

Alan Tower Waterman Papers

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Revised by Nan Thompson Ernst

Collection Summary

Title: Alan Tower Waterman Papers

Span Dates: 1917-1967

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1940-1963)

ID No.: MSS54197

Creator: Waterman, Alan Tower (1892-1967)

Extent: 17,700 items ; 59 containers plus 1 classified ; 23.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Physicist and science administrator. Correspondence, diary notes, speeches, articles, travel itineraries, subject file, and biographical material chiefly relating to Waterman's activities as an administrator of scientific research organizations including his years as deputy chief of the United States Office of Naval Research and as director of the United States National Science Foundation.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Bronk, Detlev W. (Detlev Wulf), 1897-1975.

Bush, Vannevar, 1890-1974.

Compton, K. T. (Karl Taylor), 1887-1954.

Conant, James Bryant, 1893-1978.

DuBridges, Lee A. (Lee Alvin), 1901-1994.

Gamow, George, 1904-1968.

Libby, Willard F.

Lovell, Bernard, 1913-2012.

Mead, Margaret, 1901-1978.

Oppenheimer, J. Robert, 1904-1967.

Shapley, Harlow, 1885-1972.

Waterman, Alan Tower, 1892-1967.

Wiener, Norbert, 1894-1964.

Zacharias, Jerrold Reinach, 1905-1986.

Organizations

American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Stanford, Calif.)

College Entrance Examination Board

Cosmos Club (Washington, D.C.)

National Science Foundation (U.S.)

United States. Office of Naval Research.

Yale University--Faculty.

Subjects

Artificial satellites.

International Geophysical Year, 1957-1958.

Physics--Study and teaching.

Research.

Science--Societies, etc.

Occupations

Administrators.

Physicists.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Alan Tower Waterman, physicist and science administrator, were given to the Library of Congress during the years 1968-1975 by his widow, Mary Mallon Waterman, and by Lee Anna Embrey Blick, an assistant at the National Science Foundation.

Processing History

The papers of Alan Tower Waterman were arranged and described in 1975 and 1996. The collection was expanded and revised in 1996-1997. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Some photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Sound recordings have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Alan Tower Waterman Papers.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Alan Tower Waterman in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Alan Tower Waterman are open to research though classified in part. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Security Classified Documents

Government regulations control the use of security classified material in this collection. Manuscript Division staff can furnish information concerning access to and use of classified materials.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Alan Tower Waterman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1892, June 4	Born, Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y.
1913	A.B., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
1914	M.A., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
1916	Ph.D., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
1916-1917	Instructor of physics, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
1917	Married Mary Mallon
1917-1919	Lieutenant, Meteorological Section, U.S. Army Signal Corps

1919-1923	Instructor of physics, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
1923-1930	Assistant professor of physics, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
1931-1942	Associate professor of physics, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
1933-1942	Chief reader, College Entrance Examination Board
1935-1942	Member, editorial board, <i>American Journal of Science</i>
1942-1943	Vice chairman, Division D, National Defense Research Committee
1943-1946	Deputy chief (1943-1945) and chief (1945-1946), Office of Field Services, Office of Scientific Research and Development
1946-1951	Deputy chief and chief scientist, Office of Naval Research
1948	Awarded Presidential Medal for Merit
1951-1963	Director, National Science Foundation
1963	Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom
1963-1967	Consultant, National Academy of Sciences
1967, Nov. 31	Died, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Alan Tower Waterman (1892-1967) cover the years from 1917 to 1967, with the greater part concentrated in the period 1940-1963. The collection includes [diary notes](#), correspondence, memoranda, reports, [speeches and articles](#), and [miscellaneous biographical material](#) documenting Waterman's career as an administrator of scientific research organizations. Six series are organized by document type. An [addition](#) to the collection includes declassified documents from World War II, a collection of Waterman's speeches and statements, articles by Waterman and others, and miscellaneous correspondence.

Waterman was trained as a physicist and devoted the early years of his career, 1919-1942, to teaching physics at Yale University. During World War II, Waterman headed the Office of Field Services for the Office of Scientific Research and Development, coordinating the work of civilian scientists on weaponry and other military applications, particularly in the Pacific theater. After World War II, the navy initiated a series of grants to universities for fundamental scientific research, and Waterman was placed in charge of the program as chief scientist and deputy chief of the Office of Naval Research. The success of this program led to congressional legislation in 1950 creating the National Science Foundation and to the appointment of Waterman as its director by President Harry S. Truman. The great majority of Waterman's papers details his administrative work for these organizations.

As chief scientist with the Office of Naval Research, Waterman assured universities that the government was not attempting to control academic research but did need to advance scientific knowledge in the technological age. His views on the role of government-sponsored research are stated in his [speeches and articles](#). In addition to the [General Correspondence](#) series, a group of papers designated by Waterman as "[Diary Notes](#)" provides summaries of conversations relating to his management of the Office of Naval Research and the National Science Foundation. Highlights of the National Science Foundation records concern the International Geophysical Year, 1957-1958, and the nation's early satellite program.

Among the prominent scientists appearing in the correspondence are Detlev W. Bronk, Vannevar Bush, K. T. Compton, James Bryant Conant, Lee A. Dubridge, George Gamow, Willard Frank Libby, Bernard Lovell, Margaret Mead, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Harlow Shapley, Norbert Wiener, and Jerrold Zacharias. The [General Correspondence](#) also contains papers relating to many organizations in which Waterman was active, particularly the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the Cosmos Club of Washington, D.C.

A [Subject File](#) contains papers relating to Waterman's years as a reader and chief examiner in physics for the College Entrance Examination Board and a collection of his travel itineraries and vouchers for the years 1940-1965.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in eight series:

- [Diary Notes, 1947-1963](#)
- [Family Correspondence, 1949-1965](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1920-1967](#)
- [Subject File, 1935-1965](#)
- [Speech and Article File, 1917-1966](#)
- [Miscellany, 1918-1967](#)
- [Addition, 1951-1964](#)
- [Classified, 1951](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-2	<u>Diary Notes, 1947-1963</u> Mainly summaries of conversations in person or by telephone concerning professional matters. Chronologically arranged.
BOX 3	<u>Family Correspondence, 1949-1965</u> Letters exchanged by members of the Waterman family. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 3-38	<u>General Correspondence, 1920-1967</u> Correspondence with individuals and organizations mostly concerning professional matters. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 39-42	<u>Subject File, 1935-1965</u> College Entrance Examination Board records, presidential medal, and travel records. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 43-51	<u>Speech and Article File, 1917-1966</u> Speech and article texts with indexes and lists. Arranged alphabetically by title.
BOX 52-55	<u>Miscellany, 1918-1967</u> Includes biographical material, personnel records, appointment books, financial records, and printed matter. Arranged by document type.
BOX 56-59	<u>Addition, 1951-1964</u> Articles, correspondence, memoranda, military records, a caption, and speeches and statements. Arranged alphabetically by subject or document type and chronologically thereunder.
BOX CL 1	<u>Classified, 1951</u> Material containing security classified information. Organized and described according to the series, container, and folder from which the items were removed.

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General Correspondence, 1920-1967

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