



MG 583 - Jason Schoonover fonds

Dates: 1975 (predominant); ca. 1895-1977 (inclusive).

Extent: .10 m of textual records; 25 photographs; 236 slides; 4 audio reels; 7 film reels; 1 audio cassette; 1 45 rpm record; 1 digital image (139KB)

Biography: “Writer, adventurer, expedition leader, ethnologist, archaeologist, paleontologist, canoeist, naturalist, photographer and Fellow Emeritus, Stefansson Medalist, Citation of Merit awardee, and on the Honor Roll of the prestigious Explorers Club—was brought up on farms, and in villages and small towns in Saskatchewan, Canada, and cities like Saskatoon and Vancouver. This explains why he feels equally at home canoeing in the remote north of his homeland, one of his passions, and living in megacities like Bangkok. Following university (Burnaby’s Simon Fraser, English and History, 1970), he launched a multi-media career as a disk jockey, and expanded into writing, directing and producing in radio, TV, stage, newspapers and magazines, including stints as a columnist. His largest stage production was writing, directing and producing Prime Minister John Diefenbaker’s 80th birthday party gala in 1975, an extravaganza involving over 300 performers and personnel. He founded Schoonover Properties and invested everything in Saskatoon real estate.” (from Jason Schoonover’s website <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/about/>)

Historical note: “In 1975 Ray Hnatyshyn and Dennis Fisher on behalf of the Conservative Party hired me to write, direct and produce Mr. Diefenbaker’s 80th birthday party gala at the Centennial Auditorium. It took me five months and involved over 300 performers and personnel. The show itself was about two hours. I saved all the – original film, sound recordings (including my interview with Olive, a very rare event), vintage photos that were used in montages, everything. I basically recreated Mr. Diefenbaker’s life on that stage. There’s even photos of early residences in Saskatoon that Mr. Diefenbaker lived in after Borden and during his university days.” – Jason Schoonover

Scope and Content: This fonds contains materials pertaining to the writing, planning and production of Diefenbaker’s 80th Birthday Party in 1975. Specifically, it includes handwritten and typed notes, correspondence, photographs, slides, film and audio reels, and some clippings. The film includes footage gathered and created for the event (including new interviews with John and Olive Diefenbaker) as well as the finished product as presented during the birthday gala.

Arrangement: Donated in two main accruals in 2016 and 2021, which are arranged separately.

Materials in the first accrual were organized into 4 groups:

1. Planning notes and Materials
2. Correspondence.
3. Photographs
4. Audio/Visual Material

In the first accrual, all materials arrived in two folders (plus the audiovisual materials), with no obvious order. Correspondence and photographs were removed into their own folders leaving the planning notes and materials behind in the order they were found in. Correspondence was organized alphabetical by correspondent, to bring correspondence from the same people together. Photographs were grouped by subject, mostly as found in the original order, and audiovisual material was organized to bring same types of media together.

The second accrual supplements the photographs and audio/visual material, consisting primarily of master film and slides. The slides were organized to the extent possible based on the MCs' script for the narrated slide presentation.

Restrictions: There are no restrictions on access, though audio visual material may need to be vetted before it is released.

*Finding aid created by Amy Putnam, November 2017.
Revised with 2021 accruals by Tim Hutchinson, December 2022.*

Box 1

1. Planning notes and materials. – n.d., 1975.
Contains typed and handwritten notes about Diefenbaker's life (including his first case in Wakaw, the Canoe River Case, and running for office) as well as documents relating to the planning of the 80th Birthday Party (costs, lists of photos and films, lists of performers, advertising, Centennial Auditorium policies, cue sheet for the performance, etc).
- 1b. Sample Stationary. – [1975].
2. Correspondence. – 1975, 1977.
Alexander, Muriel; AlphaCine; Bovey, John A; Campbell, Bob; Cameron, [?]; Chawbury, Michael; Clarke, Dora; Crowhurst, Donald; Diefenbaker, John; Diefenbaker, Olive; Fisher, Dennis (with Walter Dinsdale, Perrin Beatty); Flohil, Dick (see 4.a.); Hnatyshyn, Ray; Hopkins, Don; Nelson, Duane; Norris, L.; Psutka, Mary (National Photography Collection); Roberts, Jim; Young, Sandra; Ziegler, K.C. (RCMP).
3. Photographs. – 25 black and white photographs.
 - a. Girl [Olive Diefenbaker?] in grad cap and gown.
Olive Diefenbaker's class photo. (Olive not identified) See correspondence with Donald Crowhurst.
 - b. Diefenbaker with Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh
Diefenbaker with Olive in London, 1957.
Mr. and Mrs. Diefenbaker are received by the Vice-President of the Hebrew University, Mr. J. Liebes, 1963.
 - c. Visit to Taiwan with Mr. Joel Aldred, 1970. [damaged]
 - d. Diefenbaker two different women.
 - e. Head Shots of Diefenbaker.
 - f. Diefenbaker with UN Troops, April 1974
Diefenbaker in Swae with UN Forces, April 1974.
 - g. Diefenbaker with Churchill. – 5 photographs.
 - h. Aerials of highways, train tracks? – 3 photographs.
Saskatchewan Government Photographs, 73-1843-209, 73-841-136, 67-742-31.
 - i. Canoe river. - 5 Photos.
Of Canoe River train wreck, includes notes labelled "Prov. Photo" with information.
 - j. Mrs. Diefenbaker with Dr. Robbins.

4. Audio Visual Recordings

- a. Stringband. – 45 rpm record.
Songs: “Dief will be the Chief Again” (Bossin) (3:30); Mic Mac Song (Arsenault) (1:21);
Scotland / Monroe’s Hornpipe (trad.) (2:15). (See also Correspondence with Dick Flohil)
- b. “Dief Quotes Dub.” – 4” audio reel. - 1975.
- c. “Dief. Famous People Evaluations. Master.” – 7” audio reel. – n.d.
- d. “Diefenbaker’s Speech Sept 20/75”. – 7” audio reel.
Contains note: “Here’s Diefs thank you speech. Runs at 15 ft per sec.”
- e. “John Diefenbaker interview Fri Aug 15/75. Bess & comments on famous folk.” –
Audiocassette. - 1975.

Box 2

- f. “Dief: On US-Can Relationship - 1915 Sheaf Production - me preparing for interview”. –
Film reel. - nd.
- g. “Dief [...]” – Film reel. - August 1975.
- h. “What is your [?] of [?]. (Only the ?) Dief and Me.” – Film reel. – nd.
- i. Diefenbaker tape master. – Audio reel. – nd.

Photographs and Slides

Slide show. – 236 35mm slides, b&w and col. – 2 folders

The Diefenbaker birthday gala included a narrated slide show, interspersed with film and audio recordings as well as live theatre/music presentations. This file includes the slides used for the presentation and related slides.

See detailed script in the planning and notes textual file. There are two versions of the script, one revised with a slightly different lineup of slides. The version that appears to be the master for copying (e.g. note use of whiteout) has been used as the basis for the slide list. Headings have been added by the archivist, with titles of slides expanded/edited for clarity.

There appear to be multiple sources for these slides, most not evident. This event took place before the Diefenbaker Centre was established, but several slides do correspond to photographs now in the John G. Diefenbaker fonds in University Archives and Special Collections. A few correspond to prints in the earlier Schoonover accrual, including photographs of Churchill received from the Public Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada) and photos of the Diefenbaker Bridge and Hanson Lake Road from Saskatchewan Government Photographs (now held by the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan). However, several others (both personal and political) appear to be new to the UASC collections. A few photographs are contemporary to the birthday gala: primarily photographs of former Diefenbaker homes and locations named for Diefenbaker, as well as the Wakaw law office. Finally, a few slides are drawings which appear to have been commissioned for the event.

Arrangement note: The slides were reorganized to match the order of the presentation to the extent possible. In several cases there are additional slides, which have been ordered thematically – for example, additional images of Olive and of national/international leaders. Slides that could not be identified and which do not fit into the script are filed in the last folder.

Folder 1: Slide presentation organized according to script

Family and early life:

Family – young Diefenbaker with parents and brother Elmer

Not identified: Current photograph of Diefenbaker homestead

Drawings of homestead, blizzard, and Diefenbaker recovering from frostbite

Homestead

Drawing of Gabriel Dumont and Diefenbaker boys, relating to recollection that Dumont was an occasional guest to the homestead, and taught Diefenbaker to shoot

Diefenbaker court case - Canoe River crash:

Photographs and clippings

Trains:

Immigrant train (drawings)

Campaigning by train – whistlestop

Saskatoon train station

Selling newspaper to Prime Minister Laurier:

Diefenbaker family's Saskatoon house; Winnipeg Tribute reportedly sold to Laurier; Administration Building (College Building / Peter MacKinnon Building) at University of Saskatchewan; cornerstone ceremony and cornerstone; "Diefenbaker Corner" in Saskatoon, including plaque; PM Diefenbaker buying newspaper in same location.

The road to the 1958 election:

Wedding; House in Prince Albert; Convention 1956; Convention 1956 – winner; 1958 Campaign – "Carry on John"; Diefenbaker's mother watching his first TV appearance, in University Hospital; Diefenbaker voting in 1957 or 1958

Prime Minister:

Cabinet

House of Commons – opening of Parliament; Diefenbaker speaking

Diefenbaker with 10 Premiers

Queen Elizabeth with Commonwealth leaders

Pakistan

Arc de Triomphe in Paris

Fishing (7 slides)

Diefenbaker as honorary chief, with Indigenous leaders

Olive Diefenbaker:

18 slides of Olive Diefenbaker in various settings

Soldier:

Photographs of John Diefenbaker during World War I, including with family.

Additional slides not in script: Memorial Gates, memorial plaque to 46th Battalion CEF (both on University of Saskatchewan campus)

Law career:

Diefenbaker as a young lawyer with his mother

Group photo - 1936 meeting of Law Society of Saskatchewan

Diefenbaker with parents and Elmer

Wakaw law office (contemporary photos)

Wakaw soccer team

Law partners in Saskatoon – John Cullenare and Emmett Hall

National and international leaders:

Summit – Diefenbaker with John F. Kennedy and Harold MacMillan

Diefenbaker with Mackenzie King

John and Olive Diefenbaker with the Pope Paul VI, 1967

Three Prime Ministers – Diefenbaker, Lester Pearson, Pierre Trudeau

John and Olive Diefenbaker with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India

Diefenbaker in the CFQC radio studio with Wal'n Den: Wally Stambruck and Denny Carr, the MCs for the birthday gala

Ben Gurion

Diefenbaker and others with John F. Kennedy (6 slides)

Diefenbaker and others with Queen Elizabeth (4 slides)

Diefenbaker and others with Winston Churchill (4 slides)

Diefenbaker and others with national and international leaders – not in script:

Harold Macmillan

Dwight "Ike" Eisenhower (2 slides)

Japanese Prime Minister

Lester Pearson

Lester Pearson and Vincent Massey

Pierre Trudeau

Charlotte Witton, Mayor of Ottawa

Gabriel Dumont:

Gabriel Dumont – portrait and drawing. (Accompanied audio clip of Diefenbaker talking about Dumont.)

Prime Minister continued:

Canada-Alaska Microwave System

UN speech

CN property in Saskatoon

New Saskatoon post office

Diefenbaker naming honours:

Diefenbaker Lake

Diefenbaker Parkway in Israel

Tower Bridge, London (introducing a joke by the MC)

Diefenbaker Bridge, Prince Albert

Diefenbaker Drive, Saskatoon

Prime Minister continued:

Hanson Lake Rd. in Northern Saskatchewan – a product of Diefenbaker's northern vision

Bill of Rights (4 slides)

LP cover – *I am a Canadian*

Honorary degree (group photo, unidentified university)

Educational career:

Saskatoon house on 9th Street, the Diefenbaker house during his university education

Not identified: Saskatoon "main drags", listed as "12" in the script

Nutana Collegiate (2 slides)

Early shots of University of Saskatchewan campus (2 slides)

Graduation photos and yearbook entries primarily from The Sheaf – BA, MA and law degrees; Sheaf staff; Student's Representative Council (15 slides)

University of Saskatchewan crest

Editorial cartoons

17 editorial cartoons

Portraits of Diefenbaker

Karsh portrait of Diefenbaker; plus additional portraits not in script (10 slides)

Baby pictures (3 slides)

Closing:

Coin – commemorative coin from Alberta Mint, in honour of Diefenbaker’s 80th birthday

Not identified: Queen Elizabeth (see also above); displayed for singing of God Save the Queen

Folder 2: Additional and unidentified slides

Diefenbaker with mother Mary Diefenbaker (2 slides)

School picture

Diefenbaker with House of Commons Speaker

Diefenbaker “speech making” – at podium with CFQC microphone

Diefenbaker in Middle East (3 slides)

Diefenbaker with dog

John and Olive Diefenbaker next to monument/artwork – not identified

“Funny pic” of Diefenbaker

Diefenbaker and Girl Guides

Unidentified, primarily buildings (8 slides)

Photograph – Diefenbaker and Schoonover. – 1975. – Born Digital

Scanned image; original retained by donor

Box OS/1

Audio/Visual Material

Our World: Diefenbaker. – 1969 or 1970. – 16mm film

Colour, single system, optical track print on film spool (16mm), provided by CTV. Accompanied by letter from CTV, shot list re Diefenbaker from CTV’s film library, and handwritten notes by Schoonover (moved to file folder). This appears to be an episode of CTV’s *Our World* documentary series, which ran on CTV in 1969/70. “Among the many subjects tackled was John Diefenbaker’s Ottawa, with The Chief conducting viewers on a tour of the Parliament Buildings and sharing his knowledge of their history.” (History of Canadian Broadcasting, Canadian Communications Foundation, <https://broadcasting-history.com/programming/television/our-world>, retrieved 7 Dec 2022)

Diefenbaker film – master. – [1975]. – 16 mm

Film produced for 80th birthday gala. 16mm film on reel, identified as master. Includes handwritten notes which appear to be a shot list.

Diefenbaker birthday party – His and Hers Interviews. – 1975. – 2 16mm films

Interviews with John and Olive Diefenbaker

Two films on spool. B-wind optical? Cannister annotated "orig. col. & trks.". Work order was to "transfer mag stripe to b-wind optical". Includes damage report – "Original in poor condition – perforation edge badly damaged esp. in *her* interview. Also sound edge pretty rough."