

Title: **Helen and Mardy Polaner Collection**

Genre: **Papers**

Dates: **1903-1983 (Predominantly, 1940s-1960s)**

Size: **1.25 linear feet, 2 1/2 manuscript boxes**

ID #: **1257**

OCLC #:

Scope & Contents

The papers of Helen and Mardy Polaner were deposited in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs between 1985 and 1990 by Mr. Polaner and opened for research in March of 2001.

Helen Moore Polaner was born in Saginaw, Michigan on June 15, 1906. She graduated from Detroit Teachers College in 1926 and taught school until 1945, when she took leave to join the staff of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, serving as Executive Secretary, Vice-President and President between 1945 and 1950. She married Mardy Polaner in 1949. After spending five years in night school classes at the Detroit College of Law, she left the teaching profession in 1960 to practice law with Moe Wolfgang. Helen Polaner was active in a number of civil liberties and labor organizations, including the Americans for Democratic Action, the NAACP and the Michigan Federation of Labor, which elected her its first female vice president in 1950. She died in 1987.

Mardy Polaner was a labor organizer for the AFL in the 1930s. In the early 1940s, the AFL assigned him to the marine trades on the Great Lakes, appointing him administrator of the Great Lakes District of the Seafarers International Union. He served as Secretary-Treasurer from 1943-1945, during which time he edited the union's newspaper, *Great Lakes Seafarer*, and delivered a series of "Frank Talks" over several radio stations in the Great Lakes area rebutting charges of SIU racketeering by National Maritime Union (CIO) officials. He left the Seafarers to take a job on the staff of Hotel & Restaurant Employees Union Local 705 in Detroit. In 1951 he was sent by the international in Cincinnati to organize restaurants for Local 505 in Columbus, Ohio, where as secretary-treasurer of the local, he presided over the bitter strike to unionize the Neil House hotel in 1951. Later he became president of Robot Services, Inc., a vending machine company.

The Helen and Mardy Polaner Collection contains correspondence, flyers, union publications, radio scripts, legal briefs and other material reflecting their careers with the teachers', restaurant workers' and seafarers' unions and their involvement in civil liberties causes in the Detroit area, including significant correspondence with Josephine Gomon.

Subjects

National Maritime Union (CIO)
Seafarers International Union (AFL), Great Lakes District
Detroit Federation of Teachers (AFT Local 231)
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, Local 505 (Columbus, Ohio)
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, Local 705 (Detroit, Mich.)
Merchant mariners—Labor unions—United States

Correspondents

Frances Comfort
Josephine Gomon
Florence Sweeney

Transfers

A number of photographs of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 505 in Columbus, Ohio, including several of the Neil House strike in 1951, and a few photographs of Helen Polaner and Myra Wolfgang and HRE Local 705 in Detroit have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Collection.

Related Collections

Related material may be found in the Myra Wolfgang and Detroit Federation of Teachers (AFT Local 231) Collections.

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1. Comfort, Frances, and Florence Sweeney; corres. with Helen and Mardy Polaner, 1947, 1977-83
2. Polaner, Helen; Aid Bergman Committee, 1953
3. Polaner, Helen; Citizens' Committee Against the Trucks Law, 1952-55
4. Polaner, Helen; Committee for Educational Freedom, 1953-55
5. Polaner, Helen; correspondence, miscellaneous, 1945-87
6. Polaner, Helen; *The Detroit Teacher* "Executive Secretary's Column," 1948-49
7. Polaner, Helen; *The Detroit Teacher* "President's Column," 1949-50
8. Polaner, Helen; Gaines, David, case, 1968-69
9. Polaner, Helen; Gomon, Josephine, corres. with, n.d., 1956-70
10. Polaner, Helen; Gomon, Josephine, Tribute Dinner, 9 Dec 1960
11. Polaner, Helen; high school and college education
12. Polaner, Helen; publicity about, 1940s-1970s
13. Polaner, Helen; Wolfgang, Moe, Memorial Award, 1973-74

[Box 2]

1. Polaner, Mardy; Gomon, Josephine, corres. with, n.d., 1965
2. Polaner, Mardy; Great Lakes transport workers' unions' contracts, manuals, 1908-c. 1940s
3. Polaner, Mardy; Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HRE) Local 505 (Columbus, Ohio), 1951
4. Polaner, Mardy; HRE Local 505 Neil House strike, 1951-52
5. Polaner, Mardy; HRE locals' dispute with Detroit Federation of Labor, 1948-49
6. Polaner, Mardy; Lake and Lumber Carriers' Associations' contracts with Great Lakes transport workers' unions, 1903-20
7. Polaner, Mardy; letters of reference, 1937-41
- 8-9. Polaner, Mardy; National Maritime Union WSOO radio program scripts, Apr-Sep 1944
10. Polaner, Mardy; Seafarers International Union Great Lakes District (SIU GLD) corres., arbitration, 1943-45
11. Polaner, Mardy; SIU GLD "Frank Talks" radio program scripts, c. 1944
12. Polaner, Mardy; SIU GLD *Great Lakes Seafarer*, 1941, 1944-45

[Box 3]

- 1-3. Polaner, Mardy; SIU GLD *Great Lakes Seafarer* Air Edition radio scripts, Jun-Nov 1944
4. Wolfgang, Moe; letters of condolence to Myra Wolfgang, 1963