
Jean Rouverol Butler Papers

Finding aid created by Writers Guild Foundation Archive staff using RecordEXPRESS

Writers Guild Foundation Archive

7000 West Third Street

Los Angeles, California 90048

(323) 782-4680

hswett@wgfoundation.org

<https://www.wgfoundation.org/archive/>

2020

Descriptive Summary

Title: Jean Rouverol Butler Papers

Dates: 1937-1998

Collection Number: WGF-MS-085

Creator/Collector: Rouverol, Jean

Extent: 4 linear feet

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The bulk of the Jean Rouverol Butler Papers consists of the creative writing, correspondence and personal papers of Jean Rouverol Butler; a small portion relates to her husband Hugo Butler. Jean's work comprises short stories, poems, novellas and screenplays that she worked on alone and with her husband.

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

Jean Rouverol Butler Papers. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Butler's family on 3/19/2018

Biography/Administrative History

Born in St. Louis on July 8, 1916, Jean Rouverol was the daughter of Joseph Rouverol and Aurania Ellerbeck Rouverol, who was an actress turned writer. Aurania created the Andy Hardy character for the stage and went on to write plays and the 1931 Joan Crawford film "Dance, Fools, Dance." Rouverol grew up in Los Angeles and Palo Alto, CA and briefly attended Stanford. She began acting at a young age and performed in LA and New York. Beginning in the late 1930s through the 1940s, she played the part of Betty on the radio soap opera One Man's Family. In May 1937 Rouverol married screenwriter Hugo Butler and they went on to have six children. In 1940, she got her first Hollywood writing job at MGM. Between 1945 and 1947, Rouverol sold four novellas to McCall's magazine. By 1950, her first screenplay *So Young So Bad* had been made into a movie but her screenwriting career was halted after it was discovered that she and Butler had been members of the American Communist Party. In 1951, the House Un-American Activities Committee attempted to subpoena the couple. Rouverol and Butler chose to live in exile with their four children in Mexico rather than face HUAC. While in exile, Rouverol had two more children and continued to write screenplays, short stories and magazine articles and she and Butler co-wrote several screenplays using fronts and pseudonyms to keep their identities secret. The family lived in Mexico for eleven years and spent three more in Italy, for Butler's film work, before returning to California permanently in 1964. Butler died in 1968 and Rouverol continued to write. She published several books: a juvenile biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe (1968), young adult biographies of Pancho Villa (1972) and Benito Juarez (1973) and a gothic suspense novel *Storm Wind Rising* (1974). She worked on daytime soap operas: *Bright Promise*, *Search For Tomorrow*, *As The World Turns* and *Guiding Light*, the last of which garnered her two Daytime Emmy nominations and a Writers Guild Award. In 1984, she penned *Writing for the Soaps* which was expanded and retitled *Writing for Daytime Drama*, published in 1992. She also taught at USC and UCLA Extension. She served four terms on the WGA's Board of Directors and in 1987, she received the Writers Guild's Morgan Cox Award for service to the union. In 2000, at age 84, she published a memoir "Refugees From Hollywood: A Journal of the Blacklist Years" about her family's life in exile in Mexico. Rouverol moved to Pawling, NY in 2005, where she lived with her partner Clifford Carpenter, a blacklisted actor. He died in 2014. Rouverol died on March 24, 2017 and is survived by her son Michael Butler; five daughters, Susan Butler, Becky Butler, Mary Butler, Emily McCoy and Deborah Spiegelman; eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Hugo Butler was born on May 4, 1914 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada to screenwriter Frank Butler. After his parents divorced, he grew up in Canada with his mother until moving to Hollywood for his first writing job under contract at MGM in 1936. Butler married Jean Rouverol in 1937 and they went on to have six children. He achieved success as a screenwriter and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Writing, Original Story (shared with Dore Schary) for *Edison The Man* (1940). His career was interrupted briefly while he served in WWII and was derailed when he was named as a member of the American Communist Party during the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings of 1951. He and his wife fled to Mexico with their children, where he continued to write screenplays using pseudonyms. He collaborated with Spanish director Luis Bunuel on several films and worked with director Robert Aldrich as

well as producer George Pepper. The family moved to Rome in 1960 for Butler's writing work and finally back to Hollywood in 1963. His last film credit is *The Legend of Lylah Clare* (dir. Robert Aldrich) which he wrote with his wife. He died January 7, 1968 in Los Angeles of a heart attack. (Information adapted from Los Angeles Times obituaries)

Scope and Content of Collection

The Jean Rouverol Butler Papers are organized into three series. Series I: Film and TV Projects, 1945-1984, represents Jean's and Hugo's screenwriting work over several decades. Jean's produced titles include *Autumn Leaves*, *The Miracle* (written with Frank Butler) and *Little House on the Prairie*. Her unproduced titles include *Corcho Bliss*, *Life is a Zoo* (TV pilot), *Secret Valley* (with Michael Butler), and a Verdi biopic. Produced screenplays written by Hugo Butler include *From This Day Forward*, *The Little Giants*, and *Torero*. Unproduced titles include *Black is the Color*, *The Highwaymen*, and *The Loved One* (with Luis Bunuel). Treatments for projects by Butler include *Act of Love*, *El Cadillac*, *The Enemies*, *The Envelope*, and *The Last Dinosaur*. Some title pages list Butler's pseudonyms of Hugo Mozo, Phillip Roll, and others. Unproduced screenplays co-written by Butler and Rouverol include *All the Way to the Bank*, *The Sheltering Sky*, and *Tom Sawyer*. A few projects are supplemented with contracts and correspondence. Lastly, this series includes development correspondence and a script written by Dalton Trumbo titled *First Love*, based on Jean's story *When the World Was New*. Series II: Other Writing, 1920s-1993, is composed of Jean's creative writing output during much of her life. Material spans all formats - novellas, short stories, poems, plays, essays - and spans her childhood up through the 1990s. This series includes four short stories that were published in *McCall's* as well as her short story *When the World Was New*, which Trumbo adapted into a screenplay. This series includes research for a proposed juvenile biography of Emily Dickinson and extensive research and writing for a book about Percy Shelley and Lord Byron and the Pisan circle. Lastly, there is correspondence between Jean and her publisher regarding her instructional book *Writing for the Soaps*. Series III: Personal and Professional Papers, 1930s-1998, consists mainly of research, correspondence and contracts which do not pertain to creative projects found elsewhere in the collection. Ephemera from Jean's youth includes play programs and dance cards from high school and letters to her mother from her time at Stanford, discussing schoolwork, acting, plays and dating. Research relates to a Ralph Bunche project, a Mormon Trail project and a few others. Correspondence consists of letters Hugo wrote to Jean while he was in the service in 1945 and letters between Jean and Hugo from 1962 and 1963 discussing their family, their life and their work. Contracts cover some of Jean's book and TV projects. Jean's academic teaching work is represented in the form of a syllabus for *Writing for Daytime Drama* and lecture notes and assignments. A few papers relate to Aurania Rouverol and consist of notes, correspondence and contracts regarding the play and rights to *Skidding* (which originated the Hardy family) and an unpublished novel titled *The Eagle Gate*. A subseries of material relates to the Hollywood Blacklist. Some documents relate to the WGA and its efforts to correct credits for Blacklisted writers, including Hugo and Jean. Letters to WGA from Jean recount the details of her and Hugo's uncredited film work from the 1950s. Films discussed are: *The Miracle*, *Autumn Leaves*, *First Time*, *So Young So Bad*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Terero*, *World For Ransom*, *Young One*. There is also extensive correspondence between Jean and Finnish film and Blacklist scholar Matti Salo. Lastly, the collection includes Jean and Hugo's FBI files from the 1950s when they lived in exile in Mexico with their family, which Jean obtained through a FOIA request.

Indexing Terms

Blacklisting of entertainers--United States.

Blacklisting of authors--United States.

Blacklisting of entertainers--United States.

Hollywood blacklist

Rouverol, Aurania, 1886-1955

Butler, Hugo, 1914-1968

Screenplays

Screenwriters
