



Malvina Stephenson Papers (C4038)

Collection Number: C4038

Collection Title: Malvina Stephenson Papers

Dates: 1863-1996

Creator: Stephenson, Malvina, 1911-1996

Abstract: The papers of Malvina Stephenson contain the professional papers of a journalist who spent most of her career covering politics in Washington, D.C. The collection includes story and subject files, scrapbooks of articles and columns, research for a biography on Senator Robert S. Kerr, scripts for radio news reports, and other personal and professional material.

Collection Size: 8.75 cubic feet, 1 audio disc, 2 video cassettes
(278 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia. If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Malvina Stephenson Papers* (C4038); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Malvina Stephenson on November 22, 1991 (Accession No. CA5120). An addition to the collection was made by Marsha Franklin on 20 May 1996 (Accession No. CA5617).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Malvina Stephenson Papers can be found in the following collection:

[Malvina Stephenson Collection](#), (CAC-PP-074), Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, University of Oklahoma

Processed by: Processed by Elizabeth Engel on October 5, 2009. Finding aid revised by Elizabeth Engel on August 13, 2021.

Historical Note:

Mary Malvina Stephenson was born on October 17, 1911 in Paris, Texas. Her parents were Robert E. Stephenson and Allie Malvina King. The family lived in Hugo, Oklahoma, where Stephenson's father practiced law. In 1926, the family moved to Sapulpa, Oklahoma. Three years later Malvina Stephenson graduated from Sapulpa High School, where she had been editor of the school's newspaper.

Stephenson attended Southeastern State Teachers College (now Southeastern Oklahoma State University) in Durant, graduating with an associate's degree in history in 1932. She taught for three years before returning to school at the University of Oklahoma, where she earned her master's degree in journalism in 1936. After graduation, Stephenson landed a job at the *Tulsa World*, where she was the only woman working at the city desk.

In 1940, Stephenson moved to Washington, D.C. to launch a one-woman news bureau. She quickly became a regular political correspondent for a number of newspapers, such as the *Daily Oklahoman*, *Cincinnati Times-Star*, and the *Kansas City Star*, along with the *Tulsa World* and *Tulsa Tribune*. She also contributed stories to King Features Syndicate and the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA) news service. In addition, she reported for the West Virginia Network's weekly radio program.

From 1951 to 1963, Stephenson worked as press secretary for Senator Robert S. Kerr of Oklahoma. She co-edited his book *Land, Wood and Water*, which was published in 1960. After the senator's death in 1963, Stephenson did freelance work and resumed contributing stories to the *Tulsa World*. In 1969, Stephenson and Vera Glaser formed the first female political columnist team when they began writing "Washington Offbeat." During the mid-1970s, they also covered politics for WTOP News in Washington, doing radio news reports based on their columns. During the 1980s, Stephenson began writing a regular op-ed column for the *Tulsa World*.

Stephenson was named to the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 1990. The next year she returned to Oklahoma permanently. She published a biography on Senator Robert Kerr in 1995. In memory of her parents, Stephenson established a scholarship fund at the University of Oklahoma for students interested in pursuing political journalism. She died on February 16, 1996.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

Story and Subject Files
Professional
Personal
Scrapbooks

Scope and Content Note:

The **Story and Subject Files** series consists of material related to many of Stephenson's news articles. Most files contain notes or drafts for stories, although some files only contain resource material. The series has been arranged alphabetically.

The **Professional** series mainly contains articles and news reports, along with material pertaining to Stephenson's biography of Senator Robert S. Kerr. The miscellaneous material includes an audio disc from a 1972 Washington Press Club event, "A Night in Peking." The series has been arranged alphabetically.

The **Personal** series includes Stephenson's Master's thesis and a small amount of correspondence, as well as obituaries and memorial service material, including a video cassette of the memorial service. The miscellaneous material includes a video cassette of a group oral history interview Stephenson participated in concerning the Eleanor Roosevelt press conferences. The series has been arranged alphabetically.

The **Scrapbooks** series documents Stephenson's career as a journalist and largely contains newspaper clippings of Stephenson's stories. All but the first scrapbook in the series are devoted to either Stephenson and Glaser's "Washington Offbeat" column (sometimes called "Offbeat Washington") or Stephenson's articles and op-ed pieces written for the *Tulsa World*. The series has been arranged alphabetically by subject and then chronologically.

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