

**The New York Public Library  
Humanities and Social Sciences Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**A.M. Rosenthal Papers**  
**1959-2004**  
MssCol 17930

**Lee Spilberg**  
**January 2011**

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## Summary

<b>Main entry:</b>	Rosenthal, A. M. (Abraham Michael), 1922-2006
<b>Title:</b>	A.M. Rosenthal papers, 1959-2004
<b>Size:</b>	14.5 linear feet (40 boxes)
<b>Source:</b>	Purchased from the estate of A.M. Rosenthal, 2009
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The A.M. Rosenthal papers document the career of <i>New York Times</i> Managing and Executive Editor Abraham Michael Rosenthal (1922-2006), noted for his stewardship of that newspaper during one of its most tumultuous periods, from the 1960s through the 1980s. The collection contains Rosenthal's personal files from the era of his editorial tenure and beyond. The papers include extensive professional correspondence, journals, speeches, subject files, writings, and scrapbooks. They detail Rosenthal's activities and interactions during his years as an editor and a columnist.</p>
<b>Access:</b>	Advance notice required. Apply at <a href="http://www.nypl.org/mssref">http://www.nypl.org/mssref</a>
<b>Preferred citation:</b>	A.M. Rosenthal Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
<b>Special formats</b>	Journals, Photographs, Scrapbooks.

### **Related materials note**

New York Times Company Records. A.M. Rosenthal Papers. MssCol 17929.  
Manuscripts & Archives Division, New York Public Library.

## Biographical note

A. M. Rosenthal (1922-2006) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent who became the executive editor of *The New York Times* and led the paper's global news operations through 17 years of record growth, modernization and major journalistic change. After 19 years as a reporter and correspondent, Rosenthal spent the next 23 years serving successively as metropolitan editor, assistant managing editor, managing editor and executive editor, securing *The Times's* journalistic significance by pursuing the news aggressively and modernizing the paper while maintaining its strictest standards.

Abraham Michael Rosenthal was born in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada on May 2, 1922, the sixth child of Russian immigrants. The family emigrated to the United States three years later. Growing up in the Bronx during the Great Depression, Abe faced the same poverty as so many of his neighbors, but he had other hardships to endure. His father died when Abe was still very young, as did three of his five sisters. As a teenager, Abe was bedridden for two years by a case of osteomyelitis. Told he would probably never walk again, Abe expected the worst, but help from his surviving sisters allowed him to travel to the Mayo Clinic, where he slowly recovered.

Rosenthal was an eager student, but not a rich one, so he happily attended City College of New York, the academically rigorous, but no-cost, school in Manhattan. Taking particular delight in political discussion there, Rosenthal aspired to the coveted position of *The New York Times* City College campus correspondent. Attaining the job in his senior year, Rosenthal began a relationship with the paper that continued for over fifty years. He worked on the city staff as a general assignment reporter from his graduation in 1943 until he was named United Nations correspondent in 1945. After nine years covering the U.N., Rosenthal traveled the world as a foreign correspondent, stationed in India, Poland, Switzerland, and Japan from 1954 to 1963. His coverage of the political situation in Poland won him two of his proudest honors: a Pulitzer Prize and forcible expulsion from Poland.

Reluctantly returning to New York, Rosenthal was named Metropolitan Editor (an appellation he disliked, preferring the old title of City Editor). He presided over the expansion of New York coverage, adding more feature stories and social observation to the typical crime beat and press conference summaries common to city desks of the era. In 1967, Rosenthal was promoted to Assistant Managing Editor and, shortly thereafter, to Associate Managing Editor. In 1969, he was named Managing Editor. He took a more hands-on approach to the job than his predecessors, with his first action being to insist on reading selected copy before it appeared in the paper. Rosenthal himself later contrasted his style with that of earlier editors by suggesting that they preferred to be judges, assessing what was good or bad about yesterday's paper, while he preferred to be a participant, guiding what would be in tomorrow's paper.

Rosenthal found ways to enlarge the scope of the paper, adding daily sections on various special subjects, such as business, science, and entertainment. His changes increased circulation and advertising, allowing *The New York Times* to maintain its profitability as more people turned to television for their daily news consumption, while broadening the definition of news itself in the "paper of record." By 1976, the Sunday paper, previously a separate editorial entity, merged with the daily paper, and Rosenthal was named Executive Editor, responsible for every page of *The New York Times*, except for the editorial and Op-Ed pages.

In spite of presiding over an era of unprecedented change, Rosenthal's primary editorial goal was always to "keep the paper straight." Eager to keep any bias out of *Times* news coverage, Rosenthal constantly reminded his reporters and editors of the importance of impartial journalism. Rosenthal generally felt that as long as the *Times* received criticism from both sides of the political spectrum on a given issue, the reporting had been fair. Ironically, one of the controversies arising during Rosenthal's tenure resulted from one of the very few pieces he wrote as an editor. He was at Columbia University on the night of a particularly violent student protest in 1968 and, after surveying the aftermath, he decided to write an article covering the story. Critics from within *The New York*

*Times*, as well as from outside, accused Rosenthal of showing his sympathy for the administration and his contempt for the protesters. He denied any bias, but did avoid any subsequent original reporting. Some controversial policy issues arising during Rosenthal's tenure sprang from stylistic choices; until 1986, "Ms." was not a permissible honorific in the *Times* and "gay" could only be used as a synonym for happy. On the other side of the political coin, the publication of the Pentagon Papers made *The Times*, and Rosenthal in particular, a target of conservative criticism.

At the helm of a staff of highly regarded editors and writers that included many young stars he had recruited, Rosenthal directed coverage of the major news stories of the era - the war in Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers, the Watergate scandal and successive crises in the Middle East. After 17 years as a principal architect of the modern *New York Times*, Rosenthal stepped down as the top editor in 1986, having nearly reached the mandatory retirement age set for the editorial staff of the paper. He then began the last phase of his *Times* career, nearly 13 years as the author of a twice-weekly column, "On My Mind," for the Op-Ed page. The column centered on public affairs in general, with a particular focus on international issues, human rights, and drug policy in America. After publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. ended Rosenthal's tenure as a *Times* columnist in 1999, Rosenthal continued as a columnist with the *New York Daily News*, as well as with several online media outlets. He made no secret of his disappointment at being asked to leave his lifelong journalistic home, but he was eager to keep writing on the subjects about which he still had something to say.

Rosenthal was married to Ann Marie Burke from 1949 to 1986, and to Shirley Lord from 1987 until his death. He had three sons with his first wife, one of whom, Andrew Rosenthal, went on to become an editor at *The New York Times*.

## Scope and content note

The A.M. Rosenthal papers consist of Rosenthal's personal files, spanning his editorial tenure and his subsequent career as a columnist and commentator. The personal series contains those papers kept separately from *The New York Times* office files. Maintained in Rosenthal's New York home, these files add dimension to the picture of Rosenthal's years as an editor, and also provide a look at his later career as a columnist, finally free to express his own views to the public. They include notes for speeches given by Rosenthal from the 1960s through the early 2000s; subject files for his columns from 1987 through the early 2000s; and some additional correspondence, primarily from 1987 onward, but some earlier letters, as well. Highlights of this series include seventeen journals spanning 1971-1986, containing appointment data and attached correspondence, creating almost a scrapbook for each year; transcripts of an oral history recorded at *The New York Times* in 1983 and 1985, containing very frank and specific discussions of the events and people at the paper during Rosenthal's career; and some of Rosenthal's own writings, most notably, drafts of various chapters of an unpublished memoir.

While some of the correspondence in these papers dates from the era of Rosenthal's editorship, including some internal *New York Times* memoranda, the majority comes from the years 1987-2004, when Rosenthal was a columnist for *The Times* and other publications. There are a few individual correspondent files, most notably one with Richard Nixon, in which the columnist and the former president discuss world affairs of the early 1990s. There are folders designated by Rosenthal as "special letters," some of which come from famous people, whereas others seem to be letters he considered personally significant. Correspondents in this section include statesmen, such as Hubert Humphrey and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, journalists, such as Dan Rather and Barbara Walters, and business leaders, such as Steve Forbes and Donald Trump. Perhaps the most revealing correspondence in the series, however, dates from 1999, when Rosenthal was forcibly retired from *The New York Times* at the publisher's request. There are hundreds of letters from friends, acquaintances, and readers sent to Rosenthal directly, as well as to *The Times*, expressing their sorrow and outrage at the decision. There are copies of some of Rosenthal's replies included also, providing a candid view of his own feelings at the time.

Not journals in the conventional sense, Rosenthal's journals are a combination of scrapbooks and diaries. Detailing the years 1971-1986, they illustrate the highlights of most of his tenure as the leading decision maker of *The New York Times*. They list major appointments and excursions, with related letters and other papers attached where appropriate. The journals provide researchers with a sense not only of how Rosenthal spent his time, but of what he thought was important. There are, in addition, two actual scrapbooks included in the series. Both date from 1959-1960, focusing on Rosenthal's time as a correspondent in Poland. One scrapbook centers on his expulsion by the government as a reaction to the reports he filed, and the other centers on the Pulitzer Prize he won for those same reports.

Rosenthal's years at *The Times* are reviewed and relived via his official oral history, included in this collection. Times Vice Chairman Sydney Gruson met with Rosenthal for four sessions in 1983 and 1985, and their discussion was transcribed for posterity. Rosenthal shares his memories and views on colleagues and controversies, predecessors and policies. The history seems to have been intended to continue, but the fourth session is the last one included. Researchers interested in Rosenthal's personal history and thoughts will find his memoir drafts worthwhile also. Never published, Rosenthal's memoir exists as various sections and chapters, compiled over many years. He began in the early 1960s, writing about his experiences as a student and a correspondent, and then returned to the project many times throughout the years. There is no complete version of the memoir, but readers can piece together most of Rosenthal's early life and career from the chapters included.

Other writings include a complete list of Rosenthal's columns from 1987-2000, arranged by both subject and date, drafts of news and magazine pieces on Moscow, China, and the Philippines, and a

notebook containing some ideas, in Rosenthal's own handwriting, for columns and stories. A typescript of his last column for *The New York Times* is included, signed by nineteen Times staff members, including Howell Raines and Rosenthal's son, Andrew. Two versions of Rosenthal's will are also found in this series.

Notes and drafts of speeches are arranged chronologically, with venues ranging from clubs, sales conferences, and graduations to private parties, memorial services, and even the U.S. House of Representatives. The speeches span the 1960s through the early 2000s, most of Rosenthal's life as an influential figure in public discourse.

Subject files for columns are arranged alphabetically, containing some correspondence, research notes, and printed matter not necessarily available to the general public. All of the material in the subject files was generated and obtained during Rosenthal's career as a columnist at *The New York Times* and for other publications.

Rosenthal's life and career before becoming Assistant Managing Editor of *The Times* are not well-represented in the collection, with only two scrapbooks and part of his memoir touching on those early years.

## **Arrangement note**

The A.M. Rosenthal Papers are organized in the following series:

- Series I: Correspondence, 1970-2004
- Series II: Journals, 1971-1986
- Series III: Oral history and photographs, 1978-1985, undated
- Series IV: Scrapbooks, 1959-1960
- Series V: Speeches, 1968-2000
- Series VI: Subject files, 1987-2002
- Series VII: Writings, 1961-2000



## Container list

### Series I: Correspondence, 1970-2004

3 boxes

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Awards
	2	Book letters
	3	<i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>
	4	De la Renta, Oscar
	5	Douglas, Peter
	6	India
	7	Invitations
	8	Memos from AMR
	9	Memos to AMR
	10	Nixon, Richard
	11	Personal, 1971
		Retirement from <i>New York Times</i>
	12-15	1999
2	1-2	1999-2000
	3	Rosenthal sons (Jonathan, Daniel, Andrew)
	4	Six-Column paper
	5-8	Special letters
3	1	Statements (important)
	2	Sulzberger, A.O.
	3	Thank-you letters (knee operation)
	4	<i>Thirty-Eight Witnesses</i>
	5-8	Unsorted, 1966-2004

### Series II: Journals, 1971-1986

9 boxes

<u>Box</u>	<u>Vol</u>	
4	1-2	1971-1972
5	1-2	1973-1974
6	1-2	1975-1976
7	1-2	1977-1978
8	1-2	1979-1980
9	1	1981
10	1-2	1982-1983
11	1-2	1984; 1986
12	1-2	1985

### Series III: Oral history and photographs, 1978-1985, undated

1 box

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
13	1-4	Oral history transcripts, 1983; 1985
	5	Photographs, 1978, n.d.

## Series IV: Scrapbooks, 1959-1960

1 box

<u>Box</u>	<u>Vol</u>	
14	1-2	Poland

## Series V: Speeches, 1968-2000

7 boxes

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
15	1	Radio/TV appearances, 1968-1978
	2-4	General, 1971-1973
	5	Testimony before House subcommittee re: Newsmen's Privilege, 1973
	6	General, 1974-1976
	7	Journalism and the Law, 1976
	8	Ohio University, 1976
	9	New York University School of Law Bicentennial Conference, 1976
16	1-2	General, 1976-1979
	3	Judicial conference of the Second Circuit, 1979
	4-5	Florida Press Association, 1980
	6	Colby College, 1981
	7	Finley Medal, 1981
	8	Silurians Award, 1981
	9	Joint ABA-ANPA Task Force, 1982
17	1	ANPA panel, 1983
	2	Turner Catledge memorial, 1983
	3	Staff editor meeting, 1983
	4	SUNY Brockport, 1984
	5	Art Directors Club Hall of Fame, 1984
	6	Town Hall series, Sarasota, 1984
	7	New York By Night, 1985
	8	Sigma Delta Chi, Fort Worth, 1986
	9	Chancellor's Council of the University of California, 1986
	10	National Association of Black Journalists convention, 1986
	11	<i>New York Times</i> advertising sales conference, 1986
	12	Mission Inn sales conference, 1986
	13	National Press Foundation, 1987
	14	<i>Meet the Press</i> , 1987
	15	Rosenthal award, 1987
	16	Max David Journalism Prize, Milan, 1988
	17	New York University, 1988
	18	Sutton Place Synagogue, 1988
	19	Boston, 1988
	20	Bush speech, 1989
	21	Columbia University, 1989
	22	Cleveland, 1989
	23	Cincinnati, 1989
18	1	General, 1991
	2	Pentagon Papers conference, 1991
	3	Los Angeles, 1992
	4	Simon Wiesenthal Center, Town Hall, 1992
	5	American Friends of Hebrew University, 1992
	6	Malcolm Forbes dedication, Brown University, 1992
	7	New York Academy of Science, 1992
	8	Cleveland UJA; Montreal; Norfolk, 1992

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
18	9	Jewish Federation of Phoenix--Operation Exodus, 1992
	10	Middle East Council, 1992
	11	Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, 1992
	12	Grayson Memorial Lecture, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, 1992
	13	Hebrew Union College [1992}
	14	Boston--Anti-Defamation League, 1992
	15	New Jersey Jewish Federation, 1992
19	1	Central Synagogue, 1993
	2	Jewish Federation/UJA--Palm Beach, 1993
	3	UJA--Chicago, 1993
	4	Bernard Leser tribute, 1993
	5	Jewish Community Center, West Orange, NJ, 1993
	6	UJA--Milwaukee, 1993
	7	Anti-Defamation League, 1994
	8	Lotus Club, 1995
	9	Women's American ORT, 1995
	10	Future of Hope--Hiroshima, 1995
	11	American Bar Association--Palm Beach, 1996
	12	National Council of Jewish Women, 1996
20	13	UJA--Wyckoff, NJ, 1996
	14	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Award--Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1996
	1	UJA--Louisville, 1996
	2	Anti-Defamation League--Palm Beach, 1997
	3	Jewish Federation of Waterbury / Temple Beth Shalom, Livingston, NJ, 1997
	4	Ben Gurion University, 1997
	5	'Punch' Sulzberger party, 1998
	6	American Society for Technion, 1998
	7	India, 1998
	8	Jewish Federation--Des Moines, 1998
	9	Baltimore Jewish Federation, 1998
	10	Pace College, 1998
21	1	Boston Jewish Federation, 1998
	2	Har Zion Temple--Philadelphia, 1999
	3	New Orleans, 1999
	4	General, 2000
	5	Journalism, n.d
	6	Miscellaneous speeches, n.d.

# **Series VI: Subject files, 1987-2002**

15 boxes

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
22	1	Abortion
	2-3	Afghanistan
	4-5	Africa
	6	AIDS
	7	Al Qaeda
	8-9	Albania
	10	Albright, Madeleine
	11	America
	12	Amnesty International
	13	Anderson, Terry
	14	Anti-America
	15	Anti-Jews
	16-17	Anti-Semitism
23	1	Arab Human development
	2	Arab/Israel
	3-4	Arabs
	5-6	Arafat, Yasir
	7-8	Argentina
	9	Arms control
	10	Atkins, Tommy
	11	Austria
	12	Awards
24	1	Baltic
	2	Baruch, Bernard
	3	Bauer, Gary
	4	Blacks
	5	Blacks/Farrakhan
	6	Blix, Hans
	7-8	Bosnia
	9	Brown, Helen Gurley
	10	Brunner, Alois
	11	Buchanan, Patrick
	12	Buckley, William F.
25	1-2	Burns, John
	3	Center for Religious Freedom
	4	Center for Security Policy
	5	Central Intelligence Agency
	6	Century Association
	7	Chemical weapons
	8-11	China
26	1	China
	2	City College of New York
	3-4	Clinton impeachment
	5	Columbia College--Methadone
	6	Concern USA
	7	Congress
	8	Costa Rica
	9	Crime
	10	Criminal Court notes
	11	Croatia

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
26	12	Crown Heights
	13	Cuba
	14	Czechoslovakia
	15	Dalai Lama
	16	Democracy
	17	Democrats
	18	Dolan, Tony
	19	Dole, Robert
	20	Drug Watch
		Drugs
27	21-24	1998-2001
	1	2002
	2	<i>New York Times</i>
	3	Duke, David
	4	Egypt
	5	Emerson, Steven
	6	Eulogies
	7	Evans-Novak
	8	Fallaci, Oriana
	9	Falun Gong
	10	Farber, Myron
	11	Farrakhan, Louis
	12	Federal Bureau of Investigation
	13-15	Female genital mutilation
28	1	First Amendment
	2	Foreign policy
	3	Foxman, Abraham
	4	Freedom House
	5	Gates, Henry Louis
	6	Gays
	7	Gelb party
	8	GenerationA.com
	9	Germany
	10	Giuliani, Rudolph
	11	Gorbachev, Mikhail
	12	Greece
	13	Haiti
	14	Harvard University
	15	Hollywood movies
	16	Holocaust
	17	Horowitz, Michael
	18	Huffington, Arianna
	19-20	Human rights
29	1	Hungary
	2	Hussein, Saddam
	3	Immigration
	4	India
	5	International Religious Freedom Act
	6	Iran
	7-12	Iraq
	13	Ireland
	14-15	Israel

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
30	1-4	Israel
	5	Japan
	6	<i>Jerusalem Post</i>
	7	Jewish issues
	8	Jordan
	9	Journalism and <i>The Times</i>
	10	Kalahari
	11	Kashmir
	12	Kissinger, Henry
	13	Koch, Edward
31	1	Lantos, Tom
	2	Lazer, Victor and Nora
	3	Lithuania
	4	Marion Prison
	5	Million Youth March
	6	Mintz, Morton
	7	Muslim states
	8	Muslims
	9	National Families in Action
	10	National security
	11	Nazi skinheads
	12	Nazi war crimes
	13	New York
	14	<i>New York Observer</i>
	15	New York Public Library
		<i>New York Times</i>
	16	Jayson Blair
	17	Policy
	18	North American Free Trade Association
	19	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
	20	Nuclear armament
	21	Obituary book
	22	Oman
	23	Pakistan
	24	Pan Am
32	1	Pentagon Papers
	2	Pentagon Papers conference
	3	Perot, H. Ross
	4	Perry, Father Michael
	5	Poland
	6	Police
	7	Pollard, Jonathan
	8	Prague
	9	Presidential Medal of Freedom
	10	Press
	11	Proliferation
	12	Puerto Rico
	13	Pulitzer Prize
33	1	Qaddafi, Muammar
	2	Radio Free Europe
	3	Reagan, Ronald
	4-5	Religion
	6	Religious persecution

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
33	7	Rosenthal, Harold
	8	Savings and loan
	9	Schumer, Charles
	10	Securities and Exchange Commission
	11	Serbia/Croatia
	12	Severo, Richard
	13	Shalem Center
	14	Shea, Nina
	15	Shultz, George
	16	Sleeping sickness
	17	Sliwa, Maria
	18	South Africa
	19	Soviet prisoners
		Soviet Union
	20	Kazachkov
34	1	KGB
	2	Post-coup
	3-6	Sudan
	7-8	Syria
35	1	Taiwan
	2	Talese, Gay
	3	Talese, Pamela (Century)
	4-5	Terrorism
	6	<i>Thirty-Eight Witnesses</i>
	7	Tibet
36	8	Turkey
	1	United Nations
	2	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
	3	University of Pennsylvania
	4	Vietnam
	5	Wallace, Mike
	6	Wallenberg, Raoul
	7	<i>Washington Times</i>
	8	Wharton, Cliff
	9	Wiesel, Elie
	10	Wu, Harry
	11	Yugoslavia

## Series VII: Writings, 1961-2000

4 boxes

		General
37	1	Column Lists, 1987-2000 (Arranged by subject and by date)
	2	Final <i>New York Times</i> column with signatures, 1999
	3	Moscow, n.d.
	4	Philippines, n.d.
	5	<i>Reader's Digest</i> (China), 1997
	6	<i>Sophisticated Traveler</i> introduction, 1984
	7	Story idea notebook, n.d.
	8	Wills, 1980, 1985
		Memoir
38	1-8	Prologue; Chapters 1-8
	9	1961 manuscript
	10	China (original transcripts)
	11	New York
	12	Outlines, 1991-1992
<u>Box</u>	<u>Vol</u>	
39	1	Book notes--Office copy
40	1	Family, U.N., India, Nehru
	2	Vietnam, India, Nepal, Poland