



## **Robert Lipscomb Papers (SP0053)**

**Collection Number:** SP0053

**Collection Title:** Robert Lipscomb Papers

**Dates:** 1945-1953

**Creator:** Lipscomb, Robert Brice, 1926-

**Abstract:** The Robert Lipscomb Papers consists of photographs taken or collected by Robert Lipscomb in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as an oral history interview with Robert.

**Collection Size:** 0.4 cubic foot  
(20 folders, 1 cd)

**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-Springfield](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center-springfield). If you would like more information, please contact us at [springfield@shsmo.org](mailto:springfield@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

**Restrictions on Use:** The Donor has given and assigned to the Society all rights of copyright, which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the Society from others.

**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Robert Lipscomb Papers* (SP0053); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Susan Lipscomb on June 6, 2019 (Accession No. SPA0060).

**Related Materials:** Additional Materials related to the Robert Lipscomb Collection can be found in the following collection:

*Missouri Forestry Records, 1929-1994 (R1341)*

**Processed by:** Processed by Erin Smither and intern, June 27, 2019

**Biographical Note:**

Robert Brice Lipscomb was born May 2, 1926, in Springfield, Missouri, to Brice and Pearl Mae Lipscomb. His older sister, Dena Mae, passed away when Robert was one year old. He also had a younger sister named Betty Jo. Robert attended Springfield High School (now Central), graduated in 1944, and then joined the Navy. During World War II he served in Saipan and Tinian. While on Tinian in July 1945, he saw the Enola Gay, the bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945. During the war, his mother, Pearl, served as president of the American War Mothers in Springfield, Missouri.

After the war, Robert earned a degree in forestry from Purdue University. He worked for the Missouri Department of Conservation in the forestry division from 1951 to 1986. He was stationed throughout Missouri at Vienna, Rolla, Sullivan, Camdenton, Neosho, Bolivar, and Willard. While working for the Department of Conservation, Robert regularly presented about conservation and forest fires to organizations all over the state. Robert also earned a pilot's license and one of his duties included aerial surveillance to identify forest fires. After leaving the Department of Conservation, he continued to fly and served as a flight instructor based at the airport in Vichy, Missouri.

On August 5, 1950, Robert married Amelia Zuchelli. Together they had six children, Robert Jr., Jeff, Stephen, Susan, Dena and Linda. Amelia succumbed to complications of Alzheimer's disease on January 31, 2010. As of 2019, Robert was living in the Missouri Veterans' Home in Mount Vernon, Missouri.

Betty Willoughby was born in Rogersville, Missouri, on August 17, 1926, the daughter of William Clay Willoughby and Wilma Walker Willoughby. Betty attended high school at Springfield High School where she met Robert Lipscomb. They dated for a time, and Robert says he sent her letters while fighting in World War II. Betty was a gifted singer and performed with several big bands in the 1940s. In 1947, she married a bomber pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond B. Smisek. The family moved to San Antonio, Texas, in 1963. Raymond passed away in 1990. Betty lived until 2001, dying at the age of 74.

The Cobra Scare in Springfield, Missouri, began August 15, 1953. Over the next two and a half months eleven snakes would be captured or killed. How the snakes came to roam a neighborhood in Springfield would not be discovered until 1988, when Carl Barnett admitted to the Springfield News Leader that he set the snakes free from a crate behind Mowrer Animal Company in revenge for an altercation with owner Rae Mowrer. Carl was fourteen years old and claimed he had no idea what kind of snake he unleashed. Mowrer never admitted that the snakes came from his shop. The tenth cobra was killed on October 5, 1953. City officials claimed the snake was "lured" out by snake charmer music, "The Cobra Blues" played from a rented truck with a sound system. Snakes, however, cannot hear and it was more of a publicity stunt on the part of the city. Brice Lipscomb's friend, Jon Smades, was paid twenty dollars to stuff the specimen, and when

finished, invited Lipscomb to pose with it. The Cobra Scare became a local phenomenon with a political cartoon in the newspaper and businesses referencing it in their advertising. Following the incident, a cobra was added to the City seal.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following two series:

Photographs

Oral History

**Scope and Content Note:****Oral History Interview**

This series contains an oral history interview with Robert Lipscomb conducted on July 17, 2019. The interview was led by Oral Historian Sean Rost, with Erin Smither, Senior Archivist of the Springfield Research Center, in attendance. Robert was shown photographs from the collection and asked to explain the circumstances of how they came to be taken. During the interview, Robert discussed the Springfield Cobra Scare, serving during World War II, and his work with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

**Photographs**

This series contains photographs of the Lipscomb family and Robert's high school girlfriend Betty Willoughby, pictures taken during Robert's career with the Missouri Conservation Commission, various landmarks and events that occurred in Rolla and Springfield, Missouri, and nature photography of the Missouri landscape. Robert's father Brice Lipscomb is seen posing with a stuffed cobra that was caught and killed during the Springfield Cobra Scare. Photocopies of newspaper articles about the scare are also included. The series also includes a picture of the Pennant Tavern fire in Rolla, Missouri, on August 18, 1953, and a photograph of President Truman walking in a Springfield, Missouri parade celebrating the reunion of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on June 8, 1952. Other Springfield locations include: St. John's Hospital (now Mercy), the annual Springfield Christmas parade, and the Fassnacht swimming pool. There are also photographs produced during Robert's career with the Forestry division of the Missouri Conservation Commission, including images of the Forest Fire Protection District headquarters in Rolla, where Robert worked to help monitor and prevent forest fires. Robert also took pictures of state fire lookout towers all over Missouri. Robert also enjoyed nature photography.

Oversize photographs are located in folders 16 through 20, which are located in oversized Box 002. Images located here include an oversized group photograph of Robert Lipscomb and his naval comrades in folder 16, a group photograph of his mother, Pearl Lipscomb, and members of the War Mother's Drill Team, in folder 17, images of a Springfield Christmas Parade and the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Reunion are located in oversized folders 18 and 19, and photographs of the Conservation Commission headquarters and a lookout tower can be found in folder 20. The photographs have been arranged by individual and subject.

**Container List:**

f. 1	Oral History Interview
Box 001 f. 1	Robert Lipscomb Interview, 2019
f. 2-20	Photographs
f. 2	Robert Lipscomb Sr., 1944-1954
f. 3	Pearl Lipscomb, 1945
f. 4	Amelia Zuchelli Lipscomb, 1947
f. 5	Brice Lipscomb and the Cobra Scare, 1953
f. 6	William Lipscomb, no date
f. 7	Cora Anderson Lipscomb, no date
f. 8	Betty Willoughby, no date
f. 9	Springfield, no date
f. 10	35 <sup>th</sup> Division Reunion Parade, 1952
f. 11	Rolla, 1953
f. 12	Forestry, no date
f. 13	State Fire Lookout Towers, no date
f. 14	Nature, no date
f. 15	Unknown location, no date
Box 002 f. 16	Naval group portrait, 1946
f. 17	Springfield, Missouri War Mothers, 1946
f. 18	Christmas parade, no date
f. 19	35 <sup>th</sup> Division Reunion parade, 1952
f. 20	Conservation, no date

**Index:**

Index Term	Folder	Image
American War Mothers	4, 17	Yes
Lipscomb, Amelia Elizabeth, 1929-2010	3	Yes
Lipscomb, Brice E., 1899-1979	5	Yes
Lipscomb, Cora Anise, 1876-1963	7	Yes
Lipscomb, Pearl Mae, 1902-1982	4, 17	Yes
Lipscomb, Robert Brice, 1926-	2, 12-14, 16, 20	Yes
Lipscomb, William Robert, 1861-1924	6	Yes
Missouri Conservation Commission	2, 9, 12-13, 20	Yes
Rolla (Mo.)	11	Yes
Smisek, Betty Dulane Willoughby, 1926-2001	8	Yes
Springfield Cobra Scare, 1953	5	Yes
Springfield (Mo.)	4-5, 8-10, 18-19	Yes
Truman, Harry S, 1884-1972	10, 19	Yes