
Finding aid for the Sidney Harman papers 5121

Finding aid prepared by Claude Zachary
USC Libraries Special Collections
Doheny Memorial Library 206
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April 2012

Title: Sidney Harman papers

Collection number: 5121

Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 11.75 Linear feet3 extra-large flat metal-edge archival boxes, 1 document box, 2 framed items

Date (bulk): Bulk, 1990-2011

Date (inclusive): 1918-2011

Abstract: Framed letters, diplomas, and plaques; miscellaneous papers from Harman's tenure at USC.

creator: Harman, Sidney, 1918-2011

Conditions Governing Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

Preferred Citation

[Box/folder# or item name], Sidney Harman papers, Collection no. 5121, University Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

Conditions Governing Use

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Acquisition

Gift of the Harman Family Foundation.

Biographical note

Sidney Harman was an audio pioneer who built the first high-fidelity stereo receiver, served in education and government, and late-in-life, with virtually no media experience, acquired Newsweek magazine and wed it with a young Web site, The Daily Beast.

For most of his life, Mr. Harman was known as the scientist-businessman who co-founded Harman/Kardon in 1953 and made high-quality audio equipment for homes and businesses, and later navigational and other devices for cars. He made a fortune, and gave millions to education, the performing and fine arts, and other philanthropies.

But Mr. Harman, who was married to former Representative Jane Harman, a nine-term California Democrat, was also a health enthusiast, a scholar of boundless energy and utopian ideas, and something of a Renaissance man. He studied physics, engineering and social psychology; was a classical music fan and jazz aficionado; recited Shakespeare by heart; was a civil rights and antiwar activist; created programs to humanize the workplace; was the president of a Quaker college on Long Island; served as President Jimmy Carter's deputy secretary of commerce; published a memoir, "Mind Your Own Business: A Maverick's Guide to Business Leadership and Life" in 2003; and was still active in business in his 90s.

Sidney Harman was born in Montreal on Aug. 4, 1918, and grew up in New York City, where his father worked at a hearing-aid company. In 1939 he graduated from a branch of City College that became Baruch College, earning a degree in physics. He found an engineering job with the David Bogen Company, a New York maker of loudspeakers. After Army service in 1944-45, he returned to the company and by the early 1950s was general manager.

At a time when sophisticated hi-fi radio required a tuner to capture signals, a pre-amplifier, a power amp and speakers, Mr. Harman and Bernard Kardon, Bogen's chief engineer, quit their jobs in 1953, put up \$5,000 each and founded Harman/Kardon. It produced the first integrated hi-fi receiver, the Festival D1000. It was hugely successful. Mr. Kardon retired in 1956, and in 1958 Mr. Harman created the first hi-fi stereo receiver, the Festival TA230. In later years, the company made speakers, amplifiers, noise-reduction devices, video and navigation equipment, voice-activated telephones, climate controls and home theater systems.

In the 1960s Mr. Harman was an active opponent of the Vietnam War, and for a year taught black pupils in Prince Edward County, Va., after public schools there were closed in a notorious effort to avoid desegregation. From 1968 to 1971 he was president of Friends World College, a Quaker institution in Suffolk County. In 1973 he earned a doctorate from the Cincinnati-based Union Institute and University.

In the early 1970s he created a program to provide employees at his Bolivar, Tenn., automotive parts plant with training, flexible hours and work assignments, stock ownership and other benefits that eased tensions with management and raised productivity. It was hailed as visionary and scorned as impractical. But President Carter was impressed, and made him deputy secretary of commerce. He served in 1977-78. Mr. Harman was the co-author, with the pollster Daniel Yankelovich, of "Starting With the People" (1988), an analysis of national policies through a prism of public values. Mr. Harman sold his

company to avoid conflicts of interest during his government service, and bought it back a few years later at a profit. Renamed Harman International Industries, with headquarters in Stamford, Conn., he took it public in 1986, and retired as chairman in 2008. He joined the University of Southern California in 2008 as Presidential Professor and the Isaias W. Hellman Professor of Polymathy, lecturing on architecture, medicine, law, economics and other subjects. He was the founder of the USC Sidney Harman Academy for Polymathic Study.

He donated \$20 million for the Shakespeare Theater Company's Sidney Harman Hall in Washington, and was a trustee of the Aspen Institute, the California Institute of Technology, Freedom House, the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

His first marriage, to the former Sylvia Stern, ended in divorce; they had four children, Lynn, Gina, Paul, and Barbara. He married the former Jane Lakes in 1980. They had two children, Daniel and Justine Harman, both of New York City.

Mr. Harman passed away on April 12, 2011 in Washington D.C. at the age of 92 of complications from acute myeloid leukemia.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Carter, Jimmy, 1924- -- Correspondence

Clinton, Bill, 1946- -- Correspondence

Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955 -- Correspondence

Harman, Sidney, 1918-2011 -- Archives

University of Southern California. -- Archives

Businessmen--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources

Businessmen--New York (State)--New York--Archival resources

Letters

Notes

Philanthropists--United States--Archival resources

Realia

Reports

United States--Politics and government--20th century--Archival resources

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Archival resources

Realia

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| Box 1 | Framed letter and postcard from Jimmy Carter 2003 September 18
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 item |
| Box 1 | Framed letter from Jimmy Carter 1990 March 30
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 item
Size: 12.5 inches x 15 inches |
| Box 1 | Framed nomination of Sidney Harman by Jimmy Carter and appointment to position of Undersecretary of Commerce 1977
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 item
Size: 23 inches x 19 inches |
| Box 1 | Framed copy of nomination and confirmation of position of Undersecretary of Commerce 1977
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 item
Size: 16 inches x 18 inches |
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- Box 1 **Framed letter from Bill Clinton 1996 April 08**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
 Size: 10.5 inches x 12.5 inches
- Box 1 **Portfolio with letter from Catherine Quinlan, Dean of USC Libraries, in celebration of the inaugural event of the USC Academy of Polymathic Studies 2011 February 09**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
- Box 2 **Framed profile of Sidney Harman from the Washington Business Journal 2003 December 05**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
 Size: 22 inches x 22 inches
- Box 2 **Framed "Thank you" photo montage from Harman Consumer Group**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
 Size: 18.25 inches x 24.25 inches
- Box 2 **Framed proclamation "In Memoriam" of Sidney Harman from the City of Los Angeles 2011 September 26**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
 Size: 21 inches x 31 inches
- Box 2 **Plaques of profile of Sidney Harman from the Washington Post 2001 March 05**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 2.0 Items
 Size: 21 inches x 12.5 inches
- Box 2 **Plaque proclaiming Sidney Harman as Washingtonian of the Year 2007**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
 Size: 11 inches x 13 inches
- Box 3 **Framed citation inducting Sidney Harman posthumously as a member of the University of Southern California Phi Kappa Phi honor society 2011 May 11**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
- Box 3 **Copy of New York Times given as a birthday gift to Sidney Harman 1918 August 06**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item
- Box 3 **Diploma from Baruch College, CUNY, granting Sidney Harman a BA in Business Administration 1939 June**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 item

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- Box 3 **Framed certificate commemorating the establishment of the Haman Professorship in International Science, Public Policy, and Human Development in the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University 1991 March 18**

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item

Size: 11 inches x 14.5 inches
 - Box 3 **Diploma from the Union Institute granting Sidney Harman a Ph.D. 1973 May 15**

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item
 - Box 3 **Framed diploma from Baruch College, CUNY, granting Sidney Harman a Ph.D. in Humane Letters 2009 May 27**

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item

Size: 16.5 inches x 19 inches
 - Box 3 **Honorary membership certificate from the Audio Engineering Society 2000 September 22**

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item

Framed photo montage commemorating the Dr. Sidney Harman tribute luncheon given by Harman International 2008 September 29

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item

Size: 39.5 inches x 27.5 inches

Framed display of letter signed by Albert Einstein to Samuel Abramson, Camden, N.J. with embedded descriptive plaque and portrait of Einstein 1931 November 17

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 item

creator: Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955

Papers

Scope and Content

3 Binders from Spring semester, 2008, dated February 28 - March 11, containing course materials, information about the USC campus and the USC Marshall School faculty, and emails with professors and students from classes that hosted Harman as a guest lecturer in the USC Marshall School of Business.

- Box 4 **USC miscellany 2007-2010**
- Box 4 **"Education and Business--New Directions, New Hope" by Sidney Harman 1973 April**
- Box 4 **"The Buzzer Works for Me (How the Whole Thing Works)" by Sidney Harman (draft) 2002 September 25**
- Box 4 **USC Stuff/Notes for courses 2009**
- Box 4 **[USC Academy for Polymathic Studies documents and notes] 2003-2009, undated**
- Box 4 **[USC Academy for Polymathic Studies meeting agendas and course objectives]**
- Box 4 **[Spring Semester course information] [3 binders] 2008**