Finding Aid to the Jack Case Collection MSA.32

Finding aid prepared by Holly Rose Larson
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2012 June 22
Title: Jack Case Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MSA.32
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Autry Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2.5 Linear feet
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1922-1939
Date (inclusive): 1906-1992
Abstract: Jack Case was an American rodeo trick rider and Hollywood stuntman popular in the 1930s. This collection includes correspondence and records regarding Case's personal and business life, photographs, and promotional materials for rodeo shows, including his performing horse Rex.
creator: Case, Betty
creator: Case, Helen
creator: Case, Jack
creator: Taylor, Buck
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org. An item-level inventory is available from library staff.
Use
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Biographical note
Willard Luna Case was born on September 3, 1902 in Edneyville, North Carolina to Joseph Fielding Case and Mary Jane Lyda Case, who also had two daughters in 1905 and 1908. Willard left home at the age of 12, and was gone for years. Case returned to visit his home as a young man, sharing stories of performing with traveling rodeo shows. Having always disliked the name Luna, Willard had started going by the name Jack. For the rest of his life, he used the name Jack or J. W. Case, but some family members always referred to him as Willard.
Jack Case married Edith Corinne Pittenger in 1921, with whom he bore two children, Katherine and Kenneth, in Boise, Idaho. Case went back out on the road around 1922 and eventually divorced. As an adult, Case's son Kenneth joined the Marines and was involved in the capture of a German spy in Oahu on December 7, 1941.
Jack Case was named World’s Champion All-Around Cowboy of 1924, World’s Champion Bronco Rider in 1927, and broke the world record for steer wrestling in 1929. In addition to rodeo fame, Case became a popular stunt double in the film industry for actors such as Tom Mix, Ken Maynard, Tom Tyler, and Rod LaRoque. Case bought and trained an Arabian horse he named Rex, who also performed in movies. [Case’s Rex is not to be confused with “Rex the Wonder Horse” who was also a star of Hollywood Westerns at the same time.]
Jack Case traveled all over the United States during and after the Great Depression, producing and performing in rodeo shows. He managed his own rodeo shows under the company name Jack Case Rodeo Attractions and a later outfit as the Bar-20 Ranch Rodeo, whose appearances were sponsored by such organizations as the Family Welfare Agency, American Legion posts, and regional Elk Lodges. Case was the assistant arena director of the Pendleton Round-Up in 1923 and went on to direct and perform in Buck Taylor’s Wild West Show at the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Case also performed with his friend Zack Miller’s 101 Ranch Wild West Show, which toured all over America, and Case acted as manager of the 101 Ranch shows during their European tours in 1924 and 1926.
While directing rodeo shows, Case employed many other trick riders and entertainers. One such rider, known as Betty Case was a trick rider and was also the assistant manager of their company Jack Case Rodeo Attractions. There is no documentation that Betty and Jack were legally married, though publications often referred to Betty as Jack’s wife. Jack was later associated with another trick rider, Doris, who was also referred to as Jack’s wife, though no legal certificate has been produced. In 1939, Case legally married Helen Beck, a musician performing with The Bar-20 Ranch band, and the couple bore daughter Jacquelyn (Jackie). Jack and Helen continued to perform together, and Jackie became a part of the traveling circuit, spending much time with Rex.
The Bar-20 Ranch show shut down in 1942 or 1943, and the Cases moved around Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Idaho. Both Jack and Helen learned how to wire houses for electricity through the Rural Electric Administration, a product of Theodore Roosevelt’s administration. The Cases did electrical work and farming to support their family, never staying anywhere longer than a few months. In 1947, the Cases became acquainted with evangelist Brother Mac and his wife Flossie McAlmond. The McAlmonds helped the Cases relocate to California, and in 1949, the Cases, now with another daughter Carol, settled down in Los Angeles for four years, the longest stay in any one city for the family so far. Jack Case got a job working construction in Guam, and the rest of the family stayed in Los Angeles. Upon his return, Jack got work training horses on his own property, and taught trick riding skills to his daughter Jackie.

In 1952, the Cases had a son, Gordon, and a year later, the whole family moved to Washington, again staying with the McAlmonds until they could get their own place. Rex had begun to age, and Jack Case found a farm for him to live out his retirement in Washington. In 1954, the family moved to Idaho again.

Jack and Helen Case divorced in May of 1956, and in November 1956, Jack married Jacqueline Alice Price in Alhambra, California. They had two children, Wanda and Jack. This marriage dissolved in 1961. No further marriages or children of Jack Case have been noted.

Jack Case’s exact death information is not documented, but most likely died sometime in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The last time his daughter Jackie had contact with him was a personal visit in Federal Way, Washington in 1962, and a letter Jackie received from Case postmarked from Seattle, Washington in 1967.

The Autry National Center houses a large collection of Jack Case performance memorabilia donated by Petra and Greg Martin in 1991. The memorabilia includes costumes, horse tack, and a Colt single action army model revolver which Buck Taylor gave to Jack Case as payment for his performance with Taylor’s Wild West Show.

Acquisition

Preferred citation
Jack Case Collection, 1906-1992, Autry National Center; [item number].

Scope and contents
This collection consists of personal papers, photographs, memorabilia, and business files of Jack Case. The collection is divided into two series which relate to the acquisition history of the material to the Autry.

Series 91.210 consist of papers that document Jack Case’s life as a performer in traveling rodeo shows, primarily between 1926-1939. This series also includes a significant amount of correspondence and invoices between Jack Case and Buck Taylor, regarding both personal and rodeo-related subjects.

Series IT.96.245 is mostly comprised of correspondence regarding Jack Case and his rodeos, often featuring his horse Rex. Other materials in the collection are bumper stickers, business cards, a catalog, legal documents, newspaper clippings, notebooks, photographs, promotional materials, receipts, stationery, and tickets to rodeos. The majority of the items are dated 1922-1935.

Processing history
Initial inventory, physical processing, and cataloging by Autry National Center staff. Additional processing and finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, NHPRC Project Archivist 2012 June 22, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

91.210 Jack Case Rodeo files, 1906-1939
IT96.245 Jack Case papers, 1922-1992

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bar 20 Ranch Rodeo.
Case, Doris
Jack Case Rodeo Show.
Miller, Zack, b. 1878
Bronc riding -- United States
Clippings
Correspondence
Financial records
Invoices
Legal documents
Photographs
Press kits
Receipts (financial records).
Rodeo performers -- United States
Rodeos
Steer wrestling -- United States
Stunt performers -- United States
Trick riding -- United States
Trick roping -- United States
Wild west shows
Women rodeo performers -- United States -- History

Jack Case rodeo files and personal papers donated by Petra and Greg Martin, 91.210
Bulk, 1926-1939 1906-1939

Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.2 Linear feet
Scope and contents
The bulk of this collection of papers are dated from 1926-1939 and document Jack Case's life as a performer in traveling rodeo shows. Materials related to the production of rodeo shows include an accident report, correspondence, employment agreements, expense records, invoices for supplies and a horse, payment contracts, receipts, and shipping agreements. Materials regarding the promotion of rodeo shows include bumper stickers, a newsletter, postcards, press kits, programs for the shows, stationery, and tickets. The tickets are for Bar-20 Ranch Rodeo Show, Bar-U Ranch Rodeo Show, the Jack Case Rodeo Show, Jack Case Rodeo Attractions, and the World's Champion Steer and Broncho (sic) Riding Contests.
This collection contains a significant amount of correspondence and invoices between Jack Case and Buck Taylor, regarding both personal and rodeo-related subjects. Personal papers of Jack Case include correspondence and photographs as well as the contents of a wallet, which include business cards collected by Jack Case, dues paid to the Orlando, Florida Loyal Order of Moose Lodge, a drawing, identity cards, notes, vehicle registrations, work badges, and a business card for Upland Riding Academy, listing J. W. Case as proprietor.
Acquisition
Other materials
This donation also includes a collection of performance memorabilia and 3-D objects housed in the Autry Museum. The memorabilia includes costumes, horse tack, and a Colt single action army model revolver which Buck Taylor gave to Jack Case as payment for his performance with Taylor's Wild West Show.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Scope and contents</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This series is mostly comprised of correspondence regarding Jack Case and his rodeos, often featuring his horse Rex. Other materials in the collection are bumper stickers, business cards, a catalog, legal documents, newspaper clippings, notebooks, photographs, promotional materials, receipts, stationery, and tickets to rodeos. The majority of the items are dated 1922-1935 and document Case's rodeo shows and the production and travel expenses incurred. Some of Case's rodeo shows were produced by the Family Welfare Agency, Disabled American Veterans of the World War, and the American Legion, and included locations such as Bayone, New Jersey; Bartow, Florida; Pensacola, Florida; and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His letterheads name home addresses in such places as Brown, Nebraska; Boise, Idaho; and Hollywood, California.</td>
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<td>This collection contains business, legal, and personal correspondence, including exchanges with Myron &quot;Buck&quot; Baker, known for doing automobile tricks with Ringling Brothers Circus. Betty Case's name appears on the Jack Case Rodeo Attractions letterhead as Assistant Manager, and she is in an undated photograph performing a trick on horseback.</td>
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<td>A letter of response from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame to Bill Lentz, dated 1992, informs him that they do not have any information on Jack Case.</td>
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**Acquisition**

Purchase by the Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 1996 June 16.