

MSS. Collection #210

Lavin J. Burcham Papers, 1954-2011 [bulk 1954-1968].
2½ boxes (41 folders), ca. 360 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

This collection consists primarily of literary and printed materials relating to Lavin J. Burcham's preaching career. Starting at age five, Burcham traveled to preach at churches and tent revivals across the United States. He began to draw large crowds because of his age, and was invited to speak at events around Canada, Latin America, and England. The majority of the collection consists of flyers advertising his appearances and newspaper clippings pertaining to his life as a child preacher. Also included are books, photographs, magazines, and a scrapbook relating to his childhood. Most items dating after 1967 pertain to Burcham's career as a Pentecostal minister at Four Seasons Chapel in Greensboro and his mission work in the Philippines.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into four series and arranged within series by document type and/or subject. The series are: **Audio**, ca. 1960s-2011; **Literary**, 1954-1980; **Printed**, 1954-1968; and **Scrapbook**, 1968.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Lavin J. Burcham in October 2011 and assigned the accession number 2011.43.1.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by intern Savannah Edwards in August 2019.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lavin J. Burcham was born to Veatrice Willcoxon (1915-1999) and Shuble McCoin Burcham (1909-1977) in Halifax, Virginia. He has four siblings: Mackie Keith, Teddy Marconi, Sanders Willcoxon, and Rita Lou. When he was five years old, his family moved to Greensboro so Sanders could be treated for polio. The family decided to remain in Greensboro after his father found a job as a Pentecostal minister. In 1954, Burcham was called to preach and believed to have holy oil on his hands with healing abilities. He was invited to speak at tent revivals alongside revivalist A.A. Allen, sometimes delivering sermons to crowds of 13,000. As a child, he preached in over 30 states and several countries, including Canada, England, Mexico, Jamaica, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela.

Burcham had a private tutor for elementary school and started attending Calvin Wiley School when he reached sixth grade. He traveled to preach during the weekends and attended school during the week. At Ben L. Smith High School, he participated in the marching band. After graduating, he became the minister at his father's church, Four Seasons Chapel, where he remained until retirement. During his career, Burcham was active in mission work in the Philippines, and he donated the profits from the sale of Four Seasons Chapel to a preacher there after he retired. He also founded and led Four Seasons Chapel Incorporated, originally called the Lavin J. Burcham Evangelical Association, which ordained Pentecostal ministers. Burcham married Yvonne Carol Yates in 1969, and they divorced in 1974. Two years later, he married Loretta Faye Bates, and they had two children, Jennifer Lea and Lavin J. Jr.

Biographical Sources: The sources used to compile this biographical note include materials in the collection, the Guilford County Register of Deeds database, and [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include photographs, newspaper clippings, flyers, books, and other literary and printed materials pertaining to the early life of Lavin J. Burcham. Focusing on Burcham's life as a child preacher, the majority of the collection consists of newspaper clippings and flyers advertising his speaking appearances, books written by Veatrice Burcham about her son's early ministry, and writings and drawings by Burcham relating to his travels as a child preacher. A few items relate to Burcham's life outside of his calling, including an oral history interview and school report. Researchers interested in Pentecostalism or tent revivals may find this collection useful.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Audio. 4 folders (4 items). ca. 1960s-2011.

The audio includes an oral history interview of Lavin J. Burcham by staff at the Greensboro History Museum (1:2). In the interview, he describes how he became a child preacher and provides information about his life afterwards, including his career as a minister at Four Seasons Chapel and his mission work in the Philippines. Also included in this series are a reel-to-reel tape that seems to feature an Amway presentation (1:3), as well as a cassette tape (1:1) and record (1:4) containing music. The record relates to the Boy Scouts of America, of which Burcham was a member.

2. Literary. 7 folders (ca. 60 items). 1954-1980.

The literary series consists of materials written by Lavin J. Burcham and his mother, Veatrice Willcoxon Burcham. Of interest are the notes, newspaper clippings, and other written materials used to create a manuscript of Veatrice's book, *My Son Who Never Doubted* (2:4). Some of these include a page Lavin wrote while he was speaking in tongues and drawings he made that were important to his ministry. Copies are included in the final version of the book (2:3). Also of

importance is a diary kept by Veatrice with dates for the events that Lavin attended across the United States, Canada, and Mexico (2:5). His journal from a trip to England provides more details about what a speaking engagement entailed (2:7), while a paper that he wrote about Darwinism for his high school English class provides insight into his life outside preaching (2:6).

3. Printed. 29 folders (ca. 295 items). 1954-1968.

This printed material consists of newspapers and newspaper clippings (3:19-29) along with flyers (3:6-14) from various cities advertising Lavin J. Burcham's preaching appearances. Some of the flyers and newspapers in Spanish are from revivals held in New York City for predominately Puerto Rican communities. Of importance is an article by Jerry Bledsoe about Burcham's adjustment to adulthood (3:28). Some of the included copies of *Miracle Magazine*, a nationwide Pentecostal magazine founded by revivalist A.A. Allen, mention Burcham's preaching and healing abilities (3:16-17). Also contained in this series are two Bibles that Burcham used while he was preaching (3:2-3) and a map on which he marked the countries he visited for his ministry (3:16). The copies of awards and certificates that Burcham received throughout his preaching career include the original certificate from his ordination by Calvary Holiness Church in Fayetteville (3:1).

4. Scrapbook. 1 folder (1 item). 1968.

This scrapbook was created by Jimmy Bentley in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It includes images and newspaper clippings from Lavin J. Burcham's childhood preaching career. Bentley also typed Bible verses that Burcham used when he preached.

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Audio	-- Cassette tape (n.d.)
	2	"	-- Oral history interview (2011)
	3	"	-- Reel-to-reel tape (ca. 1960s)
	4	"	-- Record (n.d.)
2	1	Literary	-- Burcham, Lavin -- <i>He Hath an Ear</i> (1980)
	2	"	-- Burcham, Lavin -- "Human Evolution, Darwin's Theory: Pros and Cons" (1967)
	3	"	-- Burcham, Lavin -- London trip (1966)
	4	"	-- Burcham, Veatrice -- Diary (1954-1959)
	5	"	-- Burcham, Veatrice -- <i>I Married a Baptist Preacher</i> (1973)
	6	"	-- Burcham, Veatrice -- <i>My Son Who Never Doubted</i> (1965)
	7	"	-- Burcham, Veatrice -- <i>My Son Who Never Doubted</i> , manuscript (1954-1965)
3	1	Printed	-- Awards and certificates (1955-1966)
	2	"	-- Bible from Bill Rice (1954)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
3	3	Printed	-- Bible with notes (n.d.)
	4	"	-- Biographical (1956-1958)
	5	"	-- Church bulletins (1958-1968)
	6	"	-- Flyers -- Age 7 (1955-1956)
	7	"	-- Flyers -- Age 8 (1956-1957)
	8	"	-- Flyers -- Age 9 (1957-1958)
	9	"	-- Flyers -- Age 10 (1958-1959)
	10	"	-- Flyers -- Age 11 (1959- 1960)
	11	"	-- Flyers -- Age 12 (1960-1961)
	12	"	-- Flyers -- Age 13 (1961-1962)
	13	"	-- Flyers -- Age 14 (1962-1963)
	14	"	-- Flyers -- Miscellaneous (n.d.)
	15	"	-- Magazine clippings (n.d.)
	16	"	-- Map of world (n.d.)
	17	"	-- <i>Miracle Magazine</i> (1955-1956)
	18	"	-- <i>Miracle Magazine</i> (1957-1963)
	19	"	-- Miscellaneous (1955-1956)
	20	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 6 (1954-1955)
	21	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 7 (1955-1956)
	22	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 8 (1956-1957)
	23	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 9 (1957- 1958)
	24	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 10 (1958-1959)
	25	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 11-12 (1959-1961)
	26	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 13 (1961-1962)
	27	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 14 -17 (1962-1966)
	28	"	-- Newspaper -- Age 19 (1968)
	29	"	-- Newspaper -- Miscellaneous (n.d.)
4	1	Scrapbook	-- By Jimmy Bentley (1968)