

Allen Prescott Collection

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Motion Picture, Broadcasting and
Recorded Sound Division, Library of
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Standard*)

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eadmbrs.rs009004](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/eadmbrs.rs009004)

Collection Summary

Title: Allen Prescott Collection

Inclusive Dates: 1930-1968

Bulk Dates: 1933-1948

Creator: Prescott, Allen

Textual materials: 3.5 linear feet (4 boxes)

Photographs: 63 photographic prints

Sound recordings: 6 sound tape reels

Language: Collection materials are in English

Repository: Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: The Allen Prescott Collection consists of sound recordings, photographs, and printed materials pertaining to Prescott's career as a radio personality during the early 1930s to 1970.

Location of textual and graphic materials: RPA 00323-00324 (boxes 1-2); RPC 00007 (box 4); RPD 00011 (box 3)

Location of sound recordings: RXA 2480-2485

Key Subjects and Formats

The following headings represent names, topics, places, and formats of major significance in the collection.

Names

Prescott, Allen--Archives

Prescott, Allen--Portraits

Subjects

Home economics

Housewives--Life skills guides

Occupations

Radio personalities

Radio journalists

Forms of Material

Radio programs

Radio scripts

Photographic prints

Publicity photographs

Writings (Document genre)

Letters (Correspondence)

Radio commercials (Advertisements)

Clippings (Information artifacts)

Audiotapes

Scrapbooks

Titles

Wife saver (Radio program)

Administrative Information

Acquisition of the Collection

The collection was donated to the Library of Congress by Raymond A. Mann in 1980.

Additions

No further additions to the collection are expected.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Karen Fishman in November, 2009.

Restrictions on Use of the Collection

Restrictions may exist on copying, quoting, or publishing materials included in the collection. For additional information, contact a reference librarian in the Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Restrictions on Access to the Collection

The Allen Prescott Collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [Container number, eg., Box 3] or [Audio tape number, eg., RXA 2480], Allen Prescott Collection, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress.

Biography of Allen Prescott

Allen Prescott (1904-1978) was host of the radio program, *The Wife Saver*, a program offering household hints to housewives several mornings and afternoons a week. His cheery introduction, "Hello, girls," opened the program, and his signature sign-off, "Mrs. Housewife, I hope there's nothing burning," characterized the show's light and breezy style. Listeners from all over the country sent him hundreds of letters a week with household tips in hopes of Prescott reading them on the air.

The Wife Saver aired on New York radio stations WINS and WABC in 1929, moving to NBC's Blue Network in 1932, where it was broadcast for 15 minutes, thrice weekly. In 1933 the show could be heard on early morning time slots. By 1941 the program's name and format changed to *Prescott Presents* and the show aired weekdays for 30 minutes until 1943. In addition to hosting his radio program, Prescott wrote two books, *The Wife-Saver's Candy Recipes* and *Aunt Harriet's Household Hints*.

Allen Prescott began his radio career as a newscaster. According to Thomas DeLong's *Radio Stars*, Prescott was "working as a *New York Mirror* reporter in 1929, appearing on a WMCA news program with Walter Winchell. By 1931 Prescott was on the air as a WINS newscaster, covering special events such as aerial maneuvers over Manhattan and polo matches from Governors Island." In later years he would host other radio programs, *New York Tonight*, *Say It with Words* and *Crossword Quiz*, taking them with him when he made the transition to television. He also appeared periodically on *For Men Only*, *Mile O'Dimes*, *Uncle Jim's Question Bee*, *Hemisphere Revue*, and a public affairs program, *Once in Every Family*.

His work in television included a six-week run of *The Wife Saver* on NBC in 1947 and as emcee for the locally produced ABC show, *Quizzing the News*, from 1948 to 1949.

Born in St. Louis, Prescott moved to New York at an early age and graduated from the New York Military Academy and the University of Pennsylvania. He served for two years during World War II in the naval air service.

Allen Prescott died January 28, 1978, from a heart attack and left no survivors.

Scope and Content

The Allen Prescott Collection consists of sound recordings, photographs, and printed materials pertaining to Prescott's career as a radio personality during the early 1930s to 1970.

Included in the collection are recordings from Prescott's radio programs, manuscript materials, publicity photographs, and two 16mm films (which were [transferred to the Moving Image Section](#) of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division).

The paper materials date from 1930 to 1968, with the bulk of the materials dating from 1933 to 1948. The collection contains correspondence, fan mail, radio scripts, newspaper clippings, and scrapbooks. It also includes an unpublished novel, short stories, manuscript submissions to publishers, and an interview with Steve Allen, the entertainer.

Arrangement of the Collection

The collection has been arranged into eight series:

- Series 1: Radio Scripts, 1933-1948, and undated
- Series 2: Household Hints, 1953-1954, and undated
- Series 3: Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated
- Series 4: Newspaper Clippings, 1932, 1938
- Series 5: Writings, undated
- Series 6: Photographs, 1930, 1932, 1949, 1953, and undated
- Series 7: Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939
- Series 8: Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

Description of Series

Container

Series

Series 1. Radio Scripts, 1933-1948, and undated

Series 1 contains scripts of Prescott's radio programs, *The Wife Saver* and *New York Tonight*, as well as scripts for commercials. The *Wife Saver* scripts date from 1933 to 1945, and the five *New York Tonight* scripts are from June, 1948. Commercials are for A.E. Staley Mfg. Company and Martinson's Coffee. The miscellaneous scripts folder includes commercials for the Detroit Motor Company, the Girard Company (makers of Dagger Blades), the Gillette Company (maker of Sun Up aftershave), Sta-Puf fabric softener, and Mohawk carpets.

Series 2. Household Hints, 1953-1954, and undated

The Wife Saver radio program gave housewives helpful advice, much of it that had been sent in from listeners all over the United States. This series contains letters and postcards dating from 1953 and 1954. Memos from station WFIL in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, also contain many recommendations used by Prescott. A booklet, the *Wife Saver Handy Book*, a collection of household hints published by the Blue Network of NBC in 1950, and one folder of miscellaneous material are included in this series as well.

Series 3. Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated

This small series contains correspondence with a listener, as well as letters from radio personalities such as Ted Husing and A.L. Alexander, NBC management, publishers, and his mother, Mrs. J.A. Prescott (one letter). Business invoices are also included.

Series 4. Newspaper Clippings, 1932, 1938

The majority of clippings in this series is from 1938, when Prescott was mentioned in many newspaper columns, including "In New York," "Radio Dial Log," "Dialing with Doyle," and "Walter Winchell on Broadway." Most newspaper clippings in this series have been photocopied onto acid free paper. Many more newspaper articles about Prescott will be found in his scrapbooks in Series 7.

Series 5. Writings, undated

This series contains typescripts of unpublished novels and short stories. Included are nine chapters from an unpublished novel, *The Corinthian Class*, four chapters and a synopsis from another novel, *Goode Knight*, and synopses from short stories, "Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," "Stay in Your Own Bed," and "Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear." There is also one folder of an interview Prescott conducted with entertainer Steve Allen and another folder of material for an unpublished book, *The Wife saver, a Household Hand Book and Wives' Companion*.

Series 6. Photographs, 1930, 1932, 1949, 1953, and undated

This series contains 63 photographs. Prescott appears in studio portraits as well as publicity photos, both alone and with other radio personalities and work associates. Personalities include Fran Allison, Rex Stout, Graham

McNamee, Ted Husing, and Ace Pancoast. There are also six photos from Prescott's military service during World War II, when he was attached to Fleet Air Wing 4 and stationed in the Aleutian Islands. Photographs located in the oversize box include portraits, two photographs of Prescott and his mother, and many photographs of Prescott posing with unidentified colleagues. Most of the photographs are undated and unidentified.

Series 7. Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939

This series includes two scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, photographs, and other ephemera. The larger of the two scrapbooks is made from a promotional magazine published by the Studebaker Car Company that has newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and photographs pasted onto its pages. The other scrapbook consists of newspaper clippings from 1939. Both are in very poor condition.

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

Digital Format:

A digital version of the audiotapes is available for listening in the Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833. Format of access copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 44.1 kHz, 16 bits per sample (made from preservation copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 96 kHz, 24 bits per sample).

This series consists of six sound recordings on 7-inch reels. Included are undated *Wife Saver* radio programs and brief announcements, experimental spots, and audition pieces for a program called *As a Matter of Fact*.

Container List

Container

Contents

Series 1. Radio Scripts, 1933-1948, and undated

8 folders

RPA 00323 (box 1)

Series 1 contains scripts of Prescott's radio programs, *The Wife Saver* and *New York Tonight*, as well as scripts for commercials. The *Wife Saver* scripts date from 1933 to 1945, and the five *New York Tonight* scripts are from June, 1948. Commercials are for A.E. Staley Mfg. Company and Martinson's Coffee. The miscellaneous scripts folder includes commercials for the Detroit Motor Company, the Girard Company (makers of Dagger Blades), the Gillette Company (maker of Sun Up aftershave), Sta-Puf fabric softener, and Mohawk carpets.

BOX-FOLDER 1/1	<i>The Wife Saver</i> , 1933-1935, 1938-1939, 1940
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	<i>The Wife Saver</i> , 1941, 1945
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	<i>The Wife Saver</i> , undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	<i>The Wife Saver</i> , A.E. Staley Mfg. Company commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Martinson's Coffee commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Miscellaneous commercials, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Miscellaneous scripts and sample shows, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	<i>New York Tonight</i> , 1948

Series 2. Household Hints, 1953-1954, and undated

2 folders

RPA 00323 (box 1)

The Wife Saver radio program gave housewives helpful advice, much of it that had been sent in from listeners all over the United States. This series contains letters and postcards dating from 1953 and 1954. Memos from station WFIL in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, also contain many recommendations used by Prescott. A booklet, the *Wife Saver Handy Book*, a collection of household hints published by the Blue Network of NBC in 1950, and one folder of miscellaneous material are included in this series as well.

BOX-FOLDER 1/9	Household hints used on program, 1953-1954, and undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Miscellaneous household hints, undated

Series 3. Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated

1 folder

RPA 00323 (box 1)

This small series contains correspondence with a listener, as well as letters from radio personalities such as Ted Husing and A.L. Alexander, NBC management, publishers, and his mother, Mrs. J.A. Prescott (one letter). Business invoices are also included.

Series 3. Correspondence and Fan Mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX-FOLDER 1/11	Correspondence and fan mail, 1930, 1932, 1936-1937, 1968, and undated

Series 4. Newspaper Clippings, 1932, 1938

1 folder

RPA 00323 (box 1)

The majority of clippings in this series is from 1938, when Prescott was mentioned in many newspaper columns, including "In New York," "Radio Dial Log," "Dialing with Doyle," and "Walter Winchell on Broadway."

Most newspaper clippings in this series have been photocopied onto acid free paper. Many more newspaper articles about Prescott will be found in his scrapbooks in Series 7.

BOX-FOLDER 1/12	Newspaper clippings, 1932, 1938
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Series 5. Writings, undated

8 folders

RPA 00324 (box 2)

This series contains typescripts of unpublished novels and short stories.

Included are nine chapters from an unpublished novel, *The Corinthian Class*, four chapters and a synopsis from another novel, *Goode Knight*, and synopses from short stories, "Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," "Stay in Your Own Bed," and "Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear."

There is also one folder of an interview Prescott conducted with entertainer Steve Allen and another folder of material for an unpublished book, *The Wife Saver, a Household Hand Book and Wives' Companion*.

BOX-FOLDER 2/1	<i>The Wife Saver</i> , additional sections, undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/2	<i>The Corinthian Class</i> , chapters I-V, undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/3	<i>The Corinthian Class</i> , chapters VI-IX, undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/4	<i>Goode Knight</i> , undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/5	"Don't Just Do Something; Sit There," undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/6	"Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear," undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/7	"Stay in Your Own Bed," undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/8	Interview with Steve Allen, undated

Series 6. Photographs, 1930, 1932, 1949, 1953, and undated

63 photographic prints (2 folders, 1 oversize box) ; 11 x 14 inches or smaller
RPA 00324 (box 2); RPD 00011 (box 3)

This series contains 63 photographs. Prescott appears in studio portraits as well as publicity photos, both alone and with other radio personalities and work associates. Personalities include Fran Allison, Rex Stout, Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, and Ace Pancoast. There are also six photos from Prescott's military service during World War II, when he was attached to Fleet Air Wing 4 and stationed in the Aleutian Islands. Photographs located in the oversize box include portraits, two photographs of Prescott and his mother, and many photographs of Prescott posing with unidentified colleagues. Most of the photographs are undated and unidentified.

BOX-FOLDER 2/9	Photographs, 1932 and undated
BOX-FOLDER 2/10	Photographs, 1930, 1949, 1953, and undated

Series 6. Photographs, 1930, 1932, 1949, 1953, and undated

Container

Contents

BOX-FOLDER 2/10 Allen Prescott publicity photograph, between 1930 and 1939
1 photographic print ; 10 x 8 inches
[View digital image](#)

BOX 3 Oversize photographs, undated

Series 7. Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939

1 oversize box

RPC 00007 (box 4)

This series includes two scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, photographs, and other ephemera. The larger of the two scrapbooks is made from a promotional magazine published by the Studebaker Car Company that has newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and photographs pasted onto its pages. The other scrapbook consists of newspaper clippings from 1939. Both are in very poor condition.

BOX 4 Scrapbooks, 1930-1932, 1939

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

6 sound tape reels : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
RXA 2480-2485

Digital Format:

A digital version of the audiotapes is available for listening in the Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833. Format of access copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 44.1 kHz, 16 bits per sample (made from preservation copy: Broadcast Wave (BWF), 96 kHz, 24 bits per sample).

This series consists of six sound recordings on 7-inch reels. Included are undated *Wife Saver* radio programs and brief announcements, experimental spots, and audition pieces for a program called *As a Matter of Fact*.

REEL RXA 2480 *The Wife Saver*, undated

Prescott, Allen

1 sound tape reel (20 minutes, 40 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch

Title on original container: "Monitor-The Wifesaver."

Consists of a series of household hint "talks," each about one minute long, delivered by Allen Prescott. Every piece begins with the sound of a ringing doorbell and the introductory line, "Hello, girls, this is Allen Prescott, the Wife Saver," and ends with, "Mrs. Housewife, I hope there's nothing burning." No guests and no music are featured, just Prescott delivering household hints with a touch of humor.

Handwritten description on original container: "About 15 one-minute talks."

REEL RXA 2481 *As a Matter of Fact*, 1965-03-16

Prescott, Allen

1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 36 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch

Allen Prescott introduces himself and announces an Everlasting Dagger Blades commercial that includes descriptions of several historical and technological phenomena, each introduced by the phrase, "As a matter

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

Container

Contents

- of fact...." In the next track, Prescott introduces himself and delivers a Rock of Ages Bank and Trust Co. commercial that includes descriptions of several historical and technological phenomena, each introduced by the phrase, "As a matter of fact...." The third track consists of a very brief, unidentified segment of an unaccompanied choral performance. Description on original container: "4 one minute audition (?) talks."
- REEL RXA 2482 *The Wife Saver*, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (3 minutes, 44 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
Four brief *Wife Saver* pieces, with a total duration of 03:44.
Wife Saver pieces (about one minute each in duration) each begin with the introduction, "Hello, this is Allen Prescott, the Wife Saver." Household hints, interspersed with wry comments, include suggested methods for keeping "baby" safe while "parked" on the sofa, opening bottles of soda water, hanging wallpaper, and deterring moles.
The *Wife Saver* material is followed on the tape by two examples of a proposed series entitled *As a Matter of Fact*.
- REEL RXA 2482 *As a Matter of Fact*, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 29 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
Allen Prescott introduces an idea for "a series of fillers" entitled *As a Matter of Fact*. Similar to the light, comedic treatment of useful information that characterizes his *Wife Saver* program, Prescott remarks that *As a Matter of Fact* expands "from the household to a broader field." Two sample pieces include brief descriptions of the use of feathers for money, an ancient game, connecting rods, the secret ballot, and the oldest known fossils of beetles. Both pieces end with the phrase "...as a matter of fact."
The *As a Matter of Fact* material is preceded on the tape by four brief *Wife Saver* pieces.
- REEL RXA 2483 *The Wife Saver*, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (3 minutes, 44 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
The content is identical to *The Wife Saver* material on the preceding tape, RXA 2482.
- REEL RXA 2483 *As a Matter of Fact*, undated
Prescott, Allen
on 1 sound tape reel (2 minutes, 29 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
The content is identical to *As a Matter of Fact* material on the preceding tape, RXA 2482.
- REEL RXA 2484 *The Wife Saver*, undated
Prescott, Allen
1 sound tape reel (9 minutes, 31 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch
In the first of two brief *Wife Saver* programs, announcer Allen Prescott offers a number of household hints, such as how to freshen a black silk dress, freezing nylon stockings for longer wear, whipping cream, and removing lime deposits from tea kettles; also included are commercials

Series 8. Sound Recordings, 1965, and undated

Container

Contents

for General Electric coffee makers and toasters. In the second program, Prescott offers household hints concerning "our war with inanimate objects," such as coping with "vacuum cleaner fuddle," wearing clip earrings, peeling oranges with a spoon, keeping slacks in shape, keeping "baby" safe when "parked" on the sofa, and serving mussels; commercials are for General Electric portable vacuum cleaners, toasters, and coffee makers.

Description on original container: "2 five-minute shows for General Electric."

REEL RXA 2485

The Wife Saver experimental spots, undated

Prescott, Allen

1 sound tape reel (15 minutes, 40 seconds) : analog, 7 1/2 inches per second, full track, mono ; 7-inch

The tape contains four *Wife Saver* programs, each less than five minutes in duration, and a separately presented commercial. At the beginning of each program, announcer Allen Prescott introduces himself as the Wife Saver. In the first program, he makes suggestions to use moleskin to make clip earrings more comfortable, peel oranges with a spoon, hang slacks by the pockets to dry, keep "baby" safe when "parked" on the sofa, and button cuffs to the front of a shirt before washing; commercials are for Sta-Puf fabric softener and Sta-Flow spray starch. In the second program, he provides tips on adding hot soup to a cold meal, making a slip-free tie rack, reducing the amount of luggage needed for overseas travel, using eyeliner, peeling cooked eggs, and cleaning a dirty oven with a towel soaked in ammonia; commercials are for Sta-Flow and Sta-Puf.

In the third program, Prescott offers hints on freshening a black silk dress, freezing nylon stockings for longer wear, keeping rabbits away from the garden, whipping cream, removing lime deposits from tea kettles, grating chocolate safely, and keeping moths away from stored yarn; commercials are for Sta-Flow and Blue Raindrops water softener. In the fourth program, which is several minutes shorter than the first three, Prescott offers a household tip on stopping squeaks in doors and delivers a Sta-Flow commercial. The fifth track, not a program, is a 30-second commercial for Sta-Flow.

Description on original container: "15 minutes, audition (?) recording for A.E. Staley" (maker of Sta-Puf and Sta-Flow laundry products, and sponsor of the program).

Separated Materials

Two 16mm films were transferred to the Moving Image Section of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division (MBRS) in 2009. One of the films is a half-hour program from the series, *Directions*, a Sunday morning ABC television program that Prescott narrated in 1969, and the other is an undated five-minute promotional film for his show *The Wife Saver*.