

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

[**Kenneth A. Forde Papers**](#)

FORDE, KENNETH A.

Kenneth A. Forde papers, 1948-2017 (bulk 1966-2016).

1.15 cubic feet (3 document boxes, 1 flat box, 1 framed item)

#M-0224

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Kenneth A. Forde, pioneering colorectal surgeon who popularized the colonoscopy as a means of early detection of cancer, was born in New York City to Kenneth and Aileen Greene Forde on July 6, 1933. He was sent to live with an aunt in Barbados, his parents' native country, for his elementary and secondary education but returned to New York City to attend City College (B.S., 1954). Forde received his medical degree from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (1959), where he was the only African-American in his class, and did a surgical internship and residency at Bellevue Hospital and the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center (1959-1964). Forde served as Bellevue's Chief Surgical Resident in 1963-1964.

After military service in Germany, Forde returned to Columbia-Presbyterian where he joined the faculty in 1966. He rose through the ranks, becoming a full professor in 1983 and was named the Jose M. Ferrer Professor of Clinical Surgery in 1997. After retiring in 2006, Forde was elected to the Board of Trustees of Columbia University on which he served until his death. The Kenneth A. Forde Professorship of Surgery was established at the medical school in his honor in 1996.

As a colorectal and gastrointestinal surgeon, Forde early saw the potential of the recently invented flexible fiber optic endoscope as a non-surgical means of treatment of cancer. He pioneered and championed the routine use of colonoscopies. Forde was a founding member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons and served as its second president and as the editor of its journal, *Surgical Endoscopy*. He was widely active in both domestic and international endoscopic organizations. When Katie Couric, host of the popular early morning television show, *Today*, wanted to do an on-air colonoscopy as part of her series on colon cancer in 2000, she chose Forde to do the procedure. More than 6 million people viewed the show and in the months that followed colonoscopy rates in the U.S. rose more than 20 percent.

As one of the few African-Americans on the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Forde was an advocate for increasing minority representation among both the student body and the faculty. He served on the medical school's admissions committee for many years and was a mentor to a large number of minority students and faculty. In 2014, the medical school established the Kenneth A. Forde Diversity Alliance "to develop networking opportunities,

promote diversity awareness, foster mentoring relationships, provide community service and develop tomorrow's leaders."

In 1957 Forde married Kareitha "Kay" Ollivierre; she passed away in 2017 after almost 50 years of marriage. Kenneth A. Forde died on June 2, 2019 at his home in Scarborough, New York, survived by a son, two grandchildren, and a sister.

Bibliography:

"Dr. Kenneth Forde, Surgeon Who Foster Cancer Screening, Dies at 85," New York Times, June 12, 2019 (online).

"Kenneth A. Forde, MD, 1934-2019" [sic], Surgical Endoscopy, 33:2721-2723 (2019).

Archives & Special Collections: Appointment Cards, Kenneth A. Forde.

SCOPE AND CONTENT: Although the Forde papers document both his personal and professional life, they largely relate to the latter. Included are biographical materials, correspondence, newspaper and magazine clippings, educational records, certificates, reprints of scientific articles, photographs, medical records, a videotape and a DVD.

While there are items from as early as 1948, the bulk of the papers date from 1966-2016. The correspondence is largely from later in his career with much relating to his retirement from Columbia in 2006. There is a single folder of newspaper and magazine clippings relating to the colonoscopy he conducted on Katie Couric. The educational records come from City College of New York, Columbia University, and various educational bodies in the United Kingdom. The photographs are both standard portraits and group shots taken at various scientific meetings and Columbia University events.

ARRANGEMENT: Organized in three series: I. Correspondence and subject files; II. Visual materials; III. Oversize Certificates.

LANGUAGE: English.

ACCESS: Because the colonoscopy record book (Box 1, folder 5) includes Confidential Health Information (CHI) as defined by Columbia University policies governing data security and privacy, access is allowed only under the terms of Archives and Special Collections' [Access Policy to Records Containing Confidential Health Information](#).

USE/RIGHTS: Access to the videotape and DVD is restricted pending digital transfer.

CITE AS: Kenneth A. Forde Papers, Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library.

PROVENANCE: Gift of the Estate of Kenneth A. Forde and Lola Chandler-Crumpley, 2019 (Accession #2019.020).

PROCESSING NOTE: Processed 2020, Stephen E. Novak.

Subjects

Forde, Kenneth A.

Columbia University. Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. Faculty.

African American medical students.

African American surgeons.

Colonoscopy – United States.

Genres

Certificates.

DVDs

Medical records.

Photographs.

Reprints.

Videotapes.

Kenneth A. Forde Papers

Container List

Box	Fo.	Title	Date
Series I: Correspondence & Subject Files			
1	1	Biographical materials	1950s-2017
1	2	Certificates	1964-2002
1	3	City College of New York: Educational records & newsclippings	May 7, 1950
1	4	Colonoscopy articles (not by Forde)	1991-2003
1	5	Colonoscopy record book RESTRICTED	1994-2000
1	6	Columbia University: Appointment letters	1966-2006
1	7	Columbia University: Black Faculty & Administrators Committee	1971-1992
1	8	Columbia University: Printed materials	circa 1960-2011
1	9	Columbia University: Department of Surgery	1962-2011
		Cordice, John W.V.: Correspondence & documents relating to Martin	2002-2012
1	10	Luther King, Jr.'s surgery at Harlem Hospital (1958)	
2	1	Correspondence, General	1957, 1986-2015
2	2	Couric, Katie -- Colonoscopy, 2000: Newspaper clippings, etc.	2000-2003
2	3	Educational records, United Kingdom	1948-1949
2	4	Jones, Clyde W.: Correspondence from and articles by Jones	1996-2002
2	5	Jose Ferrer Professorship of Surgery	1996-1997
2	6	Dr. Kenneth A. Forde Diversity Alliance Receptions: Programs, minutes, etc.	2014-2016
2	7	Kenneth A. Forde Professorship of Surgery	1996
2	8	Letters of congratulations, Forde Professorship	1994-1997
2	9	Letters of congratulations, Distinguished Practitioner Award	1996
2	10	Letters from House Staff and students	1994-1998
2	11	Memorial statements of others	1983-2012
2	12	Olympus Scope Guide Endoscope Imager: Correspondence, proposals, etc.	2003-2004
2	13	Forde reprints	1971-1995
2	14	Residents' evaluations	1987, 1990-91, 1993
3	1	Retirement Dinner, Nov. 8, 2005: Program & invitation	2005
3	2	Retirement Letters	2005
3	3	Retirement Letters	2005

Series II: Visual Materials

3	4	Photographs -- Cataloged or Identified	1950s-2010s
3	5	Photographs -- Group shots	undated
3	6	Photographs -- Group shots	undated
3		Loose in box: Videotape, "Colonoscopy and the Surgeon" with Kenneth A. Forde and Spencer E. Amory, 20 minutes. Created by the Center for Biomedical Communications, College of Physicians and Surgeons RESTRICTED	undated
3		Loose in box: Retirement Gala, DVD RESTRICTED	2005

Series III: Oversize Certificates

4	1	New York Academy of Medicine, certificate of election as Fellow, November 12, 1969
4	2	Societas Chirurgicae Americanae, certificate [in Latin, occasion not known], 2002

Loose in box:

4	New York Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, certificate of election as member, October 1, 1974
4	New York Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, certificate of election as Fellow, December 6, 1984
4	Columbia University Medical Center, Office of Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculties of Health Sciences and Medicine, certificate celebrating establishment of the Kenneth A. Forde Scholarship

Map	Framed testimonial from Dept. of Surgery faculty and staff upon Forde's retirement, Dec. 6, 2005.
Case	
Draw	
er	
1:1	