

Chisholm Foundation collection on Frank Gardiner Wisner

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1909-1997

Title Statement

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Author: Ellen Welch

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16333

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

[Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/416

Unit Date

1909-1997

Language

English

Creator

Wisner, Frank, 1909-1965

Extent

1.5 Cubic Feet 1 document box, 1 half-width document box, 1 flat box, and oversize folders

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by the Chisholm Foundation (Lex Lindsay) to the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16333 Chisholm Foundation collection on Frank Gardiner Wisner, Albert and Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Biographical Note

Frank Gardiner Wisner who worked for the Central Intelligence Agency for more than two decades was born in 1909 in Laurel, Mississippi and attended boarding school at Woodberry Forest in Orange, Virginia, after completing high school in Laurel, Mississippi. He obtained his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Virginia (1934) and became an attorney for Carter, Ledyard & Milburn in New York from 1934 to 1947. His intelligence career began in 1941 as an Officer of the Navy Censor's Office. From 1941 to 1946, he was promoted to positions of increasing responsibility with the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Office of Strategic Services, and the Strategic Services Unit. He received the Legion of Merit award and the Kings Insignia from the British Empire. In 1948, Mr. Wisner joined the Central Intelligence Agency, serving as Assistant Director for Policy Coordination until 1951, as Deputy Director (Plans) until 1959, and later as Chief of Station, London. In those demanding and difficult capacities, often under conditions of great stress, Mr. Wisner demonstrated a wide range of the most admirable qualities and talents, which he gave to the service of his country without stint. His breadth and depth of knowledge, his professional competence, his precise judgement, his utter dedication to duty, his imagination, resourcefulness, integrity and courage won the respect of subordinates, peers, and superiors alike. His natural leadership was founded upon an unusually sensitive understanding of other people, as well as upon his own precept and example. Under his able guidance, an important element of the Agency was developed from meager beginnings and achieved substantial accomplishments. Mr. Wisner's distinguished career, matched by very few other intelligence officers of any country or any time, contributed greatly to the security of the United States, in keeping with the best traditions of patriotic service and reflected high credit on him and the Central Intelligence Agency. (Taken in part from his citation in being awarded the Distinguished Intelligence Medal).

Wisner's early service career was characterized by his outstanding communication skills and superior management style. He openly shared information with his colleagues and was known for his methodical analysis and clarity of thought. He was responsible for gathering information and building communications between the Rumanians, Soviets, and British. He had a close relationship with Rica Georgescu which gave him access to high officials in the Rumanian government. For a time his close work with the Russians allowed him access to their daily bomb information. He also obtained permission from the Rumanian government for the United States to evacuate thousands of allied prisoners of war. He established a program to influence domestic and foreign media against communism. He collaborated closely with newspaper editors and journalists, giving them important public relations information that promoted patriotism. He also oversaw the finances of the CIA and strongly supported pro-American forces in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1951). Wisner was passionate about stopping the spread of Communism, which came from his experiences in Rumania when he watched the Soviets plan to take over Eastern Europe. When the Soviets invaded Hungary in 1956, Wisner was devastated that the U. S. did not come to their aid. After this crushing blow, he struggled with illness, received psychological treatment and significantly reduced his workload, although he was still a consultant for the government, and a station chief in London from 1960 to 1962. After twenty-one years in the government service (from 1941 to 1962) he retired and directed his interests towards private industry where he felt that he could improve international business interests and promote the education of the public, particularly young people, in their knowledge of history and democracy. He was involved in fund raising for St. Antony's College at Oxford, (with President William Deakin), and The Conservation Foundation. He also studied the growth of several profitable companies, carefully invested in their stock and acted as a consultant to promote diversification and growth of the companies. He made investments in oil, land, farms, timber, and paper. As an attorney, he gave legal advice to colleagues, literary agents, and businesspersons and was an advisor for authors and publishers of novels about spies, former Nazis or world leaders. He

helped to ensure that their manuscripts were historically accurate accounts or at least credible to readers. He was also keen to make sure that national security interests were always protected. He made himself available to others who were interested in a career in the government. He studied resumes and gave very high recommendations to well- educated young people who showed promise. His letters from colleagues and friends reveal that he was a very kind person that cared about the careers of other people. He helped individuals from all over the world and in all positions in life with obtaining citizenship, visas or employment. He worked under several presidents, Harry S. Truman, David Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson. He also worked very closely with other C.I.A. Directors including Allen W. Dulles, John McCone, and Richard Helms (who was initially Deputy to Wisner), as well as other well-known individuals in intelligence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, ambassadors, diplomats, scholars, and journalists in the major American newspapers, including The New York Times and The Washington Post. He was also passionate about hunting and he travelled across the country and to Spain several times a year to attend shooting parties while discussing the problems of the world with his close friends. In addition to his love for hunting, he had been a star athlete in track and was eligible for the 1936 Olympics. In October of 1965, he succumbed to the illness that made him escalate between high and low mood swings, by taking his own life. Many of his friends wrote that he was a hero who gave his life for his country.

Scope and Contents

Chisholm Foundation collection on Frank Gardiner Wisner (1900-2001; 2 cubic feet) consists of letters, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and photographs from the life of Frank Gardiner Wisner including his intelligence career, track achievements and scholarship at the University of Virginia, 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, and his family.

Related Materials

MSS 15049 Frank Gardiner Wisner Papers in Small Special Collections Library

Keywords

photographs
clippings (information artifacts)
Scrapbooks

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53484

Unit Date 1928-1980

Language English

Extent .05 Cubic Feet 13 folders

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family (while in Europe)

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53470

Unit Date 1928 June

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feet one folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53471

Unit Date 1928 July

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53472

Unit Date 1928 August

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family (while at UVA)

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53473

Unit Date 1928-1929

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Language English

Extent .03 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53474

Unit Date 1930

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53475

Unit Date 1931

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53476

Unit Date 1932

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53477

Unit Date 1933

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner letters to his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53479

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Wisner family letters from friends

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53478

Unit Date 1933; 1965

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Wisner family letters

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53480

Unit Date 1945

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Scope and Contents

Frank Gardiner Wisner letter to his mother Jeanette Gardiner Wisner and a letter from Polly Wisner to her husband Frank Gardiner Wisner

Mrs. Alexander Chisholm letter

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53481

Unit Date 1952

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Wisner II letter to his mother Polly Wisner Fritchey and her husband

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53482

Unit Date 1980

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Certificates, newspaper clippings, obituaries, photographs, and printed

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53489

Unit Date 1909-1997

Language English

Extent 1 Cubic Feet14 folders, 3 oversize items, and 2 scrapbooks

Scope and Contents

Series II contains certificates for Frank Gardiner Wisner from the Winchester Rifle Corps and track at Woodberry Forest School (1924; 1927), magazine article about the Marquis de Ganay family, newspaper clippings, obituaries for Frank Gardiner Wisner (1965) and Genevieve de Viral Wisner (1974), oversize items including a torn high school diploma and photographs of Frank Gardiner Wisner, Allen W. Dulles, and General Marshal, additional photographs from 1909 to 1965, school work and art work of Frank Gardiner Wisner, and printed items related to the University of Virginia, all totaling more than .05 cubic feet.

Certificates

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53490

Unit Date 1924; 1927

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Magazine article about the Marquis de Ganay and his family

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53491

Unit Date 1985

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner newspaper clippings about track at the University of Virginia

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53492

Unit Date 1930-1934

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 16 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank and Polly Wisner newspaper clippings

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53493

Unit Date 1909-1985

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 17 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner obituary and memorial

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53494

Unit Date 1965

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 18 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Genevieve de Viral Wisner obituary

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53483

Unit Date 1974

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 19 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner photographs

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53495

Unit Date 1909-1965

Mixed Materials [X031589342] 1 (box)

Container 20 (folder)

Language English

Frank Gardiner Wisner oversize photographs

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53503

Unit Date 1927-1965

Photographs [X031589345] Oversize box P-46 (Flat_Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Scope and Contents

Oversize photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wisner, Allen Dulles and his wife, and photographs of the University of Virginia.

Frank Gardiner Wisner photographs with friends at the University of Virginia

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53496

Unit Date 1929-1934

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner photographs related to work in the government and military

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53497

Unit Date 1940-1965

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Scrapbooks

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53504

Unit Date 1927-1965

Language English

Extent 0.03 Cubic Feetone flat box

Map of Mississippi

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/59674

Unit Date Undated

Mixed Materials [X031589347] 3 (Oversize_Flat_File_folder)

Container 3 (folder)

Language English

Extent 0.03 Cubic FeetOversize folder.

Oversize high school certificate

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/59672

Unit Date 1927

Mixed Materials [X031589346] Oversize box N-23 (Flat_Box)

Container 2 (folder)

Language English

Extent 0.03 Cubic FeetOversize folder.

Scope and Contents

Laurel High School diploma and photograph of Polly Wisner on her wedding day

Printed items University of Virginia

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53498

Unit Date 1931-1932

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 3-4 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Printed items miscellaneous

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53499

Unit Date 1932; 1997; undated

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Language English

Scope and Contents

Printed items and miscellaneous include a program from the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1932, a 1997 Central Intelligence Agency 50th Anniversary booklet on trailblazers, a small miscellaneous broadside (in French), and a miscellaneous ribbon.

Frank Gardiner Wisner school grades University of Virginia

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53500

Unit Date 1929-1931

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Frank Gardiner Wisner schoolwork

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53501

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Language English

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder

Tribute to Frank Gardiner Wisner by Walter Pforzheimer

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/53502

Unit Date 1965

Mixed Materials [X031589343] 2 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Extent .01 Cubic Feetone folder