

**BAGRIANSKY-ZERNER FAMILY COLLECTION, circa 1900-2013**  
**2013.503.3**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
Tel. (202) 479-9717  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Bagriansky-Zerner family collection

Dates: circa 1900-2013 (bulk 1935-1950)

Accession number: 2013.503.3

Creator: Zerner, Rosian

Extent: 5 boxes, 1 oversize folder (2 linear feet)

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

Abstract: The collection consists of immigration and personal identification documents, photographs, writings, correspondence and related materials that document the experiences of Paul and Gerta (née Chason) Bagriansky, their daughter, Rosian Bagriansky Zerner, and their extended family. Included is information about their pre-war life in Lithuania, their life under Soviet and German occupation, including internment in the Kaunas ghetto and their escape from it, the hiding of Rosian with various Lithuanian acquaintances for the duration of the war, Paul Bagriansky's experiences as a partisan during the occupation of Lithuania, and the reuniting of the family after the war and their experiences as displaced persons in Poland and Italy following the war and their eventual immigration to the United States. The collection is arranged in series by family member.

Languages: English, German, Lithuanian

**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.

Physical access: The audiovisual material has not been digitized and is currently unavailable to researchers.

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), (Box/folder), Bagriansky-Zerner family collection (2013.503.3), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Gift of Rosian Zerner, 2013. An accretion was donated in 2017.

Custodial history: Most of the materials in this collection were either collected by Zerner, or she inherited from other family members, such as her father's essays about his own wartime experiences, and family photographs.

Related archival materials: At the same time that Zerner donated these materials, she also donated a collection of documents, musical scores, and manuscripts about her uncle, the composer Edwin Geist. These are cataloged separately as the Edwin Geist collection (2013.503.2). Both the Bagriansky-Zerner family collection and the Edwin Geist collection comprise the Rosian Zerner collection, which in addition to these two manuscript collections, also includes artifacts related to her extended family's history that are cataloged individually.

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

Processing history: Brad Bauer, 2014. Updated by Adam Fielding, July 2018

### **Biographical note**

Paul Bagriansky (1906-1996): Born Paulius Bagriansky on 24 January 1906 in Vilnius, the son of Salomon Bagriansky and Amalia (née Mayer) Bagriansky. Married to Gerta Chason on 4 September 1934 in Kaunas, and daughter, Rosian, was born on 23 October 1935 in Kaunas. A son, Gioacchino (Jack), was born on 3 May 1947 in Milan. Prior to the war, Paul Bagriansky was a businessman in the textile industry in Kaunas, and after the occupation was interned with his family in the Jewish ghetto in that city. He escaped the ghetto in January 1942, initially living under a false identity in Kaunas until he decided to go to Vilnius, where he was subsequently recognized, arrested, and imprisoned at Lukishki prison. After the intervention of Jacob Gens, the head of the Jewish Council of the Vilnius ghetto, Bagriansky was released the prison and transferred to the ghetto. In September 1943, Bagriansky escaped the ghetto with the help of Abba Kovner, and joined a partisan unit in the Rudnicki forest outside of Vilnius, where he spent the next five months, until the liberation of Lithuania, fighting the Germans and trying to avoid the Polish Armija Krajowa, who also targeted Jews in the region. Following liberation, Bagriansky worked in Moscow representing Lithuanian textile interests, but in June 1945 he, his wife, and daughter, left Lithuania for Poland, and then to Italy via Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Bagriansky family lived as refugees in Italy for several years, until they immigrated to the United States in 1951, and Paul became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1957. The family settled in the Boston area, where Paul founded the Webstone Corporation. He died on 30 November 1996 at his home in West Newton, Massachusetts.

Gerta Chason Bagriansky (1908-2008): Born in Königsberg, Germany (although on some documents, her birthplace is listed as Danzig) on 8 August 1908. Daughter of Julius Chason and Anna (née Blumenthal) Chason, both of whom immigrated to Palestine in 1935, along with Gerta's sister, Bella Chason, who became a dancer and performed with the Mary Wigman dance company. Gerta studied piano in Paris

and Berlin as a young woman, but it was during a trip to Lithuania that she met Paul Bagriansky, and the two were married in 1934. During the occupation of Lithuania, she lived in Kaunas, in the ghetto there, but when she and Paul decided it was necessary to escape the Kaunas ghetto, she helped plan first the smuggling out of her daughter Rosian, and then that of Paul. Eventually she too escaped Kaunas and reunited with Paul in the Vilnius ghetto, before they escaped from there, hiding in the nearby forests while Paul fought as a partisan. Following the war, she served as concert master with an orchestra in Kaunas. Eventually they travelled through Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria, before arriving at a displaced persons camp in Italy, where they lived for six years prior to immigrating to the United States in 1951. Gerta Bagriansky became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1957, and died in West Newton, Massachusetts a few months after her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2008.

Rosian Zerner (née Bagriansky): Born 23 October 1935, the daughter of Paul Bagriansky and Gerta (Chason) Bagriansky. Until the German occupation of Lithuania, she lived with her parents in Kaunas, until all of the Jews of Kaunas were forced into one of two ghettos in that city. When the Bagriansky family decided that they needed to escape the ghetto, they sent Rosian first, in January 1942, smuggling her out through the barbed wire fence to friends who were waiting on the other side, and who brought her to the nearby village of Kulautuva. Rosian spent the wartime years with a succession of Lithuanians who sheltered her and represented her to the authorities as one of their own children. Initially she stayed with Natalia Fugalevičiūtė and Natalia Jegorovna, and subsequently she was sheltered at the farm of Fugalevičiūtė's sister, Lidija Goluboviene. Rosian was reunited with her parents following the war, joining them as they traveled to Poland and Italy, and eventually, to the United States. As an adult, Rosian was instrumental in obtaining recognition of the women who sheltered her as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, as well as posthumous recognition for them within Lithuania as well.

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

The collection consists of immigration and personal identification documents, photographs, writings, correspondence and related materials that document the experiences of Paul and Gerta (nee Chason) Bagriansky, their daughter, Rosian Bagriansky Zerner, and their extended family. Included is information about their pre-war life in Lithuania, their life under Soviet and German occupation, including internment in the Kaunas ghetto and their escape from it, the hiding of Rosian with various Lithuanian acquaintances for the duration of the war, Paul Bagriansky's experiences as a partisan during the occupation of Lithuania, and the reuniting of the family after the war and their experiences as displaced persons in Poland and Italy following the war and their eventual immigration to the United States. The collection is arranged in series by family member.

The papers of Paul (born Paulius) Bagriansky include immigration documents and photographs dating from his time living as a displaced person, with his family, in Italy following World War II, and include identification documents, correspondence, affidavits, and his certificate of naturalization as United States citizen. The largest portion of this series, though, consists of a series of essays written by Bagriansky in later decades, describing his and his family's experiences in Lithuania from the period of the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the Baltic republics through the end of the World War II. Included are descriptions of life in the Kaunas ghetto, how his daughter Rosian was smuggled out of Kaunas, his own escape to Vilnius, his imprisonment in the latter city, and his time fighting as a partisan following his escape from prison. Some of these essays were published in 1987-1988 in the Israeli journal *Publications of the Museum of the Combatants and Partisans*. Also included are a series of photographs of Bagriansky's birth family, including his grandparents, aunt and uncles, and cousins in pre-war Lithuania, and photos of his wife and daughter from the same period, and some photographs of their immediate postwar life as well.

The series of documents of Gerta Bagriansky consists primarily of materials related to her time in Italy as a displaced person and her immigration to the United States with her family in 1951, including identification documents, records of vaccinations, passports, and her naturalization certificate from the United States. Also included are a series of newspaper clippings on the occasion of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2008, and her obituary in 2009. An additional group of photographs document the career of Gerta Bagriansky's sister, Bella Chason, who immigrated to Israel and was a dancer with the Mary Wigman dance company. Photos depict Chason in various dance positions, and include a ticket to a performance in Tel Aviv in 1943, and photographs of Gerta and Bella with their mother, Anna Chason. Remaining photographs in this series include many depicting Gerta Bagriansky with her daughter Rosian during the latter's infancy and early childhood in pre-war Lithuania, and some of Rosian from later years as well, and of other family members.

The series on Rosian Zerner is divided into two portions: one (titled "Rosian Zerner: Rescuers") relating to information that she gathered about the individuals who sheltered her as a hidden child in Lithuania during the German occupation, and the other (titled "Rosian Zerner: General") relating to other facets of her life, including original drawings and documents from her time as a hidden child, documents and photographs relating to her period as a displaced person in Italy after the war, and her subsequent immigration to the United States, and materials related to her education, her involvement in various social and civic organizations in Massachusetts from the 1970s to the 2000s, and her activities as a guest speaker and Holocaust survivor at various commemorative events in Massachusetts during the 1990s and 2000s. The section relating to Zerner's wartime experiences include materials collected by Zerner in the 1990s and 2000s about the people who rescued her, especially Lidija Goluboviene. Included are correspondence with Goluboviene's nephew and daughter-in-law, Vytautas Fugalewitsch and Annelies Stavskis, and biographical vignettes and other research material compiled by Fugalewitsch, both about Goluboviene and the others who rescued Zerner, including Natalia Fugalevičiūtė, Helene Holzman, and Natalia Jegorova. Also included is documentation relating to the naming of Zerner's rescuers as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 2005, and photographs from Zerner's trips to Lithuania and Germany to meet with relatives of the rescuers between 1999 and 2009, as well as her visit with Lidija Goluboviene in Vilnius in 1972. This series also contains documentation of two ceremonies in Lithuania at which Goluboviene was posthumously honored, the first with a decree presented by President Valdas Adamkas in 2000, and then the bestowal of a medal, the Žūvančiųjų Gelbėjimo Kryžius ("Life Saving Cross") in 2009. The decree and the medal are included in this collection, although the latter is cataloged separately as an artifact.

The accretion donated in 2017 consists of additional family photographs. The photographs of Bella Chason include depictions of her as a dancer in the 1920s and postwar photographs from Israel. The photographs of Rosian Zerner include depictions of her as a child with her parents in pre-war Lithuania and postwar images of her in Italy. Other photographs include pre-war and postwar depictions of Rosian's parents and other relatives.

### **System of arrangement**

The collection is arranged in series by family member, and alphabetically by folder title/topic within each series: I. Bagriansky, Paul, II. Bagriansky, Gerta, and the Chason family, III. Zerner, Rosian--Rescuers, IV. Zerner, Rosian—General, V. Audiovisual material, VI. Accretion 2017

### **Indexing terms**

Fugalevičiūtė, Natalia  
Goluboviene, Lidiya  
Jegorova, Natalia

Hidden children (Holocaust)--Lithuania  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Lithuania--Kaunas--Personal narratives.  
Holocaust survivors--Italy.  
Righteous Gentiles in the Holocaust.

## CONTAINER LIST

### I. Bagriansky, Paul, 1945-1996

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | 1  | <a href="#">Business (letterheads and correspondence), 1963 and undated</a>  |
| 1 | 2  | <a href="#">Death and obituaries, 1987-1996</a>  |
| 1 | 3  | <a href="#">Identification documents, Italy, 1945-1950</a>   |
|   |    | Immigration  |
| 1 | 4  | <a href="#">Affidavits and references, 1949-1951</a>   |
| 1 | 5  | <a href="#">International Refugee Organization, 1951</a>   |
| 1 | 6  | <a href="#">Miscellaneous, 1950-1951</a>   |
| 1 | 7  | <a href="#">Naturalization and statement of intent, United States, 1952-1957</a>   |
| 1 | 8  | <a href="#">Transit of pet dog from Italy to United States, and insurance for transit of family's belongings, 1951</a>   |
| 1 | 9  | <a href="#">Jewish organizations, Italy, 1948-1949</a>   |
| 1 | 10 | <a href="#">Miscellaneous: Reference material about the Vilnius ghetto and Jewish partisans, including Bagriansky's role, and correspondence related to Shoah Foundation interview, 1996 and undated</a>   |
| 1 | 11 | <a href="#">Passports, United States, 1957-1965</a>  |
| 1 | 12 | <a href="#">Photographs: Album pages with captions added by Paul Bagriansky. Includes images of his grandparents, his father with his infant daughter, and various aunts, uncles, and cousins, including members of the Maisel, Zappu, and Bagriansky families, in Lithuania and Israel, circa 1890s-1988.</a> |
| 5 | 1  | Photograph: Image of Emma Meyer Eliashevits, maternal aunt of Paul Bagriansky, undated, attached to piece of glass.  |
|   |    | Writings, circa 1987-1993  |
| 1 | 13 | <a href="#">22 June 1941</a>   |
| 1 | 14 | <a href="#">Die grosse Aktion (Kaunas, 28 October 1941)</a>  |
| 1 | 15 | <a href="#">Rosian's Escape (January 1942)</a>   |
| 1 | 16 | <a href="#">Lukishki (penitentiary in Vilnius, January 1942)</a>   |
| 1 | 17 | <a href="#">Notke</a>  |
| 1 | 18 | <a href="#">Taibl</a>  |
| 1 | 19 | <a href="#">Some Thoughts About Lithuania</a>  |
| 1 | 20 | <a href="#">Zagotowska (March 1944)</a>  |

- 1 21 [Koniuchi \(April 1944\)](#)
- 1 22 [The Captain](#)

## II. Bagriansky, Gerda, and the Chason family, 1939-2009

- 1 23 [Bank account, 1939-1962](#)
- 1 24 [Chason, Bella, including tickets to a performance of hers at the Haifa Dance School, 1943, and brochures from the travel agency she later worked for in Israel, circa 1950s](#)
- 1 25 [Citizenship and naturalization, United States, 1957](#)
- 1 26 [Identification documents, Italy, 1946-1951](#)
- 1 27 [Medical \(vaccinations, etc.\), Italy, 1951](#)
- 1 28 [Miscellaneous \(correspondence regarding oral history interview, memorial following death, business card, poem written her honor\), 1996-2009, and undated](#)
- 1 29 [News clippings, 1994-2009](#)
- 1 30 [Osherovich, Rivka, letter from, 1962](#)
- 1 31 [Passports, United States, 1957-1977](#)
- Photographs
- 1 32 [Loose photographs, primarily of Gerta, Paul and Rosian Bagriansky during Rosian's infancy and early childhood, including other family members from that time, circa 1935-1940](#)
- 1 33 [Album, containing photographs of Gerta's sister, Bella Chason, performing as a Dancer with the Mary Wigman dance troupe, images of Wigman, and a 1928 article from \*Theatre Guild\* magazine titled "The Dance of Mary Wigman," 1928-circa 1940s and undated](#)
- 1 34 [Loose photographs, of Bella Chason and Gerta Bagriansky, including images with her mother, Anna, and with other family and friends, Lithuania and Israel, circa 1930s to 1960s.](#)
- 1 35 Negatives, removed to cold storage (Not Digitized)

## III. Zerner, Rosian: Rescuers, 1972-2009

- 2 1 [Commemoration in Lithuania: Bestowal of "Life Saving Cross" posthumously to Goluboviene, and other ceremonies and exhibitions honoring rescuers in 2009, Includes text of speech by Zerner, ceremony program with biographies of various rescuers, and CD and DVDs of ceremony.](#)
- 2 2 [Correspondence, general \(mostly with Lithuanian organizations\), 2000-2001](#)  
Goluboviene, Lidija
- 2 3 [Biographical materials about Goluboviene, collected and compiled by Vytautas \(Witold\) Fugalewitsch, 2006, and undated essay by Zerner.](#)
- 2 4 [Correspondence with Vytautas \(Witold\) Fugalewitsch, nephew of Goluboviene, 2000-2001](#)
- 2 5 [Correspondence with Annelies Stavskis, daughter in law of Goluboviene, 2000](#)
- 2 6 [Photocopies of documents about Goluboviene, primarily about exile to Siberia \(Igarka\) and rehabilitation, 1948-1966](#)
- 2 7 [Photographs of Goluboviene](#)
- 2 8 [Posthumous honors: photographs of ceremony, news clippings, decrees signed](#)

- [by Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkas, 2000](#)
- 2 9 [Fugalevičiūtė, Natalia: Biographical material compiled by nephew, Vytautas \(Witold\) Fugalewitsch, 2000](#)
- 2 10 [General: copied pages from Lithuanian book about rescuers, 1967.](#)
- 2 11 [Holzman, Margarete: Statements about events during wartime in Kaunas and Vilnius, and hiding of Rosian Zerner, 2006](#)
- 2 12 [Jegorova, Natalia: Biographical material, various Photographs](#)
- 2 13 [Visit of Rosian Zerner to Lithuania, and meeting with Goluboviene, 1972](#)
- 2 14 [Visit of Rosian Zerner to Lithuania, 1999](#)
- 2 15 [Various, of rescuers, various dates and undated.](#)
- 2 16 [Various, of rescuers and families, and meetings with Rosian Zerner and Gerta Bagriansky, in United States, Lithuania, Germany, circa 1999-2009](#)
- 2 17 [Yad Vashem: Designation of Helene Holzman, Natalia Natalia Fugalevičiūtė, Natalia Jegorova and Lidija Goluboviene as Righteous Among the Nations, 2004-2005](#)

#### IV. Zerner, Rosian: General, 1936-2013

- 2 18 [Birth certificates \(copies\), 1947, 1997](#)
- 2 19 [Citizenship and naturalization, United States, 1951-1959](#)
- 2 20 [Civic organizations, 1979-2011](#)
- 2 21 [Commendations and awards, State of Massachusetts, 2009-2013](#)
- OS 1
- 2 22 [Education, Italy, 1945-1950](#)
- 2 23 [Education, United States, 1954-2006](#)
- 2 24 [Holocaust commemoration events, 2006-2013](#)
- 3 1 [Identification documents, Italy, 1951 and undated](#)
- 3 2 [Letter from Averell Harriman, 1954](#)
- 3 3 Medical, 1947-1951 (Not Digitized)
- News clippings, 1979-2013
- 3 4 [1973-1987](#)
- 3 5 [2000-2007](#)
- 3 6 [2008-2013](#)
- 3 7 [Passports, United States, 1959-1985](#)
- Photographs
- 3 8 [Scrapbook pages: primarily of Rosian Bagriansky as young child, with mother, Gerta, and other family members, Lithuania, circa 1936-1940. Also, Other family members](#)
- 3 9 [General, 1947-1951, and undated, circa 1955-2005](#)
- 3 10 [Lithuania trips, 2000, and undated \(circa 1990s-2000s\)](#)
- 3 11 [Poesiebuch \(autographs from friends\), Lithuania, 1944](#)
- Poetry and drawings, 1943-1947
- 4 1 [Album](#)
- 4 2 [Individually sleeved](#)
- 4 3 [Property owned by Bagriansky family in Lithuania, research about, 1996](#)
- 4 4 [Writings: Photocopies of pages from "Poesiebuch" with English translations, and other copies of writings, undated](#)

## V. Audiovisual materials (Not Digitized)

### Oral histories

Stored separately	Survivors of the Shoah: Visual History Foundation: Gerta Bagriansky, Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996, Tape 1, VHS
Stored separately	Survivors of the Shoah: Visual History Foundation: Gerta Bagriansky, Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996, Tape 2, VHS
Stored separately	Survivors of the Shoah: Visual History Foundation: Paul Bagriansky, Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996, Tape 1, VHS
Stored separately	USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Gerta Bagriansky. Interview code 18908. Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996, DVD
Stored separately	USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Paul Bagriansky. Interview code 18908. Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996, DVD
Stored separately	Virginia Holocaust Museum. Gerta Bagriansky. Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996 (copy of Shoah Foundation Interview) DVD, 1 of 2.
Stored separately	Virginia Holocaust Museum. Gerta Bagriansky. Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996 (copy of Shoah Foundation Interview) DVD, 2 of 2.
Stored separately	Virginia Holocaust Museum. Paul Bagriansky. Interviewed by Rosalie Franks, West Newton, MA, 18 July 1996 (copy of Shoah Foundation Interview) DVD, 1 of 1.
Stored separately	Interviews and/or conferences with Rosian Zerner WBZ Radio, Jordan Rich Show, May 2007 (CD).
Stored separately	Newton TV, with Jackie Morrissey, 25 March 2009 (CD)
Stored separately	Italy and the Holocaust: The Calabria Connection, 10 November 2009 (CD).

### Other

Stored separately	The Holocaust: Memory and Legacy: a documentary film based on the 2005 Book by Susie Davidson, "I Refused to Die..." (DVD)
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## VI. Accretion 2017, circa 1900-circa 2013

4	5	Photographs: Chason, Bella, circa 1928-circa 2000
4	6	Photographs: Zerner, Rosian, her parents, and other relatives and friends, circa 1900-circa 2013