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Staff, MSRC, "Stewart, Ollie" (2015). *Manuscript Division Finding Aids*. 188.
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Ollie Stewart Papers
201-1

Prepared by
Zora Felton
September 1999

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

SCOPE NOTE

Ollie Anderson Stewart (1906-1977), journalist, was the first African American war correspondent to go abroad during World War II. A prolific writer, he worked for the *Afro-American Newspapers*, Baltimore, Maryland. Beginning in 1941 he sent regular columns covering the African, French, Italian, and German sectors of the war. His coverage included that of the all-Black 99th Pursuit Squadron.

After the war ended, Stewart returned to the United States. He remained only until 1949 when, because of his intense dislike of discrimination as well as his disillusionment with the state of race relations at home, he returned to Europe and lived in Paris for over 25 years. Stewart continued to contribute to the *Afro-American*, but also became a freelance writer. His columns of this period provide a unique, thought-provoking, sometimes frustrating, and often humorous glimpse of his life and times. Katherine Young of New York acted as his agent and representative from 1973 until 1976 and succeeded in getting some of his articles in print.

His last major project was a biography on the life and career of his friend Josephine Baker, who died at the age of 68 in 1975. The collection contains correspondence from Baker, who signed her letters to him, "Your big sis, Joe." Stewart had written articles about Baker, and his efforts resulted in a file of news clippings (some from French newspapers), research notes and correspondence, some of which are in this collection.

SCOPE NOTE continued

Notable among the correspondents from whom he solicited information was Mercer Cook, an author, professor of romance languages at Howard University, and later, ambassador to several African countries. Cook provided invaluable recollections of his associations with Baker. (His father, Will Marion Cook (1869-1944), was the famed violinist, composer and orchestral director.)

The correspondence further reflects letters from friends and rejection as well as acceptance letters from publishers. Included also are notes from various well known personalities who wrote to thank him for having been included in his columns.

Beginning in 1964 Stewart waged a heated written trans-Atlantic battle with the Social Security Administration office in Baltimore to gain what he believed to be his rightful benefits. It was not until 1969 that the matter was resolved in his favor with a back payment along with regular monthly checks. These same letters also provide a glimpse on continuing health problems, dwindled income (\$425.00 in 1968), and the threat of eviction.

He continued to write and submitted his last column to the *Afro-American* about a month before his death in 1977.

The collection covers intermittent periods from 1953-1977, and was transferred to MSRC by a brother Dr. James W. Stewart in 1977-78.

Biographical Data

Ollie Anderson Stewart

- 1906 May 18 Born to the Rev. James D. and Mrs. Mary Stewart in Gibsland, LA.
- 1930 Earned a B.A. degree from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University. Subsequently worked for a number of newspapers, including *Southern* magazine, the *Southern Workman*, the *Globe* and *Opportunity* magazines.
- 1942 Went abroad as a war correspondent for the *Afro-American* Newspapers, covering the African, Italian, French and German sectors of World War II.
- 1945 Returned to the United States.
- 1949 Returned to Europe where he made Paris, France his home.
- 1960 Covered Olympic games in Rome while on assignment for the *Baltimore Afro-American*.
- 1977 May 16 Died of a heart attack in Atlanta at the age of 7. Buried in Gibsland, LA.

Series Description

- Series A**
200-1 **Personal Papers**
These papers include correspondent credentials, medical and income information, business cards, a college alumni citation, an obituary,

news clippings about Stewart and news clippings about Josephine Baker.

Series B

200-1

Correspondence

Includes correspondence with Josephine Baker, Mercer Cook, his agent Katherine Young, the Baltimore Social Security Administration, *Afro-American* newspaper colleagues, potential publishers and editors, and friends.

Series C

200-1

Writings by Ollie Stewart

Contains articles and columns written from about 1952 to 1976, some written for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and others for newspapers and magazines in France and abroad.

Series D

200-1

Photographs

persons.

Included here are photographs of Ollie Stewart and unidentified

Container List

Series A: Personal Papers

Box Folder

- 200-1
- 1 Correspondent credentials; French visa Business card for Ollie Stewart's American-in-Paris Parfumerie; price list for perfumes; Medical and income information; Masonic lodge membership; Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University Alumni Citation, \ 1962; insurance policy
 - 2 Business Cards
 - 3 Obituary
 - 4 Writings about Ollie Stewart
 - 5 Newsclippings about Josephine Baker

Series B: Correspondence

6 A-M

- Aggrey, Rudolph G., 1974
- American Hospital of Paris, 1975, 1976
- Aveilhe, Art, 1976
- Boone, Raymond H., 1977
- Bunche, Ralph J., 1960
- Burns, Ben, 1953 (March 4 and March 31)
- Carter, Art, 1967
- Catchpole, Terry, 1974(?)
- Cheshire, Leonard, 1973
- Cloolis (?), Mildred (?), 1976
- de Caumont La Force, Comtesse, 1976
- Diggs, Charles C., Jr. 1957

Series B: Correspondence continued

Box Folder
200-1 6 A-M

Dixon, Olivia P. (Chinkie), 1976
Frank (?), Martine, 1969
Graves, Mrs. H. Whitfield (Peggy), 1974
Henderson, Freddy S., 1973
Jones, Mr. and Mrs. William Bowdoin, 1975
Lipsitch, Lester S., M.D., 1977
Mackay, C.W., 1957
McKitterick, Miss G., 1976
Miller, Michael, 1976
Murphy, Carl, 1957

7 Baker, Josephine, 1954, 1957

8 Cook, Mercer, 1971, 1972, 1975

9 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security
Administration, 1964, 1966, 1968-1969

10 N-Z

Newson, Moses J., 1977 (January 31 and April 15)
Oskam, Robert, 1975
Overseas Press Club, ca. 1970
Perchat, J.Y., 1975
Pitts, Dr. and Mrs. Nathan A., 1975,
Players International Publications, [Kyla (?)], November and December
1975
Revay, George, 1955
Roper, Elmo, 1960
Sam ?, Afro-American Newspapers, ca. 1970s
Stewart, Ollie to Miller, Michael, 1976
Stewart, Ollie to Hammond, Bert, 1975

Container List

Series B: Correspondence continued

Box Folder

200-1 10 N-Z

Vreeland, Diana, 1975
Weinstock, Ralph, 1975
Wells, Brian G. 1976

11 Young, Katherine, 1973 - 1975

Series C: Writings by Ollie Stewart

Box Folder

200-1 12 A-H

"A Pipesmoker's Town," 1960s (?)
"A Real Test of Driving," February 1972
"A Yank and a Frank Talk about Paris Then and Now, 1952
"April in Paris," 1953
"Bedtime Losers," March 1966
"Big Splash in a Diplomatic World," July 1975
"Color Doesn't Make a Brother," March 1974
"Don't Give Your Right Name," handwritten, n.d.
"He Likes His Beer Warm," 1954
"Fighting Josephine," 1974
"4 Stars on Black Shoulders," 1976
"France and the Good Life," July 1966
"Hello Somewhere, Goodbye France!" (Also titled
"When You're Moving Out" and "Going Home"), November 1966
"How to Face a Crisis," January 1961

13 I-R

"I Reached for My Gas Mask, September 1975
"It's Still Easy to Lose Your Head," November 1960

Container List

Series C: Writings by Ollie Stewart continued

Box
200-1

Folder
13-I-R

[”Impact of the New UNESCO Arab-Afro-Asian Bloc”], December 1974
"Langston Hughes: Kinship of Mankind in Humor," n.d.
"Josephine Baker," outline of article, 1975
"Josephine's Paris Debut: Untold Tales," outline, n.d.
"Langston Hughes: Kinship of Mankind in Humor"
"New Jobs for French Blacks," July 1974
"New U.S. Military Look,," December 1965
"No Chanel No. Five for French Women," 1954
"No Illegitimate Children in France," 1954
"Ollie Stewart Opens Paris Perfume Shop," n.d.
"Overseas Kinfolks, August 1974
"Real Black Power," March 1975
"Report from Europe," 1961
"Report from Europe--U.S. and UNESCO," December 1976

14 S-Z

"She Dances at 54 to Feed Her ll Children," 1960
"The Martin Luther King I Know," 1964 (?)
"Right Man in the Right Place," September 1974
"UNESCO and Money," March 1975
["Unfaithful French Wives"], November 1974
"Unpredictable Females," unfinished, with other titles: "The Hustler,"
"Paris Hustler," "Bird of Paradise," "Ever Loving Neighbor,"
"Once-a-Week Neighbor," n.d.
"What's that Name Again," March 1972; abbreviated version, 1974
"When a Black Travels in Europe," January 1974
"Winning Friends for Jazz," 1958
"Would You Believe it, Doctor," - Medical Facts, n.d.
"You Can't Slice Equality," unfinished, handwritten, n.d.
"__?__ Unknown Soldier," n.d.
Untitled articles

Container List

Series D: Photographs

Box	Folder
200-1	1 Stewart, Ollie, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, n.d. Stewart, Ollie, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, n.d. Stewart, Ollie, n.d. Stewart, Ollie, n.d. Stewart, Ollie, n.d. Stewart, Ollie and unidentified woman, MSRC, n.d. Stewart, Ollie and unidentified woman, n.d. Stewart, Ollie and [Maps], 1971 Unidentified man in uniform, 1950 Unidentified Frenchman, n.d.