

Allen Prescott Collection



**National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2009**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/mbrsrs.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/2009600303>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/eadmbrs.rs009004>

Prepared by Karen Fishman, with assistance from Callie Holmes and Marsha Maguire

Finding aid encoded by Marsha Maguire, 2009
Revised 2023-03

Collection Summary

Title: Allen Prescott collection

Span Dates: 1930-1968

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1933-1948)

Creator: Prescott, Allen

Extent (Textual Materials): 3.5 linear feet (4 boxes, approximately 1,400 items)

Extent (Photographs): 63 photographic prints

Extent (Sound Recordings): 6 sound tape reels

Language: Collection materials are in English

Location: Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2009600303>

Summary: The Allen Prescott Collection consists of sound recordings, photographs, and printed materials pertaining to Prescott's career as a radio personality during the early 1930s to 1970.

Location: RPA 00323-00324 (boxes 1-2); RPC 00007 (box 4); RPD 00011 (box 3)

Location of Sound Recordings: RXA 2480-2485

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Prescott, Allen--Archives.

Prescott, Allen--Photographs.

Prescott, Allen.

Subjects

Home economics.

Titles

Wife saver (Radio program)

Form/Genre

Audiotapes.

Clippings (Information artifacts)

Letters (Correspondence)

Photographic prints.

Publicity photographs.

Radio commercials.

Radio programs.

Radio scripts.

Scrapbooks.

Writings (Document genre)

Occupations

Housewives--Life skills guides.

Radio journalists--Photographs.

Radio journalists.

Radio personalities--Photographs.

Radio personalities.

Collection Acquisition

The collection was donated to the Library of Congress by Raymond A. Mann in 1980.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

The collection was processed by Karen Fishman in November, 2009.

Copyright Status

Restrictions may exist on copying, quoting, or publishing materials included in the collection. For additional information, contact a reference librarian in the Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Access and Restrictions

The Allen Prescott Collection is open for research. Advance notice is required; contact a reference librarian in the Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [Container number, eg., Box 3] or [Audio tape number, eg., RXA 2480], Allen Prescott Collection, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress.

Biographical Note

Allen Prescott (1904-1978) was host of the radio program, *The Wife Saver*, a program offering household hints to housewives several mornings and afternoons a week. His cheery introduction, "Hello, girls," opened the program, and his signature sign-off, "Mrs. Housewife, I hope there's nothing burning," characterized the show's light and breezy style. Listeners from all over the country sent him hundreds of letters a week with household tips in hopes of Prescott reading them on the air.

The Wife Saver aired on New York radio stations WINS and WABC in 1929, moving to NBC's Blue Network in 1932, where it was broadcast for 15 minutes, thrice weekly. In 1933 the show could be heard on early morning time slots. By 1941 the program's name and format changed to *Prescott Presents* and the show aired weekdays for 30 minutes until 1943. In addition to hosting his radio program, Prescott wrote two books, *The Wife-Saver's Candy Recipes* and *Aunt Harriet's Household Hints*.

Allen Prescott began his radio career as a newscaster. According to Thomas DeLong's *Radio Stars*, Prescott was "working as a New York Mirror reporter in 1929, appearing on a WMCA news program with Walter Winchell. By 1931 Prescott was on the air as a WINS newsmen, covering special events such as aerial maneuvers over Manhattan and polo matches from Governors Island." In later years he would host other radio programs, *New York Tonight*, *Say It with Words* and *Crossword Quiz*, taking them with him when he made the transition to television. He also appeared periodically on *For Men Only*, *Mile O'Dimes*, *Uncle Jim's Question Bee*, *Hemisphere Revue*, and a public affairs program, *Once in Every Family*.

His work in television included a six-week run of *The Wife Saver* on NBC in 1947 and as emcee for the locally produced ABC show, *Quizzing the News*, from 1948 to 1949.

Born in St. Louis, Prescott moved to New York at an early age and graduated from the New York Military Academy and the University of Pennsylvania. He served for two years during World War II in the naval air service.

Allen Prescott died January 28, 1978, from a heart attack and left no survivors.

Scope and Content Note

The Allen Prescott Collection consists of sound recordings, photographs, and printed materials pertaining to Prescott's career as a radio personality during the early 1930s to 1970.

Included in the collection are recordings from Prescott's radio programs, manuscript materials, publicity photographs, and two 16mm films (which are located in the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center).

The paper materials date from 1930 to 1968, with the bulk of the materials dating from 1933 to 1948. The collection contains correspondence, fan mail, radio scripts, newspaper clippings, and scrapbooks. It also includes an unpublished novel, short stories, manuscript submissions to publishers, and an interview with Steve Allen, the entertainer.

Collection Arrangement

The collection has been arranged into eight series:

- Series 1: Radio Scripts, 1933-1948, and undated
- Series 2: Household Hints, 1953-1954, and undated
- Series 3: Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated
- Series 4: Newspaper Clippings, 1932, 1938
- Series 5: Writings, undated
- Series 6: Photographs, 1930, 1932, 1949, 1953, and undated
- Series 7: Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939
- Series 8: Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

Description of Series

Container

Series

Series 1. Radio Scripts, 1933-1948 , and undated

Series 1 contains scripts of Prescott's radio programs, The Wife Saver and New York Tonight, as well as scripts for commercials. The Wife Saver scripts date from 1933 to 1945, and the five New York Tonight scripts are from June, 1948. Commercials are for A.E. Staley Mfg. Company and Martinson's Coffee. The miscellaneous scripts folder includes commercials for the Detroit Motor Company, the Girard Company (makers of Dagger Blades), the Gillette Company (maker of Sun Up aftershave), Sta-Puf fabric softener, and Mohawk carpets.

Series 2. Household Hints, 1953-1954 , and undated

The Wife Saver radio program gave housewives helpful advice, much of it that had been sent in from listeners all over the United States. This series contains letters and postcards dating from 1953 and 1954. Memos from station WFIL in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, also contain many recommendations used by Prescott. A booklet, the Wife Saver Handy Book, a collection of household hints published by the Blue Network of NBC in 1950, and one folder of miscellaneous material are included in this series as well.

Series 3. Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930 , 1932 , 1936-1937 , 1968 , and undated

This small series contains correspondence with a listener, as well as letters from radio personalities such as Ted Husing and A.L. Alexander, NBC management, publishers, and his mother, Mrs. J.A. Prescott (one letter). Business invoices are also included.

Series 4. Newspaper Clippings, 1932 , 1938

The majority of clippings in this series is from 1938, when Prescott was mentioned in many newspaper columns, including "In New York," "Radio Dial Log," "Dialing with Doyle," and "Walter Winchell on Broadway." Most newspaper clippings in this series have been photocopied onto acid free paper. Many more newspaper articles about Prescott will be found in his scrapbooks in Series 7.

Series 5. Writings, undated

This series contains typescripts of unpublished novels and short stories. Included are nine chapters from an unpublished novel, The Corinthian Class, four chapters and a synopsis from another novel, Goode Knight, and synopses from short stories, "Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," "Stay in Your Own Bed," and "Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear." There is also one folder of an interview Prescott conducted with entertainer Steve Allen and another folder of material for an unpublished book, The Wife saver, a Household Hand Book and Wives' Companion.

Series 6. Photographs, 1930 , 1932 , 1949 , 1953 , and undated

This series contains 63 photographs. Prescott appears in studio portraits as well as publicity photos, both alone and with other radio personalities and work associates. Personalities include Fran Allison, Rex Stout, Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, and Ace Pancoast. There are also six photos from Prescott's military service during World War II, when he was attached to Fleet Air Wing 4 and stationed in the Aleutian Islands. Photographs located in the oversize box include portraits, two photographs of Prescott and his mother, and many photographs of Prescott posing with unidentified colleagues. Most of the photographs are undated and unidentified.

Series 7. Scrapbooks, 1930-1932 , 1939

This series includes two scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, photographs, and other ephemera. The larger of the two scrapbooks is made from a promotional magazine published by the Studebaker Car Company that has newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and photographs pasted onto its pages. The other scrapbook consists of newspaper clippings from 1939. Both are in very poor condition.

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965 , and undated

A digital version of the audiotapes is available for listening in the Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833. Format of access copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 44.1 kHz, 16 bits per sample (made from preservation copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 96 kHz, 24 bits per sample).

This series consists of six sound recordings on 7-inch reels. Included are undated Wife Saver radio programs and brief announcements, experimental spots, and audition pieces for a program called As a Matter of Fact.

Container List

Container	Contents
Series 1. Radio Scripts, 1933-1948 , and undated	
8 folders	
RPA 00323 (box 1)	
Series 1 contains scripts of Prescott's radio programs, The Wife Saver and New York Tonight, as well as scripts for commercials. The Wife Saver scripts date from 1933 to 1945, and the five New York Tonight scripts are from June, 1948. Commercials are for A.E. Staley Mfg. Company and Martinson's Coffee. The miscellaneous scripts folder includes commercials for the Detroit Motor Company, the Girard Company (makers of Dagger Blades), the Gillette Company (maker of Sun Up aftershave), Sta-Puf fabric softener, and Mohawk carpets.	
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	The Wife Saver, 1933-1935, 1938-1939, 1940
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	The Wife Saver, 1941, 1945
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	The Wife Saver, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	The Wife Saver, A.E. Staley Mfg. Company commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Martinson's Coffee commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Miscellaneous commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Miscellaneous scripts and sample shows, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	New York Tonight, 1948
Series 2. Household Hints, 1953-1954 , and undated	
2 folders	
RPA 00323 (box 1)	
The Wife Saver radio program gave housewives helpful advice, much of it that had been sent in from listeners all over the United States. This series contains letters and postcards dating from 1953 and 1954. Memos from station WFIL in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, also contain many recommendations used by Prescott. A booklet, the Wife Saver Handy Book, a collection of household hints published by the Blue Network of NBC in 1950, and one folder of miscellaneous material are included in this series as well.	
BOX-FOLDER 1/9	Household hints used on program, 1953-1954, and undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Miscellaneous household hints, undated
Series 3. Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930 , 1932 , 1936-1937 , 1968 , and undated	
1 folder	
RPA 00323 (box 1)	
This small series contains correspondence with a listener, as well as letters from radio personalities such as Ted Husing and A.L. Alexander, NBC management, publishers, and his mother, Mrs. J.A. Prescott (one letter). Business invoices are also included.	
BOX-FOLDER 1/11	Correspondence and fan mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated
Series 4. Newspaper Clippings, 1932 , 1938	
1 folder	
RPA 00323 (box 1)	

Series 4. Newspaper Clippings, 1932 , 1938

Container	Contents
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The majority of clippings in this series is from 1938, when Prescott was mentioned in many newspaper columns, including "In New York," "Radio Dial Log," "Dialing with Doyle," and "Walter Winchell on Broadway." Most newspaper clippings in this series have been photocopied onto acid free paper. Many more newspaper articles about Prescott will be found in his scrapbooks in Series 7.

BOX-FOLDER 1/12	Newspaper clippings, 1932, 1938
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Series 5. Writings, undated

8 folders

RPA 00324 (box 2)

This series contains typescripts of unpublished novels and short stories. Included are nine chapters from an unpublished novel, The Corinthian Class, four chapters and a synopsis from another novel, Goode Knight, and synopses from short stories, "Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," "Stay in Your Own Bed," and "Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear." There is also one folder of an interview Prescott conducted with entertainer Steve Allen and another folder of material for an unpublished book, The Wife saver, a Household Hand Book and Wives' Companion.

BOX-FOLDER 2/1	The Wife Saver, additional sections, undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/2	The Corinthian Class, chapters I-V, undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/3	The Corinthian Class, chapters VI-IX, undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/4	Goode Knight, undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/5	"Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/6	"Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear," undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/7	"Stay in Your Own Bed," undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/8	Interview with Steve Allen, undated
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Series 6. Photographs, 1930 , 1932 , 1949 , 1953 , and undated

63 photographic prints (2 folders, 1 oversize box)

RPA 00324 (box 2); RPD 00011 (box 3)

This series contains 63 photographs. Prescott appears in studio portraits as well as publicity photos, both alone and with other radio personalities and work associates. Personalities include Fran Allison, Rex Stout, Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, and Ace Pancoast. There are also six photos from Prescott's military service during World War II, when he was attached to Fleet Air Wing 4 and stationed in the Aleutian Islands. Photographs located in the oversize box include portraits, two photographs of Prescott and his mother, and many photographs of Prescott posing with unidentified colleagues. Most of the photographs are undated and unidentified.

BOX-FOLDER 2/9	Photographs, 1932 and undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/10	Photographs, 1930, 1949, 1953, and undated
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BOX-FOLDER 2/10	Allen Prescott publicity photograph, between 1930 and 1939
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1 photographic print

[Digital content available](#)

BOX 3	Oversize photographs, undated
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Series 7. Scrapbooks, 1930-1932 , 1939

1 oversize box

RPC 00007 (box 4)

Series 7. Scrapbooks, 1930-1932 , 1939

Container	Contents
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This series includes two scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, photographs, and other ephemera. The larger of the two scrapbooks is made from a promotional magazine published by the Studebaker Car Company that has newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and photographs pasted onto its pages. The other scrapbook consists of newspaper clippings from 1939. Both are in very poor condition.

BOX 4	Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939
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Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965 , and undated

6 sound tape reels

RXA 2480-2485

A digital version of the audiotapes is available for listening in the Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833. Format of access copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 44.1 kHz, 16 bits per sample (made from preservation copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 96 kHz, 24 bits per sample).

This series consists of six sound recordings on 7-inch reels. Included are undated Wife Saver radio programs and brief announcements, experimental spots, and audition pieces for a program called As a Matter of Fact.

REEL RXA 2480	The Wife Saver, undated
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Prescott, Allen

1 sound tape reel (20 minutes, 40 seconds)

Title on original container: "Monitor-The Wifesaver."

Consists of a series of household hint "talks," each about one minute long, delivered by Allen Prescott. Every piece begins with the sound of a ringing doorbell and the introductory line, "Hello, girls, this is Allen Prescott, the Wife Saver," and ends with, "Mrs. Housewife, I hope there's nothing burning." No guests and no music are featured, just Prescott delivering household hints with a touch of humor.

Handwritten description on original container: "About 15 one-minute talks."

REEL RXA 2481	As a Matter of Fact, 1965-03-16
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Prescott, Allen

1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 36 seconds)

Allen Prescott introduces himself and announces an Everlasting Dagger Blades commercial that includes descriptions of several historical and technological phenomena, each introduced by the phrase, "As a matter of fact...." In the next track, Prescott introduces himself and delivers a Rock of Ages Bank and Trust Co. commercial that includes descriptions of several historical and technological phenomena, each introduced by the phrase, "As a matter of fact...." The third track consists of a very brief, unidentified segment of an unaccompanied choral performance.

Description on original container: "4 one minute audition (?) talks."

REEL RXA 2482	The Wife Saver, undated
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Prescott, Allen

on 1 sound tape reel (3 minutes, 44 seconds)

Four brief Wife Saver pieces, with a total duration of 03:44.

Wife Saver pieces (about one minute each in duration) each begin with the introduction, "Hello, this is Allen Prescott, the Wife Saver." Household hints, interspersed with wry comments, include suggested methods for keeping "baby" safe while "parked" on the sofa, opening bottles of soda water, hanging wallpaper, and deterring moles.

The Wife Saver material is followed on the tape by two examples of a proposed series entitled As a Matter of Fact.

REEL RXA 2482	As a Matter of Fact, undated
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Prescott, Allen

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965 , and undated

Container

Contents

- on 1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 29 seconds)
Allen Prescott introduces an idea for "a series of fillers" entitled As a Matter of Fact. Similar to the light, comedic treatment of useful information that characterizes his Wife Saver program, Prescott remarks that As a Matter of Fact expands "from the household to a broader field." Two sample pieces include brief descriptions of the use of feathers for money, an ancient game, connecting rods, the secret ballot, and the oldest known fossils of beetles. Both pieces end with the phrase "...as a matter of fact."
The As a Matter of Fact material is preceded on the tape by four brief Wife Saver pieces.
- REEL RXA 2483** The Wife Saver, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (3 minutes, 44 seconds)
The content is identical to The Wife Saver material on the preceding tape, RXA 2482.
- REEL RXA 2483** As a Matter of Fact, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 29 seconds)
The content is identical to As a Matter of Fact material on the preceding tape, RXA 2482.
- REEL RXA 2484** The Wife Saver, undated
Prescott, Allen
1 sound tape reel (9 minutes, 31 seconds)
In the first of two brief Wife Saver programs, announcer Allen Prescott offers a number of household hints, such as how to freshen a black silk dress, freezing nylon stockings for longer wear, whipping cream, and removing lime deposits from tea kettles; also included are commercials for General Electric coffee makers and toasters. In the second program, Prescott offers household hints concerning "our war with inanimate objects," such as coping with "vacuum cleaner fuddle," wearing clip earrings, peeling oranges with a spoon, keeping slacks in shape, keeping "baby" safe when "parked" on the sofa, and serving mussels; commercials are for General Electric portable vacuum cleaners, toasters, and coffee makers.
Description on original container: "2 five-minute shows for General Electric."
- REEL RXA 2485** The Wife Saver experimental spots, undated
Prescott, Allen
1 sound tape reel (15 minutes, 40 seconds)
The tape contains four Wife Saver programs, each less than five minutes in duration, and a separately presented commercial. At the beginning of each program, announcer Allen Prescott introduces himself as the Wife Saver. In the first program, he makes suggestions to use moleskin to make clip earrings more comfortable, peel oranges with a spoon, hang slacks by the pockets to dry, keep "baby" safe when "parked" on the sofa, and button cuffs to the front of a shirt before washing; commercials are for Sta-Puf fabric softener and Sta-Flow spray starch. In the second program, he provides tips on adding hot soup to a cold meal, making a slip-free tie rack, reducing the amount of luggage needed for overseas travel, using eyeliner, peeling cooked eggs, and cleaning a dirty oven with a towel soaked in ammonia; commercials are for Sta-Flow and Sta-Puf.
In the third program, Prescott offers hints on freshening a black silk dress, freezing nylon stockings for longer wear, keeping rabbits away from the garden, whipping cream, removing lime deposits from tea kettles, grating chocolate safely, and keeping moths away from stored yarn; commercials are for Sta-Flow and Blue Raindrops water softener. In the fourth program, which is several minutes shorter than the first three, Prescott offers a household tip on stopping squeaks in doors and delivers a Sta-Flow commercial. The fifth track, not a program, is a 30-second commercial for Sta-Flow.
Description on original container: "15 minutes, audition (?) recording for A.E. Staley" (maker of Sta-Puf and Sta-Flow laundry products, and sponsor of the program).