

MsSC 121

Martin Kilian Papers

BIOGRAPHY

Martin Kilian was born in Seattle, Washington in 1897 to Dora and H.F. Kilian. In 1915, at the age of 17, Martin Kilian left Seattle for Alaska with his brother Hermann to work in the whaling trade. Traveling on the same ship as his brother, who was an engineer, Martin and rest of the crew of the vessel *Polar Bear* encountered renown Canadian/Icelandic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson near Banks Land. Proceeding toward Herschell Island, Stefansson made arrangements with the Captain of the *Polar Bear* to purchase the vessel and hire part of the crew for explorations of the Arctic and Northern Alaska. Both Martin and Hermann were among the crew members selected by Stefansson for the journey. Martin Kilian spent the next four years with Stefansson and his Chief Lieutenant Storker Storkerson in mapping the northern coasts of Alaska and other scientific projects and explorations. Hermann Kilian spent three years with Stefansson and returned to Seattle a year earlier than Martin.

Martin's return to Seattle in 1919 received considerable attention in the local press, although accounts of his Arctic journeys had also been publicized a year earlier through letters sent by both Hermann and Martin to their parents and excerpted in the local newspapers. Of particular interest to the media was Kilian's account of his eight-month voyage on an Arctic ice floe in 1917. Working later as a Second Mate on a trading vessel bound for Russia, Kilian made news again in 1921 when he was one of 16 survivors of a fire that sank the power schooner *Kamchatka* off the Aleutian Peninsula.

In 1928, Kilian turned his back on a life at sea and began to develop and manage Ohanapecosh Hot Springs, a resort area in the Mt. Rainier National Park. He operated this facility, which consisted of a few dozen cabins, lodge, bathhouse, and store, for 32 years while residing in the nearby town of Eatonville. After selling his holdings at Ohanapecosh in 1960, Kilian pursued a number of public positions in Eatonville, including posts as a town councilman, school board director, and policeman. When he died at the age of 80 in 1977, Martin Kilian was believed to be the last surviving member of the Stefansson expedition.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The papers of Martin Kilian include books, correspondence, narrative accounts, newspaper clippings, photographs, and publications that cover the years 1897 to 1977.

About half of the material details Kilian's four year expedition in Alaska and the Arctic as a seaman and explorer working for Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Kilian's personal accounts of his Arctic journeys include letters to his family in Seattle and two written narratives. Correspondence from

Martin's brother, Hermann to his family also offer a personal account of the explorations, although most of Hermann's letters were written in German and not translated. Other accounts of the expedition include newspaper articles about Martin and Hermann Kilian with excerpts of their letters sent from the Arctic.

Half of the materials focus upon Stefansson and his account of the expedition in newspaper articles and books.

The correspondence dates from 1914 to 1933, focusing mostly on the years 1914 to 1919. The bulk of the correspondence is from Martin and brother Hermann from the expedition in Alaska and the Arctic to the Kilian family in Seattle. About half of the letters are in German, with Martin composing mainly in English and Hermann writing in German. The term "Liebe Eltern" translates basically into "Dear Parents." Excerpts from Martin's and Hermann's letters to their parents in Seattle were featured in newspaper articles about the expedition published before the brothers returned from Alaska. In these articles, Martin's father, H.F., is usually credited with having granted access to his sons' correspondence to the newspapers.

The newspaper clippings, which comprise roughly half of Kilian's papers, pertain primarily to Stefansson's Arctic expeditions with personal accounts from Stefansson, Martin Kilian, and other members of the expeditionary force. The articles were clipped from mostly local newspapers, including *the Seattle Times*, *the Seattle P.I.*, *the Tacoma News Tribune*, and *the Eatonville Dispatch*.

INCLUSIVE DATES: 1897-1977

RESTRICTIONS: None

VOLUME: 1.5 Linear Ft.

ACCESSION: 1992.31

BOX 1: Correspondence, Drawing, License, Magazines, Narrative Accounts, Newspaper Clippings, Publications, and Photographs.

Baptismal Certificate: For Martin Kilian, 1897, in German. (Because of its delicate condition and need to be rolled out, the certificate has been transferred to flat-file storage in the ephemera collection.)

1. Correspondence: 1914
2. Correspondence: 1915
3. Correspondence: 1916
4. Correspondence: 1918
5. Correspondence: 1919
6. Correspondence: 1926
7. Correspondence: 1933
8. Drawing: Arctic Dog Sled. (Pencil on paper) undated.
9. License: Stationary Fireman's License. (Certified by the City of Tacoma for the Bridge Clinic)
10. Magazine Ad: Vilhjalmur Stefansson For Lockheed Luxury Liners. 1957
11. Magazines: *Alaska Sportsman*, September 1966. "All You Have To Do Is Run Up That Mountain, by Frances B. Currier. (Story about the Mt. Marathon race in Seward, Alaska.)
12. Magazines: *Science Illustrated*, November 1947. "Stefansson Pleads For Our Neglected Arctic, by Vilhjalmur Stefansson. (The necessity of colonizing the North Pole for settlement and strategic reasons.)
13. Misc.
14. Narrative Account: "Adrift On an Ice Floe For Eight Months." Undated
15. Narrative Account: "A Narrative of the Work I was Engaged in in the Winter of 1915-1916." Undated
16. Newspaper Clippings: Albert Bridge. (Developer of the Ohanapecosh Hot Springs and the clinic where Martin obtained a license to work as Stationary Fireman) 1949
17. Newspaper Clippings: Chief Steward, Bender Brothers Schooner Expedition. 1918
18. Newspaper Clippings: Kamchatka Fire. (The sinking of the Seattle Schooner *Kamchatka* off the Alaskan coast during a storm, an incident in which Martin Kilian was one of the survivors) 1921-1974
19. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1918
20. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1919
21. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1920
22. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1932
23. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1956
24. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1968
25. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Accounts of the Arctic Expedition. 1977
26. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Brother Arthur Kilian. 1947
27. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Mother Dora Kilian. 1947
28. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Obituaries. 1977
29. Newspaper Clippings: Martin Kilian, Ohanapecosh Hot Springs. 1935-1957
30. Newspaper Clippings: Misc. Alaska and Arctic Explorations. 1958
31. Newspaper Clippings: Other Accounts of the Expedition. 1916-1972
32. Newspaper Clippings: *The Polar Bear*. (Schooner used in Kilian's Arctic Expedition) 1963-1971

33. Newspaper Clippings: Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Accounts of Arctic Explorations, 1918.
34. Newspaper Clippings: Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Accounts of Arctic Explorations, (Seattle Times' seven-part series) 1919
35. Newspaper Clippings: Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Celtic-Greenland Theory. 1938
36. Newspaper Clippings: Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Evelyn Stefansson's Introduction to the Book *Eat Fat and Grow Slim* (Arctic-inspired meat diet). December 7, 1959.
37. Newspaper Clippings: Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Obituaries. 1962
38. Photographs: Misc. Personal Photographs. Undated (The bulk of the photographs in this collection, numbering about 100-150 and mostly of the expedition, are stored separately in the Society's photograph collection under the number 1992.31. Two photocopies of these photos in the file are also housed in Stefansson's papers.)
39. Publications: *Eskimo Legends*. Lela Oman. Undated (Large newspaper insert, appears to be tourist-oriented)
40. Publications: "Food and Food Habits In Alaska and Northern Canada." Vilhjalmur Stefansson. (Reprinted from *Human Nutrition Historic and Scientific*, Monograph III. Autographed copy dated 9/61 to Martin)
41. Publications: *Vilhjalmur Stefansson*. 1925. (A slim volume in tribute to Stefansson's explorations with short chapters of praise from Robert Peary, Knud Rasmussen, Clark Wissler, and Edwin Balmer, among others.)

BOX 2: Books

1. Books: *Pechuck*. Richard Montgomery. (An narrative of Stefansson's expedition, dedicated to Lorne Knight, one of the expedition members) 1931

(Because of the fragile condition of this book, it has been placed inside a folder to minimize further damage to the spine. The other books in this box have been simply placed upright in the box spine-to-spine, without folders.)

Books: *Discovery: The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*. Evelyn Stefansson. 1964.

Books: *My Life With The Eskimos*. Vilhjalmur Stefansson. 1927

Books: *The Northward Course of Empire*. Vilhjalmur Stefansson. (Copy autographed by author with message to Kilian) 1922.

Books: *Not By Bread Alone*. Vilhjalmur Stefansson. 1946

BOX 3 Book

1. Book: *The Friendly Arctic*. Vilhjalmur Stefansson. (Autographed) 1921