Kingman Brewster Personal Papers Are Now Available for Research

The Kingman Brewster Personal Papers ([Finding aid][1]) are now open to research. Brewster (1919-1988) was a noted American educator, who became especially well-known when he served as president of Yale University from 1964 to 1977.

Brewster was born in Longmeadow, Massachusetts on June 17, 1919, the son of Kingman Brewster Sr. and Florence Foster. His parents divorced in 1923 and he and his sister settled with their mother in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His mother married Edward Ballantine, a Harvard University music professor. Brewster attended the Belmont Hill School, where he participated in debate and drama. Before entering Yale University as an undergraduate student, Brewster traveled to Europe with his family. He attended Yale College from 1937 to 1941, where he was chairman of the Yale Daily News and was involved in the America First campaign, protesting America’s involvement in World War II.
After the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Brewster enlisted. He served as a Naval aviator and flew anti-submarine patrols in South America for three years.

[3]
Page 1 of a letter from Kingman Brewster to Mary Louise Phillips Brewster, written from Paris and regarding his social engagements during a break from his military service.
After the war ended, he attended Harvard Law School, where he served on the Harvard Law Review. He graduated magna cum laude in 1948. Following graduation, he went to Paris and served as assistant general counsel to Milton Katz, the United States Special Representative in Europe for the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA). The ECA was responsible for administering the Marshall Plan, and his work with Katz in Paris marked the start of a long-term professional relationship and personal friendship. Thereafter he accepted a position in the economics department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1950, Brewster was appointed assistant professor at Harvard Law School. He was promoted to full professor in 1953. While at Harvard, he became a noted expert on antitrust matters and international commerce and relations. His well-received publications included Antitrust and American Business Abroad, published in 1958, and The Law of International Transactions and Relations: Cases and Materials, co-authored with Milton Katz and published in 1960.
[6] Letter from Brewster to his colleagues regarding a survey of the “behavioural sciences” at Harvard University.

In 1960, Brewster returned to Yale University as provost under Yale president, A. Whitney Griswold, who had taught at Yale when Brewster was a student and was a friend of Brewster’s parents.

Page 2 of a letter from Brewster to A. Whitney Griswold regarding Griswold's thoughts on the liberal arts.

After Griswold died from cancer in 1963, Brewster became acting Yale University president and was named president in October. He was inaugurated in April 1964.

Brewster led the university through significant and controversial changes to the faculty, student body, and curricula. For a summary of the work of his presidential administration and the records that document it, see the Kingman Brewster, Jr., president of Yale University, records.

In May 1977, Brewster left Yale to become Ambassador to the Court of St. James's in the United Kingdom.

Swearing in of Kingman Brewster, Jr. as Ambassador to the Court Of St. James's in May 1977. Brewster was sworn in by Cyrus Vance, and the recording includes comments by Vance, Brewster, and Hanna Holborn Gray.

He served as ambassador until 1981 and was well-liked by the British with whom he regularly interacted. He travelled throughout the country to meet people and noted that his job was to try "to advise my Government on British attitudes and concerns in the fullest way possible."

Page 3 of a BBC Radio 4 Today interview with Brewster regarding the release of United States diplomats and citizens from the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran, January 21, 1981.

BBC Platform One interview with Kingman Brewster, Jr., recorded in January 1981, shortly before final confirmation of the release of the American hostages from the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran

After the ambassadorship ended in 1981, Brewster returned to New Haven, and worked for the New York-based law firm of Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam, and Roberts. He also served as chairman of the English-Speaking Union of the United States, a group that sponsors cultural and educational opportunities for students and educators. He was active in other organizations, serving in positions with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Reuters, Common Cause, and the American Council of Learned Societies. In 1984, he returned to London as resident partner for his law firm.

In 1985, he was elected Master of University College at Oxford, an unusual position for an American to hold.
He died at the age of 69 on November 8, 1988.

The Kingman Brewster Personal Papers include informative (but limited) material from 1940 to 1950, but primarily document the personal and professional life of Brewster as a Harvard faculty member (1950-1960) and Ambassador to Great Britain (1977-1981). The most substantive material in the collection is that created by Brewster himself. Letters, unpublished writings, speeches, and interviews, provide extensive documentation of his interests and expertise, including in the areas of the role of government; maintaining a viable center in the political opinion spectrum; American anti-trust laws; American companies doing business abroad; the role of a liberal arts higher education; Anglo-American relations; and the United States in world affairs. The documentation on Brewster as ambassador reflects the public side of his work, rather than behind-the-scenes policy making. The materials displayed herein provide examples of the substantive documentation in the collection.

The work undertaken to arrange and describe the Kingman Brewster personal papers was supported by Henry Chauncey, 1957 B.A., and funded by many generous individuals, including a lead gift from William Lilley, 1965 Ph.D.

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