1915-1997
2.15	Westheimer, pre-war, 1930-1941
2.16	Westheimer, in hiding, 1943

Series 6: Prayer book, circa 1930s

Folder	Title
2.12	<i>Gebete und Gegensprüche</i> , circa 1930s