

Library Opens 'Hail to the Chief!' Exhibit of Presidential Memorabilia Aug. 18

Contributed by Emily Welly
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OXFORD, Miss. -- The University of Mississippi's connections to presidential politics are well documented in a yearlong exhibit of memorabilia to be unveiled Aug. 18, in anticipation of the Sept. 26 Presidential Debate hosted on the Oxford campus.

University Libraries presents "Hail to the Chief!", a display highlighting U.S. presidents and Mississippi's role in past presidential elections. Shown in the Faulkner Room of the J.D. Williams Library, the selected items are from the Department of Archives and Special Collections and its Modern Political Archives unit. They include letters, photographs, books and campaign materials.

"Most of the items on display are from collections given by individuals and families with strong ties to the university," said Leigh McWhite, Political Papers Archivist. "This exhibit would not be possible without the generosity of these donors."

Among the prized items are personal letters, including a note from Franklin D. Roosevelt to U.S. Sen. Pat Harrison, sent along with a handwritten IOU following a game of poker. The senator's widow, Mary Edwina McInnis Harrison, donated her husband's records to the university in 1941-42.

In a handwritten letter, John F. Kennedy thanks Sen. James O. Eastland for his assistance with the Mississippi delegation during the 1960 Democratic National Convention. Eastland gave his papers to the university following his retirement from public office in 1978.

Other intriguing documentation includes Andrew Johnson's pardon of a Confederate soldier; an 1807 biography of George Washington by David Ramsay, who was part of the Continental Congress; and an invitation for William Faulkner to attend Dwight D. Eisenhower's second inaugural ball.

Several items are from the W.T. Marshall Collection. Marshall served as an unofficial librarian in the White House during the administrations of William McKinley through Franklin D. Roosevelt. His daughter, Violet Marshall Douglas, donated the collection in the 1950s and 1970s. Items on display include a photograph of William H. Taft at the celebration of the 120th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration, an elaborate Christmas greeting from President and Mrs. Hoover and an album autographed by the entire Teddy Roosevelt family, including the president, his wife and children.

Recent presidents are also included in some eye-catching pieces. From the Willie Morris Collection are a 1971 letter Bill Clinton wrote to the Mississippi author and a Topps baseball card featuring George H.W. Bush in his Yale team uniform.

The exhibit will remain open for public viewing at no charge for at least one year. Hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.

Other community-outreach events planned by the library in connection with the debate include a Sept. 4 brown bag program titled "Women in Politics: The Archival Record in Special Collections" and a Sept. 11 program called "Tell Every President to Listen to the Blues." And on Oct. 23, the library will host "History Lives in Mississippi: Creating the Presidential Debate Collection" to review the historic significance of the debate. Attendees are invited to bring debate-related items they wish to donate to the Presidential Debate Collection.

For a complete list of Presidential Debate-related events, visit <http://www.olemiss.edu/debate/calendar/> .

For the library's Presidential Debate Subject Guide, visit http://apollo.lib.olemiss.edu/center/subject_guide/debate/intro .
For more information about the University of Mississippi Libraries, visit http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library .