Durston, James Marion, 1920-2011 (MSS 571)

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MSS 571    DURSTON, James Marion, 1920-2011


2005.137.4; SC2018.73.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Marion “Brandy” Durston, the son of Reginald Durston and Ernie V. (Scott) Durston, was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on 27 February 1920. He entered kindergarten at WKU’s Training School in 1925 and graduated from College High in 1938. He then graduated from the Lincoln Chiropractic College, Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1941, he married Luella Lord (1921-1989) and they were the parents of two sons, James “Dusty” Durston and Reginald “Reggie” Durston II.

Durston practiced in Bowling Green for four months before being commissioned an officer in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in March 1942. He resumed his practice in 1945. After 22 years treating patients from Bowling Green, Warren County and surrounding counties, Durston relocated his practice to Southaven, Mississippi. A lifelong Episcopalian, he was a member of Bowling Green’s Christ Episcopal Church and of Holy Communion Episcopal Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Durston died in Southaven, Mississippi on 6 April 2011.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists mostly of letters of “Brandy” Durston to his friends Cora Jane Spiller, Oakland, Kentucky, and/or her husband, Robert E. “Bob” Spiller. Also included are miscellaneous written materials, principally Durston’s essays on autobiographical, religious and health-related topics, and printed material from his church. An inventory is in Box 1, Folder 1.

After Durston moved to Mississippi, Cora Jane regularly forwarded to him newspaper clippings, obituaries, and other items of interest relating to Bowling Green. Durston’s replies evidence his encyclopedic memory for people, families, places and events as he responds to the mailings with anecdotes, gossip (sometimes scandalous) and reminiscences about his youth, education, World War II service, College High alumni, fellow citizens, and family and professional life in Bowling Green. He also supplies current information about his two sons and their careers and families, and about his church, its leadership and activities. Some of the letters include printouts of photographs. Of interest are:

a. Durston’s remarks about treating, at the request of coach Frank Moxley, African American athletes from Bowling Green’s State Street High School, race relations in Bowling
Green, and various African American residents and their businesses and entertainments (Box 1, Folders 4, 6, 7, 11);

b. his references to some of the “low culture” of Bowling Green, such as gambling (Box 1, Folders 5, 9) and a lady wrestling match (Box 1, Folder 5);

c. his reminiscences about well-known Bowling Green madam Pauline Tabor Webster, who was also a patient of his (Box 1, Folders 5, 6, 11; Box 2, Folders 9, 10);

d. his pride in his work with the Lions Club to build a school in Bowling Green for handicapped children (Box 1, Folders 5, 9);

e. his story about an assistant postmaster in Bowling Green who stole from the mails, and the scheme he used to avoid detection (Box 1, Folder 5);

f. his experience of joining the Masons (Box 1, Folder 5);

g. his antipathy toward homosexuality and his fierce opposition to his church's liberality toward gays, including the 2004 consecration of Gene Robinson, an openly gay Episcopal priest, as Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire (Box 1, Folders 4, 6, 8, 10; Box 2, Folders 8, 9); and

h. his devotion to his church, his interest in Christian history and mythology (Box 1, Folders 3, 7, 8), and his explorations of extraterrestrialism (Box 1, Folder 2), global warming (Box, 1 Folder 5), and “one-world” conspiracies (Box, 1 Folder 11).

Box 2 also contains printed matter (programs, newsletters, directories) relating to Durston’s church, Holy Communion Episcopal Church, and to St. Mary’s Cathedral, both in Memphis, Tennessee (Folders 4-7). Included is Durston’s photo essay on the reunion of College High’s Class of 1938 and a narrative of his years at the Training School and College High (Folder 1); a collection of recipes (Folder 2); a photograph of Durston during his World War II service, various biographical anecdotes, and an article about a patient of Durston’s, musician Billy Vaughn of the Hilltoppers Quartet (Folder 3). Folders 8-10 contain a later accretion to this collection and consist of Durston’s letters dating from 2005 to 2009.

**SHELF LIST**

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MSS DURSTON, James M., 1945-2009
571 1920-2011

Letters of James M. “Brandy” Durston, a Bowling Green, Kentucky chiropractor and later a resident of Southaven, Mississippi, with copious reminiscences of people and places in Bowling Green. Includes material relating primarily to Durston’s church in Memphis, Tennessee.
2 boxes. 22 folders. 268 items. Originals, photocopies.
2005.137.4; SC2018.73.1

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Durston, Brandy, 1920-2011
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