

# Penne Laingen Yellow Ribbon Collection

AFC 1991/017

Prepared by Sarah Bradley Leighton



American Folklife Center, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

February 2006

Encoded by Amarantha Dyuaaxchs,  
September 2006 ; Revised by Nora Yeh

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadafc.af006007>

Latest revision: April 2010

## Collection Summary

Collection Number: AFC 1991/017

Title: Penne Laingen Yellow Ribbon Collection

Inclusive Dates: 1979-1991

Repository: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

Extent (original): 3 linear feet; 4 boxes (containing 15 folders of manuscript material; 7 sound recordings; 63 unique graphic images; 1 videocassette; 1 computer disk; 6 artifacts)

Creator: Laingen, Penne

Creator: Laingen, L. Bruce

Creator: Parsons, Gerald E.

Language: English

Abstract: Collection comprises Penne Laingen's yellow ribbon marking the year her husband Bruce Laingen was held hostage in Tehran, Iran, during the Iran hostage crisis from 1979 to 1981; plus a 1991 interview with the Laingens and related documentation.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Laingen, L. Bruce, collector, interviewee.

Laingen, L. Bruce.

Laingen, Penne, collector, interviewee.

Laingen, Penne.

Parsons, Gerald E., interviewer.

### Organizations

American Folklife Center, collector.

Archive of Folk Culture (Library of Congress)

### Subjects

Iran Hostage Crisis, 1979-1981--Personal narratives.

Persian Gulf War, 1991--United States--Anecdotes.

Ribbons--Symbolic aspects.

Ribbons--United States--Folklore.

### Titles

*Yellow ribbon collection, 1979-1991.*

### Form/Genre

Artifacts.

Interviews.

Photographs.

Posters.

Sound recordings.

Videocassettes.

# Administrative Information

## Access

The collection is open for research. Duplication of the collection materials may be governed by copyright and other restrictions.

## Acquisition

Penne and Bruce Laingen donated their yellow ribbon to the Library of Congress on July 2, 1991. Additional materials were collected by employees of the American Folklife Center.

## Preferred Citation

Penne Laingen Yellow Ribbon Collection (AFC 1991/017), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Bibliography

Laingen, L. Bruce. *Yellow Ribbon: The Secret Journal of Bruce Laingen*. Washington: Brassey's (US), 1992.

Letters of L. Bruce Laingen, 1980 (MSS6085). Forms part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts collection in the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"New Yellow Ribbon Tradition," An online presentation on the American Folklife Center web site, <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/ribbons/index.html>

Santino, Jack. "Apply a Ribbon Magnet to the Ole Humvee: The Yellow Ribbon Tradition Reborn." *Folklife Center News*, 27, no. 3, Summer 2005.

"Yellow Ribbon" subject files in the American Folklife Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# Scope and Content

In 1979, Penne (Penelope) Laingen tied a yellow ribbon around a tree in front of her Bethesda, Maryland home when her husband, Bruce, was among those taken hostage in the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran. The Laingens donated this yellow ribbon to the Library of Congress in 1991. The collection contains sound recordings and a photograph from that donation ceremony. Other recordings include an interview with Bruce and Penne Laingen conducted by American Folklife Center reference specialist, Gerald E. Parsons, on April 15, 1991. During the interview, the Laingens discussed their experiences during the hostage crisis and their use of the yellow ribbon and the symbolic significance it acquired. The collection also contains photographs of the Laingens taken during this interview and photographs of yellow ribbon displays during the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

# Biographical History

Penne (Penelope) Laingen is the wife of Bruce Laingen who was serving as the charge d'affaires of the United States Embassy in Tehran when Iranian student revolutionaries seized the Embassy on November 4, 1979, and held the staff hostage until January 20, 1981. A few days after Bruce was taken hostage, Penne Laingen hung a yellow ribbon around a tree in the yard of her Bethesda, Maryland home as a symbol of support for her husband and the other American hostages. She did this as a way to bolster her own strength and that of their three sons throughout the crisis.

## Collection Concordance by Format

| Quantity                    | Physical Extent (original)        | Location | Item Numbers           |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| <b>Manuscript Materials</b> |                                   |          |                        |
| 15                          | folders                           | Box 1    | Folders 1-15           |
| <b>Sound Recordings</b>     |                                   |          |                        |
| 3                           | 7-inch reel to reel audiotapes    | Box 2    | SR01-SR03              |
| 3                           | audiocassettes                    | Box 2    | SR04-SR06              |
| 1                           | 10-inch reel audiotape            | Box 2    | SR07                   |
| <b>Graphic Images</b>       |                                   |          |                        |
| 1                           | black-and-white contact sheet     | Box 1    | PH001                  |
| 28                          | black-and-white negatives         | Box 1    | PH001, PH002           |
| 2                           | black-and-white prints            | Box 1    | PH002, PH003           |
| 21                          | color prints                      | Box 1    | PH004-PH024            |
| 21                          | color negatives                   | Box 1    | PH004-PH024            |
| 11                          | color slides                      | Box 1    | PH002, PH025-<br>PH034 |
| 2                           | color posters                     | Map case | GR01                   |
| <b>Moving Images</b>        |                                   |          |                        |
| 1                           | videocassette (VHS), sound, color | Box 2    | MV01                   |
| <b>Electronic Media</b>     |                                   |          |                        |
| 1                           | 3.5-inch computer disk            | Box 1    | CF01                   |
| <b>Artifacts</b>            |                                   |          |                        |
| 5                           | novelty and display items         | Box 3    | AR01-AR05              |
| 1                           | oilcloth ribbon                   | Box 4    | AR06                   |

# Description of Series

*Container*

*Series*

[Series I: Manuscripts](#)

[Series II: Sound Recordings](#)

[Series III: Graphic Images](#)

[Series IV: Moving Images](#)

[Series V: Artifacts](#)

[Series VI: Electronic Media](#)

# Container List

## *Container*

## *Contents*

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### Series I: Manuscripts

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 1     | Finding Aid. 8 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 1  |  |
| BOX 1     | Correspondence - American Folklife Center and Laingens. February to July 1991. 8 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 2  |  |
| BOX 1     | Santino, Jack. "Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War." <i>The Journal of American Folklore</i> , 105, no. 415, (Winter 1992): 19-33. Drafts with comments and published version. 120 leaves.                  |
| FOLDER 3  |  |
| BOX 1     | Yellow Ribbon articles by Gerald Parsons, American Folklife Center reference specialist. 1981, 1991. 12 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 4  |  |
| BOX 1     | "Laingens Present Yellow Ribbon to LC." <i>Library of Congress Gazette</i> , 2, no. 28 (July 12, 1991): 3. (2 copies). 16 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 5  |  |
| BOX 1     | "Original Yellow Ribbon Given to LC." <i>Library of Congress Information Bulletin</i> , 50, no. 14, (July 15, 1991): 263. (5 copies). 50 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 6  |  |
| BOX 1     | Parker, Barbara. "Penne Laingen's Wait." <i>Washington Post</i> , (Monday, December 10, 1979). 2 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 7  |  |
| BOX 1     | Collected Articles: Significance of the Color Yellow. 1979-1981. 15 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 8  |  |
| BOX 1     | Yellow Ribbon Acquisition Ceremony. Administrative Material. July 2, 1991. 42 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 9  |  |
| BOX 1     | Yellow Ribbon Acquisition Ceremony. Press Coverage. July 2, 1991. 17 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 10 |  |
| BOX 1     | Yellow Ribbons and "No Greater Love" (Humanitarian Organization). 1980-1990. 17 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 11 |  |
| BOX 1     | Information regarding GR01 - Poster of Foshay Tower. 1981. 2 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 12 |  |
|           | [Original poster located in Reading Room map case.]  |
| BOX 1     | Sound Recording Logs: SR01, SR02, SR03. Penne and Bruce Laingen interviewed on April 15, 1991, by Gerald Parsons. 13 leaves.   |
| FOLDER 13 |  |
| BOX 1     | Sound Recording Transcript: SR01, SR02, SR03. Penne and Bruce Laingen interviewed on April 15, 1991, by Gerald Parsons. Transcript by Peggy Yocom. 10 leaves.  |
| FOLDER 14 |  |
| BOX 1     | Moving Image Log: MV01. WRC Yellow Ribbon. Recording of the WRC, NBC News 4 nightly broadcast of the six o'clock news in Washington, DC featuring the Laingen yellow ribbon donation to the Library of Congress. July 2, 1991. 1 leaf. |
| FOLDER 15 |  |

### Series II: Sound Recordings

Note: All contents have been removed from Box 2 and are shelved separately.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 2     | Penne and Bruce Laingen interviewed on April 15, 1991, by Gerald Parsons. Tape 1 of 3. One 7-inch reel recorded in stereo at 7.5 ips. |
| ITEM SR01 |   |
| BOX 2     | Penne and Bruce Laingen interviewed on April 15, 1991, by Gerald Parsons. Tape 2 of 3. One 7-inch reel recorded in stereo at 7.5 ips. |
| ITEM SR02 |   |

## Series II: Sound Recordings

| <i>Container</i>   | <i>Contents</i>   |
|--------------------|---|
| BOX 2<br>ITEM SR03 | Penne and Bruce Laingen interviewed on April 15, 1991, by Gerald Parsons. Tape 3 of 3. One 7-inch reel recorded in stereo at 7.5 ips.   |
| BOX 2<br>ITEM SR04 | Recording of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" sung by Tony Orlando and Dawn. Commercial recording dubbed on 1 audiocassette.  |
| BOX 2<br>ITEM SR05 | Recording of "She wore a yellow ribbon" sung by Mrs. Byron Coffin, Sr. of Alameda, CA. Recorded by Sidney Robertson Cowell in April 1939. Dubbed on 1 audiocassette. Accessible online at <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/collafc.af000002">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/collafc.af000002</a> . |
| BOX 2<br>ITEM SR06 | Recordings of versions of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" by Roger Williams and Andre Kostelanetz. Commercial recording dubbed on 1 audiocassette.   |
| BOX 2<br>ITEM SR07 | Recording of the donation of the original yellow ribbon to the Library of Congress in the Librarian's office, 6th Floor Madison Building, Washington, D.C. on July 2, 1991. One 10-inch sound tape reel recorded at 7.5 ips, 2 tracks.  |

## Series III: Graphic Images

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| BOX 1<br>FOLDER 16 | Photograph: PH001 (contact sheet and negatives).<br><br>Twenty-eight images of Penne and Bruce Laingen at their Bethesda, Maryland home during their interview with Gerald Parsons. April 15, 1991. One black-and-white contact sheet, 8 x 10 in. Five black-and-white negative strips with twenty-eight frames.          |
| BOX 1<br>FOLDER 17 | Photograph: PH002 (print, slide, and negative).<br><br>An image of Bruce and Penne Laingen holding up the yellow ribbon around a tree in their Bethesda, Maryland yard. April 15, 1991. One black-and-white print, 8 x 10 in. One black-and-white negative strip with one frame. One color 35 mm slide of the same image. |
| BOX 1<br>FOLDER 18 | Photograph: PH003 (print).<br><br>An image of Penne Laingen presenting the original yellow ribbon to Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington. July 2, 1991. One black-and-white print, 8 x 10 in.  |
| BOX 1<br>FOLDER 19 | Photographs: PH004 - PH024 (prints and negatives).<br><br>Twenty-one images of yellow ribbons displayed in Maryland and Virginia during the Persian Gulf War, 1991. Photographer not known. Twenty-one color prints, 3 x 5 in. Six color negative strips with twenty-one frames.  |
| BOX 1<br>FOLDER 20 | Slides: PH025 - PH034<br><br>Ten images of Penne and Bruce Laingen at their Bethesda, Maryland home during their interview with Gerald Parsons. April 15, 1991. Ten color slides, 35 mm.  |

## Series III: Graphic Images

### *Container*

### *Contents*

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Map Case  
ITEM GR01

Two copies of a color poster

Foshay Tower at 821 Marquette Ave., Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota tied with an enormous yellow ribbon. 1981. Two color posters, 21 x 30 in. [See Reading Room Map Case]

### Series IV: Moving Images

Note: All contents have been removed from Box 2 and are shelved separately.

BOX 2  
ITEM MV01

WRC Yellow Ribbon. Moving image of the WRC, NBC News 4 nightly broadcast of the six o'clock news in Washington, DC, featuring the Laingen yellow ribbon donation to the Library of Congress. July 2, 1991. One videocassette (VHS) in color with sound. See Folder 15 for the Moving Image Log.

### Series V: Artifacts

BOX 3  
ITEM AR01

"God Bless America" pin featuring an American flag and a yellow ribbon. February 25, 1991. One novelty pin, 2 in.

BOX 3  
ITEM AR02

"Yellow Ribbon Cocktail" sticks made in the shape of a ribbon. Undated. Eight novelty plastic sticks, 7 in.

BOX 3  
ITEM AR03

"Free the Hostages" yellow ribbon pin framed by No Greater Love, a humanitarian organization that claims to have spearheaded the yellow ribbon campaign during the Iran hostage crisis. November 4, 1979 - January 20, 1981. One framed item, 6 x 6 x 1.25 in.

BOX 3  
ITEM AR04

"Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" yellow ribbon display sign. Undated. One poster mounted on a plastic display stand, 8 x 10 in.

BOX 3  
ITEM AR05

Mounted photograph of Bruce and Penne Laingen holding up their original yellow ribbon in the yard of their Bethesda, Maryland home. April 15, 1991. One color photograph mounted on a plastic display stand, 5.5 x 8 in.

BOX 4  
ITEM AR06

The original yellow ribbon hung by Penne Laingen in honor of her husband, Bruce Laingen, while he was held hostage in Iran. 1979-1981. One oilcloth ribbon, 21 x 44 in.

### Series VI: Electronic Media

BOX 1  
FOLDER 21

Computer Disk: CF01

Administrative files related to the collection. One computer disk.