

C Spradling, Albert M., Jr. (1920-2004), Collection, c. 1935-1986
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INTRODUCTION

This collection is primarily composed of newspaper clippings, mostly from Missouri newspapers, about Democratic State Senator Albert M. Spradling, Jr. and Missouri politics. Also included are articles published in periodicals, campaign advertisements, signed petitions, photographs, and miscellaneous Federal Bureau of Investigation career documents.

DONOR INFORMATION

Senator Spradling donated the Albert M. Spradling, Jr. Collection to the State Historical Society of Missouri on 30 July 1997 (SHS Accession No. 3165).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Albert M. Spradling, Jr. was born on March 13, 1920. As a Democrat he was elected to the Missouri State Senate at thirty-one years of age, and became one of the youngest senators in Missouri history. After his special election, which completed the year remaining in the term of D.W. Gilmore (who left the Senate to become circuit judge), Spradling won six more elections, and served in the Senate for twenty-five years, 1952-1977. To date he has been the only state senator (and among only a handful of legislators altogether) with service in the FBI.

Senator Spradling helped change Missouri's mental health facilities from primitive to modern institutions. He also participated in legislating open meetings and freedom of information, otherwise known as the "sunshine laws." He served as one of the numerous "country lawyers" who once dominated the General Assembly, and who traditionally influenced Missouri's conservative Democratic Party legacy.

Senator Spradling's career in the Missouri Legislature bridged at least two major generational eras in that body. As a freshman senator in 1952 he became friends with the senior senator Michael Kinney, whose tenure extended back to 1912. Spradling soon established his own reputation as a senator of considerable ability through his successful reform of mental health treatment in Missouri. On such a record of achievement he won the leadership position of president *pro tempore* for the 71st and 72nd General Assemblies, 1961-1964.

During the transitional period in Missouri Democratic Party politics, when Warren E. Hearnes upset the "Establishment" Democrats by defeating Hilary A. Bush in the 1964 gubernatorial race, Spradling remained loyal to the old order. During subsequent years, when a group of more liberal Democrats (the "young turks") developed in the Senate, Spradling remained in the other, more conservative, faction. The conservatives defeated newly-elected Governor Hearnes's attempt to gain control of the Senate by electing John W. Joynt as president *pro tempore* and William B. Waters as majority leader for the 73rd and 74th General Assemblies, 1965-1968. In the 75th General Assembly Earl R. Blackwell emerged as the leader of the liberal faction with his successful bid for president *pro tempore*. A contentious legislative session followed, with the two factions regularly fighting with each other and over legislation

sponsored by Hearnes. The conflict reached a climax in early 1970 when the senators voted to oust Blackwell as *pro tempore*, an act completely unprecedented in the history of Missouri politics.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Collection is divided into three sections: **Clippings, Photographs, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Documents.**

The **Clippings** section spans from the mid-1930s to 1986, with the bulk of the clippings from 1952 to 1976. The Missouri Press Service was responsible for gathering most of the material between 1961 and 1976, although certain clippings not from the service represent some important stories omitted from the service compilations.

The pre-Press Service material was in scrapbooks or loose clippings. Specific newspaper names and dates are often absent. The material from scrapbooks was left in its original order. Loose clippings lacking an exact date but possessing period-specific information is placed at the earliest possible date with the latest possible date indicated in writing.

Earliest clippings deal with Spradling's high school debates, his law education, and enrollment in the FBI. After his father's death Spradling returned to Cape Girardeau where he took up private law practice and became active in the community. The bulk of the clippings begin with his election to the Missouri Senate in 1952.

Spradling's work in mental health reform and modernization is well represented here, with news stories appearing between 1952 and the 1970s, but especially 1955. Other topics covered during the 1950s include racketeering, wire-tapping, the St. Louis earnings tax, and nursing homes.

Before 1970 Missouri legislators met in biennial sessions; thus the odd-numbered years have more clippings. Special sessions in off years usually dealt with appropriation matters. By the mid- and late 1960s Governor Hearnes was calling special sessions every off year.

During the early 1960s mental health continues as a prominent topic, as well as taxes (sales, cigarette, use), horse racing, Sunday closing laws, and government reorganization through the "Little Hoover" Commission. Numerous articles pertain to the possibility of Spradling's higher office prospects, particularly governor or lieutenant governor.

Conflict of interest legislation is also covered, and perhaps especially interested Spradling, as there are about fifteen articles from the New York *Herald Tribune*, August 5-16, 1963, dealing with conflict of interest among that state's legislators.

The elections of 1964 dominate that year's material, as this was the year that Hearnes upset the established Democratic order. Subsequent coverage deals with conflict between Hearnes and the Senate old guard for control of that legislative body. Clippings from 1965 continue with articles on mental health and legislative reapportionment, but perhaps most noteworthy are published accounts dealing with the Uniform Commercial Code. The most detailed document dealing with this subject is an April 1965 article written by Spradling himself.

The Uniform Commercial Code continues to be covered in 1966. A proposed toll road between southeast Missouri and Jefferson City becomes a topic in 1967, as does some of Lyndon Johnson's federal spending, particularly as it pertained to Medicaid. Otherwise, the year's clippings are not numerous, and pertinent material may be missing. The conflict between Hearnes and Blackwell is covered in 1968 clippings. This conflict continues the following year and centers around control of the Senate and an income tax increase advocated by Hearnes and opposed by Blackwell. 1969 material also covers many other topics, such as voting rights for

eighteen-year-olds, the Uniform Credit Code, the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (sponsored by Spradling), and the first stirrings of an attempt to oust Blackwell as *pro tempore*.

Blackwell's ouster is a topic of the 1970 clippings. John C. Danforth also emerges as the beginning of a major Republican incursion into statewide offices. Government reorganization is a prominent concern in 1971, which continues during subsequent years, ultimately culminating in the 1974 Omnibus State Reorganization Act. Eighteen-year-olds voting rights continues as a topic in 1971, as does legislative redistricting (which gave Spradling additional Ozark counties), sales tax, legislative staff funding and numbers, and Spradling's sponsorship of a "no fault" divorce bill. A newsletter from Senator A. Basey Vanlandingham includes clippings from various newspapers. An article (*Post-Dispatch* February 21, 1971) covers the life of Michael Kinney upon the former senator's death.

Articles pertaining to the Employment Security Bill are numerous in 1972. Government reorganization continues as a subject and becomes quite controversial in its relation to higher education. Other subjects include state funding for public defenders, legislator's continued requests for increased legislative staffing (blocked by Hearnes), the opening of Interstate 55 through southeast Missouri, and many articles pertaining to probation and parole. The governor's race is also a focus.

In 1973 Spradling became senior senator. Government reorganization appears as the "biggest issue." Spradling's advocacy of no fault insurance, branch banking, and the sunshine laws are covered. Other topics include the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion rights, capital punishment, and regulation of lobbying. Clippings from 1974 are missing. 1975 is very sparsely represented, and 1976 contains two articles pertaining to Spradling's announced retirement from the Senate. The 1986 retrospective article ends the series.

One of this collection's strengths is that it is a preliminary guide for researchers seeking specific topics. The collection should not be considered comprehensive since all articles on a specific topic might not be here. In addition to legislation and news which directly involved Senator Spradling, many clippings deal with the major political stories of the time. Many published reports from other legislators are here, as well as news pertinent to the Cape Girardeau area. Many of the clippings are from the Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian*. These clippings represent mostly state political news pertaining to Senator Spradling, but also local industrial and economic concerns and other local topics.

The **Photographs** section contains black and white images, from 1936 to 1971, depicting Spradling's high school days, his Federal Bureau of Investigation career in the 1940s, and his political life in the Missouri legislature.

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation Documents** section comprises miscellaneous materials dating from 1942 through 1945 and includes a World War II ration book, telegram notification from J. Edgar Hoover of Spradling's appointment to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and limited correspondence.

ADDITIONAL SOURCE MATERIALS

Two indexed and transcribed oral history interviews with Senator Spradling may be found in the Politics in Missouri Oral History Project, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri; Collection #3929.

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