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## Former Ambassador William Hughes Donates Massive Collection to Namesake at Stockton College

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy unveiled the collection Wednesday night.

By [Anthony Bellano](#) | [Email the author](#) | May 2, 2012

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Sharon Schulman related a scary incident from January of this year.

"I thought I had everything wrapped up and he was coming in just to discuss what would be put up," Schulman said. "Then he came in and said, 'Let me ask you something. Why should I donate this stuff to Stockton and not to Rutgers?' While I was trying to find an answer, I said, 'Because you like me?'"

When William Hughes spoke a few moments later, he made a revelation: "I never had any doubts where this collection should be."

On Wednesday afternoon, May 2, the [Richard Stockton College of New Jersey](#) dedicated the Ambassador William J. Hughes Collection at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

Hughes dedicated a large portion of his collection of awards, artifacts, items of recognition for service, photos, press releases, letters and signing pens, among other items, to the center that bears his name.

"This was in my garage, my rec room, a couple of curio cabinets, I had memorabilia everywhere," Hughes said.

Hughes began his career with the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office before moving on to serve as a Congressman from 1975-95, under five presidents at a time when politics weren't as divisive as they are today. He was an Ambassador to Panama and went on to teach classes at Stockton.

The items on display at the Hughes Center are from all walks of his professional life, including:

- a letter from President Ronald Reagan about raising the debt ceiling \$985 billion;
- a flag made by Lacota Indians from Panama made of five or six different pieces of cloth;
- thank you letters from President Jimmy Carter and Vice Chair of Herdus Control Inc. Sarah Brady and

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"And his reasons were legitimate for not wanting to release it. He wanted Saddam Hussein to read it first, and not find out about it by reading it in the newspaper."

History shows it made no difference. The United States went to war with Iraq for two months in 1991, and ultimately invaded Iraq in 2003, a war that would eventually result in Hussein's capture and execution at the hands of his own people.

The letter is framed and in the Hughes Center, but will eventually return to Hughes' home.

Hughes has been involved in policy that's changed the world. He served as a Congressman at a time when Congress passed more than 40 major anticrime laws, laws covering computer crimes, firearms offenses and the banning of cop-killer bullets.

"When I was in Congress, we had to give the FBI authority for product tampering," Hughes said. "It enables us to go after terrorists."

He's met Nelson Mandela, and he's met Jacques Cousteau.

"That's the more satisfying part to me," Hughes said. "All the interesting people I met. Not just presidents, but I met Jacques Cousteau."

Cousteau was supportive of Hughes' efforts to clean the oceans, the accomplishment Hughes mentioned time and again on Wednesday.

"It's why I went into Congress," Hughes said. "I have the Brady Bill at home and the Maurice River signing hanging in my office.

"It took 17 years to finally get the job finished."

The collection at the Hughes Center is massive; it looks like Hughes cleaned out his entire house to decorate the center. However, he said he still has 11 boxes of memorabilia at his house. With so much memorabilia, Hughes came across numerous items he had completely forgotten.

"I have photos of myself with mutton chops, and a picture of me with (President) Gerald Ford and I'm wearing a suit that looks like a zoot suit," Hughes said.

Several dignitaries were on hand for Wednesday's ribbon-cutting, including Stockton President Herman Saatkamp, Congressman Robert Andrews, Hughes Center Director Daniel Douglas, Hughes Center Steering Committee Chair Dr. Edward H. Salmon; Stockton Provost Dr. Harvey Kesselman, Faculty Senate President Michael Frank and, of course, Schulman, Special Assistant to the President for External Affairs.

His wife, Nancy, and several members of his family were also on hand, and helped in the cutting of the ribbon.

"I happy this will stay in Southern New Jersey," Hughes said. "I first got involved because of local issues. What better place than Stockton for the memorabilia?"

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Mike Suleiman

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9:35 pm on Wednesday, May 2, 2012

I had the great pleasure of interviewing Ambassador Hughes for my undergraduate research. Ambassador Hughes is very knowledgeable on South Jersey and Congress and is a model for anyone looking to enter the realm of public service.

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