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### SUMMARY

**Size**  
12 linear feet

**Geographic Locations**  
Primarily Hidalgo County, TX also Mexico, Italy.

**Inclusive Dates**  
1917-2009

**Bulk Dates**  
1960s-1990s

**Languages**  
English, Spanish

**Summary**  
This collection documents the life and career of Alfonso Ramirez, first Hispanic mayor of Hidalgo County, Texas.

**Access Restrictions**  
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**Related Collections**  
Valerie Ramirez, Robert Ramirez

**Citation**  
Al Ramirez Collection. Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

**Display Credit Line**  
Courtesy of Museum of South Texas History.

**Stack Location(s)**  
I:15, I:16, I:17, I:18
Alfonso René Ramirez (1923-2009) is perhaps most remembered for serving as the first Hispanic mayor of Edinburg, Texas, from 1963 to 1967. Throughout his life, however, Al Ramirez made numerous contributions to his community. A graduate of Texas A&M University and a World War II veteran, Ramirez had careers in politics as well as education and publishing.

As an elected official, Ramirez left a legacy of cooperation and public service chosen over private interests. As an educator, he recognized that learning multiple languages was crucial to overcoming “misunderstandings between people who speak different languages and have different customs,” as he noted in a speech on Pan-Americanism. Ramirez taught Spanish at the college level, and he developed a widely used curriculum for bilingual education.

Through his publishing company, he promoted the regional history of South Texas and northeastern Mexico. He was proud of his Hispanic roots, and helped organize the first Vela Family Reunion at Laguna Seca Ranch, with over 1,300 family members in attendance.

Recognizing the importance of his legacy, the Ramirez family chose to donate material about his life and career to the Museum of South Texas History. By doing so, they entrusted the museum to be the caretakers of this legacy—as well as to share it with the larger public through display, research, and publication.
LIST OF SUB-GROUPS, SERIES, AND SUBSERIES

I. Publishing Companies
   A. New Santander Press
   B. Omni-Media

II. Genealogy

III. Memory Books

IV. Bumper Stickers

V. Military Life

VI. Play Scripts

VII. Mayoral Campaign and Records

VIII. Family Education Records

IX. Edinburg Housing Authority and Other Businesses

X. Community Organizations

XI. Memorial Book

XII. Personal Records

XIII. Published Materials

XIV. Correspondence

XV. Journals and Address Books

XVI. Other Publishing Companies

XVII. Photographs

XVIII. Media
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Publishing Companies

Young Alfonso Ramirez initially failed kindergarten due to his lack of English skills. But in 1939, he graduated from Edinburg High School in the top of his class. He went on to get his bachelor’s degree at Texas A&M College (1943) and his master’s degree from the University of Texas (1951). He taught school in Rio Grande City, Edinburg, and Pan American College. He also worked in school administration in several capacities.

Perhaps never forgetting his kindergarten experience, in the 1960s he developed an innovative curriculum for bilingual education and literacy. Published through his companies Omni-Media and The New Santander Press, the curriculum was used successfully throughout the state and the southwest for decades.

Ramirez named his publishing company New Santander Press, reflecting the region’s Spanish colonial history. The press specialized in regional authors and history, including his mother’s groundbreaking manuscript, Ranch Life in Hidalgo County After 1850.

Other titles included Wild Horse Desert, A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Mier in History, and With All Arms, an account of the first colonists in northeastern Mexico.

II. Genealogy

Al Ramirez’ family roots in South Texas ran deep. His mother, Emilia Schunior Ramirez, was a member of the large Vela family. A noted educator and author in her own right, she deeply influenced Ramirez in his love of learning, books, and history. This collection includes family trees and Vela family reunion material.

III. Memory Books

This includes Al Ramirez’ baby book and a school day memory book that belonged to his mother.

IV. Bumper Stickers

These bumper stickers relate to a variety of topics, including Al’s mayoral campaign.

V. Military Life

Like many of his generation, Ramirez served his country in World War II. He received the Air Medal and the Purple Heart for his service as combat pilot with the 454th Bombardment Group. He kept diaries and notes during his time in the service.
VI. Play Scripts

There are seven play scripts for “The Parade of Years” which was performed by Edinburg Junior College.

VII. Mayoral Campaign and Records

Ramirez was a leader in a wave of Hispanics entering politics in South Texas after World War II. Ramirez already had a successful career in school administration when he ran for Edinburg mayor in 1963. He ran a grass-roots campaign that led to victory by 14 votes. Ramirez became the first Hispanic mayor in Edinburg. In 1965, he handily won re-election. Later, he served as Texas State Director of Migrant Affairs under Governor John Connally. There are various campaign materials including posters and fundraising brochures. There are some speeches and newspaper articles written during his time as mayor.

VIII. Family Education Records

The education records primarily pertain to Al’s own education, with some information from Pan American College regarding Emilia Schunior Ramirez.

IX. Edinburg Housing Authority and Other Businesses

Al Ramirez served on the board of the Edinburg Housing Authority. There are also records from the Hidalgo Communications Corp.

X. Community Organizations

Ramirez was a long-time member of the Tripa Club, formed in the 1960s. The informal parties or pachangas held by this club provided a place for Valley Hispanics to network socially, talk politics, and launch political careers.

He was also active with the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

XI. Memorial Book

This file contains a memorial book created upon Al’s death in 2009, as well as records that were used in the creation of the book.

XII. Personal Records

Personal records encompasses a number of different topics, including sketches, notes, tax records, and medical records.

XIII. Published Materials
These records are those that were not published by one of Al’s companies, but were instead used in his research of various topics, including bilingual education.

XIV. Correspondence

Letters and emails from a number of different people and organizations that Al was a part of.

XV. Journals and Address Books

These include journals and address books that belonged to Al, as well as an address book that belonged to his mother.

XVI. Other Publishing Companies

More published materials used in Al’s research, as well as some proofs that were submitted to other publishers.

XVII. Photographs

There are numerous photographs associated with this collection, including family photos, photos from Al’s military service, *pachangas*, and more. Many of the photos are unidentified.

XVIII. Media

The media collection includes, amongst other material, materials relating to the Rock and Roll bilingual education program. There are both audio and video reels.

INDEX TERMS

- 454th Bombardment Group
- Bilingual education
- Edinburg, TX
- ESL (English as a Second Language)
- Hidalgo County Texas
- Ramirez, Alfonso
- Ramirez, Emilia Schunior
- Region One
- United States Air Force
- Vela Family
- World War II
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