

Finding Aid to the Rodney Nelson Papers

Nelson, Rodney, 1941-

Rodney Nelson papers, 1957-2001 (bulk 1970-2001)

1 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 294

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

OVERVIEW

Links: [Finding aid to earlier accession of Rodney Nelson Papers](#)

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Rodney Nelson, 2002 (Acc. 2677 & 2678).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

Copyrights: The Institute does not hold the copyright to this collection, except he donated his copyright to *Rain Burial and Other Stories* manuscript.

Citation: [Identification of item]. Rodney Nelson Papers (1957-2001), MS 294, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Rodney Allen Nelson was born on November 13, 1941, to Rudolph A. Nelson and Eva L. (Gunderson) Nelson in Fargo, North Dakota. His mother's parents were lifelong residents of Christine, North Dakota.

Nelson grew up in Fargo and Christine. After graduating from Fargo Central High, he attended several colleges without taking a degree. He served in the U.S. Navy in the early sixties as a musician. After his

military service he lived in San Francisco, where he was involved in antiwar protests. Nelson traveled extensively over the next few years, stopping in Germany, Mexico, Seattle, and the Twin Cities. He began having poetry, articles, plays, and fiction published in 1970. He received the Georgia Prize in poetry in 1973. He lived in Sonoma County, California, in 1975–1978 and received an A.A. degree in psychiatric technology from Santa Rosa Junior College in 1977. In 1978 he moved back to Fargo and became managing editor of the literary journal, *Free Passage*. Nelson served as editor of another journal, *Dakota Arts Quarterly*, during 1979–1984. One of his several novels, *Villy Sadness*, was published in 1987. This received the Lake Agassiz Publication Award of the Red River Valley Heritage Society in 1989. After living in northern Arizona during 1985–1987, he returned to North Dakota to become editor of Lone Butte Press. He lived again in Arizona in 1988–1998, working at Northern Arizona University as a copy editor. Nelson was listed in the fifty-fourth edition of *Who's Who in America*.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Rodney Nelson Papers is comprised of four series: Correspondence, Manuscripts, Poetry, and Subject Files. The [Correspondence Series](#) has been separated into incoming, outgoing, and topical sub-series and are arranged alphabetically. It contains letters to and from Rodney's mother, a former wife, and several friends, all written between 1957 and 2000, as well as work-related correspondence from the 1990s. There is only one letter in this series from Rodney's mother, Eva Nelson. Additional correspondence relating to Rodney may be found in the *Dakota Arts Quarterly Records*, 1978–1984, processed as Institute Mss 152, the Rodney Nelson Papers, 1971–1990, processed as Institute Mss 229, and the Eva L. Nelson Papers, 1909–1998, processed as Institute Mss 293.

The [Manuscripts Series](#) is arranged alphabetically by title and includes handwritten and typed manuscripts of Rodney's plays and short stories. *The Lost Profile* was Rodney's first serious work, written in 1966. "Kloshe" is a tribute to one of Rodney's publishers, Gary Elder (1939–2000). This file includes correspondence from his widow and friends as well as early letters and cards from Gary to Rodney. The Institute for Regional Studies owns the copyright to *Rain Burial and Other Stories*, a compilation of regional work that focuses on Scandinavian-American heritage. Also included is the manuscript version of one of his five published novels, *Villy Sadness*, which appeared in 1987.

The [Poetry Series](#) includes published and unpublished versions of Rodney's poetry written in the late 1960s through 1980. *North Farm*, *The Pentacle*, and *The Maiden Year* are compilations of published and unpublished poetry. *X Etudes* is a compilation of unpublished poetry and includes some revisions to the typed passages.

The [Subject Files Series](#) is arranged alphabetically by topic. It includes copies of editorial letters and other journalistic submissions and material regarding a projected translation of the work of KN, a North Dakota poet writing in Icelandic. There is a spiral-bound notebook containing inspirational notes, poems, and prose, and a folder titled "Whistleblower Report," which contains several documents pertaining to a dispute between Rodney and Northern Arizona University regarding his duties in the university's publications department.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

1/1 Finding aid, & Biographical material

Correspondence Series

Outgoing—

1/2 Nelson, Eva, 1957–1962, undated
 1/3 Nelson, Eva, 1973–1977
 1/4 Nelson, Eva, 1978–1985
 1/5 Nelson, Eva, 1986–1988
 1/6 Nelson, Eva, 1989–1993
 1/7 Nelson, Eva, 1994–1997

Incoming—

1/8 De Groot, Patty, 1994–1996
 1/9 Kelly, Bernadette, 1992–1993
 1/10 Lynch, Claire Rogers, 1997–2000
 1/11 Nelson, Ann, 1979–1988, undated
 1/12 Nelson, Eva, 1979
 1/13 Schipull, Ingeborg Pawelcik, 1968–1986
 1/14 Schipull, Ingeborg Pawelcik, 1998–2000

Topical—

1/15 Babel, Carol, 1989–1990
 1/16 Northern Arizona University, 1994
 Grievance Claim
 1/17 Northern Arizona University, 1991–1995
 Job Specifications
 1/18 Northern Arizona University, 1994–1995
 Lay-off

Manuscripts Series

1/20 Aerohead, 1995
 1/21 Causa, 1995
 1/22 Chump Summer, 1995
 1/23 Clara, 1969
 1/24 Cowboy Village: A Play in Eight Scenes (handwritten), 1992
 1/24a Cowboy Village: A Play in Eight Scenes (typed), 1992
 1/25 Dead Indian: A Radio Play, 1990
 1/26 Dead Indian: A Radio Play, 1995
 1/27 Dogtown, 1995
 1/28 Harvestman (handwritten), 1991
 1/29 Harvestman (typed), 1991
 1/30 Hill of Better Sleep, The, 1995

- 1/31 Informal Saga of Boots Brevik, The, 1971–1972
- 1/32 John Root is Gone, 1969
- 1/33 Kloshe, 2001
- 1/34 Kloshe (draft & correspondence), 1979–2000
- 1/35 Labor Day, 1976
- 1/36 Legend, 1976
- 1/37 Loafer at Reyes, A, 1968
- 1/38 Loboloco: A Monologue, 1992
- 1/40 Lost Profile, The, 1966
- 1/41 Mary: A Playlet for Voices, 1969
- 1/42 Montara Mar, 1999–2000
- 1/43 Montara Mar, 1999–2000
- 1/43a Murray Mountain, 1995
- 1/44 Not by a Longshot (first draft), 2001
- 1/45 Not by a Longshot (typed manuscript), 2001
- 1/46 Not by a Longshot (correspondence), 1998–2000
- 1/47 Not by a Longshot (source material), 1984–1999, undated
- 1/48 Oriflamme: A Play in Eight Scenes (first draft), 1993
- 1/49 Oriflamme: A Play in Eight Scenes, 1993
- 1/50 Pity on the Wapentake: And Other Plays, 1970s
- 1/51 Poor Hans: A Play, 1974
- 1/52 Rain Burial and Other Stories (pages 1–50)
- 1/53 Rain Burial and Other Stories (pages 51–100)
- 1/54 Rain Burial and Other Stories (pages 101–150)
- 1/55 Rain Burial and Other Stories (pages 151–203)
- 1/56 Say the Mountain, 1994
- 1/57 Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography, 1987
- 1/58 Svea Way (draft), 2000–2001
- 1/59 Svea Way, 2000–2001
- 1/60 Threnody, 1996
- 1/61 Threnody, 1996
- 1/62 To Go: A Comedy of Manias, 1984
- 1/63 To Go: A Comedy of Manias, 1984
- 1/64 To Woodstock, 1994
- 1/65 [Untitled], 1995
- 1/66 [Untitled], 1995
- 1/67 Villy Sadness, 1983
- 1/68 Welcome to Riotwheel and Other Stories, 1970s
- 1/69 Wine So Red, 1994
- 1/70 Wine So Red: A Play in One Act, 1994

Poetry Series

- 2/1 Maiden Year: Poems, The, 1971

- 2/2 North Farm, 1980
- 2/3 Pentacle: Poems, The, Feb.–Apr, 1968
- 2/4 Published Poems, 1974, undated
- 2/5 X Etudes, undated

Subject Files

- 2/6 Book and Poetry Reviews, 1978–1989, undated
- 2/7 Editorials and Articles, 1980–1987, undated
- 2/8 Journalism: May & June, 1971
- 2/9 KN – Icelandic Poetry, 1991
- 2/10 Notes, Poems, Quotations, & Prose, 1970–1974
- 2/11 Whistleblower Report, 1994