

HARPUDER FAMILY PAPERS, 1915-1952, 2000s
2010.240.1

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

Title: Harpuder family papers

Dates: 1915-1952

Accession number: 2010.240.1

Creator: Harpuder, Ralph.

Extent: 7 boxes, 3 oversize boxes, 4 oversize folders

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

Abstract: The Harpuder family papers documents the experiences of the Harpuder family in Berlin, Germany and Shanghai, China, 1915-1952; as well as correspondence and reunion booklets for the Jewish survivors of Shanghai through the Rickshaw Shanghai Reunion, which occurred during the 2000s.

Languages: English, German, Chinese.

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), Harpuder family papers (2010.240.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Yvonne Harpuder in 2010.

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

Processing history: Finding aid updated by Katelynn Vance, January 2021.

Biographical note

Ralf Heinz Harpuder was born on April 12, 1934, in Berlin, Germany, to Hans (Hern) and Gerda Lewin Harpuder. Hans was born on November 26, 1901, in Berlin to Gertrude Hannes Harpuder. Gerda was born on November 21, 1905, in Berlin to Joseph and Selma Nathanson Lewin. Selma was born on July 20, 1878, in Mammendorf. Hans worked in sales and took over his father's factory that manufactured ropes and canvases; Gerda was a shopkeeper. Ralf had one older sister, Ursula, born in 1925. Gerda and Hans married on December 26, 1931.

After Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933, anti-Jewish legislation and restrictions became increasingly harsh. Hans' brothers, Alfred and Erich, immigrated to the United States circa December 1938. After the Kristallnacht pogrom on November 9-10, 1938, Hans lived in hiding with friends to avoid arrest until he could confirm plans to leave Germany. The family decided to leave for Shanghai in Japanese-occupied China because it was an open port with no visa required. In early 1939, the family and Gerda's mother, Selma, took a train to Trieste, Italy, and boarded the SS Conte Verde. In March, they arrived in Shanghai and a Jewish organization transported the family to a refugee boarding home in the Hongkew district. Their possessions were sent to Shanghai by a German man who was an expediter for a van and storage company. They sold many of those valuables which provided them with enough money to live in their own apartment and co-own a delicatessen with Gerda's cousin, Kaethe Benjamin. The store closed after a year and Hans started an ice block company. The family was active in the Jewish community and celebrated the high holidays in rented movie theaters. Ralf attended a Jewish refugee school, the Kadoorie school, and learned Japanese. He played with other immigrant children and Japanese children in the remnants of bombed buildings. He went to the movies often and collected and traded cigarette sleeves with the other children.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the family stopped receiving correspondence from family in Germany. In 1943, Japanese authorities ordered that all Jewish refugees move into a ghetto in the Hongkew district. Their landlord, who was a Jewish refugee, with the help of Japanese authorities, forced the family to move because he wanted the apartment for himself. They lived in one room of a shared apartment with three other families in a less affluent area called Little Vienna because of all the coffeehouses. They had to purchase hot water in a kettle to take sponge baths. Food and support became harder to obtain from Jewish organizations. Hans worked as a sales person for a candy company and Ralf sometimes stole candy from his sample box. Hans had to obtain passes from the Japanese official, Kanoh Ghoya, to sell goods outside the ghetto. Gerda worked in a rag factory and Ursula worked as a beautician. Ralf transferred to a nearby school, the Freysinger school, a private Jewish refugee school. The family could not afford it but the principal allowed him to attend without paying tuition. He also attended Talmud Torah, an afternoon Hebrew school that was very strict, but he returned every year because the students received new shoes. On July 17, 1945, Shanghai was heavily bombed by United States forces. Gerda and Ralf were outside during the bombing. They ran inside a building and Gerda covered his head and prayed. After the air raids, Ralf could smell the stench of burning bodies.

Shanghai was liberated by the US Army on September 3, 1945. An American soldier who was friends with one of Hans' brothers in New York brought the family canned goods. In October 1945, Hans died of malnutrition and hook worms. The family learned that Hans's sister, Genia Gritz Harpuder, was killed in Stutthof concentration camp in 1945. Ralf's paternal grandmother and cousin, Gertrude and Peter, died in Auschwitz death camp. Gerda's brother, Werner, immigrated to California before the war and obtained

papers for Ralf, Gerda, Ursula, Max, and Selma to emigrate to the US. While in Shanghai, or possibly in Australia, Ursula married Max Kopstein, a soccer player who was a Jewish refugee from Vienna. In March 1947, they sailed on the SS General Gordon and settled in Los Angeles. Two weeks after arriving, Ralf celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. Werner enrolled him in junior high school and changed his name to Ralph Harper. In 1950, Gerda married Viktor Stummer. They met in 1941 when Gerda asked Viktor to repair a candlestick. Viktor had fled from Vienna to Shanghai in 1938. After high school, Ralph changed his last name back to Harpuder. Selma passed away on May 4, 1958, age 79. In 1965, Ralph married Yvonne Fenton, whose parents had come to the US around 1938 after securing US visas on their honeymoon in Switzerland. Yvonne's grandfather, Isidor Abraham, and uncle, Kurt, lived in Shanghai during the war. Ralph and Yvonne had one son. Gerda passed away on November 22, 1996, age 91. Viktor passed away in 2003, age 94. Ralph passed away on July 31, 2009, age 74.

Biography written by Molly Luken, November 2013.

Scope and content of collection

The Harpuder family papers consists of documents, photographs, correspondence, membership and identification cards, newsletters, programs, certificates, newspaper clippings, memoirs, postcards, and photograph albums. This collection documents the experiences of the Harpuder family in Berlin, Germany and Shanghai, China. Also included are correspondence and reunion booklets for the Jewish survivors of Shanghai through the Rickshaw Shanghai Reunion, which occurred during the 2000s.

System of arrangement

The Harpuder family papers is arranged in four series.

Series 1: Original documents, photographs, memoirs.

Series 2: Newspapers, magazines, newspaper clippings.

Series 3: Photocopies and scans of documents, photographs, and websites.

Series 4: Information on reunions with Jewish survivors of Shanghai.

Indexing terms

Person:

Abraham, Kurt.
Falbaum, Berl.
Harpuder, Ralph.
Heimann, Gerhard.
Heimann, Gustav.
Kadoorie, Horace.
Lippmann, Rosa.
Meyersohn, Lieselotte.
Silberstein, Julie.
Tietz, Herman.
Wartenberger, Horst.

Topical Subject:

Jewish refugees--China--Shanghai.
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees--China--Shanghai.
Refugees.
Families.

Geography:

China.
Shanghai (China)

Genre/Form:

Correspondence.
Identification documents.
Newspaper clippings.
Photographs.
Personal narratives.

Container List

Series 1: Original documents, photographs, memoirs.

Box / Folder:	Contents:
1.1	"Kurt Abraham" consists of one document which served as a passport to allow Kurt Abraham to enter into the United States post-war; German Reich passport of Kurt Abraham; Alien Tax Receipt dated April 26, 1946 in Shanghai, China; Running Certificate for winning 100m run on July 19, 1925; Gymnastics Certificate, August 22, 1926; Gymnastics Certificate, June 28-29, 1924.
1.2	"Lily Abraham" (born Lieselotte Meyersohn, married Kurt Abraham) consists of Declaration of Intention Document allowing Lily to immigrate to the United States; birth certificate of Lily Meyersohn, born February 18, 1911; birth certificate stating Leo and Johanna Meyersohn are the parents of Lily Meyersohn; photocopies of documents.
1.3	"Copies of Harpuder Family Papers" consists of photographs, letters, and advertisement photocopies while the Harpuder family lived in Shanghai, China during the war.
1.4	"Memories" by Ralph Harpuder including Julius Lowenstein Report consists of copies of photocopies and postcards of the Harpuder family and the city of Shanghai, China.
1.5	"Original Photographs" consists of photographs depicting Ralph Harpuder's experiences while living in Shanghai with his family during World War II, undated.
1.6	"Original Photographs from Red Album" consists of photographs depicting Ralph Harpuder's experiences while living in Shanghai with his family during World War II, undated.
1.7	"Original Photographs and Postcards from Black Album" consists of photographs and postcards depicting Ralph Harpuder's experiences while living in Shanghai with his family during World War II and post-war, undated.
1.8	"Miscellaneous Documents Part I" consists of a photocopy of a business card titled "Modern Candy Factory" (the business card of Max Wolff, Proprietor of the European Bakery); small blue book with a folded map of Shanghai, China; small red book written in Chinese; small paper written in Chinese with a photograph of Stern Fritz; photocopy of an unknown man standing next to a ladder; document in Chinese with a name noted in English Hermann Gustar, April 26, 1939; document on a trunk delivery, from the American President Lines LTD, 1947; newspaper written in German, June 13, 1948, Shanghai Ecro; two song documents written in German; unidentified document written in German; unidentified letter written in German signed by Metis; an advertisement to see the "Gary Cooper as Sergeant York" film at the Capitol Theatre

	in Shanghai, China; large advertisement poster, undated; Appreciation Document for Gerhard Gottschalk, January 12, 1948; original furniture advertisement card; original World Wide Zionist Organization of Jewish Youth membership card for Kurt Fleischner, September 17, 1939.
1.9	"Miscellaneous Documents Part II" consists of original documents dating from 1912-1950; UN International Refugee Organization Certificate of Travel for Rosa Lippmann, February 6, 1952; Police Authority Report, July 28, 1938; testimony of Julie Silberstein, January 13, 1912; testimony on Julie Silberstein, May 31, 1915; telegram from Herman Tietz, September 2, 1929; testimony on Gustav Heimann, November 30, 1923; telegram from The Far Eastern Jewish Central Information Bureau For Emigrants, March 22, 1948; telegram from The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to Gustav Heimann, March 10, 1950; and Certificate of Identity document for Gerhard Heimann, May 28, 1947.
1.10	"Business in the Shanghai Ghetto, the Years, 1938 to 1949" consists of a memoir draft of Ralph Harpuder's experience while living in the Shanghai ghetto with his family during World War II and photocopies of newspaper clippings.
1.11	"Boy Scouts 13 th Shanghai Group" consists of a memoir by Ralph Harpuder of his experiences in the 13 th United Shanghai Boy Scouts Group and original articles from "The 13 th News," published by the 13 th United Boy Scout Group of Shanghai in 1947.
1.12	"My Shanghai Memoirs," by Horst Wartenberger, 1952; in English.

Series 2: Newspapers, magazines, newspaper clippings.

Box / Folder:	Contents:
2.1	"Shanghai Youth Group Magazine 1" consists of photocopies of the youth group magazine, "Future" Volume 1, January 1947 - December 1947, Issue 6, 8-12, published by the Shanghai Jewish Youth Community Center; photocopies of cartoon drawings from the magazine.
2.2	"Shanghai Youth Group Magazine 2" consists of photocopies from the Shanghai Youth Group Magazine title "Looking Ahead" two photocopies from the Shanghai Youth Group Magazine title, "What's My Name" and photocopies from the Shanghai Youth Group Magazine title "Editorial."
2.3	"Newspaper clippings," consists of photocopies and original newspaper clippings from Shanghai written in German, 1940-2002.
2.4	"Death announcements for Shanghai Survivors," 1960-1980.
2.5	"Ein Verlorenes Jahrzehnt: Shanghai, 1939-1949" (A Lost Decade: Shanghai 1939-1949) consists of photocopies of a large memoir containing different diaries of Jewish refugees living in Shanghai during the war, pages 1-100; in German.
2.6	"Ein Verlorenes Jahrzehnt: Shanghai 1939-1949" (A Lost Decade: Shanghai 1939-1949) consists of photocopies of a large memoir containing different diaries of Jewish refugees living in Shanghai during the war, pages 101-200; in German.
3.1	"Ein Verlorenes Jahrzehnt: Shanghai 1939-1949" (A Lost Decade: Shanghai 1939-1949) consists of photocopies of a large memoir containing different diaries of Jewish refugees living in Shanghai during the war, pages 201-Fin; in German.
3.3	"Advertising photocopies" consists of four scanned photographs viewing of stores from the street and photocopies of advertisements.
3.3, OS 4	"Newspaper clippings from the 'Shanghai Herald' circa 1946-1947" in German.
3.4	"Books of newspaper clippings of cultural events, 1941-1945" (2) books in German.

3.5	"Theatre Programs, 1942-1947" in German.
3.6	"Exhibit Pages with Photocopies of Advertisements," in German.
3.7	"Poetry and Creative Writing, 1938-1947," in German.

Series 3: Photocopies and scans of documents, photographs, and websites.

Box / Folder:	Contents:
4.1	"Shanghai Jewish Newspapers, 1940-1946" in German.
4.2	"Newspaper of 'The Shanghai Herald,' 1940-1946" in German.
4.3	"Japanese Block Prints" 8 prints, undated.
4.4	"Copies of Photographs," consist of scanned copies of pictures of Shanghai and of Ralph Harpuder and the Harpuder family.
4.5	"Copies of Documents" consists of the scanned documents that relate the Harpuder family's experience while living in Shanghai.
4.6	"Scanned copies of postcards of Shanghai."
4.7	"Continued folder of scanned copies of photographs, postcards, and documents."
4.8	"Miscellaneous photocopies of newspapers, printouts from websites."
4.9	"Photocopies of Shanghai 'Monopoly' cards."
5.1-6	"Copies of Websites and Emails Related to the Rickshaw Express Group of Shanghai Survivors" in German and English.

Series 4: Information on reunions with Jewish survivors of Shanghai.

Box / Folder:	Contents:
6.1	"Ralph Harpuder Correspondence with Berl Falbaum, 2000s" consists of information on the Harpuder family's escape to Shanghai in March 1939; a photocopy of a cartoon strip of the late official of the Stateless Refugees' Affairs Bureau in Shanghai in September 1945.
6.2	"1980's Reunion Correspondence."
6.3	"Rickshaw Reunion Attendee Directories."
6.4	"Correspondence with Horace Kadoorie."
6.5	"Old China Hands Reunion Booklet," in English.
6.6	"Newspaper Clippings and Articles about Reunions," in English.
6.7	"1980 Reunion and 1980's Hongkew Chronicle Newsletters," in English.
6.8	"Shanghai Reunion Cruise, 1980" consists of a brief summary of the cruise trip and a postcard with a photocopy of Harpuder's identity card.
6.9	"Program for the 1973 gathering of the Association of Former Central European Refugees from Shanghai."