

E.J. Kahn Papers

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Summary

Main Entry: Kahn, E. J. (Ely Jacques), 1916-

Title: E. J. Kahn Papers, 1931-1994

Size: 15.5 linear ft. (114 boxes, 4 cartons)

Restriction: Box 108 is closed until the year 2150

Abstract: Ely Jacques Kahn, Jr., the son of the eminent Art-Deco architect, Ely Jacques Kahn, was a prolific free-lance journalist, author of 27 non-fiction books, and longtime staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine. The bulk of the papers reflect Kahn's research for his wide-ranging free-lance articles, *New Yorker* columns and articles, and books.

Biographical Note

One of *The New Yorker's* most popular and prolific staff writers, Ely Jacques Kahn, Jr. published twenty seven books -(some of which were based on articles previously featured in *The New Yorker*)- and wrote on a wide variety of subjects in hundreds of articles and profiles for *The New Yorker* and other periodicals. Born in Manhattan in 1916, Kahn was the son of the prominent architect, Ely Jacques Kahn. His mother, Elsie Plaut Mayer, was a writer. His paternal grandfather, Jacques Kahn, came to the United States from Austria after the Civil War and went into the business of importing ornamental glass from France and Belgium. Kahn's mother's family was French and named Lazard. Thanks to this cosmopolitan background Kahn grew up fluent in French and German as well as English.

Kahn graduated in 1933 from the Horace Mann High School in New York and received the A.B. degree from Harvard in 1937. While still a senior there he began his long and affectionate association with *The New Yorker* when he was he was invited by St. Clair McKelway to join the staff as a reporter for the "Talk of the Town column." His debut article, "My African Potentate", appeared in the issue of April 3, 1937, and his first *New Yorker* profile appeared in 1938, a year after his graduation from Harvard. After the outbreak of World War II in 1941 he served in the South Pacific as a writer with the rank of chief warrant officer. While in the army he wrote accounts of his experiences in the South Pacific, among them, *G.I. Jungle*, and *McNair, Educator of an Army*, which appeared in *The New Yorker* and other periodicals. He was discharged from the army in 1945.

Among the books Kahn published in his long writing career are his first book, *The Army Life* (1942); *The Peculiar War* (1952) on the war in Korea; *A Reporter Here and There* (1961); *The Stragglers* (1962), a compelling book about Japanese soldiers who, many years after the end of the war, were discovered hiding out in the caves and jungles of Guam and the Philippines and were repatriated to Japan. (Kahn also wrote an expressionistic play based on the book); *The World of Swope*, (1964); *The Separated People: A Look at Contemporary South Africa* (1968); *Harvard Through Change and Through Storm* (1969); *The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them* (1975); *About The New Yorker and Me* (1979); and, *Supermarketeer of the World*, (1991).

Kahn died in 1994 in Holyoke, Massachusetts, of injuries sustained in an automobile accident.

Series Descriptions

CORRESPONDENCE, BOXES 1-10

The general correspondence is chiefly with readers, publishers, editors, research assistants, colleagues, and friends, and is arranged by year.

SUBJECT FILES, BOXES 11-100

The name and subjects files reflect the gathering of information for Kahn's books and wide-ranging articles for *The New Yorker* and other periodicals. They include correspondence (of particular interest are Kahn's letters written to his family from South Africa) and research material consisting of articles, books, clippings, leaflets, pamphlets, periodicals, trade and specialized newspapers, reports, and typed interviews. There are also innumerable typed and handwritten notes (incisive, and often sardonic in tone), and typescripts and galley proofs of his articles and books.

Among the subjects of the articles and books covered in this series are the landmark harassment suit filed by the Socialist Workers Party against the U.S. Attorney General; the fate of the State Department's China Service officers, who were blamed by conservative critics for the "loss" of mainland China to communism; the development of the Coca-Cola Company and the evolution of the brand name "Coca Cola" as a world-wide symbol of American economic colonialism; the careers of the actors Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart; the repatriation of Japanese soldiers discovered several years after the end of World War II living in the jungles of Guam and the Philippines; an emotional reunion of the survivors of a hand-to-hand struggle in the North Atlantic between an American Destroyer-Escort and a German U-boat; the efforts of the Negro Ensemble Company to survive; Dwayne Andreas, the wealthy businessman and one of the signers of the historic trade agreement between the American Trade Consortium and the Soviet Foreign Economic Consortium; the field work of the ethnobotanist Richard E. Schultes, who spent many years studying and testing hallucinogenic drugs in the rainforests of Amazonia; and the files relating to several writing assignments in South Africa. The name and subjects files are arranged and boxed alphabetically, and indexed and cross-referenced to other files or series. Italics in the index indicate titles of Kahn's articles, columns, or books.

WRITINGS, BOXES 101-105

This series consists of typescripts of Kahn's articles, *New Yorker* columns, plays, and untitled fiction. Also included are agreements, an option agreement for a film, and contracts, for writing assignments and books. In the Subject Files are additional articles, column, and plays, organized by title. There is also a proof of an article by his son, E.J. Kahn III.

AUDIO/VIDEO MATERIAL, BOX 106

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS, BOXES 107-118

This series consists chiefly of family correspondence, a diary of a trip to Europe; estate papers, and photographs of Kahn, his first wife Virginia Rice Kahn, his extended family, and civilian and military friends.

Container List

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Aerial operations, World War, 1939-1945
See: DC-3; 75th Fighter Squadron

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WHITE, Walter; Capitalist Formation, Inc.

Afrikaners **See:** South Africa

Agents, Theatrical **See:** LASTVOGEL, Abe

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American News Company **See:** MORRISSEY, Michael A.

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American Trade Consortium **See:** ANDREAS, Dwayne

American War of Independence (Notes)

Amnesty International

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ANDREAS, Dwayne

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Anti-U-boat operations in World War, 1939-1945 **See:** *Hand to Hand*

Archer Daniels Midland Company **See:** ANDREAS, Dwayne

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Be Just and Fear Not (Annals of Law and Order) **See:** GOINS, Thomas

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Berlin Blockade, 1948-1949 **See:** Berlin Airlift

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- 25 Child Study Association of America
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- 29 CLAY, Lucius D.
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- 30-31 Coca-Cola **See also:** PRENDERGAST, Mark; Typescripts of Writings, Articles by others, Coca-Cola by David Webster;
- Cold War **See:** Berlin Airlift; Friends of Democracy, Inc.; *China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them;* CLUBB, O. Edmond; EATON, Cyrus; Korean War; *Old China Hands;* SERVICE John; VINCENT, John Carter; VINCENT, Elizabeth
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Democracy's Battle, Vol. IV, No. 23, 1946; Vol. V, Nos. 2, 5-9, 11-14, 1947

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- First Decade: A Report on Independent Black Africa* **See:** Africa
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Letter outlining an idea for a Danny Kaye film

Writings by others

- 105** Kahn, E.J. III. *The New Yorker* and Dad
Publishing agreements, agent's letters, writing assignments, and other related documents

Audio/Visual Material

- 106** Audio cassettes; phonograph record; video cassettes

Personal Correspondence and Papers

- 107** Personal correspondence, 1949-1994
Kahn's letters home, and diary of a trip to Europe in 1931
Correspondence with Virginia Rice, 1943-1945
Kahn's letters from Korea, to his wife, Virginia Rice Kahn and children, 1951
Virginia Rice Kahn's letters to Kahn in Korea, 1951
Letters to Kahn from his sons Joseph, 1964-1979, and Terry, 1967
Letters of condolences on the death of Kahn's mother, 1952
Letters, 1949-1953, to Kahn chiefly from lawyers, architects, landscapers, and others concerning his residence and property in Scarsdale, New York;
- 108** Birth certificates; family history; Children's education; separation documents; and miscellany
- 109** Diaries, 1947; c1976-1979; 1986; n.d.
- 110** Military service papers
- Estate Papers
Eugenie Kahn
Elsie Plaut Mayer
Joseph and Henriette Plaut
Henriette Plaut

- 111** Photographs
 E.J. Kahn, Jr.
 Virginia Rice Kahn
 Children, family and friends
 Army service
 Large album
 Collage
- 112** Address books; appointment books; passports
- 113** Two scrapbooks
- 114** **Closed until the year 2050**
- 115** Unsorted clippings and reviews
- 116-118** Unsorted miscellany