Finding aid for the Sammy Lee papers 3030

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USC Libraries East Asian Library
2017 December
Doheny Memorial Library
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The Sammy Lee papers, 1920-2010, consist of awards, certificates, audiovisual materials, scrapbooks, copies of a biography, and other various ephemera documenting Lee's life and career as both a two-time gold medal winning Korean-American Olympic athlete as well as a physician. The collection comprises primarily two large scrapbooks, one each to commemorate Sammy Lee's participation in the 1948 and 1952 Olympic Games. The scrapbooks are filled with photographs, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia related to those Olympic Games. The collection includes two copies of "Not Without Honor: The Story of Sammy Lee" by Molly Frick Wampler; one is the published copy from Santa Barbara: The Fithian Press, 1987, the other is a more extensive printed typescript of the book. The collection also includes awards and certificates presented to Sammy Lee for various events and accomplishments, including sports awards and presidential recognitions. The rest of the collection consists of a few video cassettes, one DVD, and a copy of the 24th Anniversary Korean American Medical Association Membership Directory.

Biographical Note
Born on August 1, 1920, Sammy Lee was a Korean American gold medal Olympian and physician. Lee won gold for platform diving at the 1948 Olympics in London and at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki. He was the first Asian American to win an Olympic Gold Medal for the United States, as well as the first man to win back-to-back gold medals in Olympic platform diving.

Growing up in Highland Park in Los Angeles, Lee faced ethnic prejudice; he was only able to use a neighboring pool in Pasadena once a week on Wednesdays, when it was dubbed "International Day." Unwilling to let this impede his practicing, Lee's coach dug a pit in his backyard and filled it with sand so Lee could practice his jumping.

Lee received his undergraduate degree from Occidental as a student athlete. In 1947, he received his M.D. from USC's School of Medicine. He also joined the U.S. Army Medical Corps, where he served from 1953-1955.

Despite his achievements and fame, Lee continued to experience ethnic prejudice in the 1950s when he attempted to purchase a home in Garden Grove, California, but was told he could not. After retiring from diving, Lee became a coach to the likes of Bob Webster, Greg Louganis, and Pat McCormick. He was also a physician and member of the Korean-American Medical Association.

Lee was married to Rosalind Wong and had two children. He died on December 2 2016, at age 96, due to complications from pneumonia.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Sammy Lee.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Asian American men -- California -- Los Angeles -- Archival resources
Divers -- United States -- Archival resources
Korean American physicians -- California -- Los Angeles -- Archival resources
Olympic athletes -- United States -- Archival resources
Books
Ephemera
Scrapbooks
Video recordings
Lee, Sammy, 1920-2006 -- Archives
Louganis, Greg, 1960- -- Archives
Korean-American Medical Association -- Archives
Olympic Games (14th : 1948 : London, England) -- Archives
Olympic Games (15th : 1952 : Helsinki, Finland) -- Archives

**Biographical materials 469067**

Box 1, Item 1

Box 1, Folder 1-13
Physical Description: 13 folders

Box 1, Item 2

**Awards and certificates 469071**

Box 1, Folder 14
Awards and certificates 1953-1995
Physical Description: 1 folder

Box 1, Folder 15
Awards and Certificates 1996-2016
Physical Description: 1 folder

Box 1, Item 3
Skull and Dagger Initiation 1989
Physical Description: 1 clamshell album

Box 1, Item 4
Paul Harris Fellow undated
Physical Description: 1 clamshell album

**Audiovisual materials 469076**

Box 1, Item 5
(DVD) Sammy Lee: two programs (1. Helsinki, 1952; 2. Sammy & Greg) 469079

Box 1, Item 6
(VHS) Sammy Lee/Greg Louganis, Seoul '88 (16:32) 469077

Box 1, Item 7
(VHS) Sam & Greg, Seoul '88: 16 Days of Glory Part 2 (44:09)

Box 1, Item 8
(VHS) Dr. Sammy Lee 469078

**Scrapbooks**

Box 1
Olympic Games London, England 1948
Physical Description: 1 oversized box
Box 2  

**Olympic Games, Helsinki, Finland 1952**

Physical Description: 1 scrapbooks.