MEDICAL CENTER ARCHIVES
OF
NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN/WEILL CORNELL

1300 York Avenue # 34
New York, NY 10065

Finding Aid To

THE BENJAMIN KEAN, MD (1912-1993) PAPERS

Dates of Papers:
1949-2009

165 Linear Inches
(28 Boxes)

Finding Aid Prepared By:
Elizabeth Shepard
Assistant Archivist
05/2002
Updated 2011
Updated 2017
Updated 2019

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NOTE OF PROVENANCE:

Mrs. Benjamin Kean donated the papers to the Medical Center Archives of New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell in April 1998. In 2011, Dr. Johnson from the Global Health donated some additional materials (Series VI and X). In 2017, Anne Cote Taylor donated some additional materials.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Dr. Benjamin Kean was born in Valparaiso, Indiana in 1912. He was raised in West Orange, NJ and New York City. He received an AB degree at the University of California, Berkeley in 1933. He graduated from Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1937.

He began his career as an intern at Gorgas Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone in 1937. He continued to work there through the World War II as a physician and pathologist. While there, he became the director of a course in tropical medicine. He also served part of World War II in Europe.

In 1948-1952, he worked at New York University-Bellevue Medical Center as an assistant professor of pathology, a consultant in tropical medicine at the VA Halloroan Hospital (1946-1951) and attending physician at University Hospital (1948-1952).

He came to Cornell University Medical College in 1954 as an assistant professor of public health in parasitology and rose in the ranks to full professor. He founded the Tropical Medicine Unit at the medical college in 1962. He was the head of the Parasitology Laboratory at New York Hospital. He also had a private practice on Park Avenue where he was the physician for several famous people including Oscar Hammerstein, Edna Ferber, Gertrude Lawrence, Martina Navratilova and Salvador Dali.

His expertise was in tropical medicine. He did extensive research in amoebiasis, malaria, toxoplasmosis, and schistosomiasis. He coordinated studies in Mexico on Turista (Traveler's Diarrhea) in the 1950s and 1960s. He was well known for his B. H. Kean Tropical Medicine Course at Cornell University Medical College.

He was also known for being the physician for the Shah of Iran during his terminal illness. He followed the Shah through his treatment at New York Hospital in October 1979 and his flight through Panama and Egypt. He was criticized for not accurately publicizing the medical condition and treatment of the Shah to the America public. The treatment of the Shah in the United States led to the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979-1981.

He died on September 24, 1993.
SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE:

The papers are organized into nine series: General Correspondence (1957-1993), Panama Autopsies (1940-1945), Tropical Medicine Unit, (1944-1993), Other Research (1942-1993), Reprints and Publications (1935-1993), Parasitology Publication (undated), Miscellaneous (1952-1989), and Photographs.

Series I: General Correspondence, 1949-1994

This series arranged alphabetically by subject contains correspondence with various colleagues and medical societies.

Series II: Panama Autopsies, 1940-1945

This series arranged chronologically consists of autopsy reports conducted in his work as the pathologist at Gorgas Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone during World War II. It gives an interesting picture of the health issues in the region. The PHI contained in these records is protected under the federal regulation, HIPPA and are restricted.

Series III: Tropical Medicine Unit, 1941-2006

This series is divided in to four subseries: Early Records (1962-1991), Teaching Materials (1955-1993), Cornell Abroad Program (1955-1993) and Research (1944-1977). The early records subseries include the reports and proposals for setting up the unit at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. The teaching materials sub-series contains lecture and course notes for his popular Tropical Medicine Course. The Cornell Abroad Program sent students on summer trips to Africa, Asia, Cuba, and South America to study tropical medicine in these countries. The research files consist of his research on schistosomiasis, toxoplasma, and turista (traveler's diarrhea).

Series IV: Other Research, 1942-1993

The other research series arranged alphabetically by subject contains his research on Chagas' disease (1942-1945), hepatic amebiasis (1962-1964), maduromycosis in Saudi Arabia (1952-1957) and shark bites (1943-1944). The files also include the Cornell in Haiti Program under the Department of Medicine-Division of Infectious Diseases, which studied AIDS (1983-1986) and infantile diarrhea (1979-1993).

This series arranged chronologically includes his speeches, articles, and books on his tropical medicine and parasitology research. It contains copies of his autobiography, M.D.

Series VI: Parasitology Publication, undated

This series arranged by the book’s table of context consists of research files for a book titled “Commoner Parasitic Diseases.”

Series VII: The Shah of Iran, 1979-1989

This series is divided into the Iran Hostage Crisis and the Shah of Iran. Each sub-series is arranged chronologically. The Iran Hostage Crisis sub-series includes clippings of the crisis. The Shah of Iran sub-series includes both clippings and correspondence regarding the Shah's treatment at New York Hospital and then his flight to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, Panama, and Cairo, Egypt. In addition, Dr. Kean's correspondence with the Shah's family after his death is contained in the files.

Series VIII: Miscellaneous, 1952-2009

This series consists of miscellaneous biographical material on Dr. Kean.

Series IX: Photographs, 1983

The photographs include the photo album of Charles Allen Jr. Fellowship in Medicine, January 1, 1983. The photographs were removed to the personal photographic collections. See photo catalog.

Series X: Audio Visual Materials

Several copies of Benjamin Kean Memorial Service is included in the collection as lectures by Neil Kaminsky, Alan Fry, John Laragh, and Anthony Fauci.

Series XI: Artifacts

Microscopes lenses and miscellaneous artifacts owned by Dr. Kean.

Series XII: Electronic Records

**ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

The panama autopsies are restricted in accordance to the HIPAA privacy rule.

**BOX AND FOLDER LISTING**

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Folder Description
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- Blue Cup with Medical Center Logo
- Microscope Lenses
- Zeiger Doppelokular
- Zeichenapparat

Server: Series XII Electronic Records, 2007

- Dr. Kean Lecture, “Cornell Experience,” audio recording, undated
- “Jewel in Benjamin Kean Crown,” speaker unknown, PowerPoint, 2007

Note: The legacy media is stored in box 29