



**State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
Tennessee State Library and Archives**

**Ronald R. Lawson, Sr., Papers, 1957-2009**

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**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

**Creator:**

Lawson, Ronald R., Jr., 1962-

**Inclusive Dates:**

1957-2009, bulk 2002-2009

**Scope & Content:**

Consists of biographies, correspondence, newsletters, and programs. 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 latter only available on microfilm.

This collection holds programs titled "The Inauguration of James Raymond Lawson as Eighth President of Fisk University," dated 1968 (photocopy); "First Annual Legends Basketball Game Featuring Cameron Panthers vs. Pearl Tigers," dated 2002; "Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association 2004 Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon," dated 2004; "Honoring the 1970 and 1971 TSSAA Champion Cameron High Panthers," dated 2007; "Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony," dated 2007; "Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools' Sports Hall of Fame: Induction Ceremony," dated 2008; "Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame 2008 Awards Banquet and Induction Ceremony," dated 2008; and "Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame 2009 Awards Banquet and Induction Ceremony," dated 2009.

A portion of the collection contains biographical sketches titled "Brief Biography of Coach Ronald R. Lawson Sr. (1941-2002): Men's Varsity Basketball Coach at Cameron High School from 1964-1971," written by the president and historian of Cameron High School Alumni Group, Inc. in collaboration with Ronald Lawson Jr., undated; "Profile of African Americans in Tennessee: James Raymond Lawson (1915-1996)" and "Profile of African Americans in Tennessee: Henry Alvin Cameron (1872-1918)" by the 2008 Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture, dated 2008.

Various materials include eight pieces of correspondence regarding Ronald R. Lawson, Sr., dated 2002 to 2003; two newsletters titled "Scoreboard" by the Tennessee Sports Hall of fame, dated 2007, and "The Courier" by Tennessee Historical Commission, dated 2006; photograph copies of Dr. James R. Lawson's portrait and Ronald R. Lawson, Sr.'s basketball career, dated 1957 to 1974; and a brochure featuring Cameron Middle School's history, dated 2003.

Oversize material contains a proclamation, dated 2007, commemorating the history of the National Negro High School Basketball Tournament and the dedication of a historical marker on the campus of Tennessee State University signed by Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives Jimmy Naifeh (active 1939-2022), and Representative of the 54th House District Brenda Gilmore (active 1952-2022).

Materials housed in Vault Collections, V-9, include a CD and DVD related to National Negro High School Basketball titled "Loyola University Chicago: 1963 NCAA Basketball Champions" and "Kean's Little Garden: A Panel Discussion on the National Negro High School Basketball Tournaments, 1945-1967."

Materials only loaned for microfilming consist of a photograph scrapbook, dated 1959 to 2004, and clippings scrapbook, dated 1960 to 1965, related to Ronald R. Lawson, Sr.'s basketball playing and coaching career. These materials are accessible from Mf. no. 1748.

**Physical Description/Extent:**

0.5 cubic feet

**Accession/Record Group Number:**

2004-087  
2006-063  
2007-044  
2008-033  
2008-110

**Language:**

English

**Permanent Location:**

ASRS  
V-9

**Repository:**

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1001 Rep. John Lewis Way North,  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

## **Administrative/Biographical History**

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 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.

## **Organization/Arrangement of Materials**

This collection is arranged in alphabetical order by document type.

## **Conditions of Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access:**

No restrictions

### **Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:**

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## **Index Terms**

### **Personal/Family Names:**

Cameron, Henry Alvin, 1872-1912  
Lawson family  
Lawson, J. R. (James Raymond), 1915-1996  
Lawson, Ronald R., Jr., 1962-  
Lawson, Ronald R., Sr., 1941-2002

### **Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:**

Cameron High School (Nashville, Tenn.)  
Fisk University. Department of Athletics  
Southern Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association  
Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association  
Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame  
Tennessee State University

### **Subjects:**

African American athletes -- Tennessee -- 20th century -- Sources  
African American athletes -- Tennessee -- 21st century -- Sources  
Basketball coaches -- Tennessee -- 20th century -- Sources

Basketball players -- Tennessee -- 20th century -- Sources

**Geographic Names:**

Nashville (Tenn.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources

Nashville (Tenn.) -- History -- 21st century -- Sources

**Document Types:**

Biographical sketches

Booklets

Business cards

CD-ROMs

Correspondence

DVDs

Newsletters

Proclamations

Programs (documents)

**Acquisition and Appraisal**

**Provenance and Acquisition:**

Ronald R. Lawson, Jr., donated this collection to the Tennessee State Library and Archives in 2008.

**Processing and Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation:**

Ronald R. Lawson, Sr., Papers, 1957-2009, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

**Processing Information:**

Processed by John-Paul Richiuso, October 2004, and reprocessed by Kaitlyne Bowling, June 2022.

**Existence and Location of Copies:**

Mf. no. 1748

**Related Archival Materials:**

Ronald R. Lawson, Sr., Papers, Addition, 1940-2008, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

## DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

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### CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Biographies	2008	1	1
Booklets	2002-2009	1	2
Brochure	2003	1	3
Correspondence	2002-2008	1	4
Newsletters	2006-2007	1	5
Newspaper clippings	1996-1997	1	6
Photographs	1957-1974	1	7
Programs	2007	1	8
Proclamation	2007	M-OV 16	
CD	undated	V-9	
DVD	undated	V-9	
<b>Microfilm only materials</b>			
Contents/Item Title	Date	Reel	
Scrapbook -- photographs	1959-2004	1	
Scrapbook -- clippings	1960-1965	1	