

Papers of William S. Hedges

Library of American Broadcasting  
University of Maryland

Processed by: Linda M. Machado  
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1.0 lin. ft.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

William S. Hedges, one of the primary architects of American broadcasting, was born in Elmwood, Illinois, on June 21, 1895. He lived in Colorado from 1900 to 1913 and attended schools in Grand Junction, Denver and Colorado Springs. He graduated from Colorado Springs High School and then moved to Chicago where he worked as a department foreman in the car shops of the Armour Car Lines. He left Armour in the fall of 1914 to attend the University of Chicago and became campus correspondent for the Chicago Daily News. He left college at the end of his junior year to join the Air Service of the United States Army. While awaiting his call to ground school he served as military correspondent for the Chicago Daily News at Camp Grant near Rockford, Illinois. Mr. Hedges served as publisher of the student publication, "The Pilot", while at the School of Military Aeronautics at Ohio State University, Columbus. Upon graduation from the School of Military Aeronautics at the University of Texas, Austin, he attended the Artillery School of Fire at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the Observers School Post Field. He was then commissioned Second Lieutenant and following the cessation of hostilities in 1918, attached as a reserve officer to the 311<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron for five years.

William Hedges returned to the Chicago Daily News as a reporter in December of 1918. In 1922 he established the radio department of the Chicago Daily News and assisted in the establishment of the Daily News radio station, WMAQ, which first went on the air in April of 1922. When WMAQ was incorporated as a separate Daily News subsidiary, Hedges was made president of WMAQ Inc. In 1923 he was one of the founders of the National Association of Broadcasters. He served as president from 1928 to 1930 and subsequently as director and chairman of the executive committee. From 1928 to 1931 he was a director and secretary of Press Wireless, Inc. which was an organization founded by a group of leading newspapers for the purpose of operating wireless stations for international communication. In 1929, he established W9XAP, an experimental television station that he operated in connection with WMAQ until November 1931.

In 1931 NBC purchased WMAQ. In addition to managing WMAQ, Mr. Hedges managed WENR - NBC's second Chicago station at that time. In June of 1933 he was appointed general manager of radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and in April of 1934, was transferred to New York as manager of NBC's newly established Owned and Operated Stations Division. Mr. Hedges left NBC in December of 1936 to become manager of radio stations WLW and WSAI in Cincinnati, Ohio and was elected vice-president of the Crosley Radio Corporation. In November of 1937 he returned to NBC as vice-president in charge of Station Relations and Traffic.

Mr. Hedges was appointed vice-president of the newly created Stations Department in May of 1939. This department encompassed Station Relations, Traffic, National Spot Sales and Owned and Operated. In July of 1945, he was named vice-president in charge of Planning and Development. In December of that year he was designated vice-president in charge of Integrated Services. In 1951 he was made vice-president in charge of General Services and in 1959 vice-president in charge of NBC's Political Broadcast Unit. In 1960 Mr. Hedges completed his last assignment for NBC – coverage of the 1960 political conventions. William Hedges retired from NBC in January of 1961.

In 1964 William Hedges began work on the Broadcast Pioneers History Project and was responsible for assembling the core collection of the present Broadcast Pioneers Library of American Broadcasting. Mr. Hedges was also a leader in the establishment of the Broadcast Pioneers Educational Fund which endowed and supervised the library's operation. The Broadcast Pioneers Library, which traces the evolution of the broadcasting industry, was founded in April of 1972. On September 18, 1974, Mr. Hedges was elected Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the Broadcast Pioneers Educational Fund.

William Hedges served as president of the Radio Executives Club (now known as the International Radio and Television Society) in 1946 and 1947 and as president of the Radio Pioneers (now known as Broadcast Pioneers) in 1949 and 1950. From 1942 to 1959 he was a member of Board of Directors of both Broadcast Music, Inc. and Associated Music Publishers. Additionally, Mr. Hedges was involved in numerous civic organizations throughout his life.

William Hedges married Margaret Elizabeth Hasenbalg in Chicago, April 21, 1920 and they had two daughters. He died on January 19, 1978 at the age of 82.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTES**

The Papers of William S. Hedges spans the years 1917 to 1976, with the bulk of the material dating from 1917-1918 and 1966-1976. The collection contains correspondence, clippings, diaries, financial statements, logs, memoranda, newsletters, pamphlets, photographs, publications and speeches. The collection is divided into the following series:

Series I: Broadcast Pioneers

Series II: Early Correspondence

Series III: Writings

Subseries 1: Authored by William S. Hedges

Subseries 2: About William S. Hedges

Series IV: Memorabilia

Series V: Photographs

Folder 108 containing biographical material from the William Hedges Collection has been moved to the Papers of William S. Hedges. One article on H. Preston Peters was removed to the Library of American Broadcasting's Biographic Files. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin houses an additional collection of the papers of William S. Hedges.

**PROVENANCE**

The Papers of William S. Hedges was donated to the Library of American Broadcasting by Mr. William S. Hedges in 1972, 1973 and 1977.

**SERIES DESCRIPTION**

Series I: Broadcast Pioneers 1964-1974 (0.3 lin. ft.)

This series contains correspondence with Mr. Hedges on a variety of topics pertaining to the Broadcast Pioneers. Topics include a 1964 dinner honoring Mr. Hedges, the Broadcast Pioneers History Project, the Broadcast Pioneers Educational Fund and the Broadcast Pioneers Library. Also included in this series are sporadic issues of the publication, Broadcast Pioneer (1966-1974), a rough draft of a speech given by Mr. Hedges at the opening of the Broadcast Pioneer's Library in Washington, D.C. and an undated inventory of the Broadcast Pioneers Library.

Series II: Early Correspondence 1932-1958 (1 folder)

This series contains correspondence from Mr. Hedges' days with NBC and KDKA. Also included in this series is a September 13, 1945 press release from NBC with notations by David Sarnoff.

Series III: Writings 1917-1967 (0.5 lin. ft.)

Subseries I - Authored by William S. Hedges (1917-1970)

This series contains writings by William S. Hedges. Included are materials from his days as a columnist for the Chicago Daily News, clippings of his articles from 1917-1918. Also included are diaries and notes from Mr. Hedges' 1945 trip to Europe as a member of a special mission to appraise military and

civilian uses of broadcasting. The series also contains various speeches and articles written by Mr. Hedges throughout his life.

Subseries II - About William S. Hedges (1922-1967)

This series contains various magazine and newspaper articles written about Mr. Hedges as well as biographical items written about Mr. Hedges.

Series IV: Memorabilia 1918-1960 (3 folders)

This series contains material from the life and career of William S. Hedges between 1918 and 1960. Included are two items from the School of Military Aeronautics at Ohio State University - a 1918 edition of the student publication, "The Pilot" which Mr. Hedges published and a commemorative pin of the 1945 flight of the "Radio Beam". Also included is a copy of a October 13, 1924, satirical issue of the Chicago Daily News, a business card for Mr. Hedges while he was a District Manager for NBC in Chicago, a birthday poem written for Mr. Hedges by an unidentified person and a copy of the NBC News 1960 Convention Directory.

Series V: Photographs 1917 – 19??(2 folders)

This series contains two photographs of Mr. Hedges. One photograph, taken in 1917, is a shot of Mr. Hedges posing in front of a press car for the Chicago Daily News and the other is an undated portrait of Mr. Hedges. Also included is an undated portrait of several members of the Broadcast Pioneers Board of Directors.

## BOX INVENTORY

### SERIES I: BROADCAST PIONEERS 1964-1974

Box Folder

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Dinner Honoring WS Hedges, 1964                               |
|   | 2 | Broadcast Pioneers History Project, 1965-1972                 |
|   | 3 | Broadcast Pioneers Educational Fund Correspondence, 1970-1972 |
|   | 4 | Broadcast Pioneers Correspondence, 1970-1976                  |
|   | 5 | <i>The Broadcast Pioneer</i> , 1964, 1966, 1971, 1972, 1974   |
|   | 6 | Broadcast Pioneers Library Speech                             |
|   | 7 | Broadcast Pioneers Library Inventory                          |

### SERIES II: EARLY CORRESPONDENCE, 1932-1958

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 8 | Early Correspondence, 1932-1958 |
|---|---------------------------------|

### SERIES III: WRITINGS-SUBSERIES 1-AUTHORED BY WILLIAM S. HEDGES, (1917-1970)

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 9  | Articles - <i>Chicago Daily News</i> , 1917    |
| 10 | Articles - <i>Chicago Daily News</i> , 1918    |
| 11 | Articles - <i>Chicago Daily News</i> , 191(?)  |
| 12 | Articles - No Date                             |
| 13 | <i>What's in the Air</i> magazine, March, 1924 |
| 14 | <i>Motor View</i> magazine, September, 1924    |
| 15 | <i>Island Daily Press Assn.</i> , 1930         |
| 16 | Memoandum from NBC, 1945 and 1947              |
| 17 | Trip to Europe, 1945                           |

SERIES III:WRITINGS-SUBSERIES 1-AUTHORED BY WILLIAM S. HEDGES,(1917-1970)

Box Folder

- 2 1 Speeches and Articles, 1920-1948
- 2 Speeches and Articles, 1951-1960
- 3 Speeches and Articles, Undated
- 4 *Television/Radio Age*, March 9, 1970

SERIES III: WRITINGS - SUBSERIES 2 - ABOUT WILLIAM S. HEDGES, (1922-1967)

- 5 Articles, 1922-1955
- 6 Articles, 1956-1967
- 7 Biographical Information

SERIES V: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1917 – 19??

- 10 William S. Hedges, 1917 and Undated
- 11 Broadcast Pioneers, Undated

SERIES IV: MEMORABILIA,1918-1960

- 2 8 School of Military Aeronautics, 1918 and 1945
- 9 Miscellaneous
- 3 1 *Chicago Daily News*, October 13, 1924