

NATHAN AND EDITH LITVIN PAPERS, 1920-1999
2013.493.1

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

Title: Nathan and Edith Litvin papers

Dates: 1920-1999, bulk 1945-1946

Accession number: **2013.493.1**

Creator: Edith Litvin
Nathan Litvin

Extent: 0.4 linear feet (1 box)

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

Abstract: Consists of documents, correspondence, photographs, and scrapbook pages documenting the experiences of Nathan Litvin and Edith Festinger Litvin. Includes pre-war and post-war photographs of the Festinger family, documents related to Edith's immediate post-war life, and correspondence, documents and photographs of the 1946 weddings (one in Paris and one in the United States) of Nathan, a Jewish-American soldier and Edith, a survivor of Auschwitz. Also includes a large spiral bound book of scans, descriptions, and narrative of the collection and DVDs of film footage which Nathan Litvin produced of his trip to Europe in the summer of 1946 to marry Edith and bring her back to the United States.

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), Nathan and Edith Litvin collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Naomi Litvin donated her parents' collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2013.

Related archival materials: For additional information about the family, please see Litvin, Naomi. *We Never Lost Hope: A Holocaust Memoir and Love Story*. [United States], 2008. The book is located in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library, as DS135.R73 L58 2008.

Processing history: Rebecca Erbelding, December 2013.

Biographical note

Edith Festinger Litvin was born on October 6, 1923 in Sighet, Transylvania, to Jonas and Regina (Stein) Festinger. She was the youngest of nine children: Zsenka, Aranka, Ceca, Helen, Johnny, Piri, Mendi, Hilda, and Edith. The family lived in Sighet, where Jonas owned and operated a hotel, until 1935, when they moved to Satu Mare. Several of Edith's siblings married and started families, and in the late 1930s, several moved away from Sighet. Piri married Kurt Meyer in 1937 and moved to the Dutch East Indies and Helen married Jules de Leeuw and moved with their two children to Australia in 1939. During the war, Piri and Kurt were imprisoned in Japanese internment camps. In April 1944, Edith, Hilda, Mendi, Ceca and her husband Miki Meyer and daughter Greta, and their parents, were interned in the Satu Mare ghetto. At the end of May, they were deported to Auschwitz. Edith, Hilda, and Mendi were selected for forced labor, while Jonas, Regina, Ceca, Miki, and Greta were sent to the gas chambers. After two weeks, Mendi was sent to Mauthausen and then to Melk, where he was liberated in May 1945. After six months in Auschwitz, Edith and Hilda were transferred to the Krupp munitions factory in Altenburg, Germany. In April 1945, the sisters were sent on a five day forced march before they were liberated by the 4th Armored Division. After liberation, they spent about a month recovering on a farm in Meerane in Silesia. Then, the sisters went to Munich, where they reunited with Mendi and where Edith went to work at Radio Munich. Edith dated several GIs, but in the fall of 1945, met Nathan Litvin. Nathan Litvin was born in Detroit, Michigan, on January 14, 1921, to Boris (later Baruch) and Ida Litvin, who both emigrated from Russia to escape the pogroms. The family operated a chicken farm, and later, a lumber company in Mount Clemens, Michigan. He was drafted into the Army on August 11, 1942, and did his basic training at Fort Wheeler in Macon, Georgia. He served with the 363rd Quartermaster Service Company and landed on Utah Beach on D-Day. At the end of the war, he went to Munich as a member of the occupying forces. In the fall of 1945, Edith left Radio Munich and she and Hilda went to work for HIAS. Before Nathan returned to the United States to be discharged, they decided to marry. Nathan was discharged in Indiana on April 20, 1946, and immediately began to work to be able to return to Europe to marry Edith. They kept in touch, though Edith doubted he would return and decided to immigrate with Hilda and Mendi to join Helen in Australia. Before they left, she saw Nathan at the Paris railway station in July 1946. The couple traveled to Marseilles to try to assist Hilda and Mendi to emigrate, returned to Paris and had a civil marriage ceremony, and left for the United States from Amsterdam. After their return, their story was reported in a number of newspapers and they held a religious wedding ceremony in August 1946 in Chicago, Illinois. Nathan Litvin passed away in 1993, and Edith in 2011.

Scope and content of collection

The Nathan and Edith Litvin collection document the marriage of a Jewish American soldier and an Auschwitz survivor, likely one of the first “war brides” to come to the United States as such. The collection includes some pre-war photographs of the Festinger family, and of Edith Festinger and her sister Hilda (and some of other siblings) after liberation, as well as some documents attesting to Edith’s wartime experiences and post-war work. However, the majority of the collection relates to Nathan and Edith’s marriage in Paris in July 1946 and return to the United States, where they held a religious ceremony in August 1946. It includes bureaucratic paperwork, souvenirs from days surrounding their wedding, multiple telegrams about procedure, and telegrams congratulating the couple. Naomi Litvin’s book and the catalog contained within the collection provide a thorough and detailed context for the original material. The collection also includes DVDs of film footage which Nathan Litvin shot in the summer of 1946, including footage taken in Europe and of the couple’s wedding in the United States.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series:

Series 1: Photographs

Series 2: Documents and Correspondence.

Indexing terms

Litvin, Edith, 1923-2011.

Litvin, Nathan, 1921-1993.

Festinger family.

War brides—United States—Biography.

Paris (France)

Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Marseilles (France)

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Photographs, 192-1946 (Box 1; 5 folders)

Box	Folder	
1	1	Photographs of the Festinger family, pre-war, 1920-1942
1	2	Photographs of the Festinger family after liberation, 1945-1949
1	3	Photographs of Nathan Litvin in the military, 1942-1946
1	4	Photographs of Edith and Hilda Festinger, post-war, 1945-1946
1	5	Photographs of Nathan and Edith Litvin, 1945-1946

Series 2: Documents and correspondence, 1946-1999 (Box 1; 6 folders, and one oversize folder)

Box	Folder	
1	6	Documents related to Edith Festinger, 1945-1946
1	7	Correspondence, 1946-1947
1	8	Documents related to European wedding, July 1946
1	9	Documents related to Chicago wedding, August 1946

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1	10	Documents related to citizenship and restitution, 1946-1974
1	11	Newspaper clippings, 1946-1999
Oversize		Scrapbook pages related to weddings, 1946