

**ILONA KELLNER PAPERS, 1929-2002**  
**2017.645.1**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
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Washington, DC 20024-2126  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Ilona Kellner papers

Dates: 1929-2002

Accession number: 2017.645.1

Creator: Kellner, Ilona, 1912-2011

Extent: 1.7 linear feet (2 folders, 3 oversize boxes)

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

Abstract: The Ilona Kellner papers consist of hundreds of recipes written on the backs of unused forms from the Nazi labor camp at Hesisch Lichtenau by Ilona Kellner and dictated by her fellow women prisoners. Ilona worked as a translator and messenger at the labor camp and tidied the factory. She pilfered the blank pages from wastebaskets in the camp. The forms include munitions delivery and fulfillment receipts for bombs, mines, and mortars; access passes; discharge bills; shift inventories; and prisoner correspondence templates. Two pages appear to include letters from Ilona to her mother. The collection also contains five family photographs (originals and copy prints) from before and after the war, including one of Ilona Kellner and her daughter, Eva Moreimi, with cakes prepared from the recipes for Ilona's grandchild's Bar Mitzvah.

Language: Hungarian, 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), Ilona Kellner papers (2017.645.1) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Eva Moreimi donated the Ilona Kellner papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2017. Eva Moreimi is the daughter of Ilona Kellner.

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

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, July 2018

### **Biographical note**

Ilona Kellner (later Elena Kalina, 1912-2011, some records list her year of birth as 1916) was born in Pelsöc, Austria-Hungary (now Plešivec, Slovakia) to Karoly (1887–1944) and Jolan Freimann (1890-1944) Kellner. Ilona had one younger sister, Vera (1922 -2017). Karoly was a merchant. Ilona was unmarried and worked as a kindergarten teacher. Following World War I, Pelsöc had become part of Czechoslovakia, and became a part of Hungary in approximately 1938. During the 1930s, Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany, and in 1938, Hungary's fascist regime adopted anti-Semitic measures based on the German Nuremberg racial laws. In November 1940, Hungary joined the Axis Alliance, and participated in Operation Barbarossa, the June 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union.

After the German retreat from Stalingrad in February 1943, Hungary sought a separate peace with the Allies. In March 1944, Germany invaded Hungary and began deporting all Hungarian Jews to concentration camps. On May 8, 1944, the authorities forced Ilona, Vera, and their parents, Karoly and Jolan, from their home and moved them into a ghetto that had been set aside in another area of the town. In mid-June, the family was deported to Auschwitz concentration camp in German occupied Poland. Their parents were taken to the gas chambers in the camp's killing center, Birkenau, and killed upon arrival. By August 2, Ilona and Vera had been deported to Hessisch Lichtenau, a sub-camp of Buchenwald concentration camp as part of a transport of 1,000 Hungarian women brought to Germany to fill a labor shortage. On September 19, Ilona and Vera were officially registered at the camp, and were assigned prisoner numbers: Ilona was assigned 20409, and Vera 20407. All of the women in this transport were assigned numbers, by last name, between 20,001 and 21,003.

The camp provided labor for an explosive munitions factory run by Fabrik Hessisch Lichtenau GmbH zur Verwertung chemischer Erzeugnisse. The laborers lived in barracks on the edge of the local town, and marched under SS supervision, an hour and a half each way to the factory, which was deep in the woods and well camouflaged with plants, shrubs and trees planted around it and on the roof. At the factory, the women filled shells, bombs, mines, and cartridges with several different types of explosives in rotating shifts, while also carrying out dangerous and physically demanding tasks. The Jewish prisoners were typically placed in the most dangerous positions in the filling station and press building where they came into contact with poisonous acids and chemicals. They breathed in toxic vapors that turned some of the women's skin yellow or were splashed and burned by corrosive chemicals, suffering permeant damage. Any prisoner not fit for work was quickly returned to Auschwitz. Ilona worked as a translator and messenger in the camp offices and when not doing those jobs, she cleaned up the factory. Her jobs gave her access to many areas and she was able to take blank forms from wastebaskets in the camp to use as writing paper. The forms included munitions delivery and fulfillment receipts for ordnance, access

passes, discharge bills, and shift inventories among other things. Ilona used the backs of the forms to record recipes dictated by her fellow female prisoners.

In late March 1945, as the United States army advanced on the region, the camp was evacuated. The women were taken to Leipzig by train, a five day trip. After a week there, the women were forced to march for two weeks, eventually arriving in Wurzen. On April 25, the survivors of the march, including Ilona and Vera, were liberated by US soldiers. On September 25, 1947, Ilona married Ernest Kalina (previously Kaufmann, 1909-2007), a Czechoslovak survivor of several forced labor camps during the war. His first wife, Irenka, their young daughter, Marika, his parents, Jenö and Etel, and several other relatives were killed at Auschwitz in 1944, and he lost a brother, Dönci, who was killed while serving as a forced laborer in the Hungarian army. He had no food or proper clothing and often had to pick up unexploded mines and carry out other dangerous tasks. The couple had one daughter. In 1971, they immigrated to the United States and settled outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The Ilona Kellner papers consist of hundreds of recipes written on the backs of unused forms from the Nazi labor camp at Hessisch Lichtenau by Ilona Kellner and dictated by her fellow women prisoners. Ilona worked as a translator and messenger at the labor camp and tidied the factory. She pilfered the blank pages from wastebaskets in the camp. The forms include munitions delivery and fulfillment receipts for bombs, mines, and mortars; access passes; discharge bills; shift inventories; and prisoner correspondence templates. Two pages appear to include letters from Ilona to her mother. The collection also contains five family photographs (originals and copy prints) from before and after the war, including one of Ilona Kellner and her daughter, Eva Moreimi, with cakes prepared from the recipes for Ilona's grandchild's Bar Mitzvah.

### **System of arrangement**

The Ilona Kellner papers are arranged as two series:

- Series 1: Photographs, 1929, 1947, 1992, 2002
- Series 2: Recipes, approximately 1944

### **Indexing terms**

Jews--Slovakia--Plešivec.

Forced labor--Germany--Hessisch Lichtenau.

World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Germany--Hessisch Lichtenau.

Explosives industry--Germany--Hessisch Lichtenau.

Plešivec (Slovakia)

Hessisch Lichtenau (Germany)

Cookbooks.

Photographs.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Ilona Kellner papers, 1929-2002

Folder	Title
Folder 1	Photographs, 1929, 1947, 1992, 2002
Boxes 1-3, Folder 2	Recipes written on the backs of munitions factory forms, approximately 1944