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PHILIP W. BUCHEN PAPERS, (1962) 1973-1992

Collection Type

Personal Papers

Extent

2 linear feet (ca. 4000 pages)

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open. Some items may be temporarily restricted under terms of the donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request, or under National Archives and Records Administration general restrictions (36 CFR 1256).

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Processed by

Brooke Clement, June 2004

Biography

Philip W. Buchen

Feb. 27, 1916 - Born, Sheboygan, WI

1939 - A.B., University of Michigan

1941 - J.D., University of Michigan

1941-42 - Partner, law firm of Ford and Buchen, Grand Rapids, MI

1943-47 - Partner, law firm of Butterfield, Keeney & Amberg, Grand Rapids

1947 - Married, Beatrice "Bunny" Loomis

1948-61 - Partner, law firm of Amberg, Law & Buchen, Grand Rapids

1961-67 - Vice President, Grand Valley State College, Allendale, MI

1962-74 and 1977- - Director, Old Kent Financial Corporation, Grand Rapids

1963-74 - Director, Rospatch Corporation, Grand Rapids

1967-74 - Partner, law firm of Buchen, Weathers, Richardson & Dutcher, Grand Rapids

1969-74 - Director, Communications Satellite Corporation, Washington, DC

1969-72 - Member, U.S. delegation to the INTELSAT Conference which negotiated a definitive arrangement for the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization.

Mar.-Aug. 1974 - Executive Director, Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy

1974-77 - Counsel to the President, White House

1977-95 - Partner, law firm of Dewey, Ballantine, Bushby, Palmer & Wood, Washington, DC

1977-2001 - Trustee, Gerald R. Ford Foundation

May 24, 2001 - Died, Washington, DC

January 29, 2002 - Beatrice "Bunny" Buchen Died, Washington, DC

Scope and Content Note

One of President Ford's initial acts after taking his oath of office, on August 9, 1974, was to name longtime friend and former law partner, Philip W. Buchen, chief White House Counsel. Ford elevated this position to Cabinet status one month later. As Counsel to the President, Buchen provided legal advice to the President and the White House staff, supervised a staff of attorneys in handling legal matters of the President or his staff, and served as a White House liaison with varied government agencies.

Some of Buchen's most important duties included aiding Ford in the legalities of the Nixon pardon. Buchen garnered information from Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski as to how long a Nixon trial might last, and whether President Ford had the right to grant a pardon prior to an indictment. Though he agreed with the necessity of the Nixon pardon, Buchen strongly discouraged the President from conferring pardons to each Watergate defendant or Spiro Agnew. Buchen, along with Benton Becker and Jack Miller (Nixon's legal counsel), also attempted to settle the Nixon papers dispute, eventually agreeing that while the Nixon papers would be housed in a National Archives facility, Nixon would have ultimate access control. (The Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 nullified this arrangement.) Moreover, Buchen worked on the amnesty program, which offered clemency to those who had avoided serving in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War.

Buchen's position as Counsel to the President, in addition to being laborious, was also a ceremonial role. He and his wife, Beatrice (AKA Bunny), were soon fixtures on newspaper society pages as they attended numerous White House, State, and Embassy dinners. The Buchens also represented the United States at the coronation ceremony of the King of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, in February 1975.

Following Ford's defeat in the 1976 presidential election, Buchen played a role in donating Ford's presidential papers to the federal government. Upon leaving government service, Buchen became a partner in the firm of Dewey, Ballantine, Bushby, Palmer & Wood, in Washington, DC, where he worked until his retirement in 1995, as well as served as a trustee of the Gerald R. Ford Foundation until his death in 2001.

Scope and Content Note

In representing Buchen's administrative role, the collection showcases his most well-known undertakings, namely the Nixon-Ford Presidential transition and the Nixon pardon. The collection is strongest in bulk in documenting the social aspects of being the President's Chief Counsel. A significant portion of this collection is made up of newspaper clippings from major news arteries such as The New York Times and Washington Post, which attest to social functions and events the Buchens attended. A large photograph compilation, boasting White House fêtes, private functions, and administrative photos from both the Buchens' personal snapshot collection and the White House Photo Office, has been transferred to the Library's audiovisual department.

The collection's Correspondence File and Bunny Buchen's desk calendars in the Subject File are intriguing because they document the public and private worlds the Buchen's lived in following Ford's oath of office. Some of the correspondence and notations in the calendars depict the Buchen's as parents and grandparents, while others depict them as friends to the Presidential family, ambassadors, and celebrities.

Notable are the opinions that come forth in this collection, specifically from Philip (in his speeches and participation in various conferences) and Bunny (in her "diary"). The estimations of others are also well-represented, especially regarding the Nixon pardon.

A shortcoming of this collection is the absence of materials dating from the beginning of Ford's and Buchen's friendship to the time of Ford's Vice Presidency. There are references to this period and the Ford and Buchen law firm, particularly in the oral histories, and some of the clippings and speeches, but for the most part, this period is left undocumented.

Related Materials (June 2004)

As the bulk of this collection is more social rather than organizational, the following related materials/collections also document the social aspect of Philip Buchen's relationship with President Ford: the Betty Ford Papers, the Vice Presidential Papers of Gerald R. Ford, the Sheila R. Weidenfeld Files, and the Eric Rosenberger and Douglass Blaser Files.

For extensive information on Buchen's role as Counsel to the President, see Philip W. Buchen Files.

Interviews or oral histories with Philip Buchen can be found in: the A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, the Grand Rapids Oral History Collection (covers only the years 1938-1948), the Composite Oral History Accessions, and the William A. Syers Interview Transcripts.

Additional related material, including more extensive background information on Buchen, may be found in the Gerald R. Ford Library's vertical file, under "Buchen, Philip W."

Last Modified Date

2025-03-06

Audiovisual Materials, 1962-1992.

Photographs and contact sheets relating to Philip Buchen's personal life and work as counsel to President Gerald R. Ford. Many of the photographs depict Buchen at work, with the Office of Counsel staff, and in various meetings with President Ford and others. Others show him and his wife Beatrice "Bunny" Buchen at social functions, such as state dinners and a Zodiac dinner party they hosted at the Chevy Chase Country Club. Also included are photographs of the Buchens' trips to Katmandu, Nepal, and to the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute For Rehabilitation in Warm Springs, Georgia.

Arranged in parallel to the textual materials.

Audiovisual Materials, 1962-1992.

Status	Title
OPEN	View container list for this series

Correspondence File, 1974-1989.

(Box 1, 0.3 linear feet)

Correspondence to and from Philip and Bunny Buchen. Recipients and senders, within "Correspondence (1)-(8)" folders, include First Lady Betty Ford, Iran

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi, Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton, Senator Bob Dole, Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller, Justice Lewis Powell, Reverend Duncan Littlefair (the Buchen's minister), and the Buchen children, among others. Two separate folders contain correspondence between the Buchens and President Ford, along with Philip Buchen's resignation letter to President Ford at the end of his term in office. Two other folders created during archival processing, due to the contents' subject value, include correspondence related to the Nixon pardon and the amnesty program.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.

Box 1 - Correspondence File

Status	Title
OPEN	Correspondence (1)-(8)
OPEN	Correspondence - Philip Buchen Resignation Letter
OPEN	Correspondence - Gerald R. Ford
OPEN	Correspondence re Amnesty Program
OPEN	Correspondence re Nixon Pardon

Speech File, 1974-1980.

(Boxes 1-2, 0.3 linear feet)

Speeches made by Philip Buchen as Counsel to the President and shortly thereafter. The speeches made between 1974 and 1976 thematically center around Buchen's role in the pardon of President Nixon, the government itself, and campaigning for President Ford. The post-White House speeches focus primarily on life as an attorney or taking a look back at his time in the White House.

Arranged chronologically and alphabetically thereunder.

Box 1 (Continued) - Speech File

Status	Title
OPEN	Speeches Made - List
OPEN	9/8/1974 - Press Conference
OPEN	9/10/1974 - Press Conference
OPEN	9/30/1975 - Remarks Before the Institute for Legal Counsels

Status	Title
OPEN	10/4/1975 - Orientation Program for New Policy Executives
Box 2 - Speech File	
Status	Title
OPEN	10/15/1975 - General Counsels' Committee of the Federal Bar Association
OPEN	11/11/1975 - NASA Annual Awards Ceremony
OPEN	12/4/1975 - The University of Michigan Law School Club of Washington, DC
OPEN	2/14/1976 - American Judicature Society
OPEN	2/26/1976 - Sheboygan County Republican Party
OPEN	2/27/1976 - Grand Rapids Bar Association
OPEN	2/27/1976 - Industrial Relations Group
OPEN	4/27/1976 - Travelers Aid International Social Services of America
OPEN	5/2/1976 - Dan Beard Council Annual Scouters Recognition Dinner
OPEN	5/3/1976 - Greater Cincinnati Harvard Business School Club
OPEN	5/26/1976 - Town Hall of California
OPEN	6/14/1976 - Bicentennial Exposition on Science and Technology
OPEN	12/29/1976 - Society of American Archivists and the American Historical Association
OPEN	3/15/1977 - Grand Rapids Area Council for the Humanities
OPEN	4/14/1977 - "299 Forum"
OPEN	4/15/1977 - Annual Banquet of the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity
OPEN	6/28/1977? - Grand Rapids Rotary Club: "Some Impressions from my Years with President Ford"
OPEN	6/28/1977 - Wranglers Meeting
OPEN	1/17/1978 - Wranglers Meeting

Status	Title
OPEN	2/23/1978 - Statement for Presentation to the Government Information and Individual Rights Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations
OPEN	4/12/1978 - Student Bar Association, International School of Law
OPEN	11/2/1978 - Wranglers Meeting
OPEN	11/20/1978 - Stewart Capital Group Meeting
OPEN	11/20/1978? - Wage Price Administrators of Automation Industries, Inc.
OPEN	1/10/1979 - Middle Atlantic Regional Group of the American Society of Corporate Secretaries
OPEN	5/17/1979 - Conference on Regulatory Reform: Challenges for the Future
OPEN	5/1/1980 - Montgomery Bar Association

Subject File, (1962) 1973-1992.

(Boxes 2-6, 0.3 linear feet)

Speeches made by Philip Buchen as Counsel to the President and shortly thereafter. The speeches made between 1974 and 1976 thematically center around Buchen's role in the pardon of President Nixon, the government itself, and campaigning for President Ford. The post-White House speeches focus primarily on life as an attorney or taking a look back at his time in the White House.

Arranged chronologically and alphabetically thereunder.

Box 2 (Continued) - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Bunny Buchen "Diary" Notes - Misc. Dates August 28, 1974 to January 12, 1975
OPEN	Center for the Study of the Presidency Panel: Presidency in Transition
OPEN	Clippings (Undated)
OPEN	Clippings - 1973
OPEN	Clippings - January to July 1974

Status	Title
OPEN	Clippings - August 1974 (1)-(2)

Box 3 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Clippings - August 1974 (3)
OPEN	Clippings - September 1974 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Clippings - November to December 1974
OPEN	Clippings - January 1975
OPEN	Clippings - February 1975
OPEN	Clippings - March 1975
OPEN	Clippings - April to September 1975
OPEN	Clippings - November 1975
OPEN	Clippings - 1976 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Clippings - 1977
OPEN	Clippings - 1978
OPEN	Clippings - 1979
OPEN	Clippings - 1980

Box 4 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Clippings - 1981 to 1983
OPEN	Commission on Presidential Disability (1)-(3)
OPEN	Ford Administration (1)-(2)
OPEN	Ford Administration - Duncan Littlefair re Nixon Pardon
OPEN	Ford Administration - Oral Histories
OPEN	Ford (Gerald R.) Foundation
OPEN	Gerald R. Ford Library - Photocopies re Transition (1)

Box 5 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Gerald R. Ford Library - Photocopies re Transition (2)
OPEN	Hofstra Conference re Ford Presidency (1)-(2)
OPEN	International Lincoln Association
OPEN	Miscellanea (1)-(2)

Status	Title
OPEN	Transferred to AV
Box 6 - Subject File	
Status	Title
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 1/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 2/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 3/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 4/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 5/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 6/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 7/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 10/1976
OPEN	Bunny Buchen Desk Calendar - 1/1977
OPEN	Certificate - Bicentennial Independence Day
OPEN	Certificate - National Day of Prayer
OPEN	Certificates - Air Force One/Army One Flights
OPEN	Scrapbook Pages