EMERSON, WILLIAM A., 1923-2009
William A. Emerson papers, 1949-2011

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Emerson, William A., 1923-2009
Title: William A. Emerson papers, 1949-2011
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1094
Extent: 8 linear ft. (16 boxes) and 5 oversized paper (OP)
Abstract: Papers of Atlanta journalist William A. Emerson, Jr., including correspondence, writings, newspaper clippings, printed material, and artwork.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Collection stored off-site. Researchers must contact the Rose Library in advance to access this collection.

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Source
Gift, 2008.

Citation
[after identification of item(s)], William A. Emerson papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
William Austin Emerson, Jr., journalist, editor, and author, was born in 1923 in North Carolina and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, where he died in 2009. He attended Davidson College in North Carolina for two years, then served in the United States Army in World War II in the China-Burma-India theater. After the war, he completed his bachelor's degree at Harvard University. Upon graduation in 1948 he worked for Collier's magazine. From 1953-1961, Emerson was the chief of Newsweek's Atlanta Bureau, where he was the first bureau chief to cover the southern United States. He is known for his journalism on the civil rights era. From 1965-1969, he was editor-in-chief at The Saturday Evening Post. He later joined the faculty of the University of South Carolina (Columbia, South Carolina), where he taught journalism. In addition to his journalistic writing, Emerson published The Jesus Story (1971), Sin and the New American Conscience (1974), contributed to To Rule the Night: The Discovery Voyage of Astronaut Jim Irwin (1974), and wrote papers, short stories, and speeches. Emerson often published under the byline Bill Emerson. He also worked for ABC News, was a popular speaker, and was married to Lucy Kiser for 56 years until her death in 2005.

Scope and Content Note
The collection consists of the personal and professional papers of William A. Emerson, Jr., from 1949-2011. The papers include correspondence, writings, newspaper clippings and other printed material, and artwork. The correspondence concerns Emerson's work as a journalist for Collier's and Newsweek, in addition to his tenure as editor of The Saturday Evening Post. The collection also includes some of Emerson's personal correspondence, which documents his work with charity and church organizations, professional societies, and other authors. The majority of the newspaper clippings are of Emerson's columns and articles. Writings include drafts of essays, columns, and editorials that later appeared in print. A large portion of the collection consists of Emerson's speech cards, research, and notes relating to his numerous speaking engagements and teaching activities.

The collection also contains an original watercolor cartoon of William A. Emerson by political cartoonist Robert Ariail. Noteworthy in the collection are investigation reports and research relating to The Saturday Evening Post's investigation into University of Georgia's head football coach James Wallace "Wally" Butts Jr. for allegedly conspiring to fix games with Alabama head coach Bear Bryant. The Post's "Story of a College Football Fix" appeared on March 23, 1963 and three days later, Butts sued Curtis Publishing, The Post’s parent company, for libel in the amount of $10 million. Curtis Publishing Co. v. Butts reached the Supreme Court and became a landmark case by upholding the Atlanta federal court's decision to award Butts damages for libel. Also noteworthy are interview transcripts and page proofs of Emerson's interview with Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Jr. (1968). Finally, the collection includes materials pertaining to The Jesus Story and The Importance of Idle Conversation (1973), an unpublished collection of Emerson's journalism.
Arrangement Note
Arranged by record type, then in alphabetical order.
## Container List

### Personal papers

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<td>Administrative files, <em>The Saturday Evening Post</em> and other unidentified employers, 1949-1976</td>
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<td>Artwork by Robert Ariail, original watercolor cartoon of William A. Emerson</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Artwork by F.E. Becerra, undated [includes portraits of William A. Emerson]</td>
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4  5  *Newsweek* magazine, 1954
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4  7  Oliver, Mary, "The Night Traveler," undated [photocopy]
4  8  Personal photographs, 1927-2007
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5  2  "A Short History of *The Saturday Evening Post*," 1959
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5  7  The William Allen White Centennial Seminar: "The Role of the Mass Media in a Free Society" (The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas), 1968 April 28-30

**Research and writing**

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