**Language of Material:** Multiple languages

**Contributing Institution:** Special Collections & Archives

**Title:** Robert and Eva Tharp Collection

**Creator:** Tharp, Robert and Eva

**Identifier/Call Number:** OCH.RNT

**Extent:** 1.79 linear feet

**Date (inclusive):** 1902-2004

**Abstract:** Robert and Eva Tharp were both born in China to missionary parents, and both took on missionary work in China individually and after they married in 1938. After the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, Robert was imprisoned by the Japanese, and after his release 8 months later the Tharps moved to India where they worked as liaisons between Chinese and Indian citizens and for the British government. They returned to China to continue their mission work, but were forced to flee to America in the wake of the Communist takeover in 1949. In the United States, Robert worked as a Chinese instructor for the Defense Language Institute and the Yale Institute for Far Eastern Languages. The Tharps also opened Chinese restaurants in the Monterey area in the 1970s, and were active in the Chinese community in the area. In 1994, Eva published Robert's autobiographical work, *They Called Us White Chinese*. The collection consists of items related to both Robert and Eva's family and experiences in China, their careers in the United States, and the publication of *They Called Us White Chinese*.

**Language of Material:** English, Chinese

**Biographical Information:**
Robert Tharp was born in 1913 to British missionary parents in the Jehol Province of Manchuria. Evangeline (Eva) Kok was born in 1914 in Yunnan, China, to Dutch missionary parents. In 1918, the family moved to Peking (Beijing), where her father served as the First Chancellor of the Netherlands Legation in China. Eva attended the Peking American School, graduating in 1931. She then attended the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and returned to China to perform mission work after graduating in 1936.

Starting in 1934, Tharp did full-time missionary work in China, with Eva joining him after they married in 1938. After the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, when Japan gained control of Manchuria, Tharp was jailed for nearly eight months while Eva was placed on house arrest. After his release the Tharps worked in New Delhi, India, as a liaison between Chinese and Indian citizens, and then for the British Ministry of Information monitoring Chinese transmissions and writing counter-propaganda. The Tharps returned to China as missionaries after the war; but fled in 1949 as communist forces advanced across the country. Their escape took over a month, after which they were able to travel to San Francisco, California.

In the U.S., the Tharps were almost deported, as they were unable to clear up issues of citizenship, but on the day of their deportation Tharp received a position at the Army Language School, now called the Defense Language Institute. He taught Chinese there for three years, before accepting a position on the faculty at the Yale Institute of Far Eastern Language, where Eva received a teaching position as well.

The Tharps eventually returned to the San Francisco area, where Eva opened a popular takeout restaurant, Eva's Jyaudz Factory, and in 1976 Robert opened the first Mandarin Chinese restaurant in Monterey, the Old Peking. Robert Tharp also wrote an autobiographical novel about his and Eva's experiences in China, *They Called Us White Chinese*, which was published in 1994 by Eva after Robert passed away in 1993. Eva continued to correspond with friends and former students until she became ill in January of 2004, and passed in August of that year.

**Scope and Contents**

Series I, **Family and Personal Materials**, consists of ephemera, photographs, articles, personal narratives, mendicant chants, correspondence and genealogical information written by or related to the Tharps and their family members. Also included are the Tharp's passports, driver's licenses, and applications for United States visas and citizenship.

Series II, **Friends and Colleagues**, consists of correspondence and articles written by or about Tharp family friends and colleagues, usually discussing their experiences in China.

Series III, **Mission Work and Professional Employment**, consists of materials related to both Robert and Eva's various mean of employment and their mission work. This includes the Inland China Mission, Robert's work in shipping cases and...
importing cars into China, his work as a Chinese professor, and Eva's Jyuadz Factory.

Series IV, *They Called Us White Chinese*, consists of photographs used in the book, and correspondence sent to Eva by readers ordering additional copies, talking about the book, and sharing their own stories of living in China.

Series V, *Publications*, consists of advertisements for books by other Old China Hands, as well as articles and books collected by the Tharps related to China and the Peking American School.

**Arrangement of Materials:**

Series I: Family and Personal Materials, 1924-2002
Series II: Friends and Colleagues, 1943-2000
Series IV: They Called Us White Chinese, circa 1920-2004

**Conditions Governing Access:**

This collection is open for research use.

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**Preferred Citation:**

For information about citing items in this collection consult the appropriate style manual, or see the [Citing Archival Materials](#) guide.

**Processing Information:**

Tim Kauffer (Intern), 2013

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Ephemera
Documents
Photographs

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Box 1, Folder 6  National Security Agency Certificate to Robert Tharp
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