

Description and Finding Aid
J. BLAIR SEABORN FONDS
F2368

Prepared by
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J. BLAIR SEABORN FONDS

Dates of creation

1948-2018

Extent

1 m of textual records

9 photographs

266 MB of electronic records

8 audio cassettes

1 artefact

Biographical sketch

James Blair Seaborn, diplomat and civil servant, was born in Toronto on March 18, 1924, the son of Richard Seaborn, an Anglican priest, and his wife Muriel. He was educated at the Toronto Normal School, the University of Toronto Schools, and in 1941 he entered Trinity College. In 1943 he enlisted in the army, training with the Royal Canadian Artillery. He served briefly in England and Holland, returning home in 1946. He received his BA in 1947, and an MA in political economy in 1948. While at Trinity College he met Carol Trow (4T8); they married in 1950 and had two children, Geoffrey (Trinity 7T3) and Virginia (Trinity 7T6).

Seaborn joined the Department of External Affairs in 1948, working for the newly-appointed Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, taking on positions at home and abroad. From 1950 to 1954 he was Second Secretary in The Hague, followed by a promotion to First Secretary in Paris from 1957 to 1959. These positions were followed by a posting in Moscow as Counsellor (1959-1962), and Head, Eastern European Section from 1962-64, and 1966-67, back in Ottawa. Between these last two postings Seaborn served as Canadian Commissioner, International Commission for Supervision and Control, in Saigon. In 1964 and 1965 he was sent on six missions to Hanoi. From 1967 to 1970 Seaborn was Head of the Far Eastern Division, in Ottawa.

Leaving External Affairs he moved to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, serving as Assistant Deputy Minister, Consumer Affairs, from 1970 to 1974. He then moved to the Department of the Environment, as Deputy Minister, from 1974 to 1982. He was Canadian Chairman of the International Joint Commission from 1982 to 1985, and Intelligence and Security Co-ordinator in the Privy Council Office from 1985 to 1989. In 1989 he retired from the Public Service of Canada.

Post-retirement, Seaborn joined the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency as Chairman, Environmental Assessment Panel on Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept. He was actively involved in the Five Lakes Fishing Club in the Gatineau area, and participated in yearly hikes along the Appalachian Trail in New England. He became a resource for countless researchers on the Vietnam War, and on environmental issues, contributing to many articles, interviews, conferences, and broadcasts. In 2000 he became a Member of the Order of Canada. His wife, Carol, predeceased him on June 27, 2011. Blair Seaborn died on November 11, 2019, in Ottawa.

Scope and content

The J. Blair Seaborn fonds consists of records created and accumulated by Seaborn relating to his career as a public servant and as a private citizen. Some records are contemporary with his work in a variety of public service postings. Many were created during his retirement when he was involved in the documentation of his work in Vietnam and in projects that expressed his interest in the environment.

Contains series:

1. Professional Records
2. Personal Records

Notes

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Gift of the Estate of J. Blair Seaborn

Acquisition history: Materials in this fonds were maintained by J. Blair Seaborn until his death in 2019.

Arrangement: Order has been imposed by the archivist.

Restrictions on access: None

Terms governing use and reproduction / publication: Various copyright holders. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any part of the fonds.

Accruals:

No further accruals are expected.

Provenance access points:

Seaborn, James Blair, 1924-2019

SERIES 1: PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

Dates of creation

1954-2018

Extent

0.87 m of textual records

7 photographs

266 MG of electronic records

6 audio cassettes

1 artefact

Scope and content

Series contains records relating to Seaborn's diplomatic postings and civil service career. Records include personal letters, clippings and other published materials, manuscripts, correspondence, interviews, transcripts, sound recordings, travel itineraries, speeches and presentations, reports in draft and final formats, photocopies of declassified documents, sound recordings, and photographs.

Location / File Listing

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX/ FILE #
Work recollections	1959	2011	File contains letters written by Blair and Carol Seaborn from their posting in Moscow, 1959-1962, with later notes and materials. Included is the text of a presentation by Landon Pearson to the Retired Heads of Mission Association, entitled 'Private Letters, Public Matters: the Pearsons, father and son, correspondence about Suez, NATO and the French', 2011.	1-1
[Magazine articles]	1965	1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maclean's Magazine</i>, 15 November 1965, with Seaborn on the front cover and an article, 'Our Man in Saigon' by Terence Robertson • <i>Life Magazine</i>, 22 March 1968, with article about Seaborn and others, 'Peace Feelers: This Frail Dance of the Seven Veils', by Frank McCulloch. 	OS Folder 1– MC 3– 5
Vietnam [File 1]	1964	1993	File contains printed material, including newspaper clippings and magazine articles, and photocopies of declassified material. Also includes some contemporary letters from Seaborn to his brother, Bob, and correspondence with R.L. Rogers and Thomas Delworth.	1-2
Vietnam [File 2]	1971	2002	Contains newspaper clippings, a copy of Seaborn's 2001 published article, Dictaphone cassette tapes and transcript of an interview by Andrew Cohen in 1984, correspondence and notes relating to other interviews, photocopies of declassified documents, review of Charles Taylor's book on Canada's involvement in Vietnam, correspondence with Paul Martin and others. Includes a list of the exact dates Seaborn visited Hanoi.	1-3 to 1-6
"Mission to Hanoi: the Canadian channel"	2001	2001	<p>Drafts, notes and correspondence with Robert Bothwell regarding the article to be included in the book <i>Canadian Peacekeepers in Vietnam</i>, edited by Arthur Blanchette.</p> <p>Floppy disk: 'Blanchette – Vietnam; text fr. Seaborn' printed by the archivist.</p>	1-7
<i>Canadian Peacekeepers in Vietnam</i>	2001	2005	Correspondence, publicity, book launch particulars, regarding the publication of the book edited by Arthur E. Blanchette.	1-8
<i>The Devil's Snare: a memoir of Saigon</i>	2005	2005	Unpublished copy of the book by Janice Tait, and correspondence between Seaborn and the publisher.	1-9
LBJ telephone tapes	1998	1998	3 audio cassette tapes containing tapes from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, from 1964: Tapes WH 6405.10, WH 6406.03 and WH 6406.04. Gift from Michael Klenavic, with accompanying note of thanks to Seaborn.	Box 8

[illegible]

			October 18, 1965', notes for an interview with Bob Bothwell; correspondence and notes regarding other interviews re Vietnam; letter to Robert McNamara.	
Vietnam: Blair interviewed on <i>The Current</i>	2003	2003	Audio cassette of the CBC Radio show, March 2003	Box 8
Fontainebleau Workshop	1989	1989	Paper, "Protection of the Environment and the Trade Rules" by Frank Stone and Blair Seaborn, with related materials about the conference organized by the European Environment Bureau.	3-2
The Global Environment and National Security	1990	1990	Paper presented at the Canadian Centre for Management Development.	3-3
Transboundary Pollution: a Canadian Perspective	1990	1990	Notes for panel presentation given to the American Society for International Law, Washington DC, and related documents.	3-4
Options for a Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement	1990	1990	Notes for a presentation at the Dartmouth Winter Seminar, Dartmouth Institute, New Hampshire.	3-5
Contract with Department of External Affairs and International Trade	1991	1991	Contract to review the security function of the department, and confidential report.	3-6
Netherlands trip – address	1991	1992	Contains information relating a trip coordinated by the Department of External Affairs to France, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, resulting in a report by Seaborn in his role as Chairman of the Environmental Assessment Panel on Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal. Includes itinerary, report, text of a talk, "How Green is Canada" with slides and overheads.	3-7
Security – External: Penkovsky-VanVliet-Beeby incident	1991	2003	Contains declassified photocopied documents, newspaper clippings, and correspondence between Seaborn and researchers.	3-8
Environmental Assessment – nuclear waste	1992	2018	Contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Memories: Environmental Assessment of the Concept for the Disposal of Nuclear Fuel Waste', chaired by Seaborn, [1996?] • 'Implementing adaptive phased management 2018-2022', Nuclear Waste Management Organization, 2018 	3-9 To 4-2

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Government of Canada response to Recommendations of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept Environmental Assessment Panel', 1998 • 'Final Guidelines for the preparation of an environmental impact statement on the nuclear fuel waste management and disposal concept', The Federal Environmental Assessment Review Panel, 1992 • 'Nuclear fuel waste management and disposal concept', Report of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Management and Disposal Concept Environmental Assessment Panel, 1998 • Floppy disk: PBMR [RE South African nuclear project, 2002-2003 [files printed by the archivist, 31 July 2020] • Floppy disk: S.A. nuclear – Pelindaba, 2002 [files printed by the archivist, 31 July 2020] • Floppy disk: [PBMR] Key factors [files printed by the archivist, 31 July 2020] • CD: Scoping report, EIA Process for proposed demonstration module nuclear pebble bed Nuclear Reactor, 2001 • CD: PBNC 98; 11th Pacific Basin Nuclear Conference, Banff, 1998 	
[Intelligence]: Interviews, talks, presentations	1994	2012	Contains talks given by Seaborn regarding the Maher Arar case, intelligence policies in Canada, etc., and drafts of articles written by others (James Cox, J.L. Black), correspondence relating to Seaborn's segment on the CJRT "Open College" session	4-3
'The Uneasy Peace'	[198-]	[198-]	Audio cassette, with hand-letter title and the printed logo of CJRT-FM, Open College. Blair Seaborn interview with Bob Bothwell and Margaret MacMillan	Box 8
The History of Espionage	[198-]	[198-]	Audio cassette, Program 11 of the CJRT-FM Open College series	Box 8
Roundtable on U.S.-Canada cooperation in pollution prevention	1995	1995	Contains the text of Seaborn's presentation at the Washington, DC event, and related materials	4-4
Environment Canada ID badge	19997	1997	Seaborn's government issue ID card, in a plastic case with chain	Box 8
South Africa Nuclear	2000	2003	Contains the panel reports on the proposed demonstration of the pebble bed modular reactor and the proposed manufacture of nuclear fuel and transportation of materials, and associated materials. Seaborn was one of six panelists. File also contains 3 CDs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PBMR EIA Consortium. Contains files – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIR – PBMR – including report and annexures (proposed demonstration PBMR) 	4-5

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIR – NECSA – Including report and annexures (NECSA fuel manufacturing and transport) 	
			2. PBMR EIA Consortium. Contains file –	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIR – PBMR – including report and annexures (proposed demonstration PBMR) • EIR – NECSA – Including report and annexures (NECSA fuel manufacturing and transport) • PBMR and NECSA comments register 	
			3. Applications for the construction of a demonstration module for a pebble bed modular reactor at Koeber and application for manufacturing and transport of fuel spheres to the proposed PBMR at Koeberg	
Water Study Group – notes, etc.	2003	2005	Contains reports, clippings and correspondence relating to U.S.-Canada transboundary water issues and management.	5-1
PRI Water Conference	2006	2006	Contains published materials and correspondence. Also contains a CD from the Government of Canada, Policy Research Initiative, containing reports, briefing notes, working papers and journal articles relating to Water Demand Management, Pollution Control, International Governance Issues, and Integrated Management	5-2
James B. Bruce correspondence	2015	2015	Printed email to Seaborn, with attached section of a draft document: “A Canadian Environmental Chronicle 1954-2014”, regarding climate change.	5-3
[Intelligence] Air India crash	2005	2016	Contains a declassified version of Seaborn’s report on air security, and Bob Rae’s inquiry into the Air India crash. Also includes notes, interview questions/answers, and newspaper clippings.	5-4
Scrapbook material	1966	2004	Contains certificates, awards, newspaper clippings, menus, programmes, invitations, etc. Also includes a photograph of Seaborn with a group of government officials including Joe Clarke and Jeanne Sauvé.	5-5
			1 photograph : col. ; 20 x 25 cm	
Memorabilia	1979	2017	Contains press releases, published materials, invitations to state events, greeting cards, letters of thanks and congratulations, and an official photograph of Seaborn.	5-6
			1 photograph : b&w ; 17 x 12 cm.	
Personal and financial	1954	1989	Contains job descriptions, letters of appointment, press releases relating to government appointments, letters of thanks (including letters from Lester Pearson, Brian Mulroney and Pierre Trudeau), newspaper clippings, personnel forms, letters of promotion, salary information, etc. Includes four photographs of Seaborn’s retirement party in May 1989.	5-7 & 5-8
			4 photographs : col. ; 10 x 12 cm	

Speeches	1970	1988	Texts for 19 speeches given by Seaborn to a variety of groups, including businesses, universities, clubs, and conferences. Removed from a binder	6-1 to 6-3
Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal	2000	2001	Information about the award and Seaborn's application	6-4
"Almost everything you always wanted to know about James Blair Seaborn but were much too polite to ask"	1983	1983	Binder, compiled by colleagues for Seaborn's retirement dinner from the International Joint Commission	6-5
Appointment certificates	1964	1983	Official certificates of appointment for positions as Canadian Commissioner on the International Supervisory Commission for Vietnam, Deputy Minister of the Environment, and Commissioner of the International Joint Commission.	OS Folder 2 - MC 3-5
Order of Canada	2000	2000	Certificate of appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada	OS Folder 2 - MC 3-5

SERIES 2: PERSONAL RECORDS

Dates of creation:

1948-2018

Extent:

0.13 m of textual records

2 photographs

2 audio cassettes

Scope and content:

Series contains academic records, genealogical information, memoirs, published materials, correspondence and photographs.

Location / File Listing:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX/ FILE #
Undergraduate transcript, MA	1948	1948	Official transcript, signed by Sidney Smith; MA thesis titled 'Organized Labour and the Co-operative	7-1

thesis, letter from SGS			Commonwealth Federation'; letter certifying graduate studies	
Five Lakes Fishing Club	1971	2018	Correspondence, maps, minutes of annual meetings, invitations, etc.	7-2
Five Lakes Fishing Club publications	1986	2015	Contains a 1990 history prepared for the 50 th anniversary of the Club ("Five Lakes Before the Club"), and 4 published members books	7-3
Hiking	1979	2001	Contains material relating to yearly hiking trips on the Appalachian Trail, including maps, guidebook, correspondence	7-4
University of Toronto Schools	1981	2010	Contains correspondence, photograph, identification button, and photocopied material relating to alumni events at UTS. 1 photograph: b&w ; 8.5 x 12.5 cm	7-5
Army Course Reunions	1983	2003	Contains published booklets for the 50 th and 60 th Reunions, and related materials, including a photograph of the 1943 alumnae 1 photograph : col. ; 20 x 25 cm.	7-6
Trinity College	1994	2017	Contains materials relating to donations and alumnae events	7-7
Recollections: family, postings, travel	2007	2014	Contains genealogical information, clippings and correspondence regarding the Seaborn family, and printed chapters of Seaborn's recollections on various topics: Nuclear Waste Panel, Canada-Hungary Task Force on Environmental Assessment, Environment Canada, Travelling, Paris, The Netherlands, Family.	7-8
Warren James	2002	2002	Audio cassette containing a 'letter' to Seaborn in response to a letter of condolence on the death of James' wife, Kathleen. R. Warren. James was a colleague, one-time Director, Consumer Research Branch, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.	Box 8
CBO CCC Resto[r]ation]	1994	1994	Audio cassette, being a tour of Christ Church Cathedral in December 1994 after a major restoration. Seaborn was involved in fundraising activities for the restoration.	Box 8