

Phil and Melba Curls Collection (AC84)

Introduction:

The Phil and Melba Curls Collection primarily features artifacts related to the professional and political careers of Phil Curls, Missouri State Senator, and Melba Curls, Missouri State Representative.

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: Phil and Melba Curls

Title: Phil and Melba Curls Collection

Date Range: 1988-2015

Size: 1.42 linear feet (2 boxes)

Collection Number: AC84

Donor Information:

Melba Curls, June 2022

Citation Note:

Phil and Melba Curls Collection (AC84), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri.

Related Collections:

Freedom, Inc. Collection AC81

Administrative Information:

Reproduction Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Access Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Biographical Sketch:

Phillip B. Curls, born in KC in 1942, son of Fred Curls, founder of Freedom, Inc. was himself a member of Freedom, Inc., and served as President of Freedom, Inc. for 8 years, and was state politician. He earned his bachelor's degree in business administration at Rockhurst College after

graduating from De La Salle High School. He began his political career in 1972 when he became KC's 28th District Representative. In 1983, he joined the State Senate as the 9th District where he served as a senator until he retired in 1998. He passed legislation that funded the Truman Sports Complex and Bartle Hall, and the Missouri Child Care Development Act. He also served as the Chairman of the Insurance and Housing Committee, and the Desegregation Task Force. After retiring from political due to health concerns caused by diabetes, he became the CEO and President of a Californian-based real-estate development company and helped develop the Missouri Legislative Black Caucus Foundation. Phillip Curls died May 4, 2007.

Melba Curls, widow of Phillip B. Curls, was born in October 1941. She attended Central High School followed by the University of Missouri-Columbia. She too was a member of Freedom, Inc., as well as NAACP, the Black Agenda Group, the United Minority Media Association, and the Jack and Jill of America. Additionally, Mela served on the board of the American Jazz Museum, was Vice-President of the Friends of Bruce Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, and was on the board of Catholic Charities in KC. Before becoming a politician, Melba worked at KCTV5, was the Head Start Director at KCMC Child Development Corporation, and served as a staff assistant of Senator Tom Eagleton. From 1999- 2007, Melba was the Representative of the 41st District, where she served on the Appropriations- Health and Mental Health; Urban Affairs; Tourism, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs; Commer and Economic Development; Children, Families, and Health; and the Civil and Administrative Law Committees, as well as the Interim Committee on Energy and Environment and the Interim Committee on Urban Conservation and Restoration. In 2007, she joined the Kansas City Council as Councilwoman of the 3rd District in 2007 until her retirement in 2015. During her time on the City Council, Melba served on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Legislative Committee, Public Safety and Emergency Services Committee, and the Neighborhoods and Housing Healthy Communities Committee.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection also contains three manuals, located in the Library: the Official Manual State of Missouri, 2005-2006, the Official Manual State of Missouri, 1991-1992, and the Official Manual State of Missouri, 1989-1990. These items are also available upon request.

Series 1: Awards

This series features plaques and awards bestowed upon Phil Curls and Melba Curls.

Series 2: Photographs

This series contains photographs of Phil and Melba Curls, including one of Phil Curls meeting President Carter.

Series 3: Advertisements

This series contains political advertisements for Melba Curls.

Collection Inventory**Series 1: Awards**

- f. 1 Hallmark Political Action Committee, Public Service Award, Phil Curls, 1988
- f. 2 American Cancer Society, Outstanding Service, Phil Curls
- f. 3 Greater Kansas City Women's Political Caucus, Share the Torch Plaque, Melba Curls, 2007
- f. 4 National Congress of Black Women Kansas City Chapter, In Recognition, Melba Curls, 2013
- f. 5 Dedicated Service to Public Safety, Melba Curls
- f. 6 American Jazz Museum, Board Service Award, Melba Curls, 2015

Series 2: Photographs

- f. 7 Framed Photo of Phil Curls with 2 men
- f. 8 Framed Photo of Phil Curls and President Jimmy Carter
- f. 9 Prints #1-2
- f. 10 Phil Curls Annual Scholarship Invitational Golf Tournament

Series 3: Advertisements

- f. 11 Political Advertisements

**Processed by Laura Darnell, Archivist, April 2024. Updated by Laura Darnell, Archivist
August 2025.**

Sources:

Conrads, David. "Phillip Curls." Missouri Valley Special Collections, 2009. Accessed April 2024. <https://kchistory.org/document/biography-phillip-curls-1942-2007-legislator-and-political-activist>

Jaros, Joe. "Councilwoman looks back fondly at time in office." Northeast News, Aug 2015. Accessed April 2024. <https://northeastnews.net/pages/councilwoman-looks-back-fondly-at-time-in-office/>

Kansas City Black History. "Phillip B. Curls Sr." Accessed April 2024. <https://kcblackhistory.org/articles/phillip-b-curls-sr>

Missouri House of Representatives. "Representative Melba Curls." Accessed April 2024. <https://house.mo.gov/memberdetails.aspx?district=041&year=2002&code=R>

Missouri House of Representatives. "Representative Melba Curls: District 41" Accessed April 2024. <https://documents.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills01/member01/mem041.htm>

"Rep. Melba Curls: 92nd General Assembly." Accessed April 2024. <https://house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills03/member/bio041.htm>