

Collection #
P 0891

**JANE KINGSAFER GROUNDS COLLECTION,
CA. 1940S-CA. 1951**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

**VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:** 2 folders of photographs

**COLLECTION
DATES:** Ca. 1940s–ca. 1951

PROVENANCE: Gift from Cherie Helmer of Arizona, April 2006

RESTRICTIONS: None

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HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION
NUMBER:** 2006.0240

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL / HISTORICAL SKETCH

Jane Kingsafer Grounds was born Flora Jane Kingsafer to Anthony and Bertha Voirol Kingsafer on 2 February 1916 in Roseland, Clay Township, St. Joseph County, Indiana. Her parents were from Ohio and had moved to Lafayette, Indiana, by 1910, and then to Roseland before Jane was born. Her father had a job painting electric railway cars. Her older siblings were Laura, Carlton, Wanda, and Ernest. Jane graduated from Washington-Clay High School and was a member of the Press Club. During World War II, she served as an Air Raid Warden in Roseland. On 28 January 1949 Jane married Louis Harold Grounds (1926–1985) in South Bend, Indiana, and became the stepmother of Louis Harold Grounds, Jr. Jane died on 9 July 2005 in South Bend.

Jane's sister, Wanda Ruth Kingsafer, was born 16 February 1899 when the family still lived in Ohio. In December 1920 she married Guy Edward Wolfe (1895–1934) in Michigan. He worked as a railroad conductor in northern Indiana. They had a son, Guy Edward Wolfe, Jr. (1922–1973). It appears that Guy Wolfe, Sr. was the second of Wanda's three husbands. Wanda was an office worker for the electric railway and later worked as a bookkeeper for the Oliver Hotel in South Bend. She died on 24 August 1983 in South Bend.

Dorothy Louise Grounds was a sister of Louis Harold Grounds. She was born in South Bend on 15 January 1930 to William Harold Grounds and Margaret Ley Grounds. Her birth certificate shows her middle name to be Bobette, but all other documents show it as Louise. Her father worked for the railroad. In addition to Louis, her older siblings were Anna Marie and William Wesley Grounds; her younger sister was Margaret Elizabeth. Dorothy attended Central High School in South Bend, where she participated in the Glee Club and Student Council. After high school, Dorothy worked as a lab technician in a clinic and was also a member of the Beta Nu chapter of the Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority.

On 2 January 1952, during the Korean War, Dorothy joined the Navy. During her service she met James Frederick Christenson (1928–2022), who was also in the Navy, and they married in Vallejo, California on 6 June 1953. Dorothy was discharged from the service on 21 August 1953. James was an engineer. The couple had two sons, James II and Craig. They lived in New York City, California, Las Vegas, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, before settling in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Dorothy worked as a clinical lab technician at University of Iowa hospitals. She died on 4 October 1985 in Cedar Rapids, five days before her brother Louis died in South Bend.

Olga V. Fister was the first president of South Bend's Beta Nu chapter of the Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority. She was born on 29 October 1921 in South Bend to Austrian immigrants Frank and Lucille Zoncich Fister. Her father was a blacksmith. Olga graduated from Central High School in South Bend and then worked as a secretary and office worker. She was an avid bowler and a member of the South Bend–Mishawaka Women's Bowling Association. She won an award in 1963 for her editorials in *Hits and Misses* magazine for the National Women's Bowling Writers. After she retired, she was a volunteer for the Leighton Center, the College Football Hall of Fame, and for twenty years for the Crime Prevention Unit of the South Bend Police Department, being named Volunteer of the Year in 1998 by Mayor

Steve Luecke. She was a member of St. Mary of the Assumption Church and at her death was a member of Our Lady of Hungary Church. Olga died on 21 April 2014 in South Bend.

Epsilon Sigma Alpha was founded in 1929. Adelia Prichard, a businesswoman in Portland, Oregon, who had served as the national president of the Business and Professional Women's Club from 1923–1925, recognized the need for further education for women. She convinced the leaders of the National What to Read Club to convert its structure from simply selling books into an organization supporting continuing education for women. Mrs. Prichard chose the Greek letters Epsilon Sigma Alpha to signify the National Reading Society and designated the Open Book, representing “the wealth of knowledge and the strength of wisdom” as the national emblem. The first official chapter was organized in Jacksonville, Texas. The national charter was issued to Epsilon Sigma Alpha in Missouri on 11 February 1930, but the organization is now incorporated in Colorado. By 1933 there were more than four hundred chapters in thirty-eight states. With the Great Depression, the focus shifted more to service projects and philanthropy. During World War II, this emphasis was formalized. In 1948 the organization welcomed its first international chapter.

The Beta Nu chapter of the Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority was installed on 9 August 1949 at the First Methodist Church in South Bend. The officers named at that time were: Olga Fister, president; Dorothy Grounds, vice president; Geraldine Jablonski, secretary; Gertrude Forsberg, corresponding secretary; and Rosemary Doyle, treasurer. Others initiated were Juanita Swanson, Barbara Brandenburg, Leitha Wermuth, Marian Latz, and Doris Gerstbauer. It appears that this was a community chapter of the sorority rather than a collegiate chapter.

Sources:

Ancestrylibrary.com (Accessed 12 September 2024):

- California, U.S., Marriage Index, 1949–1959
- Find a Grave
- Indiana, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1907–1944
- Indiana, U.S., Marriages, 1810–2001
- Indiana, U.S., Death Certificates, 1899–2017
- Iowa, U.S., Armed Forces Grave Registrations, 1835–1998
- Michigan, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1822–1940
- U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850–2010
- U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900–2016
- United States Federal Census, 1900–1950

“Chapter Installed.” *The South Bend Tribune*, 11 August 1949, p. 10.

Helmer, Cherie. Personal communication, 25 April 2006.

Obituary for Dorothy L. Christenson. *The Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Gazette*, 6 October 1985, p. 24.

Obituary for F. Jane Grounds. *South Bend Tribune*, 10 July 2005, p. C10.

Potter, Audrey. “A Glimpse in Time Series: From the Beginning.” Epsilon Sigma Alpha blog post from 6 May 2019: [A Glimpse in Time Series: From the Beginning - Epsilon Sigma Alpha \(ESA\) - An International Service Organization](#) Accessed 6 September 2024.

“Rites Today to Honor Air Raid Wardens.” *The South Bend Tribune*, 14 February 1943, pp. 1–2.

“Weddings: Kingsafer-Grounds.” *The South Bend Tribune*, 31 January 1949, p. 6.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is composed of photographs that had belonged to Jane Kingsafer Grounds of Roseland and South Bend in St. Joseph County, Indiana. Four loose photographs are of family or friends, including one of Jane. Other photographs had been part of a scrapbook kept by Jane but possibly had previously belonged to her sister-in-law, Dorothy Grounds Christenson. The clippings from scrapbook pages (1949–1950) all pertain to the Beta Nu chapter of the Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority in South Bend, of which Dorothy was a member and served as vice president. The photos show numerous members and potential members of the sorority, most of whom are not identified. Some of the scrapbook clippings have photos attached to both sides of the page. The scrapbook also included two newspaper clippings and an invitation to the sorority’s Christmastime event called “Tinsel Tea.”

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Photo of Jane Kingsafer standing in a yard, late 1940s.

CONTAINER

Photographs,
Folder 1 of 2

Wanda Kingsafer Wolfe (on the right, in sunglasses) standing on a sidewalk with an unidentified woman [ca. 1940s].

Photographs,
Folder 1 of 2

Two young children wearing hats, standing outside a building. Written on back: "Dec. 25, 1951 / Joanie [and] Mike Richardson."

Photographs,
Folder 1 of 2

Portrait of a baby. Written on back: "Sharon Otis / Jane Kingsafer's niece," (photo by Cain-Sloan Co. of Nashville, Tennessee). [This is possibly the daughter (born ca. 1944) of Amos Bernard Otis and Betty Lou Otis. An item in *The South Bend Tribune* on 24 April 1942, p. 18, announced that Sergeant Jack Otis and Private Amos Otis of Camp Forest, Tennessee, were guests of Mrs. A. N. (Bertha) Kingsafer for dinner at her home at 137 W. Vernon Street in Roseland, Ind.]

Photographs,
Folder 1 of 2

Epsilon Sigma Alpha invitation to Tinsel Tea on Sunday, 18 December 1949 at 922 West LaSalle in South Bend.

Photographs,
Folder 2 of 2

Five snapshots of Epsilon Sigma Alpha candlelight dinner, held on 11 April 1950 at the Hotel Oliver; four show women in long gowns.

Photographs,
Folder 2 of 2

Olga Fister, first president of the Beta Nu chapter of Epsilon Sigma Alpha, squatting, with flowers.

Photographs,
Folder 2 of 2

Three snapshots of the Tinsel Tea, (December) 1949: charter members of the Beta Nu chapter of Epsilon Sigma Alpha; rushes and members of the chapter; and Dorothy Grounds (vice president) and "Jerry" (Geraldine) Jablonski (secretary) in the kitchen.

Photographs,
Folder 2 of 2

Photocopy of newspaper article about the Tinsel Tea mentioned above, which includes a photo of Juanita Swanson, chair of the Tinsel Tea, from *The South Bend Tribune*, 15 December 1949, p. 12.

Photographs,
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Photocopy of the candlelight dinner photo mentioned above with newspaper clipping about the event from *The South Bend Tribune*, 13 April 1950, p. 11.

Photographs,
Folder 2 of 2