

FRITZ BUFF PAPERS, 1939-1940
2007.121.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Fritz Buff papers

Dates: 1939-1940

Accession number: 2007.121.1

Creators: Buff, Fritz, 1921-2017

Extent: 0.2 linear foot (4 folders)

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

Abstract: The Fritz Buff papers consist of biographical materials, letters, and a travel diary documenting Fritz Buff from Krumbach, Germany, his voyage aboard the *MS St. Louis* to Cuba in 1939, the ship's forced return to Europe, his life as a refugee in Brussels, Belgium, and his immigration to the United States in 1940.

Language: 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), Fritz Buff papers (2007.121.1) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Fred and Lotte Buff donated the Fritz Buff papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2007.

Related archival materials: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also holds photographs depicting Fritz Buff in the Liesl Joseph Loeb papers (1991.164.118) and the Edith Simon Babich collection (1994.A.0280). The Museum's library holds a copy of Buff's published diary, *Riding the Storm Waves: The St. Louis Diary of Fred Buff, May 13, 1939 to June 17, 1939*.

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, February 2018

Biographical note

Fritz (now Fred) Buff (1921-2017) was the son of Julius and Emma Buff. He was born on July 26, 1921 in Krumbach, Germany, a small Bavarian town where his family had lived for several generations. There, his parents ran an upholstery supply business. Fritz has one sister, Anni (now Anne), two years younger. At the age of ten, Fritz left home to attend a secondary school in Ulm, where he also went to Hebrew school and belonged to a Jewish club and sports organization. He graduated in 1936 and returned to Krumbach where he worked briefly in a local bank, the town's only surviving Jewish business. After six months Fritz left for Munich to study mechanics at a Jewish vocational school. In the summer of 1938 the student body was forced to participate in the dismantling of the city's main synagogue. On the day before Kristallnacht, Fritz and a group of his classmates fled the city by bicycle to evade the annual Beer Hall Putsch commemoration. They spent the day playing soccer, during which Fritz injured his leg and had to be removed by ambulance to the Jewish hospital in town. When the pogrom began that evening, a group of Nazis searched the hospital and began seizing Jewish men. Though Fritz's injury was not serious, the doctor told the Nazis that Fritz needed to stay in the hospital for a full month and therefore he was left alone. Fritz's father, a diabetic, was arrested that same evening and sent to Dachau. Though he was released four weeks later, he never fully recovered his health. In the wake of Kristallnacht, the Jewish vocational school was closed, and Fritz returned to Krumbach, where his family focused their efforts on emigration. Relatives in the United States arranged for Fritz to receive a Cuban visa with the understanding that his parents and sister would follow shortly. Fritz sailed on the MS *St. Louis*. On board he spent most of his time in the company of Fritz Hilb, a friend from Ulm, and Georg and Werner Lenneberg from Cologne. When the ship was forced to return to Europe, the four were granted asylum in Belgium. For several months they shared an apartment in Brussels. Meanwhile, Fritz's parents and sister managed to reach the United States by way of Italy in late 1939. A few months later, Fritz secured papers and set sail for America. He arrived in New York on January 13, 1940, seven months after the *St. Louis* returned to Europe. In 1945 he married Lotte Neuberger, another German-Jewish refugee, originally from Ichenhausen.

(Biography provided by donor)

Scope and content of collection

The Fritz Buff papers consist of biographical materials, letters, and a travel diary documenting Fritz Buff from Krumbach, Germany, his voyage aboard the MS *St. Louis* to Cuba in 1939, the ship's forced return to Europe, his life as a refugee in Brussels, Belgium, and his immigration to the United States in 1940.

Biographical materials include identification, registration, and immigration papers and a ration card documenting Buff's status as a German Jew, his relocation to Belgium following the return of the *St. Louis* in June 1939, and his immigration to the United States in 1940.

Two letters from Fritz Buff describe his voyage aboard the *St. Louis*. One documents his optimistic perspective during the voyage to Havana while he still believed he would be permitted to disembark. The other describes his disappointment and anxiety upon learning he would not be allowed into Cuba, wondering what his fate would be, and learning he would be allowed into Belgium.

Buff's travel diary documents his experiences aboard the *St. Louis* on route to Havana and then back to Europe. He describes the ship, his fellow passengers, the food and entertainment on board, the optimism about a new life in Cuba, reaching Havana, growing anxiety that the passengers were not being disembarked, the agony and despair of being turned around and sent back to Europe, and the relief at learning the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and England would welcome the refugees on board.

System of arrangement

The Fritz Buff papers are arranged as a single series.

Indexing terms

Buff, Fritz (1921-2017)

St. Louis (Ship)

Jews--Germany--Krumbach.

Jewish refugees--Belgium--Brussels.

Krumbach (Germany)

Brussels (Belgium)

Cuba--Emigration and immigration--Government policy--20th century.

Germany--Emigration and immigration--Government policy--20th century.

United States--Emigration and immigration--History.

Diaries.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Fritz Buff papers, 1939-1940

Folder	Title
1 of 4	Biographical materials, 1939-1940
2 of 4	Letters, 1939
3 of 4	Travel report diary, copy 1, 1939
4 of 4	Travel report diary, copy 2, 1939