

Collection #
M 0488
OM 0118

JEAN E. SPEARS FAMILY PAPERS, 1930–1986

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August 1987
Updated 21 January 2005

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 manuscript boxes, 3 oversize manuscript folders, 1 OVA photograph folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1930-1986

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

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1984.0912, 1986.0640

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 counselor 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 NOTE

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.

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BOX 1: Spears Family Correspondence and Documents, Claudia Polley Documents and Memorabilia

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Jean Spears correspondence, 1960-1984	Box 1, Folder 1
Jean Spears documents, 1952-1979	Box 1, Folder 2
Awards, citations and degrees, 1945-1978	Box 1, Folder 3
John Holliday Spears	Box 1, Folder 4
Lucia Spears	Box 1, Folder 5
Genealogical material	Box 1, Folder 6
Joseph Francis Douglas	Box 1, Folder 7
Marion Brabham Douglas Burch	Box 1, Folder 8
John E. Polley	Box 1, Folder 9
Amanda Polley	Box 1, Folder 10
Clippings	Box 1, Folder 11
Nursery School Diploma	OM 0118, Folder 1
Grade School material	Box 1, Folder 12
Correspondence and certificates	Box 1, Folder 13
Interlochen Diploma and award, 1967	Box 1, Folder 14

BOX 2: Claudia Polley Documents and Memorabilia; Community Groups and Organizations

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Programs	Box 2, Folder 1
Programs	Box 2, Folder 2

Programs	OM 0118, Folder 2
Clippings	Box 2, Folder 3
Clippings, resumes and publicity material	Box 2, Folder 4
Clippings, resumes and publicity material	OM 0018, Folder 3
National Council of Negro Women yearbooks, 1977-1981	Box 2, Folder 5
Indiana Avenue Project #1	Box 2, Folder 6
Indiana Avenue Project #2	Box 2, Folder 7
Indiana Avenue Project Publications	Box 2, Folder 8
Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church and Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church	Box 2, Folder 9

BOX 3: Fox Lake Resorts Records; Scrapbooks

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Correspondence--Marion B.D. Burch	Box 3, Folder 1
Tenants lists	Box 3, Folder 2
Financial material	Box 3, Folder 3
Receipted bills	Box 3, Folder 4
Histories and Newsletters	Box 3, Folder 5
Fox Lake receipt book, 1955-1962	Box 3, Folder 6
Fox Lake Account book, 1962-1968	Box 3, Folder 7
Fox Lake Account book	Box 3, Folder 8
Jean Spears' scrapbook	Box 3, Folder 9
Visual Materials	Visual Collection: OVA Photographs, Folder 1