



FINDING AID

GERALD E. MERNIN PAPERS 1924-2010 (bulk dates: 1965-2001)

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HISTORY

Gerald “Jerry” Mernin, Jr. was born in Sacramento, California to Emma and Gerald Mernin. Mernin developed his love of and passion to protect all that is wild at very early age. Spending his formative years in Yosemite National Park where his father was District Ranger, Mernin was raised on Park Service lore. This gave Mernin a deep understanding and a unique perspective of National Park Service (NPS) operations that would serve him well during his long, distinguished NPS career.

After graduating from Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento, California, Mernin attended the University of Notre Dame where he graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Economics. Upon graduation, he joined the Army, serving state-side during the Korean War. Mernin then attended Hastings College of Law in San Francisco, California. Motivated by a deep admiration and respect for his father, Mernin made the decision to pursue a career with the NPS rather than to continue working towards a law degree and left Hastings College. In 1952, Mernin began his NPS career as a seasonal Fire Lookout at Pelican Cone in Yellowstone National Park. His career continued with summer employment stints at national parks including Glacier and Yosemite until he earned his first permanent NPS position at Bryce Canyon National Park. Following a brief period at Grand Canyon National Park, in 1964, Mernin returned to Yellowstone National Park. Turning down promotion after promotion, he would remain in his beloved Yellowstone for the next 32 years until his retirement in 1996.

In May of 1971, while patrolling in the Lake area, Mernin met the woman he would spend the next 49 years of his life with. His future wife, Cindy, and two friends pulled into the Lake Ranger Station while looking for the Lake Hospital where they would be working as nurses for the summer. By late fall, Jerry had proposed and Cindy accepted; they would have celebrated their 40th anniversary on December 18, 2011.

An artist, a writer, and all-around cowboy, Mernin was a connoisseur of wide-ranging interests, including any field skills relating to ranger life and law enforcement. He had well-thought out opinions about subjects ranging from the proper condition in which to leave a back country cabin to the ethics of popularized bear management methods. He could always be counted on for some thoughtful and eloquent words in any situation. In 2010, Mernin co-founded the Bozeman Gypsy Rhythm Writers Club. A born story-teller, Mernin’s decades of experience in Yellowstone provided much material to share through personal tales of adventures, many involving his much-beloved horses as well as various other Yellowstone residents and visitors — both the four-footed and two-legged variety.

Mernin’s commitment to Yellowstone didn’t end with his retirement. He continued to volunteer and spend summers patrolling and protecting Yellowstone’s backcountry until his health would no longer permit it. Although he suffered with Parkinson’s disease through his final years, Mernin’s mind and wit remained unaffected. Throughout the remainder of his life, Mernin would continue to be a strong advocate for Yellowstone’s wilderness and preservation, sharing his thoughts and expertise with park management and others. On December 13, 2011, retired Ranger Gerald “Jerry” Mernin passed away. A mentor and leader to the very end, Mernin left a legacy through several generations of younger Park Rangers inspired by his example.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

GERALD E. MERNIN PAPERS
1924-2010 (bulk dates: 1965-2001)

CATALOG NUMBER YELL 203567

VOLUME 6.5 LF

DESCRIPTION The Gerald E. Mernin papers consists of journals, notebooks, forms, correspondence, and ephemera pertaining to Gerald E. Mernin, Jr., his interests, and his time as a National Park Service Ranger. The main focal point of his NPS career is the span of his appointment as a Yellowstone Park Ranger from 1964 until his retirement in 1996.

Encompassing the majority of the collection, Mernin's writings fill numerous notebooks, legal pads, and small notepads. The main focus of the writings is the recording of notes for future reference. Mernin's writings fulfill various purposes including recording 'to-do' lists and ideas to remember, developing presentations, and acting as journals to record his thoughts. The notebooks, in particular, evolved in purpose. Initially a place to write down quotations obtained from books read, they later became scrapbooks with comics, photos, and other memorabilia taped inside.

Given Mernin's varied interests, broad themes are presented with the collection, specifically within the Subject Files in Series III. Documented are topics such as bear and bison management, the Nez Perce trail through Yellowstone, and Yellowstone's evolving safety policies and practices. Correspondence is related to both Mernin's personal life and his work as a park ranger, such as NPS internal procedures and response letters to visitor complaints. When covering specific topics, correspondence can also be found in the Subject Files, such as that related to the Professional Rangers Organization. The Series II correspondence also includes several personal letters to Cindy Mernin. The park service correspondence in Series II and the forms in Series III both contain items addressed to Gerald Mernin, Sr., including records of employment.

The photos in Series V provide evidence of Mernin's continued training as a ranger, his appreciation for outdoor activities, and his professional development through frequent attendance of the Spring Rangers Conference.

In addition to materials concerned with Yellowstone National Park, there are also materials, including forms and correspondence, related to Yosemite National Park where both Gerald Mernin, Sr. and Gerald Mernin, Jr. worked.

ORGANIZATION

Organized into five series:

- Series I, Notebooks & Journals;
- Series II, Correspondence;
- Series III, Subject Files;
- Series IV, Printed Materials;
- Series V, Photographs and Visual Media.

PROVENANCE

Gift of Cindy Mernin, 2012.

RESTRICTIONS

NO

*ASSOCIATED
MATERIALS*

- A saddle, skis, uniforms, and other historic objects, Yellowstone National Park Museum Collections
- Official records of Mernin's work activities, Yellowstone National Park Combined Archives
- Reminiscences, which include Mernin, Yellowstone National Park Research Library

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Notebooks & Journals, 1965-2010

This series consists of various notebooks, notepads, and journals handwritten by Gerald Mernin. Many notebooks consist of quotations Mernin obtained from books he read, mainly Westerns. Entries are all entered chronologically and, in most instances, a table of contents is listed on the inside of the back and/or front cover. Often the notebooks were later used as scrapbooks with comic strips and/or photographs taped on to pages inside or, as with later notebooks, inserted into the pockets of dividers found inside. Several journals are included that are evidence of Mernin's thoughts particularly those as he began to prepare his memoirs. Notepads are also found in this series, which contain various notes and reminders. Daily planners with notes, itinerary, and daily 'to-do' lists, are organized chronologically in small boxes with each box containing a planner for each month of the specific year.

II. Correspondence, 1948-2004

This series consists of letters personally sent to Gerald Mernin from family, friends, coworkers, and supervisors. One letter of note from Mernin is addressed to Backpacker magazine in response to a 2004 article on Yellowstone hiking trails. Also included in the correspondence are responses written by Mernin to complaint letters sent by Yellowstone visitors. Often included are both the visitor letter and Mernin's reply. Several replies also include drafts with more candid responses that were not included in the final draft. Correspondence is also included within the Subject Files series when pertaining to a specific subject, such as the Professional Rangers Organization.

III. Subject Files, 1948-2009

This series contains reports, news articles, and writings related to areas of interest to Mernin. Subject files such as the bison management and Ranger Bob Jackson folders contain news articles in addition to correspondence, reports, and articles about the subject. Mernin collected materials related to the Nez Perce' Trail of Tears, including two informational DVDs located in Series V. Also included are maps with annotations written by Mernin related to trails throughout Yellowstone Park's backcountry. Some of these annotations may be related to the Nez Perce movements as they moved through Yellowstone on the Trail of Tears.

IV. *Printed Materials, 1950-2009*

This series is comprised of ephemera collected by Gerald Mernin and, possibly, other members of his family, such as his wife or father. It includes park-related materials, such as books on national parks, a Yellowstone comic book and a park ranger coloring book. There are also small information booklets regarding field skills as well as National Park Service employee training materials. Also included is a journal with a group photograph featuring Mernin from the Second Annual Rangers' Rendezvous.

V. *Photographs and Visual Media, 1969-1982, 2008*

Within this series are group photos of the Spring Rangers Conference, many of which have a reference on the back regarding who is pictured. Also contained are photos of Mernin in a cross-country skiing race and images from 1982 of Mernin and others in firearms training. Also included are two DVDs featuring a survey of the Nez Perce trail through Yellowstone.

CONTAINER LIST

Series	Series Title
<i>01</i>	<i>Notebooks & Journals</i>

Box 1

File	Title
01.01	Notebooks, undated [1 of 2]
01.02	Notebooks, undated [2 of 2]
01.03	Notebook, 1965-1968
01.04	Notebook, 1972-1979
01.05	Notebook, 1979-1991
01.06	Notebook, 1991-1992

Box 2

File	Title
02.01	Notebook, 1992
02.02	Notebook, 1992-1993
02.03	Notebook, 1993-1994
02.04	Notebook, 1994-1995
02.05	Notebook, 1995
02.06	Notebook, 1995-1996

Box 3

File	Title
03.01	Notebook, 1996-1997
03.02	Notebook, 1997
03.03	Notebook, 1998 [1 of 2]
03.04	Notebook, 1998 [2 of 2]
03.05	Notebook, 1999
03.06	Notebook, 1999-2000

Box 4

File	Title
04.01	Notebook, 2000
04.02	Notebook, 2000-2002, 2005
04.03	Notebook, 2003-2005
04.04	National Park Service Notepads, 1989-2004
04.05	Notepad, 1993-1995
04.06	Notepad, 2005-2006
04.07	Notepad, 2006-2007

Series	Series Title
01	<i>Notebooks & Journals (cont'd)</i>

Box 5

File	Title
05.01	Notepad, 2007-2008
05.02	Notepad, 2008-2009
05.03	Notepad, 2009
05.04	Notepad, 2009-2010
05.05	Notes, Legal pad, 1987-1988
05.06	Notes, Legal pad, 1988 [1 of 3]
05.07	Notes, Legal pad, 1988 [2 of 3]
05.08	Notes, Legal pad, 1988 [3 of 3]
05.09	Notes, Legal pad, 1989
05.10	Notes, Legal pad, 1990-1991
05.11	Notes, Legal pad, 1991-1992
05.12	Notes, Legal pad, 1992 [1 of 3]
05.13	Notes, Legal pad, 1992 [2 of 3]

Box 6

File	Title
06.01	Notes, Legal pad, 1992 [3 of 3]
06.02	Notes, Legal pad, 1993 [1 of 3]
06.03	Notes, Legal pad, 1993 [2 of 3]
06.04	Notes, Legal pad, 1993 [3 of 3]
06.05	Notes, Legal pad, 1994 [1 of 2]
06.06	Notes, Legal pad, 1994 [2 of 2]
06.07	Notes, Legal pad, 1995 [1 of 2]
06.08	Notes, Legal pad, 1995 [2 of 2]
06.09	Notes, Legal pad, 1997 [1 of 2]
06.10	Notes, Legal pad, 1997 [2 of 2]
06.11	Notes, Legal pad, 1998
06.12	Notes, Legal pad, 1998-1999
06.13	Notes, Legal pad, 1999
06.14	Journal, 2000-2001

Box 7

File	Title
07.01	Journal, 2000-2001, 2007
07.02	Journal, 2004-2007
07.03	Work notes, 1970
07.04	Work notes, undated
07.05	Day Planner, 1968
07.06	Day Planner, 1975

Series	Series Title
01	<i>Notebooks & Journals (cont'd)</i>

Box 8

File	Title
08.01	Day Planners, 1983, 1985-2000

Series	Series Title
02	<i>Correspondence</i>

Box 9

File	Title
09.01	Correspondence, National Park Service, 1947-1997
09.02	Correspondence, Park Visitors, 1960-1981
09.03	Correspondence, Personal, 1948-2004

Series	Series Title
03	<i>Subject Files</i>

Box 9 (cont'd)

File Unit	Title
09.04	Bear management, Grizzly Bear-Man Relationships in Yellowstone National Park, 1971
09.05	Bear management, Notes and Memorandum, 1969-1973
09.06	Bear management, Research reports, 1967-1971
09.07	Bear management, Research reports, 1973-1974, 1998-1999
09.08	Bibliographic sketch, National Park Families, 1973
09.09	Bison management, 2008
09.10	Certificates, 1967, 1973, 1984
09.11	Coupon Books, 1973-1974

Box 10

File	Title
10.01	Forms, 1948-1995
10.02	Historic resource study, Golden Gate, 1979
10.03	Historic structure report, Old Faithful Inn, 1982
10.04	Map, Great Lake Reservoir WY, 1956
10.05	Map, Huckleberry Mountain WY, 1956
10.06	Map, Old Faithful WY, 1956
10.07	Map, West Thumb WY, 1956
10.08	Map, Frank Island WY, 1959
10.09	Map, Mount Hancock WY, 1959
10.10	Map, Yellowstone WY-MT-ID, 1961
10.11	Memoranda, 1961-1987

Series	Series Title
03	<i>Subject Files (cont'd)</i>

Box 10 (cont'd)

File	Title
10.12	Miscellaneous Notes, 1975-1980, 1987-1988, and undated
10.13	Nez Perce Trail, undated See also Box 11
10.14	Policies and reports, 1969-1981

Box 11

File	Title
11.01	Professional Guide Institute, undated
11.02	Professional Rangers Organization, 1970-1971
11.03	Ranger Bob Jackson, 2000-2001, 2007
11.04	Student Conservation Association, 1982
11.05	Target shooting, competition forms, 1972-1986
11.06	Target shooting, log, 1986
11.07	Yellowstone cartoons, 1967, 1970, 1986, 1988
11.08	Yellowstone plan proposal and Public hearing, 1972
11.09	Yellowstone Wolf Project, 2001, 2009

Series	Series Title
04	<i>Printed Materials</i>

Box 11 (cont'd)

File	Title
11.10	Western Fire Fighters manual, 1924, 1934
11.11	US Forest Service Instructions on Smokechasing, 1943
11.12	Yellowstone Nature Notes, 1950
11.13	Yosemite Park Travel Survey, 1952
11.14	National Park Service Employee Handbook, 1958

Box 12

File	Title
12.01	National Parks in California, 1959
12.02	Mountaineering Medicine, 1965
12.03	Grand Canyon Perspectives, 1969
12.04	Park Ranger, coloring book, 1971
12.05	Yarns of Yellowstone, comic book, 1972
12.06	Ranger Journal, 1977
12.07	Wildlife Monographs, 1981
12.08	Trail Construction and Maintenance Guide, undated
12.09	Wilderness Boating on Yellowstone Lake, undated
12.10	Winter Comes to Yellowstone, undated

Series	Series Title
05	<i>Photographs and Visual Media</i>

Box 12 (cont'd)

File	Title
12.11	Spring Rangers Conference, 1969-1980, and undated
12.12	Photographs, 1982, and undated Includes Mernin cross-country skiing and ranger training sessions.
12.13	Archeological Survey of the Nez Perce National Historical Trail in Yellowstone, DVDs, 2008 See also Box 9