



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Joan Murray papers**

1953-2009 [bulk 1961-1988]

Sc MG 847

Compiled by Heather Lember, 2016.

## Summary

**Creator:** Murray, Joan, 1937-

**Title:** Joan Murray papers

**Date:** 1953-2009 [bulk 1961-1988]

**Size:** 37.59 linear feet (84 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Joan Murray, 2011.

**Abstract:** Joan Murray (1937- ) was the first African American female television news reporter in the United States, as well as an entrepreneur, small plane pilot, and writer. The Joan Murray papers detail her career in media and marketing; her personal life; and the various projects and business endeavors she pursued throughout her life.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Heather Lember, 2016.

## Creator History

Joan Elizabeth Murray (1937- ) is a broadcaster, entrepreneur, author, small plane pilot, and lecturer. She was born and raised in Ithaca, New York alongside her twin sister, June, and a younger sister, Rythma. After graduating from high school and completing a year at Ithaca College, Murray left for New

York City to study speech, writing, anthropology, and journalism at Hunter College, The New School for Social Research, and the French Institute. In 1959, Murray was hired as secretary assistant in the CBS Television Network Press Information Department. She was involved in publicity for such events as Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev's visit to America (1959), the Kennedy-Nixon debates (1960), Edward R. Murrow's documentary *Harvest of Shame* (1960), the first man in space (1961), the premiere of CBS News with Walter Cronkite (1962), and Jacqueline Onassis' televised White House tour, *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* (1962). Murray also served as a production assistant on *Candid Camera*, and as secretary to the show's host, Allen Funt. She was eventually promoted and became the first African American to work on CBS's Corporate Affairs staff.

During the 1960s, Murray appeared in a number of television and print advertisements. In 1962, she starred in a television commercial for ARTRA skin tone cream with her twin sister, which was the first advertising campaign specifically targeted at an African American audience.

Murray left CBS in 1963 for a job as a writer and occasional on-air commentator for the NBC television program, *Women on the Move*. The daytime show, which was hosted by Kitty Carlisle, addressed stories about family, home, and fashion. After the show was canceled in 1964, Murray wrote a letter to CBS expressing her qualifications to be an on-air news broadcaster. She was granted an audition and subsequently hired as an on-air news correspondent for the 6:00 PM and 11:00 PM news at the New York City affiliate, WCBS-TV. She also appeared on the WCBS-TV public affairs programs *Two at One* and *Opportunity Line*. With her new job, Murray became the first female African American television news reporter in the United States.

Murray is also a small plane pilot, a skill she acquired during the 1966 filming of a CBS Eye on New York documentary, *The Small Plane Boom* (1966). That same year she entered the Trans-Continental Women's Air Race as a co-pilot, and became the first African-American to ever fly the race. Also known as the Powder Puff Derby, Murray served as the official WCBS-TV news reporter for the race, which she reported on in a two-part series called, *A Powder Puff for Joan* (1967).

Murray was approached by McGraw Hill to write her autobiography as part of their Young Pioneer Book series in 1968. Her book, *The News*, was written for a youth audience as a guide to television news reporting and broadcasting, and serves as an account of Murray's early life and career.

The following year, Murray authored recommendations to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller's Committee on Employment of Minority Groups and Women in the News Media. The committee, which was chaired by Samuel B. Gould, was formed to study minority representation in the news media, and to promote greater diversity in the field.

In 1969, Murray co-founded Zebra Associates Inc., an advertising and marketing firm that focused on Black, Hispanic, and low-income consumer markets. She served as executive vice president until the company's dissolution in 1976. Zebra Associates was the largest black-owned and managed advertising agency at the time, and worked with such companies as Coca-Cola, Clairol, Ethiopian Airlines, Gulf Oil, Miller Brewing Company, and Polaroid. Their clients also included government agencies, large organizations, and media companies including the Peace Corps., the Girl Scouts, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Essence* Magazine, and Paramount Pictures. Murray began work with the United States Department of State in the early 1970s, where she reviewed and recommended films for distribution in Africa. Murray embarked on a six week international lecture tour of Africa in 1972, visiting Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia on behalf of the Department of State, where she delivered lectures and led seminars on television broadcasting and advertising.

After giving a lecture at Howard University in 1979, Murray was asked to assist three physicians in opening Western Park Hospital Medical Center, a new trauma facility in Los Angeles, California. Murray took on the administrative and publicity work, serving as Director of Public Relations and Media/Communications for the new hospital which opened in November of 1979.

In 1980, Murray was married to Richard L. Atkins, a real estate developer and building contractor in Los Angeles. During her time in Los Angeles, Murray owned and operated House of Royal, a fragrance, skin care, and jewelry boutique in Beverly Hills.

Murray returned home to Ithaca, New York in 1998 to care for her mother. In Ithaca she began work on her memoir, *Newsroom: Fade to Black*, and the novel, *The Colored Ladies Luncheon*. Murray is now retired and remains a resident of upstate New York.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The collection dates from 1953 to 2009 (bulk dates 1961-1988) and consists of files detailing Joan Murray's work in broadcasting and media; her pursuits as a small plane pilot; her business and marketing career; her writing; and her personal life. Murray's professional life spanned various industries, locations, and decades, and her papers chronicle her employment trajectory, while also providing insight into her early life, education, family, and relationships.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Advertising executives  
Air pilots  
Authors  
Journalists  
Marketing executives  
Publicist  
Television news anchors

### **Subjects**

African American television journalists  
African American women in advertising  
African Americans in television broadcasting  
Women air pilots  
Women in marketing  
Women television news anchors

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Manuscripts  
Minutes (reports)  
Photographs  
Proposals  
Research

### **Geographic Names**

Ithaca (N.Y.)  
Los Angeles (Calif.)  
New York (N.Y.)

## Container List

### Series I: Broadcasting and Media 1959-1983 (18 boxes 8.6 linear feet)

Series I addresses Murray's work in television and radio; the publication of her biography, *The News*; and her contributions to Nelson Rockefeller's Committee on Employment of Minority Groups and Women in the News Media. These files also hold a selection of photographs that span the entirety of Murray's broadcasting career, and certificates and awards she earned during this time.

The majority of items relating to Murray's work in broadcasting are found in the CBS files. Included are scripts from her 1965 audition; air scripts for *Two at One*, *Opportunity Line*, and her evening news broadcasts; professional correspondence; fan letters; her notebooks; and a scrapbook chronicling her on-air time. Box 77 also holds press cards additional notebooks, and her ear telex.

The rest of Series I files address Murray's brief period with the NBC show, *Women on the Move* and *The Joan Murray Show* radio program. Her contributions to these productions are preserved through correspondence, scripts, notes, and press releases.

### CBS

- b. 77 1959-1969
- b. 1 f. 1 Press Information Department 1959-1963
- Air Scripts and Notes
- b. 1 f. 2-8 1964-1971
- b. 1 f. 9 Audition 1965
- Channel 2 News
- b. 1 f. 10-13 1965-1968
- b. 2 f. 1 1968
- b. 2 f. 2-6 *Two at One* 1966-1968
- Opportunity Line*
- b. 2 f. 7-8 1968
- b. 3 f. 1-3 1968-1969
- Correspondence
- b. 3 f. 4-11 1961-1966
- b. 4 f. 1-7 1965-1968
- b. 5 f. 1-19 1966-1970
- b. 6 f. 1-6 1967-1972
- Fan Letters
- b. 6 f. 7-11 1963-1972
- b. 7 f. 1-9 1965-1967
- b. 8 f. 1-7 1966-1974
- b. 9 f. 1-7 1967-1974
- b. 10 f. 1 1971-1972
- b. 10 f. 2-5 Memoranda 1965-1968
- b. 10 f. 6-15 Press 1963-1969
- b. 80 f. 1-4 Scrapbook 1961-1965
- b. 82 f. 3-4 Notebooks 1964-1969
- b. 11 f. 1-5 Commercials 1962-1969

Series I: Broadcasting and Media (cont.)

b. 11 f. 6-15 Appearances 1966-1972

b. 12 f. 1-3 NBC 1963-1964

b. 12 f. 4-14 *The News* 1966-1977

Radio

b. 12 f. 15-16 1968-1969

b. 13 f. 1 1968-1969

b. 13 f. 2-6 Committee on Employment of Minority Groups and Women in the Media  
1968-1972

Awards

b. 14 f. 1-6 1967-1970

b. 78 f. 10-14 1967-1975

b. 79 f. 1 1983

Photographs

b. 78 f. 1-9 1960-1964

b. 14 f. 7-15 1961-1968

b. 15 f. 1-4 1965-1968

b. 15 f. 5-10 Series II: Aviation 1966-1996 (1 box 0.4 linear feet)

Murray's lifelong interest in piloting small planes is documented in Series II. These hold papers related to The Trans-Continental Women's Air race Murray's pilot flight record and log book, photographs, correspondence, and the program from the 1996 Blacks in Aviation celebration

### Series III: Business and Marketing 1968-2007 (46 boxes 27.7)

The entrepreneurial endeavors Murray pursued are found in Series III. Included are files from Murray's tenure with Zebra Associates, her trip to Africa on behalf of the United States Department of State, her work with Western Park Hospital, her founding and management of House of Royal, and programming proposals she crafted for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. These files also hold a large selection of address books and business cards.

The Zebra Associates files comprise the bulk of the business materials, which consist of alphabetical files of clients; administrative files; correspondence; financial information; guest books; meeting notes and minutes; notebooks; press and publicity files; proposals and presentations; reports; and research.

Client files provide insight into the companies and organizations that hired or consulted with Zebra Associates to assist with their marketing and advertising. These files contain correspondence, proposals, business plans, recommendations, reports, and agreements regarding Zebra Associates services. Of special interest are the *Essence* magazine files, which include a memo Murray wrote to the publication's founder, Edward Lewis, in which she urges him not to call the newly founded magazine "Sapphire," suggesting that he instead use the name "Essence." This memo is attached to a presentation about the magazine in which the name, "Sapphire" is used throughout. The Zebra Associates Administrative files include personnel information, legal papers, general company information, organizational charts, and the firm's certificate of incorporation. These files address matters related to the company's operations, facilities, and staff, providing a glimpse into the managerial tasks and individual roles of those employed with the company.

The achievements and publicity that Zebra Associates garnered is compiled in a number of "press books," which are found in the Press and Publicity files. These press books are arranged chronologically, and contain press clippings that showcase the work and accomplishments of the firm. Many of the pages feature handwritten labels describing the content. These files also include press releases and files discussing public appearances.

The Department of State files contain travel itineraries, correspondence, clippings, typed speeches, notes, press releases, and presentation materials. The correspondence includes both professional communications with government officials, and personal letters with individuals Murray met during the course of her travels.

Murray's work with Western Park Hospital is represented through files of correspondence, memoranda, mailing lists, invitations, brochures, and press releases. There are also guest books present from various events that Murray helped to organize, as well as planning materials for public relations events and fundraising strategies that she designed.

The House of Royal files contain Murray's correspondence, proposals, product presentations, guest books, and a financial ledger. The presentation materials include both textual descriptions and product samples designed by Murray. She also retained all the paperwork from her patent and trademark applications, as well as legal files from a lawsuit she filed against JC Penney for patent and trademark infringement in 1993.

### Zebra Associates

#### Clients

- b. 15 f. 11 All-Pro Chicken 1969
- b. 15 f. 12 Admiral Plastics Corporation 1969-1976
- American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T)
- b. 15 f. 13-14 1973
- b. 16 f. 1-3 1974
- b. 16 f. 4 Apex 1969
- b. 16 f. 5-10 Avaon 1973
- b. 16 f. 11 Black Eagle Incorporated 1970-1975
- b. 16 f. 12 Black Enterprise Magazine 1970
- b. 16 f. 13 Bowery Savings Bank 1972
- b. 17 f. 1-2 Bristol Myers 1969-1971

Series III: Business and Marketing (cont.)

Zebra Associates (cont.)

Clients (cont.)

- b. 17 f. 3 CBS 1971
- b. 17 f. 4-10 Clairol 1969-1970
  - Coca-Cola
  - b. 17 f. 11 1970
- b. 18 f. 1-11 1970-1972
  - b. 18 f. 12 Dewar's 1971
  - b. 18 f. 13 Educational Computer Program Institute 1970
- b. 19 f. 1-2 *Esquire Magazine* 1969
  - b. 19 f. 3 *Essence Magazine* 1969-1970
  - b. 19 f. 4 Ethiopian Airlines 1971
- b. 19 f. 5-6 Fabergé 1969
  - b. 19 f. 7 Four Roses Distillers Company 1971
  - b. 19 f. 8 Frankfort Distillers 1969
  - b. 19 f. 9 General Electric 1971
- b. 19 f. 10-11 General Foods 1975
- b. 19 f. 12-13 Gulf Oil 1973-1975
  - b. 19 f. 14 International Famous Agency 1974
  - b. 19 f. 15 International Ladies Garment Workers Union 1969-1975
- b. 19 f. 16-17 ITT Continental Baking 1970
  - b. 20 f. 1 Liggett and Myers 1971
- b. 20 f. 2-6 Miller Brewing Company 1974-1975
  - b. 20 f. 7 Motown 1973
  - b. 20 f. 8 National Clearing House for Drug Abuse Information 1972
  - National Institute of Mental Health
  - b. 20 f. 9-11 1971
- b. 21 f. 1-2 1971
  - b. 21 f. 3 National Medical Association Foundation 1973
  - b. 21 f. 4 New York City Police Department 1973
  - b. 21 f. 5 New York State Civil Service Commission 1970
  - b. 21 f. 6 The Off-Track Betting Corporation 1970-1971
  - b. 21 f. 7 Omega Concepts Ltd 1972
- b. 21 f. 8-9 Paramount Pictures 1974
- b. 21 f. 10-11 Peace Corps 1972
  - b. 22 f. 1 Pepsi-Cola 1969-1974
  - b. 22 f. 2 Piels Beer 1969-1974
  - b. 22 f. 3 Polaroid 1971
  - b. 22 f. 4 Remington 1971
- b. 22 f. 5-6 Revlon 1975
  - b. 22 f. 7 Seagrams 1971
- b. 22 f. 8-11 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture 1974-1975
  - b. 22 f. 12 Singer 1969



Series III: Business and Marketing (cont.)

Zebra Associates (cont.)

Clients (cont.)

- b. 22 f. 13 Urban League of Essex County 1969
- b. 22 f. 14-15 Uniroyal 1971
- b. 22 f. 16 United States Department of the Army 1971
- b. 22 f. 17 United States Department of Commerce 1971
- b. 23 f. 1-4 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 1970-1971
- b. 23 f. 5 United States Navy 1971
- b. 23 f. 6-8 U.S. Virgin Islands 1971-1972
- b. 23 f. 9 Warner Communications 1975

Administrative Files

- b. 23 f. 10-15 1969
- b. 24 f. 1-14 1969-1971
- b. 25 f. 1-12 1969-1973
- b. 26 f. 1-3 1970-1974

Correspondence

- b. 26 f. 4-9 1968-1972
- b. 27 f. 1-9 1970-1974
- b. 28 f. 1-12 1971-1976
- b. 29 f. 1-12 1973-1975
- b. 30 f. 1-7 1974-1976
- b. 31 f. 1-5 1975-1976

Financials

- b. 31 f. 6-10 1969-1976
- b. 32 f. 1-14 1972-1976
- b. 33 f. 1-7 1974-1976

Guest Books

- b. 81 f. 1-3 1969-1970
- b. 82 f. 1 1969-1970

Meetings

- b. 33 f. 8-12 1970-1975
- b. 34 f. 1-9 1972-1975

- b. 83 f. 1-3 Notebooks 1968-1977

Press and Publicity

- b. 35 f. 1-9 1969-1971
- b. 36 f. 1-7 1969-1978
- b. 37 f. 1-7 1971-1974
- b. 38 f. 1-8 1972-1975
- b. 39 f. 1-7 1974-1977

Proposals and Presentations

- b. 39 f. 8-12 1968-1971
- b. 80 f. 5-6 1969-1975
- b. 40 f. 1-8 1971-1975

Series III: Business and Marketing (cont.)

Zebra Associates (cont.)

Proposals and Presentations (cont.)

b. 41 f. 1-12 1974-1975

Reports

b. 41 f. 13 1969-1970

b. 42 f. 1-14 1969-1975

Research

b. 42 f. 15 1970

b. 43 f. 1-13 1970-1973

b. 44 f. 1-2 1973-1976

Department of State

b. 44 f. 3-14 1972

b. 45 f. 1-5 1972

Western Park Hospital Medical Center

b. 45 f. 6-9 1977-1982

b. 78 f. 15 1979

b. 82 f. 2 1979

b. 46 f. 1-7 1979-1980

b. 47 f. 1-11 1979-1982

b. 48 f. 1-8 1980-1982

b. 49 f. 1-3 1982-1984

House of Royal

b. 49 f. 4-11 1978-1979

b. 50 f. 1-12 1979-1998

b. 51 f. 1-13 1993-2003

b. 52 f. 1-9 1996-2007

b. 84 f. 1-2 Guest Books

b. 84 f. 3 Ledger 1986

Presentation Materials

b. 76 1978-2007

b. 80 f. 7-8 1978-2007

b. 53 f. 1-4 Los Angeles Olympics 1984

Address Books and Business Cards

b. 72 1965-2000

b. 73 1965-2000

b. 74 1965-2000

b. 75 1965-2000

**Series IV: Writing 1965-2001 (3 boxes 1.3 linear feet)**

Series IV holds samples of Murray's writing from throughout her life. While there are some early drafts of assorted writing dating from the 1960s through the 1980s, as well as television series and film proposals, the bulk of Murray's compositions are in the form of manuscripts from the 1990s. This includes her unpublished memoir *Newsroom/Fade to Black: The Story of the First Black Television Reporter*, and an unpublished novel called *The Colored Ladies Luncheon*. Murray revised her manuscripts many times, and submitted them in varying degrees of completion to publishers, producers, and executives. Some drafts include the correspondence she submitted with her writing, and others include feedback and rejections. Murray's memoir manuscripts reveal the most thorough narrative of her life and career, and recount stories and events that were not included in her 1968 autobiography.

- b. 53 f. 5-9      1965-1998  
                         Manuscripts and Proposals
- b. 53 f. 10-18      1981-1994
- b. 54 f. 1-7      1995-1997
- b. 54 f. 8      *The News Autobiography* 1997
- b. 54 f. 9-12      *Newsroom/Fade to Black: The Story of the First Black Television Reporter*  
                         1997-2001  
                         *The Colored Ladies Luncheon*
- b. 55 f. 1-8      1997-1998
- b. 56 f. 1-5      1998-1999

**Series V: Personal 1956-2009 (16 boxes 6.7 linear feet)**

Details of Murray's early life, education, friendships, family, and marriage are found in Series V. The majority of these files comprise her correspondence, which spans much of her life and features letters from friends, family, fans, admirers, and colleagues. Murray's personal files also hold a copy of her birth certificate, family photographs, programs from events she attended in the 1960s, and obituaries for family members.

The materials related to Murray's education are mostly from her time at Ithaca High School. This includes awards, a yearbook, and a commencement brochure. There are also some papers present that relate to her brief employment with the United States Air Force in the 1950s, and early copies of her resume.

- b. 56 f. 6      Birth Certificate 1956  
                         Correspondence
- b. 56 f. 7-10      1956-1962
- b. 57 f. 1-9      1960-1973
- b. 58 f. 1-7      1963-1970
- b. 59 f. 1-9      1965-1980
- b. 60 f. 1-12      1968-1969
- b. 61 f. 1-9      1968-1975
- b. 62 f. 1-7      1970-1977
- b. 63 f. 1-7      1972-1982
- b. 64 f. 1-6      1976-1981
- b. 65 f. 1-9      1978-1982
- b. 66 f. 1-9      1980-1993
- b. 67 f. 1-9      1982-1988
- b. 68 f. 1-8      1985-1986
- b. 69 f. 1-9      1985-2009

Series V: Personal (cont.)

- b. 70 f. 1-8    **Education** 1953-1961
- b. 70 f. 9-20    **Notebooks** 1987-1996
- b. 71 f. 1-4    **Obituaries** 1982-1999
- b. 71 f. 5-10    **Photographs** 1953-1980
- b. 71 f. 11-17    **Programs** 1962-1970

**Series IV: Audio and Video Recordings** 1963-1981 (115 sound recordings; 2 videos; 40 films)

The collection contains many audio and video recordings. The majority of these recordings are related to commercials or advertising campaigns produced by Zebra Associates. Also included are films from the The Trans-Continental Women's Air race, and recordings from Murray's time at CBS and NBC.