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Fridy, Wilford Eugene, b. 1934 (MSS 384)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
 Department of Library Special Collections
 Western Kentucky University
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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 384 FRIDY, Wilford Eugene, b. 1934

3 boxes. 25 folders. 367 items. 1956-2009.
 Originals, photocopies, photographs and slides.

2011.227.3

See also: MSS 383 Robert Penn Warren Oral History Project &
 MSS 382 Venable Family Papers

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Wilford Eugene Fridy

Wilford E. Fridy was born on 11 March 1934 to Thomas E. and Catherine (Greer) Fridy in Evansville, Indiana. He graduated from College High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky and received his Bachelor's degree from WKU in 1957. He then matriculated at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he earned a Bachelor's of Divinity in 1959. While serving as minister of the Monroe Center Community Church in Monroe Center, Illinois, he studied at the University of Chicago's Divinity School from 1960 to 1962.

He undertook the study of literature at the University of Kentucky (UK) in 1962, and received his M.A. degree in 1964. He had a long, abiding interest in Robert Penn Warren and his literary opus. The topic of Fridy's 1968 dissertation at the UK was "Robert Penn Warren's Use of Kentucky Materials in His Fiction as a Basis for His New Mythos." In 1968 he was awarded a Ph.D. in English from UK.

Fridy began teaching English at Western Kentucky University in the fall of 1966, and he published several articles about Warren and taught a Warren seminar. Fridy married Ruth Ann DeBoe. He retired from WKU in 1996.

Warren, Robert Penn

Robert Penn Warren was born on April 24, 1905. The son of a banker and a school teacher, Warren grew up in Guthrie, Todd County, Kentucky, with two siblings. At the age of fifteen, he graduated from Guthrie School, and then spent a school year at Clarksville High School in Clarksville Tennessee before pursuing college. In 1921, he enrolled at Vanderbilt University at the age of sixteen.

Warren's time spent at Vanderbilt found him involved with The Fugitives. The Fugitives were a group of Southern poets that were advocates of the rural Southern agrarian tradition, writing poetry about the classical aesthetic ideals of which they believed. Some of the members included Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom (two professors of literature that Warren fell under the tutelage of at Vanderbilt). Warren was the group's youngest member, and published his first collection of poems in the group's magazine, *The Fugitive*. He also became involved later on with The Agrarians, a group of some of the same writers of The Fugitives, who believed in traditionalist conservative values. Warren contributed to the Agrarians' *I'll Take My Stand* manifesto, writing "The Briar Patch," an essay that defended racial segregation in the South.

After graduating from Vanderbilt, he attended the University of California (UC), obtaining his Master's Degree while also serving as a teaching assistant. He met his first wife, Emma "Cinina" Brescia at UC; they married in 1929. After UC, he attended Yale University on fellowship, and then entered New College at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, receiving his B. Litt. in 1930. Afterward, he taught at many universities, including Vanderbilt, The University of Minnesota, Yale University, and Louisiana State. It was at Louisiana State where he and Cleanth Brooks and Charles W. Pipkin, two fellow literary critics, published *The Southern Review*, a literary quarterly that published poetry, essays, interviews, fiction, and excerpts from novels written by emerging and established authors. Warren and Brooks also published *Understanding Poetry* in 1938. *Understanding Poetry* was a textbook which widely influenced New Criticism and the study of poetry at the college level in America.

Between 1933 and 1942, while teaching at LSU, Warren closely observed Huey Pierce Long, the radical populist governor of Louisiana. In his research, Warren was able to publish the novel *All the King's Men*. The novel tells the story of Willie Stark, an ambitious populist of the American South, and his political ascent and governorship during the 1930s. *All the King's Men* received tremendous recognition, and is the most widely known of all of Warren's literary works. The novel was adapted into a 1949 film, which won several Academy Awards, including Best Picture. The film was remade in 2006 and also inspired an opera in 1981.

All the King's Men won Warren the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1947. He also received two Pulitzers for poetry: in 1958 for *Promises: Poems 1954-1956*, and in 1979 for *Now and Then*. He is the only writer to have received a Pulitzer Prize for both fiction and poetry. Throughout his career, Warren has received many awards, including the Bolingen Prize, the National Medal for Literature, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1986, he was named the first U.S. Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry.

Warren was married to Emma "Cinina" Brescia from 1929 until 1951. He married author Eleanor Clark in 1952. The couple had two children, Rosanna Phelps Warren and Gabriel Penn Warren. During the latter part of his life, Warren lived in Fairfield, Connecticut, and Stratton, Vermont. He died of complications from bone cancer in 1989 at the age of eighty-four.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists of class materials, published and unpublished papers, and resources used for Wilford E. Fridy's study of Robert Penn Warren and his works. Box 1 includes correspondence and class materials, while Box 2 and Box 3 include papers and notes related to Fridy's study of Robert Penn Warren. All materials have been placed in acid free housing.

Fridy was chiefly interested in how Warren's past affected his writing, particularly how some of Warren's characters and settings were based on people and places familiar to the author since childhood. He was particularly interested in the Venable family of Hopkinsville, which Warren used as a prototype for the Lovehart family in *Circus in the Attic*. Many of the materials in this collection reflect Fridy's exploration of Warren's works in the classroom and beyond.

The collection also includes a copy of an untitled and unpublished novel by Warren (Box 1, Folder 10), photographs of Warren taken on his 75th birthday, and colored slides taken by Fridy in Warren's hometown of Guthrie, Kentucky.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	FRIDY, Wilford E.	1956-1993	173 items
Folder 1	Biographical information	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Correspondence about Robert Penn Warren projects	1968-1993	35 items
Folder 3	Fridy's correspondence with Robert Penn Warren	1973-1983	48 items
Folder 4	Material related to Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU; syllabi and course overview	1988-1993	6 items
Folder 5	Material related to Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU; handouts and notes	n.d.	12 items
Folder 6	Student papers from Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU	1956-1989	7 items
Folder 7	Student papers from Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU	1991	25 items
Folder 8	Student papers from Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU	1992-1993	14 items

Folder 9	Warrenesque poems from Robert Penn Warren classes at WKU	1991-1993	23 items
Folder 10	“Published vs. Unpublished” paper by Fridy; untitled and unpublished novel by RPW	n.d.	2 items
BOX 2	FRIDY, Wilford E.	1968-2009	113 items
Folder 1	Published papers and conferences	1972-1977	5 items
Folder 2	Drafts of papers by Fridy	2009	11 items
Folder 3	Papers about Robert Penn Warren and Robert Penn Warren’s works	1992-1996	12 items
Folder 4	“The Author & The Ballplayer: An Imprint of Memory in the Writings of Robert Penn Warren”	1991	7 items
Folder 5	Special project: “The Circus in the Attic” by Robert Penn Warren	n.d.	16 items
Folder 6	Special project: <i>The Prisoners of Niagara</i> by Jesse L. Holman; correspondence and research materials	1968-1982	59 items
Folder 7	Thesis: “Robert Penn Warren’s Use of Kentucky Materials in His Fiction as a Basis for His New Mythos”; University of Kentucky	1968	1 item
Folder 8	Thesis: “Robert Penn Warren’s Use of Kentucky Materials in His Fiction as a Basis for His New Mythos”; University of Kentucky; with handwritten revisions and annotations	n.d.	2 items
BOX 3	FRIDY, Wilford E.	1962-1995	81 items
Folder 1	Special project: photographs of Robert Penn Warren from his 75 th birthday	1980	11 items
Folder 2	Special project: ektachrome slides of Robert Penn Warren’s hometown	1980-1991	8 items

Folder 3	Special project: hometown symposium	1987	16 items
Folder 4	Notes for interviews about Robert Penn Warren	1977-1979	20 items
Folder 5	“Warren Country: A Robert Penn Warren Festival” grant proposal	1980	1 item
Folder 6	Robert Penn Warren Center at WKU; records, pamphlets, newsletters	1987-1992	13 items
Folder 7	Assorted Robert Penn Warren event announcements	1962-1995	12 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS FRIDY, Wilford Eugene, b. 1934 1956-1996
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Correspondence, class materials, published and unpublished papers, and research material collected by Dr. Wilford E. Fridy in his study of Robert Penn Warren and his writings. Includes an untitled and unpublished novel by Robert Penn Warren, correspondence between Fridy and Warren, and photos of Warren and Guthrie, Kentucky, Warren’s hometown.

3 boxes. 25 folders. 367 items. Originals, photocopies, photographs and slides.
2011.227.3

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Alexander, Kern S., Jr., b. 1939 – Correspondence B1,F2
Bennett, James – Correspondence B1,F2
Boone, Joy (Field) Bale, 1912-2002 – Comments about, 1988 B1,F2
Boone, Joy (Field) Bale, 1912-2002 – Correspondence B1,F2
Brandt, Nat – Correspondence B1,F2
Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies – Western Kentucky University – Relating to B1,F2;
B3,F6
Circus in the Attic – Relating to B2,F5
Davis, Nancy – Relating to B1,F2
Disharoon, Hugh B. – Letter to B1,F2
English – Study and teaching – Relating to B1,F4-9

Flynn, James – Letter to B1,F2
 Greenfield, Kent, 1902-1978 – Relating to B2,F4
 Guthrie – Photos B3,F2
 Handy, Riley Dean, 1941-2010homholmn B1,F2
 Holman, Jesse L. – Relating to B2,F6
 Merrill, Boynton, Jr., 1925-2012 – Letter to B1,F2
 Miller, Mary Ellen – Mentioned B1,F2
 Millichap, Joseph R. – Relating to B1,F2
 Poetry B1,F9
Prisoners of Niagara – Relating to B2,F6
 Reasons, Mary Moore (Allensworth), 1898-1997 – Correspondence B1,F2
 Robson, Ann B1,F2
 Spurlock, John Howard, b. 1939 B1,F2
 Venable, John Wesley, Jr., 1888-1976 – Comments about B2,F5
 Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989 – Birthplace – Guthrie – Relating to B1,F2
 Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989 – Birthplace – Guthrie – Photos B3,F1-2
 Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989 – Correspondence B1,F3
 Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989 – Photos B3,F1
 Warren, Robert Penn, 1905-1989 – Relating to
 Warren, Thomas, 1911-1985 – Letter to B1,F3

Houchin/Jeffrey 09/24/2014