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Manuscripts Section

**Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum**

Collection number 298

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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Nancy Jo Landon was born July 29, 1932, to Alfred Mossman Landon and Theo Cobb

Landon. She was preceded in birth by a sister, Peggy Ann (b. 1917) and followed by a brother, John Cobb (b. 1933). Her birth coincided with her father's run for the governorship of Kansas. The positive press generated by her birth is thought by some scholars to have carried her father to victory in the August primaries and subsequent general election in November 1932. Her father was the Republican candidate for President, but was soundly defeated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1936. Landon won only two of the forty-eight states.

Kassebaum earned a B.A. in political science from the University of Kansas in 1954 and an M.A. in diplomatic history from the University of Michigan in 1956. While she was an undergraduate at Kansas, she met her future husband, Phillip Kassebaum. They were married in 1956, and later had four children, John (b. 1958), Linda (b. 1960), Dick (b. 1961) and Bill (b. 1963).

Living in the Wichita suburb of Maize, Phillip became a prominent Wichita attorney, while Nancy was vice-president of Kassebaum Communications Corporation, which operated two Wichita radio stations, KFH and KBRA. She also was active in civic committees and held a seat on the local school board.

She separated from her husband and went to work for Senator James Pearson (R-KS) in 1975, a position she held for two years. When Sen. Pearson retired in 1978, Mrs. Kassebaum decided to run for his vacant seat, using such campaign slogans as "A New Voice and a Trusted Name" and "A Fresh Face, a Trusted Kansas Name" to capitalize on her father's fame.

The campaign was not an easy one for Kassebaum. Her own father opposed her bid. He felt a woman's place was in the home. She also lacked political experience, as her only public office had been a school board seat. When she listed her net worth at over \$2 million after having paid only \$5075 in taxes, her chances for a seat in the Senate were badly damaged. The matter escalated when she refused to publicly release tax forms, a move she made to protect her husband. When election time came, she trailed by ten points in the polls, but won the seat by a margin of 83,447 votes, defeating Democrat Bill Roy. She had thus become the first woman in history to gain a seat in the senate without being named to replace a deceased husband.

Senator Pearson retired from his seat on December 23, 1978, allowing Kassebaum to gain a slight seniority over the other freshmen senators and get an early shot at committee assignments. By 1983, Kassebaum was the 38th ranking senator, and sat on committees for banking, housing and urban affairs, commerce, science and transportation, and foreign relations. She was also on a special committee on aging, and chaired the aviation subcommittee and the subcommittee on African affairs.

Early in her congressional career, Kassebaum followed the party line, but began developing an independent streak. A self-proclaimed feminist, Kassebaum always saw herself as more of a humanist. She had little patience for middle-class women who considered themselves oppressed and was against extending the deadline for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, even though she did favor its passage. Although a small woman, she began to grow in stature as she became more confident. Her fierce independence led her to vote against the Balanced Budget Amendment and the Helms Amendment (to allow prayer in public schools). Her autonomy on such issues helped her gain favorable notice in some circles, as she was mentioned as a possible vice-presidential candidate in

1980, 1984 and 1988.

For six years, Kassebaum followed the party line of "constructive engagement" with South Africa. By 1986, she realized this policy was failing and that South Africa was no closer to ending apartheid than they were in 1980. She began to support sanctions against the African nation and voted as such. When President Reagan vetoed the sanctions, she voted to override the veto, against the wishes of the senior senator from Kansas, Bob Dole. Eventually, sanctions helped end centuries of apartheid in South Africa.

When Kassebaum took office late in December 1978, Iran was holding U.S. citizens as hostages. During this crisis, Kassebaum immediately asserted her independence from the Republican mainstream by voting against a sea blockade of Iran. This marked the first time she publicly disagreed with Dole and the party line. Later, she disagreed with Dole and opposed the 1982 constitutional amendment to balance the budget. Further riling the Republican Party, she was pro-choice on abortion, although she did eventually want to limit abortions to women who had been raped or if a woman's life was in danger. In 1995, she further limited abortions by voting to make minors inform their parents in the event of an abortion. In 1984, the senator was against the constitutional amendment to permit organized vocal prayer in public schools (the Helms Amendment), and voted to limit President Reagan's missile program the following year. She proved to be the swing vote when the Senate resolved to ban some semiautomatic weapons. The vote passed by the slimmest of margins, 51-49. Her votes on all of these issues went against the traditional party line. She felt that her party had lost its historic view of conservatism, and she tried to vote in a fashion that not only prevented more government, but that provided for less government, even in personal matters such as abortion.

However, Kassebaum did vote along party lines about 80 percent of the time. Consistently, she voted to reduce government, freeze or lower taxes, and keep the defense budget intact. She switched from the Commerce Committee to the Labor and Human Resources Committee in 1988 so she could have a more direct impact on formulating policy for education, labor, health care, and child welfare. In her final term, she came up with an alternative plan for national health insurance, though it never came to fruition.

As the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee's Africa subcommittee, she brought the warring factions of Somalia to the bargaining table in an attempt to put an end to hostilities. When talks broke down and Somalia resumed its bitter and bloody civil war, she was instrumental in convincing her colleagues in Congress to intervene militarily in the country.

Near the end of her third term in Congress, she refused an appearance in the movie *Dave*, a political satire about running for the presidency. It was being distributed by Time Warner, the same conglomerate that released the infamous Body Count song, "Cop Killer". Kassebaum was subjected to numerous phone calls and hate mail when she voted to confirm a lesbian as the assistant secretary of HUD. (She was also once dubbed an alien by the tabloid *Weekly World News*.) In this and many other ways, Kassebaum showed her willingness to vote her conscience instead of the way some of her constituency may have wanted her to vote.

Kassebaum left behind a legacy of being an individual not afraid to speak out for her beliefs, even if they interfered with the Republican party's agenda. Nancy Jo Landon Kassebaum is now

retired and remarried to retired Senator Howard Baker (R-TN). She owns land in Chase County, Kansas, and was recently appointed to chair a task force charged with looking into military policies. She also appears at the occasional banquet or speaking engagement and enjoys retirement with her new husband.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTES

The papers of Nancy Landon Kassebaum were donated to the Kansas State Historical Society over a period of eleven years, from 1986 to 1996. Kassebaum served as a United States Senator from the State of Kansas from 1979 to 1997. The papers and other media in this collection cover all eighteen years of Kassebaum's congressional career.

The collection is stored at an offsite location in 675 boxes, excepting only boxes 500-507, which are stored at the Kansas State Historical Society's Library and Archives. The collection is divided into two series: correspondence files and press and media files. The correspondence files include five subseries: alphabetical files, CMS/CSS files (Correspondence Management Services/Constituent Services System -- mass mailings), departmental files, education subcommittee files, and subject files. The press and media files include three subseries: miscellaneous media files, photograph files, and videotape files.

The largest portion of the collection is devoted to correspondence between Senator Kassebaum and her constituency. These files are stored in 225 boxes (about one-third of the collection). This correspondence consists of the letter the constituent sent to Kassebaum and the form letter that Kassebaum sent back to the constituent. The collection also contains numerous files pertaining to departments of the federal government (such as Justice, State, and Education), various subjects, three years worth of education subcommittee files, and numerous photographs, audio- and videotapes, press releases, newsletters, and newsclips. Kassebaum also sent out numerous questionnaires during her term in office. The questionnaires and their responses are included in this collection.

All materials within the collection are dated 1979 to 1996, with the exception of a few photographs. These dates correspond to the eighteen years, or three terms, Kassebaum served as a United States Senator for the State of Kansas. Her career encompassed the 96th through the 104th Congresses. During this period, the United States underwent many fundamental changes. Technology improved rapidly, the Soviet Union fell, the Berlin Wall tumbled, and numerous revolutions occurred, from Central America to Africa to Asia. Senator Kassebaum was often at the forefront as an agent of some of these changes.

Three boxes full of photographs represent a pictorial history of Kassebaum's years in office, as well as photographs prior to her public life. Presidents, ex-presidents, heads of state, royalty, political prisoners, the Pope, entertainers, professional athletes, actors, and astronauts are but a few of the celebrities Kassebaum has been photographed with. She has also posed with visitors from Kansas (as well as other states and nations), such as common citizens, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, school and church groups, and numerous other organizations. Her staff is also fully documented in these photograph files.

Kassebaum was photographed repeatedly as a child due to her father's status as governor of Kansas and 1936 Republican candidate for the presidency. Included in this collection are photographs of her with her father, with other 1930s politicians, and with other family members. Press photographs from her terms in office are also included.

Many hours of audio and videotape may also be found in this collection. Everything from debates, appearances on news programs, campaign commercials, and even "Rock the Vote" on MTV can be found in this collection. Periodically, Kassebaum sent out newsletters to keep her constituency updated. Copies of these are provided and do much to reveal Kassebaum's position on issues such as inflation, defense, taxation, and the budget. More often, Kassebaum's office sent out press releases in response to anything newsworthy that a Senator should have an opinion on. These brief quips also do much to further reveal her positions. Finally, the press generated by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee in 1995 and 1996 comprise the remainder of the press and media files.

The strengths of the collection include subjects as varied as Africa (especially South Africa and Somalia), the Iran hostage crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, aid to El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980s, Labor and Human Resources Committee correspondence after 1988 (including issues such as aging, education, AIDS, insurance, and nutrition), agricultural issues (such as price-supports for farmers), education subcommittee correspondence, and especially issues important to the people of Kansas as expressed in their letters to Senator Kassebaum. Also of note in this collection are debates surrounding Supreme Court nominations (especially Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas), the ban on semiautomatic weapons, the budget crisis and temporary government shutdown of 1996, and issues of taxation. Subject matter such as the Persian Gulf War, foreign relations with nations outside of sub-Saharan Africa, and domestic issues before 1988 are represented but not as strongly as areas of committee assignments or in areas of specific concern to Senator Kassebaum. Weaknesses of the collection may be improved upon at a future date, as the contents of boxes 453 through 496 and 517 through 675 have not yet been determined.

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## SERIES DESCRIPTION

As indicated in the scope and content notes, this collection consists of two series: correspondence files and press & media files. The correspondence files are further divided into five subseries: alphabetical files, CMS/CSS (mass mailings) files, department files, education subcommittee files, and subject files. The press & media files are divided into three subseries: miscellaneous media files, photograph files, and videotape files.

The alphabetical files contain copies of outgoing correspondence filed according to the constituent's last name. (Another copy, with the constituent's incoming letter attached, is filed in the subject file according to the topic on which the constituent wrote.) The boxes are arranged chronologically, thereunder alphabetically by the constituent's surname.

The CMS (Correspondence Management System) and CSS (Constituency Services System) files begin in 1981 and run through the end of Senator Kassebaum's congressional career. CMS and CSS are systems designed to create form letters to answer "mass mailings." (The CMS system was used from 1981 until 1990, and the CSS system has been used since 1991.) Copies of constituent letters were attached to a work order with a number indicating the corresponding letter to be sent to the constituent. Kassebaum's office maintained a cumulative list of the names and addresses of the

constituents and the topic on which they wrote. However, the CMS system was not yet in place in Kassebaum's office in 1979 and 1980, so those years are not represented here. Also, the 1989 and 1990 CSS files are incomplete---a complete index is therefore not available.

The department files contain correspondence pertaining directly to a department or agency rather than general subjects. For example, while agriculture may be a general subject, it is also a governmental department. Therefore, everything related to the Department of Agriculture can be found in the department file, while an item dealing only with the subject of agriculture would be located in the subject file. These files are may be accessed by looking up the department name. Once the boxes that house the department's files have been determined, one need only to look up the year that corresponds to the box number. For example, box 33 houses all of the 1981 correspondence related to the Department of Defense.

The education subcommittee files cover the years 1990, 1991, and 1992. They are located entirely in boxes 279, 309, and 338. A complete list of the subcommittee's file names are contained in subseries D of this finding aid. Subseries E contains the subject files, which are very similar to the department files. The obvious exception is that only correspondence pertaining to a certain subject, not department, is found here. Finally, the miscellaneous media files, photograph files, and videotape files are contained entirely within boxes 497-516. An index to each box is provided near the end of this document; however, this index is very lengthy and cumbersome, and is not easily accessible.

### Series I: Correspondence Files

[Note: All correspondence and press and media files are stored at an offsite location. A videotape files (boxes 500-507) are stored at the Library and Archives Division of the Kansas State Historical Society.]

#### Subseries A: Alphabetical Files

1979	Box 1.....A-M Box 2.....N-Z	1988	Box 206....H(cont.)-M (cont) Box 207....M(cont.)-S Box 208....S(cont.)-Z
1980	Box 12.....A-M Box 13.....N-Z	1989	Box 229....A-Cok Box 230....Col-G Box 231....H-Levh Box 232....Levi-O Box 233....P-Sph Box 234....Spi-Z
1981	Box 22.....A-K Box 23.....L-Z		
1982	Box 35.....A-K Box 36.....L-Z		
1983	Box 64.....A-G Box 65.....H-O Box 66.....P-Z	1990	Box 258....A-B Box 259....C-E Box 260....F-H Box 261....H(cont.)-L Box 262....M-O

- 1984 Box 92....A-K  
Box 93....L-Z
- 1985 Box 113....A-G  
Box 114....H-P  
Box 115....Q-Z
- 1986 Box 145....A-D  
Box 146....E-J  
Box 147....K-O  
Box 148....P-S  
Box 149....T-Z
- 1987 Box 175....A-D  
Box 176....E-J  
Box 177....K-O  
Box 178....P-S  
Box 179....T-Z
- 1988 Box 204....A-C  
Box 205....D-H
- 1993 Box 351....G-I  
(cont) Box 352....J-L  
Box 353....M-O  
Box 354....P-S  
Box 355....S(cont.)-V  
Box 356....W-Z
- 1994 Box 383....A-C  
Box 384....C(cont.)-G  
Box 385....H-K  
Box 386....L-O  
Box 387....P-S  
Box 388....S(cont.)-Z
- 1995 Box 421....A-C  
Box 422....D-H  
Box 423....H(cont.)-L  
Box 424....M-Q  
Box 425....R-S  
Box 426....T-Z
- Box 263....P-S  
Box 264....S-V  
Box 265....W-Z
- 1991 Box 288....A-Che  
Box 289....Chi-F  
Box 290....G-H  
Box 291....I-L  
Box 292....M-Q  
Box 293....R-S  
Box 294....T-Z
- 1992 Box 319....A-C  
Box 320....D-H  
Box 321....H(cont.)-M  
Box 322....M(cont.)-R  
Box 323....R(cont.)-V  
Box 323.5....W-Z
- 1993 Box 349....A-C  
Box 350....C(cont.)-F



**Subseries B: CMS (Correspondence Management System), 1981-1990  
CSS (Constituent Services System), 1991-1995**

CMS and CSS letters were used to answer "mass mailings." Copies of constituent letters were attached to a work order with a number indicating the corresponding letter to be sent to the constituent. Kassebaum's office staff maintained a cumulative list of the names and addresses of the constituents and the topic on which they wrote. However, the 1981, 1989, 1990, and 1996 files are incomplete and not entirely available. For a list of form letters arranged alphabetically by subject heading, go to page 14 for the subseries index.

**CMS letters**

- 1981 Box 48.....1-26  
 Box 49.....27-45  
 Box 50.....46-69  
 Box 51.....70-119  
 Box 52.....120-154  
 Box 53.....155-192 and unnumbered temporary letters
- 1982 Box 54.....1-40  
 Box 55.....41-54  
 Box 56.....54(cont.)-59  
 Box 57.....59(cont.)-77  
 Box 58.....78-94  
 Box 59.....94(cont.)-113  
 Box 60.....114-132

- Box 61.....133-148  
 Box 62.....149  
 Box 64.....150-156 and unnumbered temporary letters
- 1983 Box 81.....1-3  
 Box 82.....3(cont.)  
 Box 83.....3(cont.)  
 Box 84.....4-13  
 Box 85.....14-30  
 Box 86.....31-43  
 Box 87.....44-62  
 Box 88.....63-72  
 Box 89.....73-80  
 Box 90.....80(cont.)-95 and unnumbered temporary letters  
 Box 91.....cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1984 Box 105....1-18  
 Box 106....19-21  
 Box 107....22-32
- 1984 Box 108....33-49  
 (cont) Box 109....50-69  
 Box 110....70-90  
 Box 111....91-119 and unnumbered temporary letters  
 Box 112....cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1985 Box 129....1-10  
 Box 130....11-19  
 Box 131....20-21  
 Box 132....22-23  
 Box 133....24-32  
 Box 134....33-38  
 Box 135....39-47  
 Box 136....48-51  
 Box 137....52-62  
 Box 138....63-85  
 Box 139....86  
 Box 140....86(cont.)-89  
 Box 141....90-103  
 Box 142....104-119  
 Box 143....120-130 and unnumbered temporary letters  
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- 1986 Box 165....1-19  
 Box 166....20-43  
 Box 167....44-49

- Box 168....50-61
  - Box 169....62-69
  - Box 170....70-73
  - Box 171....74-99
  - Box 172....100-113
  - Box 173....114-119
  - Box 174....120-133 and cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1987
- Box 193....1-7
  - Box 194....7(cont.)
  - Box 195....7(cont.)-15
  - Box 196....16-24
  - Box 197....25-37
  - Box 198....38-52
  - Box 199....53-63
  - Box 200....63(cont.)
  - Box 201....64-77
  - Box 202....77(cont.)-89 and unnumbered temporary letters
- 1987 (cont.)
- Box 203....cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1988
- Box 221....1-7
  - Box 222....8-15
  - Box 223....16-22
  - Box 224....23-31
  - Box 225....31(cont.)-36
  - Box 226....37-64
  - Box 227....65-84
  - Box 228....cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1989
- Box 248....1-10
  - Box 249....11-13
  - Box 250....14-17
  - Box 251....18-21
  - Box 252....22-26
  - Box 253....26(cont.)-33
  - Box 254....34-55
  - Box 255....56-71
  - Box 256....72-84 and temporary letter on child custody form, approval sheets, and comments
  - Box 257....cumulative list of names and addresses
- 1990
- Box 280....1-12
  - Box 281....13-16
  - Box 282....17-27

Box 283....28-32  
Box 284....33-49  
Box 285....50-59  
Box 286....60-77  
Box 287....78-97

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- 1991 Box 310....1-8  
Box 311....9-23  
Box 312....24-32  
Box 313....33-44  
Box 314....45-52  
Box 315....53-56  
Box 316....57-63  
Box 317....64-84  
Box 318....cumulative list of names and addresses and form approval sheets
- 1992 Box 339....1-17  
Box 340....18-32  
Box 341....33-43  
Box 342....44-47  
Box 343....48  
Box 344....49-53  
Box 345....54-63  
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Box 347....80-101  
Box 348....cumulative list of names and addresses and form approval sheets
- 1993 Box 375....1-5  
Box 376....6-12  
Box 377....13-19  
Box 378....20-23  
Box 379....24-34  
Box 380....35-42  
Box 381....43-60  
Box 382....cumulative list of names and addresses and form approval sheets
- 1994 Box 409....1-2  
Box 410....2(cont.)  
Box 411....3-10  
Box 412....11-29  
Box 413....30-48  
Box 414....49-52  
Box 415....53-62  
Box 416....63-69

Box 417....69(cont.)-86  
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 Box 419....cumulative list of names and addresses  
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 Box 444....6-12  
 Box 445....13-15  
 Box 446....16-22  
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[Note: The item number follows the year. To determine the subject of each item number, turn to appendix I:B:1-13, found on pages 43 through 94.]

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**(Note: Health, Education, and Welfare became Health and Human Services in 1982. HHS a subdivision of HEW in 1981-1982. HHS became Health and Human Resources in 1991.)**

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 Cover Sheets for Kansas Clips (1979-6/30/1996)--Box 512 (no appendix available)  
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 Miscellaneous Press Files (1979-1984)--Boxes 510 and 511 (appendix begins on page 97)  
 Newsletters--Box 508 (appendix begins on page 99)  
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**Subseries B: Photograph Files**

- Constituents--Box 498 (appendix begins on page 142)



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**Subseries C: Videotape Files (appendix for videotape files begin on page 166)**

[All videotape files (boxes 500-507) are stored at the Library and Archives Division of the Kansas State Historical Society. All other files are stored at an offsite location.]

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