Inventory of the
William (Bill) Saunders Papers, circa 1950 - 2004
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Descriptive Summary

Title: William ("Bill") Saunders Papers,

Dates: circa 1950 - 2004

Creator: Saunders, William, 1935-.

Abstract: William ("Bill") Saunders, a community and Civil Rights activist in Charleston, South Carolina, was an organizer and lead negotiator of the Charleston Hospital Strike of 1969. In 1970, Saunders established the Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA) to address race-related community problems and provide assistance to community members in need. He also operated the AM radio station WPAL from 1972-1998.

This collection includes materials relating to the personal and professional life of William "Bill" Saunders. A very small portion of the papers contains personal materials such as biographical material, clippings, and correspondence. The majority of the collection documents Saunders' civic involvement from the late 1960s to 2004, with organizations such as the Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA), Charleston Area Community Relations Committee, and Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation. A limited number of newspaper articles relate to Saunders' role in the 1969 Hospital Workers' Strike. The largest portion chronicles the establishment and early operation of COBRA, though later COBRA materials are included. Saunders' ten-year tenure as South Carolina Public Service Commissioner is also reflected, while a small amount of materials relate to Saunders' run for South Carolina Senate in 1980. A portion of the collection contains materials relating to WPAL radio station, including audiocassette tapes of various programs from 1990 to 2002. Also includes subject files containing articles and publications relating to many local issues.

Extent: 14.5 linear feet (28 archival boxes)

Repository: Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston

Call Number: AMN 1100

Language of Material: Material in English

Biographical Note

William ("Bill") Saunders was born on February 14, 1935 in New York. At the age of eighteen months, he moved to Johns Island, South Carolina to live with his maternal grandparents. There, he grew up working on his grandparents' farm and on others in the area. He attended Mt. Zion Elementary School on Johns Island and Burke High School on the Charleston peninsula.

In 1951, Saunders joined the United States Army and fought in the Korean War until the summer of 1952.
During the 1960s, Saunders became involved in the Civil Rights movement in Charleston, organizing an armed self-defense group and publishing a radical newspaper called the *Lowcountry Newsletter*. He participated in the 1969 Hospital Workers' Strike and helped negotiate the resolutions to this strike. In the 1970, Saunders established the Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA), an organization whose primary purpose is to mediate problems and facilitate communication within the Charleston community. In addition, COBRA assists underprivileged citizens through various programs, gaining particular attention for its Sickle Cell Anemia awareness program.

In 1972, Saunders became the co-owner of AM radio station WPAL, the first radio station to return to the air after Hurricane Hugo. He became the sole proprietor of the station in 1985 and continued to operate WPAL until 1998.

Saunders ran for South Carolina Senate in 1980, and held a ten-year tenure on the Public Service Commission of South Carolina from 1994 to 2004. In 2004, William "Bill" Saunders returned to the full-time administration of COBRA.

**Collection Overview**

This collection includes materials relating to the personal and professional life of William ("Bill") Saunders. A very small portion of the papers contains personal materials such as biographical material, clippings, and correspondence. The majority of the collection documents Saunders' civic involvement from the late 1960s to 2004, with organizations such as the Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA), Charleston Area Community Relations Committee, and Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation. A limited number of newspaper articles relate to Saunders' role in the 1969 Hospital Workers' Strike. The largest portion chronicles the establishment and early operation of COBRA, though later COBRA materials are included. Saunders' ten-year tenure as South Carolina Public Service Commissioner is also reflected, while a small amount of materials relate to Saunders' run for South Carolina Senate in 1980.

A portion of the collection contains materials relating to WPAL radio station, including audiocassette tapes of various programs from 1990 to 2002. Also includes subject files containing articles and publications relating to many local issues.

**Collection Arrangement**

1. Personal Papers, 1976-2003
2. Civic Involvement, 1967-2005
4. Subject Files and Publications

**Restrictions**

**Access Restrictions**

No restrictions.

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The materials from our collections are made available for use in research, teaching, and private study, pursuant to U.S. copyright law. The user must assume full responsibility for any use of the materials, including but not limited to, infringement of copyright and publication rights of reproduced materials. Any materials used for academic research or otherwise should be fully credited with the source.

Related Material

Oral History Interviews with William ("Bill") Saunders by Felice Knight, AMN 500.026.009 in the South Carolina Civil/Human Rights Anthology Project:

Part I: September 9, 2004, AMN 500.026.009 2004-09-09
Part II: September 17, 2004, AMN 500.026.009 2004-09-17
Part III: October 1, 2004, AMN 500.026.009 2004-10-01
Part IV: October 8, 2004, AMN 500.026.009 2004-10-08
Part V: October 27, 2004, AMN 500.026.009 2004-10-27

Separated Material

1100-OPF/1

Subject Headings

African American civic leaders -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
African American political activists -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
African American radio stations -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
African Americans -- Civil rights -- South Carolina -- History -- 20th century.
African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- 20th century.
African Americans -- South Carolina -- Johns Island -- 20th century.
African Americans -- South Carolina -- Johns Island -- Social life and customs.
Charleston (S.C.) -- History -- 20th century.
Charleston (S.C.) -- Race relations -- History -- 20th century.
Civic leaders -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
Committee on Better Racial Assurance.
Community health services -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
Community health services -- South Carolina -- Johns Island.
Hospital Workers' Strike, Charleston, S.C., 1969.
Johns Island (S.C.) -- History -- 20th century.
Nonprofit organizations -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- 20th century.
Nonprofit organizations -- South Carolina -- Johns Island -- 20th century.
Political activists -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
Saunders, William, 1935-.
Sea Islands -- Social conditions.
Social action -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- 20th century.
United Way of America.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], William "Bill" Saunders Papers, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

Processing Information

Processed by Felice Knight, June 2006, and Jessica Farrell, August 2010
Encoded by Jessica Farrell, August 2010
Edited by Amanda Ross, August 2010

Funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources supported the collection processing and encoding of this finding aid.
Detailed Description of the Collection

1. Personal Papers, 1976-2003

Box  1 Folder  1  Biographical: William "Bill" Saunders
Box  1 Folder  2  Biographical: Saunders Family
Box  1 Folder  3  Biographical: Clippings, 1989-2003
Box  1 Folder  4  Financial
Box  1 Folder  5  Personal Correspondence, 1976-2001 and undated
Box  1 Folder  6  Photographs and Negatives, 1998 and undated
Box  1 Folder  7  Tributes to William "Bill" Saunders, 1984-1994
Box  1 Folder  8  Writings and Notes, 1979-2003

2. Civic Involvement, 1967-2005

2.1. General

Box  1 Folder  9  Awards and Honors, 1972-2005
Box  1 Folder  9A  Awards and Honors: South Carolina Broadcasters' Hall of Fame, 1993
Box  1 Folder  10  Event Invitations and Programs
Box  1 Folder  11  Correspondence, 1974-2004 and undated
Box  1 Folder  12  Speaking Engagements, 1972-1998

2.2. Community and Cultural Organizations

Box  1-2 Folder  13-18  Blue Ridge Institute: Conferences, 1976-1996
Box  2 Folder  19  Blue Ridge Institute: Correspondence, 1975-1999
Box  2 Folder  20  Blue Ridge Institute: Membership
Box  2 Folder  21  Center for Community Change, 1981
Box  2 Folder  22  Citizens’ Committee of Charleston County, 1976-2000
Box  2 Folder  23  Coastal Plains Human Development Coordinating Council: Correspondence and Meetings
Box  2-3 Folder  24-27  Coastal Plains Human Development Coordinating Council: Research Materials
Box  3-11  Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA)

Includes materials created during the establishment and early operation of the Committee on Better Racial Assurance (COBRA), which was founded by William "Bill" Saunders in 1970 to assist with community race relations and provide various housing, health, and other assistance services to community members in need.
Box 3 Folder 28  COBRA: General Information
Box 3 Folder 29  COBRA: Board of Directors, 1978-1979
Box 3 Folder 30  COBRA: Clippings
Box 3-4 Folder 31-34  COBRA: Correspondence: Executive Director, 1978-1981
Box 4 Folder 35  COBRA: Correspondence: General, 1975-1981
Box 4 Folder 36-38  COBRA: Department of Justice Notices, 1975-1978
Box 4 Folder 39  COBRA: Employee Absence Reports, 1980
Box 4 Folder 40  COBRA: Employee Work Plans, 1975-1976
Box 5 Folder 41  COBRA: Financial Papers, 1973-1979
Box 5 Folder 42  General Programs
Box 5-6 Folder 43-55  Community Relations Assistance Program, 1974-1990 and undated
Box 6 Folder 56  Employment Referral Program, 1976-1979
Box 6-7 Folder 57-60  Health Education Program, circa 1970s
Box 7-9 Folder 61-73  Housing Assistance Programs, 1971-1980 and undated
Box 9 Folder 74-75  Housing Assistance Programs: Photographs, circa 1970s-1980s
Box 9 Folder 76  Housing Assistance Programs: Research Materials
Box 9 Folder 77  Hypertension Program, 1976-1979
Box 9 Folder 78  Hypertension Program: Application for Continuation, 1981
Box 9-10 Folder 79-82  Operation Crossroads, 1971-1978
Box 10 Folder 83  Operation Crossroads: Brochures and Booklets
Box 10 Folder 84  Operation Crossroads: Program Reports, 1967-1972
Box 10 Folder 85  Sickle Cell Program, 1975-2004
Box 10 Folder 86  Sickle Cell Program: Advisory Council
Box 10 Folder 87  Sickle Cell Program: Advisory Council Correspondence, 1975-1980
Box 10 Folder 88  Sickle Cell Program: Advisory Council Meeting Minutes, 1975-1980
Box 10 Folder 89  Sickle Cell Program: Correspondence, 1976-1980
Box 11 Folder 90  Sickle Cell Program: Counseling
Box 11 Folder 91-92  Sickle Cell Program: Grants, 1978-1979
| Box 11 Folder 93 | Sickle Cell Program: Monthly Screening Reports, 1972-1978 |
| Box 11 Folder 94 | Sickle Cell Program: State Sickle Cell Council, 1977-1980 |
| Box 11 Folder 95 | Urban Ministry Program, 1974-1976 |
| Box 11 Folder 96 | COBRA: Event Photographs, undated |
| Box 11 Folder 97 | Highlander Research and Education Center |
| Box 11 Folder 98 | Penn Community Services, Inc., 1977-1980 |
| Box 11 Folder 99 | Sea Island Economic Development Council, 1975-1979 |
| Box 11 Folder 100 | Trident 2000: General |
| Box 11 Folder 101 | Trident 2000: Board of Directors, 1979-1980 |
| Box 12 Folder 103 | Trident 2000: Program Committee, 1979 |
| Box 12 Folder 104 | Trident 2000: Task Force Reports, 1977-1978 |
| Box 12 Folder 105 | Trident Region Arts and Culture Project, 1995 |
| Box 12 Folder 106 | Trident United Way: General |
| Box 12 Folder 107 | Trident United Way: Board of Directors, 1980-1981 |
| Box 12 Folder 109 | Trident United Way: Human Services Council, 1975-1979 |
| Box 12 Folder 110 | Trident United Way: Long Range Planning Inclusiveness Committee, 1978 |
| Box 12 Folder 111 | Trident United Way: Trident Area Agency on Aging, 1980-1981 |
| Box 12 Folder 112 | Trident Urban League, 1996-1997 |
| Box 13 Folder 113 | United Way of America: General |
| Box 13 Folder 114 | United Way of America: Chief Volunteer Officers Forum, 1978-1979 |
| Box 13 Folder 115 | United Way of America: Long Range Planning, 1979 |
| Box 13 Folder 117 | United Way of America: Southeast Regional Volunteer Task Group, 1977-1978 |
| Box 13 Folder 118 | United Way of South Carolina: General |
| Box 13 Folder 119 | United Way of South Carolina: Board of Directors, 1979 |
| Box 14 Folder 120 | United Way of South Carolina: Executive Committee, 1979-1980 |
| Box 14 Folder 121 | United Way of South Carolina: Long Range Planning Committee, 1979 |
1.2. Educational Institutions

Box 14 Folder 122  Charleston County School District: General, 1978-1992
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Box 14 Folder 126  Charleston County School District: Newsletters and Annual Reports, 1976-1979
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1.3. Governmental Agencies

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Box 16 Folder 136  City of Charleston Program and Detailed Budget, 1978
Box 16 Folder 137  Governor's Advisory Commission on Human Relations, 1971
Box 16 Folder 137A  South Carolina Human Affairs Commission
Box 16 Folder 138  South Carolina Public Service Commission: General Information and Notes
Box 16 Folder 139  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Clippings and Newsletters, 1978-2004
Box 16-17 Folder 140-149  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Correspondence, 1993-2004 and undated
Box 17 Folder 150  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Legal Cases, 1994-2004
Box 17 Folder 151  South Carolina Public Service Commission: National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, 1998-2003
Box 17 Folder  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Personnel Committee, 2000
Box 17-18 Folder 153-154  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Reports, 1996-2003 and undated
Box 18 Folder 155  South Carolina Public Service Commission: Southeastern Association of Regulatory Commissioners, 1998-2000
Box 18 Folder 156  South Carolina Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program, 1999-2000

1.4. Health-Related Organizations

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Box 22 Folder 201 United Methodist Church: Charleston District Ministries
Box 22 Folder 202 United Methodist Church: Leadership Skills Seminar, 1979
Box 22 Folder 203 Religious Organizations: Other Materials


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Box 22 Folder 205 Clippings, circa 1950s-1990
Box 22 Folder 206 Correspondence, 1980-1999
Box 22 Folder 207 Financial, 1972-1987
Box 22 Folder 208 Photographs
Box 22 Folder 209 Radio Announcements and Programs, 1977-1999
Box 23 Audio Materials, 1990-2002

3.2. Professional Affiliations

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Box 24 Folder 212 Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Correspondence, 1972-1973
Box 24 Folder 214 Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Legal Papers, early 1970s
Box 24 Folder 215-216 Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Minutes, 1972
Box 24 Folder 217 Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Opinion Poll, 1972
Box 24 Folder 218 Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Notes and Other Materials
Box 25 Folder 219 Tri-County Council of Volunteer Coordinators Council, 1977-1978
Box 25 Folder 220-221 Trident Chamber of Commerce: Board of Directors, 1977-1980
Box 25 Folder 222 Trident Chamber of Commerce: Crime Prevention Task Force, 1980
Box 25 Folder 223 Trident Chamber of Commerce: News Releases, 1979
Box 25 Folder 224 Trident Chamber of Commerce: Photographs
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4. Subject Files and Publications

4.1. Subject Files

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Box 25 Folder 228 Black Health Care
Box 25 Folder 229 Civil Rights
Box 25 Folder 230 Community and Civic Groups
Box 25 Folder 231 Economic Issues
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Box 25 Folder 236 "Porgy and Bess": Samuel Smalls as "Porgy"
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Box 26 Folder 242 Business and Finance
Box 26 Folder 243 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, 1977
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Box 27 Folder 249 Federal Publications: Grants
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<td>27</td>
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<td>South Carolina Department of Social Services</td>
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