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Archives of American Art

"Happy Birthday RMS", circa 1950

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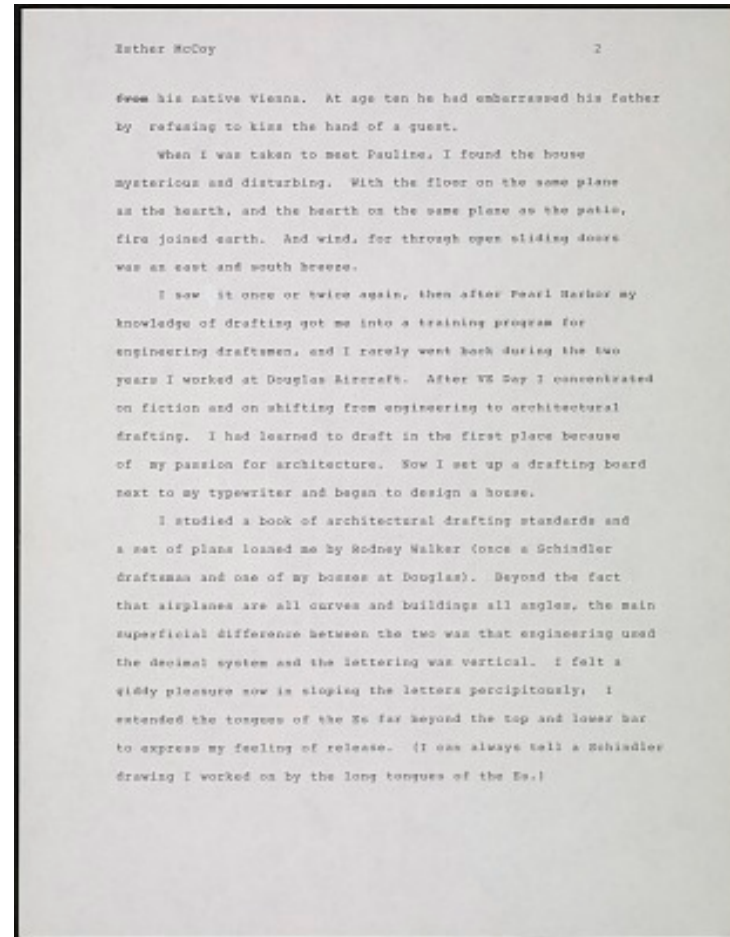
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~~from~~ ~~his native Vienna~~. At age ten he had embarrassed his father by refusing to kiss the hand of a guest.

When I was taken to meet Pauline, I found the house mysterious and disturbing. With the floor on the same plane as the hearth, and the hearth on the same plane as the patio, fire joined earth. And wind, for through open sliding doors was an east and south breeze.

I saw it once or twice again, then after Pearl Harbor my knowledge of drafting got me into a training program for engineering draftsmen, and I rarely went back during the two years I worked at Douglas Aircraft. After VE Day I concentrated on fiction and on shifting from engineering to architectural drafting. I had learned to draft in the first place because of my passion for architecture. Now I set up a drafting board next to my typewriter and began to design a house.

I studied a book of architectural drafting standards and a set of plans loaned me by Rodney Walker (once a Schindler draftsman and one of my bosses at Douglas). Beyond the fact that airplanes are all curves and buildings all angles, the main superficial difference between the two was that engineering used the decimal system and the lettering was vertical. I felt a giddy pleasure now in sloping the letters percipitously; I extended the tongues of the Es far beyond the top and lower bar to express my feeling of release. (I can always tell a Schindler drawing I worked on by the long tongues of the Es.)



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