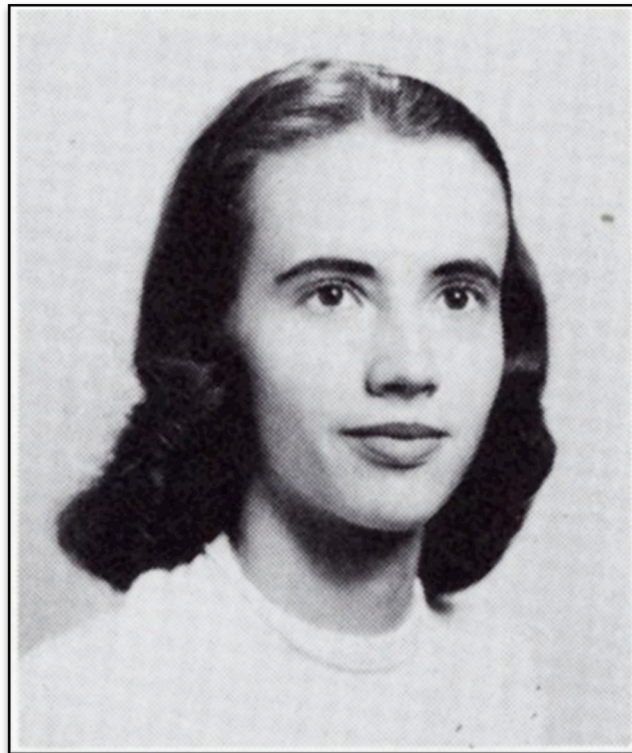


MARY ALICE AYERS PAPERS

1955 - 2012

Finding Aid



Archives and Special Collections



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Accession Number: 13-01

Size: 2.47 Cubic Feet

Provenance: Mary Alice Ayers

Restrictions: None

Location: Range 6 Section 4 Shelves 47 - 48

Project Archivist: Yingwen Huang

Date: April 2013

Biographical Sketch

Mary Alice Ayers was born in Yonkers, New York on July 10th, 1937. She was the youngest child of the family. Her father, Andrew Barry McElroy, was born in Ireland, but later became a U.S. citizen. Her mother, Helen Theresa McIntyre, was a native New Yorker. The family of four resided in the Bronx, New York. Despite both of her parents having only completed their high school educations, Mary was motivated to pursue a college degree.

Mary initially attended Marymount College and later transferred to Hunter College. During her undergraduate years at Hunter College, she led an active student life; she was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Class of June 1959 and a member of various student clubs and fraternities such as the English Club, Philosophy Club, Phi Beta Kappa, and Sigma Tau Delta. Upon her graduation, her short story—“*A Museum Piece*”—was awarded the Bernard Cohen Short Story Prize by the Department of English. In June 1959, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in English and Philosophy.

After she graduated from Hunter, she worked as an advertising copywriter at an advertisement company from 1959 to 1964, where she met Jack Ellis Ayers, to whom she was later married. In 1964, she followed her husband and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. However, her marriage lasted for about 9 years and resulted in divorce in 1973.

In 1973, Mary decided to pursue her Master’s in Education with a concentration in Secondary Education at Georgia State University. At the same time, she worked as a 9th grade English teacher at Westminster School in Atlanta for 5 years. After she received her Master’s, Mary decided to move to Miami, Florida in 1978. As the dedicated teacher that she was, she continued to teach English and Creative Writing at various high schools while she was working on her writings. Later, she became a professor at the University of Miami and Florida International University and taught college students Creative Writing and Basic and Advance Composition for business, science, and technology. At the same time, she devoted her time to writing and published most of her writings between 1970s and 1990s.

As an extraordinary award - winning fiction writer, Mary received a grant from the Ingram Merrill Foundation, a writing fellowship from Millay Colony for the Arts, and she was twice a winner of the PEN Syndicated Fiction award, American Short Fiction award, and a nominee for the Pushcart Prize. Two of her writings, *Change at Jamaica* and *The Infinite Dark (What the Dark Was)*, received the PEN Syndicated Fiction Award. *The Infinite Dark* was also featured on the National Public Radio’s “The Sound of Writing”, and later published in an anthology called *Life On The Line* (1992), widely read by students in the humanities field. Another of her short stories, “Works Cited”, received the American Short Fiction Contest Award. Many of her other short stories were also published in numerous leading literary magazines including *Paris Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Florida Magazine*, *Newsday Magazine*, *Four Quarters*, *Epoch*, *Connecticut Critic*, and *Village Advocate*. Her poem, “Last Voyage”, was written in memoriam of Ana Sanchez, a student of hers at University of Miami in 1996, and it was featured on WLRN’s “The Voice of Poetry”. Moreover, Mary was named in the Millennium Edition of *Who's Who of American Women* in 2000.

In June 2012, Mary Alice Ayers passed away due to heart disease at her home in Miami, Florida.

Yingwen Huang

Scope and Content Note

The Mary Alice Ayers Papers, 1937 - 2012, mainly document the early development of her talents in creative writing and her passion as a dedicated educator and a diligent writer. The bulk of her papers extend from her undergraduate years in 1955 to her death in 2012. The materials are arranged alphabetically by type of documents including her biographical data, education and employment records, correspondence, and writings. All papers that are in fragile condition have been Xeroxed and the originals are kept in plastic sleeves.

The contents within Ayer's biographical information consist of her birth certificate, obituary, resumes, profiles from various biography databases, her Last Will and Testament, and family background. Some documents regarding Ayer's family background were found online, such as the 1940 Federal Census Record and obituaries of her relatives.

The documents in the academic institutions folders include Ayer's academic records, correspondence, and papers written by her during her undergraduate years, as well as her instructional materials and contracts from the institutions where she was employed. They are arranged chronologically by the year she was associated with the institution.

The correspondence includes incoming and outgoing letters with her dentist, friends, publishers, etc., from 1955 to 2010. There are also letters between Ayers and Charles McGrath, an editor of the *New Yorker*, whom Ayers was sending her manuscripts to, hoping to get her writings reviewed and published. Another person in her correspondence is Simon Frank, a doctor as well as the author of an unpublished work called "Butterfly Dream" that Ayers was helping to edit.

Among her writings are some of her published and unpublished works including diaries, journals, reading notebooks, short fiction stories, novels, poems, and some undated and untitled writings. From her short stories such as "The Infinite Dark" and "Work Cited", one can see how one can inspire and motivate students from the perspective of an educator. Her other short stories and novels, such as "A Recovery of Sorts" (1971) and "Will Park" (1999), offer the readers keen insights about the conflicts and complications between couples and families. Most of her stories involve a personal touch and allow the reader to connect the main character to Ayer's experience in the different roles she partakes in life. For example, in "Mother's Money, Then and Now" (1978), she was a housewife, whereas in "Finding a Place" (2009), she was a realtor. While her earlier works mainly revolve around personal relationships and conflicts, she incorporated new elements such as religion and nature into her later works: "Islander" (1992), "To Be An Angel" (2009), and the "Seven Nature Poems" (2008 - 2009).

Lastly, the Mary Alice Ayers Papers will provide invaluable insights to Hunter alumni, researchers, and writers, as well as educators who hope to increase their knowledge in teaching and writing by studying the legacy of a passionate writer and a committed English educator.

Yingwen Huang

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series I – Biographical

Series I consists of Mary Alice Ayers' biographical data including her birth certificate, obituary, resumes, profiles from various biography databases, and her Last Will and Testament. In addition, there are papers about her family that were later found and added to the collection.

Series II – Academic Institutions

Subseries 2.1 Education

Subseries 2.2 Employment

Subseries 2.1 consists of Mary's student records, correspondence, and writings during her education at Hunter College (1957 - 1959) and Georgia State University (1973 - 1975).

Subseries 2.2 consists of her employment contracts in Westminster School, Atlanta, Georgia (1973 - 1978), a guide from the University of Miami, Florida (1977), and her instructional materials from Florida International University (2009 - 2010). All materials are arranged chronologically according to the years of her association with the institutions.

Series III – Correspondence

Series III consists of incoming (1978) and outgoing letters (June 1955 - March 2010), as well as correspondence with Charles McGrath, an Editor of the *New Yorker* (1978 - 1993) about her story submissions to the *New Yorker*, and Simon Frank, M.D., the author of an unpublished work titled "Butterfly Dreams" that Mary edited (May 1991 - February 1992).

Series IV – Writings

Subseries 4.1 Published Works

Subseries 4.2 Unpublished Works

Subseries 4.1 consists of notes, drafts, and manuscripts of her published works arranged alphabetically (1977 - 1998). Subseries 4.2 consists of diaries, notebooks, and the notes, drafts, and manuscripts of Mary's unpublished short stories, novels, and poems ranging from the 1960s to 2010s. They are arranged chronologically by decades of the final product. However, there are some works that are undated. In addition, while most of her works contain notes with the manuscripts, not all of them have rough drafts and notes with them.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I - BIOGRAPHICAL

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Biographical Data
	2	Family Background

SERIES II - ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Subseries 2.1 - Education

1	3	Hunter College, 1957 - 1959 Academic Records Correspondences, January 1982 & August - October 2000
	4	Writings, 1957 - 1959 “The Hunt of West Tenth Street”, Marymount College, 1956 “Weekend”, 1957 “The Little Wife”, 1958 “A Museum Piece”, Bernard Cohen Short Story Prize Awarded by the Department of English at Hunter College, 1959 “An Appointment With Necessity”, n.d. “Thus Ends A Vigil”, n.d.
	5	Georgia State University, 1973 - 1975

Subseries 2.2 - Employment

1	6	Westminster School, Atlanta, Georgia, 1973 - 1978
	7	University of Miami, Florida, 1977
	8	Florida International University, 2009 - 2010

SERIES III - CORRESPONDENCE

1	9	Incoming, 1978 Outgoing, June 1955 - March 2010
	10	Correspondence with Charles McGrath, Editor of the <i>New Yorker</i> , 1978 - 1993
	11	Simon Frank, M.D., Author of “Butterfly Dreams”, edited by Mary Alice Ayers, unpublished, May 1991 - February 1992

SERIES IV - WRITINGS

Subseries 4.1 - Published Works

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	12	List of Publications and Reviews, 1996-1998
		Published Short Stories, 1977 - 1998
	13	Ayers, Mary Alice. "Articles of Faith." <i>Four Quarters</i> 27.1 (1977): 24-29 ---. "Change at Jamaica." PEN Syndicated Fiction Award 1986 ---. <i>Literary Review</i> 29:1 (1985): 5-10. ---. <i>Florida Magazine</i> 18 January 1987: 23 - 25. ---. <i>Florida Magazine</i> 10 May 1987: 21 - 24. ---. <i>Newsday Magazine</i> 17 May 1987: 60 - 67. ---. "England's So Different Now." <i>Florida Magazine</i> 10 May 1987: 17-18. ---. "Kinsdale." <i>Michigan Quarterly Review</i> 17.2 (1978): 213-222. ---. "Lost at Sea." <i>Mississippi Review</i> 6.3 (1977): 68-77. ---. "Of Sisters." <i>Paris Review</i> 85 (1982): 80-89. ---. "Slow Flying." <i>Partisan Review</i> 57.2 (1990): 239-242. ---. "Something Old, Something New." <i>Four Quarters</i> 31.4 (1982): 23-27.
	13	---. "The Infinite Dark." PEN Syndicated Fiction Award 1988 ---. "The Infinite Dark." <i>Anthology Life On The Line: Selections on Words and Healing</i> . Ed. Sue Brannan Walker and Rosalyn Demaios Roffman. Mobile, Alabama: 1992. 56 - 61.
	14	---. "Works Cited." <i>American Short Fiction</i> 8:29 (1998): 86-104.

Subseries 4.2 - Unpublished Works

2	1	Diary Entries, March - November 1952, May 2007, August 2009
		Notebooks
	2	January 13, 1969 - April 25, 1970
	3	St. John, n.d.
	4	St. Luke, January 21, 1980 - September 21, 1990
		Unpublished Short Stories, 1960s
	5	"George to Be Completed", n.d. "How About the Friendly Big City For A Change?" n.d. "Strange Shadows On You Tend", n.d. "Lost at Sea", March 1965 "The Wedding", May 1966 "Up at Lake Bombazine", June 1966
		Unpublished Short Stories, 1970s
	6	"A Recovery of Sorts", 1971 "A Reactionary Affair", July 1978

SERIES IV - WRITINGS

Subseries 4.2 - Unpublished Works

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2	6	Unpublished Short Stories, 1970s “Mother’s Money, Then and Now”, July 1978 “Once Upon a Story”, April 1979 “Another Jesus”, August 1979
	7	Unpublished Short Stories, 1980s “To Be Reconciled”, July 1981 “An Uncle from Wales”, August 1984 “There Is a Tide”, July 1985 “Building”, June 1987 “Cultural Affair”, July 1987 “I Promise I Won’t Touch”, March 1988 “Nature Lover”, August 1988
	8	Unpublished Short Stories, 1990s “Wishneak Falls”, January 1990 “Will Park”, January 1992 “The Jacket”, February 1992 “Collaborators”, July 1992 “Lesson”, July 1993 “The Flavor of God”, August 1996 “Embryonics”, July 1999
3	1	Unpublished Short Stories, 2000s “Breathing Room”, August 2001 “Ourselves and Others Married”, August 2001 “Shooting Bird”, 2005
	2	“To Be an Angel”, December 2009 “Finding a Place”, December 2009 (renamed after “The Little Lame”) “Catskills”, July 2010
	3	Unpublished Short Stories, Undated, Titled “A Natural Sequence” “An Adventurous Summer” “Awakening” “Chapter One: The Harsh Rain” “Dialogue Between Robert & Annie” “Fall” “Guilty or Not” “Lost Child”

SERIES IV - WRITINGS

Subseries 4.2 - Unpublished Works

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
3	3	Unpublished Short Stories, Undated, Titled “Margie’s Big Event” “Spiritual” “The Joys of Boating: As Seen by the Boatman’s Wife” “Uncertain Hours”
	4	Unpublished Short Stories, Undated, Untitled “A Dim Light Fell Through The Colored Glass...” “Anne Marie Woke Up Shaking And Terribly Frightened...” “But The Trouble With Him Was Not That No One Love...” “He Had First Seen Jennie On The Wharf At Venice” “I Am Not Telling This Story Merely To Give...” “Margie Martin Was In A Delicious State Of Semi - Consciousness...” “Paul Offers To Father The Child... Karen” “The Subway Was Far Too Crowded.” “We Had Been Friends A Long Time, Ann & I” Notes about mother taking care of her Notes on a novel planning... Karen
5		Short Story Submission Records and Guidelines, 1972 - 2010
6		Undeveloped Short Story Ideas and Publication Proposal, n.d.
	7	Unpublished Novels “Take A Bunch Of Carrots”, Notes, 1967- 1977
	8	“Take A Bunch Of Carrots”, Drafts, 1967 - 1977 Summary of “Take A Bunch Of Carrots”, July 28, 1977 “Take A Bunch Of Carrots”, February 2, 1967 “Free Trade”, February 9, 1967 “Strawberry Red”, March 23, 1967 “Wings”, March 24, 1967 - November 16, 1967 Untitled 6, November 17, 1967 Untitled 7, November 18, 1967 - January 21, 1968 Untitled 8, February 6, 1968 Untitled 9, February 21, 1968 Untitled 10, March 11, 1968 Untitled 11, March 14, 1968 Untitled 12, April 11, 1968
4	1	“Take A Bunch of Carrots”, Manuscript (Missing Chapter One)

SERIES IV - WRITINGS

Subseries 4.2 - Unpublished Works

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Unpublished Novels
4	2	“Nun's Parlor”, 1986
	3	“Islander”, Notes, 1982 - 1992
	4	“Islander”, 1st Drafts, 1982 - 1992 Chapter One: An Away Place, July 12, 1982 Chapter Two: Getting Under Way, July 29, 1982 Chapter Three: Missing Connections, August 30, 1982 Chapter Four: The Price of Love, August 12, 1983 Chapter Five: Racing Before Us The Time When, June 27, 1983 Chapter Six: Visions, August 3, 1984 Chapter Seven: Waste, April 14, 1989 Chapter Eight: Appetite, November 1, 1997
	5	“Islander”, 2nd Drafts, 1982 - 1992
	6	“Healing Isle” (renamed after “Islander”), Manuscripts, 1982 - 1992 Chapter One: An Away Place Chapter Two: Getting Under Way Chapter Three: Missing Connections
	7	“Butterfly Dreams” by Simon Frank, Edited by Mary Alice Ayers, Notes, 1991 - 1992
5	1	“Butterfly Dreams”, Manuscript, 1991 - 1992
		Unpublished Poems, 1948 - 2006
	2	“A Friend”, April 18, 1948 "Last Voyage: In Memoriam: Ana Sanchez," Student of Mary Alice Ayers at University of Miami. May 11,1996. Featured on “The Voice of Poetry” (WLRN) “Hellen: Hip At 101”, December 28, 1999 (Poem dedicated to Hellen Ingram Plummer, mother of Pulitzer Prize winning poet James Ingram Merrill and former wife of Merrill Lynch founder Charles E. Merrill) “Roger Is Right” (For Roger Tobin), July 28, 2001

SERIES IV - WRITINGS

Subseries 4.2 - Unpublished Works

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
5	2	Unpublished Poems, 1948 - 2006 “Immediate Response to a Dinner Invitation Following Anthony's Comment” (Parody on Hamlet), December 21, 2006
	3	Unpublished Poems: “Seven Nature Poems”, 2008 - 2009 “Aqua Longing”, 2008 “An Airing”, 2008 “Blizzard”, August 2008 “Brooks Rock”, September 2008 “Color In Call”, April 25, 2009 “Fecundity”, August 27, 2008 “Nebulous Cumulous”, Jun. 2009
	4	Unpublished Poems, 2010 - 2011 “Romance News”, Christmas 2010, December 14, 2010 “Shadow Boxing”, January 24, 2011 “Party Time”, January 25, 2011 “Sour Season”, January 25, 2011
		Unpublished Poems, Undated “Analogy” “Love I & II” “Patterns” “Resignation” “Unity” “To Our Endlessness” Untitled Poem