
John Gay Papers

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

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2019

Descriptive Summary

Title: John Gay Papers

Dates: 1956-2002

Collection Number: MS-WGF-077

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 16.75 linear feet

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The John Gay Papers, 1949-2013, consist of Gay's scripts, outlines, notes and correspondence created during his five decade career as a screen and television writer in the entertainment industry. The collection features Gay's most famous works, such as *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Fatal Vision*, *Separate Tables*, and *Run Silent, Run Deep* and includes drafts and correspondence for many unrealized projects.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment only.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

John Gay Papers. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by son Larry Gay on April 4, 2017.

Biography/Administrative History

John Gay was born on April 1, 1924 in Whittier, California and grew up in Los Angeles with an interest in theater and acting. He worked a stint as a clerk at the U.S. Coast Guard office during WWII, which brought him to New York, where he graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. He spent several summers in stock at the Boothbay Playhouse in Maine, where he met his wife Barbara (Bobbie) Meyer, also an aspiring actress. They married in 1949 and soon after were hired by TV station WOR in New York to write and perform in a daily domestic show titled *Apartment 3C*. This morphed into a weekly mystery series called *Mr. and Mrs. Mystery*, which aired until 1952. He began writing plays and scripts for anthology TV series and would continue for five decades as a screenwriter. He was hired by Burt Lancaster to adapt the novel *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1958), his first credited feature film, which brought his family to Los Angeles permanently. Gay's career resulted in 14 feature films, 39 TV movies, 5 episodes of live TV and various plays. Much of his writings were based on books and/or real people and true events. He was nominated for an Oscar with co-writer Terrence Rattigan for *Separate Tables* (1958) and was nominated for 6 WGA Awards, 1 Emmy, 1 Cable ACE and 3 Edgar Allen Poe Awards during his career. Gay was also awarded three honorary awards by the Writers Guild: the Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award for Television Writing Achievement (1984), the Morgan Cox Award for his service to the Guild (1992), and the Edmund H. North Founders Award for his leadership and service (2003). Gay's play *Diversions and Delights*, based on the life of Oscar Wilde, premiered in San Francisco and then traveled across the United States during the 1970s. He also wrote the plays *Christophe*, *Soap*, and *Well Chosen Enemies*. Gay was a longtime member of the Writers Guild of America. He was a Board Member from 1971-1975 and again from 1977-1979, then served as the WGA's Vice President from 1985-1987. He helped lead negotiations during looming writer's strikes. He was also a board member of the Writers Guild Foundation and served from 1987 to 2001. Beginning in the early 1960s, Gay served on more than two dozen guild committees, including the screen grievance committee (1962-73), TV-Film negotiating (1966), membership and finance (1967-68, 1979-81), Working Rule #8 disciplinary (1972-75), screen credits (1973-2002), strike planning (1980-81), and many others. He was also an officer of the guild's pension plan and its health fund, and held several positions, including president and vice president, of the guild's credit union. Gay published the autobiography *Any Way I Can: 50 Years in Show Business* in 2008, co-written with his daughter Jennifer Gay Summers. He died on February 4, 2017, in Santa Monica, California at age 92, survived by his children Lawrence, Jennifer, and Elizabeth.

Scope and Content of Collection

Series I: TV Scripts, is divided into two groups. Subseries A: TV Movies, 1971-1996 contains scripts, notes, outlines, shooting schedules, and research for a majority of Gay's television movies, many of which were based on true events or books. Notable works include *The Bunker* (1981), *Fatal Vision* (1984), *A Private Battle* (1980), *Inherit the Wind* (1988) and *Things in Their Season* (1974). Many projects contain multiple drafts and Gay's handwritten margin notes can be found throughout

the collection. Subseries B: Episodic Television, 1956, 1959, contains Gay's scripts for Lux Video Theatre's *The Sentry*, Playhouse 90 episodes *The Day Before Atlanta* and *Out of Dust*, and Lynn Riggs' original *Out of Dust* playscript. Series II: Films, 1960-1979 contains scripts for most of Gay's feature films. *The Power* (1968), *Soldier Blue* (1970) contains various drafts, as does *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1971). Series III: Unproduced Projects, 1956-2002 contains scripts, notes, research and outlines for Gay's unproduced projects, some based on books and some original ideas. Works include a Mary Pickford biopic, an Enola Gay miniseries, a TV adaptation of *Giant*, a Robin Hood story, a version of *And the Band Played On*, a TV adaptation of *Tea and Sympathy*, and a feature version of *The Travels of Jamie McPheeters*. Series IV: Plays contains scripts for the stage, including *Christophe and Literacy*, *Love*, and *Licentiousness Diversions and Delights*, and others. Series V: Correspondence, 1951-2013 contains letters written primarily written to Gay regarding his work in the entertainment industry, arranged chronologically. A large portion is from his first agents, Blanche Gaines (TV-NY) and H.N. Swanson (Film-LA) and reveals the day to day work of being an agent in the nascent TV industry. Some correspondence is related to service and business of the WGA and WGF. The correspondence spans his career and includes some other notable industry people and information about WGA arbitrations in which Gay was involved, including the film *How The West Was Won*. Series VI: Professional Artifacts contains many of the trophies, certificates and plaques garnered by Gay over his career, including his honorary awards from the WGA. Also included are playbills from Boothbay, photos, brochures and programs from conferences and Gay's typewriter, a Royal Model O "Touch Control" c. 1930s.

Indexing Terms

Motion picture industry

Golden age of television

Literary agents

Theatrical agents

Swanson, H.N.

Writers Guild of America, West

Made-for-TV Movies

Teleplays

Screenplays

Playscript

And the band played on (Television program)

Screenwriters

Televisions Writers
