

[Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library](#)

[Karl Meyer Papers](#)

MEYER, KARL, 1899-1990.

Karl Meyer papers, 1929-2000 (bulk 1932-1990)

.85 cubic feet (2 boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 1 folder)

#M-0134

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Karl Meyer, biochemist, was born September 4, 1899 to Ludwig and Ida Aaron Meyer in Kerpen, near Cologne, Germany. He received his medical degree in 1924 from the University of Cologne and after an internship there entered the University of Berlin where he studied chemistry in the laboratory of Otto Meyerhof. He was awarded the doctorate in 1927 and then did further study with Richard Kuhn at the Swiss Federal Polytechnic Institute in Zurich and with Fritz Haber at the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute für Physikalische Chemie in Berlin.

In 1930, Meyer accepted a position in the laboratory of Herbert M. Evans at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was assistant professor of experimental biology. Meyer was dismissed abruptly by Evans in 1932 for financial reasons. The next year he joined the faculty of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons as assistant professor of biochemistry in the department of ophthalmology and chemist to the Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. He became associate professor in 1942 and in 1948 switched to the department of medicine where he reached full professor in 1954. Meyer retired in 1966 and was made emeritus professor in 1967. From 1967 to 1976 he was professor of biochemistry in the Belfer Graduate School of Yeshiva University.

Meyer's primary research interest was in acidic mucopolysaccharides found in connective tissue. In 1935 he isolated hyaluronic acid from the vitreous humor and several years later isolated chondroitin sulfate. He and his associates isolated a third mucopolysaccharide, keratosulfate, in 1953. After he joined the department of medicine in 1948, Meyer did important research in rheumatoid arthritis, aging and Marfan's syndrome.

Meyer received numerous awards and honors: the Albert Lasker Award (1956), the T. Duckett Jones Memorial Award of the Helen Hay Whitney Foundation (1959), the Pasteur Medal of the Institut Pasteur (1959), the Van Slyke Award of the Society of Clinical Chemists (1972), and the Medal of the New York Academy of Medicine (1981), among others. He received the Distinguished Service Award of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1983 and was awarded honorary doctor of science degrees from Uppsala University (1977) and Columbia University (1986).

Meyer died on May 18, 1990 leaving a wife, Marthe, and two children.

ORGANIZATION: Organized in four series: I. Subject/Correspondence Files; II. Photographs; III. Oversize materials; IV. Accession 2021.011.

SCOPE AND CONTENT: The Meyer Papers include correspondence, biographical materials, photographs, and certificates and awards. The bulk of the correspondence dates from the 1930s and relates to his abrupt dismissal from the University of California, Berkeley, by professor Herbert M. Evans on financial grounds and efforts by Meyer to receive the salary he was due and to obtain another academic position.

There are also important biographical materials including curricula vitae and bibliographies from the 1930s into the 1980s. An autobiography he began in old age only covers his life through his military service in World War I but includes important details about his early life. In addition, there is documentation of the numerous awards and honors Meyer received including correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, medals and certificates. The photographs include portraits, group shots, and candid snapshots from the 1930s into the 1980s.

LANGUAGE: English, German.

ACCESS: Open.

REMOVED ITEMS: A copy of an early Meyer scientific publication, *The Growth and Gonad-Stimulating Hormones of the Anterior Hypophysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933) has been added to the Archives and Special Collections rare book collection.

PROVENANCE: Gift of Janet Levy, daughter of Meyer, December 2003 (accession #2003.12.18), and June 2021 (accession #2021.011).

CITE AS: Karl Meyer Papers, Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library.

SUBJECTS

Meyer, Karl.
Columbia University. Department of Ophthalmology.
Biochemists.
Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology.
Autographies.
Awards.
Diplomas.
Medals.
Photographs.

Papers processed and finding aid written by Stephen E. Novak, January 2004; accession #2021.011 processed September 2021.

Meyer, Karl.
Papers, 1929-2000

Series I: Subject/Correspondence Files

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 1 | Biographical materials, 1960s-1990s |
| | 2 | Curricula vitae, bibliographies, 1950s-1980s |
| | 3 | Newspaper and magazine clippings, 1947-1960s |
| | 4 | Memorial service: program, remarks, correspondence, 1990 |
| | 5-6 | Albert Lasker Award: program, newspaper clippings, citation, 1956 |
| | 7 | American Academy of Arts and Sciences: notification of election as fellow, 1965 |
| | 8 | Bhavanandan, V.P.: correspondence with Meyer's wife; drafts and reprint of his article, "Karl Meyer, Pioneer of the Field of Glycosaminoglycans (Mucopolysaccharides)" in <i>Trends in Glycoscience and Glycotechnology</i> v. 4, n. 18 (July 1992) |
| | 9 | Columbia University: appointment letters, 1966-1983; correspondence and newspaper clippings about his honorary degree, 1986 |
| | 10 | Columbia University: certificate of emeritus status, 1967 |
| | 11 | <i>Connective Tissue Research</i> : Karl Meyer special issue (v.3, n.1, 1975) |
| | 12 | Correspondence, general (largely congratulatory letters regarding honors), 1974-1996 |
| | 13 | Gairdner Foundation Awards: program, 1960 |
| | 14 | Gordon Research Conference on Proteoglycans, 1986: program with signature of the participants |
| | 15 | New York Academy of Medicine: correspondence, program, address, relating to award of Academy Medal to Meyer, 1981 |
| | 16 | Programs, menus, certificates, ephemera, 1930s-1980s |
| | 17 | Society for Complex Carbohydrates: Tribute to Meyer, 1981 |
| | 18 | T. Duckett Jones Memorial Award: program, congratulatory letters, 1959 |
| | 19 | T. Duckett Jones Memorial Award: citation, 1959 |
| 2 | 1 | Uppsala University (Sweden): notification of honorary doctorate, 1976 |
| | 2 | Yeshiva University: appointment letter, 1973 |

Series II: Photographs

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Portraits, c.1940s-1960s |
| 4 | Group portraits, miscellaneous and unidentified, c.1940s-1960s |
| 5 | Gairdner Foundation Awards, 1960s |
| 6 | Gordon Research Conferences, 1968, 1986: group portraits |
| 7 | T. Duckett Jones Memorial Award, 1959 |
| 8 | Snapshots, miscellaneous, 1950s-1980s |

Series III: Oversize Material & Artifacts

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 3 | 1 | Alpha Omega Alpha: membership certificate, 1966 |
| | 2 | American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science: program, annual dinner, 1952, 1954 |
| | 3 | Columbia University. Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology: program, "Surgeon's [sic] Dinner," April 9, 1938, with signatures of attendees |
| | 4 | Columbia University Honorary Degree, 1986: photograph |
| | 5 | Institut Pasteur: poster announcing Meyer lecture, 1959 |

Loose in box:

Diploma, University of Berlin, 1927

Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology: photograph of staff dinner, April 6, 1940

American Academy of Arts and Sciences: certificate of election, 1965

Certificate, Van Slyke Award, 1972

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4 | Plaques, medals and certificates, including Columbia University honorary degree, 1986, and College of Physicians and Surgeons Distinguished Service Award, 1983 |
|---|---|

In Map Case Drawer 2:9: Diploma, Honorary Degree, Uppsala University, 1977

Series IV: Accession #2021.011

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
-------------------	----------------------

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 2 | 9 | Autobiography, 1982 [transcript] |
| | 10 | Autobiography, 1982 [original – fragile] |
| | 11 | Columbia University: Appointment, 1933 |
| | 12 | Correspondence, General, 1930-1937 |
| | 13 | Correspondence, General, 1959, 1990-1996, 2000 |
| | 14 | Citizenship papers, Karl and Marthe Meyer, 1937, 1941 |
| | 15 | E.R. Squibb & Sons, 1932-1934 |
| | 16 | Evans, Herbert M., 1929-1933 |
| | 17 | Mendel, Lafayette B., 1932 |
| | 18 | Meyer, Karl: death certificate, 1990 |
| | 19 | Meyer, Marthe: correspondence re immigration matters, 1930-1931 |
| | 20 | Simpson, Miriam, 1932 |
| | 21 | University of California, Berkeley, 1930-1932 |
| | 22 | Wonder, Donald H., 1932 |