Griffin B. Bell papers

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Georgia Historical Society
Creator: Bell, Griffin B., 1918-2009.
Title: Griffin B. Bell papers
Dates: circa 1952-2009
Extent: 79.5 cubic feet (77 boxes, 6 volumes, 1 oversize folder, 22 loose items)
Identification: MS 2305

Biographical/Historical Note

Griffin Boyette Bell was born in Americus, Georgia, on 31 October 1918. He served in the United States Army, attaining the rank of Major, from 1941 to 1946 and graduated cum laude from Mercer University Law School with an LL.B. degree in 1948.

Bell practiced law in Georgia from 1948 until 1961 when he was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judge Bell served on the Fifth Circuit for fifteen years until President Jimmy E. Carter's nomination to become the 72nd Attorney General of the United States. Bell received the attorney general oath of office from Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in January 1977 and served until August 1979.

In his private practice, Bell joined the law firm King and Spaulding in Atlanta, Georgia in 1953. He became managing partner in 1958, and served as senior partner until January 2004 when he became senior counsel of the firm. He conducted investigations such as internal reviews for E.F. Hutton's Board of Directors regarding fraud charges and an independent review of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska for the board of directors of the Exxon Company and managed the estate of Howard Hughes.

Bell served on Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's ad hoc Advisory Committee on new rules governing military tribunals in 2002, served on the Technology and Privacy Advisory Committee for the Department of Defense, and chaired a study group regarding the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office of Professional Responsibility in 2003. In addition, he was selected by the Defense Department as a member of the Review Panel for Military Commissions and served as Chief Judge until resigning in November 2007.

Griffin Bell died on 5 January 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia at the age of 90.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains address books, U.S. Attorney General's files, awards, audiovisual material, political and personal correspondence, clippings, commission and committee records, crank letters, U.S. Department of Justice files, event materials, financial records, legislation files, legal opinions, organizational records, photographs, political cartoons, a scrapbook, speeches and lectures, Supreme Court briefs, and testimonies of Griffin B. Bell. The papers date from 1952 to 2009.

In addition to Bell's files covering his years in private legal practice in Georgia, his U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit years, and his service as 72nd Attorney General of the United States, the collection also includes Bell's files on his book, Taking Care of the Law, published in 1982 by Mercer University Press. Materials also cover many of the organizations and committees he participated in over the years including, American Bar Association, Center for Study of Presidency, American College of Trial Lawyers, Atlanta Baptist School Committee, Center for Law and National Security, Council on Crime in America, Ethics Resource Center, Georgia Bar Association, Law and National Security Board of Advisors, National Advisory Committee, National Legal Center for Public Interest, National Science Center, National Tax Limitation Committee, Neighborhood Justice Center, President's Commission on Federal Ethics Law.
Reform, Secretary of State’s Advisory Committee on South Africa, and Task Force on Violent Crime.

**Arrangement**

This collection is arranged into 77 boxes, 6 volumes, 1 oversize folder, and 22 loose items:

- **Box 1:** Speeches, engagements, declined invites, 1991
- **Box 2:** President’s Commission on Federal Ethics Law Reform, 1989
- **Box 3:** Eugene Hasenfus/Nicaragua and sub-file on Iranian Arms Deal/Special Prosecutor for years 1986-1987
- **Box 4:** Speeches, 1984
- **Box 5:** Misc. including: Bi-centennial of constitution; Ethics Research Center, 1988; Fowler, Whche Judicial Reviews; press clippings, 1985-1987
- **Box 6:** Audiovisual materials including: American College of Trial Lawyers annual meetings, 1989; speeches/lectures and press conference w/Griffin Bell re: Commission on Federal Ethics Law Reform, 1989; Hasenfus; testimony re. Justice Rehnquist, 1986; testimony at Robert Bork confirmation hearing, 1987; Special Counsel - the Camp David Accords and the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty between Jerusalem and the White House; also includes Bell’s checks, 1989, 1993 and American Enterprise Institute Research notebook
- **Box 7:** Personal: testimony during Robert Bork confirmation during Sept 1987 and other materials related to Judge Bork; Secretary of State’s Advisory Committee on South Africa from Dec 1985 - Dec 1987
- **Box 8:** Miscellaneous files and photos including swearing in as attorney general, white house years, etc., 1970s-1980s
- **Box 9:** Task Force through June 1981
- **Box 10:** Files on events attended, 1988
- **Box 11:** Miscellaneous correspondence A-Z, 1982
- **Box 12:** Personal: Terry Adamson; American Bar Assoc, 1984; American Judicature Society, 1984; Atlanta newspaper articles; correspondence/Christmas letters, 1983-1984; crank letters, 1984; Antitrust monograph, 1982; financial records; Governor Busbee; Center for National Policy; fiscal reform; John Glenn; Golf; Habersham Rd home/office furnishings; Heflin for Senate; Senator Hollings; House Judiciary Antitrust hearings; Institute of Judicial Admin; Kimberly Clark; Law and National Security Board of Advisors; Modern Media Institute; National Tax Limitation Committee; Center for Study of Presidency; Bar pretrial publicity; Project ’87; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Special letters; Sumter Historical Preservation Society; Supreme Court (articles on caseload); testimony on House Judiciary Committee; Thurmond; Washington Post op-ed
- **Box 13:** Personal: 86 law suits relating to service at Justice Dept, 1983; Lino Graglia Inquiry, 1986; client billing/compensation/marketing, 1987; Workman’s comp file; University of Georgia Law School article on Panama Canal Treaty (background materials), 1986; Desk file on Philip Denude: American Minority Mining Application
- **Box 14:** Miscellaneous correspondence A-Z, 1988-1989
- **Box 15:** Mercer and law review article, 1983; Presidential Six Year Term, 1983; Ethics Resource Center, 1984; Center for Law and National Security, 1983; Task Force on Violent Crime, 1981; Balanced budget, 1984
- **Box 16:** American College of Trial Lawyers, 1985
Box 17: Ethics Resource Center files, 1985-1987
Box 18: Miscellaneous correspondence A-Z, 1983
Box 19: Miscellaneous correspondence T-Z, 1979-1982
Box 20: Files on events attended, 1983
Box 21: Files on events attended, 1985
Box 23: Reading/outgoing correspondence files, timesheet files, and crank letters, 1987
Box 24: Reading/outgoing correspondence files and crank letters, 1989
Box 25: Reading/outgoing correspondence files, misc. engagements, declined invites, 1988
Box 26: Meetings, events, engagements, 1986
Box 27: American College of Trial Lawyers, 1983
Box 28: Miscellaneous correspondence E-L, 1979-1981
Box 29: American College of Trial Lawyers, 1984
Box 31: Miscellaneous correspondence A-Z, 1984
Box 32: Personal: Committees/organizations/associations/commissions files, articles, Neighborhood Justice Center, Judicial Invitational, Georgia Tort Law-Practice and Procedure chapter; etc., 1985-1988
Box 34: Telephone calls, 1982; rolodex; Lawyers Desk Book, 1980-1982; address book; King and Spaulding Lawyer bios w/images, 1980-1982
Box 35: Speeches, 1981-1982
Box 36: Department of Justice suits and misc. 1979-1982; engagements/invitations; Federal Judicial Center; fees/expenses through 1981; Fordham Stein award; Georgia State University; Georgia Wildlife Federation; Hunt for Justice; Independent Colleges; Law Clerks; Loxscreen Co.
Box 38: Personal, 1988-2001
Box 42: Hutton report (bound); personal, 1988-2002
Box 43: Reading/outgoing correspondence files, 1986

Box 45: Study of Crime in Atlanta, 1979


Box 47: Miscellaneous correspondence M-S, 1979-1981

Box 48: Miscellaneous correspondence A-Z, 1986-1987

Box 49: Meetings and events, 1989; reading/outgoing correspondence files, 1992

Box 50: Department of Justice suits; Patrick Gray and Aronson, 1983; 11th Circuit Court Judicial Conference; 5th Circuit Conference, 1980; personal misc.; speaking engagement letters

Box 51: Georgia Bar Association 1982-1983; voter rights act; Carter library; Clubs, 1983; Crank letters, 1983; Fischer and Phillips; American Law Institute; Annals; Anti-trust Contribution Rights; Arbitration and Mediation Committee sidebar; Budget Bipartisan Appeal

Box 52: Atlanta Baptist School Committee, 1958-1966; Georgia Bar Association, 1952-1960


Box 54: Requests for photographs and autographs, 1989; political correspondence, 1989; Georgia Bar Association, 1954-1968; Lawyers Desk Book, 1983-1984; Sherman Unger file

Box 55: Biography file; articles on/by Griffin B. Bell; University of Georgia Law School; copies of 1977 Attorney General file; correspondence copies

Box 56: Photos, articles, and clippings on Griffin B. Bell

Box 57: Griffin B. Bell death/tributes, 2009; records transfer to Georgia Historical Society; organizations, journals, committees

Box 58: Speeches, 2000-2002

Box 59: Organizations, publications, Supreme Court Briefs signed as former government official; "The Ten"; a/v materials including memorial services

Box 60: Sibley Commission-Vandiver Legal Committee-Vandiver Chief of Staff, 1980 and 1977 correspondence w/King and Spaulding; speeches, 1977-1979, and speeches and engagements, 1996-1997; Estate of Howard Hughes, 1984 (bound); Madrid meeting 1980 (bound)


Box 62: Organizations, memberships, etc., 2003-2005; correspondence, 2001-2009


Box 65: Speeches, 1998-1999

Box 66: Correspondence, 1990s-2000s

Box 67: Speeches, 2003-2008
Box 68: Speeches, 1980s

Box 69: Speeches, 1980s


Box 74: Speeches and engagements, 1991-1995

Box 75: Ethics Resource Center, 1989; Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987-1988; South Africa; Eleventh Circuit matters, 1989; Griffin B. Bell confirmation hearings

Box 76: Files on Bell's Attorney General years including Speeches and Testimony of Griffin B. Bell Attorney General of the United States 1977-1979 vols. 1-4; file entitled "How to get A.G. Bell's papers from Dept. of Justice", 1977-1985; and envelope "Attorney General Publications and Correspondence" 1977-1978 (at time of acquisition on loan to Professor James P. Fleissner, Mercer Univ. School of Law; these records were received from Fleissner)

Box 77: Files on Bell's Attorney General years (at time of acquisition these material were on loan to Professor James P. Fleissner, Mercer Univ. School of Law; these records were received directly from Fleissner and include his notes); 2 CDs "Conversations with Judge Griffin Bell; 1 videotape "Judge Griffin Bell Birthday Party" (1993); "Asbestos Litigation and Judicial Leadership..." reprint; 2 books Taking Care of the Law (one copy cataloged in Library collection) ; Bell interview conducted by GHS staff 8 November, 2008 (2 cassette tapes); eulogy of Bell by Dr. William D. Underwood, President of Mercer University

Volume 1: United States Supreme Court briefs, transcript, and decision for George W. Bush v. Palm Beach County Canvassing Board, et. al., No. 00-836

Volume 2: United States Supreme Court briefs, transcript, and decision for George W. Bush and Richard Cheney v. Albert Gore, Jr., et al., No. 00-949

Volume 3: Opinions, Griffin B. Bell, Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, 1963-1964 term

Volume 4: Opinions, Griffin B. Bell, Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, 1967-1968 term

Volume 5: Opinions, Griffin B. Bell, Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, 1968-1969 term

Volume 6: Scrapbook of clippings on Griffin B. Bell, 1976-1978
OS folder 1: Copy prints of 1961 John F. Kennedy inaugural address and 1861 Ordinance of Session from reproductions hanging in Griffin B. Bell's home office

Loose items: 22 mats containing 27 original political cartoons about Griffin B. Bell. 1977-1987, many are signed by the artists

Index Terms

Attorneys general--United States.
Bell, Griffin B., 1918-2009.
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-
Forms (documents)
Judges--United States.
Lawyers--Georgia.
United States. Court of Appeals (5th Circuit)

Administrative Information

Processing Information

This collection is processed at the Basic Level (or collection level). There is no detailed inventory for this collection as it is not fully processed. To request that this collection be added to our priority list of collections to be fully processed as staffing and funding allow, please contact the Library and Archives staff.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Sponsorship

Encoding funded by a 2008 Archives-Basic Projects grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.