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CHARLESTON

AVERY RESEARCH CENTER
FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORY AND CULTURE

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

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Charleston, SC 29401 USA

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Descriptive Summary

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Title: | William ("Bill") Saunders Papers, |
| Dates: | circa 1950 - 2004 |
| Creator: | Saunders, William, 1935-. |
| Abstract: | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |
| 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
3. Professional Papers, 1950s-2002
4. Subject Files and Publications

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

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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 |
| | COBRA: Programs |
| 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 |

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| 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 102 | Trident 2000: Crime Commission, 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 108 | Trident United Way: Executive Committee, 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 116 | United Way of America: Long Range Planning Inclusiveness Subcommittee, 1977-1978 |
| 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 |
| Box 14 Folder 123-124 | Charleston County School District: Blue Ribbon Commission, 1979-1980 |
| Box 14 Folder 125 | Charleston County School District: Local School Advisory Committee, 1975-1979 |
| Box 14 Folder 126 | Charleston County School District: Newsletters and Annual Reports, 1976-1979 |
| Box 14 Folder 127 | South Carolina College and University Board Memberships, 1997-2002 |

1.3. Governmental Agencies

See also the Health-Related Organizations subseries.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Box 15 Folder 255 | Charleston Area Community Relations Committee, 1969-1975 |
| Box 15 Folder 128-131 | Charleston Area Community Relations Committee, 1976-1981 and undated |
| Box 15 Folder 132 | Charleston Area Community Relations Committee: Labor Law |
| Box 15 Folder 133 | Charleston Area Community Relations Committee: Meeting on Police Brutality |
| Box 15 Folder 134 | Charleston Area Community Relations Committee: Miscellaneous |
| Box 15 Folder 135 | Charleston County Economic Opportunity Commission, 1971-1978 |
| 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

See also the Governmental Agencies subseries.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Box 18 Folder 157 | American Cancer Society: Charleston Unit, 1979 |
| Box 18 Folder 158 | Charleston County Health Care Advisory Committee, 1978-1979 |
| Box 18 Folder 159-160 | Charleston Area Comprehensive Health Planning: Correspondence, 1970-1978 |
| Box 18 Folder 161 | Charleston Area Comprehensive Health Planning: Miscellaneous Papers, 1975-1978 |
| Box 18 Folder 162 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Correspondence, 1975-1978 |
| Box 19 Folder 163 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Counseling Services, 1974-1975 |
| Box 19 Folder 164-166 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Grant Applications, 1973-1977 |
| Box 19 Folder 167 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Meetings, 1974-1977 |
| Box 19 Folder 168 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Regional Drug Education Training and Resource Center |
| Box 19 Folder 169-170 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Regional Drug Education Training and Resource Center - Conferences, 1968-1972 |
| Box 19 Folder 171 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: Regional Drug Education Training and Resource Center - Pamphlets |
| Box 19 Folder 172 | Charleston County Substance Abuse Commission: South Carolina Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, 1974-1977 |
| Box 19 Folder 173 | Franklin C. Fetter Family Health Center: Grants |
| Box 20 Folder 174 | Franklin C. Fetter Family Health Center: Poverty Alcoholism Program |
| Box 20 Folder 175 | Franklin C. Fetter Family Health Center: Substance Abuse Program |
| Box 20 Folder 176 | Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation: General |
| Box 20 Folder 177 | Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation: Executive Director Search, 1976-1979 |
| Box 20-21 Folder 179-188 | Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation: Financial Documents, 1978-1979 |
| Box 21 Folder 189-193 | Folders 189-193 Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation: Grants, 1971-1981 |
| Box 21 Folder 178 | Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation: Grievance Committee, 1977 |

1.5. Political Activity

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Box 22 Folder 196 | Correspondence and Contacts, 1977-1999 |
| Box 22 Folder 197 | Election Candidates, 1975-2000 and undated |
| Box 22 Folder 198 | Hospital Workers' Strike of Charleston, 1969 |
| Box 25 Folder 239 | Sanitation Workers' Strike, 1969 |
| Box 22 Folder 195 | South Carolina Senate Bid, 1980 |
| Box 22 Folder 199 | United Citizens Party, circa 1969-1971 |

1.6. Religious Organizations

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Box 22 Folder 200 | United Methodist Church: Board of Missions, South Carolina Conference, 1975-1976 |
| 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 |

3. Professional Papers, 1950s-2002

3.1. WPAL Radio Station, 1977-1999

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Box 22 Folder 204 | General, 1983-1998 and undated |
| 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

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Box 22 Folder 210 | Charleston Business and Professional Association, 1978-1981 |
| Box 22 Folder 211 | Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Articles and Pamphlets, 1969-1973 |
| Box 24 Folder 212 | Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Correspondence, 1972-1973 |
| Box 24 Folder 213 | Concerned Citizens for Better Broadcasting: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Defense Workshop, 1970-1972 |
| 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 |

- Box 25 Folder 225 Trident Chamber of Commerce: Trident News Newsletter, 1977-1979
- Box 25 Folder 226 Trident Chamber of Commerce: Miscellaneous Papers

4. Subject Files and Publications

4.1. Subject Files

- Box 25 Folder 227 Abortion Issues, circa 1975
- 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
- Box 25 Folder 232 Hurricane Hugo
- Box 25 Folder 233 Militancy
- Box 25 Folder 234 Police Brutality
- Box 25 Folder 235 Politics
- Box 25 Folder 236 "Porgy and Bess": Samuel Smalls as "Porgy"
- Box 25 Folder 237 Public Housing
- Box 25 Folder 238 Race Relations
- Box 25 Folder 240 Sea Islands
- Box 25 Folder 241 Sports

4.2. Publications

- Box 26 Folder 242 Business and Finance
- Box 26 Folder 243 *Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, 1977*
- Box 26 Folder 244 *Boards of Directors: A Study of Current Practices in Board Management and Board Operations in Voluntary Hospital, Health and Welfare Organizations, 1974*
- Box 26 Folder 245 Education
- Box 26 Folder 246 Federal Publications: Census Bureau
- Includes *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790-1978* and related materials.
- Box 26-27 Folder 247-248 Federal Publications: *Federal Register*, 1979-1980
- Box 27 Folder 249 Federal Publications: Grants
- Box 27 Folder 250 Federal Publications: Housing and Urban Development

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Box 27 Folder 251 | Federal Publications: United States Civil Service Commission, 1976-1979 |
| Box 27 Folder 252 | Health and Nutrition |
| Box 27 Folder 253 | <i>Personnel Advisory Bulletin</i> , 1979-1981 |
| Box 27 Folder 254 | South Carolina Department of Social Services |