



Brady, James S.: Files, 1981-1989

Finding Aid Type

White House Staff and Office File Collections

Subtitle/Office

Press Secretary, Office of

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Record Type

Textual

Biography

Biography

James Scott Brady was born on August 29, 1940 in Centralia, Illinois. In high school he excelled in several sports, and became an Eagle Scout. While attending the University of Illinois, he hosted a children's show at a local television station, and worked as a field representative for Senator Everett Dirksen (R-Illinois). He graduated from Illinois in 1962 with a degree in political science. After a summer internship at the Department of Justice, he found work in Illinois state government and the private sector.

Brady married Sue Beh in 1961, but they divorced two years later. In 1973 he married Sarah Kemp, who was then the finance liaison for the Republican Party in Illinois and they both decided to pursue careers in Washington, DC. Over the next seven years, Brady held various federal government positions: Special Assistant to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Special Assistant to the Director of OMB; Assistant to the Secretary of Defense; and staff member under Senator William Roth. Brady was press secretary to John Connolly as Connolly sought the 1980 Republican presidential nomination. He went on to serve as Director of Public Affairs and Research for the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign, and spokesman for the Office of the President-Elect in 1980-81. Brady became White House Press Secretary after Reagan was sworn into office in January 1981.

On March 30, Brady was shot in the forehead during the assassination attempt on President Reagan. Brady underwent over six hours of emergency surgery to remove bullet fragments from his head. He was hospitalized for most of the next eight months, undergoing additional surgeries, and nearly dying several times from blood clots. Brady finally left the hospital's care in November 1981. He was left partially paralyzed, with permanently slurred speech.

Brady formally returned to work in November 1982. Although he remained the White House Press Secretary until President Reagan left office, his injuries prevented him from resuming most of his duties. His assistant [Larry Speakes](#) continued to handle most press secretary functions, including hosting the regular White House press briefings, serving as the chief public spokesman for President Reagan and his Administration, and overseeing the Office of the Press Secretary. [Marlin Fitzwater](#) replaced Speakes in this role in 1987.

The Bradys took up the cause of gun control in 1985, after their young son picked up a loaded handgun in the car of an acquaintance. Sarah Brady became chair of Handgun Control Inc. in 1989, and the Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 1991. The two organizations were later renamed the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, respectively. A 1993 law that tightened the process of purchasing a handgun from a federally licensed dealer was named the Brady Bill in Mr. Brady's honor. Brady also became involved in fundraising for a number of groups that work on behalf of the disabled. He served as vice chairman of the National Organization on Disability.

James and Sarah Brady made a televised prime-time appearance at the 1996 Democratic National Convention, speaking behalf of gun control. They moved to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware in 1999.

Mr. Brady made a rare return visit to Washington, DC in June 2004, to attend the funeral service for Ronald Reagan.

Brady moved into an Alexandria, Virginia retirement community in 2013. He died there on August 4, 2014. Following an autopsy, the Virginia medical examiner's office ruled his death a homicide, a result of the March 1981 gunshot wound. Sarah Brady died the following year on April 3, 2015.

Scope and Content Note

There is additional James Brady material in the [1980 Campaign files](#) and in the 1980-1981 Transition files. Please see an archivist regarding the availability of this material.

The James S. Brady collection consists of six series: SERIES I: Chronological File, 1981-1989; SERIES II: Subject File, 1981-1982; SERIES III: James S. Brady Presidential Foundation File, 1982-1983; SERIES IV: Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 1982-1983; SERIES V: Assassination Attempt Correspondence, 1981-1987; and SERIES VI: Assassination Attempt Books and Artifacts, April 1981.

Series List

SERIES I: CHRONOLOGICAL FILE. 1981-1989

SERIES II: SUBJECT FILE. November 1980-April 1981 (1982)

SERIES III: JAMES S. BRADY PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION FILE, 1982-1983

SERIES IV: WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS. January 1982-December 1983

**SERIES V: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT CORRESPONDENCE. 1981-1987.
(Unsorted : OA's 15573, 16774-16778, 16288-16301, 16301A-16301C)**

SERIES VI: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT BOOKS AND ARTIFACTS. April 1981.

Last Modified Date

2024-02-26

SERIES I: CHRONOLOGICAL FILE. 1981-1989

Box 1

Status	Title
OPEN	Chron File (August 1980-January 1981)
OPEN	Chron File (February 1981) (1)(2)
OPEN	Chron File (March 1981-June 1981) (1)(2)
OPEN	Jim Brady Chron [July 1981-December 1981] [Brady Form Replies, n.d.] (1)-(5)
OPEN	Jim Brady - Chron January 1982-June 1982 (1)-(6)
OPEN	Jim Brady - Chron July 1982-December 1982 (1)-(3)

Box 2

Status	Title
OPEN	Jim Brady - Chron July 1982-December 1982 (4)-(7)
OPEN	Signature Brady [November 1982-May 1983] (1)-(3)
OPEN	Brady Chron January 1983-March 1983 (1)-(8)
OPEN	Brady Chron April 1983-June 1983 (1)-(3)

Box 3

Status	Title
OPEN	Brady Chron April 1983-June 1983 (4)-(9)

Status	Title
OPEN	Brady Chron July 1983-September 1983 (1)-(9)
OPEN	[Brady Chron January 1984-March 1984] (1)(2)

Box 4

Status	Title
OPEN	[Brady Chron January 1984-March 1984] (3)-(9)
OPEN	[Brady Chron April 1984] (1)(2)
OPEN	[May 1984-July 1984] (1)-(5)
OPEN	Sally [McElroy]- for Action [April 1984-May 1984] (1)(2)
OPEN	Jim [Special Incoming, June 1984-April 1985] (1)(2)

Box 5

Status	Title
OPEN	Pending: Brady/Sally: For Action [June 1984-July 1985]
OPEN	Dallas Trip [For 1984 Republican Convention] and [Thank-you Letters to] Truck Stops
OPEN	July 1984-August 1984 [Trip to 1984 Republican Convention]
OPEN	September 1984-October 1984 [April 1984-October 1984] (1)-(6)
OPEN	[October 1984-November 1984/Form New Year's Greeting for 1985] (1)-(5)
OPEN	[October 1984-February 1985 - Special Material] (1)(2)

Box 6

Status	Title
OPEN	[October 1984-February 1985 - Special Material] (3)-(6)
OPEN	[January 1985-March 1985] (1)-(3)
OPEN	Hold for Sally McElroy [February 1985-May 1985]
OPEN	[March 1985-June 1985] (1)-(5)

Box 7

Status	Title
OPEN	[March 1985-June 1985] (6)-(10)
OPEN	[Nancy Maare Material Regarding a Possible Article about J. Brady - June 1985]

Status	Title
OPEN	[July 1985-October 1985] (1)-(7)
OPEN	[November 1985-January 1986] (1)(2)

Box 8

Status	Title
OPEN	[November 1985-January 1986] (3)-(5)
OPEN	[January 1986 - Special] (1)(2)
OPEN	[Norfolk Christian Lower School - Cards Made by Fourth Grade, January 1986]
OPEN	[20/20 Correspondence (January 1986-February 1986)] (1)-(5)
OPEN	Jim Brady Mail/Signature [January 1986-October 1986] (1)-(3)

Box 9

Status	Title
OPEN	Jim Brady Mail/Signature [January 1986-October 1986] (4)-(8)

OA 18351

Status	Title
CLOSED	[August 1986-December 1986]
CLOSED	[January 1988-July 1987]
CLOSED	[July 1987-November 1987/M. Fitzwater Incoming (July 1986, February 1987-May 1987)]
CLOSED	[November 1987- March 1988]
CLOSED	[March 1988-May 1988]
CLOSED	[May 1988-June 1988]
CLOSED	[July 1988-September 1988]

OA 18352

Status	Title
CLOSED	[September 1988]
CLOSED	[October 1988-December 1988]
CLOSED	[December 1988-January 1989]

SERIES II: SUBJECT FILE. November 1980-April 1981 (1982)

OA 16783

Status	Title
CLOSED	Personal/Congratulations
CLOSED	Personal File (Letters)
CLOSED	Personal, Hold-Over [from 1980-1981 Transition]
CLOSED	Photo/Signature Requests
OPEN	President Reagan's Visit to Canada, 03/10/1981-03/11/1981 [Sally McElroy's Binder] (1)-(3)
OPEN	President Reagan's Visit to Canada, 03/10/1981-03/11/1981
CLOSED	[Presidential Visit Proposals] To Check On
CLOSED	[Press Office Procedures, Proposed, by J. Brady (ca. January 1981)]
CLOSED	[Press Releases, 03/10/1981 (1981 budget)] (1)(2)
OPEN	[Press Conference and Press Releases - Assassination Attempt] (1)-(3)
CLOSED	Recommendations [for Positions]
CLOSED	Resumes [1980-1981 Transition] (1)(2)
CLOSED	Resumes - Old
CLOSED	Resumes/Referrals
CLOSED	Security Forms
OPEN	[Shooting - Aftermath - Brady Get Well Messages] (1)-(4)
OPEN	[Shooting - Aftermath - Mrs. Brady Condolences]
OPEN	[Shooting - Aftermath - Mrs. Brady, Brady Family (Condolences and Gift Registers)]
OPEN	[Shooting - Aftermath -] Personals

OA 16781

Status	Title
OPEN	[Shooting Material - Magazines and Newspapers]
OPEN	[Shooting, Prior to - Canada, President's Trip to - Notes]
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to - Georgetown Club (03/21/1981)]
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to - 1981 Inauguration Ceremonies]
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to - Journal, Schedules (November 1980-March 1981)]
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to] - Notes and Memos

Status	Title
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to - Notes and Schedules for 03/30/1981]
CLOSED	[Shooting, Prior to - Personal Incoming]
OPEN	[Shooting, Prior to - Personal Incoming - "Self-Help Improvement Techniques"]
CLOSED	Sigma Chi
CLOSED	[Special Correspondence, Resumes]
CLOSED	[Stationery - blank]
OPEN	Thank-You Letters [Post-Shooting-Form Letters]

SERIES IV: WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS. January 1982-December 1983

OA 16041

Status	Title
CLOSED	<i>Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents</i> [unfolded]

**SERIES V: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT CORRESPONDENCE. 1981-1987.
(Unsorted : OA's 15573, 16774-16778, 16288-16301, 16301A-16301C)**

OA 15573

Status	Title
OPEN	[Thanksgiving and Christmas Messages Received by Jim Brady in 1987]
OPEN	[Christmas Messages Received by Jim Brady in 1987] (1)-(3)
OPEN	[Messages Offering Health Advice Received by Jim Brady 1987]

OA 16775

Status	Title
OPEN	[Random Sample of Correspondence to James Brady - April 1982]

OA 16288

Status	Title
OPEN	[Random Sample of Correspondence to James Brady - June 1981-July 1981]

OA 16293

Status	Title
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OPEN [Random Sample of Correspondence to James Brady -
August 1981, October 1981]

**SERIES VI: ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT BOOKS AND ARTIFACTS. April 1981.
OA 16779**

Status	Title
OPEN	[Books and Accompanying Correspondence]
OPEN	[Personal Items]

OA 16780

Status	Title
OPEN	[Assassination Attempt - Gifts to James Brady]

Box 1-F-L

Status	Title
CLOSED	4 Oversize "Get-Well" Posters