

Townsend, John W., Jr., Papers

John W. Townsend, Jr., Papers

1949-1990



Title Statement

Townsend, John W., Jr., PapersJohn W. Townsend, Jr., Papers, 1949-1990 Ms.1990.068

Author: Special Collections Staff; and Kat Zinn, Archivist

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1990.068

Unit Date

1949-1990

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

This collection contains NASA administrator and physicist John W. Townsend, Jr.'s (1924-2011) personal and professional papers from 1949 until his retirement from corporate and government aerospace work in 1990. In addition to professional correspondence, memos, and subject files, there are extensive travel files from 1949-1968 and 1985-1990, congressional testimony on NASA projects from 1982-1986, and files on the history of the Upper Air Rocket Research Program at the Naval Research Laboratory from about 1956-1958. Throughout his career, Townsend also served on a number of councils, boards, and panels. The collection also includes files from the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station Advisory Panel (1966-1968, the International Academy of Astronautics (c. 1981-1987), the NASA Advisory Council (1982-1987), the National Academy of Engineering (1982-1987), the National Research Council Space Applications Board (1983-1987), and the Office of Technology Assessment Advisory Board Panel on International Cooperation and Competition in Civilian Space Activities (1982-1985).

Creator

Townsend, John W., Jr. (John William), 1924-2011

Extent

8.4 Cubic Feet 6 boxes

Physical Location

Please note: This collection is in off-site storage and requires 2-3 days notice for retrieval. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives for more information.

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The John W. Townsend, Jr., Papers were donated to Special Collections in 1990.

Processing Information

Some original description of the John W. Townsend, Jr., Papers was completed prior to 2000. A folder list and additional description of the collection was completed in October and November 2018.

Additional arrangement and description of the John W. Townsend, Jr., Papers was completed as part of the project, "Piercing the Veil: Creating Access to the Archives of American Aerospace Exploration at Virginia Tech," funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in 2024.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], John W. Townsend, Jr., Papers, Ms1990-068, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Physicist John W. Townsend, Jr., was born in 1924. He received a B.A. from Williams College in 1947, an M.A. in 1949, and a Sc.D. in 1961. After completing his M.A., Townsend went to work for the Naval Research Laboratory from 1949-1958, spending the last three years as a branch head. In 1958, he moved to NASA for a decade, including three years (1965-1968) as the deputy director of the Goddard Space Center in Maryland. He left NASA in 1968 to serve as a deputy administrator in the Environmental Sciences Services Administration (1968-1970), and an associate administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (1970-1977). In 1977, he took a break from government work, serving as the president of Fairchild Space and Electronics Company (1977-1982) and, when the company changed names, president of Fairchild Space Company from 1983-1987. In 1987, he returned to NASA as director of the Goddard Space

Center until his retirement in 1990. Townsend died in November 2011.

Scope and Content

This collection contains physicist John W. Townsend, Jr.'s personal and professional papers from 1949 until his retirement from corporate and government aerospace work in 1990. In addition to professional correspondence, memos, and subject files, there are extensive travel files from 1949-1968 and 1985-1990, congressional testimony on NASA projects from 1982-1986, and files on the history of the Upper Air Rocket Research Program at the Naval Research Laboratory from about 1956-1958. Throughout his career, Townsend also served on a number of councils, boards, and panels. The collection also includes files from the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station Advisory Panel (1966-1968, the International Academy of Astronautics (c. 1981-1987), the NASA Advisory Council (1982-1987), the National Academy of Engineering (1982-1987), the National Research Council Space Applications Board (1983-1987), and the Office of Technology Assessment Advisory Board Panel on International Cooperation and Competition in Civilian Space Activities (1982-1985).

Materials in this collection have been separated into the following series:

Series I: Reading Files, 1958-1967, contains Townsend's reading files for a variety of subjects.

Series II: Organizations and Committees, 1982-1987, n.d., consists of materials from Townsend's involvement in committees, boards, and panels, including the American Geophysical Union, the International Academy of Astronautics, the National Academy of Engineering, NASA Advisory Council, the National Resource Council Space Applications Board, and the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station Advisory Panel.

Series III: Correspondence, 1957-1990, contains professional correspondence, memos, and clippings.

Series IV: Travel, 1949-1990, includes extensive travel documentation.

Series V: Testimonies, 1981-1986, contains files from Townsend's congressional testimonies on NASA projects.

Series VI: Subject Files, 1987-1989, n.d., consists of subject files such as publications, files on the history of the Goddard Space Flight Center and the Rocket-Sonde Research Branch of the Naval Research Laboratory, and Earth observations.

Series VII: Personal Files, 1978-1989, n.d., includes files such as appointment books and performance ratings.

Keywords

Archives of American Aerospace Exploration (AAAE)

Businesspeople

Physicists

Physics

Science and Technology

United States -- National Aeronautics and Space Administration -- Officials and employees

United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Arrangement

This collection has been arranged into the following series:

Series I: Reading Files, 1958-1967, is arranged chronologically.

Series II: Organizations and Committees, 1982-1987, n.d., is arranged alphabetically according to group. If there is more than one item from a group, they are arranged chronologically. For example, "National Academy of Engineering, 1983" is before "National Academy of Engineering, 1984."

Series III: Correspondence, 1957-1990, is arranged chronologically.

Series IV: Travel, 1949-1990, is arranged chronologically.

Series V: Testimonies, 1981-1986, is arranged chronologically.

Series VI: Subject Files, 1987-1989, n.d., is arranged chronologically.

Series VII: Personal Files, 1978-1989, n.d., is arranged chronologically.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Reading Files

Unit Date 1958-1967

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1958-10-23-1958-12-30

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1959-01-01-1959-03-31

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1959-04-01-1959-06-30

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1959-10-01-1959-12-31

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1959-07-01-1959-09-30

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 16 (folder)

JWT Reading File (2 folders)

Unit Date 1960

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4-5 (folder)

JWT Reading File

Unit Date 1961

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

JWT Reading File (2 folders)

Unit Date 1962

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7-8 (folder)

JWT Reading File (3 folders)

Unit Date 1963

box-folder 1 (box)
Container 9-11 (folder)

JWT Reading File (3 folders)

Unit Date 1964
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 12-14 (folder)

JWT Reading File (2 folders)

Unit Date 1965
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 15-16 (folder)

JWT Reading File (2 folders)

Unit Date 1966
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 17-18 (folder)

JWT Reading File (2 folders)

Unit Date 1967
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 19-20 (folder)

Series II: Organizations and Committees

Unit Date 1982-1987, n.d.

Aerospace America Advisory Board (2 folders)

Unit Date n.d.
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 1-2 (folder)

American Geophysical Union

Unit Date n.d.
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 3 (folder)

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

Unit Date n.d.
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 4 (folder)

Center for Excellence in Government (2 folders)

Unit Date n.d.
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 5-6 (folder)

Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems Meeting Briefing Book

Unit Date 1986-04-17-1986-04-18
box-folder 5 (box)
Container 27 (folder)

Commision on Engineering and Technical Systems Miscellaneous

Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems Miscellaneous

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 28 (folder)

GARP- Global Atmos. Research Project

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 24 (folder)

International Academy of Astro. Committee on Space & Global Change

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

International Academy of Astronautics (3 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 8-10 (folder)

Maryland Academy of Sciences

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

National Academy of Sciences Nation Weather Observation Systems

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering

Unit Date 1983

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 23 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering

Unit Date 1984

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 22 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering

Unit Date 1985

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 21 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering

Unit Date 1986

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 20 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 3 (box)
Container 19 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee

Unit Date 1982
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 29 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee

Unit Date 1983
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 28 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee

Unit Date 1984
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 27 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee

Unit Date 1985
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 26 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee

Unit Date 1986
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 25 (folder)

National Academy of Engineering Finance Committee Correspondence

Unit Date 1987
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 24 (folder)

National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere

Unit Date n.d.
box-folder 6 (box)
Container 11 (folder)

National Aerospace and Space Administration Advisory Council (2 folders)

Unit Date 1986
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 13-14 (folder)

NASA Advisory Council

Unit Date 1987
box-folder 3 (box)
Container 12 (folder)

NASA Advisory Council (3 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 15-17 (folder)

Committee on NASA Scientific and Technological Program Reviews

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 26 (folder)

National Coalition for Science and Technology

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

National Resource Council Space Applications Board (NRC SAB) (4 folders)

Unit Date 1983

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 18-21 (folder)

NRC SAB (4 folders)

Unit Date 1984

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 14-17 (folder)

NRC SAB (7 folders)

Unit Date 1985

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 6-9, 11-13 (folder)

Minutes of Space Applications Board Meeting

Unit Date 1985-07-23-1985-07-24

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

NRC SAB Miscellaneous (4 folders)

Unit Date 1986

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 2-5 (folder)

National Research Council Board on Mathematical Sciences

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 23 (folder)

National Research Council Space Science Board

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 22 (folder)

National Research Council Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems Meeting

Unit Date 1985-10-24-1985-10-25

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 25 (folder)

National Research Council-Commission on Engineer. & Technical Systems

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 24 (folder)

NRC-Low Level Wind Shear Committee

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 27 (folder)

Office of Technology Assessment (2 folders)

Unit Date 1983

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 16-17 (folder)

Office of Technology Assessment

Unit Date 1984

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

Office of Technology Assessment

Unit Date 1985

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Office of Technology Assessment Info. Continued (2 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 18-19 (folder)

SATSERV (2 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 20-21 (folder)

Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS) Advisory Panel (4 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 1-4 (folder)

Series III: Correspondence

Unit Date 1957-1990

Up to 1957 Miscellaneous Correspondence

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

1985 Chron. Correspondence (2 folders)

Unit Date 1985

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 9-10 (folder)

1986 Chron. Correspondence (4 folders)

Unit Date 1986

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 5-8 (folder)

Space Applications Board -1987 Miscellaneous Correspondence

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 5 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Chronological Correspondence

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Memos (6 folders)

Unit Date 1988

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 19-24 (folder)

Memos (3 folders)

Unit Date 1989

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 16-18 (folder)

Memos & Clippings (2 folders)

Unit Date 1990

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 14-15 (folder)

Series IV: Travel

Unit Date 1949-1990

Travel JWT

Unit Date 1949-1954

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Travel JWT 1955-1957 (2 folders)

Unit Date 1955-1990

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 7-8 (folder)

Travel JWT

Unit Date 1957-1960

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Travel (2 folders)

Unit Date 1963-1968

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 17-18 (folder)

Travel Thru 1973 (3 folders)

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 19-21 (folder)

Travel

Unit Date 1974-1976

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Travel (2 folders)

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 1-2 (folder)

Travel (3 folder)

Unit Date 1988

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 3-5 (folder)

Travel Vouchers (4 folders)

Unit Date 1989

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 8-11 (folder)

Travel Vouchers (2 folders)

Unit Date 1990

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 12-13 (folder)

Series V: Testimonies

Unit Date 1981-1986

NASA Program Management & Procurement Practices/Procedures Testimony

Unit Date 1981-06-25

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 32 (folder)

Testimony-U.S. Senate on NASA Applications Program

Unit Date 1982-03-30

box-folder 6 (box)

Container 31 (folder)

Senate Testimony-NOAA Program**Unit Date** 1982-04-21**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 30 (folder)**Testimony-Commercialization of Civil Space Remote Sensing****Unit Date** 1983-06-21**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 29 (folder)**Testimony-Space Commercialization****Unit Date** 1984-06-19**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 28 (folder)**Testimony-Wind Shear Detection Technology (2 folders)****Unit Date** 1984-07-25**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 25-26 (folder)**Testimony--Shuttle Pricing****Unit Date** 1985-02-21**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 24 (folder)**Testimony-House Committee on Space Science & Applic.****Unit Date** 1986-02-27**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 23 (folder)**Testimony-Report "Pioneering the Space Frontier"****Unit Date** 1986-07-22**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 22 (folder)**Series VI: Subject Files****Unit Date** 1987-1989, n.d.**1987 Chron File (3 folders)****Unit Date** 1987-06-22-1987-12-31**box-folder** 6 (box)**Container** 1-3 (folder)**Publications****Unit Date** 1988**box-folder** 4 (box)**Container** 25 (folder)

Goddard Space Flight Center History (3 folders)

Unit Date 1989

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1-3 (folder)

Rocket Sonde Branch History (2 folders)

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 22-23 (folder)

Earth Observations: Technology, Economics, and International Cooperation

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 3 (box)

Container 18 (folder)

Series VII: Personal Files

Unit Date 1978-1989, n.d.

Appointment Book

Unit Date 1987

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Appointment Books

Unit Date 1988-1989

box-folder 4 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

JWT Performance Ratings

Unit Date n.d.

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 11 (folder)