



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Lili St. Cyr Papers

NMAH.AC.1451

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2018

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Content Description.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	3
Names and Subjects .....	3
Container Listing .....	4
Series 1: Publicity, 1941-1999.....	4
Series 2: Personal Papers, 1917-1980.....	6
Series 3: Professional, 1963-1970.....	8
Series 4: Biographical Materials, 1968-2015.....	9

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Lili St. Cyr Papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1451
<b>Date:</b>	1917-1999
<b>Creator:</b>	St. Cyr, Lili,, 1917-1999
<b>Source:</b>	Tombers, Mathew
<b>Extent:</b>	3 Cubic feet (10 boxes, 1 map folder)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The collection measures about 3 cubic feet, dates from 1917 to 1999, and documents the life and career of the prominent burlesque stripteaser Lili St. Cyr. Found within the papers are personal financial documents; photographs of her family; her personal passport holder; publicity shots of Dardy Orlando and herself; correspondence with family and friends; business contracts; newspaper clippings and magazine articles, featuring and advertising her work; and biographical materials, including notes, drafts, contracts, photographs, a couple audio reels, a recorded interview with St. Cyr on 18 audio cassette tapes, and two biographies. The papers reflect Lili St. Cyr's personality as a performer and as a person.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated in 2017 by Mathew Tombers.

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Bryanna Bauer, intern, 2018; supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist, 2018.

### Preferred Citation

Lili St. Cyr Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

The collection is open for research use. Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs and negatives.

### Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

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## Biographical / Historical

Lili St. Cyr was a prominent burlesque stripteaser of the 1940s and 1950s, deemed the most famous woman in Montreal during that period and billed as the "Anatomic Bomb" while performing at Ciro's Nightclub in Hollywood, in 1947. Accused of indecent, immoral, and offensive performances, St. Cyr was arrested several times throughout her career, most famously in 1951, during her act at Ciro's. The arrest made front pages of newspapers, and her case went to trial. She performed her act in the courtroom for the jury, and the charges were dropped, marking "a real victory for the profession."

St. Cyr was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1917. Her birth certificate read "Marie Klarquist." Lili was named after the woman she believed to be her mother (although actually her grandmother), Mariah Marie Curry Klarquist (aka "Maud"). Lili's biological parents were Maud's daughter Idella and a Dutchman who left shortly after Marie's birth, Edward Van Schaack. Upon realization of her true family tree, Marie Klarquist changed her last name to Van Schaack (occasionally respelt as "Van Schaak," "Van Chaack," or "Van Schaacht"), and she periodically added the first name "Willis," Lili St. Cyr also started referring to her biological grandmother as "Alice" and her biological mother as "Adelaide" or "Mom."

By the time Lili St. Cyr learned the truth about her family, her mother Idella had already remarried twice. In 1919, Idella married Louis Sherman Cornett, Jr., and together they had Betta Lee (or Bettie Lue, aka "Betty") and Louis "Jack" Cornett. In 1923, Idella married John Alfred "Ian" Blackadder, and they raised Idella Ruth Blackadder and Rosemary Blackadder. Both Blackadder daughters had successful careers in burlesque, going by the stage names Barbara Moffett (Idella) and Dardy Orlando (Rosemary). Barbara married the American toy maker and businessman Louis Marx in 1982, changing her name back to Idella, and they had five children--the eldest named Spencer. Dardy married the adopted son of the eldest Minsky's Burlesque brother Harold Minsky, and together they raised Danny and Ava.

St. Cyr never had children, but she did marry six times, and had numerous affairs throughout (particularly with a man named Jimmy Orlando in Montreal). She first married the racer Cordy Milne in 1937. Her second marriage was to Richard Hubert in 1941. She then married the actor Paul Valentine (aka "Val Valentinoff") in 1946, followed by her marriage to restaurateur Armando Orsini in 1950. She then married actor Ted Jordan in 1955 and special effects man Joseph Albert Zomar in 1959. Every marriage ended in divorce, the last having ended in 1964. It was around this time she met Donald Andrew Markick, a man seventeen years her junior who had served as a paratrooper toward the end of the Korean War. He dreamed of becoming a magician, so she took him under her wing, renaming him "Lorenzo Holmes." His family refused to call him by that name, and they disapproved of his relationship with Lili St. Cyr. Thus, he was kicked out of his house, and he moved in with Lili. He was with her for nearly thirty years. They never married, but she often introduced him as her husband, calling herself "Mrs. (Lili or Marie) Holmes."

By the 1970s, St. Cyr had retired, and she had opened her own lingerie line "The Undie World of Lili St. Cyr," selling garments similar to what she wore onstage. In her later years she was determined to keep herself hidden away with Lorenzo and her cats--Tiny, Bootsie, Tiger, Baby Bear, Little Two Shoes, Max, Big Boss, and Lee-Enze. In 1978, Lili, going by the name Marie Garrellick (the last name of her one-time neighbor, with whom she was staying), applied to rent an apartment from Mathew Tombers. After getting to know her, Tombers began helping Lili write her autobiography.

Lili St. Cyr died at the age of 80, on January 29, 1999, in Los Angeles, California.

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## Content Description

The papers document the personal and professional life of the burlesque dancer Lili St. Cyr. They include collection includes photographs, publicity materials, correspondence, greeting cards, manuscript versions of a biography of St. Cyr co-authored by St. Cyr and Mathew Tombers, open reel audiotapes, audiocassettes of oral history interviews with St. Cyr, clippings, magazines, two biographies, financial records, legal records, business records, and her personal passport holder.

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## Arrangement

Materials are arranged in chronological order. Artifacts are housed in boxes 6 and 7. Audio cassette tapes are housed in box 9.

The collection is arranged into 4 series:

Series 1: Publicity, 1941-1999

Series 2: Personal Papers, 1917-1980

Subseries 2.1: Financial RecordsPapers, 1954-1979

Subseries 2.2: Correspondence, 1956-1978

Subseries 2.3: Photographs of Family, 1917-1967

Subseries 2.4: Miscellaneous Materials, 1980

Series 3: Professional, 1963-1970

Series 4: Biographical Materials, 1968-2015

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Burlesque (Theater)
- Striptease
- Stripteasers

Types of Materials:

- Audiocassettes
- Audiotapes -- Open reel
- Black-and-white photographs
- Business records
- Clippings
- Color photographs
- Correspondence
- Financial records
- Greeting cards
- Legal records
- Magazines (periodicals)
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Tombers, Mathew

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Publicity, 1941-1999

Scope and Contents: Contains newspaper clippings and magazine articles, featuring and advertising Lili St. Cyr's burlesque work, and publicity shots of Dardy Orlando and herself.

Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 8, Folder 1	Quebec and San Francisco Newspapers and Hollywood Magazine, 1941-1970
Box 1, Folder 1	Newspaper clippings of New York, 1946-1966
Box 1, Folder 2	Las Vegas newspaper and magazines, 1946-1970
Box 1, Folder 3; Map-folder 1	Photographs and negatives, 1946-1979
Box 1, Folder 4	Photographs and newspaper clippings, 1950
Box 1, Folder 5	Photographs, 1951
Box 1, Folder 6	Magazines, 1951-1962
Box 1, Folder 7	Magazines and newspaper clippings, 1954-1967
Box 1, Folder 8	Photographs and newspaper clippings of Las Vegas, 1955-1956
Box 1, Folder 9; Box 6, Folder 1C	Hollywood newspaper clippings and magazines, 1960 Notes: Includes magazines <i>Focus</i> , <i>Screen Guide</i> , and <i>Peep Show</i> .
Box 8, Folder 2	Marilyn Redux and Midnight newspapers, 1964-09-21-1964-10-26
Box 8, Folder 3	Midnight Newspaper, 1964-11-02
Box 8, Folder 4	Midnight Newspaper, 1964-11-09
Box 1, Folder 10	Postcards and newspaper clippings of San Francisco, 1965-1966
Box 1, Folder 11	Newspaper clippings, 1965-1967
Box 1, Folder 12	Newspaper clippings, 1965-1970
Box 1, Folder 13	Fan mail, 1967-1970
Box 1, Folder 14	Life at the Aladdin, 1970

Box 1, Folder 15	<a href="#">Photographs, 1970-1987</a>
Box 1, Folder 16	Stalker, 1978-1979
Box 1, Folder 17	Articles, 1980
Box 8, Folder 5	Classic Images Newspaper, 1983
Box 1, Folder 18	Obituary, 1999
Box 1, Folder 19	Follies, undated
Box 1, Folder 20-22; Box 6, Folder 1A	Photographs, undated
Box 1, Folder 23	Photographs of Dardy, undated
Box 1, Folder 24	Photographs of Dardy and Lili, undated
Box 1, Folder 25	Photographs of other professionals, undated
Box 1, Folder 26	Postcards and programs, undated
Box 1, Folder 27	Printing plates, undated
Box 6, Folder 1B	Love Moods (1952) and Son of Sinbad (1955)
Map-folder 1	Runaway Girl, 1965 1 Poster (27" x 41")

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 2: Personal Papers, 1917-1980

**Scope and Contents:** Contains personal documents and photographs belonging to Lili St. Cyr, including financial papers, correspondence, personal greeting cards to herself from her cats, and photographs of her family, cats, and herself. The series is organized into four subseries.

Subseries 2.1: Financial Records Papers, 1954-1979

Subseries 2.2: Correspondence, 1956-1978

Subseries 2.3: Photographs of Family, 1917-1967

Subseries 2.4: Miscellaneous Materials, 1980

### Subseries 2.1: Financial Records, 1954-1979

**Scope and Contents:** Contains St. Cyr's personal financial documents, including bank statements, checks written by Lili St. Cyr, insurance papers, and social security documents.

Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 28      Tax returns and bank statements, 1954-1978

Box 2, Folder 1-3      Bills, 1957-1978

Box 2, Folder 4      Medical, 1970-1976

Box 2, Folder 5      Bank statements, 1975-1976

Box 2, Folder 6      Insurance and social security, 1979

### Subseries 2.2: Correspondence, 1956-1978

**Scope and Contents:** Consists of St. Cyr's personal correspondence with family and friends. The materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 7      Address, 1956

Box 2, Folder 8      Addresses, 1965-1978

Box 2, Folder 9      Correspondence and cards, 1970-1977

Box 2, Folder 10      Correspondence and cards, 1970-1978

Box 2, Folder 11      Cards, undated

### Subseries 2.3: Photographs of Family, 1917-1967

**Scope and Contents:** Contains St. Cyr's personal photographs of her mother, her half-sisters Barbara and Dardy, her niece Ava, her nephews Danny and Spencer, her cats, and herself during her childhood and career. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 12      Lili at six weeks old, 1917



Box 2, Folder 13	Cordy and before the war photographs and newspaper clippings, 1930-1937
Box 2, Folder 14	Mostly unidentified, Lili and Lorenzo, 1947-1963
Box 2, Folder 15	Dardy, Danny, Ava, 1953
Box 3, Folder 1	Mother, 1963-08
Box 3, Folder 2	Cats, 1967-08
Box 3, Folder 3	Idella Marx, Spencer, undated
Box 3, Folder 4	Family and posed images of Lili, undated
Box 3, Folder 5	Lili at home, undated

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#### Subseries 2.4: Miscellaneous Materials, 1980

Scope and Contents: Contains St. Cyr's personal greeting cards to herself from her cats, an autographed picture of Buckwheat, a photograph of herself with Buckwheat, and a small pamphlet from the memorial of Buckwheat.

Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 3, Folder 6	Buckwheat autograph and obituary, 1980
Box 3, Folder 7	Box for cards from cats, undated
Box 7, Folder 1	Box for Mother's Day card from cats, undated
Box 3, Folder 8	Cards from cats, undated
Box 6, Folder 1	Mother's Day card from cats, undated
Box 7, Folder 2	Passport holder, undated
Box 3, Folder 9	Will, undated

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*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Professional, 1963-1970

Scope and Contents: Contains professional documents belonging to Lili St. Cyr, including business correspondence, contracts, stationery from her boutique, and blueprints of a bathtub.

Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 3, Folder 10	Boutique, 1963
Box 3, Folder 11	Contract at the Castaways, Las Vegas, 1964
Box 3, Folder 12	Boutique, 1967
Box 3, Folder 13; Box 8, Folder 6	Bathtub, 1970
Box 3, Folder 14	Envelopes, undated
Box 7, Folder 1A	Lili St. Cyr Her Intimate Secrets (lingerie catalog), undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 4: Biographical Materials, 1968-2015

Scope and Contents: Consists of biographical materials collected by Mathew Tombers to assist Lili St. Cyr with writing her autobiography. The materials include newspaper clippings and magazine articles, notes, drafts, contracts, photographs, audio reels, and a recorded interview with St. Cyr on 18 audio cassette tapes. The series also includes two copies of her biographies. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 3, Folder 15	Radio Canada, audio reels, Between Ourselves of October 25, 1968-12-18 2 Sound tape reels
Box 4, Folder 1	Montreal notes and correspondence, 1968-1981
Box 4, Folder 2	Mathew J. Tombers, 1978
Box 9, Item 1	St. Cyr interview number 1, 1979-01-26-1979-01-27 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 2	St. Cyr interview number 2, 1979-02-05 1 Cassette tape
Box 4, Folder 3	Mathew Tombers' correspondence, 1979-07-11
Box 4, Folder 4	Copyright registration, 1979-12
Box 4, Folder 5	Contract and agreement of Lili St. Cyr and Mathew Tombers, 1979-1982
Box 4, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1980-10-14
Box 4, Folder 7	Rejection letters, 1980-1981
Box 4, Folder 8	Lamparski information, 1981-1983
Box 4, Folder 9	Letters of support, 1981-1983
Box 4, Folder 10	The Lamparski Proposal, 1982-10
Box 4, Folder 11	Business correspondence, 1982
Box 4, Folder 12	Lili Movie treatment, Girl in the Golden Cage, 1983-06-28
Box 4, Folder 13	Writer's Guild, 1983-10
Box 4, Folder 14	Girl in the Golden Cage, 1983-11-08
Box 4, Folder 15	Lili Movie, 1983-11-21
Box 4, Folder 16	Letters of reference, 1983

Box 4, Folder 17	Quebecor correspondence, 1983
Box 10, Item 1	Gilded Lili and the Striptease Mystique by Kelly DiNardo, 2007
Box 10, Item 2	Goddess of Love Incarnate: The Life of Stripteuse Lili St. Cyr by Leslie Zemeckis, 2015
Box 4, Folder 18	The Autobiography of Lili St. Cyr by Lili St. Cyr and Mathew Tombers, pages 1-154, undated
Box 4, Folder 19	The Autobiography of Lili St. Cyr by Lili St. Cyr and Mathew Tombers, pages 155-347, undated
Box 4, Folder 20	Chapter One, undated
Box 5, Folder 1	Chapters, undated
Box 5, Folder 2	Courtyard Courier, undated
Box 5, Folder 3	Girl in the Golden Cage, version number two, undated
Box 5, Folder 4	Interviews, undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Interviews, copy of pages 1-40, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Montreal notes and newspaper clippings, undated
Box 5, Folder 7	Notes, undated
Box 5, Folder 8	Paul Valentine notes, undated
Box 5, Folder 9	Photographs, undated
Box 5, Folder 10; Box 8, Folder 7	Sample chapter, outline, overview, undated 1 Oversize folder
Box 5, Folder 11	Sample contract, undated
Box 5, Folder 12	Story ideas, undated
Box 5, Folder 13	Story treatment, undated
Box 5, Folder 14	Title options, undated
Box 5, Folder 15	Inventory of Lili St. Cyr photographs, Montreal, Canada, undated
Box 9, Item 3	St. Cyr interview number 3, undated

	1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 4	St. Cyr interview number 4, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 5	St. Cyr interview number 5, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 6	St. Cyr interview number 6, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 7	St. Cyr interview number 7, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 8	St. Cyr interview number 8, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 9	St. Cyr interview number 9, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 10	St. Cyr interview number 10, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 11	St. Cyr interview number 11, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 12	St. Cyr interview number 12, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 13	St. Cyr interview number 13, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 14	St. Cyr interview number 14, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 15	St. Cyr interview number 15, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 16	St. Cyr interview number 16, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 17	St. Cyr interview number 17, undated 1 Cassette tape
Box 9, Item 18	St. Cyr interview number 18, undated 1 Cassette tape

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*