

**WILLIAM AND BELA CITRON AND MIRIAM CITRON BURHANS PAPERS,  
1930-2016  
2009.157.5**

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

Title: William and Bela Citron and Miriam Citron Burhans papers

Dates: 1930-2016 (bulk 1945-1983)

Accession number: 2009.157.5

Creator: Citron, William, 1925-2005.

Additional creator: Citron, Bela, 1923-2015.

Additional creator, Burhans, Miriam Citron, 1948-

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box)

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

**Abstract:**

The collection documents the post-war experiences of William and Bela Citron (Wolf Cytrynblum and Bela Kasztan) and their daughter Miriam Citron (Gela Machla, later Miriam Citron Burhans) in displaced persons camps in Germany prior to their immigration to the United States in 1949. Included are identification documents, photographs, a small amount of immigration documents, material related to the search for the fates of their families, and restitution paperwork. Photographs primarily document William and Bela's time in the Foehrenwald and Stuttgart DP camps, including the birth of their daughter Miriam in 1948, and their immigration to the United States via ship in 1949. Also depicted are William's parents Abraham Cytrynblum and Chana Cypel and Bela's mother Machle Lehrman Kasztan.

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), William and Bela Citron and Miriam Citron Burhans papers (2009.157.5), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Miriam Citron Burhans in 2009. An accretion was donated in 2010. The collections previously numbered 2009.157.1 and 2010.172.1 incorporate this collection.

Separated material: Two objects were also donated: Brown leather suitcase used by William Citron when he immigrated to the United States in 1949 (2009.157.2); Blanket (2009.157.3). Additionally, oral history interviews conducted with William and Bela Citron are available (RG-50.461.0001: 2009.157.4)

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

Processing history: Adam Fielding, January 2019

### **Biographical note**

Bela Kasztan (later Bela Citron, 1923-2015) was born on March 17, 1923, in Radom, Poland, to Jankle, an accountant, who was born in Opatow on January 4, 1904, and Machle Lehrman Kasztan, born in Plock in 1905. Bela had two younger brothers, Zelick, born in 1926, and Froim, born in 1928. The family was very religious. Her father taught her Hebrew and wanted her to be a Hebrew teacher. In 1928, the family moved to Łódź where her father became a partner in a textile factory.

In 1939, Germany invaded and occupied Poland. In February 1940, the Jews in Łódź were incarcerated in a ghetto. Bela escaped the ghetto through a tunnel later that year and returned to Radom where she lived with her great-grandmother. She had to wear a yellow star and beg for food, as they had no money. In the fall of 1942, Bela was sent to the Skarzysko-Kamienya slave labor camp in Częstochowa, Poland. She worked making ammunition parts in a factory for HASAG (Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft), a munitions manufacturer that was the third largest consumer of forced labor during the war. Her mother managed to send her a photograph using a gentile boy as messenger. Bela buried the photo in a glass bottle. At some point, Bela was shot in the leg while ill with dysentery. She was saved by a German woman whose husband may have been a German officer at the camp. They got Bela's work assignment changed and she worked in the woman's garden and watched her children. Bela received much better food rations with the family. In 1944, Bela was transferred to another labor camp near the German border. The camp was liberated by Soviet soldiers. Bela could not bring herself to leave for twenty-four hours because of fear that the Soviet soldiers would kill them. After the war ended in May 1945, Bela returned to Radom, searching for her family, but there were no other survivors. Her parents had been killed in Auschwitz and her brothers in other concentration camps in 1942. She then went to a displaced persons camp in Germany.

During her imprisonment, Bela had been allowed to keep her beautiful long hair because she was used for propaganda purposes. Her future husband, Wolf Cytrynblum, whom she had met in the Częstochowa labor camp, would recognize her in the displaced persons camp near Berlin because of her hair. Wolf found Bela and some friends rooms in the same house at the DP camp. After nine months, Bela and

Wolf married on August 16, 1945. They wanted to get into the American zone, so that Wolf could escape service in the Soviet Army. They searched for Bela's parents, but they had perished. They relocated to Foehrenwald displaced persons camp, and eventually to the DP camp in Stuttgart, where they had a daughter, Gela Machla (Miriam), born on February 7, 1948, in Maria Hospital. She was named Gela for her father's side and Machla after her maternal grandmother. Bela worked in a factory and fixed socks for soldiers in exchange for food. William attended dental training classes.

On August 18, 1949, the family accepted the offer of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to resettle in the United States. They Americanized their names to Bela, Miriam, and William Citron. They sailed for the US and arrived in Boston on September 15 with \$3.75. Bela later received restitution payments from Germany through the United Restitution Organization. William died in 2005, age 80 years.

Wolf Gitman Cytrynblum (later William Citron, 1925-2005) was born on October 17, 1925, in Plock, Poland. His parents, Abraham, born in March 19, 1891, in Warsaw, and Chana (Anna) Cypel, born in 1893 to Gela in Plock, ran a clothing store. He had an older sister, Lucia, born on April 23, 1923. Wolf was often ill as a child, but the family was wealthy and it was a comfortable childhood. His maternal grandmother lived with them. The family had a nanny and a sleep-in maid. However, the family was aware of the increasing antisemitism in Poland. Wolf felt that Poles were jealous of the Jews and blamed them for all Poland's problems.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. For the first month or two, life was not greatly changed. The Polish zloty was replaced with occupation currency and stores were encouraged to operate. In March-April 1940, the family store was confiscated and they were forced into the ghetto. The ghetto was sealed and one could leave only with a pass. In late 1940, the town was declared Juden frei (Jew free). The Cytrynblum's, and the other Jews, were transported to the Chmielnik ghetto near Kielce. Only Wolf had to work breaking big stones into gravel to make roads. His maternal grandmother, who was in her 70s, was beaten on the way to the rail station for moving too slow. She became ill and died a few weeks after the move.

In the fall of 1941, there was a selection of the young and healthy for forced labor. Wolf and Lucia were taken to the Skarzysko-Kamienya slave labor camp in Czestochowa where they worked in a factory making ammunition parts for HASAG (Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft), a munitions manufacturer that was the third largest consumer of forced labor during the war. He saw Lucia occasionally; she worked processing dried food and once in a while slipped him some. In 1944, Wolf and Lucia were transferred to another camp near the German border. In summer 1944, Wolf was moved to another camp because of the advancing Soviet Army. The camp was liberated on January 16, 1945, by the Soviets. Wolf and Lucia found each other a few days after liberation. By January 21, Wolf learned that his parents had been killed in 1942. He would later learn that he, his sister, and his first cousin, David Zwirek, were the only members of their family to survive. Lucia married Sam Berneman, a fellow survivor who had lost his family. They moved to a displaced persons camp outside Munich, possibly Foehrenwald, and immigrated to the United States in 1945 with the help of the United Jewish Appeal.

After the war ended in May 1945, Wolf lived in a displaced persons camp in Germany. Living in the same building was Bella Kasztan, also from Poland, whom he knew from the HASAG labor camp. Her immediate family had all perished during the Holocaust. After nine months, they married on August 16, 1945. Wolf and Bela registered to go to the US. They wanted to get into the American zone, so that Wolf could escape military service in the Soviet Army. The couple lived in dp camps in Berlin and

Foehrenwald, before settling in a camp in Stuttgart. They were there for over 4 years and their daughter, Gela Machla (Miriam), was born there on February 7, 1948. Bela worked in a factory and fixed socks for soldiers in exchange for food. William attended dental training classes.

Not until Miriam asked her father about his Holocaust experiences for a graduate school assignment, did he share his story. He and Bela had thought that she was not interested and she never asked because she thought the memories would upset them. William then began speaking to local school and college organizations about his ordeal. William, 80, passed away in 2005 and his wife Bela passed away in 2015.

Biography by Kate Cooper, 2011

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

The collection documents the post-war experiences of William and Bela Citron (Wolf Cytrynblum and Bela Kasztan) and their daughter Miriam Citron (Gela Machla, later Miriam Citron Burhans) in displaced persons camps in Germany prior to their immigration to the United States in 1949. Included are identification documents, photographs, a small amount of immigration documents, material related to the search for the fates of their families, and restitution paperwork. Photographs primarily document William and Bela's time in the Foehrenwald and Stuttgart DP camps, including the birth of their daughter Miriam in 1948, and their immigration to the United States via ship in 1949. Also depicted are William's parents Abraham Cytrynblum and Chana Cypel and Bela's mother Machle Lehrman Kasztan.

### **System of arrangement**

The collection is arranged as two series.

Series 1. Biographical material, 1949-2016 and undated

Series 2. Photographs, 1930, 1945-1949 and undated

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

### **Indexing terms**

Person:

Citron, Bela, 1923-2015.

Citron, William, 1925-2005.

Burhans, Miriam Citron, 1948-

Corporate:

Foehrenwald (Displaced persons camp)

Stuttgart (Displaced persons camp)

Topical Subject:

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.

Refugees, Jewish--Germany.

Displaced persons camps.

Geography:

Stuttgart (Germany : Refugee camp)

United States--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:  
Photographs.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1. Biographical material, 1949-2016 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Citron, Bela, 1949-2015
1.2	Citron, William, 1949 and undated
1.3	Immigration, 1949-1955
1.4	Restitution, 1949-1979
1.5	Restitution, 1981-2009
1.6	Search for fate of families, 1946-1956
1.7	Temple Beth Shalom <i>Book of Remembrance and Holocaust Memorial</i> , 2016

### Series 2. Photographs, 1930, 1945-1949 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.8	Citron, Bela, 1947 and undated
1.9	Citron, Miriam, circa 1949
1.10	Citron, William, circa 1945-circa 1949
1.11	Cytrynblum family, 1930 and undated
1.12	Displaced persons camps, Germany, 1945-1949
1.13	Kasztan, Machle Lehrman, undated
1.14	On ship to United States, 1949