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Collection Summary

Repository: Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

Creator: Fairservis, Walter Ashlin, 1921-1994

Title: Walter A. Fairservis Papers

Dates: 1931-1994

Quantity: 10 cubic feet (10 boxes)

Abstract: Correspondence, manuscripts, teaching materials, publications, and other papers related to Fairservis's work as a professor, archaeologist, author, and playwright. Of particular note is his correspondence with his family describing his trips overseas.

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Biographical Note

Walter Ashlin Fairservis, Jr. (1921-1994) was an American archaeologist, professor, author, and playwright. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y. to Walter A. Fairservis and actress Edith Yeager, Fairservis traveled the country with his mother and worked as a child actor and performer. During the Second World War, Fairservis served as a lieutenant in Army Intelligence and served in Japan as a member of General Douglas MacArthur's occupation staff. After the war, Fairservis attended Columbia University, where he received both his B.A. and M.A. degrees. He began his archaeological work with American Museum of Natural History in 1949 on an expedition to the Quetta Valley in Pakistan. He went on to direct a number of other expeditions, and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Fairservis joined the Vassar College faculty in 1969 as professor of anthropology. Before his retirement in 1993, he would serve as both Chair of the Anthropology Department and Director of the Asian Studies Program. In 1983, he founded the nonprofit East-West Fusion Theater in his home of Sharon, CT. His wife, Jan (Sutherland) Fairservis, was an artist and illustrator.

He died in 1994, at the age of 73.

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Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of correspondence, manuscripts, teaching materials, and other papers related to Fairservis's work as a professor, archaeologist, author, and playwright. Of particular note is his correspondence with his family describing his trips overseas. Also of note is the material relating to his training in Japanese

language and culture for the military, as well as the correspondence from Hoyt Van Buren to Jan Fairservis while he was training for the U.S. Army Air Force.

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Arrangement

This collection has not been fully processed. If research proves difficult at the current level of processing, arrangements may be made to provide further arrangement and description work for the collection. [Top](#)

Access and Use

Access

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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Related Material

Related Materials

- [The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University holds a collection of Fairservis's archaeological research materials.](#)
- [The Penn Museum Archives at the University of Pennsylvania also hold a small collection of Fairservis's papers.](#)
- Vassar College Anthropology Department Records

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Subject Headings

Names:

- Fairservis, Jan

Organizations:

- American Museum of Natural History
- Military Intelligence Service Language School (U.S.)
- United States. War Department. Military Intelligence Service. Pacific Unit
- Vassar College--Faculty

Subjects:

- Anthropologists
- Anthropology--Study and teaching
- Archaeologists
- Archaeology--Study and teaching
- Theater—Japan
- World War, 1939-1945—Japan

Places:

- Afghanistan--Description and travel
- Pakistan--Description and travel

Document Types:

- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Notebooks
- Photographs
- Printed ephemera

VCL Categories:

- Anthropology and Anthropologists
- East Asia, South Asia, and India
- Theater, Drama and Film
- Travel
- Vassar College
- War and War Crimes

[Top](#)**Encoding Information**

Encoded by Laura Streett, December 2009.

Updated by Emma Gronbeck, November 2025.

[Top](#)**Administrative Information****Preferred Citation**

Walter A. Fairservis Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Processed by Laura Streett, December 2009.

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was the gift of Jan Fairservis to Vassar College in 2005 (M2006-019). Other materials were transferred from the Peabody Museum in 2007 (M2007-006) after being separated from their collection, which was a 2004 gift of Jan Fairservis. Some materials from this accession were later returned to the Peabody Museum in 2010.

The videotapes were of gift of Teviot Fairservis (M2011-016).

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Series List

[Series I.](#) Biographical Material, 1931-1982 (Boxes 1 and 8)

[Series II.](#) Correspondence, 1939-1992 (Boxes 1-2)

[Series III.](#) Teaching Material, 1968-1989 (Boxes 3 and 8)

[Series IV.](#) Writings and Research, 1994, undated (Boxes 3-4 and 8)

[Series V.](#) Drama and Theater, undated (Boxes 4-6 and 8-10)

[Series VI.](#) Edith Yeager Papers, undated (Box 6)

[Series VII.](#) Japanese Work for the U.S. Military, 1944-1947 (Box 7)

Container List

SERIES I. Biographical Material, 1939-1992

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|-----------------|---|
| Folder 1.1 | Genealogy |
| Folder 1.2 | Fairservis, Walter A. — General |
| Folder 1.3 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Clippings |
| Folder 1.4 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Track in U.S. Army, 1945-1946 |
| Folder 1.5 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Michigan Track Team, 1944-1945 |
| Folders 1.6-1.7 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Athletics |
| Folder 1.8 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Trip on the Mauretania, 1931 |
| Folder 1.9 | Fairservis, Walter A. — Mt. Vernon High School Hall of Fame, 1982 |

Box 8 Fairservis, Walter A. — Columbia diploma
 Folder 1.10 Fairservis, Walter A. — Miscellaneous
 Folders 1.11-1.12 Fairservis, Jan
 Folders 1.13-1.14 Fairservis Family — House Plans
 Folder 1.15 Fairservis Family — Christmas Cards
 Folders 1.16-1.20 Fairservis Family — Miscellaneous
 Folder 1.21 Ephemera
 Folder 8.18 Photographs
 Box 8 Undeveloped film

SERIES II. Correspondence, 1939-1992

Folders 1.22-1.26 Fairservis, Walter A. to Fairservis, Jan, 1947-1976, undated
 Folders 1.27-1.28 Fairservis, Jan to Fairservis, Walter A., 1947-1948
 Folder 2.1 Fairservis, Jan to Fairservis, Walter A., 1949-1964, undated
 Folders 2.2-2.5 Fairservis, Walter A. to Yeager, Edith, circa 1939 - 1946, undated
 Folders 2.6-2.7 Yeager, Edith to Fairservis, Walter A., 1941-1955, undated
 Folder 2.8 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Fairservis, Walter A. to Fairservis, Jan, 1949
 Folder 2.9 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Fairservis, Jan to Fairservis, Walter A., 1949
 Folder 2.10 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Fairservis, Jan to Family, 1950 - 1951
 Folder 2.11 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Family to Fairservis, Jan and Walter A., 1950 - 1951
 Folder 2.12 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Yeager, Edith to Fairservis, Walter A., 1949 - 1951
 Folder 2.13 Afghanistan / Pakistan Trip — Miscellaneous correspondence and other items, 1949 - 1951
 Folders 2.14-2.16 Miscellaneous friends and family to Fairservis, Walter A., 1936 - 1982
 Folder 2.17 Miscellaneous friends and family to Fairservis, Jan
 Folder 2.18 Miscellaneous friends and family to Fairservis, Jan and Walter A.
 Folder 2.19 Fairservis, Jan to family
 Folder 2.20 The Sutherland Family
 Folder 2.21 Fairservis children — to and from
 Folders 2.22-2.23 Van Buren, Hoyt to Fairservis, Jan, 1943-1946
 Folder 2.24 Fairservis, Walter A. to Miscellaneous
 Folder 2.25 U.S. Army
 Folder 2.21 Miscellaneous Professional — Fairservis, Walter A.
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 Folder 3.2 Benton, William, 1963-1964
 Folder 3.3 O'Donnell, C. Donald,
 Folder 3.4 Lewin, Albert, 1959-1966

- Folder 3.5 Yeager, Edith - Miscellaneous
- Folder 3.6 "Aunt Norma" to Yeager, Edith
- Folder 3.7 Poultny Bigelow to Yeager, Edith, 1945-1952
- Folder 3.8 Miscellaneous
- Folder 3.9 Transcripts of WWII letters of Brent Winn, sent to Walter A. Fairservis by Janette Winn, 1992

SERIES III. Teaching Material, 1968-1989

- Folders 3.10-3.11 Vassar College — Correspondence
- Folders 3.12-3.15 Vassar College — Course Material
- Folder 8.17 Vassar College — Course Material
- Folder 3.16 Vassar College — "Projects for Beginning Classes"
- Folder 3.17 Vassar College — Chinese Program Annual Reports, 1968-1989
- Folders 3.18-3.19 Vassar College — Miscellaneous
- Folder 3.20 New York University
- Folder 3.21 University of Washington
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- Folder 3.24 "The American Museum of Natural History and I"
- Folders 3.25-3.29 "Barre, A Community in Photographs"
- Folder 3.30 Black Glaze Analysis
- Folder 4.1 "Education in the United States," 1994
- Folders 4.2-4.3 Education, Reading and Writing project
- Folders 4.4-4.5 "Collections of children's drawings and early writing examples..."
- Folder 4.6 "Fever"
- Folder 4.7 "Josiah" (poem)
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- Folder 4.8 Letters to newspapers
- Folder 4.9 "The Lion"
- Folder 4.10 "Netsuke"
- Folder 4.11 "New Ways in the New World," with Jan Fairservis
- Folder 4.12 "Once We Laughed Together"
- Folder 4.13 Review of Possehl book
- Folder 8.2 "The Savior of Kyoto"
- Folder 4.14 "Tales out of Hell and Heaven"
- Folder 4.15 The theatre and archaeology

- Folder 4.16 "Voices of Veterans"
- Folder 4.17 "Wage Peace"
- Folder 4.18 Notes on ritual and drama
- Folder 4.19 Unidentified manuscript
- Folder 8.3 Unidentified manuscript
- Folder 4.20 Class notes [?]
- Folder 4.21 W.A.F.'s library
- Folder 4.22 Childhood writings and school material
- Folder 4.23 Miscellaneous

SERIES V. Drama and Theater, undated

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- Folder 4.25 Plays — "Drums at Yale"
- Folders 4.26-4.29 Plays — "Edith"
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- Folders 5.1-5.7 Plays — "Forgotten Spirit"
- Folder 8.4 Plays — "The Great Goddess and the Nine Wonders"
- Folder 5.8 Plays — "The History of the United States..."
- Folder 8.5 Plays — "The History of the United States..."
- Folder 8.6 Plays — "The House of [?]"
- Folder 5.9 Plays — Ikari notes
- Folder 8.7 Plays — "Josiah"
- Folder 5.10 Plays — "Kichibi"
- Folders 5.11-5.14 Plays — "The Last Pipes of Arcady"
- Folder 8.8 Plays — "The Last Pipes of Arcady"
- Folders 5.15-5.16 Plays — "Manifest Destiny"
- Folder 5.17 Plays — "Mikayo"
- Folders 5.18-5.20 Plays — "Nathan Hale"
- Folder 5.21 Plays — "Polo Grounds"
- Folder 8.9 Plays — "Saul"
- Folders 8.10-8.11 Plays — "Snake Story"
- Folder 5.22 Plays — "The Sword of Tamerlane"
- Folder 8.12 Plays — "Wagon Train West"
- Folder 5.23 Plays — "Yamashita, Yamashita"
- Folder 5.24 Plays — "Voices of Veterans"
- Folder 5.25 Plays — "The Way of the World"
- Folder 5.26 Plays — Miscellaneous
- Folder 5.35 Plays — Miscellaneous notes

Folders 5.27-5.28 Plays — Unidentified

Folder 8.13 Plays — Unidentified

Folder 5.29 Plays — Miscellaneous playbills

Folder 6.4 Plays — Miscellaneous notes

Folders 8.14-8.15 Plays — Miscellaneous notes

Folder 6.5 Plays — Copyright certificates

Folder 5.30 BBC TV — "Buried Treasure"

Folder 5.31 Miscellaneous CBS productions

Folder 5.32 CBS TV — "Man in the Mist"

Folders 5.33-5.34 CBS TV — "Adventure"

Folder 5.36 Radio — "The Second Hand"

Folder 6.1 Radio — Audition pieces

Folder 6.2 Radio? — "The Big Story"

Folder 6.3 Radio? — "The Last of the Samuels"

Folder 6.6 A.C.T.

Folder 6.7 Actors studio

Folder 6.8 Arnold, Benedict

Folder 6.9 Asian Theatre Journal

Folder 6.10 Breese, Gerald

Folder 6.11 Calabro, Tony

Folder 6.12 Center Spot Players

Folder 6.13 Dramatic Publishing Co.

Folder 6.14 Drama — Critic's Notices

Folder 6.15 East-West Fusion Theatre

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Folder 6.18 Ideas — Plays

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Folder 6.20 Janney, Ben

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Folder 6.24 Miller, Arthur

Folder 6.25 Nakemura, Masami

Folder 6.26 Opera acting

Folder 6.27 Pan-Asian Rep.

Folder 6.28 Parlakian, Nishan

Folder 6.29 Philips, Jud

Folder 6.30 The Pyramid

Folder 6.31 Seattle Repertory Theatre

Folder 6.32 Sharon Playhouse

Folder 6.33 Stage Design — Jan Fairservis

Folder 8.16	Straight Wharf Theatre — 1951 season
Folder 6.34	Taylor, Clyde
Folder 6.35	Theatre — Religious
Folder 6.36	Theatre — Sides and scenes
Folder 6.37	Theatre Northwest
Folder 6.38	Theatre One
Folder 6.39	Vassar Theatre
Folder 6.40	The Wasp
Folder 6.41	Westchester County Civic Opera
Folder 6.42	Williams, Annie-Laurie
Folder 6.42	Copyrights
Folder 6.42	Correspondence — Miscellaneous theatre-related
Boxes 9-10	Videotapes of various performances

SERIES VI. Edith Yeager Material, undated

Box 6	2 notebooks of Yeager writings
Box 6	Yeager writings, including documents from her YMCA service in France in WWI
Box 6	Miscellaneous Yeager material

SERIES VII. Japanese Work for the U.S. Military, 1944-1947

Box 7	Ken Edge — Book, thoughts on Japan, 1947
Box 7	Letters and printed ephemera collected while stationed in Tokyo, 1946
Box 7	Materials from Military Intelligence School, Minneapolis, including modern conversational Japanese exercises and interrogation tests, 1944
Box 7	Notebooks and other materials from Japanese language course, University of Michigan, 1944
Box 7	Official indictment against Japan and Japanese individuals, International Tribunal Against the Far East, 1945
Box 7	Political writings in Japanese circa 1944
Box 7	"Propaganda for Japanese Consumption," prepared by MISLS, Fort Snelling, MN 1945 Apr
Box 7	"Reproduction of a Captured Japanese Diary," Military Intelligence Service Language School, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 1945 Jul 11
Box 7	Russian interrogation of Japanese, 1946

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