

Elissa Blake Free Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2022

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2022086477>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms022007>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2022
Revised 2023 March

Collection Summary

Title: Elissa Blake Free Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1947-2021

Bulk Dates: 1978-2005

ID No.: MSS86477

Creator: Free, Elissa Blake, 1955-

Extent: 2,300 items

Extent: 7 containers

Extent: 2.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2022086477>

Summary: Television news producer. Correspondence, memoranda, diaries, notes and notebooks, production scripts, CNN manuals and alumni newsletters, photographs, and other papers of Elissa Blake Free pertaining to her career primarily at CNN but also with CBS News.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Elissa Blake Free were given to the Library of Congress by Free in 2022.

Processing History

The papers of Elissa Blake Free were arranged and described by Andrea J. Briggs in 2022.

Transfers

Video and audiocassette tapes of Free's news stories and air checks have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division where they are identified as part of the Elissa Blake Free Papers. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division in advance of a research visit.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the papers of Ann Cottrell Free (see <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms022008>).

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Elissa Blake Free is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for information concerning these restrictions. In addition, many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Elissa Blake Free Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Elissa Blake Free was born on October 18, 1955, in Washington, D.C., to Ann Cottrell Free and James S. Free. She received her bachelor of arts in 1978 from Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota. That same year, Free began her career in television news broadcasting when she was hired at CBS as an assistant and researcher. In 1980, she left CBS to begin working at the Washington, D.C., bureau of CNN as a producer. She held various positions as associate and executive producer of nightly and weekly news shows and segments on the network before transitioning to the role of general field assignment producer around 1992. She began working as a story producer around 1996, working with CNN's Washington correspondents. In 1999, she moved into the newly created position of newsroom manager, where she was responsible for ensuring all assignments and beats were covered and positions were staffed, before leaving CNN in 2001. She married William Ward Nooter in 1983, and their daughter, Amanda Blake Nooter, was born in 1991.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Elissa Blake Free (1955-) span the years 1947-2021, with the bulk of the material dating from 1978 to 2005, and document Free's career as a television news producer at CBS and The Cable News Network (CNN). The papers are primarily in English and organized alphabetically by subject.

The collection documents broadcast news and the early years of cable news, with files regarding CBS and CNN's coverage of news events, memoranda and correspondence documenting internal operations, and staff files and employee benefits material. It also contains coverage manuals from CBS and CNN, which serve as the production manuals for each news event and outline the logistics for how a news story or segment developed. Free faced several notable instances of sexism as a female news producer throughout her career, which is reflected in files on her maternity leave from CNN and files related to *Hartman v. Albright*, a class action sex discrimination lawsuit against the United States Information Agency in which she was awarded damages for their discriminatory hiring practices.

The collection also includes personal correspondence, diaries and reporter's notebooks, photographs, and invitations and programs from various professional receptions and events.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged alphabetically by name of organization, subject, or type of material.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Free, Elissa Blake, 1955-

Organizations

Cable News Network.

Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.

United States. Agency for International Development--Trials, litigation, etc.

Subjects

Journalism.

Maternity leave--United States.
Sex discrimination in employment--United States.
Television broadcasting of news.
Women in journalism--United States.

Occupations

Television producers.

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|------------------|---|
| BOX 1 | CBS |
| BOX 1 | Broadcast transcripts, 1979-1982 |
| BOX 1 | Coverage manuals |
| BOX 1 | Abscam bribery scandal, 1980 |
| BOX 1 | "The Pope in Washington, D.C.," Pope John Paul II, 1979 (2 folders) |
| BOX 1 | Employee benefits, 1978 |
| BOX 1 | Memos, 1979-1980, 1987-1989 |
| BOX 1 | Miscellany, 1979-1980 |
| BOX 1 | Personal correspondence, 1979-1981, undated |
| BOX 1 | Phone lists, 1980, undated |
| BOX 1 | Photographs, 1979 |
| BOX 1 | Press credentials, 1979-1980, undated |
| BOX 1 | Primary and caucus handbooks, 1980 |
| BOX 1 | Workers' compensation, 1978-1979 |
| BOX 2 | CNN |
| BOX 2 | Antitrust lawsuit against ABC, CBS, NBC, and White House staff, 1980-1981 |
| BOX 2 | Appointment calendars, 1990-1991, 2001 |
| BOX 2 | Broadcast transcripts, 1981-1982, 1994 |
| BOX 2 | Cable News Network launch booklet, circa 1980 |
| BOX 2 | CNN Washington Bureau Alumni Society, 2002-2005, 2021 (2 folders) |
| BOX 2 | Coverage manual, Beach Boys and Independence Day, 1984 |
| BOX R 7 | Davis, Rick, 1991-1992 |
| BOX 2 | Ephemera and memorabilia, undated |
| BOX 2 | Employee benefits, 1983-1990 |
| BOX 2 | Employee evaluations, 1992-2001 |
| BOX R 7 | Ginsberg, Judd, 1984 |
| BOX 3 | Maternity leave, 1981-1985, 1990-1993 |
| BOX 3 | Memos and correspondence, 1980-1987 |
| BOX 3 | Miscellany, 1989-1991, 1996-2001 |
| BOX 3 | "Operation Tailwind" story retraction, 1998 |
| BOX 3 | Personnel papers, 1985-2001, undated |
| BOX 3 | Phone lists, 1981-1986, 1991-2002 (2 folders) |
| BOX 3 | Photographs, 1980-1992, undated |
| BOX 4 | Photographs, 1980-1992, undated |
| BOX 4 | Press and clippings, 1980-1985, 2021 |
| BOX 4 | Press credentials, 1980-2002 |
| BOX 4 | Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) German/American Journalist Exchange Program, 1947-1948, 1995-1996 (2 folders) |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
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| BOX 4 | Republican National Convention, press guide, 1984 (2 folders) |
| BOX 4 | Scripts, 1980-1982 |
| BOX 4 | Speeches, 1986, undated |
| BOX 5 | Diaries, 1980-1981, undated |
| BOX 5 | Event programs, 1980-1985, 2009 |
| BOX 5 | <i>Hartman v. Albright</i> sex discrimination lawsuit, 1984-1991, 1996-2005, 2021 (2 folders) |
| BOX 5 | Job search, 1980-1988, 1997-1999 (2 folders) |
| BOX 5 | Membership directories, Sigma Delta Chi, The Society of Professional Journalists, 1983-1987 |
| BOX 6 | Personal correspondence, 1981-1990, 2001, undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 6 | Reporter's notebooks, 1982, undated |
| BOX 6 | Senate staff directory, 1984 |
| BOX 6 | United States Information Agency (USIA), 1982-1988 (2 folders) |