

INVENTORY OF THE
OTTO E. PASSMAN COLLECTION
(1947-1978)

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President Richard M. Nixon and Fifth Congressional District Representative Otto E. Passman
discussing urban developments for Monroe, Louisiana

FOREWORD

Otto E. Passman served as a Congressman from Louisiana's Fifth Congressional District for thirty years, 1947 - 1978. During his last term in office, he saw his once proud accomplishments challenged by charges of tax evasion, bribery, and conspiracy brought by the federal government. On April 1, 1979, he was found not guilty of charges that he had accepted illegal gratuities from South Korean rice dealer Tongsun Park. For the man who once said, "You have to be honest and I am honest," the results were a satisfying vindication.

Passman, born to sharecropper parents Ed and Pheriby Carrier Passman on June 27, 1900, lived on a farm near Franklinton, Louisiana, during his formative years. His youth saw him forced to leave school at the age of thirteen to earn a living by working at numerous jobs during the next sixteen years. He continued his education by attending night classes at Baton Rouge High School and Commercial Business College in Bogalusa from which he eventually graduated.

Passman later married Willie Bateman of Franklinton and relocated in Monroe, Louisiana. In 1929 he established the Passman Wholesale Equipment Company, a commercial refrigerator and restaurant supply firm. He later became the owner of Delta Furniture of Monroe, Passman Investment Company, and expanded his commercial equipment company by opening a branch office in Fort Smith, Arkansas. As time evolved, he became increasingly interested in politics and contributed to numerous local campaigns.

Passman received a commission in the United States Navy in October, 1942. During his enlistment, he served as a material and procurement officer and was later discharged in September, 1944, after achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Upon his return to Monroe, he filed for the Democratic nomination for Congress from the Fifth Congressional District. He defeated Charles E. MacKenzie, the incumbent, on September 10, 1946, by a narrow margin of 455 of the 34,703 total votes cast. During the next thirty years, Passman became one of the most powerful men in Congress, serving as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and rising to tenth in seniority.

As a freshman member of the "do-nothing" 80th Congress, Passman voted for the first and last time in favor of a foreign aid authorization bill, a fact in which he takes pride. In 1949 he was appointed to the Appropriations Committee and in 1955 as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. He served at that post for twenty-one years and later waged battles with succeeding administrations over the size of the foreign aid budget. He once admitted to Lawrence Spivak on "Meet the Press," "In principle I am very much against foreign aid because I don't believe that giving away our wealth and dollars alone will save our country."

In the years that followed, Passman was able to cut millions from foreign aid almost with impunity. Until Lyndon Johnson became President, Passman was not once overruled by the entire committee and only twice by the House. In the battle over the 1964 AID budget, Johnson excelled Passman in his subcommittee and on the floor of the House. Passman's control was weakened but he continued annual cuts

of hundreds of millions of dollars from the Federal budget. It was during his capacity as controller of foreign assistance funds that he became involved with Tongsun Park.

Passman successfully promoted the sale of Louisiana products overseas, a fact which substantiates his constant devotion to his constituency. With active participation of then Congressman and later Louisiana Governor Edwin W. Edwards, Passman initiated the sale of Louisiana rice and yams as well as other products that benefited Louisiana's producers. At that time, South Korea was a large purchaser of American products through several governmental programs. Tongsun Park, representing these Korean interests, became acquainted with Passman and was instrumental in expanding the total purchases of Louisiana products in his country.

During the 1972 election, Passman faced a strong challenge in the primary but was re-elected. By 1976, however, with the alleged charges that he had padded his expense accounts for travel between the Capitol and the Fifth District as well as the first allegations he had used his influence to push preferred agents for shipping of foreign aid, he was defeated. Jerry Huckaby, a 35-year-old farmer and businessman, defeated Passman in the August 14 primary.

In his thirty years in Washington, Otto Passman was a friend of many of the men and women who shaped our post-war world. In particular, he is most proud and fond of Richard M. Nixon and Gerald Ford. In the Watergate period, Passman was one of the President's strongest supporters; he was one of only three who voted to reject the report of the committee on the judiciary impeachment hearings. During the

investigation and subsequent trial of Passman, both Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford took a personal interest in his defense proceedings and provided the Congressman with immeasurable moral support through their daily inquiries as to the status of his health.

Passman has remained active in the months since his trial while attending his business interests from his office in the Ouachita National Bank Building in Monroe. The gift of his Congressional papers to Northeast Louisiana University reflects a unique and valuable insight of the operations of the Congress and the nation.

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INTRODUCTION

The manual is subdivided into categories entitled General Files, Post Office Series, Social Security Administration, and Veteran's Administration. Each category has been inventoried as a separate unit and listed in chronological sequence according to the year of legislation (Box 1963 - 02: Second box of subject legislation for the fiscal year 1963).

Within each unit the material has been arranged alphabetically by the subject classification used on the file folders within the box of manuscripts (F 20: File twenty).

Thus, a correct citation for the material would consist of the fiscal year of legislation, box number of that legislation, and file number with file name (Box 1963 - 02 - F 20: General Files - 88th Congress, 1st Session, A through D - F 20 Congressional Directory).

The estimated 300,000 documents contained within this collection are available to qualified researchers. In the future, this collection will be reproduced in micro format and an itemized cross reference computer index will be compiled.