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## Robert and Phyllis White Papers

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## **Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Robert and Phyllis White Papers

**Dates:** 1946-1989

**Collection Number:** WGF-MS-080

**Creator/Collector:**

**Extent:** 4 linear feet; 283 MB

**Repository:** Writers Guild Foundation Archive  
Los Angeles, California 90048

**Abstract:** The Robert and Phyllis White Collection contains mostly television scripts written by the couple as a team and solo works by Robert White. A small amount of correspondence related to their involvement in labor organizing for TV writers is included. Additionally, this collection consists of radio and television scripts written by Phyllis White's first husband Shelby Gordon.

**Language of Material:** English

### **Access**

Available by appointment only.

### **Publication Rights**

The responsibility to secure copyright and publication permission rests with the researcher.

### **Preferred Citation**

Robert and Phyllis White Papers. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

### **Acquisition Information**

Donated by Robert White in 2004 and 2005.

### **Biography/Administrative History**

Robert White was born on April 7th, 1924 in Bakersfield, CA. After four years serving in the Merchant Marines during World War II, he majored in theater arts at Los Angeles City College. While in college, Robert sold his first scripts for radio and moved on to writing for television in the 1950s. At the start of his career, Robert White wrote for a variety of television comedy shows including "The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show" and "The Real McCoys." Phyllis White (néé Kremer) was born June 5th, 1923 in South Dakota on a reservation. After graduating from the University of Minnesota in 1944 she moved to Chicago to become a writer. Phyllis's start came at a CBS owned radio station where she would sometimes serve as a photographer for football games. Phyllis married fellow radio writer and producer Shelby Gordon (1919-1959) in 1948. She was involved in the Radio Writers Guild and was elected to the Chicago council in 1947 and appointed midwest Executive Secretary in 1949. Shelby Gordon was a radio and TV writer. He was one of the founding leaders of the Television Writers Association. Some of his final TV credits were the documentary series' Adventure and Air Power. He passed away on November 4th, 1959. Phyllis and Robert White married in 1960. Together they wrote for a wide variety of television shows which included westerns, dramas, comedies, soap operas and animation. As a team their credits included Death Valley days, My Favorite Martian, The Bold Ones, Ironside, Guiding Light, Search for Tomorrow, He-Man, She-Ra and many others. The couple earned a Daytime Emmy nomination for their work on Guiding Light and Writers Guild of America Awards for Guiding Light and Search for Tomorrow. Robert and Phyllis were both strong union supporters during their careers. Robert White served as Secretary-Treasurer of the WGA TV-Radio branch from 1971-1973 and was active on many committees during his time in the WGA. Phyllis White served on the WGA Board from 1974-1977 and served as Vice President of the WGA from 1977-1979. Before joining the Writers Guild of America at its reorganization in 1954, Robert and Phyllis were active in the television writer unionization efforts of the short lived Television Writers of America during the early 1950s in Hollywood. Despite an NLRB election in its favor in 1953, the group faltered and dissolved in 1954. After retiring from television, the couple wrote travel guides until Phyllis's death on July 7th, 2002 from a stroke. Robert White passed away on June 17th, 2011.

### **Scope and Content of Collection**

The Robert White and Phyllis White Papers are organized into two series. Series I: Scripts, 1946-1989 contains the majority of the collection materials. Scripts spanning Robert and Phyllis Whites' careers, as well as that of Shelby Gordon, make up this series. Subseries A: Robert and Phyllis White Scripts, contains all works by the writing team. This subseries contains produced scripts written for television, treatments, and scene breakdowns. Contained in this subseries are materials from the soap operas As the Worlds Turns, Rituals, and Search for Tomorrow, episodic TV such as My Favorite Martian, death Valley Days and The Bold Ones, and animation such as He-Man and She-Ra. A pilot by the team titled called My Friend Tony is included as well as storyboards and scripts for Pink Panther animated shows and The Snorks. Robert White's works

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written for television before working with Phyllis are also found in this subseries which includes The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show, The Real McCoys, and The Gale Storm Show and radio episodes of Johnny Madero Pier 23, Man of a Thousand Voices and Voyage of the Scarlet Queen. Finally, there are scripts for a show Fun With Fables, created for experimental Los Angeles TV station W6XYZ in 1946. Subseries B: Shelby Gordon Scripts, contains scripts that were written by Phyllis White's late husband, Shelby Gordon. The majority of this subseries is radio scripts with a few television series. Notable entries include Immortal Pirate: The Story of Francis Drake and episodes of The Whistler, Suspense, Tales of the Texas Rangers, Defense Attorney and Cathy and Elliot Lewis on Stage. TV scripts consist of documentary series' Adventure and Prudential's Air Power. Some radio scripts were co-written by Shelby Gordon and Phyllis. Series II, Writers Guild Material, 1949-1953, contains material retained by Robert and Phyllis White related to union work. Stemming from their time in the Radio Writers Guild are a few agreements and memos to members. Stemming from their time as organizers of the Television Writers of America, this series contains documentation related to the TWA efforts at unionizing of television writers, such as a dozen issues of TWA's newsletter (The TV Writer) and executive board meeting minutes. There are also sample contracts, memos and correspondence from 1953 when multiple groups were vying to win jurisdiction over television writers. Also included is an August 1953 issue of American Mercury where an article by Martin Berkeley entitled Reds in Your Living Room discusses Communist leanings of RWG and TWA leaders, including Robert White. This series also contains plaques and medals from the WGA and T-Shirts and buttons commemorating WGA strikes.

#### **Indexing Terms**

Labor unions

White, Phyllis (Travel writer)

Gordon, Shelby

Teleplays

Radio plays

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