Summary

Creator: Levy, Jesse W.

Title: Jesse Levy collection of Tallulah Bankhead materials

Date: 1930s-1980s

Size: 1.51 linear feet (4 boxes)


Abstract: Jesse W. Levy (1918-1991) was a personal assistant to Tallulah Bankhead (1902-1968) the film and stage actor. The collection, dated from the 1930s to 1980s, contains material amassed by Levy about Bankhead. (Some of the files focus on Levy's personal life.) The collection holds information about Bankhead's estate; photographs, correspondence, newspaper clippings, a script, artifacts, and audio-visual materials.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in the NYPL’s online catalog for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials

Conditions Governing Access: Library policy of photography and photocopying will apply. Inquiries regarding audio/visual materials in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatre@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Processing note: Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014.

Creator History
Jesse W. Levy (1918-1991) worked as a personal assistant to Tallulah Bankhead (1902-1968), the film and stage actor. In 1966, he met Bankhead at Truman Capote's Black and White Ball where she offered Levy a job. For the last two years of her life, he became a friend and confident. Following her death in New York City, Bankhead's last will and testament bequest Levy the sum of $10,000.00. This financial amount was more or equal to those given to her family. Levy died in San Francisco in 1991.

Scope and Content Note
The collection, dated from 1930s to 1980s, documents the professional career and personal life of Tallulah Bankhead (1902-1968) the stage and film actor. Jesse W. Levy (1918-1991) created this collection during and after her lifetime, although some of the files relate to him. The collection holds correspondence, legal documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, a script, artifacts, and audio-visual materials.

The collection mostly centers on Tallulah Bankhead's estate and personal life. The estate papers hold letters from lawyers to Levy about his inheritance from Bankhead's will. These lawyers also respond to questions about profits from Bankhead's autobiography and about biographies written by others. A copy of Bankhead's last will and testament forms part of the estate papers.

Photographs offer the best documentation of Bankhead's personal life during the late stages of her career. These black and white photographs, dating from 1966 to 1968, show Bankhead enjoying leisure time with friends, including Truman Capote.

Levy also kept photographs of Bankhead's professional career. Most of the images are stock commercial photographs of close-ups, and movie and television scenes. The last group of photographs focuses on Levy.

The remaining material includes a script from the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour; a fan letter; one letter from the actor Roddy McDowall; a linen towel from the 1935 play Something Gay; and two audio-visual recordings relating to Bankhead's career.

Arrangement: The collection arrangement follows: Tallulah Bankhead Estate Papers; Photographs; Printed Matter; Assorted Materials.

Key Terms
Occupations
Actors (performing artists)

Subjects
Actors -- United States
Movies

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Artifacts (object genre)
Clippings (information artifacts)
Photographs

**Names**
Bankhead, Tallulah, 1902-1968
Container List

Tallulah Bankhead Estate Papers
b. 1 f. 1-3  Correspondence 1969-1984
b. 1 f. 4-8  Last Will and Testament and Related Documents 1967-1975

Photographs
Bankhead, Tallulah
b. 4 f. 1  Closeup 1952 (oversize)
b. 4 f. 2  Closeup (oversize)
b. 2 f. 1  Closeups
b. 2 f. 2  Bankhead Seated Beneath her Portrait
b. 2 f. 3  Bankhead with Burgess Meredith
b. 2 f. 4  Bankhead with David Niven
b. 2 f. 5  Bankhead with Alice Pearce
b. 2 f. 6  Bankhead with Pets
b. 2 f. 7  Bankhead Swinging a Baseball Bat
b. 2 f. 8  Movies and Movie Sets
b. 4 f. 3  Photograph Album 1960s
   Levy, Jesse
b. 2 f. 9-13  1930s-1980s
b. 2 f. 14  Negatives

Printed Matter
b. 2 f. 15  Memorabilia 1960s-1970s
b. 2 f. 16-20  Newspaper Clippings
b. 4 f. 3  Life Magazine 1939
   Article featured Tallulah Bankhead.

Assorted Materials
b. 3 f. 1  Bankhead, Tallulah. Correspondence 1951, 1960s
b. 3 f. 2  Drawing of Tallulah Bankhead
   Photocopies
b. 3 f. 3  Drawings. Unidentified
b. 3 f. 4-5  Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour 1967
b. 3 f. 6  Who's Who in America 1964
b. 3 f. 7  Souvenir Towel 1935
b. 3 f. 8  Levy, Jesse. High School Diploma 1934
b. 3 f. 9  Levy, Jesse. Passports 1961, 1966