



Rabb, Ambassador Maxwell M.: Papers, 1980-1989

Finding Aid Type

Donated Collections

Record Type

Textual

Biography

Biography

Maxwell Milton Rabb (September 28, 1910-June 9, 2002) was an American lawyer, government executive, White House and political advisor in the Eisenhower Administration and Ambassador to Italy under President Ronald Reagan.

Mr. Rabb was born in Boston. He graduated from Harvard University and its law school. He was admitted to the Massachusetts bar in 1935. After briefly practicing law in Boston, he moved to Washington in 1937 as administrative assistant to Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. (R-Mass.). When Lodge resigned in 1943 to enter the Army in World War II, Mr. Rabb worked briefly for Sinclair Weeks, who was appointed to fill Lodge's unexpired term.

Mr. Rabb then joined the Navy himself. From 1944 to 1946, Rabb served in the United States Naval Reserve as a lieutenant. In 1946 he would serve as legal and legislative consultant to United States Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and he also returned to his law practice in Boston.

A lifelong Republican, Rabb was involved in efforts to persuade Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, then the commander of NATO, to seek the Republican presidential nomination in 1952. In January 1953 he joined the White House staff as aide to Sherman Adams and counsel to the President, and in 1954 he became Secretary to the Cabinet. Eisenhower created this position for Rabb. The job involved organizing the weekly Cabinet meetings that were a prominent part of the Eisenhower administration and keeping track of decisions that were made.

Throughout his time in the White House, Rabb was viewed as the staff member in charge of minority affairs. Correspondence, reports, and printed materials involving Jewish issues, African-Americans, civil rights, segregation, integration, anti-Semitism, refugees, and immigration were often referred to Rabb. Eisenhower used his knowledge and skills in this area, notably giving him a directive to desegregate public facilities in Washington, DC. He also was adviser on the dispatch of federal troops to Little Rock to desegregate Central High School.

His quiet role in these early White House civil rights actions persuaded the late Rep. Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the flamboyant New York Democrat from Harlem, to back Eisenhower in his reelection campaign in 1956. Rabb was also admired by Powell's successor, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), who became a longtime friend of Mr. Rabb.

Leaving the White House, Rabb practiced law in New York, where he was a partner in the law firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan from 1959-1981. A modest, unassuming man with a reputation for wit, Mr. Rabb was long familiar with the corridors of power. He had wide-ranging contacts in business and political circles in this country and abroad. Consequently, he continued to be useful as a private citizen for the U.S. government.

Just after leaving the White House, Rabb was sent as chairman of the U.S. delegation to the tenth session of UNESCO in Paris in 1958, later serving on the executive committee of the United States Committee for UNESCO (1959-60). President Johnson appointed Rabb to the Commission on Income Maintenance Programs (the Heineman Commission on Welfare and Related Programs, 1968-70). In the late 1960s he made 23 trips to East Germany to broker the release of Americans being held on espionage charges. He was a trustee of the American

Health Foundation (1969-74) and served on the Council of Foreign Relations (1978). Rabb was a director of several corporations and a member of the board of directors of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. He also served as president of the United States Committee for Refugees, a private group organized in 1958 that dealt with refugee resettlement and immigration.

Rabb was also active in Jewish charities and political advocacy for Jewish people and Israel. Rabb was chairman of the government division of the United Jewish Appeal (1953-57), a member of the board of governors of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and vice chairman of the New York executive committee of the Anti-Defamation League, among many other posts.

As with Eisenhower, Rabb was an early backer and fundraiser for President Ronald Reagan. He supported his run for the presidency in 1976 and during the 1980 campaign. Rabb was appointed as ambassador to Italy where he served from 1981-1989. During that period, the Reagan administration also used him on other assignments -- for example, he helped arrange the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia.

The normal rhythm of diplomatic life was sharply interrupted for Mr. Rabb shortly after he took up his duties in Rome, when Italian police uncovered a Libyan plot to assassinate him, and the U.S. flew him out of Rome for a brief time. The plot was said to be in retaliation for the downing by U.S. fighters of two Libyan jets over the Gulf of Sidra. The American planes were carrying out exercises over the gulf, which the U.S. considers to be international waters, when they were attacked by Libyan planes. The incident had little effect on Mr. Rabb's official duties, but for the remainder of their years in Rome, he and his wife, Ruth, were under guard.

John Cabot University established the Maxwell Rabb Scholarship in honor of Rabb, who was the longest-serving American ambassador to Italy. The partial-tuition scholarship is granted to a degree-seeking student from the U.S. or Italy who demonstrates a commitment to community service and/or civic involvement.

Remaining active in his law practice, Mr. Rabb continued to serve the U.S. Government and other organizations. He was a former U.S. representative to World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes; a member of the Presidential Advisory Panel on South Asian Relief Assistance, a member of the

board of advisers of the John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Harvard School of Public Health; a trustee of the Eisenhower Library and the George Marshall International Center.

Rabb was married to Ruth Rabb for 62 years and they had four children and five grandchildren. At the time of his death, he was of counsel to the firm of Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel.

Ambassador Rabb died at the age of 91 after suffering a fall while walking to his law office in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

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This collection consists of four series: SERIES I: 1980 Campaign; SERIES II: Selected Correspondence; SERIES III: Subject File; and SERIES IV: Scrapbooks and Oversized Material.

Series List

SERIES I: 1980 CAMPAIGN

SERIES II: SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE

SERIES III: SUBJECT FILES

SERIES IV: SCRAPBOOKS AND OVERSIZED (Boxes 14-24 are medium flat boxes)

Last Modified Date

2024-05-16

SERIES I: 1980 CAMPAIGN

Box 1

Status	Title
OPEN	Letters Regarding Ronald Reagan (1)(2)
OPEN	Governor Reagan – November 13 Dinner (1)(2)
OPEN	1980 Campaign (1)(2)
OPEN	Governor Reagan (1)-(3)
OPEN	Congratulatory Notes re: Ronald Reagan Campaign and March 25th Primary
OPEN	[Reagan for President] (1)(2)
OPEN	Governor Reagan [Campaign Material] (1)(2)
OPEN	[Campaign Correspondence re Other Candidates] (1)-(3)
OPEN	Ripon Forum
OPEN	[Campaign Correspondence] (1)(2)

Box 2

Status	Title
OPEN	[Campaign Correspondence] (3)-(14)
OPEN	Charles Freeman

SERIES II: SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE

Box 2, cont.

Status	Title
OPEN	1981 (1)-(5)

Box 3

Status	Title
OPEN	1981 (6)-(11)
OPEN	1982 (1)-(11)

Box 4

Status	Title
OPEN	1982 (12)-(17)
OPEN	1983 (1)-(12)

Box 5

Status	Title
OPEN	1983 (13)-(15)
OPEN	1984 (1)-(10)

Status	Title
OPEN	1985 (1)-(4)

Box 6

Status	Title
OPEN	1985 (5)-(12)
OPEN	1986 (1)-(8)

Box 7

Status	Title
OPEN	1986 (9)-(22)
OPEN	1987 (1)(2)

Box 8

Status	Title
OPEN	1987 (3)(4)
OPEN	1988 (1)(2)
OPEN	1989 (1)(2)
OPEN	Letters to Keep (1)-(3)
OPEN	Letters of Special Interest (1)(2)
OPEN	[Thank You Notes] 1983 (1)(2)
OPEN	[Thank You Notes] 1984
OPEN	[Thank You Notes] 1985
OPEN	[Thank You Notes] 1988 (1)-(3)
OPEN	[Thank You Notes] 1989

Box 9

Status	Title
OPEN	President Reagan – Re-Election Congratulatory Letters & Responses (1)-(4)

SERIES III: SUBJECT FILES

Box 9, cont.

Status	Title
OPEN	<i>Achille Lauro</i> (1)-(7)
OPEN	DATA (USA) Before Leaving for Italy, 1981
OPEN	Drug Rehabilitation (1)(4)

Status	Title
OPEN	General Dozier Kidnapping
OPEN	Naples Visit [<i>USS Missouri</i>] (1)(2)
Box 10	
Status	Title
OPEN	M.M.R. & Terrorism
OPEN	Richard Wagner Strasse 39 [Visit to Stuttgart, Germany]
OPEN	President Reagan's Attendance at the Economic Summit - Venice Italy 06/08/1987-06/10/1987 (1)(2)
OPEN	Villa Taverna - Draft Inventory
OPEN	Nancy Reagan's Visit to - 05/02/1985-05/04/1985
OPEN	Nancy Reagan's Book
OPEN	Visit to Site of Earthquakes and U.S.A. Aid
OPEN	President Pertini Visit
OPEN	Ambassador Wilson
OPEN	Prime Minister DeMita Visit to U.S.
OPEN	Minister of Interior Scalford - Visit to U.S.
OPEN	Prime Minister Fanfani, 1983
OPEN	Spadolini
OPEN	Visit of Prime Minister Goria, 1987 (1)(2)
OPEN	Visit of President Pertini, 1982 (1)(2)
OPEN	Prime Minister Craxi Visit to U.S.
OPEN	Justice Scalia's Italian Visit - 07/1988
OPEN	Andreotti - Rabb Discussions - Rome 11/24/1983-11/25/1983
OPEN	Villa Taverna

Box 11

Status	Title
OPEN	Visit of Attorney General Meese to Minister of Interior Fanfani - 02/1988
OPEN	Chief of Missions Conference, Oslo - 1981 (1)(2)
OPEN	Headquarters: United States European Command

Status	Title
OPEN	Maxwell Rabb Oral History (08/02/1989)
OPEN	Acceptance of Darma Ham in U.S.A
OPEN	Confirmation Hearing
OPEN	Selected Correspondence (1)(2)
OPEN	1986 Events (1)(2)
OPEN	Schedules (1)(2)
OPEN	Daily Schedules
OPEN	Remarks by Italian Officials at 40th Anniversary of U.S. Liberation of Italy
OPEN	Speeches & Toast, 1984 (1)-(7)

Box 12

Status	Title
OPEN	Miscellaneous [Clippings, Correspondence, & Speeches] (1)-(15)

Box 13

Status	Title
OPEN	Miscellaneous [Clippings, Correspondence, & Speeches] (16)-(18)
OPEN	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> Article

SERIES IV: SCRAPBOOKS AND OVERSIZED (Boxes 14-24 are medium flat boxes)

Box 13

Status	Title
OPEN	[Not included Items] (1)-(8)

Box 14

Status	Title
OPEN	[Newsclippings from Scrapbooks 03/12/1981-01/09/1982]

Box 15

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 01/06/1982-01/29/1982][Scrapbook 01/30/1982-04/11/1982]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 03/25/1982-06/06/1982]

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 06/07/1982-06/20/1982]

Box 16

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 07/04/1982-10/31/1982]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 11/01/1982-02/01/1983]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 02/05/1983-06/03/1983]

Box 17

Status	Title
OPEN	Honorary Diploma - Istituto Internazionale di Studi
OPEN	[Scrapbook 06/06/1983-10/05/1983]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 10/14/1983-02/01/1984]

Box 18

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 02/04/1984-04/03/1984]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 04/06/1984-06/03/1984]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 1984]

Box 19

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 09/23/1984-10/23/1984]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 11/28/1984-12/21/1984]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 12/21/1984-04/14/1985]

Box 20

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 05/01/1985-06/30/1985]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 07/01/1985-10/11/1985]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 10/08/1985-10/17/1985]

Box 21

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 10/16/1985-10/21/1985]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 10/20/1985-11/08/1985]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 11/11/1985-01/11/1986]

Box 22

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 01/11/1986-02/24/1986]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 02/15/1986-04/13/1986]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 04/22/1986-07/09/1986]

Box 23

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 07/08/1986-08/24/1986]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 08/25/1986-11/15/1986]
OPEN	[Scrapbook 11/20/1986-01/20/1987]

Box 24

Status	Title
OPEN	[Scrapbook 01/21/1987-05/25/1987]
OPEN	[Scrapbook End of 1987]

Box 25 (Small object box)

Status	Title
OPEN	Two nametags
OPEN	Rome medallion