



JOHN W. "BILL" ROBERTS PAPERS, 1973-77

Collection Type

Personal Papers

Extent

14 linear feet (ca. 28,000 pp.)

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open. Some items are temporarily restricted under terms of Donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request.

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Processed by

Helmi J. Raaska, April 1992

Biography

John W. "Bill" Roberts

March 21, 1919 - Born, Ft. Atkinson, WI

1941 - B.A., Ripon College

1942-46 - U.S. Army

1946-48 - Radio news reporter, WOC, Davenport, IA

1948-58 - Radio news reporter and television anchorman, WMT Stations, Cedar Rapids, IA

1958-72 - Washington Bureau Chief, Time, Inc.

1972-73 - Washington Bureau Chief, McGraw-Hill

1973-74 - Deputy Press Secretary to the Vice President

1974-77 - Assistant Press Secretary to the President

Scope and Content Note

John W. "Bill" Roberts's background was in radio and television news reporting. He was a newscaster for radio and television stations in Iowa and then Washington bureau chief for stations owned by Time, Inc. and McGraw-Hill. When McGraw-Hill closed its Washington bureau, Roberts joined Vice President Ford's staff. As Deputy Press Secretary to the Vice President, Roberts assisted in planning media coverage of events involving Ford and was responsible for all media arrangements on vice presidential trips. Roberts was also involved in preparation of press releases, statements, speeches, and articles, and occasionally briefed the press. In the transition to the Ford administration, Roberts became Assistant Press Secretary to the President.

In the Ford White House, Roberts's main responsibilities were in areas involving the radio and television media and still photographers. He worked with the networks

on live coverage setups in the Oval Office, East Room, and in Washington, DC. He escorted photographers for photo sessions, served as press officer for pool trips and White House social events, wrote messages for the President to deliver by film or radio tape, drafted press releases, and suggested possible questions for press briefings and presidential news conferences.

During the final six months of the administration Roberts's duties were expanded to include supervising preparation of responses to press inquiries, press releases, and texts of presidential actions, policies, and statements. He was responsible for all press coverage arrangements for more than 30 state dinners and formal arrival ceremonies for foreign dignitaries visiting the President, and was the designated press officer for foreign journalists covering the White House.

Scope and Content of the Roberts Papers

One value of the Roberts Papers is that they span the entire Ford vice presidency and presidency. They provide an overall view of the Ford vice presidency through travel schedules, drafts and texts of speeches, transcripts of interviews, and clippings. The papers relate more to Ford's speeches, travel, and public image than they do to issues. An exception is the Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy, for which there are fact sheets, working drafts of a decision paper on proposed privacy initiatives, a text of congressional testimony by Philip Buchen, and an agenda and background notes for a meeting on July 10, 1974.

The collection includes Roberts's personal observations and recollections, which he tape-recorded every few days during July, August, and September 1974. These recollections, on four audio cassettes, provide insight into the last days of the Ford vice presidency, the transition to the presidency, and the persons and personalities involved in the events. Roberts also tape-recorded reporters singing to Vice President Ford aboard Air Force Two and a press party held at Ron Nessen's home on August 25, 1974. The cassettes have been transferred to the audiovisual department, and transcripts of the recordings will be placed in the folder, "Roberts - Personal - Recollections."

A segment of the presidential subject file consists of materials relating to the President's foreign trips, including schedules and briefing papers prepared for the press, press releases, and pool reports.

The 1976 presidential campaign is a recurring theme, and materials relating to this topic include Roberts's memos about the campaign and Ford's image in the "Memos" folder, and his handwritten notes from senior staff meetings and events at the Republican National Convention. Discussion reports and memoranda are available for a staff meeting held at Camp David in August 1976 to consider the role of the press office in the general election campaign.

The bulk of the papers from the presidential years are the President's daily schedules. In addition to schedules, these files contain briefing papers prepared for the President, press releases, pool reports, press schedules, notes on press briefings, and interview transcripts. The value of the materials lies in their chronological arrangement and in the breadth of subjects covered, not in the depth of information on any given topic. Because of the arrangement, researchers can focus on presidential activity for a given day or period of time.

Related Materials (As of April 1992)

Related materials may be found in the Ford Vice Presidential Papers, Files of Press Secretary Paul A. Miltich; staff files of colleagues in the White House Press Secretary's Office, particularly a Roberts Chronological File in the Ron Nessen Files; and the Ron Nessen Papers.

Last Modified Date

2024-10-18

Vice Presidential Subject File, 1973-74.

(Boxes 1-3, 1.0 linear feet)

Correspondence, memoranda, speeches, statements, messages, schedules, press releases, interview transcripts, news summaries, and clippings. Materials relate to preparation of the Vice President's speeches, messages, and travel schedules; operation of the press office; and the Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box 1 - Vice Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Clippings and Cartoons (1)-(2)
OPEN	Correspondence (1)-(5)

Status	Title
OPEN	Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy
OPEN	Interviews and News Conferences (1)-(4)

Box 2 - Vice Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Memos Received
OPEN	Memos to the Vice President
OPEN	Messages
OPEN	News Summaries (1)-(2)
OPEN	Polls
OPEN	Roberts - Personal
OPEN	Roberts - Personal Correspondence
OPEN	Roberts - Speech - Radio and Television News Directors Association
OPEN	Schedules (1)-(7)

Box 3 - Vice Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Speech Material
OPEN	Speeches and Statements
OPEN	Speeches and Statements - Drafts
OPEN	Staff
OPEN	Travel (1)-(3)
OPEN	White House - General Information for Staff
OPEN	White House Press Releases

Presidential Subject File, 1974-77.

(Boxes 3-7, 1.8 linear feet)

Roberts's recollections, memoranda, correspondence, press releases, pool reports, schedules, interview transcripts, and clippings. Materials relate to press arrangements and briefing materials for the President's foreign trips, operation of the press office, and the 1976 presidential campaign. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box 3 (Continued) - Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Budget and State of the Union Briefings and Fact Sheets
OPEN	Correspondence (1)-(3)

Box 4 - Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Correspondence (4)-(7)
OPEN	Ford, Betty - Cancer Surgery
OPEN	Ford Presidency: A Portrait of the First Two Years
OPEN	Japan - Visit of Emperor and Empress (1)-(2)
OPEN	Mayaguez Incident (1)-(2)
OPEN	Memos
OPEN	Nessen Briefings - Possible Questions
OPEN	President - Bicentennial Speeches

Box 5 - Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November 1974 - Japan, Korea, Soviet Union (1)-(3)
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - May-June 1975 - Belgium, Spain, Austria, Italy, Vatican City (1)-(2)
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - July-August 1975 - Germany, Poland, Finland, Romania, Yugoslavia (1)-(2)
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November 1975 - France - Pool Reports
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November 1975 - France - Press Notes (1)-(2)
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November 1975 - France - Press Releases
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November-December 1975 - Pacific Basin - Pool Reports

Box 6 - Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November-December 1975 - Pacific Basin - President's Schedule

Status	Title
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November-December 1975 - Pacific Basin - Press Notes
OPEN	President - Foreign Trips - November-December 1975 - Pacific Basin - Press Schedules
OPEN	President - Interviews
OPEN	President - Schedules, August 1974
OPEN	President - Testimony to Hungate Committee
OPEN	President - Travel - Air Force One
OPEN	Press Office - Background Information (1)-(4)
OPEN	Press Office - Camp David Meeting, August 6-7, 1976
OPEN	Puerto Rico Summit Meeting

Box 7 - Presidential Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Republican National Convention
OPEN	Roberts - Personal - General (1)-(2)
OPEN	Roberts - Personal - Personnel Forms
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Roberts - Personal - Recollections (click on link to access digitized content)
OPEN	Roberts - Personal - Ripon College
OPEN	Senior Staff Meeting Notes (1)-(2)
OPEN	Sequoia
OPEN	White House Office Handbook (1)-(2)
OPEN	White House Staff
OPEN	White House - West Wing

President's Daily Schedules, 1974-77.

(Boxes 8-35, 11.2 linear feet)

Schedules, briefing papers prepared for the President, press releases, pool reports, interview transcripts, and notes on press briefings. Schedules for August and September 1974 are not included, but from October 1974 to March 1975 there is one folder of schedules per month. Beginning March 25, 1975, each day or presidential trip has its own folder and additional materials as listed above are filed

with the schedules. A broad range of topics is covered in the files, but no one topic is dealt with extensively. Arranged chronologically.

Box 8 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	October 1974 - April 11, 1975

Box 9 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	April 12, 1975 - May 5, 1975

Box 10 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	May 6-24, 1975

Box 11 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	May 26, 1975 - June 17, 1975

Box 12 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	June 18, 1975 - July 10, 1975

Box 13 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	July 11, 1975 - August 4, 1975

Box 14 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	August 5, 1975 - September 8, 1975

Box 15 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	September 9-30, 1975

Box 16 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	October 1-31, 1975

Box 17 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	November 1-29, 1975

Box 18 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	December 8, 1975 - January 7, 1976

Box 19 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	January 8, 1976 - February 6, 1976

Box 20 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	February 7-24, 1976

Box 21 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	February 25, 1976 - March 10, 1976

Box 22 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	March 11-26, 1976

Box 23 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	March 26, 1976 - April 9, 1976

Box 24 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	April 9-27, 1976

Box 25 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	April 27, 1976 - May 14, 1976

Box 26 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	May 14, 1976 - June 4, 1976

Box 27 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
OPEN	June 5-26, 1976

Box 28 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN June 29, 1976 - July 18, 1976

Box 29 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN July 19, 1976 - August 5, 1976

Box 30 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN August 6, 1976 - September 7, 1976

Box 31 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN September 8-24, 1976

Box 32 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN September 25, 1976 - October 9, 1976

Box 33 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN October 11-22, 1976

Box 34 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN October 22, 1976 - December 18, 1976

Box 35 - President's Daily Schedules

Status	Title
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OPEN December 19, 1976 - January 19, 1977

Audio Diary, July-September 1974.

(AV Collection, 6 audio cassettes and transcripts)

Roberts's personal observations and recollections, which he tape-recorded every few days during July, August, and September 1974. These recollections, on four audio cassettes, provide insight into the last days of the Ford vice presidency, the transition to the presidency, and the persons and personalities involved in the events. The diary begins and ends abruptly, and it is sporadic. Roberts also tape-recorded reporters singing to Vice President Ford aboard Air Force Two and a press party held at Ron Nessen's home on August 25, 1974. Researchers can access digitized copies of the recordings and transcripts through links in the container list.

AV Collection - Audio Diary (click on links to access digitized content)

Status	Title
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Audio diary, July 24-August 9
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Audio diary, August 10-13
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Audio diary, August 13-27
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Audio diary, August 28-September 12
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Diary transcript
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Reporters aboard Air Force Two singing songs poking fun at President Nixon and Vice President Ford
OPEN / DIGITIZED	Remarks and songs at a party for President Ford and Air Force Two reporters at journalist Ron Nessen's home, August 25, 1974