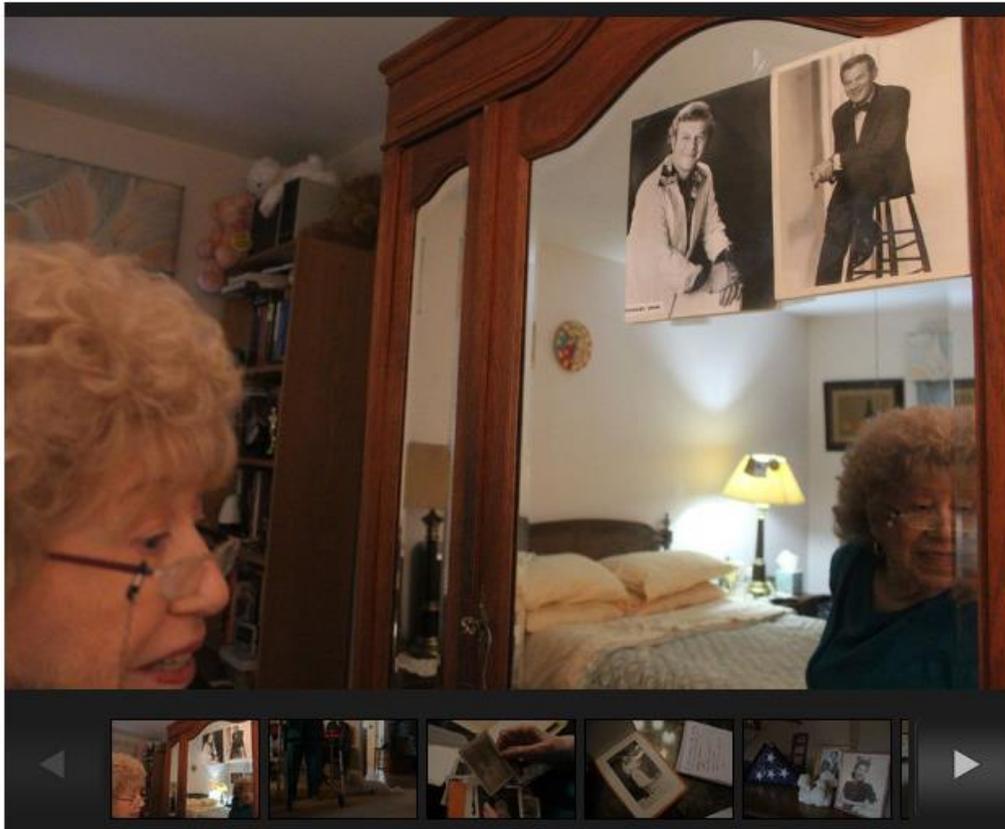


The Star-Ledger

More than 70 years later, letters still hold their love



The

Sandy Schulman shows off two photos of her late husband Hyman Schulman from his singing career which she keeps hanging in her bedroom in her Scotch Plains, N.J. home on 4/22/15. (Caitie McMekin | For NJ Advance Media)

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Letters between a World War II soldier and his wife sat in boxes in the attic, turning yellow with age.

Had it not been for their busy lives raising a family and owning a business, Hyman and Sandy Schulman would have read those missives when Hyman came home from his deployment in Europe.

"We put the letters away and forgot about them," she says.

They remained untouched until two years ago when Sandy, at 90, started going through them in their Scotch Plains home.

As she read, Hyman listened from heaven. He was 91 when he died in 2013, leaving behind a touching historical treasure of their life.

The story that unfolds from 1942 to 1945 is an Army corporal's account of the war with beautifully written love letters and poems that frame their marriage of 69 years.

At last count, 1,050 letters fill 6,300 pages. Most are written in cursive. Some are in pencil, some pen, others are typed and the longest is 32 pages. They take Hyman from training camp to the day he was wounded in Belgium's Battle of the Bulge, to the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp.

Hyman was there on that day – April 11, 1945 – with Rabbi Herschel Schacter, the Jewish chaplain he was assigned to as an assistant chaplain to conduct religious services.

As Sandy poured over the letters, her family soon realized their importance. Her daughter-in-law, Arlene Schulman, contacted a New York-based visual arts center that helps families preserve artistic and historic legacies. **POBA** - Where The Arts Live – has been archiving and cataloguing the collection that could be its own exhibit on the lost art of letter writing.

"In these days of emails and text messages, the idea of writing letters takes time and creativity," says Jennifer Cohen, POBA's co-managing director.

Hyman and Sandy had nothing but time and each other, when you read what's in their hearts.

9, April 1945.

It's two days before Hyman reaches Buchenwald and he can't wait to get home.

... "For every move we make further into Germany means a much closer day of victory for us, much nearer to the day when I can come home to claim my most precious possession. Much closer to the time when I can hold you in my arms, kiss you so endearingly and tell you in a very loud whisper how I adore you, how much I've missed you and how lucky I feel having you as my wife."

In his letters, there are many stories. He writes of beautiful countryside across from the Rhine. Days later he sees human bones piled 7 feet high. There are crematoriums in pictures he brought home, lampshades made from prisoner's skin, a train ticket to Buchenwald.

"War is hell," he writes to Sandy.

As he sees the results of war crimes, Hyman learns that things are not so good at home when Sandy writes on April 13th that President Franklin D. Roosevelt is dead.

"Everyone here is walking around in a daze," she writes. "We're all crying openly."

On his end, Hyman experiences bright moments of hope when he escorts children on a train to

Switzerland and keeps siblings together as Jews are resettled. He was also moved, Sandy says, when emaciated Jews would not eat one morsel of matzo until the rabbi said Passover prayers. They later would write letters to Hyman, thanking him for saving them.

"That, he remembered," Sandy says.

Hyman was a romantic soul, yet apologetic when he couldn't write. Sandy mailed 13 letters once, addressing the envelopes in red or green ink so he would know the mail was from her.

"You had to write good letters," she says. "I thought it was my duty."

In one of them, Sandy jokes with Hyman, explaining that he's her dependent after she received a tax refund of \$59.05.

"Now you know why I married you," she writes playfully, adding this tender thought. "... I married you cause I love my angel with all my heart."

The Schulmans' life together is captured in memories spilling from photo albums, the menu from their wedding reception, a flower from Sandy's bouquet, a red rose from when Hyman proposed.

She was 15 and he was 16 when they met. They were married six years later on June 4, 1944, during his furlough before he was shipped overseas.

After the war, they raised five children in Brooklyn, N.Y. She was a stay-at-home mom and he owned a jewelry and watch supply business before they retired and moved to New Jersey. On weekends, he sang opera and show tunes in the Catskills.

Each time she reads the letters, Sandy knows Hyman is with her, even though they didn't get a chance to share them together.

"Along with God I watch over you."

He wrote that, too.

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