Bridges, Richard Wilson, 1943-2015 (MSS 646)

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**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Richard Wilson “Dick” Bridges was born on 15 June 1943, the son of Robert Alton Bridges and Rob Shelton Bridges. They lived in Gracey, Christian County, Kentucky. Bridges majored in History, Religion and English at Baylor University in Waco, Texas and graduated in 1965. He also received a Masters of Divinity degree from South Baptist Theological Seminary. He married Sandra Hill and had two children, Robert Alton Bridges, II and Jewell Wilson Bridges. Bridges served as a pastor for three years prior to coming to Bowling Green’s First Baptist Church as Minister of Education in 1970. He served in that role, until he became Associate Pastor in 1978. He remained in that role until 1981, when he became interim pastor and finally senior pastor in 1982; he remained in that position until 1996. He was pastor when a 14 October 1991 fire destroyed the church’s 1913 sanctuary. Bridges helped oversee the building of a new sanctuary on the same site. He later served as pastor of the Franklin Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Kentucky and retired from the ministry on 31 July 2007. Bridges passed away in Bowling Green on 5 August 2015 at the age of 72.

**COLLECTION**

All of the material in this collection, except for the last folder (Box 2, Folder 7), relates to Richard W. Bridges’ service as the Chairman of the Western Recorder Board of Directors. The Western Recorder (WR) is the weekly newspaper for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and during this period had a circulation of around 45,000. During Bridges’ tenure as Chairman, The WR’s editor Jack Sanford (editor from 1985 to 1989) died from a heart attack on 24 May 1989. The Board of Directors voted to empower the Administrative Committee to serve as the publication’s management and editorial supervisors until a new editor was hired. The new editor assumed duties at the WR in 1990.

Box 1, Folder 2 contains several short histories of the Western Recorder as well as lists of previous editors, employees, and circulation information. Folder 3 contains an incomplete compilation of WR Board of Directors’ meeting minutes from 1983 to 1990. Folder 4 contains incomplete financial records from roughly the same period. Box 1, Folder 5 through Box 2, Folder 4 contains Bridges’ correspondence related to his tenure as Chairman and subsequently
his editorial responsibilities from 1989 to 1990. The correspondence includes both internal and external correspondents. It is particularly rich in material related to social and moral issues of the era: abortion, gun control, child care, and evolution and more specifically address the takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention by a conservative faction in the 1980s. Folders 5 and 6 contain information related to the search process for a new WR editor that started in July 1989 and ended in May 1990 with the naming of E. Marvin Knox, Jr. as the new editor. Box 2, Folder 7 includes information about a controversial letter sent from Aurora, Colorado pastor Jerry A. Johnson to Dr. Roy L. Honeycutt, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, regarding faculty member Paul Simmons. A copy of the letter and Honeycutt’s reply are included.

**SHELF LIST**

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<td><em>Western Recorder</em> – Historical information</td>
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<td>Folder 3</td>
<td><em>Western Recorder</em> – Minutes of Board of Directors’ meetings</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
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Folder 3  Western Recorder – Correspondence  March 1990  56 items
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Folder 5  Western Recorder – Editor search committee  June 1989-May 1990  66 items
Folder 6  Western Recorder – Editor search candidate resumés  January 1990  32 items
Folder 7  Southern Baptist Seminary – Louisville  1990  3 items
Folder 8  Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs  December 1988; February 1990; n.d.  5 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

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Material, chiefly correspondence, of Bowling Green, Kentucky pastor Richard W. Bridges, who served as Board of Directors’ Chairman for the Western Recorder, the statewide newspaper of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. During Bridges’ Chairmanship, the editor, Jack Sanford, died. Bridges and the Board’s executive committee assumed the paper’s management and editorial responsibilities. This collection provides insights into the conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s.
2 boxes. 17 folders. 659 items. Originals, photo, and photocopies.
SC2016.99.266

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Abortion – Comments about, 1989  B1,F7-9; B2,F1,3
Allen, Jimmy Raymond, b. 1927  B1,F7
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs – Comments about  B2,F2-4,8
Brymer, Jack E., Sr.  B2,F2,5
Child care – Comments about  B1,F9
Christian Life Commission – Southern Baptist Convention  B1,F6,9; B2,F3
Church controversies – Southern Baptist Convention – 20th century
Cox, James H., Jr., b. 1939  B1,F7-9; B2,F1-5
Dunn, James M.       B2,F2-3,5
Evolution – Comments about, 1989       B1,F7
Falwell, Jerry Larmon, Sr., 1933-2007       B1,F8
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Gun control – Comments about, 1989       B1,F9
Honeycutt, Roy Lee, Jr., 1926-2004       B2,F7
Johnson, Jerry A.       B2,F7
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Journalists
Knox, E. Marvin, Jr., b. 1956       B2,F5
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Western Recorder – Louisville – Relating to
Wood, James P.       B1,F6
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