

## **MARIE ZELWER PAPERS, circa 1947-1952 and undated 2015.235.1**

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

Title: Marie Zelwer papers

Dates: circa 1947-1952 and undated

Accession number: 2015.235.1

Creator: Zelwer, Marie, 1933-

Extent: 0.5 linear feet (4 folders and 1 book enclosure)

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

Abstract: The Marie Zelwer papers include a diary, autograph book, and post-war documents relating to Marie Zelwer's post-war experiences aboard the SS *Exodus* in 1947 and her life in Germany at the Bad Aibling IRO Children's Village, an International Refugee Organization (IRO) camp. The collection also includes an English translation of "And the Ram Was Not Caught in the Thicket: The Life of Avraham 1939-1944."

Languages: Polish, Hebrew, 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: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Marie Zelwer papers (2015.235.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Rachele Doll, daughter of Marie, donated the Marie Zelwer papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2015.

Related material: The Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project conducted the interview with Marie Brandstetter on February 7, 2001 (1999.A.0122.397). The Museum's Library holds a copy of Marie Brandstetter's book *Mania's Angel: my life story* (DS135.P63 B7354 1995).

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

Processing history: Morgan Voth, April 2019

### **Biographical note**

Marie Zelwer (Mania or Marjan, later Brandstetter, 1933- ) was born in Błaszki, Poland to Haim Luzer Zelwer (?-1942) and Eta (Ida) Messer (died at age 82) and was raised Orthodox. Marie had a younger brother, Szlamek (Sam b. 1935), and a half-sister Helene Litwak Gordon. Her father owned a bus company.

After the German invasion of Poland in 1939 Haim was drafted into the Polish army. Marie, Eta, Sam, and her aunt Zoszia fled Poland to the Soviet Union through Warsaw. They struggled to find refuge in small towns and after hiding in hotels, they crossed the border into Russia and eventually settled in Kowel (currently Kovel, Ukraine) at a Jewish Temple with other refugees. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union they fled again by train to Moscow. Soon after, they were taken by the NKVD to Siberia where Eta worked in a labor camp. After a few months they escaped in late 1942 and went to Asbest where Eta and Zoszia worked in an asbestos factory and Sam and Marie went to school. They also spent a short period of time on a farm before reuniting with their aunt and uncle in 1944 in Chemkent (now Shymkent, Kazakhstan) where they lived together until the end of the war.

After the war they returned to Poland in 1945 and Eta became ill. Marie's aunt sent her and Sam to a kibbutz with the thought that they would immigrate to Palestine, but Eta found her children and wanted to keep the family together. They lived in a DP camp in Ulm where Marie went to school and studied languages and nursing. When her mother announced she was going to remarry, Marie left out of anger that her mother was trying to replace her father. She left for Palestine in 1947 aboard the SS *Exodus* and participated in the onboard resistance when British soldiers boarded the ship and ordered refugees to disembark and return to Europe. Marie returned to her family in Germany where she and her brother lived at the Bad Aibling IRO Children's Village, an International Refugee Organization (IRO) camp. An uncle sponsored Marie and Sam's immigration to the United States and they arrived in San Francisco in 1950. Marie married Newell Brandstetter in 1953 and they had four children Hymie, Joey, Victor, and Rachelle. Marie's mother, stepfather Abram Litwak, and half-sister Helene immigrated to the United States prior to 1953. Haim died in Treblinka in August 1942.

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

The Marie Zelwer papers include a diary, autograph book, and post-war documents relating to Marie Zelwer's post-war experiences aboard the SS *Exodus* in 1947 and her life in Germany at the Bad Aibling IRO Children's Village, an International Refugee Organization (IRO) camp. The collection also includes an English translation of "And the Ram Was Not Caught in the Thicket: The Life of Avraham 1939-1944."

In her diary Marie writes about her experiences aboard the SS *Exodus* in 1947 and her return to Germany and eventual immigration to the United States. The diary includes several poems and song about her journey. In the later entries, Marie writes about leaving for San Francisco, missing her parents,

and adjusting to life in America. The autograph book was kept by Marie while living in Bad Aibling, San Francisco, and New York and includes signatures, writings, photographs, drawings, cutouts from cards and postcards, songs, and poems.

Post-war documents include a report card issued to Miriam for Hebrew school, an international Youth Sports Festival brochure from the Bad Aibling IRO Children's Village, two letters of recommendation for Maria from the Bad Aibling IRO Children's Village, a letter sent to Marie Zelwer from David Landau Masonic Lodge thanking her for her performance, and a handwritten document titled "Warszawo."

The collection also includes English translation of "And the Ram Was Not Caught in the Thicket: The Life of Avraham 1939-1944," recounting the story of Avraham Bosak.

### **System of arrangement**

The Marie Zelwer papers are arranged as a single series.

### **Indexing terms**

#### **Person:**

Zelwer, Marie, 1933-

#### **Corporate:**

Exodus 1947 (Ship)

International Refugee Organization.

#### **Topical Subject:**

Personal narrative, Jewish.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945).

World War, 1939-1945--Refugees.

#### **Geography:**

Błaszki (Poland)

Warsaw (Poland)

Palestine.

#### **Genre/Form:**

Diaries.

Correspondence.

## **CONTAINER LIST**

### **Series 1: Marie Zelwer papers, circa 1947-1952 and undated**

<b>Folder</b>	<b>Title</b>
1 of 4	"And the Ram Was Not Caught in the Thicket: The Life of Avraham 1939-1944," undated
BE 1	Autograph book, 1949-1950

2 of 4	Autograph book cover, circa 1949
3 of 4	Diary, 1947-1952
4 of 4	Post-war, 1948-1952