

The Dealer's Cards: How Gary Sternberg Has Made the Best of Them

Edited and Expanded Version with Embedded Artifacts and Photographs from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Holocaust Collection

By Kevin Ostoyich, The Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

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



Gary Sternberg reviewing artifacts and photographs with Danny Spungen on July 16, 2017. Much of the present article is based on the items Gary donated to the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation. [Photo: FLSFF]

Gerd “Gary” Sternberg was dealt a tricky hand. Born the son of a Protestant mother and a Jewish father in Cuxhaven, Germany on August 25, 1931, he experienced discrimination firsthand in Hitler’s Third Reich. Through luck and perseverance, his family was able to find safety in Shanghai, China. Given that Gary later spent almost 32 years of his life as a blackjack dealer in Las Vegas, he knows a thing or two about luck and the importance of making the best of the hand one is dealt.¹

Gary’s father, Hermann Sternberg, was born on September 2, 1893, in Wetzlar an der Lahn. Gary’s mother, Auguste (née Piassek) Sternberg, was born on November 24, 1894, in Lengoven, in present-day Poland. Hermann and Auguste had come from very different worlds: Hermann from a wealthy family of cattle farmers, Auguste from a modest family of Polish farmers. The more consequential difference between them, and one that would greatly complicate their lives, was that of religion: Hermann’s Jewish faith meant that Hermann and Auguste’s two children, Gary and Ruth, increasingly encountered discrimination even though the children were being raised in Auguste’s Protestant faith. Gary insists, however, that religion was never a point of dissention or disagreement within the family. The Sternbergs celebrated Easter, Passover, Chanukah, and Christmas. Gary remembers the Christmas trees his father would bring home: “The tree is too big or it’s too small, all the branches are on one side and



over here it's too bare, it's crooked on the top, etc., etc." But he adds that "when the tree was all decorated, it was just perfect." Hermann was always in charge of setting up the candles for the tree, and buckets of sand and water were placed at the base in case of fire. As Gary remembers, "My father would light the candles and my mother would lead us in song, she had a beautiful voice. The flicker of the lighted candles in the darkened room, the singing and the anticipation of opening the presents was a memorable and festive event."²

Hermann had been a medic during the First World War and had been awarded the Iron Cross for having crawled out of a fox hole to save the life of a wounded officer. In Cuxhaven, Hermann maintained an orthopedic practice that he ran out of the house. Gary remembers his father's workshop, where his father and an employee "would make arch supports, Hernia trusses, artificial limbs, braces and a whole array of medical appliances. It was such a fun place; there were machines, tools and all kinds of materials to make all these things."³



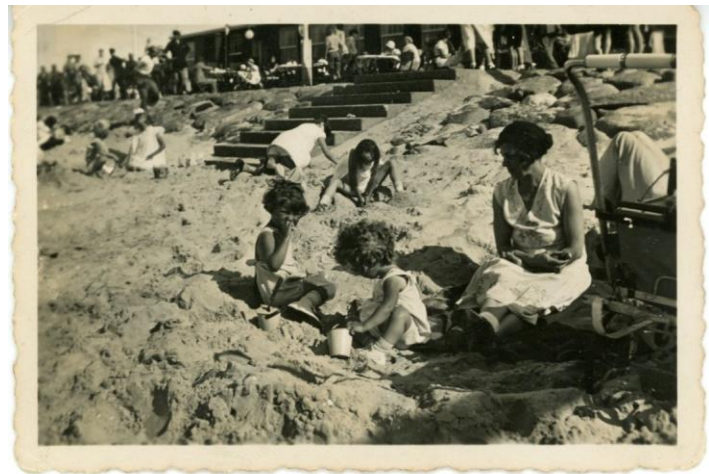
The Sternberg Family (from left: Auguste, Gary, Ruth, Hermann) [Photo: FLSFF]

Gary remembers life in Cuxhaven in idyllic terms. The Sternbergs lived on the first floor of a two-story house at Dohrmannstrasse 1, which was just a block away from the North Sea.⁴ "There was a big back yard and the side of the house had a flower garden and next to the garden there flowed a creek, it was called 'Die Wettern,' the water was usually shallow, very clear and cool, but the current was swift, we had so much fun there, wading bare-footed in the cool water with the mud squishing between the toes, a net in one hand and a tin can in the other we would catch little minnows..."⁵ Often Gary and Ruth would walk to the beautiful beach along the North Sea and gaze at Cuxhaven's famous Kugelbake (a tall structure used by seafarers for orientation). They also watched their step so as not to tread in "Kuhkacke" left like "land mines" by the cows as they grazed the grass.⁶ Some of Gary's fondest memories are those of the family dressing up and going out on beautiful Sunday afternoons, buying ice cream, and listening to bands play "Strauss waltzes and other popular dance music."⁷





(From left: Gary, Auguste, and Ruth) [Photo: FLSFF]



Ruth and Gary playing in the sand in front of Auguste
[Photo: FLSFF]



Auguste Sternberg [FLSFF]





Hermann and Auguste with Gary and Ruth in the early 1930s [Photo: FLSFF]

Storm clouds started to appear on the horizon as the 1930s progressed, however. Gary vividly remembers the problems that he encountered in school as antisemitism increasingly spread throughout the curriculum. Particularly painful for him was being forced to watch antisemitic films, which invariably depicted Jews as criminals and often contained scenes of violence. After one extremely explicit film that ended with townspeople beating up a Jew, Gary went home crying. When he explained the film to his father, Hermann said, “Don’t say anything about it.” Gary remembers his school cancelling all lessons in order to walk to the dike and greet Adolf Hitler as he sailed by Cuxhaven on a yacht: “I would guess that all the schools in town were on that dike. After a while the teachers were going around passing out paper swastika flags. It made quite a sight, the whole dike was bathed in a sea of red, black and white flags. It seemed like we were sitting there for a long time until Hitler’s ship finally appeared way off in the distance. Everybody was disappointed because they expected to at least get a glimpse of that German God. As the ship appeared, we were told that everybody jump to their feet waving their flags and arms and hollering ‘Heil Hitler,’ it was a typical Nazi propaganda spectacle.”⁸

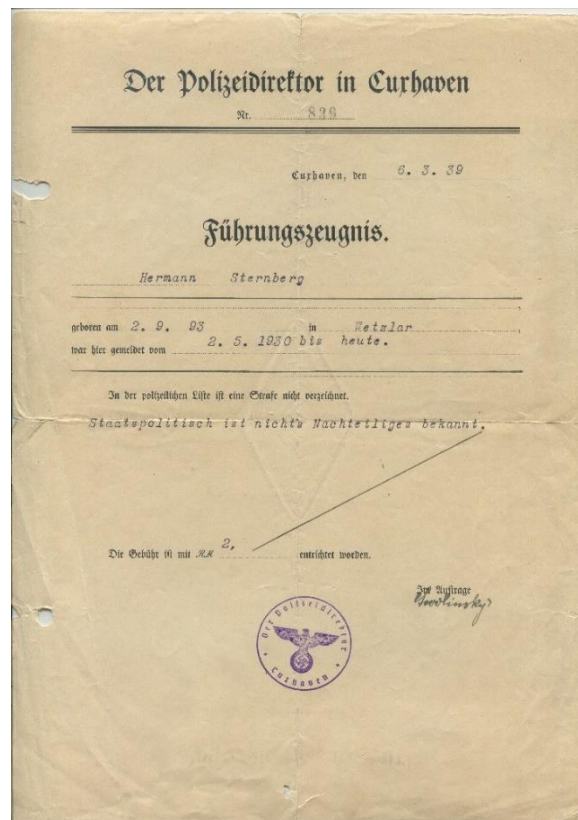
The storm finally hit the Sternbergs on the early morning of June 14, 1938. Members of the Gestapo banged on the door and carted Hermann away before he had a chance to say goodbye to Auguste and the children. Gary remembers, “My Mother was hysterical, and my sister and I were crying with all the commotion.”⁹ It would be weeks before the family learned that Hermann had been sent to Sachsenhausen. Hermann’s name appears in the Sachsenhausen “Strength Reports” of June 23, 1938, and his prisoner number in the camp is listed as 6137.¹⁰

Although Gary and Ruth were being raised Protestant, they were still viewed by others as racially Jewish. Gary says that he was shunned a lot by the other children. He started to feel this acutely after Hermann was sent to Sachsenhausen: “In school not a lot of kids wanted to befriend me. Because they knew that my father was Jewish. Especially when he went to the concentration camp, that was ‘He’s a



Jew. He's horrible. He's got horns growing out of his head.' Yeah, that was hard." Gary says that up to that time in school he was thought of as being half-Jewish, but after his father was sent to Sachsenhausen, "then the half didn't count that much; I was just Jewish, and that's it."

While Hermann was in Sachsenhausen, men simply showed up at the house and took all of Hermann's orthopedic equipment, machines, and tools. They claimed they were not stealing the items, but merely "buying it from the Jew, Sternberg." After loading everything on the truck, "the guy in charge put some papers on the table saying, 'this is the inventory of all things we bought, sign here' and with that he threw a few Marks [...] on the table and left."¹¹ Hermann was released from the concentration camp on January 28, 1939.¹² He and Auguste then tried to figure out what to do. Gary remembers his father saying that the family would have to leave Germany. As he thinks back to his father making that painful decision, Gary is reminded of the similarities of his family to that of Anne Frank. He points out how Hermann Sternberg, like Otto Frank, was a World War I hero, and how both men had to tell their families that they had to leave Germany in search of a haven: "Families being uprooted from beautiful towns and familiar places, leaving friends and possessions behind and becoming refugees overnight. These scenes like the Frank's and the Sternberg's were played out thousands and thousands of times, all for the same reason, yet each a completely different story."¹³



The Certificate of Conduct issued by the Police of Cuxhaven for Hermann Sternberg. Dated March 6, 1939.

The Certificate of Conduct was issued in the time Hermann was back in Cuxhaven after his release from Sachsenhausen concentration camp and his departure to Shanghai. The document certifies that Hermann had no criminal record and that nothing disadvantageous was known about him with respect to state policy. [FLSFF]



Hermann and Auguste were able to find one first-class ticket for Shanghai. Auguste implored Hermann to go, because, as a Jew, he was in the most danger. Somehow Hermann and Auguste scrounged up the money for the expensive ticket, as well as for new clothes that would be suitable for Hermann in first-class passage. During the months in Sachsenhausen, Hermann had lost a tremendous amount of weight and none of his clothes fit him anymore. On May 15, 1939, he left Germany for Shanghai.¹⁴ Auguste then looked for a way to get herself, Gary, and Ruth to Shanghai as soon as possible. Through the generosity of a rich client of Hermann's, Auguste got a job at a restaurant, and thus managed to provide sustenance for her children as she continued to search for a way out of Germany.¹⁵ Gary remembers that as his mother struggled to make ends meet, money and food were in short supply.¹⁶

In September 1939, the Germans invaded Poland, thus starting the Second World War. During the next year, Auguste, Ruth, and Gary experienced British bombing raids of Cuxhaven:

“Air raid wardens who never had a shred of authority in their lives were now going up and down the streets knocking on doors and shouting orders and telling people what to do, like to tape up the window glass, it had to be done in a crisscross pattern to prevent glass from shattering from bomb blasts, also making sure that drapes were completely closed to black out any light at night. If any light did show through during an air raid you were fined or jailed. Anti-aircraft gun installations and listening posts were popping up all over the place. Military personnel (mostly Navy) was increasing by the day. Officers were strutting around like peacocks.”¹⁷

Gary remembers spending nights in the bomb shelter. “It was scary as hell for a little kid. The bomb shelter was a cement thing and was cold and damp. It was not good [...]. Sometimes the bombs got so close that it broke out the windows in the house.” Gary explains, “The favorite thing for all the kids after an air raid was to go around and find bomb fragments and anti-aircraft artillery fragments. Whoever collected the most, of course, was the hero. We used to do that. I had a whole collection of those things.”

Auguste continued to work on getting her, Gary, and Ruth out of Germany and on the way to Shanghai. This proved difficult in Cuxhaven, so the three of them moved in with Auguste's sister and brother-in-law (Annie and Kurt Kasulke) in Berlin. While waiting, the family often had to go down to the basement bomb shelter of the apartment building. Gary remembers that in the shelter people often told jokes that were critical of the Nazi regime. The Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment and governing official (*Gauleiter*) of Berlin, Joseph Goebbels, was particularly singled out for ridicule: Gary remembers people calling Goebbels “*Halb Sieben*”—indicating the hands of a clock at six-thirty—to mock the Minister's clubfoot appearance. Auguste was shocked at such brazen displays of criticism of the Nazis, but Annie assured her that no one was going to say anything because they were all of like mind.¹⁸ Eventually, in Berlin, and with the help of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Auguste was able to finalize the arrangements for the trip to Shanghai.¹⁹

Auguste, Ruth, and Gary departed from Berlin and travelled by train through Poland and Russia. Gary remembers going to Moscow, where they stayed in the luxurious Metropol Hotel, and they saw all the sights of the city. They then boarded the Trans-Siberian Railroad at Moscow and continued their long journey. Gary remembers the train being very comfortable with amazing food in beautiful dining cars. His breath was taken away by the scenery of Lake Baikal as the train curved around the lake: “My pastime was to count all the tunnels [that were dug through the mountains], and I counted 53 of them!” His memory of Siberia: “Trees and trees and trees.” When they crossed the border from Russia



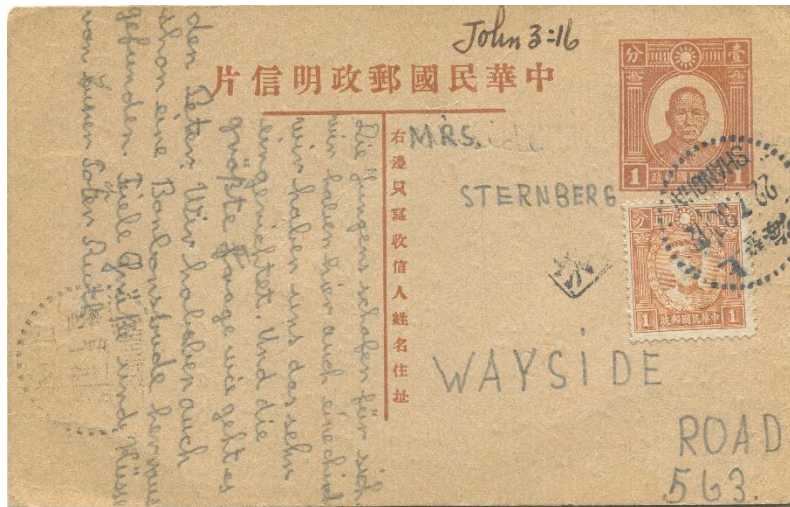
to Manchuria (at the time, the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo), Japanese soldiers boarded the train, and two soldiers stood guard with fixed bayonets in each car. Gary was frightened and thought they would be arrested. All the shades were drawn, and an announcement was made that no one was to look out the windows: "We figured that there were a bunch of Japanese military installations that they didn't want us to see." The train took them to Harbin, which Gary remembers being called "Little Israel," given its large Jewish population. In Harbin they boarded a Chinese train. The conditions onboard were dirty and the smell overwhelming. Sanitation conditions were deplorable, and there were people infested with lice. This was a "total switch" from the conditions they had experienced up to this point on their journey. On the Chinese train, Auguste, Gary, and Ruth first realized what their new lives were going to be like in China. Gary remembers his mother, whom he describes as "a neat freak" being "in total horror." Gary also remembers that on the train all the signs were in Chinese and English, "which of course we couldn't read but Muttie [Mommy] had the foresight to bring a little pocket dictionary from German to English and English to German."²⁰ The train took them to a port on the Yellow Sea. At the port they boarded a dirty Japanese steamer. Gary remembers they spent three days on this "rusted out rust bucket" journeying to Shanghai. Upon arriving in Shanghai after the long journey, they were greeted by Hermann, who informed them that he had not secured a place for them to stay. Suffice it to say, Auguste was not pleased to learn this. Fortunately, they were quickly able to find a one-bedroom apartment on Wayside Road.²¹

The apartment was on the second floor of the building and had a balcony that overlooked a Japanese garrison. From the balcony they could watch the Japanese soldiers doing their exercises with bamboo sticks.²² Overall, Gary says their relations with the Japanese were favorable, and there even was a Japanese soldier who sometimes brought fruit and meat to Gary's family.

In Shanghai, Auguste joined the Association of Central-European Protestants Refugee Organization and continued to raise Gary and Ruth as Protestant.²³ Initially, Gary and Ruth attended a Christian missionary school. Gary says the missionary school placed too much emphasis on religious instruction at the expense of secular subjects, and thus, when he and his sister later had to attend the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School, they were very far behind the other children in their respective grades.

The Christian missionary school also had extracurricular activities. For example, Gary believes that his sister's postcard that is now in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection, was sent by Ruth from a summer camp run within the missionary school system.





Postcard sent from Ruth Sternberg to her parents from a summer camp outside of Shanghai. [FLSFF].

Gary wrote the following about the postcard in an e-mail to Danny Spungen on July 18, 2017:

“Explanation ---My sister’s [postcard] was sent from a summer camp in ‘Shanghai Hills’ [outside] of Shanghai. The card explains how wonderful the camp is the food and activities, I think the camp was part of the missionary school system.”

The postcard reflects Ruth’s Christian upbringing: 1) Ruth wrote the biblical reference “John 3:16” on the front of postcard. According to King James Version of the bible, this passage reads “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” 2) Ruth wrote, “And every evening we have a campfire, yesterday evening I had to feed the 4,000.” She thus made a reference to Jesus’ miracle of feeding the multitude. [Translation by Kevin Ostoyich.]

Ruth sent the postcard during the time the family lived on Wayside Road, thus prior to when the Japanese set up the Designated Area and the family moved to the Chaoufoong Road Camp.

In 1943, the Japanese set up a “Designated Area” in the Hongkew district. This meant that Gary and his family had to move from their one-room apartment into a camp within the Designated Area. Gary explains, “Shanghai for the most part—pardon the expression—is a shithole, and Hongkew is the shithole of Shanghai.” The camp they moved into was the Chaoufoong Road Camp, which used to be a former Chinese university. Gary and Hermann slept in bunks in the men’s dormitory, and Auguste and Ruth in a large hall. Gary explains the effect on his mother: “My mother went hysterical. There were bedbugs and lice, and it stunk. She went crazy.” A few weeks later, Hermann was able to find a space in a building that was called the “Hospital Building.” They moved to the third floor of the building. There they lived with four other families in a large room that was only separated with bunk beds and sheets. They only had recourse to communal toilets and cooking facilities. Gary remembers it not being easy, with families bickering and kids screaming all the time.





Gary (first on left in middle row) as a member of the Juniors Champion team for 1944-45 in Shanghai. Leo Meyer, the prominent soccer player and physical education teacher at the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School (aka “Kadoorie School”), is standing far right. [Photo: FLSFF]

Gary fell in love with football (American “soccer”) and ping-pong. He explains how if a kid had a football or a ping-pong ball, that kid was popular. “When the ball broke, his popularity waned. So, that was the culture of the camp. [*He laughs.*]” The children put picnic tables together and placed bricks on them to serve as the ping-pong “net.” It did not matter to them that the planks of the tables were all warped. They played football on the field of the former university and had organized teams. The football league was quite large. Gary’s team was called Barcelona: “Barcelona was not a good team. We were always along the bottom end of it. We lost every damn game [...] and I couldn’t handle that.” Then Gary was asked to play for the *Alte Herren Verein* (A.H.V.) That was the top team for all the different divisions, from men’s down through the boys. “Just to be on that team—whether you ever played or not—was a great honor.” So, now Gary found out that to play on the team, he needed proper football shoes. The question was how he was going to get them. Gary remembers, “I was in tears because I knew I was going to be dumped from the team because I didn’t have football shoes.” Hermann was able to scrounge up a pair of shoes, but they were too small. Hermann said he thought the shoes were too small, but Gary said, “Oh, no, no. They’re fine! They’re fine!” In actuality, he could hardly walk in the shoes. He explains,

“When they took me off the bench, I could barely walk in those shoes, let alone run or kick the ball. But I still played on the team. [*He laughs.*] And I was still on the team. It was such an honor even though I couldn’t play worth a damn. With those shoes it was impossible. I was in pain every time we got done with the play. That was my experience playing football.”

To this day Gary’s eyes sparkle when he talks about the first place medal his A.H.V. team won.





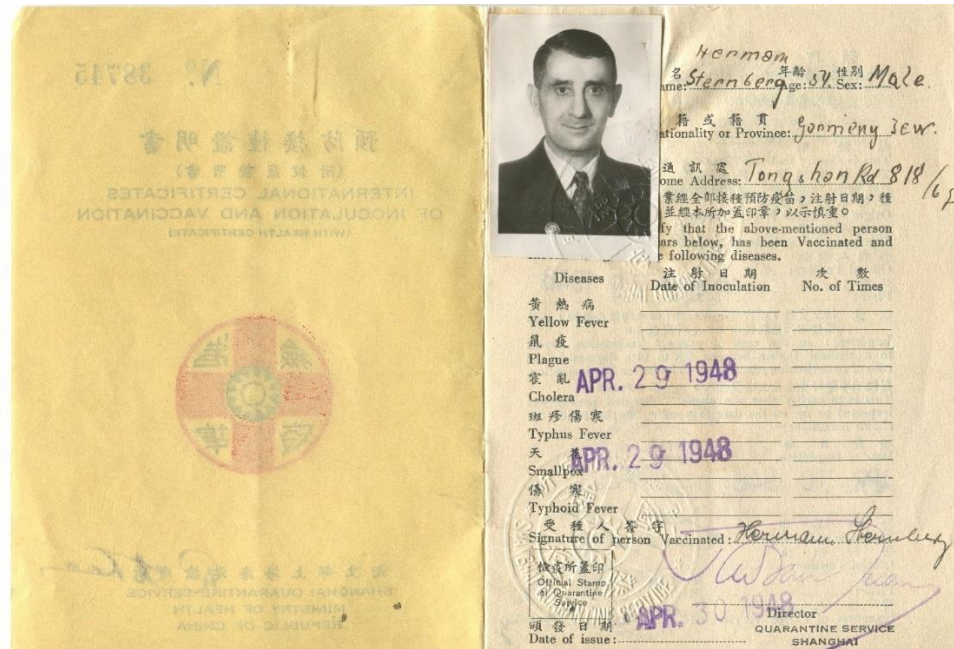
Left: Front of Gary's football medal won with the *Alte Herren Verein*. [FLSFF]



Right: Back of medal: J.F.L. (Junior Football League) June 1944/45, Roman numeral "I" for first place. [FLSFF]

The kids improvised when it came to toys and games. They played a game called "Packs" which was like Marbles but with cigarette packs. After the war, the kids added Marbles to their repertoire of games. (He explains that most kids could not afford the marbles during the war.) They often made footballs out of rags because actual balls were rare. "Any kid who had a ball was the most popular kid on the block." They would play on a back lot where there were open sewers. Sometimes the ball would go into the open sewers, and they had to go get the ball and wash it off. When they got thirsty, they were not supposed to drink the water. One time when Gary was playing, he got very thirsty and drank from the tap. He got extremely sick afterward with dysentery: "I was so sick. It was unbelievable!" He had to go through many different treatments before getting better.

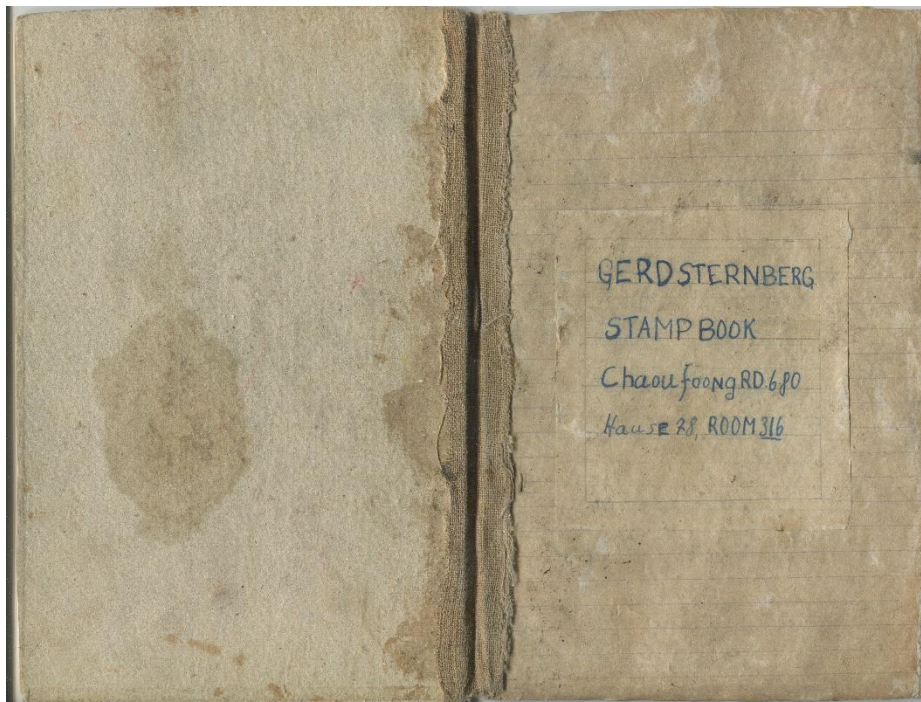




Inoculation certificate for Hermann Sternberg issued by the Shanghai Quarantine Service of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of China with stamps for vaccinations received on April 29, 1948 (roughly two months before the family left Shanghai for the United States of America).

Shanghai presented refugees with many health challenges. The city was infamous for poor hygienic conditions and the European refugees were particularly susceptible to the diseases specific to Shanghai’s climate. [FLSFF]

Gary was an avid stamp collector in Shanghai and managed to save some of those stamps. He had a large stamp book, a small stamp book, and a box of stamps.

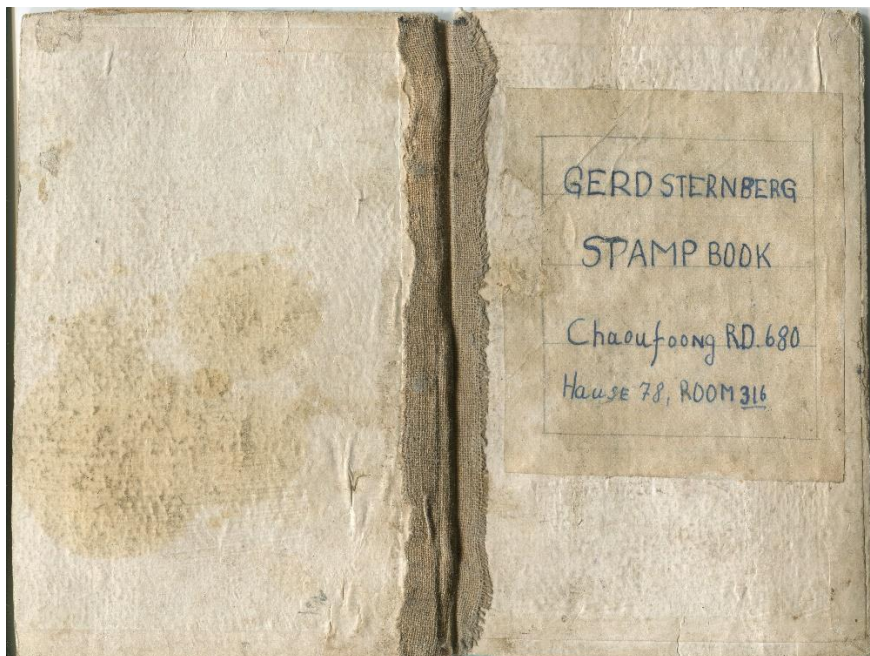


Left: Cover of Gary’s large stamp book while living at Chaoufoong Road 680. [FLSFF]



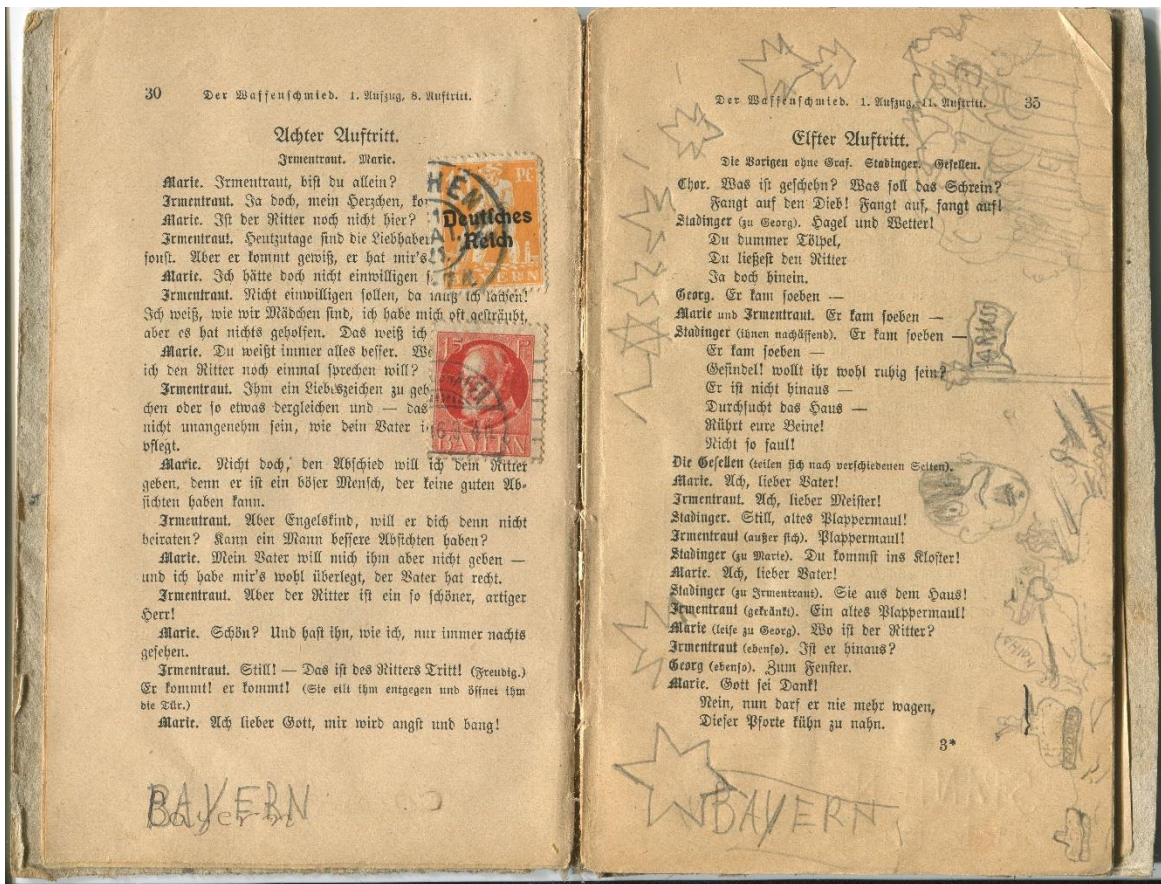


Pages devoted to England and Argentina in Gary's large stamp book. [FLSFF]



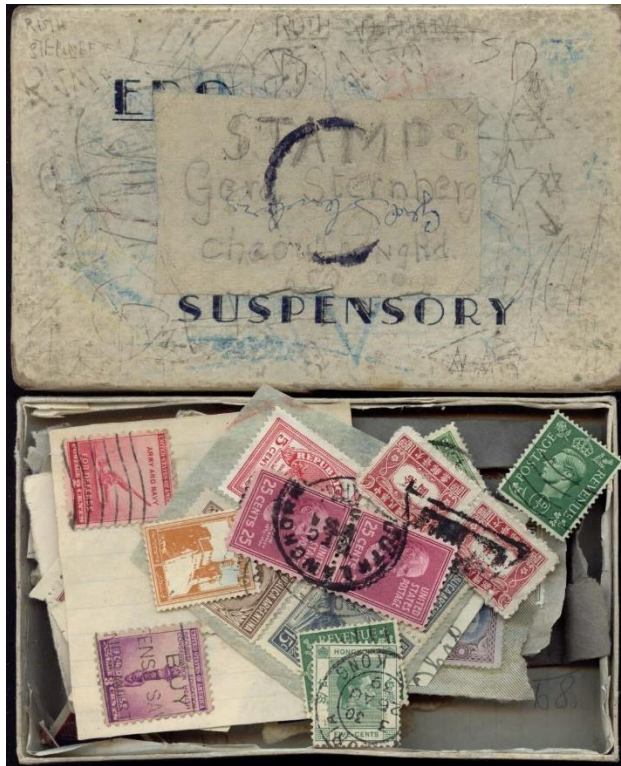
Cover of Gary's small stamp book while living at Chaoufoong Road 680. [FLSFF]





Pages in Gary's small stamp book devoted to Bavaria (Bayern). In the right margin, Gary drew a picture of tanks and soldiers shooting. He depicted a soldier saying "Haha!" as he shoots. There is also the head of Adolf Hitler. Gary drew the flag of the Soviet Union (with a triangle instead of star but with hammer and sickle roughly visible and with "Russ" for "Russia"). The meaning is ambiguous: One interpretation is the drawing depicts Russian soldiers shooting Adolf Hitler. Kevin Ostoyich's interpretation is that the drawing depicts German soldiers invading the Soviet Union under Hitler's orders. [FLSFF]





Left: Box containing some of the stamps Gary collected in Shanghai. [FLSFF]

Right: Four special Chinese stamps from Gary's collection. Gary writes: "[Stamps commemorating the] 1st Special Session of the Inauguration of the Chinese Parliament, which are very valuable, given only a small number were issued. Greetings, Gerdy."

[Translation by Kevin Ostoyich.]

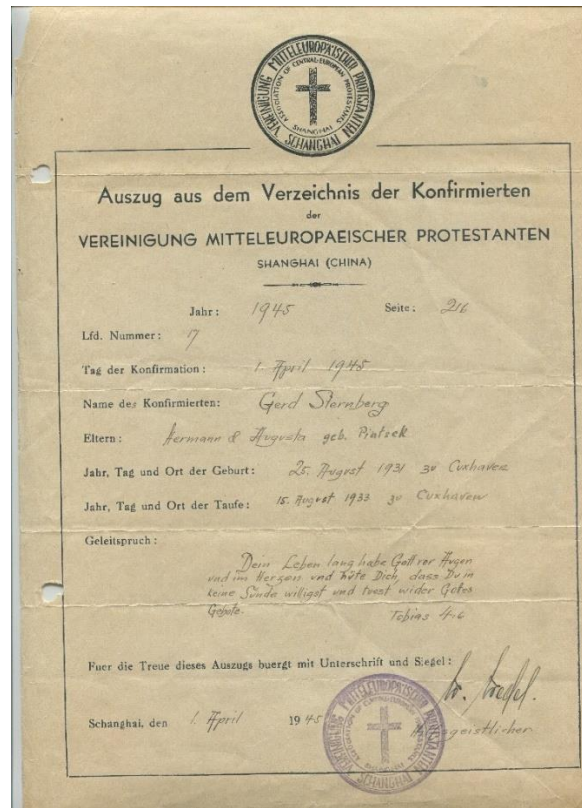
Depicted on the stamps is the National Great Hall in Nanjing. The first National Assembly of the Republic of China met there in March 1948. The building is now known as the Nanjing Great Hall of the People. [FLSFF]



Auguste and the children attended church in Shanghai, and it was in Shanghai that Gary was confirmed. Gary explains, though, that he was never religiously devout. He says there were a lot of mixed marriages among the refugees, but there were also a lot of Christians who had been established in Shanghai well before the refugees arrived. Gary remembers the church not looking much like a church, but just a regular building with services in it. Not having been very religious, Gary liked attending church only because he could get cookies there.

Gary says there were other friends in Shanghai who had Jewish fathers and Christian mothers. One such boy whom Gary befriended in Shanghai was Henry Litmanovitz. Although friends in Shanghai, their relationship did not become strong until after both families journeyed to the United States.

Gary remembers being bullied by the Jewish children in the camp. He says, "In Germany I was persecuted for being a Jew, and in Shanghai I'm being persecuted for being a Christian." He was singled out and called "Jesus Christ." Thinking back, Gary says, "Kids are kids."



Gary's Confirmation certificate issued by the Association of Central-European Protestants Shanghai on April 1, 1945. The certificate notes that Gary was baptized in Cuxhaven on August 15, 1933. [FLSFF]



After the war, Hermann rented a little storefront on Chushan Road.



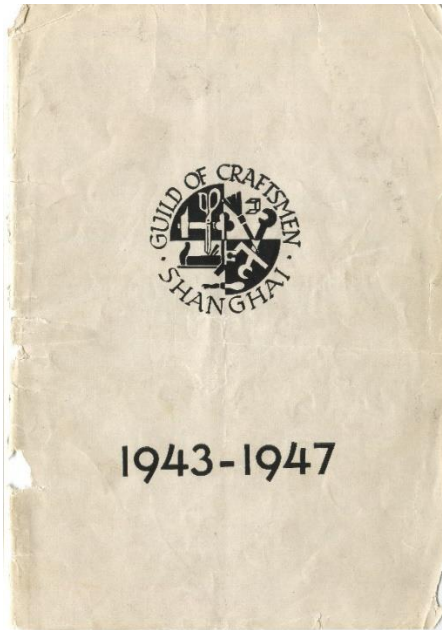
Hermann Sternberg's store materials [Photo: FLSFF]

Hermann was a board member of the Guild of Craftsmen, which was founded in April 1943 in Shanghai. In an official pamphlet published by the Guild, the purpose of the organization was articulated as follows:

All over the world, the organizations of craftsmen form an integrant part of the national economy. Also the craftsmen who have immigrated to Shanghai, have soon realized the necessity of organization and cooperation. This organization was all the more necessary, as the craftsmen soon found out that they would have to work under quite different conditions in Shanghai than in Europe, in order to build up an existence. There were no established working hours in Shanghai, then; in addition, buying raw material was a very complicated procedure owing to the lack of knowledge of the markets and language difficulties. The official regulations, which basically differed from those employed in Europe, placed the artisans, particularly those appertaining to the building trade, before almost insolvable problems. There was no trace of a regular training of apprentices, like in Europe. These and many other difficulties presented themselves, and the individual craftsman would hardly have been in a position to master them.

For the above reasons, a group of determined masters, well-trained in matters of organization, founded in April 1943, the Guild of Craftsmen, Shanghai with the purpose of securing a higher living standard to masters, their assistants, and above all, to the youth by procuring them apprenticeships, in this way integrating them into the economic system of Shanghai.²⁴





Front cover of Guild of Craftsmen, Shanghai, 1943-1947 pamphlet. [FLSFF]



(Second down on left) Advertisement for Hermann Sternberg's business in the Guild of Craftsmen, Shanghai, 1943 – 1947 pamphlet. [FLSFF]





Hermann Sternberg (second from right, top row) pictured with the other board members of the Guild of Craftsmen, Shanghai (ca. 1947). This is an original photograph. A copy of the photograph appears in the pamphlet of the Guild of Craftsmen, Shanghai 1943 - 1947. [Photo: FLSFF]

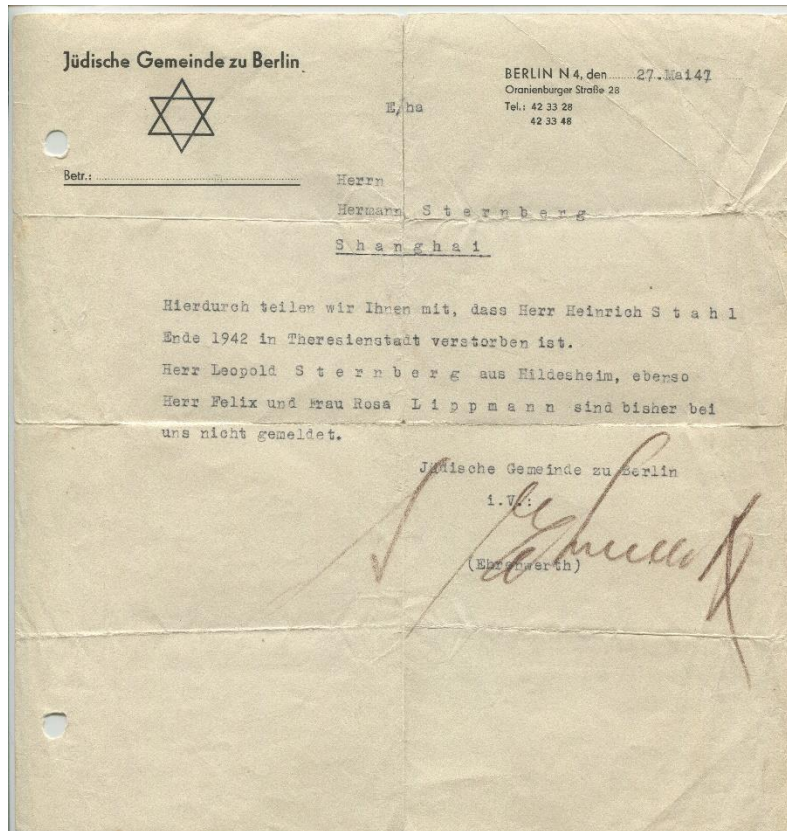


(Top, outside view) Silver cigarette case with dragon on top that was presented to Hermann Sternberg by the Crafts Guild in Shanghai. The case is monogrammed "H.S." (The monogram appears on the top left of the photograph.) [FLSFF]



The family moved out of the camp into a room in a house on Tongshan Road. The lanes stank and had garbage strewn all over the place, but Gary points out, “that, by comparison, was luxury.”

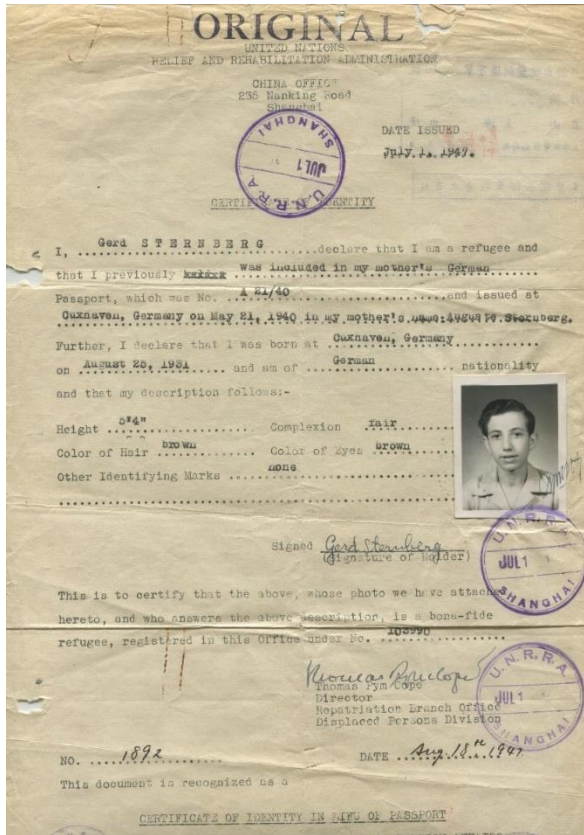
After the conclusion of the war, Shanghai refugees started to learn the fates of friends and family members who did not escape the Holocaust. In addition to looking at lists that were posted in Shanghai, refugees started making inquiries through various agencies. In May 1947, Hermann received information from the *Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin* [Jewish Community of Berlin] presumably in response to such an inquiry. The letter informed him that Heinrich Stahl had died in Theresienstadt at the end of 1942. There was no registration information for Leopold Sternberg or Felix and Rosa Lippmann. When asked about these individuals in a telephone call in the summer of 2023, Gary could only recall that Heinrich Stahl was an uncle who was a very wealthy banker.



Letter from the *Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin* to Hermann Sternberg presumably in response to his inquiries about Heinrich Stahl, Leopold Sternberg, and Felix and Rosa Lippmann. Dated May 27, 1947. [FLSFF]

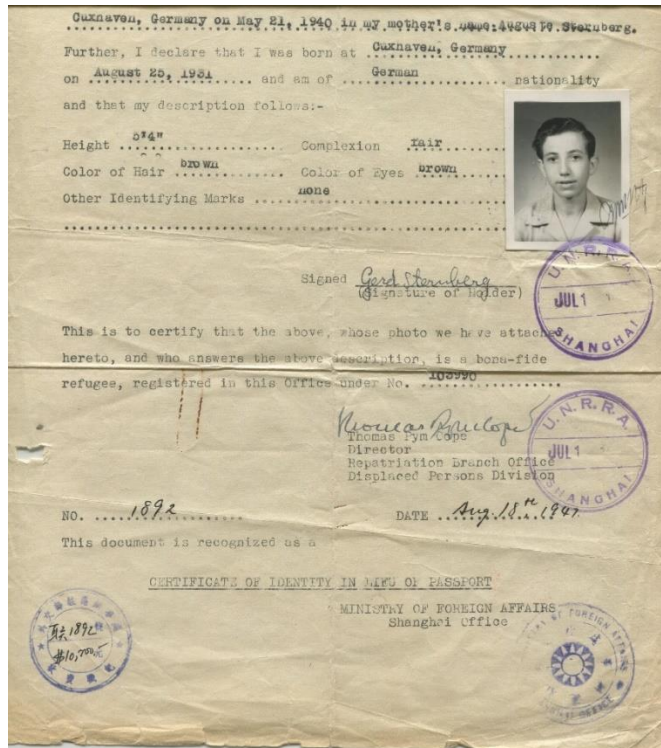
The Sternbergs applied to come to the United States at the conclusion of the war, and Gary notes, “It took us three years total from the time we applied.” Given that Gary did not have a passport, he needed to have a Certificate of Identity issued to him.

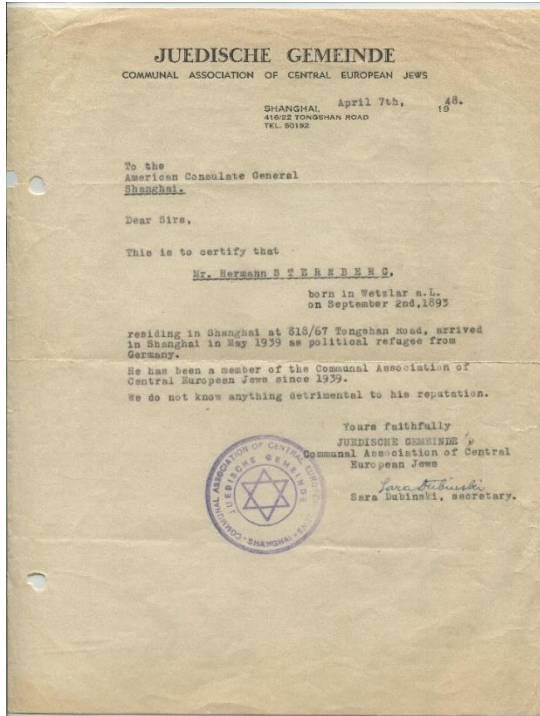




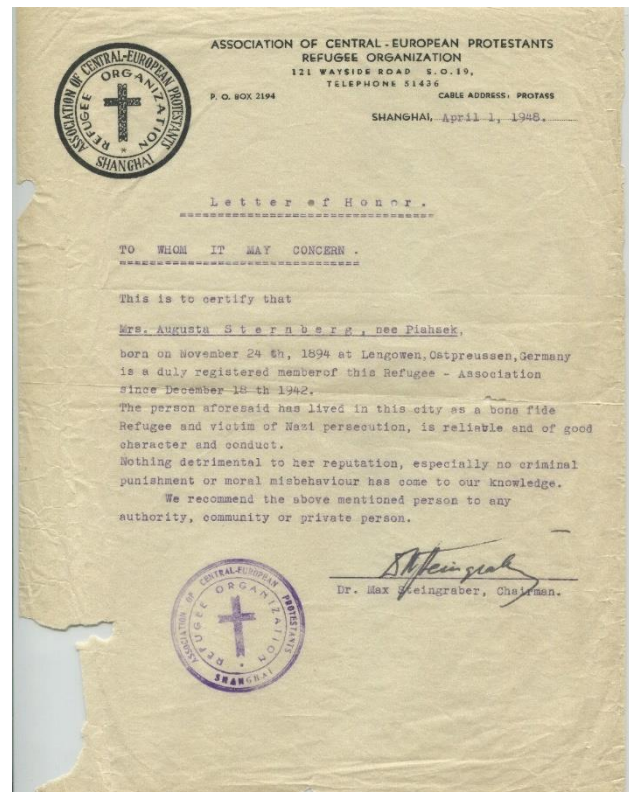
Left: (Top portion) of Gary's Certificate of Identity issued by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNNRA) on July 1, 1947, and certified by the Shanghai Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 18, 1947. [FLSFF]

Right: (Bottom portion) of Gary's Certificate of Identity issued by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNNRA) on July 1, 1947, and certified by the Shanghai Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 18, 1947. [FLSFF]





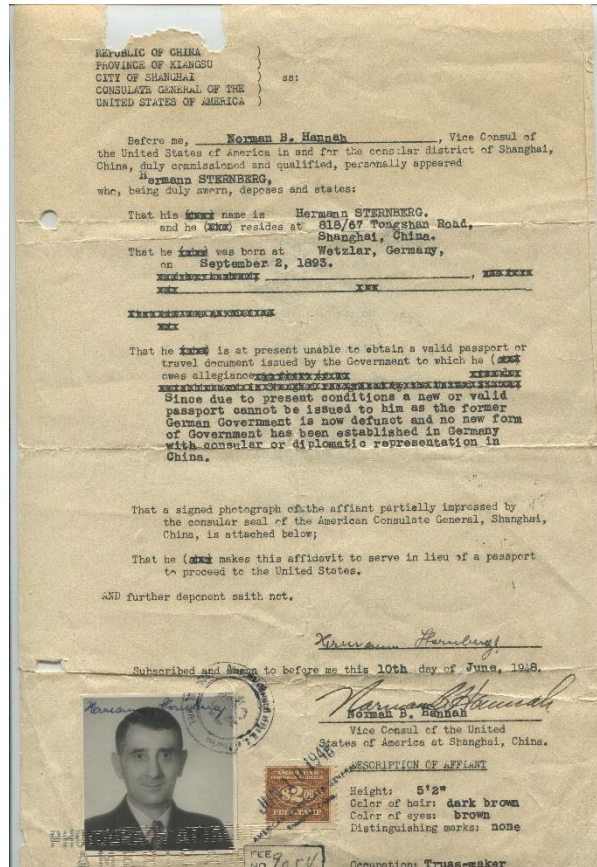
Left: Letter from the Juedische Gemeinde Communal Association of Central European Jews to the American Consulate General Shanghai testifying to the refugee status and good reputation of Hermann Sternberg. Dated April 7, 1948. [FLSFF]



Right: Letter of Honor issued by Dr. Max Steingraber, the Chairman of the Association of Central-European Protestants Refugee Organization in Shanghai testifying to good character and refugee status of Auguste [spelled here “Augusta”] Sternberg. Dated April 1, 1948. [FLSFF]



In June 1948, the family received visas to go to the United States. One memory stands out prominently for Gary about this process: When it was time for them to go to the American Consulate General to pick up the final travel documents for the United States, they went by taxicab. This had become somewhat of a tradition for families to do in celebration of finally getting to leave for the United States. When it came time for the Sternbergs to do this, however, Hermann wavered, saying it was simply too expensive. But Ruth begged and begged until Hermann finally relented. Gary laughs when he points out that the taxicab did not come to them; rather, they had to walk to the taxicab and then take it the few blocks to the American Consulate General. "But that was one of those things," Gary says with a chuckle, "I still think of that today and think it's funny!"



US Consulate Affidavit issued to Hermann Sternberg by Vice Consul of the United States of America at Shanghai, China, Norman B. Hannah. Dated June 10, 1948. [FLSFF]



REPUBLIC OF CHINA)
 PROVINCE OF Kiangsu)
 CITY OF SHANGHAI)
 CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE)
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Before me, Norman B. Hannah, Vice Consul of the United States of America in and for the consular district of Shanghai, China, duly commissioned and qualified, personally appeared Auguste STERNBERG, who, being duly sworn, depose and state:

That ~~she~~ (her) name is Auguste STERNBERG, and ~~she~~ (she) resides at 818/87 Tongshan Road, Shanghai, China.

That ~~she~~ (she) was born at Lengoven, Germany, on November 24, 1894. and her husband, Hermann STERNBERG, was born at Wetzlar, Germany on September 2, 1893.

That she was married on September 29, 1930. at Cuxhaven, Germany.

That ~~she~~ (she) is at present unable to obtain a valid passport or travel document issued by the Government to which ~~she~~ (she) owes allegiance ~~because of the present conditions in Germany.~~ Since due to present conditions a new or valid passport cannot be issued to her as the former German Government is now defunct and no new form of Government has been established in Germany with consular or diplomatic representation in China.

That a signed photograph of the affiant partially impressed by the consular seal of the American Consulate General, Shanghai, China, is attached below.

That ~~she~~ (she) makes this affidavit to serve in lieu of a passport to proceed to the United States.

AND further dependent saith not.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 10th day of June, 1948

Auguste Sternberg
Auguste Sternberg
 AUGUSTE STERNBERG
 JUN 10 1948

Norman B. Hannah
Norman B. Hannah
 Vice Consul of the United States of America at Shanghai, China.

DESCRIPTION OF AFFIANT
 Height: 5'8"
 Color of hair: brown
 Color of eyes: grey
 Distinguishing marks: none
 Occupation: none

PHOTOGRAPH OF AFFIANT

US Consulate Affidavit issued to Auguste Sternberg by Vice Consul of the United States of America at Shanghai, China, Norman B. Hannah. Dated June 10, 1948. [FLSFF]

ORIGINAL **AMERICAN PRESIDENT LINES** Form 49
ALIEN HEAD TAX RECEIPT No. 32409

RECEIVED BY GERD STERNBERG Ticket Form 43 No. 40835
 En route from SHANGHAI to PACIFIC COAST U.S. PORT
 Per S. S. GENERAL MEIGS Vol. 14 Sailing JUNE 30, 1948

THE SUM OF \$2.00 DOLLARS U.S. CURRENCY, TO COVER HEAD TAX REQUIRED BY THE UNITED STATES AND PHILIPPINE ISLANDS GOVERNMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN ACT TO REGULATE THE IMMIGRATION OF ALIENS INTO THE UNITED STATES OR PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

NOTICE TO PASSENGERS
 The ALIEN HEAD TAX represented by this receipt is collected for account of the United States and or Philippine Islands Government and is paid by this Company to them. As a rule the U. S. Bureau of Immigration or Philippine Immigration will refund this tax through the Steamship Company, in cases in which the following conditions are shown:
 1. That ALIEN'S regular domicile or bona fide residence was in Canada, Newfoundland, Cuba or Mexico, for at least one year prior to entry into the United States coming for a temporary stay.
 2. That ALIEN has been in transit through the United States and its possessions and has left within sixty days.
 Aliens of this class must:
 (a) Be listed as "Transit" by Immigration officials on their arrival. Passengers who do not state at time of arrival their intention is remains but sixty days cannot obtain any refund, even though subsequently leaving the United States within that period.
 (b) They must on arrival at U. S. port secure a certificate (Gov. Form 755) from the Immigration Officials.
 (c) The certificate with this receipt and passenger's permanent address should be forwarded to the American President Lines, at the port where tax is paid by the Steamship Company to the U. S. Government as soon as possible, an claim must be filed with the United States Government within ninety days after alien's arrival at U. S. port where taxed.

PURSUERS AND AGENTS:
 Pursers and Agents should be careful to ascertain if aliens in transit are in possession of through transportation, and if so, note form number and destination on Alien Manifest.

AMERICAN PRESIDENT LINES
 By: *[Signature]*

Issued Agent's Stamp

Gary's American President Lines Alien Head Tax Receipt. The receipt was issued on June 26, 1948 for a voyage to embark on June 30, 1948, for the Pacific Coast U.S. Port. [FLSFF]



The Sternberg family then embarked on their journey to the United States. They first set foot on American soil in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the Jewish Community Center there treated them like kings. Gary glows as he remembers,

“We couldn’t believe just how they treated us, we felt so important, here little refugees from Shanghai, and they made us feel so important. And they sent each one of us off with a great big bag full of little Hawaiian oranges. Real thin-skinned oranges. And they were like sugar. [...] The amount of fruit that we had had was almost non-existent. And here I am, I’m halfway through this bag of oranges. I can’t stop eating them. So, when the ship left the harbor, we hit really rough seas. And the ship we were on was an 18,000-ton troop transport and when it hit rough sea the front of the ship would get under the water and then lift up the ocean and then it would rattle [...]. I was never so sick in my life. I heaved up all the oranges. And my sister was laughing at me that I got seasick. I might have gotten seasick, but mostly because I was loaded down with those oranges.”

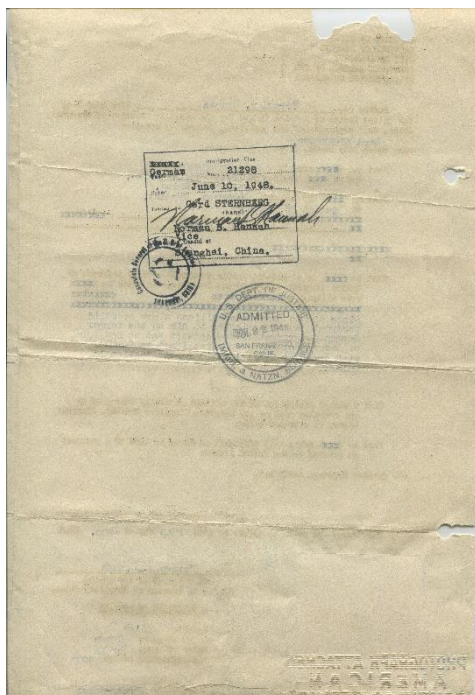
Gary remembers going through Pearl Harbor and seeing the masts of the American ships that had been sunk during the Japanese attack sticking up out of the water: “It was an eerie sight.” Gary says his trip on the “slow boat to the United States,” took two to three weeks. (Based on the documents, the voyage lasted a little over three weeks, from June 30, 1948 to July 22, 1948.) When Gary thinks of his arrival in San Francisco, he chokes up: “That was such a transformation. It’s like coming from Hell into Heaven.” He remembers when the ship approached the Golden Gate Bridge:

“It’s enormous. And I’m looking around, I’m asking everybody. And one of the crew from the ship comes up and I asked, ‘Where’s the Statue of Liberty?’ And he starts laughing, and I felt like an idiot. He says, ‘You’re in the wrong place. You’re on the opposite side of the country.’ I didn’t know! [Gary laughs.]”



The Sternbergs journeyed to the United States on the USS *General M.C. Meigs*. [Photos: FLSFF]





Reverse of Hermann Sternberg's US Consulate Affidavit with stamp showing admittance in San Francisco on July 22, 1948. [Note: Auguste Sternberg's US Consulate Affidavit also has the stamp showing admittance in San Francisco on July 22, 1948.] [FLSFF]

The Sternbergs were admitted into the United States on July 22, 1948. They stayed in San Francisco for about three months. They had two rooms in a hotel: Hermann and Gary in one, Auguste and Ruth in the other. The family then moved on to Cleveland, Ohio. Gary laughs and says, "For me 'Ohio' meant 'good morning' in Japanese. But it was Cleveland, Ohio, never heard of it." On the block to which they moved, they were surrounded by other families of refugees from Shanghai. He recalls, "It was like little Jewish Germany." Everybody knew everybody else and were generally friendly to one another. One day, Gary ran into Henry Litmanovitz, although Henry's family had Anglicized their name to Littman. The Littmans moved in two doors down from the Sternbergs. From this point on, Gary and Henry were inseparable. They double-dated and went to parties together. Gary says Henry was a real good-looking guy, and "the girls just flocked around him." Gary remembers that all he and Henry wanted to do was lose their German accents and become Americans.





Photos of Gary, Ruth, and Auguste in the United States of America. Dated September 11, 1948. [Photos: FLSFF]



Hermann was not able to resume his orthopedic practice. In order to have done so, he would have had to go to school in order to become licensed, and this would have been impossible for him, especially because he did not really speak English. So, Hermann got a job in the Hildebrand Sausage Factory meatpacking plant. Gary remembers his father working hard and how badly this work beat up his father's fingers and hands.

Meanwhile, Ruth moved to Benton Harbor, Michigan because she had become engaged to an American sailor, whom she had met in Shanghai at one of the dances at the YMCA. Even though Hermann and Auguste were against the union, Ruth married the sailor.

Gary had always been good with his hands, so he got a job with a locksmith and an electrician, who shared a store. Under their tutelage, Gary learned about electricity, radio, locks, and more. Then Gary took a job at a factory that made aircraft parts. Gary started doing backbreaking work carrying long, heavy sheets of steel. He then moved into the inspection division and started taking trade school courses.

In 1952, Gary was drafted into the service. Given his electrical experience, he was put into anti-aircraft radar. After basic training, he was shipped to Korea. At the time, he figured this would be fine, because there were no enemy planes in Korea. The problem, though, was that when he arrived in Korea, he was assigned to the First Field Artillery Observation Battalion. Gary soon found that this "is not a fun job. [...] Your life expectancy is not very good." Gary explains, "We had a big radar stand sitting right behind the front lines with everyone looking down our throat and shooting mortars at us and we had nothing to shoot back with." His unit's job was to figure out the trajectory of mortar and artillery shells, plot them out on the map, and then call that information back to an artillery unit, which would then fire on the area. Gary's unit was sent wherever there was the most artillery fire on the Main Line of Resistance (MLR) that stretched all the way from the west coast to the east coast of the country. The unit was often exposed to the enemy for long stretches of time. He remembers one time this being due to the Korean soil. He explains that the ground in Korea is mostly clay. During the summer the clay turned into powder that would produce a huge cloud if a vehicle went over it, but in the winter, it would turn into a hard rubber substance, and one could hardly dig into it. Gary remembers during the winter his unit was sent up a mountain in central Korea. They could not dig in, so they were completely exposed to the enemy. A group of engineers was sent up to them to try to dig into the ground using dynamite and land mines. After many futile attempts, the engineers simply gave up, leaving Gary and his unit to fend for themselves.

Upon the conclusion of his service in Korea, Gary reflected on how miraculous it was that he had survived bombing raids in Germany and China and then serving in a "four-point zone" (the most dangerous) in Korea. Through it all, the worst injury he sustained was a cut on his leg from running into barbed wire when he and his friends were fleeing a mortar attack while returning from a movie at Battery Headquarters.

Unfortunately, the same could not be said for Henry Littman. Littman had also been sent to Korea and served as a combat medic. One day Gary was going by Henry's unit and decided to stop in and see how his best friend was doing. When Gary asked for Henry, he was informed that Henry had been killed a couple days before. Gary was devastated: "I thought I'd sink into the ground." When he returned home, Mrs. Littman could not even look at Gary because he reminded her of her son. Gary somberly



remembers, “It was a horrible, horrible thing. He got killed by small arms fire.” It was not until Gary got married in 1957, that the Littman family was ready to interact with Gary and the Sternbergs again.

In order to marry Noreen Gottlieb, whom he met on a blind date, Gary converted to Judaism. He laughs and says, “Her grandmother didn’t want her to marry a Goy.” At the time Gary was working as a foreman for a spot-welding plant making aircraft parts. Not too long after getting married, Gary and a partner went into business together servicing washing machines and dryers. The partnership eventually broke down, and Gary returned to working at the aircraft parts manufacturer. In 1964, Gary, Noreen, and their daughter, Pammy, moved to Los Angeles with Hermann and Auguste.²⁵ Not too long after this, Hermann passed away of lung cancer and Auguste died of a heart attack. Gary breaks up when he thinks of the problems he encountered when he tried to have Auguste buried next to Hermann in the Jewish cemetery. The hatred that had flared over the union between a Jewish man and a Christian woman that Gary had witnessed in Germany and China now reared its head again in Los Angeles. Gary stayed his hand, and he ultimately was able to prevail in having his parents lay in rest together.

Gary started selling washing machines and stoves for a Sears Roebuck store in Hollywood. As a result, he sold appliances to many stars, including Liberace and Dan Blocker (aka Eric “Hoss” Cartwright on *Bonanza*). Gary says one of the greatest incentives of working with Sears was the profit-sharing.

After working for Sears for a while, Gary and Noreen decided to start a decorating business called “Driftwood Décor and other Delights,” but despite its catchy name, Gary says, “business didn’t really warm.”²⁶ After closing the store and having experienced one too many California earthquakes, Gary and Noreen decided to move to Las Vegas in 1969. The following year Noreen gave birth to the second of their two children, Adam. In Las Vegas Gary opened his own appliance service business. Not too long afterward, he enrolled in Michael Gaughan’s card-dealing school. During the day, Gary ran the business; at night, he learned the art of the deal.

Gary notes that, at the time, to become a dealer at a major casino, one first had to break in downtown, where one did not make much money. Usually, to get a job at Caesars Palace—the greatest casino in the world at the time—one had to work first for about *four years* downtown. “Obviously, I wasn’t going to go that route,” Gary explains. Instead, Gary played his ace card: table tennis. During his childhood in Shanghai, Gary had fallen in love with the game, despite the warped boards, brick “nets,” and unreliable balls. In Las Vegas he pursued this passion by starting a table tennis club with students at UNLV. It just so happened that an executive at Caesars Palace, named Neil Smyth, also had a passion for table tennis. Gary said nobody wanted to play with Neil because he had a weird style, but Gary did. Gary asked Neil about working at Caesars Palace, and Neil said that if Gary got a little bit of experience dealing, he could have a job at Caesars Palace. Gary then proceeded to go from casino to casino downtown looking for a job, but only found rejection. Next thing he knew, he got a call from a man by the name of Dick Nee about a busted washing machine. It turned out Dick also had a hot-water heater emergency. Gary fixed both the washing machine and the hot-water heater (despite having little experience working on the latter). Dick was a dealer. Gary asked him if he could help him break in downtown. Dick made a phone call to his friend Marv, a pit boss at the Bonanza Casino. Marv took Gary to see his friend, a casino manager at the El Cortez Casino, who gave Gary an audition and hired him. Gary explains that that is how Vegas works: “Juice.” After Gary worked at the El Cortez for seven months, Neal Smyth carried through on his promise and Gary was granted an audition at Caesars Palace. He passed. He laughs and says, “So, now I’m a big shot dealer at Caesars Palace!” Gary recalls



the stress of the first day: “I’m on the game for about two seconds, a guy [sits] down [at my table and says] ‘Let me have a ten-thousand-dollar marker.’ [Gary starts laughing hysterically and shakes to show how nervous he was at the time.]” Gary’s boss came up to him and said, “Gary, if you can’t handle that action, I’ll put someone else on.” Gary said, “No, sir, I can do it, and I dealt away.” For the next 31 years and one month, Gary handled the action. In 2005, at 74 years of age, he put down his dealer’s apron.

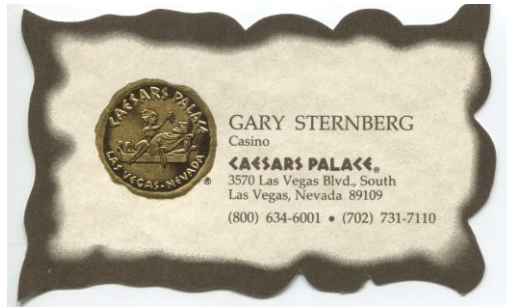


Gary’s Caesars Palace dealer’s apron. Photo by Rebecca Ostoyich. [Item in FLSFF Collection]



Gary in his Caesars Palace uniform [Photo: FLSFF]





Gary's Caesars Palace business card [FLSFF]

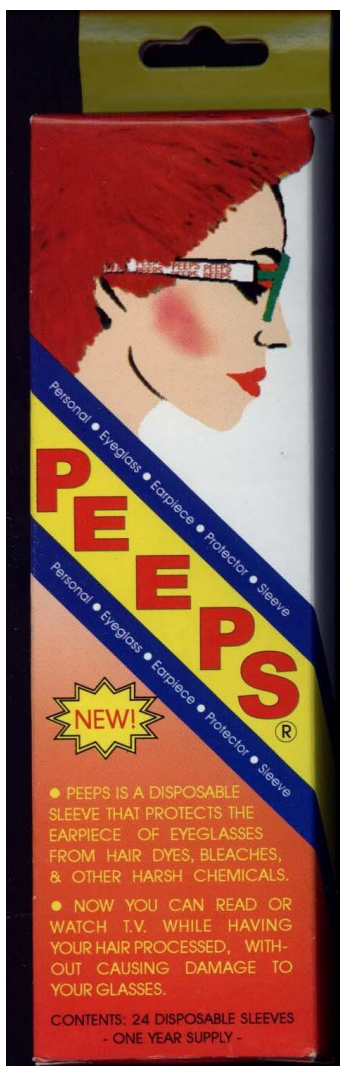
Gary says he is very proud of the prestige of having worked at Caesars Palace. He explains, “To some people this may seem like a very minor thing, but to me, a little Jewish boy from China—a little refugee boy—this was a big thing [...] to get the best job in a town like Las Vegas.”

While Gary was still working at Caesars Palace, he and Noreen turned to the import business in 1983, but Gary laughs and says, “What do I know about the import business? Not a damn thing!” They started selling sequin and beaded appliques, and business boomed for a few years. “We made good money at it. But then, like anything else, the trend changed—because it’s a fashion item—the trend changed, and we tried different things and invested money in a lot of other things that didn’t work out, and then we finally closed up the business.” Then Gary invented Peeps. Peeps solved the age-old problem of how to protect one’s glasses while having one’s hair dyed at a beauty parlor.

“That was the project from Hell. No matter what you can think of that can go wrong with a project. It’s like: You drive your car on the interstate, and you get one flat tire; it’s bad luck, and you pull over to change the tire. But if you drive down the interstate, and get *four* flat tires; that’s how bad, that’s how unlucky this project went!”

The manufacturer sent 50,000 boxes of Peeps—a whole warehouse full—from China, and “half of them were no good, but you didn’t know which half until you tore them apart.” But even with this poor hand, Gary did not bust. A couple years after the shipment fiasco, Gary’s patent attorney called and said that a Danish company had come up with a similar invention and wanted to lease Gary’s patent in order to distribute it in the United States. “I said ‘No way! They’re going to buy it or they’re not going to get it at all!’” Gary sold the patent to the Danes, and still has thousands of boxes of half-defective Peeps.





Peeps. One of Gary's inventions [FLSFF]

Peeps is by no means Gary's only invention. For example, Gary has come up with an efficient and economical transport system for an electric scooter in a vehicle. The inspiration for this was the fact that in the last years leading up to her death in 2002, Noreen was physically impaired, and the available systems for transporting scooters tended to be very complex and expensive. Gary is always tinkering and coming up with new ideas. He is excited about his latest invention—a plexiglass napkin holder for which the patent application is currently pending. The novelty of the holder is that a single napkin can be drawn from the holder with ease. Given that the prototype currently stands on a kitchen table that has been made from an official gaming layout from Caesars Palace, it is not hard to see how the invention could spring from the mind of a man who spent a great deal of his life pulling out one card at a time.





Gary's inventor business card [FLSFF]



Gary Sternberg's collection of Caesars Palace concert pins [Photo: FLSFF]

Although Gary Sternberg spent close to 32 years cleanly distributing the cards in Las Vegas, it is clear he has spent his *whole* life as a dealer. He has always been shuffling the cards, going from Cuxhaven to Berlin to Moscow to Harbin to Shanghai to Honolulu to San Francisco to Cleveland to Los Angeles to Las Vegas. With his trained hands he has shuffled employers countless times: ranging from an aircraft manufacturer, Sears Roebuck, Caesars Palace, and several others. He has dabbled in the worlds of washing machine repair, interior design, and fashion accessories. He has been through bombing attacks in Germany, China, and Korea. He has seen just about every hand imaginable in Las Vegas. Many more articles could be written just on his brushes with Frank Sinatra, Telly Savalas, David Hasselhoff, and many others over the decades. In fact, the transcript of Gary's interview for an oral history project conducted by UNLV for the history of Las Vegas spans several hundred pages.



Looking back at all the hands he has dealt and has been dealt, he offers two bits of advice for new players to the table: First: “If you would take religion out of the human equation there would be a lot less death, a lot less killing, a lot less dissension. But this is how things are, so you have to make the best of it.” Second: “The moral of the story of me and so many like me, is, that if you are dealt a bad hand you don’t have to play it, you certainly don’t double down on it or keep on whining about it, you fold or pass and go on till [you] get a good hand and then double down or raise.”²⁷ As for Gary, in 2004, after going on many dates and feeling like he had finally lost all his chips, he met Mary Lou Burbine. With Mary Lou in his life, Gary feels as happy as can be: “I hit the jackpot, and the Lottery, I doubled down and raised the limit and became very wealthy. I am not talking about money...I met Mary Lou: A dealer’s ultimate reward.”²⁸

Gary Sternberg passed away on January 1, 2024.



**Gary Sternberg wearing his Caesars Palace dealer uniform with his button collection behind him, 2015.
[Photo: FLSFF]**



Items Pertaining to Gary Sternberg in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection:

Note: The items are not listed alphabetically here. Instead, this list replicates the order provided in a “Gary Sternberg Materials Catalogue” within the FLSFF Collection. [Items listed as “Caesars Palace Item” under “Documents and Material Objects” and “Various digital photographs of Gary Sternberg (Caesars Palace Retirement, etc.)” and “Various digital photographs of Gary Sternberg discussing donation materials with Danny Spungen (July 16, 2017)” listed under “Photographs” are not in the “Gary Sternberg Materials Catalogue” and have been added here.

Documents and Material Objects:

1. Postcard written from summer camp in "Shanghai Hills."
2. Gerd Sternberg's Stamp Books
3. Affidavit issued to Hermann Sternberg by U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai for Hermann Sternberg to travel to the United States
4. Affidavit issued to Hermann Sternberg by U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai for Auguste Sternberg to travel to the United States
5. Affidavit issued to Gerd Sternberg by U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai for Auguste Sternberg to travel to the United States
6. Certificate of Identity for Gerd Sternberg, issued by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's China Office
7. 4 Stamps on a folded sheet of paper
8. Photograph of Shanghai Juniors Champion Football team
9. Photograph of the Guild of Craftsmen in Shanghai Ghetto
10. Hermann Sternberg's Führungszeugnis, a document issued by the police of Cuxhaven confirming Sternberg had not been convicted of any crimes. Necessary for emigration from Germany.
11. Response to inquiries about several members of the Sternberg Family from the Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin
12. Hermann Sternberg's inoculation booklet, issued by the Shanghai Quarantine Service
13. American President Lines Alien Head Tax Receipt
14. Letter from the Jüdische Gemeinde Shanghai Office to the American Consulate General confirming Hermann Sternberg's identity
15. Letter of honor from the Association of Central-European Protestants Refugee Organization vouching for Augusta Sternberg (sic)
16. Gerd Sternberg's Confirmation Certificate, issued by die Vereinigung Mitteleuropaeischer Protestanten (Organization of Central-European Protestants)
17. Gary Sternberg's Caesars Palace business card
18. Gary Sternberg Inventor business card
19. Registered envelope to Mr. Gerd Sternberg
20. Guild of Craftsmen Booklet
21. Registered envelope to Mr. Gerd Sternberg
22. Envelope addressed to Mr. Danny Spungen



23. Booklet photocopy of the Guild of Craftsmen Booklet
24. Big rolled up certificate in tube. Honoring Hermann for his work at the Guild of Craftsman
25. Hand-carved silver cigarette case
26. Caesars Palace Item: used deck of cards.
27. Caesars Palace Item: pair of used dice.
28. Caesars Palace Item: dealers' apron
29. Caesars Palace Item: "table" from Blackjack table
30. Caesars Palace Item: dealers' necklace
31. Caesars Palace Item: "Chicago Caesar's Palace" button

Photographs:

1. Photograph of young Gerd Sternberg
2. Photograph of two women with Gerd Sternberg
3. Photograph of people in a street
4. Photograph of Gerd with his arms crossed, sitting on a bench.
5. Photograph of three women standing outside
6. Photograph of a man walking past a tented building
7. Photograph of a woman standing on a staircase
8. Photograph of man and woman standing in the foreground, man in white doctor's coat in background
9. Photograph of a girl standing in front of geese
10. Photograph of nine boys holding a soccer ball. One row is standing, the other kneeling.
11. Photograph of seven boys standing and one boy crouching with a soccer ball
12. Photograph of Nine boys posing, standing or crouching in three rows of three.
13. Photograph of "Mother, September 11, 1948." Number 619 printed on back.
14. Photograph of "Ruth and Mother, 11 of September 1948."
15. Photograph of Gerd with his hands in his pockets
16. Photograph of American President Lines ship in harbor
17. Photograph postcard of S.S. General M.C. Meigs underneath a bridge
18. Photograph of dog
19. Photograph of "American President Lines S.S. General Meigs, 23rd of July (struck through) June 1948"
20. Photograph of three-story building
21. Photograph of woman sitting and holding a cat
22. Photograph of Gerd holding a dog
23. Photograph of girl sitting and holding a cat
24. Photograph of cat sitting in front of boxes
25. Photograph of shaved dog
26. Photograph of boy in inner tube
27. Photograph of the Sternberg family standing outside
28. Photograph of Gerd standing outside
29. Photograph of Hermann and Auguste Sternberg sitting on porch
30. Photograph of Ruth, Auguste, and Gerd Sternberg standing outside



31. Photograph of Hermann Sternberg standing behind Auguste and Ruth Sternberg
32. Photograph of large building
33. Photograph of Hermann Sternberg sitting outside
34. Photograph of Hermann and Auguste Sternberg standing outside
35. Photograph of Sternberg Orthopedics
36. Various digital photographs of Gary Sternberg (Caesars Palace Retirement, etc.)
37. Various digital photographs of Gary Sternberg discussing donation materials with Danny Spungen (July 16, 2017)



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 is currently an associate fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (global dis:connect) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

Additionally, he is a board member of CANDLES Holocaust Museum, the Sino-Judaic Institute, 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.

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¹ The original version of this article was published by the American Institute of Contemporary German Studies (now American-German Institute) of Johns Hopkins University on April 4, 2019:

<https://americangerman.institute/2019/04/the-dealers-cards-how-gary-sternberg-has-made-the-best-of-them/>. The narrative details for the original article were based on three interviews conducted of Gary Sternberg by Kevin Ostoyich (October 28, 2017 in Henderson, Nevada; October 28, 2018 phone interview with Sternberg in Henderson, Nevada and Ostoyich in Valparaiso, Indiana; and March 10, 2019 in Henderson, Nevada), additional phone calls, e-mail exchanges, and Gary Sternberg's unpublished memoir, "The Kid from Cuxhaven: An Autobiography of Gerd (Gary) Sternberg: A Holocaust Survivor's Story." In order to keep notes to a minimum, only quotations from "The Kid from Cuxhaven" and e-mails are cited. For a narrative of the family's history that focuses on Auguste Sternberg, see Kevin Ostoyich, "[Mothers: Remembering Three Women on the 80th Anniversary of Kristallnacht](#)." Kevin Ostoyich has edited certain portions of the original text, has added new text, and has embedded artifacts and photographs from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation.

² Gary Sternberg, Unpublished memoir, "The Kid from Cuxhaven: An Autobiography of Gerd (Gary) Sternberg: A Holocaust Survivor's Story," (September 20, 2014), 5.

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁰ https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=8516618 (Accessed September 16, 2022). The original document from Sachsenhausen is in RG-11.001M in the archival holdings of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A Photo of the original document:

<https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/wexner/cache/1663319830-3336867-RG-11.001M.0085.00001274.jpg>

(Accessed September 16, 2022). (Hermann Sternberg is identified as Jewish and appears on line 1374 of the list.)



¹¹ Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 12.

¹² Ibid., 15. Gary says that later he talked to his father about the latter’s experience in Sachsenhausen. After recounting some of the stories that his father had told him about Sachsenhausen, Gary tears up and says, “It’s unbelievable. Normal, civilized people turned into absolute savages. Savages. Unbelievable.” (Ostoyich interview of Sternberg, March 10, 2019).

¹³ Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 17.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵ The client, Mrs. Reinecke/Reineke, also sent presents so the Sternbergs could celebrate Christmas with Hermann away in Shanghai: “It was a couple of days before Christmas, Mrs. Reinecke’s limousine pulls up to the front door, her chauffeur comes in with his arms full of packages, after his second trip he tells us that Mrs. Reineke and her staff wish us a Merry Christmas while Ruth and I are standing around open mouthed. My mother hugged and thanked him all over the place, and [said] also to thank Mrs. Reineke.” Others also helped the Sternberg family. Gary remembers a baker, who gave Gary a small green wreath along with Christmas wishes for Auguste and Ruth. Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 14.

¹⁶ Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 11. On Auguste Sternberg’s efforts to keep her family alive, see Kevin Ostoyich, “[Mothers: Remembering Three Women on the 80th Anniversary of Kristallnacht.](#)”

¹⁷ Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 19.

¹⁸ The description of the bomb shelter experience and criticism of Goebbels is based on the interviews as well as Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 24.

¹⁹ On Auguste Sternberg’s efforts to get the family to safety, see Kevin Ostoyich, “[Mothers: Remembering Three Women on the 80th Anniversary of Kristallnacht.](#)”

²⁰ Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 35. Gary still has the little blue dictionary in his desk drawer, and he says, “whenever I open the drawer I can see Muttie leafing through it struggling to construct a sentence.” Sternberg, “The Kid from Cuxhaven,” 36.

²¹ Gary clarified that the family’s first place of residence in Shanghai was on Wayside Road in a telephone conversation with Kevin Ostoyich on August 24, 2023.

²² Gary explains, “We would watch the Japanese soldiers in competitive judo-like sword combat sport. It is one on one, a bamboo stick would simulate a sword, wearing total bamboo body armor and a baseball catcher’s mask for protection. It was very noisy as they attacked each other with yelling and screaming like a Bonsai charge.” E-mail from Gary Sternberg to Kevin Ostoyich, March 23, 2019.

²³ On Auguste joining the Association of Central-European Protestants Refugee Organization: “Letter of Honor” for Augusta Sternberg, Association of Central-European Protestants Refugee Organization, dated April 1, 1948, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

²⁴ *Crafts of Guildsmen, Shanghai 1943 – 1947*. Pamphlet. Shanghai, China.

²⁵ Pammy was born in 1958.

²⁶ The name was a riff on Herb Albert’s album, *Whipped Cream & Other Delights*. Gary attributes the failure of the store to its poor location.

²⁷ E-mail from Gary Sternberg to Kevin Ostoyich, March 17, 2019.

²⁸ E-mail from Gary Sternberg to Kevin Ostoyich, March 23, 2019.

