

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Levine, Ronald L., 1929-  
Papers, 1974-2016**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, contact the Collections Department.

Size of Collection:  
.33 cubic feet

Location Number:  
Ms. A L665

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**Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of papers from 1974-2016 relating to the professional career of Dr. Ronald L. Levine. Materials document Levine's career as a practitioner and professor of obstetrics and gynecology in Louisville, Kentucky, especially his contributions to laparoscopic surgery and women's reproductive health care.

The collection includes biographical information, newspaper clippings, journal and newsletter articles, correspondence, photographs, and presentation and conference materials. Records describe how Levine trained with the German laparoscopic surgeon Kurt Semm in 1983, and how Levine promoted laparoscopic techniques as less invasive and less expensive than opening the abdomen with conventional surgery. Materials provide information about his laparoscopic inventions, his award-winning exhibits on pelviscopic surgery at professional conferences in 1985, his publications about laparoscopic techniques, his election as president of the American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists (AAGL) in 1998, and his AAGL presentation "Then and Now: My 30 Year Love Affair with Laparoscopy" in 2003. A DVD includes video files of interviews with Levine.

Records also reference Levine's work on behalf of women's reproductive health care and choices. A 1985 article about Sister M. Alwinia and her promotion of a "Family Centered Maternity Care Program" at St. Anthony Hospital in Louisville includes an image of her with Levine. Several letters from former patients express gratitude to Levine for his skill, kindness, and professional support as a physician. Materials related to Levine's 2012 Planned Parenthood of Kentucky Founders Award detail his long involvement with the organization, dating back to 1963. They document his efforts to provide contraception to female patients in Louisville before the pill was widely available, and to treat patients suffering from septic shock and infections from "back-alley abortions" before the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision.

**Separation Note**

Related to Levine's professional career are the following museum objects: a laparoscopic instrument designed by Levine, and seven medals awarded to him by European organizations dedicated to laparoscopic surgery and reproductive health care. These objects are cataloged and stored in the Filson museum collections (2018.46.1-7).

- Marlow Primus laparoscopic instrument, stainless steel, n.d.
- Bronze medal on chain, n.d., Kiel University Gynecologic Clinic.
- Bronze medal, 1983, commemorating the contributions of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century physicians Ignaz Semmelweis and Gustav Adolph Michaelis to the prevention of puerperal fever.

- Bronze medal in case, 1983, German Society for the Study of Fertility and Sterility.
- Bronze medal in case, 1987, European Congress on Sterility (ESCO).
- Bronze medal, 1990, commemorating the history of pelviscopy.
- Silver medal in case, 1991, commemorating laparoscopic surgeon Kurt Semm.

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**Biographical Note**

Dr. Ronald L. Levine was born in 1929 in Jackson Heights, New York, and moved to Kentucky when he was stationed at Fort Knox during the Korean War. In 1955, he married Sonia Cohen of Louisville and began his medical training at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, receiving his medical degree in 1959. After working several years in private practice, Levine completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology with the University of Louisville from 1963-1966. He went on to earn hospital appointments at Jewish Hospital and St. Anthony Medical Center, and academic appointments at the University of Louisville School of Medicine as a professor of obstetrics and gynecology. Beginning in the 1980s, Levine published and presented extensively on his work advancing laparoscopic techniques in gynecological procedures, and he served as president of the American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists in the late 1990s. In 1963, Levine began a lifelong partnership with Planned Parenthood in Louisville and served in many positions on the local, state, and national levels, including medical director, board member, and on the national medical committee. In 2012, he received the Planned Parenthood of Kentucky Founders Award in recognition of his commitment to women's reproductive health services.

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**Folder List**

Box 1

Folder 1: Curriculum vitae and biographical materials

Folder 2: Newspaper clippings, 1978-2002

Folder 3: Journal and newsletter articles, 1978-2002

Folder 4: Correspondence, 1974-2016

Folder 5: DVD with video files of interviews with Dr. Levine, 1984-1998

Folder 6: Inventions, conference materials, and exhibit photographs, 1985-1997

Folder 7: Presentation materials, 2003

Folder 8: Founders Award materials, 2012

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**Subject Headings**

American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists.  
Abortion – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Birth control – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Childbirth – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Feminism – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Gynecology – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Jewish Hospital (Louisville, Ky.)  
Jewish physicians – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Laparoscopes.  
Laparoscopic surgery – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Obstetrics – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Physicians – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Physicians – Malpractice – Kentucky – Louisville.  
Planned Parenthood of Kentucky.  
Reproductive health.  
Semm, Kurt, 1927-2003.  
University of Louisville. School of Medicine.