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**Department of Special Collections**

**Finding Aid - Roy Kiesling papers (P1988.46)**

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# Roy Kiesling papers

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## Summary information

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| <b>Repository:</b>                             | Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections    |
| <b>Title:</b>                                  | Roy Kiesling papers  |
| <b>Reference code:</b>                         | P1988.46   |
| <b>Archon Collection ID<br/>[alternative]:</b> | 184  |
| <b>Date:</b>                                   | 1970-1995 (date of creation)   |
| <b>Physical description:</b>                   | 31.50 Linear Feet, 21.00 Boxes   |
| <b>Physical location:</b>                      | Pre-fire 2018: Stack G:R19/S13/14/Sf1-6/1-5; 21 Boxes, 31.50 Linear Feet |
| <b>Physical location:</b>                      | Annex  |
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| <b>Physical location:</b>                      | Annex  |

**Physical location:** Annex

**Physical location:** Annex

**Language:** English

**Language:** Latin

**Dates of creation,  
revision and deletion:**

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

1934 - Born March 11, 1934, place unknown; Raised in Houston, Texas, after the Second World War.

Roy Kiesling graduated Yale University with a major in English and a self-described "overwhelming fascination for sports cars." Thereafter, he briefly taught English before entering the University of Texas Law program

1960 - Completing his course of legal study in three years with a Bachelor of Laws degree, he moved to San Francisco and worked as an administrator of research contracts for then-Lockheed Missles and Space Company

1961-1966 - Enrolled in San Jose State College as a student of engineering, but later switched majors to Physics

1966 - The University of Texas retroactively granted Kiesling status as a Doctor of Jurisprudence.

1970 - Worked as a volunteer for Paul Ehrlich's Zero Population Growth (ZPG) organization, eventually becoming the spokesman for the ZPG's task group on Consumer environmental responsibility

1970 - Attended the ten day "Summer Alumni College on Environment" conference at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

1971-1972 - Co-founded the Consumer Alliance with Paul Ehrlich and Richard Harriman

1971- Sparred with congressional representative Peter McCloskey over the contents of the federal legislature's Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) bills

1971 - April; Met with Ralph Nader over his opposition to the Consumer Alliance's organizational structure and anti-lobbyist stance. Soon after Nader created a counter-organization, called Public Citizen.

1971 - December; Attended the Ad Hoc Food Labeling Conference at which he became friends with Helen Nelson, then-Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs to California Governor Bobbie Brown, and Consumer Movement leader Esther Peterson

1972 - January; Liaised with Walker Sandbach, Executive Director fo the Consumer Union and Consumer Federation of America President Helen Nelson at the Consumer Federation of America Conference

1972 - Donated \$1,000 to the presidential campaign of George McGovern

1972 - Worked to resolve "The Great Chevrolet Engine Mount Controversy" in which the car company released cars for sale with defective engine stabilization parts

1973 - Invited by Virginia Knauer the White House Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs to attended a special meeting of the Consumer Federation of America held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At the meeting, attendees split into factions with competing visions of the Consumer Movement. The incident has often been called "the Milwaukee Massacre"

1973-1974 - During the Tucson Symposium, a dozen individuals, including Currin Shields, Louis Meyer, and Fr. Robert McEwen, form the Conference of Consumer Organizations

1973-1976 - Represented the Consumers United of Palo Alto and the Consumers Cooperative Society of Palo Alto, California against government protectionism of American agribusiness

1974 - Participated in the renewed congressional fight for a consumer-oriented federal agency

1975 - Researched consumer Co-ops in response to discussions during a January Consumer Federation of American meeting

1976 - Summer; Participated in the "Consumer '76 conference sponsored by the California State Department of Consumer Affairs

1976 - Summer; Attended the JC Penny Consumer Affairs Forum

1976-1985 - Served on the advisory board and staff of the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) in the Department of Consumer Affairs

1977 - Inaugurated as president of the Consumer Federation of California

1977 - Invited to participate in a White House discussion, attempting to reinvigorate the debate for a consumer-friendly federal agency

1977 - Inspired by a meeting with Colston Warne on the campus of MIT, Kiesling began writing an autobiography of his time in the Consumer Movement and the direction the movement should next take. The unpublished manuscript, entitled "Report to Those Most Concerned", describes his time in the Consumer Movement

1978 - The Federal Consumer protection Agency Bill was defeated in the House of Representatives

1978-1983 - Served on the Consumer Advisory Council of the AT&T divestiture Pacific Telephone

1980 - Completed writing "A Report to those Most Concerned"

1980-1988 - Provided consultation for various organizations on Intermittent Ignition Devices and California's Car Lemon Laws

2007 - Lobbied to ban genetically engineered drug-producing safflower

2007 - Lived in Santa Cruz, California

2010 - The Dodd-Frank Bill, calling for the creation of a Consumer Affairs Bureau, passed both houses and was signed into law by President Barack Obama.

## **Custodial history**

The Roy Kiesling Papers have been assigned Accession Number: P1988.46. Processing of the collection was completed by Paul A. Thomsen in August, 2010.

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## **Scope and content**

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The Roy A. Kiesling papers (1970-1990) consist primarily of correspondence, reports, conference material, and publications related to Kiesling's 1970s and 1980s participation as a lawyer and engineer in the California and national Consumer movements. The papers have been arranged to reflect his administrative involvement in several non-profit organizations, state-level government committees, for-profit businesses, and his personal interest in various ongoing consumer-related issues.

The Consumer Organizations Series (1970-1990) consists of five boxes of memoranda, reports, speeches, correspondence, press releases, clippings, by-laws, receipts, and chronological files, which span Roy Kiesling's administrative involvement in several consumer movement organizations. Arranged in chronological order by organization, this series stands as one of the two greatest strengths of the Kiesling

papers. Two of the boxes offer researchers a detailed view of the formative years of the Consumer Alliance, which was co-founded by Kiesling with Donald Kennedy and Paul Ehrlich in the aftermath of the ten-day 1970 "Summer Alumni College on the Environment" symposium at Stanford University. Similarly, many files cover Kiesling's activities as a board member and president of the Consumer Federation of California and the Consumer Cooperative Society of Palo Alto, including board minutes, resolutions, and reports of the organization's actions.

Researchers will also find the documentation relating to the Consumer Cooperative's files of particular interest in complementing the activities of other regional organizations. For example, where the Consumer Alliance was interested in broad issues, the Consumer Cooperative placed a greater focus on local issues, such as their affiliation with five California-based supermarkets in collaboration with the Berkeley Cooperative. This partnership outlined in the files accrued an annual collective gross of nineteen million dollars a year. Other files in this series include correspondence and reports relating to Paul Ehrlich's theories on population growth, the history of the California consumer movement, and the problems caused by the 1973 government protection of agricultural business and the teamsters over the United Farm Workers and the California shopper. Finally, still other materials center on the creation and maintenance of local cooperatives throughout California's urban landscape to the benefit of individual neighborhoods neglected by national store chains.

The Conferences Series (1970-1995) consists of three boxes of meeting minutes, programs, rosters, clippings, notes, testimonies, and audio tapes arranged in chronological order. Collected by Kiesling during the 1970s as a conference attendee, many of the early files in this series cover important events in the history of the Consumer Movement. These include the 1970 Summer Alumni College on the Environment, the 1971 Food Labeling Conference, the 1971 Consumer Union/American Council on Consumer Interests (whose records are retained by K-State Special Collections), the "Milwaukee Massacre" of 1973, and several Tucson symposia. Other files include "Tape-to-Tape" recordings of conference speeches and lectures given by Consumer Movement leader Colston Warne. Researchers will also find the documents relating to the creation of the national conference creating the Conference of Consumer Organizations (COCO), which was founded by Currin Shields, Louis Meyer, and Fr. Robert McEwen and aided by Roy Kiesling, to be of particular interest. The papers of Shields and Meyer are also housed in the Consumer Movement Archives at Kansas State University. These files include several issues of the organization's newsletter, Intercom, as well as documentation relating to Food Grading, Earth Day, consumer medicine, boycotts, and their relationship with the Consumer Federation of America. The Government Consultancies Series (1976-1985) collects two boxes of documents arranged in alphabetical order and relating to Roy Kiesling's involvement as an advisor to the California Bureau of Automotive Repair. Spanning his eight years on the board of review in the California Department of Consumer Affairs, these documents include meeting minutes, chronological files, agendas, appointments, and reports, which largely focus on public grievances and service industry concerns with state and local regulations. One particularly noteworthy set of documentation involves the creation of a set of standards to deter the potentially fraudulent conduct and floating prices of individuals in California considered "Transmission Specialists." Other files contain complete runs of the government printed newsletter, Automobilia (later renamed Car Clips), which Kiesling used for reference. The series also includes annual reports for the years 1975-1981. Researchers will also find of interest a set of correspondence between Kiesling and economist Milton Friedman on the role of government and regulation in consumer protection and their potential long-term effects on the American economy.

The Research Series (1970-1982) consists of nine boxes of documents arranged in alphabetical order, which served as reference material for Roy Kiesling. These files include reports, briefing books, correspondence, legal documents, industry advertising samples, and newspaper clippings, concerning the ongoing activities of Consumer Alliance, Kiesling's personal interest in energy awareness, tort law, and

toys. The files also contain correspondence and clippings featuring the author's relationship with members of the Federal Trade Commission, Colston Warne, and Richard L.D. Morse. Other sections of this series also include accumulated research on such topics as Food branding, labeling ingredients and measuring, the viability of Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) plans, "Intermittent Ignition Devices," utility rate normalization plans in California, and drafts of consumer protection agency legislation brought before the United States Congress. Kiesling considered the Intermittent Ignition Devices issue before the California Department of Energy, a subject covering the state government's regulation of pilot lights in water heaters an ideal example of well-intentioned consumer "regulation gone wrong." Finally, researchers will also find special interest in Kiesling's collection of memos, reports, and manuals relating to his time on the Consumer Advisory Council and Consumer Advisory Panel for Pacific Bell. The files cover issues relating to the deregulation of the telecommunications industry in the 1980s, subsequent court proceedings, customer guides, and the availability of telephone access for the physically challenged. The Publications Series (1970-1988) consists of three boxes of periodicals, reports, and studies arranged in alphabetical order by title. Several of the files collect guides and directories for an assortment of businesses, including California cooperatives, consumer associations, and complaint guides. Other files contain consumer-related information pamphlets and bound public testimonies before congress as well as journal issues, newsletters, and a complete 1974-1978 run of The Workbook. Other folders collect a number of photographs, depicting period leaders in the Consumer Movement. The last box in the series contains sample outlines, topical chapters, and different manuscript versions of Kiesling's unpublished memoir. The majority of the documentation relates to the lessons he learned as a consumer advocate and his time in the Consumer Movement, including sections on Ester Peterson, automobile safety, the 1970s fight for the Federal Consumer Protection Agency Bill, Ralph Nader, the Tucson Consumer Symposium, Peter McCloskey, the production and marketing of Pringles, and Paul Ehrlich's Zero Population Growth organization. A Consumer Alliance embossing seal has been transferred to the artifacts collection in the University Archives.

As a lawyer in the 1970s and 1980s, Kiesling was instrumental in the growth of several California-based outlets of the growing Consumer Movement. A co-founder of the Consumer Alliance with Paul Ehrlich and Richard Harriman, Kiesling helped craft a declaration of consumer rights, which included stipulations for the inclusion of name and complete mailing address of product manufacturers, the name of the product, model number, warnings usage, and the list of ingredients with accurate percentages stated on the product label. During this time, he also took part in the national meetings of the Consumer Federation of America and, in the aftermath of the "Milwaukee Massacre," helped shape the Conference of Consumer Organizations. Later, he represented the Consumers United of Palo Alto, the Consumers Cooperative Society of Palo Alto, and became president of the Consumer Federation of California. Unlike many consumer advocates, Kiesling also served as an advisor to government and business, including the Bureau of Automotive Repair in the Department of Consumer Affairs and Pacific Bell/AT&T.

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## Notes

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### Title notes

### Immediate source of acquisition

Acquisition Source: Roy Kiesling

Acquisition Method: Donation

Acquisition Date: 19880101

## Arrangement

The arrangement of these records reflect Kiesling's administrative efforts in the interest of both California consumers and businesses. They are organized in the following manner: 1) Consumer Organizations (1970-1990), 2) Conferences (1970-1995), 3) Government Consultancies (1976- 1985), 4) Research (1970-1982), 5) Publications (1970-1988).

## Restrictions on access

No access restrictions: All materials are open for research.

## Conditions governing use

The researcher assumes full responsibility for observing all copyright, property, and libel laws as they apply.

## Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
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## Access points

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- Consumer movement (subject)