

**EHRENTHEIL FAMILY PAPERS, 1915-2010**  
**2013.185.1**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
Tel. (202) 479-9717  
e-mail: [reference@ushmm.org](mailto:reference@ushmm.org)

**Descriptive summary**

Title: Ehrentheil family papers, 1915-2010

Dates: 1915-2010

Accession number: 2013.185.1

Creator: Dr. Otto Ehrentheil

Extent: 5 boxes (2 linear feet)

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

Abstract: Consists of documents, correspondence, memoirs, and research notes related to Dr. Otto Ehrentheil's attempts to assist family and friends to escape Nazi-occupied Europe. After his family arrived in the United States from Vienna, Austria, in November 1938, Dr. Ehrentheil worked to provide financial assistance and affidavits for numerous family and friends. Includes correspondence, financial documentation, memoirs and additional information about those he assisted, and research notes related to the writing and publication of "Dear Otto," written by Dr. Ehrentheil's daughter, Susanne Learmonth, about her father's wartime activities.

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: Collections is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: [Item/folder], [Box #], Ehrentheil family collection [accession number], United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of the family of Otto Ehrentheil, January 2013.

Processing History: Rebecca Erbeling, March 2013.

### **Biographical note**

Dr. Otto Ehrentheil was born in 1897 in Trieste to Emanuel and Ada Perutz Ehrentheil. He was one of four children: Michael (1891-1896), Paul (1894-1945), Otto, and Anny (1901-1986). Due to Emanuel's work as the director of an insurance company, *Assicurazione Generali*, the family moved frequently between Vienna and Trieste as Otto was growing up. During World War I, Otto fought as a member of the artillery and, after the war, enrolled in the University of Vienna Medical School. While in school, he met Josephine Fischer, who went by "Fini."

Josephine "Fini" Fischer was born in 1899 to Max and Olga Pollaczek Fischer. She had an older brother, Erich, who was born in 1898. Fini was raised in Vienna, where her father was the director of the *Israelitische Kinderbewahranstalt* [Jewish Nursery School] as was his father before him. Max Fischer died in 1924 and Olga took over the directorship of the nursery school.

After Otto graduated from medical school in 1923, Otto and Fini married and settled in Vienna. Otto divided his time between private patients and working as the district physician for the Workers' Health Insurance plan, while Fini was a licensed piano teacher. The couple enjoyed the cultural scene in Vienna in the 1920s, frequently attending the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the opera. Otto was also heavily involved in the Social Democratic Party.

Otto and Fini had two daughters, Susanne (Susi) born in 1926 and Hanni, born in 1930. After the Anschluss in 1938, Hanni was thrown out of her elementary school, though Susi, who attended a gymnasium, was able to finish the school year. In March 1938, Otto applied for a visa for emigration to the United States. As he was born in Trieste, he was listed on the Italian quota, which was much less crowded than the Austrian quota. In May 1938, Otto was dismissed from his position as district physician. Otto's brother Paul, who had previously emigrated to Brussels, urged the family to emigrate and Otto transferred some of the family's resources to him to avoid confiscation. On September 27, 1938, the Ehrentheil family and Fini's mother, Olga Fischer, left Vienna for Milan, Italy, and from there, went to Naples where they waited for their American visas. In late October 1938, they received their visas and left from Le Havre on the S.S. Washington to the United States.

The Ehrentheils arrived in New York on November 10, 1938. After five days, they traveled to Boston, where Otto took a job as a lab assistant at Massachusetts General Hospital. He passed his medical boards in the winter of 1939-1940 and began to work in the out-patient clinic at Beth Israel Hospital in Brookline, MA. Fini's mother, Olga, continued to live with them, as did Fini's brother Erich's family after their arrival in 1941. They became involved in three refugee committees in the Boston area: the Boston Committee for Refugees; the Window Shop, and IMAS (the Immigrant Mutual Aid Society). Otto and Fini became American citizens on April 24, 1944.

From 1938-1945, Otto spent most of his limited time and resources to assist family and friends with their emigration attempts. He was able to sign affidavits for Erich Fischer (Fini's brother); Erich, his wife Irene, and young daughter Gay, left Vienna for Palestine in February 1939. With Otto's help, the Fischer

family arrived in Boston in early 1941. Otto also signed an affidavit of support for his sister, Anny Graf, her husband Heinz, and their twin daughters Eva and Erika; they emigrated to France in July 1939 and arrived in the United States in the summer of 1941. Otto also provided financial assistance and arranged for affidavits for numerous other family and friends during and after the war.

In 1952, Otto took a position at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Bedford, MA. He wrote numerous papers and became an assistant professor of medicine at Tufts University. Dr. Otto Ehrentheil died in 1983 at age 85. Olga Pollaczek Fisher passed away in 1976 at the age of 103. Fini Ehrentheil passed away in 1992 at age 93. Dr. Susanne Ehrentheil Learmonth graduated from Harvard Medical School and practiced as an anesthesiologist. Hanni Ehrentheil Myers studied music, teaching both at Brookline Music School and later, at Boston College, where she also taught German. In 2008, Susanne Learmonth published "Dear Otto: Lifelines Across the Atlantic During the Holocaust" (Burlington, VT: The Carolyn and Leonard Miller Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont, 2008).

Source: Learmonth, Susanne. Dear Otto: Lifelines Across the Atlantic During the Holocaust. Burlington, VT: The Carolyn and Leonard Miller Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont, 2008

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

This collection focuses on Dr. Ehrentheil's work assisting friends and family to emigrate.

The first series is related to the pre-war, wartime, and post-war life of the Ehrentheil family themselves, though this is not the main focus of the collection. The series does include the document confiscating Dr. Ehrentheil's car in Vienna in 1938, blank forms and affidavits related to the United States immigration process, Otto's autobiography, and Susanne's reflections on her own experiences.

The second series contains alphabetical files for each family or friend assisted by Dr. Ehrentheil. Some files include evidence of his financial support, correspondence with the family in Europe, telegrams, and correspondence with State Department personnel and personnel of relief and refugee agencies.

The third series includes memoirs and additional documentation related to those he aided.

The fourth series includes clippings, articles, handwritten research notes, and documentation Susanne Learmonth collected while preparing for the writing and publication of "Dear Otto."

### **System of arrangement**

The collection is arranged in four series: Series 1: Materials related to the Ehrentheil family, 1921-2005; Series 2: Files related to family and friends assisted by Otto Ehrentheil, 1915-1985; Series 3: Additional material related to family and friends assisted by Otto Ehrentheil, 1941-2008; Series 4: Research notes related to "Dear Otto," 1964-2007. Series 1 and 4 are chronological by the date of the first document in the thematic folder, while series 2 and 3 are alphabetical by the last name of the family assisted.

### **Indexing terms**

This collection is indexed in the online catalog record of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives under the following terms:

Bokor, Tibor  
Ehrentheil, Otto.  
Ehrentheil, Josephine.  
Engell, Erich.  
Erkan, Lilly.  
Farber, Hilde.  
Fischer, Alice.  
Fischer, Erich.  
Fischer, Olga.  
Goldberger, Ernst.  
Goldberger, Rosalia.  
Graf family.  
Haas family.  
Hillebrand family.  
Kohn family.  
Learmonth, Susanne Ehrentheil.  
Mandel, Willy.  
Myers, Hanni Ehrentheil.  
Neufeld, Grete.  
Perutz, Julius.  
Pick, Sigi.  
Pollaczeck, Wolfgang.  
Subak family.  
Taussig family.  
Immigrants—United States  
Jews—Austria—History—20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Jewish refugees—United States  
United States—Emigration and immigration.  
Vienna (Austria).  
Budapest (Hungary).  
Correspondence.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Materials related to the Ehrentheil family, 1921-2005 (Boxes 1; 10 Folders)

Box	Folder	
1	1	General information and misc. related to Dr. Ehrentheil's work gathering affidavits, 1918-1985
1	2	Copyprints, 1921-2010
1	3	Birthday letters and poems, family history, 1937-1993
1	4	Documents related to the Ehrentheil family's experiences, 1938-1993
1	5	Documents related to the transport of personal goods, 1939-1940
1	6	"From Vienna": Refugee Artists group, 1939

1	7	Forms and documents, 1940-1947
1	8	Seder speeches, 1940-1980
1	9	"A Part of the Honors" by Otto Ehrentheil
1	10	Susanne Learmonth poetry, ca. 1990-2005
1	11	Questionnaire for Leo Baeck Institute filled out by Susanne Learmonth, 2003-2004

**Series 2: Files related to family and friends assisted by Otto Ehrentheil, 1915-1985 (Boxes 1-3; 24 Folders)**

1	1	Bokar, Tibor, 1951
1	2	Engell, Erich, 1940
2	3	The Ehrentheil family in Budapest, 1939-1978 (1 of 2)
2	4	The Ehrentheil family in Budapest, 1939-1978 (2 of 2)
2	5	Erkan, Lilly, 1940
2	6	Farber, Hilde, 1941
2	7	Fischer, Alice, 1940-1998 (1 of 2)
2	8	Fischer, Alice, 1940-1998 (2 of 2)
2	9	Fischer, Erich, 1938-1985
2	10	Fischer, Olga, 1915-1972
2	11	Goldberger, Ernst and Rosalia, 1939-1945
2	12	Graf family, 1939-1940
2	13	Haas family, 1941-1942
3	14	Hillebrand family, 1951-1952
3	15	John, Frau, care of Sigi Pick, 1939-1941
3	16	Kohn family, 1939-1940
3	17	Mandel, Willy 1934-1941
3	18	Neufeld, Grete, 1939-1940
3	19	Perutz, Julius, 1939-1945
3	20	Pollaczek, Wolfgang, 1940-1944
3	21	Subak family, 1939-1946
3	22	Taussig family, 1941-1997
3	23	Photocopies of collection documents (1 of 2)
3	24	Photocopies of collection documents (2 of 2)

**Series 3: Additional material related to family and friends assisted by Otto Ehrentheil, 1941-2008 (Boxes 4; 10 Folders)**

Box	Folder	
4	1	Inventory of Alice Fischer's artwork at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, GA, 2008
4	2	Correspondence between Olga Fischer and Poldi/Maria Fischer, 1944-1970
4	3	"Reminiscences and Memoirs" by Erich Fischer, 1981

4	4	Related to the passing of Irene Nechama Kaminska Fischer, 2009
4	5	Information about Jan Kiepura, ca. 2005
4	6	"Through Thick and Thin: Life Story of Hedi Kral," 1992
4	7	Handwritten memoir by Hedy Taussig Kral, 1992 (handwritten copy of above)
4	8	Family tree of Wolf Pollaczek (beginning 1740)
4	9	Letters from Fred Powell to his aunt and uncle (Olga and Otto), 1941-1945
4	10	Heidi Swanson's autobiography, 2009

**Series 4: Research notes related to "Dear Otto," 1964-2007, (Box 5; 7 Items)**

5	1	Research notes in preparation for "Dear Otto" (1 of 2)
5	2	Research notes in preparation for "Dear Otto" (2 of 2)
5	3	Notes regarding the publication of "Dear Otto," 2000-2004
5	4	Draft from "Dear Otto" for revisions, ca. 2005
5	5	Articles and clippings, 1964-2007
5	6	Notes related to "The Window Shop" to Cambridge, MA, ca. 1989-2000
5	7	Notes and research on the Boston Committee on Medical Emigres, ca. 2005-2007