

KHACHIGIAN, KENNETH L.: Papers, 1980-1982 – REAGAN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

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KHACHIGIAN, KENNETH L.: Papers, 1980-1982

Speechwriter and Political Consultant for Ronald Reagan

See also: KHACHIGIAN, KENNETH L.: Files, 1981

Biographical Note

Kenneth L. Khachigian is a native Californian, born in Visalia, California in 1944. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and graduated with honors in 1966.

Before continuing his education, Mr. Khachigian worked on Richard M. Nixon's successful 1968 presidential campaign for nearly a year. He began work with the campaign in December 1967 and stayed until the election victory in November 1968. This was the beginning of his long career as a speechwriter and Republican campaign and political strategist.

After the Nixon campaign ended, Mr. Khachigian attended Columbia University Law School, graduating in 1969 with a law degree.

At 25 years of age, in January 1970, Khachigian joined the Nixon White House as part of the National Goals Research Staff, which had been established within the White House by Presidential Statement on July 13, 1969. In August 1970, he became the staff assistant to Herbert Klein, Director of Communications. He has self-described this work as, "Generating ideas as how best to communicate President Nixon's goals and policies." It was a role he was to continue for President Reagan. In May of 1971, he transferred to Patrick Buchanan's staff to work primarily on the 1972 re-election campaign. He worked within the White House and had close contacts with the Republican National Committee and the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Since he had been unofficially writing for anyone who needed a speech, article or position statement, he was eventually transferred in early 1973 to the President's speechwriting staff, working under David Gergen. At the time of Nixon's resignation, his official title was Deputy Special Assistant to the President. He stayed on at the White House past the resignation into the fall of 1974.

From 1975-1979, Mr. Khachigian was the editorial consultant to Richard M. Nixon. He assisted the former President with writings of any kind and speeches.

In 1980, he was brought into the Ronald Reagan Presidential campaign as a consultant and speechwriter. He was appointed as Special Consultant to the President by President Reagan in January 1981. During this time at the White House he also acted as the chief speechwriter. He

left the Reagan administration in May 1981. Khachigian continued to write speeches for the Reagan White House, especially during the campaign years of 1982, 1984, and 1986. Some samples of additional work by him include President Reagan's remarks at the Bergin-Belsen Concentration Camp in 1985, the joint anti-drug address of President and Mrs. Reagan in 1986 and the 1987 State of the Union speech.

After leaving Washington, DC, Mr. Khachigian returned to California where he has been a key adviser and strategist for California Governors Deukmejian and Wilson, and has run several other statewide campaigns. He served as National Senior Adviser to presidential nominee Robert Dole in 1996 and Senator John McCain in 2000. He currently has a private law practice, Smiland & Khachigian. He can be heard quite frequently on political talk shows and continues to write political editorials, columns and articles.

Scope and Content Note

In June 2000, Mr. Khachigian donated these personal papers to the Library. The material consists of his work on the 1981 Inaugural Speech, and work he did for the Political Affairs Office for the 1982 mid-term election. It includes drafts, notes, research material, comments from future White House staff on drafts and correspondence. The material is not large (24 folders, approximately 1,100 pages) and therefore the Library has made no series distinctions.

For more Khachigian material, especially for his later contracted speeches, please see the Speechwriting Drafts and the corresponding White House Office of Records Management Subject File SP categories. For more material on the campaign speeches of the 1980s, please also see the Ronald Reagan personal papers collection. For his brief time as an official staff member at the White House, please see his collection within the presidential staff and office files. This collection consists of hand-written notes on legal paper taken by Mr. Khachigian at meetings for the Cabinet, Communications Office, Scheduling and Senior Staff from January 1981-April 1981.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

“Inaugural Addresses of the President’s of the United States” (annotated)
 President-Elect Reagan: Inaugural Address, First Draft 01/04/1981 (1)(2)
 Inaugural Address 01/20/1981 (1)-(10)

Box 2

1982 Mid-Term Elections – Speech Drafts (1)(2)
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – Correspondence
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – Notes
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – Research
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – RR’s 1980 Convention Acceptance Speech
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – FDR Speeches
 1982 Mid-Term Elections – Press Clippings

1982 Mid-Term Elections – Scheduling and Communications Strategies
1982 – Themes and Issues
President’s Schedule – August-December 1982