

Finding Aid for the Frank Pierson Collection

Collection Processed by:

Hannah Holshouser (October 16, 2023)

Finding Aid Written by:

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Revised, Joel Parham (January 12, 2026)

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Origination/Creator:	Pierson, Frank (1925–2012)
Title of Collection:	Frank Pierson Papers
Date of Collection:	1987–1995
Physical Description:	2 boxes
Identification:	Special Collection #31
Repository:	American Film Institute AFI Archives 2021 N. Western Ave. Los Angeles, CA

RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS

Access Restrictions:	Collection is open for research.
Copyright:	The copyright interests in this collection remain with the creator. For more information contact the AFI Archives.
Acquisition Method:	Donated by unknown; however, due to Frank Pierson's tenure as an AFI Conservatory faculty member the collection is assumed to have been donated by Mr. Pierson.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORY NOTE

Frank Romer Pierson was born on May 12th, 1925, in Chappaqua, NY and died July 22nd, 2012, in Los Angeles, CA. "Pierson was raised by his father, Harold, and his mother, Louise, a writer whose autobiography was turned into the seriocomic 'Roughly Speaking' (1945), starring Rosalind Russell and Jack Carson" (TCM, 2023). He served in the Army during World War II and later graduated from Harvard College with a B.A. degree. He was an American screenwriter and film director. He both wrote and directed films like *The Looking Glass War* in 1970, and *A Star is Born* in 1976. He also wrote the screenplays for films like *Cool Hand Luke* in 1967, and *Dog Day Afternoon* in 1975. In 2001, "Pierson was elected president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, a position he held for the maximum four consecutive terms, echoing nicely his previous two terms as president of the Writers Guild of America, West. Pierson remained active right up until the end, scripting episodes of 'The Good Wife' (CBS, 2009–2016) and 'Mad Men' (AMC, 2007–2015), as well as serving as a producer on both series, before his death" (TCM, 2023) in 2012. He was 87 years old.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Frank Pierson Collection spans from 1987 to 1999. Seven binders were donated containing scripts, personal reflections, and notes by Frank Pierson. An original order was recognized within the collection as enacted personally by Frank Pierson regarding the four PRESUMED INNOCENT binders. This original order has been respected by keeping each folder in line with his original tabs. Pierson's introductory reflections for each section have been placed at the beginning of each folder. There are a total of 21 folders in 2 boxes. Broken down into 5 series titled PRESUMED INNOCENT binder 1, binder 2, binder 3, binder 4, and WHITE FLAME.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

Series 1: PRESUMED INNOCENT, binder 1

- f. 1 Novel text of PRESUMED INNOCENT, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 221p.
- f. 2. Notes on the novel PRESUMED INNOCENT, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 25p.
- f. 3 Letter from Scott Turow to Frank Pierson, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 2p.

Series 2: PRESUMED INNOCENT, binder 2

- f. 4 First draft presented to Pollack, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 134p.
- f. 5 New outline of script, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 154p.
- f. 6 Added notes, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 4p.
- f. 7 Alan Pakula's script notes and correspondence, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 30p.

Series 3: PRESUMED INNOCENT, binder 3

- f. 8 Scott Turow script notes and correspondence, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 34p.
- f. 9 Notes and correspondence from Frank Pierson and New Draft of script, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 159p.
- f. 10 Notes from Alan Pakula and Harrison Ford, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 6p.
- f. 11 Studio and Pollack team notes on script, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 17p.
- f. 12 Notes and commentary by Pierson, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 6p.
- f. 13 Draft script by Alan Pakula, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 136p.

Box 2

Series 4: PRESUMED INNOCENT, binder 4

- f. 1 April 7th, 1989, Draft of script, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 152p.
- f. 2 April 18th notes to Alan Pakula, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 5p.
- f. 3 May 26th Second Draft and Shooting Script, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 137p.
- f. 4 Letter to Alan Pakula, with reflection by Frank Pierson, 6p.

Series 5: WHITE FLAME

- f. 5 Screenplay, WHITE FLAME by Frank Pierson, 1st Draft. 140 p.
- f. 6 Shooting schedule and part of the script for PLAZA SUITE found inside binder for novel text of WHITE FLAME, by James Grady, 21 p.
- f. 7 Novel text of WHITE FLAME, by James Grady, 233 p.
- f. 8 WHITE FLAME screenplay by Frank Pierson, 117p.