



Lester Mondale Papers (R0111)

Collection Number: R0111

Collection Title: Lester Mondale Papers

Dates: 1965-1977

Creator: Mondale, Lester, 1904-2003

Abstract: The Lester Mondale Papers contains the correspondence, notes, published works, and miscellaneous material of Lester Mondale, a retired Unitarian minister from near Fredericktown in Madison County, Missouri. He was president of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Collection Size: 0.75 cubic foot
(27 folders, 3 volumes)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research, but is stored offsite. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at rolla@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Lester Mondale Papers* (R0111); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Lester Mondale on April 8, 1982 (Accession No. RA0119).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Lester Mondale Papers can be found in the following collections:

Lester Mondale Lecture (R1364)

Raymond B. Bragg Papers (K0468)

Processed by: Processed by John F. Bradbury, June 4, 1982. Revised by Kathleen Seale, April 23, 2020.

Biographical Note:

R. Lester Mondale was born in Redwood County, Minnesota on May 28, 1904 to Theodore S. Mondale and Jessie Alice Larson. Raised as a Methodist, he became interested in Unitarianism while a student at Hamline College. He entered the Unitarian ministry in 1920. After completing his education at Harvard Divinity School in 1929, Mondale held pulpits at various Unitarian churches including a thirteen-year stint as a pastor in Kansas City, Missouri. He retired in 1962 to an eighty-acre farm near Fredericktown.

During retirement, in addition to accepting several appointments as interim pastor to Unitarian congregations, Mondale became very active in humanist and ethical circles. His association with the humanist movement went back to 1933, when he became the youngest signer of the seminal document of American humanism. He was also a member of the Unitarian Ministers Association and the American Ethical Union, and was a guest lecturer at theological schools and universities under the sponsorship of the American Humanist Association. He was elected to the presidency of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists in 1967, serving until 1972. He was elected to a second term, 1974-1976. He was accorded some local recognition after his half-brother, Walter F. Mondale served as Vice President of the United States, 1977-1981.

The Fellowship of Religious Humanists, organized in 1963, was seen as a “rallying point” for non-theists and religious liberals who regarded religious experience as a fact of human existence, and who were dissatisfied with secular humanism and traditional religions. The Fellowship was also regarded as a bridge organization for religious humanists, and, as such, was affiliated with the American Ethical Union, the Unitarian-Universalist Association, the American Humanist Association, and the International Humanist and Ethical Union. In company with these groups, the Fellowship sponsored lectures, conferences, and meetings. The Fellowship also began publication in 1967 of a quarterly journal, *Religious Humanism*.

Mondale died on August 19, 2003 at the age of 99. His ashes were scattered along the creek at his family farm.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series with three subseries:

- Correspondence
- Fellowship of Religious Humanists
 - Financial Reports
 - Miscellaneous
- Publications
- Personal Papers
- Published Works

Scope and Content Note:

Correspondence

This series contains Lester Mondale's personal correspondence. The primary correspondent is Edwin H. Wilson, editor of *Religious Humanism* and administrative secretary of the Fellowship until 1970, and with Doris Slaughter, who became office manager after Wilson's retirement. From the Fellowship's headquarters in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Wilson and Slaughter both corresponded frequently with Mondale in connection with the mechanics of running the society, setting up annual meetings and conferences, publishing the journal and directing annual appeals for membership and support. Mondale also correspondence widely with the leaders of the societies with which the Fellowship was affiliated, and with the officers and benefactors of the Fellowship. An itemized list of the correspondence is available in the administration folder. This series is arranged chronologically.

Fellowship of Religious Humanists

This series consists of materials pertaining to the financial records and miscellaneous materials of the Fellowship. The financial records subseries contains reports sent to Mondale during his first term as president. The subseries is arranged in chronological order. The miscellaneous subseries includes statistics on membership, promotions and appeals, subscriptions to the journal, and correspondence and notes connected with the annual meeting of the Fellowship. The subseries is arranged in its original order.

Publications

This series contains miscellaneous printed materials from the affiliates of the society, including a file of bulletins issued by the International Humanist and Ethical Union of Utrecht in the Netherlands. This series is arranged in its original order.

Personal Papers

This series contains Lester Mondale's vita and writings on religious humanism. The series is arranged in its original order.

Published Works

This series consists of Lester Mondale's published works concerning religious humanism. Volumes 1 and 2 are books written by Mondale. Volume three contains an edition of the *Religious Humanism* with articles by Mondale, Palmer Hilty, Robert Hoagland, and Henry Winthrop. This series is arranged chronologically.

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