

Jerome B. Wiesner Personal Papers (#308)



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Administrative Information

Abstract

Papers, 1961-1965 (#308). Consist of official chronological and subject files. The vast majority of materials cover the years 1961-1963. Engineer, educator, government official. Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology (1961-1964); Director, Office of Science and Technology (1961-64). Open.

Usage Guidelines

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Provenance

Received from Jerome B. Wieser 13 July 1964. (Acc. 2003-054; NK 66)

Extent

9.82 cubic feet

Access Restriction Note

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Processing Information

Opened December 2023.

Processed by Abigail Malangone, Michelle Demartino, and Savannah York.

Collection Overview

Biographical/Historical Note

Jerome B. Wiesner was born in Detroit, Michigan, on May 30, 1915. He was educated in the Dearborn public schools and at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he received bachelor of science degrees in electrical engineering and mathematics in 1937, the master of science degree in electrical engineering in 1938, and the doctor of philosophy degree in electrical engineering in 1950.

As both an undergraduate and graduate student at Michigan, Dr. Wiesner was associate director of the university's radio broadcasting service. In addition, he participated in studies of acoustics and assisted in developing electronic techniques at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, MI.

In 1940, he was appointed chief engineer for the Acoustical and Record Laboratory of the Library of Congress. There he assisted in developing recording facilities and equipment and traveled through the South and Southwest with the noted folklorist Alan Lomax, recording the folk music of the regions for the Library of Congress Archives.

In 1942, shortly after the United States became involved in World War II, Dr. Wiesner joined the research staff at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) newly formed Radiation Laboratory, where he worked on the development of microwave radar. He became an associate member of the laboratory's steering committee and was later the leader of Project Cadillac, which developed an airborne radar system that was the forerunner of the present AWAC system.

In 1945, as the war came to an end, Dr. Wiesner briefly joined the staff at the University of California's Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico, then returned to MIT in 1946 as assistant professor of electrical engineering. He was advanced to the rank of associate professor in 1947 and was made a full professor of electrical engineering in 1950.

From 1946 to 1961 he worked at MIT's Research Laboratory of Electronics. He held various positions at the laboratory, including assistant director, associate director and finally director. From 1959 to 1960 he was also acting head of the Department of Electrical Engineering.

Dr. Wiesner was a frequent consultant and adviser to government agencies, particularly the Department of Defense and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, on matters relating to science and technology. He became a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee in 1957 during the Eisenhower administration. He also served as the technical director of the Gaither Panel, a study of civilian defense undertaken by the White House. In 1958 he served as staff director of the United States delegation to the Geneva Conference for the Prevention of Surprise Attack. Also in 1958, Dr. Wiesner became associated with the Pugwash Group, scientists whose activities have been directed toward improving communications and relations between intellectual leaders in Communist bloc nations and those of the Western world.

Dr. Wiesner took a three-year leave of absence from MIT starting in February 1961 to serve as special assistant to President John F. Kennedy for Science and Technology and, simultaneously, as chairman of the President's Science Advisory Committee. He also held those posts for a short time under President Lyndon B. Johnson following the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. He returned to MIT as dean of the School of Science in 1964. In July 1971, Dr. Wiesner became president of MIT.

From 1974 to 1981, Dr. Wiesner served on the Technology Advisory Council of Congress' Office of Technology Assessment, where he was elected chairman in January 1976. He was also a member of the board of directors of the Public Broadcasting Service and served as a consultant-at-large to the President's Science Advisory Committee.

Dr. Wiesner was on the board of trustees of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the Board of Governors of The Institute of Science, the advisory committee of the Wellman Laboratory for research in photobiology, the Board of Overseers of Harvard College, and the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government. In addition he served on the boards of the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity, Consultants for Management Decisions, Inc., The Faxon Company, Magnascreen, and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Dr. Wiesner married Laya Wainger of Johnston, Pennsylvania in 1940. They had four children. Wiesner passed away October 21, 1994 of heart failure.

[Adapted from an MIT News Office obituary, 26 October 1994.]

Scope and Content Note

The Jerome B. Wiesner Personal Papers collection consists of material generated by Wiesner and his staff while working as Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, as the Director of the Office of Science and Technology, and as the Chairman of the President's Science Advisory Committee. As a special assistant, Wiesner provided advice on the effective use of science and technology in the interest of national security and for the general welfare. The Office of Science and Technology was established in May 1962 and as its first director, Wiesner was responsible for the proper coordination of federal science and technology functions.

This collection is comprised of three series: Top Secret Files, Secret Files, and Unclassified Files. Materials include memoranda, reports, telegrams, letters, and speeches. Wiesner communicated often with President Kennedy and other administration staff members, with congressmen and senators, and with members of the scientific community. Topics covered in this collection include education; scientific and technical manpower; space – including memoranda on the manned lunar landing and other earth-orbit space activities; and telecommunications, among others. There is a large amount of material related to nuclear testing and the test ban treaty, including letters from the public who wrote to Dr. Wiesner to express their views.

Subject Headings

Advice and Counsel to the President
Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
Nuclear weapons
Science
Space
Telecommunications

Series List

Top Secret Files, 1961-1963.

Secret Files, 1961-1963.

Unclassified Files, 1961-1965.

Container List

Series 1. Top Secret Files, 1961-1963.

Extent: 1 box (.252 cubic feet)

Arrangement: Arranged in reverse chronological order.

This series contains materials from Wiesner's files that were classified as top secret. Primarily consisting of reports, these materials cover various topics, such as arms control, nuclear weapons, nuclear test bans, and other materials related to national security. The majority of these records remain classified.

Box 001

TS: S&T-358: cy 4, 18 December 1963
TS: S&T - 301: cy 2C, 8 August 1963
TS: S&T - 296: cy 2C, 6 August 1963
TS: S&T - 288: cy 2A, 30 July 1963
TS: S&T - 258: cy 1B, 22 June 1963
TS: S&T - 178: cy 3A, 18 February 1963
TS: S&T - 156: cy 3B, 4 December 1962
TS: S&T, 19 November 1962
TS: S&T - 120: cy 7A, 6 October 1962
TS: S&T - 112: cy 5A, 28 September 1962
TS: S&T - 95: cy 4A, 5 September 1962
TS: S&T - 25: cy 1CC: Telecommunication memorandum, 19 July 1962
TS: S&T - 60: cy 6, 20 June 1962
TS: S&T - 36: cy 1, 2 April 1962
TS: S&T - 12: cy 5, 25 January 1962
TS: S&T - 2: cy 3A, 25 January 1962
TS: S&T - 7: cy 2, 17 January 1962
TS: S&T - 4: cy 6, 13 January 1962
TS: S&T - 3: cy 5, 9 January 1962
TS: S&T - 161: cy 1B, 22 December 1961
TS: S&T - 122: cy 1B, 22 August 1961
TS: S&T - 119: cy 4, 7 August 1961
TS: S&T - 104: cy 15, 20 June 1961
TS: S&T - 101: cy 4, 9 June 1961
TS: S&T - 38: cy 1B, 1 February 1961
TS: WH-S&T-107; cy 27B, undated [1961]
TS: WH-S&T-98: cy 4, undated [1961]
TS: S&T-258: cy 1B, undated
TS: S&T-121: cy 1B, undated
TS: S&T-25: cy 1B, undated
TS: S&T-19: cy 8B, undated

Series 2. Secret Files, 1961-1963.

Extent: 12 boxes (6.048 cubic feet)

Arrangement: Arranged into two main groups: chronological file and subject file. The chronological file is arranged chronologically by month and year and thereunder, in reverse chronological order. The subject file is arranged alphabetically by subject.

This series consists of a chronological file and a subject file maintained by the office of Jerome Wiesner. The chronological file consists primarily of outgoing carbon copies of memoranda, letters, etc. to President John F. Kennedy, administration officials, members of Congress, and members of the scientific community, among others. Very rarely is the incoming correspondence included in this material, and attachments referenced in outgoing communications are not included.

Box 002

Chronological File: January 1961
Chronological File: February 1961
Chronological File: March 1961
Chronological File: April 1961
Chronological File: May 1961
Chronological File: June 1961
Chronological File: July 1961
Chronological File: August 1961
Chronological File: September 1961
Chronological File: October 1961
Chronological File: November 1961
Chronological File: December 1961

Box 003

Chronological File: January 1962
Chronological File: February 1962
Chronological File: March 1962
Chronological File: April 1962
Chronological File: May 1962
Chronological File: June 1962
Chronological File: July 1962 (1 of 2 folders)
Chronological File: July 1962 (2 of 2 folders)
Chronological File: August 1962
Chronological File: September 1962
Chronological File: October 1962
Chronological File: November 1962

Box 004

Chronological File: December 1962
Chronological File: January 1963
Chronological File: February 1963
Chronological File: March 1963
Chronological File: April 1963
Chronological File: May 1963
Chronological File: June 1963

Chronological File: July 1963
Chronological File: August 1963
Chronological File: September 1963

Box 005

Chronological File: October 1963
Chronological File: November 1963
Subject File: Advanced Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (AICBM)
Subject File: Advertising Council: T.F., 1961
Subject File: Air traffic
Subject File: Aircraft Nuclear Propulsion (ANP)
Subject File: Astronomy
Subject File: Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), 1961-1962
Subject File: Atomic Energy Commission: Fermi Award
Subject File: Atomic Energy Commission: Lawrence Award
Subject File: Civil defense
Subject File: Advisory Committee: Report by the PSAC Panel on Civil Defense, 16 July 1962
Subject File: Civilian technology
Subject File: Command and control
Subject File: Commerce
Subject File: Congressional (1 of 2 folders)

Box 006

Subject File: Congressional (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: Democratic Advisory Council
Subject File: Disarmament
Subject File: Economics
Subject File: Education
Subject File: Energy
Subject File: Federal Aviation Agency (FAA)
Subject File: Government
Subject File: Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)
Subject File: High energy physics
Subject File: International (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: International (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: Life sciences; Limited War (1 of 3 folders)
Subject File: Life sciences; Limited War (2 of 3 folders)
Subject File: Life sciences; Limited War (3 of 3 folders)

Box 007

Subject File: Manpower; Missiles
Subject File: Mental retardation [intellectual disability]

Subject File: National Academy of Sciences
Subject File: National Medal of Science, 1961-1962
Subject File: National Medal of Science, 1963 (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: National Medal of Science, 1963 (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: Description of Assets and Recommendations for National Communications System
Subject File: National Communication System: Functional Network/System "U" (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: National Communication System: Functional Network/System "U" (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: National Science Foundation
Subject File: National Science Foundation: National Science Board, 1961-1962
Subject File: National Science Foundation: National Science Board, 1963
Subject File: Natural resources

Box 008

Subject File: Nuclear detection: Underground: USSR
Subject File: Nuclear tests
Subject File: Oceanography
Subject File: Office of Science and Technology (OST)
Subject File: Patents
Subject File: Personnel
Subject File: President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) (1 of 4 folders)
Subject File: President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) (2 of 4 folders)
Subject File: President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) (3 of 4 folders)
Subject File: President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) (4 of 4 folders)
Subject File: Project MOHOLE for J. B. Wiesner
Subject File: Radiation
Subject File: Space
Subject File: Telecommunications (1 of 2 folders)

Box 009

Subject File: Telecommunications (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: Water
Subject File: White House: Title folder, 1961
Subject File: White House: Title folder, 1962
Subject File: White House: Dungan [Ralph] (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: Dungan [Ralph] (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: Feldman [Myer]
Subject File: White House: Gildner [Jay]
Subject File: White House: Holborn [Frederick]
Subject File: White House: Manatos [Mike]
Subject File: White House: Medal of Freedom, 1963
Subject File: White House: O'Brien [Lawrence F.]

Box 010

Subject File: White House: O'Donnell [Kenneth] (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: O'Donnell [Kenneth] (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Title folder, 1961
Subject File: White House: President, 1962 (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President, 1962 (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Messages, congratulations, 1961 (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Messages, congratulations, 1961 (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Messages, congratulations, 1962-1963 (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Messages, congratulations, 1962-1963 (2 of 2 folders)

Box 011

Subject File: White House: President [Report to the President on Water Resources Research] (1 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: President [Report to the President on Water Resources Research] (2 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: President [Report to the President on Water Resources Research] (3 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume I (1 of 4 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume I (2 of 4 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume I (3 of 4 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume I (4 of 4 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume II (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume II (2 of 2 folders)

Box 012

Subject File: White House: President: Volume III (1 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume III (2 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: President: Volume III (3 of 3 folders)
Subject File: White House: Reardon [Ted]
Subject File: White House: Salinger [Pierre] (1 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: Salinger [Pierre] (2 of 2 folders)
Subject File: White House: Schlesinger [Arthur]
Subject File: White House: Sorensen [Theodore C.]
Subject File: White House: Travell [Janet]

Box 013

Subject File: White House: White [Lee C.]
Subject File: White House: Wilson [Henry H.]
Subject File: Miscellaneous: Material for Kennedy Library (1 of 2 folders)

Subject File: Miscellaneous: Material for Kennedy Library (2 of 2 folders)

Series 3. Unclassified Files, 1961-1965.

Extent: 7 boxes (3.528 cubic feet)

Arrangement: Arranged into groups. Public mail is arranged alphabetically by last name, but also includes several folders of mail solely related to nuclear testing. The remaining groups — congressional appearances, publications and reports, and speeches are arranged chronologically.

This series consists predominantly of mail sent in by members of the public to express their opinion on matters such as nuclear testing, civil defense, the space program, and scientific manpower and education. It also includes letters written by the public to inform Wiesner of their own scientific inventions. Other materials include those related to congressional appearances by Wiesner, speech files, and various publications and reports.

Box 014

- Public mail: A
- Public mail: B
- Public mail: C (1 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: C (2 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: C (3 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: D

Box 015

- Public mail: E
- Public mail: F
- Public mail: G (1 of 2 folders)
- Public mail: G (2 of 2 folders)
- Public mail: H
- Public mail: I
- Public mail: J
- Public mail: K (1 of 2 folders)
- Public mail: K (2 of 2 folders)

Box 016

- Public mail: L (1 of 2 folders)
- Public mail: L (2 of 2 folders)
- Public mail: M (1 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: M (2 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: M (3 of 3 folders)
- Public mail: N
- Public mail: O
- Public mail: P
- Public mail: Q

Public mail: R (1 of 2 folders)
Public mail: R (2 of 2 folders)

Box 017

Public mail: S (1 of 2 folders)
Public mail: S (2 of 2 folders)
Public mail: T
Public mail: U
Public mail: V
Public mail: W (1 of 2 folders)
Public mail: W (2 of 2 folders)
Public mail: Y
Public mail: Z

Box 018

Public mail: Nuclear test ban (1 of 3 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear test ban (2 of 3 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear test ban (3 of 3 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (1 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (2 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (3 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (4 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (5 of 9 folders)

Box 019

Public mail: Nuclear testing (6 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (7 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (8 of 9 folders)
Public mail: Nuclear testing (9 of 9 folders)
Public mail: President's statement on science and engineering manpower, February 1962
(1 of 2 folders)
Public mail: President's statement on science and engineering manpower, February 1962
(2 of 2 folders)
Congressional appearances of Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner: List
Congressional appearances of Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner: Statements, 1962
Congressional appearances of Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner: Statements, testimony, discussion,
1963 (1 of 2 folders)

Box 020

Congressional appearances of Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner: Statements, testimony, discussion,
1963 (2 of 2 folders)
Publications and reports, 1962-1963

Publications and reports, 1964-1965

Speeches: List of prepared speeches and off-the-cuff remarks, 1961-1964

Speeches: Requests declined, 1961-1963

Speeches, 1961

Speeches, 1962

Speeches, 1963 (1 of 2 folders)

Speeches, 1963 (2 of 2 folders)