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## **Guide to the**

### **THE JOHN MORRIS COLLECTION**

**Irving Teacher Walk-Out Material  
1951-1960 (bulk 1955-1956)**

**.4 linear ft.**

**Accession Number: 9697-35**

**Collection Number: 55**

**Prepared by Kevin Kendro  
December 2007**

**CITATION: The John Morris Collection, Box number, Folder number, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.**

#### **Historical Sketch**

In early 1955, the Irving School Board fired the school superintendent, Dr. John Beard. When the board refused to give their reasons for firing Beard, most of the teachers and other school district employees walked off the job in support of the superintendent. The teacher walk-out created a bitter rift in the Irving community.

The supporters of Dr. Beard petitioned Dallas County to allow for an election to dissolve the school district, with the ultimate purpose of disbanding the school board, after which there would be another election to reconstitute the school district and elect a new school board. The election was held in March of 1955, with the community voting in favor of dissolving the school district. With the district no longer in existence, the school board was also dissolved. Two months later, a second election was held, and the voters voted to reestablish the Irving Independent School District with the faction supporting Dr. Beard winning the seats on the newly formed school board. The board rehired Dr. Beard and the teachers who had walked out.

A year later, in June of 1956, another school board election was held, and the anti-Beard faction prevailed. At this time, Dr. Beard resigned saying that the new board should be allowed to pick its own superintendent.

The disagreement between the two factions went well beyond the school board issue and into accusations of communist influence and unknown outside forces coming into the community.

#### **Biographical Sketch**

The collection's donor, John Morris, was a long-time resident of Irving. He was born in

Bomarton, Texas, a no longer existing Czech community that was located in north central Texas.

He graduated from high school in Bomarton in 1931 and attended North Texas State Normal School (today University of North Texas). Morris married Johnnie Davenport in 1938. He worked as an insurance salesman in Denton and Dallas, and during WWII, Morris worked in shipbuilding in Houston. After the war, he began work for Waples Platter in Dallas and moved to Irving in 1947. In the early 1950s, Morris started his own specialty advertising company. He remained in the specialty advertising business for the remainder of his career.

John Morris died in 2001.

**Sources:** The John Morris - Irving Teacher Walk-Out Material

John Morris, interviewed by Jan Hart, September 20, 1997, tape 32, and transcript, Oral History Collection, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

### **Scope and Content**

The John Morris - Irving Teacher Walk-Out Material is arranged in three series. The bulk of the collection consists of newspaper articles and school board election campaign material relating to the Irving school teacher walk-out in 1955. The collection is contained in one half-size manuscript box and space in Newspaper Cabinet Drawer 3.

Series I. consists of miscellaneous documents and ephemera found in the collection such as a 1951 Irving Telephone Directory, a campaign card from the school board election, and an Order of Service from John Morris's funeral, 2001.

Series II. is made up of campaign fliers and mailers put together by the anti-Beard "Save Our Schools Committee." This material provides an excellent insight into how the teacher walk-out grew into something much larger than a disagreement over the school board's actions. The fliers make accusations of outside influences, unknown people around town, and communist motivations.

Series III. consists of newspapers and newspaper articles concerning the firing of Dr. Beard and the events that followed, 1955 and 1956. This series is the largest in the collection. The articles are mainly from *The Dallas Morning News*. The original newspaper articles were brittle and deteriorating, so they were photocopied and the originals were discarded. Two complete issues of *The Irving Herald* and one each of the *Irving News-Record* and *The Irving News Citizen* from the time of the walk-out were kept in the collection. Although they are very brittle, the originals have been maintained because there are no microfilmed records of these newspapers, and the Archives keeps original issues of them when they are available.

The newspaper articles in this series provide a history of the firing of Dr. Beard, the teacher walk-out, and the ensuing school board elections.

### **Provenance Statement**

The John Morris - Teacher Walk-Out Material, accession number 9697-35, was donated to the Irving Archives by John Morris on September 22, 1997. Prior to its donation to the Archives, the material was in the possession of John Morris.

### **Literary Rights Statement**

Permission to publish from the John Morris - Teacher Walkout Material must be obtained from the Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

### **Note to Researcher**

See also: The Irving Archives Oral History Collection contains an interview with John Morris on tape 32 and a transcript of the interview. The interview was conducted in 1997.

Further information on the firing of Dr. Beard and the ensuing events can be found in:

Irving Archives Collection 6 – Chamber of Commerce Scrapbooks

Irving Archives Collection 40 – Elise and Adolphe Walker Collection

Accession Number 0607-46 – bound volume of photocopies of newspaper articles relating to the teacher walk-out.

Further information on John Morris can be found in:

Accession numbers 0001-128 and 0001-185

Discussion of John Beard's firing and the teacher walk-out can be found in the following interviews in the Irving Archives Oral History Collection:

Russell Horn interview - tape 72 and transcript  
Harry Spencer interview-tape 154 and transcript  
Alice Butler interview - tape 128 and transcript  
Arthur Casey interview - tape 116 and transcript  
Lynn Connor interview - tape 152 and transcript  
Nel Decker interview - tape 37 and transcript  
Jane Easter interview - tape 143 and transcript  
Catherine Schulze interview - tape 174 not transcribed  
Clereta Toler interview - tape 211 and transcript

### **Container List**

#### **Series I. Documents, 1951, 1956, and 2001**

##### Box 1

##### Folder

1 Documents, 1951, 1956, and 2001  
Contains an Irving, Texas, telephone directory, February 1951; campaign card for James T.

Young for school board; Order of Service from John Morris's funeral, April 2, 2001.

## **Series II. Campaign Material, 1955 and 1956 (bulk 1955)**

### 2 Campaign Material, 1955 and 1956

Contains bulletins, fliers, and mailers created on behalf of the anti-Beard faction during the school board election campaign to determine whether to abolish the school district.

## **Series III. Newspapers, 1955-1960 (bulk 1955)**

### 3 Newspaper clippings, 1955

Contains photocopies of newspaper clippings concerning the firing of Irving school superintendent John Beard, the ensuing teacher walk-out, and the elections to disband and reorganize the independent school district.

### 4 Newspaper clippings, 1956

Contains photocopies of newspaper clippings concerning the school teacher walk-out and the school board election of 1956.

### 5 Newspaper clippings, n.d.

Contains photocopies of newspaper clippings concerning the firing of Irving school superintendent John Beard, the ensuing teacher walk-out, and the elections to disband and reorganize the independent school district.

### 6 Editorials, 1960

Contains editorials from *The Dallas Morning News*, September and October 1960, mainly about Nikita Khrushchev and the U. S. presidential campaign of 1960.

## Oversize Folder

### Oversize Newspapers, 1955

Folder Contains an issue of *The Irving News-Citizen*, March 13, 1955, and *The Irving News-Record*, March 24, 1955. The papers contain articles on the upcoming election to disband the school district. There are also two issues of *The Irving Herald*, Friday, June 3, 1955, headline - "Affidavit Reveals Personnel Planned School's Shut-Down" and Friday, June 10, 1955, headline - "Beard Issued Challenge by Blaylock." Also in the file is a page from the *Irving News* addressing what goes on at a PTA meeting, Feb. 6, 1955, and an *Irving School News* newsletter, undated, containing articles about various activities in the school district.

An issue of the *Dallas Time Herald*, Friday, August 9, 1974, and *The Dallas Morning News*, Friday, August 9, 1974, documenting Richard Nixon's resignation and Gerald Ford becoming the 38th president of the United States have been removed from the collection. These newspaper issues are available on microfilm in the Irving Public Library.