Ellen Wolf during a light moment of the December 1, 2018 Interview.
(From left to right: Herb Wolf, Danny Spungen, Rebecca & Kevin Ostoyich & Ellen Wolf)

Ellen (née Salomon) Wolf
(April 23, 1930 – July 1, 2022)[1]

Family of Good Fortune:
The Salomons' Journey from Berlin to Shanghai to Chicago

by Kevin Ostoyich, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

[Note: Items from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation are marked with "FLSFF"]

On December 1, 2018, Ellen (née Salomon) Wolf was interviewed about the history of her family. The following is a brief synopsis of that history. Ellen has since passed away. Hopefully, her words from the past will help educate young people in the present and future.

Ellen never really talked about family history with her parents. Her father, Harry Salomon, was born on June 28, 1897. His father, Max Salomon, died in 1901, when Harry was very young.[2] Ellen thought her father had four siblings and that one of Harry's sisters went to Argentina and converted to Christianity. Harry then cut off relations with this sister because he disagreed with her decision to convert.[3] Harry

[1] https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/il/hillside/ellen-wolf-14879244 (Accessed September 4, 2023).
[2] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-50/harry-salomon-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).
[3] According to MyHeritage.com, Harry had five siblings. It is possible that his oldest brother, Willy Salomon, died early. (Unlike the other siblings, there is no death date given on MyHeritage.com.) Thus, it is possible that Ellen only heard of four siblings. The sister who went to South America was most likely Meta (née Salomon) Fruh. She is

fought in the First World War. Although Harry never spoke to Ellen about his First World War experiences, she knew that he was shot twice, because he had scars from the wounds.

Selma (née Preuss) Salomon was born September 16, 1899.[4] Her father, Max Preuss, was born in Tilsit on September 15, 1868. He was a physician.[5] Selma's mother was Ida (née Hirschowitz) Preuss, who was born November 15, 1876, in Gumbinnen, East Prussia.[6] Ida was a homemaker.[7] It is not clear how many siblings Selma's mother had. It appears that she had at least two brothers; Ellen noted in the interview that one brother was killed in the Holocaust. Another brother—who changed his surname to "Price," submitted information to Yad Vashem about his parents.[8] During the course of the interview, Ellen mentioned Selma had a sister in California; thus, Selma had at least one sister.[9]

Harry and Selma most likely met in Berlin. They were married there on May 28, 1925.[10] Harry was a physician and Selma was a homemaker. Given that Harry did not have an assistant, he often asked Selma for help. As Ellen recalled this, she laughed and said that her mother "hated it. She didn't want to have anything to do with it."

Ellen had an older sister, Inge (née Salomon) Wagner, who was born on October 3, 1926.[11]

Ellen did not remember much of her childhood in Berlin. She did remember her first day of school and being given a *Schultüte* (a decorative cone filled with various sweets and school supplied that is traditionally presented to a German child by their parents on the first day of first grade). Ellen noted that whereas Inge was always the studious type and loved to read, Ellen never cared much for school.

Regarding memories of activities or friends from her time in Berlin, Ellen said, "I must have blocked that." One thing she did remember thought was that once while was walking to school or a park, a Nazi

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listed as having died in Valparaiso, Chile in 1965. https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-50/harry-salomon-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

[4] This corresponds correctly with the date of birth that is recorded in Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Holocaust Collection.

[5] Ellen mentioned her maternal grandfather's name in the interview. The details of Max Preuss' birthdate, hometown, and profession come from https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=1241057&ind=2 (Accessed September 6, 2023).

[6] Ellen mentioned her maternal grandmother's name in the interview. The details of Ida Preuss' birth and hometown come from https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11609744&ind=2 (Accessed September 5, 2023).

[7] See the "A Page of Testimony" submitted to Yad Vashem by Leo Price on June 13, 1985 at https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=1015375&ind=1 (Accessed September 6, 2023).

[8] See the "A Page of Testimony" submitted to Yad Vashem by Leo Price on June 13, 1985 at https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=1015375&ind=1 (Accessed September 6, 2023). Leo Price was living in the United States at the time.

[9] It is not clear when Selma's sister went to California. Unfortunately, MyHeritage.com does not provide any information about siblings for Selma Salomon. https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-155/selma-salomon-born-preuss-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

[10] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-50/harry-salomon-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

[11] Inge (née Salomon) Wagner predeceased Ellen. https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/il/hillside/ellen-wolf-14879244 (Accessed September 4, 2023).

pushed her into some barbed wire. She was scarred on her leg under the knee from the incident. She remembered that her father was suspended from medical practice on two occasions for being Jewish. She recalled how, before *Kristallnacht*, her father would say things like, "It's going to blow over. It's going to be okay." After *Kristallnacht*, that changed.

Ellen recalled what happened on that "Night of Broken Glass":

> We had a call in the middle of night from Dutch patients of [my father], saying, "Harry, don't ask questions, don't turn on lights. Just leave. Get out of there." So, he packed us up in the middle of the night, I remember that, and we went to the lovely people, the Dutch, and therefore neutral, and we stayed there for a couple days.

When they felt it was safe enough, the Salomon family returned to their home. Fortunately, their home had been spared from the destruction of the pogrom. Harry started to make the arrangements to get the family out of Germany. Initially, he hoped to get the family to the United States, but as with countless others, he encouraged the daunting receive U.S. visas. Eventually, Harry learned that one could go to Shanghai. Before sending the whole family across the globe, Harry went first to see if Shanghai "was fit for his family" and if he could find the necessary housing, etc. He went with Selma's uncle, Norbert Hirschowitz, and Norbert's wife, Gustl Hirschowitz. (Norbert was Selma's mother's brother.) Ellen did not remember exactly when her father left but noted that her mother, her sister, and she stayed in Berlin for approximately one more year.[12] An index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York provides an arrival date of June 27, 1939.[13] For the next year, Selma looked after Ellen and Inge without any help from family members. Ellen surmised that her father most likely had left money with her to make ends meet while he got established in Shanghai. Harry, Norbert, and Gustl found an apartment in Shanghai's French Concession. Harry tried to build a medical practice in the city but struggled initially.

About a year after Harry left, Selma, Inge, Ellen, and Harry's mother (Mathilde (née Neuhaus) Salomon) left by train to Trieste, Italy.[14] Ellen remembered the trip being "scary." She explained that whenever the conductor came around to check (tickets, etc.), "we were always afraid something would go wrong, and they'd throw us off or some such thing." Thinking back to the journey on the train, Ellen said, "That was not a comfortable trip."

After staying in Trieste for perhaps a day or so, they boarded the ship. Their cabin was comfortable. Ellen surmised that her mother may have received some help a Jewish organization for the trip: "I want to say HIAS, but I'm not sure." They befriended other refugees during the voyage. Regarding the ship's

[12] Given that Selma, Ellen, Inge, and Harry's mother arrived in Shanghai on March 7, 1940 (see below), Harry most likely left Germany in the first half of 1939.

[13] Given that Selma, Ellen, Inge, and Mathilde arrived in 1940, the June 27, 1939 arrival date is for Harry Salomon. Index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, Arolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677442 (Accessed March 23, 2025).

[14] Mathilde (née Neuhaus) Salomon (birthdate: May 14, 1863) appears on the index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, Arolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677442 (Accessed March 23, 2025).

route, Ellen remembered going through the Suez Canal and at one point someone showing her where Palestine was. "But," she said, "that was about it."

On March 7, 1940, Ellen arrived in Shanghai with her mother, sister, and grandmother.[15] Her Initial impression of the city was that it smelled overpoweringly bad and looked disgusting. By this time, Harry was no longer living with Norbert and Gustl Hirschowitz. Ellen, her mother, her sister, and her grandmother moved into the apartment he had found.[16]

The family made the most of the limited space:

> It was separated by a curtain. There were two beds we must have brought from Germany, and my mother had the mattresses—which were very good mattresses—covered with a nice fabric. So, in the daytime, you'd flip it, and it would be my father's office or a living room. And my sister and I were in the back, windowless area, with each like a bamboo bookcase type thing for our clothes. That was it!

Harry used a part of the apartment as an office, but he did not have many medical supplies there because he did not carry out his practice in the home. Patients did not come to the house; rather, Harry rode his bicycle to administer care. Ellen explained, "I wouldn't call it a practice. He worked for the various Hongkew camps…He took care of the refugees there." By "Hongkew camps" Ellen referred to the *Heime*, the large barracks-style housing facilities for impoverished refugees.

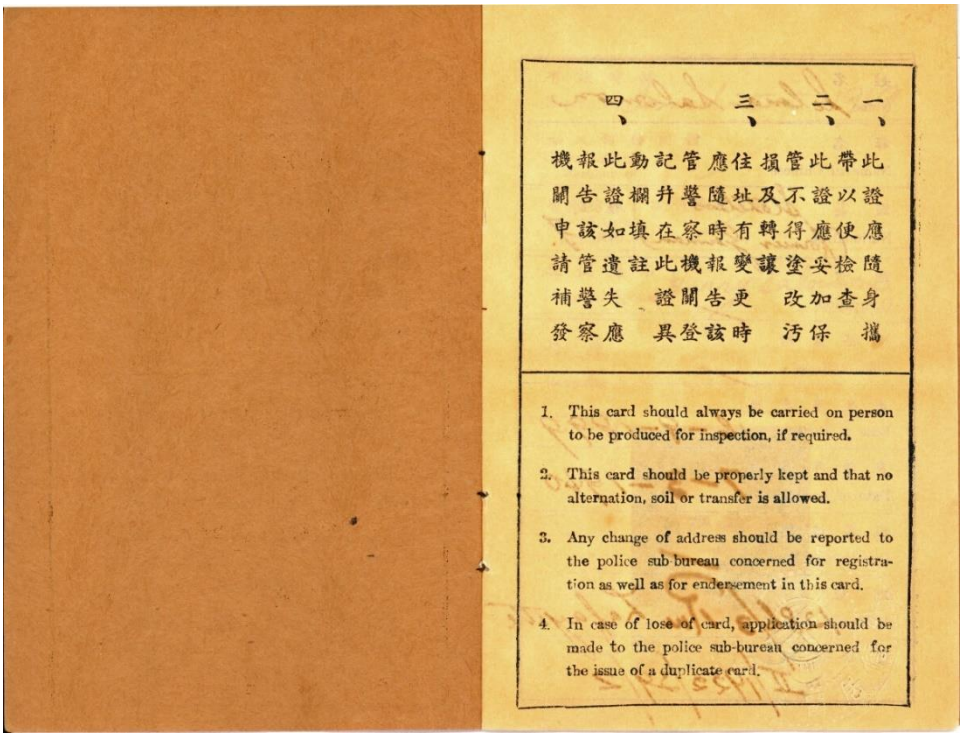
Regarding the living conditions in Shanghai, Ellen explained that children tended to accept the conditions as they were, but that, for her mother, "it must have been *really really* hard." Selma, for example, had to cook all the family meals on a makeshift stove.

Ellen recalled how they had to spray against bedbugs and set up mosquito nets. Ellen laughed about how the mosquitos always came for her but left her sister alone.

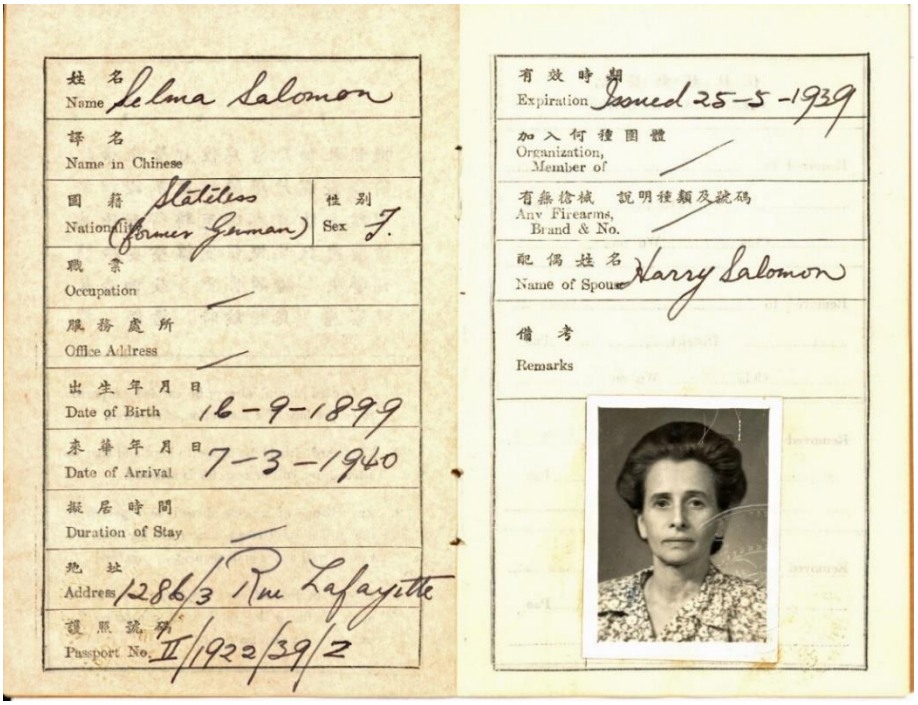
[15] The date of arrival is recorded in Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Holocaust Collection.

[16] Two addresses associated with the family have been located. The address 1286/3 Rue Lafayette is recorded in Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Holocaust Collection. That document has a discrepancy: It is noted as having been issued on May 25, 1939, but has Selma Salomon's date of arrival as March 7, 1940. It is possible that the date of issue was tied to her German passport information or to information pertaining to Harry Salomon in some way. The address 1823 Jaffre Ave was the date 1941 is listed on the index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, Arolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677442 (Accessed March 23, 2025).

Cover of Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate [FLSFF]



Inside cover and first page of Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate [FLSFF]



姓名 Name Selma Salomon

譯名 Name in Chinese

國籍 Nationality Stateless (former German) 性別 Sex F.

職業 Occupation /

服務處所 Office Address /

出生年月日 Date of Birth 16-9-1899

來華年月日 Date of Arrival 7-3-1940

擬居時間 Duration of Stay /

地址 Address 1286/3 Rue Lafayette

護照號碼 Passport No. II/1922/39/2

有效時期 Expiration Issued 25-5-1939

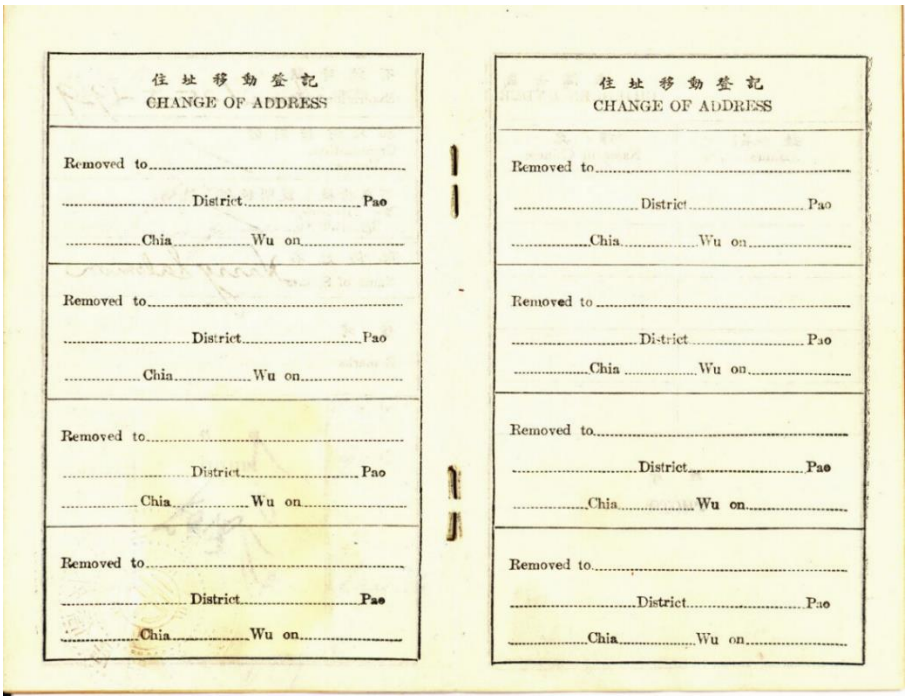
加入何種團體 Organization, Member of /

有無槍械 說明種類及號碼 Any Firearms, Brand & No. /

配偶姓名 Name of Spouse Harry Salomon

備考 Remarks

Second and Third Pages of Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate [FLSFF]



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Fourth and Fifth Pages of Selma Salomon's Foreigners Resident Certificate [FLSFF]

Most of the refugee children attended the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School. Given that the Salomon family lived in the French Concession, Ellen and Inge attended the Shanghai Jewish School, instead. Although some refugee children attended this school, it was predominantly comprised of Sephardic Jewish children and stateless Russian Jewish children. Regarding the transition to the Shanghai Jewish School, Ellen said, "I want to say that kids take things at stride. And, it wasn't a remarkable experience. Everything had changed, of course. We either walked or rode our bicycles through smelly markets to get to school. But that was the way it was then."

She believed that many of the teachers in the school had not actually been trained as teachers. As someone who later became a teacher, herself, she felt the teaching methods at the Shanghai Jewish School left much to be desired. She recalled, for example, that her history teacher simply reading from a book while she and the other students took notes. As she reflected on this, Ellen stated this was just about the worst pedagogical method one could employ.

English was the language of instruction. This was Ellen's and Inge's first exposure to the language. They picked it up within about six months. Ellen noted that they also learned the Shanghai dialect "very quickly too." Harry learned English more quickly than Selma did. Ellen thought this understandable given her father was often "out in the world" meeting and conversing with people, while her mother "was at home" most of the time. Ellen added that her mother "was very aware of her accent and reluctant to speak." Ellen did not believe her grandmother ever learned English. German continued to be the language at home. She and Inge spoke primarily German with each other during the first year but then switched to English.

Given Ellen quickly learned some Shanghainese, she was sent out to negotiate for bread for the family. She recalled, "No matter what it is you bought, you had to haggle with them [the Chinese]. So, that was my job. And, it usually worked out just fine." In addition to this bread, the family ate "a lot of rice, a lot of rice!" Ellen laughed as she thought about all the rice.

As had been the case in Germany, Inge was more of the student. Ellen simply was not interested in school. Ellen laughed as she added, "and that carried into college, too!" Ellen made good friends and was very active in sports. She played field hockey, participated in gymnastics, and roller-skated. She befriended another refugee named Karen Pardo, and together they played table tennis. Karen was a very good player, though, and would always beat Ellen. Ellen and Karen joined the Girl Guides in Shanghai. Ellen befriended many stateless Russian Jews at the Shanghai Jewish School. Some of them remained lifelong friends. She also befriended a Polish Jewish refugee and played with Chinese children as well. She recalled, "As kids, we made friends in our lane, with other children." She remembered her interactions with the Chinese children as being positive. She tended to speak Shanghainese with them. They played whatever games they could, such as hopscotch, ropes, and jacks. When she was a teen, she took dance lessons and had more of a social life. She remembers going to dances, for example.

The Salomon family resided in the French Concession the whole time they lived in Shanghai. This did not mean that Ellen had many interactions with French children. She laughed as she recalled, "There were no French in the French Concession…that I knew!" She did not have any real interactions with the British or Americans in Shanghai either. There was not much of a chance for her to have done so. She arrived in Shanghai in March 1940. On December 8, 1941, concurrent with the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese occupied Shanghai. Given that the British and American citizens were officially enemy combatants, the Japanese then stared to send them to internment camps.

The Salomon family was very fortunate. They were not mistreated by the Japanese. When the Japanese issued a proclamation in February 1943 that ordered all stateless persons who had entered Shanghai before January 1, 1937, to move into a "Designated Area" in Hongkew, the Salomons did not have to go. Ellen explained that a Japanese man named Mr. Hasida/Hasita who lived in their apartment building and was a patient of her father's said the family could stay. Ellen noted, "He…evidently had a lot of pull, and we were extremely lucky because we were never bothered again." She remembered that Mr. Hasida "thought the world of my dad and wasn't going to let anything happen." Ellen was not certain but thought Mr. Hasida may have been in the Japanese Army. Furthermore, she thought Mr. Hasida must have been ill and treated by her father at some point before the Proclamation of the Designated Area was issued. She noted that it is natural for people to like a doctor who treats them well. Her memory of Mr. Hasida was that he was "really a very nice guy. From what I remember. You know, you meet people in an apartment building. Friendly. Pleasant."

Other families, including some of her friends, had to move to Hongkew at the time. For many of the refugee children, it meant they had to transfer to the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School. Given that the Salomons stayed in the French Concession, Ellen and Inge remained in the Shanghai Jewish School.

The only difference the Japanese occupation meant for Ellen personally was that whenever she needed to go to the Hongkew district across the Garden Bridge, she had to bow to the Japanese gendarmes. Ellen went to Hongkew to attend dance lessons and visit either her friends or her aunt and uncle. (Unlike the Salomons, Norbert and Gustl Hirschowitz were not exempted from the Proclamation.) Although she was young and often travelled to Hongkew alone, Ellen did not recall ever being afraid.

Meanwhile, Harry continued to ride his bicycle to Hongkew to take care of patients. He did this despite air-raid sirens and bombings.

End of the War:

Ellen remembered that there were people who followed the developments of the war on shortwave radios, and that toward the end of the war, people were afraid that Shanghai would be subjected to more bombings. She said, "So, there was, obviously, a concern."

Although Ellen did not really recall the Japanese leaving at the end of the war, she clearly remembered the arrival of the Americans. She said the American sailors had a terrible reputation and were known to "throw out condoms through the windows." She added, "There was a whole hullabaloo about that." Ellen's sister, Inge, started to date Americans.

The end of the war was "liberating, of course." Soon thereafter, however, the Salomons and other refugee families started to receive news of the Holocaust and the fates of their loved ones. Ellen explained that her mother's parents and one of her mother's brothers were killed.

According to the testimony provided to Yad Vashem by Selma's brother, Max and Ida had lived at Speyerer Strasse 1 in Berlin.[17] According to Yad Vashem files, Max and Ida Preuss were deported from Berlin on October 18, 1941 on Transport 1 to the Łódź ghetto (which was referred to by the Germans as Litzmannstadt).[18] Yad Vashem provides detailed information about Transport 1, including the following statements:

> "This first transport from Berlin (Welle I – "Wave I") departed from Grunewald station in Berlin on October 18 and arrived in Lodz on October 19, 1941. The train was designated DA 4 by the Reichsbahn and was the first out of over 60 transports to the East (Osttransporte) which together took more than 35,000 Jews from Berlin to ghettos and extermination sites in Eastern Europe."
>
> […]
>
> "Immediately after the transport arrived in Lodz, the police confiscated all money and documents from the deportees and handed both over to the Gestapo. The Jews were then led into the local ghetto.
>
> During the period between May 4 - 15, 1942, many of the Jews who had been expelled and deported from Berlin were murdered in the Chelmno extermination camp."[19]

On May 12, 1942, Max and Ida Preuss were deported from the Łódź ghetto to the Chełmno extermination camp, where they were both murdered.[20] It is not clear what happened to the brother Ellen mentioned in the interview. Max and Ida were the only two people with the surname "Preuss" on Transport 1 from Berlin.[21]

Ellen noted that her parents were not of the same mind regarding Shanghai after the war. She explained, "Although, by that time, my father liked China so much that he really wanted to stay… [*She laughed*.] Well, my mother sure didn't think we should stay! [*She laughed*.] She was ready for normalcy again." In the end, Selma's view won out and the family made plans to leave Shanghai.

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[17] See the "A Page of Testimony" submitted to Yad Vashem by Leo Price on June 13, 1985 at https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=1015375&ind=1 (Accessed September 6, 2023). An edit has been applied with respect to the "Speyrerstrasse" misspelling in the original document.

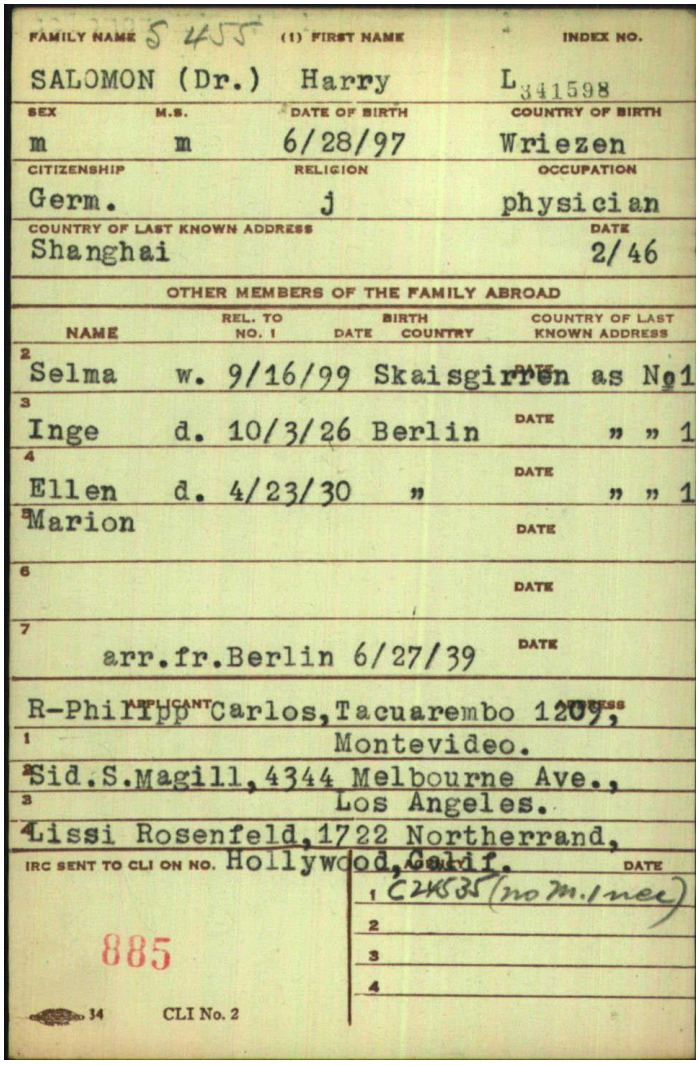
[18] For Ida Preuss: https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11609744&ind=2 (Accessed September 5, 2023); for Max Preuss: https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11609766&ind=1 (Accessed September 6, 2023).

[19] https://deportation.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&itemId=5092666 (Accessed September 5, 2023).

[20] For Ida Preuss: https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11609744&ind=2 (Accessed September 5, 2023) and https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=4126083&ind=3 (Accessed September 5, 2023); for Max Preuss: https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11609766&ind=1 (Accessed September 6, 2023).

[21] The list of those on Transport 1 from Berlin to the Lodz ghetto can be found at https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&fromDeportation=true&advancedSearch=true&deportation_value=5092666 (Accessed September 6, 2023).

The United States:



FAMILY NAME S 455 (1) FIRST NAME INDEX NO.

SALOMON (Dr.) Harry L 341598

SEX	M.S.	DATE OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF BIRTH
m	m	6/28/97	Wriezen

CITIZENSHIP	RELIGION	OCCUPATION
Germ.	j	physician

COUNTRY OF LAST KNOWN ADDRESS: Shanghai — DATE: 2/46

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY ABROAD

	NAME	REL. TO NO. 1	BIRTH DATE	BIRTH COUNTRY	COUNTRY OF LAST KNOWN ADDRESS
2	Selma	w.	9/16/99	Skaisgirren	as No 1
3	Inge	d.	10/3/26	Berlin	" " 1
4	Ellen	d.	4/23/30	"	" " 1
5	Marion				
6					
7	arr.fr.Berlin 6/27/39				

APPLICANT R-Phirpp Carlos, Tacuarembo 1209, ADDRESS Montevideo.

1 Sid.S.Magill, 4344 Melbourne Ave., Los Angeles.

2 Lissi Rosenfeld, 1722 Northerrand, Hollywood, Calif.

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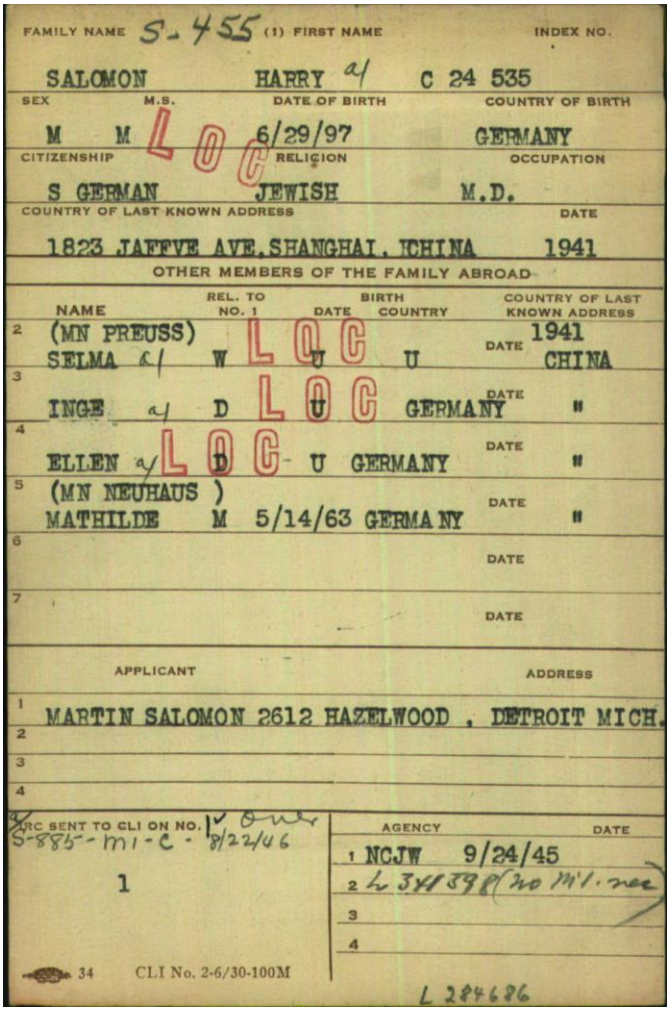
34 CLI No. 2

Index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New YorkArolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677440 (Accessed March 23, 2025).



FAMILY NAME S-455 (1) FIRST NAME INDEX NO.

SALOMON HARRY a/ C 24 535

SEX	M.S.	DATE OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF BIRTH
M	M	6/29/97	GERMANY

CITIZENSHIP	RELIGION	OCCUPATION
S GERMAN	JEWISH	M.D.

COUNTRY OF LAST KNOWN ADDRESS — DATE

1823 JAFFVE AVE.SHANGHAI. ICHINA — 1941

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY ABROAD

	NAME	REL. TO NO. 1	BIRTH DATE	BIRTH COUNTRY	COUNTRY OF LAST KNOWN ADDRESS
2	(MN PREUSS) SELMA a/	W	U	U	DATE 1941 CHINA
3	INGE a/	D	U	GERMANY	DATE "
4	ELLEN a/	D	U	GERMANY	DATE "
5	(MN NEUHAUS) MATHILDE	M	5/14/63	GERMANY	DATE "
6					DATE
7					DATE

APPLICANT — ADDRESS

1 MARTIN SALOMON 2612 HAZELWOOD , DETROIT MICH.

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Index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, Arolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677442 (Accessed March 23, 2025).

The Salomons left Shanghai on March 20, 1947.[22] As had been the case back in Berlin, the family wanted to go to the United States. As Ellen noted, "It had been [where they wanted to go] before, before we ever went to Shanghai." Regarding the journey to the United States, Ellen remarked, "All I remember about that trip is that we were sick for a long time. [*She laughs*.]"

That was not all she remembered. She recalled "*very vividly* approaching the Golden Gate Bridge. And, it was dawn, and it was just *gorgeous*. And I do remember that feeling of elation: 'We've made it!'" The Salomons arrived in the United States on April 7, 1947.[23]

[22] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-50/harry-salomon-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

[23] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-155/selma-salomon-born-preuss-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

After arriving in San Francisco, the Salomons "were stuck there for about three months." Harry needed to be recertified in the United States, and this required that he conduct an internship. The family waited while an internship was sought for Harry by HIAS. The question was whether Harry would conduct his internship in New York or Chicago.

As the family waited in San Francisco, Ellen ate. And ate. And ate some more. To Ellen, San Francisco meant food. She laughed as she exclaimed, "I gained my first thirty pounds!" Given that a vacant apartment in Chicago's Southside was made available to them by Selma's sister (who lived in California), the family ultimately left San Francisco for Chicago.

Meanwhile, Ellen's grandmother went to Detroit to live with Harry's brother, Martin Salomon.[24] Ellen surmised that it was probably determined that it would be too difficult to provide for her grandmother, especially given that Harry had to do his internship. Mathilde Salomon died on January 8, 1949 in Michigan.[25]

The Gravestone for Ellen's grandmother, Mathilde Salomon.
Photo: https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-52/mathilde-salomon-born-neuhaus-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

The first thing Ellen and Inge did in Chicago "was find jobs, because we had to support our parents." Ellen worked at Mandel Brothers, the department store on State Street during the day. After work, she walked to the YMCA on LaSalle Street and attended evening classes to earn her high school diploma. She had to take political science and U.S. history—classes that had not be offered in Shanghai. It took her about a year to finish the coursework. She then attended the University of Illinois Chicago, which was located at Navy Pier at the time. She went straight through with her studies until she finished her first master's degree.[26] Ellen stopped working when she began her university studies. She said, "Evidently, my parents could support me" at that time. Inge let Ellen attend university first, even though

[24] In the interview, Ellen noted that her grandmother went to live in Detroit with her father's brother. The name, Martin Salomon with a Detroit address appears on the index card from the Documentation of the Central Location Index (CLI) of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, Arolsen Archives: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/131677442 (Accessed March 23, 2025).
[25] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-52/mathilde-salomon-born-neuhaus-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).
[26] It appears that she may have attended the campus at Urbana-Champagne at some point—At one point during the interview, Ellen mentioned that she had lived in Chicago continuously except for "the three years in Urbana."

Inge was the older of the two. Inge had landed a very good job in a law firm that helped support the family. Ellen thought the fact that Inge had learned shorthand in Shanghai may have helped Inge get the job in the law firm. After initially delaying her education, Inge eventually attended university. Ellen exclaimed, "She sure did! My little sister caught up!" (Despite being younger than Inge, Ellen often referred to Inge as her "little sister" due to Inge's diminutive size.)

Ellen eventually became a German teacher. She had wanted to do so since her Shanghai days. She explained, "As a kid, I always wanted to teach. That was *a* goal. But it didn't translate really into activities or special thoughts how I'd get there." Although she taught German for many years, about five to ten years before the time of the interview (December 1, 2018), Ellen no longer wanted to hear the German language. She found this odd and could not explain why this was the case. She laughed and said she would perhaps be a good case for psychoanalysis. Her laughter at this thought is captured in the screenshot below.

Ellen Wolf laughing during a light moment of the December 1, 2018 Interview.
(Screenshot courtesy of Kevin Ostoyich)

Ellen's parents were very happy in the United States. After Harry received his certification, he went to work for Manteno State Hospital near Kankakee, Illinois. When asked how her father had viewed his German identity, given that he had fought in the First World War for Germany but later had to flee the country, Ellen responded that her father never renounced his German identity. She added that her father spoke German at home even in the United States. Selma Salomon passed away in 1962.[27] Harry Salomon passed away on October 27, 1974.[28]

Ellen met Herbert Wolf on a blind date. Ellen taught German, Herbert taught math, "The rest," Ellen exclaimed, "is history!"

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[27] Ellen notes 1962 in the interview. 1962 is also listed on MyHeritage.com: https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-155/selma-salomon-born-preuss-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).
[28] https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-1684606350-3-50/harry-salomon-in-myheritage-family-trees (Accessed April 29, 2025).

Good Fortune:

Ellen and Herbert had three children. They also had grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins.[29] Ellen thought that she probably told her children her Shanghai history before they were in junior high school. Her children were taught about Jewish culture, and the family celebrated the holidays. Nevertheless, religion was never a big part of Ellen's life. Neither Harry nor Selma had been religious. Ellen did not think her paternal grandmother had been devout either. The Salomons observed the holidays, but had been, overall, rather secular. Ellen and Inge had a Hebrew tutor at home in Berlin, but her family did not attend temple. She did not believe the Shanghai experience had made her family any more religious than they had been in Berlin. Ellen described herself as agnostic and claimed that she had grave misgivings about the negative effect religion has had on society throughout history. Ellen was content without religion in her life.

Ellen participated in Rickshaw Reunions, the name for the reunions Shanghailanders have held over the years. The first time Ellen attended a Rickshaw Reunion was in San Francisco. She attended two reunions in Philadelphia and a few in other cities. At the time of the interview, the last time she had attended an event that commemorated the history of the Shanghai refugees was when the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation sponsored such an event at the Hyatt in Chicago in 2013. Ellen enjoyed attending such events.

Ellen occasionally spoke about her Shanghai past. The first time she did so was in the 1950s. There was then a long gap before she spoke about it again. She had not spoken about her past for many years prior to giving the interview.

Ellen never really *felt* that she was a Holocaust survivor. She knew that she was recognized as a survivor "as a fact." It was not a topic she dwelt much on though. Nor did she focus a great deal on her refugee past. Nevertheless, she did feel an affinity with the refugees of the present day. She felt the history of the Holocaust should be included in every World History textbook and taught widely to young people. She believed the Holocaust "should never be forgotten."

Ellen never had any desire to return to Shanghai. She did not know why. As she looked back on her Shanghai experience, Ellen said succinctly, it was "A short span of my life, a certain section. Learning how to cope, naturally, not having huge expectations, others providing for you, and yet independence. I think I learned that early on." She explained that, as a kid, she had a perfectly good life in Shanghai and her family had been very fortunate to find refuge there.

Item Pertaining to Ellen Wolf in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection:

Document:

Foreigner's Resident Certificate for Selma Salomon. Issued May 25, 1939.

[29] https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/il/hillside/ellen-wolf-14879244 (Accessed September 4, 2023).

About the Author

Kevin Ostoyich is a professor of history at Valparaiso University. Kevin and his students at Valparaiso began partnering with the Florence and Laurence Spungen Foundation in 2013. The Foundation provided artifacts (mostly documents & postal history) to the students from Holocaust survivors who were in the Shanghai ghetto, "Shanghailanders," for archival studies and the curation of temporary exhibitions at the university. In 2021, he collaborated with the Foundation to author the preface and two additional chapters in the Foundation's book, *Forging Secrets: Faces and Facts Inside the Nazi Operation Bernhard Scheme,* published in 2022. In July 2023, he joined the Foundation staff as a researcher, writer, and interviewer, focusing on artifacts from the Spungen Foundation collection. He has interviewed and written stories about Shanghailanders on the Foundation's behalf.

At Valparaiso, he served as chair of the Department of History from 2015 to 2019, was the recipient of the Dixon W. and Herta E. Benz Fund for Faculty Support (an endowed position) from 2020 – 2022, and was bestowed the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2017-2018. He holds his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and his A.M. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He was recently a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (global dis:connect) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and is currently a fellow at the Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung / Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

He is a board member of the Sino-Judaic Institute and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and a non-resident fellow of the American-German Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Kevin has served as a fellow and guest professor at multiple institutions and universities; has written many articles and book chapters; has co-edited *The History of the Shanghai Jews: New Pathways of Research* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) and authored *The German Society of Pennsylvania: A Guide to Its Book and Manuscript Collections* (German Historical Institute, 2006); interviews Holocaust survivors; gives lectures about the Holocaust worldwide; and creates historical theatrical plays about Shanghai Jewish refugees with students.

The Spungen Foundation can devote many pages honoring Kevin's work, so let's just say he keeps very, very busy teaching, writing, conducting interviews, and working on documentaries.

About the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

The Spungen Foundation was established in 2006 by Florence Spungen and reflects the individual and collective philanthropy of the founders, their children, and their grandchildren. The Foundation focuses its grantmaking typically in Santa Barbara, CA and Lake County, IL. One of the Foundation's strategic areas concentrates on the Holocaust and genocide education. The Spungen Family Foundation has one of the largest collections of Holocaust artifacts in private hands, mainly consisting of postal history, such as letters, post cards, stamps, along with money, children's artwork, and more. The collection has been used for Holocaust education all around the world.

The mission of the Foundation is to improve the quality of life of individuals and families facing health challenges, and to address issues that particularly affect the Jewish community.

Visit us at: www.spungenfoundation.org

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