

Charles M. Defieux collection [textual records, graphic materials]

SUPPLIED TITLE NOTE

Title based on contents of the records.

COLLECTION NUMBER

VMM21

DATE(S)

1946-1972, [predominant 1966-1971]

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

12.5 cm of textual records and 6 photographs (b&w; colour)

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY / BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles M. Defieux was born in Liverpool, England on April 9, 1901. In 1911 his family immigrated to Canada and settled in Edmonton, where in 1917, he began his newspaper career as a copy boy and later junior reporter on the *Edmonton Journal*.

Although under age in the First World War, Mr. Defieux joined the Royal Air Force for the last two months of the war in 1918. The next year he joined the U.S. Army, staying for two years, including service in Siberia. Returning to Edmonton from the U.S. in 1921, Mr. Defieux combined newspaper work with radio. He was the first Canadian broadcaster to announce basketball games when the Edmonton Grads women's team was the world champion.

He continued to combine newspaper and radio work during the 1920s and 1930s in Vancouver, where he was a news and sports announcer for CJOR and CKWX, as well as a writer, actor, dancer-singer in radio and national radio revues. Mr. Defieux also worked briefly at KOMO in Seattle in 1928. While in Edmonton and San Francisco he also acted in stage productions. In 1923 he came to *The Sun* where he stayed for most of the next 17 years. In 1924, he coached the first Canadian football championship team, the Ex-King George men's team from Vancouver, and during the 1920s and 1930s was an emcee at hockey, wrestling and bicycle racing events in Vancouver.

In 1940 Mr. Defieux entered the RCAF, serving as an officer working in public relations and operations intelligence. In 1945 he was discharged as a flight lieutenant. That same year he returned briefly to *The Sun* as head of *The Sun's* Veteran Bureau, a service helping vets adjust to civilian life through counselling and help in dealing with government departments. Later in 1945, he joined the federal department of veterans affairs, a two-year job that included service as a personal assistant to the then-minister, Ian McKenzie. During later writing trips abroad, Mr. Defieux wrote reports on business and finance for the then-prime minister Lester Pearson, and handled China and Poland relief contributions for the federal government. Returning from Ottawa in 1947, he started a public relations business in Vancouver, becoming actively involved in publicity for and management of the Pacific National Exhibition for the next 12 years.

He also ran the weekly *Richmond-Marpole Times* for two years before selling it in 1951, and continued work on the massive volume *Years of Man*, begun in 1943 and completed in 1961. The work began as a history of medicine but later branched out to include all other major historical events with some 17,000 cross-referenced entries. Though it was never published, Mr. Defieux did get a royalty advance on the book and took a world tour writing newspaper stories. In 1958 he had made a four-month study of the economic system of the United Kingdom.

With a lifelong interest in the sea, inherited from his father who was a master mariner on sailing ships, Mr. Defieux was best known in for his column on shipping news and local marine history. He began the column in 1964, 40 years after he was named marine editor in an earlier stint with *The Sun*. Prior to his death on October 9, 1972 at the age of 70, he was still active as a freelance journalist, lecturer in marine affairs, and writing *The Sun* column, "Of Ships and Men."

SCOPE & CONTENT

Collection consists of textual records comprised of research notes, correspondence, and working papers related to the maritime research undertaken by Charles M. Defieux. Collection also contains newspaper clippings from *The Vancouver Sun* and excerpts of journal articles from publications including *Sea Breezes*.

ARRANGEMENT

Records arranged by Archivist.

LANGUAGES

English

Collection Contents

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Biographical details and photographs

File consists of photocopies of articles from three local newspapers, the Vancouver Sun, the Province and the Columbian, dated October 10, 1972, announcing the death of Charles Defieux and outlining his career. Also included are six family photographs, 5 b&w, 1 colour, taken during his trip to Germany in 1965, which included a visit to Bremen.

Coast history [research and correspondence]

File consists of 5 original newspaper columns, "Of Ships and Men", written by Charles M. Defieux, and original correspondence and typescript and handwritten notes relating to his career as maritime columnist for the Vancouver Sun. Also included are newspaper clippings and articles from periodicals relating to ships, shipping and maritime issues.

Marine history – Steam ships

File consists of newspaper clippings and articles relating to maritime history, individual ships and shipping lines.

Marine history – Steam ships and West Coast

File consists of newspaper clippings, periodical articles and handwritten notes relating to local history, Russian and American shipping on the West Coast and B.C. shipping.

Pioneers

File consists of original correspondence, newspaper clippings and handwritten and typescript notes relating to early personalities of BC, mainly those related to shipping and other maritime activities. Much of the correspondence was related to Charles Defieux in his role as author of the "Of Ships and Men" column in the Vancouver Sun.

VR history

File consists of original typescript and handwritten notes relating to the early history of Vancouver and includes significant dates in the history of the Board of Trade, descriptions of fishing within the city, the loss of a barge in a fire, early bars in the city, the Vancouver fire and some of the kindness shown by citizens, early developments on Beach and Denman Streets and Granville Island and mention of Jerry Rogers and his 65 head of oxen and drivers.

To interview

File consists of hand written and typescripts notes referring to stories, people and events that might be possible subjects for newspaper columns. Most are notes sent to Defieux by others, but some are notes on people, addresses and telephone numbers that he has made note of.

Research and correspondence, vol. 1

File consists of a range of correspondence, typescript and handwritten notes, periodical articles, newspaper clippings and other materials relating to various aspects of ships and shipping, particularly relating to West Coast marine history and Atlantic and Pacific shipping.

Research and correspondence, vol. 2

File consists of a range of correspondence, typescript and handwritten notes, periodical articles, newspaper clippings and other materials relating to various aspects of ships and shipping, particularly relating to West Coast marine history and Atlantic and Pacific shipping.

Research and correspondence, vol. 3

File consists of a range of correspondence, typescript and handwritten notes, periodical articles, newspaper clippings and other materials relating to various aspects of ships and shipping, particularly relating to West Coast marine history and Atlantic and Pacific shipping.

Speeches

File consists of full typescript texts and handwritten notes for speeches given by Charles Defieux in the Vancouver area. Included are speeches delivered at BCIT and UBC and they cover such topics as "Shipping is a Universal Service...", "Primitive Man was the Ancient Mariner", "There is Romanticism - Profit - Opportunity on the Sea...", and "The Evolution of Shipping".

"Birth of a Province"

File consists of typescript text of the introduction and contents of a compilation of events, entitled "The Birth of a Province", developed by Charles Defieux, which was intended to show the development of British Columbia from its earliest beginnings to its entry into Confederation in 1871. The compilation begins in 10,000 B.C. and covers the histories of many countries as they relate to the beginnings and development of British Columbia. Work on the compilation was completed in 1967.