



## Lynn Ray Sykes papers15624275

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## Summary Information

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|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Repository:</b>               | Rare Book and Manuscript Library   |
| <b>Creator:</b>                  | Sykes, L. R.   |
| <b>Title:</b>                    | Lynn Ray Sykes papers  |
| <b>ID:</b>                       | 15624275   |
| <b>ID:</b>                       | MS#2057  |
| <b>Date [inclusive]:</b>         | 1940-2015  |
| <b>Date [bulk]:</b>              | 1970-2010  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b>     | 3.78 Linear Feet 9 document boxes  |
| <b>Language of the Material:</b> | The collection is primarily in English, with some academic papers and reports in Russian.  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>                 | Lynn Ray Sykes (1937- ) is an American seismologist and the Higgins Professor Emeritus of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Columbia University. While working at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Sykes made important discoveries about plate tectonics and played key roles in the development of nuclear test bans. The papers include correspondence, annotated journal articles, academic presentations, conference programs, reports, photographs, invitations, meeting notes, research material, and additional written documents. |

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Lynn Ray Sykes Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Lynn Ray Sykes was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1937. After growing up in Washington, D.C., Sykes attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received his B.S. and M.S. in Geology and Geophysics. Upon receiving his master's degree in 1960, Sykes

matriculated at Columbia University for a doctorate in Geology. During his program, Sykes studied earthquakes and plate tectonics under the supervision of Jack Oliver. When Sykes finished his Ph.D. in 1965, he stayed at Columbia, joining the university's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and becoming the Higgins Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Sykes studied seismology and nuclear testing, publishing over 135 scientific articles throughout his career. In the realm of nuclear testing, Sykes joined a U.S. delegation to Moscow in 1974 to discuss the Threshold Test Ban, and he played a significant role in the eventual development of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He lobbied lawmakers on matters related to nuclear testing and spoke before Congress on multiple occasions. Sykes served as a member of several professional organizations, such as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences, and he became Chair of the National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council in 1984. Sykes' achievements throughout his career earned him several awards and recognitions, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Sloan Fellowship, and the American Geophysical Union's Walter H. Bucher Medal.

In 2017, Sykes published *Silencing the Bomb: One Scientist's Quest to Halt Nuclear Testing* (Columbia University Press), which details his efforts to stop nuclear testing. In the book, Sykes explains how he and his collaborators used seismology, especially plate tectonics, to discover underground nuclear explosions throughout the Cold War.

Now retired, Sykes lives in Palisades, New York, near the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory.

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## Scope and Contents

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The collection contains the papers of Lynn Ray Sykes and, in the main, relates to his work in seismology and nuclear test bans, as represented by Series I-II. There is a small final series that relates to Sykes' personal life, which includes awards he received, a copy of his oral history, several photographs dating back to his childhood, and his curriculum vitae.

The bulk of the collection pertains to Sykes' career as a seismologist. The collection includes correspondence, annotated journal articles, academic presentations, conference programs, reports, photographs, invitations, meeting notes, research material, and additional written documents.

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## Arrangement

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This collection is arranged in three series. Series I is arranged by person or subject (e.g. institution, organization, conference, etc.). Within Series I, items are arranged alphabetically. Subseries I.1 is arranged alphabetically by last name, while Subseries I.2 is arranged alphabetically by subject title. Series III is arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Revision Description

Finding aid created by CCR. Restriction on oral history (located in Box 9, Folder 10) lifted as expired. kws 2025-07-16 2026-01-05

### Conditions Governing Access

The collection has no restrictions.

### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is located off-site. You will need to request this material at least five business days in advance to use the collection in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library reading room.

### Accruals

No additions are expected.

### **Conditions Governing Use**

Reproductions may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Curator of Manuscripts/University Archivist, Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML). The RBML approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Gift, Lynn Ray Sykes, 2021.

### **Processing Information**

This collection was processed by Sophia Scanlan (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2030). Finding aid written by Sophia Scanlan in July 2025.

### **Processing Information**

Before archival processing, materials were largely organized by name or institution, and this collection maintains that structure, especially in Series I-II. Within Series I, order was imposed to organize materials alphabetically by last name or subject title. While most folders and titles were reused, some old folders, hanging folders, and cardboard folders were replaced and relabeled for clarity or preservation purposes. Additional order was imposed to group personal and biographical materials together in Series III.

A Social Security number of a living person was redacted.

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Related Materials**

[Oral History Interview with Lynn R. Sykes, 1997](#). A copy of this interview at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library's Center for Oral History is located in the Lynn Ray Sykes Papers.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Geologists
- Seismology
- Earthquakes
- Underground nuclear explosions
- Nuclear weapons -- Testing
- Cold War
- Correspondence
- Geology
- Geophysics
- International relations
- Oral history
- Politicians
- Photographs
- Scientists
- Seismologists
- Nuclear explosions
- Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory

## Collection Inventory

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### Series I: Subject Files, A-Z, 1945-2015

#### Scope and Contents

This series contains correspondence, journal articles, academic presentations, conference programs, reports, meeting notes, and research material related to Sykes' career. While the documents span 1945 through 2015, the bulk of the material covers 1970 through 2010. Materials are organized alphabetically by individual's last name or subject title, such as organization, conference, or institution.

### Subseries I.1: People, 1957-2012

#### Scope and Contents

This subseries contains files related to over fifty people with whom Sykes collaborated or had contact over the course of his career. While most of these individuals are other researchers, the subseries also includes files related to several prominent mid- to late-twentieth-century political figures, including former Senator Edward Kennedy, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and President Ronald Reagan, among many others. The bulk of the subseries contains correspondence but also includes research material, conference programs, journal articles, and reports.

| Title/Description           | Instances |          |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Adushkin, Vitaly, 1990-2001 | box 1     | folder 1 |

|   |       |             |
|---|-------|-------------|
| Alewine, Ralph, 1983-1985                       | box 1 | folder 2    |
| Bache, Thomas, 1980-1987                        | box 1 | folder 3-4  |
| Barker, Robert, 2009                            | box 1 | folder 5    |
| Bundy, McGeorge, 1986                           | box 1 | folder 6    |
| Case, Clifford P., 1971                         | box 1 | folder 7    |
| Der, Zoltan, 1985                               | box 1 | folder 8    |
| Evernden, Jack, 1970-1988                       | box 1 | folder 9-11 |
| Evernden, Jack, 1970-1988                       | box 2 | folder 1    |
| Evernden-Sykes Test Ban Letters, 1983-1984      | box 2 | folder 2    |
| Frank, Jerome, 1984                             | box 2 | folder 3    |
| Garbin, H. Douglass - Mill Yard Explosion, 1986 | box 2 | folder 4    |
| Garwin, Richard L., 1983-1999                   | box 2 | folder 5    |
| Gertz, Bill, 1999                               | box 2 | folder 6    |
| Geschwind, Carl-Henry, 1998                     | box 2 | folder 7    |
| Glenn and Goldstein, 1993                       | box 2 | folders 8   |
| Glenn, Lawrence A., 1960-1994                   | box 2 | folder 9    |
| Goldanskii, Vitalii, 1985                       | box 2 | folder 10   |
| Hannon, W.J., 1985                              | box 2 | folder 11   |
| Harriman, W. Averell, 1983-1984                 | box 2 | folder 12   |
| Herrin, Eugene, 1983                            | box 2 | folder 13   |
| Imai, Ryukichi, 1986-1991                       | box 2 | folder 14   |
| Johnson, Gerald, 1986                           | box 2 | folder 15   |
| Khalturin, Vitaly, undated                      | box 2 | folder 16   |
| Kidder, Ray, 1991                               | box 2 | folder 17   |
| Kim, Won-Young, 2001                            | box 2 | folder 18   |
| Kirichenko, V.V., 1993                          | box 2 | folder 19   |
| Kitov, I.O., 1991-1992                          | box 2 | folder 20   |
| Kulp, J. Laurence, 1957-1961                    | box 2 | folder 21   |
| Kvaerna, Tormod, 1992                           | box 2 | folder 22   |
| Leith, William, 1987-2001                       | box 2 | folder 23   |
| Leith, William, 1987-2001                       | box 3 | folder 1    |
| Marshall, P.D., 1977-1994                       | box 3 | folder 2-3  |

|   |       |            |
|---|-------|------------|
| Marshall, letters, 1969-2002  | box 3 | folder 4   |
| Mellman, G.R., 1988-1990  | box 3 | folder 5   |
| Murphy, John, 1988-2012   | box 3 | folder 6-8 |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |            |
| Includes report co-authored with J.L. Stevens and I.O. Kitov.   |       |            |
| Nersesov, Igor, 1988  | box 3 | folder 9   |
| Nitze, P.H., 1979   | box 3 | folder 10  |
| Nuttli, Otto, 1982-1986   | box 3 | folder 11  |
| Perle, Richard, 1986  | box 3 | folder 12  |
| Politicians, correspondence, 1979-1985  | box 3 | folder 13  |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |            |
| Includes correspondence from a number of Senators and Congressmen, including Sens. Kennedy, Inouye, Dodd, etc. See Box 3, Folder 16 for correspondence with Reagan. |       |            |
| Pomeroy, Paul, 1960-1964  | box 3 | folder 14  |
| Press-Sykes Correspondence on Test Ban Questions, 1977-1983   | box 3 | folder 15  |
| Reagan, Ronald, 1986-1988   | box 3 | folder 16  |
| Richards, Paul, 1986-2009   | box 4 | folder 1   |
| Rodean, Howard, 1971  | box 4 | folder 2   |
| Romney, Carl, 1959  | box 4 | folder 3   |
| Ryall, Alan, 1986   | box 4 | folder 4   |
| Sagan, Carl, 1986-1988  | box 4 | folder 5   |
| Staunder, William, 1966   | box 4 | folder 6   |
| Stevens, J.L., 1991   | box 4 | folder 7   |
| Sultanov, D.D., 1993, undated   | box 4 | folder 8-9 |
| Sykes, Lynn Ray, 1995-2010  | box 4 | folder 10  |
| Velikhov, Evgeny, 1986-1987   | box 4 | folder 11  |
| von Hippel, Frank, 1983-1993  | box 4 | folder 12  |
| Warnke, Paul, 1991  | box 4 | folder 13  |
| Weinberger, Caspar, 1985  | box 4 | folder 14  |
| Yeltsin, Boris, 1992  | box 4 | folder 15  |

**Subseries I.2: Subjects, 1945-2015****Scope and Contents**

This subseries includes files from a variety of committees, institutions, conferences, and organizations related to Sykes' work. Several files in this subseries pertain to Sykes' role in developing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as well as his work with the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency and the National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council. Also included in this subseries are photos, handwritten notes, and documents related to his 1974 trip to Moscow as part of a U.S. delegation to discuss the Threshold Test Ban Treaty. For documents related to earthquake studies delegations, including Sykes' trip to China the same year, see Series II. In particular, Subseries I.2 contains conference programs, academic presentations, handwritten notes, correspondence, invitations, reports, and additional written material.

| <b>Title/Description</b>  | <b>Instances</b> |           |
|---|------------------|-----------|
| Advanced Research Projects Agency, 1968-1970, 1984  | box 4            | folder 16 |
| Air Force Technical Applications Center (AFTAC), 1965-1982  | box 4            | folder 17 |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |                  |           |
| Documents and correspondence related to Air Force Technological Applications Center.                              |                  |           |
| Arms Control Talks, 1980s   | box 4            | folder 18 |
| Belmont Conference on Nuclear Test Ban Policy, 1989   | box 4            | folder 19 |
| Center for Defense Information, 1983-1993   | box 5            | folder 1  |
| Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, 1997   | box 5            | folder 2  |
| Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, 1972-1976   | box 5            | folder 3  |
| United Nations U.S. Report to UN's Conference of Committee on Disarmament - Seismic Verification, 1972            | box 5            | folder 4  |
| Conference on Nuclear Deterrence (University of Maryland), 1984   | box 5            | folder 5  |
| Congress, 1985-1990   | box 5            | folder 6  |
| Sykes, Press Releases, Arms Control Congress Tests, 1982-2000   | box 5            | folder 7  |
| Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Correspondence, 1985-1989  | box 5            | folder 8  |
| Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Jason, 2000   | box 5            | folder 9  |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |                  |           |
| Letter related to JASON program.  |                  |           |
| National Academy of Sciences (NAS) / National Research Council (NRC) - Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), 2000 | box 5            | folder 10 |

|   |       |            |
|---|-------|------------|
| National Academy of Sciences (NAS) / National Research Council (NRC), 1994-2009   | box 5 | folder 11  |
| Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Stanford, 2000  | box 5 | folder 12  |
| Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), Department of Defense (DOD) Important Historically, 1985-2008   | box 5 | folder 13  |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |            |
| Documents related to Defense Advanced Research Project Agency through the Department of Defense. Sykes determined these documents "important historically." |       |            |
| Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), Department of Defense (DOD) Technical Review Panel, 1983-1989   | box 5 | folder 14  |
| Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), Identification Workshop, 1992   | box 5 | folder 15  |
| Decoupling, 1976-2001   | box 5 | folder 16  |
| Decoupling, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 1987-2002  | box 5 | folder 17  |
| Decoupling in Hard Rock, 1992-2000  | box 5 | folder 18  |
| Decoupling, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) / Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA), 1986-2009  | box 6 | folder 1-2 |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |            |
| Documents related to conference with the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and Defense Nuclear Agency.                                      |       |            |
| Decoupling, Reinke et al., 1998   | box 6 | folder 3   |
| Decoupling, Swedish Experiment, 2000-2002   | box 6 | folder 4   |
| Department of Energy (DOE), 1945-1992   | box 6 | folder 5   |
| Earthquake Relocation Computer Cards, 1967  | box 6 | folder 6   |
| Earthquake Relocation ID1 + Tread, 1965   | box 6 | folder 7   |
| Federation of American Scientists, 2000-2001  | box 6 | folder 8   |
| Gaither Committee, 1957-1973  | box 6 | folder 9   |
| General Correspondence, 1982-1986   | box 6 | folder 10  |
| Geology of Chinese Nuclear Test Site, 2015  | box 6 | folder 11  |
| Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS), USSR Program, 1988-1990   | box 6 | folder 12  |
| Israel-South Africa Nuclear Weapons, Press Coverage, 1997   | box 6 | folder 13  |

|   |       |              |
|---|-------|--------------|
| Miscellaneous, 1983-1985  | box 6 | folder 14    |
| Miscellaneous, 1985-1990  | box 6 | folder 15    |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Conference, Seismic Discrimination, 1972                      | box 6 | folder 16    |
| Moscow Trip, 1974   | box 6 | folder 17-18 |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |              |
| Includes handwritten session notes, photographs, and invitation from U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. |       |              |
| National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council (NEPEC), 1977-1988                                      | box 6 | folder 19-20 |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |              |
| Documents related to National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council.                                   |       |              |
| National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council (NEPEC), 1977-1988                                      | box 7 | folder 1-7   |
| <b>Scope and Contents</b>   |       |              |
| Documents related to National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council.                                   |       |              |
| National Nuclear Security Administration, 2015  | box 7 | folder 8     |
| National Resources Defense Council, 1986-1997   | box 7 | folder 9     |
| Novaya Zemlya, 1987   | box 7 | folder 10-11 |
| New York Times, Inquiries and Solicitations, 1982-1983  | box 7 | folder 12    |
| Office of Technology Assessment, 1988-1989  | box 8 | folder 1     |
| Operation Orpheus, 1961   | box 8 | folder 2     |
| Parliamentarians for World Order, 1985  | box 8 | folder 3     |
| Parkfield Earthquake Prediction Scenarios and Response Plans, circa 1980s                                 | box 8 | folder 4     |
| Pugwash Conference, 1984  | box 8 | folder 5     |
| Report, USSR Nuclear Weapons Tests, 1996  | box 8 | folder 6     |
| Rockland County Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, 1985   | box 8 | folder 7     |
| Save Columbia Council, Inc., 1984   | box 8 | folder 8     |
| Scientific American, Article on Test Ban, 1982  | box 8 | folder 9     |
| Scholz-Thatcher Debate About Loma Prieta Earthquake, 1986-1987  | box 8 | folder 10    |

|   |       |           |
|---|-------|-----------|
| Spacebridge to Moscow, undated                  | box 8 | folder 11 |
| Strategic Air Command, 1984                     | box 8 | folder 12 |
| University of Michigan, Vesiac Conference, 1967 | box 8 | folder 13 |
| USSR, Early Bomb Development, 1996              | box 8 | folder 14 |

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## Series II: Earthquake Studies Delegations, 1974-1976

### Scope and Contents

This series contains several files related to earthquake studies delegations between 1974 and 1976. While most files pertain to Sykes' visit to China in 1974 as part of a U.S. delegation, the subseries also includes related reports from 1975 and 1976. The series includes photographs, field materials, translated academic papers, reports, and research material.

| Title/Description   | Instances |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Chinese Earthquake Science Visit to Lamont (Photos), 1974   | box 8     | folder 15 |
| China, Field Materials, 1974  | box 8     | folder 16 |
| China, Photographic Slides, 1974  | box 8     | folder 17 |
| Miscellaneous Items from China Trip, 1974   | box 8     | folder 18 |
| Earthquake Papers, Translated from Chinese, 1974-1976   | box 8     | folder 19 |
| Report on Visit to Seismological Institutions in China, 1975  | box 8     | folder 20 |
| Canadian Seismological Mission to China, 1975   | box 9     | folder 1  |
| Adams, R.D. - Visit to China, 1974 Haicheng Prediction, 1976 Tangshan Earthquake, 1975-1976         | box 9     | folder 2  |
| China-U.S. 1976 Study Group, Frank Press, 1976  | box 9     | folder 3  |
| Proceedings of the Lectures by the Seismological Delegation of the People's Republic of China, 1976 | box 9     | folder 4  |

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## Series III: Personal and Biographical, 1940-2009

### Scope and Contents

This series includes material related to Sykes' personal life and professional achievements. The series contains paper awards, a transcript of his oral history, headshots, and a copy of his curriculum vitae.

### Subseries III.1: Awards, 1971-2000

**Scope and Contents**

This subseries includes several awards and recognitions Sykes won throughout his career, along with letters of congratulations and press releases. Notable files pertain to his Guggenheim Fellowship and his Walter H. Bucher Medal. Also included are honorary degrees, nominations, and other awards.

| Title/Description                 | Instances |          |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Awards, Press Releases, 1971-1992 | box 9     | folder 5 |
| Vetlesen Award, 2000              | box 9     | folder 6 |

**Subseries III.2: Oral History, 1997-1999****Scope and Contents**

This subseries contains the transcript of Sykes' oral history interview with the American Institute of Physics. A copy of the interview is [located](#) at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library's Center for Oral History. A portion of the interview is restricted until 2026.

| Title/Description  | Instances |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Transcript of Oral History with American Institute of Physics, Part 1, 1997-1999     | box 9     | folder 7  |
| Transcript of Oral History with American Institute of Physics, Part 2, 1997-1999     | box 9     | folder 8  |
| Transcript of Oral History with American Institute of Physics, Part 3, 1997-1999     | box 9     | folder 9  |
| Transcript of Oral History with American Institute of Physics, Restricted, 1997-1999 | box 9     | folder 10 |

Conditions Governing Access:**Conditions Governing Access**

Restricted until 2026

**Subseries III.3: Photographs, circa 1940s-1991****Scope and Contents**

This subseries includes three headshots of Sykes. The first is from his childhood, the second is from high school in 1955 or 1956, and the third is a professional headshot from 1991.

| Title/Description                 | Instances |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Photos of Sykes, circa 1940s-1991 | box 9     | folder 11 |

**Subseries III.4: Curriculum Vitae, 2009****Scope and Contents**

This subseries contains a copy of Sykes' curriculum vitae from 2009.

| Title/Description      | Instances |           |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Curriculum Vitae, 2009 | box 9     | folder 12 |

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