

Bernard L. Austin Papers

A Finding Aid to the Papers in the Naval Historical Foundation Collection in the Library of Congress



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Prepared by Joseph K. Brooks with the assistance of Richard Ratamalaya

Collection Summary

Title: Bernard L. Austin Papers

Span Dates: 1916-1979

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1937-1968)

ID No.: MSS61725

Creator: Austin, Bernard L. (Bernard Lige), 1902-1979

Extent: 7,500 items ; 24 containers plus 3 classified ; 9.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Naval officer and educator. Correspondence, speeches and writings, and subject files documenting Austin's naval career.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Anderson, George Whelan, 1906-1992--Correspondence.
Austin, Bernard L. (Bernard Lige), 1902-1979.
Baldwin, Hanson Weightman, 1903-1991--Correspondence.
Bates, Richard W., 1892-1973--Correspondence.
Beakley, Wallace M.--Correspondence.
Burke, Arleigh A., 1901-1996--Correspondence.
Colbert, Richard G., -1973--Correspondence.
Conolly, Richard L. (Richard Lansing), 1892-1962--Correspondence.
Dennison, Robert L. (Robert Lee), 1901-1980--Correspondence.
Dietrich, Neil K.--Correspondence.
Eccles, Henry Effingham, 1898- --Correspondence.
Edison, Charles A., 1890-1969--Correspondence.
Eller, Ernest McNeill, 1903-1992--Correspondence.
Gallery, Philip D. (Philip Daly), 1907-1973--Correspondence.
Ghormley, Robert Lee, 1883-1958.
Harrigan, Anthony--Correspondence.
Hayward, John Tucker, 1910- --Correspondence.
Hoyt, Edwin Palmer--Correspondence.
Knoll, Denys W.--Correspondence.
Lovette, Leland Pearson, 1897- --Correspondence.
McManes, K. M.--Correspondence.
Melson, Charles L.--Correspondence.
Moorer, Thomas H., 1912- --Correspondence.
Nimitz, Chester W. (Chester William), 1885-1966--Correspondence.
Orem, Howard E.--Correspondence.
Peniston, Robert C.--Correspondence.
Ramsey, Paul H. (Paul Hubert), 1905-1982--Correspondence.
Smedburg, W. R.--Correspondence.
Stark, Harold R. (Harold Raynsford), 1880-1972--Correspondence.
Vosseller, A. B.--Correspondence.
Watson, Frank T.--Correspondence.

Organizations

Inter-American Defense Board.
Naval War College (U.S.)
United States. Navy Department.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Great Britain.
United States. Navy--History--20th century.
United States. Navy. Fleet, 2nd.
United States. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.
United States. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. International Affairs Division.

Subjects

Destroyers (Warships)--United States.
Journalism, Military--United States.
Korean War, 1950-1953--Naval operations.
Military readiness.
Submarines (Ships)--United States.
World War, 1939-1945--Naval operations, American.
World War, 1939-1945--Naval operations, British.

Occupations

Naval officers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Bernard L. Austin, naval officer and educator, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1984, and converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of Bernard L. Austin were arranged and described in 1992. The finding aid was revised in 2008.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Bernard L. Austin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Bernard L. Austin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Security Classified Documents

Government regulations control the use of security classified material in this collection. Manuscript Division staff can furnish information concerning access to and use of classified materials.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Bernard L. Austin Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1902, Dec. 15	Born, Wagener, S.C.
1918-1920	Attended The Citadel, Charleston, S.C.
1924	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

1924-1926 Served aboard *New York* (battleship)

1925 Married Isabella Murray Leith

1927-1931 Served aboard submarines *R-10* and *R-6*

1931-1934 Taught physics and chemistry, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

1934-1937 Commanded *R-11* (submarine)

1937-1941 Press relations officer, Navy Department; special naval observer, Ghormley mission to Great Britain

1942 Commanded *Woolsey* (destroyer) in Atlantic and Mediterranean waters; assisted in the sinking of German submarine off Casablanca, Morocco

1943 Commanded *Foote* (destroyer), Destroyer Division 46, and Destroyer Squadron Fourteen in South Pacific; participated in battles off Bougainville, British Solomon Islands

1944-1945 Assistant chief of staff for administration to Chester Nimitz, commander in chief Pacific (CINCPAC)

1946-1947 Attended United States National War College, Washington, D.C.

1949 Attended Imperial Defense College, London, England

1950 Commanded Service Squadron Three in Korean waters

1951-1954 Assistant director and director, International Affairs Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations

1954-1955 Commanded Cruiser Division Two

1956-1958 Director, joint staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

1958-1959 Commanded Second Fleet

1959-1960 Deputy chief of naval operations for plans and policy

1960-1964 President, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

1963 President, court of inquiry investigating the loss of the *Thresher* (submarine)

1964-1967 Chairman, Inter-American Defense Board

1968 President, court of inquiry investigating loss of the *Scorpion* (submarine)

1979, Aug. 21 Died, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Bernard Lige Austin (1902-1979), a naval officer who achieved distinction as a commander of submarines and destroyers and as an administrator, educator, military diplomat, and press officer, span the years 1916-1979, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1937-1968. The collection is organized into series of [Correspondence](#), [Speeches and Writings](#), [Subject File](#), [Classified](#), [Top Secret](#), and [North American Treaty Organization](#). Austin attended The Citadel at Charleston in his native South Carolina before matriculating at the United States Naval Academy, from which he was graduated in 1924. His first independent command was as captain of the submarine *R-11* during 1934-1937. In the late 1930s, while serving as a press officer for the Navy Department, Austin wrote articles on submarine warfare for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *World Book Encyclopedia*. His submarine expertise was again called on late in his career when he presided over courts of inquiry investigating the loss of the nuclear powered submarines *Thresher* (1963) and *Scorpion* (1968).

Despite his many years in submarines, Austin's principal achievements came during his command of destroyers. His submarine experience proved useful in his first destroyer command, the *Woolsey*, in 1942 when he participated in the sinking of a German U-boat off Casablanca during Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa. In 1943, Austin commissioned the destroyer *Foote* and sailed it to the South Pacific, where he assumed the command of Destroyer Division Forty-Six, which with Destroyer Division Forty-Five comprised Destroyer Squadron Twenty-Three, Arleigh Burke's famed "Little Beavers", the only World War II destroyer squadron to be awarded a presidential citation.

In November 1943, Austin participated in two battles off the coast of Bougainville, British Solomon Islands, which resulted in the sinking of at least nine Japanese warships. He was awarded the Navy Cross and promoted to commodore, making him the youngest flag officer in the Navy at that time. His postwar commands included the supply ships of Service Squadron Three in Korean waters during 1950 and Cruiser Division Two (1954-1955) and the Second Fleet (1958-1959) in the Atlantic. Most of Austin's sea duty is well documented in the [correspondence](#) series. Included in the [Subject File](#) is a substantial amount of material on his World War II destroyer commands, "R" class submarines, submarine warfare in the early part of World War II, and the *Thresher* and *Scorpion* inquiries.

During 1944-1945, Austin served as assistant chief of staff for administration to Chester Nimitz, commander in chief of Allied naval forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC). Other administrative postings included stints on the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (1945-1946) and the staff of the National Security Council (1947-1948). During 1956-1958 he was director of the joint staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and during 1959-1960 he served as deputy chief of naval operations for plans and policy. All of these administrative and policy billets are well represented in the [correspondence](#), and there are [subject files](#) on the National Security Council, State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, and the reorganization of the armed services after World War II.

From 1960 to his retirement as vice admiral in 1964, Austin served as president of the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., where he emphasized the coordination of curricula among armed forces graduate institutions. Approximately one-fourth of the [correspondence](#) results from Austin's years as president of the Naval War College, and several folders on the college, such as minutes of the academic board, are included in the Subject File.

Austin's first foray into military diplomacy was as a member of the Ghormley mission to Great Britain 1940-1941. The task of Admiral Robert Lee Ghormley, "special naval observer," was to negotiate the policy and technical details of naval cooperation between the United States and Great Britain in the event of United States entry into World War II. Austin, as Ghormley's deputy, was the only mission member other than the admiral to participate in all of the meetings with the British political and naval leadership, which included Winston Churchill and Admiral Sidney Bailey. Other postings involving foreign relations were as assistant director and eventually director of the Navy's International Affairs Division (1951-1954) and as chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board (1964-1967). [Correspondence](#) from the 1940-1941 period includes letters from Robert Ghormley. Austin corresponded with many South American naval officers during his service on the Inter-American Defense Board and maintained substantial contact through the 1970s with the Brazilian admiral Levy A. Reis. [Subject files](#) also includes material on the Ghormley mission and United States-British naval relations during the World War II period.

Austin felt that his role as Navy Department press relations officer during the period 1937-1940 was a major factor in his achieving flag rank. As a press officer, he developed his interest in oral communication into a professional skill. Some of the speeches in the [Speeches and Writings File](#) were ghostwritten by him for key naval civilian officials and admirals, such

as secretary of the navy Charles Edison and chief of naval operations Harold R. Stark. Austin's correspondents during the period 1937-1940 included Hanson Baldwin, military correspondent of the *New York Times*.

[The Subject File](#) contains detailed material on Austin, including biographical sketches, orders, and personnel records.

Prominent correspondents not previously cited include George Whelan Anderson, Richard W. Bates, Wallace M. Beakley, Arleigh A. Burke, Richard G. Colbert, Richard L. Conolly, Robert L. Dennison, Neil K. Dietrich, Henry Effingham Eccles, Ernest McNeill Eller, Philip D. Gallery, Anthony Harrigan, John Tucker Hayward, Edwin Palmer Hoyt, Dennys W. Knoll, Leland Pearson Lovette, K. M. McManes, Charles L. Melson, Thomas H. Moorer, Chester W. Nimitz, Howard E. Orem, Robert C. Peniston, Paul H. Ramsey, W. R. Smedburg III, A. B. Vosseller, and Frank T. Watson.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Correspondence, 1924-1979](#)
- [Speeches and Writings, 1924-1967](#)
- [Subject File, 1916-1974](#)
- [Classified, 1955-1967](#)
- [Top Secret, 1955](#)
- [North American Treaty Organization, 1955-1959](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-11	<u>Correspondence, 1924-1979</u> Letters sent and received with attached related matter. Organized into family and general correspondence and chronologically therein.
BOX 12-16	<u>Speeches and Writings, 1924-1967</u> Speeches, statements, articles, article outlines, and poems by Austin and others. Arranged by type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX 17-24	<u>Subject File, 1916-1974</u> Correspondence, awards, citations, newspaper clippings, drawings, cartoons, ship logs, maps, nautical charts, battle reports, press releases, notes, research material, orders, biographical sketches, resumes, personnel records, chronologies, administrative histories, minutes of meetings, records related to courts of inquiry, lectures, and transcripts of telephone conversations. Organized alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX CL 1	<u>Classified, 1955-1967</u> Documents containing national security information removed from the collection. Arranged and described according to the series and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX TS 1	<u>Top Secret, 1955</u> Documents containing national security information removed from the collection. Arranged and described according to the series and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX NATO 1	<u>North American Treaty Organization, 1955-1959</u> Documents containing national security information removed from the collection. Arranged and described according to the series and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-11	Correspondence, 1924-1979 Letters sent and received with attached related matter. Organized into family and general correspondence and chronologically therein.
BOX 1	Family, 1936-1979, undated
BOX 1	General
BOX 1	1924, Sept.-1943, Dec. (5 folders)
BOX 2	1944, Jan.-1951, Aug. (6 folders)
BOX 3	1951, Sept.-1954, Dec. (7 folders)
BOX 4	1955, Jan.-1958, Mar. <i>See also Classified, Top Secret, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization</i> (6 folders)
BOX 5	1958, Apr.-1959, Aug. <i>See also Classified and North Atlantic Treaty Organization</i> (6 folders)
BOX 6	1959, Sept.-1961, July (6 folders)
BOX 7	1961, Aug.-1962, Aug. (7 folders)
BOX 8	1962, Sept.-1963, Dec. (6 folders)
BOX 9	1964, Jan.-Oct. (5 folders)
BOX 10	1964, Nov.-1967, May <i>See also Classified</i> (7 folders)
BOX 11	1967, June-1979, Aug., undated <i>See also Classified</i> (7 folders)
BOX 12-16	Speeches and Writings, 1924-1967 Speeches, statements, articles, article outlines, and poems by Austin and others. Arranged by type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX 12	Speeches
BOX 12	By Austin
BOX 12	1924-1961 (6 folders)
BOX 13	1962-1963 (7 folders)
BOX 14	1963-1967, undated <i>See also Classified</i> (6 folders)

Speeches and Writings, 1924-1967

Container

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BOX 15	Undated (2 folders)
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BOX 16	Ghostwritten by Austin, 1939-1948, undated
BOX 16	Writings
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BOX 16	Poems, 1955, undated
BOX 16	Prose, 1931-1940, undated
BOX 17-24	Subject File, 1916-1974 Correspondence, awards, citations, newspaper clippings, drawings, cartoons, ship logs, maps, nautical charts, battle reports, press releases, notes, research material, orders, biographical sketches, resumes, personnel records, chronologies, administrative histories, minutes of meetings, records related to courts of inquiry, lectures, and transcripts of telephone conversations. Organized alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX 17	Aircraft carriers
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BOX 17	Awards, certificates, and citations, 1942-1964, undated
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BOX 17	Cartoons and drawings, undated
BOX 17	Charts and maps, 1916-1946, undated
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BOX 17	Destroyers
BOX 17	Battles and operations, 1943-1963, undated
BOX 17	<i>Converse</i> , 1945
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BOX 18	Destroyer Squadron Fourteen, 1944
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BOX 18	Inter-American Defense Board, 1964-1967, undated
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BOX 19	Global strategy discussions, 1959

Subject File, 1916-1974

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BOX 19	Lectures, 1952-1963
BOX 19	Second Conference of the War Colleges of the Americas, 1963
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BOX 20	(1 folder)
BOX 20	<i>Navy News</i> , Guam edition, Orders and personnel records, 1924-54 (5 folders) 1945
BOX 20	Orders and personnel records, 1924-1954 (5 folders)
BOX 21	1955-1968, undated (3 folders)
BOX 21	Press Relations Department, Navy Department, 1939, 1974, undated
BOX 21	Press releases, 1939-1946 (2 folders)
BOX 22	1957-1960 (2 folders)
BOX 22	Reorganization of armed services, 1944-1960, undated
BOX 22	Service Squadron Three, 1951-1953, undated
BOX 22	State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 1945, undated
BOX 22	Submarines Encyclopedia articles by Austin, 1938-1940, undated
BOX 22	Miscellaneous, 1927-1940, undated
BOX 22	"R" class submarines, 1930-1937, undated
BOX 22	<i>Scorpion</i> Correspondence, 1968-1969, undated
BOX 23	Miscellaneous, 1968, undated
BOX 23	<i>Squalus</i> , 1939, undated
BOX 23	<i>Thresher</i> Correspondence Miscellaneous, 1963 (4 folders)
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BOX 23	Summary of events, 1963 <i>See also Classified</i>
BOX 23	Telephone conversations, 1963
BOX 23	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE),. 1955-1956, undated
BOX 23	United States-British naval relations <i>Administrative History of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, 1940-46</i> , 1947 (1 folder)
BOX 24	(2 folders)
BOX 24	ComNavEu monograph, <i>United States-British Naval Relations 1939-1942</i> , 1947, undated (2 folders)
BOX 24	Ghormley mission
BOX 24	Interview with Austin, 1966
BOX 24	Memoranda and notes, 1940-1941
BOX 24	Miscellaneous, 1940-1941, undated

Subject File, 1916-1974

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BOX 24	<i>U.S.-British Naval Cooperation 1940-45</i> , undated (3 folders)
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BOX CL 1	1955, July-Aug. (Container 4)
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BOX NATO 1	Correspondence
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North American Treaty Organization, 1955-1959

Container

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BOX NATO 1

1959, Jan.-May (Container 5)