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Spottswood, Henry Mercer, III, b. 1940 (MSS 665)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 665  SPOTTSWOOD, Henry Mercer, III, b. 1940


SC2019.44.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Henry Mercer Spottswood III, the collector of this material, first met the Jim Wayne Miller and Mary Ellen Miller in 1963, through a mutual friend, Tom Jones. Spottswood was in the College of Business at Western Kentucky State College (now Western Kentucky University), Jim Wayne in the Department of Foreign Languages, and Mary Ellen in the English Department. They enjoyed Sunday evening dinners together along with other friends and colleagues from Western. Spottswood describes the Millers as “so welcoming and devoted to scholarship, literature and learning,” and they encouraged him in his own attempts to compose poems.

Jim Wayne Miller was born in Leicester, Buncombe County, North Carolina, on October 21, 1936, the son of James Woodrow Miller and Edith [Smith] Miller. Miller attended Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, receiving with a degree in English in 1958. In the summer of 1957, he lived in Germany as a member of the Summer Homestay Experiment in International Living. He received his doctorate in German, with a minor in English, from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee in 1965. He married Mary Ellen Yates of Willard, Carter County, Kentucky in 1958 and had three children: James Yates “Jimmy” Miller, Frederic Smith “Fred” Miller, and Ruth Ratcliff Miller. Miller first teaching position was at Fort Knox Dependent School in Kentucky, where he taught English and German from 1958 to 1960. He then became a National Defense Education Act Fellow in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages at Vanderbilt University. In 1963 Miller became an associate professor of German with the Department of Foreign Languages (later renamed the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies) at Western Kentucky University. In 1970, Miller became a full professor and after thirty years of dedicated service to the university, he chose optional retirement in 1993.

Miller composed and published poems, articles, essays and novels, many concerning Appalachian issues. He wrote about the regional culture and language along with political and environmental issues. Miller’s collection of poems Copperhead Cane was published in 1995 as a bilingual German edition, Der Schlangenstock. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Jesse Stuart Foundation and was on the staff of the Hindman Settlement School Writing Workshop for several years. Miller’s works were the subject of festivals and workshops concerning writing and Appalachian studies. Among the literary honors Miller won were the Thomas Wolfe Literary Award in 1980, the 1989 Zoe Kincaid Brockman Memorial Award for Poetry, the Appalachian Writers Association’s Book of the Year and Outstanding Contributions to Appalachian Literature awards, and
the Appalachian Consortium Laurel Leaves Award. The Kentucky General Assembly named him as the state’s Poet Laureate in 1986. Miller was also a fellow of the Yaddo Corporation, an artist colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. He gave readings, writing workshops and spoke throughout the United States concerning Appalachia, poetry, and other literary topics. After battling lung cancer, Miller died on 18 August 1996 in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Mary Ellen (Yates) Miller was born on 21 January 1935 in Grayson, Kentucky, the daughter of Richie Yates and Carries Faye (Ratliff) Yates. She earned a Bachelors degree from Berea College in English and a Masters degree in English from the University of Kentucky. She taught in the English department at WKU for fifty-plus years, making her tenure one of the longest in the university’s history. She was instrumental in helping establish the Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies at WKU as well as supporting new programs at the university, such as Women’s Studies and the English Department’s MFA in Creative Writing. In 1997, one year after her husband’s death, Mary Ellen established the Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing workshop. In May 2017, she was named University Poet Laureate, and in 2018 the Celebration of Writing was renamed in honor of both Millers. The Millers had three children: Ruth, James, and Frederic. Mary Ellen Miller died on 9 June 2018. Both Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller were buried in Bowling Green Gardens.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection contains material collected by Henry Spottswood related to Jim Wayne Miller and his wife Mary Ellen. Folders 2-6 includes correspondence between the two men, but it chiefly consists of letters and corollary material sent from Miller to Spottswood. A folder of Spottswood letters and corollary material can be found in the Jim Wayne Miller Collection. The corollary material in this collection usually relates to Miller’s writing and speaking activities. Folder 4 includes an unpublished chapbook titled “The Rapture” which was the result of a practical joke that Jim Wayne Miller pulled on Gurney Norman, who asked him to write a poem about the Biblical rapture, followed by a comical correspondence from several fictional women characters. Folder 7 includes letters written by Mary Ellen Miller to Spottswood and include her thoughts about her husband’s career and death. Folder 8 contains an unpublished book, “You Can be a Poet: A How-To Book by Students, compiled by Mary Ellen Miller and Frank Steele for a class at Western Kentucky University.

**SHELF LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX</th>
<th>Spottswood, Henry</th>
<th>1983-2019</th>
<th>93 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Inventory, obituary, photos</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Correspondence and corollary material from Jim Wayne Miller</td>
<td>1983-1988</td>
<td>16 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Correspondence and corollary material from Jim Wayne Miller</td>
<td>1989-1991</td>
<td>10 items</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Folder 4  Correspondence and corollary material from Jim Wayne Miller  1992-1993  17 items
Folder 5  Correspondence and corollary material from Jim Wayne Miller  1994-1996  5 items
Folder 6  Correspondence and corollary material from Jim Wayne Miller  n.d.  9 items
Folder 7  Correspondence and corollary material from Mary Ellen Miller  1996-2019  31 items
Folder 8  “You Can Be A Poet: A How-To Book by Students”  n.d.  1 item
Compiled by Mary Ellen Miller and Frank Steele

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS SPOTTSWOOD, Henry Mercer, 1983-2019
665 III, b. 1940

Correspondence with poet and author Jim Wayne Miller, Bowling Green, Kentucky. Chiefly letters to Spottswood which contain numerous attachments about Miller’s writing and speaking engagements. Also includes a small amount of correspondence from Miller’s wife, Mary Ellen Miller, and an unpublished book of poems by WKU students. 1 box. 8 folders. 93 items. Originals, photos, and photocopies. SC2019.44.1

**SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Authors
Lyon, George Ella, b. 1949 – Comments about B1,F4
Miller, Edith B1,F7
Miller, Jim Wayne, 1936-1996 B1,F2-6
Miller, Jim Wayne, 1936-1996 – Comments about B1,F7
Miller, Mary Ellen (Yates), 1935-2018 B1,F7
Miller, Mary Ellen (Yates), 1935-2018 – Relating to B1,F8
Norman, Gurney Gordon, b. 1937 B1,F4
Poetry
Poets
Steele, Frank – Relating to B1,F8