



Frank Eschen Collection (S0570)

Collection Number: S0570

Collection Title: Frank Eschen Collection

Dates: 1927-1993

Creator: Eschen, John Francis, 1909-1960

Abstract: The Frank Eschen Collection contains correspondence, scripts, newspaper clippings, and photographs regarding the career of St. Louis radio and television broadcaster Frank Eschen. Also included in the collection is a copy of Frank Eschen's son, Tom Eschen's, dissertation titled, *The Freeze and Beyond: The History of St. Louis Television, A Survey, 1947-1960*.

Collection Size: 0.04 cubic foot
(27 folders, 1 cassette tape, 220 photographs)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Rights & Reproductions](#) on the Society's website for more information about reproductions and permission to publish.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Frank Eschen Collection* (S0570); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the WHMC by Tom Eschen on November 18, 1993 (Accession No. SA3139).

Notes: Please note that this collection has been minimally processed and has not been heavily indexed.

Alternate Forms Available: Some of the photographs have been digitized and are available online at: <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/search/searchterm/S0570>

Processed by: Processed by Zelli Fischetti, July 1996. Finding aid revised by Rachael Heriford, February 2024.

Biographical Note:

John Francis “Frank” Eschen was born July 30, 1909, in Hannibal, Missouri, to John H and Frances White Eschen. Throughout his childhood, Eschen lived in Pennsylvania, Alabama, and Singapore before eventually relocating back to Clayton, Missouri, and graduating high school in 1928. From 1928 to 1932, Eschen attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, where he obtained a degree in journalism. While attending the University of Missouri, Eschen worked his first radio job at the local KFRU radio station in Columbia. After graduating, Eschen relocated to St. Louis in 1933 and briefly worked as a lumber salesman before continuing his career as a media broadcaster at WIL radio.

After becoming an announcer on KSD radio in 1935, he worked as a newscaster, sports reporter, and director of Special News Events. After the outbreak of World War II, Eschen enlisted in the Army, where he served with a public relations unit from 1943 to 1945. Eschen also served at Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois. In February 1946, Eschen accompanied St. Louis Archbishop John J. Glennon during his installation as a Cardinal in Rome, Italy. While in Europe, Eschen also covered the ongoing Nuremberg trials and the sudden death of Cardinal Glennon in Dublin, Ireland, on March 9, 1946.

After returning to the United States, Eschen married the widowed Helen Bernadine Graham Weber (1919-1978) on September 3, 1946. In addition to Helen Eschen’s first child, Carole M. (1943-), from her first marriage, the couple had four additional children: John Bernard (1948-), James Joseph (1949-), Mary Frances (1950-), and Thomas Michael Eschen (1953-).

Eschen became a pioneer of television in St. Louis after anchoring the first broadcast of KSD-TV on February 8, 1947. Throughout the rest of his career, Eschen traveled throughout the United States and Europe to cover news, sports, and special events for KSD, KSD-TV, and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Eschen covered notable events such as the 1947 Centralia mine explosion, the West Frankfort mine disaster in 1951, the annual Veiled Prophet parade and ball, and the capture of the Bobby Greenlease kidnapers. He also made direct broadcasts from Democratic and Republican political conventions and the 1949, 1953, and 1957 inaugurations of President Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. In addition to broadcasting, Eschen made numerous guest appearances on NBC programs such as *Today* and the game show *Who Said That?*

Aside from his career in television and radio, Eschen was an active member of the Catholic church in St. Louis. He served as president of the Serra Club of St. Louis, which fosters Catholic religious vocations, and a leader of the Third Order of St. Francis at St. Charles Borromeo Church in St. Louis. Frank Eschen died in University City, Missouri, on March 25, 1960. The St. Louis Radio Hall of Fame inducted Frank Eschen as a member on January 3, 2005.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following 3 series:

Papers
Photographs
Oral History

Scope and Content Note:

Papers

The Papers series contains correspondence, newspaper clippings, speeches, and scripts documenting Frank Eschen's high school, college, and military experience and his subsequent radio and television career in St. Louis. Also included in this series is Tom Eschen's dissertation on the history of St. Louis television titled *The Freeze and Beyond: The History of St. Louis Television, A Survey, 1947-1960*. The materials have been arranged chronologically from 1927 to 1993.

Photographs

This series contains 228 photographs, primarily chronicling Eschen's broadcasting career. The images depict Eschen interviewing political figures such as Stuart Symington and Dwight D. Eisenhower, attending banquets with individuals such as Eleanor Roosevelt and St. Louis mayor Bernard F. Dickman, and filming segments for KSD-TV. The photographs have been arranged numerically by label number.

Oral History

This series contains a 1995 oral history featuring Tom Eschen discussing his father, Frank Eschen. The materials in the series have been maintained in its original order.

Container List:

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Box 001 f. 1	Highschool material, 1927
f. 2	Playbills for productions in which Frank Eschen acted, 1931-1933
f. 3	KWK radio magazine, 1941
f. 4	Military service material, 1942-1946
f. 5	Material from trip with Cardinal Glennon,
f. 6	Newspaper and magazine articles about Frank Eschen, 1946-1986
f. 7	Radio and television scripts and memos, 1946-1956
f. 8	Municipal Opera reviews, 1947-1948
f. 9	Presidential inauguration, 1949
f. 10	Correspondence, 1950-1960
f. 11	Radio Correspondents Association annual dinner in honor of the President program, 1950
f. 12	Newspaper and magazine articles, 1950-1993
f. 13	TWA certificate, 1951
f. 14	Speeches, no date
f. 15	Program schedules and proposal for program, no date

- f. 16 Sympathy correspondence, 1960
- f. 17 *The Freeze and Beyond: The History of St. Louis Television, A Survey, 1947-1960*
- f. 18 Drawing of Frank Eschen by Daniel Fitzpatrick, no date
- f. 19-26 Photographs, 570.1-570.220, no date
- f. 27 Oral history interview with Tom Eschen, 1995

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