



Writer Herb Weiss attains archive status: a legacy of 45 years of advocacy on aging

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by Herb Weiss, writer on aging issues, and Nancy Thomas, publisher

Herb Weiss Attains Archive Status: A Legacy of 45 Years of Advocacy on Aging

his education and career.

Weiss's journalistic career began long before he was a staff writer intern (a three-month position) for the *Providence Journal*. He has since written columns and digital news commentaries on aging for outlets such as the *Pawtucket Times*, *Woonsocket Call*, *Senior Digest*, *Senior Living* (now *Prime Time*), and *RI News Today*. Weiss holds a Master of Arts in Studies in Aging and a Specialist Certificate in Aging from North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas). He also spent years covering health and long-term care policy as an accredited House Gallery Reporter in Washington, D.C., for various publications.

Weiss has contributed his expertise to the editorial boards of *McKnight's LTC News* and *The Brown University LTC Quality Letter*. His "Age Beat" column, which has been a staple for local readers in Rhode Island, reflects his dedication to covering generational issues with depth and insight.



Herb Weiss books

Weiss has published three volumes of his column compilations: *Taking Charge: Collected Stories on Aging Boldly* (2016), *Taking Charge: Vol. 2 – More Stories on Aging Boldly* (2021), and his recently released third volume, *Taking Charge: Vol. 3 – Even More Stories on Aging Boldly*.

Service to the Community and Advocacy

In addition to his journalistic work, Weiss has served as Pawtucket's arts and cultural "ambassador" and as the deputy director of the Leon Mathieu Senior Center. He has been appointed to the Rhode Island Advisory Commission on Aging by five different governors and, in 2021, was tapped by Rhode Island Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero to serve on the Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease Research and

Treatment.

Weiss's impact extends beyond his writing: one local restaurant even named a lobster salad (delicious) and a hamburger (dangerous) in his honor. Recently, a small café also named a decadent breakfast sandwich after him, called "The Herb Weiss Breakfast Sandwich."

Weiss hopes that the archive will provide researchers, students, and journalists with valuable historical context on aging policy and community issues from the past four decades. His work, particularly in understanding aging-related public policy, will be a helpful resource for professionals in aging services, healthcare, social work, and gerontology.

The Value of the Collection at RIC

Housed in RIC's Special Collections, the Weiss archive is poised to benefit generations of students, researchers, and professionals. The collection not only preserves the history of aging policy in Rhode Island and in Congress but also serves as a vital resource for anyone involved in or studying aging-related topics.

The value of this collection lies not only in the breadth of its coverage but also in its unique perspective—Weiss has chronicled aging issues from a journalistic standpoint, grounded in personal experience. His columns explore complex issues like healthcare, caregiving, and retirement, offering readers practical advice as well as a deeper understanding of



Delivering 45 years of newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and memorabilia to Veronica L Denison, assistant professor, and digital archivist and special collections librarian at RIC's James P. Adams Library

Here is the link to the "Papers" at Rhode Island College – <https://www.riamco.org/render?eadid=US-RPRC-mss-0149>

What They're Saying About the Herbert P. Weiss Papers collection at Rhode Island College

Numerous aging network professionals, providers and elected officials have praised the significance of the *Herbert P. Weiss Papers* at RIC. Some have recognized Weiss for his tireless work on aging issues, others have lauded the collection's contribution to expanding access to vital research on aging. One even commented on the collection's role in tackling pressing issues such as Medicare reform and family caregiving. Others noted that this collection would become an invaluable resource for students, faculty, and policymakers alike.

Let us take a look at their comments...

"I am so pleased to have the opportunity to praise the action of Rhode Island College in establishing the collection of the works of Herb Weiss's reports on aging in Rhode Island over the years. The reports have recognized the evolution of the enormous challenges faced by our large aging population and inspired the people who worked tirelessly to address them.

I met Herb when he worked for the Pawtucket Times and the City of Pawtucket. Back then, we both served as members of the Governor's Commission on Aging. The committee members were younger then and were mostly leaders in agencies, service providers and dedicated professionals. I came to recognize the young reporter (Herb) and his deep commitment to solving the daunting challenges we faced.

Herb has never let up on his efforts and his writings are full of insights and useful information presented in multiple articles and reports which are all factual and frequently memorable. He has gained readers among leaders, researchers and others of all ages. His writings are a great resource for the public, and the state's Office of Elderly Affairs.

Herb is a true champion for all as we age."

Kathleen Connell, Past Secretary of State of Rhode Island, Past Director of AARP Rhode Island

"What an honor to hold the Herb Weiss collections at Rhode Island College and so well deserved! I especially enjoy *Taking Charge: Stories on Aging Boldly* where Herb Weiss offers practical tools to live a happy, fulfilled life and interviews experts and everyday people who share their keen observations about growing older."

Patricia Raskin, Broadcaster "Positive Living and Aging" PBS and Cumulus Affiliates and Southcoast Health Podcasts

"Herb Weiss has been an articulate and passionate writer on so many issues related to aging and older adults in Rhode Island. His writings trace the enduring achievements and challenges of growing older, and this collection is a testament to his myriad contributions to enriching our perspectives on older adults."

Phillip G. Clark, ScD, Professor and Director, Program in Gerontology, University of Rhode Island

"Herb is a respected leader and trusted authority in the aging field, as evidenced by his appointments by the last five governors to provide crucial guidance to the Advisory Commission on Aging. We are excited that his remarkable collection will be showcased at Rhode Island College's James P. Adam's Library, increasing visibility of his work and expanding access to his writings, which have made a significant contribution over the past 45 years in support of the nation's aging population."

Meghan Grady, Executive Director of Meals on Wheels of RI, Inc. and Chair of the Advisory Commission on Aging.

"It's fantastic to have the collective works of Herb Weiss's many insightful insights on aging organized in one place for all to benefit from his years of experience in aging."

Sarah Lenz Lock, SVP Policy & Brain Health, AARP

"Herb Weiss has an incredible dedication to shining a light on so many issues involving aging. This collection will be an invaluable resource in further understanding the myriad of important topics that he has addressed in his decades of insightful writing."

Larry Berman, Director of Communications, Rhode Island House of Representatives

A wealth of Herb Weiss' keen observations and insights with respect to all things healthy aging, is now housed at Rhode Island College, to the benefit of students, researchers, and professionals in aging work. This treasure trove will be a tremendous asset to those seeking context or to understand the broad range of issues facing older Rhode Islanders and their caregivers. The Weiss collection will also inform the work of countless aging work professionals and provide a solid foundation for students pursuing their education in nursing, gerontology, healthcare administration, as well as social work.

“Herb Weiss has long been a guiding voice in the conversation around aging, capturing both the personal journey and the broader policy landscape with clarity and depth. His work distills complex research into accessible articles that educate the public, influence policymakers, and support older adults, their families, and caregivers. His collection of articles, now housed in the “Herbert P. Weiss Papers collection at Rhode Island College’s (RIC) James P. Adams Library, tackle pressing issues such as Social Security and Medicare reform, affordable housing, and the challenges of family caregiving. His tenacity and commitment to truth make his articles an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to understand aging in America today. More than just a policy discussion, the collection is a roadmap for navigating the later years of life with knowledge and confidence.

Whether you’re an advocate, a professional in elder care, or simply planning for your own future, RIC’s archives of his work offers essential insights into the evolving landscape of aging—one well-researched story at a time.”

John E. Gage, MBA, NHA, President & CEO, Rhode Island Health Care Association

“Herb Weiss has dedicated his career to illuminating the complexities of aging and retirement, providing invaluable insight and advocacy for older adults. Through his thoughtful journalism and deep expertise, he has shaped public understanding and influenced policy discussions, ensuring that aging issues remain at the forefront. His work has had a profound impact, empowering individuals and communities with the knowledge needed to navigate later life with dignity and confidence. It has been an honor and privilege to have now published three volumes of his collected works.”

Steven R. Porter, Publisher, Stillwater River Publications, West Warwick, RI

“Herb Weiss’s 3 book compendium is a one of a kind collection, illustrating the complex social, economic, and political dynamics that surround and influence elder care in our country. This is a vital resource for all professionals who have anything to do with elders and their families. Herb’s sensitivity to these matters emerges from his various roles as a professional himself – a noted author, a devotee to culture and art, a background as a former Nursing Facility Administrator and an opinion writer on all legislative issues related to elders at local and national levels. This recognition of him at Rhode Island College brings honor indeed to the institution.”

Teresa Chopoorian, EdD, MSN, FNAP, Vice President and Administrator, Mansion Nursing and Rehabilitation Center; Fellow, National Academy of Practice, Nursing

“Herb Weiss has worked tirelessly over many years to keep Rhode Island’s aging population informed about the issues that matter most and highlight policy areas and proposals that otherwise might not receive wider attention. Congratulations to Herb and Rhode Island College for creating this valuable resource.”

"Herb Weiss for many years has been a tireless, committed researcher and writer regarding the issues that face our increasingly older population. I always read his work with interest and believe his writings will be a valuable resource for students, faculty, politicians, and others who earnestly seek to address the needs of those of us who are elders in the community."

Dr. Nancy Carriuolo, *Rhode Island College president 2008-2016*

"As a journalist Herb has always adhered to the most critical qualities of objectivity, integrity and just plain good understandable writing, coupled with his keen sense for a story that needs to be told," states Bill Benson, former Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging at the U.S. Administration on Aging who leadership position in the US Senate and House of Representatives. Rhode Island College is to be commended for providing a permanent home for Herb's collection, says Benson. "These are worrisome times with journalism under assault." Hopefully those reviewing the Herbert P. Weiss collection in the future who care about aging in America will find inspiration and a model for quality writing on these important matters, he said.

Bill Benson, *Former Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging at the U.S. Administration on Aging who spent 8 years working in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives*

"We appreciate Herb Weiss's donation and believe that it will be beneficial to RIC students and the broader Rhode Island community interested in the topics of healthcare, policy, and aging. Thank you!"

Veronica L. Denison, *Assistant Professor, Digital Archivist and Special Collections Librarian, James P. Adams Library, Rhode Island College*

"Herb has chronicled over 45 years of aging in America and locally. No one individual has been so attentive and dedicated to older adult reporting on emerging healthcare concerns, social security and financial matters, caregiving, socialization, volunteering, nutrition, etc. This collection provides enormous historical access for social & healthcare workers, geriatric case managers, policy makers, and elected officials. Readers should want to immerse themselves in these insightful and instructive stories. Well done, Herb!"

Vincent Marzullo, *former Federal Director/Corp. for National & Community Service (RI); past volunteer President, AARP RI; Board member/Senior Agenda Coalition of RI.*

"We are thrilled and honored to hold the Herb Weiss collections at Rhode Island College. No one has made more contributions to the field of aging and long term care through their journalism and writing than Herb. Herb has studied and tracked policies, issues, trends, legislation, and best practices in long term care for years and provided invaluable research, commentary, analysis, and a historical perspective. Most important, he has engaged with the community, policy

century. Uniquely researched and written from the perspective of a single journalist and public policy professional, the Herbert P. Weiss Papers should stand as an historical treasury for researchers and students in the years to come."

Paul Kleyman, *Cofounder, Journalists Network on Generations/Editor, GBONewss.org.*

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"It is an honor to be asked for a quote on Herb Weiss' work for your archiving his writings. As the former Chief of Staff of the House Aging Committee and since then a spokesman at the White House and after, I've had the privilege of working with Herb Weiss for decades. Herb Weiss is the best and most knowledgeable aging issues writer in the country. He has informed not only Rhode Island but the Nation on problems and solutions for the elderly. His work will finally be archived and protected as the national treasure that it is. His historical record is invaluable and an incomparable resource for researchers, writers, and students."

Robert S. Weiner, *Former Chief of Staff, U.S. House Aging Committee under Chairman Claude Pepper, spokesman in the Clinton and Bush White Houses, and spokesman/senior staff for Cong. Claude Pepper, Charles Rangel, John Conyers, Ed Koch, Sen. Ted Kennedy, and Four-Star Gen./Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey – Winner, National Press Club President's Award for recruiting young journalists as co-bylined oped writers (1000+ articles to date (www.weinerpublic.com/opeds)).*

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"Herb Weiss has set the highest standard for writing on important aging policy issues. He does more than write. He provokes people to take action. He is the best journalist advocate I know."

Bob Blancato, *Executive Director, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, DC*

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"Herb Weiss is an indispensable conduit for real-time news that gives us what is increasingly disappearing: honesty, transparency, fact-based And an amalgam of big-picture and personal stories about aging and the human condition—a real treasure!"

Fernando Torres-Gil, *M.S.W., Ph.D., Director, UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging; Professor, Social Welfare and Public Policy, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs*

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"Herb's contributions have been a guiding light in the field of aging, illuminating critical issues with compassion, clarity, and a relentless pursuit of the truth. This collection is a well-deserved tribute to his decades of impactful journalism and advocacy."

John O'Connor, *Editorial Director, McKnight's*

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"For over 45 years Herb Weiss's reporting has kept us informed about important issues touching the lives of our older population – from critical national and local policy proposals to tips for aging boldly. This collection honors his many years of journalistic excellence in reporting on aging."

“Herb Weiss tackles important seniors’ topics from a Rhode Island perspective, at once localizing and nationalizing them. Our organization has been happy to help share Herb’s work with a national audience over these past decades. His columns go beyond routine reporting on Social Security, Medicare, Aging, and a host of other issues we care about. Herb brings nuance, balance, and detail where it can otherwise be lacking in other media. This new collection of his works will be a valuable resource to everyone in our field.”

Max Richtman, *President and CEO, National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare*

From Herb Weiss: A Personal Reflection

As Weiss reflects on his decades of work, he acknowledges the unique role his writing has played in shaping public discourse on aging. Through his columns, he strives to offer practical advice and provoke action on aging issues, all while highlighting the personal and emotional aspects of growing older. His hope is that this archive will inspire and inform future generations, just as his columns have done for decades.

In conclusion, *The Herbert P. Weiss Papers* is a treasure trove of information that not only showcases a significant body of work in aging journalism but also offers a lasting resource for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of aging, caregiving, and public policy. The archive’s permanent home at RIC’s James P. Adams Library ensures that Weiss’s contributions will continue to inspire and educate students, researchers, and professionals long into the future. By preserving his comprehensive documentation of the aging landscape, RIC will allow future generations to benefit from his detailed insights and policy analysis. For anyone involved in aging-related work—whether in research, policy, or direct services—the collection will serve as a valuable touchstone for understanding the evolution of aging issues over the past four and a half decades.

This collection is an invaluable asset to the community, providing essential insights and supporting the work of those involved in aging services.

Publisher’s Note: Herb Weiss’s column on aging issues is featured every Monday in RINewsToday. We are thrilled to have Herb’s expertise with us, almost from the very beginning of our publication, 10 years ago. As we come to understand issues around aging in one of the state’s with the oldest populations, institutional history helps us know where we’ve been, what has been tried, what’s worked, what hasn’t – something all too often missing in today’s dynamic of politics and public policy. We are grateful for Herb’s contributions to RINewsToday’s readers – and Congratulations to Herb on his collection being established at Rhode Island College! – **Nancy Thomas**, *founder and publisher, RINewsToday*.

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