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Guide to the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Papers 1914-2010



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.NEFES
Title	Nef, Evelyn Stefansson. Papers
Date	1914-2010
Size	4.75 linear feet (8 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Evelyn Stefansson Nef was a puppeteer, librarian, and philanthropist. She was married to Committee on Social Thought founder John U. Nef, Jr. for 35 years. The collection contains her correspondence, personal papers and photographs, dating from 1914 to 2010. The bulk of the collection dates from 1964 to 2009.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Nef, Evelyn Stefansson. Papers [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Evelyn Stefansson Nef was born on July 24, 1913 to Bella Klein and Jené Schwartz of Brooklyn. She had two older sisters, Rosalind and Julie, and a younger brother Myron. Her father died when she was 11, and Evelyn's emotionally fragile mother went mute from grief. Evelyn attended Washington Irving High School where she developed an interest in puppetry and marionettes. (The Schwartzes were a talented bunch; Julie went on to perform with the Ziegfeld Follies under the name Julie Jenner.)

With her mother unable to care for the family, Evelyn spent much of her time in her late teens in Greenwich Village, where she met artists, writers, and dancers, and was briefly involved with architect Buckminster Fuller. In 1932 she married puppeteer Bil Baird and began performing with his marionette theatre. Though she and Baird divorced after 4 years, she continued to perform through the end of the 1930s.

In 1941, Evelyn married Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 30 years her senior. During their marriage she served as a secretary and research assistant to Stefansson, and they amassed a large library of material on polar and subpolar regions. The Stefanssons and their library moved to Dartmouth College in 1951, where Vilhjalmur taught and Evelyn both taught and served as librarian for his collection. Evelyn herself wrote several books on polar geography and from 1969 to 1971 served as president of the Society of Women Geographers.

After Vilhjalmur Stefansson died in 1962, Evelyn moved to Washington D.C. to work for the American Sociological Association. In 1964 she met John U. Nef, Jr., professor in (and founder of) the interdisciplinary Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He proposed five days later and they were married in April of that year. Through Nef, Evelyn met such cultural and artistic luminaries as Saul Bellow and Marc Chagall, with whom the Nefs vacationed in France. In 1971, Chagall designed a mosaic for the Nef's garden.

In the 1970s Evelyn studied psychoanalysis and opened her own practice in Washington. She served on various boards, including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Washington Opera, the MacDowell Colony, and the International Longevity Center. The Nefs were prominent at social events and in the society pages through the 1960s and 1970s, and into the 1980s. John Nef died in 1988.

Evelyn Nef's life did not slow down after the death of her third husband. She continued to host musical evenings at her Georgetown home, whose guests included Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Her philanthropic work continued as well.

Between 1998 and 2002 Nef was awarded three honorary doctorates and the Icelandic Order of the Falcon Medal of Honor. Her autobiography, *Finding My Way*, the Autobiography of an Optimist, was published in 2002. Nef died of cancer on December 10, 2009.

Scope Note

The collection is divided into four series.

Series I, Personal, contains personal papers and ephemera, newspaper clippings, and memorials, arranged chronologically.

Series II, Correspondence, contains personal correspondence, arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Series III, Audio-Visual, contains photographs, negatives, and slides of Evelyn Nef, family, and friends. It also contains two CDs of poetry readings.

Series IV, Oversize, contains photographs of Evelyn and John Nef and friends, including the Chagalls and Hannah Arendt. Because many of them are undated, photos are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Of particular interest in the collection are photographs of, and correspondence related to, the mosaic designed by Marc Chagall for the Nef's garden in Washington, D.C. as well as many photographs of Chagall himself, most of them taken on vacation with the Nefs and his wife Vava (Valentina) in France. There is also a set of photographs from the baptism of Madeleine Albright's twins, and several of Hannah Arendt with John Nef. Other notable persons whose correspondence or photographs appear in the collection include Margaret Meade, Sandra Day O'Connor, Judith Leiber, Eleanor Jackson Piel, T. S. Eliot, Sir Neville Marriner, Yo-Yo Ma, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Bill and Hilary Clinton, and Saul Bellow.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Nef, John U., Jr. Papers

Nef, Elinor Castle. Papers

University of Chicago. John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought. Records

Subject Headings

- Nef, Evelyn Stefansson, 1913-2009
- Chagall, Marc, 1887-1985
- Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, 1879-1962
- Nef, John U. (John Ulric), 1899-1988

INVENTORY

Series I: Personal

Box 1

Folder 1

Marriage Certificate and Clipping, 1964

Box 1

Folder 2

Menus and Memorabilia, "SS France" Cruise, 1966

Box 1

Folder 3

Clippings – Society Pages, 1966-1970

Box 1

Folder 4

Clippings – Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, 1969-1989, undated

Box 1

Folder 5

Clippings – 1969-2001

Box 1

Folder 6

Correspondence and Contributions – Eleanor Lattimore Memorial Booklet, 1970-1971

Box 1

Folder 7

Nef Foundation – Correspondence, and Papers, 1970

Box 1

Folder 8

Poem by "H. W. W.," 1982

Box 1

Folder 9

Committee on Social Thought – Honorary Dinner Invitation, 1989

Box 1

Folder 10

Leiber, Judith – Clippings, Correspondence, Catalog, 1990-2002

Box 1

Folder 11

Clippings and Mailings – Chagall, 1995-1996

Box 1

Folder 12

Brendan Gill Dinner – Invite List, Drafts of Talk, 1996

Box 1

Folder 13

Evelyn Nef – Introduction of Saul Bellow, 1998

Box 1

Folder 14

Yo-Yo Ma/Silk Road Project Event – Correspondence, planning Materials, Photographs, 2009

Box 1

Folder 15

Clipping – Evelyn Nef Obituary, 2009

Box 1

Folder 16

Evelyn Nef Memorial Service – Program, Invitation, Remarks, 2010

Box 1

Folder 17

Evelyn Nef Memorial Booklet, Photographs, and Notes, 2010

Box 1

Folder 18

Dartmouth Alumni Magazine with Memorial, 2010

Box 1

Folder 19

Statement by J. Bird to National Geographic Society, undated

Series II: Correspondence

Box 1

Folder 20

Correspondence – Saul Bellow, 1998-2002, undated

Box 1

Folder 21

Correspondence – "B," 1963-2000

Box 1

Folder 22

Correspondence – "C," 1969, undated

Box 1

Folder 23

Correspondence – Chagall Mosaic, 1970-1972

Box 1

Folder 24

Correspondence – Chagall, Vava, 1976-1992

Box 1

Folder 25

Correspondence regarding Chagall Events/Exhibits, 1995

Box 1

Folder 26

Correspondence – de Angelis, Kodansha, Kodansha America, Inc., 1994

Box 1

Folder 27

Correspondence – "D-E," 1966-1972

Box 2

Folder 1

Correspondence – Eliot, Valerie and T. S., 1964-1969, undated

Box 2

Folder 2

Correspondence – "F," 1963-1989

Box 2

Folder 3

Correspondence – "G," 1962-1991

Box 2

Folder 4

Correspondence – "H," 1963-1993

Box 2

Folder 5

Correspondence – Katz, Alex and Ada, 1974-2002

Box 2

Folder 6

Correspondence – "L," 1963-2007, undated

Box 2

Folder 7

Correspondence – Lattimore, Owen and Eleanor, 1963-1969

Box 2

Folder 8

Correspondence – Lattimore, Owen, 1972-1978

Box 2

Folder 9

Correspondence – Lattimore, Owen, 1982-1987

Box 2

Folder 10

Correspondence – Lattimore, David and Gerry, 1996-2005

Box 2

Folder 11

Correspondence regarding Owen Lattimore, 1990

Box 2

Folder 12

Correspondence – "M," 1981-2005

Box 2

Folder 13

Correspondence – Marriner, Molly and Neville [1 of 4], 1991-1996

Box 2

Folder 14

Correspondence – Marriner, Molly and Neville [2 of 4], 1997-2002

Box 3

Folder 1

Correspondence – Marriner, Molly and Neville [3 of 4], 2003-2006

Box 3

Folder 2

Correspondence – Marriner, Molly and Neville [4 of 4], 2007-2009

Box 3

Folder 3

Correspondence – Morazé, Monique, 1965-1993

Box 3

Folder 4

Correspondence – "N," 1974-1990, undated

Box 3

Folder 5

Correspondence – Nef, John, 1964-1971

Box 3

Folder 6

Correspondence – "P," 1971-2006

Box 3

Folder 7

Correspondence and Pamphlets, PEN American Center, 2006-2008

Box 3

Folder 8

Correspondence – Piel, Gerard and Eleanor Jackson, 1981-2008

Box 3

Folder 9

Correspondence – "S," 1974-2004

Box 3

Folder 10

Correspondence – University of Chicago Committee on Social Thought, 1989-1995

Box 3

Folder 11

Correspondence, Clippings, Releases – James von Sweden, Landscaping, 1989-2001

Box 3

Folder 12

Correspondence – Various, 2009

Series III: Audio-visual

Box 3

Folder 13

Photographs and Photocopies – Schwartz Family, 1914-1943, undated

Box 3

Folder 14

Photographs – Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, circa 1930

Box 3

Folder 15

Photographs – Young Evelyn Nef (including photocopies), 1932, undated

Box 4

Folder 1

Photographs – Evelyn Nef and Bil Baird, Marionettes, 1933-1934, undated

Box 4

Folder 2

Photographs and Negative – Evelyn Nef at Marionette Theater, 1939

Box 4

Folder 3

Photographs – Notable Acquaintances, 1942, undated

Box 4

Folder 4

Photographs and Note – Evelyn Nef in Russian Play, 1945

Box 4

Folder 5

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Friends, 1952, undated

Box 4

Folder 6

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, circa 1954, undated

Box 4

Folder 7

Photographs – Dartmouth College Activities, 1957-1989, undated

Box 4

Folder 8

Photographs – Birthday Party for Evelyn Stefansson Nef, circa 1960

Box 4

Folder 9

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef and Friends, 1961-1978, undated

Box 4

Folder 10

Photographs – Engagement Party (John and Evelyn Nef), 1964

Box 4

Folder 11

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef, Wedding, 1964

Box 4

Folder 12

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef, Wedding Portraits, 1964

Box 4

Folder 13

Photographs – Honeymoon, Florence and Rhodes, 1964

Box 4

Folder 14

Photographs and Negatives – Honeymoon in Paris, 1964

Box 4

Folder 15

Photographs – Marc and Vava Chagall, 1964

Box 4

Folder 16

Photographs – Nef Apartment, circa 1964

Box 4

Folder 17

Photographs – Lattimore Family and Nefs, 1964-1984, undated

Box 4

Folder 18

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef at Various Events, 1964-1976, undated

Box 4

Folder 19

Slides – Marc Chagall and John Nef, Cap d'Antibes, France, 1965

Box 4

Folder 20

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef, Cruise on "SS France," 1965-1966

Box 4

Folder 21

Photographs – Madeleine Albright and Family (Christening), 1965

Box 4

Folder 22

Photograph and Negative – Washington Post Article (Nefs), 1966

Box 4

Folder 23

Photographs and Note – John and Evelyn Nef at Point Farm, 1968

Box 4

Folder 24

Photographs and Note – Nefs, Chagalls, and Colwins, 1968

Box 4

Folder 25

Photographs – Marc Chagall and Others, 1968, undated

Box 5

Folder 1

Photographs – Society of Women Geographers (SWG) – Evelyn Nef, 1968-1998

Box 5

Folder 2

Photographs and Slide – Marc Chagall's Birthday Party, 1970

Box 5

Folder 3

Photographs – Nefs, Pierre Matisse, Chagalls – Cap d'Antibes, France, 1970

Box 5

Folder 4

Negatives, Photographs, and Contact Sheets – Evelyn Nef by Jacques Munch, Cap d'Antibes, 1970

Box 5

Folder 5

Photographs and Contact Sheet, Evelyn Nef, British Embassy Benefit, circa 1970

Box 5

Folder 6

Photographs – Marc and Vava Chagall, John and Evelyn Nef (with Note), 1970-1971

Box 5

Folder 7

Negatives and Contact Sheet – Chagalls, Kurtz, Schaffer, 1971

Box 5

Folder 8

Photographs – Tatiana de Fidler, 1971

Box 5

Folder 9

Photographs – Installation of Chagall Mosaic, 1971

Box 5

Folder 10

Photographs, Newsletter – Folger Library Events, 1972-1973, 1998

Box 5

Folder 11

Photographs and Contact Sheet – Evelyn and John Nef, Marc and Vava Chagall, Cap d'Antibes, France, 1973

Box 5

Folder 12

Contact Sheet and Photographs – Evelyn Nef by Mercedes Eichholz, 1973

Box 5

Folder 13

Photographs – Marc Chagall's Birthday Party, 1975

Box 5

Folder 14

Photographs – White House (Evelyn Nef), 1975-2003

Box 5

Folder 15

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, 1976-1982, undated

Box 5

Folder 16

Photographs, Negatives, and Slide – Evelyn and John Nef, circa 1976-1978

Box 5

Folder 17

Photographs and Negatives – Evelyn Nef, Volunteer Achievement Award, 1978

Box 5

Folder 18

Photographs – Evelyn Nef and Lord Boyd Orr (with Note), 1978

Box 5

Folder 19

Photograph, Slide and Negative – Evelyn and John Nef, 1981

Box 5

Folder 20

Photograph and Slides – Evelyn and John Nef, Chagall Mosaic (from Baltimore Sun), 1981

Box 6

Folder 1

Photograph, Contact Sheet, Photocopy – Evelyn Nef and Friend Dancing/Chagall Mosaic, 1982, 1984

Box 6

Folder 2

Photographs and Notes – Evelyn Nef and Hugh Jacobsen, 1983, 1985

Box 6

Folder 3

Photographs – John and Evelyn Nef, 1983, undated

Box 6

Folder 4

Photographs and Note – John and Evelyn Nef and J. Symington, 1985, 2003

Box 6

Folder 5

Photographs – Evelyn Nef and Friends, 1986-1992

Box 6

Folder 6

Photographs – Monique Morazé, 1987, undated

Box 6

Folder 7

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, Mt. Sinai/Aging Research Event (with Note), 1987

Box 6

Folder 8

Photographs – Evelyn Nef at Various Events, 1990-1996

Box 6

Folder 9

Photo Album – Committee on Social Thought 50th Anniversary, 1992

Box 6

Folder 10

Photographs – 80th Birthday (by Mary Carswell), 1993

Box 6

Folder 11

Photographs – Evelyn Nef (incl. Photocopy), 1995-2003, undated

Box 6

Folder 12

Photographs – University of Alaska Honorary Degree (Evelyn Nef), 1998

Box 6

Folder 13

Photographs, Negatives, Contact Sheets – Evelyn Nef with Chagall Mosaic, 1998, undated

Box 6

Folder 14

Photographs – Evelyn Nef and Angela Lansbury at Kennedy Center Honors, 1999

Box 6

Folder 15

Photographs – National Organization on Disability Event (with Envelope), 1999

Box 6

Folder 16

Photograph – Evelyn Nef and Sandra Day O'Connor, 2000

Box 6

Folder 17

Photographs and Negatives – Evelyn Nef, Bobby Bristol, Mary, 2001

Box 6

Folder 18

Photographs – Washington Opera Balls (with Note) 2001, 2003

Box 6

Folder 19

Photographs – Evelyn Nef and Friends, 2001-2007

Box 6

Folder 20

Photographs Evelyn Nef at Various Events, 2003

Box 6

Folder 21

Photographs, Andre Siegfried, undated

Box 6

Folder 22

Passport Photos – Evelyn Nef (with Sleeve), undated

Box 6

Folder 23

Photographs and Negative – Evelyn and John Nef, Chagall Mosaic, undated

Box 6

Folder 24

Photographs and Proofs – John and Evelyn Nef with Jim Douglas, undated

Box 6

Folder 25

Photographs – Marc Chagall, undated

Box 7

Folder 1

Photographs and Slides – Self-Portraits, undated

Box 7

Folder 2

Framed photograph - Evelyn Stefansson Nef, undated

Box 7

Folder 3

CDs – David Grene Reading Poetry, 2002

Series IV: Oversize

Box 8

Folder 1

Photographs – Chagall Mosaic, undated

Box 8

Folder 2

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, 1972, undated

Box 8

Folder 3

Photographs and Correspondence – Evelyn Nef by Michelle Mattei, 2004

Box 8

Folder 4

Photographs – Evelyn and John Nef, undated

Box 8

Folder 5

Photographs – Evelyn and John Nef and Friends, circa 1966

Box 8

Folder 6

Photographs – Evelyn Nef, Monique Morazé, Eleanor Douglas, undated

Box 8

Folder 7

Photographs – Hannah Arendt and John Nef, circa 1966

Box 8

Folder 8

Photographs – John Nef in Academic Regalia, undated

Box 8

Folder 9

Photographs – John Nef at Work, undated