

**BLINSHTEYN FAMILY PAPERS, 1935-2002
(bulk, 1944-1945)
2017.166.2**

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: Blinshteyn family papers

Dates: 1935-2002 (bulk, 1944-1945)

Accession number: 2017.166.2

Creator: Berina, Zhanna

Extent: 12 folders (0.5 linear foot)

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

Abstract: Correspondence, documents, and photographs related to Semyon and Velya Blinshteyn, and their children Naum, Zhanna, and Fanya, originally of Odessa, Ukraine, and pertaining primarily to the experiences of the Blinshteyn family in the Soviet Union during World War II. Includes poems written by Naum Blinshteyn and correspondence related to Zhanna (Blinshteyn) Berina's search for the grave of her brother Naum, and the placement of a headstone there.

Languages: Russian, 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), Blinshteyn family papers (2017.166.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Gift of Zhanna Berina, 2017. An accretion formerly cataloged as 2017.483.1 has been incorporated into this collection.

Related archival materials: An oral history interview with Zhanna Berina, conducted as part of the USC-Shoah Foundation project in November 1995, is available for viewing at the USHMM Library.

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, February 2017. Revised by Julie Schweitzer, January 2018

Biographical note

Zhanna Berina was born on 13 September 1930 in Odessa, Ukrainian S.S.R. (present-day Odesa, Ukraine), the daughter of Semyon (1905-1971) and Velya (nee Ertvah, 1905-1974) Blinshteyn. In addition to Zhanna, the Blinshteyns had two other children, a son, Naum (1925-1945) and a daughter, Fanya (1939-2017). The Blinshteyn family was living in Odessa when Germany and its allies invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Semyon was conscripted into the Red Army, in which he served for the duration of the war. In the early days of the occupation, many family members were killed.

In January 1942, Velya and her children were moved to the Slobodka ghetto, where they sought to avoid being placed on a transport to one of the nearby camps, managing to escape such transports on a couple of occasions. In June 1942, however, the family was sent to the Domanevka concentration camp, in Transnistria, and from there was sent to work as forced laborers on nearby farms for the duration of the occupation, often living in squalid conditions. In March 1944, the Romanian and German occupation forces retreated, and the Domanevka camp was liberated by the Red Army. The retreating Germans took many of the male prisoners with them, including Zhanna's brother, Naum, who subsequently managed to escape and return to Odessa, where he reunited with his family. Shortly after that, however, he was conscripted into the Red Army, and was killed in action in Poland on 19 January 1945. After the war, Semyon, who had survived, returned to his family in Odessa.

In 1989, Zhanna, her daughter, Nonna, and grandchildren, immigrated to the United States. With the help of the American Red Cross and other organizations, they subsequently were able to locate the grave of Naum Blinshteyn, who had been buried in a Soviet military cemetery in Putusk, Poland. With the help of American and Polish friends, a gravestone was placed there in 1996, and they were able to visit his grave in 2002. Zhanna's sister Fanya passed away in Israel in 2017.

Scope and content of collection

Collection consists of correspondence, documents, and photographs related to Semyon and Velya Blinshteyn, and their children Naum, Zhanna, and Fanya, originally of Odesa, Ukraine, and pertaining primarily to the experiences of the Blinshteyn family in the Soviet Union during World War II. Includes poems written by Naum Blinshteyn and correspondence related to Zhanna (Blinshteyn) Berina's search for the grave of her brother Naum, and the placement of a headstone there.

System of arrangement

The Blinshteyn family papers are arranged in three series, and alphabetically by folder title within each series: I. Correspondence, II. Documents, III. Photographs.

Indexing terms

Personal name:

Blinshteyn, Naum, 1925-1945.
Blinshteyn, Semyon, 1905-1971.
Blinshteyn, Velya, 1905-1974.
Blinshteyn, Fanya, 1939-2017.

Topical headings:

Jews--Ukraine--Odesa.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Ukraine--Odesa.
Jewish soldiers--Soviet Union.
Jewish soldiers--Correspondence.
Soldiers--Soviet Union--Correspondence.
World War, 1939-1945--Cemeteries--Poland.

Geographic headings:

Odesa (Ukraine)
Domanevka (Mykolaïvs'ka oblast', Ukraine)
Pułtusk (Poland)

Genre terms:

Correspondence.
Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Correspondence, 1944-1945

Folder	Title
1	Blinshteyn, Naum: to his father, June 1944-January 1945
2	Blinshteyn, Naum: to his mother and sisters, October-December 1944
3	Blinshteyn, Semyon: to his wife and daughters, February-May 1945
4	Blinshteyn, Velya: to her brother (12 May 1944), informing him that she and children had survived camps, and fragment of undated letter to husband
5	Blinshteyn, Zhanna: to her father, June 1944

Series 2: Documents, 1944-1999

Folder	Title
6, 12	General, 1944-1945. Includes note confirming Naum's service in Red Army, November 1944; document stating that Semyon Blinshteyn was in military hospital in Kharkiv, and asking recipient to return items to family that had been confiscated, December 1944; and copy of document attesting that Velya Blinshteyn and children had been imprisoned in camps, April 1944.
7	Identification of grave of Naum Blinshteyn in Poland, 1987-1999
8	Poetry written by Naum Blinshteyn, 1944

Series 3: Photographs, 1935-2002

Folder	Title
9	Blinshteyn family, 1935-1945. Includes snapshot of Semyon Blinshteyn, which he sent to his family from the front, April 1945; portrait of Zhanna, Fanya, and Velya Blinshteyn, Odessa, November 1944; and copy print of family portrait, originally taken in 1935.
10	Blinshteyn, Naum: portrait, at age 10, taken in 1935 and recovered by neighbors and returned to family after the war.
11	Blinshteyn, Naum: burial site in Poland, 2002. Includes images of grave, and of Zhanna (Blinshteyn) Berina, her daughter, Nonna Berina, and grandchildren, Vera and Serge Krimnus.