

Al Ramirez Collection
Finding Aid

Compiled by
Kelly Francis-Love

Museum of South Texas History
Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives
Edinburg, Texas

2018



CONTENTS OF INVENTORY

Summary	#3
Biographical/Historical Note	#4
List of Series and Subseries	#5
Series and Subseries Descriptions	#6-8
Index Terms	#8
Container List	#9-10

Use of manuscript materials. If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 to make an appointment to visit the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives (MHMMA) reading room.

Photocopying. Should you wish to request photocopies, please consult a staff member. Do not remove items to be photocopied. The existing order and arrangement of unbound materials must be maintained. Reproductions must be made from surrogates (microfilm, digital scan, photocopy of original held by the Museum of South Texas History), when available.

Publication. Readers assume full responsibility for compliance with laws regarding copyright, literary property rights, and libel.

Permission to examine archival materials does not constitute permission to publish or display. Any publication or display of such materials beyond the limits of fair use requires specific prior written permission. An “Authorization to Publish or Display” must be completed and submitted to the Executive Director of the Museum to obtain permission. When permission to publish is granted, two copies of the publication will be requested for the MHMMA.

Proper acknowledgement of MHMMA materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page.

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	The collection is open for research. If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 to make an appointment to visit the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives (MHMMA) reading room.
Reproduction Note	Reproductions must be made from surrogates (microfilm, digital scan, photocopy of the original held by the Museum of South Texas History), when available. Only archives staff may photocopy collection documents.
Copyright	<p>Researchers assume full responsibility for compliance with laws regarding copyright, literary property rights, and libel.</p> <p>Permission to examine archival materials does not constitute permission to publish or display. Any publication or display of such materials beyond the limits of fair use requires specific prior written permission. Contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 for instructions to obtain permission to publish or display.</p>
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

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

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

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
I:15	RGDOC 900		OMNI Media
I:15	RGDOC 901		OMNI Media
I:15	RGDOC 902		OMNI Media
I:15	RGDOC 903		OMNI Media
I:15	RGDOC 904		OMNI Media
I:15	RGDOC 905		OMNI Media
I:16	RGDOC 906		New Santander Press
I:16	RGDOC 907		New Santander Press
I:16	RGDOC 908		New Santander Press
I:16	RGDOC 909		Genealogy
I:16	RGDOC 910		Memory Books
I:16	RGDOC 911		Bumper Stickers
I:16	RGDOC 912		Military Life
I:16	RGDOC 913		Play Scripts
I:16	RGDOC 914		Mayoral Campaign and Records
I:16	RGDOC 915		Family Education Records
I:17	RGDOC 916		Edinburg Housing Authority and Other Businesses
I:17	RGDOC 917		Community Organizations
I:17	RGDOC 918		Memorial Book
I:17	RGDOC 919		Personal Records
I:17	RGDOC		Personal Records

Al Ramirez Collection**Acc. # 2009.080, 2018.024****MHMM Archives**

	920		
I:17	RGDOC 921		Published Materials
I:17	RGDOC 922		Correspondence
I:17	RGDOC 923		Journals and Address Books
I:17	RGDOC 924		Other Publishing Companies
I:18	RGDOC 925		2018.024 journal books, personal records, mayoral records, genealogy, community organizations, military records, recipes, school records
I:18	No box #		Photos
Freezer			OMNI Media audio reels and film rolls
Media room			Media