

Collection #
P 0826

**THOMAS M. MEADOWS KKK PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION
EARLY–MID-1970S**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 7 folders of photographs, manuscript material, an artifact, and ephemera; 5 folders of negatives

COLLECTION DATES: Early–mid-1970s

PROVENANCE: Gift from Christine Meadows of Red Bud, Illinois, 2021

RESTRICTIONS: This collection is kept in Cold Storage and must be requested at least 4 hours in advance.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2021.0188

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas M. Meadows and some of his friends opened a photography studio in Indianapolis called The Silver Image where they practiced what they called “Gonzo Paparazzo” photography (an adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson’s gonzo journalism), documenting the life and times of 1970s and 1980s Indiana. He photographed such events as a nudist contest in Roselawn, roller derby, and Ku Klux Klan gatherings. For a few years he photographed as a stringer for United Press International at the Indy 500.

Thomas “Tom” Martin Meadows was born on 7 August 1944 in Richmond, Indiana, the middle child of three sons of Martin Pershing Meadows and Ruby Amelia Rodefeld Meadows. He grew up playing baseball, was the first male cheerleader at his junior high school, and wrestled for Richmond Senior High School.

He attended Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, where he was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. In college he met Christine Quinn of Cobourg, Ontario, Canada. Tom and Christine married on 19 August 1967 in Cobourg. After college, Tom taught business at Bellefontaine High School in Bellefontaine, Ohio, and then he and Christine moved to Indianapolis where he worked for his mother’s family’s electronics distribution business, the Rodefeld Company. He later worked for Zenith Electronics and made moves within the company to Salt Lake City, Utah, and Chicago, Illinois. During his more than 30 years with Zenith, Tom held many positions, including vice president of sales and vice president of customer service.

Tom was passionate about photography. His first camera was a Pentax, and from the beginning he developed his own film and became an expert at making prints. He loved photographing people, enjoying documenting crowds and individuals attending events more than the events themselves.

After Tom retired from Zenith, he and Christine moved to Red Bud, Illinois, in 2013. He continued his photography work, for which he won several awards. Tom passed away on 26 November 2019. Christine donated Tom’s photographs of the Ku Klux Klan to the Indiana Historical Society, but also included some of his other Indiana photographs to show some of his other subjects.

Sources:

Items in the collection

Ancestry <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com>. Accessed 23 February 2022:

Find a Grave

U.S., Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s–Current

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is composed of items pertaining to the photography work of Thomas M. Meadows. The bulk of it includes photographs he took of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Edinburgh, Indiana, in 1974 and in Wabash, Indiana, in 1975. None of the people in the photographs are identified by name. A sampling of photographs he took of other subjects in Indiana around the same time period are included. There are also several items of KKK ephemera, such as leaflets and a membership application form, that he collected while photographing the KKK. There are a few items regarding Meadows himself: one photo that includes him, a brief essay about him and his photographic work written by his son and wife, and a Gonzo Paparazzo patch that he wore.

The photographs in this collection are digital prints made from the original analog negatives made by Meadows in the early- to mid-1970s. The original black-and-white 35mm negatives of the KKK photographs are included.

The collection is arranged into five series:

Series 1, Thomas M. Meadows: This series includes the photo of Meadows, the essay about him written by his son and wife, and the Gonzo Paparazzo patch that he wore.

Series 2, Non-KKK Photographs by Thomas M. Meadows: This series is composed of prints of various subjects, including some taken of people at the Indy 500, roller derby, nudist colony contest at Roselawn, and other people he saw at a variety of locations.

Series 3, Ku Klux Klan – Edinburgh, Indiana, 1974: This series contains nine prints and some negatives of photos taken at a KKK gathering in Johnson County in 1974, showing people in KKK attire and protesting against the Ford Motor Company.

Series 4, Ku Klux Klan – Wabash, Indiana, 1975: This series contains fourteen prints, a transparency, and some negatives of photos taken at a KKK gathering in Wabash County in 1975, showing people in KKK attire, with women and children.

Series 4, KKK Ephemera: This series holds items such as a business card; several leaflets distributed by the KKK in Greenwood, Johnson County, Indiana, on topics such as the United Nations, busing, the dangers of mixing with Black people, opposition to amnesty for Vietnam-era draft evaders and military deserters, anti-Communism, and calling for a boycott of Ford cars and trucks; membership application form; recruitment poster; and reproduction of a sheet music cover.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Thomas M. Meadows

CONTENTS

Photo of Thomas M. Meadows, 1974. Behind him are two police officers on the left and two KKK members on the right. The lower righthand corner is stamped with the Gonzo Paparazzo logo.

CONTAINER

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Brief biography of Thomas M. Meadows, his photojournalistic style and methods, written by his son, Jason Meadows, and his wife, Christine Meadows (2 pages), [ca. 2021]

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Gonzo Paparazzo patch worn by Thomas M. Meadows

Cold Storage,
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Series 2: Non-KKK Photographs by Thomas M. Meadows

CONTENTS

Mr. Peanut [Planter's mascot] with children at the Indy 500 – mid-1970s

CONTAINER

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People at a concession stand at the Indy 500, with a large container of French's mustard in the foreground – mid-1970s

Cold Storage,
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Man standing in a lot with Christmas trees in the vicinity of 49th to 52nd streets, College Avenue or Central Avenue, Indianapolis – mid-1970s

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Roller Derby at the Coliseum at the Indiana Fairgrounds – mid-1970s

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Old man holding onions with two children standing with him, near Mooresville, Indiana – mid-1970s

Cold Storage,
Folder 3 of 7

Couple at the Indy 500 Snake Pit – mid-1970s

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“I Am Woman (Roselawn, Indiana / Naked City / Ponderosa; the name(s) of the private club where the nudist colony met.” Shows a nude woman standing on a platform, seen from behind; facing her are several men with cameras – mid-1970s

Cold Storage,
Folder 3 of 7

“Blinded by the Light” shows an older woman seated on a bench, using her hand to shield her eyes from the sun – taken at Glendale Mall, Indianapolis – early 1970s

Cold Storage,
Folder 3 of 7

Series 3: Ku Klux Klan – Edinburgh, Indiana, 1974

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Car with an American flag on its antenna and a sign taped to the driver’s door that says “Ford Does Not Have a Better Idea”

Cold Storage,
Folder 4 of 7

Man in KKK attire standing next to car with a sign taped to it that says “Knights of the / Ku Klux Klan / Unit 21 / Elwood Ind”

Cold Storage,
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Close-up portrait of older man in KKK attire, wearing eyeglasses that are frameless on the bottom

Cold Storage,
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Close-up portrait of older man in KKK attire, wearing eyeglasses with a dark rim surrounding the lenses

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Another view of the same man listed second in this series by the car from Elwood, in KKK attire

Cold Storage,
Folder 4 of 7

Two younger men in KKK attire standing on a sidewalk by shops and restaurants

Cold Storage,
Folder 4 of 7

A few men in KKK attire and a woman standing outside a restaurant; a woman carrying a baby is in the background

Cold Storage,
Folder 4 of 7

The same people as in the photo listed immediately above outside a restaurant; prominent in this photo is the back of one man’s shirt that says “U.K. of A. / Knights of the Ku Klux Klan” with an illustration of a hooded Klansman on horseback wielding a flame, against a Confederate flag; another wears a patch that says “Realm of Indiana”

Cold Storage,
Folder 4 of 7

Young man in KKK attire standing in a doorway	Cold Storage, Folder 4 of 7
Two folders of negatives holding 38 images on 12 strips, including the photos in this series	Cold Storage, 35mm black-and-white negatives, Folders 1 and 2

Series 4: Ku Klux Klan – Wabash, Indiana, 1975

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Several people in KKK attire walking down a slushy sidewalk past businesses, seen from behind	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Group of men, women, and children; most of the adults are wearing KKK attire. There is a second, smaller, slightly cropped version of this photo.	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Man in KKK attire holding a baby wrapped in a blanket; he appears to be standing in a parking lot across the street from residences	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Several men in KKK attire standing across the street from a large house	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Close up from the side of a woman in KKK attire next to someone whose face cannot be seen around the KKK hood, but a cigarette is dangling from the mouth	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Two people in KKK attire amid street traffic [one person appears to possibly be throwing a snowball]	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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A man in KKK attire appears to be handing a leaflet to a woman passenger in a car	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Two men in KKK attire posing with a large dog in a slushy parking lot; a third man in KKK garb appears in the background	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Men in KKK attire walking uphill on a sidewalk past the Masonic Temple	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Three men in KKK attire walking uphill on a sidewalk by a police station [just up the hill from the Masonic Temple in the previous photo]; a police officer is walking around the corner	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
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Close-up of man with mustache in KKK attire who appears to be holding an antisemitic leaflet	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
Three men in KKK attire holding a velvet painting of a Klansman on horseback holding a burning cross	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
Dozens of people in KKK attire walking across an intersection, in the foreground is the statue of Abraham Lincoln on the lawn of the Wabash County Courthouse	Cold Storage, Folder 5 of 7
Black-and-white transparency shows five men posing, two are in KKK attire with pointed hats, three are wearing hardhats	Cold Storage, Folder 6 of 7
Three folders of negatives holding 70 images on 22 strips, including the photos in this series	Cold Storage, 35mm black-and-white negatives, Folders 3–5

Series 5: KKK Ephemera

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Business card for the United Klans of America, Inc. / Knights of the Ku Klux Klan / Realm of Indiana, with a P.O. Box address in Southport, Indiana. “Keep America White” is printed on the front of the card; on the back it says, “The Eyes of the Klan Are on You.”

Cold Storage,
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Leaflet titled “Know the UN,” published by the United Klans of America, Inc., with a P.O. Box address in Greenwood, Indiana (2 copies, both also are stamped with a P.O. Box address in Osceola, Indiana)

Cold Storage,
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Leaflet titled “America for Americans,” published by United Klans of America, with a P.O. Box address in Greenwood, Indiana (stamped with a P.O. Box address in Kokomo, Indiana)

Cold Storage,
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Anti-Communism leaflet titled “Wake Up America,” published by the United Klans of America, Inc. with a P.O. Box address in Greenwood, Indiana. On the back it says, “Stop Busing! (To Achieve Racial Balance) / Save Our Free Public Schools” and is stamped with a P.O. Box address in Kokomo, Indiana.

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<p>United Klans of America, Inc. / Knights of the Ku Klux Klan application form for “citizenship in the Invisible Empire,” open to white male Christians (2 copies)</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>
<p>United Klans of America Inc. leaflet with P.O. Box address in Greenwood, Indiana: on one side is “A Klansman’s Prayer” and on the other side is “I am Liberty!” by Neil Wyrick, Jr. and is stamped with a P.O. Box address in Kokomo, Indiana</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>
<p>Illustrated leaflet about the dangers of mixing with Black people, published by the United Klans of America, with a P.O. Box address in Greenwood, Indiana, and is also stamped with a P.O. Box address in Kokomo, Indiana</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>
<p>Leaflet titled “The Question of Amnesty,” which disagrees with President Gerald Ford’s program of amnesty for Vietnam-era draft evaders and military deserters [1974]; on the back is a notice “to all white citizens” calling for a boycott of Ford cars and trucks because “Ford profits have been distributed to integration and civil rights organizations to fight the white people of the South, by forcing them to associate with negroes”</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>
<p>Recruitment poster on cardstock saying, “Don’t be half a man / join the Klan,” published by United Klans of America, with a P.O. Box address in Gadsden, Alabama, and stamped with a P.O. Box address in Albertville, Alabama, for the D.C. Hunting Club</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>
<p>Reproduction on cardstock of cover of sheet music for “Daddy Swiped Our Last Clean Sheet and Joined the Ku Klux Klan,” words by Helen Marcell and Peggy Hedges, music by Helen Marcell, published by R.C. Marcell of Ottawa, Kansas, with an illustration of people in KKK attire and a large cross [this is a blurry, not clear reproduction]</p>	<p>Cold Storage, Folder 7 of 7</p>