



From German-born Einstein's diary: "I'm studying English, but it won't stick in my old brain."

A genius, a man

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Einstein letters detail his life's troubled side

By Allyn Fisher
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Stacks of letters and notebooks left by Albert Einstein offer a rare glimpse of his personality, his often troubled personal life and his behind-the-scenes involvement in world politics.

The 43,000 documents, stored in a basement library after his death in 1955, depict a sensitive man who was beset by family problems and was sometimes a victim of anti-Semitism.

Unpublished letters that Einstein exchanged with Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, show that the scientist was a committed Zionist, although he often displayed an ambivalence toward Judaism.

He repudiated the religion at a young age and frequently criticized Weizmann for the way that Jewish settlers treated Arabs in Palestine before the formation of Israel.

Einstein introduced President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the possibilities of the atomic bomb in 1939, but said the bomb might be "too heavy for transportation by air."

Other letters reveal details about the family problems that Einstein faced as a young man, although they rarely appear to have distracted him from his work in physics.

Because of his feeling for the Jewish state, Einstein, who lived in Princeton, N.J., at the time of his death, bequeathed his personal papers to Hebrew University in Jeru-

salem and his first wife portray a stormy relationship, with frequent separations and then divorce after 19 years, largely as the result of his mother's meddling in their lives.

Because of his mother's objections, Einstein delayed the wedding for years, until after Lieserl was born. "She cried like a child," Einstein wrote about his mother's reaction to the marriage in 1900. He said his mother objected because his wife was an intellectual instead of a homemaker and was four years older, 25 to his 21.

Einstein's first wife, who was in his college physics class in Zurich, Switzerland, was also an important sounding board for the young scientist's work.

He once wrote her about his nearly dropping his theory of relativity because of a simple mathematical error.

"I wrote to you that I doubt my ideas about relativity. But my concerns were based on a computing error. Now I believe it more than ever," Einstein wrote in 1901, 20 years before winning a Nobel prize in physics for the research.

The letters include frequent complaints by Einstein of being unable to find work. German-born, he never mastered English and had most of his letters to Roosevelt translated. On the backs of his drafts, he often doodled physics formulas.

"I'm studying English, but it won't

stick in my old brain." Among other papers in the Einstein collection are packets of notebooks and travel diaries. In his logs from one transatlantic voyage in 1931, Einstein commented on everything from passengers' habits to the shapes of fish in the sea.

Once, he apparently got seasick. In the same sentence he wrote about his study of mechanics, Einstein broke off and added, "The ship is creaking. . . . The doctor says older people often get seasick. It seems to be true."

In another passage, he wrote: "Yesterday, I took a look at the ship's engine, the diesel motor. The engineer is very intelligent. The people on this ship are especially vulgar."

In one log of a trip to New York in 1931, he complained at length about being badgered by reporters and Jewish fund-raisers.

As a victim of Nazi persecutions, he was drawn to the Zionist movement. But of Jewish militancy toward Arabs he wrote: "If we don't find a way of honest cooperation and honest dealing with the Arabs, we have not learned anything during our 2,000 years of suffering and deserve any fate that will hit us."

Anti-Semitism apparently confronted him even after he found refuge in the United States.

His employer in Princeton, Abraham Flexner, director of the Institute for Advanced Study, once canceled Einstein's plans to spend a

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