Overview of the Collection

Creator
Graham, Thomas, 1933-

Title
Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament

Dates
2015 (inclusive)
2015
2015 (bulk)
2015

Quantity
12.40 gigabytes, including 2 interviews

Collection Number
OH 036

Summary
The Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament consist of two in-depth oral history interviews conducted in the Fall of 2015, and focusing on Graham's influential twenty-seven-year career as a diplomat and negotiator. Both of these interviews are available online. Graham's tenure with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency is a major subject of the interviews, as are his memories of specific arms limitation talks conducted throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. From 1970 to 1997, Graham was a participant in the negotiation of every major arms control and nonproliferation agreement that involved the United States. During this same time period, he engaged in diplomatic discussions with representatives of more than one hundred countries.

Repository
Oregon State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives Research Center
Special Collections and Archives Research Center
121 The Valley Library
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR
97331-4501
Telephone: 541-737-2075
Fax: 541-737-8674
scarc@oregonstate.edu

Access Restrictions
Collection is open for research.

Languages
English

Biographical Note
Thomas Graham, Jr. was born in Louisville, Kentucky on October 9, 1933, and grew up there as an only child. He inherited a love of politics from his father, a prominent Kentucky Democrat, at a young age.

After graduating from Louisville Male High School in 1951, Graham began undergraduate studies at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School, a public policy institute. While there, Graham focused on international diplomacy, history, politics, and economics. He graduated in 1955 and spent the next year as a fellow at the Institute of Political Science in Paris.

The following year, he returned to the United States with the intent of beginning studies at Harvard Law School. Before he could begin his Harvard career however, he was conscripted into the military. Graham’s period of service lasted for almost two years, from September 1956 to June 1958, during which time he worked as a radio operator and in an intelligence unit.

In September 1958, Graham finally enrolled at Harvard Law School, and he graduated in 1961. During his college years, Graham remained interested and involved in politics, attending the Democratic National Conventions in both 1952 and 1960.

After completing his Harvard studies, Graham moved to Washington, D.C. where he worked for the federal government for a short period of time. In 1963, he left the public sector, choosing to work instead at a law firm in his native Louisville. He stayed there for two years, then moved to New York City to work for another law firm, where he remained for an additional three years.

In 1968, Graham once again attended the Democratic National Convention. His experience at the tumultuous Chicago convention proved distasteful, and in reaction he chose to register as a Republican and began working for the Nixon campaign. After the 1968 election, he returned to the New York law firm for eight months, then started a new job in the Air Force General Counsel office in Washington, D.C. It was in this capacity that Graham first engaged in a diplomatic mission, negotiating agreements on the siting of early warning radar missile detection systems.

Not long after, Graham switched to another government office, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and it was here that he spent the vast majority of his career as an ambassador and diplomat. During his twenty-seven years with the agency, (1970-1997) Graham was a participant in the negotiation of every major arms control and nonproliferation agreement that involved the United States. During this same time period, he engaged in diplomatic discussions with representatives of more than one hundred countries.

For fifteen years, Graham served as the general counsel for the ACDA, and for two additional years he filled the role of Acting Director, and then Acting Deputy Director. For the final three years of his career, which occurred during Bill Clinton’s presidency, Graham held the additional appointment of President’s Special Representative for Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament. Graham retired from government service in 1997.

Graham is a widely published author and has taught as a visiting professor at numerous universities. He has also received several awards, including the Meritorious Honor Award from the Department of State. Today, Graham acts as chairman or board member for multiple organizations. Among these is the Lightbridge Corporation, which seeks to advance nuclear fuel technologies as a reaction to the growing peril of global climate change.

Content Description

Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament, 2015
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv04168
The Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament consist of two oral history interviews conducted in the Fall of 2015 that were captured using, in each instance, digital video and audio recorders. Both sessions were led by Linda Richards, an instructor in the School of History, Philosophy and Religion at Oregon State University, and a scholar of Cold War and nuclear history. Chris Petersen, a faculty member in the OSU Libraries Special Collections and Archives Research Center, also participated in the interviews. Graham was in Corvallis as a Visiting Lecturer for the term. Each of the interviews that Graham gave is available online; neither has been transcribed.

In his first interview (1:19:43), recorded on October 28, 2015, Graham discussed his authorship of a forthcoming book on nuclear-free zones; the negotiations that led to the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995; his memories of learning the art of diplomacy; and the path that he took to becoming an arms control negotiator. He then shared his experience of having been politically persecuted for his work; commented on Linus Pauling’s anti-nuclear activism; and praised President Barack Obama’s activities with regard to nuclear non-proliferation.

From there, Graham relayed his memories of negotiating on behalf of multiple presidential administrations, and spoke of his work to ban the use of chemical and biological weapons. The interview concluded with Graham’s thoughts on climate change, including the crucial role that nuclear power might play in reducing the world’s dependence on fossil fuels.

In his second interview (2:28:40), recorded on December 3, 2015, Graham discussed his early years, including his family’s involvement in politics, the shaping of his political perspective, and his first work in law and government. He then commented on the attempt, in 1993, to eliminate the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA); the Reagan-era struggle over the Anti-Ballistic Missiles treaty that was ushered in by the advancement of the Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as “Star Wars”; and his own personal memories of being denounced by political foes who harbored vested interests against his work. Next, he reflected on the ultimate dissolution of ACDA in 1999 and the role played by Sen. Jesse Helms in bringing about the agency’s demise.

Later on in Interview #2, Graham spoke of participating in a group called Republicans for Obama; provided a lengthy remembrance of the negotiations that led to the signing and ratification of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in the early 1990s; and shared his recollections of the collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, including his personal experience of observing the final departure of Communist ministers from Prague. The interview concluded with Graham’s reflections on the role that ACDA played in defending the nuclear test ban moratorium, including a pivotal decision related to Chinese nuclear testing ambitions. He also responded to a closing question asking for advice that he would offer to those hoping to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

The raw *.wav audio files and *.mts video files captured during the Graham interviews have been deposited into the OSU Libraries preservation server space. Likewise, derivative *.mp3 and *.mpg access files have been created by SCARC staff and are available for patron use upon request. A signed permissions form is also held in the SCARC central files.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament (OH 36), Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.
Administrative Information

Arrangement

The interviews described in this collection are available online through OSU MediaSpace. Neither interview has been transcribed.

Related Materials

The Special Collections and Archives Research Center is home to a rich assemblage of collections documenting a wide range of topics that have defined the nuclear age. Perhaps chief among these collections are the Ava Helen and Linus Pauling Papers (MSS Pauling) and the History of Atomic Energy Collection (RB Energy), both of which contain materials related to nuclear arms limitation and nonproliferation activities in the twentieth century. Additional manuscript collections of interest include the Barton C. Hacker Papers (MSS HackerB), the Charter Heslep Papers (MSS Heslep) and the David A. Marcus Letters (MSS Marcus). Additional interviews with Thomas Graham, Jr. are available through his website.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
Diplomacy.
International relations.
Nuclear arms control.
Nuclear nonproliferation.

Personal Names:
Graham, Thomas, 1933-

Corporate Names:
United States. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Form or Genre Terms:
Born digital.
Digital audio formats.
Digital moving image formats.
Oral histories (document genres).

Other Creators:
Personal Names:
Petersen, Chris (Christoffer) (creator)
Richards, Linda Marie. (creator)

Finding Aid Authors: Chris Petersen.
2016

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License:

Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr. Interviews on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament, 2015
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv04168