

## **JAMES M. RIDENOUR, 1942? -**

### **A Register of His Papers, 1989 – 1993**

#### **Overview of Collection**

**Creator:** Ridenour, James M. 1942?  
**Collection Number:** Mss 258  
**Title:** James M. Ridenour Papers, 1988 – 1993

#### **Abstract:**

James M. Ridenour served as Director of the National Parks Service from April 1989 to January 1993 under the George H. Bush administration. The papers consist of his correspondence with National Park Service administrators and staff as well as other government administrators especially those from the Department of the Interior. There is correspondence concerning the adoption as a national park of the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, the National Park Service 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, National Park Service concessions and the donation of the Laurence Rockefeller Woodstock property.

**Quantity:** 2.5 cubic feet consisting of 5 document boxes and 5 photographs in 1 folder.

#### **Scope and Content Note**

The papers include correspondence, photographs and reports. The materials date from 1988 – 1993 with the bulk of the collection from 1989 – 1992.

The James M. Ridenour Papers consist of his correspondence file while Director of the National Park Service, 1989 – 1993 including letters from NPS administrators and staff as well as with other government administrators especially from the Department of the Interior. They pertain to the management of the national parks, natural monuments and historic sites under the care of the NPS as well the conservation of natural resources and historic sites thorough the nation. The papers are arranged chronologically.

There is information about the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Park Service, the transfer of the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco to the Park Service, the fires in Yellowstone, the Exxon Valdez oil spill and correspondence from Pearl Harbor survivors concerning the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. There is also lengthy correspondence regarding concessions at the parks, most notably the Curry Company in Yosemite. There is correspondence between Ridenour and Laurence S. Rockefeller about donating his property, now the Marsh-Billings-Rockerfeller Historic Park, located outside of Woodstock, Vermont. Correspondents include George H. and Barbara Bush, Dan Quayle, Ronald Reagan, Lady Bird Johnson, Laurence S. Rockefeller, and Nancy Thurmond.

Copies of three of Ridenour's speeches, 1989 – 1990, a series of briefing papers by Ridenour to the Secretary of the Interior concerning the status of six issues that the Secretary requested updates, 1991 and five photographs 1988 – 1991 are also part of the collection.

### **Additional Collection Information**

Cite as: [description of item such as "Letter from John Smith, Clemson, SC to Michael Jones, Columbia, SC"], box number, folder number, Mss 258, James M. Ridenour Papers, Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC.

### **Biographical Note**

James M. Ridenour was born and raised in Wabash County, Indiana. He graduated from Wabash high school where he was class and student body president. After attending DePauw University as a freshman, he transferred to Indiana University where he earned a B.S. and a M.S in Recreation and Park Administration in 1964 and 1965. Ridenour married Anna Jean McClure soon after his graduation and began working at LaRue Carter Hospital in Indianapolis. He served in the United States Army Medical Corps beginning in 1966. In 1967 he worked at a medical aid station near the Cambodian border in Vietnam and served as the commander of the 71<sup>st</sup> Evacuation Hospital near Pleiku. After his tour of duty Ridenour returned to the United States in 1968. He then worked for the Colorado Department of Agriculture as personnel director and then director of administration. During this period he earned a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado in 1972. From 1975 to 1978, he worked for the Council of State Governments in Kentucky. Ridenour then moved back to Indiana and became a partner in a racquetball and health club in West Lafayette. During the 1980 election, he served as a volunteer fund raiser for the campaigns of President Ronald Reagan, Senator Daniel Quayle and Governor Robert Orr. In 1981, Ridenour became the Director of Indiana's Department of Natural Resources preferring a position in Indiana to one in Washington. He stayed in this position until 1989 when there was a change of administration in Indiana. For a few months in 1989 he was a member of the faculty at Purdue University until President George H. Bush appointed him Director of the National Park Service which he held until January 1993.

Several major events impacted upon national parks during Ridenour's tenure. There were major fires in Yellowstone as well as the controversial reintroduction of wolves. The Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster occurred in Alaska with the accompanying impact upon sites along the spill. Hurricane Andrew devastated Southern Florida including the Everglades. Thirteen national parks were added at a time when he protested against budget priorities that stretched the Park Service with sites that he believed were not worthy of national recognition.

Ridenour played a key role in the organization of the NPS 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration with a yearlong symposium. This symposium was a milestone for the NPS and produced a report known as "The Vail Agenda." "The Vail Agenda" detailed the strategies to expand the NPS system and manage its natural and cultural resources into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ridenour also successfully negotiated reform of the NPS concessions contracts, most notably with the Curry Company at Yosemite. He succeeded in reducing the

concessionaire's property to book value which markedly reduced the cost if they were to be purchased in lieu of renewing a contract and reformed the preferential rights of existing concessionaires when bidding contracts.

Ridenour advocated the privatization of some services and facilities while expanding other activities. He helped build a stronger science and resource protection service for the NPS through the "Parks as Classrooms" program. The geographic information system (GIS) were initiated for the park service during his tenure.

Biographical information from the National Parks Service website ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)), the Texas A & M University Department of Recreation, Park, & Tourism Sciences website ([www.rpts.tamu.edu](http://www.rpts.tamu.edu)) and Indiana University Office of Media Relations web site ([wwwnewsinfo.iu.edu](http://wwwnewsinfo.iu.edu)).

## **Related Material**

Mss 117 William Penn Mott, Jr. Papers

## **Subjects**

Conservation of Natural Resources – United States  
United States. National Park Service  
Historic Sites  
Marsh-Billings National Historical Park  
National Park Concessions – United States  
Natural Monuments  
Oil spills – Alaska – Prince William Sound  
Presidio of San Francisco (Calif.)  
Yellowstone National Park  
Yosemite National Park

## **Correspondents**

Bush, George (1924 --  
Quayle, Dan (1947 --  
Reagan, Ronald  
Rockerfeller, Laurence  
Thurmond, Nancy Moore

## **Document Types**

Photographs

## **Administrative Information**

### **Acquired from:**

James M. Ridenour, in 1993 and 2001.

### **Processing Information**

Stacie Poore, a graduate student, prepared the register in 2003 as part of History 893, Practicum in Archives with further editorial work done by Michael Kohl in 2004 and processing help from student assistant Cornelius Harrington.

## SEPARATION LIST

### Photographs:

1. One 3 x 4 color photograph of personal friends of James Ridenour, Henry and Jean Kazimer, at Christmas 1988.
2. Two 3 x 4 black and white photographs taken at the debut of the Centennial Maritime History Exhibit 1989.
3. One 8 x 10 color photograph of Mall and Washington Monument in Washington, DC 1989.
4. One 8 x 10 black and white photograph of First-line Park Supervisors and Director Ridenour who gathered for a conference at Harper's Ferry, WV 1991.

### Books:

*National Parks for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Vail Agenda.* A report & recommendation to the Director of the National Park Service.

Mss 258 James M. Ridenour Papers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	1	Correspondence
	2	1989
	3	April
	4	May
	5	June
	6	July
	7	August
	8	September
	9	October
2	1	November
	2	December
	3	1990
	4	January
	5	February
	6	March
	7	April
3	1	May
	2	June
	3	July
	4	August
	5	September
4	1	October
	2	November
	3	December
	4	1991
	5	January
	6	February
	7	March
	8	April
	9	May
	10	June
5	1	July
	2	August
	3	September
	4	October
	5	November
	6	December
	7	1992
5	8	January
	9	February
	10	March
5	11	April
	1	May
	2	June
	3	July

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4	August
5	September
6	October
7	November
8	December
	1993
9	January
10	Director's Update on Issues To Secretary Lujan of the Department of the Interior, July 16, 1991
12	Ridenour Speeches, 1989 -- 1990