

**Preserving a Montana Senator's Image:
The Lee Metcalf Photograph and Film Collections Project**

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Abstract

One of the greatest challenges for archivists in processing the papers of post-WWII U.S. congressmen is the organization, description, and promotion of their photographs. With the explosion in new public media forums (i.e. TV and increased newspaper publication) and cheaper, repeatable photographic processes, U.S. congressmen began taking and collecting more and more photographs for use in campaigns and public relations after WWII. The 1950s, especially, ushered in a new era of awareness by members of Congress as to the power of images; the importance of documenting their work, their campaigns, and their constituency; and the need for still images for films, commercials, and Congressional hearings.

Congressmen began to select their own images, and determine the means through which the public and the press digested the images of their public officials at work. Congressmen began collecting negatives and having the same single image cropped in multiple ways, to reflect different “visions” or “uses”, which led to multiple photographic prints showing different actions and origins, all born from a singular image. This new use pattern has been little documented in the archival world, and many institutions struggle with how to identify and organize their congressional photograph collections. Perhaps the two greatest challenges with such image collections from this time period are 1) the newness of the congressman’s service (thus there is little written on the congressman’s life), and 2) a large number of people documented in the photographs are alive and have differing feelings about the work archivists are performing on the collections. Republican and Democratic U.S. congressmen had different approaches to the use of their images; but, they all selected similar mechanisms by which to record and promote the events represented by their images. This is illustrated clearly through the Senator Lee Metcalf Photograph and Film Collections Project.

Project Description and Results

In 2012, the Montana Historical Society (MHS) Research Center applied for and received a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) “Hidden Collections” grant. It was called the Lee Metcalf Photograph and Film Collections Project. Senator Lee Metcalf was the longest-serving Acting President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate, from June 1963 to January 1978. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953 to 1960, then elected as a U.S. Senator in 1961 and serving until his death in January 1978. He was one of the most important Democratic U.S. Senators of the mid-twentieth century; but, little is known about him due to his personality and the lack of publications about his work. MHS already had 302.6 linear feet of Senator Metcalf’s office papers, donated in the 1970s to the society by the senator. However, Metcalf left no personal papers, had no children, and was very private. In order to understand his work, life, and papers better, Metcalf’s visual record needed to be properly and completely identified.

The first year of the Metcalf Project included researching, sorting, identifying, organizing, describing, and preserving the original 4,454 (3,900 after processing and weeding out copies) photographic prints, negatives, and slides documenting Senator Lee Metcalf’s life and work. The second year of the project was to clean, preserve, research, identify, and re-house the 300-plus film reels from Senator Metcalf’s office. The project was originally to run from April 1, 2013—March 31, 2015. To promote Metcalf’s role in these events, the processing of the collections was to correspond with and discover new visual materials for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, the Wilderness Act, the 1964 Montana Flood, and other events. Another aim of the project was to intellectually tie this project’s materials with the Lee Metcalf Papers MC 172 and other Senator Metcalf materials held by MHS.

I began the project researching the life of Senator Lee Metcalf. I spent six months researching, preserving, and organizing the photographic prints into groups by subjects, dates, and purpose. This included surveying through the minimally-processed MC 172 Lee Metcalf Papers; reading more than 6,000 newspaper articles on Metcalf's life and work; visiting and researching online at multiple archives and historical societies; and researching Metcalf's use of photos and films during his congressional career. I also interviewed in person, by telephone, and by email more than 55 individuals who were former friends, staff members, conservation activists, and state politicians with connections to Senator Lee Metcalf.

After processing, the Lee Metcalf Photograph Collection (Lot 31) is housed in the MHS Photograph Archives. The collection is 9 linear feet, composed of 3,900 images. When I first started on the project, I found that about 25-30% of the images had been already identified in some fashion or with some details. However, not all the information was accurate, and there was no notation as to who made the identifications on many of those images. By the end of the project, I was able to identify at least two of the necessary pieces of identifying information for photographs—the subject matter, date, people, or location—for 85-90% of the images, thanks to my approach to research and identification of the images. The Lee Metcalf Photograph Collections is currently one of the largest image collections of a twentieth-century federal Montana congressman in the United States.

The arrangement of the Lee Metcalf Photograph Collection was based largely on the Lee Metcalf Papers' folder subjects and categories, which greatly expanded the utility of both collections in relation to one another. For example, Metcalf's papers contained two folders labeled as follows: MC 172 Box 37, Folders 1-2—Department of Agriculture: Forest Service, Bolle Reports (1971-1970). We had in Metcalf's photographs the original prints from which the

images printed in the 1970 Bolle Report were created. Therefore, I arranged these report photographs as follows in the collection: Lot 31 Box 9, Folder 3: U.S. Senate—Congressional Projects: Department of Agriculture (Bolle Report) (1970). Such arrangement is allowing better coordination for researchers between photographs in Lot 31 and their matching content in specific folders of MC 172 Metcalf Papers. This type of intellectual organization of images and documents was the original intention of Senator Metcalf's office staff in their original office filing system, prior to the photographs and papers being separated over time.

The reason I took the time to research in detail the senator's life is due to his relative obscurity in the modern historical narrative. As for historical analysis of Metcalf's time as a federal congressman, there has been written only one book (written in 1965) and another book chapter written on Senator Metcalf in 2003; little biographical or interpreted historical materials exist on Senator Metcalf. No personal records exist for Metcalf. Little was known of his family's history, his family life, his childhood, and his college years; this was significant, as a number of photographs in the collection were from Metcalf's early life. After combing through Metcalf's papers, I compiled a list of people who knew Metcalf and were still alive. I scheduled times to talk with them about how Metcalf used photographs in his career, about his personal life, and about his political history. These talks and research helped in narrowing the research focus to themes and subject areas commonly identified in Metcalf's photograph collection. With these focused subjects areas identified, I was able to discover more information faster about the images in the collection, thanks to limiting my physical search parameters. I found online resources for which assisted in identifying elements of the congressional history of Metcalf. I conducted informal interviews with former staff and friends, who allowed me to take notes to use for the project. The ultimate result was that these steps created a network of individuals who were

introduced to the project, the importance of Metcalf's images, and the work of archivists to preserve history.

These interviews proved more informative than I knew, until after I started working more closely with the photograph collection. Amongst Metcalf's photographs, I found a series of ten contact print sheets of various scenes involving Senator Lee Metcalf, all taken around 1972. We did not have any photographic prints or negatives to match the images in the contact prints, and had no idea what was the purpose for these images having been taken. I interviewed Karl Englund, son of Metcalf's long-time administrative assistant Merrill "Brit" Englund. Karl said that in 1970-1971, Metcalf and his staff started gearing up for his 1972 Senate re-election campaign. Metcalf did not like having new pictures taken of himself, and frequently used photographs of himself from the 1940s and 1950s for press throughout the 1960s. Brit Englund forced the senator to go to new places, events, and meet with individuals in order to have photographs sessions to use in the 1972 campaign. These ten contact print sheets are the images made during the 1972 campaign photo shoots which Englund arranged for Metcalf. The contact sheets have grease pen marks made by Metcalf indicating which images he liked the most for use in the campaign. I later found those images Metcalf selected published in newspaper campaign advertisements.

During my research, I learned a significant amount about how Senator Lee Metcalf utilized his photographs for political messages, personal relations, public relations, and impacting legislation. Lee Metcalf's office managed the publication of the Montana congressional delegation's newsletter *A Montanan's Washington Notebook*, which began as a Democratic-focused publication started in 1956. The publication did not use large amounts of photographs until Metcalf took over the publication in 1961, when he became a U.S. senator.

There were photographs published in the newsletter from 1960-1977. Metcalf retained photographs he had taken on Capitol Hill in a “Photo File” in his office for use in this newsletter. Many of the photographs in the Metcalf collection I worked on were used in the newsletter.

Senator Metcalf shot a series of television report films entitled “Report from Washington” (1963-1965)—later called “Washington Report” (1965-1967)—in which he used photographs from his office files for visual evidence related to legislation, federal public programs, and federally-funded projects on which Metcalf worked for Montanans. These films help date the images, and explain the subject content of Metcalf’s films (which were mostly unidentified). Metcalf used those same photographs in his television campaign commercials. He also used his photographs in published special campaign handouts and newspapers during his Senate campaigns in 1960, 1966, and 1972. All of the information on the senator’s use of images in publications, campaigns, and television came from records I located in the Lee Metcalf Papers at MHS.

Senator Metcalf’s papers helped in other ways to provide information to confirm the descriptions and dates of his photographs. For instance, to confirm the date of a Senate Democratic Photograph Studio (see below for more information on the Studio) negative of Presidential Scholars Robert Thomas and Brenda Gilmer visiting Lee Metcalf, I checked Senator Metcalf’s daily schedules for 1963 to 1974. The original Senate negative sleeve in which the negative was housed was dated March 3, 1969. I did not know if this was the date the negative was filed by the Senate photographer’s staff, or the date the image was taken.

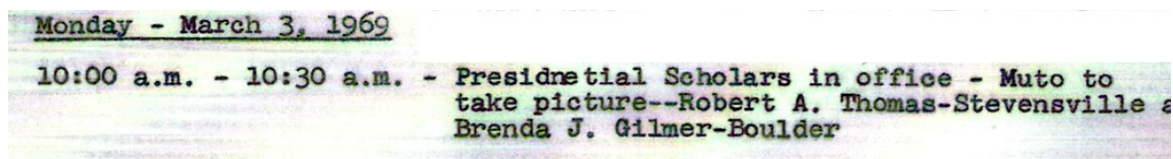


Illustration 1: Schedules, Lee Metcalf Papers, MC 172, Box 426, Folders 2-3

I found the above notation (see Illustration 1) in Metcalf's schedules. The schedule description and dates match the date listed on the negative's sleeve for the date of the students' visit, confirming the image's date as March 3, 1969.

Senator Metcalf's office regularly published photographs of Metcalf visiting constituents, Metcalf with politicians, of Metcalf testifying in committees, of Metcalf on the campaign trail, of Metcalf with other politicians, and with Metcalf at Montana events and dedications. The *Billings Gazette*, *Kalispell Daily Inter Lake*, *Hungry Horse News*, *Helena Independent Record*, and the *Butte Montana Standard* were the newspapers most commonly publishing Metcalf's photographs, which the senator's office would intend as "visual press releases". The newspaper photographs from Metcalf's office contained captions which had been created by Metcalf's staff; staff typed descriptions on carbon paper that was taped to the back of photographic prints they sent to the newspapers. Most of the captions and image descriptions for the photographs were published in the newspapers often word-for-word from the captions sent with the photographs.

As part of my strategy for identifying Senator Metcalf's photographs, I utilized various online tools, publications, and websites, which provided information for matching or explaining the subject content of Metcalf's photographs. One such website was The American Presidency Project, created and maintained by the University of California—Santa Barbara. It provides online, searchable text of presidential speeches, events attended by presidents, presidential dedications, and political party platforms. This was extremely useful if I was looking for subject content or the purpose of Presidential visits on specific days or special events attended by the senator, as depicted in Metcalf's photographs. Another site is HathiTrust, which is very useful for locating online committee hearings transcripts. The hearings transcripts provide lists of U.S. congressmen present at specific hearings, dates for the hearings, hearing staff members, and

names of those testifying. I used this information to confirm the identity of photographs with notations about committee hearings or people present in the photographs at a specific hearing.

I utilized Wikipedia quite a bit for comparative photographs of federal politicians. Despite its reliability issues, Wikipedia provides lists by congressional session for all U.S. congressmen. As an example, the Wikipedia page for the 89th U.S. Congress (January 3, 1965 to January 3, 1967) gives names by state for all Senators and Representative, provides sample photographs of the leadership for the session, and also notes which congressmen were replaced mid-session. Such information for U.S. congressmen is difficult to find in published histories on federal politics after the 1940s, and proved extremely useful in narrowing my search parameters to identify specific federal congressmen in photographs with Lee Metcalf.

There are other archives and presidential library digital collections which are very helpful in finding representative images of federal congressmen from different time periods, at various events, and in different styles of dress. Presidential libraries have increased over the past five years the number of official White House and congressional photographs of U.S. Presidents hosted on their archives website. The reason these images are helpful is to find comparative photographs of a U.S. congressman over a number of years, which can be used for dating your own congressional photograph collection. There are few places—other than in presidential photograph collections—where the descriptions and dates for photographs is so incredibly detailed and documented. For federal congressmen who are a little more obscure than, say, Hubert H. Humphrey, presidential library photograph collections are often the only online location to find representative images of those congressmen.

At present, there are large numbers of online photographs for presidents Harry S. Truman through Gerald R. Ford. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum currently has one of

the best online collections of presidential photographs. Although not having individual images identified, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum's Digital Library has scanned and made available online descriptions for photographs by sets of images in contact sheets and rolls of film taken at the same time, through a monthly calendar browsing option. If you know a date for an image that has a U.S. President pictured, but do not know the event or names of those in the photograph, presidential library images collections are your best bet for finding descriptions for your images.

With the greater availability of digitized twentieth-century newspapers via subscription databases, it is easier to find events, photographs, and confirm information about individuals for descriptive purposes for congressional photograph collections. My greatest asset on this project was NewspaperArchive. NewspaperArchive is a subscription newspaper database which contains full-text searchable, OCR newspapers dating from the 1860s up to the 1990s for some newspapers. Depending on your state, you can find a variety of representative newspapers from around the state that cover a federal congressman's service differently. NewspaperArchive happened to have included in their database all but two of the major Montana newspapers. The database provides summaries of search results, and you can read the summaries to find indications of the presence of photographs and photograph captions in articles.

NewspaperArchive uses limiting chronological searching options to narrow search dates, which can greatly increase your chances of finding an image in the newspaper. For example, I had a Senator Metcalf photograph that was taken sometime in 1963. In NewspaperArchive, I limited the search dates to January 2, 1963 to December 31, 1963, and used the search results to indicate whether a photograph is present (for this example, it helped me identify the image Lot 31 B16/7.01). An archivist can find photographs in the digital newspaper articles, by finding in

the search summaries such statements as “Metcalf visited with . . . last Wednesday” or “Metcalf shown discussing”. These terms indicate a visual element in the article, and will likely have a photograph of the topic mentioned in the search summaries. One has to use multiple subject term combinations to locate photographs or information in the database, but the results are stunning.

I also used NewspaperArchive to find representative period photographs of people thought to be in photographs, in order to confirm the identity and time period of the images. For example, I had a photograph in the Metcalf collection that was taken in 1958 of the Montana delegates to the 1958 National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C. I could not identify the 4-H students individually in the photograph, but I knew their names collectively from typed copy attached to the photograph. In my newspaper searching, I stumbled upon a *Billings Gazette*, March 7, 1958, article containing photographs of all four 4-H delegates in the article. I used the newspaper photographs to match the students’ faces with those students in the Metcalf image of the visiting students.

In 2008, the U.S. Senate Historical Office sent 962 negatives to the MHS Photograph Archives of Senator Lee Metcalf. The office had located in storage in a U.S. Capitol building basement space the negatives for dozens of U.S. senators, with the only identification of whose negatives they were being the senator’s last name written on the negatives’ sleeves. The office had no idea who took these negatives, and there were no descriptions with the negatives. The Senate Historical Office began in 2008 repatriating the negatives to cultural heritage institutions which possessed a U.S. senator’s original papers and/or photograph collections. Metcalf’s negatives’ sleeves had notations about various requested or made print sizes, as well as handwritten dates (though it was not known if these were the dates the photograph was taken, the dates the negative was printed, or the date the negative was filed). The only recorded Senate

photograph studio was the Republican Party's Senate photo studio operated by Arthur E. Scott. My question was simple: If the Republican Party had their own photographer(s), did the Democrats have their own photographer(s) and studio?

Using Senator Metcalf's papers, interviews with former staff members, and notations on photographs and letters attached to some of the photographs, I identified a "Muto" as the photographer for some of the Senate negatives, and found him to be the photographer Al Muto. In the 1964 Democratic National Convention, it was reported in the convention's published record, that Al Muto was hired by the U.S. Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, beginning in the early 1960s, to take photographs of Democratic Senators. President Lyndon B. Johnson had used Al Muto as a personal photographer since the early 1950s, continuing to do so into his time in the U.S. Presidency. An internally-created U.S. House lobbying bloc for liberal legislation and public policies, the Democratic Study Group (DSG) in the U.S. Congress began hiring Al Muto, after Muto was laid off of the Associated Press in the late 1950s and the DSG was formally incorporated in 1959. Then-U.S. Representative Lee Metcalf, as a co-founder of the DSG, began using Muto regularly starting in early 1961.

Al Muto's title in the early 1960s was "Photographer—Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee", according to notes found in Senator Metcalf's papers. Though, there is no record of what Muto's title was throughout the remainder of his time as a Senate photographer. Between 1962 and 1972, the Senate Democratic Photograph Studio¹ operated in the U.S. Capitol Building. Eventually, the studio was operated by public funds, and was no longer paid by the Democratic campaign committee. In 1972, the Democratic and Republican studios were combined into one studio, but the studio remained employing separate party photographers. Brothers Al and Frank

¹ A title I have created as a companion to the similar name given the Republican's Senate studio.

Muto, long-time accomplished press photographers, were the two primary photographers in the Democratic studio until 1975.

When needing copy prints from negatives either held by Democratic studio or by Senator Metcalf's office, Metcalf's staff would send a letter to the Mutos or Dev O'Neill (the U.S House Democratic photographer) requesting such reprinting or resizing services, as seen in the following note by Senator Metcalf to Al Muto: "The Democratic Study Group, of which I [Lee Metcalf] am an alumnus, would like two 8 x10 glossies of each of the enclosed negatives. I'll appreciate a separate bill, because DSG is going to pay it" (see Illustrations 2 and 3).² The Democratic studio kept most of the original negatives for the images they took, and sent prints to each Senator per the number requested. By using visual markers in the photographs and the corresponding dates printed on the back of photographic prints created by the Senate studio, I was able to identify and pair 368 of Senator Metcalf's photographic prints to their corresponding Democratic studio negatives. The corresponding prints and negatives make up Series 24 of Lot 31 Lee Metcalf Photograph Collection.

After talking with former Metcalf relations, I learned the senator had specific places within his Senate office that he liked photographs to be taken for certain people or for certain subject matter. The senator had a framed Native American headdress on the wall just inside the door to his personal office—a gift from a tribe in Montana—in front of which he would get pictures with staff members and his summer interns. If I had an unidentified photograph of a young person with Metcalf in his office, and they were standing in front of this framed headdress, I could reasonably think it was of a staff member or intern. This information helped me limit my search for the name of the staff person in newspaper articles and Metcalf's papers.

² Letter, Lee Metcalf to Al Muto, August 4, 1967, Lee Metcalf Papers, MC 172, Montana Historical Society Research Center, Archives, Helena, Montana.

3

PA-1007-26

No. 3/8/65

Name Senator Metcalf

Order _____

Remarks _____

Retouched _____

Order Finished _____

Reorder _____

Reorder _____

Neg # 3- 4-5x7

Neg # 1-2- 1-8x10 Matte
In Signature

Illustration 2: Senate negative sleeve for images Lot 31 B16/15.01-.03. Note markings for print sizes based on the negatives

United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

Frank, 5/12/67

Please have this neg.
printed up 5x7. We will
take a look at it if it is
what we want we will want
10 color 35mm horizontal
slides.

Thanks much
Bill
Bill Huber
Legis. Intern Metcalf

Illustration 3: Note attached to Senate negative sleeve, giving Senate Democratic Photo Studio instructions about image reproductions, May 12, 1967—here addressed to Frank Muto

Metcalf also liked to be photographed with visiting constituents while sitting on the senator's leather couch or arm chair in his office. Again, if I had a photograph matching this type of scene, I could narrow my search for identification of the image to visiting constituents, whose names appeared on Metcalf's office schedules, in newspaper articles, and in thank you letters in the Metcalf Papers. The Senate Democratic Photograph Studio photographers also had a specific look and style of photograph for different subject matter which they preferred using for different Democratic senators. Studying Metcalf's Senate photographs taught me ways in which the photographers—the Muto brothers—liked to portray these public representatives. Metcalf's former staff members relayed to me that all of the Democratic senators in the 1960s who they knew, also had specific ways or places in their offices in which to had photographs taken.

A last note is necessary about the Senate Democratic Photograph Studio. Because archivists and historians have not been familiar with the operation or existence of the Democratic photographs, many archives which have received the newly-discovered negatives from the U.S. Senate Historical Office have not known who took the images. The images, therefore, have remained limited for use by researchers and historians, because the questions of copyright ownership and creator are up in the air. Since the Senate Democratic Photograph Studio was paid for from public funds, all of the images taken by the Democratic Senate photographers are in the public domain. For MHS, this meant having 962 images from Metcalf's Senate negatives which we instantly can make available for publication. Whereas, in other parts of Metcalf's collection, the photographs are unknown or the photographs were taken by a newspaper photographer, and are still copyrighted.

In closing, I would say that identifying and describing twentieth-century congressional image collections is becoming easier and faster for archivists, as more digital content has been

added online across the United States. These online resources, such as EAD-based finding aids for other congressional photograph collections and digitized newspapers, are helping archivists better coordinate their descriptive information for a congressman's photographs. In a 1989 archival leaflet on processing congressional papers, the following was recommended for photographs: "Member's audiovisual material will probably contain duplicates which are unidentified, negatives with no matching positives, and positives with no matching negatives. . . . Often, the identification of photographs is left to researchers due to limitations on processing resources."³

Once time-consuming and left unprocessed, congressional photograph collections can now be processed using more advanced research techniques, capturing the memories of a congressman's office staff, digital databases, and visual clues in images without a great amount of labor involved. In our new visually-dominated age, it is vital that archivists identify and described a congressman's photographs as detailed as possible, so an institution and its users can mutually benefit from information and content that corresponds with a congressman's use and creation of his documents. The descriptions of a congressman's photographs can often be the only record of their involvement with particular people, projects, and committees. Using approaches similar to those utilized in the Lee Metcalf Project, congressional photograph collections no longer need to be drudgery in processing. Nor do the photographs have to be set aside due to lack of information about their content. The Lee Metcalf Project serves as an example of the cultural and research value that a congressman's images can bring to the historical record, once strategies are developed with modern tools to accelerate the processing and description of congressional photographs.

³ Mary Boccaccio and David W. Carmicheal, "Processing Congressional Collections," Technical Leaflet Series Number 4, Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, pp. 7-8 (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, 1989). Viewed at http://www.marac.info/assets/documents/marac_technical_leaflet_4.pdf