

# Eloise and William McGraw papers, 1923-1991

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	McGraw, Eloise JarvisCorbin, William
<b>Title</b>	<a href="#">Eloise and William McGraw papers</a>
<b>Dates</b>	1923-1991 (inclusive) 1923 1991
<b>Quantity</b>	33.5 linear feet, (75 containers)
<b>Collection Number</b>	Ax 243
<b>Summary</b>	The McGraw Papers reflect the writing careers of Eloise and William McGraw and include correspondence, literary manuscripts, and book reviews. Three of Eloise's books were Newberry Honor Books. William was a journalist and an award-winning novelist.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.</a> UO Libraries--SCUA 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 <a href="mailto:spcarref@uoregon.edu">spcarref@uoregon.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. Collection or parts of collection may be stored offsite. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives in advance of your visit to allow for transportation time. Collection includes sound recordings, moving images, and digital files 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 and University Archives in advance and pay fees for reproduction services as necessary.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	<a href="#">See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options.</a>
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Historical Note

Eloise Jarvis McGraw, the only child of Genevieve Lucinda and Loy Hamilton Jarvis, was born on December 9, 1915 in Houston, Texas. Eloise's family moved to Oklahoma City when she was five years old. From an early age Eloise expressed an interest in writing. At age eight, inspired by the gift of a cedar pencil, she wrote a story entitled "The Cedar Pencil Boys". Her story drew upon the magical adventures she read about in Frank Baum's Oz series. Eloise believed that young authors

would always emulate the authors they read, so it would become important to her, as an author, to give children quality material to imitate.

Eloise attended Classen High School in Oklahoma City where she graduated in 1933. She continued her education at Principia College in Elsah, Illinois. Eloise majored in art, but she had a wide range of interests that included playing hockey, writing poetry, and singing in the glee club. Eloise earned her A.B. degree in 1937 and decided to return to Oklahoma. For the next three years she pursued a variety of interests. She painted murals and portraits, attended some graduate classes at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Colorado at Boulder, studied modern dance in her spare time, and even worked in radio, broadcasting children's plays.

In 1940 Eloise married William Corbin McGraw, a newspaperman she met in college. The couple moved to Ohio where their son Peter was born. They stayed only a short time before returning to Oklahoma where Eloise taught portrait painting for two years. William's military service took them out west to San Diego. The couple, now with two children, lived in La Jolla, California while William served in the Navy and then worked as a reporter for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Eloise McGraw's writing career began in 1943 when Parent's Magazine accepted her first article. In 1945 she submitted a manuscript to a publishing house, but was rejected, though she did receive excellent criticism. In 1947 Eloise had a short story published in Jack and Jill. She returned to writing longer works in 1949 when major surgery forced her into idleness for six weeks. This attempt proved more successful and her career as a juvenile author started with the publication of her first novel, *Sawdust in His Shoes*. The book was a great success and was listed as a Junior Literary Guild selection. Spurred by the success of *Sawdust in His Shoes* and her husband's novel *Deadline*, the McGraws decided to leave the comforts of California and try their hands at writing full time in Oregon in 1952.

The move to Oregon was a dream come true for Eloise. As a child her fondest memories were of summers spent at her uncle's house in the Willamette Valley. Eloise wrote, "The Oregon country is beautiful and its forests and streams [are] a real foretaste of heaven." William and Eloise bought a 23-acre filbert farm near Wilsonville, Oregon and began working on their separate projects in a drafty old farmhouse. Though the farm had been bought in case the couple's writing ventures failed, they need not have worried. Eloise proved a popular and prolific writer. Three of her works were Newberry Honor Books and her other works were well received. Many of her books have appeared in German, Dutch, Swedish, Portuguese, and Spanish editions as well as in Braille.

When asked of her theories on writing, McGraw explained, "Writing is my natural gesture, as necessary to my well-being as breathing or eating. I never have a more specific purpose in mind than writing another book, exploring some character and situation that have captured my interest. But I have also been exploring my own emotions, clarifying my attitudes, sometimes resolving an inner conflict and coming to terms with a problem in my life."

In addition to writing for children Eloise McGraw also wrote one adult novel, *Pharaoh*, in 1958, and one non-fiction book, *Techniques of Fiction Writing* in 1959. She also published numerous articles in *The Writer* magazine, and a one-act play, *Steady, Stephanie!*, in 1962. She and her husband volunteered to correct and grade English compositions for a local district high school and taught adult education fiction writing classes at Lewis and Clark College. She also taught at Haystack Conference sponsored by Portland State University in the summers of 1965-67 and 1971-78. In addition, she served as a director of juvenile workshops in Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, and La Jolla, California. She spoke frequently on writing at schools and literary gatherings.

Eloise's interests always remained diverse. She worked on her filbert farm, traveled to Europe and Africa with her husband, and loved gourmet cooking. In 1998 she received a lifetime achievement

award from the Willamette Writers Organization for her work. In November 2000 Eloise Jarvis McGraw died after a battle with cancer. Her two children, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren survived Eloise.

William Corbin McGraw was born in Des Moines Iowa in January 1916 and fell in love with the written word at a young age. He described himself as an "omnivorous reader" who "broke out in a rash of adolescent poetry." William went to college first at Principia College in St. Louis, where he met Eloise Jarvis, then transferred to the University of Missouri, before graduating from Drake University in 1938. With the country slowly climbing out of the Great Depression, William decided to continue his education at Harvard University.

After a number of graduate courses at Harvard, McGraw was convinced that he could not earn a living writing fiction. William made a practical decision to move into the newspaper business. He wrote to publishers across the country in an effort to find a job, before landing a position at the Athens Messenger in southeastern Ohio in 1939. While in Ohio he married Eloise Jarvis. The couple moved to Cleveland and then to Oklahoma City in the next couple of years. With the World War II still raging, William joined the Navy in 1945, moving the family to San Diego.

After two years in the service, William McGraw landed a position at the San Diego Union-Tribune working as a reporter, columnist and feature writer. He never lost the desire to write fiction, however. When Eloise published her first book in 1951, William's competitive nature inspired him to work on a book of his own. In 1952, under the name William Corbin, he published *Deadline*, a novel for young readers about the newspaper business. While it met with mixed critical reviews, the success, combined with the success of his wife's work, led the couple to move from San Diego to a filbert farm in Oregon in order to focus their energies on writing.

Over the next four decades he published nearly a dozen works for young readers. Some of these books won critical acclaim, including the Children's Book Award of the Child Study Association of America and the Junior Book Award of Boy's Clubs of America for *High Road Home*. Disney made *Smoke*, a Junior Literary Guild selection, into a television movie in 1970. *Horse in the House* was made into a seven-part serial by Thames Television of London in 1977. These media adaptations show the popularity of McGraw's work, however William remained dedicated to the written word. William Corbin McGraw wrote: "The printed word is an enduring joy and delight as well as the rock upon which civilization is built. Maybe the lights will go out some day and all those machines will be sitting there with their mouths rectangularly pursed and no Message From Our Sponsor coming out. But the written word will still be around underneath the rubble and it will be the reader who will inherit what's left of the earth."

William McGraw joined his wife volunteering at a local high school, teaching at Lewis and Clark College, working on the filbert farm, and traveling around the world. In addition to his children's books, William wrote short stories for *Cosmopolitan*, *This Week*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. The couple worked at desks facing each other spurring a healthy competition and raising the level of each other's work. Eloise and William were married for nearly sixty years at the time of his death in June 1999. It is a tribute to their parenting and the happiness of their marriage that both of their children, after traveling widely, chose to settle close to their parents' home in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

## Content Description

The McGraw Papers reflect the careers of authors Eloise and William McGraw and include a wide range of materials, including primarily correspondence and literary manuscripts. The collection reflects the arrangement of the collection as it was received. This arrangement was fine-tuned to include other

series, such as a separate photograph series, as well as phonograph records and one audiotape combined in a series.

The boxes are numbered discretely within each series.

The McGraw Papers are divided into the following twelve series:

Series I, Correspondence has been further subdivided into four subseries. Subseries A is personal correspondence that includes incoming and outgoing letters, of which some are joint. Subseries A is further divided into A1 Family, A2 Foster Children (financial support through an international agency), A3 Friends and A4 Students. Subseries B is professional correspondence that includes incoming, outgoing and joint correspondence. Subseries C includes fan letters. Subseries D is related to business. The majority of the correspondence is from 1970 to 1981 and is arranged alphabetically by the writer.

Series II, Manuscripts, which includes book length, short stories, and article materials, all of which is filed alphabetically by title. There are also completed carbon copies of two of McGraw's recent books. The series has been divided into three subseries. Subseries A includes manuscripts by Eloise Jarvis McGraw. Subseries B includes manuscripts by William Corbin McGraw. Subseries C includes manuscripts by Eloise and William McGraw.

Series III, Book Reviews, which includes only Eloise J. McGraw books.

Series IV, Teaching materials, which mostly includes assignments, lectures, and notes by Eloise J. McGraw.

Series V, Speeches and Conferences.

Series VI, Newspaper articles about Eloise J. McGraw and some for her husband William Corbin McGraw.

Series VII, Illustrations, which include cover pages, tracings, and some postcards she used during her research for her book *Master Cornhill*.

Series VIII, Photographs, which include plate-making negatives, postcards made from pictures, and portraits of friends.

Series IX, Miscellaneous materials which includes desk calendars, autobiographical information and autograph sessions.

Series X, Scrapbooks, which includes miscellaneous letters, photographs, and newspaper clippings.

Series XI, Oversize, which has three subseries. The oversize items are sorted by size in two separate boxes. Subseries A includes Photographs, Subseries B includes Illustrations, and Subseries C includes Newspapers.

Series XII, Audio Recordings, which includes one audio cassette tape and phonograph records.

## Administrative Information

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# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Description

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[Guide to the Eloise and William McGraw Papers](#)

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## Names and Subjects

### **Subject Terms :**

Authors, American--20th century  
Children's literature, American--Authorship  
Journalists--United States

### **Personal Names :**

Corbin, William

### **Form or Genre Terms :**

Correspondence  
Manuscripts for publication

Finding aid prepared by Aika-Maria Kihunrwa, Christopher Wolf and Aggie Agapito  
2004



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