Jay Riley papers, 1959-1988

Finding aid prepared by Jenifer Becker with assistance from Julie Graham, August 2015; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

UCLA Library Special Collections
Room A1713, Charles E. Young Research Library
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Finding aid last modified 23 March 2016.
Title: Jay Riley papers
Collection number: 2277
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 3.0 linear ft. (4 boxes, 1 carton and 1 flat box)
Date: 1959-1988, bulk 1970s-1980s
Abstract: Jay Riley was an African American actor who started his career in 1932. He appeared in Broadway productions and also found roles in motion pictures and television. The collection consists of script material, photographs and a small amount of biographical information, press clippings, ephemera, books, and audiovisual materials related to Riley's career.
Language of Materials: English
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.
Restrictions on Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. Advance notice required for access. Contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. To review these audiovisual materials you must notify the reference desk in advance of your visit.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Jay Riley Papers (Collection 2277). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
Provenance/Source of Acquisition
Gift of Mercedes Riley; 2013.
Biography/History
James Merriman Riley, professionally known as Jay Flash Riley, Jay Riley, and Joe Riley, was born June 24, 1916 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He got his start acting in 1932 with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Theater project. His first appeared on Broadway in the role of Jack Stanton in Orson Welles's production of Native Son (1941). Other Broadway appearances include Carmen Jones (1943), On the Town (1944), Finian's Rainbow (1947), The Wiz (1975), and Bubbling Brown Sugar (1976). Riley spent time in Europe (ca. mid-1960s and 1970s) and appeared in and produced a stage production of Trumpets of Our Lord. Additionally, he appeared in films such as Cleopatra and The She Beast, and did voice-overs dubbing 200-plus films. Riley's television credits include appearances on Frank's Place, Good Times, Sanford and Son, Taxi, and The White Shadow. In 1979, Riley won the Los Angeles Weekly's Lawre Award for Outstanding Performance of the Year for his role in Bubbling Brown Sugar. In 1988, shortly before his death, he appeared in the MGM film Memories of Me. He died September 20, 1988 in Los Angeles, California.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of materials related to the career of African American actor Jay Riley. The majority of the materials are script materials and photographs. Additionally included are a small amount of biographical information, press clippings, ephemera, books, and audiovisual materials. Script materials represent projects for which Riley may have been involved in some capacity, such as Bubbling Brown Sugar, Trumpets of Our Lord, and The Wiz. The photographs are professional and/or personal in nature; professional photographs are mostly headshots of Riley. Notably absent from the collection are items representing his television work and his involvement with foreign-made films, such as Cleopatra and The She Beast.
Organization and Arrangement
Arranged into the following series:
- Series 1. Personal and Biographical Materials
- Series 2. Correspondence
- Series 3. Projects
Series 4. Photographs
Series 5. Books and Audiovisual Materials

**UCLA Catalog Record ID**
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 7685605

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Riley, Jay -- Archives
African American actors -- Archives

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**Personal and Biographical Material. undated, 1988.**

**Scope and Content**
The series consists of birth and death records, resumes, and documents related to Riley's death. There is no specific arrangement to the series.

- **Box 1, Folder 1**
  - Birth and death certificates. undated.
- **Box 1, Folder 3**
  - Death sympathy cards. ca. 1988.
- **Box 1, Folders 4**
    - **Scope and Content**
      - This file includes a memorial book, prayer certificate, and inurement program.

- **Box 1, Folder 5**
- **Box 1, Folder 2**
  - Resumes. undated.
- **Box 1, Folder 6**
  - Address books (2 items). undated.
- **Box 1, Folder 7**
  - Business cards and blank stationary. undated.

**Correspondence. undated, 1966, 1978-1988.**

**Scope and Content**
The Correspondence series consists of letters to and from Riley. The series is arranged into either personal or career related letters. Items are arranged in loose chronological order within the folders.

- **Box 1, Folder 9**
    - **Scope and Content**
      - With a letter from Jerome Robbins.

- **Box 1, Folder 8**
    - **Scope and Content**
      - With a card from Langston Hughes.

**Projects. ca.1959-ca.1980s.**

**Scope and Content**
The bulk of the Projects series consists of script materials for projects in which Riley may have been involved in some capacity. Additionally there is a small amount of press clippings (original and photocopies), photographs, and ephemera. Materials represent projects such as *Bubbling Brown Sugar, Trumpets of Our Lord*, and *The Wiz*, among others. The series is arranged alphabetically by project title.

- **Box 1, Folder 10**
- **Box 1, Folder 11**
  - Residuals and handwritten notes about wages. ca. 1980s.
- **Box 1, Folder 12**
  - Riley jottings. undated.
- **Box 7, Folder 1**
  - Sketches. undated.
- **Box 3, Folder 5**
  - Untitled project script pages. undated.
- **Box 2, Folder 2**
  - Beauty and the Beast: Promises of Someday house draft script. 1987 December 15.
- **Box 2, Folder 3**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 7, Folder 2</th>
<th>Black Experience (The) posters. 1972.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 3</td>
<td>Checking Out script. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 13</td>
<td>Dark of the Moon handbill. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 12</td>
<td>Dirty Dancing: Just One Look pilot script. 1988.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 13</td>
<td>Gathering of Old Men (A) production notes. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 1</td>
<td>Flash and Sunda in Vaudeville press clippings (photocopies). ca. 1939-ca. 1940.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 2</td>
<td>Macbeth program and script pages. [ca. 1977].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 3</td>
<td>Memories of Me press clippings. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 4</td>
<td>Native Son film press kit (photocopy) and ticket. 1986 December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 6</td>
<td>No Holds Barred script. 1988 March 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 7</td>
<td>On The Town photocopied page of photographs (possibly from a printed program). undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 8</td>
<td>Pantomime (A) synopsis. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
<td>With published sheet music for Send in the Clowns and holographic notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 9</td>
<td>Shakespeare in Harlem clipping of images. 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 10</td>
<td>Sing a New Song narration script pages. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 11</td>
<td>Skeeters Wings script. 1988 April.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folders 12-13</td>
<td>Suicide in B Flat (A Mysterious Overture) script. ca. 1979.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
<td>Script annotated. With photographs, clipping, and award announcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 14</td>
<td>Superior Court script pages. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 14</td>
<td>There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York published sheet music (from Porgy and Bess). © 1935.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folders 15-16, Bin 7, Folder 4</td>
<td>Trombones script, press clipping, costume design, scene sketches, and ephemera (3 folders). undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 2</td>
<td>Trumpets of the Lord photographs, programs, and press. ca. mid-1960s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 17</td>
<td>Turning of Dugmore Boetie (The) script. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 12</td>
<td>Wiz (The) blocking script. 1975 September.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
<td>Appears to be for production of Working. With photocopy of handwritten vocal score titled All the Live long Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 13</td>
<td>Year in the Life (A) script. 1988 February.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs and Ephemera. undated.</td>
<td>Photographs and ephemera that are professional and/or personal in nature and not identified with known projects. The majority of the professional photographs are headshots of Riley. The majority of photographs are not identified. There is no specific arrangement to the series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 11</td>
<td>Photograph album - appears to be family and friends. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folders 1-4</td>
<td>Photograph album - appears to be family and friends (4 envelopes). undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General note</td>
<td>Photographs found loose in magnetic self-adhesive photoalbum. Original order could not be determined; photographs removed from album for preservation purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photographs and Ephemera. undated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folders 5-10, Box 2, Folder 1 Box 5, Folder 1, Box 1, Folder 13-14, Box 7, Folder 1 Box 1, Folder 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photographs - appears to be family and friends (6 envelopes and 1 folder). undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs - mostly headshots (4 folders). undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs - mostly with others and possibly related to projects. undated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Books and Audiovisual Materials. undated.

Scope and Content
The series consists of books collected by Riley, and a small number of audiocassettes and videotapes. Many of the books relate to African Americans in the entertainment industry. There is no specific arrangement to the series. Audiovisual materials in this series are restricted and require advance notice for use.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
SERIES CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. To review these audiovisual materials you must notify the reference desk in advance of your visit.

Audiovisual materials (3 audiocassettes, 3 VHS, and 1 betamax). undated.

Scope and Content
RESTRICTED ACCESS: Use of audiovisual material requires production of listening and viewing copies.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Audiovisual materials will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. To review these audiovisual materials you must notify the reference desk in advance of your visit.

Books (7 items). undated.
Scope and Content