

Collection #s
M 1072
OM 0532
DVD 317-330

ETHERIDGE KNIGHT FESTIVAL COLLECTION, 1957-2012

[Collection Information](#)

[Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Nicole Poletika
October 2013

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 2 manuscript boxes, 8 OM folders, 3 color photograph folders,
3 OM photograph folders, 1 DVD box

COLLECTION
DATES: 1957-2012

PROVENANCE: Eunice Knight-Bowens

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION
RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection
must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS: Etheridge Knight Jr. Papers (M 0798)

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 2008.0285, 2011.0240, 2012.0146

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts was started in 1992 by Eunice Knight-Bowens and her family as a tribute to her brother's legacy and the arts community. A youth poetry component was added in 1994. The Festival began as an annual celebration bringing together local and national individuals who perform for the community and serve as mentors to help develop emerging artists. It stressed making arts available more broadly to all groups within the community.

On April 19, 2012, the Festival hosted the "Evening with the Legends" honoring nationally renowned legends Amiri Baraka, Mari Evans, Haki Madhubuti, and Sonia Sanchez. The event, held at the Indiana Landmarks Center paid homage to the life of Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000).

Biographical Sketch of Etheridge Knight, Jr.

Etheridge Knight, Jr. (son of Etheridge, Sr. and Belzora Cozart Knight) was born in Corinth, Mississippi, on April 19, 1931. Growing up in Corinth and Paducah, Kentucky, he attended local schools and dropped out after the eighth grade. Knight joined the United States Army in 1947 and saw action during the Korean Conflict, where he was seriously wounded and developed an addiction to drugs and alcohol. After Knight's discharge from the service, he turned to crime in support of his habit, and in 1960 he was arrested for armed robbery. Knight was incarcerated at the Indiana State Prison from 1960 to 1968. In commenting on his transformation from soldier to convict to poet, Knight penned: "I died in Korea from a shrapnel wound, and narcotics resurrected me. I died in 1960 from a prison sentence, and poetry brought me back to life."

While in prison, Knight began to write poetry and submit his writings to publishing houses. He has been quoted as saying, "prison is my major metaphor." Regarding incarceration, he further stated: "In prison your superficialities are stripped away. You act and think as you naturally are. It does nothing to help people or rehabilitate them." Following numerous rejections from publishers, Knight received his first acceptance letter from *Negro Digest* editor Hoyt Fuller. Appearing in the July 1965 issue of the journal, his first published piece was a reflection on a major rhythm and blues singer. Titled "To Dinah Washington," the poem was written soon after Knight learned of Washington's death. Knight's talent also came to the attention of poet Gwendolyn Brooks during his confinement at the Indiana State Prison.

After his release from prison, Knight married fellow poet Sonia Sanchez. They divorced, and in 1970 he married Mary McNally. Knight was father to her two adopted children, Mary TanDiwe McNally and Etheridge Bambata McNally Knight. He also had one son, Isaac "Bushie" Blackburn Knight, with his third wife, Charlene Blackburn.

Knight authored five books of poetry: *Poems from Prison* (Broadside Press, 1968); *Black Voices from Prison* (Pathfinder Press, 1970); *Belly Song & Other Poems* (Broadside Press,

1973); *Born of a Woman* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981); and *The Essential Etheridge Knight* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986). He has also been published in a wide range of periodicals and anthologies, including: *A Comprehensive Survey of Black Writers of America*, *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, *New Black Voices*, *New Canadian-American Poetry*, and *Black World*.

Etheridge Knight often expressed the importance of speaking and performing poetry. He said, "Poets are sayers, singers, and chanters." He referred to his writing as "poeting." Themes in his poetry included family relationships, prisons, life and death, love and connection, addiction, and incarceration.

He served as poet or writer-in-residence at several colleges including University of Pittsburgh, University of Hartford, and Lincoln University (Missouri). He also worked with the Butler University Writers Studio.

Knight gave many poetry readings throughout his life. He began his reading career in 1969, when shortly after his release from prison, poet David Hall invited him to the University of Michigan. After the publication of *The Essential Etheridge Knight* for which he won a 1987 American Book Award, he began a 15-city tour to promote his book. He did poetry readings and/or led Free People's Poetry Workshops that were open to the public in several U.S. cities.

The recipient of numerous awards, Etheridge Knight was the winner of the Shelley Award from the Poetry Society of America. During the 1970s and 1980s, he received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1972 and 1980) and the Guggenheim Foundation (1974).

In November 1988, Knight was injured by a hit-and-run motorist in Philadelphia. He suffered a broken wrist and a hideous leg gash. A group of poets came together and gave a benefit for him. Returning to Indianapolis, he spent time recuperating at the Veterans Hospital.

In August 1990, Etheridge Knight was a featured writer at the Michigan Festival sponsored by Michigan State University and the Michigan Council for the Humanities. The following month, he collaborated with painter and sculptor Stephen Stoller, and produced "Fame and Freedom." The program was billed as "an event of the heart: the celebration of the life and body of work of two major American artists living in Indianapolis." Essentially an art exhibition and poetry reading, the Indianapolis event included music and dance.

On January 19, 1991, numerous local and nationally known poets gathered in Indianapolis to pay tribute to an ailing Knight who was suffering from cancer. Over 700 people attended the program at the American Cabaret Theatre and heard poetry readings from Robert Bly, Samuel Allen, Christopher Gilbert, Galway Kinnell, Haki Madhubuti, Dudley Randall, Elizabeth McKim, Mari Evans, and Jared Carter. Etheridge Knight died in Indianapolis on March 10, 1991. He is buried at Crown Hill Cemetery.

Sources:

Etheridge Knight, Jr., Papers (M 0798) guide at the Indiana Historical Society; Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts, Inc., <http://www.ekfestival.org/aboutus.html>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts, Inc. was created to honor the poet after his passing in 1991. His sister, Eunice Knight-Bowens coordinated the event that began in 1992 and was incorporated in 1996 in Indianapolis. Much of the material contained in this collection pertains to programs and performances that were part of the festival.

The festival has hosted literary luminaries such as the late Gwendolyn Brooks, Eugene Redmon, Lamont Steptoe, and The Last Poets. Amiri Baraka, Mari Evans, Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez were part of the twentieth anniversary celebration. The organization has evolved from hosting an annual arts festival to year round arts programming.

The collection contains six series, most of which pertain to the Etheridge Knight Festival and its events. They are: Etheridge Knight Festival Events; Correspondence; Etheridge Knight, His Poetry and Legacy; Publications; Awards and Certificates; and Etheridge Knight Family Members, et al. Contained within the collection are various formats of material (including DVDs, photographs, manuscripts, and printed materials) that examine and pay homage to Knight's life. There are marketing materials related to the many programs of the annual Etheridge Knight Festival. The collection has a limited amount of correspondence written to or from Knight. From his name being included on a list of persons receiving a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship in 1974 to the dedication of the Etheridge Knight House at Martin University, the collection materials reflect the extent to which the poet's talent was revered.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts Events

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts Programs, 1992-2011	Box 1, Folder 1
Annual Poetry Contest, Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts Guidelines, 2005-2012	Box 1, Folder 2
Press Releases, Etheridge Knight Play and Festival, 1992-2010	Box 1, Folder 3
Proclamation, State of Indiana, Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts Days, April 17-20, 2002	OM0532 Folder 1
21 st Etheridge Knight Festival, Evening with the Legends posters, 2012	OM0532 Folder 2
Jessica Care Moore, 19 th Etheridge Knight Festival, April 15, 2010, photographs	DVD 0317
Jessica Care Moore, Etheridge Knight Festival, 2010, photographs	DVD 0318
Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts, 2011, photographs	DVD 0319
Conversation about Etheridge, 20 th Arts Festival, April 1, 2011	DVD 0320
Etheridge Knight Festival of the Arts, 2012, photographs	DVD 0321
Thumbnails from Etheridge Knight Festival, ca. 2000s	OVA Color Photographs Folder 1
Satan's Funeral Programs, ca. 2009	Box 1, Folder 4
Video, Satan's Funeral, November 2009	DVD 0322
Slideshow, Satan's Funeral, 2010	DVD 0323
Po-Rap-Try Concert Advertisements and Programs, 2005-2012	Box 1, Folder 5

The Rock Cries: Gospel Music Theater Programs, 2003-2005	Box 1, Folder 6
Café Li'Ture Programs, ca. 2002- 2005	Box 1, Folder 7
Video, Dinah, the play	DVD 0324
Etheridge Lives, Etheridge Knight Reading, Humboldt State University, California, 1980s	DVD 0325
Correspondence, Etheridge Knight Events, Readings, and Commemorations, 1992-2001	Box 1, Folder 8
Workshops and Auditions Advertisements, 1982-1993	Box 1, Folder 9
News clippings, Etheridge Knight Events, 1987- 2012	Box 1, Folder 10
News clippings, Advertisements and Audition Notices for Etheridge Knight Events, ca. 2000s	Box 1, Folder 11
News clippings, Etheridge Knight Young Artists Events, 2003- 2010	Box 1, Folder 12
Young Artists in Bloom Programs and Contest Winners Book, 2001-2009	Box 1, Folder 13
Young Artists in Bloom Music Classes, Summer 2008	Color Photographs Folder 1
Young Artists in Bloom, Summer 2009, photographs	DVD 0326
Fall, After School Young Artists in Bloom, 2009, photographs	DVD 0327
Young Artists in Bloom, Summer Camps 2010, photographs	DVD 0328
Young Artists in Bloom, Spring, After School, 2010, photographs	DVD 0329
Programs, Advertisements, and Tickets, 1991- 2012	Box 1, Folder 14
Satan's Funeral, Dinah: Lost Daughter of Israel, Po-Rap-Try posters, ca. 2000s	OM0532 Folder 3

Series 2: Correspondence

CONTENTS

Correspondence to Etheridge Knight, 1974-1983, n.d.

Correspondence, Etheridge Knight's death, 1991

Correspondence, State and Federal Government,
2010-2011

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 15

Box 1, Folder 16

Box 1, Folder 17

Series 3: Etheridge Knight, His Poetry and Legacy

CONTENTS

John Simon Guggenheim Fellows, 1974

Etheridge Knight Poetry and Reviews, ca. 1968-1980

News clippings, Articles by and About Etheridge
Knight, 1974- 2011

News clippings, Etheridge Knight's death

Poetry in Tribute to Etheridge Knight, 1991

Poems Inspired by Etheridge Knight, 1982- 2003

Drafts of Poems and Plays, n.d.

"The Southern Voice of Etheridge Knight," Senior
Project, by Tommy Wilemon, University of Memphis,
2008

Etheridge Knight House Dedication, Martin
University, Indianapolis

Ceremonial Markers from the Etheridge Knight
House, ca. 2000s

Dead Poets Society of America's Grand Tour at
Crown Hill Cemetery, Indianapolis, 2010) Sponsored
by Brick Street Poetry, Inc.

Khabir Shareef as Etheridge Knight, Crown Hill
Cemetery, Indianapolis, 2010

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 18

Box 1, Folder 19

Box 1, Folder 20

Box 1, Folder 21

Box 1, Folder 22

Box 1, Folder 23

Box 1, Folder 24

Box 1, Folder 25

Box 1, Folder 26

Color Photographs
Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 27

DVD 0330

Series 4: Publications (Contain references to Etheridge Knight and/or his poetry)

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

The American Poetry Review (September/October 1977)

OM0532, Folder 4

Arts Indiana (April 1991; February 1993)

OM0532, Folder 5

Art Insight (September 1980)

OM0532, Folder 6

Black American Literature Forum (Fall 1980)

Box 2, Folder 1

Black History News & Notes (February 2004)

Box 2, Folder 2

Free Peoples' Voice (April 1992)

Box 2, Folder 3

The Incision Line (April 1992)

Box 2, Folder 4

Literally (Writers' Center of Indiana, February/March 2002)

Box 2, Folder 5

Negro Digest (January and February 1968)

Box 2, Folder 6

NUVO (February 1993; May 2012)

OM0532, Folder 7

NUVO Arts Guide (2006)

Box 2, Folder 7

O Magazine (Finding Your Voice, November 2009)

OM0532, Folder 8

ON CAMPUS (Somerset County College, North Branch, N. J., May 13, 1977)

Box 2, Folder 8

PMLA ("The Antipanopticon of Etheridge Knight," by Michael Collins), 2008

Box 2, Folder 9

Shooting Star Review (Fall 1987)

Box 2, Folder 10

Way Station (No date; issue dedicated to Etheridge Knight)

Box 2, Folder 11

Series 5: Awards and Certificates

CONTENTS

Certificates and Awards, Etheridge Knight, 1993- 2001

Plaque, The Afrikan Poetry Theatre Presents a Tribute to An Elder Etheridge Knight, May 30, 1987

Award, Etheridge Knight Poet Laureate of Martin Center College, Nov. 1, 1990

Indiana Governor's Arts Award, 1993

Plaque, A Tribute to the Elders Presented to Ms. Knight-Taylor at IPS Infusion Conference, July 30, 1996

CONTAINER

Box 2, Folder 12

Artifacts
Accession #: 2012.0146

Artifacts
Accession #: 2012.0146

Artifacts
Accession #: 2012.0146

Artifacts
Accession #: 2012.0146

Series 6: Etheridge Knight Family Members, et al.

CONTENTS

Knight-Cozart Family Reunion, 2009

Eunice Knight-Bowens Awards, 1957-2011

Group photo, 1966 U.S. Army Medical Field Service (Includes Lois Knight)

Kizzy Rice Dunkins, Mozella Rice Cozart, and Cordelia Rice Dunkins

Unidentified young woman

CONTAINER

Box 2, Folder 13

Box 2, Folder 14

OVB
Photographs
Folder 1

OVA
Photographs
Folder 1

Color Photographs,
Folder 3

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1072).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.