

ELSIE RAGUSIN AZZINARO PAPERS, 1904-CIRCA 2015
2016.468.1

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

Title: Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro papers

Dates: 1904-circa 2015 [bulk 1944-1961]

Accession number: 2016.468.1

Creator: Azzinaro, Elsie, Ragusin, 1921.

Extent: 10 folders

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro and her parents Giovanni and Domenica Ragusin in Neresine, Italy (present day Nerezine, Croatia). Correspondence includes a letter written by Elsie in Italian to her mother while in a train boxcar as she was being deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944; letters from the Red Cross regarding the fate of Elsie's father Giovanni; and postwar letters written to Elsie from Gemma La Guardia Gluck whom she was imprisoned with at Ravensbrück. Other material includes clippings about Gemma La Guardia, a eulogy of Giovanni Ragusin, and a postcard announcing Domenica Ragusin's return to the United States from Italy in 1947. The notes and family history also include descriptions of drawings made by Elsie while on a train boxcar to Auschwitz and a printout of a survey of the Ragusin property in Neresine. Additionally, there is a copy of an interview regarding a Dutch woman's experience in Auschwitz.

Languages: Italian, 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), Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro papers (2016.468.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was purchased by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro in November 2016.

Related materials: The Elsie A. Ragusin Azzinaro collection contains two objects: patch with red triangle worn by Elsie Ragusin in the camps on which she embroidered "USA" (IRN# 556085); and a red pouch used by Elsie Ragusin to carry a prayer book she acquired while in Ravensbrück (IRN# 556084). She also published her memoir *An American in Auschwitz* in 2010 (D805 G3 R245 2010).

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

Processing history: Adam Fielding, February 2017

Biographical note

Elsie Anna Ragusin (later Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro, 1921-) was born in New York City on 4 November 1921 to Giovanni (1882-1945) and Domenica Ragusin (1886-1948). She had three brothers, John (1911-1939), Edward (1912-), and Albert (1914-). Her parents were Catholic and married in Neresine, Italy (present day Nerezine, Croatia) in 1908 and immigrated to the United States the same year. Right after Elsie was born, the family returned to Italy where they remained for several years, returning to the United States around 1930. In 1939, Elsie's brother John was killed in a fire.

In 1939, Giovanni, Domenica, and Elsie returned to Neresine to care for Giovanni's ailing parents. They purchased a home and Giovanni found work. By 1941, they were unable to leave the island and had their passports confiscated. In May 1944 the German Army reached Neresine, and Elsie and Giovanni were arrested shortly thereafter on accusation of being American spies. They were separated and interrogated. Giovanni was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp where he perished on 28 February 1945. Elsie was deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp where she was a forced-laborer. She was then deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp where she was again a forced-laborer. While in the camp she befriended Gemma La Guardia Gluck, the sister of New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. Ravensbrück was liberated in April 1945, and Elsie and other prisoners were taken to Malmö, Sweden. She lived with the Alkeman family for around 9 months. On 10 December 1945 she sailed back to the United States from Sweden on the *Stig Gorthon*.

Domenica survived the war, and sailed back to the United States on the *MS Sobieski* in 1947. She died a year later of heart problems. During the war, Elsie's brother Albert joined the United States Army, and her brother Edward was a civilian employee of the United States Navy.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Elsie Ragusin Azzinaro and her parents Giovanni and Domenica Ragusin in Neresine, Italy (present day Nerezine, Croatia). Correspondence includes a letter written by Elsie in Italian to her mother while in a train boxcar as she was being deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944; letters from the Red Cross regarding the fate of Elsie's father Giovanni; and postwar letters written to Elsie from Gemma La Guardia Gluck whom she was imprisoned with at Ravensbrück. Other material includes clippings about Gemma La Guardia, a eulogy of Giovanni

Ragusin, and a postcard announcing Domenica Ragusin's return to the United States from Italy in 1947. The notes and family history also include descriptions of drawings made by Elsie while on a train boxcar to Auschwitz and a printout of a survey of the Ragusin property in Neresine. Additionally, there is a copy of an interview regarding a Dutch woman's experience in Auschwitz.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as a single series. Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Azzinaro, Elsie Ragusin, 1921-
Ragusin, Domenica, 1886-1948.
Ragusin, Giovanni, 1882-1945.
Gluck, Gemma La Guardia, 1881-1962.

Corporate:

Auschwitz (Concentration camp)
Ravensbrück (Concentration camp)
Buchenwald (Concentration camp)

Topical Subject:

Catholics--Italy.
Catholics--United States.
Holocaust (1939-1945)--Personal narratives.

Geography:

Italy--History--German occupation, 1943-1945.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
1	Gluck, Gemma La Guardia: Clippings, 1956-1961
2	Notes and family history, 1991-circa 2015
3	"People as experimental rabbits in Auschwitz" interview reprint, 1945
4	Ragusin, Domenica: <i>MS Sobieski</i> postcard, 1947
	Ragusin, Elsie correspondence:
5	American Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, and International Red Cross, 1945-1997
6	Gluck, Gemma La Guardia, 1946-1947
7	Ragusin, Domenica, 1944
8	General, 1945 and undated
	Ragusin, Giovanni:
9	Eulogy, circa 1946
10	Letter from Domenica Ragusin, 1904