
Robert Van Scoyk Papers

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

7000 West Third Street

Los Angeles, California 90048

(323) 782-4680

hswett@wgfoundation.org

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Robert Van Scoyk Papers

Dates: 1943-1998

Collection Number: WGF-MS-039

Creator/Collector: Scoyk, Robert van, 1928-2002

Extent: 10 linear feet: 4 records boxes + 5 archival boxes

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The Robert Van Scoyk Papers consists mainly of produced television scripts, treatments, and ideas for produced and unproduced TV shows. Some of the popular shows include Columbo, Murder, She Wrote, The Imogene Coca Show, and The Virginian. This collection also includes scrapbooks as well as photos, correspondence, illustrations, and song lyrics of personal and professional nature.

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 Van Scoyk Papers. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Van Scoyk's family in 2006 and 2008.

Biography/Administrative History

Robert Elseworth Van Scoyk was born on January 13, 1928 in Dayton, Ohio to Robert Van Scoyk and Gertrude Wardlow. Van Scoyk began writing for local radio in Dayton and joined the Army Air Force during the last months of World War II. After the war, he moved to New York to attend Columbia and New York University. He married Patricia Schauder and they had two sons. She died in 1971 at the age of 42 and Van Scoyk later married Leona Plotkin. Van Scoyk started in New York as a page for NBC, originally with the goal of writing for radio. While he was working as a page he wrote a column about being a struggling writer in the Dayton Daily News, which got him noticed as a writer. His time at NBC began during the Golden Age of television, and his first writing credit was with his partner Allan Manings for the Imogene Coca Show, a successor to Your Show of Shows. Van Scoyk worked on TV shows U.S. Steel Hour, Kraft Theater, Armstrong Circle Theater, The Ann Sothorn Show, Ellery Queen, and Columbo among others. He also had a story published in The Best American Short Stories 1958 and wrote sketches for a 1956 Broadway show called The Littlest Revue. He moved to Los Angeles in the late 1960's to write for The Virginian. Van Scoyk won an Edgar Allan Poe Award, awarded by the Mystery Writers of America, in 1979 for an episode of Columbo entitled "Murder Under Glass." Besides Columbo, Van Scoyk is best known for writing and producing episodes of the mystery show Murder, She Wrote during the 1980s and 1990s and was profiled about his work on this show for the book "Successful Scriptwriting." Van Scoyk died on August 26, 2002 in Los Angeles, CA at age 74, from complications of diabetes. He was survived by his wife of thirty years, Leona Plotkin Van Scoyk; three sons (Robert Van Scoyk, Andy Van Scoyk, and Matt Tyrnauer); his father Robert; and his sister, Lois Harley.

Scope and Content of Collection

Series I: Scripts, 1948-1998, contains scripts primarily written by Robert Van Scoyk over the course of his career, including in the very early days of television in New York. Subseries A: Weekly Television Scripts, 1949-1998, consists of episodic shows: Armstrong Circle Theater, All's Fair, Columbo, Ellery Queen, East Side/West Side, Hollywood Screen Test, The Imogene Coca Show, Ironside, Kraft Television Theater, Love, Sidney, Lucas Tanner, The Men From Shiloh, Murder, She Wrote, Stanley, United States Steel Hour, The Virginian, The Johnny Carson Show, Magnum P.I., Rafferty, Sarge, Young Maverick, and several others. Subseries B: Television Movies and Specials, 1966-1994, contain teleplays for a few TV movies including two for the series Columbo, and the 1966 WGAe awards show. Subseries C: Radio Scripts, 1948-1952, contains episodes of The Aldrich Family and Fred Allen. Subseries D: Unproduced Scripts, 1955-1964, includes a teleplay for the Jackie Gleason Show [or The Honeymooners]. Series II: Treatments, 1951-1994 contains treatments, sketches, and many notes for many TV series and episodes. Subseries A: Produced Episodes, 1974-1994, contains treatments and production materials for aired TV episodes. Shows represented include Murder, She Wrote, The Cosby Mysteries, and Lucas Tanner. Subseries B: Unproduced Ideas for Existing Television Shows, 1951-1994, contains treatments, sketches, and ideas for such as shows Murder, She Wrote, The Johnny Carson Show, Columbo, and others. Subseries C: Miscellaneous Ideas,

1950-1980, contains treatments, sketches and notes. Most, if not all, of the ideas either did not get produced or are of unknown origin. Some are dated from 1950-1960, but most items are undated. The details and specific titles in each folder are indicated in the inventory. Series III: Personal and Professional Ephemera, 1943-1987, is made up of scrapbooks, photos, correspondence, illustrations, song lyrics, news clippings, and other personal and professional items. The professional ephemera includes a Van Scoyk business card, a coverage format guide from Columbia, and correspondence. Personal ephemera includes a brochure for a book about forensic medical examination and tourist brochures from Coney Island. Lastly, this series contains three scrapbooks put together by Van Scoyk. The first chronicles his teenage years, performing in plays and learning about comedy. The second describes the first year of his marriage to Patricia, and many photos of his children. The third covers his early career writing in radio and TV.

Indexing Terms

Television Scripts

Columbo (Television program) Murder, she wrote (Television program)

Television writers
