

Frank De Felitta Collection

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

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2021

Descriptive Summary

Title: Frank De Felitta Collection

Dates: 1951-2002

Collection Number: WGF-MS-098

Creator/Collector: De Felitta, Frank, 1921-2016

Extent: 10 linear feet, 9 total boxes

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The Frank De Felitta Collection contains drafts of novels including *Audrey Rose*, *The Entity*, *Oktoberfest* and *Sea Trial* as well as drafts of screenplays by De Felitta adapted from his novels. Additional produced film scripts include *The Savage is Loose* (1974) and *Scissors* (1991). In 1979, De Felitta attempted to adapt Anne Rice's novel *Interview with a Vampire* into a film. Included in the collection are several drafts of his unproduced screenplay. Also included in the collection are scripts for the TV series *Armstrong Circle Theater* and *Danger* and TV Movies *Trapped* (1973) and *Two Worlds of Jennie Logan* (1979). In addition to writing, De Felitta produced documentaries for television. The collection includes production materials, interview transcripts and correspondence for two NBC New documentaries *Mississippi: A Self-Portrait* (1966) and *The World of the Teenager* (1967). In addition, the collection contains several short stories as well as a libretto and musical score for a musical called *Wanda*, *Wanda* produced in Los Angeles in 1983. Most of De Felitta's major screenplays and teleplays are catalogued and available in the library's main collection.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment only. Most materials stored offsite. One week advance notice required for retrieval.

Publication Rights

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

Preferred Citation

Frank De Felitta Collection. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by son Raymond De Felitta on August 8, 2018.

Biography/Administrative History

A writer of novels, television and films as well as a producer of TV documentaries, Frank De Felitta was perhaps best known for writing the occult horror novel, *Audrey Rose*, which was published in 1975 and has sold over 3.5 million copies worldwide. Born in the Bronx on August 3, 1921, Frank Paul De Felitta was the son of Italian Immigrants. His father Pasquale, a painter, oversaw the painting of some of New York City's movie palaces. De Felitta graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in the Bronx and served in the Air Force during World War II. After the war, he married Dorothy Gilbert and had two children, Raymond and Ivy-Eileen. De Felitta began his writing career on a weekly radio series *The Whistler*. This led to gigs writing during the 1950s for anthology television series such as *Suspense*, *Tales of Tomorrow*, *Armstrong Circle Theater* and *Danger* - a live show featuring mostly psychological murder mysteries. He also gravitated toward documentary work throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1958, he was nominated for a Writers Guild Award (along with Irwin Blacker) for an episode of the CBS series *Odyssey* "Satan in Salem" about the Salem witch trials. In 1963, he won a Writers Guild Award (along with Robert Northshield) for the NBC News documentary *The Chosen Child*, about adoption. In 1963, he was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Special with Irving Gitlin for an episode of *DuPont Show of the Week* entitled "Emergency Ward." He also wrote and directed a 1965 NBC special *The Stately Ghosts of England*, documenting three haunted estates. In 1965, De Felitta produced a documentary for NBC News "Mississippi: A Self-Portrait." The piece depicted racism in Civil Rights Era Mississippi, highlighting specifically the negative attitude of white Mississippi residents toward black residents. In the documentary, African American waiter Booker Wright speaks candidly about the negative treatment he receives from white patrons while working in a restaurant. As a result of the broadcast, Wright was forced to quit his job due to being shunned by customers. Wright was later murdered. De Felitta's son Raymond, along with one of Wright's granddaughters, chronicled Wright's life and these incidents in a 2012 *Dateline NBC Special* and in a documentary entitled *Booker's Place*. De Felitta produced another documentary for NBC News in 1967 entitled "The World of the Teenager" which looked at youth culture and teens in Lexington, Massachusetts. De Felitta was perhaps best known for writing the horror novel *Audrey Rose* (1975), about a couple that gradually comes to believe a man who claims their daughter is the reincarnation of his deceased daughter. De Felitta later wrote *The Entity* (1978) about a woman tormented psychologically by a presence outside knowable space and time. De Felitta adapted both

novels into screenplays. The film *Audrey Rose* was directed by Robert Wise and released in 1978, starring Anthony Hopkins and Marsha Mason. The *Entity* was released in 1992, directed by Sidney J. Furie and starring Barbara Hershey. De Felitta is credited with writing several TV movies during the 1970s and 1980s and his final film writing credit was for the horror film *Scissors* (1991). Based on a story by Joyce Selznick, the film starred Sharon Stone. De Felitta wrote short stories into retirement age and passed away in March of 2016 at the age of 94 in Los Angeles.

Scope and Content of Collection

Series I: Novels with Adapted Screenplays, 1975-1999 Series I contains multiple drafts of novels by De Felitta as well as the screenplays adapted from those novels. Titles represented are: *Audrey Rose* (Novel: 1975; Film: 1977); *Inch* (Novel: 2006; collection contains early production materials for an unproduced film version of the novel); *Oktoberfest* (Novel: 1973; collection includes drafts of a screenplay, though a film version of *Oktoberfest* was never produced); *Sea Trial* (Novel: 1980; collection contains several drafts of a screenplay called "Penny Dreadful" based on *Sea Trial*, but a film was never produced). Most drafts of novels and scripts are undated, but many include hand-annotations. The collection contains a significant number of publicity and press clippings, articles and publications from the release of *Audrey Rose* as a novel in 1975 and a film in 1977. **Series II: Film, 1968-1991** Series II contains other film projects and is divided into two sub-series. **Sub-Series A: Produced Screenplays** contains one draft of De Felitta's screenplay with Max Ehrlich for *The Savage is Loose*. This film was released in 1974 and directed by George C. Scott. The sub-series also contains three drafts of *Scissors* (1991). Other titles which have been catalogued and are accessible in the library's core collection include: *Anzio* (1968), *The Killer in the Mirror* (1986), *Trapped* (1973), *Z.P.G.* (1972). **Sub-Series B** consists of unproduced film screenplays, most of them undated. Titles include: *Al Capone's Sitter*, *Colors of Love*, *Day of the Damned*, *Fleming's Legacy*, *Interview with the Vampire* (3 drafts; De Felitta's 1979 attempt to adapt Anne Rice's 1976 novel), *The Nuts Brigade*, *Sitting Duck*, *Streets of Gold*. **Series III: Television, 1951-1979** Series III: Television consists of three subseries. **Sub-Series A is Produced Television Scripts**; **Sub-Series B is Unproduced Television Scripts** and **Sub-Series C is Documentary Television Material**. **Sub-series A: Narrative Television Scripts, 1951-1979** *Armstrong Circle Theatre* was an anthology drama series that ran on NBC during the 1950s. This sub-series contains two of the nine episodes that De Felitta wrote "The Three Tasks" (1954) and "Danny's Tune" (1951). *Danger* was a live drama show featuring mostly psychological murder mystery stories. This sub-series contains a draft of the episode "The Patterns of Truth," which aired in 1954. *Trapped* was a television movie written and directed by De Felitta, starring James Brolin and Susan Clark. Produced by Universal Television, the Longform program aired on ABC in 1973. The sub-series also contains the TV movie *Two Worlds of Jennie Logan* (1979). Starring Lindsay Wagner, Marc Singer and Alan Feinstein and based on the 1977 novel "Second Sight" by David Williams, this movie initially aired on CBS in 1979. **Sub-series B: Unproduced Television Scripts** Sub-series Includes a treatment for a television program / Movie-of-the-Week called "The Haunters and the Haunted" - no date indicated on the script. **Sub-Series C: Documentary Television materials** *Adventure* (1953-1956) was a news / special interest show that spoke to scientists and other experts about various topics and aired on CBS. The collection contains 9 short segment scripts on various topics, only one of which "Voodoo" is written by De Felitta, who shares credit with writer Shelby Gordon. Other writers credited include Herbert Hollzer, Clair Huffaker, Robert Northshield and Ben Kagan, Shelby Gordon and Franklin Barton. The collection includes *The Chosen Child*, a documentary special written by Frank De Felitta and Robert Northshield for NBC News in 1964 about children who are adopted. There is a 63-page transcript of the special, which can be found in the library. *Mississippi: A Self-Portrait* was a documentary that aired for NBC News on May 1, 1966. This section features materials from pre-production and post-production, including a full-transcript of the program, post-production pages with annotated dialogue for editing, synopses and pitch materials and raw interview transcripts. Interview transcripts in the collection include KKK Grand Wizard Robert M. Shelton, then Mississippi Governor Paul Johnson as well as an interview with waiter Booker Wright, in which he details poor treatment by white customers at the restaurant where he works. Additional transcripts include interviews with police officers, charity workers, plantation owners and other Mississippians. The collection also contains correspondence and letters to NBC from viewers after the show aired. Some letters criticize the program citing its bias in talking mostly to white interview subjects and ignoring certain regions of the state; other letters praise the program for taking on the subject of Civil Rights. *The Stately Ghosts of England* was a 1965 NBC special on haunted estates. Included are the final documentary transcript as well as correspondence and memos created during the filming. This sub-series also includes material from an unproduced documentary about galleries and art, including the Whitney Museum. Collection includes typed song lyrics for "Yankee Doodle Dandy" as well as lyrics and poetry from Woody Guthrie; interview transcripts with artists Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Edward Hopper and Jack Levine as well as pre-production and budget materials. *The World of the Teenager* was a documentary that aired for NBC News, shot in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1966. The collection contains production materials, transcripts from interviews with teens, their parents and teachers as well budget and pre-production materials and letters written to NBC from viewers in response to the program. **Series IV: Other Works, 1983-2012** This series consists of several other works by De Felitta, including the novella *L'Opera Italiano* which was published in 2012, and the never-published short story *Long Walk to Bernstein's Store*. The collection also contains clippings, correspondence, score and libretto to a musical called *Wanda, Wanda*, which had its

world premiere at the Landmark Alliance Theater in Los Angeles in 1983. Series V: Clippings and Professional Papers, 1962-1970s This series contains research, newspaper clippings, photographs, publications, programs and correspondence not identifiably related to novels, TV productions or films represented elsewhere in the collection. The series includes issues of Variety and the Hollywood Reporter as well as information and correspondence related to the WGA and DGA pension, health and retirement plans.

Indexing Terms

Paranormal fiction

Horror films

Civil Rights--United States

Race relations

Television and teenagers

Horror fiction

Screenwriters

Novelists

Television writers

Television producers and directors

Television documentaries
