

## **Guide to the Oran K. Gragson Photographs**

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.**

Box 457010

4505 S. Maryland Parkway

Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-7010

[special.collections@unlv.edu](mailto:special.collections@unlv.edu)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
<b>Creator:</b>	Gragson, Oran K. (Oran Kenneth), 1911-2002
<b>Contributor:</b>	Gragson, Bonnie, 1913-2007
<b>Title:</b>	Oran K. Gragson Photographs
<b>ID:</b>	PH-00310
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1957 to 1981
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.20 Cubic Feet (2 hanging folders and 1 shared box of negatives)
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.20 Linear Feet
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Oran K. Gragson Photographs depict Las Vegas, Nevada mayor and businessperson Oran K. Gragson from 1957 to 1981. The photographs primarily depict Gragson at political events with his wife Bonnie and other politicians such as U.S. senators Howard Cannon and Alan Bible, and Nevada Governor Paul Laxalt. The photographs also depict Gragson at groundbreaking ceremonies, Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas hotels and casinos, the mayor's office, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, and with performers such as Wayne Newton, Sammy Davis Jr., and Lawrence Welk.

### Preferred Citation

Oran K. Gragson Photographs, 1957-1981. PH-00310. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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## Biographical Note

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Politician Oran Gragson was the longest-serving mayor of Las Vegas, Nevada, a position he held from 1959 to 1975. He was born February 14, 1911, near Tucumari, New Mexico. In 1919, his family moved to Arkansas, then later to Texas. Gragson came to the Las Vegas area in 1932 and worked at the Hoover Dam for a short time before finding employment in highway construction.

He later managed the Boulder Inn Casino and Dance Hall and then became part owner of a new and used furniture store. He later opened the North Main Furniture Store, followed by the Charleston Appliance Center.

In the late 1950s, Gragson found that some of the local police had been breaking into his store and stealing televisions. Observing the corruption in the police force motivated Gragson to seek public office. In 1959, Gragson was elected Mayor of Las Vegas. Three years later, he won the Republican nomination for governor, but lost to incumbent Grant Sawyer in the general election. Gragson won re-election as mayor in 1963, 1967, and 1971. During his time in office, he defeated two recall attempts: a recall in his first term and a recall in his last term. He chose not to seek a fifth term, and retired from office in 1975. In 1968, he won the Fiorello LaGuardia Award for "Outstanding Mayor of the Year."

During Gragson's tenure as mayor, he oversaw the construction of several major structures, including Cashman Field and the Las Vegas Convention Center. Under his leadership, the City of Las Vegas acquired several properties for neighborhood parks and community centers, and Gragson founded the Mayor's Urban Renewal Committee, which primarily funded housing projects and improvements like renovating West Las Vegas. Gragson increased highway funding and funds for a new city hall (approved in 1967).

Sources: Martin, Roy. "Oran K. Gragson." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. February 7, 1999. <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/oran-k-gragson>

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## Scope and Contents Note

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The Oran K. Gragson Photographs depict Las Vegas, Nevada mayor and businessperson Oran K. Gragson from 1957 to 1981. The photographs primarily depict Gragson at political events with his wife Bonnie and other politicians such as U.S. senators Howard Cannon and Alan Bible, and Nevada Governor Paul Laxalt. The photographs also depict Gragson at groundbreaking ceremonies, Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas hotels and casinos, the mayor's office, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, and with performers such as Wayne Newton, Sammy Davis Jr., and Lawrence Welk.

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## Arrangement

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Materials remain in original order.

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## Administrative Information

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### Access Note

Collection is open for research.

### Publication Rights

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Reproductions and Use](#) on the UNLV Special Collections and Archives website for more information about reproductions and permissions to publish.

### Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 1987 by Oran K. Gragson and Bonnie Gragson; accession number 1987-149.

### Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2015, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Lindsay Oden wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Collections

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:

Oran K. Gragson Papers, 1959-1988. MS-00170. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Gragson, Oran. Interview, December 25, 1972. OH-00709. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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## Names and Subjects

- photographs
- Politicians
- Las Vegas (Nev.)

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