



Dalhousie University Archives

Finding Aid - René de Villiers fonds (MS-2-746, Boxes 1-35)

Generated by the Archives Catalogue and Online Collections on January 23, 2017

Dalhousie University Archives
6225 University Avenue, 5th Floor, Killam Memorial Library
Halifax
Nova Scotia
Canada
B3H 4R2
Telephone: 902-494-3615
[Email: archives@dal.ca](mailto:archives@dal.ca)
<http://dal.ca/archives>
<http://findingaids.library.dal.ca/rene-de-villiers-fonds>

René de Villiers fonds

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	4
Notes	4
Access points	5

Summary information

Repository:	Dalhousie University Archives
Title:	René de Villiers fonds
Reference code:	MS-2-746, Boxes 1-35
Date:	1881-1989 (date of creation)
Language:	English
Physical description:	5 m of textual records and other material (35 boxes)
Note [generalNote]:	Preferred citation: [Identification of item], René de Villiers fonds, MS-2-746, Box [box number], Folder [folder number], Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

René Marquard de Villiers was a journalist, author, historian, newspaper and magazine editor, as well as a liberal parliamentarian and activist in the Republic of South Africa. He was born in Winburg, Orange Free State in 1910, the same year that the Union was established. On his mother's side, he was related to Leo Marquard, one of the important political figures of the time. On his father's side, he was related to the de Villiers clan, which traces its roots in South Africa back to the 17th century.

He was educated at Grey College and then at Grey University College in Bloemfontein, where he studied law. After graduating, he was offered a job at the office of the Judge President of Orange Free State, but turned instead to journalism and took a job as a cub reporter at *The Friend*, one of the *Argus* newspapers, in January 1930. He then served on the staff of *The Farmer's Weekly* for one year. Between 1934 and 1935, he went to England to study international relations at the prestigious London School of Economics. After returning to Africa, he resumed his job at *The Friend* and became its News Editor in 1939. In 1944, he joined the staff of *The Forum*, a weekly news review founded by J. H. Hofmeyer, and was appointed Editor three years later. In 1949 he left *The Forum* to join the editorial team of *The Star*, the main English-language daily in Johannesburg. He returned to serve as Editor of *The Friend* in December of that same year.

In October 1957, he accepted the position of Senior Assistant Editor of *The Daily News* based in Durban. A little over three years later (January 1961), he was appointed Editor. He was appointed Senior Assistant Editor of *The Star* in January 1962, serving under J. W. Patten. Upon Patten's retirement, de Villiers assumed the editorship of the paper and remained in that capacity until his retirement in 1970. From 1972 to 1973, however, de Villiers served a brief term as Editor of *Optima*. He was also responsible for editing the second volume of *Better than They Knew*, a multi-authored scholarly work on the contributions of English-speakers to South Africa. As well, he contributed to the *Oxford History of South Africa*.

In April 1974, after being urged by friends, de Villiers came out of retirement and sought election as a member of the South African Parliament, Cape Town. He won his seat as a Progressive Party candidate in the district of Parktown, and became the party's press and media critic, as well as the spokesman on domestic affairs. In May 1975, he was instrumental in the merging of the Progressive and Reform parties. This resulted in the creation of the Progressive Reform Party, which later became the official opposition. In 1977, after only a single term, de Villiers retired from politics.

Throughout his professional life, de Villiers was active as a member of the South African Institute of Race Relations, which was dedicated to the goal of fighting racial discrimination and prejudice in South Africa. He served as editor of the Race Relations News, the Institute's official periodical. After retirement from Parliament, he served as Regional Chairman of the Institute's Cape Western district (1977-1979). In January 1980, he was elected President of the Institute for a two-year term.

De Villiers was a passionate advocate for freedom of the press, and throughout his life he spoke frequently on the need for the press to be unhindered by governments or individuals. He defended the press from attacks by national politicians who believed that reporters and editors were unduly influenced by political or other such interests. In June 1955 he testified before an official commission on the press in South Africa on this issue.

In April 1978 de Villiers was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, and he later accepted a Fellowship from Trent University in Peterborough, ON.

De Villiers was married to Grace Moira Franklin in December 1937. The couple had two children: a daughter, Inez Dorothy, and a son, Marq Antoine.

Custodial history

The fonds was donated to the Dalhousie Archives by René de Villiers' son Marq.

Scope and content

The fonds contains considerable material from René de Villiers' time as an editor and politician.

The fonds contains records on associations and clubs, press and media, historical publications, urban problems, Marquard family papers, manuscripts, correspondence, biographical materials, speeches & editorials, politics, publications, photographs, and miscellaneous materials.

The fonds includes ca. 123 photographs, almost all black and white, 7 posters, 2 audio reels, 2 maps, and 1 painting.

Notes

Title notes

Restrictions on access

There are no access restrictions on these materials. All materials are open for research.

Conditions governing use

Materials do not circulate and must be used in the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room. Materials may be under copyright. Contact departmental staff for guidance on reproduction.

Finding aids

A detailed finding aid is available onsite.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published

Access points

- Correspondence (subject)
- Editors (subject)
- Family trees (subject)
- Free Press and fair trial (subject)
- Journalism (subject)
- Manuscripts (subject)
- Personal archives (subject)
- Photographs (subject)
- Politicians (subject)
- South Africa--Politics and government (subject)
- Speeches, addresses, etc. (subject)

Collection holdings
