

July 12, 2013 | By Dolores Davies

Writer and Alumnus Rex Pickett Donates Personal Archive to UC San Diego Library



are from the Pickett Papers, Mandeville Special
UC San Diego

UC San Diego Alumnus Rex Pickett, known best for “Sideways,” his hilarious, best-selling novel about the exploits of two old college buddies on a wine-enriched road trip, has donated his personal papers to the Library’s Special Collections. The archive includes a wide range of materials—including posters, photographs, and other memorabilia—both from the novel and the wildly popular movie it spawned. The “Sideways” movie, which has generated a cult-following, is also the basis for “Sideways” the play, a collaboration between Pickett and Tony Award-winning director Des McAnuff. The play will be staged at the La Jolla Playhouse from July 16 through August 18 in the Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre.

“I’m both honored and humbled to have my personal archive included among the distinguished special collections at the UC San Diego Library,” said Pickett. “The Library is a critical intellectual resource for students and faculty and, without it, my university education would not have been the same. I spent many days and nights on the 7th Floor of the Library poring over books I could never have found anywhere else in those pre-digital days, and I hold, and cherish, fond memories of the hours I spent there.”

Pickett, who graduated summa cum laude from UC San Diego in 1976, studied film with the late Manny Farber, an irreverent and highly respected film critic and painter, who was a professor emeritus of Visual Arts. In the ‘80s, following a one-year stint at USC’s film school, Pickett made two films, including “From Hollywood to Deadwood,” which had a theatrical release in 1989. “Sideways: A Novel,” was published in 2004, followed by the release of the movie, which garnered an Academy Award for Best Screenplay in 2005.

“My artistic sensibilities—first, as a filmmaker, then a screenwriter, a novelist, and now a playwright here at the La Jolla Playhouse—were annealed in the cauldron of my time at UCSD and the many great minds and ideas I was exposed to, who inspired me and fired my imagination. The late artist/film critic Manny Farber, was incontrovertibly the single largest influence on my life. Donating my personal

papers to the UC San Diego Library is, for me, a coming of full circle. One day I graduated and left for L.A. with a few boxes of writing; and one day I returned with a life's work, now archived and cared for where it all began.”

The Rex Pickett Papers chronicle the writer's ups and downs, both as a novelist and writer for television, as well as in the film industry. His archive includes film reels from his movies, along with scripts, book drafts, journals, manuscripts, correspondence, and screenplays. Pickett penned a sequel to the “Sideways” novel, “Vertical,” which won the 2012 Independent Publishers Book Awards Gold Medal for Fiction. His credits also include two independent feature films and numerous screenplays—many of them original—for both television and film.



A small exhibition of materials from the Pickett archive will be on view in UC San Diego's Geisel Library, 15 July-30 August.

The UC San Diego Library's Mandeville Special Collections is the repository for the archives of numerous prominent writers, artists, scientists, and poets, ranging from the Dr. Seuss Collection to the archives of Nobel Laureates like Harold Urey, Hannes Alfvén, and Maria Goeppert Mayer. The Library's Archive for New Poetry is recognized as one of the most comprehensive collections of American poetry in the nation, tracing the alternative and experimental approaches

of writing in the post-WW II era. Mandeville Special Collections also holds one of the largest and most diverse collections of artist's books—more than 2000 works—on the West Coast. The collection includes a rich variety of creative works, ranging from the original lithographs by impressionist painter Edouard Manet and the “mass mailings” of Edward Ruscha, to works by renowned book artists such as Ian Tyson and Tom Phillips.

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