

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

**JACK CATO PAPERS
1953 – 2006 (Bulk: 1970 – 2006)**

Manuscript Collection: MC021

Size: .5 linear feet
Restrictions on Access: None
Restrictions on Use: None

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Creator Sketch:

The only surviving child of Willard Clyde and Genevieve Clayton Cato, John Thomas (Jack) Cato was born on October 8, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois. His father built plants all over the United States for Monsanto Chemical Company and Tellepson Construction Company. Cato attended numerous schools, acquiring an adventurous spirit and quizzical nature. After graduating in 1953 from the Lutheran High School in St. Louis, Missouri, Jack enrolled at the University of Missouri, studying Journalism.

After leaving Missouri in 1957, Cato worked in radio and television in Galveston and Houston completed a five-year stint as a stockbroker before joining KPRC in 1967. One of his earliest assignments was reporting traffic from the air and on the ground. Broadcasting the reports from the Houston Police Station, Cato established a long-time relationship with policemen that would serve him throughout his career. With his news car outfitted as his office with 28 radios to every facet of the city, Cato would become known as the dean of police reporters. Gifts of cigars and ice cream at crime scenes soon became his trademark.

In 1972 Cato covered the devastating earthquake that leveled the city of Managua, Nicaragua, broadcasting daily reports of the relief efforts. In 1973, his breaking news coverage of the Elmer Wayne Henley murders made him famous throughout the United States when Henley confessed to his mother over Cato's car telephone, "Momma, I killed Dean..." In 1978, he nearly lost his life while filming a gathering at Moody Park, Houston, which quickly turned into a riot and sent him and his photographer to the hospital. In 1984, he traveled to Columbia and Peru to follow the cocaine trail to the Port

of Houston. His thrill of adventure had him reporting every hurricane in this part of the country.

In 1974 Cato resigned from KPRC for a brief time, along with George Nelson Barnett, to form a local wire service which soon became a training ground for young reporters. He returned to KPRC in 1976 and stayed until his retirement from television news in 1995.

Also in 1974, Jack, along with his wife, Shirley, founded Broadcast News Reports, the first video media clipping and transcription service in Texas and one of the first in the United States. The company was sold in 2004 to Multivision, Inc., of California.

Cato received many awards and was especially proud of receiving the UPI Broadcasters Association First Place Award for spot news in 1974; the Pieringer Award from the Texas Association of Broadcasters in 1978; and the Individual Achievement Award for a Television News Story from the Headliners Club in 1984.

After retiring from television news in 1995, Cato became the police spokesperson for the Houston Police Department, a reversal of duties from his reporter days.

A life long Republican, Cato decided to run for political office in 1998. He successfully won two four-year terms as Harris County Treasurer in 1998 and 2003. In March 2006 he won the Republican primary for a third four-year term.

Jack Cato was 70 years old and in his eighth year as Harris County Treasurer when he died of heart failure on May 22, 2006, at St. Luke's Hospital. He married Shirley Jean Logan in 1969 and had two sons, Chris and John, and seven grandchildren. He was a member of Garden Oaks Baptist Church and Director of the Adult 11 Sunday School Class.

Scope and Contents Note:

Photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, correspondence, a WNET radio program transcript, printed materials, a scrapbook, recorded materials and a caricature document the professional and political careers of Jack Cato 1953 – 2006. Ninety-seven photo images (1953 – 2006) record Cato as a puppeteer in an early children's television show in St. Louis, meeting Richard M. Nixon in the early 1960s, interviewing national celebrities visiting Houston, and campaigning for political office in addition to working as a television news reporter both in Texas and abroad. "Free Press / Free Trials," a transcript from a radio program aired on November 29, 1973, on WNET in New York City, records news reporters from Houston discussing the issue of freedom of the press versus the right to a fair trial in light of the coverage of the Elmer Wayne Henley mass murders in Houston. Digital recordings of the news reports following Cato's death and his memorial service document the high regard for Cato in Houston and Harris County, Texas. There are seven series: Professional Papers, Political Papers, Printed Materials, Scrapbook, Photographs, Works of Art, and In Memory of Jack Cato.

Inventory

Series: Professional Papers

Dates: 1970 - 2005

Title / Description	Date	Location
KPRC		
Correspondence	1970, 07/24 – 2002, 04/02	0920-X-01
Printed Materials	n.d.	0920-X-02
Cato Profile by George Nelson Barnette	ca. 1980	0920-X-03
Managua Earthquake	1972, 12/24 – 1973, 02/19	0920-X-04
Elmer Wayne Henley Murders	1973, 08/08	0920-X-05
Transcript “Free Press/Free Trials”	1973, 11/29	0920-X-06
Moody Park Riot	1978, 05/08 – 1995, 05/05	0920-X-07
Cocaine Pipeline	1984, 04/05 – 1985, 02/03; n.d.	0920-X-08
Houston Police Department:		
Correspondence	1980, 01/07 – 1998, 03/18; n.d.	0920-X-09
Newspaper Clipping	1994, 08/28-08/30; n.d.	0920-X-10
Harris County Treasurer:		
Correspondence / Stationary	2005, 11/17	0920-X-11

Series: Political Papers

Dates: 1997 - 2006

Title / Description	Date	Location
Harris County Treasurer: 1998 Campaign		
Correspondence	1998, 01/26 -05/28 – n.d.	0920-X-12
Newspaper Articles	1998, 2/22 – 10/16 – n.d.	0920-X-13
Republican Primary Election Materials	1998, 02/10 – 03/01; n.d.	0920-X-14

Cato Campaign Materials	1997, 12/30 – 1998, 11/03; n.d.	0920-X-15
Republican Primary Results	1998, 03/11	0920-X-16
Harris County Treasurer: 2006 Campaign		
Correspondence	2006, 01/10 – 03/09; n.d.	0920-X-17
Newspaper Articles	2005, 11/14 – 2006, 03/08; n.d.	0920-X-18
Republican Primary Election Materials	2006, 01/04 – 03/07	0920-X-19
Cato Campaign Materials	2006; n.d.	0920-X-20
Photographs	2004, 02/03 – 2006, 01/06	0920-X-21

Series: Printed Materials

Dates: 1960 - 2006

Title / Description	Date	Location
Certificates	1973 – 2004; n.d.	0920-X-22
Magazine Tear Sheets	1980 – 1987	0920-X-23
Newsletters	1990 – 1994	0920-X-24
Newspaper Clippings	1960, 11/04 – 2006	0920-X-25
Newspaper Clippings	n.d.	0920-X-26
Periodicals		
<i>Texas: Houston Chronicle Magazine, “Cop Shop”</i>	1983, 08/07; 1989, 10	0007-V-04
713, “Take a Ride on the Sleazy Side”		
Programs	1970, 02/07 – 2006, 04/11	0920-X-27
Ephemera: Identification, Press Passes	1969 – 1998	0920-X-28

Series: Scrapbook

Dates: 1967 - 1975

Title / Description	Date	Location
Photocopy of Scrapbook [prior to disassembling]	1967 – 1975	0007-V-03
Correspondence	1970, 02/07 – 1974, 01/24; n.d.	0920-X-29

Newspaper Clippings	1967 – 1975 – n.d.	0920-X-30
Photographs	n.d.	0920-X-31

Series: Photographs
Dates: 1953 - 2006

Title / Description	Date	Location
Early Years	1953 – 1960; n.d.	0920-X-32
KPRC-TV	1969 – 1991; n.d.	0920-X-33
Houston Police Department	ca. 1994 – 1998; n.d.	0920-X-34
Harris County	ca. 1993 – 2006; n.d.	0920-X-35
Grand Jury Assembly	ca. 1993 – 2000	0920-X-36

Series: Works of Art
Dates: 1968

Title / Description	Date	Location
Works of Art	1968	0920-X-37

Series: In Memory of Jack Cato
Dates: 2006 - 2007

Title / Description	Date	Location
Condolences	2006, 05/22 – 2007, 09-17; n.d.	0920-X-38
Media Reports of Death	ca. 2006; n.d.	0920-X-39
Memorial Service	2006, 05/27	0920-X-40
Digital Records:		
Air Check News Taping		
A Celebration of Life: Jack Cato	2006, 05/22 - 27	0920-X-41