Ronald “Butch” Alford Collection

Title: Ronald “Butch” Alford Collection
Collection No: MSS.435
Creator: Ronald “Butch” Alford
Extent: .75 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1949-2002

Abstract:

Donor: Ronald Alford, November 2004
Processed by: James E. Montague, April 2005; Brigitte Billeaudeaux, October 2016.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: Ronald “Butch” Alford Collection, Preservation and Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: December 2016
Biographical information

Mr. Alford served in the Air Force and received a bachelor’s of science degree in journalism and a master’s of education degree from the University of Memphis. He worked as a copyboy and reporter for the Commercial Appeal before joining the staff of the Associated Press in August 1965. It was during this period when the erroneous report that James Meredith had been shot dead was issued by the Associated Press instead of the correct report that “James Meredith had been shot in the head.” This collection includes various accounts of that incident.

Mr. Alford later served as assistant public information director at Memphis State University and later as the first information director of Shelby State Community College. He was also information director with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Mr. Alford served on the Memphis Board of Review. During Mr. Alford’s tenure on the board the board was sued by several movie exhibitors for violation of the first and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The court ruled that the Memphis Board of review was powerless to enforce the city’s anti-obscenity ordinance. The Board of Review was created in 1968 to prevent the dissemination of obscene materials to juveniles.

Scope and contents

This collection includes a variety of materials related to the careers of Ronald “Butch” Alford. Much of the collection focuses on two periods of time in Ronald “Butch” Alford’s life, his position at the Associated Press’ Memphis Bureau and his time working on the Memphis Board of Review. This collection includes materials related to Mr. Alford’s service as a volunteer public relations professional during President Ford’s visit to Memphis in 1976 and President Carter’s visit to Memphis in 1978.

Along with materials related to the careers in news media and public relations of Mr. Alford, there are accounts from others in the public relations field that cover the James Earl Ray trial, the death of Elvis Presley, and some of the history of public relations in Memphis, Tennessee.

Subject terms

SUBJECTS:
Associated Press
Motion pictures—Censorship—United States—History
Public Relations Society of America—Tennessee—Memphis

NAMES:
Alford, Ronald
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-
Ford, Gerald R., 1913-2006
Meredith, James, 1933-
### Inventory

**Series I: Employment with the Associated Press**  
**Box 1**  
**Folder**

1. Ronald “Butch” Alford’s account of events that resulted in the erroneous reporting of James Meredith’s death.
2. Various press accounts reporting the shooting of James Meredith.
3. Copy of Associated Press letter written by Thomas Aden to General News Editor Sam Blackman explaining the erroneous report that James Meredith was killed at Hernando, Mississippi.
5. Memo to staff written by Sam Blackman addressing the James Meredith shooting, what went wrong, and other reporting procedures.
6. Letters from Mr. Alford’s peers about the James Meredith story.
7. Copies of correspondence, press reports, newspaper articles, and an excerpt from a book that is related to the false reporting of James Meredith’s death.
   Five Over Sized (OS) copies were moved to the OS folder for this collection.
9. June 11, 1966 issue of _Editor and Publisher_ that contains an article entitled “Apology Made for Meredith Death Report.”
11. Various news stories about James Meredith from after the 1966 shooting.
   One OS news report was moved to the OS folder for this collection.
12. Copy of Mr. Alford’s letter to Mr. Thomas Aden dated June 16, 1966 resigning from the Associated Press to take a position at Memphis States University.
13. Copy photograph and photocopied image of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others.
14. Forty-six color images of the memorials located on the campus of the University of
Series II: Memphis Board of Review
Box 1

15 Items related to Mr. Alford’s appointment to the Memphis board of review: Newspaper clipping announcing the appointment, letter to Mr. Fred L. David from Wyeth Chandler recommending the appointment, letter to Mr. Alford from William C. Boyd thanking Mr. Alford for his service, letter and certificate of appreciation to Mr. Alford from William C. Boyd

16 List of Memphis Board of Review members with their contact information.

17 Minutes of the Memphis Board of Review meetings running from January 9, 1973 thru July 69, 1975.

18 Forms and official documents used by the Memphis Board of Review: Stock letter and forms for the review of a motion picture, Stock letter to theater owners on behalf of the board, copy of the indecency ordinance for the City of Memphis, copy of Memphis Code Sec. 22-23.1 thru 31.15, copy of a Resolution and Commitment of Cooperation, copy of an Agreement between Memphis Board of Review and Exhibitors & Distributors in Memphis, and a copy of the Rules of Memphis Board of Review

19 Memphis Board of Review movie theater assignment sheets from December 1972 to January 1975

20 Two styles of evaluation forms that were used by members of the Memphis Board of Review.

21 Copy of 1972: A Review of the World of Movies published by the Motion Picture Association of America with an explanation of the movie rating system.

22 Letter from the Memphis Board of Review Chairman, Las Savell, to all theater owners and managers concerning violations to Memphis’ ordinance on obscenity.

23 Two copies of an unnumbered ordinance to amend language in Chapter 22 of the code of ordinances of the City of Memphis.

24 Four copies of an unnumbered ordinance to amend language in Chapter 22 and 31 of the code of ordinances of the City of Memphis and a partial copy of Memphis Code 22-39.
Correspondence from Ross Clark, Board Staff attorney, to the members of the Memphis Board of Review concerning the movie *Tommy* and board procedures.

Copies of letters from the Memphis Board of Review to the Motion Picture Exhibitors of Memphis from January 1974 until June 1975 noting movie ratings of the movies that have been reviewed by the board over the course of the month.

Two editorials distributed by WHBQ-TV 13 concerning a proposal that would allow the Memphis Board of Review to determine what television programs would be allowed on Memphis television stations.

Miscellaneous newspaper articles related to the Memphis Board of Review’s activities and the movie *Last Tango in Paris*.

Copy of a letter from *Time* magazine’s Maria Cisneros to Las Savell dated February 20, 1973 discussing the movie *Last Tango in Paris*.

Newspaper clippings related to the Memphis Board of Review and censorship.

Letter from Joe M. Pipkin dated January 15, 1974 to a member of the review board detailing the Mid-South Coliseum’s policy on performances at the venue.

Letter from Las Savell dated April 25, 1973 to Mayor Wyeth Chandler concerning complaints about Rock and Roll performances at the Mid-South Coliseum.

Miscellaneous Commercial Appeal and Memphis Press Scimitar articles concerning Rock and Roll concerts and Memphis’ juvenile obscenity ordinance.

Documents and a newspaper clipping related to the resignation of George Morrow from the Memphis Board of Review.

Miscellaneous correspondence and newspaper clippings related to proposed changes to Memphis City Ordinance regarding juvenile access to materials deemed obscene.

Original drawing, prints, and newspaper clippings of Commercial Appeal editorial cartoons by artist Draper Hill.

Articles by Edwin Howard ranging from the 1970s to 2000s.

Copy of a letter dated April 3, 1974 by Las Savell to the Memphis Press Scimitar responding to Edwin Howard’s article from April 2, 1974.

Copies of letters from citizens in support of the Memphis Board of Review.

Opinions from Memphis City Council members Fred Davis, Bob James, and Jack McNeil concerning the Memphis Board of Review.
Newspaper clippings relating to a lawsuit filed by national film distributors against the Memphis Board of Review citing that Memphis’ enforcement of an obscenity ordinance is unconstitutional.

Legal documents and correspondence related to the case Allied Artists et al vs. Memphis Board of Review.

Newspaper clippings and copies of articles about Lloyd Binford and two copies of To See or Not to See: The Legacy of Lloyd Binford, from The Downtowner Magazine, February 2002.

Article entitled Remembering Film Row: Lights! Camera! Action! By Dana Avent Tucker in The Downtowner oMagonage, February 2002

Series III: Public Relations
Box 2

1 Mr. Alford’s handwritten notes and transcription of Senator Albert Gore, Sr.’s statement to the Memphis Press Scimitar at Memphis State University’s commencement, January 25, 1969.

2 Undated article by Ronald “Butch” Alford entitled Presidential visits to Memphis.

3 Contents of a notebook compiled by Mr. Alford from when he volunteered as a public relations professional during President Gerald Ford’s visit to Memphis May 1976.

4 Contents of a notebook compiled by Mr. Alford from when he volunteered as a public relations professional during President Jimmy Carter’s visit to Memphis for the 1978 Democratic Party mini convention held December 8th through 10th. Copy of President Carter’s speech to the convention included in the contents.

5 Charles F. Holmes’ undated account of working as press liaison and advisor to Sheriff Bill Morris throughout the trial of James Earl Ray.

6 Article dated August 16, 1977 written by Morris B. Baker about the response of the Memphis Chapter of Public Relations Society of America to assist with the news media attracted to the city by the death of Elvis Presley.

7 Undated article by Mark L. Stansbury entitled PR Practitioner Reflects on Progress in Memphis.
Miscellaneous copies of articles from a special public relations edition of the Memphis Business Journal.


Miller, K. “PR can enhance profits by building internal unity.” Memphis Business Journal.


Memphis Image Survey Summary to help members of the Memphis Chapter of the PRSA formulate its public relations plan.

VIPR (Very Important Public Relations folks) meeting attendee list from October 6, 2001.

50th Anniversary Committee Meeting Agenda of the Memphis Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Saturday, October 6, 2001.

Program for the Golden Gala of the Public Relations Society of America Memphis Chapter, April 26, 2002.

Series III: Miscellaneous
Box 2

Letter to Mr. Alford from Clarence Saunders dated May 9, 1949 thanking Mr. Alford for his letter regarding a visit to Keedoozle.

Newspaper clippings about Clarence Saunders, founder of the Piggly Wiggly and Keedoozle stores and the original owner of the Pink Palace.

Two OS Memphis Press Scimitar articles about Clarence Saunders and Keedoozle moved to the OS folder for this collection

Oversize Folder

Four oversized photocopies from Life magazine, vol. 60 no. 24, June 17, 1966.


