Val Farmer Papers
(C4417)

Collection Number: C4417

Collection Title: Val Farmer Papers

Dates: 1978-2012

Creator: Farmer, Val Gene, 1940-

Abstract: The papers of a clinical psychologist and syndicated columnist who specialized in rural mental health include correspondence and research materials pertaining to the Midwest farm crisis in the 1980s and rural mental health issues in general. The majority of the correspondence is letters from readers.

Collection Size: 4.0 cubic feet
(102 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia. If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] Val Farmer Papers (C4417); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Val Farmer on July 17, 2019 (Accession No. CA6557).

Related Material: Additional materials related to the Val Farmer Papers can be found in the following locations:

Val Farmer Papers, (CA6642)
Dr. Val Farmer: Rural Mental Health & Family Relationships

Biographical Note:

Dr. Val Gene Farmer was born in Teton, Montana, on September 12, 1940, to Truman E. and Aneata Peterson Farmer. He belonged to a large farming family and was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints. The family moved to Seattle, Washington, where Farmer attended Cleveland High School. He then went to Provo, Utah, to attend Brigham Young University in the early 1960s.

He became a well-known clinical psychologist and syndicated columnist, specializing in rural mental health and family relationships. He received a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Arizona in 1976 and attained thirty-one years of counseling experience in North and South Dakota. He was an executive director of a mental health center in Huron, South Dakota, from 1978 to 1982 before moving to Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1983.

Farmer lived in Rapid City for 14 years from 1983-1997 where he worked for the West River Mental Health Center and with Psychological Associates of the Black Hills. He then worked for MeritCare in Fargo, North Dakota, for nine years.

Besides his work with marital relationships and rural mental health issues, Farmer developed mediation and conflict resolution consultation services to family businesses, particularly farm and ranch families in business together. Several national farm publications have carried his ideas on how integrate a business and family perspective into a viable business structure and the communication/organizational skills involved for successful team building.

Farmer served as president of the National Association for Rural Mental Health for the 1982-1983 term. He also was a weekly guest for eight years (1994-2002) on AgriTalk, a syndicated radio call-in show for farm audiences throughout the United States. He also wrote a monthly magazine column from 1982-1987 for the Farm Wife News.

Farmer started a syndicated weekly newspaper column in 1984 and was published for 28 years until he retired in 2012. His column was published in numerous newspapers in United States and Canada, including Iowa Farmer Today. His column was also carried by the main agriculture newspapers in the Midwestern states.

Farmer published several books, including To Have and To Hold: Thoughts on Successful Marriage, Honey I Shrunk the Farm and Making the Good Life Better. He also wrote numerous booklets on various mental health and rural mental health topics.

Val married Darlene Felsted on June 24, 1966, in Alameda City, California. They had seven children, five daughters and two sons. Val and his wife retired to Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following three series:

Letters from Readers and Listeners
Letters from Readers and Listeners

The Letters from Readers and Listeners series comprises the largest portion of the collection and contains letters Val Farmer received from the readers of his newspaper column and the listeners of his radio program on AgriTalk. His column could be found in numerous publications such as the *Farm Journal Forum, Farm Wife News, Iowa Farmer Today,* and the *Rapid City Journal.* The letters are both complimentary and critical of Farmer’s advice to his audience. Farmer offered perspective on a wide range of issues affecting rural farm families in America, including loneliness, stress, abuse, farm management, and marriage. His readers would often describe in detail their own personal situations regarding the topic of his columns and ask for advice. In later years, many of the letters are requests for help with specific problems the writer is experiencing within their own family or with their farm. Some of these letters have been redacted to protect the privacy of the writers. Many letters describe personal experiences with the farm crisis of the 1980s and the aftermath of that event. The letters date from the early 1980s until 2012, when Farmer retired.

Correspondence

The Correspondence series contains Farmer’s personal and business correspondence and is arranged chronologically. Letters from friends can be found here in addition to correspondence with his publishers and frequent requests to either speak to a group or participate in a conference or workshop. The letters begin in 1978 and continue until 2012.

Publications

The Publications series consists of printed material collected by Farmer regarding farm families, rural life, and mental health, largely from the 1980s and 1990s.

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