

C Epstein, Eleni (1926-1991), Papers, 1948-1987
3898 .8 linear feet, 19 audio cassettes

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INTRODUCTION

Papers of Eleni Sakes Epstein, fashion and beauty editor of the *Washington Star* from 1943 to 1981. The papers consist of correspondence, speaking engagements, photographs, miscellaneous material about the fashion industry, *Fashion in Newspapers*, clippings, and audio cassette interviews with American, European, and Asian fashion designers and others.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Eleni Epstein Papers were donated to the University of Missouri by "Eleni" Sakes Epstein on August 31, 1990 (Accession No. 4985). They are part of the National Women and Media Collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eleni Epstein, fashion and beauty editor of the *Washington Star* for more than three decades, was born Helen Sakes to Greek immigrant parents in Washington, D.C., in 1926. She spent her formative years in Washington, D.C., and later attended George Washington University and Columbia University. During World War II she began her journalism career as a copy assistant at the *Washington Star* and quickly rose to the position of fashion editor. For the *Star* she wrote reports from the fashion capitals of Europe and Asia under the byline, "Eleni." Her internationally syndicated articles covered the fashion markets of Milan, Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York, Rome, and London. In 1979 she created for the *Washington Star* "This is Star...Fashion," a weekly fashion and beauty section for women, men and children. Her position as fashion editor lasted more than 35 years until 1981 when the *Star* ceased publication.

During her long career she received many awards for her interpretive writing and her contribution to the fashion industry. In 1960 she was the recipient of the first J.C. Penney fashion writing award from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. In 1963 she received the Emba Fur Fashion Excellence Award from INFOPLAN, a worldwide public relations service. In the same year, she was the honorable mention winner of a Golden Slipper award. Inaugurated in 1960, the Golden Slipper award is given for outstanding coverage of news in the field of footwear among newspaper, radio and television fashion editors. In 1973 she received the prestigious FRANY (fashion reporter's award from New York) for journalistic ability and layout compositions. The FRANY award is given annually by the city of New York and the New York Couture Business Council for the best fashion reporting for newspapers with a circulation over 400,000. In 1974 she received one of Italy's highest civilian honors, the decoration of Cavaliere in the order Al Merito Della Repubblica Italiana, for outstanding fashion coverage. During her career she received two Lulu Awards from the American Institute of Men's and Boy's Wear for editorial excellence in presenting news of men's fashion, the first in 1968 and the second in 1975. She was also cited for excellent work in fashion cultural exchange by the U.S. State Department and the Fashion Group, Inc.

Besides her weekly column, Epstein was a frequent speaker in the Washington area, emceeding fashion shows and lecturing to a variety of civic and professional organizations. In

1977 Eleni was invited by the Smithsonian Institution to inaugurate their first "Fashion as Culture" series. The series explored such topics as fashion and big business, film and fashion, the psychology of fashion, color and public spaces, museums and fashion, and fashion photography. In 1979 she presented "Fashion is an Art," a six-week seminar for the Smithsonian Institution which included Miss Piggy's designer Calista Hendrickson; Antonio Lopez, the fashion illustrator; Koos van den Akker; and Ilias Lalaounis, Greece's most famous jewelry designer.

Early in her career, Eleni contributed to two publications on fashion. In 1951, commissioned by the Fashion Institute of Technology, she wrote the Pauline Trigere segment of *American Fashion*, a five-part book on the "life and lines" of designers Adrian, Mainbocher, McCardell, Norell and Pauline Trigere. Later, in 1960, Eleni wrote the chapter on fashion reporting in *Your Future in the Fashion World*. This book, updated in 1979, was a textbook for students pursuing careers in the fashion industry.

In 1983 the Fashion Group, Inc. established a \$2,500 scholarship to be given annually in Eleni's name. The Fashion Group is a non-commercial, international organization of women holding creative and executive positions in all phases of the fashion industry.

On 28 January 1991, at the age of 65, Epstein died at her home in Washington, D.C., of scleroderma, a vascular disease.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Epstein Papers span the years from 1948 to 1981 and are arranged into five series: **Correspondence, Clippings, Photographs, Miscellaneous, and Audio cassettes.**

The **Correspondence** series, arranged chronologically from 1948 to 1981, primarily consists of letters, memos, or notes to Eleni from various American and international haute couture fashion designers, executives and manufacturers in the fashion/beauty industry, fashion promotion directors, students, and others who read her fashion section in the *Washington Star*. Letters from her readership consist of thank you notes for particular articles in the *Star*, such as one on fashion and the handicapped, "Fashion on Wheels." Others are congratulatory in nature and primarily center on Eleni's own fashion awards and the 1979 initiation of "This is Star--Fashion." This weekly section can best be described as something of a hybrid, part newspaper and part magazine. Correspondents included Bill Blass, Helena Rubenstein, Edith Head, Joyce Brothers, Estee Lauder and Helene Rochas. Letterheads include those from Bloomingdale's, Neiman-Marcus, Sak's Fifth Avenue, Madame Gres, Elizabeth Arden, Balenciaga, Givenchy, Vidal Sassoon, Pauline Trigere, I. Magnin, Giorgio Armani, Lord and Taylor, L'Oreal, Jean Patou, and Phillippe Venet. The correspondence series gives the researcher a good idea about Eleni's circle of friends and readers in *The Washington Star*.

The **Clippings** series, 1950s-1981, is primarily composed of Eleni's "This is Star...Fashion," section of the *Washington Star* with photographs by John Bowden and coordinated by Madeleine Harrell. Columns within the fashion section include: Fashion Notebook, Men's Fashion, Sew What?, Super Shape Ups, What's Happening, Sounding Off, It's Now, and By Design. Some were written by Eleni. Others were either written by her staff or guest designers. Fashion and beauty topics include articles on in-season ready-to-wear clothes, accessories, body and hair, make-up, and sewing and fabrics.

Arranged chronologically, the **Photographs** series is small and primarily consists of 8x10 images related to the fashion industry and, sometimes, used in newspaper articles written by Eleni. Photographic subjects include Eleni, Judy Agnew, Julie Andrews, Bill Blass, Pierre Cardin, Mr. Blackwell, James Galanos, Kasper, Adele Simpson, and Pauline Trigere. Most of the photographs were taken by Star fashion photographer, John Bowden.

The **Miscellaneous** series consists of a variety of materials. Speaking and lecture engagements can be found in one folder, arranged chronologically. This folder is an incomplete record of Eleni's community service activities in the Washington area.

The fashion industry materials consist of pamphlets, fashion show programs, brochures, invitations and other materials. *Fashion in Newspapers*, written by Garrett D. Byrnes in 1951 and published by the American Press Institute and Columbia University Press, is included in this series.

The heart of the collection lies in the **Audio cassettes** series. The content of the taped interviews served as raw material for Eleni's fashion articles for the Star. The interviews were conducted by Eleni either on the telephone, in restaurants, studios, apartments, or at fashion shows. The quality of the recording sound varies from tape to tape. Interviews are with designers of clothing, accessories, perfumes, etc. Occasionally descriptions of interview settings are included. Dates for interviews are approximate and have been determined by internal evidence on the tapes. Subjects interviewed include Adolfo, Bill Blass, Kasper, Gloria Sachs, Billie Blair, Rudi Gernreich, Karl Lagerfeld, Louise Nevelson, Estee Lauder, Adele Simpson, and Pauline Trigere.

FOLDER LIST

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- f. 1 Correspondence, 1948-1958
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1962-1969
- f. 3 Correspondence, 1970-1972
- f. 4 Correspondence, 1973
- f. 5 Correspondence, 1974-1975
- f. 6 Correspondence, 1976-1978
- f. 7 Correspondence, 1979 February-July
- f. 8 Correspondence, 1979 August-December
- f. 9 Correspondence, 1980 January-March
- f. 10 Correspondence, 1980 April-June
- f. 11 Correspondence, 1980 July-December
- f. 12 Correspondence, 1981

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- f. 13 Clippings, 1954 March -1959 November
- f. 14 Clippings, 1960 July -1964 August
- f. 15 Clippings, 1965 September -1969 July
- f. 16 Clippings, 1970 July -1975 July
- f. 17 Clippings, 1976 September-1979 February
- f. 18 Clippings, 1979 March -December
- f. 19 Clippings, 1980 January -April
- f. 20 Clippings, 1980 May -July
- f. 21 Clippings, 1980 August -December
- f. 22 Clippings, 1981 January -February
- f. 23 Clippings, 1981 March-May
- f. 24 Clippings, 1981 June-November
- f. 25 Clippings, n.d.

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- f. 26 Photographs, c. 1950-c. 1970
- f. 27 Photographs, 1971-1987
- f. 28-29 Photographs, n.d.

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- f. 30 Speaking and lecture engagements
- f. 31 Fashion industry, c. 1950-1968
- f. 32 Fashion industry, 1969-1974

- f. 33 Fashion industry, 1976-1979
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 f. 35 Fashion industry, n.d.
 f. 36 *Fashion in Newspapers*, Garrett D. Byrnes, 1951

Audio cassettes Series

- a.c. 1 Epstein interview with Adolfo, Bill Blass, Kasper, Gloria Sachs, c.1980
 a.c. 2 Epstein interview with Billie Blair, Kai-Yan Lo, c. 1976
 a.c. 3 Epstein interview with John Bates, c. 1979
 a.c. 4 Epstein interview with Rudi Gernreich, c. 1979
 a.c. 5 Epstein interview with Rose Narva, c. 1979
 a.c. 6 Epstein interview with Karl Lagerfeld, Saint Gilles, c. 1980
 a.c. 7 Epstein interview with Judith Leiber, c. 1977
 a.c. 8 Epstein interview with Louise Nevelson, Arnald Scaasi, c. 1979
 a.c. 9 Epstein interview with Frank Miller, Estee Lauder, c. 1980
 a.c. 10 Epstein interview with Antonio Lopez, Hans Stern, c. 1979
 a.c. 11 Epstein interview with Patricia Roberts, c. 1980
 a.c. 12 Epstein interview with Helene Rochas, Leonard of Paris, c. 1979
 a.c. 13 Epstein interview with Sonia Rykiel, c. 1979
 a.c. 14 Epstein interview with Zandra of London, Nancy Kissinger, c. 1980
 a.c. 15 Epstein interview with Adele Simpson, Norma Kamali, c. 1980
 a.c. 16 Epstein interview with George Stavropoulos, c. 1979
 a.c. 17 Epstein interview with Pauline Trigere, Albert Capraro, c. 1976
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