

# PURDUE

---

UNIVERSITY

---



## INVENTORY TO THE ROBERT W. TOPPING PAPERS, 1930-1996

**Purdue University Libraries  
Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections  
Research Center  
504 West State Street  
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2058  
(765) 494-2839**

<http://www.lib.purdue.edu/spcol>

© 2010 Purdue University Libraries. All rights reserved.  
Revised: February 5, 2010; October 16, 2012  
Compiled By: Mary A. Segó

## Descriptive Summary

**Creator Information** Topping, Robert W., 1925-2009

**Title** Robert W. Topping papers

**Collection Identifier** MSA 33

**Date Span** 1930-1996, predominant 1966-1988

**Abstract** The collection consists of many newspaper clippings, news releases, ten cassette tapes and miscellaneous printed ephemera that Robert W. Topping collected, while on the staff of the Purdue University Office of Publications for twenty-eight years. Also included are the files used for his published book; "The Hovde Years", 1980 and the original manuscript for "A Century and Beyond", 1988, along with the unpublished manuscripts for, "Gentle Force, The Women of Purdue University.", 1993 and "Just Call Me Orville", the unpublished biography of Orville Redenbacher, 1996.

**Extent** 2.75 cubic feet (7 boxes)

**Finding Aid Author** Mary A. Seago

**Languages** English

**Repository** Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections  
Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

## Administrative Information

**Location Information:** ASC

**Access Restrictions:** Collection is open for research.

**Acquisition Information:** January 6, 2010; Suzanne Topping, donation

**Accession Number:** 20100106; 20060721

**Preferred Citation:** MSA 33, Robert W. Topping papers, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

**Copyright Notice:** Purdue University, per deed of gift.

## Subjects and Genres

### Persons

Topping, Robert W., 1925-2009  
Hovde, Frederick L., 1908-1983  
Redenbacher, Orville C., 1907-1995

### Organizations

Purdue University  
Purdue News Service, 1976  
Purdue Office of Publications, 1962-1990

### Topics

Purdue University--History  
Purdue University--Faculty, Women  
Purdue University--Alumni  
Purdue University, Board of Trustees

### Form and Genre Types

Cassettes, Audio  
Ephemera, Printed  
Manuscripts  
Newspaper clippings  
Papers  
Photographs

## Biography of Robert W. Topping

Robert W. Topping was born November 27, 1925. He was the son of Professor and Mrs. Alanson N. Topping. Topping's father was a professor of electrical engineering at Purdue from 1903 to 1949, so Robert grew up in the community. Robert Topping was a member of the Purdue Class of 1950, and he was editor in chief of the *RIVET*, a campus humor publication. He graduated in 1950 with a degree in English. His brothers and sisters also graduated from Purdue.

After Robert Topping's graduation, he spent several years working as a reporter for the *Journal and Courier* in Lafayette, the *LaPorte Herald-Argus* and the *Grand Rapids Press* in Michigan. He was cited in 1956 by the American Political Science Association for distinguished reporting of state and local government in 1956. Topping served in the Air Force in 1950 and 1951 as an information specialist at Castle Air Force base, Merced, California. He returned to Purdue permanently in 1961.

Topping started working in the old Bureau of Information, before it was renamed the Purdue News Service. He was director of the News Service in 1976 when he left that post to begin work on his book about former Purdue President Frederick Hovde. While researching and writing the book, he became an assistant to the vice president for advancement and continued to serve as press officer for the board of trustees and editor of *Perspective*. He later became senior editor in the Office of Publications and retired in 1990, after twenty-eight years on the Purdue staff. At Topping's retirement dinner, Governor Evan Bayh made him a "Sagamore of the Wabash", the highest honor an Indiana governor can bestow. Another award, the Leather Medal, from the Purdue chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists went to Topping in 1990. Awarded annually since 1921, the honor goes to someone "who has made a great contribution to the welfare, success and reputation of Purdue."

Robert Topping was the founding editor in 1973 of *Perspective*, the university's quarterly tabloid. He was also editor of *Purdue Today*. He has authored three books about Purdue University: *The Hovde Years* (1980), which covers Purdue history during Frederick Hovde's presidency from 1946 through 1971. His book, *A Century and Beyond* (1988), was the first comprehensive history of Purdue since 1925. John Hicks III, the former senior vice president of Purdue, suggested that Topping write an updated version of Purdue's history in 1983, and *A Century and Beyond* is a result of that suggestion. *The book of trustees: Purdue University, 1865-1989*, (1989) is book about Purdue University's board of trustees members. Topping also wrote two unpublished manuscripts, "Gentle Force, The Women of Purdue University", (1993) and "Just Call Me Orville", the unpublished biography of Orville Redenbacher, (1996).

Topping had been the vice president of the Class of 1950, and he played a key role in getting the Class of 1950 lecture hall built on campus. It's been noted in several publications that he always considered Purdue home. Robert Topping died April 25, 2009, and he will be remembered as one of Purdue University's best-known historians and beloved storytellers.

*Source:*

Various articles published by the Lafayette *Journal and Courier*, filed in the Archives and Special Collections vertical file.

## Collection Description

### Scope

The Robert W. Topping papers (1930-1996; 2.75 cubic feet) the collection consists of many newspaper clippings, news releases, ten interviews on cassette tapes and miscellaneous printed ephemera that Robert W. Topping collected, while on the staff of the Purdue University Office of Publications for twenty-eight years. Also included are the files used for his published book; “The Hovde Years,” 1980 and the original manuscript for “A Century and Beyond,” 1988, along with manuscripts for “Gentle Force, The Women of Purdue University,” 1993 and “Just Call Me Orville,” 1996, the unpublished biography of Orville Redenbacher, 1996. The papers are organized into two series:

### Arrangement

#### **1. Purdue Related Publications, 1930-1987 (1.25 cubic feet).**

The original order of materials in the series has been maintained. Items consist of Purdue University board of trustees’ minutes (1978-1987), ten cassette tapes (interviews), various issues of Purdue *Alumnus*, material from the “Purdue Plan for the Eighties” campaign, a brochure for McClure Park, the future Industrial Research Park, and other Purdue related publications. There is an album which contains an extensive collection of Purdue related newspaper clippings from July – December, 1966. This includes clippings related to Purdue’s participation in the 1967 Rose Bowl.

#### **2. Manuscripts and Files, 1945- 1990 (1.5 cubic feet)**

This series contains the original manuscript for Robert Toppings published book, *A century and beyond: the history of Purdue University,*” 1988, along with the files used to write his published work, *The Hovde years: a biography of Frederick L. Hovde*, 1980. The original order of the files was maintained. Manuscripts for Topping’s two unpublished works, “Gentle Force, The Women of Purdue University” and “Just Call Me Orville” are a part of this series.

### Descriptive Rules

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

### Processing Information

Whenever possible, original order of the materials has been retained. All materials have been housed in acid-free folders, and acid-free boxes.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

### **Purdue Related Publications, 1930-1987**

(1.25 cubic feet)

#### **Box 1 Contents**

##### Folder

1. Purdue University, Board of Trustees minutes, September 14-15, 1978 - June 15, 1979
2. Purdue University, Board of Trustees minutes, September 7, 1979 – September 24, 1981
3. Purdue University, Board of Trustees minutes, November 12-13, 1981 – May 11, 1984
4. Purdue University, Board of Trustees minutes, September 14, 1984 – May 15, 1987

Small Box Contains ten cassette tapes, each with individual interviews, William T. Berkshire, Class of '02, done for Purdue Alumni Association; Buchanan (2 tapes); Jenkins; Karling; Knoy; Koffler; McNelly; Stone

##### Issues

Purdue Alumnus, May 1931

[“Bruce Rogers, Sci. 90, Designer of Books”, pp. 5-6; “Muse’ful Mem’oir of a Purdue Man”, by George W. Munro, EE '97, pp. 7-8]

Purdue Alumnus, September 1943, “Old Purdue”, by George W. Munro, '97, from The Bent of Tau Beta Pi, pp. 9-14 (2 issues)

Purdue Alumnus, January, 1987, front cover and feature on R. B. Stewart

Purdue Alumnus, February, 1979, “Archives hold Purdue’s treasures”, pp. 5-6

Purdue Alumnus, March 1979, “Centennial! Experiment Station celebrates 100 years of service”, pp. 2-3, 13

Purdue Alumnus, December 1979, front cover – Dr. Herbert C. Brown and feature, pp. 2-5

Purdue Alumnus, April 1982, 25 Years of Grand Prix

Purdue Alumnus, Summer 1982, 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of flight began at Purdue – Amelia Earhart, a continuing mystery, p. 10; “A Gala Week Album”, 1982, p. 12

Purdue Alumnus, December 1984, issue on research Purdue Alumnus, January 1985 front – “Flight of Discovery”; inside – “Aeronautics, Astronautics Foreseen by George Ade, pp. 8-10

The Purdue Engineer, April, 1933, v. XXVIII, no. 7, “Professor G. W. Munro - Impressions of the Mechanical School” by G.W. Munro, pp. 102, 110-112

The Bent of Tau Beta Pi, v. XXXIV, no. 3, “Old Purdue” by George W. Munro, pp. 87-90

Bulletin of Purdue University, v. XXXI, April 1931, no. 7, catalogue number for the sessions of 1930-1931 with announcements for the Sessions of 1931-1932, gift of George Bostwick, '35 (?)

Purdue University Directory, 1932-1933 appears to be gift of George Bostwick, Ch.E.

Purdue University sixty-first annual commencement, Tuesday, June 11, 1935, program

Purdue Plan for the Eighties – Purdue University – The \$34.2 million Campaign for Advancement in Science and Technology, 1979-1982

[packet of information includes press releases; drafts of letters; campaign update letters; letter to members of the Board of Trustees of Purdue University,

in regards to the establishment of the Purdue Foundation, Incorporated, dated, 12 January, 1979; final campaign report; University's "backyard" Plan for the Eighties campaign in Greater Lafayette and Purdue, led by James C. Shook, general chairman; photographs of James C. Shook, sketches of proposed buildings – new Life Sciences Laboratory, Technology Building and Civil Engineering addition]

## **Box 2    Contents**

Purdue News Clippings Album, July 1 to December 31, 1966

[Album contains a selection of newspaper and magazine clippings; first 12 pages Rose Bowl clippings (just those that represent direct activity of the University News Service – news release, photographs, telephone calls or personal visitations by staff members). The remainder of the album, clippings selected were not limited to those resulting from material released by the University News Service, rather they were chosen to give a quick picture of Purdue University's "press."]

Slides used in A Century and Beyond

Morrill  
John Purdue  
John Stein  
Martin Peirce  
1<sup>st</sup> photo of campus  
Science Hall  
Boarding Hall (Ladies Hall)  
Purdue Hall (Men's Dormitory)  
University Hall  
Water and Gas Hall  
Winter 1976  
Richard Owen  
Abraham C. Shortridge  
John Hougham (1<sup>st</sup> professor)  
Emerson White  
James H. Smart  
Winthrop E. Stone  
Henry Marshall  
Stanley Coulter  
Edward C. Elliott  
A.A. Potter  
Frederick L. Hovde  
Arthur G. Hansen  
John Hicks  
Steven C. Beering



## Manuscripts and Files, 1945- 1996

(1.5 cubic feet)

### Box 3 Contents

Manuscript – “A century and beyond : the history of Purdue University,” 1988

### Box 4 Contents

Manuscript – “A century and beyond : the history of Purdue University”, 1988  
[pt. 2]

#### Contents

Box 5 Manuscript – “Gentle Force, The Women of Purdue University”, 1993

#### Contents

Box 6 Manuscript - “Just Call Me Orville”, 1996 and a letter from James Thurber, 1948  
[unpublished biography of Orville Redenbacher and a letter from James  
Thurber addressed to Mr. Topping, when he was editor of the *Rivet*, as a  
student at Purdue University, dated October 30, 1948]

#### Contents

Box 7 Files on Frederick Hovde used in writing Topping’s book, “The Hovde Years”,  
1980

#### Folder

- 1 Visit of King and Queen of Afghanistan, September 16, 1963
2. Athletics, 1958-1975  
[newspaper clippings and photographs of Hovde playing golf]
3. Legislative, 1963-1967, newspaper clippings
4. Miscellaneous, circa 1960-1970, newspaper clippings
5. Fisher Body Craftsman’s Guild and Contest, 1946  
[correspondence, issues of *Guild News*, Plans and Instructions for building  
a miniature model Napoleonic Coach, 1946 competition]
6. Hold for Questions – Hovde
7. Draft – The Hovde Years – Chapter IX, Some of the People Around Him
8. Unmarked Folder – Early Years (?)
9. Part II, Chapter X – Biographical Data
10. Part I, Chapter II – University of Minnesota (Undergraduate Years)
11. Part I, Chapter III – At Oxford
12. Part II, Chapter VI, Coming to Purdue
13. Rose Bowl, newspaper clippings
14. Social and Mrs. Hovde, circa 1950-1970, newspaper clippings

15. Speeches, Messages, etc., 1960-1970, newspapers clippings
16. Part 1, Chapter V, W.W. II
17. Part 1, Chapter IV, General College, University of Rochester
18. Part II, Chapter VI, Appointment as President  
[letters of congratulations, newspaper clippings, Washington farewell dinner, first speech at Lafayette, October 15, 1945 (homecoming banquet), remodeling changes]