

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞
for Special Collections
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ **Michael Harrah Papers, 1973-2007** ◀

MSS-244

Size: 1 linear foot

Provenance: Received from Michael Harrah.

Access: open

Collection Summary: Collection consists of drafts, scripts, correspondence, reviews, books, and media, along with miscellaneous material, which primarily document the creation of his first novel "First Offender." The papers also contain his drafts and materials documenting the reception of this novel as well as the copyright form.

Subjects: [Literature](#)

Related Collections: Robert Flanagan Papers, MSS-124; Herbert Woodward Martin Papers, MSS-015,095; and the Craig Holden Papers, MSS-235.

Processing Note: none

Copyright: The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

Completed by: Ashley A. Johnson, September 2010; last updated: November 2014

**Michael Harrah
Papers, 1973-2007**

Biographical Sketch

Michael Harrah was born in Marion, Indiana, in 1940. He is a 1962 graduate of the University of Toledo with a B. A. in English Literature, and in 1979 he earned an M. A. in English Literature from the University.

Harrah's work life has included social work, writing, teaching, and broadcasting, as well as acting and singing. Harrah first worked for the Lucas County Juvenile Court system in the early 1960s while attending college. *First Offender*, his book about the juvenile court, derives mostly from experiences working for the court as both a detention supervisor and probation counselor from 1972 to 1979. Harrah's novel focused on a fictional young boy named Freddy, an impoverished 13 year-old mistakenly accused of a crime. The novel details Freddy's experiences not only in his poor surroundings and domestic circumstances—an environment set in Toledo—but also his experiences with the law and juvenile system. *First Offender* later became the basis for a one-hour television special on the Home Box Office (HBO) Network in 1987.

While at UT as an undergraduate, he was active in University Theater, an interest he continued to pursue after graduation with the Toledo Opera in small roles and the chorus, the Ypsilanti Greek Theater, and following a move to New York City in 1967, the New York City Opera Chorus, and with various opera workshops in New York and summer stock.

He returned to Toledo from New York in 1972, where he again worked for the Juvenile Court until 1983, gaining the immediate experience that led to writing *First Offender*. He also taught as an adjunct in the English Department at the University of Toledo from 1980 until 1992, and worked as a classical music announcer for WGTE FM from 1984 until 1992. He co-hosted a public affairs program for WGTE TV in 1991 and 1992, when he moved to Philadelphia. He has since appeared in over 125 industrial videos and commercials, including national ads for the Royal Bank of Scotland and National Health Care. Network TV appearances include *The Unusuals*, *All My Children*, *As the World Turns*, and *Ghost Stories*.

Harrah taught writing in Philadelphia, primarily at Drexel and Temple Universities, until 2007. Today, he actively pursues casting calls, and continues to write. His daughter, Mary, is a musician and teacher who lives in Phoenix, Arizona; his son James, a filmmaker, died in 2008. In 2002, Harrah married his second wife, Jane Spencer, a graphic artist.

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Scope and Content Note

The Michael Harrah Papers contain drafts, scripts, correspondence, reviews, books and media, along with miscellaneous material. These series primarily document the process of Harrah writing and publishing his first novel—*First Offender*. Some of the miscellaneous materials document the novel's reception by readers. The collection is arranged chronologically and the dates range from 1973 to 2007.

The draft files (folders 1-14) of the collection includes early and late drafts of the novel's material, along with alternate story lines and the publishing company's early and final galleys for the final published manuscript. The scripts (folder 15-17) include various drafts of *First Offender's* adaptation to television written by Harrah. Comments, revisions, and editing marks by author Robert Flanagan can be seen on each script. Books and media documents (folders 18 through 20) include the hard and soft cover editions of the final novel, along with a DVD of the HBO movie adaptation. The miscellaneous files (folders 21 through 25) include correspondence between Harrah and his publishing companies, rejection letters, research materials for the novel, reviews, and the novel's copyright form.

**Michael Harrah
Papers, 1973-2007**

Series List

S1 Drafts

1973-1980

Arranged chronologically.

This series consists of Harrah's varied drafts of 'First Offender', along with the publishing company's galleys.

S2 Scripts

1983-1985

Arranged chronologically.

This series consists of scripts of 'First Offender'. Editing and revision markings are on the scripts.

S3 Books and Media

1980-1987

Arranged chronologically.

This series consists of both the hard and soft cover editions of the final novel. A copy of the HBO movie is also included.

S4 Miscellaneous

1976-2007

Arranged chronologically.

This series consists of professional correspondence, rejection letters, reviews, and other materials related to the writing and reception of 'First Offender'.

Folder List

Box Folder Arrangement

S1. Drafts

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 1 | Drafts: Early Work, 1973-1974 (1 of 11) |
| | 2 | Drafts: First Submission, 1974 (2 of 11) |
| | 3 | Drafts: Second Submission & Rewrites, 1974-1975 (3 of 11) |
| | 4 | Drafts: Notes, Versions, Submissions, 1976 (4 of 11) |
| | 5 | Drafts: Revisions & Notes, 1975-1976 (5 of 11) |
| | 6 | Drafts: Revisions & Notes, 1975-1977 (6 of 11) |
| | 7 | Drafts: Misc., Alternative Endings, 1977 (7 of 11) |
| | 8 | Drafts: Later, almost final, versions, 1979 (8 of 11) |
| | 9 | Drafts: Pre-final version, correspondences, and notes, 1979 (9 of 11) |
| | 10 | Drafts: Misc. Work, n.d. (10 of 11) |
| | 11 | Drafts: Misc., Alternative Endings, n.d. (11 of 11) |
| | 12 | Galley with editing, n.d. (1 of 3) |
| | 13 | Galley, Final Set, n.d. (2 of 3) |
| | 14 | Galley, Master Copy, 1980 (3 of 3) |

S2. Scripts

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| | 15 | Script, Comments, 1983 (1 of 3) |
| | 16 | Script, Comments, 1983 (2 of 3) |
| | 17 | Script, pages missing, 1985 (3 of 3) |

S3. Books and Media

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|--|----|--|
| | 18 | Media: Soft Cover Novel Edition, 1980 (1 of 3) |
| | 19 | Media: Hard Cover Novel Edition, 1980 (2 of 3) |
| | 20 | Media: HBO Movie on disc, 1987 (3 of 3) |

S4. Miscellaneous

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|--|----|--|
| | 21 | Various Agency Correspondences & Feedback, 1976-1980 |
| | 22 | Rejection Letters & Notes, 1977 |
| | 23 | Copyright form for 'First Offender', 1980 |
| | 24 | Reviews on 'First Offender', T.V. & Book, 1980-2007 |
| | 25 | Toledo Hotel Research for novel, n.d. |