Latin America in the Mike Mansfield Papers
Collection Number: Mss 065

Mansfield was a professor of Latin American History and of Far Eastern History at the University of Montana (then called Montana State University) prior to his election to the US House of Representatives in 1942. He continued his political career as a US Senator and as US Ambassador to Japan. Among other documents, Mansfield’s collection includes constituent correspondence responding to events in Latin American countries, briefings from his years as Senate Majority Leader and speeches he made about Latin American countries and events. [The speeches have been digitized and are available online via the Mike Mansfield Papers in the Montana Memory Project.]

The following series are likely to hold the majority of content relevant to Latin America, but other correspondence and documents may be scattered throughout the collection. For example, Mansfield was a Congressional delegate to the 1948 Bogotá Conference, which established the Organization of American States. He was Senate Majority Leader during the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. And he was a delegate to almost every annual meeting of the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group between 1961 and 1977. Keyword searching the guide to the Mike Mansfield Papers in NWDA (Northwest Digital Archives) for relevant terms may lead to content outside of the series listed below.

Series IV: House: Foreign Affairs, 1930-1949
12.5 linear ft.

This series contains material relating to both the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Mansfield’s own congressional interest in foreign matters. Material in the series concentrates on the years 1947 to 1949, but includes lecture notes presumably from courses Mansfield taught at the University of Montana prior to 1943.

The country files in the series encompass a broad range of subjects relevant to individual nations. There are copies of foreign affairs bills from the House and the Senate. Loans and other foreign aid provide much of the material in individual folders. Letters in the country files include correspondence between Mansfield and various ambassadors and State Department officials. Letters from companies and constituents with strong interests in specific countries are also well-represented in these files. Other letters are from government organizations including the War Department, the State Department, the Army, and the Marine Corps. There are reports from government agencies on specific foreign relations challenges like the Panama Canal. United Nations reports also appear in the series, and congressional hearings and committee reports accompany legislation. There are notes in Mansfield’s hand from committee hearings. Items from the Congressional Record pertaining to specific countries are also included in folders for individual countries. Proposals for large quantities of foreign aid spending elicited the most vehement responses. A given spending measure typically drew letters of both criticism and praise; many Montanans expressed displeasure with Congress’ willingness to spend money overseas when domestic problems persisted. Foreign nationals and American expatriates also wrote Mansfield to support or decry a particular policy or proposal. Country files also contain newspaper clippings, magazine articles, American and international publications, and press releases.

This series also contains information on specific political issues like the demobilization of troops in China, Burma, and India following World War II. These folders contain many of the same types of materials as the country files. In addition, there are presidential press releases, citizen petitions,
telegrams, and photographs. There are also folders with information and documents concerning Mansfield’s official trips abroad. This series chronicles the beginning of Mansfield’s career-long involvement in foreign policy and provides insight into the constituent opinions and congressional concerns about foreign affairs during and after World War II.

The folders are divided by individual country, by issues like demobilization, and by Mansfield’s official trips abroad. The organization of the series is unclear; there is no apparent chronological or alphabetical order to the boxes and folders. Often a similar subject like the United Fruit Company in Central America appears in several folders under different titles; in this case, both Central America and Costa Rica. The boxes and folders do not specify time periods and often skip all over the globe and through a number of years.

62.5 linear feet

The Foreign Relations series contains a variety of material relating to Mansfield’s tenure in the Senate. The contents range broadly from constituent letters to Senate Committee reports. As Mansfield gains seniority in the Senate, the volume and importance of the material increases. The most significant concentration of material concerns the Vietnam War, although questions of foreign aid also elicit copious letters and policy papers. The constituent mail in the series provides particular insight into the attitudes of Montanans on foreign policy issues during this era. There are files relating to specific countries during each of Mansfield’s terms in the Senate and broader reports on general United States foreign policy.

More specifically, the individual country files contain letters from Mansfield, constituents, Senate colleagues, and interest groups. Typically the file contents cover the whole time span of a given Senatorial term, though particular crises and policies may account for folders or entire boxes in the series. For example the Nixon Incident in Venezuela in 1958 caused a furor, and the files contain many letters and newspaper clippings both supporting and deriding Nixon. Most are from Montanans, but voters and interest groups from across the country and Latin America expressed their sentiments to Mansfield. Many country files contain policy reports assessing specific political climates, reports to congressional committees with policy recommendations, and reports from State Department officials including ambassadors and the Secretary of State. There are also letters from foreign nationals, expatriates, and Americans doing business overseas providing advice to Mansfield on foreign policy matters. The country files often contain booster materials published by the country, including magazines, photographs, newspapers, and pamphlets.

Besides country files, the series consists of U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee proceedings, reports from the United Nations, and particular pieces of foreign policy legislation. Of particular note in this series is the information relating to Vietnam and Cambodia. There are copious numbers of letters supporting and opposing of the war, student protest, the Kent State situation, and Nixon’s actions in Cambodia. These letters provide a fascinating survey of public opinion during the war years and range widely from vehement support of Nixon and the war to outraged opposition. The series also contains material relating to foreign aid legislation, a topic that elicited reactions nearly as strong as those expressed regarding Vietnam. The Committee proceedings boxes have legislative summaries, memorandums and letters between Congressional colleagues, and Presidential reports. The boxes near the end of the series are less specifically labeled and often the folder names are simply Miscellaneous with a date. These folders cover the whole range of subjects contained in
more specific earlier folders including country reports, correspondence, legislation, and Senate hearings. The series is rounded out by requests for copies of Mansfield’s speeches, transcripts from Mansfield’s television and radio appearances, photographs, press releases, and telegrams.

The series is divided into four chronological Subseries: First Term, Second Term, Third Term, and Fourth Term.

Series XXII: Senate: Leadership, 1961-1977
72 linear feet

This series includes an amalgamation of information relating to Mansfield’s time as Senate Majority Leader (1961-1977.) The documents range from voting and attendance records for Senators during a Congressional session to memorabilia from Maureen Mansfield’s trips abroad with the Kennedys and Johnsons. The bulk of the series focuses on boxes relating to legislation, foreign affairs, and other policy business in the Senate. There are also files on weekly Majority Conference meetings and files for individual people including constituents, ambassadors, General MacArthur, and Jacqueline Kennedy. The series holds letters, reports, press releases, clippings, survey results, minutes for informal Democratic leadership meetings, and memorandums from the Central Intelligence Agency.

The structure of the series is inconsistent, though parts of the series are clearly organized. The first boxes in the series contain basic housekeeping documents from the Senate. These include voting worksheets on various bills, absentee lists, attendance records for each senator, and copies of the Congressional Record. The boxes are not arranged chronologically but individual folders are labeled by Congressional session. Following these boxes are about fifty that contain material on a wide variety of topics. There is no clear organizing principle and most of this information overlaps with other series. For example, the folder "Legislation-Gun Control (Firearms)" holds letters from interest groups, copies of Mansfield’s letters and statements on the issue, a working draft of the bill, and newspaper clippings. Generally these folders are titled by legislative subject or foreign affairs area. Individual nations have their own folders, though there are regional folders as well. For example, there are extensive files on the Middle East concerning the 1967 Egypt-Israeli war. Some of the legislation files do have a specifically leadership slant and contain documents analyzing legislative strategies for passing pending bills. Progress reports on President Johnson's legislative agenda, synopses of Senate activity for a given Congressional session, and letters from the Democratic Policy Committee also reveal leadership issues. The foreign affairs folder tends to be general but also contains information like choices for Great Britain's bicentennial gift that concern Mansfield’s leadership position in the Senate. The synopsis reports from the weekly Majority Conference meetings are especially interesting because they chronicle candid policy discussions among Congressional Democratic leaders. These reports are collected chronologically by Congressional session and also include meetings on particularly important topics like the nation's economic situation in 1970. The end of the series has a number of folders labeled "personal" and containing correspondence and reports relating to the person on the title. Typically the letters pertain to business connected with Mansfield's majority leadership and many are on purely partisan matters. The folder on Charles Ferris provides an interesting glimpse into the importance of party workers in determining the practices of elected officials. Some of the folders contain nothing more than thank-you letters for helping a constituent gain contacts abroad while others hold information about Senate scandals like the resignation of Secretary of the Majority Baker.
The series is divided into seven subseries: Attendance Records; Domestic Affairs; Foreign Affairs; Leadership Functions; Speeches, Trips, and Reports; Policy Committee; and Majority Leaders Office. The attendance records and voting tallies are easy to follow. The foreign affairs and legislation files show no particular structure and adjacent folders might contain a bill from 1966 and another from 1974. The Majority Conference meetings follow chronologically but the personal files have no apparent order. Finding specific information here is difficult and folder names are probably the best guide to the hidden treasures about the real workings of American government.

approx. 7500 images

The photographs in this collection were gathered by Mansfield's office from a variety of sources. A few snapshots were produced by Mansfield himself, but the bulk of the images were taken by news and commercial photographers at official events and ceremonies. These do not always have good identification information. Maureen Mansfield appears in many of the images with the Senator or by herself. Many of the images are official portraits; there are autographed portraits from several presidents and high officials in the United States government. There is especially complete coverage of Mansfield's Asia trips beginning in 1944.

Most of the images were originally housed in albums assembled by Mansfield's staff and by persons who gave him the albums as gifts. The titles of the albums have been retained, but the photographs have been removed and listed individually. Identifications and dates were transcribed from the albums as available; many of the photographs, particularly those from the ambassadorial period, are not well identified.