

**Gans family papers, 1900-2004 [bulk 1938-1950]
2012.478.3**

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

Descriptive summary

Title: Gans family papers

Dates: 1900-2004 [inclusive 1938-1950]

Accession number: 2012.478.3

Creator: Manfred Gans
Anita Gans

Extent: 3.0 linear feet (5 boxes, 5 book enclosures)

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

Abstract: Consists of documents, photographs, memoir, and correspondence related to the Holocaust experiences of the family of Moritz and Else Gans, originally of Borken, Germany, who were living in Zandvoort in the Netherlands. Prior to the war, Moritz and Else emigrated to Zandvoort in the Netherlands, while sons Karl, Manfred, and Theo were able to emigrate, Karl (later Gershon) to Palestine, and Theo and Manfred to Great Britain, where Manfred joined the military under the name "Freddy Gray." Moritz and Else were deported to Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, where they were liberated. Includes pre-war, wartime, and post-war family photographs, and the diary of Moritz and Else Gans from 1945, documenting life in the concentration camps and culminating in Manfred's visit to Theresienstadt, where he located his parents. The bulk of the collection consists of extensive wartime and post-war correspondence, mainly between Manfred and fellow refugee Anita Lamm (who wrote under the pseudonym Joan Garry) whom Manfred married in 1948, and between Manfred, Anita, and their respective parents.

Languages: English, German

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: No restrictions on use.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Gans family papers (2012.478.3), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Manfred Gans donated his memoir to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2004. Daniel Gans and Aviva Gans-Rosenberg donated their parents' collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2004 and 2012. This collection incorporates those donations previously cataloged as 2004.696 and 2012.478.1 under the new accession number of 2012.478.3.

Related archival materials: See also RG-50.030*0489, an oral history interview with Mr. Gans.

Processing history: Rebecca Erbelding, August 2012; updated by Adam Fielding, February 2018

Biographical note

Manfred Gans was son of Moritz Gans and Else Fraenkel Gans. Moritz Gans grew up in a large family of five boys and five girls of Dutch-Jewish descent Borken, near the Dutch border. Manfred was born on April 27, 1922. He had an older brother Carl (later Gershon Kadar) and a younger brother Theo. Moritz, who had lost a leg in World War I, became a prosperous textile merchant and was the first Jew to serve on the city council. The family was Orthodox. The three boys attended their first eight grades in the one room Jewish elementary school and then transferred to the public high school. In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany, and many German Jews considered emigrating. That summer, Manfred attended a hachshara farm in Gut Neuendorf run by his uncle Alex Moch to train young Jews for agricultural work in Palestine. There, he met another German-Jewish teenager, Anita Lamm, the daughter of his father's friend, Leo Lamm. Manfred continued to attend the hachshara every summer until 1938, and his family stayed in touch with Lamm family. In 1938 Anita spent a weekend with the Gans family in Borken on her way to the United States. Her father obtained permission to go to Paris on business but secretly planned to go from there to the States rather than return to Germany. Moritz helped his friend smuggle his travel papers across the Dutch border by hiding them in his false leg. Following this weekend together, Manfred and Anita began a regular correspondence until her parents told her stop.

In 1936, Manfred's older brother Carl moved to Palestine, changing his name to Gershon and joined the Mikve Israel Agricultural Training School. (He later served in the Jewish Brigade and Palmach.) Two years later, in July 1938, Manfred went to England. He originally planned to go only for the summer, but as conditions worsened in Germany, his parents told him not to return home. His brother Theo also came to England, and his parents moved to Holland. Manfred studied for the entrance exams for technical college and found work in the machine and truck repair department of a factory in Manchester. He hoped to eventually to become an engineer and felt was good preparation. He boarded with Jewish families and maintained his Orthodox lifestyle. He also met the Jewish physicians, Leo and Luise Wislicki, who became close friends. With the outbreak of war, Manfred was classified as an enemy alien. At first this did not matter much. He continued to live in the same home and study for his university entrance exams. However, after the German invasion of Western Europe, the British government imposed a new wave of restrictions on enemy aliens. First Manfred had to sell his bicycle. He then was arrested and sent to an internment camp north of Manchester and later to a tent camp. Finally in late August or early September he was deported to the Isle of Man. The internees were kept in former hotels; Orthodox Jews had their own home with a kosher kitchen. They kept busy with a series of

lectures provided by the internees themselves. In December, the British government announced that enemy aliens eighteen or older were permitted to enlist in the army, and Manfred immediately registered. He was assigned to the Pioneer Corps – an unarmed labor unit for criminals or the physically unfit. Manfred spent the next two years frustratingly performing manual labor on construction projects.

His luck changed in 1943 when he was asked if he wanted to apply for special work. After passing his interview, he was sent to North Wales for training. He joined Three Troop of the Tenth Inter-Allied IA Commando organized by Lord Mountbatten, head of British Combined Operations, a special forces unit composed of fluent German speakers, almost all of whom were Jewish refugees. Everyone was given a new British identity; Manfred Gans assumed the alias of Fred Gray. Each soldier could assign one person from the outside to forward mail from other friends and family. Manfred chose the Wislickis in Manchester. He also left any private possessions with them that might identify his true identity such as German datebooks and Jewish ritual objects. For the next year, Manfred underwent intensive training to include both military science and extreme physical conditioning.

In May 1944 Manfred detailed to 41st Royal Marine Commando, and he boarded an invasion craft on June 5th. He participated in the D-Day landings, helped capture a fully manned radar station and participated in the fighting in Belgium and The Netherlands. He also interrogated German prisoners and gathered intelligence. By December he received a field-grade promotion to officer in recognition of his work. The following March he entered his hometown of Borken. His former home was still intact having served as a Gestapo headquarters and later as Allied Military Government headquarters. The Gestapo had used the wine cellar as a torture chamber.

Towards the end of the war, Manfred learned that parents had been deported to Theresienstadt and were likely still alive. In May 1945 he set out with driver and truck to find them. When he arrived the registration clerk told him they were alive and went to forewarn them of his visit. After an emotional overnight reunion, Manfred had to leave because the camp was under quarantine. He left all of his rations of food and cigarettes with his parents and returned with lots of letters written by Dutch survivors eager to be repatriated, including one from the head of the Dutch prisoners who had previously served as a judge in the Peace Court in The Hague. After returning from the camp, Manfred presented his letter to Princess Juliana, thereby paving the way to the repatriation of the Dutch colony. After their return, his parents recuperated in Holland, before moving to Israel in the 1950s. Manfred also reunited with his paternal grandmother who survived the war in hiding on a farm near Leewarden.

After the end of the war, Manfred was promoted to captain and became the head of military administration of Gladbeck. He also served as the Deputy Commander of the Intelligence Section of the prisoner of war camp for high ranking Nazis in the Sennelager near Paderborn. He prepared the prisoners for war crimes trials including von Bohlen Krupp and Hans Aumeier. After his demobilization in August 1946, Manfred returned to England, reverted to his true name, enrolled in the College of Technology in Manchester in October and finally became a British citizen.

While still in the service, the Wislickis began forwarding letters to Manfred from an unknown American girl named Joan. After about a year he discovered that Joan was in fact Anita Lamm, his childhood sweetheart. In 1947 Anita visited him in Europe and they spent Passover together with Manfred's parents in Holland. A few weeks later they became engaged, and the Wislickis hosted a party. They married the following year in the Lamm's apartment in New York. Manfred and Anita returned briefly to England so that he could complete his undergraduate education. They then came back to the United States and Manfred enrolled in MIT for graduate work and gave birth to children Aviva and Daniel.

Scope and content of collection

The collection relates to the Gans family, originally of Borken, Germany. It includes photographs of pre-war life, including a photograph album depicting a day in the life of the three Gans boys. The majority of the collection consists of correspondence, mainly from Anita Lamm in the United States to Manfred Gans, then a member of the British military. Also includes documentation and correspondence related to the wartime experiences of Moritz and Else Gans, who were deported to Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen, and liberated from Theresienstadt. Includes Moritz's diary, into which he made short entries throughout his internment experiences, ending when Manfred, as a member of the British military, found his parents in Theresienstadt. Additionally, there is a memoir by Manfred entitled "Live Gave Me a Chance." The memoir describes his childhood in Borken, his departure for England for school in 1938, his internment on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien, his participation in the British Army as an interpreter and intelligence operative (including participation in the D-Day invasion), his trip to Theresienstadt in an attempt to locate his parents, and his post-war life.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in nine series:

Series 1: Photographs

Series 2: Pre-war bound volumes

Series 3: Naturalization and Citizenship papers

Series 4: Related to the liberation of Moritz and Else Gans

Series 5: Correspondence between Anita and Manfred

Series 6: Correspondence to and from Moritz and Else Gans

Series 7: Miscellaneous correspondence

Series 8: Miscellaneous documents

Series 9: Bound photo albums and diaries [Oversize]

Indexing terms

Gans, Moritz.

Gans, Else.

Gans, Karl.

Gans, Manfred.

Gans, Theo.

Gans, Anita Lamm.

Bergen-Belsen (Concentration camp)

Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)

Anonyms and pseudonyms.

World War, 1939-1945—Great Britain.

Zandvoort (Netherlands).

Borken (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany).

Correspondence.

Diary.

Photographs.

Personal narratives.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Photographs, 1900-1975

Box/Folder	
1.1	Pre-war and wartime photographs and postcards, 1933-1941
1.2	Post-war photographs, ca. 1949-1975
1.3	Photographs from the brown "Photographs" album
1.4	Brown "Photographs" album (empty)

Series 2: Pre-war and wartime bound volumes, 1905-1943

Box/Folder	
BE 1	Poesie book, 1905-1909
BE 2	Scrapbook photo album of a trip to Switzerland [probably Anita's], ca. 1938
1.5	Day calendars, January-June 1937
1.6	Day calendars, July-December 1937
1.7	Day calendars, 1938-1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943
1.8	Day calendars, 1940-1941, 1942, 1943
2.1	Day calendars, 1942-1943

Series 3: Naturalization and Citizenship papers, 1938-1946

Box/Folder	
2.2	Passports for Manfred and Anita, 1944-1946
2.3	Naturalization and citizenship papers, 1938-1955

Series 4: Related to the liberation of Moritz and Else Gans, 1942-1945

Box/Folder	
2.4	Diary written in Zandvoort, dated January 1942 but covers 1939-1940, 1942
2.5	Gans diary in Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, Jan-May 1945
2.6	Manfred Gans report at arriving at Theresienstadt, May 1945

Series 5: Correspondence between Anita and Manfred, 1938-1958 [bulk 1944-1948]

Box/Folder	
2.7	Undated correspondence
2.8	Correspondence, 1938-1939
2.9	Correspondence, 1943-1944
2.10	Correspondence, January-June 1945
2.11	Correspondence, July-December 1945
2.12	Correspondence, 1946
3.1	Correspondence, January-April 1947
3.2	Correspondence, May-August 1947

3.3	Correspondence, September-December 1947
3.4	Correspondence, January-March 1948
3.5	Correspondence, April-May 1948
3.6	Correspondence, June-July 1948
3.7	Correspondence, August 1948-July 1958

Series 6: Correspondence to and from Moritz and Else Gans, 1938-1983

Box/Folder	
3.8	Telegrams and letters to Moritz and Else Gans, 1942-1945 [bulk summer 1945]
4.1	Correspondence from the Gans, 1938-1949
4.2	Correspondence from the Gans, 1950-1983

Series 7: Miscellaneous correspondence, 1928-1946

Box/Folder	
4.3	Correspondence from Manfred Gans to friends, 1944
4.4	Letter to Manfred Gans from friends, 1945-1946
4.5	Letter from Carl Gans explaining his wartime experiences, August 1946
4.6	Miscellaneous correspondence to and from Manfred Gans, 1928-1944

Series 8: Miscellaneous documents, 1921-1950, 2004

Box/Folder	
4.7	Karl Gans school report card, 1921
4.8	George Munro column clippings, ca. 1940
4.9	Manfred Gans Soldier's Service book with inserts, 1940-1945
4.10	Miscellaneous, undated-1950
4.11	Manfred Gans memoir: "Life Gave Me a Chance, 2004

Series 9: Bound photo albums and diaries, circa 1934-1949

Box/Folder	
BE 3	Brown plaid album, "Ein Tag im Hause", ca. 1934
BE 4	Green "Gruss aus Berlin" album, ca. 1935-1939
5.1	"Milestones: A Five Year Diary," 1945-1949
BE 5	Brown birthday storybook, undated