
Willard Wiener Papers

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Willard Wiener Papers

Dates: 1907-1961

Collection Number: WGF-MS-052

Creator/Collector: Wiener, Willard 1900-1982

Extent: 4.8 linear feet

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The Willard Wiener Papers, 1907-1976, consists of correspondence, photographs, memorabilia, news clippings, scripts, and development material related to Wiener's personal life and career as a journalist and screenwriter. The bulk of the material consists of both personal and professional letters that are collected in 18 scrapbooks.

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

Willard Wiener Papers. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Devik Wiener, December 6, 2016

Biography/Administrative History

Willard Wiener was born March 27, 1900, in St. Louis, Missouri. His father, Harry Wiener, was a successful small businessman who was born in Nashville, Tennessee. His mother, Carrie Lowen Wiener, was born in St. Louis, Missouri. On Wiener's 18th birthday, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserve. He served in the United States and overseas during World War I and was honorably discharged in the summer of 1919. From 1920-1934 Wiener worked as a newspaper reporter in New York, including stints with the Evening Post and the Philadelphia Bulletin. During this time, he also did publicity work for Universal Pictures. Between 1934 and 1939 he worked for the New York Post, and began writing for radio. Wiener worked for the New York newspaper PM from 1940 until he resigned to become a freelancer in 1944. In addition to these newspapers Wiener had work published in Vanity Fair, Current History, Esquire, Tricolor, and The New Republic. While working as a reporter, Wiener also published novels: Rafferty (1931), Morning in America (1942) and Four Boys and a Gun (1944). The latter was released as a film in 1957. Wiener wrote a novelized version of the movie A Song to Remember, a film directed by Charles Vidor and released in 1945. That same year he published a non-fiction book commissioned by the U.S. Air Force entitled Two Hundred Thousand Flyers, which told the story of the civilian AAF pilot training program and how General Hap Leonard turned the nation's private flying schools into Air Corps training facilities during World War II. During the 1940s Wiener started painting and drawing and exhibited some art in local galleries over the decades. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Wiener worked briefly in Hollywood as a screen and television writer and in publicity. Wiener married Grace Katz on October 3, 1923 in New York. In 1924 the couple had settled in a Los Angeles suburb but by 1927 they had moved to Long Island, New York. The couple had three children: Barbara, Marcia, and Leigh. In 1946 the family returned to California, and Wiener lived there until his death on January 9, 1982. Son Leigh Wiener went on to become a prominent photographer, and the collection contains letters representing Leigh's entry into the field of photography.

Scope and Content of Collection

Series I: Scrapbooks, 1907-1961, consists of personal letters written by Wiener to family and business letters written to literary agents and newspaper editors. Includes photographs, artifacts, news clippings, and official documents pertaining to Wiener's personal life, career, and his wife and children. Subseries A: Youth, 1907-March 1918, contains letters and photographs from Wiener's youth. Includes vintage postcards and Valentine's Day cards from elementary school classmates. Subseries B: World War I, April 1918-June 1919, consists of letters, telegrams, photographs, artifacts, and official documents chronicling Wiener's time in the U.S. Navy Reserves during World War I. Most of the letters are to and from Wiener's parents, siblings, and friends. There is a photograph of the crew of the U.S.S. Fresno and artifacts taken from a German prisoner. Also includes a small booklet taken from a French stowaway found on the U.S.S. Fresno. Wiener also describes his experiences in Paris, France in his letters. Subseries C: Grace, July 1919-1926, consists of letters to and from Grace Katz, whom Wiener married in October 1923. Mostly courtship letters but details of Wiener's assignments as a New York reporter are revealed. During this era Wiener started working a newspaper reporter and was assigned to cover court

trials in New York City. Also includes photographs of Wiener, Grace, and their first child, Barbara, when the family was living in California. Subseries D: Business-New York, May 1929-1944, consists of letters, photographs, official documents, news clippings and some artifacts pertaining to Wiener's personal and professional affairs while he and his family lived in Long Island, New York. Some documents and photographs relate to his wife and children. During this period Wiener had three novels published, Rafferty (1931), Morning in America (1942) and Four Boys and a Gun (1944). Letters in this subseries also chronicle Wiener's transition from news reporter to full time creative and freelance writing. Contains a journal entry Wiener wrote regarding the World War II Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Around 1943 Wiener started painting and sketching artwork and there are photographs of some his works. Artifacts include press cards, and dust jackets from one of his novels. Subseries E: Business-Hollywood, 1945-1956, consists of letters, photos, and news clippings. During this time Wiener worked as a writer for Columbia Pictures and a publicist for ABC. Most of the letters pertain to business transactions but some are personal and chronicle health challenges Wiener was going through (heart attack). Some letters demonstrate how Wiener's son, Leigh, started to embark on his career as a photographer, and there are other documents and biographical information pertaining to Leigh Wiener in this subseries. Subseries F: Miscellaneous, 1956-1961, contains receipts from home remodeling (in 1954 a plot of land off Nichols Canyon had been purchased); an October 19, 1955 Hollywood Reporter magazine issue; a contest award letter. Subseries G: Leigh Wiener, August 1948-May 1956, consists of letters and postcards written by Wiener, and his wife Grace, to and from their son Leigh Wiener. Series II: Works, 1940s-1976, consists of a variety of creative works by Wiener. Most of the material is undated. It is uncertain how much of the works were published. Evidence of publishing was provided if available. Subseries A: Novels, contains the manuscript of the novel adaptation of the film A Song to Remember (1945), which is a fictionalized biography of the composer Chopin. In addition, a serialized version of the manuscript, as was published in PM magazine, is included. Another novel manuscript is included in this subseries, titled "Vera" or "Marriage on the Rocks". Subseries B: Play Manuscripts, consists of two copies of a play version of his novel Morning in America (1976), two copies of Leave it to Little People (1959), and one copy of The Lonely Ones. Subseries C: Research, consists of an article titled FDR's Airship Fleet written by Shirley Jordan, and a telegram from FDR addressed to TJ Cromwell (October 1938); Untitled Civil War Project contains various writings regarding the U.S. Civil War with particular emphasis on a narrative of an Italian immigrant, and a historical timeline on the city of New Orleans. In addition, a Report by District Attorney of New York County and a background for a story idea is included. Subseries D: Short stories, contains the titles The Anniversary Present and Man Talk. Subseries E: Screenplays, contains the following titles: The Back Forty, Lantern Magic, A Light at Sundown, Grapevine, The End is Known (co-written by Ida Lupino), and an Untitled work. Subseries F: Teleplays, consists of the following produced titles: Four Star Playhouse - A Bag of Oranges and Eddie's Place; Screen Directors Playhouse - Checked Out (directed by Ida Lupino); Big Town - Prison Riot. Unproduced titles include a backup episode for the Mark Stevens series Decision and many pilot and teleplay ideas. Subseries G: Story ideas, consists of many stories and series ideas. Series III: Personal Papers and Artifacts, 1918-1982 contains family correspondence, information on a few of Wiener's painting exhibitions, personal condolence letters from the passing of his wife and estate documents, personal effects such as WGA membership cards, and photos. The series also contains Wiener's World War I U.S. sailor uniform of bell bottom trousers and jumper top and a Navy issued pea coat. Hat not included.

Indexing Terms

World War, 1914-1918

Wiener, Leigh

Journalists

Screenwriters
