

# Guide to the Walter Friedrich Knips films, circa 1950s

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#### **Collection Overview**

Repository: Human Studies Film Archives

Title: Walter Friedrich Knips films

Date: circa 1950s

Identifier: HSFA.2015.07

Creator: Knips, Walter Friedrich, 1911-1994

**Extent:** 3 Film reels (1,550 feet; 16mm and 8mm)

Language: English.

**Summary:** Walter Friedrich Knips was a commercial attaché for the German

foreign service. He served in Karachi, Pakistan, from 1952 to 1957. The film footage included in this collection covers trips taken by Knips and his family to Hunza, Srinagar, Gilgit, and Nanga Parabat between 1953 and 1955 and family home movies from Pakistan and Houston

dating from 1952 to 1960.

#### **Administrative Information**

### **Acquisition Information**

The Walter Friedrich Knips films were donated by his daughter, Franziska Hart.

#### Related Materials

The HSFA holds excerpts from the journals of Walter Friedrich Knips and his wife, Eva Knips, as translated by their daughter Franziska Hart, which relate to the family trip to Hunza in 1955. Please consult the archivist for more information.

## **Processing Information**

The first film was assembled from three reels of film and the second and third film were each assembled from two reels of film. Titles for the assembled film reels were supplied by the archivist. Titles for the individual film reels were derived from information on the film cans when the film was digitized.

Descriptions of the film footage were supplied by Franziska Hart.

Processed by HSFA Staff, November 2014

Encoded by Katherine Christensen, November 2020

#### Preferred Citation

The Walter Friedrich Knips films, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

#### Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

### Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

## **Biographical Note**

Walter Friedrich Knips was born in Berlin on March 5, 1911. He was unable to attend university and took a business/electro-technical apprenticeship at Siemens in 1931. At the end of his apprenticeship, he was hired by Siemens and worked for them for two years before being transferred to their British India location in 1936. When England declared war on Germany after the invasion of Poland in 1939, all German nationals living in India, including Knips, were taken into internment camps. Knips was interned at Ahmendnagar (1929-1941), Deolali (1941-1942), and Dehra Dun (1941-1942). In the internment camps, Knips volunteered to help the dentist and was employed to assist in the camp hospital. When the internees were released two years after the end of the war, few were permitted to remain in India, and Knips returned to Germany, where he met his wife, Eva Burhenne. He worked as a salesman for Zellstoff Fabrik Waldhof, a Wiesbaden based pulp and paper company, for two years. Then, in 1952, his daughter Franziska was born, and he was hired by the German foreign service to take a position at the new embassy in Karachi, Pakistan, due to his knowledge of and desire to return to the region.

Knips was a commercial attaché for the German foreign service from 1952 to 1976. He served in Karachi from 1952 to 1957; he was fluent in Urdu and served as a negotiator and translator. He met Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan (1912-1976), the last Ismaili ruler of the State of Hunza, in 1953 while serving as a facilitator for the German-Austrian Nanga Parbat Climbing Expedition. The Mir invited Knips to visit him in the Hunza Valley, which he did with his wife in 1954 and his wife and daughter, Franziska, in 1955. Their friendship continued after Knips' departure from Pakistan in February 1957.

Knips continued to work for the German foreign service until his retirement in 1976, while serving in Montreal. He was posted in Houston, Texas, from 1957 to 1961 and in Montreal, Canada, from 1961 to 1976. He remained in Canada until his death in 1994.

#### Sources Consulted

Hamid, Major General Syed Ali. "A German Captive in Wartime India." *The Friday Times*, September 20, 2019. https://www.thefridaytimes.com/a-german-captive-in-wartime-india/

Hart, Franziska. "Walter F. Knips 1911-1994." Accessed November 19, 2020. http://www.gaebler.info/Walter Knips.pdf

1911	Born in Berlin on March 5
1931-1934	Business/Electro-Technical apprentice at Siemens
1934-1936	Worked at Siemens
1936-1939	Worked at British India office of Siemens
1939 -1941	Interned by British forces at Ahmednagar
1941-1942	Interned by British forces at Deolali
1942-1947	Interned by British forces at Dehra Dun
1948	Married Eva Burhenne on October 30
1948-1952	Worked for Zellstoff Fabrik Waldhof
1952-1957	Commercial attaché for the German foreign service in Karachi, Pakistan
1953	Served as a facilitator for the German-Austrian Nanga Parbat Climbing Expedition

1954	First trip to Hunza (with Eva)
1955	Second trip to Hunza (with Eva and Franziska)
1957-1961	Commercial attaché for the German foreign service in Houston, Texas
1961-1976	Commercial attaché for the German foreign service in Montreal, Quebec

Died in Quebec, Canada

## **Scope and Contents**

1994

The Walter Friedrich Knips films contain footage of the Knips family trips to Hunza in April of 1954 and autumn of 1955, a trip to Gilgit and Nanga Parabat in 1953 for the German-Austrian Climbing Expedition, and footage of the family in Karachi and Houston. The Hunza film footage contains depictions of their journey there, the events and people they witnessed while there, and their return home. The family film footage depicts the Knips children at various ages as well as unidentified local events. Some of the family film may date to after their time in Pakistan, perhaps to their time in Houston.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

## **Further Reading**

Bilal, Shah. "The History of Hunza." YouTube, 10:31, accessed October 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=xRZweSmnAhE&list=PLIKIUP7yiEBKwlU\_36s10C3oa79Tx3Dt2&index=3

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Douglas, William O. Beyond the High Himalayas. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1952.

Leaf, Alexander, M.D. "Every Day is a Gift When You are Over 100." *National Geographic Magazine*, January 1973.

Manchester Education Committee. "Hunza-A Remote Himalayan Community." YouTube, 16:09, accessed October 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHFliio9Khl&index=1&list=PLIKIUP7yiEBKwlU\_36s10C3oa79Tx3Dt2

McCarry, John. "High Road to Hunza." National Geographic Magazine, March 1994.

Michaud, Sabrina & Roland. "Trek to Lofty Hunza - and Beyond." *National Geographic Magazine*, November 1975.

Rodale, J. L. The Healthy Hunzas. Emmaus, Pennsylvania: Rodale Press, 1949.

Shor, Jean & Franc. "At World's End in Hunza." National Geographic Magazine, October 1953.

Shor, Jean Bowie. *After You, Marco Polo*. New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1955.

Taylor, Reneé. *Hunza Health Secrets for Long Life and Happiness*. New Canaan, Connecticut: Keats Publishing Inc., 1964.

Tobe, John H. *Hunza, Adventures in a Land of Paradise*. St. Catharines, Ontario: The Provoker Press, 1960.

# Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Festivals Polo

Names:

Khān, Muhammad Jamāl, Mir of Hunza, 1912-1976

Places:

Gilgit District (Pakistan) Hunza (Pakistan) Nanga Parbat (Pakistan)

Pakistan

Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir, India)

## **Container Listing**

Item 2015.7.1-1 Walter Friedrich Knips Amateur Film: Pakistan, 1955-1956

1 Film reel (silent color reversal; 1,050 feet; 16mm)

Notes:

This film footage was assembled from 3 reels. The first two of these reels were from the Knips family trip to Hunza in the autumn of 1955. (The HSFA holds translations of journal entries of both Walter and his wife Eva Knips concerning this trip. To see these materials, consult the archivist.) The third reel is comprised mostly of family film of the Knips children, but also includes street scenes at what may be part of the commemoration of *Matam*.

Reel 1: Hunza #1. The Knips family's journey from their home in Karachi to the Hunza Valley opens with shots of their five-year-old daughter Franziska on the train from Karachi, a view from the train of people along a river washing laundry; arid countryside with scrub brush; train's arrival at Khanewal Junction train station; (it's likely that the train journey continued to Rawalpindi where the family spent the night at the Flashman's Hotel); their luggage is loaded onto a buggy or tonga (likely to be delivered to the Rawalpindi airstrip from where the family will take off); the view from a plane (a decommissioned Dakota transport aircraft) enroute from the city of Rawalpindi (Pakistan) to the town of Gilgit (situated in the region of Kashmir but administered at the time by a Pakistani Political Agent; the 2 hour flight was considered one of the most challenging routes in the world at the time); Eva, Walter Knips' wife, and Franziska walk with a guide on the residential grounds of the Political Agent in Gilgit; local man and his shy young daughter, wearing a traditional crossstitch embroidered cap, emerge from behind flowers; the young girl and Franziska pose for the camera; next morning's early departure by jeep from the Gilgit Agency; the view from the jeep of a bridge across the Hunza River, and the axle-wide road in the foothills; Franziska in the jeep; Franziska on a small mountain pony with a personal guide; scenes which take place after their arrival in Baltit: men dancing, drumming, and playing horns; a man in european dress, the Mir (Muhammad Jamal Khan, the last Ismaili ruler of Hunza), leads a group of local men dressed in open woolen cape-like coats and wearing the traditional soft-rounded rolled-up hat (a pakol); Mir in western dress with Franziska and two of his daughters in local dress; cattle graze as a small local child chases them and plays; a large residence on a hilltop—the palace; mountains and rolling landscape around the residence; local people in a courtyard perform daily tasks (knitting, rhythmic grinding of grain) and pose for the camera; a western couple sits in the sun, men bring fruit and set up a carpet for seating, a seated woman carding wool-most likely from sheep or Yak; drumming musicians with Mir's daughters and Franziska in the background as Eva passes by; local man sits on the ground and uses his legs to stretch the inside of an animal skin (goat?); young woman,

the Mir's eldest daughter, appears in a white shawl draped over her head and sits against the snow covered mountain scenery; Eva holds a green mango? sits beside and talks to a smiling local man; Mir's oldest daughter and her two younger sisters and Franziska sit and wave to the camera; Walter Knips enjoys fruit—mango?; a procession of the Mir in western dress and carrying a camera, the Mir's wife, the Rani, in a green shawl/scarf carries a drawstring bag, her lady-in-waiting follows behind, along with the Mir's oldest daughter in white shawl and the Mir's brother in a brown jacket—all settle on the previously laid down rug; Eva carries a camera and joins the Mir encouraging him to a stroll; Mir's brother briefly appears; Eva joins earlier mentioned westerners in the sun and Walter, in a black beret, joins in; Mir's oldest daughter carries knitting needles and knitting to her mother seated with Eva on the carpet; several women of the household dressed in red; local children carrying younger siblings; Eva joins other westerners seated in the sun with their young pony-tailed daughter and a Jack Russell-like terrier dog.

Reel 2: "Hunza #2. This is a continuation of Reel 1 and begins with more footage of Baltit: Franziska Knips with the Mir's two young daughters as seen earlier; scenes of the a gathering in the palace garden in which the Mir, Muhammad Jamal Khan, appears in elaborate official dress, as he shows off his saber first to Eva Knips and another woman (blonde), then to Walter and a second european man; the Mir and his wife, the Rani, stroll alone and then pose for photos with a group of Europeans —Eva in plaid skirt stands next to the Mir; Eva takes photos of a small formally dressed boy—the Mir's youngest son; Eva carries the boy as she walks with the Rani; the small boy poses with a formally dressed young girl who runs into the scene—the boy and girl are the Mir's youngest of nine children—they dance in a circle; Franziska and her two friends, the princesses, play what looks like ring-around-the-rosy; local men are seated in a row and stand as they are being filmed—they have assembled in an open air court presided over by the Mir (barely visible in the rear corner)—the Mir is both ruler and judge and regularly hears his community's grievances and requests; procession of local men departs from the court; an orchard with children and men in the trees collecting apples; men stirring large pans of yak milk? and grain? over a fire; Eva attempts to cross a rope and plank ladder bridge under the watchful eyes of 2 locals; grazing yaks are baited by the terrier mentioned earlier; Franziska, along with another western child and a western woman, watches the yaks; a herdsman ropes a yak through the nose; local children and the Mir's youngest son now dressed in a small brown coat somersault and play. Footage continues with scenes of people organizing for the caravan-like journey from Baltit to the Mir's winter palace. Locals stand along the edge of the rocky road, westerners mount yaks—Eva in a beige windbreaker and visor cap, Franziska right behind, then the Rani in a dark shawl and white gloves which she wears to shield her hands from sun exposure to prevent discoloration and wrinkling, locals walk

along side, villagers watch and salute the procession; Eva passes by astride her yak saddled with a red saddle blanket; food is laid out/handed out; children pose for the camera; Eva positions herself to take photos from a balcony as the Mir, dressed in riding clothes and a brown topi hat, rides into the polo arena on a white horse surrounded by the advancing crowd led by drummers and pipers; the Mir dismounts and greets locals who stand and hold out their food offerings; locals arrange themselves along the edge of the polo field; Franziska and the princesses are briefly seen on the viewing platform before scampering off with the Mir and his brother in tow; the Mir's oldest son—the crown prince—and two of his younger sisters appear in front of a snow- covered mountain backdrop as Franziska joins in the rear; a scene of three local women beating and turning wool with sticks; mountain scenery; Walter Knips in a black felt hat with the Mir and his brother; a smiling local and others file out of a building with Eva, the Mir, and his brother among them; a local man with a strap of rifle cartridges across his chest stands in front of a mountain scene; a rider and his horse struggle to traverse a deep and rapidly flowing river; polo match scenes show chickens and black sheep running around in the midst of the game; Eva and Franziska, in coat and hat, are seen shaking hands in farewell with the Mir and his brother before mounting a yak; as a guide looks on, Eva and Walter test what it's like to cross a river on a precarious rope and plank bridge. Footage continues with the journey home. A jeep packed full of people, including Eva and Franziska and the terrier (which did not belong to the Knips family); views from the jeep; an airplane taking off at Gilgit airstrip; a view of mountains from the airplane; then a view from the train as it passes many newly constructed homes on the outskirts of Karachi before pulling into the station; the very end of the reel offers a very brief glimpse of a man standing on the platform, dressed in white clothes and turban—this is Abdul, the Knips family's head manservant awaiting their arrival.

Reel 3. 1956: Franziska Knips, age 6, and her brothers, Georg, age 3, and Karl, age 1, play with each other on the terrace of their home in Karachi; Georg plays with a wooden scooter; Eva with camera and the new German nanny, Barbara, appear on a desert-like terrain outside of the home with the three children; as Eva films, the Knips' father Walter and the nanny play-act a chase scene with the children; (interspersed is footage of a local construction crew, passing freshly mixed mortar/cement chaingang style up a primitive scaffolding); family scenes on the home terrace in Karachi continue with Franziska, Georg, nanny Barbara, Eva in a black and white strapless sun dress carrying Karl to his play pen; scenes of the terrace show a seating area and oleander planters; manservant Abdul and his helpers salute for the camera; Eva drives a car (a 1956 Fiat Multipla) into the carport; nanny Barbara emerges along with the three children; Walter appears and waves his hat as he strolls the courtyard and stops to smell the oleander blossoms with nanny Barbara, Franziska, the two boys, and the family's white dog, a

Spitz; Karl practices rocking back and forth on his knees on the grass; Walter drives up in a blue and white Chevrolet; Franziska with the family's white dog; nanny Barbara with Georg, Eva with Franziska seated on the grass; Georg plays with a puppet on a stick. Footage moves to scenes of locals assembled, playing cymbals, large gongs, and drums; a caravan of local men surrounds an elevated and ceremonially decorated platform or litter?; dramatic and incredibly rapid sword wielding skills are displayed by young boys; stick and sword fighting by older men as drumming continues; a parade of local women and children passes; scenes of bare-chested older men and young boys, swaying back and forth as they swing their arms to rhythmically beat their chests (This could be part of Matam, a devotional ceremony of mourning and lamentation commemorating the martyrs of the Battle of Karbala in 680. Here the self-flagellation is performed with hands but there are other cases where knives. swords, or blades are used to self-inflict chest lacerations); a young girl dressed in formal costume and elaborately pleated head wear dances; a man riding his camel along the beach near Karachi.

Item 2015.7.1-2 Walter Friedrich Knips Amateur Film: Pakistan, 1953-1954 1 Film reel (silent black-and-white reversal; 250 feet; 8mm)

Notes: This film footage was assembled from two reels. The first reel is from Walter Knips and his wife's 1954 trip to Hunza and Srinagar, and the second reel is from their 1953 trip to Gilgit and Nanga Parbat.

Reel 1: Hunza #3 and Srinagar. This reel begins with scenes from Walter and Eva Knips' first visit to Hunza, in 1954. Several men dance to pipe and drum in front of an audience of other local men; a group of men stand around with horses being saddled; snow-capped mountain range filmed from an elevation—plane? But also from a ground level as evidenced by a view of some tree tops; two western women, including Eva in a tuuk hat, walk along a path, ahead of a group of men, including two or three men in western dress-the Mir (Muhammad Jamal Khan, the last Ismaili ruler of Hunza) in shirt, tie, jacket and hat appears in the foreground; women and children watch and wave from the side of the path; polo players stand ready with their mallets; polo match; a man dancing at the polo match; many men dancing in a circle with flags; the Mir, seated in a viewing area behind a protective screen of chicken wire, reaches toward the outstretched hands of his subjects who stop by to pay homage; men dancing; the Mir in a garden setting, outfitted in his elaborate official vestments of gold-thread embroidered coat and a flat cap decorated by a snow white plume of hair from a Himalayan mountain goat —perhaps analogous to the *gamsbart* —the German hat pin made of goat's beard hair; the Rani, the Mir's wife, poses in the garden setting, her hair covered by a diaphanous shawl and her neck wrapped in a string of pearls. Footage continues with scenes from Walter and Eva's trip to Srinagar (Note: the voyage to Srinagar actually took place before the trip to

Hunza): the journey by small wooden boat down a river—most likely a shikara or type of open-air or partially covered gondola with a "driver" paddling or poling at the rear; views of the shoreline and other boats; people crossing over the river on a bridge; people looking out of houses that at times overhang the shoreline; children along the shoreline; men doing laundry in the river; passing under a stone bridge with people crossing and watching the boat pass; men poling the boat; a woman cleaning the floor of the boat; men sitting around a small steaming pot on the boat perhaps preparing a small snack or tea; Walter in a water taxi films the approach to the rented houseboat named "Doreen" as Eva looks down from the houseboat's upper deck; Eva in a dark blouse sits in the houseboat kitchen and smiles as she wields a large knife to trim and cut leeks; merchants display polished semi-precious agates and a small case of silver rings; the view of the lake—perhaps Lake Nigeen and surrounding coastline and mountain ranges; a small boat or water taxi comes into view; Srinagar footage ends with interior shots of the houseboat showing western furnishings and a floor covered in oriental rugs; another water taxi approaches.

Reel 2: Gilgit and Nanga Parbat. Footage begins with a very brief glimpse of Eva Knips, in a white lace blouse, speaking to a heavily bearded man, Hermann Buhl, the prominent Austrian mountaineer and member of the 1953 German-Austrian Nanga Parbat Climbing Expedition. Eva and Walter Knips traveled to Gilgit from Karachi in order to attend a reception honoring the return of the European mountaineers from their successful summit of Nanga Parbat (elev. 26,660 feet) on July 3, 1953; in his role as Trade Commissioner with the German Embassy in Karachi, Walter had served as the expedition's local contact and as German/English/Urdu translator as he helped to organize climbing permits, Sherpas, etc.; the expedition members rewarded his assistance by inviting him to join them on the first leg of their climb to the mountain's first base camp (elev. 13,000 feet). Footage of the reception continues with scenes from the grounds of the Political Agent's residence: a stationary, uniformed marching band with drummers and their mascot? goat: Eva in white blouse stands in the background with other westerners—some of them are the mountaineers as well as local officials, including the Political Agent; guests serve themselves from a buffet; a group of local men; the Political Agent congratulates the mountaineers and bids each man to kneel in order to receive a touch on the shoulder and have the traditional soft-rounded rolled-up hat (pakol) placed on his head; the return journey by plane from Gilgit, likely to the simple airstrip of Rawalpindi, offers views of the snow covered mountain ranges; a few quick scenes of the plane's interior show Eva and the mountaineers; there is some footage of the descent to a lower elevation to show a valley's landscape; more extensive footage (approx. 2 minutes) of Nanga Parbat continues to the end of the reel.

1 Film reel (silent black-and-white and color reversal; 250 feet; 8mm)

Notes: This film footage was assembled from two reels. The

This film footage was assembled from two reels. The first reel is a mix of black-and-white and color. The black-and-white film is from the Walter and Eva Knips family's time in Pakistan, and the color footage is from their time in Houston. The second reel is entirely in black-and-white and is from the family's time in Pakistan.

Reel 1: The reel begins with black and white footage of Franziska Knips, as a toddler of two-and-a-half, wading in a shallow pool as her seated father, Walter, looks on. These first few scenes of Franziska with her parents, Walter and Eva, in swimsuits, take place in early 1953, most likely at the Beach Luxury Hotel in Karachi where the family was required to live for several months, after their arrival from Germany and before the construction of their permanent home was completed. Footage moves on to show Franziska looking at a book and standing at a table where 4 candles are lit for her 4th birthday; Franziska discovers a tricycle stashed beneath the table, pulls it out and tries to get on with Eva's help; an audience of western children that have been invited for the birthday party watch as a man and boy urge their dancing monkeys to perform; Franziska with her tricycle poses for the camera and propels it around the home's open terrace with her feet on the ground; Franziska plays with a ball and laughs at the camera. A scene change shows a beach house setting where Eva, in a swimsuit and sunglasses, sits on the stoop and holds a book; Franziska shows off her sand toys; Eva and Lilo, a distant cousin of Eva's who has come from Germany to act as a nanny, eat lunch with Franziska. The next scene change shows Eva holding her newborn, a boy named Georg, born on December 8, 1953, at a Karachi hospital; Eva is watched over by women and nurses; Eva and the nanny Lilo leave the hospital with the infant; upon arriving at home, Franziska runs out ahead of Eva, Lilo, and baby Georg; all four sit at a table in the dining room; Abdul, the head manservant in a white turban, and two of the waitstaff exit the kitchen and bring food to the table; Eva, dressed in white blouse and shorts, and Franziska stand together on their terrace. Film footage switches to color and moves to Houston. Preteen children (Franziska Knips in a white striped bathing suit with frilly bottom) in swimsuits line up and walk toward the camera to play in the pool at the Knips family's home in Bellaire, Houston; boys and girls show off diving skills. Footage changes to scenes of a parade with floats, including one of a Mississippi River boat, a marching band, people in costumes, people on roller skates, and people carrying large puppets—Abe Lincoln, Thanksgiving turkey-most likely all part of an annual Texas Rodeo parade. Footage returns to family scenes: Georg eating while Karl plays with a ball; another group of preteens in swimsuits (Franziska in a black suit). Scene changes to an unknown harbor: ferrymen operating a train car ferry—railway tracks are visible; the ending of the tracks on a boat; the ferry cruises past the breakwater and enters the open harbor; views of the harbor; western women on the boat viewing the end of the tracks; and Eva, in a blue and

white dress and white necklace, watches another ferry pass. Scenes of Georg and Karl sitting by the pool at their Bellaire home; Georg pulls frogs out of the pool; Georg rides his bicycle; Karl, dressed in a coat, is determined to ride the same bicycle and decides to position it next to the sandbox for an easier mount; rides off with ease; final scene of another swimming party that includes Georg and Karl.

Reel 2. A group of adults and children, wearing crowns and holding lantern sticks, parading ahead of St. Nicholas, who appears in a bishop's mitre and cape, and carries a sack of toys during a Christmas party organized by the German embassy for the German colony; a large assembly of dinner guests for Christmas in the courtyard on the embassy grounds; black and white scenes of a boat excursion include Eva in head scarf, Franziska and nanny Lilo; Franziska hugs Eva; a final black and white scene shows Franziska riding her tricycle on the terrace of her home in Karachi, Pakistan.