Ann Yarborough “Tunky” Riley
(1935 – 2008)


Volume: 3 linear feet

Processed: 2009, by Dorothy Hazelrigg; additions, 2016, by Dorothy Walker and Mae Bradford

Provenance: Donated by the Honorable and Mrs. Richard W. Riley

Citation Form: Ann Yarborough “Tunky” Riley Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina

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Biographical Note:

Ann Osteen Yarborough Riley served as South Carolina’s First Lady from 1979 until 1987, and was known not only for her gracious hospitality and warmth, but for her work toward improving South Carolina’s educational system. The daughter of Hubert Yarborough and Anne Yarborough Bryson, Mrs. Riley was born in Florence, SC. Known from childhood by the nickname “Tunky” (thought to be a Gullah word meaning “sweet little baby”), she was a graduate of McClenaghan High School. She earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of South Carolina. In 1957, she married Richard W. “Dick” Riley, then a law student at USC. Following his graduation, they moved to Washington, D.C., where Riley worked for Senator Olin D. Johnston and the Senate Judiciary Committee. Ultimately the Rileys returned to the state, settling in Greenville, which Riley represented in the General Assembly from 1963 to 1977. The couple had four children: Richard, Jr., Anne, Hubert, and Ted.

Mrs. Riley was actively involved for years in the Greenville public schools, as a volunteer coordinator, tutor, and teacher. That interest carried over into her husband’s priorities as a legislator, governor, and, eventually, Secretary of Education under President Bill Clinton. In 2006, Riley credited his wife as “one of the chief reasons he got involved in education.”¹ Mrs. Riley was a full partner in the Riley administration’s efforts to advance public education, leading the Governor’s Task Force on Citizen Participation in Education, as well as chairing the South Carolina Adult Reading Campaign and helping to marshal support for 1984’s landmark Education Improvement Act. Mrs. Riley also took interest in the arts, wildflowers, and natural beauty, but as she told the Spartanburg Herald-Journal in 1986, “My primary interest has always been in education, and I’ve spent much of my efforts working with various committees, programs and reforms—like the Education Improvement Act—because I believe education is the most important function state government provides.”²

One of Mrs. Riley’s most visible projects as First Lady was raising funds for, planning, and carrying out a major renovation to the state’s Governor’s Mansion. The Mansion, its grounds and associated buildings, including the Lace House and the Caldwell-Boylston House, were developed into a nine-acre complex featuring refurbished gardens and the Mansion Mall area that is now a gathering place for public and private events.

²Ginger Lundy, “‘Tunky’: The State’s First Lady is Heading Home,” Spartanburg Herald-Journal, 23 February 1986
Mrs. Riley was diagnosed with breast cancer in the early 1980s, but continued her work as First Lady during the treatment of her cancer. She was noted for her regular presence in the chamber of the South Carolina Senate during debate on the Education Improvement Act, despite undergoing chemotherapy. In March 2008, after a recurrence of the disease, Mrs. Riley passed away at the age of 72. A resolution passed by the General Assembly soon afterward stated in part, “Ann Riley is remembered as gracious and kind in every situation and a friend to everyone she knew. She was a rock to her husband personally and politically and an example and teacher to her children; and...the members of the South Carolina General Assembly are saddened to learn of the death of Ann Yarborough Riley who served her beloved Palmetto State so effectively with such vitality and grace.”

**Scope and Content:**

Mrs. Riley’s papers consist of Public papers relating to her work as First Lady of South Carolina, as well as Personal papers, Speeches, Clippings, and photographs. The Public papers particularly document her leadership on education issues and her active involvement in the Governor’s Mansion renovations.

Personal papers and photographs include material on Mrs. Riley’s family and family history. The Speeches series includes many on subjects close to Mrs. Riley’s heart, including various facets of education, adult literacy, volunteerism, and the arts.

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Staff
Tours
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Waring House, Charles Towne Landing, Charleston

Governor’s Task Force on Critical Human Needs
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Health Care:
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National Governors’ Conference:
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1986:
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Planning (2)
Program
Thanks

South Carolina Mother of the Year/Family of the Year
Southern Governors’ Conference
Volunteerism
Wildflower Alliance

Personal:  

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Campaign [Dick Riley Gubernatorial]:
  1978
  1982
Civil Service (1957)
Democratic Party
Education
Family:
  General
  Bryson, Anne Osteen Yarborough (mother)
  Osteen Family Papers
  Osteen Genealogy Charts
  Wedding (1957)
  Yarborough Family Papers
Topical:
  Dinner “In Honor of Ann Yarborough Riley,” 19 October 1986
  Macrobiotic Diet

Speeches: [See speech index]

Speech Material:
  General
  Education:
    General
    Adult and Literacy
    Citizens Participation and Volunteerism
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Texts:
  1979-1980 and c. 1980
  1981 and c. 1981
  1982 and c. 1982
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  1984-1985 and c. 1984-1985
  1986 and c. 1986
  1987-1988

Clippings:
  General:
    1981-1988
2008 and n.d.
Education
Family:
    General
    Bryson, Anne Osteen Yarborough (mother)
    National Governors’ Conference

Audiovisual, Photographs:
    General
    Osteen/Yarborough Family:
        c. 1880s- c. 1950s
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Speech Index

1979:
    July 19, SC Festival of Flowers, Greenwood
    Aug.:
        25, Democratic Women’s Club, Florence
        26, Alex Harvin Highway Dedication Ceremony
        28, Oconee County Democratic Party

1980:
    Apr.:
        10, “Arts in the Eighties,” J.L. Mann High School, Greenville
        23, Garden Clubs of SC
    May 23, Spoleto, Charleston
    June 16, SCAPCAE/ACE/SCAAED [adult education] Summer Conference
    Oct.:
        13, Atlas Road Elementary School, Columbia
        21, Business and Professional Women’s Club, Anderson
    c. 1980, Kirkland Jaycees

1981:
    Jan.:
        13, Charleston County Kick-off, Adult Reading Campaign
        29, Community Awareness Luncheon, Adult Reading Campaign, Richland County School District One, Columbia
    Feb. 16, Forest Lake Elementary School PTO
    Mar. 13, SC State Conference of the International Reading Association
    Apr.:
        28, Volunteerism
        29, Adopt-A-School Luncheon, Greenville
        30, Governor’s Health Promotion Workshop, Columbia
    May 11, Blackville School Spring Commitment for Reading Campaign
    c. 1981:
        “Commitment to Excellence 1981,” Conway High School
        Governor’s Award for Citizen Participation in Education, Mauldin High School
        Democratic Women of Greenville County
    c. 1980-1981, Greenville Urban Ministry

1982:
    Jan. 27, United Way of Florence County
Feb.:  
17, Lake City Junior High School  
25, Clemson Home Extension Symposium  
Mar., Democratic Women?
Apr.:  
9, Annual Meeting, SC Association of Human Service Agencies  
20, Webber School  
30, Volunteer Greenville  
May:  
3, Bradley Elementary  
10, Sumter Junior League  
Sept. 15, Legal Secretaries Association  
Oct. 9, Delta Kappa Gamma  
c. 1982:  
Campaign issues  
South Carolina’s Outstanding Head Start Parent for 1982  
Women’s History Week, Greenville

1983:  
Jan.:  
27, Pedestrian Safety Campaign  
No date, Governor’s Mansion and volunteerism, Clover  
Feb.:  
16, Easter Seal Luncheon  
17, Wil Lou Gray Literacy Meeting  
24, Beta Club Induction, Monaview Middle School, Greenville  
Mar. 23, Gaffney Literacy Council [also used for Greenwood LC]  
Apr.:  
13, Midlands Volunteer Recognition Luncheon  
21, Camden Elementary School PTO  
May 11, Logan School Head Start Parents  
Sept. 7, Greenwood Literacy Council [text also used at Lancaster, Chester, and York Counties?]  
c. 1983, Democratic Women of Columbia

1984:  
Mar. 1, Easter Seals Kickoff Luncheon  
May 7, Lexington County Hospital Volunteers  
c. 1984, “Partnerships for Progress: Parents, Schools, and the Community,” SC School Boards Association

1985:  
Jan. 17, Chester County Literacy Council  
Mar. 29, Institute for Responsive Education, Atlanta, GA
Apr. 23, Lexington School District 2 Volunteer Recognition Banquet
Nov.:
   4, Bennettsville High School Academic Boosters
   9, Parent Involvement Conference
N.d., Cherokee County Literacy Association Annual Meeting

1986:
Jan. 10, Intergenerational Reading Program, Orangeburg
Mar.:
   17, Orangeburg Art Center Dedication
   18, Press Conference, Adult Reading
   25, Education Improvement Act Update
Sept. 9, “Working Together to Fight Illiteracy: A Focus on Older South Carolinians”
Oct. 18, South Carolina Association on Children Under Six
C. 1986, “Second South Carolina Conference on Effective Schools—Focus on Teaching ‘86”

1987:
Apr. 30, Greenville County Education Association Human Relations Awards Banquet
Aug. 14, Furman University Commencement Address
1988, Sept. 16, Greenville Democratic Women