Overview of the Collection

Creator: Jones, Elizabeth Orton, 1910-2005
Title: Oral Memoirs of Elizabeth Orton Jones
Dates: 2004
Quantity: 0.5 linear feet, (3 containers)
Collection Number: Coll 319
Summary: Elizabeth Orton Jones (1910-2005) was an illustrator and writer of children's books. The collection consists of an oral history interview of Jones conducted in the fall of 2004 by members of the staff of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries: Linda Long, Dorothy Knaus, and Hannah Dillon. The collection consists of audio cassette tapes, video cassette tapes, and a complete printed and bound transcript of the interview.

Repository: University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives,
UO Libraries--SPC, 1299
University of Oregon
Eugene OR
97403-1299
Telephone: 541-346-3068
Fax: 541-346-3485
spcarref@uoregon.edu

Access Restrictions: Collection is open to the public.

Collection must be used in Special Collections & University Archives Reading Room.

Collection includes sound recordings or moving images to which access is restricted. Access to these materials is governed by repository policy and may require the production of listening or viewing copies. Researchers requiring access must notify Special Collections & University Archives in advance and pay fees for reproduction services as necessary.

Languages: English

Sponsor: This oral history interview was made possible through a grant from the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon. Funding for transcribing this interview and for processing this collection was provided by R. Jean Taylor.

Historical Note

Oral history interview
Linda Long, Dorothy Knaus, and Hannah Dillon conducted an oral history interview of children's book illustrator and writer Elizabeth Orton Jones in the fall of 2004. The interview was done in Jones' house "Rock-a-Bye" in Mason, New Hampshire. The interviews were done over a three day period, November 28 through November 30.

The interviews were recorded on audio cassette tapes and MiniDV video cassette tapes. Not all parts of the audio recordings are represented on the video recordings due to the fact that on a couple of occasions Jones and the interviewers moved from one room to another and the video camera on its tripod was not moved.

Elizabeth Orton Jones

Born June 25, 1910, in Highland Park, Illinois, Elizabeth Orton Jones was the oldest of three children of Jessie Orton Jones and George Roberts Jones. She majored in art at the University of Chicago and at the Art Institute of Chicago, receiving her Ph.B. in 1932. The same year she acquired a Diplôme in painting at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Fontainebleau, France. In Paris she studied with artist Camille Liausu, who encouraged her to go out and study the children of Paris. When Jones returned to the United States, she had a one-person exhibit of color etchings of children at the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1938 Oxford University Press published Jones's first book, Ragman of Paris and His Ragamuffins. Even before this book was finished she knew that making books for children was what she wanted to do above all else. She stated, “A very strong sense of responsibility to what children are as individuals in their own right became firmly established as an imperative in my life.”

In the spring of 1940 Jones worked on illustrations for Maminka's Children (published by the Macmillan Company in 1940) with printers Lillian and William Glaser in Long Island City, New York. The story was inspired by Jones’s close friendship with three young Bohemian women who worked for her family when she was a child in Highland Park.

Author of seven books and illustrator of sixteen others, Jones was runner-up for the Caldecott Medal in 1943 for Small Rain: Verses from the Bible, one of four books done in collaboration with her mother, Jessie Orton Jones. She won the Caldecott Medal in 1945 for Prayer for a Child by Rachel Field.

Upon winning this prestigious award given annually by the American Library Association for the best-illustrated children's book, Jones commented, “Drawing is very like a prayer. Drawing is a reaching for something away beyond you. As you sit down to work in the morning, you feel as if you were on top of a hill. And it is as if you were seeing for the first time. You take your pencil in hand. You'd like to draw what you see. And so you begin. You try…. Every child in the world has a hill, with a top to it. Every child—black, white, rich, poor, handicapped, unhandicapped. And singing is what the top of each hill is for. Singing-drawing-thinking-dreaming-sitting in silence . . . saying a prayer. I should like every child in the world to know that he has a hill, that that hill is his no matter what happens, his and his only, forever.”

With the first royalty check for Twig (Macmillan, 1942) Jones bought a house in Mason, New Hampshire. She and fellow artist Nora Unwin painted murals for the walls at Crotched Mountain Center in Greenfield, New Hampshire. Jones became involved with children with disabilities at Crotched Mountain and for years spent many hours with them. She also helped establish a children’s room at the Mason City Library and painted child-size furniture with brightly colored designs inspired by Bohemian folk art.

Early in the 1960s Jones and a group of teachers started Andy’s Summer theater, run by and for children. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s she wrote plays and designed sets and costumes for the plays.
An artist of many years standing in etching, printing, pastel, water color, gouache, graphite, ink and oil, Jones won numerous awards and had many distinguished exhibits.

Elizabeth Orton Jones died at the age of 94, on May 13, 2005, at Monadnock Community Hospital in Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Content Description

This collection comprises the oral history interview of Elizabeth Orton Jones. The eight audio cassette tapes constitute the official recording medium for the interview; secondarily, the interview was also recorded on eight MiniDV videotapes. The researcher should be aware that there are occasional discrepancies between the oral recording and the video recording.

The interview has been transcribed and is available in bound form in this collection (Series III).

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Property rights reside with Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries. Copyright resides with the creators of the documents or their heirs. All requests for permission to publish collection materials must be submitted to Special Collections & University Archives. The reader must also obtain permission of the copyright holder.

Archival material may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal and/or state right to privacy laws and other regulations.

Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g. a cause of action for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the University of Oregon assumes no responsibility.

If a researcher finds sensitive personal information in a collection, please bring it to the attention of the reading room staff.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Oral Memoirs of Elizabeth Orton Jones, Coll 319, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into the following series:

Series I: Audio Cassette Tapes
Series II: Video Cassette Tapes
Series III: Transcription of the Interview

Acquisition Information

Produced by Special Collections and University Archives staff in 2004.

Processing Note

Collection processed by Dorothy Knaus. The transcript of the oral history was initially transcribed by Justin Kaushall, and later edited by Dorothy Knaus.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Audio Cassette Tapes

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<th>Container(s)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>coll319_002: Audio Cassette Tape 2 (pages 24-42 of the transcription) <em>Ragman of Paris</em> &amp; author Ruth Sawyer. Inspiration for <em>Twig</em> during elevated train ride in Chicago. Collaborating with her mother, Jessie Orton Jones, on <em>This is the Way</em>. Revolting against religious and musical education. Reading as a child. College and Art Institute of Chicago. Studying at Fontainebleau with Camille Liasu; having to leave because of stock market crash. Bertha Mahony (Miller) and <em>The Horn Book</em>. Creating a library for children in Mason; painting furniture for the library.</td>
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<td>coll319_004: Audio Cassette Tape 4 (pages 59-81 of the transcription)</td>
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Container(s) | Description
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 | coll319_005: Audio Cassette Tape 5 (pages 81-106 of the transcription)
 | coll319_006: Audio Cassette Tape 6 (pages 106-121 of the transcription)
 | coll319_007: Audio Cassette Tape 7 (pages 121-142 of the transcription)
 | coll319_008: Audio Cassette Tape 8 (pages 142-154 of the transcription)

**Series II: Video Cassette Tapes**

The videotapes correspond approximately to the content of the audio tapes. Occasionally, when Jones and the interviewers moved from one room to another during the interview, the video camera was not always moved with the audio recorder; thus, there are occasional gaps in the video recordings.
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video cassette tape 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;This videotape corresponds approximately to the content of the audio tape for pages 23-33 of the transcription:&lt;br&gt;Discussion of authors Elizabeth Yates, Nora Unwin, Gladys Adshead and Ruth Sawyer. <em>Ragman of Paris</em>. Inspiration for <em>Twig</em> during elevated train ride in Chicago. Collaborating with her mother, Jessie Orton Jones, on <em>This is the Way</em>. Revolting against religious and musical education. Reading as a child. College and Art Institute of Chicago.</td>
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<td><strong>Video cassette tape 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;This videotape corresponds approximately to the content of the audio tape for pages 33-74 of the transcription:&lt;br&gt;Esther Custer’s legacy of toys and books. Eija Clan friends. Finding a human head at the beach. More memories of family. Murals at Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center. Quotation books of favorite poems. Dream of a story about a new color. Favorite books. Studying at Fontainebleau with Camille Liais; having to leave because of stock market crash. Bertha Mahony (Miller) and <em>The Horn Book</em>. Creating a library for children in Mason; painting furniture for the library.</td>
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<td><strong>Video cassette tape 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;This videotape corresponds approximately to the content of the audio tape for pages 74-91 of the transcription:&lt;br&gt;Quotation books of favorite poems. Dream of a story about a new color. Crotched Mountain. Favorite books. Having lunch on Katherine Mansfield’s grave. Working with writer Gladys Adshead. Willard Williams and Toadstool bookstore in Peterborough.</td>
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<td><strong>Video cassette tape 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;This videotape corresponds approximately to the content of the audio tape for pages 91-107 of the transcription:&lt;br&gt;Going through mementos and photos. Remembering visits from former University of Oregon curators. Toadstool bookstore in Peterborough. Memories of Elizabeth Yates and William McGreal, Shieling Woods, the McGreal Sight Center. More memories of family. Discussion of Jones’s home in Mason, “Misty...&quot;</td>
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Meadow." Studying abstract painting under Don Stoltenberg with Nora Unwin. Discussion of Jones's schoolhouse across from her home, Misty Meadow, on Valley Road. Illustrations for To Church We Go by Robbie Trent. Children at Crotched Mountain. Working with mother on books. Memories of Highland Park and Lake Michigan. Difficulties doing color separations.

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<td>This videotape corresponds approximately to the content of the audio tape for pages 107-121 of the transcription: Working on Secrets and This is the Way with mother; admiration for mother’s writing. The Golden Rule in various religions. Feelings about children. Working with children with disabilities at Crotched Mountain. Creating a church for children, demise of church, leaving Crotched Mountain forever.</td>
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**Series III: Transcription of the Oral Memoirs of Elizabeth Orton Jones**

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<td>Volume</td>
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Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :
Children's literature, American--Authorship
Crotched Mountain (Rehabilitation center)
Illustrated children's books--United States
Women authors, American--20th century--Interviews
Women illustrators--United States--Interviews

Personal Names :
Adshead, Gladys L.
Dillon, Hannah
Jones, Elizabeth Orton, 1910-2005--Interviews
Jones, Jessie Orton
Knaus, Dorothy
Long, Linda, 1956-
McGreal, William
Stoltenberg, Donald
Unwin, Nora S. (Nora Spicer), 1907-1982
Yates, Elizabeth, 1905-2001

Form or Genre Terms :
Interviews
Oral histories

Finding aid prepared by Dorothy Knaus
2010

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