

A Guide to the Charles McDowell Papers, 1944-2004

Charles McDowell Papers, 1944-2004
1944-2004

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Descriptive Summary

Accession Number

44427

Language

English

Physical Description

17 cubic feet (36 boxes)

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Ann McDowell, Alexandria.

Preferred Citation

Charles McDowell Papers, 1944-2004. Accession 44427. Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Biographical Information

Charles Rice McDowell, Jr. was born in Danville, Kentucky on 24 June 1926. He is the son of Charles Rice McDowell, Sr. (1895-1968) and Catherine Frazier Feland (1904-1986). When he was young, the family moved to Lexington, Virginia, where the elder McDowell was a professor of law at Washington and Lee University. The younger McDowell was a student there, where he majored in English, and graduated in 1948. He then attended the Columbia University School of Journalism, and graduated the following year.

McDowell then moved to Richmond Virginia, and joined the staff of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, where he would remain his entire career, retiring in 1998. He covered local news, and was then assigned to the State Capitol, where he reported on the Virginia General Assembly and state politics. In 1954, McDowell began to write a syndicated column which appeared 3-4 times per week, and would span the remainder of his career. He was assigned to Washington, D.C. in 1965, and he relocated to Alexandria. McDowell wrote three books: "Campaign Fever," which was a journal of the 1964 presidential election, and two collections of humor columns entitled "One Thing After Another" (1960) and "What Did You Have in Mind?" (1963). He was also a panelist on PBS's "Washington Week in Review" for 18 years, beginning in 1978, and he was a writer, narrator, and host for other PBS programs, including "Summer of Judgement: The Watergate Hearings," "Richmond Memories," and "For the Record." McDowell also provided voice-overs for the productions "The Civil War" and "Baseball" by Ken Burns.

McDowell was inducted in the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame in 1988, and awarded the Fourth Estate Award by the National Press Club in 1996. He married Ann Rice of Ashland, Virginia. McDowell died on 5 November 2010.

Scope and Content

Papers, 1944-2004, of Charles McDowell (1926-2010) of Alexandria, Virginia, documenting his career as a reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, panelist on the PBS program "Washington Week in Review," and other journalistic activities. Includes columns, correspondence and subject files, books, and videotapes.

Contents List

Series I. Columns, 1946-1998.

Boxes 1-9 (box)

Extent

Extent: 9 boxes.

Scope and Content

The collection contains photocopies of McDowell's column which appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch from 1954 until his retirement in 1998. The columns appeared 3-4 times per week, and were also syndicated by Media General News Service and the Scripps Howard News Service and appeared in other newspapers across the country. The earliest columns were titled "Charles McDowell Today" and "Capital Sidelights." McDowell wrote on a wide variety of topics of local, state, and national interest, including politics, history, personal news, society and popular culture, weather, and sports. Recurring fictional characters appeared in the column over the many years it ran, namely McDowell's relative Aunt Gertrude, his neighbor Mr. Bumbleton, Reliable Source, and Alfred the Capitol Square Squirrel. McDowell's columns were laced with satirical musings and political punditry. There are no copies of the column for the years 1986 to 1997, but there is an index which includes the title of the column, paper in which it appeared, date, and page number. This series also includes early articles written by McDowell while he was a student

at Washington and Lee University entitled "Reporter-at-Large," and as a sports reporter for the Roanoke Times entitled "Time For Sports."

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Chronological.

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Series II. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1944-2004.

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Extent

Extent: 25 boxes.

Scope and Content

The correspondence contains letters written by readers of McDowell's column, and those who viewed his appearances on the PBS program "Washington Week in Review" and other programs. The correspondence includes reactions, both for and against, to McDowell's writings and viewpoints. There are also congratulatory letters relating to the many awards he received and upon his retirement in 1998, as well as invitations to make appearances and speeches, ideas for future columns, and resumes from prospective journalists. There is also correspondence between McDowell and literary agents and magazine editors.

The subject files contain a wide variety of materials relating to McDowell's nearly 40 years as a journalist and author. There are manuscript drafts and free-lance articles for various publications, reviews, publicity, and correspondence relating to books he wrote, including "One Thing After Another" (1960), "What Did You Have in Mind?" (1963), and "Campaign Fever" (1965). There is background information for his articles, columns, and speeches, especially on the subjects of Congress, television and political conventions, elections, inaugurations, and campaign finance reform.

McDowell did voice-overs for the Ken Burns productions, "The Civil War" (1990) and "Baseball" (1994), and the collection contains articles and reviews, notes, correspondence, clippings, and screening and final scripts. He also was a host on the program "For the Record," which aired on Central Virginia Public Television, which was devoted to public policy, politics, and history. The collection includes drafts of questions McDowell posed to his guests, working files, and background biographical information. Videotapes of some of the programs are also included in the collection. McDowell also narrated the 1983 program on Watergate called, "Summer of Judgment: The Watergate Hearings," which was a production of WETA in Washington, DC. There are reviews, viewer mail, and a transcript of the program.

The subject files also include biographical information, copies of his daily news articles and special feature stories for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, get well cards, Gridiron Club dinner programs, speeches, scripts, clippings, and membership lists, information on the visit of Nikita Khrushchev to the United States in 1959,

photographs, programs, speech notes and drafts, as well as information relating to his work with Paul Duke (1926-2005), and with the Virginia congressional campaign of Andrew McCutcheon.

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Extent

Extent: 2 boxes.

Scope and Content

The collection contains numerous books presented to McDowell that contain inscriptions by the authors. Videotapes in the collection include many of McDowell's appearances on "For the Record," as well as programs which he narrated, including "Summer of Judgment: The Watergate Hearings," "The James: Revolutionary River," and "Richmond Memories." There are also taped interviews with McDowell, speeches, and other appearances.

Red Barber. 1947: When All Hell Broke Loose in Baseball. (De Capo Press, 1982) .

Box 35

Harry F. Byrd, Jr. Double Trouble: Vignettes from a Life in Politics and Newspapering (Harrisonburg, Va.: RR Donnelley and Sons, 2007) .

Box 35

Bruce Chadwick. The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film. (New York: Knopf, 2001) .

Box 35

Paul Duke, ed. Beyond Reagan: The Politics of Upheaval. (New York: Warner Books, 1986) .

Box 35

Kent M. Keith. Anyway: The Paradoxical Commandments. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001) .

Box 35

C. Brian Kelly. Best Little Stories from the White House. (Charlottesville, Va: Montpelier Publishing, 1992) .

Box 35

Florence Selden Peple. The Red and White Secret. (Richmond, Va.: Garrett & Massie, 1931) .

Box 35

A.J.G. Priest. Old Hilarity. (Charlottesville, Va.: The Michie Company, 1965)

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Box 35

William W. Pusey III. Washington and Lee University in Fiction. (1988) .

Box 35

Parke Shepherd Rouse, Jr. [Collected Stories, 1997?] .

Box 35

William D. Rouse. Plucked Again! (Writers Club Press, 2000) .

Box 35

Cassette - David Broder, Julie Johnson, and Charles McDowell. "Election, '96: Let the Games Begin." Ford Hall Forum, Faneuil Hall, Boston, 3 November 1995.

Box 36

Cassette - Toast to Hugh Haynie, Society of Professional Journalists, 26 June 1996.

Box 36

Videotape - Gridiron Club Dinner (Beta), 1982.

Box 36

Videotape - "Summer of Judgment: The Watergate Hearings" (Two Copies) 1983.

Box 36

Videotape - "Outlook," Demo, Potomac Television Productions, Inc., Washington, DC, 1983.

Box 36

Videotape - Gridiron Club Dinner (Beta), 1984.

Box 36

Videotape - "Free Speech and Advertising - Who Draws the Line?" Institute for Democratic Communication, Boston University, 1987.

Box 36

Videotape - Charles McDowell Being Inducted into the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame, 1988.

Box 36

Videotape - Centre College, Danville, KY Graduation, 1989.

Box 36

Videotape - "The James: Revolutionary River," 1990.

Box 36

Videotape - "Rally Behind the Virginians" with Charles McDowell (Program on land conservation/preservation), 1994.

Box 36

Videotape - "Washington Journal," Charles McDowell Interview, C-SPAN, 4 September 1995.

Box 36

Videotape - "Former Offenders: Breaking the Cycle of Violence," Across the River with Hedrick Smith, WETA, October 1995.

Box 36

Videotape - "Richmond Memories" WCVE, 1995.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Charles McDowell," Interview by Ken Thompson, 18 October 1996.

Box 36

Videotape - "Virginia Vote '96 with Paul Duke" WCVE/WHTJ, 24 October 1996.

Box 36

Videotape - "More Richmond Memories" WCVE, 1996.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Margaret Warner," 10 October 1997.

Box 36

Videotape - Charles McDowell and Shelby Foote, Fredericksburg Form, University of Mary Washington, 28 October 1997.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Linwood Holton" Part I, 28 November 1997.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Linwood Holton" Part II, 19 December 1997.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Stansfield Turner," 23 January 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Gale Mattox," 27 February 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Julian Bond," 24 April 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Lowell Weicker," 27 April 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Lee Hamilton," 26 June 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Kathryn Thornton," 25 September 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Lech Walesa," 16 October 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: John Sununu," 21 November 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "Richmond Memories: School Days" WCVE, 1998.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Timothy Naftali," 8 January 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Bobby Muller," 12 February 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Philip D. Zelikow," 26 March 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Jim Jones," 9 April 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - Washington and Lee 250th Anniversary National Day of Celebration Television Special, 1 May 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - Washington and Lee 250th Anniversary Cruise, 1999.

Box 36

Videotape - "For the Record: Charles McDowell" Interview by Charles Sydnor, 24 March 2000.

Box 36

Videotape - "The Great Campaign of 1960." Off Center Productions and WETA, 30 October 2000.

Box 36

Videotape - "Judy Garland: The Concert Years" (1985); Candidate Bill Clinton at Georgetown University, 23 October 1991; Miscellaneous Clips; "The Civil War: Episode Three" (clip); Dan Quayle on the Rush Limbaugh Show; Wimbledon Coverage. .

Box 36