

DAVID NEWMAN MEMOIR, 1988-2006
2015.300.1

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

Descriptive summary

Title: David Newman memoir.

Dates: 1988-2006.

Accession number: 2015.300.1

Creator: Newman, David.

Extent: 3 folders (0.25 linear feet)

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

Abstract: Manuscript memoir, in Yiddish, 120 pages, describing David Newman's experiences in the Skarżysko-Kamienna forced labor camp in Poland during the German occupation, and his subsequent imprisonment at Buchenwald, written by Newman in 1988. An English translation by Miriam Beckerman, from 2006, is also included.

Languages: Yiddish, 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), David Newman memoir, 2015.300.1, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Gift of Jack Newman, 2015.

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

Processing history: Brad Bauer, June 2015.

Biographical note

David Newman was born Dawid Najman on 11 December 1919 in the Polish town of Chmielnik, south of Kielce. In 1935, shortly after his mother's death, Newman, his father, and three sisters moved to Łódź, where he and his father found work as teachers in Jewish schools. Following the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Newman fled to Warsaw, but upon arriving and seeing that the Polish capital had already fallen to the Germans, he returned to Łódź. When the Germans established a Jewish ghetto in Łódź in early 1940, the family decided it would be best to return to Chmielnik, hoping that it would be safer living among their extended family, and after receiving permission to do so, they left. Unable to find living quarters there, they moved on to the neighboring city of Staszow. One of Newman's cousins was able to open a factory that made uniforms for the German troops, and through which Newman was able to find work for his father and sisters, in the hope of protecting them from deportation. He, however, was forced to volunteer to work at the camp at Skarżysko-Kamienna, manufacturing ammunition, and arrived there in October 1942. He worked at the Hasag "Werk C" factory, manufacturing grenades, and was able to stay in contact with his father and sisters in Staszow through the help of a Polish laborer at the factory, who smuggled letters to and from them, up until the time when Newman's family and the other remaining Jews in Staszow were deported to the Poniatowa camp and murdered there in November 1943. In July 1944, the camps at Skarżysko were evacuated, and Newman, along with other prisoners, were transported to Buchenwald, where he once again was assigned to work in a weapons factory, until it was destroyed in an Allied bombing raid. In April 1945, he and other prisoners were forced onto a death march toward Czechoslovakia, and at a stop in a village near Pilsen, he and a couple of other prisoners managed to escape from the march and were hidden by Czech partisans until the end of the war a few weeks later. Eventually he returned to Poland, and sought out a former prisoner from Skarżysko he had befriended, Chanke, who he had promised to visit in her hometown of Tarnow, should they both survive the war. When they were reunited, they decided to marry, and did so in Łódź later that year, and subsequently left Poland in November 1945, settling in the Landsberg am Lech displaced persons camp in Germany, where they gave birth to a son, Jack (Isaac), in August 1946. They subsequently moved on to France, where they stayed with Newman's uncle, who lived in Paris. Newman trained and worked as a tailor there until 1951, when he and his wife Anna (Chanke) and their son immigrated to Canada, arriving at Pier 21 in Halifax Harbour in April of that year, and then settling in Toronto, where their daughter, Gloria (Yochevet), was born two years later. Newman founded a Conservative congregation, Kol Israel, in Toronto and continued to teach there as well. David Newman died in Toronto in January 2002.

Scope and content of collection

Manuscript memoir, in Yiddish, 120 pages, describing David Newman's experiences in the Skarżysko-Kamienna forced labor camp in Poland during the German occupation, and his subsequent imprisonment at Buchenwald, written by Newman in 1988. An English translation by Miriam Beckerman, from 2006, is also included. The text begins with an account of the pre-war history of the Jewish community in his hometown of Chmielnik, Poland, the experiences of Newman's family during the initial stages of the German occupation of Poland, when his family lived in Łódź, their subsequent move to Staszow, and the increasing levels of persecution directed at Jewish residents there. A large portion of the memoir describes Newman's experiences at Skarżysko-Kamienna, including his arrival,

living conditions at the camp, the poor working conditions in the factory at "Werk C," where he manufactured grenades, his infection with typhus and his narrow escape from a round-up of sick prisoners who were subsequently executed, and how a friendly Polish laborer in the factory was able to leave the camp on several occasions to travel to Staszow and exchange letters between Newman and his family there. The memoir also describes the arrival of new prisoners from the Warsaw Ghetto and Majdanek in mid-1943, the concerts that the prisoners staged and songs they composed about camp life, arrivals of other prisoners from Plaszow in late 1943, including a prisoner from Tarnow named Chanke, who he befriended, and who after the war became his wife. He also describes the history and fate of the Jewish community of Tarnow, and attempts to smuggle weapons out of Skarżysko to partisan fighters of the Armia Krajowa. The latter part of the memoir describes Newman's transfer, with the remaining prisoners of Skarżysko, to Buchenwald in mid-1944, his separation from Chanke, his experiences as a forced laborer at Buchenwald, the destruction of the factory he worked in there, the evacuation of the camp in April 1945, and how he was hidden by Czech partisans after escaping from a death march, and was subsequently liberated at the end of the war. Descriptions of his return to Poland, his reunion with and marriage to Chanke, and decision to leave Poland due to post-war anti-semitism, are also included.

System of arrangement

Three folders, by language and format.

Indexing terms

Topical:

Skarżysko-Kamienna (Concentration camp)

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Poland--Skarżysko-Kamienna--Personal narratives.

Jews--Poland--Chmielnik (Województwo Świętokrzyskie)--History.

Buchenwald (Concentration camp)

World War, 1939-1945--Underground movements--Czechoslovakia.

Geographic:

Staszów (Województwo Świętokrzyskie, Poland)

Chmielnik (Województwo Świętokrzyskie, Poland)

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
1	Memoir: Yiddish original
2	Memoir: English translation
3	Added biographical information