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Former representative's collection reflects upon career, Ole Miss ties

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Former representative's collection reflects upon career, Ole Miss ties

FaTvLiErCoSMPrSt



Former Mississippi Rep. Bill Miles, who recently donated his valuable papers and memorabilia to the J.D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi, knew as a teenager that his career in journalism would start in Oxford.

"Ole Miss was my destination after I decided I wanted to pursue journalism in my mid-teens," said Miles, an Itawamba County native. "Not only did I receive my B.A. degree from Ole Miss, but the Department of Journalism (as it was called then) was the most prestigious academic

center for newspapermen and a few women of that era."

Miles said he had three years of experience at a community newspaper before he arrived at UM in the summer of 1957, just five years before James Meredith enrolled as the first African-American at the university. Being a student during that historic time opened his eyes to social causes that many generations of college students might not consider.

After working briefly as a journalist, Miles formed the advertising/public relations firm Bristow-Miles Associates Inc. in 1963 in Tupelo. After later becoming Bill Miles Associates, the firm represented local political candidates. In 1996, voters of Itawamba and Monroe counties sent Miles to the Mississippi House of Representatives, where he remained for 12 years.

The collection includes several vintage campaign commercials and photographs produced by the Bill Miles Associates firm for North Mississippi candidates and Miles' own files from his 12 years in the Legislature, which he called the "most meaningful period" in his career. The collection also includes diaries that Miles kept while the Legislature was in session.

Miles had considered the possibility of Ole Miss being the custodian of his papers but did not make the commitment until he was contacted by Ed Meek, retired business owner and former assistant vice chancellor for public relations and marketing at UM; Andy Mullins, who recently retired as chief of staff to the chancellor; and other key players in the 50th anniversary observance of James Meredith's enrollment.

"Ole Miss has meant a lot in my own education, and for my children and grandchildren. When I was shown the extent of the archives — where it is housed and its documentation — I was very impressed," he said. "And the university is a place where scholars can use ordinary collections, such as mine, for extraordinary benefits for the future."

Mullins said asking Miles for his collection was an equally easy decision.

"Bill Miles has been a good friend of mine for years, and I appreciate his willingness to trust his alma mater with his life's story," Mullins said. "He has been involved from several angles with this region of the state and has made many contributions to the rich political and journalistic history of North Mississippi. The University of Mississippi is proud to have one of her most distinguished graduate's collection added to the Political Archives for researchers to enjoy for many years."

The Miles collection offers some unique materials for future researchers who visit the UM Archives and Special Collections.

"From his years as a journalist at the Tupelo *Daily Journal*, we have a series of historically significant photographs Miles captured of events surrounding the integration of the university in 1962," said Leigh McWhite, political papers archivist and associate professor at UM.

The university's impact and influence trickled down to Miles' children, Pattie Miles Cox and William T.

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"Skip" Miles Jr., and grandson, Chris Cox, all of whom also graduated from Ole Miss. For Miles, the hope for his legacy is simple.

"I did not start out to pursue an agenda or change a political philosophy. If I did, it was a simple evolution," he said. "I hope, in the end, researchers will afford me this description: 'He told it or recorded it like it was.'"

For more information about the Bill Miles Collection at UM, [click here](#).

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