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Peter Orlovsky Papers

Collection Summary

Title:	Peter Orlovsky Papers
Call Number:	MS 91-01
Size:	0.25 linear feet
Acquisition:	Purchased from William E. White, 1990
Processed by:	KFS, 9-25-1990; JEF, 4-1-1998; MN, 5-10-2011
Restrictions:	None

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Content Note

The collection contains letters written by the poet Peter Orlovsky to members of his family while he was traveling in Europe and the Middle East in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Letters which are addressed to the entire family or to more than one member are included with letters addressed to his mother. The collection is arranged chronologically and by recipient. Orlovsky was involved with several other 20th century poets throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and many of them are mentioned in the letters. These include Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Alan Ansen.

Biography

Peter Orlovsky was born July 8, 1933, in New York City to Kate and Oleg Orlovsky. He was one of five children in the family; Nicholas, Julius, Lafcadio (Laff) and Marie were his siblings. Orlovsky, primarily a poet, worked at a variety of jobs, from ambulance attendant and postal clerk to owning and running an organic farm during the 1970s. He participated in anti-war protests and was interested in Buddhism, drawing and the guitar. He died May 30, 2010.

Series Listing

Series 1	Box 1 FF 1-4	Correspondence
Series 2	Box 1 FF 5	Photographs

Box and Folder Listing

Series 1 – Correspondence

Box 1	FF 1	Contains correspondence from the 1950s. Letter to Kate and Marie (May 15, 1955), handwritten, mentions Ginsberg, refers to school and inquires about Nick; letter to Kate (May 17, 1957), typewritten, description of trip to Tetwan and Chaun in Morocco with Ginsberg; postcard to Kate (May 21, 1957); letter to Kate (May 30, 1957), typewritten, inquires about Nick; letter to Kate (June 7, 1957), typewritten, concerned about VA check and instructions on where to send it, also refers to his mental health; letter to Kate (June 8, 1957), handwritten, mentions Bill Burroughs, Gregory Corso and the former's arrest in Italy, and explains travel plans; letter to Kate, Marie and Lafcadio (Laff), (June 20, 1957), handwritten, writes of his recent illness and his experiences with Ginsberg in Madrid, Spain, asks about Laff and Julius. Contains letter to Kate (June 21, 1957), handwritten, with a postscript from Ginsberg, repeats instructions about how to send his VA check, states his opinions concerning Julius' health and the possibility of a lobotomy; postcard to Kate and Marie (June 28, 1957), from Spain; letter to Kate and Marie (July 22, 1957), typewritten; letter to Kate with a note addressed to Laff and Marie (September 7, 1957), typewritten, expressed concern about Laff and Julius, explains what Ginsberg's brother suggests they should do about Julius, mentions Oleg; letter to Kate, Marie, and Laff (September 19, 1957), handwritten, from Paris; letter to Kate (December 22, 1957), typewritten, writes that he will be home in a month and inquires about Oleg.
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Box 1

FF 2

Contains correspondence from the 1960s. Postcard to Kate (April 2, 1961), handwritten, descriptions of Paris; letter to Kate (April 4, 1961), handwritten, descriptions of Paris; letter to Kate (April 29, 1961), typewritten and handwritten, refers to Jim Jones, life in Paris with Ginsberg and Corso, and instructions on where to send VA check; postcard to Kate (May 28, 1961), telling her of his arrival in Marseilles; letter to Kate (June 25, 1961), handwritten, writes of a recent illness, mentions Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso, and notifies her of his travel plans and explains the decision to travel alone; letter to Kate (July 28, 1961), typewritten, explains travel plans to Athens, Greece; letter to Kate (August 25, 1961), handwritten, gives instructions on where to send checks and makes some observation about world politics. Contains letter to family (August 25, 1961), typewritten, descriptions of Cairo, Egypt; letter to Kate (August 28, 1961), typewritten, describes social life in Cairo; letter to family (September 1, 1961), typewritten, descriptions of his experiences in Cairo with children begging and the poverty of the region also mentions dreams that he has been having; letter to Kate (September 5, 1961), typewritten, advice to Kate about Laff and his drug use; letter to Kate (September 23, 1961), typewritten, describes the difficulties he is having in Beirut with loneliness, and finding heroin for Laff; the following letters to Kate all ask for money or give instructions about where to send VA checks, October 5, October 7, October 8, October 13, and October 14, 1961, notifying Kate that he received the check. Contains a postcard to Kate and Laff (October 16, 1961) from Damascus; letter to Kate and Laff (October 24, 1961), typewritten, describes Jerusalem; letter to Kate and Lafcadio (October 30, 1961), typewritten, describes the sights of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites that he is visiting, also his pro-Arab sympathies; letter to Kate and Marie (May 1, 1962), typewritten, description of Rahdika's family and Hindu mythology; letter to Kate and Marie (April 7, 1962), typewritten, description of trip to India, mentions Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, another poet; letter to family (March 22, 1963) with an attached letter for Lafcadio (March 25, 1963), typewritten, mentions Ginsberg, and Orlovsky's interest in Hinduism; letter to Kate, Marie and Lafcadio (February 15, 1968), handwritten, announcing that he is returning to farming; letter to Kate (February 9, 1969), handwritten, mentions that he is on his way to San Francisco with Ginsberg, opinions about the Vietnam War.

Box 1

FF 3

Contains correspondence from the 1950s and 1960s addressed to other members of the family. Contains four letters addressed to Laff, (June 28, 1961), typewritten, from Tangier; (June 30, 1961), nine pages typewritten, mentions time spent with Ginsberg, Corso, and Burroughs, and his interest in yoga and painting; (September 5, 1961), typewritten, advice to Laff about drugs; (September 23, 1961), typewritten. Contains three letters to Marie (June 21, 1957), handwritten, mentions Lafcadio, travel, dreams, and Orlovsky's interest in painting and drawing; (February 16, 1962), typewritten, from Bombay; (April 27, 1962), typewritten, letter to Orlovsky from Marie and his reply on the same paper (June 1, 1962). Contains one letter to Nick (April 21, 1962), typewritten, describes travels, a recent illness and his interest in yoga.

Box 1 FF 4 Contains correspondence from the 1970s addressed to Kate and the family. Contains letter to Kate (December 8, 1971), typewritten, mentions the farm and Denise, who adds a postscript; letter to Kate and Marie (August 17, 1972), handwritten, tells them about Oleg's operation, the farm, and about a war protest that he will take part in; letter to Kate, Marie, and Lafcadio (September 14, 1972), handwritten, mentions Denise and describes his arrest for involvement in Miami protest; letter to Kate, Marie, and Laff (January 3, 1973), handwritten, mentions Oleg and Nick; letter to Kate (July 12, 1973), handwritten, description of the farm; letter to Kate (July 25, 1973), handwritten, with an added note from Julius; letter to Kate, Marie, and Lafcadio (December 5, 1974), handwritten, concerning Julius.

Series 2 – Photographs

Box 1 FF 5 Contains photographs that Orlovsky sent his family while living and traveling in Europe and India. Contains picture of Radhika, Bombay, (April 1962); contains four photographs taken in Tangier with information typed on the back (April 1957); contains photograph of man drawing (n.d.); contains photograph of a woman getting her hair trimmed (n.d.); contains photograph of a group of people at a bar.

For information, please contact us at:
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