Finding Aid to the
Alice K. Olson Papers

Olson, Alice K., 1945-
Alice K. Olson Papers, 1968-1983
2 linear ft.
Collection number: Mss 356 & Acc. 2980
Audio cassettes 221-226 & 236-238
Photo P314

Biography Scope and Content Box and Folder List

OVERVIEW

Links: Alice K. Olson interview, October 6, 2010
Alice K. Olson interview, October 8, 2010
Alice K. Olson interview, October 13, 2010

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Alice K. Olson 2010-2011 (Acc. 2931 & 2980).

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Citation: Alice K. Olson Papers (Mss 356), Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Alice Olson was christened Alice Ann Katherine Kinsella, namesake of her Aunt, Alice Sleevar Haycraft. Alice was born on December 19, 1945 in St. Joseph's Hospital in Bloomington, Illinois. Alice's father was Francis Michael Kinsella, who was born February 14, 1910. He died on January 25, 1985 in Clay

County, Minn. Alice's mother was Irene Agnes Kinsella, who was born November 16, 1914 to Anton and Agnes Sleevar who emigrated from Poland. Irene Kinsella died on July 24, 2004 in Cass County, N.D.

Alice is a graduate of Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minnesota, has pursued graduate studies at North Dakota State University in Fargo, and has her law degree from the University of North Dakota School of Law. Alice practiced law in Fargo for six years with the firm of Lamb, Schaefer, McNair, Larson & Olson, Ltd.

Alice served as both an officer and a member of the Board of Governors of the North Dakota Trial Lawyer's Association; she has been on the Executive Committee of the Cass County Bar Association; and she maintained memberships in the American Bar Association and the National Trial Lawyers Association. She is a graduate of the National Institute of Trial Advocacy, an intensive training program for trial attorneys, and also served as a member of the teaching facility for that program.

Alice's involvement in government service has included work as a legislative research assistant to the House Committees on Education, Natural Resources, and Veterans Affairs during the 1975 Legislative session. In addition she has been a legal research assistant with the State Social Service Board, has served on the North Dakota Commission on the Status of Women, the Advisory Committee to the Governor's Commission of Commercial Air Transportation, the North Dakota Supreme Court's Services Administration Committee and the Citizen's Committee on the New Judicial Article. In addition, Alice has served as one of the seven members of the North Dakota State Social Service Board. She has been President of the Board of Directors of CENTRE, Inc., North Dakota's only halfway house for prison parolees and served as an officer and member of the Board of the NDSU Campus Y. Alice has also been a member of the Board of Directors of Nokomis child Care Center. She was the Democratic-NPL candidate for the North Dakota attorney general in 1980 and for the Labor Commissioner in 1982.

Alice is a well-known feminist activist. While still a law student, Alice briefed and argued a case before the North Dakota Supreme Court which resulted in a unanimous decision of the Court prohibiting a referendum of the Legislature's ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. She has represented women prisoners in efforts to obtain equal treatment for them at the North Dakota State Penitentiary; and in her law practice she was involved on a daily basis in domestic litigation, that area of the law which impacts individual women most directly. She was a frequent speaker before women's groups of all kinds addressing not only legal issues, but also a wide range of social issues related to the changing role of women.

Alice's husband, Michael, was a certified public accountant with the firm of McGladrey Hendrickson & Co. in Fargo, North Dakota and New York, New York. Mike and Alice have two daughters, Angie and Beth.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Alice Olson Papers** and accompanying oral history interview provide us with a view of an extremely energetic feminist agent of social change and consciousness during the turbulent years of the 1960s and

into the early 1980s. We can see how she interacted with people and politics on a local and national level to bring women into politics as more than just observers of the process, for them to be activists for causes that would elevate women's rights to a higher level than they had previously attained. Her details of her arrest at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and personal observations on this event that was of national historical significance are invaluable additions to available research on this topic.

We have a glimpse into the day to day life of a busy working attorney and mother who sends a signed affidavit with her daughter to school in place of the school physical records so her daughter can participate. We can hear a wife commend her devoted husband for his support over the years so that she could pursue her career, activism, and interests. We can read in the cards and letters of the sincere support of her friends and colleagues, of their belief that Alice can become the first female Attorney General in the history of the nation in 1980 and again in her bid for Labor Commissioner of North Dakota in 1982. We can hear of her awakening into Feminism and read of her efforts to assist women prisoners and to give women in North Dakota access to an abortion clinic in order that they might have as an option their right to an abortion and exercise the basic right to maintain control of their own bodies. We can read her letter to Congressman Byron Dorgan challenging him for not taking a stand in the abortion debate, for dismissing it as irrelevant. We can read of her involvement in the formation of the standing Women's Caucus in the North Dakota Democratic – NPL party and her presence at the formation of the Minnesota Women's Political Caucus. And we can learn of the achievement of daycare at the North Dakota state convention in order that women could be involved as active participants in the democratic processes of the party. From her personal correspondence we realize that she met Gloria Steinem, influential and long-time editor of *Ms*. magazine.

This material came to the Institute in legal folders with brief titles. In each folder some of the papers were dated; many were not. In general, the papers of Alice Olson were in reverse chronological order, naturally compiled in legal fashion with the most recent on top. For the convenience of researchers, they have been reversed so that the earliest dated materials in the folders are first with the exception of The Personal Correspondence folders which have been kept in original order. Undated documents were found intermittently with dated documents. On the possibility that this may reflect their original point in time, or approximately so, most of them have been kept in that same sequence.

The **2011 Accession Series** consists of documents deposits added by Alice Olson to her original donation. These papers have been semi-processed only. The majority of these papers relate to her 1980 run for North Dakota Attorney General and include correspondence, survey, newspaper clippings, campaign literature, donor information and other documents. There are small files on her attendance at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago and her seeking the nomination for North Dakota Public Service Commissioner in 1982. In addition there is a typed copy of an interview with Alice Olson for the local Plainswoman magazine, a number of certificates of appreciation, including two from New York, several campaign artifacts and a file of photographs related primarily to her 1980 campaign.

SEPARATION RECORD

Photographs (Photo P314)

- 10 photographic prints of Alice Olson during campaign and with Henry Martinson

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Content
1/1	Finding aid, and Biographical Information
	Transcripts of Oral History Interviews Series
1/1A	Interview of October 6, 2010
1/1B	Interview of October 8, 2010
1/1C	Interview of October 13, 2010
	Attorney Miscellaneous Correspondence Series
1/2	October 6, 1976 to December 1, 1976
1/3	January 17, 1977 to December 19, 1977
1/4	February 21, 1978 to December 18, 1978
1/5	January 10, 1979 to December 6, 1979
1/6	January 12, 1980 to December 12, 1980
1/7	January 1, 1981 to November 19, 1981
1/8	January 11, 1982 to September 30, 1982
	Attorney General Campaign, 1980 Series
	Correspondence Subseries—
1/9	Undated and June 1979 to November 1979
1/10	Bound – May 7, 1979 to January 16, 1980
1/11	February 11, 1980 to August 26, 1980
1/12	September 4, 1980 to April 20, 1983
	Topical Subseries—
1/13	Agnes Geelan, 1980
1/14	Art Auction Fundraiser, 1979-1980
1/15	Cartoon and "The North Dakota Plan" by John Kenneth Galbraith, 1980
1/16	Contributions, 1979-1980
1/17	District Canvass
1/18	Dokken, Wade, 1980
1/19	Electoral Analysis by County, 1974
1/20	Electoral Analysis by County, 1980
1/21	Home Hospitality Fundraising, 1980
1/22	"Indices of Partisanship in North Dakota Counties 1956-1976" by Lloyd B. Omdahl and Scott J. Omdahl
1/23	Media, 1980

1/24 Media Purchases, 1980
1/25 News Clippings, 1980
1/26 News Packet, 1980
1/27 News Releases, 1979-1980
1/28 Polls, 1980
1/29 Research, 1980
1/30 Speeches1979-1980
1/31 Stationery and Other Letterhead
1/32 Work plan, 1980

Labor Commissioner Campaign, 1982 Series

1/33 Correspondence
1/34 Letterhead and Advertising
1/35 Mailing Lists
1/36 Newspapers
1/37 Receipts
1/38 Receipts and Contributions
1/39 Women's Campaign Fund

Topical Series

2/1 Citizens for a Real Choice (Legal Abortion)
2/2 Complaint brought before Disciplinary Board of the State Supreme Court
2/3 Contributions to Others' Campaigns
2/4 Dorgan, Byron – Abortion Stand
2/5 International Women's Year North Dakota State Meeting 1977
2/6 Jungroth, James – President Carter Resignation
2/7 Kick-Off Event for 1984 Held Nov. 22, 1980
2/8 King, Jr., Gorman
Mailing Lists—
2/9 I
2/10 II
2/11 III
2/12 IV
2/13 March on Washington, DC 20th Anniversary, August 27, 1983
North Dakota Democratic-NPL Party – Women's Caucus
2/14 History
2/15 Post-Organizational
2/16 Steinem, Gloria, 1981

Personal Pre-1983 Correspondence Series

2/17 I
2/18 II

2/19 III
2/20 IV

2011 Accession Series (Acc. 2980)

Box 1 Interview with Alice Olson for *Plainswoman* magazine
Democratic National Convention, 1968
North Dakota Attorney General Campaign, 1980—
- Correspondence (3 folders)
- Speeches, talks (1 folder)
- Campaign material (1 folder)
- Campaign guestbook
- Survey (computer report)
- General files (5 folders)
- Newspaper clippings (4 files)

North Dakota Labor Commissioner campaign, 1982
Artifacts (3 items)
Photographs (1 folder)

Box 2 Oversize pages from scrapbook related to Attorney General campaign
Card file of donations to campaign, 1980
Certificates—
- North Dakota Social Service Board, 1979
- Distinguished Alumni Award, 1989
- State of New York Legislative Resolution for 'distinguished service to Community Board No. 4 and the Borough of Manhattan' 1993
- Citation in 'recognition of your service … as chair of the Community Board.' by Borough of Manhattan, 1993

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