

SPEARS FAMILY PAPERS, 1930-1986

Collection #
M 488
OM 118

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Processed by
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August 1987

USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 manuscript boxes, 3 oversize folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1930-1986

PROVENANCE: Jean Spears, Indianapolis, In in 1984 as part of the Black Women in the Middle West Project and a later addition in 1986

RESTRICTIONS: none

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: none

OTHER FINDING AIDS: none

RELATED HOLDINGS: none

ACCESSION NUMBER: 84.0912 86.0640

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Spears family has been resident in Indianapolis for three generations, beginning with Jean Spears' father Louis Joseph Douglas and his wife, Marion Elizabeth Brabham Douglas Burch. Jean Spears was born in Indianapolis 18 February 1925. In 1946, Jean married Sherman J. Polley (1918-). The couple had three children, one of whom died in infancy. The surviving children were Claudia Anne Polley (1949-) and John Evan Polley (1952-). Jean and Sherman Polley were divorced in 1952. In 1956, she married John Holliday Spears (1919-1969), an Indianapolis native and reporter for *The Indianapolis Star*. Jean and John Spears had one child, Lucia Marion Spears (1957-).

Jean Spears attended Crispus Attucks High School, graduating in 1942. She continued her education at Purdue University, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics. Spears taught grade school and was involved in many community projects. She worked with the Indiana Avenue Association on its project to encourage the renovation of the avenue and to attract black businesses to the area. She is active within the Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church, where she taught Sunday School for many years. She has also been active in the Indianapolis Urban League, the Presbyterian Church's Urban Guild and the Community Action Against Poverty project.

Jean's husband, John Holliday Spears, was also a native of Indianapolis. He attended Crispus Attucks High School and Butler University, from which he graduated in 1950 with a degree in journalism. His university career was interrupted by World War II. Mr. Spears served in Italy and was awarded the Purple Heart. He worked as a reporter for *The Indianapolis Star* and later at the Fort Harrison Finance Center.

Jean Spears had two children by her first marriage, Claudia Anne Polley and John Evan Polley. Claudia Polley attended Interlochen Arts Academy until her graduation in 1967. She then attended the Juilliard School in New York City, where she finished her vocal training. Claudia has since appeared in concert and in performances of musicals many times, as well as working in radio and television. Claudia has also done charitable work and has been as active as her mother in the black community. She has two children, Amanda Elizabeth Polley (1973-) and Evan Lawrence Polley (1982-).

John Evan Polley was born in Indianapolis in 1952. He attended Shortridge High School, Dartmouth College (from which he graduated cum laude) and Harvard Law School. Since finishing his law degree he has worked for Baker and Daniels, Continental Airlines and Indianapolis Methodist Hospital.

Lucia Marion Spears, the daughter of Jean and John Holliday Spears, was born in Indianapolis in 1957. She attended Shortridge High School, from which she graduated in 1975. Lucia received her M.D. from Howard School of Medicine in 1983. She also holds the rank of Lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Marion Elizabeth Brabham Douglas Burch (1899-1974), mother of Jean Spears, also was very active in community projects. She graduated in 1916 from Shortridge High School, and received her B.A. and both Master's Degrees from Butler University. She taught music at Crispus Attucks High School from 1937-1962, and spent the four years before her 1966 retirement serving as a guidance counsellor there. She was a member of the Indianapolis Women's Improvement Club and of Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church. She also managed the popular resort of Fox Lake, in Angola, Indiana, for several years.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains the papers of the family of Jean Spears from 1930-1986. Biographical information and the documents and correspondence of the various family members makes up the first box. The Jean Spears' correspondence and documents and those of her husband John are in the first box, Folders 1-5, while the information about her parents and her children are in Box 1, Folders 6-15, and Box 2, Folders 1-4. By far the bulkiest portion of the biographical section is the collection of Claudia Polley, which holds programs from many of her performances, her correspondence and diplomas.

Box 2, Folders 5-9 contain information about the projects and charitable works of the Spears family, such as the Indiana Avenue Project and Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church. The papers on Fox Lake resort are in the last box (Box 3) and the bound volumes which accompany the collection.

BOX AND FOLDER INVENTORY

Box 1: Spears Family correspondence and documents; Claudia Polley Documents and memorabilia. Folder:

- 1: Jean Spears correspondence, 1960-1984.
- 2: Jean Spears documents, 1952-1979.
- 3: Awards, citations and degrees, 1945-1978.
- 4: John Holliday Spears.
- 5: Lucia Spears.
- 6: Genealogical material.
- 7: Joseph Francis Douglas.
- 8: Marion Brabham Douglas Burch.
- 9: John E. Polley.
- 10: Amanda Polley.
- 11: Clippings.
- 12: (OM 118) Nursery School Diploma.
- 13: Grade School material.
- 14: Correspondence and certificates.
- 15: Interlochen Diploma and award, 1967.

Box 2 Claudia Polley Documents and memorabilia; Community groups and organizations Folder:

- 1: Programs.
- 2: Programs. (See also OM 118)
- 3: Clippings.
- 4: Clippings, resumes and publicity material. (See also OM 118)
- 5: National Council of Negro Women yearbooks, 1977-1981.
- 6: Indiana Avenue Project #1.
- 7: Indiana Avenue Project #2.

8: Indiana Avenue Project Publications.

9: Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church and Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church.

**Box 3 Fox Lake Resort Records; Scrapbooks
Folder:**

1: Correspondence--Marion B.D. Burch.

2: Tenants lists.

3: Financial material.

4: Receipted bills.

5: Histories and Newsletters.

6: Fox Lake receipt book, 1955-1962.

7: Fox Lake Account book, 1962-1968.

8: Fox Lake Account book.

9: Jean Spears' scrapbook.

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Spears, Jean E.

Spears Family Papers, 1930-1986

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Crispus Attucks High School (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Indianapolis Urban League

Shortridge High School

Interlochen Arts Academy

Julliard School

Fox Lake Resort (Angola, Ind.)

Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Black Women in the Middle West Project.

Business records--Indiana--Angola

Education--Indiana--Indianapolis

Churches--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-American physicians--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-American lawyers--Indiana--Indianapolis

Lawyers--Indiana--Indianapolis

Physicians--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-American college students--Indiana--Indianapolis

Conservatories of music--Michigan--Interlochen

Conservatories of music--New York--New York

Presbyterian Church--Indiana--Indianapolis

Resorts--Indiana--Angola

Singers--Indiana--Indianapolis

Scrapbooks--Indiana--Indianapolis

Indiana Avenue (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Angola (Ind.)

END