



## Robert May Papers (R1537)

**Collection Number:** (R1537)

**Collection Title:** Robert May Papers

**Dates:** 1935-2024 (bulk 1973-2024)

**Creator:** May, Robert Lee, 1935-2024

**Abstract:** The Robert May Papers include information about the life, family, and community service work of Robert (Bob) May. This collection's primary focus is on May's impact on the community of Rolla, Missouri. He served as the Phelps County District Area 122 Missouri House Representative from 2000-2008 and was involved in countless community service endeavors and youth outreach programs over his lifetime. Also included in this collection is a complete history of the Reifsteck family out of Champaign, Illinois. Carlene Reifsteck May, Robert's wife, is thought to have compiled this information before her passing in 2023.

**Collection Size:** 8.75 cubic feet  
(231 folders, 1 a.c., 4 DVD, 2 VHS)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research but may be stored offsite. This collection is available at the [State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [rolla@shsmo.org](mailto:rolla@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Robert May Papers* (R1537); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Timothy May on July 30, 2024 (Accession No. RA1750).

**Related Materials:** Additional materials related to the Robert May Papers can be found in the following collections:

[\*Korean War Veterans Association Collection\*](#), (R1498)

**Processed by:** Processed by Ashley Weaver, December 12, 2024

### **Biographical Note:**

Robert Lee May was born on January 18, 1935, he grew up in Champaign, Illinois. His parents were Winifred May and Caroline Beulah Lancaster. Robert had two brothers Frank Eli May and Dale Lloyd May. He graduated from Champaign High School in 1953 and chose to join the US Navy rather than be drafted. Robert, often called Bob, served four years as an Electrician's Mate in the United States Navy. He served on at least three Atlantic Fleet Destroyers during his time in the Navy, including the USS Cascade (1954), the USS N.K. Perry (1954), and the USS Yosemite (1955).

Bob May married his high school sweetheart, Carlene Reifsteck, in the late winter months of 1954. Her parents were Carl (Junior) & Lucille (Wood) Reifsteck. They had three children Patrick May (1961-1986), Michel May (Ruth Ann), and Timothy May (Sheryl G.). Bob served four years in the Navy and upon discharge, signed up for Forestry classes at the University of Illinois. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1963 with a Bachelor of Science degree and quickly went to work for the US Forest Service. Bob's career with the Forest Service allowed the May family to travel, they lived in Minnesota twice and in Indiana between 1963 and 1973. In 1973, Bob joined the staff of the Mark Twain National Forest near the Rolla, Missouri area as a Rolla District Ranger. He worked for the Mark Twain National Forest in some capacity, moving up the chain until he retired from Service in 1990.

Robert May became active in the Rolla community shortly after his relocation with the Forest Service, he was a long-time member (since 1974) of both the First Presbyterian Church and the Rolla Optimist Club. His community service efforts focus on working with children by coaching local sports teams, judging academic competitions, and helping to create the Community Partnership and the Partnership in Education Committees. Bob was also an active member of the Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents who had deceased children.

After Bob's professional retirement from the Forest Service, he became involved in local politics. He was elected to the Missouri State Legislature for three terms, he served as the Rolla area Representative from 2000-2008. He was a member of several legislative committees including those related to Natural Resources, Children and Families, Health and Mental Health, and was Chair of the Elections committee.

At the end of 2008, Bob May retired from professional public service for the second time but continued his volunteer efforts in his community, his focus returning to helping at-risk children. In the 1990s, Bob was the director of a Parks and Recreation program that benefited at-risk youth. He returned to those roots by volunteering for the Prevention Consultants of Missouri tackling substance abuse in schools and became a suicide prevention specialist & advocate in the Rolla community. He also worked to improve the lives of Veterans residing at the Missouri Veterans Home in St. James, Missouri.

In 2019, Bob was awarded the Edmund Ward Bishop Award by the Rolla area Chamber, it is reserved for those individuals who demonstrate a lifetime commitment to improving the lives of those around them.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following 6 series with 14 subseries:

**Personal**

- Robert May

- Family

**Professional**

- Military Service

- Forest Service

**Political**

- Local Politics

  - Friends of Bob May

  - Lincoln Day

- Missouri House of Representatives

**Miscellaneous**

- Articles

- History Publications

- Obituaries

- Maps

- Miscellaneous

**Audio-Visual**

- Audio Cassette

- DVD

- VHS

**Oversize****Scope and Content Note:****Personal Papers**

This series contains materials related to Robert May and his family. It is subdivided into two subseries: Robert May and the May family. The section that focuses on Robert May concerns his life before he was married and items directly related to him after he was married and had a family. His papers include education information, awards and certificates, community service certifications, his work within the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church, correspondence, and May/Lancaster family information with photographs.

The family subseries is organized by family members and/or family relations. It includes the personal papers, photographs, and newspaper clippings of Carlene, Michael, Timothy & Patrick May. Carlene (Reifsteck) May has the largest section in this subseries; along with her papers and photographs, there is a complete family history of the Reifsteck family and some pictures of the Wood family. The Wood family is related to Carlene May through her Mother Lucille (Wood) Reifsteck. Michael May is Robert May's oldest son, Michale May's son is Patrick John May, named after the late Patrick S. May, Robert May's youngest son, who died from cancer in 1986. Timothy May is Robert May's middle son, he has a blended family, photographs from his first

and second marriage exist in this collection. All of Robert May's sons have papers and photographs within this series.

### **Professional Papers**

This series consists of materials concerning Robert May's government service. He served four years in the U.S. Navy (1953-1956) and twenty-seven years with the U.S. Forest Service (1963-1990). The Military Service subseries has little official documentation of Robert May's time with the U.S. Navy. Most of what is here from that period is correspondence between May and his family and friends. They are arranged chronologically and by sender. There are photographs from his time with the Navy, which are either official head and group shots sanctioned by the Navy, or tourist-type photographs from shore leave trips during his Atlantic Ocean regional tours of duty.

The Forest Service subseries all items from this collection related to the U.S. Forest Service, including general employee information created by the Forest Service, records specific to Bob May's employment with the Forest Service, some personnel records from when May was in charge of the Rolla Office of the Mark Twain National Forest, information for retirees, photographs of different National Forest locations, and photographs from two celebrations that May attended while working for the Forest Service.

### **Political Papers**

This series contains information related to Robert May's political career. The Local Politics subseries highlights May's involvement in local politics, particularly with the Phelps County Republican Central Committee. It also has information about local political races, political agendas that affected the local community, precinct results, and Republican Party caucus information.

The Missouri House of Representatives subseries explores the work that Bob May was a part of when he was the district 149 representative for the Missouri House. It includes information about the committees he was a member of the House and Senate bills that passed when he held office, and general information about the functions of the Missouri House. There is also a section of information dedicated to Bob May's political opponents, including extensive data about the election challenge that May filed against McBride in 1998. The photographs in this section are all related to politics, they include official headshots, official photographs for House events, and local photographs from events that May attended as a state representative.

### **Miscellaneous**

This series contains articles, history publications, obituaries, eulogies, maps, and photographs that did not fit within any other series. The articles and history publications subseries illustrate the scope of Bob May's interests and show what types of reading may have influenced his political decisions. The obituaries subseries is from Bob May's family and friends. The maps subseries is mostly of Missouri counties from various periods throughout May's life, but a World Political map is also included. The photographs subseries contains images of unknown people or experiences from May's early life but were too unique to remove from this collection. This series is arranged by material type and then chronologically within them.

## Audio-Visual

This series contains one audio cassette recording of campaign strategies for Robert May's district race against Jerry McBride in 1998, two DVDs that contain May family members' digital photo collages used for their funerals, one DVD of a black belt competition attended by Patrick J. May, and two VHS tapes, also of black belt competitions attended by Patrick J. May.

## Oversize

This series contains all objects associated with the Robert May Papers that were too large to include within the other four series but still pertain to their subject matters. They are arranged by size and weight. There are memorabilia items from May's tenure in the Missouri House of Representatives, a photograph of him in the Navy with his crew, a photograph of the Missouri State Basketball team in 1978, a Good Life Monthly Magazine, and four scrapbooks. Three of the scrapbooks belong to Carlene May, Bob May's wife. The earliest scrapbook is of her wedding shower in the early 1950s. The other two scrapbooks are of local sorority chapters in the 1970s and 1980s. The final scrapbook is an ode to Bob May's community service work done in his later years; it is undated.

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- f. 199 Privatization Watch, "Financial Crisis: Too Much Government," Vol. 32, No. 2, 2009
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  - f. 203 "Phelps County's Historic Place Names" by Richard Wilber, 1998
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