

MSS. Collection #242

Oka T. Hester Jr. Family Papers, ca. 1930-2006 [bulk 1941-1961].
3½ boxes (118 folders), ca. 635 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The Oka T. Hester Jr. Family Papers consist primarily of correspondence, printed material and photographs pertaining to the professional and private life of Oka T. Hester Jr. As director of Greensboro's Parks and Recreation Department from 1947 to 1977, Hester was known for his leadership in the recreation field, as well as his community service. Researchers interested in the city's Parks and Recreation Department will find letters, newspaper clippings, photographs and reports from his tenure. The collection also includes materials documenting his daughter Julia "Judy" Hester's life in Greensboro and time studying at Duke University.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into eight series by document type and/or subject. The series are: **Awards/Certificates**, 1944-1978; **Correspondence**, 1939-1994; **Financial/Legal**, 1947-1953, n.d.; **Hester, Julia**, ca. 1943-2006; **Maps**, 1975-1976, n.d.; **Miscellaneous**, ca. 1943-ca. 1966; **Photographs**, ca. 1950-ca. 1975; and **Printed Material**, ca. 1930-1977.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Graham Fripp in April 2017 and assigned accession number 2017.18.1. The donor purchased Julia Hester's house and its contents after her death in 2016.

Processing: This collection was organized by volunteer Elizabeth Moore, and the finding aid was completed in February 2018.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born in Raleigh, Oka T. Hester Jr. (1912-1978) attended Greensboro High School and played football as a freshman at Elon College. He joined Greensboro's Parks and Recreation Department in 1934 as an athletic director, and between 1942 and 1947 directed departments in Raleigh and Augusta, Georgia. In 1947, he returned to Greensboro to become the city's first Director of Parks and Recreation. During his tenure, he oversaw the development of fourteen neighborhood centers and forty playgrounds. He organized a comprehensive athletic program that included boxing, baseball and basketball, and served as a mentor to local marbles teams. He also worked with the Greater Greensboro Open golf tournament from 1938 until his retirement.

Oka Hester was active in multiple national and state organizations, including the American Recreation Society and the North Carolina Recreation Society, and he wrote articles for several

national publications. In 1952, the State Department sent him to West Germany for five months to set up recreation programs in various cities. At the time of his retirement in 1977, his department was recognized as one of four premier parks and recreation departments in the country. He and his wife, Fay Holder (1917-2007), were members of First Baptist Church and lived at 1704 Liberty Dr. in Kirkwood.

The only child of Fay and Oka Hester, Julia “Judy” Glenn Hester (1936-2016) was born in Greensboro and graduated from Greensboro Senior High School (later Grimsley High School) in 1955. She earned a BS and PhD in nursing from Duke University, as well as a MS from UNC Chapel Hill, and she worked as a school psychologist in the Winston Salem-Forsyth County Schools. Like her parents, she was a member of First Baptist Church and active with youth programs, and she also volunteered at Irving Park School. She lived at 1704 Liberty Dr. in Kirkwood until her death.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information was gathered from materials in the collection, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), Oka Hester’s obituary (*Greensboro Daily News*, November 14, 1978), Fay Holder Hester’s obituary (*News & Record*, December 17, 2007), and Julia Hester’s obituary (*News & Record*, September 27, 2016).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include correspondence, photographs, printed material such as newspaper clippings and reports, and maps of parks and recreation facilities. Most items pertain to Oka T. Hester and Greensboro’s Parks and Recreation Department. Also included are correspondence and printed material relating to his daughter Julia’s education in Greensboro and at Duke University. Researchers interested in the history of Greensboro’s Parks and Recreation Department and its facilities, as well as local schools, will find materials of interest.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Awards/Certificates. 5 folders (6 items). 1944-1978.

Among the items in this series is the Order of the Long Leaf Pine (1:3), the highest honor bestowed by North Carolina governors upon citizens who exemplify service to their communities. Also included is an award from the North Carolina Recreation and Park Society recognizing Hester’s leadership (1:2), and a certificate from the University of Alabama for attending the Southeastern Recreation Executives School in 1944 (1:5).

2. Correspondence. 10 folders (ca. 115 items). 1939-1994.

The majority of the correspondence centers on Oka Hester’s work within Greensboro’s Parks and Recreation Department. Some letters plan meetings with other directors, relay information between department employees, and share ideas with other recreation departments. Several thank Hester for his service to cities, organizations and causes, while others highlight his department’s

accomplishments. This series also includes correspondence pertaining to marbles tournaments (2:11), an invitation to visit the Hester family in Raleigh (2:9), and the announcement of Hester's appointment to the N.C. Zoological Authority (2:7). While most of the letters pertain to Greensboro, the series also contains a few that give insight into Hester's work in other cities, especially Raleigh and Augusta, Georgia.

3. Financial/Legal. 3 folders (3 items). 1947-1953, n.d.

This series contains two receipts, one from the Hotel Bristol in Vienna, Austria (3:3) and the other from Wesley Long Hospital (3:1). Also included is an assignment to Oka T. Hester of an undivided one-twentieth interest in a patent for a "new type of Venetian blinds" designed by William E. Carter Jr. (3:2).

4. Hester, Julia. 21 folders (ca. 100 items). ca. 1943-2006.

Oka T. Hester's daughter Julia "Judy" Hester grew up and worked in Greensboro. She attended Greensboro Senior High School, and then UNC Chapel Hill and Duke University. The bulk of this series consists of photographs and personal correspondence sent from Private Thomas E. Cherry to Julia while at Duke. Other items include a 1952 Central Jr. High School yearbook (4:15), programs from school events (4:14-15, 4:18, 4:20), 3D glasses (4:6), a Greensboro library card (4:7), and Julia's 1979 doctoral dissertation (4:16).

5. Maps. 1 folder (2 items). 1975-1976, n.d.

Included in this series are a map of Greensboro Parks and Recreation facilities in 1975-1976 and an undated design study for Oka T. Hester Park.

6. Miscellaneous. 5 folders (ca. 25 items). ca. 1943-ca. 1966.

This series consists primarily of Oka Hester's resume (6:4) and job applications for various recreation positions (6:3) that provide insight into his employment history and his colleagues' perceptions of him. Also included is his FBI fingerprint card (6:1).

7. Photographs. 31 folders (ca. 330 items). ca. 1950-ca. 1975.

A large portion of this collection consists of photographs, roughly half of which relate to Greensboro (7:3-20). Researchers interested in the city will find photographs of parks, recreation facilities and community centers, as well as group portraits primarily from social events and meetings throughout Greensboro. The series also includes portraits of Hester and his family (7:26-27), with most portraits of Hester appearing to have been taken in his office at the Parks and Recreation Department (7:27). Researchers interested in Hester's work with Greensboro's marbles teams will find the photos of the marbles tournaments particularly interesting (7:28-29). Also worth mentioning are the athletic portraits taken by North Carolina photographer Hugh Morton (7:30), as well as two photos of Hester with LeRoy T. Walker (7:21), the first African American president of the U.S. Olympic Committee and chancellor of North Carolina Central University.

8. Printed Material. 42 folders (ca. 55 items). ca. 1930-1977.

The printed material includes newspaper clippings, reports, a magazine, bulletins and articles. Researchers focusing on the city's parks and recreation facilities will find the annual reports useful (8:14-16, 8:35). Also included are an article written by Hester on the Glenwood Community Center (8:9) and an article about the Warnersville Community Center, one of Greensboro's segregated recreation centers for African American residents (8:42). Numerous newspaper clippings pertain to Hester (8:21-25) and, along with press releases, the marbles teams that he oversaw (8:27, 8:37).

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Awards/Certificates -- Greensboro (1978)
	2	" -- N.C. Recreation and Park Society (1977)
	3	" -- Order of the Long Leaf Pine (1978)
	4	" -- Recreation Training Institute (1950)
	5	" -- University of Alabama (1944)
2	1	Correspondence -- 1941-1944 *Rufus W. Reynolds; E. Earle Rives; David O. Stern; D.C. Walker; J.D. Wilkins
	2	" -- 1945 *Federal Security Agency-Recreation Division; Harold D. Meyer-North Carolina Recreation Commission; National Recreation Association
	3	" -- 1946 *Federal Security Agency-Recreation Division; Harold D. Meyer-North Carolina Recreation Commission; Society of Recreation Workers of America
	4	Correspondence -- 1947 *Mose Kiser-Guilford Dairy; Harold D. Meyer-North Carolina Recreation Commission; Harry G. Sharp-YMCA of Greensboro
	5	" -- 1948-1949 *J.R. Townsend
	6	" -- 1950s *Robert H. Frazier; Harold D. Meyer-North Carolina Recreation Commission; J.R. Townsend; Thomas Turner
	7	Correspondence -- 1973-1977 *Jack D. Horner
	8	" -- 1994 *Bill Britt
	9	" (n.d.)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
2	10	Correspondence	-- Marbles (1939-1961)
3	1	Financial/Legal	-- Bill -- Wesley Long Hospital (1953)
	2	"	-- Patent (1947)
	3	"	-- Receipt -- Hotel Bristol (n.d)
4	1	Hester, Julia	-- Correspondence (1955)
	2	"	-- Correspondence (1956)
	3	"	-- Correspondence (1962)
	4	"	-- Financial -- Insurance Policy (2006)
	5	Hester, Julia	-- Financial -- Withholding Statement (1952)
	6	"	-- Miscellaneous -- 3D Glasses (n.d.)
	7	"	-- Miscellaneous -- Library Card (1953)
	8	"	-- Miscellaneous -- Passport (1984)
	9	Hester, Julia	-- Miscellaneous -- War Ration Book (ca. 1943)
	10	"	-- Photographs -- Group Portraits (ca. 1945- 1955)
	11	"	-- Photographs -- Group Portraits (n.d)
	12	"	-- Photographs -- Portraits (ca. 1979)
	13	Hester, Julia	-- Photographs -- Portraits (n.d.)
	14	"	-- Printed Material -- Aycock Jr. High School (1952)
	15	"	-- Printed Material -- Central Jr. High School (1952)
	16	"	-- Printed Material -- Dissertation (1979)
	17	Hester, Julia	-- Printed Material -- Evelyn Fowler Pupil Recital (1946-1947)
	18	"	-- Printed Material -- Greensboro High School (1953-1955)
	19	"	-- Printed Material -- Greensboro High School Diploma (1955)
	20	"	-- Printed Material -- Greensboro High School Graduation (1955)
	21	Hester, Julia	-- Printed Material -- Newspaper Clippings (1958)
5	1	Maps	-- Parks & Recreation Facilities (1975-1976, n.d.)
6	1	Miscellaneous	-- FBI Fingerprint Card
	2	"	-- Illustration
	3	"	-- Job Applications (ca. 1943-1953)
	4	Miscellaneous	-- Resume (ca. 1966)
	5	"	-- U.S. Civil Service Commission Notice of Ranking (1950)
7	1	Photographs	-- Augusta, Georgia (n.d.)
	2	"	-- Germany (1952)
	3	"	-- Greensboro -- A.H. Peeler Center (1971)
	4	"	-- Greensboro -- Bryan Park (ca. 1975)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
7	5	Photographs -- Greensboro -- City Lake (n.d.)
	6	" -- Greensboro -- Clubs & Sports Teams (n.d.)
	7	" -- Greensboro -- Country Park (n.d.)
	8	" -- Greensboro -- Exterior Shots (n.d.)
	9	Photographs -- Greensboro -- Glenwood Community Center (n.d.)
	10	" -- Greensboro -- Group Portraits (1956-1965)
	11	" -- Greensboro -- Group Portraits (n.d.) *Greensboro Fire Department
	12	" -- Greensboro -- Group Portraits (n.d.)
	13	Photographs -- Greensboro -- Guilford Courthouse (n.d.)
	14	" -- Greensboro -- Lake Herman (n.d.)
	15	" -- Greensboro -- Lindley Pool (1953)
	16	" -- Greensboro -- Northwest Recreation Center (later Lewis Center; n.d.)
	17	Photographs -- Greensboro -- Oka T. Hester Park (n.d.)
	18	" -- Greensboro -- Portraits (n.d.)
	19	" -- Greensboro -- Recreation Events (n.d.)
	20	" -- Greensboro -- Windsor Community Center (1966)
	21	Photographs -- Group Portraits (1961-1975)
	22	" -- Group Portraits (n.d.)
	23	" -- Group Portraits (n.d.)
	24	" -- Group Portraits (n.d.)
	25	Photographs -- Group Portraits (n.d.)
	26	" -- Hester Family (ca. 1950-1975)
	27	" -- Hester, Oka T. (n.d.)
	28	" -- Marbles (ca. 1950s-1960s)
	29	Photographs -- Marbles -- Paris (ca. 1950s)
	30	" -- Portraits (n.d.)
	31	" -- Miscellaneous (n.d.)
8	1	Printed Material -- "American Recreation Society Bulletin" (1958-1960)
	2	" -- "Annual N.C. State Invitational Semi-pro Baseball Tournament" (1952)
	3	" -- <i>Coach & Athlete</i> (June 1963)
	4	" -- "Community Action Guide for Public Officials: Staffing & Consultants"
	5	Printed Material -- "Community Recreation & Sports" (March 1952)
	6	" -- "Elon Alumni News" (1951-1952)
	7	" -- "Exchange Club of Augusta" (July 1950)
	8	" -- Flynt Studio (n.d.)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
8	9	Printed Material -- Glenwood Community Center (n.d.)
	10	“ -- Greensboro <i>City Beat</i> (1977)
	11	“ -- <i>Greensboro Daily News</i> (December 1977)
	12	“ -- Greensboro Intra-Urban Migration (1975)
	13	Printed Material -- Greensboro Junior Chamber of Commerce (January 1954)
	14	“ -- “Greensboro Parks & Recreation Department: The Vision of Two Men” (n.d.)
	15	“ -- “Greensboro Parks & Recreation System” (1975)
	16	“ -- Greensboro Recreation Annual Report (1935, 1952)
	17	Printed Material -- Marbles Final Standings (June 1958)
	18	“ -- McClure’s Restaurant
	19	“ -- National Marbles Tournament (n.d.)
	20	“ -- National Swimming Pool Institute (1968)
	21	Printed Material -- Newspaper Clippings (1930s)
	22	“ -- Newspaper Clippings (1940s)
	23	“ -- Newspaper Clippings (1950s)
	24	“ -- Newspaper Clippings (1960s)
	25	Printed Material -- Newspaper Clippings (1970s)
	26	“ -- Newspaper Clippings (n.d.)
	27	“ -- Newspaper Clippings -- Marbles (ca. 1960s)
	28	“ -- North Carolina City & Town Recreation Study (November 1972)
	29	Printed Material -- North Carolina Land & Water Conservation Fund Expenditures (1965-1975)
	30	“ -- <i>North Carolina Recreation Review</i> (1957, 1966)
	31	“ -- <i>North Carolina State Exchange News</i> (February 1962)
	32	“ -- North Carolina State University Revenue Sources Management School (1973)
	33	Printed Material -- Northwest Recreation Center (n.d.)
	34	“ -- Oka T. Hester Park (1977)
	35	“ -- Parks & Recreation Facility Location Package (1977)
	36	“ -- Piedmont Triad Council of Governments (1974)
	37	Printed Material -- Press Releases -- Marbles (ca. 1960s)
	38	“ -- Sedgefield Country Club (1955)
	39	“ -- Southern Railway (n.d.)
	40	“ -- Sugar Purchase Certificate (1942)
	41	Printed Material -- War Ration Books (ca. 1943)
	42	“ -- Warnersville Community Center (n.d.)