



Stephen Holbrook

The following is excerpted from the Utah State Historical Society. The Society holds Stephen's collection of photographs.

Stephen Holbrook was born into a Mormon pioneer family from Bountiful, Utah. As a child and adolescent, he met many prominent politicians and became an organizer of Utah's Young Republicans. During his transformational experiences as an LDS missionary in Hong Kong, China and Chinatown, San Francisco, he was confronted with abject poverty and the LDS church's stance on race. Upon his return, he continued to be active in conservative politics, but also he became an activist for civil rights and for the rights of the poor. Holbrook's simultaneous work for NAACP and for Utah Congressman Sherman P. Lloyd, was seen as untenable by Lloyd's office, so he was eventually given an ultimatum—leave civil rights or leave Lloyd's employment. Holbrook's conscience chose civil rights, and he left Washington to return to the Utah Civil Rights Movement and the Salt Lake City NAACP.

During the summers of 1964 and 1965, Holbrook campaigned for voter registration in the South. He was arrested there, and his many experiences caused him to question his assumptions that the government always works to ensure civil liberties. Upon his return to Utah, Holbrook continued to work for civil rights, including campaigning to persuade the LDS church to support Civil Rights as a moral issue.

Holbrook became a leader in Utah's major anti-Vietnam War coalition, the United Front to End the War (1967-71). This coalition brought about major demonstrations, moratoria, and multiple media and civic engagement events. At the end of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam war, Holbrook continued his social activism. He served in the Utah State Legislature for three terms, advocated for low income housing, and successfully helped to raise money for Utah first shelter for homeless individuals and families. Holbrook's social activism joined with environmental and sustainability concerns as he became Executive Director for the Coalition of Utah's Future and Envision Utah until his retirement in 2004.



Much of Holbrook's work involved interacting with the media. When he and others found Utah media to be unwilling to cover local news, especially dissenting opinions, he began a long campaign to open the media better coverage. A five year effort to open a non-profit community radio station culminated KRCL 91 FM airing in December, 1979. KRCL 91 continues to serve Utah.

Stephen Holbrook participated in the Oral History of Utah Peace Activists, and his interview will soon be available at the UVU Library Archives.

Find more details on Stephen Holbrook and The Stephen Holbrook photograph Collection, 1946-2005, see <http://history.utah.gov/findAids/C01660/C1660ff.XML>