



## FINDING AID

# **William L. Neely Papers** **1942-1993** **(bulk dates: 1942-1978)**



William Neely in Santa Barbara in 1963

Prepared by

Yosemite National Park Archive Staff  
David Turshyan and Brandon Johnson

Catalog Number: YOSE 232957  
Yosemite Collection Number: 2025

***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

Copyright and Restrictions .....	ii
History .....	1
Scope and Content .....	2
Hierarchy .....	4
Series Descriptions .....	5
File Unit Descriptions/Container List.....	8
Separated Material.....	12

## ***COPYRIGHT AND RESTRICTIONS***

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. The various state privacy acts govern the use of materials that document private individuals, groups, and corporations.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a reproduction if the document does not infringe the privacy rights of an individual, group, or corporation. These specified conditions of authorized use include:

- non-commercial and non-profit study, scholarship, or research, or teaching
- criticism, commentary, or news reporting
- as a NPS preservation or security copy
- as a research copy for deposit in another institution

If a user later uses a copy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," the user may be personally liable for copyright, privacy, or publicity infringement. This institution's permission to obtain a photographic, xerographic, digital, or other copy of a document does not indicate permission to publish, exhibit, perform, reproduce, sell, distribute, or prepare derivative works from this document without first obtaining permission from the copyright holder and from any private individual, group, or corporation shown or otherwise recorded.

Permission to publish, exhibit, perform, reproduce, prepare derivative works from, sell, or otherwise distribute the item must be obtained by the user separately in writing from the holder of the original copyright (or if the creator is dead from his/her heirs) as well as from any individual(s), groups, or corporations whose name, image, recorded words, or private information (e.g., employment information) may be reproduced in the source material. The holder of the original copyright is not necessarily the National Park Service. The National Park Service is not legally liable for copyright, privacy, or publicity infringement when materials are wrongfully used after being provided to researchers for "fair use."

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if fulfillment of the order is judged in violation of copyright or federal or state privacy or publicity law.

## ***HISTORY***

William Lewis Neely (1923-1985), a long-time Yosemite Naturalist, was born on July 24 in Los Angeles, California. He had a multifarious persona with many gifts: artist, potter, oenologist and wine connoisseur, vinegar-maker, biologist, ranger, fire-fighter, teacher, poet, philosopher, traveler, musician, folk-dancer, actor, linguist and polyglot, father-of-six—but above all, he was a Naturalist, in the Ecological tradition of John Muir and Henry David Thoreau. Neely began writing journals in 1939, and continued up until 1978; even adding notes as late as 1984, but later destroying the journals of 1939-1941. After graduating from the University High School, West Los Angeles in 1940, Neely studied life sciences and the German language at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for two years, until WWII took him to the U.S. military and an extended duty with the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services, later called the C.I.A., Central Intelligence Agency). After WWII, Neely enrolled at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), with plans to complete a Ph.D. in Ecology — a term with a limited usage at the time. In 1949, Neely met the legendary Naturalist and botanist Carl Sharsmith, who urged him to consider attending the Yosemite Field School. In 1950, Neely entered the Field School, and in 1951 began serving as a seasonal Ranger-Naturalist in Yosemite Valley and at Glacier Point. Over the next 25 years, with a few brief interruptions, Neely served in Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Bridalveil Creek Campground, White Wolf Campground, and led guided “loop” trails: seven-day trips through the High Sierra Camps of the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. Neely also served as a field instructor in the Yosemite Institute and became the first Director of Field Activities. On August 7, 1985, Neely died in his sleep, in Santa Barbara, California.

## ***SCOPE AND CONTENT***

William L. Neely Papers  
1942-1993 (bulk dates: 1942-1978)

*CATALOG NUMBER*           YOSE 232957

*VOLUME*                       7 LF

### *DESCRIPTION*

The William L. Neely Papers, 1942-1978 will be arranged to reflect long-time Yosemite Naturalist William L. Neely's journals and incidental writings. The journals are rich with detailed nature observations and sketches of plants. Peppered in are fragments of plant specimens, sketches, letters, photographs, postcards, newspaper articles, and wine labels. During his lifetime Neely's publications were mainly featured in the Yosemite Nature Notes, with occasional letters to columnists and editors. These journals were initially given to Allan Shields by Chris Neely, William Neely's oldest son. Shields has published four books from the journals, which he titled: *Wild Bill Neely and The Pegan Brothers' Golden Goat Winery*, 1992; *O.S.S.: One Sad Sack: Pvt. Neely Disciplines the Military*, 1994; *A Yosemite Naturalist Odyssey*, 1994; and *Wilderness Treks by Foot, Canoe, and Adobe Rocket and Father's Far-Flung Fables*, 1995. The collection also houses a sketchbook of Neely's drawings and sketches, plant specimens that Neely collected over the years in his journals, photographs and letters addressed to Neely and to Shields.

### *ORGANIZATION*

The arrangement will consist of five series and six subseries outlined below. Series I: *Journals and Incidental Writings* comprise 36 years of journal entries of William L. Neely, arranged chronologically, including diary entries, philosophical musings, poems and fables. Some entries were added at the back pages of the journals up until 1984. "The Big Fat Book" covers 33 years of writings kept simultaneously with *Small Journals*, and will be separated from the latter to form two subseries. Series II: *Sketchbook* consists of sketches and drawings, while traveling, kept separately from the rest of the journals. Due to their

fragility, plant specimens, found throughout the journals, will be separated and arranged chronologically, in relation of their placement in the journals. Series III will contain photographic materials, separated into two subseries of originals and photocopies, arranged, to the extent possible, chronologically. Series IV: Correspondence will consist of two subseries: letters to Neely from Kathy Russell, the daughter of British philosopher Bertrand Russell, and letters to Allan Shields from Neely's friends, arranged chronologically. Series V will contain two cassette tapes, labeled Jack Ash Society.

*PROVENANCE*

These journals were created and written by William Neely documenting many years of his life as an YNP Naturalist.

*RESTRICTIONS*

NO

*ASSOCIATED  
MATERIALS*

## ***HIERARCHY***

### **SERIES I. Journals and Incidental Writings, 1942-1984 (bulk dates: 1942-1978)**

- A. Small Journals, 1942-1984
- B. The Big Fat Book, 1934-1975

### **SERIES II. Sketchbook, 1934-1975**

#### III. Photographs, 1937-1978

- A. Photographic Prints, 1942-1978
- B. High School Yearbooks, 1942-1993 (bulk dates: 1942-1946)

### **SERIES IV. Correspondence, 1944-1993 (bulk dates: 1944-1945)**

- A. Letters from Kathy Russell, 1944-1945
- B. Letters to Alan Shields from Friends, 1993

### **SERIES V. Cassette Tapes, 1964**

## ***SERIES DESCRIPTIONS***

### ***SERIES I. Journals and Incidental Writings, 1942-1984 (bulk dates: 1942-1978)***

5 LF

This series is comprised of 36 years of journal entries by William L. Neely, including diary entries, philosophical musings, poems and fables. Some entries were added at the back pages of the journals up until 1984. "The Big Fat Book" covers 33 years of writings kept simultaneously with Small Journals. Neely also included: photographs, sketches, newspaper clippings, and other loose material within these journals. These items have been separated and re-housed.

This series is organized into two subseries.

#### ***Subseries A. Small Journals, 1942-1984***

**44 JOURNALS**

The Small Journals and Incidental Writings subseries consist of 36 years of writings chronicling Neely's life both in, and outside, of Yosemite Nation Park. These journals contained loose material that has been separated and re-housed.

This subseries is arranged chronologically.

#### ***Subseries B. The Big Fat Book, 1934-1975***

**1 JOURNAL**

The Big Fat Book comprises of additional writings, journal entries and loose ideas that ran parallel but separately to the small journals from subseries 1.

Arranged chronologically.

### ***SERIES II. Sketchbook, 1934-1975***

**1 SKETCHBOOK**

Neely's sketchbook was kept along with the journals and the "The Big Fat Book" during his travels in life.

Arranged chronologically within the sketchbook.

### ***SERIES III. Photographs, 1937-1978***

**2 FOLDERS**



Series III contains photographic materials, separated into two subseries: Photographic Prints, and High School Yearbooks. These photographs contain pictures of Neely as in adult, pictures of him in Yosemite, and photocopies of his high school yearbook pages.

This series is organized into two subseries.

***Subseries A: Photographic Prints, 1942-1978***

**1 FOLDER**

These photographs contain both pictures of Neely as in adult, and pictures of him in Yosemite.

This subseries is arranged chronologically.

***Subseries B: High School Yearbooks, 1942-1993 (bulk dates: 1942-1946)***

**1 FOLDER**

These photocopies contain pictures of Neely in high school. They have been edited and described by Alan Shields.

This subseries is arranged chronologically.

***SERIES IV. Correspondence, 1944-1993 (bulk dates: 1944-1945)***

**2 FOLDERS**

Correspondence consists of two types of letters: letters to Neely from Kathy Russell, the daughter of British philosopher Bertrand Russell; and letters to Allan Shields from Neely's friends.

This series is organized into two subseries.

***Subseries A: Letters from Kathy Russell, 1944-1945***

**1 FOLDER**

This subseries contains letters from Kathy Russell describing a friendship, and hinting at a past romantic relationship.

This subseries is arranged chronologically.

***Subseries B: Letters to Alan Shields from Friends, 1993***

**1 FOLDER**

This subseries contains letters from William L. Neely's friends to Alan Shields, recounting their collective memories of Neely and his life. These were probably used to help write the books on Neely's journals in the early 1990's.

This subseries is arranged chronologically.

**SERIES V. *Cassette Tapes, 1964***

2 TAPES

This series contains two cassette tapes labeled Jack Ash Society.

This series is arranged chronologically.

---

**FILE UNIT DESCRIPTIONS/CONTAINER LIST**

*SERIES I: JOURNALS AND INCIDENTAL WRITINGS, 1942-1984 (bulk dates: 1942-1978)*

*Series I: Subseries A: Small Journals, 1942-1984*

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 1**

Folder 0001. Deskaide, The Silent Secretary, 1942  
*Photographss, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0002. Dailyaide, The Silent Secretary, 1943  
*Newspaper, plant life*  
Folder 0003. Diary, Cholmondely, 1944  
*Photographs, newspaper*  
Folder 0004. Notebook, Vol. I, 1945  
Photographs  
Folder 0005. Notebook, Vol. II, 1945  
  
Folder 0006. Notebook, Vol. III, 1945-1946  
  
Folder 0007. Notebook, Vol. IV, 1946  
Photographs, newspaper

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 2**

Folder 0008. Notebook, Vol. V, 1946-1947  
*Photographss, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0009. Lab-book, Zoologi Botanikk, 1947  
*Photographs, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0010. Record, Vol. VI, 1947  
*Photographs, newspaper*  
Folder 0011. Record, Vol. VII, 1947-1948  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0012. Composition Book, Vol. IX, 1948  
*Plant life*

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 3**

Folder 0013. Record, Vol. VIII, 1948-1949  
*Newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0014. Notebook, Vol. IX, 1949  
  
Folder 0015. Transit Book, Journal XII, 1951-1952  
*Photographs*

Folder 0016. Want Book, Journal Vol. XIII, 1952-1953  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0017. Dailyaide, The Silent Secretary, 1954  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0018. Transit Book, 1955

Folder 0019. Dailyaide, The Silent Secretary, 1956  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0020. Light Green Book, 1957  
*Newspaper*

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 4**

Folder 0021. Year Book, 1958  
*Newspaper*  
Folder 0022. Dailyaide, 1959  
*Newspaper*  
Folder 0023. Dailyaide, 1960  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0024. Dailyaide, The Silent Secretary, 1961  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0025. Light Green Book, 1962  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0026. Light Green Book, 1963  
*Photographs*  
Folder 0027. Record, 1963  
*Photographs, newspaper*

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 5**

Folder 0028. Record, 1964 February-1964 September  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0029. Record, 1964 September-1964 November  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0030. Record, 1965  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0031. Record, 1966  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0032. Record, 1967  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0033. Record, 1968  
*Photographs, newspaper*  
Folder 0034. Daily, 1969  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0035. Record, To Dana 1968, 1970  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*

Folder 0036. Record, 1970  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 6**

Folder 0037. Daily, 1971  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0038. Record, 1972  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0039. Record, 1973  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0040. Record, 1974  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize*  
Folder 0041. Record, 1975  
*Oversize*  
Folder 0042. Six-ring Binder, 1976

**Series I: Subseries A: BOX 7**

Folder 0043. Composition Book, 1976  
*Newspaper, oversize, plant life*  
Folder 0044. Record, 1978  
*Map*

*Series I: Subseries B: The Big Fat Book, 1934-1975*

**Series I: Subseries B: BOX 8**

Folder 0045. Big Fat Book, 1943-1975  
*Photographs, newspaper, oversize, plant life*

*SERIES II: SKETCHBOOK, 1934-1975*

Folder 0046. Sketchbook, Wire-O Skisseblokk, 1970

*SERIES III: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1937-1978*

*Series III: Subseries A: Photographic Prints, 1942-1978*

Folder 0047. Photographs of William Neely and Yosemite, 1942-1978  
*Photographs*

*Series III: Subseries B: High School Yearbooks, 1942-1993 (bulk dates: 1942-1946)*

Folder 0048. Photocopies of Neely's High School Yearbook Pages, 1937-1940

*SERIES IV: CORRESPONDENCE, 1944-1993 (bulk dates: 1944-1945)*

*Series IV: Subseries A: Letters from Kathy Russell, 1944-1945*

Folder 0049. Letters to William Neely from Katy Russel, 1944-1945

*Series IV: Subseries B: Letters to Alan Shields from Friends, 1993*

Folder 0050. Notes about Neely by Friends, 1993

*SERIES V: CASSETTE TAPES, 1964*

Folder 0051. Cassette Tapes, Jack Ash Society, 1964  
*Cassette tape*

***SEPARATED MATERIAL***

OVERSIZE BOX 1 – Loose materials from folders 1-6

OVERSIZE BOX 2 – Loose materials from folders 7-12

OVERSIZE BOX 3 – Loose materials from folders 13-20

OVERSIZE BOX 4 – Loose materials from folders 21-26

OVERSIZE BOX 5 – Loose materials from folders 27-34

OVERSIZE BOX 6 – Loose materials from folders 35-40

OVERSIZE BOX 7 – Loose materials from folders 41-45

OVERSIZE BOX 8 – Oversize materials from all folders arranged chronologically

**Organic Material**

PLANT SPECIMENS BOX – Contains all 36 plant specimens from the collection and is arranged chronologically