



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Sylvester Carter papers and slides

1930-1983

Sc MG 154

Summary

Creator: Carter, Sylvester J

Title: Sylvester Carter papers and slides

Date: 1930-1983

Size: 11 linear feet

Source: Gift, Carter, Sylvester J, 1983 Bequest, Carter, Sylvester J, 1987

Abstract: The Sylvester J. Carter Papers document the life and career of this prominent hand surgeon. The collection contains scrapbooks, correspondence, writings, programs of medical conferences and meetings, photographs and plaques.

Preferred citation: Sylvester Carter papers and slides, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Sylvester Carter was a prominent hand surgeon and one of the first surgeons to perform a replantation of a severed hand. He also pioneered in the treatment of severed hand tendons. Carter was born in Massachusetts in 1908 and originally began studying for a career as a concert singer in the Boston Conservatory of Music. After receiving a Bachelor's degree from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, he decided to go into medicine. In 1939 Carter received his M.D. degree from Boston University. He interned at Massachusetts Memorial Hospital and Harlem Hospital, New York. In the 1940's he became interested in surgery of the hand; in 1959 he established a hand clinic and became Director of Hand Surgery at Flower Fifth Avenue and New York Medical College. An accomplished photographer, Carter produced a film on advanced surgical techniques on the hand.

Carter also was involved in a wide range of public service activities, among them, Medical Director of the Crossroads Africa program, member of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Research and Education in Sickle Cell Anemia, and the Board of Directors of Municipal Concerts. He was a frequent contributor to medical journals and wrote a book, "Virus Infections of the Hand." Carter died in 1986.

Scope and Content Note

The Sylvester J. Carter Papers document the life and career of this prominent hand surgeon. The collection contains scrapbooks, correspondence, writings, programs of medical conferences and meetings, photographs and plaques. Included are scrapbooks of letters, articles by and about Carter, material from his student years at Bates College (1930's) and his singing with the Bates College Glee Club and as a soloist. Other scrapbooks contain curriculum vitae and additional biographical information. Correspondence with colleagues discusses both Carter's medical and non-medical activities (1930-1980). Also included are articles by Carter and other authors, letters regarding Carter's appointments to hospital staffs, audiotapes of talks given at meetings of professional associations, and newsclippings. In addition, the collection consists of programs of conferences, congresses, meetings and symposia (1962-1982), his published papers, articles about Carter and plaques honoring his medical achievements. The color slides of surgical procedures consist of approximately 16,000 images of hand operations performed by Dr. Carter. The slides show procedures and techniques in hand surgery and contain both illustrative drawings and on site photographs. Many slides illustrate the tissues, muscles and veins, etc. Some of the categories of the slides are amputations, arthritis, bone disorders, burns, carpal tunnel, cerebral palsy, children, dupuytren's contracture and dupuytren's disease, firecracker accidents, frostbite, infections, injuries, nerves, prosthesis, ring injuries, skin grafts, strangulated hand, teaching cases, tenosynovitis stenosing, tendons, thumb, tuberculosis and vascular. The slides were taken by Carter's nurse, Lilla F. Grant and are labeled and date from 1963 through 1976. A small number of black and white photographs document surgical procedures of hand operations.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American physicians
African American surgeons
African Americans in medicine
African Americans in the performing arts
Amputation
Hand -- Surgery
Prosthesis
Reimplantation (Surgery)
Skin-grafting
Surgery, Operative
Surgery, Plastic -- United States

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scrapbooks
Slides

Names

Carter, Sylvester J
Grant, Lilla F