Finding aid for the Rolf Ransenberg papers 6103

Emily Hodgkins
USC Libraries Special Collections
2015 November
Doheny Memorial Library 206
3550 Trousdale Parkway
Los Angeles, California 90089-0189
specol@usc.edu
URL: http://libraries.usc.edu/locations/special-collections
Finding aid for the Rolf Ransenberg papers 6103

Date (inclusive): 1937-1947

Abstract: Correspondence and personal documents, 1937-1947, created and collected by Rolf Ransenberg. Consisting chiefly of correspondence from the Ransenberg family in Wanneman, Germany to their son Rolf in the United States, the papers also contain along with some personal documents of Rolf and Friedel Ransenberg. The Ransenberg family consisted of Jakob, Matilde, Rolf, Friedel, Guenther, Alfred, Karl-Heinz, and Inge. Jakob, the father, was a butcher; he was married to Mathilde, with whom he had six children. Rolf, the oldest son, was sent to the United States in 1938, and he kept up correspondence with his family until about 1941. Eventually, six out of the eight family members were killed by the Nazis between 1942-1944.

Biographical / Historical

Rolf (also known as Ralph) Ransenberg was the oldest of Jakob and Matilde Ransenberg’s six children. Friedel, the second brother, was born in 1925. Guenther was born in 1926, followed by Karl-Heinz in 1928, Alfred in 1932, and the only daughter, Inge, in 1934. Jakob Ransenberg, the head of the family, owned and ran a butchery in Wennemen, a town near the city of Meschede in Germany. However, with the Nazi’s rise to power, the family’s lives changed permanently and rapidly. Jakob was forced to close his butcher’s shop due to the 1936 ordinance that prohibited Jews from owning businesses. The oldest son, Rolf, was able to take part in a 1938 Kindertransport to the United States--one of a relatively few children from Germany who were able to--and from then on lived with Max and Rosalie Loeb in Kansas City, MO. The rest of the family, who had remained in Wennemen despite the persecution they faced, wrote regularly to Rolf, Max, and Rosalie from 1938-1941.

However, in March of 1942, the lives of the Ransenburgs changed permanently. While on a lunch break, Guenther got into an amiable snowball fight with some friends. As they were throwing snowballs, one of his accidentally hit the daughter of a local S.S. officer. Soon, Guenther was arrested, placed in a concentration camp as a prisoner, and soon after hung for his “crime.” Matilde Ransenberg died mere weeks afterward, likely of a broken heart. Friedel ended up being sent directly to a concentration camp, and Jakob, Alfred, and Inge were sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto. From there, the three of them were transported to Auschwitz, where all three were killed in about 1944. Not much is known about Karl-Heinz’s fate, outside of that he too was killed in a camp in about 1944.

Still in Kansas City, Rolf enlisted in the U.S. Army, eventually earning a Purple Heart in December of 1944. Friedel miraculously survived spending about four years in different concentration and work camps, including Auschwitz, despite being only 16-20 years old. He and Rolf were the only two from the Ransenberg family of eight to survive World War II and the Holocaust.

Scope and Contents

The Rolf Ransenberg papers consists of the correspondence from the Ransenberg family to their son Rolf, who was in the United States. The letters are personal in nature, and often contain notes from everyone in the family, including all of the other children, since Rolf was the oldest. They range in length from shorter notes to longer letters, but are nonetheless frequent and consistent throughout the period from 1938-1941. In addition to the letters, there are also some personal documents that belonged to Rolf and Friedel Ransenberg, including paperwork regarding Rolf’s service in the U.S. Army during World War II.

Conditions Governing Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

Conditions Governing Use

All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Manuscripts Librarian. Permission for publication is given on behalf of Special Collections as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained.

Preferred Citation
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Nora Beraja, August 13, 2015.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Holocaust survivors -- Germany -- Archival resources
World War, 1939-1945 -- Germany -- Archival resources
Correspondence
Ransenberg, Rolf, 1923-
Ransenberg, Rolf, 1923- -- Archives
Ransenberg, Alfred, 1932-1944 -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Friedel, 1925- -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Gunther, 1926-1942 -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Inge -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Jakob, 1894-1944 -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Karl-Heinz, 1928-1944 -- Correspondence
Ransenberg, Matilde, 1896-1942 -- Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 1  [Correspondence] 1937 April 26-1938 December 3
Box 1, Folder 2  [Correspondence] 1939 January 2-1939 December 16
Box 1, Folder 3  [Correspondence] 1940 January 8-1941 November 2
Box 1, Folder 4  [Correspondence] undated
Box 1, Folder 5  [Rolf and Friedel's World War II/post-war personal documents and correspondence] 1944-1947
Box 1, Folder 6  [Empty envelopes] undated