

Kirschner, Doris Schechter, 1923 - .  
Doris Schechter Kirschner papers, 1935-1995.  
5.3 cu. ft. (6 boxes) and 1 microfilm reel.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Doris Schechter Kirschner was born December 20, 1923 in St. Paul, Minnesota, the fourth child of Harry and Esther Schechter. While attending St. Paul's Central High School, Doris met her future husband Melvin Kirschner (b. 16 July 1923). The romance continued after their graduation in 1941, culminating in a secret wedding in May of 1942. The marriage was re-solemnized in a Jewish ceremony attended by friends and family on December 6, 1942. Doris briefly attended the University of Minnesota where she studied home economics, while Mel pursued a degree in chemical engineering. Mel's studies were interrupted by his draft into the army in May, 1944. Following training in Washington D.C. for the medical corps, Mel was shipped to Europe where he served as a medical laboratory technician in evacuation hospitals in France and Germany. The Kirschner's first child, Barry William, was born December 6, 1944, just as Mel was shipped to Europe. After being separated for more than one year, the Kirschners were reunited in late December of 1945. Richard James was born in 1947, followed by Robert Allan in 1948. Mel completed his chemical engineering degree at the University of Minnesota in 1948 and worked for Superior Bottling Company (St. Paul, Minn.) as a dispatcher. In 1950, he took a job at as a shift engineer for Silas Mason Company, necessitating a family move to Grand Island, Nebraska. The Kirschners moved back to Minnesota in September of 1953 when Mel was hired by Honeywell.

After moving back to St. Paul, Doris entered the University of Minnesota and completed her B.S. degree in home economics from the university's Department of Food Science and Nutrition in 1958. She was accepted into the graduate program and awarded a work scholarship but, hampered by health problems, she was soon forced to give up these plans. Despite the fact that she was unable to continue her formal education, Doris strove to put her knowledge to practical use in the kitchen. In 1954 she started the first of her daily menu planners, which she has continued for more than forty years. A particular interest since her teen years, cooking remained a passion for Doris throughout her life. By the 1990s, Kirschner had collected more than 2,000 cookbooks (most now at the University of Minnesota's Department of Food Science and Nutrition) reflecting cuisines across the world.

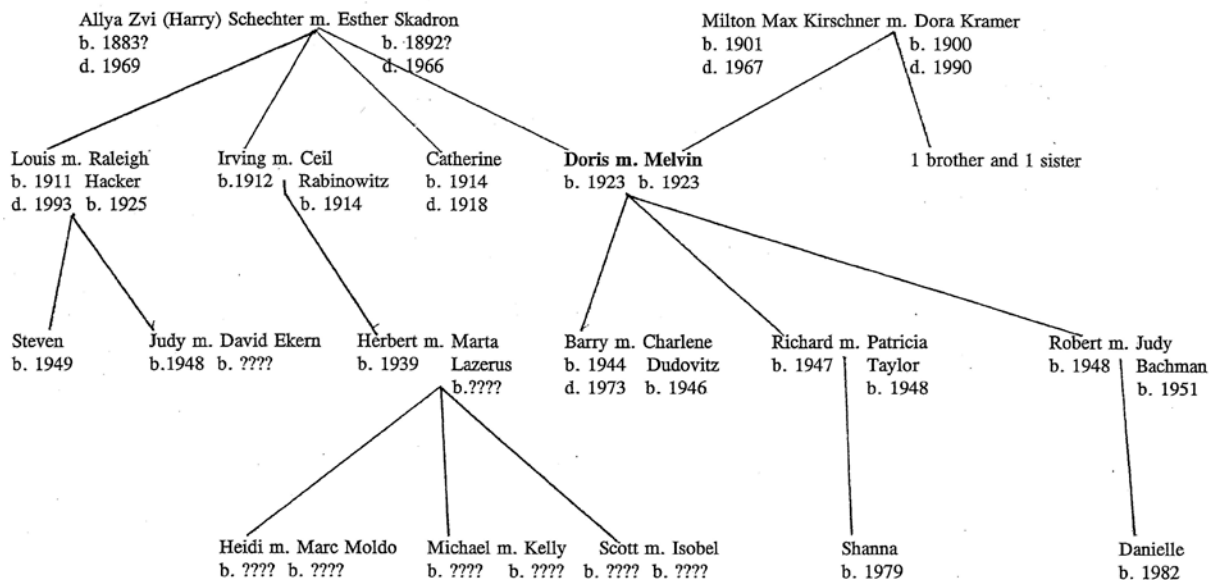
Although frequently ill as a young woman, Doris's health took a turn for the worse in 1959 following a family trip to Florida. Eventually she was diagnosed with lupus (systemic lupus erythematosus), an autoimmune disease causing wide-ranging ailments. For Doris the disease meant numerous hospitalizations, near constant discomfort, frequent flare ups of severe pain and confinement to her bed for days at a time. In later years the stress of chronic illness was intensified by family tragedy: In 1973 at age 29, the Kirschner's son Barry committed suicide at his home in Boulder, Colorado. The loss of their son and subsequent estrangement from his wife, Charlene, put a strain on the Kirschners' marriage with which they struggled for many years after.

Despite her ongoing battle with lupus and other health problems, Doris and her family remained constantly active. In 1962 family moved to Italy after Mel accepted a special assignment from

Honeywell. Doris and Mel, along with their youngest son, Robert, resided in Florence while the older boys attended a boarding school for international students in Rome. The family returned to Minnesota in 1963, eventually settling in near Minneapolis's Lake of the Isles. Doris and Mel continued to travel frequently, including several returns to Europe and many trips around the U.S. in their motor home, most of which Doris documented in her diaries. Doris kept up an extensive correspondence throughout her life with friends and family around the world. They also hosted many foreign visitors in their home with whom they kept in close contact throughout the later years. In 1985 the Kirschners hosted the granddaughter of their former maid in Florence, with whom they had become good friends. By 1991 they had begun hosting teachers from Kobe College in Kobe, Japan as part of an ongoing exchange program. Seeking the health benefits of a warmer climate, the Kirschners decided in 1993 to travel in the southwestern United States, and eventually made a new home in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Kirschner died May 7, 2001 at Las Cruces, New Mexico.

#### KIRSCHNER/SCHECHTER FAMILY TREE



Genealogical information taken from the collection and from data supplied by Doris Schechter Kirschner. Diagram is not comprehensive. Question marks indicate missing or uncertain information.

Lara D. Friedman  
June 1996

Accession Number: 15,222

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS

The Doris Schechter Kirschner Papers consist primarily of correspondence and diaries and other materials relating to the life of a Jewish woman and her family in St. Paul and Minneapolis. The collection is organized into three major series: diaries, correspondence and related materials, and cooking-related materials, each arranged roughly chronologically.

Kirschner's diaries include her personal daily journals (1940, 1962-1986), as well as several trip diaries (1959, 1977, 1978, and undated). The 1940 diary, kept while Kirschner was a student at Central High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, outlines day to day activities and describes her meeting and early relationship with future husband Melvin Kirschner. The bulk of the diaries date from a later period in Kirschner's life, spanning a quarter of a century during the period her sons were reaching adulthood and starting their own families. The diaries vary from brief overviews of the day's activities written on wall calendars to detailed accounts of Kirschner's feelings and physical condition on a given day. Topics of note include the family's sojourn in Italy (1962-1963), Kirschner's relationship with her sons and her daughters-in-law, the suicide of eldest son Barry and its effect on family relationships, the ups and downs of the Kirschners' marriage, and the many descriptions of Jewish celebrations and observances that framed the family life. In addition there are many references to cooking, including descriptions of elaborate culinary preparations for Passover and other Jewish holidays.

Because Kirschner frequently recorded daily symptoms and medications (often in abbreviated notations in the margins of the pages, keyed to a list at the beginning of the volume), the diaries are also remarkable as a record of the course of her battle with lupus throughout the years. Kirschner also kept separate journals during several of the trips she and her husband took around the United States in their motor home. These are less personal in nature than the regular diaries; Although they provide an often extremely detailed listing of each day's activities, they contain few entries giving insights into Kirschner's opinions and thoughts on these experiences.

Kirschner's collection of correspondence (including picture postcards, v-mail, and greeting cards, as well as traditional letters) with her husband, her sons, and their families, as well as other relatives and friends, forms the largest part of the papers. The series is arranged chronologically by correspondent, beginning with the body of correspondence between Kirschner and her husband during their courtship (1940-1942) and his wartime service (1944-1945). This group of letters is particularly useful and interesting because it includes both sides of the correspondence. Written from her parents' home in St. Paul, Doris's letters describe her first and very difficult pregnancy, son Barry's first year, and other family matters. Mel's letters focus on his experiences in the military, including his training for the medical corps, and include descriptions of several European cities he visited while on furlough. The letters also include comments on world events such as the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the bombing of Japan, as well as personal issues such as birth control and disagreements among family members. Many of the letters were later annotated by Doris (mainly in 1971).

The next major section of the series consists of correspondence between family members during periods of separation in the 1950s and 1960s. These letters include descriptions of Mel's experiences as he adjusted to a new job as a shift engineer for Silas Mason, Inc. in Grand Island,

Nebraska; business trips and vacations to Florida and to Florence, Italy; and Barry and Richard's impressions of the Notre Dame International School in Rome, which they attended during the family's stay in Florence.

Richard Kirschner, along with his wife Patricia (Patti), and daughter Shanna, became major correspondents once Richard moved away from the Twin Cities. Soon after marrying, Richard and Patti departed for a year-long trip around Europe and Asia, which they describe in detailed letters sent home. Their letters (1971-1995) are rich in descriptions of Jewish family life and synagogue-related activities. Of particular interest are letters concerning Patti's decision to convert to Judaism (1975), and daughter Shanna's Jewish education, both at home through family observances and celebrations and more formally through her Bat Mitzvah (1992) and a year living on a kibbutz and attending high school in Israel (1994-1995).

The remainder of the series is composed mainly of correspondence from various family members and friends around the world including those met in Italy and through the Kobe College Home Stay program. Particularly notable are letters and an album from Kazuto Hirosawa, a teacher from Kobe College who stayed in their home (1991-1995), and a folder of annual holiday letters (the type that was duplicated and sent out to friends) describing major events for the family during the past year (1962, 1968-1971). In addition, the series includes pages from a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, poems and cartoons collected by Doris throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a family expense record book (1959-1963), and two folders of photographs and negatives (mainly from the 1950s) of family members. A folder of biographical materials at the end of the series includes Doris's wedding planner (1942) (with names of wedding party, guests, and list of gifts), Mel's 1949 resume, and Doris's University of Minnesota transcript and application to the graduate school.

The final series in the collection reflects Doris's lifelong passion for cooking. The menu calendars (1959-1974, 1982-1989) are the highlight of the series, providing a record of the family's eating habits as they evolved over nearly thirty years and illustrating the use of increasing numbers of ethnic dishes in the menus along with the traditional Jewish recipes of Doris's childhood. Many of the latter are included in a handwritten notebook of recipes dictated to Doris by her mother, Esther Schechter. A 1995 article from the *StarTribune* gives a history of the menus and describes her enormous collection of cookbooks, now housed at the University of Minnesota.

## CONTAINER LIST

- Box 1.** **143.J.2.9B**  
Autograph Album, 1935.  
Diaries, 1940, 1963-1977. (12 v. plus 3 folders containing materials enclosed in the diaries)
- Box 2.** **143.J.2.10F**  
Diaries, 1978-1986. (9 v. plus 2 folders containing materials enclosed in the diaries)  
Annotated Wall Calendars, 1983, 1984.  
Trip Diary: Florida, 1959. (2 notebooks)  
Trip Diaries: United States, undated and 1977, 1978.
- Box 3.** **143.J.3.1B**  
Courtship Correspondence and Miscellaneous Notes Between Doris Schechter Kirschner and Melvin Kirschner, Early 1940s.  
Miscellaneous Cards and Notes to Melvin Kirschner from Doris Kirschner, 1940s.  
Correspondence written by Doris and Melvin Kirschner, undated and 1950s-1980.
- Wartime Correspondence, 1940-1945:**  
Mel Kirschner, Camp Carson, Colorado to Doris Kirschner, May-June 1944. (2 folders)  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, May-June 1944. (2 folders)  
Mel Kirschner, Army Medical Center, Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C. to Doris Kirschner, July-November 1944. (4 folders)  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, July-November 1944. (4 folders)  
Mel Kirschner, Fort Riley, Kansas to Doris Kirschner, November-December 1944.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, November-December 1944.  
Mel Kirschner, At Sea and United Kingdom, to Doris Kirschner, December 1944.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, December 1944.  
Mel Kirschner, United Kingdom to Doris Kirschner, January 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, January 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, United Kingdom to Doris Kirschner, February 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, February 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, United Kingdom, France, and Belgium to Doris Kirschner, March 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, March 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, Belgium, France, and Germany, April 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, April 1945.
- Box 4.** **143.J.3.2F**  
Mel Kirschner, Schwerte, Germany to Doris Kirschner, May 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, May 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, Germany, Belgium, and France to Doris Kirschner, June 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, June 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, Rheims, France to Doris Kirschner, July 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, July 1945.

Mel Kirschner, France to Doris Kirschner, Aug. 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, Aug. 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, France and Eberbach, Germany to Doris Kirschner, Sept. 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, Sept. 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, Eberbach, Germany and Biarritz, France to Doris Kirschner, Oct. 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, Oct. 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, Biarritz, France to Doris Kirschner, Nov. 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, Nov. 1945.  
Mel Kirschner, France to Doris Kirschner, Dec. 1945.  
Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota to Mel Kirschner, Dec. 1945.

**Kirschner Family Correspondence, 1950s and 1960s:**

Mel Kirschner, Grand Island, Nebraska and Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota, March-May 1951.  
Mel Kirschner, Grand Island, Nebraska to Doris Kirschner, St. Paul, Minnesota, August, 1951.  
Mel, Doris, Barry, Richard, and Robert Kirschner, During Vacations and Business Trips to Florida, 1959, 1960, 1961.  
Robert Kirschner to Mel and Doris Kirschner, July 1961.  
Mel, Doris, Barry, and Richard Kirschner, During Mel's Business Trip to Germany and Italy Preparing for Family Move to Italy, September-October 1961.  
Esther Schechter to Kirschner Family While Living in Florence, Italy, February 1962-August 1963.  
Barry and Richard Kirschner, Notre Dame International School in Rome, Italy and While Traveling, to Doris and Mel Kirschner in Florence, Italy, February 1962-September 1963.  
Richard Kirschner to Mel and Doris Kirschner, 1961-1970.

**Richard Kirschner and Family (Patricia and Shanna) Correspondence, 1971-1995:**

Richard and Patricia Kirschner to Mel and Doris Kirschner: Wedding Arrangements and Year-Long Honeymoon Trip around Europe and Asia, 1971-1972.  
Richard and Patricia Kirschner, Ann Arbor, Michigan and Massachusetts, to Mel and Doris Kirschner, 1972-1979.  
Richard, Patricia, and Shanna Kirschner, Massachusetts and Kalamazoo, Michigan to Mel and Doris Kirschner, 1980-1989.  
Richard, Patricia, and Shanna Kirschner, Kalamazoo Michigan to Mel and Doris Kirschner, 1990-1995.  
Richard, Patricia, and Shanna Kirschner, undated.

**Box 5.**

**143.J.3.3B**

**Correspondence:**

Barry and Charlene Kirschner, Boulder, Colorado, 1967-1976.  
Robert, Judy and Danielle Kirschner, 1967, 1969, 1972, 1974-1994 and undated.  
Burzagli Family (Fiorella and Guiseppa, Ermina ("Mina"), and Silvia), undated and 1972-1995.  
Beekman Family (Stephen, Danielle, Gerry and Philippe), 1970-1995.

Tigue Family (Ralph and Ethel), undated and 1962, 1963, 1986, 1989; Eulogies for Ethel Tigue, 1986.  
Farber (Pat and Mel), 1964-1966, 1970, 1974, 1977, 1983; Guidice (Anna Maria) 1965, 1990-1994; Taylor (Bob and Maxine), undated and 1971, 1983.  
Kazuto Hirosawa, Kobe, Japan, 1991-1995.  
Album Made by Kazuto Hirosawa for Mel and Doris Kirschner, 1991?.  
Various Japanese Acquaintances who were Guests of the Kirschners Through the Kobe College Homestay Program, 1993-1994.  
Miscellaneous Family and Friends, undated and 1943-1995. (Includes some materials in Italian.)

Family Holiday Letters Sent Out by the Kirschners, 1962, 1968-1971.  
Christmas Lists, undated and 1965-1967.  
Kobe College Homestay Program Information, 1991, 1993.  
Meaningful and Important to Me: Clippings, Cartoons, Etc., 1960s-1980s. (3 folders).  
(Materials collected by Doris Kirschner in a scrapbook)  
Doris and Mel Kirschner Wills and Other Information on Family Finances and Belongings, miscellaneous years, 1960s-1990s.  
Family Expense Record Book, 1959-1963. (1 v.)  
Correspondence Regarding Donation of Cookbooks and Suit to University of Minnesota, 1984, 1986, 1989.  
Correspondence Regarding the Barry William Kirschner Memorial Fund, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1993.  
Family Photographs, miscellaneous years, 1940s-1980s. (52 images)  
Family Photo Negatives, 1950s. (75 negatives)  
Miscellaneous Biographical Materials.

**Box 6.**

**143.J.3.4F**

Menu Calendars, 1959-1974, 1982-1989. (6 folders)  
(These materials **available on Microfilm: M589**)  
Like Mother Makes: Esther Schechter Recipes, As Dictated to Doris Schechter; Recipes for Gefilte Fish; Shopping List[?], undated.  
Newspaper Article: "A Readable Feast," *StarTribune* [Minneapolis, Minn.], 27 December 1995.

**Menu Calendars on Microfilm, 1959-1974, 1982-1989:**

**Reel 1.**

**M589**

**REEL CONTENTS LIST**

Newspaper article: Dean, Lee Svitak,  
"A readable feast," *Minneapolis  
Star Tribune*, 27 December 1995.

September 1959 - August 1960

September 1960 - August 1961

November 1961 - December 1962

January-April 1963

February-December 1964

April-December 1965

December 1965 - December 1966

June-December 1966

January 1967 - April 1968

January-December 1968

January-December 1969

January-November 1970

January 1971 - January 1972

January-December 1972

February-June 1972

January-October 1973

April-November 1974

January-December 1982

January-December 1983

January-December 1984

January-December 1985

January-December 1986

January 1987 - December 1989