

ELIHU RICKEL PAPERS, 1942-1946
2013.203.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: ElihuRickel papers

Dates: 1942-1946

Accession number: 2013.203.1

Creator:Rickel, Elihu

Extent: 1 box (0.5 linear foot)

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

Abstract: Selected documents from Commander ElihuRickel, pertaining to his service as a military chaplain with the U.S. Marine Corps, ministering to Jewish communities in North China, particularly in Tianjin (Tientsin), following World War II. Documents included correspondence, photographs, reports, and written testimony from Jewish émigrés from Europe who had fled their homelands to escape the Nazis prior to 1940. Also included are documents relating to a memorial service for Jewish victims of the Holocaust, held at Temple Beth-El in Buffalo, NY, where Rickel served as rabbi, in 1942.

Languages: 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), Elihu Rickel papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Gift of Alice Rickel, 2013.

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

Processing history: Processed by Brad Bauer, August 2013.

Biographical note

Elihu H. Rickel was born in Montreal on April 8, 1910, but was raised in Cleveland. His father, Harry Rickel, served as cantor of the B'nai Jeshurun Congregation in that city. Following studies at New York University and Columbia University, he earned a degree as rabbi and master of Hebrew letters at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1935. He was subsequently named rabbi of Temple Beth El in Buffalo, New York, where he served from 1939 to 1951.

During World War II, he was commissioned as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy in 1943, serving initially with the U.S. Marine Corps at Parris Island, South Carolina. He was then sent with the Third Marine Division to Guam, and was present at the invasion of Iwo Jima in early 1945, when he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroism. Following the end of the war, Rickel was sent with the First Marine Division to China, where among other activities, he ministered to Jewish displaced persons in Tianjin and other locations. In 1946 he returned to Temple Beth El in Buffalo to serve as rabbi, but asked for another leave of absence from the congregation at the outbreak of the Korean War, when he returned to active duty in 1951. Initially he served with the First Marine Division in Korea, but after the end of that war, he remained in active duty for the next two decades, until his retirement in 1969. During those years, he served at various Marine and Navy installations, including with the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, as assistant district chaplain of the Eleventh Naval District in San Diego, and at the U.S. Naval Training Center at Great Lakes, Illinois, among other locations.

Commander Rickel received the "Chaplain of the Year" award from the Four Chaplains Award Committee in 1959, and was granted an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1972. He died in Aventura, Florida, on January 23, 2003.

[Source--obituary, Navy press release]

Scope and content of collection

The bulk of this collection relates to Commander Elihu Rickel's time in China, and in particular Tianjin, in 1945-1946, while serving as a chaplain with the U.S. Marine Corps. While there, he sought to raise awareness about the condition of the Jewish community in Tianjin, which was comprised primarily of Jews who had fled Europe in the late 1930s. The second series of documents in this collection contains, in part, a report that Rickel wrote about the community, a letter he sent to Rabbi Stephen Wise, and a journalistic account of Rickel's ministry among the Jewish community. By this time, many of the émigrés in the Jewish community in Tianjin were hoping immigrate to the United States, and the third series of

documents contains dossiers, usually consisting only of a resume or other biographical summary, which were likely written in part as applications for affidavits of support in order to obtain entry visas.

In addition to the material related to China, the first series of documents dates from Rickel's earlier ministry in Buffalo, New York, as the rabbi at Temple Beth El, and specifically, to a series of interfaith memorial events dedicated to Jewish Holocaust victims in Europe. These meetings took place in late 1942, prior to Rickel's induction into the Marine Corps and his subsequent service as a chaplain.

Extensive documentation about Rickel's subsequent career as a chaplain is not included in the present collection, and remains with the Rickel family.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in three series: I. Memorial meetings (Buffalo, NY, 1942), II. China: General documents, and III. China: Biographical statements. Individual files are arranged in alphabetic order by title within those series.

Indexing terms

Jewish refugees--China--Tianjin.

Military chaplains--United States.
World War, 1939-1945--Chaplains.

Temple Beth El (Buffalo, N.Y.).

CONTAINER LIST

Box Folder

I. Memorial meetings, September 23, 1942, and December 27, 1942

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | Memorial, September 23, 1942
Memorial, December 27, 1942 |
| 1 | 2 | Correspondence |
| 1 | 3 | Introductory remarks (Rickel) |
| 1 | 4 | Invitation, printed |
| 1 | 5 | News clippings |
| 1 | 6 | Order of service |
| 1 | 7 | Memorandum: "Facts Concerning Nazi Inhumanities in Central Europe," undated |
| 1 | 8 | Pamphlet: "A Memorial Service for the Jewish War Dead," National Jewish Welfare Board, New York, undated |

II. China: General documents

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 9 | Correspondence: Letter from Chaplain Elihu Rickel, to Rabbi Stephen Wise, Jewish World Congress, regarding situation of Jewish community in Tientsin, November 16, 1945 |
| 1 | 10 | Correspondence: Letter addressed to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, from Tientsin Hebrew Association, December 31, 1945 |
| 1 | 11 | Photographs: Dedication of the ark ceremony, Tientsin Temple, January 1946 |
| 1 | 12 | "Report from North China" [regarding Jewish communities], from Elihu Rickel, 6 pages, undated |
| 1 | 13 | Report: Written for publication, by SSG F.F. Birnbaumer, U.S. Marine Corps, describing activities of Chaplain Rickel in Tienstin, December 4, 1945 |

III. China: Biographical statements from applicants for affidavits of support

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|---|----|--|
| 1 | 14 | Berger, Jenö (Nagyvarad, Hungary; Berlin) |
| 1 | 15 | Cohen, Henry (Hamburg) |
| 1 | 16 | Fleischer, Albert and Anna, and family (Vienna) |
| 1 | 17 | Frey, Martin Jacques (Leipzig, Germany) |
| 1 | 18 | Gottlieb, Cilly (Marosvasarhely, Hungary) |
| 1 | 19 | Gottlieb, Julius (Sadagora, Bukovina; Vienna) |
| 1 | 20 | Jonas, Wilhelm (Berlin) |
| 1 | 21 | Klinger, Mojseja (Kalisz, Poland) |
| 1 | 22 | Levisohn, Manfred, and family (Frankfurt/Main; Dachau) |
| 1 | 23 | Mark, Max (Vienna) |
| 1 | 24 | Rager, Bruno (Hamburg; Berlin) |
| 1 | 25 | Shapiro, J. (Lodz; Prague) |
| 1 | 26 | Shapiro, Naum (Lodz; London) |
| 1 | 27 | Simenauer, Lothar (Katowice, Silesia; Buchenwald) |
| 1 | 28 | Vidor, Eugen and Else, and son Paul (Budapest) |
| 1 | 29 | Wechsberg, E. (Katowice; Berlin) |