
Guide to the Raymond Carver Correspondence, 1977-1988

Collection number: MS 131

The University Library

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Raymond Carver Correspondence,

Date (inclusive): 1977-1988

Collection number: MS 131

Creator: Carver, Raymond

Extent: 1 document box

3 folders - 38 items

Repository: University of California, Santa Cruz. University Library. Special Collections and Archives
Santa Cruz, California 95064

Abstract: Correspondence between Raymond Carver and David Swanger, 1977-1988. Also included is one letter from Tess Gallagher (Mr. Carver's wife) to David Swanger.

Physical location: Stored in Special Collections: Advance notice is required for access.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

Acquisition Information

Gift of David Swanger in 2002 & January 2003.

Biography

Raymond Cleve Carver was born in Clatskanie, Oregon on May 25, 1938. In 1941 his family moved to Yakima, where Carver grew up, graduating from Yakima High School in 1956. On June 7, 1957, he married 16 year old Maryann Burk, who had just graduated from high school. In December of 1957 their first child, daughter Christine LaRae, was born. A son, Vance Lindsay, was born in October of the following year.

For the next dozen years one or both of the young parents were enrolled in various colleges and universities while holding a continuous succession of menial jobs. Carver wrote his first story, "Furious Seasons," while a student at Chico State College in California. After two years there, the family moved to Eureka, where he attended Humboldt State College, eventually becoming editor of the campus literary magazine *Toyon*. In the spring of 1962 *Western Humanities Review* accepted "Pastoral" -- Carver's first story published. The very same day, he received word that *Target* had accepted his poem "The Brass Ring" for publishing.

After graduating from Humboldt in February 1963, Carver moved to Berkeley, but by autumn the family had moved to Iowa City so he could attend the two-year master's program of the Writers' Workshop. They stayed only one year, however, before moving back to Sacramento, California, where Carver's parents were living. Financial difficulties continued, but he continued to write, and began to garner some success in getting work published. The next several years found them moving often, ending up in the Bay Area by the late 1960's. In 1970 "Neighbors" became the first of Carver's stories to be accepted by a major magazine, *Esquire*.

In 1971 he began teaching, despite finding it "a terrifying prospect." His first lecturer position was at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The following year was at UC Berkeley. During this time his drinking became more and more of a problem. In the 1973-74 academic year, he tried to teach at both the Iowa Writers' Workshop and at UCSC, without either school being aware he was teaching at the other. Meanwhile, his first collection of short stories, *Put Yourself In My Shoes*, appeared. Nonetheless, by the following year, when he was to teach at UC Santa Barbara, his alcoholism made the situation untenable and he was forced to resign. He continued a downward spiral, hospitalized for acute alcoholism on four separate occasions.

June 2, 1977, was called by Carver "the line of demarcation" between his "two lives": it was then he had his last alcoholic drink. It was too late to save his family life (he and Maryann eventually divorced but were already separated, and his children were estranged from him), but he soon recovered his ability to teach and desire to write. By the 1978-79 academic year, he held a writer-in-residence position at the University of Texas, El Paso. There he began a relationship with the poet Tess Gallagher, whom he had met the previous year at a conference in Dallas. They moved in together January 1, 1979, and they stayed together until his death in 1988. Jobs took them to Tuscon, Arizona, and then to Syracuse, New York, where Carver had his first permanent teaching post. Throughout the 1980's he continued to write stories and poems, enjoying ever-increasing success. Then in the fall of 1987 Carver was diagnosed with lung cancer, which by the next spring had spread to his brain. In June of 1988 he and Tess were married in Reno, Nevada. They returned to their home in Port Angeles, Washington, making only a brief trip to Alaska before Raymond Carver died on August 2, 1988.

Raymond Carver was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1979 and twice awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Among the awards Mr. Carver received were the prestigious Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Award, which beginning in 1983 gave him \$35,000 tax free annually, solely on the condition that he give up all other employment besides writing. He received *Poetry* magazine's Levinson Prize in 1985, and a Brandeis Citation for fiction in 1988. Also that year he was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Hartford, and received a Brandeis Citation for fiction. His work has since been translated into more than twenty languages.

Scope and Content of the Collection.

The collection includes 28 letters from Raymond Carver to David Swanger, 2 letters about Carver, and 8 photocopies of letters held by Ohio State University from Swanger to Carver (restrictions may apply). Mr. Swanger, currently Professor of Education and Creative Writing at Crown College, was already teaching at UCSC when Mr. Carver was hired as a lecturer in 1970. This correspondence is from the years after Mr. Carver had left UCSC. The last letter chronologically is from his widow Tess Gallagher to Mr. Swanger.

Arrangement

This letters are in chronological order within each folder.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

Carver, Raymond--Correspondence

Swanger, David--Correspondence

Authors, American--20th century--Correspondence

Swanger, David

Gallagher, Tess

- Folder 1 **Correspondence About Raymond Carver, 1977 - 1988**
- 1978, Jan. 05, James K. P. Mortensen to David Swanger, El Paso, TX.**
- Physical Description:** 1 page
- Scope and Content Note**
- "Mr. Raymond Carver has applied for a position as a teacher of creative writing here..."
- 1978, Jan. 05, David Swanger to Lester A. Standiford, Santa Cruz, CA.**
- Physical Description:** 2 pages (photocopy)
- Scope and Content Note**
- "I am writing on behalf of Ray Carver, who I understand is being considered for a Visiting Professorship at the University of Texas at El Paso..."
- 1988, Oct. 9, Tess Gallagher to David Swanger, Port Angeles, WA.**
- Physical Description:** 1 page with memorial card
- Scope and Content Note**
- "...Thank you for sending along your good piece [from Remembering Ray, William Stull, ed.] which adds so much to the full picture of Ray's life..."
- Folder 2 **Correspondence from Raymond Carver to David Swanger, 1977 - 1988**
- [1976?], Jan. 26 , RC to DS**
- Physical Description:** 1 page
- Scope and Content Note**
- "Hey, mon, thank you so much for that forty bucks; I needed it badly (not to pay for this stationery), and I'll return it the soonest. I got an advance copy of the book..."
- [1977], Sep. 27, RC to DS, McKinleyville, CA.**
- Physical Description:** 1 page
- Scope and Content Note**
- "Hope this finds all well there. We're okay up here. Still without a phone, and on a hide-line level of existence, or so it would seem but we're alive and well. Unending trouble over the summer..."

[1977], Nov. 23, RC to DS, [McKinleyville, CA.]

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks for the various communications you've directed this way recently. There's an amusing story about that Gilbert poem..."

[1977], Dec. 29, RC to DS, [McKinleyville, CA.]

Physical Description: 2 pages

Scope and Content Note

"How are you? Things okay here, but getting better by the minute I feel. Chris and Vance found there (sic) way up here for Christmas..."

[1978?], Apr. 15, RC to DS, Iowa City, IA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"The flyer for the SCWriters' Conference arrived only yesterday, so it was a while in transit. It looks good..."

[1978?], Apr. 29, RC to DS.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Greetings. This is just a note. Les Standiford at UTEP sent up some materials of one sort and another a few days ago, and I thought it might please you to know that he used your book for his graduate poetry seminar..."

1978, May 17, RC to DS, Iowa City, IA.

Physical Description: 1 postcard

Scope and Content Note

"I can't remember if I gave you my new address..."

Jul. 12, RC to DS, Arcata, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Hombre! How are you? This is just a little shot. I trust you are well and all..."

Jul. 26, RC to DS

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"How are you doing? Thank you for the good letter. I enjoyed being there and it pleases me if I contributed something to the conference..."

n.d., RC to DS, El Paso, TX.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"I trust you folks are well and all. I'm fine, but about busier than I've ever been in my life..."

1978, Sep. 30, RC to DS, El Paso, TX.

Physical Description: 1 page + two reviews of *Furious Seasons*.

Scope and Content Note

"I trust you're well and all. I'm fine, doing a little better, even, than holding my own. I'm enclosing a couple of recent reviews..."

1979, Jan. 3, RC to DS, El Paso, TX.

Physical Description: 1 postcard

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks for your good letter. I'm back in Old El Paso..."

1979, Mar. 5, RC to DS, [El Paso, TX].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just a little note, in haste. Things are going very well down here. I'm just back from a week's residency at the U[niversity] of Houston..."

1979, Aug. 30, RC to DS, [Tucson, AZ?].

Physical Description: 2 pages

Scope and Content Note

"I've lived in some places including Tel Aviv and Los Angeles, but this place takes the cake. We don't like it at all, yet anyway, but we're going to make the best of it..."

1979, Sep. 13, RC to DS, Tucson, AZ.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks for the good letter, and the good poems. The poems 'Dangers' and 'My Parents Arrive' I didn't care for overly much..."

1979, Nov. 3, RC to DS, [Tucson, AZ?].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just a little note. How are you doing? We're fine and forging along here with one thing and the other. I'm writing a lot of stories these days, which pleases me, of course..."

1980, Feb. 27, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"How are things going there? I'm Fine. I'm alive and well in Syracuse, and so far so good. I've taken Hayden Carruth's place for this semester..."

1980, Jun. 7, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just a little note. How are you? I'd like to see you sometime, but I don't know when on earth I'll ever be back..."

1980, Nov. 30, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks fot your good letter. I've been thinking about you too. This proves ESP! First, let me say I liked 'Snake Lover.'..."

n.d.[probably March 1981], RC to DS

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just a note, in haste. Things go well, though we're both busy and have our respective noses to the grindstone. Tess is out in *Life* magazine, the April issue - a portfolio of American poets.'..."

1981, Jan. 18, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks for the good letter and the good poems. Of the two poems, my favorite is 'He Compares Himself to Another.'..."

1981, Sep. 16, RC to DS, [Syracuse, NY].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks for the book. I guess it came by Greyhound, by way of Mexico, because it just got here..."

1982, Sep. 29, RC to DS, [Syracuse, NY].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

This is just a little note...I find myself so busy these days I scarcely know which way to turn. I'm serious..."

1983, Feb. 24, RC to DS, [Port Angeles, WA].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is only a little note...We're leaving here in an hour to go over to Bellingham, there to see my daughter, Chris..."

1983, Oct. 3, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just a little note...I have to leave in a short while to go to NYC..."

1983, Dec. 26, RC to DS, Syracuse, NY.

Physical Description: 2 pages

Scope and Content Note

"I read the book ms. of poems with a lot of pleasure. I liked your other books, as you know, but I really think..."

1984, Jan. 7, RC to DS, [Syracuse, NY?].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Just a note... I love the new title to the book and the epigram..."

Folder 3

Correspondence from David Swanger to Raymond Carver, 1977 - 1988

Note

Please note: These are photocopies of letters held by Ohio State University.

1978, Jan. 19, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"We're starting a Writer's Institute (or some such as title) this summer here..."

[1978], Jul. 18, DS to RC, [Santa Cruz, CA].

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Judging by *Quarterly West*, reading Carver is exhausting. 1st the reader must watch a snake devour a frog; then he is stepped on by heavy footsteps disguised as words..."

1978, Aug. 5, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"This is just to say/ I got your check/ It was warm and flat/ And I ate it/ Like a tortilla. Thanks. Marcia/maris, windblown from Hawaii stopped in; she thrives tautly..."

[1981], Apr. 6, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Thanks so much for *WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT LOVE*. It's a splendid book; even the stories I've read before retain their edge and menace..."

[1981], Nov. 1, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"Just to say I have seen "Chef's House" in the current *NEW YORKER*, and congratulations! It's a good story..."

1983, Feb. 10, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"I have in hand the NY Times announcement of the Strauss award. My heartiest congratulations!..."

1983, Sep. 15, DS to RC, Santa Cruz, CA.

Physical Description: 2 pages

Scope and Content Note

"Let me offer Lynn's and my heartiest congratulations on Cathedral! And thank you for having a copy sent to me..."

[1984?], Jan. 5, DS to RC.

Physical Description: 1 page

Scope and Content Note

"A quick return and an appreciative thankyou for yours of last month. Your advice re. the ms. is all to the good..."