Guide to the James Boyer May Correspondence

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Guide to the James Boyer May Correspondence

Collection number: MS 165

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Descriptive Summary
Title: James Boyer May correspondence,
Date (inclusive): 1956-1972
Date (bulk): (bulk 1956-1965)
Collection number: MS 165
Creator: May, James Boyer
Extent: 2 document boxes
Repository: University of California, Santa Cruz. University Library. Special Collections and Archives
Santa Cruz, California 95064
Abstract: This collection correspondence between Kenneth Patchen, Miriam Patchen and James Boyer May between 1956-1972, as well as a small collection of printed material documenting Kenneth Patchen's jazz-poetry period and his degenerating medical condition.
Physical location: Stored in Special Collections & Archives: Advance notice is required for access to the papers.
Language: English.
Access
Collection open for research.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
James Boyer May Correspondence. MS 165. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.
Acquisition Information
Acquired, June 1987
Biographical Note
James Boyer May, (December 30, 1904 - February 21, 1981), was a minor poet, essayist and a publisher. He ran the small but influential literary magazine *Trace* from 1952 through 1970 in Los Angeles. *Trace* printed listings of small press activities connecting Alan Swallow of Denver to Len Fulton's *Dustbooks* in Northern California. May recollected, "*Trace* was called a 'Bridge' by various people - and it was - between people in many parts of the world... It's my belief, and I think it could be documented, that we had an influence on the language itself."

The friendship between May and Kenneth Patchen began with a strong review in *Trace* of Patchen's newly issued works *Hurrah for Anything*, and *When We Were Here Together* (1957), and continued throughout the 1960's. May appeared to Patchen as a possible source of help in his efforts to obtain financial support from the literary community. Sadly, the letters in this archive are a chronicle of his failure.

**Scope and Contents Note**

This archive mainly consists of outgoing and incoming correspondence between the Patchens and James Boyer May. The bulk of the letters provide a chronological commentary by Kenneth Patchen and his wife Miriam, beginning in his famous poetry-jazz period and continuing through the trauma of his medical condition. The letters are in turn hopeful, humorous, and courageous.

A small portion of the material is printed material on Kenneth Patchen; ephemera and clippings covering fundraisers, jazz-poetry and publishing activities.

**Related Materials**

James Boyer May/Amsberry Poetry Collection. University Archives and Special Collections, Pollak Library, California State University, Fullerton.

(The collection focuses on American small press poetry publishing from the mid-to-late Twentieth Century including Los Angeles poet and publisher James Boyer May's business archives and correspondence files)

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

May, James Boyer--Archive
Patchen, Kenneth--1911-1972
Authors, American--20th century
Poets, American--20th century--Correspondence
Patchen, Miriam
Patchen, Kenneth--1911-1972--Kenneth Patchen archive

**Correspondence 1956-1972 (bulk 1956-1965)**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

**Scope and Content Note**

Consists of outgoing, and incoming correspondence;

There are 31 carbon copies of typed letters from May to Patchen mainly written between 1957-1965;

52 letters from Kenneth Patchen to James Boyer May beginning November 1956 through 1964, comprising 20 typed letters signed (TLS), 29 annotated letters signed (ALS), and three annotated post cards signed (APCS). The bulk of the correspondence sheds personal insight on the Patchen's physical troubles;

10 holograph letters, six typed letters, and seven cards from Miriam Patchen to May. Included is a 13 page carbon to an unidentified "Judith", which chronicles the medical mishaps of Patchen in great graphic detail. Many of the letters and envelopes from Miriam and Kenneth Patchen are hand decorated, presumably by Kenneth Patchen;

Three other incoming letters, one from William Packard informing May of Charlie Mingus benefit concert, which raised $350 for Patchen, and a forwarded copy from William L. Rothenberg, Chairman of Carnegie Fund for Authors, to William Packard notifying of Patchen's disqualification from the Fund in 1961.

Box-folder 1:1 **Outgoing to Kenneth and Miriam Patchen [31 carbon copy letters, 35 pp] 1957-1965 1972**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box-folder</th>
<th>Incoming: Kenneth Patchen 1956-1964 n.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2-52, 2:1-3</td>
<td>Seasons' Greeting Card, &quot;A Parable At the Year’s End...&quot; [+ env.] Dec. 27, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Please - the 40 dollars is not from me:&quot; [2 pp + env.] Aug. 30, 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;No, you didn't tell us about Geraldine's bump.&quot; [2 pp + env.] Aug. 18, 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Your good letter: thanks are badly said by couple quick questions. &quot;, [1 pg + env.; decorated] Sep. 28, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Most pleasant to get Geraldine's chatty and thoughtful letter - and the more appreciated...&quot; [3 pp + env.; decorated Sep. 22, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Yesterday doctor discovered that my blood pressure is very high...&quot; [1 pg + env.; decorated] Aug. 19, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Very bad time these past days, too done in for anything.&quot; [1 pg + env.; decorated] Aug. 10, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:11</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;You tell me that you did no more than anyone would do;&quot;, [2 pp + env.; decorated] Jul. 26, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Our 'big' address book just will not be foun d, but I've garnered a few names for you.&quot; [1 pg + env.; decorated] Jul. 10, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Just up to this..&quot; [1 pg + env.] Jul. 8, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14</td>
<td>ALS &quot;It may happen - nothing definite as yet - that our only remaining hope, course, what -have-you, will be to bring suit against the doctors and hospital...&quot; [4 pp + env.] May 31, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;As you've probably guessed, things have been almost impossibly rough for us.&quot; [1 pg. + env.] May 26, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;The past week has been so strange and depressing...&quot; [4 pp + env.] May 11, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:16</td>
<td>TLS &quot;Book reviewing out of my line: policy matter: so don't say no to doing something for you, only that I never do that.&quot; [1 pg] Feb. 17, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;What an amazing ability you have ...&quot; [1 pg + env.] Jan. 24, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:18</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;We both very much appreciated Geraldine's fine, long letter.&quot; [2 pp + env.] Jan. 8, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:19</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Forgot couple things: about my play - the planned road tour...&quot; [1 pg. + env.] Jan. 25, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Many thanks for your KP items in Trace.&quot; [1 pg] Nov. 14, [1959]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:21</td>
<td>TLS, &quot;No, we missed the CBS program...your word of it was our first...&quot; [1 pg] Oct. 2, [1959]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Just after phone talk - the two news items, very briefly: The Troupe Theater in Palo Alto will present world premier of my 1st play, DON'T LOOK NOW, on October 9th...&quot; [2 pp + env.] Aug. 24, 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:23</td>
<td>TLS, &quot;What with one thing and a thousand others Miriam hasn't been able to get round to answering Geraldine's letter. &quot; [1 pg] July 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:24</td>
<td>ALS &quot;Trying to finish my book [poems and drawings] BECAUSE IT IS, which New Directions will publish in fall as a paperback....&quot; [1 pg + env.; pink silk paper] May 6, 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Harried as I am by trips to clinic here and to Stanford Hospital in SF for tests and x-rays for the operation, I can't remember whether I wrote to you since return from NY or not...&quot; [1 pg + env.] Apr. 24, [1959]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;The Doctors conferred over me on Tuesday: report- 'a 2.5 m. leiomyms at the upper esophagus which has ... been largely a symptomatic.&quot; [1 pg + env.] Mar. 7, 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:26</td>
<td>ALS, &quot;Readings to turn away crowds everywhere - but what a beating one takes!&quot; [1 pg + env.] Feb. 27, 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:27</td>
<td>TLS, &quot;Just too uncomfortable with stepped up traction to get round to doing much of anything.&quot; [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in red ink] Jan. 25, 1959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box-folder 1:29  TLS, "I'm sure that the holiday period gave you little chance to work on your novel...or much else." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in green ink] Jan. 9, 1959
Box-folder 1:30  TLS, "I've said no to Occidental College." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in brown ink] Dec. 10, 1958
Box-folder 1:31  TLS, "Hope you are finding time and inspiration for the novel. " [1 pg; blue top edge] Nov. 25, [1958]
Box-folder 1:32  TLS "Appearance of magazine much improved. Things at lowest ebb with us." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in blue ink] Oct. 28, 1958
Box-folder 1:33  ALS, "Yesterday Dent Hand delivered phonograph - fine to have a machine again, and such a good one!" [1 pg + env.] Oct. 16, 1958
Box-folder 1:34  TLS, "Received the section listing Grants etc...." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in green ink, + holograph note] Sep. 9, 1958
Box-folder 1:35  TLS, "Two things. I wonder if it's convenient for you to lend me that book which has the listing of writers' grants and awards--" [1 pg + env.; blue top edge, signed in green ink, + holograph note] Aug. 27, 1958
Box-folder 1:36  TLS, "How nice of Geraldine to be phoning up an audience for the TV show." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in black ink] Aug. 26, 1958
Box-folder 1:37  TLS, "Coat arrived in handsome neat boxshape..." [1 pg] Aug. 9, 1958
Box-folder 1:38  TLS, "Yes, played tapes. Suffer on this beat-out machine..." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in red ink] Aug. 2, 1958
Box-folder 1:39  TLS, "Brother! since getting home it has been sixty eleven things after another, bang, bang, bang..." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in green ink] Jul. 24, 1958
Box-folder 1:40  TLS, "I've written to the program director in Brussels telling her that I am delighted to have the invitation..." [1 pg; signed in blue ink] Jun. 29, 1958
Box-folder 1:41  TLS, "X-rays show a badly dislocated neck, and I'm in collar-brace until muscle spasm subsides enough to permit traction." [1 pg; blue top edge, signed in green ink] Jun. 22, 1958
Box-folder 1:42  TLS, "I wish I could answer your good letter with news of a better kind than prompted it." [1 pg; signed in blue ink] Jun. 4, 1958
Box-folder 1:43  ALS, "Some day, when I see you, I'll tell you the story of what these past weeks have been for us - really incredible, one blow after the other, without let up -" [1 pg] May 27, 1958
Box-folder 1:44  TLS, "Thanks for your letter and the list of names." [1 pg + env.; blue top edge, signed in red ink] Apr. 23, 1958
Box-folder 1:45  ALS, "With the opportunity to rest, I find myself tireder than I knew." [1 pg + env.] Mar. 28, 1958
Box-folder 1:46  TLS, "Thanks for your kind note of the 21st. " [1 pg] Oct. 27, 1957
Box-folder 1:47  TLS, "I would have thanked you before now for your statement about 'Hurrah for Anything' except for the intrusion of a bad experience brought on by one of the new medicines." [1 pg] May 21, 1957
Box-folder 1:48  ALS, "Thank you very much for sending me the magazine carrying your interesting article." [1 pg + envelope] Nov. 16, 1956
Box-folder 1:49  APCS, "A few more names-by the bye, I never received The International Guide" n.d.
Box-folder 1:50  ALS, "As You can guess I've hardly time to catch my breath just now!" [1 pg; a note] Oct 17
Box-folder 1:51  APCS, "My printed notice of portfolio would be appreciated." n.d.
Box-folder 1:52  Two empty envelopes Nov 18, 1958 Jul 28, 1960
Box-folder 1:51  Attachments, mailing list [holograph, 5 pp]
Box-folder 1:53  APCS, "Thank you for your message" [+ env.] Jan. 17, 1972
Box-folder 1:54  ALS, "And time goes by - Got these yesterday so this late word." Dec. 1964
Box-folder 1:55  APCS, "Your long-ago beautiful letter has been sitting among my papers for months, waiting an answer..." [+ env.] Jul. 20, 1964
Box-folder 1:56  TL, "So many thanks for your prompt and good help. I was quite desperate, as you judged." [13 pp; includes holograph post script, detailed description of Patchen's medical conditions and events] Feb. 14, 1962
Correspondence 1956-1972 (bulk 1956-1965)

Guide to the James Boyer May Correspondence

**Box-folder 1:57**

ALS, "There is so much to say. First, however, there is the main thing: The friendship withstands any difficulties in communication." [1 pg + env; 11x 17, decorated] post-Feb 1962

**Box-folder 1:58**

APCS, "How cruel... to send us 'coffee munchies' Mr. and Mrs. and not join us." [Painted Poem card - "The Walker, standing"] Dec. 30, 1961

**Box-folder 1:59**

APCS, "Just to say we think of you there: in your wild work period, alone with livestock etc." [Painted Poem card - "The one who comes to question himself"] Dec. 12, 1961

**Box-folder 1:60**


**Box-folder 1:61**

APCS, "Forget the Doubleday deal-their banker [called banker!] says it would be too expensive. More later" Aug. 7, 1961

**Box-folder 2:4**


**Box-folder 2:5**


**Box-folder 2:6**


**Box-folder 2:7**

TLS, "As usual, I am in a burning fever about something..." [1 pg + env.; decorated] Apr. 18, 1961

**Box-folder 2:8**

ALS, "Of course - if we were dying, we'd insist on your coming - and we'd die if you didn't" [1 pg + env.; decorated] Feb. 20, 1961

**Box-folder 2:9**

TLS, "Kenneth will be home tonight, though we went to the hospital only Sunday..." [1 pg + evn.; decorated] Jul. 15, 1959

**Box-folder 1:63**

TLS, "That must have seemed a stupid and distraught sort of mad call last night." [1pg] Jul. 22, 1958

**Box-folder 1:64**

TLS, "It was a lousy way to leave, and none felt worse about it than we. It was all wrong at that point." [1 pg] n.d.

**Box-folder 1:65**

ALS, "judging from what is happening, the Bank of America can't handle a simple transfer to another of their branches - so undoubtedly will not honor our check to you -" [1 pg] n.d.

**Box-folder 1:66**

ALS, "How terribly good to hear from you - it's as if from another world another day." [4 pp] n.d.

**Box-folder 1:67**

ALS, "It's always good when a artificial push gets one into the water after that too-long-hesitation." [2 pp] n.d.

**Box-folder 1:68**

ALS, "How good to talk to you. I knew it would please Kenneth to break t raining and talk on the phone - to you" [2 pp] n.d.

**Box-folder 1:69**

PCS, signed Christmas card n.d.

**Box-folder 1:70-71**

Incoming: Other 1961-1962

**Box-folder 1:70**

Miriam Patchen to Curtis Zahn, APCS, "What's happened to your issue of Coastlines?" Jul. 28, 1962

**Box-folder 1:71**


**Box-folder 1:71**


**Printed Material 1957-1961**

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Content Note

A collection of ephemera and newspaper clippings on Kenneth Patchen.

**Box-folder 1:72**

Ephemera 1958-1961

1. Invitation to "Paintings by Kenneth Patchen on Show at the City Lights Gallery" March-April 1965

2. Program to "San Francisco Tribute to Kenneth Patchen", Marines' Memorial Theater. [featured Kenneth Rexroth, James Broughton, Jonathan Williams, Herb Barman Concert Jazz Orchestra etc.] Jan. 29, 1961
Box-folder 1:72
3. Announcement, "Kenneth Patchen Reads with the Chamber Jazz Sextet [+] env [1959]
Box-folder 1:72
4. Prospectus for "The Famous Painted Edition Patchen Books... When We Were Here Together, Hurrah for Anything, Poemscapes..."
Box-folder 1:72
5. Flyer distributed through Trace, publication headed by James Boyer May, to inform Patchen's blithe.
Box-folder 1:72
6. Typescript for a press release announcing "Poet Invited to Read at Brussels" [1 pg]
Box-folder 1:72
7. Typescript, "News flash about "poetry-jazz" sessions with Chamber Jazz Sextet..." [1 pg]

Box-folder 2:10
Newspaper clippings 1957-1961
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
5. Comic strip "Not satisfied with reading poetry to jazz, they're now rewriting the Declaration of Independence: We dig these truths to be real frantic..." 1958
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
Box-folder 2:10
9. "Bufano Offers Art Work To Help a Poet in Need"
Box-folder 2:10