

A Guide to the Arthur R. "Pete" Giesen, Jr. Collection, 1963-1997

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History

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

2020.0003

Language of Materials

English

Creator

Arthur R. Giesen, Jr.

Physical Characteristics

11 boxes

Repository

Augusta County Historical Society

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The records were donated by Arthur R. "Pete" Giesen, Jr.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Biographical Information

Arthur Rossa "Pete" Giesen, Jr. was born in Radford, Virginia, on August 8, 1932. His father, Arthur R. "Ott" Giesen was a former member of City Council and Mayor of Radford, and his mother, Charlotte C. "Pinkie" Giesen, was the first woman elected to the Radford City Council and the first woman elected to the Virginia House of Delegates as a Republican.

He graduated from Yale University in 1954 with a B.A. in American Studies and received an MBA from Harvard Graduate School of Business in 1956.

He married Dorothy Ann Hopkins in 1954; they divorced in 1981. A second marriage, to Patricia Ann Wilson Elliott, took place in 1983.

He died on April 2, 2021.

Business and Political Career

He was president and treasurer of Augusta Steel Corporation and Vice President of Giesen-Caldwell Agency, Inc. He formed the New Options Group, Inc., in Waynesboro, Virginia. Giesen served on the executive boards of both the Augusta Steel Corporation and the Virginia Central Valley Bank.

In 1964 Giesen was elected to Virginia's 10th District of the House of Delegates. After the 1970 census reapportionment the 10th became the 15th District. In 1974 he resigned his House seat and leadership position, hoping to win the special election to succeed H. Dunlop Dawbarn in the state senate. He lost that election and was re-elected to the House in 1975. From 1982 to 1983 the 15th District was again the 10th District. In 1983 the 10th became the 25th District. He served the 25th, representing part of the Shenandoah Valley, until his retirement in January 1996.

During his tenure in the House Giesen served on various committees, including Appropriations; Counties, Cities, and Towns; Militia and Police; and Mining and Mineral Resources. He served on a number of subcommittees and advisory committees. A number of files on electric vehicles and alternative fuels correspond to his work on the House Clean Fuels Study Subcommittee.

He was chairman of the Joint Republican Legislative Caucus from 1969-1970 and again from 1984-1986, and served as House Republican floor leader from 1970 to 1974 and Assistant Republican floor leader from 1970-1972.

Before and after retirement he was on various boards of directors, committees, and councils. Among these are Steering Committee, Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation; Board of Directors, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center Foundation; Volunteer Services Council; Western State Hospital Board of Directors; Mental Health Association in Virginia; Executive Board, Lutheran Synod of Virginia; and Executive Council, Lutheran Church of America. He was active in the Kiwanis Club.

According to Steve Landes, who had worked as his legislative assistant and who succeeded Giesen as House Representative for the 25th district, Giesen had a strong interest in mental health reform. After retirement he participated in fund-raising efforts for the Augusta County chapter of the Mental Health Association.

"He told me the reason he became interested in mental health reform was that he visited some of the mental health hospitals in the state back in the 60's and they were just warehousing people," Landes recalled, "So he said, 'we gotta do better.'" (*News Leader*, April 5, 2021)

After retirement Giesen was Executive Vice President of New Options Group. He was legislative consultant and legislative coordinator for the Virginia Coalition on Aging and the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging. He lobbied at the state level for two non-profit agencies and served as the legislative liaison for several local governments, and served as chief-of-staff to Lt. Gov. John Hager.

Giesen represented James Madison University as legislative liaison in Richmond from 2001 until 2007. Beginning in 2007 he taught courses in state and local government and topics in American politics at the university.

Scope and Content

The papers of Arthur "Pete" Giesen are Series IV of the Giesen Collection.

The bulk of Series IV corresponds with the period in which Mr. Giesen served in the House of Delegates of the Virginia General Assembly. The material includes files on committees on which he served, Virginia election results, House membership, records of his political campaigns, including campaign finances, and conferences he attended.

Series IV is divided into subseries.

Subseries 1, 2, and 3 correspond with Giesen's time as a Delegate.

Subseries 4 and 5 contain material on electric vehicles and alternative fuels, related to Giesen's membership on the Joint Subcommittee to Study the Use of Vehicles Powered by Clean Transportation Fuels, also referred to as the Clean Fuels Study Subcommittee, created in 1990.

On October 24, 1992, President George H.W. Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 1992, designed, in part, to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil imports by encouraging the use of domestically produced fuels. The Act contained both mandates and incentives for the use of alternate fuels in vehicles.

During the 1993 session the Virginia General Assembly passed several pieces of legislation related to alternative fuels or to motor vehicle-generated air pollution. One bill provided for establishing a clean fuel fleet program in Virginia, consistent with the requirements of the federal Clean Air Act of 1970 and its 1990 amendments.

The terms "alternative fuels" and "clean fuels" are used interchangeably in the records. At the time, "clean" or "alternative" fuels included methanol, ethanol, natural gas, propane, hydrogen, coal-derived liquids, and electricity, some of which would not today be called "clean."

Files on "alternative fuels" include committee reports, copies of legislation, notes, letters and memos, reports from various organizations, handwritten notes, etc.

Baker Equipment and Engineering Company, Richmond, Virginia, and Baker's focus on developing electric vehicles, feature prominently in the papers.

Baker Equipment was a client of the New Options Group, a company Giesen founded, and there is correspondence between the two.

Material on political campaigns (subseries 6) includes material from the Giesen for Delegate committee, campaign literature, and financial records.

Personal files in subseries 7 include programs from inaugurations and other events and records and photos of two Friends of Giesen roasts in 1987 and 1988.

The papers cover the period from approximately 1963 to 1997.

Index Terms

Persons:

Giesen, Arthur Rossa 'Pete', Jr.

Corporate Names:

Baker Equipment Engineering Co.

Southern States Energy Board

Virginia General Assembly. House of Delegates

Subjects:

Alternative fuels

Elections - Virginia

Electric vehicles

Inaugurations-Programs

Political campaigns

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