

Guide to the Fellers Incident Records, 1949-1967

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Collection Summary

Repository:	Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries
Creator:	Vassar College
Title:	Fellers Incident Records
Dates:	1949-1967
Quantity:	0.4 cubic feet (2 boxes)
Abstract:	Materials relating to a dispute between student Nancy Jane Fellers and Vassar College over a grade given by distinguished English Professor Helen Druscilla Lockwood.

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Biographical Note

Nancy Jane Fellers transferred to Vassar College from Earlham College as a junior in 1950. The incident took place at the end of the first semester of Fellers' senior year in 1951. However, it received national attention when Fellers wrote an article entitled "God and Women at Vassar" for *The Freeman* in November 1952. Fellers gave her account of the ordeal claiming that she was graded unfairly because her beliefs clashed with those of Professor Lockwood. As for Nancy Jane Fellers, she returned to Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana where she graduated with her class in June 1952. She went on to become a writer.

As a result of Nancy Fellers' article, Vassar was petitioned with mail from alumnae, students, and parents. Most of the letters were simply requests for more

information on the incident and several gave ringing support to the college in its battle against the accusations. Vassar's replies came from either Sarah Gibson Blanding, the president; John Holmes, secretary to the president; or Gertrude Garnsey, alumnae secretary. All held to the defense that Miss Fellers was not persecuted for her ideals, but rather she was judged according to Vassar's academic standards which she, although given many chances, could not meet.

The Fellers incident would flare up from time to time over the course of 1952-1953 with articles like "Miss Blanding's Dream College" in the *Chicago Tribune*, 31 Oct 1952, "Liberal Education at Vassar" in *The Freeman*, 12 Jan 1953 by Patricia Bozelle, and "Academic Freedom at Vassar" in the *Congressional Record*, 12 Mar 1953. Vassar weathered each storm giving only an occasional press statement to the Associated Press or the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker* in regard to the incident. Most often the sharing of any of the details surrounding the ordeal were kept within the Vassar community.

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Scope and Content Note

Correspondence, clippings, press statements, and speeches relating to a dispute between student Nancy Jane Fellers and Vassar College over a grade given by distinguished English Professor Helen Druscilla Lockwood.

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Subject Headings

Names:

- Fellers, Nancy Jane
- Lockwood, Helen Drusilla, approximately 1891-1971

Organizations:

- Vassar College--Public relations

Subjects:

- Universities and colleges--Complaints against

VCL Categories

- Vassar College Events and Issues

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Encoding Information

Finding aid encoded by Jason Kovari, 17 Mar 2009.

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Fellers Incident Records, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Archives and Special Collections staff.

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Series List

[Series I.](#) Correspondence, 1952-1955

[Series II.](#) Publications, 1949-1967

[Series III.](#) Vassar College Press Statements, 1952-1953

[Series IV.](#) Newspaper Clippings, 1952-1961

[Series V.](#) Speeches, 1952-1953

Container List

SERIES I. Correspondence, 1952-1955	
Letters to Vassar	
Folder 1.1	11 July - 28 Dec 1952 (38 letters, 9 enclosures)
Folder 1.2	6 Jan - 26 Mar 1953 (22 letters, 9 enclosures)
Folder 1.3	6 Apr - 30 June 1953 (43 letters, 11 enclosures)
Folder 1.4	4 July 1953 - 17 Jan 1955 (6 letters, 7 enclosures)
Letters from Vassar	

Folder 1.5	18 Aug - 29 Nov 1952 (37 letters, 1 enclosure)
Folder 1.6	1 Dec 1952 - 29 Jan 1953 (43 letters)
Folder 1.7	2 Feb - 30 May 1953 (33 letters)
Folder 1.8	2 June 1953 - 12 Oct 1954 (28 letters, 2 enclosures)
Folder 1.9	Letters to and from editors, 15 Mar - 5 June 1953 (5 letters)
Folder 1.10	Letters to and from Congressman Reece, 4 Nov 1952 - 22 Jan 1953 (5 letters)
Folder 1.11	Mimeographed letters (6 units)
SERIES II. Publications, 1949-1967	
Folder 2.1	June 1949 - Nov 1952 (5 items, 1 mimeograph)
Folder 2.2	Dec 1952 - Feb 1953 (5 items)
Folder 2.3	12 Mar 1953 - 3 Nov 1967 (5 items)
SERIES III. Vassar College Press Statements, 1952-1953	
Folder 2.4	10 Nov 1952 - 13 Jan 1953 (4 statements)
SERIES IV. Newspaper Clippings, 1952-1961	
Folder 2.5	31 Oct 1952 - 31 Mar 1961 (19 clippings)
SERIES V. Speeches, 1952-1953	
Folder 2.6	3 Nov 1952 - 8 June 1953

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▼ Details

Abstract

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