

Schroeder, Jean, papers

Jean Schroeder papers
ca. 1939-1951

Title Statement

Schroeder, Jean, papersJean Schroeder papers MSS 16836

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16836

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1645

Unit Date

ca. 1939-1951

Language

English

source

Max Rambod

Extent

.6 Cubic Feet 2 document boxes (1 legal, 1 half-legal)

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Max Rambod by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 6 September 2023

Preferred Citation

MSS 16836, Jean Schroeder papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

Jeanie Schroeder (Married names: Boston, [McCoy], [Shearer??] was born in 1921 to Theophil R. Schroeder (1898-1973) and Goldie Margaret Halliday Schroeder (1893-1959) and graduated from Northwestern University. She also worked as a personnel manager for the Billy Wright Orchestra (known as a pre-cursor to the famous musician Little Richard-- William Wright (1918-1991) was an African American singer who was openly Gay. He is considered one of Little Richard's greatest influences in his formative years.) Jeanie's boyfriend and secret husband was a musician named Kenny Leighton. She had many friends who were musicians in Chicago and in the United States Navy Band. When she became pregnant, her mother wanted her to marry someone (not Kenny Leighton) just to obtain what Mrs. Schroeder considered acceptable married status. Mrs. Schroeder wanted to take care of her daughter and Miss Schroeder showed much courage in exploring an interracial marriage with Kenny "Tiny" Leighton and raising her son on her own while trying to earn money and attend college. Her grandmother was Mary Halliday (1874-1969) and she had many aunts including, Opal Wycoff, Edith Blackhurst, Elsie Chowning, Clara Falk, and a [great] aunt Eva Viola Halliday Mapletoft. From them she received many letters with advice, most of it to follow the wishes of her parents, but her Aunt Elsie wanted her to follow Jeanie's own dreams and encouraged her writing abilities. Miss Schroeder also had letters from some close girl friends (Doris Reiman Gorman who became a doctor in California) and many boy friends who were very fond of her. She also had a brother, Frank Schroeder, who lived with his parents, was not well and who died in 1943. Her parents felt that they could not leave him alone because he was frequently in pain (possibly from Rheumatoid Arthritis).

Content Description

This collection contains letters and paper ephemera written to Jeanie Schroeder, a young, white woman who fell in love, got pregnant during her pre-med studies at Northwestern University, and secretly married a young Black musician identified as Keith "Tiny" Leighton in the letters. The bulk of the collection dates from the 1940s to the 1950s. The content centers Jeanie Schroeder's courage in facing the difficulties of being seen as an unwed mother in the 1940's; young men going off to World War II, and women obtaining new careers and exploring the work place that was previously unavailable to them.

It contains 130 handwritten letters, thirty typed letters, and 115 pieces of paper ephemera, including identification cards, handwritten poetry, and illustrations by Blair, their child, drawn for his mother.

The archive includes letters from Jeannie's father, Theophile R. Schroeder, a Chicago business owner, demanding to know the baby's father, from Jeannie's mother, Goldie Halliday Schroeder, begging her daughter to hide her condition, from a girlfriend, Doris Reiman Gorman, urging Jeannie to move to Mexico where her "sociological problems" won't be an issue, and from a friend (George Nesbitt) of Tiny's family with advice for the courage an interracial marriage would require of her, as well as letters from Jeannie and Keith's son, Blair. He wrote letters to his mother while he attended the Williams Military Academy. An envelope with some of the boy's hair is included.

Related Materials

Related to the UVA Collection of the History of Parenting, Childhood, and Family Building.

Keywords

Interracial marriage

Interracial marriage -- United States

History of Childhood, Parenting and Family Building (UVA)

African Americans

Max Rambod

Description of Subordinate Components

Series 1. Letters

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249011

Unit Date 1936-1953

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249000

Unit Date 1936-1938

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249001

Unit Date 1939

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249002

Unit Date 1941-1942

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249003

Unit Date 1943 March-July

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249004

Unit Date 1943 August-December

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249005

Unit Date 1944

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249006

Unit Date 1945-1949

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Letters to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249007

Unit Date 1950-1953

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Letters and notes from Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249008

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Letters from Ken Leighton to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249009

Unit Date 1941-1944

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Blair Boston artwork, and letters

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249010

Unit Date 1943-1953

Mixed Materials [X032784007] 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Series 2. Greeting Cards, invitations, postcards, business cards, programs and newspaper clippings.

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249012

Unit Date 1938-1953

Greeting cards and invitations

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249013

Unit Date 1938-1953

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Greeting cards

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249014

Unit Date 1939-1953

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Postcards to Jeanie Schroeder

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249015

Unit Date 1937-1940's

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Programs

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249016

Unit Date 1939-1953

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Business cards

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249017

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Personal identification cards and receipts

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249018

Unit Date 1941-1943

Mixed Materials [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Blair Schroeder hair

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/249020

Unit Date 1943 and undated

Manuscripts [X032784008] 2 (box)

Container 8 (folder)