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The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ **Mike Ferner Papers, 1978-2010** ◀

MSS-241

Size: 7 lin. Ft.

Provenance: Gift of Mike Ferner, 2010

Access: Open

Collection Summary: Collection consists of documents concerning Ferner's early activism, City Council campaigns from 1987 to 1991, office records from 1989 to 1993, and records of his mayoral run in 1993. Materials documenting his activism in labor affairs and peace/anti-war campaigns, as well as his involvement with Veterans for Peace, Inc., are also featured in this collection and include photographs and VHS video recordings.

Subjects: [Civic Interests](#); [Politics and Government](#); [Municipal Government](#)

Related Collections: [Toledo Mayoral and City Council Papers, MSS-061, 1920-1998](#)

Processing Note: None

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Completed by: Ashley Bouknight and Bradley Sommers, August 2010; revised: November 2014 and November 2015

Biographical Sketch

Mike Ferner was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1951. In 1969, he graduated from St. John's High School and attended the University of Toledo from 1975-1983. Ferner would later return to the university in 1993 and graduate cum laude with a B.A. in Education in 1994. In 1969 he entered the United States Navy and worked as an EEG technician as a general duty corpsman on post-operative neurosurgery wards of the Great Lakes Naval Hospital and aboard the carrier USS Hancock.

After being honorably discharged as a Conscientious Objector from the Navy in 1973, Ferner became heavily involved in political activism efforts in Ohio and around the world. He was an advisor to various campaigns regarding military spending and energy policy as well as serving as the media liaison for the Veterans for Peace fact-finding trip to Central America. In 1975 Ferner founded the Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy (TCSE) and assisted in the formation of Ohioans for Utility Reform in 1976. Both groups were organized to unite citizens to lobby for alternatives to nuclear power and lower consumers' utility rates. In 1978, Ferner was employed as a bus driver and habilitation technician for six years with the Lucas County Board of Mental Retardation and then took a position as a union organizer with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) until 1989. Also during this period he served as a freelance writer for *Toledo Metropolitan Magazine*.

Because of his interest in political issues, Ferner decided to run as an Independent for Toledo City Council in 1987. Although unsuccessful, he won the City Council election in 1989 and again in 1991. As councilman, Ferner is noted for tackling issues such as tax abatement, criminal justice reform, and the environment. He is perhaps best known as a leader of the effort to create a municipal electric power system. In 1993, Ferner ran for mayor of Toledo in an extremely close race which he lost by only 672 votes.

Ferner's life after his career as a councilman closely resembles his years prior to entering politics. He continues to work on environmental, civil rights, and economic justice issues. He is also a peace activist, serving on the board and as national president of Veterans for Peace, Inc. Much of his work has been captured in articles and columns in a number of magazines, newspapers, and websites from across the country. His first book, *Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq*, was published in 2006. *Inside the Red Zone* describes his experiences in Iraq in 2003, just prior to the U.S. invasion, and again a year later.

Mike Ferner continues to serve as an activist and freelance writer in Toledo, Ohio.

Scope and Content Note

The Mike Ferner Papers are arranged into seven series which document Ferner's activities in Toledo city government and social activism from 1978-2010.

Series I, Personal, documents the early activism of Ferner from 1978-1987. This series includes news clippings and articles relating to Ferner as well as a copy of his resume from 1992. The majority of this series is comprised of Ferner's early writings as a columnist for the University of Toledo's newspaper, *The Collegian*.

Series II, City Council Run, consists of material relating to Ferner's run for City Council from 1987-1991. This series includes a large amount of correspondence from the 1989 and 1991 campaigns regarding endorsements and personal congratulatory letters. Most of the information pertaining to the 1987 campaign is contained in a scrapbook located in Series VI, Ephemera. In addition to correspondence, this series also contains campaign flyers, news clippings, speeches, photographs, press releases, mailings, and brochures advertising various campaign fundraising/endorsement events for Ferner around the Toledo area.

Series III, City Council, is one of the largest of the seven series and covers the period 1989-1993 in which Ferner served as a Toledo city councilman. Like Series II, Series III holds several files containing information of various events in the form of news clippings, general correspondence, and personal notes/research. However, a large portion of this series is composed of individual files highlighting specific political issues, such as the city budget, city development and housing, and Toledo recycling reforms. A significant portion of the series relates to Ferner's work in lowering energy costs for Toledoans. Included in this section are files such as "Toledo Edison Negotiations", "Public Power", and "Utility Rate Feasibility Study". These files are arranged in alphabetical order and the enclosed material is arranged in chronological order.

Series IV, Mayoral Run, covers Ferner's 1993 run for mayor of Toledo. With the exception of several pieces of correspondence from 1994-1995 and a news clipping from 2004, the majority of the files date to 1993. These files include information on campaign events, various flyers and mailings, and campaign speeches. The largest section of this series is dedicated to news clippings, press releases, and correspondence from the campaign. These files have been arranged chronologically in multiple folders and the correspondence has been divided into three categories: endorsements, general correspondence, and personal letters and cards.

There is also a single mailing from Ferner's 2015 mayoral run.

Series V, Activism, documents Ferner's work as an activist before and after his political career. While there are files that contain information dating from Ferner's time in office, they do not comprise a significant portion of the series. Included in this series are files on his early activism involvement with the Toledo Express Airport strike (1981), the Greyhound bus driver strike (1981-84), the Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy, and the David-Besse/Toledo Edison Conflict (1975-2002). Also documented in this series is information regarding his work with the Toledo Area AFL-CIO, campaign finance reform, AFSCME, anti-war/peace campaigns,

unionizing, and an Iraq peace team mission. Each of the files is arranged in alphabetical order and their contents are organized in chronological order. The series also contains electronic files of writings, email, and correspondence from Ferner documenting his most recent activities, ca. 2005-2010. Much of this material relates to Ferner's work with Veterans for Peace, Inc. The files are stored on a compact disk, and are in various file formats.

Series VI, Ephemera, range from oversized items and photograph albums to campaign t-shirts and membership cards for various organizations. This series also includes Ferner's Certificates of Nomination and Election for city council in 1989 and 1991. Additional campaign materials from his 1989 and 1991 City Council races can be located in **Series VII, Audio/Visual Material**, which includes four VHS tapes containing various commercials that ran during these campaigns. Much of this section contains 35mm slides highlighting Ferner's activism work in the late 1980s.

Folder List

Box	Folder	Item
		Series I. Correspondence
1	1	Early Writings, 1978-1984
1	2	Miscellaneous, 1994
1	3	Resume, 1992
		Series II. City Council Run
1	4	Campaign Events, 1987-1991
1	5	Campaign Flyers, 1987-1991
1	6	Campaign Mailings, 1987-1991
1	7	Correspondence (Endorsements), 1987-1991
1	8	Correspondence (General), 1987-1991
1	9	Correspondence (Personal Letters and Cards), 1987-1991
1	10	Miscellaneous, 1987-1991
1	11	News Clippings, 1987-1992
1	12	Photographs, 1987-1991
1	13	Press Releases, 1987-1991
1	14	Research and Notes, 1987-1992
1	15	Speeches, 1989-1991
		Series III. City Council
1	16	Accomplishments, 1990-1993
1	17	Budget, 1990-1993
1	18	Children, 1986-1993
1	19	Citizen Participation, 1967-1993
1	20	Citizens Against Costly Government Takeover, 1988-1992
1	21	City Council: Correspondence (General), 1989-1993
1	22	City Council: Correspondence (Personal Letters and Cards), 1989-1993
1	23	City Council Minutes and Notes, 1989-1991
1	24	City Council: Miscellaneous, 1992
1	25	City Council: Press Releases, 1990-1993
1	26	City Council: Speeches, 1991-1993
1	27	City Development and Housing, 1989-1993
1	28	Department of Natural Resources: Nature Education, 1990-1991
1	29	Dura Landfill, 1989-1992
1	30	Earth Day, 1990
1	31	Economic Development, 1992
1	32	Electric Rates, 1990-1993
1	33	Emergency Medical Services, 1991-1993
1	34	Employee Ownership of Companies, 1990-1993
1	35	Energy Efficiency Program, 1989-1997
2	1	Environment-Clean Water School Project, 1991-1992
2	2	Environment, Utilities, and Law Committee, 1992

2	3	Ferner in the News: Economy (General), 1990-1992
2	4	Ferner in the News: Environment (General), 1990-1992
2	5	Ferner in the News: Politics (General), 1990-1993
2	6	Ferner Reports, 1990-1993
2	7	Fish Farming, 1992-1993
2	8	GLOBE Trade, 1991-1992
2	9	Health Care, 1990-2002
2	10	Independent Politics, 1922-1994
2	11	Institute for Local Self Reliance, 1987-1990
2	12	Landfill Debate, 1989-1992
2	13	Local Legislation (Resolutions), 1990-1993
2	14	Maquiladora Industry, 1989-1992
2	15	Military Spending, 1982-1992
2	16	National League of Cities, 1990
2	17	Ottawa River Clean-up, 1990-1993
2	18	Owens-Corning Conflicts, 1978-2004
2	19	Peace Dividend for Cities, 1989-1991
2	20	Peace Dividend for Cities, 1992
2	21	Photographs, 1989-1993
2	22	Plabel Rubber Products, Inc., 1992-1993
2	23	Pollution, 1990-1992
2	24	Pollution, 1993-1994
2	25	Portside Conflict, 1989-1993
2	26	Proposed Changes within City Council, 1990-1993
2	27	Prostitution Conflicts & Aid Programs, 1992-1993
2	28	Public Power, 1981-1991
2	29	Public Power, 1992-1993
2	30	Public Power, n.d.
2	31	Public Support of Lower Utility Rates, 1990-1993
2	32	Recycled Products, 1990-1993
2	33	Recycling-Purchasing Agents, 1990
2	34	Reforestation, 1990-1991
2	35	Research on Public Power Electricity Companies, 1987-1993
2	36	San Jose Sustainability Program, 1982-1993
2	37	Solid Waste/592 Implementation, 1990-1992
2	38	Solid Waste/Economic Development, 1982-1993
2	39	Spicer Unit Close Down Agreement, 1992
2	40	Strike Breakers, 1990
3	1	Summit Center/Garage, 1989-1992
3	2	Tax Abatement, 1978-1991
3	3	Tax Abatement, 1991-1997
3	4	Tax Abatement: Dora Steel, 1991-1992
3	5	T.E.A.M.S., 1991-1992
3	6	Toledo Edison ACME Generating Plant, 1992-1996

3	7	Toledo Edison Electric Franchise, 1989-1993
3	8	Toledo Edison Negotiations, 1990-1993
3	9	Toledo, OH History: Brand Whitlock, n.d.
3	10	Toledo, OH History: Sam Jones and Great-grand Daughter, 1987-1998
3	11	Toledo Recycling Reforms, 1990-1993
3	12	Toledo Public Schools-City Coop. Committee, 1990
3	13	Toledo Youth Violence and Program Responses, 1989-1993
3	14	Trees-Preservation Studies, 1984-1990
3	15	Unfunded Mandates, 1990-1992
3	16	Urban Forestry Commission, 1990-1993
3	17	Utility Rate Feasibility Study, 1989-2004
3	18	Utility Street Openings, 1988-1993
3	19	Volunteer Programs, 1984-1991
3	20	Welfare Reform, 1994-1996
3	21	Youth Projects/Recreation Programs, 1990-1993
		Series IV. Mayoral Run
3	22	Campaign Events, 1993
3	23	Campaign Mailings, 1993 and 2015
3	24	Correspondence (Endorsements), 1993
3	25	Correspondence (General), 1993
3	26	Correspondence (Personal Letters and Cards), 1993-1995
3	27	Miscellaneous, 1993
3	28	News Clippings, January – September 1993
3	29	News Clippings, October 1993 – 2004
3	30	Photographs, 1993
3	31	Press Releases, 1993
3	32	Research and Notes, 1993
3	33	Speeches, 1993
		Series V. Activism
4	1	ACLU Issues, 1994
4	2	Activism: Correspondence (General), n.d.
4	3	Activism: News Clippings (General), 1982-2000
4	4	Activism: Publications, 1982-2005
4	5	Activism: Publications, 1996-2005
4	6	Activism: Speeches, 1993-1996
4	7	Air Pollution Movements, 1981-1982
4	8	American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) (General), 1982-2001
4	9	Anti-War/Peace Campaign, 1980-2003
4	10	AUTOLITE 50 th Anniversary Rally, 1934-1991
4	11	Bridge Vandalism Case, 2006
4	12	Campaign Finance Reform, 1983-1997
4	13	Congressional Hearing Case, 2006-2008

4	14	Convention Center/Freedom of Speech Case, 1992
4	15	David-Besse/Toledo Edison Conflict, 1975-2002
4	16	Early Activism Efforts, 1975-1988
4	17	Environmentalists for Full Employment, 1979-1996
4	18	Fulton County Waterline, 1995-1996
4	19	Greyhound Strike, 1981-1984
4	20	Institute for Self Reliance, n.d.
4	21	Iraq Peace Team, 2003
4	22	Jobs with Peace, 1982-1983
4	23	Labor Committee for Safe Energy and Full Employment, 1981
4	24	Labor Day Parade, 1983
4	25	Labor/Union Activities, 1978-2001
4	26	Lower Utility Rate Initiative, 1976
4	27	Lower Utility Rate Initiative, 1977
4	28	Meijer Employees Strike, 1994
4	29	National Organization of Women (N.O.W.) Event Flyer, n.d.
4	30	OAPSE/AFSME Unionizing, 1982-1987
4	31	Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE), 1984-1990
4	32	Ohio Labor Party: Correspondence, 1982-2001
4	33	Ohio Labor Party: Government Documents/Minutes, 1983-2001
4	34	Ohio Labor Party: Mailings/Newsletters, 1983-2001
4	35	Ohio Labor Party: News Articles, 1930-2001
4	36	Ohio Schools/Tax Data, 1993-2001
4	37	Partnership between Businesses and Schools, 1994-1999
4	38	Photographs, 1975-1989
4	39	POCLAD-Education, 1997-2006
4	40	Toledo Area AFL-CIO (General), 1983-1994
4	41	Toledo Area AFL-CIO Education/Civil Rights Committee, 1982-1983
4	42	Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy: Correspondence, 1979-1990
4	43	Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy: Flyers and Mailings, 1983-1997
4	44	Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy: News Clippings, 1975-1993
4	45	Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy: Newsletters, 1979-1983
5	1	Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy: Notes and Research, 1980-1986
5	2	Toledo Criminal Justice Issues, 1993-1996
5	3	Toledo Express Airport Strike, 1981
5	4	Toledo Mineworkers Union Support, 1981
5	5	Toledo Transportation Systems, 1981-2002
5	6	Toledoans Against the Contract, 1995
5	7	UAW (General), 1981-2002
5	8	Union Busters articles, 1977-1981
5	9	United Steel Workers of America, 1983
5	10	Writings, miscellaneous electronic files, ca. 2005-2010

Series VI. Ephemera		
5	11	Activism: Booklets
5	12	Activism: Stickers, Toledo Edison Conflict, n.d.
9		Campaign Button, City Council Run, 1987
9		Campaign Button, City Council Run, 1989
9		Campaign Button, n.d.
5		Campaign mug, glass, Mayoral Run, 1993
10		Campaign Posters, City Council Run, n.d.
10		Campaign Poster, Mayoral Run, 1993
10		Campaign Poster, vandalized, Mayoral Run, 1993
6		Campaign T-shirt, City Council Run, 1987
6		Campaign T-shirt, City Council Run, 1989
6		Campaign T-shirt, City Council Run, 1991
6		Campaign T-shirt, Mayoral Run, 1993
5	13	Certificates of Nomination/Election, 1989-1991
8		City Council Run Scrapbook, 1987
5	14	Delegate Badges, 1990-1996
9		Framed Campaign Newspaper Cartoons, 1989-1991
9		Framed Campaign Newspaper Cartoons, 1989-1991
9		Framed Campaign Newspaper Cartoons, 1989-1991
5	15	Membership Cards, 1984-1991
5	17	Personal Office Notes, Notebook, 1991-1992
5		Photograph album (Protests), 1981-1989
5		Photograph album (David-Besse Conflict), 1979-1981
5	16	Personal Organizers/Appointment Books, 1989-1992
5	18	Publications, 1993-2006
Series VII. Audio/Visual Material		
7		8 mm photographic slide, Press Conference, 1984
7		8 mm photographic slides, N.O.W. March on Washington for Women's lives (46 slides), 1989
7		8 mm photographic slides, Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy slide presentation: "The Price of Power" (140 slides), 1991
7		8 mm photographic slides, TWA Strike (3 slides)
7		8mm photographic slides, N.O.W. 20 th Birthday Celebration at University of Toledo (22 slides), 1986
7		Cassette tape, Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy slide presentation: "The Price of Power" (audio for presentation), 1991
5		VHS tape, "City Council: Toledo Green"
5		VHS tape, City Council Run campaign television commercials
5		VHS tapes, Campaign material
5		VHS tapes, Campaign material