

MAGNUS AND VAN OOSTEN FAMILY PAPERS, 1940-1943
2016.97.1

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

Title: Magnus and van Oosten family papers.

Dates: 1940-1943, and undated

Accession number: 2016.97.1

Creator: Magnus family (Family: Groningen, The Netherlands)

Extent: 11 folders

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

Abstract: Correspondence, certificates, printed material, and photographs, related to the experiences of the extended family of Sary Melles (née Magnus) during the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. Includes correspondence from her brother, Ibertus Magnus, written shortly before and during his imprisonment by the Germans, first in Assen, the Netherlands, and then at Buchenwald, as well as a notification of his death and a death certificate. Also includes a brochure that documents the jazz band that he performed with prior to the war. The collection also includes documents from Melles' aunt, Johanna van Oosten, such as her business card, but primarily consisting of correspondence she sent to Melles' family, who were in hiding, during the time that van Oosten was interned at the Westerbork camp. Correspondence also includes a postcard written by van Oosten, and thrown off of the train, during her transport to Auschwitz, describing conditions in the train car, her sons' fear of the impending transport, and thanking her family. This letter was found and mailed to Melles' family, who were in hiding at the time. Also includes identification cards for Melles' parents, Roosje and Noach Magnus, including a false identification card used by the latter under the name of Andries Zijlstra.

Languages: Dutch, 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), Magnus and van Oosten family papers (2016.97.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Gift of Sary Melles, 2016.

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, March 2016.

Biographical note

Sary Melles was born Nannie Sari Louise Magnus in Groningen, the Netherlands, on 10 June 1928, the daughter of Noach (born 9 June 1886) and Roosje (née Jakobs, born 23 February 1893) Magnus, both of whom were originally from Emmen. Noach owned a textile business in Groningen, and in addition to Sari, the Magnuses had two other children, a daughter Henriette, or Hetty (born 16 August 1916, Emmen), and a son, Ibertus (born 23 September 1917, Emmen), who was known as Bert. In addition to working in the family business, Bert was also the leader of and tenor saxophonist in a jazz and swing band in the Netherlands, "The Plus Fours." During the invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940, the Magnus family initially fled to Amsterdam, hoping to be able to find a way to get to England. Although they did engage the services of a captain who was willing to take them on his boat to England, the captain's wife persuaded him not to do so at the last moment, and the Magnus family remained in Amsterdam for some time, before returning to Groningen.

In the fall of 1941, Bert Magnus decided to make a trip to the nearby city of Assen, to visit his uncle and pick up some clothing there, following the start of clothing rationing on 1 November. While on the train to Assen, he was overheard making comments critical of the occupation regime by a member of the NSB, the Dutch political party that collaborated with the Nazis. As a result, Bert was subsequently arrested by the Gestapo at his uncle's home in Assen, and placed in a jail there from 2 November 1941 to 15 January 1942. After promises made to the Magnus family by the local head of the Gestapo that Bert would soon be released, he was instead transferred to a prison in the nearby German city of Leer, before being deported to Buchenwald, where he perished on 25 March 1942.

In the months that followed, the Magnus family decided it was necessary to go into hiding, and knowing that some Christian friends and neighbors would be willing to take them in, the family members initially split up, going into hiding in several different homes on 2 October 1942, before they eventually all rejoined at the home of Egbert Star, a retired headmaster of a Christian school in Godlinze. The Magnus family, which at that time included Noach and Roosje, their daughters Sari and Hetty, along with Hetty's husband, Herman Goslinski, who had previously been interned in a labor camp, stayed with Star, who they referred to as "Opa Star" ("Grandpa Star") until liberation on 17 April 1945. Initially, the Goslinskis' newborn daughter, Bertie, was placed with another family, the Engelkamps. During that time, they slept

in an attic space, but largely spent their days downstairs with Star. Once there was a Gestapo raid that they narrowly escaped by hiding in the attic, and in which Star was helped onto a neighbor's balcony, in the fear that he might inadvertently reveal their presence, due to his unshakeable honesty. Star was recognized posthumously as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1999.

During the occupation, the family of Roosje's sister, Johanna van Oosten (born in Emmen, 27 May 1902), did not escape detection and arrest. While staying in Friesland in the early months of the occupation, they were caught listening to shortwave broadcasts of the BBC, and were arrested by the Gestapo. While Johanna's husband and older son were sent to forced labor camps in the Netherlands, Johanna and her two younger sons were sent to Westerbork. Johanna was able to write to her sister, sending letters through an intermediary in Groningen, up to the time when she and her two boys were deported to Auschwitz. As the train was leaving Westerbork, she was able to throw from the train a postcard she had written to her sister's family, asking that if any passersby found the postcard, to mail it to the address written on it, which someone did. Johanna van Oosten was killed at Auschwitz on 24 September 1943.

Scope and content of collection

The Magnus and van Oosten family papers consist of correspondence, certificates, printed material, and photographs, related to the experiences of the extended family of Sary Melles (née Magnus) during the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. The collection includes correspondence from her brother, Ibertus Magnus, written shortly before and during his imprisonment by the Germans, first in Assen, the Netherlands, and then at Buchenwald, as well as a notification of his death and a death certificate. Also included is a brochure that documents the jazz band that he performed with prior to the war. The collection also includes documents from Melles' aunt, Johanna van Oosten, such as her business card, but primarily consisting of correspondence she sent to the Magnus family, who were in hiding, during the time that van Oosten was interned at the Westerbork camp. Correspondence also includes a postcard written by van Oosten, and thrown off of the train, during her transport to Auschwitz, describing conditions in the train car, her sons' fear of the impending transport, and thanking her family. This letter was found and mailed to Melles' family, who were in hiding at the time. Also includes identification cards for Melles' parents, Roosje and Noach Magnus, including a false identification card used by the latter under the name of Andries Zijlstra.

System of arrangement

The Magnus and van Oosten family papers are arranged in groupings according to family member, and then in alphabetical order by file title.

Indexing terms

Personal names

Magnus, Noach.
Magnus, Roosje.
Magnus, Ibertus.
van Oosten, Johanna.
Star, Egbert (1866-1953)

Topical headings

Jews--Netherlands--Groningen.

Jews--Persecutions--Netherlands.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue--Netherlands.
Buchenwald (Concentration camp)
Westerbork (Concentration camp)

Geographic names

Groningen (Netherlands)
Assen (Netherlands)

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
	Magnus family
1	Identification cards: Roosje Jakobs Magnus (Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam), 1942; and false identification for Noach Magnus, under the name of Mada Andries Zijlstra (Groningen), 1941.
	Magnus, Ibertus
2	Correspondence, from prison in Assen, 9 November 1941 – 11 January 1942
3	Correspondence, from Buchenwald, 1 February 1942
4	Correspondence: letter from Ibertus (Bert), sent to Mr. Stern, Assen, discussing upcoming trip, 30 October 1941. Also includes undated letter, from Noach Magnus, describing the circumstances of his son's trip to Assen on 2 November and subsequent arrest. Includes unused ticket for Ibertus Magnus' return trip.
5	Correspondence: undated.
6	Death announcements and certificate, 1942
7	Identification and passport, 1940-1941
8	Musical group, "The Plus Fours:" booklet and newspaper clipping, undated, circa 1940, 1955.
	van Oosten, Johanna
9	Business card, undated
10	Correspondence: from Westerbork, undated, circa 1941-1943
11	Postcard: written on transport to Auschwitz, and tossed from train, 21 September 1943