

Marga Silbermann Randall Papers, 1824, c. 1930-2005

Call number: MSS#543

Extent: 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

Language of Materials: English, German

Rauh Jewish Archives

Library and Archives

Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

Senator John Heinz History Center

1212 Smallman St.

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Abstract

Born in Lemforde, Germany, on March 20, 1930, Marga Silbermann Randall and her family experienced Nazi persecution before fleeing to the United States and settling in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Some members of her immediate family survived the war and were reunited, but most of her extended family perished. Marga Silbermann Randall married, had a family, and was active in the Jewish community, including as the president of Women's American Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) in the 1960s. In 1981, she returned to Germany to begin to piece together her family's history and confront her own memories. She spent the rest of her life teaching and lecturing about her personal experiences in the Holocaust both locally and abroad.

Biographical Sketch

The youngest of four children, Marga Silbermann Randall was born to Louis and Johanna (Hannah) Silbermann in Lemforde, Germany, on March 20, 1930. The sudden death of her father fractured the family, and her mother and siblings went in separate directions to support themselves. After moving into a small apartment, her mother was employed as a housekeeper. Her brothers Manfred and Herbert, and her sister Hilda went to acquire trade skills for employment. Marga Silbermann was sent to Schermbeck, Germany, to live with her maternal grandparents Gustav and Emma Adelsheimer and her aunt, Paula.

Soon after *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, the family laid plans to flee Schermbeck for Berlin. After two and a half years of waiting for exit visas in Berlin, Marga Silbermann, her sister Hilda, and her mother boarded a ship that would bring them to the United States in 1941. Upon arrival, they moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Marga Silbermann's aunt Bertha Adelsheimer Kann and her husband Nathan Kann lived, having immigrated a few years before.

After her arrival in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Marga Silbermann went to Colfax School, located Squirrel Hill. She learned the English language and eventually received United States citizenship. She also was a member of Rodef Shalom Congregation. After

graduating high school, she worked in sales, married Jordan Randall, and had a family consisting of three children.

Marga Silbermann Randall was active in the Jewish community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, serving as the South Hills Chapter Evening president of Women's American Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) during the 1960s. She supported Action Reconciliation Peace Services, an organization that sends young Germans to provide Holocaust education and to care for survivors worldwide, and was also involved in the Pittsburgh Holocaust Center.

In 1981, forty-one years after fleeing, Marga Silbermann Randall, decided to travel back to Schermbeck and confront her past. After an initial visit, she returned to both Schermbeck and the town of her birth Lemforde, Germany, multiple times. After 1981, Marga Silbermann Randall devoted her life to educating people about the Holocaust. In 2004, she established a Holocaust Memorial Garden at her synagogue, Temple Emanuel in Mt. Lebanon, with the soil she brought back from the ash pits at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp where her aunt Paula had died. She spent her time teaching, lecturing, and participating in Holocaust survivor programs locally and throughout the world. She made presentations at universities, public and private schools, conducted Holocaust workshops and seminars, and spoke to community organizations. She passed away on November 24, 2005, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is housed in one archival box with the folders arranged alphabetically. The collection primarily consists of articles and correspondence. The collection includes an extensive documentation about Women's American ORT during the time Marga Silbermann Randall was president of the South Hills Evening Chapter. These documents include attendance and membership, events, programs, newsletters, newspaper clippings, reports, and speeches. Also included in the collection is material related to Dr. Hedwig O. Pregler, principal of Colfax School, and the woman Marga Silbermann Randall credited. These materials include articles, biographical material, and correspondence, between her and Dr. Pregler. The collection has documentation related to Marga Silbermann Randall's return trips to Germany, speeches, and presentations. Some of these materials are in German. A VHS video cassette using narration and photographs, documenting her return trips to Lemforde, Germany, photographs of her family's table which she donated to Heinz History Center museum, and archival documentation related to these museum artifacts are included in the collection. Also included is a book commemorating the German Jewish soldiers that died during World War I.

Statement of Acquisition: The materials were received in five accessions.

Acc#2001.0212 was received on November 21, 2001.

Acc#2002.0027 was received on January 18, 2002.

Acc#2002.0044 was received on March 15, 2002.

Acc#2003.0114 was received on May 5, 2003.

Acc#2003.0246 was received on October, 30, 2003.

All materials are gifts from Marga Silberman Randall.

.Preferred Citation: Marga Silberman Randall Papers, 1824, c. 1930-2005, MSS#543, Rauh Jewish Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center.

Restrictions: None

Related Materials

An oral history by Marga Silberman Randall relating to her Holocaust experiences is available on the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's website.

[http://tc.usc.edu/vhite/\(bbkgn455ncbjcm554ssxcnqh\)/frameresults.htm](http://tc.usc.edu/vhite/(bbkgn455ncbjcm554ssxcnqh)/frameresults.htm) (Accessed November 20, 2009).

Randall, Marga. *How Beautiful We Once Were: a remembrance of the Holocaust and beyond*. Pittsburgh, PA: Cathedral Publishing, 1998; is available in the Heinz History Center library collection.

Separations:

One archival box consisting of photographs of the family has been separated, arranged, and described as MSP#543.

To the Museum Division:

Artifacts from Little's Shoe Store Acc#2003.0246, donated on October 30, 2003.

Table from Germany, glove, three pieces of silver, and table covering donated on February 6, 2002.

Processor: Papers arranged and inventory written by Theresa E. Rea, with generous support from the PNC Charitable Trusts- J. Samuel and Rose Y. Cox Foundation and the Giant Eagle Foundation, on November 17, 2009.

Container List:

| | | | |
|-------|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Box 1 | Folder 1 | Correspondence | 1824, c.1930-1997 |
| | Folder 2 | Emma Kaufmann Camp | 1944 |
| | Folder 3 | Family Papers | n.d., 1947 |
| | Folder 4 | Holocaust Materials | 1981, 1988, 2009 |
| | Folder 5 | Lemforde, Germany | c.1996-1998 |
| | Folder 6 | Marriage Certificate | 1934 |
| | Folder 7 | Museum Related Artifacts | |
| | | Table and Glove | 1990, 1992, 2002 |

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|-----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Folder 8 | Newspaper Articles | 1983, 2009 |
| Folder 9 | Outreach and Programs | c.1993-2001 |
| Dr. Hedwig O. Pregler | | |
| Folder 10 | Articles | 1984-1996 |
| Folder 11 | Correspondence | 1995-1996 |
| Folder 12 | Miscellaneous | 1984, 1996 |
| Folder 13 | Rodef Shalom Congregation | 1946-1947, 1984 |
| | Women's American ORT | |
| Folder 14 | Attendance and Membership | 1965-1967 |
| Folder 15 | Events and Programs | c.1965-1973, 2000 |
| Folder 16 | Newsletters | 1965-1966 |
| Folder 17 | Newspaper Clippings | 1965-1969 |
| Folder 18 | Reports and Speeches | c. 1965-1967 |
| Volume 1 | Die Judischen Gefallenen Des Deutschen Heers, Der Deutschen Marine Und Der Deutschen Schutztruppen 1914-1918 | 1932 |
| VHS Cassette | Table-Slides Documentary Lemforde Germany Silbermann Family | 2002 |