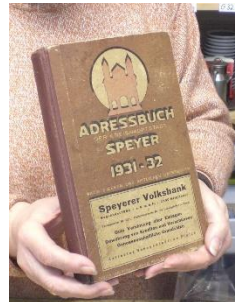


## A Wedding Diary from 1908 as an Element of Unification

Written by Ofra Satat Millo and Yoram Millo

In the year 2008, my wife, Ofra, and I, Yoram Millo, arrived in the city of Speyer, with a strong wish to get to know the place where my father, the late Ephraim Millo, formerly Franz Muhlhauser grew up, and to research the history of my family members, all of whom had been born and living in the city for many generations.

We arrived in Speyer on a particularly freezing day, and as we were strolling through its main street, Maximilian Street, we saw a shop which held books and antiques and decided to walk in. It was a unique and welcoming "Bookworm" shop that unfortunately has since then been closed down. After hearing my family story, the store owners presented us with a book containing the city's population registry during the years 1931-32.



You could say in fact, that at that moment, our journey to discover details about my family members had actually began. As things turned out and thanks to the shop owners, we managed to meet the incredible Mr. Johannes Bruno, who dedicated his life to the memory of the Jews of Speyer, well-known for his research and writing, both books and local newspaper articles about those Jewish families who lived in Speyer and were liquidated during the Holocaust. As he handed us his book "Schicksale Speyerer Juden, 1800 bis 1980" (Schriftenreihe der Stadt Speyer), a whole world opened up to us, revealing a specific chapter about the Dreyfuss family, which is the family of my grandmother Marie Muhlhauser nee Dreyfuss.

From this point on, the pieces of my family's puzzle which have previously been missing, began to connect since my father did not talk much about his past, neither did he tell us very much about his family members - a phenomenon that is very common among Holocaust survivors who lost their loved ones during the Holocaust.

Very surprisingly, considerable progress was made when in 2011 we found a letter in our mailbox, sent to us by Mr. Bruno, in which he conveyed the fact that a woman living in Speyer had approached him, noting that having read his article in the local newspaper about the Dreyfuss family, she remembered the fact that in her library she saw a diary by that title. It had been written before the wedding that took place between the couple Marie Dreyfuss and Albert Muhlhauser, who are my grandparents. The excitement that filled up our family's hearts was indescribable. At that moment we took a decision to travel to Speyer the soonest possible in order to get hold of this very rare and precious diary.

We arrived in Speyer in November 2011 together with our dear sons, Ori and Danny, who made an immense effort to come with us in order to honor this special event, considering its great importance. It is noteworthy that our arrival in the city was both important in the aim of honoring the impressive annual ceremony in memory of the Kristallnacht as well as taking part in the inauguration of the new Synagogue in Speyer.



Together with Johannes Bruno, we were all excited to reach the "Bookworm" shop, where our journey had begun a few years earlier and meet up with Mrs. Marie Boss who arrived especially to give us my grandparents' diary. We were faced by a beautiful, well-groomed and energetic woman, with alert and curious blue eyes, silvery hair, elegantly dressed and fluent in English.

Mrs. Boss handed me the diary, while commenting that "You look exactly like your grandfather!". I, who had never been privileged to see a picture of my grandfather, felt immensely moved together with my wife and sons. I finally felt something tangible from my family which I never got to know or had the privilege of having.

With a beating excited heart, I opened up the diary and got a glimpse of the picture of my grandparents together with us all, for the first time, standing out in one of the first pages of the diary.



Marie and Albert in the photo in the diary, 1908

We went with Mrs. Boss to a nearby cafe in order to continue our conversation, get to know her and understand, among other details, how the diary happened to land in her hands and, of course, further listen to everything detail. She said she inherited this library from her late aunt, and among all the books was this diary.

Marie-Louise Boss (nee Sitzenstuhl) was born in Speyer on November 15, 1930, trained as a pediatric nurse and spent many years outside Germany, including New York and Paris, seeking contact with Jewish families, including caring for their children. The bitter fate of the Jews indeed touched her heart most deeply.

As we talked to her we managed to understand why she said that I looked like my grandfather. She was acquainted with him and saw him with her own eyes! We therefore gained a significant eyewitness testimony because she remembered well that when she was 8, the morning of Kristallnacht in November 1938, she saw my grandfather Albert Muhlhauser, and described him as walking around in great confusion between the smoky ruins of the synagogue and the shattered factory shop, which was located close to the Synagogue.



SS soldiers in front of 'M.Dreyfuss & Sohne', Speyer, 1938

In addition, Mrs. Boss recalled that when she was 10, on October 22, 1940, while playing with her friends on the street near her home, a red bus arrived, stopped in front of the house where my grandparents and aunt used to live, after being expelled from their home. They were apparently picked up with their luggage, along with other Jews. She did not know then that it would be a journey from which they would never return.

On one of our next visits to Speyer Mrs. Boss led us to the exact spot where they were put on the bus.

These testimonies of Mrs. Boss were incredibly significant to us, both shaky and moving. As our acquaintance with Mrs. Boss deepened, we came to realize more so that we were confronted by an impressive woman, both unique, noble, liberal, peace-loving, with high awareness of human rights and extensive knowledge of literature, politics and history. We fell in love with her and her family and we believe that the love was mutual.

And here I find it appropriate to expand about my family:

My grandmother, Marie Dreyfuss, was born in Speyer in 1885. In 1908 she married my grandfather Albert Muhlhauser, who was born in Hurben-Krumbach in 1879. Both families - Muhlhauser and Dreyfuss, have been deeply rooted in German life and culture for centuries. After their wedding, Marie (Dreyfuss) and Albert Muhlhauser established their home in Speyer and raised their four children with dignity and fairness. My grandfather Albert took an active part in community life in the city. He served as a soldier in the German army during World War I. At one point he was the chairman of the Synagogue in Speyer until the Nazis burned it down during Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938. Albert, along with his father-in-law, Sigmund Dreyfus, headed and managed the long-established family factory and clothing store "M.Dreyfuss & sohne" located at 38/39 Maximilian Street, where one might find today the "DM" department store.

For years then, my grandparents suffered badly from humiliation and boycotts under the Nazi regime. Their home and life enterprise were looted and taken away from them by deceitful means. On October 22, 1940, my grandparents were deported with their young daughter, Klara, to Gurs detention camp in the south of France, along with other Jews from Speyer and from the rest of the Rhineland-Palatinate. After about two years, having been held in appalling conditions and in isolation from each other, my grandmother, grandfather and aunt, who were only 23 old at the time, were deported to Auschwitz, and in August 1942 they were murdered in the gas chambers.

Over the years, my great-grandfather, Marie's father, Sigmund Dreyfuss, was one of the mainstays of Speyer. Among other roles, he served both as a member of the city council, of the audit committee at Volksbank Speyer, a social and political activist in the Democratic Party (DDP), the chairman of the clothing manufacturers' association in southern Germany, as well as the owner of the factory and clothing store (along with his brother Josef Dreyfus). "M.Dreyfuss & Söhne" was a factory founded in the early 19th century by Sigmund and Joseph's grandfather, Moritz Dreyfuss.

This article is too short to mention all of Sigmund's other activities in the benefit of his city and its people. Unfortunately, all his activities in benefit of his society and state did not manage to protect or save him. Therefore, on the night of November 9, 1938, Kristallnacht, at the age of 79, he was forced to try and save his own life and escape from his beloved hometown of Speyer. First, he fled to Baden Baden, and shortly afterwards to the city of Wiesbaden, where he was allowed to stay only in exchange for an extremely inflated price, that had to be paid to the local authorities.

For four years the old man Sigmund Dreyfuss was forced to wander between several homes. The last place he lived in had been a building in which the authorities crammed the city's remaining Jews of Wiesbaden while increasingly depriving them of their rights. In August 1942, Sigmund was ordered to report to the courtyard of the old Wiesbaden synagogue to be deported to the Theresienstadt camp. Sigmund, who immediately understood what would happen to him and out of a desire to preserve, even slightly, his dignity, and to stop the continuing pleasure that the authorities took in his humiliation, took his own life at the age of 83.

Albert and Marie's remaining children: My father, Franz, his brother, Ernest, and their sister, Stephanie fled Germany at the last minute. Stephanie and Ernest emigrated to the United States while my father set foot on the land of Israel, a few days before Kristallnacht. A few years later he married my mother, Ruth, who also came from Germany. After the establishment of the State of Israel, my father changed his name to Ephraim Millo.

On this occasion, I regard it as my duty to mention a few of the many others from the Muhlhauser and Dreyfuss families who were murdered in various extermination camps scattered throughout Nazi Europe:

My grandmother's Marie sister, Gertrude Hedwig (nee Dreyfuss) and her husband Jacob Toitsch,

My grandfather's Albert brothers:

David Muhlhauser and his wife Cilly (Regensburg)

Jacob Muhlhauser, his wife Rosa (Grunhut) and their daughter Francesca Muhlhauser,

Adel (Braunschweiger) Muhlhauser, the wife of Beno Muhlhauser, Albert brother, who survived the Theresienstadt camp,

and Leo Kohn,— the husband of Albert sister Louise (Muhlhauser).

The houses, business, property, documents, photographs, art objects, and bank accounts "disappeared" as if they had never been. The destruction of our families was almost total.

So back to the diary.

The diary we received from Mrs. Boss is a great treasure to us. Mrs. Boss knew how important it would be for the family and therefore made an effort to reach us in order to personally hand it to us. The diary is a valuable testimony, of both personal and historical value, to the existence of previous generations. This diary was written in honor of the joyous occasion - the wedding of my grandparents Marie and Albert, on March 9, 1908, in which they each individually described the events they went through during their lives, from the day they were born to their anniversary. It sheds light both on their standard of living and quality, the values they inherited, the return of youth alongside the seriousness of adolescence, etc. This diary opens up a vast world of getting to know much more about my grandparents. The diary reveals that they never felt different or exceptional in relation to others. Unfortunately, many of their neighbors did not think so.

Since 2008 we have made many visits to the city of Speyer. We feel a deep connection to the city and its inhabitants. We wish to mention, in particular, the event that took place in 2017, in which we were presented, in an impressive ceremony held at the Speyer Municipality, 4 wine goblets that were owned by my great-grandfather, Sigmund Dreyfuss, and had ended up in an obscure way in the hands of one of the families of the city.

Another very special and meaningful event for us that took place in May 2018, which was also attended by our two sons and granddaughters, was the placement of the Stolperstein in memory of the family members in the vicinity of their home which was then located at 26 Hartmanstraße and which has changed its name today to 26 Schraudolphstraße.

Before placing the Stolperstein, we were privileged to see with great pride our dear son, Ori Millo, speaking at the City Hall - a facility where Sigmund Dreyfuss was a regular and desirable visitor, and in close contact with the mayor before the Nazis came into power. We would like to point out that all the exciting events we participated in, would not have taken place without the outstretched hand of many good hearted volunteers and people who recognize the great importance of commemorating the Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis. At this point we would like to mention the late Gerhard Cantzler, Due to his great devotion, and thanks to his efforts we received Sigmund Dreyfuss wine goblets from Mr. Hansjorg Eger, the mayor.

We are deeply grateful to all of them.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Mrs. Boss, her daughter and husband, Ina and Michelle Jung, who since we received the diary in November 2011, we have been privileged to meet them almost every time we came to Speyer, and enjoy warm and loving encounters and hence, our relationship with them has since deepened.



Danny, Ofra, Yoram, Ms. Boss and Ori Millo, Speyer, 2011@ photographed by Yoram Millo





Ms. Boss & Yoram Millo, Speyer, 2011@ photographed by Ofra Satat Millo

The last time we met Mrs. Boss was in February 2020, while she was staying at a nursing home in Speyer.

Unfortunately, she passed away on September 20, 2020.

May she rest in peace.

Since our journey in search of the family finds and items mentioned is not over, thank you, dear readers, if you can help us continue our journey in the aim of discovering our family as follows: If anyone has a piece of information or object, document or photo they believe is related to our families, please contact me by email: [yomillo@gmail.com](mailto:yomillo@gmail.com)

Finally, below are photos from the diary that represent an exciting event of union and love of spouses - love that was cut short because of blind and insane hatred. We dedicate them to commemorate the memory of my relatives and the memory of all the Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust.

