

OTTO HERSKOVIC DIARY AND PAPERS, 1931-1954

2015.301.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Otto Herskovic memoir and papers

Dates: 1931-1954

Accession number: 2015.301.1

Creator: Herskovic, Otto.

Extent: 5 folders.

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

Abstract: Diary, handwritten, composed by Otto Herskovic, at the age of 15, immediately following the end of World War II. In it, he recounts his family's experiences during the German invasion of Belgium, his family's flight to southern France, and the experiences of him and his sister while at an O.S.E.-administered children's home, and later, as part of a convoy of children who were sent to the United States via North Africa in July 1942 with the help of the United States Committee for the Care of European Children (USCOM). Included are hand-drawn maps of places referenced in the diary, photographs, news clippings, and identification documents for Herskovic and his mother, Emma Herskovic. Also included are documents relating to Otto Herskovic's service in the U.S. Army (circa 1950-1955).

Languages: English, Flemish.

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), Otto Herskovic diary and papers, 2015.301.1, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Atiyeh Nafari donated her late husband's diary and documents, with the assistance of his niece, Patricia Herskovic, in 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: Processed by Brad Bauer, April 2015.

Biographical note

Otto Herskovic (1931-2014) was a native of Antwerp, Belgium. Following the German invasion in May 1940, Herskovic, his parents, Emile and Emma, and his elder sister Hilde escaped southward through Belgium into France, reaching southern France by late June. Initially the family stayed in various locations in the department of Tarn et Garonne, including Serignac, Varennes, and Toulouse. By late 1940, Otto's parents decided it would be best to send their children to the Chateau des Morelles, a children's home run by the OSE in Brout-Vernet, near Vichy, where Otto and Hilde remained for the better part of a year. Eventually, it was arranged to have both Otto and Hilde emigrate to the United States, and after several unsuccessful attempts to reach Marseilles and board a ship there, they managed to do so, travelling by ship to the Algerian port of Oran, and from there by train to Morocco, where they boarded the *Nyassa*, a Portuguese ship that took them to Baltimore. Later Otto lived with a foster family in St. Louis, but was eventually reunited with his parents and with other siblings, including his older brother William. When the latter opened a camera store in Los Angeles in 1957, he invited Otto to join him, and he worked in the family-owned Bel-Air Camera in Westwood for much of the rest of his life. Otto Herskovic died in Los Angeles in January 2014.

Scope and content of collection

The "Biographical" series of documents includes Herskovic's birth certificate, a copy of a Red Cross letter he and his sister received from their parents after the liberation of France in late 1944, identification cards from the period that Herskovic served in the U.S. Army, including a driver's license, his Selective Service registration card, and a letter of reference, as well as a much later document from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in which Herskovic began to write down information about his wartime experiences.

The "Photograph" series consists of five photographic prints, including one showing a group of children in France, among which were Otto and Hilde, two prints of passengers on a ship, presumably including Otto, and two photos from camps in France, which may have been the ones where Emile and Emma Herskovic were held.

The "Writings" series consists of the original memoir written by Herskovic in English, in 1946, as well as a photocopy of the same and a later typescript version of it. The original diary includes hand-colored maps and drawings of the locations in France that his family fled to, as well as a map depicting the stops on Otto's journey to the United States, and various news clippings from the era as well.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in three series: I. Biographical, II. Photographs, III. Writings, and in rough chronological order within each series.

Indexing terms

Corporate:

Œuvre de secours aux enfants (France)
United States Committee for the Care of European Children (USCOM)

Topical:

Jews--Belgium—Antwerp.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue—France.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)—France.
Jewish refugees--United States.
Emigration & immigration--United States.
Hidden children (Holocaust)--France.

Geographical:

Antwerp (Belgium)
Broût-Vernet (France)

CONTAINER LIST

Folder Sub-folder

1		Biographical
1	1	Birth certificate, Otto Herskovic, Antwerp, 1931
1	2	Herskovic, Emma: International Refugee Organization identification card, 1950
1	3	Red Cross letter sent by parents, in France, to Otto and Hilde (copy), 1944
1	4	Identification cards, U.S. Army and Selective Service registration, and letter of reference, 1950-1954
1	5	Survivor Registry form (half-completed), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, undated
2		Photographs
2	1	Herskovic, Otto, with other children, France, undated; and on ship
2	2	Camps, including Gurs and unidentified transit camp, 1940 and undated
		Writings
3		Diary, original
4		Diary, photocopy
5		Diary, typed version