



# **Preliminary Guide to the Elizabeth A. McMahan Papers, 1926-2010 and undated**

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Elizabeth A. McMahan papers, 1926-2010 and undated

**Creator:**

McMahan, Elizabeth A.

**Source:**

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture

**Abstract:**

Elizabeth McMahan (1924-2009) was an entomologist (termite biology), psychologist, cartoonist, writer of children's books, and ocean traveler. Collection contains materials documenting McMahan's personal and professional life, including correspondence, writings, and photographs. Acquired as part of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture.

**Extent:**

18 Linear Feet

**Language:**

Materials in English.

**Collection ID:**

RL.00880

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1k92d>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Elizabeth A. McMahan Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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## Background

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**Scope and Content**

The collection contains primarily correspondence and greeting cards, including correspondence with John Craig Wheeler (considered the father of "black holes" ) on parapsychology and its intersection with theoretical physics.

Also includes news clippings and scrapbooks documenting McMahan's life; illustrations she made describing her travels aboard Pacific-traveling cargo ships; several of her self-published children's books; and compilations of her cartoons from "The Meadowlark," a newsletter published by Carolina Meadows, a retirement community in Chapel Hill, N.C. Acquired as part of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture.

Subsequent additions include materials relating to McMahan's termite research; book illustrations; her early life, including school materials and World War II ephemera; and personal correspondence with friends and relatives. Also includes a memorial tribute to her.

### **Biographical/Historical**

Entomologist (termite biology), psychologist, cartoonist, writer of children's books, and ocean traveler. McMahan is credited with 59 publications, many under the name E. A. McMahan, including 11 children's books.

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|-------------|---|
| 1924        | Born, Davie County, N.C.  |
| 1946        | A.B., Duke University, Major in Psychology  |
| 1948        | M.A. in Psychology, Duke University   |
| 1943-1954   | Research Assistant, Parapsychology Laboratory, Duke University. Close friend of Rhine family.   |
| 1960        | Ph.D, Entomology, University of Hawaii  |
| 1960-1961   | Post-doctoral work, Zoology, University of Chicago  |
| 1961-1987   | Professor, Department of Biology, UNC-Chapel Hill. Received outstanding teaching award in 1970. |

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|-------------|--|
| 1987-1988   | Peace Corps, College of Agriculture, Port Antonio, Jamaica   |
| 1989        | Received North Carolina Entomological Society's Award of Excellence for contributions to entomology. |
| 1989-2009   | Retired to Carolina Meadows, a retirement community in Chapel Hill, N.C.                             |
| 2009        | Died, Chapel Hill, N.C.  |

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

### Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

## Acquisition Information

The Elizabeth A. McMahan Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift in 2003-2018.

## Processing Information

Processed by Stacey Clark

Completed September 30, 2003

Encoded by Stacey Clark, Elizabeth Arnold

Finding aid updated by Meghan Lyon, 2008 and 2009

Finding aid updated by Alice Poffinberger, 2010, 2011

Accession 2018-0101 added by Leah Tams, May 2024.

This collection is unprocessed: materials may not have been ordered and described beyond their original condition.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2003-0128, 2003-0270, 2004-0334, 2006-0012, 2006-0034, 2007-0016, 2007-0076, 2007-0203, 2008-0264, 2009-0203, 2009-0206, 2009-0222, 2010-0132, 2011-0124, 2018-0101.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material

[Parapsychology Laboratory Records, 1893-1984](#) David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University [Louisa E. Rhine Papers, 1890-1983](#) David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

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## Names and Subjects

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- Cartoons
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Duke University -- Alumni and alumnae
- Entomologists -- North Carolina
- Scrapbooks
- Parapsychology and science
- Self-publishing -- United States
- Termites
- Psychometry (Parapsychology)
- Caricatures and cartoons
- Cargo ships -- Passenger traffic
- Children's literature
- Books and reading
- Ocean travel
- Pacific Ocean -- Description and travel
- Color photographs
- Rhine, J. B. (Joseph Banks), 1895-1980
- Wheeler, J. Craig
- McMahan, Elizabeth A.
- Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture

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## Collection Inventory

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### Accession 2003-0128

Contents of Box 1: Box 1

**Processing Information:**

[Technical Services staff may need to reformat brittle paper before use.]

[Attention: Contains rusty fasteners.]

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Correspondence, 1957-1980 Box 1

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Clippings, 1980-2002 Box 1

---

Contents of Box 2: Box 2

**Processing Information:**

[Technical Services staff may need to reformat newsprint and brittle paper before use.]

[Technical Services staff need to format for use copies of video tape before use.]

[Attention: Contains pictorial material.]

---

Rhine Correspondence, 1946-1975 Box 2

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes letters and hand-made birthday cards to J.B. Rhine. Also contains letters to family from Costa Rica and Puerto Rico.

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Big Book of Animal Behavior Box 2

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Loose material removed from scrapbook in box 4, 1960-1978 Box 2

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes original artwork, newspaper, and magazine clippings.

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Videotape: Wall Cartoons (Vic and Jim Smith Video) Box 2

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Contents of Box 3: Box 3

**Processing Information:**

[Technical Services staff may need to process materials in envelopes before use.]

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Correspondence with John Wheeler, 1986 Box 3

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**Writings**

"Life at Carolina Meadows" series Box 3

---

Children's books Box 3

---

"The Meadowlark " newsletter Box 3

---

Curriculum vitae Box 3

---

Artwork, cartoon illustrations Box 3

---

Clippings and greeting cards, [1964-2001] Box 3

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Contents of Box 4:   | Box 4 |
| Scrapbook, 1941-1962 | Box 4 |

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes clippings, correspondence and photographs.

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**Accession (2003-0270), 1926-2008**

**Physical Description:** 3 boxes

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition consists of McMahan's artwork, correspondence (including with friend and colleague Howard T. Odum), photographs, journals, diplomas, and other ephemera.

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**Accession (2004-0334), 1972-2004**

**Physical Description:** 1 Box, 1 Oversize Folder

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition comprises correspondence, field notes, journals, and sketch books related to McMahan's termite research. Also includes newsletters, photographs, certificates, and awards.

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**Accession (2006-0012), 1940-2006**

**Physical Description:** 8 boxes

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition comprises primarily original illustrations by McMahan. Also includes correspondence, children's stories, cartoons, a sketchbook, postcards, poetry, lecture notes, travel journals, clippings and one VHS tape containing an interview with McMahan held in 2004.

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**Accession (2006-0034), 1967-2005**

**Physical Description:** 4 boxes

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition comprises primarily correspondence written by McMahan to Burke Smith; 6 photographs; clippings; and sketches of cartoons by the donor.

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**Accession (2007-0016), 1999-2006**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Miscellaneous emails and clippings               | Box 1 |
| Email correspondence, 1999-2003                  | Box 1 |
| Email correspondence, 2003-2005                  | Box 2 |
| Correspondence with sister, Mary Lee Doyle, 2006 | Box 2 |

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**Accession (2007-0076), 1934-2006**

**Physical Description:** 4 boxes

|                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Correspondence                       | Box 1 |
| Clippings                            | Box 1 |
| Sketches                             | Box 1 |
| Journal                              | Box 2 |
| Ephemera from a European trip, 1950s | Box 2 |
| Correspondence 1950                  | Box 2 |
| Postcards                            | Box 2 |
| War ration books, 1942               | Box 2 |
| Student handbook, 1960-1961          | Box 2 |
| Senior diary, 1935                   | Box 2 |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Record of payments for work in Parapsychology lab, 1943-1945 | Box 2 |
| Research notebook, 1975                                      | Box 2 |
| Autograph book, 1936-1939                                    | Box 2 |
| School treasures book, 1934                                  | Box 2 |
| Wood engraving   | Box 2 |
| Name cards   | Box 2 |
| Autograph book   | Box 2 |
| Postcards  | Box 2 |
| Diary, 1936  | Box 2 |
| Autographed wooden spoons, 1940                              | Box 2 |
| Address book   | Box 2 |
| Correspondence   | Box 3 |
| Drawings for Camie book                                      | Box 3 |
| Plaque from the Entomological Society for support, 1993      | Box 3 |
| Clippings  | Box 3 |
| Materials from elementary school                             | Box 3 |
| Scrapbook  | Box 4 |
| Clippings  | Box 4 |
| Sketches for Camie   | Box 4 |

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**Accession (2007-0203), 1950-2007**

**Physical Description: 1 boxes**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Miscellaneous correspondence, 1980s-2007 (4 folders)        | Box 1 |
| Hoyle correspondence, 2007                                  | Box 1 |
| Correspondence and photographs, 1950s                       | Box 1 |
| Rhine Center correspondence                                 | Box 1 |
| Carolina Meadows material                                   | Box 1 |
| Public Health Service Research Fellowship Application, 1959 | Box 1 |
| Miscellaneous photographs                                   | Box 1 |

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**Accession (2008-0264), 2007-2008**

**Physical Description: 1 boxes**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Carolina Meadows publications                        | Box 1 |
| Email correspondence, 2007-2008 (5 folders)          | Box 1 |
| Miscellaneous email correspondence, 2008 (3 folders) | Box 1 |

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**Accessions (2009-0203 and 2009-0206)**

**Physical Description: 1 box**

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition (2009-0203) (100 items; 0.4 lin. ft.; dated 1946-1987) includes a Thematic Apperception Test, Duke parapsychology lab communications, color slides of Duke's campus (1957), UNC Department of Zoology correspondence, materials on Donald Costello and Burke Smith, and miscellaneous materials from McMahan's retirement in 1987. Addition (2009-0206) (1 item; 0.2 lin. ft.; dated 1950s-1960s) consists of a photo album with unlabelled photographs of the J.B. Rhine family and the Duke parapsychology laboratory.

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 16 color slides from Duke's West Campus, 1957 | Box 1 |
|---|-------|

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|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 8 color slides of the K.M. Wilbur family, including children Gretchen and Louise; Dr. J.R. Bailey; Dr. Horn and Kathy, 1957 | Box 1 |
| Thematic Apperception Test, 1946  | Box 1 |
| <b>Scope and Contents note</b>  |       |
| Includes cards, manuals, and interpretation guide.  |       |
| Duke materials  | Box 1 |
| <b>Scope and Contents note</b>  |       |
| Includes Department of Zoology correspondence, 1960s, and Nixon Library correspondence, 1981.                               |       |
| Donald Costello, 1970s  | Box 1 |
| Burke Smith correspondence, 1984-1986   | Box 1 |
| Parapsychology  | Box 1 |
| Retirement, 1987  | Box 1 |
| Voices: the Literary Magazine of Carolina Meadows, Spring 2009  | Box 1 |
| Photo album   | Box 1 |
| <b>Scope and Contents note</b>  |       |
| Includes unlabelled photographs of J.B. Rhine, his family, and the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory, 1950s-1960s.             |       |

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### **Accession (2009-0222)**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition (2009-0222) (700 items; 1.2 lin. ft.) includes subject files, correspondence, and other materials from McMahan's retirement. Subjects include Jamaica, freighter travel, UNC's Zoology Department, etc. Box 2 of this material is housed with Acc. 2010-0132.

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|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Society of Woman Geographers | Box 1 |
|------------------------------|-------|

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Australia                               | Box 1 |
| Professional correspondence, 2002       | Box 1 |
| General mail and email, 2002            | Box 1 |
| References                              | Box 1 |
| India                                   | Box 1 |
| Lin Frye: CMSW UNC/Vance Co., July 1994 | Box 1 |
| Zukeran                                 | Box 1 |
| Peace Corps (Jamaica), 1987-1988        | Box 1 |
| Jamaica, 1991                           | Box 1 |
| Freighter travel (talks)                | Box 1 |
| Arm-chair travel (freightering), 2002   | Box 1 |
| La Selva (and LTER), 1985-1986          | Box 1 |
| Talks (extras)                          | Box 1 |
| Sigma Xi                                | Box 1 |
| Unlabelled folder (miscellaneous)       | Box 1 |
| Rowland, 2002                           | Box 1 |
| Greenes                                 | Box 1 |
| Capt. Chris Blake and Capt. Cook        | Box 1 |
| NC State                                | Box 1 |
| Christy Lehrer (Nalepa)                 | Box 1 |
| Duke Library (Bingham Center)           | Box 1 |
| UNC Zoology                             | Box 2 |
| Correspondence, 1986                    | Box 2 |
| JB Rhine                                | Box 2 |

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|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Parapsychology Abstracts International, 1986                        | Box 2 |
| ESP tests, 1940s  | Box 2 |
| Printouts of 2 photos of JB Rhine and the parapsychology lab, 1970s | Box 2 |

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### **Accession (2010-0132)**

**Physical Description:** 1 folder

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition (2010-0132) (29 items; 0.1 lin. ft.; dated 1985-2009 and undated) contains flyers and email from the UNC biology dept. and library; McMahan's obituaries and memorial program; two articles she published on the Assassin bug; newspaper clippings on her work; and copies of her cartoon works, including two of her children's books.

Accession (2010-0132) Box 2

**Processing Information:**

[This material is housed with Acc. (2009-0222)]

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### **Accession (2011-0124)**

**Physical Description:** 1 folder

**Scope and Contents note**

Addition (2011-0124) (2 items, 0.1 lin. ft.; dated 2010) comprises a journal copy of SOCIOBIOLOGY (2010 Vol. 56, no. 1) containing a memorial tribute to McMahan, along with a reprint of the piece.

Accession (2011-0124) Box 2

**Processing Information:**

[This material is housed with Acc. (2009-0222)]

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### **Accession (2018-0101), 1957-2006**

**Scope and Contents**

Series contains largely personal photographs of McMahan's travel on container ships in the early 2000s, as well as photos from Carolina Meadows (retirement community), family, and friends. Photographic slides from the 1950s-1980s document McMahan's entomological studies in Hawaii, Panama, and other places.

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Correspondence and clippings, 1990-2005   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Hawaii, Panama, and El Verde Station, 1957-1985   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photo album, 1970s-1990s<br><b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders<br><b>Scope and Contents</b><br>Album disbound by archivist. | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photographs: Whittaker graveyard, Davie County, NC, 1976-1984   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photographs and negatives: Unknown locations, circa 1980s-1990s   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Raymond Mendez, <i>Salyavata variegata</i> , 1980s  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Assassin bug, 1983  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Carolina Meadows murals, 1993   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photographs: Carolina Meadows mural, 1993, 2001-2002  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photographs: Annie Laurie's kittens, 1994 June  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Melbourne Star voyage, 1995   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Slides: Melbourne Star, 1995 May-July   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 1 |
| Photographs: Travel, 1996-1999  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Negatives: Melbourne Star, 1997   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Australia, 1997  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Slides: Pitcairn, termites, Melbourne Star, 1999-2002                                    | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Melbourne Star, Australia, 2000   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Snowfall, 2000 January  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Seventh voyage, circa 2001  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Negatives: Sydney Star, circa 2001   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| List of photos sent to Capt. Grimshaw, 2001  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Sydney Star, 2001   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Templetons, 2001  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Auckland, 2001 April  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Sky tower, Auckland, 2001 May 09  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs and negatives: Barbecue, 2001 May 19   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Don's birthday, Cammie III drawings, Panama Canal, 2001 May 21              | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Sydney Star, Don's birthday party, 2001 May 21                              | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Officer's farewell party, 2001 June 01                                      | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photograph: Capt. Jackson's painting, 2001 August-December                               | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: Sydney Opera House, 2002 January 26   | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 2 |
| Photographs: McKnights, Wesley Chapel Church, 2003 May 24                                | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |
| Photographs: West Jefferson, Hoyles, Wesley Chapel, Melbourne Star mementos, 2003 May 26 | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |

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|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Photographs: Cec and Sue Jackson, 2004-2006                     | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |
| Photographs: Dedication of Sigma Xi headquarters, 2004 April 23 | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |
| Photographs: Mocksville, NC, 2006 August                        | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |
| Photographs: Hallway art at Carolina Meadows, 2006 October      | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |
| Photographs: Carolina Meadows, 2006 October 31                  | Box Acc. 18/0101: Box 3 |

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