

4-1-2013

# From the White House to the Boathouse: Preserving the Lost Records of Eisenhower's Farewell Address

Valoise Armstrong

*Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Armstrong, Valoise (2013) "From the White House to the Boathouse: Preserving the Lost Records of Eisenhower's Farewell Address," *MAC Newsletter*: Vol. 40 : No. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter/vol40/iss4/6>

This Preservation Essentials is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *MAC Newsletter* by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

*MACers interested in writing a column for “Preservation Essentials” are encouraged to contact Sara Holmes at [sara.holmes@nara.gov](mailto:sara.holmes@nara.gov).*

### **From the White House to the Boathouse: Preserving the Lost Records of Eisenhower’s Farewell Address**

*By Valoise Armstrong, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum*

All archivists understand the importance of a stable storage environment and the need to maintain temperature and humidity with little fluctuation. Archivists also know that almost none of the collections they acquire have been stored in spaces meeting those requirements. The Eisenhower Presidential Library recently received a collection that, despite 50 years of very poor storage, proved the durability of paper documents even under less than ideal conditions.

In October 2010, Eisenhower Presidential Library Deputy Director Tim Rives received an E-mail from Grant Moos, son of former Eisenhower speechwriter, Dr. Malcolm C. Moos. A native of Minnesota, Moos had served in the final years of the Eisenhower administration as a special assistant to the president. Grant Moos and his sister had come across some old boxes of their father’s papers at the family’s boathouse in Minnesota. Would the library be interested in them?

Rives barely hesitated, waiting only for confirmation that the files did indeed contain speech drafts from the Eisenhower years before setting the paperwork in motion to accept this body of materials. The boxes, stored first in a barn for 20 years and then in a boathouse for 30 more, proved to be the missing records in a collection held at the Eisenhower Presidential Library since 1966.

#### **Arrival at the Archives and Processing Problems**

The staff archivist who received the shipment of Moos’s boxes at the library gave them a cursory look and immediately contacted the archivist who oversees the internal preservation program. On the initial review of the boxes, the archivist determined they were some of the dirtiest she had ever accessioned. There appeared to be mold on the outside of some boxes. Inside, all the file folders were filthy with decades of dirt and debris, but, fortunately, no mold damaged the documents themselves. Mouse droppings, insects, rust, and dirt, however, were all in abundance. The Moos records even contained pine cones in various stages of decomposition.

The weather was warm and dry the day the boxes arrived, so a temporary work station was set up on the library’s loading dock. Armed with archival cleaning supplies, such as brushes, gloves, masks, and Gonzo rubber sponges, the archivists reboxed the records. A Niflisk vacuum with variable suction control and a HEPA filter did an excellent job of cleaning the exterior of the file folders. The archivists transferred the contents to new folders when needed and vacuumed dirt and debris from the folder interiors and documents that required it.

Because the library anticipated high researcher interest in these materials, it was important to process them as soon as possible. One side effect to their poor storage was a lingering musty odor in many of the files. A recent workshop at the Northeast Document Conservation Center had recommended MicroChamber paper for such a problem, so archivists interleaved a few pieces of this paper in each box during processing, which completely eliminated the smell in a few weeks.

#### **Importance of the Documents**

The timeliness of the arrival of this new collection was, frankly, amazing. January 17, 2011, marked the 60th anniversary of Eisenhower’s Farewell Address. In the Moos files, library staff hoped to find new information about the development of the speech, particularly the origin and selection of the phrase, “military-industrial complex.” The already existing Malcolm Moos Special Assistant to the President Records contained a great deal of information relating to presidential speeches, but the files had a huge gap after November 1957. This corresponded with Moos taking over as the chief speech writer for President Eisenhower.

As archivists removed the folders from the filthy boxes and recorded the folder titles, it became apparent that the arrangement of the new files roughly mirrored the original Malcolm Moos Records. The dates on the incoming collection filled in the gap in the library’s existing holdings. The missing special assistant files had been found.

*(Continued on page 18)*

*(Continued from page 17)*

To understand the development of the speech, the Farewell Address drafts first needed to be placed in chronological order. As most were undated, archivists carefully compared the texts of the drafts. Beginning with the first draft, conveniently labeled “Commencement,” they noted the handwritten annotations and then located the typescript that incorporated those changes into a new draft. Working from there, archivists properly arranged a total of 21 new drafts of this historic speech, offering researchers a better picture of how it evolved in the late fall of 1960.

The new documents reveal that the first draft of Eisenhower’s address included the words “military-industrial complex” and that the wording remained unchanged throughout the development of the speech. It is still unclear whether this phrase originated with Moos, or if someone else on the staff suggested it, but it is clear that this phrase was present from the beginning.

The new documents also reveal the length of time President Eisenhower and his staff spent developing the speech. On May 20, 1959, the president met with Moos and discussed the major speeches he wanted to give in the final months of his presidency. Moos wrote a memo for the record about the meeting, stating that Eisenhower especially wanted to give a “10 minute farewell address to

the Congress and the American People.” Moos thought it was an excellent idea and believed his staff should be “dropping ideas into a bin, to get ready for this.” Moos began to draw up an outline of speeches and topics. On May 24, Moos and several key members of Eisenhower’s staff met at Milton Eisenhower’s home. The president’s brother often assisted in the fine tuning of major speeches. In the notes to this meeting, Moos wrote that the proposed final speech might stress “the need for common sense to accommodate the broad range of belief in the political spectrum of America, particularly when the nation may have an Executive of one Party and a Congress of another.”

Every archives probably has a collection like the Moos Records: an incomplete set of office files or personal correspondence with troubling gaps. But few are as lucky as the Eisenhower Presidential Library. Not only were the missing special assistant records uncovered after 60 years from less-than-ideal storage, they proved to contain vital information on one of the twentieth century’s most influential presidential speeches. The newly received Malcolm Moos files prove that not only was Eisenhower intimately involved in the conception of his Farewell Address, but that this speech was conceived and carefully crafted for over a year before Eisenhower delivered it to the nation.



**HOLLINGER  
METAL EDGE**

**Archival Storage Materials**



**We Care About Our Quality. We Care About Our Service!  
We Care About Your Professional Needs.**

**The Quality Source**

**[hollingermetalede.com](http://hollingermetalede.com) 1-800-862-2228/1-800-634-0491**