

Grace Eldridge Halperin Papers
1914-2001, n.d.

Creator: Halperin, Grace Eldridge (1914-2001)

Extent: 0.25 l. ft.

Processor: Ashley Eckhardt, January 15, 2010

Administration Information

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Separations: Some duplicates were removed

See Also: Older Women's League Archives

Biographical History

Grace May Eldridge was born on April 17, 1914, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Gracie May Comstock Eldridge and John Philip Eldridge. She attended Kansas City Junior College with her sister Rosena from 1931 until 1933, each receiving their Associate of Arts degrees. In 1936, she began studying sociology at Central Methodist College in Fayette, Missouri, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1938. She took graduate courses in social work at the Kansas City Unit of Washington University in St. Louis and the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. Grace moved to Los Angeles, California, in 1944 where she worked for the Children's Home Society, an adoption agency, and the Medical Social Service Department of Los Angeles County General Hospital before returning to Chicago in 1950 to complete her Master of Arts degree at the University of Chicago, which she received in 1951.

Grace married Lee Halperin in 1958 in Chicago. Lee worked as an electrician for the city of Chicago until his retirement in 1966. He was diagnosed with skin cancer at the age of 35 and continued to receive treatments for the disease throughout his life. After his retirement, the disease worsened and led to further health complications and disfiguring skin lesions on his face. Grace took care of Lee until the stress of the situation began affecting her own health and she moved to Evanston, Illinois, in 1980. She continued to care for Lee, although living separately, until his death in 1985.

After moving to Evanston and as a result of her own difficulties with the long-term care of her husband, Grace became involved in several organizations and began advocating for health insurance reform and women's rights. In 1981, she joined the Older Women's League (OWL) through which she lobbied for laws that would provide health insurance benefits to divorced women. Illinois eventually passed such a law as well as the Spousal Impoverishment Reform Act which allowed for

the division of a couple's assets when one spouse is placed in a nursing home. Grace also served on the Evanston Commission on Aging and the Board of the National Senior Citizens Law Center, each for six years. In the early 1990s, she joined Equality Now, an international human rights organization that raises awareness about abuse and violence against women.

In 2001, Grace published her memoirs, *A Life Long Quest*, through which she reflected on her life and how her personal experience with female genital mutilation at the age of four affected her physically and emotionally for the rest of her life. She also received numerous awards for her activist work for women and the elderly. In 1988, she received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Field of Long-Term Care and in 1996 she was admitted to the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame. Grace also moved into the Mather Home, a retirement community in Evanston, in 1996, where she remained until her death on August 21, 2001.

Scope and Content

The Grace Eldridge Halperin Papers consist of biographical materials related to Grace's family and personal life, particularly after the death of her husband Lee in 1985. The collection primarily contains Grace's own reflections on her life and how she coped with the physical and emotional trials she endured. It also includes some reference to her advocacy efforts through biographical statements and a few of the awards she received.

Series 1: Biographical, 1914-2001, n.d., Box 1

This series contains materials related to Grace's family history, personal life, and the publication of her memoirs, *A Life Long Quest*. It also contains some of the awards and commendations she received in her later life. Materials include correspondence, handwritten notes, newspaper and magazine articles, and photographs as well as her notes and manuscripts used to publish *A Life Long Quest*.

Subjects:

Elderly care
Female genital mutilation
Halperin, Grace Eldridge
Health insurance laws
Older Women's League

Women and Leadership Archives
Loyola University Chicago

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Series 1: Biographical, 1914-2001, n.d.			
1	1	Articles	1989-2000
	2	Awards	1996-2001
	3	Biographical Statements	2001
	4	Correspondence	2000-2001
	5	Family History	1914, n.d.
	6	Female Genital Mutilation	2001
	7	<i>A Life Long Quest</i>	2001
	8	<i>A Life Long Quest: Manuscripts</i>	2000-2001
	9	<i>A Life Long Quest: Notes and Reflections</i>	1989-2001
	10	<i>A Life Long Quest: Requests</i>	2000-2001
	11	The Mather Retirement Home	1996-1997, n.d.
	12	Memorials	2001
	13	Photographs	1962, 1990, 1997
	14	Résumé	1943
	15	“Wisdom of the Ages” Sermon	2000