Finding Aid to the
John D. Paulson Papers

Paulson, John D., 1915-2001
John D. Paulson Papers, 1932, 1958, 1981-1985, 1998
.6 linear ft.
Collection number: Mss 198

Biography Scope and Content Box and Folder List

OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is in off-site storage. A 24-hour turn-around is required to make the records available for use at the Institute Research Room. The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by John D. Paulson, 1998 (Acc. 2527); Forum Publishing Co., 2006 (Acc. 2785).

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BIOGRAPHY

John D. Paulson was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota on October 1, 1915. He was the son of a newspaper man. His father, H.D. Paulson, worked in the newsroom of the *Grand Forks Herald*, was the *Herald*'s legislative reporter, and was part owner and editor of the *Fargo Forum*. After graduating from high school, Paulson attended the University of North Dakota and the University of Minnesota where he received his B.A. in journalism. He then worked for the *Minneapolis Star* before he accepted his father's

offer to be a copy editor for the *Forum*. In 1939 Gerald Movius, the *Forum*'s legislative reporter, took a job with United States Senator Gerald Nye and Paulson became the *Forum*'s new legislative correspondence. He covered the 1939 and 1941 legislative sessions before joining in the war effort. After serving four years in the U.S. Army Paulson returned to his reporting duties at the state capital in 1947. In 1952 Paulson became the managing editor, and when his father retired in 1957 Paulson became the *Forum*'s editor. In 1957 the paper won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the tornado that destroyed a large part of north Fargo. Paulson was a delegate to the 1972 North Dakota Constitutional Convention held in Bismarck. He retired in 1981, remaining on the board of directors until 1985, when the corporation purchased all the stocks he owned. The same year Governor Allen Olson appointed Paulson to the North Dakota Centennial Committee.

Mr. Paulson married Zoe Bean in 1946. They had five children. She died Aug. 12, 1993 and he died January 21, 2001.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The John D. Paulson papers consist primarily of manuscripts for unpublished articles he prepared in anticipation of North Dakota's centennial celebration in 1989. He wrote these articles after retiring from the *Forum*, during the years 1981 to 1985. The articles were never published. They cover modern North Dakota politics, reflecting Mr. Paulson's long connections with the *Forum* in reporting the political landscape of North Dakota since 1939. The term "Centennial Series" appears on many of the manuscripts. The papers are divided into nine series: **Correspondence, Background**, **William Langer**, **Governors**, **Legislators**, **State Officials and Their Rivals**, **Republican Organizing Committee**, **1972 Constitutional Convention**, and **Judges**.

The **Correspondence Series** (a later accession) consists almost exclusively of congratulatory letters to Mr. Paulson regarding the Fargo Forum newspaper being awarded a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting of the 1947 tornado in Fargo. Most are from other newspapers or officials, although a few are from individuals. There is also a letter by Paulson to William Marcil (1998) regarding major events and personalities of the region in the 20th century.

The **William F. Langer Series** covers Langer's political career along with his long dispute with William Lemke over Mexican land in which Langer had bought stock. Also included is information on two of Langer's rivals: William Lemke and A.C. Townley. Of particular interest may be Paulson's article on Langer's defense in front of the Senate when charges were filed against him saying he was morally unfit to represent North Dakota in the Senate. This includes correspondence between Paulson and Langer's nephew, Judge Morgan Ford, who was part of Langer's defense team. Also of special interest is a hand written note of someone's comments about voting for Lemke over Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential election.

The **Governors Series** covers the careers of four North Dakota governors in the state's second fifty years. John Moses' service as governor and brief service as United States Senator are covered. Moses died from cancer shortly after being elected to the senate. A brief article covers the gubernatorial career of John E.

Davis. Great attention is given to the careers of William Guy and Arthur Link. For twenty years these two Democrats controlled the governorship of a Republican state.

The **Legislators Series** covers the careers of North Dakota's state and federal representatives and senators. It covers Mark Andrews's early career showing his attempt to take the governorship from Guy and his election to the House of Representatives in a special election. U. S. Senator Gerald Nye's beginnings and career is covered. Particular attention is paid to Nye's isolation stance he took during World War II, which many believed cost him the election in 1944. For those interested in women in politics, the first female elected to the North Dakota senate, Agnes Geelan from Enderlin, is covered highlighting the political and post-political careers. Milton Young, Usher Burdick and Quentin Burdick also receive extensive coverage. Young was appointed to the Senate when John Moses died and held that office for thirty-five years. Usher Burdick served as North Dakota's representative in Washington for ten terms and enter the University of Minnesota's law school in a most interesting way. Quentin Burdick was North Dakota's first Democratic representative sent to Washington and later became senator. Paulson also provides his personal recollections of the various legislators he met over his years working for the *Forum*.

The **State Officials and Their Rivals Series** deals with lesser known and publicized state offices. Lloyd Omdahl terms as tax commissioner in the 1960s is covered along with his dealings with Robert P. "Mac" McCarney. McCarney is included because he made a name for himself by challenging the state's tax policies in the 1960s. He ran for governor and other elected offices but failed to win. Paulson believed McCarney's failure to win elected office occurred because he focused only on taxes and would not change his views. Ralph Dewing, appointed to the Coal Impact Office by Link, had a disagreement with Link over a report and was fired. The career of Secretary of State Ben Meier is also covered.

The **Republican Organizing Committee Series** consists of Governor Fred Aandahl's career and his involvement with ROC. Also included is a brief history of the ROC. There are letters Paulson received from Aandahl's daughter, Louise Aandahl Stockman, detailing his career and additional information about the Committee. Also there is a statement of the principles of the Republican Organizing Committee and a copy of the Committee's letter head. Finally, there is information on Senator Carroll Day, a member of the Committee, and Representative Vernon Johnson, who was instrumental in the founding of the Committee. There is a handwritten letter from Johnson to Paulson detailing his involvement with the Committee.

The **1972 Constitutional Convention Series** consists of the events leading to the North Dakota convention, the selection of delegates, Paulson's personal observations, and an article on Frank Wenstrom, the convention's chairman. The articles have feedback from the voters of North Dakota and also members of the state legislatures, many who thought the convention delegates were trying to change the whole system.

The **Judges Series** consists of biographies of North Dakota's federal judges. There are biographies of J.F.T. O'Connor, Morgan Ford (Langer's nephew), Charles Vogel, Ronald Davies, and Myron Bright. Also included are highlights of the judge's careers. For example there is a section dealing with Judge Davies' Little Rock decision. There are letters to Paulson from Ford offering corrections and additional

information on his biography. Also, there is a letter Paulson wrote to Davies trying to set up a meeting for an interview.

SEPARATIONS RECORD

There were also nineteen photographs of North Dakota political figures within the papers which have been withdrawn and place as a separate collection in the Institute photograph collection; Photo 468.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Finding aid, and Biographical material
	Correspondence Series
2/11	Congratulatory letters on Pulitzer Prize, 1958
	Background Series
1/2	Centennial Series and North Dakota Political Background
1/3	Legislative Branch, General Outline
	William F. Langer Series
1/4	"Langer as Senator, 1941-1959"
1/5	Langer's critics and supporters
1/6	Langer's rivals: Lemke and Townley
1/7	Langer/Lemke conflict
	Governors Series
1/8	John Moses, governor and U. S. Senator
1/9	Governor John E. Davis
1/10	Governor William Guy
1/11	Governor Arthur A. Link
	Legislators Series
1/12	Mark Andrews, early career
1/13	Gerald Nye, beginnings and career
1/14	C. Warner Litten

1/15	State Senator Don Holand
1/16	Arthur C. Johnson
1/17	P.W. Lanier and P. W. "Bill" Lanier, Jr.
1/18	Agnes Geelan, 1st Female Senator
1/19	Representative Brynhild Haugland
1/20	Representative S. F. "Buckshot" Hoffner
1/21	Senator Milton Young
1/22	Usher and Quentin Burdick
1/23	Usher and Quentin Burdick, newspaper clippings
2/1	Paulson's personal recollections of United States Senators

State Officials and Their Rivals Series

2/2	Lloyd Omdahl, tax commissioner
2/3	Robert P. "Mac" McCarney
2/4	Ben Meier, Secretary of State
2/5	Ralph Dewing

Republican Organizing Committee Series

2/6	Fred Aandahl, governor and ROC involvement
2/7	ROC History

1972 Constitutional Convention Series

2/8	Constitutional Convention, 1972
2/9	Senator Frank Wenstrom, Constitutional Convention Chairman

Judges Series

2/10	North Dakota's Federal Judges

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