

MS-239

**DR. CHARLES R. BERRY'S PAPERS:
The Survivors of the Holocaust
Oral History Project**

Special Collections and Archives
Wright State University Libraries
Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio



**WRIGHT STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Processed by:
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Introduction

The Charles R. Berry Papers pertaining to the oral history project that document the experience of the survivors of the Holocaust in the Dayton, Ohio area were donated by Dr. Berry to the Wright State University Archives in January of 1992. The collection consists six Hollinger boxes spanning two (2) linear feet and organized into seven series:

Series 1	Organization of the Project
Series 2	Oral History Project, Taped Interviews
Series 3	Other Oral History Programs
Series 4	Yom Hashoah and Other Holocaust Memorial Activities
Series 5	Newspaper Article
Series 6	Educational Materials
Series 7	Miscellaneous

There are no restrictions on the use of the collection.

History

The Survivors of the Holocaust Oral History Project was conceived by Dr. Charles R. Berry, presently Professor of History at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Dr. Berry was born in Palestine, Texas. Raised in a home that was quite liberal for its time, and influenced by his father, who was a Protestant minister and an unabashed foe of anti-Semitism, Dr. Berry became profoundly affected by the Holocaust at an early age. Long before embarking on this project, Professor Berry was greatly troubled by the fate of the Holocaust victims. During a dinner conversation some thirty years later, Rabbi Albert Goldman of the Wise Temple in Cincinnati talked about his interviews with congregants who were survivors of the Holocaust. Dr. Berry, who had specialized in oral history, recognized the potential of permanently recording, on audio recording tape, the experiences of the survivors who lived in and around Dayton, Ohio.

From the very start, the lack of an adequate number of volunteers became apparent. This would prove to be one of the project's persistent problems. Although generally praised, it rarely had enough hands-on workers. This obstacle appeared at the first meeting which had been scheduled for April 21, 1977, but had to be postponed due to the lack of attendance. The following two meetings were then held as scheduled. It was during these first three meetings that the project assumed its life-form. Parameters were established; the uniqueness of the program was determined; the term "survivor" was defined; and the nature of the organization (to be independent or associate with an institution?) was defined. Moreover, many survivors in the area were identified, and the type of questionnaire to be used was chosen. Subsequent to the third meeting, a tentative questionnaire was formulated. Mentioned too, was the existence of 100 to 175 Jewish victims of Nazi persecution living in Dayton and the vicinity. The number of non-Jewish victims could not be ascertained at that time.

As the result of these findings, two subcommittees were established, one dealing with an acceptable questionnaire and the other with devising a strategy of initiating and maintaining contact with the survivors. Of the two, the one concerned with designing the questionnaire created the greatest controversy due to the concern for the sensitivities of the interviewees. It was the consensus of the committee to respect the feelings of the survivors to the utmost, as they recalled their painful memories. In turn, this gave rise to disagreements that centered around the specific role of the interviewer, length of the interview, and whether the interview should be controlled or uncontrolled. These differences also caused Professor Berry considerable anguish. Appended to the handwritten draft of the June, 1978 meeting minutes were some personal observations regarding the format of the questionnaire. However, these do not appear in the official version of the minutes. Dr. Berry's main criticism dealt with the fact that his directions, which were requested by the committee, were either rejected or accepted only in part. Sometimes they were debated to death. The appendage also reveals his thoughts about the goals of the project as well as the length of the interviews. As to the latter, Dr. Berry noted that an interview of this nature is more than a pat question and answer dialogue. Rather, it is an effort between interviewer and interviewee to facilitate the revelation of the ultimate

purpose of the victims' tortured deaths, sufferings, and humiliations. At last, through the modifications of some questions as well as the elimination of others, a questionnaire was agreed upon. Eventually, a procedure for contacting and interviewing the survivors also emerged. During the summer of 1978, twenty interviews took place. Thereafter, the numbers decreased to a total of thirty-two at the end of the year. The reduction in the amount of interviews can be attributed to many factors including less interviewers than expected.

In time, the Oral History Project branched out into other activities, which were also dedicated to the remembrance of the Holocaust. These programs were first suggested as a means of obtaining additional funds. An oral history project, *per se*, was thought to appeal only to scholars and other researchers. However, programs of "non-scholarly," but "meaningful" nature were believed to generate added support among the general public for efforts to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. Therefore, a subcommittee was appointed to investigate the feasibility of various ideas. Curiously enough, the subcommittee reported back that it would be in the best interest of the project to continue to concentrate on its original mission and not to proliferate into related endeavors. Nevertheless, the possibility of presenting lectures, symposia, etc., had already been favorably *discussed* by the committee. Later, the group was informed that funding for one lecture per year, for three years, was available. This provided the endowment for the establishment of the Dr. Hans Liebermann Memorial Lectures.

Dr. Hans Liebermann was a prominent physician in Dayton, Ohio. He had fled from Germany in 1938 and was well known for his work in resettling victims of the Holocaust in Dayton as well as for the generous donation of his services to the Children's Hospital. He *died in* 1977. The first lecture, which was held on March 27, 1980, featured Dr. Franklin Little, a Christian clergyman noted for his accomplishments in Holocaust education. Because the money allocated for the lecture did not allow for Dr. Little's usual fee, compensation of a different kind was agreed upon. Two more yearly lectures followed. Each headlined a personality whose work in connection with the Holocaust had been somewhat unique. The locations of the three lectures alternated between Antioch College and Wright State University.

Another venture devoted to the Holocaust was the production of a documentary film that depicted the interaction between survivors and high school students in a classroom setting. Made under the title "Chosen to Live," with the help of a local television station and at minimal cost, it was first shown on October 10, 1985. In its desire to disseminate as much knowledge as possible about the Holocaust, bibliographies in addition to other educational resource materials were compiled so that they may be freely available to the public. Regrettably, inadequate funding limited a broader awareness of the need to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. Major foundations and funds, although approached more than once, could not find themselves at liberty to assist a project of this kind. Finances became so tight at one time that Professor Berry had to write to the Wright State University Foundation, pleading desperately for an additional four hundred and fifty dollars. Indeed, the project's entire funding came from local individuals and the area's smaller foundations and trusts.

Thanks to Dr. Berry's unstinting leadership, The Survivors of the Holocaust Oral History Project came into being and expanded. The taped interviews, including any of their accompanying records, are now a part of the holdings of the Wright State University Archives. Perhaps the program would have been better served had it not deviated from its core project of taping the survivors. Nevertheless, these interviews constitute an ironclad testimony to the terrible events of this genocidal carnage. If for no other reason than to sustain the truth of the Holocaust, these memories have to be kept alive. For, after all is said and done, it is the truth that makes remembrance a reality.

Scope and Content

As conceived by Dr. Berry, the primary goal of The Survivors of the Holocaust Oral History Project was the preservation of the experiences of the Holocaust survivors in and around Dayton, Ohio. The collection documents Professor Berry's work on the project from 1977 to 1985. It also contains related materials, such as newspaper clippings, pamphlet, and books, to about 1982.

The papers are divided into seven series, each covering a different phase of the project. Most of the file titles are those of Dr. Berry's. It should be noted, however, that a title of a file is not always indicative of its content. In order to remain faithful to the original arrangement, the content of the files has been disturbed as little as possible. Nevertheless, since Dr. Berry's arrangement of the category termed "Educational Materials" included several folders of variegated items that bore little relationship to each other, the processor took the liberty, in Series Six, of combining the materials in these folders into two major groups of like contents. The following arrangement of the collection eventually evolved:

Series 1	Organization of the Project
Series 2	Oral History Project, Taped Interviews
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Much of what is in series four, as well as in series seven, is catalogues, price lists, and like items which are outdated but have been retained due to some unique feature. Such items include illustrations, texts, and biographical sketches. Judging from the amount of letters in Box 1 File 4, Dr. Berry seemed to have had an extensive correspondence with Mrs. Eric (Rita) Kohlhagen and Mrs. Hans (Lottie) Liebermann. It is also noteworthy that most of the meetings' proceedings do not appear as minutes, but they appear in letters addressed to the committee members.

The following files seem to have some significance: Box 1 File 2, insofar as it traces the early developments of the project. It deals with such matters as the final definition of "survivor," the evolution of the questionnaire, the establishment and maintenance of contact with the survivors, Dr. Berry's estimated budget, and the genesis of the Dr. Hans Liebermann Memorial Lectures. This file also holds the draft letter that expresses Professor Berry's frustration over the differences of opinions regarding the questionnaire. In Box 1 File 3, the resolutions are of some importance, since they clarify the purpose and scope of the project. Box 1 File 15 to Box 2 File 2, contain a great deal of biographical information. Parts of Box 4 File 1, are a biographical sketch of Dr. Hans Liebermann, in addition to the records of Dr. Little's compensation. Almost all of Box 4 File 5 is devoted to the film "Chosen to Live." In Box 4, File 6 is a Program Planning Guide for Holocaust Observances, and Box 4 File 9 contains two photographs, with negatives, of memorial markers placed on mass graves.

The entire Series 5 is made up of newspaper articles that could be of some historical value. In Box 2, File 3, The Dayton Jewish Chronicle of March 2, 1978 offers a short biography of Dr. Berry. Of some local historical value may be the pamphlet concerning the American-Jewish Tercentenary Week that can be found in Box 6 File 5.

The collection also revealed two serendipitous finds. One consists of three, apparently rare, German booklets that are part of Box 4 File 10. Respectively, they pertain to citizens of Berlin who had helped Jews during the Holocaust; the almost forgotten Buam organization; and the Jews of Berlin that were active in the underground. The second discovery comprises a number of copies of the now defunct German newspaper Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden. This paper was mainly a propaganda sheet meant for the ethnic Germans (Ausland deutsche) that resided in the Netherlands. It probably came into the collection as an example of the hectoring of Jews by the Nazis. Also notable, but not unique, is the publication of the termination of Jewish civil rights pursuant to a decree by the Reichskommissar for the Netherlands. Aside from its Jew-baiting, these also may be of interest: The apologia for the German conquest of the Netherlands; advice on the correct relationship of ethnic Germans to the Dutch citizens; the gloating over German military victories; and the treatment of the German retreat. A microfilm of the newspapers, with a letter showing provenance, is located in Box 6 File 6.

CONTAINER LISTING

SERIES 1: ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Committee Organization Correspondence - Correspondence including total amount received from the Idding Foundation; Announcement of the first Dr. Hans Liebermann Lecture. Committee reports. Membership roster with one showing the signatures and professions of members.	1977-1980
	2	Committee Meetings - Correspondence. Reply cards indicating the ability to attend meetings. Result of a mailing regarding interviews.	1977-1980
	3	Purpose Antioch and Wright State University Affiliation and Support - Request to be affiliated with Wright State University and attachment. Resolution of Wright State University. Summary drafts of project.	1978
	4	General Correspondence - Business and other formal correspondence. Personal Correspondence.	1977-1986
	5	Finances Budget - Correspondence containing lists of foundations and grant proposals. Invoices. Wright State University Foundation account summaries. Summary of Wright State University Foundation contributions. Handwritten project budget.	1978-1985
	6	Project Funding-Grants - Correspondence. Fund proposals and applications. Handwritten notations. Copy of the resolution of endorsement of the Wright State University. List of prospective donors. Hand written job description for a full-time interviewer. Request for funds. Pamphlet. Newspaper clippings. Press release. Budget calculations. Notations on a file folder giving names and dates.	1977-1978
	7	Funding - Correspondence with donors including the following: Draft letter stating goals and methodology of the project, definition of "survivor." Letter seeking much needed money from the Wright State University Foundation. Application addressed to the Review Committee of the Dayton Chamber of Commerce. Budget summary. Authorization by the Wright State University to establish an account. List of potential donors.	1978-1987
	8	Solicitations and Acknowledgements - Logo, letterhead, and envelope of the project. List of possible donors. Solicitations of various foundations and replies.	1979-1980

SERIES 2: ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – TAPED INTERVIEWS

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>	
1	9	Questionnaire Questionnaires and revisions - 6x8 index cards. Several copies of the Questionnaire with suggested modifications. Draft questions to be reviewed by Mrs. Appel (notations on reverse side).	1978	
	10	Julie Orenstein's Internship - Prospectus of History Course 715. Summary of internship. Summary of various interviews.	1978,1984	
	11	Survivors List of Survivors 4x6 index cards. Roster of survivors. Correspondence. Coded list of Dayton area Survivors with additional information. List of survivors with biographical sketches.	1977-1978	
	12	Initial Contact with Survivors. Sample of a reply card showing the willingness of a survivor to participate in the project. Original draft letter, with corrections, inviting prospective participants to complete the reply card. Photocopy of the corrected letter. Draft of a follow-up letter. "Suggestions for Interviewers" telling how to conduct an interview. Handwritten draft of the original questionnaire. Rough, typewritten letter suggesting how to approach prospective participants (with a handwritten conclusion). Copy of the above letter with an invitation to critique the same.	1978	
	13	Children of the Holocaust Project - Correspondence. Newspaper clippings indicating the concept of such a project.	1978	
	14	Interviewers (possibilities) - Completed reply cards showing whether addressees were willing to participate. Suggested names of interviewees.	1978-1980	
	15	Potential Interviewees Potential Interviewees A-F - 6x8 index cards giving the names of the interviewees with some biographical information. Newspaper clippings concerning interviewees.	1978-1983	
	16	Potential Interviewees G-L - Same as File 15	1978-1983	
	17	Potential Interviewees M-W -Same as File 15.	1978-1983	
	2	1	Potential Interviewees: Eugene H. Horvath and Mr. and Mrs. Micheel 6x8 index cards. Correspondence. Newspaper clippings.	1978
		2	Potential Interviewees: Mrs. Rita Kohlhagen, Mrs. Evelyn Ostreicher, Mr. and Mrs. K. Reisner, Mr. and Mrs. Stine. Same as File 2.	1978

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
		Publicity	
2	3	News Releases to Area Newspapers - Correspondence. Newspaper clippings. Photocopies.	1978, 1983
	4	Publicity for Project - Newspaper clippings. Photocopies.	1976-1985
	5	Speaking (Engagement) Related to Project Correspondence. <u>Curriculum Vitae</u> of Dr. Berry.	1978-1980
	6	Publication Possibilities - Correspondence in regard to the publication of a book on the project.	1982
		Correspondence & Releases	
	7	Archival Tape Records - Correspondence. Draft form of a check list. Tape holding of the archives stating provenance <i>and time</i> period of each tape. Collection description by Julie Orenstein.	1985
	8	Mrs. Charles (Helen) Abramovitz	1984
	9	Mrs. Bert (Carmen) Appel	1984
	10	Walter Becker	1980
	11	Donald Bender	1984
	12	Mrs. Paul (Margaret) Ebert (Deceased)	1978
	13	Hans Erman	1981
	14	Mrs. Hans (Helene) Reman	1981
	15	John Farnbacher	1984
	16	John H. Feenstra	1980
	17	Robert Feist	1980
	18	Mrs. Robert (Ruth) Feist	1978-1979
	19	Kurt Fish	1978-1979
	20	Mrs. Norman (Lee) Fishman	1984
	21	Mrs. Wiktor (Emma) Fiszlewicz	1981-1982
	22	Mrs. Abe (Rachel) Frydman	1980
	23	Dr. Felix Garfunkel	1981-1982
	24	Mrs. Roy (Ronnie) Harlan	1984
	25	Ernest Heilbronner	1981
	26	Mrs. Stephen (Kate) Kahn	1980
	27	Erie Ernst Kohlhagan	1970-1980
	28	Eugene Krauss	1979
	29	Mrs. Mark (Esther) Lawner	1981,1984
	30	Paul Leeser	1978-1980
	31	Mrs. Bernard (Lillie) Levine	1981-1982
	32	Dr. & Mrs. Hans Libermann	1978-1982
3	1	Jerzy Lubinfeld	1978,1981
	2	Lydia May	1978,1981,1995
	3	Benjamin Muler	1978
	4	Mrs. Benjamin (Bernice) Muler	1978
	5	Hannah Northway	1982
	6	Sig Sanders	1983,1991
	7	Voelga Silbermann	1978-1980
	8	Henry Steeber	1980,1995
	9	Abraham Stine	1982,1995
	10	Dr. Murray Weisman	1980-1981

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
Background Information			
3	11	Holocaust Background Information	Undated
	12	Judaism Background Information	Undated
	13	Newspaper Clippings – General	1975-1978
	14	Holocaust Survivor Interviews – Television Schedule	1990-1991

SERIES 3: OTHER ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
Dr. Hans Liebermann Memorial Lectures			
4	1	First Lecture - Correspondence, among others, with Dr. Little, Mrs. Liebermann, and Dr. Weinberg; also includes Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Little, acknowledgements, and letters announcing the lecture. Handwritten format of the program for the lecture. Finished program. Photograph of Dr. Little. Newspaper releases. Rough draft of an introduction to the first lecture by Dr. Berry. List of preparations for the lecture.	1980
	2	Second Lecture - Correspondence: About and with Dr. Bass; also contains acknowledgements for financial support as well as preparations and invitations to a luncheon. Curriculum Vitae and photo of Dr. Bass Program. Newspaper clippings and news releases. List of preparatory chores. Invoices, receipts, and vouchers.	1980-1981
	3	Third Lecture - Correspondence: With Helen Epstein, Mrs. Liebermann, Mr. and Mrs. James Levinson; also included are acknowledgements, Curriculum Vitae of Helen Epstein, and announcements. Newspaper clippings and news releases. Program. List of preparatory activities. Vouchers and receipts.	1982
Available Audiovisual Materials			
	4	Newsletters for Schools - Various newsletters. Bibliographies. "Filmography" by Evelyn Eaton with handwritten introduction and annotations.	1984-1991
	5	Film Project - Letter seeking help from commercial organizations in providing speakers on the Holocaust for schools. Correspondence respective to "Chosen to Live." Sample invitation to attend preview of film. Financial records dealing with the film.	1983-1986

SERIES 4: YOM HASHOAH AND OTHER HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
		Holocaust Memorial Activities	
4	6	Holocaust Memorials - Reproduction of Holocaust - document. Announcement of a meeting of Nazi camp liberators. Description of the Holocaust Memorial in Dayton, Ohio. Programs, including one of the official ground breaking of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprint of the "Recommendation of the President" dealing with a permanent National Holocaust Memorial. Announcement of an International Liberators' Conference. Program Planning Guide for Holocaust Observances.	1976-1987
	7	Holocaust History (Project) - Rough draft of a speech by Dr. Berry concerning the Holocaust Oral History Project and dealing mainly with the growth of Holocaust literature in the media from 1963 to 1930.	1980
	8	National Institute of the Holocaust - Correspondence. Promotional literature. Bibliographies. Announcements. Envelope showing address. Result of a questionnaire about the teaching of the Holocaust in academic institutions. Newsletters.	1978-1984
	9	Information (Geographical) - Two photographs with negatives of markers on mass graves in Lithuania and accompanying correspondence. List of possible sources of Holocaust photographs	1980
	10	Documents - Three booklets having to do with Berliners that aided in Jewish survival, the Baum organization, Berliner Jews of the underground. A thank-you letter by a Hugo Schendel for furnishing affidavits facilitating his emigration to the United States Copy of a release from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Photograph of a puzzling list of names.	1940-1941, 1982
	11	Requests for Information - Various agencies seeking information about witnesses to Nazi atrocities.	1979-1980
	12	Films - Literature dealing with Holocaust films. Filmographies. Announcements of film showings. Letter asking the Wright State University to edit the tapes of the Oral History Project.	1982-1987
	13	Interfaith Yom Hashoah Memorial Services - Correspondence. Booklets. Pamphlets. Programs.	1978-1987

SERIES 5: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
5	1	Clippings from local as well as metropolitan papers dealing with different aspects of the Holocaust.	1966 – 1979
	2	Same as File 1, but also contains articles on the Nazi regime and the film "Shoa."	1980 – 1987

SERIES 6: EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
		Literature	
5	3	Books and Pamphlets - <u>Yad Vashem Studies, Salmagundi, from My People</u> (Abba Eban) "The Holocaust," <u>Human Rights and Genocide: 1975, The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, The Holocaust</u> (mostly photographs, some children's drawings), <u>Yad Vashem, Commemorative Observances for the Days of Awe</u>	1957, 1975-1977, 1985
	4	Reprints - These are concerned with, <u>interalia</u> , the moral and philosophical approach to the Holocaust; Holocaust revisionism; teaching the Holocaust. Also a part of the file are OP-ED articles; a critique of the definition "Holocaust" by Yehuda Bauer; and others.	c.a.1980
	5	News Items, Clippings, Periodicals, Newsletters - Contains such items as book reviews, biographical sketch of Elie Wiesel, local news, views on the Holocaust, impact of the NBC "Holocaust" series in Germany. Also on freedom fighters and survivors.	1977-1982
		Resource Materials	
	6	Bibliographies and Catalogues.	1978-1987
	7	Pamphlets and Guides.	Undated
	8	Yad Vashem Materials - Correspondence. Additionally, list of publications, newspaper clippings, and newsletters.	1976-1983

SERIES 7: MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
6	1	American Jewish Archive's Folklore Project - History and abstract. Forms such as tape outline, contract sheet, log, and release.	1979
	2	Other Oral History Projects - Correspondence. "Oral History and Photo Documentation Project." Video Archives of Yale University Guide. "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Holocaust and Jewish Studies, University of Waterloo, 1982"	1982-1988
	3	Workshops, Symposia, Etc. Correspondence. Announcements and publicity.	1978-1986
	4	International Gatherings - Correspondence. Announcements of meetings. Brochures. Newspaper clippings.	1980-1983
	5	Jewish Community Council - Correspondence. Pamphlet about the American Jewish Tercentenary Week, 1955. Newsletter. List of constituent organizations, 1977. Roster of Executive Committee.	1977-1981

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
6	6	Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden - Microfilm of copies. Original copies located in Oversized File 30, Location 20. Also letter showing provenance	1944-1945, 1955, 1977, 1983