Guide to the Barbara L. Kevles Collection on Gordon Parks M1409

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Date (inclusive): circa 1976-2001
Abstract: Interview notes and other material related to filmmaker and photographer Gordon Parks by journalist Barbara Kevles.

Kevles biography


She's also published hundreds of newspaper articles in such well known dailies as the Daily News (NYC), New York Post, Newsday, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, San Antonio Express-News, Austin American-Statesman, and The Dallas Morning News. Collections of Kevles' audio taped interviews, research, manuscripts, and correspondence reside at the John F. Kennedy Library, operated by the National Archives, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Museum of Modern Art (NYC), Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin, and Bryn Mawr College for the benefit of scholars, historians, authors, and students. Her Kennedy Library archives, which measure 1.5 linear feet, were used by Laurence Leamer in his bestseller, The Kennedy Women: The Saga of an American Family (Villard Books, 1994). See Kevles, Barbara L(ynne) at http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Archives+and+Manuscripts [as of 2007]. Recently, Stanford University Libraries Special Collections and Art and Architecture Library jointly acquired a Kevles archive.

Kevles' last bestseller writing book, Basic Magazine Writing (WDB), was a Book-of-the-Month Club and Quality Paperback Book Club choice and a Main Feature by Writer's Digest Book Club. Basic Magazine Writing was endorsed by top editors at TV Guide, People, Family Circle, Harper's Bazaar, and House Beautiful. It sold 2100 copies. She's also co-edited an essay collection, In Opposition to Core Curriculum: Alternative Models for Undergraduate Education (Greenwood Press). Endorsed by Presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and Vassar as well as Harvard University faculty, this essay collection was excerpted in The New York Times and Change Magazine.

Barbara Kevles has taught at New York University, The New School (NYC), and The University of Texas at Dallas. Articles in basic forms she has taught, assigned and supervised by staff and free-lance journalists have appeared in The New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, Parents, Esquire, and People. Her alumni have worked for The Wall St. Journal, New York Post, Elle, Victoria, House Beautiful, and other notable publications. Barbara Kevles was educated at Bryn Mawr College where she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Kevles' biography is included in Contemporary Authors.

Conditions Governing Access
Open for research. Note that material must be requested at least 36 hours in advance of intended use.

Related Materials
Stanford Special Collections also holds the Barbara L. Kevles Collection of Computer Technology (M1588): https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/6962501
Wichita State University holds the Gordon Parks Papers:
The Library of Congress also holds a Parks collection: https://www.loc.gov/item/mm96083761/  

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Scope and Contents  

This finding aid was created with notes supplied by Kevles about her interviews.  

Subjects and Indexing Terms  
Motion pictures -- History.  
African Americans in the motion picture industry  
Kevles, Barbara L.  
Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 1</th>
<th>Gene Young Parks, Gordon's third wife &amp; his book editor ; Executive Editor of the Trade Dept., J. B. Lippincott Company (23 5&quot; x 8&quot; cards) 2084087</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Carl Mydans, Life photographer (13 Cards) 2084089  
Scope and Contents  
Gordon from 1948 at Life, how Gene Young got to be his editor, his unusual photographic strengths, attitudes toward Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Gordon Parks, Jr. (13 cards & questions) 2084091  
Scope and Contents  
Parks' first born, also a film director, who filmed Super Fly (1972). Died tragically in an airplane crash in 1979 filming on location in Africa. Criticizes dad's films: "He takes the horror out of violence." |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Leadbelly Producer Mark Merson (8 cards & 2 cards with questions) 2084093 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Dr. James Barringer, Director of Minority Programming, Paramount (7 cards) 2084095  
Scope and Contents  
Parks credits him as the reason Leadbelly got produced and that he prevented Leadbelly's production work from being stopped many times. |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Phil Kundhardt, Life Magazine, Assistant Managing Editor, and Managing Editor Special Issues (9 cards) 2084097  
Scope and Contents  
Importance of Gordon as black for advice on stories like Watts Riots, Gordon's special eye, how lived with. Harlem gang, Flavio, to get joy & suffering, on film, 2 photo stories didn't run by Gordon & why |
Bob Williams, Farm Security Administration staff member (9 cards) 2084099
Scope and Contents
how Gordon overcame blatant harassment of his photography & prejudice in Farm Security Administration photo lab workers

Dave Golden, Hollywood cameraman on Learning Tree, both Shafts (2 cards) ; Village Voice editor Richard Goldstein 2084101

Gordon Weaver, VP Marketing, Paramount (10 cards & questions on card front & back 2 cards on Shaft) 2084103

Life editor Loudon Wainwright (6 cards & questions) 2084131

More sources. List of awards Gordon Parks won (5 cards) ; Norman Whiteman, Paramount’s Director of Distribution (1 card) 2084133

Gordon Parks (9 cards #3 - #8 missing) 3/11/1976
Scope and Contents
Fracas in Detroit over Leadbelly... Depression... Insulted by Paramount marketing campaign & why

Gordon Parks (21 cards & 1 card of phone #’s, 2 cards scheduling) 2084221 3/12/1976
Scope and Contents
How Ken Hyman at Warner/7 Arts gave first break in film, why Shaft was made, why sequels, why Leadbelly, Hollywood's stereotype of him as black director

Gordon Parks (7 cards) 2084223 3/12/1976
Scope and Contents
Paramount cooperating, different audiences, different marketing. View of black man can die any moment, etc.

Gordon Parks (5 cards) 2084225 3/13/76
Scope and Contents
Tennis style & strategy at tennis date, directorial style & intent of Leadbelly, story of Flavio, subject of LIFE Magazine photo essay & aftermath

Gordon Parks (16 cards) 2084227 3/13/1976
Scope and Contents
Watching Gordon Parks play tennis & discussion with. him about tennis training & strategies

3/27/76 1 card questions 4/6/76. 1 card questions. 2084229
4/6/01 Gordon Parks (3 cards) 2084231
Scope and Contents
Interview NYC train station, Leadbelly's performance, his direction of screen actors, Life ATTEMPT AT CENSORSHIP pof his essay on killing of Martin Luther King why left life 16 cards Philmfest director scene & stats

Gordon Parks at Philadelphia radio station, WDAS (6 cards) 2084233

Reception prior to screening at Philmfest ’76 (2 cards) Gordon Parks on stage prior to screening of Leadbelly at Philadelphia Philmfest (4 cards) 2084235

4/6/01. Hotel Room Interview Gordon Parks (10 cards) 2084237
Scope and Contents
Paramount’s mistreatment of him, his son as film-maker

Typed page of my memory of Gordon Parks' standing ovation end of screening (1 page) 2084239
box 1, folder 23  On meeting Gordon Parks at People Magazine 2nd anniversary party 2/26/76 (4 pp. single-spaced typed notes) 2084241 3/3/76
  Scope and Contents
  His battle with Paramount's racist marketing of Leadbelly with his comments

box 1, folder 24  Bob Williams Farm Security Administration staff member (4 pp. typed) 2084243
  Scope and Contents
  Reminiscences of Gordon Parks working in 1942 segregated Washington, DC, working in the prejudiced Farm Security Administration. Discussion of Gordon's job for Stanford [i.e. Standard] Oil that led to Life. signed by Bob Williams. w. letter also signed by Williams

box 1, folder 25  Village Voice agreement letter, article drafts 2084245
  Scope and Contents
  Agreement letter to the Village Voice drafts: Editor's marked copy we revised in conference at Voice My copy of revisions made contemporaneously. Second article draft, First article draft

box 1, folder 26  My outline of article, Notes on relevant themes 2084247
box 1, folder 27  My Gordon Parks chronology 2084249
box 1, folder 28  Expenses 2084251
  Scope and Contents
  Handwritten & typed list for Village Voice for trips for interviews with Paramount Marketing VP, Life photographer Carl Mydans, Ex-Farm Security Administration layout artist, Bob Williams Paramount Director of Minority Programming, Life editors Loudon Wainwright, Phil Kunhardt, Leadbelly Producer Mark Mereon

box 1, folder 29  List of phone numbers 2084339
  Scope and Contents
  List of phone numbers of interviews including those for Gene Young, his wife, Kunhardt, Wainwright, Mydans Williams, Gordon Parks, Jr. Paramount's Dir. of Distribution, Dir. of Marketing, Minority Program Dir., Leabelly producer, Gustav Rehberger, Sue & Bob Massey, David Gordon, Philmfest, Viking, a Hollywood writer, a cameraman. attached Gordon Parks signature? & home phone #

box 1, folder 30  Leadbelly news coverage 2084341
  Scope and Contents

box 1, folder 31  Leadbelly Reviews 2084343
  Scope and Contents
box 1, folder 32  **Gordon Parks Works** 2084345  
**Scope and Contents**  
Jazz, written & photographed by Gordon Parks: poem & essay on Duke Ellington, Original Life essay and Photographs by Gordon Parks: 'A Man Who Tried To Love Somebody' (His essay & color photos of funeral of Martin Luther King) Gordon Park's Life essay on "The Long Search for Prido"

box 1, folder 33  **Learning Tree film reviews** 2084347  
**Scope and Contents**  

box 1, folder 34  **General Coverage Daily News (Gene & Gordon)** 2084349  
**Scope and Contents**  

box 1, folder 35  **Copy of Working Woman, "Scenes From A Modern Marriage," (Cover Line Article)
Published April, 1977** 2084359  
**Scope and Contents**  
Introduction & Interview with Gene Parks, wife of Gordon Parks

box 1, folder 36  **Background Research** 2084361  
**Scope and Contents**  
Questions for Gordon Parks, Paul Wilkes, Book Author, Helen Hanff, Book Author, Evan Thomas, Vice Pres., Editor W.W. Norton, Previously boss of Gene Parks. 7 hand-written pages of questions for Gene Young, Business Card of Genevieve Young, Exec. Editor, J.P. Lippincott Company (Gene Parks). List of Background Interviews & Phone Numbers (front & back) Hand-Written Interviews on a pad with Evan Thomas Helen Hanff Paul Wilkes Gordon Parks: as his editor, how he changed her clothing styles & attitudes, her fair play, his tearing up 100 pages & starting again because of her, dedication for her authors & sacrifice, their work schedule conflicts, her bossiness about household tasks, taught him to speak out, her Long Island marriage, his indefiniteness about engagements. Justified by his creativity, he consults her on his speeches & talks to her about his work (never would 2nd wife), her insecurity: her clothes, her work interferes with their sex life

box 1, folder 37  **Typed letter to Gene Parks from Barbara Kevles** 2084363  
**Scope and Contents**  
Scope and Contents

Verbatim answers from Gene Parks to Barbara Kevles’ interview questions typed exactly as she said them, on 20 pages, typed single-spaced of yellow paper: age, birthdates, responsibility for sister’s name, sister’s ages, lonely childhood, punishing, overly disciplining nanny, never snitched, dad Chinese diplomat, Daddy’s girl, their mutual pursuits, relationship to remote mother, family moves, dad’s incarceration by Japanese in W.W. II & death, schooling, her high school success, mother’s UN job & credo mother’s metamorphosis after husband’s death, Wellesley College years 1st job & how she advances w/o typing or steno skills, 1st marriage, their relationship, housework, division, differences met Gordon Parks in 1962, opposed to taking on his book, Gordon’s daily calls, weekly lunches, her naive views of it, fled his first protestations of love, discussion of course of action & its result and her prolonged five year work for divorce, her sisters’ jobs, her work relationship w. Gordon Parks & yelling at him, Gordon’s disregard of age or sex if he can learn something, his quickness of mind, spendthrift attitudes about advertising for his books nurtured by unlimited Life expense budgets, the Gordon Parks she married, her contractual nature & his open-handedness & its negative, her overburned(?) lot in house and for his business, her management of his pension, investments, financial decisions & her resentment & her feelings she’s the only coolie in the house, drawn to him despite his faults, for travel & freedom & wilder life as Great Neck (Long Island) housewife.. his call to her from Madagascar during her lunch w. new NY Times food critic, Clive Barnes, at the Sheraton.. drawn to him for his gifts... refers to herself as "the brains in the family" her attitude about his possible affairs during his travels or hers, her frustration w. his indecision about making plans, her disapproval of her travel for work he didn't take her advice on "Shaft's Big Score," with disastrous end, who shares what with whom, or doesn't & why she taught Gordon to voice his disagreements with her, her complete obliviousness to his being black, in anecdote Gordon's jealous suspicions of her business lunches, her influence on him to fight Paramount's campaign for 'Leadbell'y as black exploitation film, his influence on her, Gordon as self-starter in Love, written when they lived together, how she got Gordon an agent that precipitated his leaving Lippincott, her subscriptions to cultural events & Gordon's reactions how she got 20 lbs. off Gordon & changed his diet & her 1/4 lb. butter binges, her dependence on his clothes sense for herself, Gordon's taste for himself good except for check suits his prevailing & choosing their apt. furniture all in one day at Bloomingdale's (very funny anecdote about their clash of wills), why their marriage works though Gordon resents the demands of her career, some weeks they don't have real conversation because of conflicting schedules. End of 1st 20 pp. of 1st Interview with Gene Parks
Gene Parks (2 of 2) 2084407

Scope and Contents
Second set of verbatim answers from Gene Parks to Barbara Kevles' interview Questions typed exactly as she said them, on 18 pages, typed single-spaced on yellow paper. Her favorite cookbook, her salary, her bestsellers as editor, her job responsibilities as Vice President of Lippincott & Executive Editor of Trade Dept., her honesty and her tactlessness, roots of her Independence & Influence of her mother's development & credo on her, her family travels en masse & what it's like, once a year childhood in Shanghai, Paris, Manila no. times in China, life as Great Neck housewife, cooking beef casseroles changes in dress from formal Chinese to pants suits, her repressed emotions... oriental distaste for emotional scenes of her and her sister, "Both of us stayed married five years longer because we hated scenes." Initial meeting w. Gordon Parks over his book as one of her first authors & what his attention did for her, Gordon Parks' like her mother, her unworldliness, Gordon's encouragement to dress American & their disagreements about her clothes: about his desire for a formal look and her casual chic, Gordon Parks' influence on her change in hairstyle strangers' diff. reactions to them when they travel, his overwhelming instant popularity at Jill Kremintz' tennis club in a day, her childhood book favorites, very revealing, divvying up of household chores dishwashing male/female roles in previous marriage, doesn't worry about not cooking Gordon's dinner when delayed at work, divvying up of rent, household expenses, maid problems w. Gordon at home working, her deal to do his business books, Gordon's live & let live attitude about checking acct., bitches about her larger share of housework & why she does it, whose approval she seeks, her clash with Gordon's cultural values about manners, the orderly life she gives Gordon & their clash when she's not the hausfrau, her inauguration of vacations in Gordon's life, her bossy nature & Gordon's passive resistance, his respect for her work at night & weekends, his resentment of her reading half an hour before bed, famous people she's met with Gordon, her retreat from press & celebrity bit at movie openings, advantages in restaurants being famous encroaches on their privacy & time, her way around Gordon's inability to make social commitments & problems it poses for friends & how it's part of Gordon being black & graphic example of it. Gordon, Jr. her subscriptions to cultural events & her independent social life apart from Gordon, her attitudes about being a mother, Gordon's phone calls or hers interrupt their dinner but she resents Gordon's calls more, why people marry, who cooked soup when both were ill with flu. End of second interview with Gene Parks.

Excerpt Gene Parks likes from Betty Rollin book or article, First You Cry 2084409

Scope and Contents
Barbara Kevles' notation of important themes & pages in interviews 3 versions of introduction to article, last typed Work notes of Barbara Kevles "Read Interview I through...see letter for themes..."

white paper, Barbara Kevles' author note for article end blue paper, list of themes & pages 2084411

Scope and Contents
Final Draft of Introduction & Interview, "Gene Parks: Scenes from A Marriage," 31 pages, typed on Time-Life paper ruled for easy word & space counting, with hand-written corrections & edits by Barbara Kevles on typed ms. Many pages have different versions of the same page under the one paper clip
Scope and Contents

Gene Parks (3 pp. on column-lined paper)
Scope and Contents
Carbon Copy: Text Changes from Discussion with Gene Parks. (Unsolicited) 28 changes to introduction and interview, Gene Parks Interview: Scenes from a Marriage. pp. 1-28 Introduction and Interview unedited. Coral stickum on top of edits & ms, "Original." 2 white note pages hand-written notations on both sides dated 7/20/76...list of same Gene Parks; editorial changes listed above.

Gene Parks Interview (28 pp. manuscript typed on Time-Life column, pages of introduction and interview)
Scope and Contents
Scenes From a Marriage, without previously noted 3 pp. of typed changes, Text Changes from Discussion with Gene Parks, incorporated. It is the ORIGINAL Unedited manuscript. Red marks indicate places where changes notes above belong in the manuscript. This manuscript is the first typed copy. It obviously has been read by Gene Parks. She has written a few editorial questions in the manuscript in pencil. Coral stickum on top says, "Original."

Gene Parks (original typed copy 4 pp.)
Scope and Contents
Text Changes from Discussion with Gene Parks (Unsolicited). Each edit checked twice with red and black pencil. & 5th page of edits not included with carbon copy.

Gene Parks Interview (29 pp. typed)
Scope and Contents
Gene Parks: Scenes From A Marriage (revised) Carbon Copy The Introduction and Interview Incorporate all changes requested in Text Changes from Discussion with Gene Parks (Unsolicited!) & fifth.
Parks interview & correspondence, Working Woman 2085403

Scope and Contents

Note by Barbara Kevles about sophistication of crowd in which Gene & Gordon Parks move so that color is not an issue and the two of them don't think of each other as black or Chinese. 29 pp. typed Gene Parks interview: Gene Parks: Scenes From A Marriage (revised) Second Carbon Copy The Introduction and Interview incorporate all changes requested in Text Changes from Discussion with Gene Parks (unsolicited). Fifth page noted above. Contains additional hand-written editorial comments by Gene Parks. Barbara Kevles' hand-written note on coral stickum, "Geno's hand-written comments which I ignored." Carbon copy of letter from Barbara Kevles to Gordon Parks, dated March 21, 1977. It's a cover letter accompanying a payment of $450 to Gordon Parks minus Kevles' 10% agent fee for his photographs of Gene Parks published in the magazine. Kevles emphasizes how she got the magazine to more than double its usual photographer's fee of $200 for Gordon's photos. The letter concludes, "I am honored that your photographs are appearing with my interview." Letter from Barbara Kevles to Gordon Parks dated January 25, 1977. It confirms the Working Woman $500 fee for Parks' photos of his wife and Kevles' agent fee. It concludes, "...It was marvelous seeing you and Gene Saturday. As you know, I like you both very, very much." The letter includes and invoice for Parks' photos sent to Working Woman. Gene Parks: Delivery WORKING WOMAN 7/19/76

Village Voice May 10, 1976 Arts Section Cover Story 2085405

Scope and Contents

"Gordon Parks: 'I Don't Make Black Exploitation Films." The published article is a no-holds-barred chronicle of Gordon's fight against Paramount's marketing of his film Leadbelly as a Blaxploitation film. Gordon is up against studio bookings in rundown inner city theaters, a tasteless ad of an ape-like hero, prostitute and a fight, and Paramount's refusal to contact big city critics about his film's premiere in their towns.

Cineaste 2085407

Scope and Contents

20 minutes of tape on 5" Reel of questions and Gordon's answer at Philadelphia Philmfest April 6, '76. Gordon's Taped answers are crystal clear sound bites. Gordon gives totally uncensored views on black actors, his directing style, Leadbelly's personal meaning for him, Paramount's distribution tactics, his photography's influence, his camera style, hollywood prejudice, his mandate for a black crew, his film's benefits for blacks. Gordon Parks selves into where he grew up, how he worked with black people who had never worked in front of cameras, views of how much a director directs. His next projects including a Concerto for Cello and Orchestra. The symbolic meaning of Leadbelly's life to him as an artist, his catching a Leadbelly performance in 1949 - 2 months before Leadbelly's death. Why he didn't use Leadbelly's own recordings in the film as an insight into Leadbelly's treatment by his times and the smash hit of his song Goodnight Irene 8 months following his death and Leadbelly's view of his legacy and Park's. His problems with Paramount's distribution of his film and his views without a black VIP insider the film never would have been made. Why he won't make fast buck films. The influence of his photography, particularly fashion photography for Vogue, on how he shoots films. Views on what he searches for in shots -- beauty vs. truth. His relationship to cameraman, how much he frames shot, shots he took in film. How Ken Hyman, Pres. of Warner Brothers 7 Arts, broke down Hollywood prejudices to get him his first film project, Learning Tree, which he wrote, scored and produced from his book. His mandate for a black film crew and its fulfillment on Learning Tree, on Leadbelly, sources for Leadbelly's Life. An interview with a black reporter: Will people see Leadbelly rather than black stud films? What he hopes to accomplish for recognition of Leadbelly's achievements. Will he make more historical biographical films, Benefit of Leadbelly for our people.

Custodial History

TAPE IS MISSING 2/2020