

Finding Aid to the Vivian Paley Correspondence Collection, 1986-2015

Summary Information

Title: Vivian Paley correspondence collection

Creator: Vivian Paley, Randy Michael Testa, Eileen O'Donnell, Celia Genishi (primary);
The Strong (secondary)

ID: 2019.paleycorr

Date: 1986-2015 (inclusive); 1998-2006 (bulk)

Extent: 2.2 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: The Vivian Paley correspondence collection is a compilation of materials pertaining to the life and career of Vivian Paley, most notable of which are handwritten letters from Paley to colleagues in the education field. The bulk of the materials are from between 1998 and 2006.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
One Manhattan Square
Rochester, New York 14607
585.263.2700
library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donors have not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The Vivian Paley correspondence collection was assembled by The Strong using donations received from Randy Testa, Eileen O'Donnell, and Celia Genishi in 2015 and 2016. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object IDs 115.403 (Celia Genishi), 116.2949 (Eileen O'Donnell), and 115.1615/ 115.2111 (Randy Testa).

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Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Genishi, Celia
- O'Donnell, Eileen
- Paley, Irving
- Paley, Vivian Gussin
- Testa, Randy Michael

Subjects

- Child development
- Correspondence
- Early childhood education
- Fantasy in children
- Paley, Vivian Gussin, 1929-2019
- Play--Social aspects
- Preschool children
- Preschool teaching
- Social interaction in children

Biographical Note

Vivian Gussin Paley (1929-2019) was a noted preschool and kindergarten teacher and early childhood education researcher. She taught and did most of her research at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. She was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and authored thirteen books.

Paley was born in 1929 in Chicago. She earned a Bachelor of Philosophy degree from the University of Chicago in 1947 and a B.A. in Psychology from Newcomb College in 1950. She then taught in New Orleans and later in Great Neck, New York. After receiving her M.A. from Hofstra University in 1962, she returned to Chicago where she remained for the rest of her teaching career.

Paley's books contained her observations of and reflections about her classroom and students, primarily those at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools where she taught preschool and kindergarten for many years. To collect data, Paley made audio-recordings of her classrooms so that she could listen to and analyze the interactions that occurred. In so doing, she heard private conversations among children that helped her think about the ways young children communicate with each other. She used what she discovered to improve her teaching and children's lives. Paley's writings focused primarily on three major areas of concern she saw in children: fantasy, friendship, and fairness. Many educators believed that Paley's greatest legacy is in the area of storytelling and fantasy play, which she argued could significantly impact a child's academic and social growth.

Paley passed away on July 26, 2019.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Vivian Paley correspondence collection is a compilation of four total donations from Randy Michael Testa (Harvard University), Eileen O'Donnell (retired educator), and Celia Genishi (Teachers College, Columbia University). This collection contains letters from Paley, audiorecordings of talks given by Paley, notes, brochures, draft manuscripts, and other related materials. Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The Vivian Paley correspondence collection has been arranged into three series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The materials are housed in three archival document boxes and one cassette tape box.

Related Materials

Researchers interested in Paley’s career should also consult the [Vivian Gussin Paley papers](#) in the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play. Books and articles by Paley are also part of the holdings within the library stacks.

System of Arrangement

- Series I: Randy Michael Testa, 1997-2015
 - Subseries A: Correspondence from Paley
 - Subseries B: Audiorecordings of Paley
 - Subseries C: Manuscript
 - Subseries D: Ephemera, publicity, and miscellaneous
- Series II: Eileen O’Donnell, 1986-2015
- Series III: Celia Genishi, 2006-2014

Contents List

Series I: Randy Michael Testa, 1997-2015

Scope and Content Note: Randy Michael Testa is an American educator, speaker, and Associate Director of Pre-K through 16 Programs at Harvard Graduate School of Education since 2015. In 1996, Testa met Vivian Paley while teaching at Dartmouth College, and the two began a fruitful friendship. Testa's series of materials in this collection include letters, tape recordings, a partial manuscript draft, brochures, and other documentation he retained about Paley.

Subseries A: Correspondence from Paley

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains nearly two decades of letters from Paley to Testa. These are arranged in chronological order.

Box 1

- Folder 1 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 1997-1998
- Folder 2 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 1999-2000
- Folder 3 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2001-2002
- Folder 4 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2003-2004
- Folder 5 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2005-2006

Box 2

- Folder 1 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2007-2009
- Folder 2 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2010-2013
- Folder 3 Testa – correspondence from Paley, 2014-2015
- Folder 4 Testa – correspondence from Paley, n.d.

Subseries B: Audiorecordings of Paley

Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses 48 audiocassettes (46 standard-sized and 2 microcassettes) of talks or lecture demonstrations by Paley, recorded by Testa. Fourteen of these cassettes do not have any labels or indication of their contents. Also in this subseries are notes and draft transcripts of select audiorecordings created by Testa.

Box 3

- Object 1 “Vivian Paley’s 1998 NAIS Talk/ Vivian Paley: NAIS Talk, Feb. 27th, 1998,” 1998
- Object 2 “Vivian Paley: Public Lecture, U.S.M. 5/5/98/ Vivian Paley, Portland, ME, 5/5/98,” 1998
- Object 3 “Vivian Paley, U.S.M. 5/5/98/ Vivian Paley, Portland, ME 5/6/98; Part II,” 1998
- Object 4 “Tape 2 Vivian at [?] end 5/6/98/ Vivian w/ 2 ½-4s. Part III, 5/6/98,” 1998
- Object 5 “Interview w/ Vivian Paley, 5/16/98, I, II/ Interview w/Vivian Paley, Part I; Part II,” 1998
- Object 6 “Vivian Paley Part III,” n.d. [1998]
- Object 7 “Vivian Paley at Wheelock College, I, 3/15/99,” 1999
- Object 8 “Vivian Paley at Camb. Friends, 3/16/99, III,” 1999
- Object 9 “Vivian Paley at Duke 4/99,” 1999

- Object 10 “Vivian Paley Boston Psychoanalytic Inst. 5/7/99 Part I/ Vivian Paley B.S.I. 5/7/99,” 1999
- Object 11 “Vivian Paley Spence School 12/6/99 Part I/ 2nd grade, 5th grade cont.,” 1999
- Object 12 “Spence School 5th gr. B II,” n.d. [1999]
- Object 13 “Vivian Paley B first-3rd gr. Spence School III,” n.d. [1999]
- Object 14 “Vivian Paley at Cooper Union 5/5/00 Lionni/ Vivian Paley at Cooper Union Leo Lionni 5/5/00,” 2000
- Object 15 “Vivian at Ball State 10/19/00 I,” 2000
- Object 16 “Vivian at Ball State 10/19/00 II,” 2000
- Object 17 “Vivian at Ball State 10/20/00 III,” 2000
- Object 18 “Vivian at Ball State 10/20/00 IV,” 2000
- Object 19 “Vivian at Ball State keynote 10/21/00 V,” 2000
- Object 20 “1/13/01 Vivian Paley Monmouth County, NJ,” 2001
- Object 21 “Myatt Garden Grade 1 Storytelling, Vivian Paley III 3/9/01,” 2001
- Object 22 “Vivian Paley at Rochampton, England, 3/20/01, Public Address Rochampton Institute, Newsweek editorial recap of day IV,” 2001
- Object 23 “Rochampton Part 2 Vivian Paley, prepared talk ... 3/20/01 V,” 2001
- Object 24 “Sif/hull 1/9/02 – boat both sides,” 2002
- Object 25 “3/13/03 Vivian at Concord, MA Museum/ 10 yrs. later, How is You Can’t Say... Doing,” 2003
- Object 26 “3/14 Concord Children’s Center Vivian’s Demonstr. I,” n.d. [c. 1998?]
- Object 27 “3/14 Concord Children’s Center Dem. w/ Children II,” n.d. [c. 1998?]
- Object 28 “Kintore Way, England, 3-4 yr old, Vivian Paley Part I, Blue Room, Telling stories,” n.d.
- Object 29 “Kintore Way, London, England, 3-4 yr olds, Vivian Paley Part II, Storyacting Blue,” n.d.
- Object 30 “Univ. of North London, Vivian talk to childcare people VI,” n.d.
- Object 31 “Vivian at London Bubble all day conference, 3/22 pm summary talk, VII,” n.d.
- Object 32 “Vivian Paley Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, Part II,” n.d. [c. 1999?]
- Object 33 “Vivian Paley at Boston Psychoanalytic Inst. Part III,” n.d. [c. 1999?]
- Object 34 “Nisha Nuparel [?] – Sen/U of C Lab School,” n.d.
- Object 35 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 36 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 37 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 38 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 39 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 40 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 41 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 42 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 43 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 44 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 45 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 46 standard audiocassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 47 microcassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]
- Object 48 microcassette [unlabeled tape, n.d.]

Box 2

- Folder 5 Testa – notes based on audiorecordings, 1998 and n.d.
- Folder 6 Testa – draft transcripts of select audiorecordings, 1998-1999 and n.d.

Subseries C: Manuscript

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds a draft manuscript created by Testa which includes transcriptions of some of Paley’s presentations.

Box 2

- Folder 7 Testa – draft manuscripts, n.d. [c. 1998-2000s]

Subseries D: Ephemera, publicity, and miscellaneous

Scope and Content Note: Within this subseries are brochures, programs, articles, and other papers from Testa that provide context about the correspondence and audiorecordings in this collection.

Box 2

- Folder 8 Testa – brochures and programs for Paley-related events and presentations, 1998-2002 and n.d.
- Folder 9 Testa – “Wisdom of the Young Ages,” Della De La Fuente, *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 11, 1999
- Folder 10 Testa – “A Companion Booklet to the video Vivian Paley and the Boy Who Could Tell Stories,” Resa Matlock and Randy Testa, 2001
- Folder 11 Testa – miscellaneous letters to Testa, 1998-2009
- Folder 12 Testa – miscellaneous photographs, n.d.

Series II: Eileen O’Donnell, 1986-2015

Scope and Content Note: Eileen O’Donnell is a retired American educator from New Jersey. She and Paley cultivated their long-distance friendship for several decades through letters, which are held in this series. These are arranged in chronological order.

Box 4

- Folder 1 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, 1986-1989
- Folder 2 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, 1990-1994
- Folder 3 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, 1995-1999
- Folder 4 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, 2000-2005
- Folder 5 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, 2006-2015
- Folder 6 O’Donnell – correspondence from Paley, n.d.

Series III: Celia Genishi, 2006-2014

Scope and Content Note: Celia Genishi is a Professor Emerita of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Selected letters from her correspondence with Paley over the years are held in this series. They are arranged in chronological order.

Box 4

- Folder 7 Genishi – correspondence from Paley, 2006-2014