Vincent Silk Papers 992.082

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Abstract: Vincent James Silk (1902-1992) started his career as a singer and drummer, then performed in vaudeville as a comedian and band leader. Alongside his work as a performer, Silk was actively involved throughout his career with the American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA], holding several local and national positions. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII as Director of Plant Protection, as Chief Investigator and as Police Chief respectively. Silk worked as a private investigator for several years, while still performing at various events. Later in life, he performed as a Master of Ceremonies/monologist for private and community events, especially for the Press Club of San Francisco, of which he was a member until his death. The papers also include documents and photographs from Silk's wife, Charlotte Ade. The Vincent Silk Papers document his various careers and his family and organized into the following series: Biographical Files; Charlotte Ade Biographical Files; Original Writings; American Guild of Variety Players [AGVA]; Press Club of San Francisco; Collected Publications and Writings; Photographic Materials; Programs; Scrapbooks; and Sheet Music/Arrangements.

Biographical Sketch for Vincent James Silk

Vincent James Silk was born May 13, 1902 in San Francisco, California. He started in the performing arts field very early. In his childhood, he was a singer and drummer and advanced to become a vaudeville comedian and leader of a band, playing with vaudeville circuits such as Chataqua Circuit, the Keith Albee Circuit, eventually becoming a mainstay with the popular Fanchon & Marco circuit in 1927. He became the leader of his own band and performed as a Guest Conductor/Master of Ceremonies at America's largest theater at the time, the Fox-Detroit. He spent a year in Detroit and a year at the Fox in Brooklyn. From 1933-1939, Silk joined a vaudeville tour with the Fanchon & Marco Circuit and performed on both coasts. During this time, Silk became involved with the American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA], an association he would retain throughout his life. At one point, Silk was appointed the National Representative for the Pacific Coast. He helped organize AGVA offices in Portland; Spokane; Seattle; Vancouver, B.C. and Hollywood. He was the Executive Secretary for the San Francisco local branch and served on the local Executive Board and the National Board of Directors. Later he worked as an arbitrator on several high profile trials.

From 1942-1946, Silk served in the U.S. Army Air Force as Director of Plant Protection, then as Chief Investigator and later retired as Police Chief. Initially stationed at McClelland Field in Sacramento, he was to organize all police and fire departments for air fields in eleven Western states. He also spent time at March Air Force Base in San Bernardino, CA. Other duties included organizing and maintaining Identification Bureaus and conducting investigations regarding sabotage and subversive activities. After the war, he headed a government operation to investigate surplus property theft across the United States and Mexico borders. It resulted in a recovery of over $1 million.

Following the war, Silk worked as a private investigator for several years. Silk worked as a private investigator of personal injury cases for the law firms of Belli & Ashe and Hoberg & Finger, Esq. He also worked for San Francisco City Hall for Assessors Joseph Tinney and Sam Duca. Throughout his work as an investigator, he continued to perform in theaters and night clubs as a "Banquet Speaker"/Master of Ceremonies/monologist for private and community events in the United States and Canada. One of the organizations he performed for regularly was the Press Club of San Francisco (also known as the Press and Union League Club of San Francisco). He was a deeply committed member until his death and participated in various activities. For example, for many years, he gave the annual eulogy for their past president, Will Aubrey.

Silk was involved with several unions and clubs alongside AGVA and the Press Club of San Francisco. Other memberships and affiliations included: the Knights of Columbus; Ancient Order of Hibernians; Elks Club; Screen Actors Guild & Extras Club; and the Bay Counties Peace Officers Association; American Federation of Television & Radio Artists; American Federation of Musicians; Academy of Television Arts & Sciences; Associated Operators of Los Angeles County; Civil Air Patrol; and Deputy Sheriff for the Counties of Santa Clara, Sacramento and Riverside.
Silk married Charlotte Ardenell Ade in 1953. She was a dancer for groups such as the Dorothy Kilgore Group and Pavley-Oukrainsky Ballet.


Scope and Content
The Vincent Silk Papers includes original documents and photographs encompassing Silk's life from his childhood to his senior years. It includes materials collected over the course of extensive work with associations such as the American Guild of Variety Artists and the Press Club of San Francisco.

The Papers have been organized into the following series:

Series I: Biographical Files includes documents and materials related to Silk's childhood and career as performer, his military career during World War II, press clippings, correspondence, and membership and affiliation cards.

Series II: Charlotte Ade Biographical Files includes correspondence, writings, clippings, and ephemera related to Charlotte Ade, Vincent Silk's wife from 1953-1980 (her death). Also included are documents pertaining to an interrogatory of Ade regarding an accident in 1975.

Series III: Original Writings contains original songs, manuscripts, joke routines, and other original writings by Silk along with some related documents.

Series IV: American Guild of Variety Players [AGVA] contains materials related to Silk's membership and work with the American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA]. The materials include documents such as original AGVA contracts, certificates from conventions, documentation from Silk's work on the AGVA Executive Committee, and documents pertaining to AGVA legal proceedings Silk participated in. This series also includes newsletters and magazines with articles about the union's activities as well as issues of "AGVA News". As Silk served as an arbitrator for AGVA, this series includes transcripts and related documents on AGVA trials he was involved with, such as those involving actress Penny Singleton and singer/actor Roy Rogers.

Series V: Press Club of San Francisco includes materials related to Will Aubrey, one of the Club's presidents, documents from various events and activities, including certificates and commemorations to Silk, such as to commemorate his entry to the Press Club of San Francisco Hall of Fame. As Silk was heavily involved in the Press Club for several years, the series also includes documentation from the club's Board of Director committee minutes from 1970-1988.

Series VI: Collected Publications and Writings contains printed newsletters, booklets, and cards as well as unpublished manuscripts collected by Silk. Also included are copies of Emcee. The collection also includes an extensive run of professional comedy writer Robert Orben's Orben's Current Comedy newsletter from 1959-1985.

Series VII: Photographic Materials includes includes photographs of Vincent Silk in performance; with family and friends; in the context of his various jobs; portraits and headshots; photographs of various celebrities and public figures; and photographs of theater marquees and promotional signs for his performances. There are also several images related to Charlotte Ade, especially from her work at the Pavley-Oukrainsky Ballet and the Dorothy Kilgore Dance Group. There are also several images from various AGVA conventions. This series also includes images from various Press Club of San Francisco events such as when the Press Club hosted Princess Margaret during her visit to San Francisco, an event with Clint Eastwood promoting the show Rawhide, as well as prominent San Francisco and California politicians and public figures such as past governor Goodwin Knight; past San Francisco Mayors Angelo Rossi and George Christopher, renowned sculptor and designer Beniamino Bufano, among others.

Series VIII: Programs includes program books and promotional collateral from events Silk directly participated in.

Series IX: Scrapbooks includes scrapbooks highlighting Silk's performance career in the 1920s as well as two childhood scrapbooks. Also included are excerpts from a scrapbook from his wife, Charlotte Ade.

Series X: Sheet Music/Arrangements includes acquired music arrangements, most likely used for performances by Silk and his orchestra and/or bandmates in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Vincent Silk Papers are arranged in the following series:

1. Biographical Files
2. Charlotte Ade Biographical Files
3. Original Writings
4. American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA]
5. Press Club of San Francisco
6. Photographic Materials
7. Programs
Preferred Citation

[Folder Title], Vincent Silk Papers, Museum of Performance + Design.

Access

The collection is open to all researchers with no restrictions.

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Processing History

Collection was processed by MP+D Staff.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Charlotte, Ade
American Guild of Variety Artists
Clippings (Information artifacts)
Comedy sketches.
Correspondence.
Dance
Music--20th century--Performance.
Performing arts--United States.
Photographic prints.
Press Club of San Francisco
Programs (Documents)
Scrapbooks.

Series I: Biographical Files, 1924-1992

Scope and Contents note

This series includes documents and materials related to Silk's childhood and his career as performer, his military career during World War II, documents related to his work as a private investigator, such as his work for prominent attorney Melvin Belli. The series also includes press clippings, correspondence, membership and affiliation cards, as well as two deputy sheriff badges.

Box 1, Folder 1  Personal effects, 1947, 1985, 1992, undated

Scope and Contents note
Includes family obituaries, holiday greeting cards, and sketches.

Box 1, Folder 2  Diaries, 1924-1925

Box 1, Folder 3  Military Service related documents, 1942-1946

Box 1, Folder 4  Private investigator application and related correspondence, 1949

Box 1, Folder 5  Employment history and affiliations, 1957, 1973-1977

Scope and Contents note
Includes applications, business cards, and two deputy sheriff badges.

Box 1, Folder 6  Belli, Melvin M. - correspondence and related documents, 1949, 1960, 1971, undated

Box 1, Folder 7  Clippings and cards, 1928-1947, undated

Box 1, Folder 8  Clippings, 1953-1968

Box 1, Folder 9  Clippings, 1973-1984

Box 1, Folder 10  Correspondence, 1942-1990
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series I: Biographical Files, 1924-1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Box 1, Folder 11</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 12, Folder 8</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 1, Folder 12</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 1, Folder 13</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 2, Folder 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 2, Folder 7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Box 2, Folder 8</strong></td>
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**Series II: Charlotte Ade Biographical Files circa 1920s-1975**

Scope and Contents note
This series includes correspondence, writings, clippings, and ephemera related to Charlotte Ade, Vincent Silk's wife from 1953-1980 (her death). Also included are documents pertaining to an interrogatory of Ade regarding a car accident in 1975.

| **Box 1, Folder 12** | Correspondence, 1925-1963 |
| **Box 1, Folder 13** | Writings, clippings, and ephemera, 1925-1926, 1954-1964, undated |
| **Box 1, Folder 14** | Interrogatory and related documents, circa 1975 |

**Series III: Original writings, 1932-1987**

Scope and Contents note
This series includes original songs, manuscripts, joke routines, and other original writings by Vincent Silk along with some related documents.

| **Box 2, Folder 1** | Original song manuscripts, undated |
| **Box 2, Folder 2** | "Wings for Eagles", original script and related documents, 1971, 1982 |

**Series IV: American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA], 1941-1980**

Scope and Contents note
This series includes materials related to Silk's membership and work with the American Guild of Variety Artists [AGVA]. The materials include documents such as original AGVA contracts, certificates from conventions, documentation from Silk's work on the AGVA Executive Committee, and documents pertaining to AGVA legal proceedings Silk participated in. This series also includes newsletters and magazines with articles about the union's activities as well as issues of "AGVA News". There is also a subseries, Proceedings, which has documents pertaining to Silk's work as an arbitrator with AGVA legal proceedings, which included trials involving prominent AGVA members such as actress Penny Singleton and singer Roy Rogers.

| **Box 3, Folder 1** | Contracts, 1967, 1973 |
| **Box 3, Folder 2** | Official Convention Credential certificates and related materials, 1954-1964 |
| **Box 3, Folder 3** | Correspondence, 1942-1947 |
| **Box 3, Folder 4** | Clippings and printed materials, 1942-1965 |
| **Box 3, Folder 5** | Executive Secretary reports and meeting records, 1941 |
| **Box 3, Folder 6** | Committee Meeting Notes and other meeting records, 1955-1963 |

**Proceedings, 1950-1963**

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### Box 3, Folder 7
**Pied Pipers trial and related documents, 1950**

### Box 3, Folder 8
**Morris, Hal, Arbitration and related documents 1951**

### Box 3, Folder 9
**McClellan Committee, 1962**

### Box 3, Folder 10
**Singleton, Penny - trial and related documents, 1963**

### Box 3, Folder 11
**Rogers, Roy and Spears, Doug - trial and related documents, 1963**

### Box 3, Folder 12
**Collected newsletters and magazines, 1941-1942, 1962-1963, 1980**

**Scope and Contents note**
Includes issues of "Variety" (1962-1963); "The Actor" (1941-1942); and the AGVA official newsletter (1980).

### Box 3, Folder 13
**"AGVA News" issues, 1959 February-December**

### Box 3, Folder 14
**"AGVA News" issues, 1960, 1962, 1965**

#### Series V: Press Club of San Francisco, 1931-1988

**Scope and Contents note**
This series includes materials related to Silk's activities with the Press Club of San Francisco (also referred to as the Press and Union League Club of San Francisco). The series includes materials pertaining to past president Will Aubrey, including sheet music and lyrics to his original work, *The Cat Song*, written specifically for the Press Club of San Francisco. The series also includes documents from various events and activities, including certificates and commemorations to Silk, such as to commemorate his entry to the Press Club of San Francisco Hall of Fame. As Silk was heavily involved in the Press Club for several years, the series also includes documentation from the club's Board of Director committee minutes from 1970-1988. The series also contains issues of various Press Club of San Francisco publications such as the newsletters *The Black Kitten* and *Scoop Weekly* as well as issues of the magazine *Scoop Annual*.

### Box 4, Folder 1
**Aubrey, Will, 1927, 1940, 1958, undated**

**Scope and Contents note**
Includes correspondence, clippings, artist sketches, lyrics and sheet music to Aubrey's "Cat Song" written specifically for the Press Club of San Francisco.

### Box 4, Folder 2
**Aubrey, Will - eulogies and related materials, 1961-1972, undated**

### Box 4, Folder 3
**Board of Directors Committee Minutes, 1970-1979**

### Box 4, Folder 4
**Board of Directors Committee Minutes, 1979-1988**

### Box 4, Folder 5
**Certificates to Silk, 1955, 1972, undated**

### Box 5, Folder 2
**Certificate to Silk (framed) for Press Club of San Francisco Hall of Fame, 1987 April 4**

### Box 4, Folder 6
**Correspondence to Silk, 1949-1966, 1979**

### Box 4, Folder 7
**Clippings and cards, 1955, 1988, undated**

### Box 4, Folder 8
**"Masquers Variety Revue" event, 1950**

### Box 4, Folder 9
**Programs, speeches, and related documents, 1931-1987**

#### Publications, 1961-1984

### Box 4, Folder 10
"*The Black Kitten*" newsletter, 1961-1966

### Box 4, Folder 11

### Box 4, Folder 12

### Box 4, Folder 13
"*Scoop Annual*" magazine, 1977-1979

### Box 4, Folder 14
"*Scoop Annual*" magazine, 1980-1981
Publications, 1961-1984

Box 5, Folder 1
"Scoop Annual" magazine, 1983-1984

Series VI: Collected Publications and Writings, 1950-1985, undated
Scope and Contents note
This series contains printed newsletters, booklets, and cards as well as unpublished manuscripts collected by Silk. Also included are copies of Emcee. The collection also includes an extensive run of professional comedy writer Robert Orben's Orben's Current Comedy newsletter from 1959-1985.

Box 6
Comedy and Gag Cards, undated
Box 5, Folder 3
Gibson, Walter P. - "Comedy Mind Reading" 1958
Box 5, Folder 10
Healy, Vince - "Parody Parade" and other writings, undated
Box 5, Folder 4
Muir, Jimmie "M.C." - "Giggleless, Gadgets, and Guffaws" and "How to M.C.", undated
Box 5, Folder 5
Orben, Robert - "Current Comedy" and other writings, 1971-1972, undated
Box 7
Orben, Robert - "Obren's Current Comedy", 1959-1985
Box 5, Folder 6
Orben, Robert - "Comedy Filler" newsletters, 1971-1980
Box 5, Folder 7
Orben, Robert - "Orben Comedy Letter" newsletters, 1971-1972
Box 5, Folder 8
Orren, Edmund - "Clever Remarks", undated
Box 5, Folder 9
Orren, Edmund - "Rich and Rare", undated
Box 5, Folder 11
"Emcee" magazine, 1953-1956
Box 5, Folder 12
Parody books and pocket cards, undated

Series VII: Photographic Materials, circa 1920s-1970s
Scope and Contents note
This series includes all the photographic materials in the collection and arranged in the following subseries: Silk, Vincent; Ade, Charlotte, American Guild of Variety Artists; Press Club of San Francisco; and Unidentified Photographs. All oversize materials are in Box 12.

Silk, Vincent, circa 1920s-1970s
Scope and Contents note
This subseries includes photographs of Vincent Silk in performance; with family and friends; in the context of his various jobs; portraits and headshots; photographs of various celebrities and public figures; and photographs of theater marquees and promotional signs for his performances. Arranged alphabetically by topic.

Box 8, Folder 1
Commemorative cards from various restaurants and hotels, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 12, Folder 3,
School portraits, Family, friends, and casual gatherings, circa 1910s, circa 1950s-1960s, undated
Box 8, Folder 2
Military portrait and images, circa 1943-1945
Box 8, Folder 3
Private investigator work related images, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 8, Folder 4
Portraits and headshots, circa 1920s-1960s, undated
Box 12, Folder 4,
Celebrity photographs autographed to or from Silk, circa 1930s-1970s, undated
Box 8, Folders 5-6
Silk in performance, undated
Box 12, Folder 6,
Theater marquees and other promotional signs for Silk, circa 1920s-1930s, undated
Box 8, Folder 7
Fanchon & Marco, circa 1920s
Box 12, Folder 5,
Box 8, Folder 8
Box 8, Folder 9

Ade, Charlotte, circa 1920s-1970s
Scope and Contents note
This subseries includes photographs of Charlotte Ade in performance; with family and friends; her first husband, Don Gilbert, a gymnast; portraits and headshots; and photographs of various celebrities and public figures. This subseries includes several photographs of Pavley-Oukrainsky Ballet, one of the earliest ballet companies in the United States. Arranged alphabetically by topic.
Series VII: Photographic Materials, circa 1920s-1970s

Ade, Charlotte, circa 1920s-1970s

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Box 8, Folder 10 Family and casual images, circa 1950s
Box 8, Folder 11 Gilbert, Don circa 1930s

Scope and Contents note
Charlotte Ade's first husband.

Box 8, Folder 12, Box 12, Folder 9 Portraits, headshots, and sketches, 1929-1944, undated
Box 8, Folder 13 Pavlely-Oukrainsky Ballet and other dance groups, circa 1920s-1930s, undated

Box 9, Folder 1 Performances and related events, circa 1959
Box 9, Folders 2-4 Celebrities photographs autographed to Ade, circa 1920s-1960s, undated

Box 12, Folder 2, Box 9, Folder 5 American Guild of Variety Artists, 1950-1964

Scope and Contents note
Includes images from various AGVA conventions and gatherings with AGVA members.

Press Club of San Francisco, circa

Box 9, Folder 6 Aubrey, Will, circa 1950s, undated
Box 9, Folder 7 Aubrey, Will - gravesite, 1959-1962, undated
Box 9, Folders 8-9, Box 12, Folder 11 Events and activities, circa 1950s-1960s, undated
Box 9, Folder 10, Box 12, Folder 10 Celebrities and prominent guests, circa 1950s-1960s, undated
Box 9, Folder 11 Silk, Vincent at Press Club events (negatives), circa 1950s
Box 12, Folder 12 Silk, Vincent - original sketch in charcoal, 1958

Box 9, Folder 12 Unidentified photographs, circa 1950s-1960s, undated

Series VIII: Programs

Scope and Contents note
This series includes programs and promotional collateral for events Silk participated in either as a performer or master of ceremonies. Series also includes invitations to events where he may have been a master of ceremonies or attending as a guest. Series is arranged in chronological order.

Box 11, Folder 1 1928
Box 11, Folder 2 1947-1949
Box 11, Folder 3 1950-1959
Box 11, Folder 4 1960-1969
Box 11, Folder 5 Selo Brothers Circus and Polack Brothers Circus programs and related documents, 1964
Box 11, Folder 6 1970-1978
Box 11, Folder 8 1985, 1987
Box 11, Folder Undated

Series IX: Scrapbooks

Scope and Contents note
This series includes scrapbooks from Vincent Silk’s childhood (two notebooks) and clippings scrapbooks from his early performance tours from 1924-1927. The series also includes a scrapbook from Charlotte Ade in notebook form and excerpts from another scrapbook.

Box 10, Folder 1 Silk, Vincent - childhood scrapbook, 1909
Box 10, Folder 2 Silk, Vincent - childhood scrapbook, 1910
Series IX: Scrapbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 10, Folders 3-4</th>
<th>Silk, Vincent - performance clippings scrapbook, 1924-1925</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 10, Folders 5-6</td>
<td>Vincent Silk and Orchestra engagements scrapbook, 1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10, Folder 7</td>
<td>Ade, Charlotte - scrapbook, circa 1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10, Folder 8</td>
<td>Ade, Charlotte - scrapbook pages, circa 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxes 13-14, Box 12, Folder 1</td>
<td>Series X: Sheet Music and Arrangements, circa 1920s-1940s, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scope and Contents note

This series contains collected sheet music and arrangements used by Vincent Silk, most likely with his performances in the 1920s-1930s with his band and orchestra. The series is arranged alphabetically by title with oversize materials stored separately.