



State of Tennessee  
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**Tennessee State Library and Archives**  
403 Seventh Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**RONALD R. LAWSON, SR.**  
**(1941-2002)**  
**PAPERS**  
**1959-2004**

*Prepared by:*

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Archival Technical Services

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**MICROFILMED**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ronald R. "Scat" Lawson, Sr., Papers consist of a mixture of donated items and items loaned for microfilming. The materials were donated/loaned by Ronald Lawson, Jr., in October 2004. Loaned materials were returned after filming.

There are no restrictions on the individual research uses of these materials, and single copies of items may be made for such purposes.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The materials in this collection document the legendary basketball career as both player and coach, of Ronald R. Lawson, Sr. This collection consists of both donated and loaned items.

The donated items consist of seven letters regarding Coach Lawson, dated 2002-2003, and not dated; a program for the TSSAA 2004 Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon, March 20, 2004; a pamphlet, "Cameron Panthers vs. Pearl Tigers," November 30, 2002; a photo review of coach Lawson's basketball career; and a flyer about Cameron Middle School.

The items loaned for microfilming consist of: photograph scrapbook of Ronald Lawson, Sr.'s basketball playing and coaching career, 1959-2004; a clippings scrapbook of the same, 1960-1965; and a folder of materials related to Dr. James R. Lawson, Ronald senior's father and the 8<sup>th</sup> president of Fisk University, 1968, 1997.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Ronald R. "Scat" Lawson, Sr., was born on April 26, 1941, in Opelousas, Louisiana. He was the son of Dr. James R. Lawson, former president of Fisk University, and Lillian Arceneaux Lawson. The Lawson family moved to Nashville shortly after his birth and began his education at St. Vincent DePaul. He graduated from St. Vincent DePaul and entered Father Ryan High School in 1956.

In 1957 Lawson transferred to Pearl High School and began playing with the basketball team. He became a starter on the varsity team in 1958. During Lawson's time with Pearl High the team won three straight Black National High School Championships, from 1958 through 1960, under legendary coach William J. Gupton. Lawson led Pearl to two straight national titles. At Pearl he was an honor student and Senior Class President in 1959.

Upon graduation from Pearl High, Lawson was offered basketball scholarships by Notre Dame, Loyola University, University of Kansas, University of Cincinnati, and UCLA, among others. Some observers said that Lawson was the best high school player ever produced in middle-Tennessee. Lawson selected UCLA so that he could play under legendary coach John Wooden.

In 1962, Lawson transferred to Fisk University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1963, and a Master of Arts degree in 1966. After receiving his degrees, Lawson played for the Harlem Magicians and a local semi-professional team, the Nashville Shamrocks. He received offers to tryout from the Miami Floridians, Indiana Pacers, and the Oakland Oaks of the ABA.

Lawson decided to try coaching in 1964, when he accepted his first head coach job at Cameron High School, long-time rival of Pearl High. Under Lawson's direction, Cameron won their first state championship in 1970 with a 29-1 record, and repeated in 1971 with a perfect 32-0 record. The Cameron Middle School gymnasium was named the "Ronald Lawson, Sr. Gymnasium of Champions," in his honor.

When Cameron High was closed in 1971, Lawson became head coach of the men's basketball team at Fisk University. In Lawson's second year at Fisk the team went 24-5, and won the Southern Inter-Collegiate Athletic Championship (SIAC). He was named SIAC Coach of the Year. The following year the Bulldogs went 26-4 winning the SIAC for the second consecutive year. That earned Fisk a trip to the NCAA South Region where they played rival Tennessee State University (TSU), beating TSU 65-54 at Kean's Little Garden at TSU.

Lawson finished his coaching career at Fisk in 1979, when he was ranked in the top ten winning coaches in the nation among Division III coaches. Seventy-five percent of Lawson's Fisk players graduated, and a scholarship is named for him at Fisk University. Ronald R. "Scat" Lawson, Sr., died unexpectedly on February 6, 2002. Lawson was inducted posthumously into the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) Hall of Fame on March 20, 2004.

## **CONTAINER LIST**

1. Photograph scrapbook, 1959-2004 (Microfilm only)
2. Clippings scrapbook, 1960-1965 (Microfilm only)
3. Folder of materials related to Ronald R. Lawson, Sr., 2002-2004
4. Folder of materials related to Dr. James R. Lawson, 1968; 1997