

## United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

### Finding Aid

#### RG-10

#### Small Collections

#### RG-10. 477

#### Acc. 2005.145

**Title:** Roman Kawalek Collection, 1913-1998.

**Extent:** 1 box (8 folders)  
1 certificate (oversized and framed)

**Provenance:** Marlene Kawalek Josephs donated her father's collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on March 30, 2005.

**Restrictions on Access:** No restrictions on access.

**Restrictions on Use:** No restrictions on use

**Organization and Arrangement:** By subject and chronology.

**Language:** English, Polish, German

**Preferred citation:** Standard citation for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Curatorial Affairs Division, Archives Branch

**Biographical/Historical Note:** Roman Kawalek was born in Zborów, Poland, in 1913. He moved to Vienna with his parents when he was 12. He studied in the *Bundesrealgymnasium* in Vienna, and upon completion, he enrolled into the Medical school, from where he graduated in October 1938. Later that year, Dr. Kawalek and his twin brother, Marcel, fled to England, while their parents stayed in Vienna. In 1940, Kawalek's father died of a heart attack, and his mother was arrested and deported to Auschwitz. For two years, Dr. Kawalek tried to join the British army but was rejected because he was not a British citizen. In 1940 he left for America, where he completed his graduate work in medicine, then enlisted in the U.S. Army. As he told his children, he had only one thought: to rescue his mother. On June 12, 1944, Dr. Kawalek landed in Normandy. That September, with her son less than 500 miles away, Dr. Kawalek's mother died in Auschwitz. In 1945, Dr. Kawalek was the commanding medical officer with the unit that liberated the concentration camp at Buchenwald. Dr. Kawalek earned a Bronze Star for his service. After the war, Dr. Kawalek returned to the United States and began to establish his medical practice. During the summer of 1945, while on vacation in the Catskills, he met and later married Diana Celia Lieberman. From 1962 to 1975, he served as police surgeon. Dr. Kawalek

died in May 1998. His ashes were buried at the Arlington National Cemetery with a plaque in his honor engraved, by his request, with three words: "One of many." He had three children, a son, Jeffrey, and two daughters, Marlene Kawalek Josephs, and Kim Kawalek Vogel. Marlene Kawalek Josephs donated her father's papers to the USHMM in 2005.

**Scope and Content Note:** The collection consists of correspondence, forms, newspaper clippings, certificates, and report cards related to the experiences of Dr. Roman Kawalek. Originally, of Zborów, Poland, Dr. Kawalek received his medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1938. He emigrated to the United States in 1940, after a brief period in England and joined the United States Army. He participated in the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. The collection contains papers regarding Dr. Kawalek's education, including his medical school diploma, and his experiences in immigration and in the US Army.

## Inventory:

### **Folder 1, Roman Kawalek personal papers-Poland/Austria (1919-1932)**

**Personal documents and primary school reports and certificates until his graduation from the Vienna Gymnasium in 1932. All papers in German, unless otherwise stated.**

Handwritten birth certificate (1919) (Polish) and its German translation (translation issued in Vienna in October 1938 and is attached with thread on original Polish certificate). Copies of certificate of domicile in Vienna (1930). Various primary school reports (Vienna, 1919-1923) and certificates and reports from *Bundesrealschule* and *Bundes-Reformrealgymnasium* (Vienna, 1924-1931). Copy of Final Examination and Matriculation Certificate from *Bundesrealgymnasium* in Vienna (1932) (Photo copy made in the US in 1943). Final Examination and Matriculation Certificate from *Bundesrealgymnasium* in Vienna (1932).

### **Folder 2, Roman Kawalek personal papers-Austria (1932-1940)**

**Personal and university documents until his graduation from medical school in Vienna in 1938. All documents in folder in German except where stated.**

Proof of registration to Medical School (1932). Part of registration booklet with Kawalek's picture (1932). Vienna university student registration booklet (1932-1939). Examination certificates in various lessons in Medical School (1933-1939). Notification to R. Kawalek for registration (December 1938). Copy of birth certificate (form) (issue date 1938) (Polish). Recommendation letter from his supervisor at Hospital of Jewish community of Vienna (May 1939). Correspondence (1940). Matriculation certificate from University, Medical School (November 1938) and its English translation (1943). Copies of Diploma in Medicine by the University of Vienna (1938) and English translation. The diploma is in Latin but has on it waiver (in German) about "unconditional surrender of the rights to practice medicine in the territory of former Austria." (Photo copy made in the US in 1943). Certificate of internship at Hospital of Jewish community of Vienna (1939). Certificate by Dean of Medical School, Vienna, testifying

about Kawalek becoming a doctor in October 1938 (issue date of certificate: October 1940). Signature authentication done by US consulate in Vienna, and affixed on the original certificate with ribbon.

### **Folder 3, Roman Kawalek personal papers-USA (1940-1998)**

#### **Personal papers from R. Kawalek's life in the U.S. Bulk of material 1940 to 1950.**

US passport. International driving permit. 1 Personal letter (1963) (in German). Divorce papers from Gertrude S. Kawalek (dated 1941) [There is no mention of Gertrude Kawalek in Roman Kawalek's obituary. It only mentions wife Diana]. Certificate of marriage (by Temple Mason in Brooklyn, NY, dated 1945) with Diana Celia Lieberman. Medical certificate and membership dues. Cover letter of certificate of naturalization. Copies of obituary.

### **Folder 4, Roman Kawalek correspondence (1940)**

Correspondence among family members, especially with parents and brother, regarding news about family's life back in Austria, Roman and his brother Marcel's life in the US, parents complaining that both Roman and Marcel do not write enough or often (1940). Date of letters (1940) is significant: This is the year that Kawalek immigrated to the US. Shortly after, during the same year, his father died of heart attack, and his mother was deported to a concentration camp. She died in the camp while Kawalek was also with the US army in Europe.

Many of the letters are about obtaining US visas for family in Austria and difficulties (1940).

### **Folder 5, Roman Kawalek Army papers (Folder 1 of 2) (1943-1958)**

Various army papers (bulk of material 1944): Conscription papers and military health certificates and reports (March 1944); commission by the War Department (June 1947); report of separation (April 1944); certificate of participating in officers' courses and program of graduation day; certificate of shipping of commendation ribbon with metal pendant; assignment booklet; pay record etc.)

Awarding of Bronze Star Medal (February 1944).

### **Folder 6, Roman Kawalek Army papers (Folder 2 of 2) (1943-1971)**

Various army papers (bulk of material 1943-1946): Notice of "alien's acceptability" into US army (March 1943); Appointment by army (March 1944); pay allowances and vouchers (1947); dining room receipts; assignment papers (1944); military uniform tally sheet (1944); clearance certificates (1946); separation qualification record (1946) (with description of duties overseas); citation for the army commendation ribbon (1946); appointment as Captain Medical Corps (1947)). "Officer's qualification card copy" (1945). The document describes military "history" of Kawalek, with description and dates of his various duties and appointments.

**Folder 7, Roman Kawalek newspaper clippings (1941-1944)**

Various newspaper clippings about R. Kawalek's service in the army. Part of newspaper with announcement of his divorce.

"Arkansas Democrat" newspaper article (with photo) about Kawalek meeting by chance a former fellow student of University of Vienna, now also a doctor at the same hospital. The article speaks about both men's longing for their parents, from whom they haven't heard anything, and wait to receive US nationality and be able to conscribe in the army (July 12, 1942).

**Folder 8, Roman Kawalek Record Jackets (no date)**

2 original paper jackets that contained previously service records of R. Kawalek.