Collection # M 0817, CT 1516–1525, OM 0413

HOMER E. CAPEHART PAPERS, 1938–1962

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

Susan A. Fletcher, Dorothy Nicholson, Carol Street 22 October 2004

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department William Henry Smith Memorial Library Indiana Historical Society 450 West Ohio Street Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF Manuscript Materials: 6 boxes, 2 oversized folders (OM 0413), COLLECTION: 37 reel-to-reel audio tapes transferred to 10 cassette tapes,

Visual Materials: 1 folder of photographs, 1 oversized

photograph folder (OVC), 26 16mm films transferred to 3 VHS

videotapes

COLLECTION DATES:

1938-1962

Thomas Capehart, Jr., Oak Hill, Virginia 29 March 2004 PROVENANCE:

Use of original 16mm films and reel-to-reel audiotapes is RESTRICTIONS:

restricted. Researchers must work with VHS copies of 16mm

films and cassette copies of reel-to-reel audiotapes.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED Homer E. Capehart autograph (SC 2584); Beulah Gray papers **HOLDINGS:**

(M 0391); Home E. Capehart papers at the Indiana State Library

2004.0216 ACCESSION

NUMBER:

NOTES: The original 16mm films and audiotapes remain part of the

collection but are stored separately. The 16mm films are housed in the film collection storage area. The audio reel-to-reel tapes are stored in box 3 (reels 1-9), box 4 (reels 10-19), box 5 (reels

20-28), and box 6 (reels 29-35) of this collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Homer E. Capehart was born 6 June 1897 in Jefferson Township, Pike County, Indiana, near Iva. He was the oldest son of tenant farmers Alvin and Susan Capehart. He and his sister Bessie and brothers Paul and Ivan helped on the farm. The family moved to Davies County when Homer was twelve years old. He attended the Longfellow Consolidated School for grades six through eight, and attended Washington High School until the age of eighteen. In April 1916, his family moved to Polo, Illinois to manage a dairy farm. Capehart later moved back to Indiana after he graduated from an Illinois high school and began work as a baking powder salesman and a yard maintenance man in Indianapolis.

In April 1917 he enlisted in the army to fight in the First World War, joining the first group of volunteers from Davies County. Capehart was a member of the Twelfth Infantry. In 1919 he received an honorable discharge, leaving the army with the rank of quartermaster sergeant. After the war, he was a night waiter at a restaurant in Rockford, Illinois, and he later became a farm hand.

Capehart married Irma Viola Mueller, a Wisconsin teacher, in Green Bay 19 January 1922. The couple had three children: Homer Earl Jr., Patricia Louise, and Thomas, who was killed in an airplane crash at Montego Bay, Jamaica. The 1920s and 1930s were an unsettled time in the young family's life. They lived in nine different states in nine years as Homer Capehart held a variety of jobs, selling milking machines, tractors, plows, and popcorn machines, finally working his way up to sales manager for Holcomb and Hoke Manufacturing Company in Indianapolis, Ind. In 1927 he founded Capehart Corporation, which manufactured automated phonographs and radios. In 1932 he joined the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York, as vice president and general sales manager, and he bought the Packard Piano Company to manufacture musical instruments. He also purchased a farm in rural Indiana, which his sister Bessie managed.

During this time, Capehart grew increasingly interested in politics. He was unhappy with the nation's Democrat leaders and he worked with the Republican Party. In 1938 he organized the Republican Cornfield Conference, a gathering of nearly 55,000 party members on his 1,800-acre farm. The conference signaled Capehart's status as a rising star in politics. By 1939 the editors of the *Indiana Republican* chose Capehart as their favorite for the 1940 Republican presidential nominee. Capehart did not run for president that year, announcing instead Wendell Willikie's candidacy.

During World War II, Capehart converted the Packard Manufacturing Company to war-time operations, manufacturing parts for the army and navy. Capehart purchased Duraloo Tool Works and the Niagara Stamping Company as additions to the Packard Company. For five years in a row, the corporation received the coveted Army-Navy E Awards for excellence in war production. The Veterans of Foreign Wars gave him the Medal of Honor for being an outstanding civilian worker.

Capehart's war efforts dovetailed with his success in politics. In 1942 he was elected the Indiana Seventh District Republican Chairman and was reelected two years later. In 1944 he ran for the United States Senate and won. On 3 January 1945, Capehart took his oath of office, beginning his eighteen year-long congressional career. He was a member of the 79th–87th United States Congresses, serving continually from 1945 until 3 January 1963. In 1950 he won his second term, beating Alex Campbell, and in 1956 he won his third term by beating Claude Wickard.

Capehart took an active role in the Senate. He was a member of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, the Banking and Currency Committee, the Government and Operations Committee, the Joint Committee on Defense Production, and the Foreign Relations Committee. As a member of the latter, he traveled extensively throughout Eastern Europe, visiting Russia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Capehart was an ardent opponent of Communism and many people believed that he supported Joseph McCarthy. Capehart aligned himself with Eisenhower's moderate wing of the Republican Party but was often critical of Eisenhower's foreign policy during the 1950s. The senator also traveled in Latin America as part of his duties for the Foreign Relations Committee and he became an advocate of aid to that part of the world to prevent the spread of Communism.

In addition to his famous anti-socialist activities, Capehart was an ardent opponent of President Truman. He was particularly critical of Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan at the end of World War II, arguing that Japan had been making overtures toward peace. Capehart was also interested in domestic matters, including housing and jobs. He proposed legislation directed at reducing the national debt and helping small businesses. He proposed a farm bill to help rural farmers.

Capehart maintained an active social life in Indiana, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. In Indiana he was a member of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce, the Loyal Order of the Moose, Order of the Eagles, the Columbia Club, Press Club, Athletic Club, Meridian Hills Country Club, and the Army and Navy Club. He was also a member of the Indiana Society of Chicago and the National Press Club.

Capehart lost his reelection campaign in 1962 to the young Birch Bayh. After his defeat, Capehart moved to Indianapolis where he ran a family business dedicated to real estate and farming. He also traveled in South America, doing business consultation. In July 1979 he broke his hip and never fully recovered after his surgery to repair the damage. He died on 3 September 1979 and is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery.

Sources:

Materials in collection

Ancestry Plus: http://search.ancestry.com (accessed 26 May 2004)

Pickett, William B. *Homer E. Capehart: A Senator's Life*, 1897–1979. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1990. E748.C218 P53 1990

Wolf, Thomas H. "Homer Earl Capehart," in *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 10: 1976–1980*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995. Reference Room Collection: E176 .D563 suppl.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains materials dealing with United States Senator Homer E. Capehart. The collection is divided into three series; Series 1: Campaign Materials, Series 2: Senate Materials, and Series 3: Business and Home Life.

The Campaign Materials include a copy of a special edition of *The Washington Herald* devoted to Homer Capehart's life until 1950. The paper contains articles and political cartoons detailing Capehart's rise from a tenant farmer to a successful businessman and politician. The series also includes a mimeograph copy of *The Courier-Journal*, which contains an article about Capehart's 1962 campaign for the U.S. Senate.

Senate Materials include three photographs of Homer Capehart with other politicians and his official senate biographical sketch. There are also eleven 16mm films containing episodes of the Capehart Weekly Report. These weekly reports are interviews with the senator, who responds to questions about his visit to Eastern Europe, his housing and farm bills, his views on President Eisenhower, and his impressions on the United Nations. This series also contains thirty-four reel-to-reel audio tapes from the 1950s and 1960s. Some of the tapes include Capehart's weekly reports from Washington and political campaign speeches.

The Business and Home Life series contains a copy of the March 1945 "Packard Manufacturing Corporation Employee's Salute to Homer E. Capehart," as well as two banquet photographs of Wurlitzer parties. The series also contains fourteen 16mm films related to Capehart's family life, including footage of his family on vacation, the senator playing golf, Capehart farms, and Veteran's Day parades. There are also three reel-to-reel audio tapes, which include a copy of the soundtrack to *My Fair Lady* copied from an L.P., and recordings of the *Lawrence Welk Show* and Glenn Miller's Sunday night program. The last tape is a recording of the Capeharts describing their Christmas holidays.

With the exception of one film in poor condition, all the 16mm films have been copied to three VHS user-copy videotapes. Researchers must use the videotapes; however the original films are available for dubbing onto other formats as requested. All of the reel-to-reel audio tapes except for the *My Fair Lady*, *Lawrence Welk Show*, and Glenn Miller recordings have been copied to cassette tapes for researcher use. The original reel-to-reel audio tapes are housed in boxes 3–6 in the collection.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Campaign Materials

CONTENTS CONTAINER

The Washington Herald, 3 July 1950 OM 0413, Folder 1

The Courier-Journal: Indiana News, 24 September Box 1, Folder 1

1961

Series 2: Senate Materials

CONTENTS CONTAINER

Photograph, Homer Capehart and group of men, no Visual Collections:

date Photographs, Folder 1

Photograph, 3 unidentified individuals, no date

Visual Collections:

Photographs, Folder 1

Duplicate photographs, Homer Capehart by map of Visual Collections:
Indiana, no date Photographs, Folder 1

Senate Biographical Information

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Ben Cole of the *Indianapolis Star*, Lew Heiner of the *Indianapolis News*, and Bill Steinbrock of WOWO interview Senator Capehart. They ask him questions about his role on the Senate Records Committee, his impressions about Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters, and his opinions on foreign aid. He responds to the criticism of too many senators running for president, the communist unrest in Latin America, and he talks about how Republicans are fighting inflation.

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Part 3 in the series on Senator Capehart's trip to Eastern Europe. He discusses his visit to Communist Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. He explains the difference among the countries' farms, churches, and social structure, and the role that women play in each country. He also discusses the negative impacts of collective farming and explains why the American system of farming is superior.

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Senator Capehart is interviewed about the Capehart Plan. He talks about Russia and the Cold War

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Senator Capehart talks about his wife, who is in the hospital. He also responds to "the people's" questions about the Luce-Morris Affair, the lack of jobs, and the Douglas Bill.

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Senator Capehart discusses farm problems and his introduction of the wheat bill in Congress. He aims to freeze the surplus of wheat, corn, and cotton, and he talks about how this bill would affect Hoosier farmers.

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Senator Capehart talks about his wife, who is out of the hospital. He warns President Eisenhower against "going soft" on Communism. The interviewer asks him questions about Khrushchev's visit, and Capehart talks about why he does not want Khrushchev in the United States.

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Dan Kidney of Scripps-Howard and Jim Schneider of Westinghouse ask the senator questions about the impending housing bill.

Capehart Weekly Report, 24 March 1962. Senator Capehart talks about why he is against the United Nations and against buying UN bonds.

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #1 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #2 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #3 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #4 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #5 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #6 [13 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 1, #7 [14 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 2, #1 [14 minutes] Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. Part 1 in the series about Capehart's visit to Eastern Europe. Senator Capehart explains his four basic conclusions about Communism, asserting that the Russians are using their manpower to build war materials and that Communism gives its people less than Americans have.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 2, #2 [14 minutes]

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. On this film, Senator Capehart discuses his trip to Oakland City, where he received an honorary degree. He also discusses the troubles in Latin American and the Cuban invaders in Nicaragua, he comments on the Rio Agreement, the housing bill, and balancing the budget.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 2, #3 [14 minutes]

Capehart Weekly Report, 1959. This film is the last televised Capehart Weekly Report of the year. Louis Heiner interviews Senator Capehart about North Vietnam, the long legislative session, Khrushchev's visit, and the labor bill. He also talks about why he voted to override the president's veto on the public works bill.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 2, #4

Tariff speech, no date. Congressman Wilson and Dr. Lewis Lloyd address an audience from the 9th Congressional District of Indiana. They talk about tariffs and exports, imports, and natural resources. They also respond to audience questions, although these questions are inaudible on the tape.

CT 1516 [Audio tape 1]

Capehart Report, 10 May 1962. Senator Capehart talks about life in his office, including the kinds of letters that he gets and how he responds to them. He also talks about disarmament, national security, the United Nations, and flood control.

CT 1517 [Audio tape 2, 2B]

Capehart Report, 9 March 1956. Senator Capehart talks about the farm bill and what he likes and does not like about it. He also discusses the features of the bill, such as the soil bank. His goal is to double the production of farmers. Marked "7:45 pm."

CT 1518: #1 [Audio tape 3]

Capehart Report, 1 May 1958. Senator Capehart discusses Bill S3718, legislation that would enable 10 million businessmen to depreciate capital gains for tax purposes.

CT 1518: #2 [Audio tape 4]

Capehart Report, 10 May 1961. Senator Capehart talks about the organizations that the United States belongs to, including the United Nations and NATO. He also discusses the war in Korea, military action in the Congo, and mutual defense projects.

CT 1518: #3
[Audio tape 5]

Capehart Report, no date. Senator Capehart discusses how he voted on the issues that came up in the Senate Banking and Finance Committee. He discusses why he voted against the home improvement program bill.	CT 1518: #4 [Audio tape 6]
Capehart Report, 2 June 1961. Senator Capehart welcomes Congressman Adair as his guest to discuss foreign policy and the national debt. They also talk about how to prevent socialism and Communism, and also discuss as Adlai Stevenson's report from Latin America.	CT 1518: #5 [Audio tape 7]
Capehart Report, 7 June 1961. Senator Capehart's guests discuss flood control. They also talk about President Kennedy's foreign aid bill and why they do not like it.	CT 1518: #6 [Audio tape 8]
Capehart Report, 15 June 1961. Senator Capehart welcomes guest Doris Worsby from Hammond, Indiana. She asks the senator about his foreign policy, Cuba and Fidel Castro, and the lack of jobs in Hammond. Capehart talks about the United Nations giving money to Cuba, how Europeans should fight Communism in Cuba, and President Kennedy's reorganization plan.	CT 1519: #1 [Audio tape 9]
Capehart Report, 21 June 1961. Senator Capehart welcomes Mrs. Gibson as his guest. She talks about her husband, who is an American prisoner in Cuba. Senator Capehart talks about the plan to exchange tractors for prisoners and he reads the names of twenty-two Americans who are in prison in Cuba. He also talks about how Switzerland is helping with negotiations.	CT 1519: #2 [Audio tape 10]
Capehart Report, 5 July 1961. Capehart talks about current issues in Washington, including the farming omnibus bill, and Congressman Ralph Harvey, and Khrushchev's attempt to control the U.N.	CT 1519: #3 [Audio tape 11]
Capehart Report, 12 July 1961. Capehart asks William Bray of the Military Affairs Committee and Mr. Roudabusch of the Space Committee to talk about the space and missile program. They also discuss Gus Grissom's chances at being the next astronaut.	CT 1519: #4 [Audio tape 12]
Capehart Report, 19 July 1961. Congressman Wilson is Capehart's guest as the two men talk about appropriations and expenditures. They also wonder if the president will call up the reserves and the national guard.	CT 1519: #5 [Audio tape 13]

Capehart Report, 25 July 1961. Indiana's youth ask CT 1519: #6

Senator Capehart questions and talk about their experiences as interns in his office. He talks about the rewarding aspects of being a senator and how he helps the people of Indiana when they visit Washington, D.C.	[Audio tape 14]
Capehart Report, 2 August 1961. In an informal press conference, Senator Capehart responds to questions about President Truman's criticism and the Berlin situation. The tape ends mid-program.	CT 1519: #7 [Audio tape 15]
Capehart Report, 9 August 1961. Senator John Williams of Delaware, the "watchdog of the treasury," discusses the foreign aid bill.	CT 1519: #8 [Audio tape 16]
Capehart Report, 31 August 1961. Senator Capehart talks about Cuba and Berlin, and his experiences during World Wars I and II. He talks about the events leading up to the Berlin situation, and he speaks against secret agreements.	CT 1520: #1 [Audio tape 17]
Capehart Report, 14 March 1962. Senator Capehart talks about international communication and satellite systems. The sound is poor.	CT 1520: #2 [Audio tape 18]
Capehart Report, 29 March 1962. Senator Capehart talks about foreign currency, as well as the Peace Corps.	CT 1520: #3 [Audio tape 19]
Capehart Report, 10 April 1962. Senator Capehart talks about the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 and tariffs.	CT 1520: #4 [Audio tape 20]
Capehart Report, 25 April 1962. Reporters Lew Heiner and Horace Coats ask Senator Capehart questions about the Indiana Dunes and the Indiana Harbor.	CT 1520: #5 [Audio tape 21, 21B]
Capehart Report, 3 May 1962. Senator Munt explains the new farm proposal and what it means for the people of Indiana.	CT 1520: #6 [Audio tape 22]
Capehart Report, 15 May 1962. Senator Capehart talks about government propaganda, the situation with presidential press secretary Salinger "hobnobbing" with Khrushchev, and the Billy Saul Estes case.	CT 1521: #1 [Audio tape 23]
Capehart Report, 24 May, 1962. Senator Capehart welcomes Senator Hickenlooper as his guest, and they discuss foreign aid including the Merchell Plan.	CT 1521: #2 [Audio tape 24]

Capehart Report, no date. Senator Capehart talks about whether or not the President should discharge Lester Bowles.

they discuss foreign aid including the Marshall Plan.

CT 1521: #3 [Audio tape 25]

Capehart Report, no date. A reporter asks Capehart about the situation with Cuba and the Bay of Pigs incident. Senator Capehart blames the failure of the operation on President Kennedy, who pulled air support from the mission.

CT 1521: #4 [Audio tape 26]

Capehart Report, no date. Senator Capehart talks about Castro's demands and he says why he thinks the Freedom Committee for Tractors is blackmail and dangerous for the U.S. government. Capehart also discusses the riots in Alabama and the freedom riders, as well as the revolt in South Korea.

CT 1521: #5 [Audio tape 27]

Capehart Report, no date. Senator Capehart responds to letters from students at Jackson Central High School in Arcadia, Indiana. He responds to their pointed questions about Cuba, the Soviets, the Bay of Pigs incident, nuclear war, and the arms race.

CT 1522: #1 [Audio tape 28]

Capehart Report, no date. Senator Capehart discusses Bill S3718 and its implications for tax legislation and the American people.

CT 1522: #2 [Audio tape 29]

Capehart Campaign Commercial, 1962. The soundtrack from a Capehart television campaign commercial. Senator Capehart makes a "statement" about why the people of Indiana should reelect him. He talks about President Kennedy asking for a "rubber stamp" Congressman from Indiana, and Capehart discusses why that would be a bad idea. The senator talks about the issues that he supports, including reducing the national debt and expenditures, throwing Russia out of Cuba, and stopping government farming. He talks about the need for private enterprise to built schools, churches, and roads, and he speaks out against socialism.

CT 1522: #3 [Audio tape 30]

1961 Washington Report, 1961. Senator Capehart gives a dinner presentation about Communist Russia.

CT 1523 [Audio tape 31]

Reporter's Roundup, 21 January 1960s. Reporters ask Senator Capehart questions about the Republicans coming back into power, United Nations bonds, the presidential nominee for 1964, communism and aid programs, and the Soviet nuclear tests. They also ask him questions about the proposed twenty-five hour work week, medical aid for elderly people, and dictators in Latin America.

CT 1524 [Audio tape 32]

Series 3: Business and Home Life

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

"Packard Manufacturing Corporation Employee's

OM 0413, Folder 2

Salute to Homer E. Capehart," March 1945.
Wurlitzer Party Photograph, no date.
Wurlitzer Party Photograph, no date.
Parade footage, no date. Footage of a parade in Indianapolis, near the War Memorial and Monument Circle. Soldiers and bands march in the parade.
RKD Pathe News: GOP 20,000 Republicans Launch Drive, 1938. Coverage of Capehart's Cornfield Convention.
Footage of family, no date. Footage of women in front of a church, as well as footage of men playing golf. It looks like this film was double-exposed.
Capehart family, no date. Footage of the Capehart family, including a child on a teeter-totter and the

family, including a child on a teeter-totter and the family playing on the swings. Capehart's wife, sons, and daughter play by the seaside.

Capehart farms, no date. Footage of Capehart farms, including the livestock. Also footage of a political rally and Capehart's visit to a factory.

"Big Game Hunting in Africa with Prince William of Sweden," MCMXXVIII. The story of a big-game hunt in Africa. Footage of native dancing, white hunters, baboons, birds, and the party fording a river. The hunting party captures a zebra, gorilla, a giraffe, lions, monkeys, and wild pigs.

Capehart family, no date. Footage of the Capehart family swimming, running, participating in track and field events, and playing with their dog.

Veterans' Day Parade, no date. Footage of the Veteran's Day Parade in Indianapolis.

Capehart family, no date. Footage of the Capeharts in front of a house and on a farm.

Vacation, no date. Footage of a koi pond, a beach, the seaside, and people swimming.

Capehart Farm, no date. Footage of livestock on

Visual Collections: OVC Photographs, Folder 1

Visual Collections: OVC Photographs, Folder 1

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #1 [5 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #2 [2 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #3 [45 seconds]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #4 [3 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #5 [1 minute, 20 seconds]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #6 [10 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #7 [12 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #8 [1 minute]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #9 [2 minutes]

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #10 [2 minutes]

Box 2: VHS

the Capehart Farm.

User Copy Tape 3, #11 [3 minutes]

Water, no date. Footage of a science experiment with water, and footage of a dog and a man filming the dog.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #12 [2 minutes]

Golf, no date. Scenes of men playing golf.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #13 [2 minutes]

People and cars, no date. Footage of a crowd milling around on the street.

Box 2: VHS User Copy Tape 3, #14 [2 minutes]

Family holidays, 1956 and 1959. Audio recordings of the Capeharts' Christmas, Halloween, and Thanksgiving holidays. The father of the family interviews his two sons Jimmy and Homer about the presents that they got, Grandfather Homer Capehart talks to his grandsons, the family talks about their holiday activities.

CT 1525 [Audio tape 33]

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

- 1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: http://opac.indianahistory.org/
- 2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
- 3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
- 4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0817).
- 5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.