

Hatfield's Senate papers tucked out of view until 2022

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The records of former Sen. Mark Odom Hatfield, one of Oregon's most prominent politicians, won't be made public until July 12, 2022, on what would have been the Republican's 100th birthday.

Hatfield, who died in 2011, climbed to national prominence over the course of three decades in the Senate and built a reputation that close supporters still protect.

The Dallas, Oregon-born politician served in the state Legislature before being elected secretary of state in 1956. He served as governor from 1959 to 1967, when he ventured to Capitol Hill to represent Oregon in the U.S. Senate, a post he held until 1997.

Records that observers say could be of national significance — he chaired the influential Senate Appropriations Committee and opposed the Vietnam War and the nuclear program — are kept at Willamette University in Salem, a hearty stone's throw from the state capitol.

Representatives of the university, a private institution, can't say much about the specific contents of the collection. The trove includes speeches, correspondence, memos, legislative records, photos, videos, campaign records, artifacts, and other items spanning 2,200 linear feet of storage space, including 2,000 boxes of paper records.

Hatfield's widow, Antoinette, said the release date was chosen after he died.

"Well, I would rather have them (made public) after I was in the grave, to be truthful, because I couldn't answer any of the questions they would ask about his papers," she said.

Mrs. Hatfield, who now lives in Portland, maintained that she was not involved in her husband's political affairs.

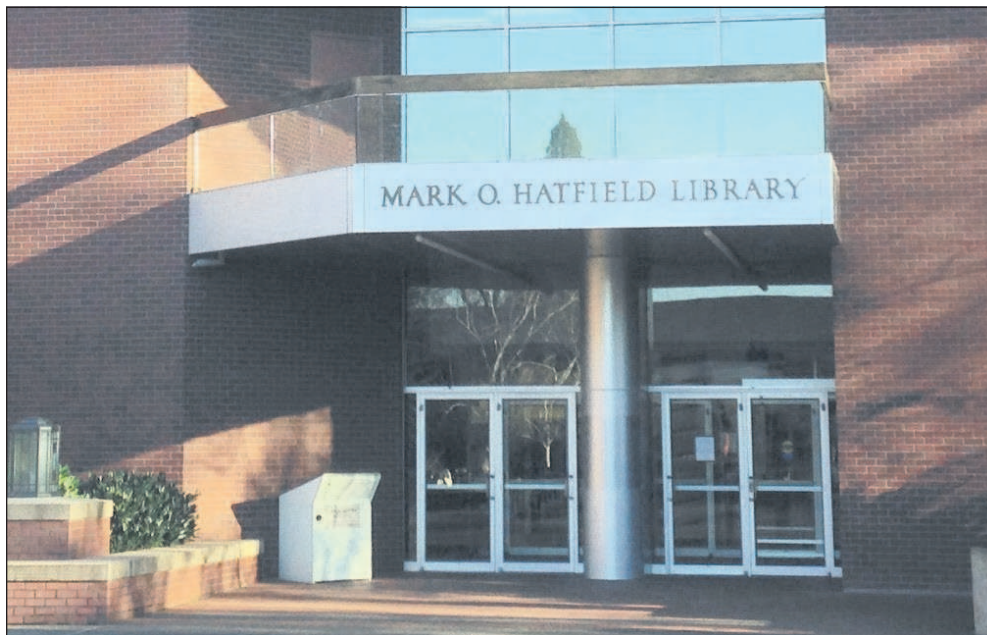
"I didn't do anything in his office over the years," she said. "It was not my business."

She said that Sen. Hatfield's 100th birthday "seemed like a nice round number to have them come out."

The papers generated by federal legislators are considered their personal property, not public documents, said Karen Paul, the archivist for the U.S. Senate. It's their responsibility to have them boxed and ready for shipment to the location of their choice the day before their final term ends.

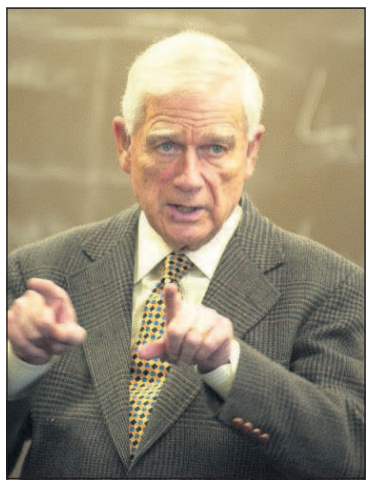
Hatfield got a jump on the process. Willamette began preparing the collection even before he left the Senate.

A spokesman for Willamette said Richard Jones, a historian at Reed College, was initially hired by the university to start sorting



Claire Withycombe/Capital Bureau

The Mark O. Hatfield Library at Willamette University in Salem. The university is the depository for Hatfield's Senate papers, which will not be opened to the public until July 12, 2022, on what would have been his 100th birthday.



Courtesy Kirk Hirota/George Fox University
The late Mark Hatfield, R-Oregon, after his retirement from the U.S. Senate.

through the collection in 1985, 12 years before Hatfield left the Senate. Staff of the university's Hatfield Library took over processing in 1992.

Generally, the archiving process tries to preserve the original order of the papers, said Willamette University Archivist Mary McRobinson. The archival process also includes describing what the records contain, making them easier to navigate for researchers.

It's not apparent what the collection may reveal.

Hatfield's legacy permeates the Beaver State. He is credited with creating the research powerhouse that is now Oregon Health and Science University, and the 1986 designation of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

But he also made well-publicized missteps.

In 1984, Antoinette Hatfield was paid \$55,000 in real estate fees by Basil Tsakos, a Greek businessman who wanted to build an oil pipeline in Africa and sought help on the project from Sen. Hatfield, according to *Willamette Week's* 2011 obituary of Hatfield. The Hatfields donated the money to charity and in 1987, the Justice Department said it wouldn't investigate Hatfield, according to the *New York Times*.

In the early 1990s, Mark Hatfield was investigated by a federal grand jury for gifts he'd received but hadn't disclosed from a university president in the 1980s. At the time of the gifts, Hatfield was weighing a \$16.3 million grant to the university, according to

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— Brent Walth, an Oregon journalist

the *New York Times*. He was rebuked by the Senate Ethics Committee in 1992.

Jim Moore, director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University, says the collection could shed more light on those incidents.

"He had some major scandals in the 1980s and people would really, really, really like to know what documents he has on that and what he was thinking," Moore said.

The papers of two former Oregon senators also held at Willamette are not yet publicly available either.

Some papers of Republican Sen. Bob Packwood — his Senate papers and records of the annual Dorchester Conference, which he founded in 1965 — are stored offsite and available to researchers by appointment.

However, the university could not say when the Packwood collection will be public, or when the whole collection will be available to researchers. Packwood, who was elected to the Senate in 1968, resigned his Senate seat in the wake of a sexual harassment scandal in 1995.

The papers of Republican Sen. Gordon Smith, who served in the Senate from 1997 to 2009, won't be public until 2029 at the earliest.

There's often a delay in making political papers public. Supporters tend to guard the reputations of revered figures such as Mark Hatfield, Moore said.

"When you open up that archive, that kind of becomes secondary, and it's new stuff," Moore said. "And people get nervous about that."

Brent Walth, an Oregon journalist whose authoritative biography of former Gov. Tom McCall was published in 1994, said he was approached on two separate occasions by people close to Hatfield asking whether he'd be interested in writing a book about him.

Walth told the interested parties that he'd need complete access to Hatfield's papers and need interviewees to be open with him about all aspects of Hatfield's life. He heard nothing more about the idea.

Walth doesn't know why they didn't follow up, but noted there could have been a number of reasons why he wasn't contacted again after those discussions.

The Hatfield papers also raise questions about when records created in the course of official business should be public. Not all of the records are under seal: Some correspondence of Hatfield's is scattered among other U.S. institutions and available for public scrutiny there, according to the Biographic Directory of the United States Congress.

And oral history interviews with Hatfield and his staff are kept at the Oregon Historical Society and OHSU, according to the directory.

Unlike Senate papers, records created by the state's top executives are considered public. Since 1991 — decades after Hatfield was governor — state law has required that records created by the governor, secretary of state, attorney general and treasurer be turned over to the state archivist, says State Archivist Mary Beth Herkert.

Before then, turning over the records to the state archives was the implied rule under the state's public records law, but it wasn't followed, Herkert said.

"It was just getting to the point where you're losing out on these records," Herkert says, "And that's not right because you're alienating a public record, which is not allowed to be done."

Nearly five more years will pass before Oregonians can see the collection for themselves.

Walth, the journalist, noted that memory fades the longer that someone is out of office, and once someone is no longer living. Public interest in Hatfield may also fade as time goes by.

"And the longer those papers stay locked up ... it could be harder to find a context for him or his story," Walth said. "I hope not. I think it would be a terrific story, but I don't know."

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