

MSS. Collection #104

Luis Felicia Papers, ca. 1943-1995 [bulk 1943-1969]. 1 box (24 folders), ca. 209 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 Luis Felicia Papers consist of photographs and printed materials relating to Pvt. Luis Felicia's service during World War II and subsequent career as a dance instructor and owner of Felicia Studios of Dance. The bulk of items are photographs dating from 1946 to 1969.

Of historical note are the Overseas Replacement Depot (ORD) materials, which document recreation or non-combat activities, as well as ceremonies at Greensboro's Army Air Force base during World War II. Researchers interested in the history of civil rights in Greensboro are directed to the Felicia Studios material and biographical note in this finding aid. Of interest to textile historians is the photographs series, which shows civilian and military dress during World War II and children's dance theatre costumes from 1946 to 1969.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into two series by document type and within each series materials are separated into sections for Felicia Studios and ORD. The two series are: **Photographs, 1943-1969;** and **Printed Materials, 1945-1995.**

Provenance: This collection was donated by Luis Felicia in 1991 and assigned the accession number 1991.162.1.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by volunteer Alice Bailey in June 2013.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Luis Felicia was born in 1911 in Columbus, Ohio. In the 1920s and 1930s, he worked as a professional dancer in the Detroit area with his wife. During this time he mainly performed vaudeville, often working with entertainer and comedian Amos Jacobs, later known as Danny Thomas (2:3).

Stationed in Greensboro from 1943 to 1946, Felicia was assigned the rank of private and instructed soldiers and German prisoners of war in dance (1:14, 2:1). As head of Service Club #1 at ORD, he also performed in shows for the soldiers, appearing with Tony Martin and Donald O'Connor (1:14).

In 1946, Felicia opened Felicia Studios of Dance at the former site of Cone Export and Commission Company (330 South Greene Street). Felicia was the first Caucasian to offer dance instruction to African Americans, initially teaching classes at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA. He stated in a *News & Record* article (1995) that he believed teaching African American students caused him to lose business from Caucasian clients, but he expressed pride in his decision,

specifically that it pre-dated the Civil Rights Movement (2:1). In 1958 he relocated to Exchange Place, where he taught African American students. During the 1960s he instituted a policy of integrated instruction and held joint recitals before retiring in 1970.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information was compiled from notes taken by Stephen Catlett during a conversation with Luis Felicia on March 28, 1995, and copies of news articles in the collection.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of photographs and printed material. The bulk of the photographs were taken between 1946 and 1969 and relate to Felicia Studios of Dance. They depict dance instruction, rehearsal, and recitals, and they include photographs of both African American and Caucasian children in costume. Of greater historical interest are photographs relating to ORD that document everyday activities on the base. The Felicia Studios printed materials are generally more informative, while the ORD printed materials include both photocopies and original military publications.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Photographs. 19 folders (ca. 185 items). 1943-1969.

The [images relating to the ORD \(1:11-19\)](#) consist of black and white negatives and photographs of varying sizes. Photographs of recreation and base activities document daily life and leisure on an army base during World War II. Of particular note are images of appearances by celebrities, including Eleanor Roosevelt visiting injured soldiers.

The photographs relating to Felicia Studios (1:1-10) are arranged in folders by race, number of subjects, and type of pose. Notably, the photographs of African Americans include only a single portrait of a female, no male subjects or couples, and roughly a third the number of ensembles represented in Caucasian photographs.

2. Printed Material. 5 folders (ca. 24 items). 1944-1995.

The [printed materials relating to the ORD \(2:3-6\)](#) consist mainly of original issues of newspapers and reproductions of newspaper articles. The latter are related to Felicia's role as dance instructor at the base, while whole newspaper issues pertain to military operations.

The printed materials relating to Felicia Studios are fewer in number and less varied than the ORD printed materials. They are divided into Ephemera (2:1) and News Articles (2:2), and they document Felicia's post-war career as an instructor and professional dancer. Included is a newspaper article containing information about Felicia's life both before and during the war, in particular his personal perspective on operational aspects of Felicia Studios of Dance and his career as an entertainer.

FOLDER LISTING

| Series | Folder | Contents | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | 1 | Photograph s | -- Felicia Studios -- African American ensembles, posed (1950-1969) |
| | 2 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- African American individuals, posed (1950-1969) |
| | 3 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian couples, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 4 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian couples, recreational dancing (1946-1969) |
| | 5 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian ensembles, candid (1946-1969) |
| | 6 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian ensembles, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 7 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian ensembles, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 8 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian ensembles, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 9 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian group, portrait (1946-1969) |
| | 10 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian individuals, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 11 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- Caucasian individuals, posed (1946-1969) |
| | 12 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Base Activities (1943-1946)</u> |
| | 13 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Ceremonies (1943-1946)</u> |
| | 14 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Dancing (1943-1946)</u> |
| | 15 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Eleanor Roosevelt (1945)</u> |
| | 16 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Miscellaneous (1943-1946)</u> |
| | 17 | " | -- ORD -- Negatives (1943-1946) |
| | 18 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Recreation (1943-1946)</u> |
| | 19 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Sports (1943-1946)</u> |
| 2 | 1 | Printed Materials | -- Felicia Studios – Ephemera, reproductions (1940s-1960s) |
| | 2 | " | -- Felicia Studios -- <i>News & Record</i> , etc. – Newspaper articles, mainly reproductions (1960s-1995) |
| | 3 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Ephemera, reproductions (1945-1946)</u> |
| | 4 | " | <u>-- ORD -- BTC 10-Shun and Greensboro Record; Newspaper articles, reproductions (1944-1946)</u> |
| | 5 | " | -- ORD -- <i>The ORD News</i> and <i>The Rotator</i> ; Newspaper issues (1945-1946) |
| | 6 | " | <u>-- ORD -- Telephone directory (1945)</u> |