

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES

Jim Harrison

Author Jim Harrison poses at his desk in his home office in Arizona.

Photo by Steve Jessmore
The Saginaw News

Grand Valley Preserves Life's Work of Author

The Jim Harrison collection encapsulates the full and eclectic breadth of a life well lived. Ranging from 1938 to his recent death in March of 2016, Grand Valley State University's Special Collections and University Archives holds the Jim Harrison Papers, which is comprised of over 360 boxes of photographs, recorded readings, taped interviews, journals, and personal correspondence.

Harrison was a prolific writer who wrote all his drafts by hand and the archival collection is a great resource for students to see the writing process from idea to publication. The collection provides keen insights into the publishing field, the screenwriting process, and the intersection of a writer's lived experience and his literature.

Born in Grayling, Michigan in 1937, Harrison went on to publish in several genres, including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and children's literature. Harrison was also active in Hollywood as a screenwriter, as well as a long-time food critic for *Esquire* magazine.

Perhaps his best known screen adaptation is the 1994 film *Legends of the Fall*, which was adapted from his 1979 novella of the same name. Early versions of the novella, as well as the screenplay and

correspondence between Harrison and the production company, illustrate the multifaceted process of filmmaking.

The collection also contains correspondence from many of his celebrity friends; Francis Ford Coppola, Jack Nicholson, Winona Ryder, Anthony Bourdain, and Hunter S. Thompson are just a few of the famous correspondents from the hundreds of letters he received throughout his life.

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RIGHT: Jim Harrison with actor Jack Nicholson at Nicholson's home in California. Part of the Jim Harrison Papers.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES CONTINUED

Deeply interested in and indebted to nature and indigenous cultures, Harrison spent a great deal of his later life in the western United States, where he actively wrote and published until his death. The Jim Harrison Papers at Grand Valley will continue to grow as his estate is settled and will be used in an upcoming French documentary about his life. François Busnel, a French journalist, literary critic, and television host interviewed Harrison several times at his home in Montana. Busnel will travel to Michigan to use the Grand Valley collection to complete his documentary.

Grand Valley's Special Collections and University Archives houses many other unique collections and has been used throughout the years for a multitude of purposes. The collections have aided in the creation of multiple documentaries, endless student projects, and even a linguistic project detailing speech patterns from local oral histories.



ABOVE: Harrison's letter to his parents about running away. Part of the Jim Harrison Papers.

LEFT: Examples of the correspondence preserved in the Jim Harrison Papers.

For more information about the Special Collections and University Archives visit www.gvsu.edu/library/specialcollections/