

W.E. Chilton, III, Oral History Interview—7/14/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: W.E. Chilton, III
Interviewer: William L. Young
Date of Interview: July 14, 1964
Location: Charleston, West Virginia
Length: 13 pages

Biographical Note

Chilton, assistant to the publisher from 1955-1961, and later publisher of the *Charleston Gazette* from 1961-1987, discusses his interactions with John F. Kennedy during the 1960 West Virginia primary and general elections, bigotry against West Virginia, and the Kennedy administration's impacts on West Virginia, among other issues.

Access

Open.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed on February 15, 1965, copyright of these materials has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the interviewee. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

W.E. Chilton, III, recorded interview by William L. Young, July 14, 1964, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Gift of Personal Statement

By W. E. CHILTON, III

to the

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 as amended (63 Stat. 377) and regulations issued thereunder, I, W. E. CHILTON, III, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a transcript of a personal statement approved by me on DEC. 8, 1964 [____], and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this document is made subject to ^{No} ~~the following~~ terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited

in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

or

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument available for research in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507(f)(3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, this material shall not

- a. for a period of _____ years
- b. during my lifetime
- c. for a period of _____ years or until the donor's prior death
- d. for a period of _____ years or until _____ years after the death of the donor, whichever occurs earlier
- e. for a period of _____ years, or until _____ years after the death of the donor, whichever occurs later

be made available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it. [[[This restriction shall apply to and include employees and officers of the General Services Administration, the National Archives and Records Service, and the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.]]] or [[[This restriction shall not apply to employees of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library engaged in performing normal archival work processes.]]]

3. A revision of the above stipulation governing access to the aforesaid document may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States or his designee if it appears desirable to revise the conditions herein stipulated.

4. [If required by the terms of paragraph 2] I hereby designate _____ to have, after my death, the same authority with respect to authorizing access to the aforesaid document as I have reserved to myself in paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 above.

5. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

6. The donor retains to himself [for a period of _____ years] or [during his lifetime] all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. [After the expiration of this _____ year period,] or [After the death of the donor], the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

Signed W. L. Lullin CW

Date: 12/8/64

Accepted Wayne L. Gamm
Archivist of the United States

Date: 2/15/65

W. E. Chilton, III

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First meeting with John F. Kennedy (JFK)
2	1960 West Virginia primary debates
3	Why Kennedy won West Virginia
4, 8	Bigotry, Catholicism, and West Virginia
6	Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr.
7	1960 West Virginia Primary
8	1960 November General Election
9	JFK's relationship with West Virginia
11	Anecdotes about JFK

Oral History Interview

With

W. E. CHILTON, III
Publisher, Charleston Gazette

July 14, 1964
Charleston, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: This interview is being recorded at the Daniel Boone Hotel, Charleston, West Virginia, July 14, 1964, with Mr. W. E. Chilton, III, publisher of the *Charleston Gazette*. During the 1960 Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] Primary campaign in West Virginia, Mr. Chilton was assistant to the publisher.

Ned, in your position as a newspaper man, what were your first reactions to the announcement that two U.S. Senators would be campaigning in West Virginia for the Primary vote?

CHILTON: I don't know that I had any reaction at that time. I don't think that I was unaware of the Kennedy campaign for the Presidency, but being an individual who wanted to see Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] elected President, and being an individual who was running as a delegate to the National Convention, promising if nominated, that I would support Mr. Stevenson, I don't suppose I really took too much interest in the campaign until they came into the state. I think the first visit that President Kennedy made to Charleston, I believe, my wife [Elizabeth Early "Betty" Chilton] and I were invited over to the Kanawha Motel to the meeting, and I was a little bit reluctant, I must admit, and hesitant to go, because I—my allegiance was elsewhere, and I just felt sort of hesitant about it. But my wife, incidentally, who supported Kennedy from the first day that he announced, was wild about him all along and thought he was tremendous. She never had

any doubts about his winning the nomination; winning West Virginia; winning the Presidential Democratic Party nomination—or I might add—the Presidency of the United States. And I doubted all of those initially, or in the beginning, as each sequence of events happened. We went over and, if I remember correctly, there were about 25 or 30 of us, and he came out of a bedroom into a living room, and walked along and introduced himself as Senator Kennedy, and

[-1 -]

he'd stop briefly and chat with each one. I think someone had briefed him slightly on me, because he said, "Oh, yes, Edwin," and I think, if I remember, he called me Ed or Edwin and my name is Ned—and he said, "You're in politics too, aren't you, and the campaigning must be taking an awfully lot of your time?—It must be terribly arduous." I was quite taken back, 'cause I felt how idiotic, in a way, the question was, because here was a man who obviously was in the United States Senate, stomping all over the country and the amount of time I was spending was very, very little. I did not stay long. I don't think I stayed more than five minutes. My wife stayed quite some time.

The second time I met Kennedy was when he appeared on the debates, which I feel the *Gazette* was responsible for setting up—the debate between President Kennedy and Senator Humphrey [Hubert E. Humphrey]. I was one of those who asked the questions on the panel, and I saw him when he came into the studio and, of course, all during the show—I saw him and I asked him questions as I asked Senator Humphrey. There were three of us and a moderator. After the show was over, incidentally, my own personal opinion was that Kennedy made a better impression than Senator Humphrey did, primarily because—if I remember correctly, and I think I'm right—the two men had ten minutes, I believe, with opening statements, then a rebuttal, and then questions for the last 40 or 42 minutes of the hour program. Kennedy, I believe, had to speak first—but maybe he didn't—that's immaterial. When he came on, he was seated at a desk and there were some props in front of him. He spoke extemporaneously with no script, but he had props—there was a can of beans and some other staples that were being given to West Virginia welfare recipients. The cameras had hardly been on him, let's say, more than half a minute or a minute—this can be checked because I'm sure that show is still available—he took a can of beans and he thrust it out at the camera, and it was part of his talk about what the poor people of West Virginia were getting for a diet and he dramatically presented this as evidence. The debate itself, as Doris Fleeson commented, was that both of them agreed to hate and damn Republicans, which I think to a great extent was true. Each of them said that the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration was a disaster and that either of them could have done a better job and would do a better job. After the debate was over I went to the Press Club, which is a local establishment in town, where drinks can be purchased, where food can be had, and I was sitting there waiting to meet some people, and I've forgotten who it was, but I remember that Senator Kennedy came in, and sat down. I think the whole family, more or less, was going to meet there for dinner after the program, which I believe went

[-2 -]

off at 8:30 to 9:30. Someone came up to me and said, "I'd love to be introduced to Senator Kennedy." If I'm not mistaken, the person who asked to be introduced was a Catholic—but he was also a staunch Republican. I introduced him—I introduced him to Senator Kennedy as a co-religionist who had no intention of voting for him even if he was fortunate enough to be nominated, and Senator Kennedy was most gracious, and he smiled. I heard later—although I don't know whether the story was true or not—that this guy proceeded to tell Senator Kennedy why he wouldn't vote for him, even though he was a Catholic—I left at that point—I think my friends came in.

YOUNG: I'd like to interrupt you, if I may, for just a minute.

CHILTON: Sure.

YOUNG: Do you think that Doris Fleeson's analysis of the TV debate might also be a pretty good analysis of the entire primary?

CHILTON: Any thoughts that I have on the primary, I would like to point out, are subjective. I read most of the stories that appeared in the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Charleston Daily Mail* concerning what the two candidates were doing—what their position statements were. In the main, your assessment is apt, because really what they were talking about—each in his own fashion, in his own way, in campaigning—was, "vote for me to be your nominee—I won't forget West Virginia." And also the further thing, that this was a stinking crime that a state had been left out of the mainstream of American life. I think, to a great extent, West Virginia was an eye-opener to both men, coming from quite prosperous areas. Obviously they have slums in Boston; obviously they have them in Minneapolis. But I think both men, coming from relatively prosperous regions of the United States, were considerably taken back by the deplorable conditions in the coal counties. I don't think there was any question about this, and I think both men were sincere in their reaction to the poverty and the people that existed. I think also that both President Kennedy and Senator Humphrey were tremendously impressed by West Virginians, their warmth. Both of them got good crowds—I think a great deal of the crowds, in both cases, was curiosity. People went out to see them whether they intended to go out to the polls or not. Obviously President Kennedy made a tremendous impression on young females—I don't think there's any question about that.

[-3-]

They would come roaring out to see him. They both got excellent crowds, but insofar as a difference of opinion, there really wasn't much. It was more of a clash of personality and political campaign techniques and again, I think there's a great deal of truth in the fact that Kennedy had an extremely attractive family, all of whom were willing to come into the state and campaign tirelessly. He had an unlimited pocketbook or resources—campaign funds. He used all the various advertising media—television, newspaper, billboard, radio. He used all of these a great deal. Humphrey's campaign was extremely limited. Certainly Kennedy's volunteer organization, both those who were of the same religion as he was and those who

were not, was far bigger, more dynamic, more prestigious, in terms of name or family or establishment or whatever you want to call it, in most areas of the state. Although Kennedy certainly out-did Humphrey in so far as finances were concerned, my own opinion is, that as one commentator said, "He spent a fortune to buy an election and he bought a landslide." When I said bought, I don't mean it in the sense of the word, vote buying, although I'm sure there was some of that too, because West Virginia is notorious for votes being purchased. He would have won—in my feeling—he would have won without the great effort that he went to, but I think this is a mark of the man. He felt that this was a crucial state; that he could bury the religious issue here and that he had to win it and, therefore, he went all out.

YOUNG: Do you think that any voters had the feeling that if they did not vote for Kennedy, they might be accused of being prejudiced, even though perhaps their honest choice would be for Senator Humphrey? Was this attitude at least abroad in the state at all? Did you hear it mentioned at the time?

CHILTON: I didn't hear that mentioned too much. I've always wondered, as I said, I was a Stevenson delegate. And, of course, Senator Kennedy's and Senator Humphrey's names appeared on the ballot, and I voted for Senator Kennedy. Actually I probably knew Humphrey better, but I felt I had weighed, assessed the situation, what I thought honestly, and I thought that Kennedy did a better job and therefore deserved my vote. And I might add, I was nominated, went to the Convention, and did not vote for Mr. Kennedy on the Floor of the Convention. I was a delegate-at-large, and I voted for Stevenson, and I've always wondered, I've always thought to myself, whether the anti-Catholicism, the fact that I do have reservations about the Catholic Church, which I do have, whether this subconsciously caused me to vote for Kennedy or not? I just can't say.

[-4-]

I do think this—I think that certain people in the Kennedy camp used the religious issue shabbily. I think Joe Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop], who was obviously for Kennedy, used it miserably and in some columns that he wrote and polls that he took. I think the outside press blew up the business of Catholicism, whereas our paper, I think, and a number of state papers were fairer. There was the famous instance of the *Hillbilly*, which ran the joking headline which went something like this: "My Grandpappy ain't going to vote for no Catholic," which the *Herald Tribune* put up as an example of West Virginia bias and bigotry, when actually the whole story was a spoof and an ironic commentary on the campaign and had absolutely nothing to do with prejudice at all. It was written by a Republican who wasn't going to vote for either one of them under any circumstances and was attempting to use the situation as a humorous incident and the *Herald Tribune* misinterpreted it—so did the *Washington Post*. The *Washington Post* later had the decency to apologize, but the *Herald Tribune* never bothered to.

YOUNG: You might identify the *Hillbilly*.

CHILTON: Yes.

YOUNG: It's a weekly, isn't it?

CHILTON: Yes, I'm sorry—the *Hillbilly* is run by—darn, I know his name as well as I know my own. I'm sorry, but you're right. It was the *Hillbilly* that it appeared in.

YOUNG: It's a weekly paper which had a wide state distribution.

CHILTON: Yes, it does. I think in many instances, the outside press completely misinterpreted bigotry, whereas the press in West Virginia didn't feel that this bigotry existed. For instance, our own city editor on our paper took Ed Morgan [Edward P. Morgan], the ABC commentator, when he came to our city to a small community not too far outside of Charleston and they interviewed about 8 or 10 people on the street. West Virginians, I think, in many ways, as Mr. White [Theodore H. White] pointed out in his book, are friendly people and this is a pretty free state. We take our politics seriously. We'll argue at the drop of a hat, and I think that elsewhere in ordinary polite living room conversation, if a group of Catholics were present and a group of Protestants, they probably wouldn't get into a religious argument. Well, in West Virginia, a religious argument might very well develop. Ed and Andy [Andy Anderson] were in this small community, interviewing various people, asking them whether or not they would vote for Kennedy and the overwhelming consensus was that Kennedy won their poll hands down without any question, and

[-5 -]

Anderson, incidentally, all along said, Kennedy would win, and win pretty big. Kennedy won this poll hands down, and in the community some of them did make this comment—they said they were getting awfully sick of the reports coming out about Catholic bias, but they didn't think that would influence them to vote for Humphrey. They intended to vote for Kennedy, but if the bias kept up, they just might vote against Kennedy. They gave as an example, that in their community, although they were not Catholic, the Protestants of this particular community had helped the Catholics build a local church and had all gotten together to build a local church. I wish I could give you the name of the community, but I've forgotten.

YOUNG: Would you go from that to a couple of other things about the campaign? Could you evaluate the effectiveness of the appearance of Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. and then the effect of, also, the Kennedy war record as campaign weapons?

CHILTON: This again is subjective. If there was a low blow struck in this campaign, certainly it was the low blow that Franklin D. Roosevelt struck at Senator Humphrey about his war record and a blow, incidentally, which President Kennedy later disavowed but, of course, the damage had been done. I personally, again this is purely subjective, but I think most people would disagree with me, the name Roosevelt is

magic in West Virginia. There is no question about this. Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] was beloved, particularly in Putnam County where she, once upon a time—if I'm not mistaken—dedicated a red house which was later named Eleanor, after her, for a public housing project, which was put in while her husband was in office. She also dedicated a similar community up near Morgantown. She was a beloved woman, and the name Roosevelt had a certain magic to it without question. But whether this particular Roosevelt appealed to West Virginians, I question. I could be wrong. What has he ever done to merit our support? I mean, he was coming in from the outside. I would tend to discount what he said. I thought his tactic, which most of the papers in the state promptly criticized and, if anything, I would say that particular thing backfired. Although, I know this, that many political analysts who are far shrewder than I am in the sizing up of a political campaign, feel that Roosevelt materially helped Kennedy's effort.

YOUNG: I suppose that we would say that in the final analysis, Kennedy won because he got more votes, but could you give some kind of an overall summary of the campaign or indicate anything that has been omitted so far, or that you feel is relevant with respect to the Primary?

[-6 -]

CHILTON: Well, to summarize, I think that the religious issue was magnified and vastly over played. I think that the outside press distorted and failed to get the correct story. It was sort of a standing joke among our correspondents, incidentally, that too many of them came down here and spent most of their time at the Press Club reading their own press releases and interviewing the local press—and the local press, like anything else, they had their own prejudices and opinions. Also, to his credit, did go out, but again, I think, shamefully misinterpreted the results of one poll. It's interesting that the night of the Primary election—the Press Club in Charleston—the 2nd floor of the Press Club was set up as a place for the working press—for the cut of town correspondents to pick up the tabulations as they came in and to write their pieces for the paper. Bob Considine [Robert B. Considine] was there; Carlton Kent [Carleton V. Kent] of the *Chicago Sun Times*; Bill Lawrence [William H. "Bill" Lawrence] of the *New York Times*; Phil Potter [Philip Potter], I believe, of the *Baltimore Sun*; any number of correspondents were up there—maybe about 15 or 20. There was a TV set—I think maybe two. There was a wire going out—there were phones—there were the teletypes coming in and, of course, they were watching the results. I remember one incident with Bill Lawrence, which I think was interesting. All during the campaign, almost without exception, the election was considered a horse race, with a great many people feeling that the edge went to Humphrey due to religious bias. Lawrence, incidentally, who did—I would have to say in his remarks and every thing else—was certainly pro-Kennedy over Humphrey, although I question that he allowed this necessarily to enter his writing. I wouldn't make that charge. But Bill did come over to me. The first precinct came in. It's traditional in West Virginia that a precinct in Hardy County is always the first precinct in. It's similar to the New Hampshire precinct that counts the votes—votes at 11:00 and then counts the votes at 12:00, so that they can come in before the general day's election votes start. This precinct came in, I think, at 7:20. The polls close—what, at 7:30?

Kennedy led this precinct by a substantial majority. It's a small precinct. We'll say it was 48 to 24—something like that, but it wasn't quite two to one, but it sure was a sizable majority, and from then on, he led all through the night. About an hour and a half after the results had been in, Bill Lawrence came over to me. I think I had been kidding him, because that morning he had a story in the *Times* which had been on the front page to the effect that the race was a horse race, but it looked as if, unless Kennedy could close the gap—then it would be an upset—Humphrey was going to win. But of course, by this time, in the results of the election, it was a runaway. It was a landslide for Kennedy, and I was joshing Bill about it. Bill ordinarily doesn't take joking to friendly, but he was in a fairly good

[-7-]

mood that evening, and he came over and told me confidentially: "Son of a bitch, if we had only gone with the *Times* team." And I said, "What in the world do you mean?" And he said, "Well, we had a *Times* team in here of poll takers and they took a poll and they predicted this landslide, but we didn't have enough guts to use it."

YOUNG: Do you have any other stories or observations on the November General Election, then moving away from the Primary to the November General Election—the campaign as it was conducted between May and November?

CHILTON: I might add that my own feelings were, that after the Primary, and I can say this because I wrote a piece which appeared in *The New Leader*, commenting on what had happened in the primary and I ended the article by saying, "If President Kennedy was nominated, there was no question about where West Virginia would be in the November Election. It would be solidly in the Democratic corner." I had no doubts about that and I didn't waiver in my doubts at all. As a matter of fact, I did make one mistake. I did make a bet—I lost it. I bet a gentleman \$50.00 that President Kennedy would win the nation, the state, and my home county. I lost on my home county. I had to pay off. In other words, it was a sucker bet. It was a 3 to 1 in essence, but I lost in Kanawha County and I think to a certain extent, perhaps, I'm prejudiced myself, but I think that an analysis of those results would show that I lost in those areas where I think there was a certain amount of Catholic bias.

YOUNG: Well, you seem to be very positive about the outcome of the November Election. Do you think that among the state Democratic candidates running for state office, or I believe the U.S. Senatorship at that time—in that group, were there any "Doubting Thomases" that felt that the Kennedy image might still be harmful to the Democratic ticket?

CHILTON: If there were, I never met one of them. Of course, if I'm correct on this, and, if I remember correctly, Randolph [Jennings Randolph] led the ticket.

YOUNG: Running for the U.S. Senate.

CHILTON: Senator. It possibly was a minor state office—possibly the Secretary of State—one of those inconsequential offices might have had more votes, but I don't think so. Senator Randolph led the ticket and I think Barron [William W. Barron] was second, and Kennedy was third—if I'm not mistaken, between a 40 and 50,000 majority, and in fact, I would have to say, that certainly religion did

[-8 -]

play a part in both the primary and in the General Election in West Virginia. My main point is though, that it was far over emphasized and it did not change the results. It did not deprive Kennedy of a victory in the Primary and certainly didn't deprive him of a victory in the General Election.

Incidentally, one thing about it, people forget that Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith] won in 1928 in the primary in West Virginia by over 100,000 votes. Therefore, there's no question in my mind, and I never heard an important political figure in the state, although I don't remember speaking to any political figures in the state, I can't recall any direct conversation concerning, your question. I can't imagine that any politician—an important Democratic politician, was all disturbed or worried that the state would not go Democratic. The Barron Administration—Governor Barron, of course, was under a cloud due to a situation which had arisen, but his opponent was so inept—West Virginia was hurting and the Underwood [Cecil H. Underwood] Administration, I think, had been perhaps unfairly criticized, but still there was no question that the Democrats would win. I certainly never had any doubts about it as far as West Virginia was concerned. I don't think any politician had. I might further add, that I do remember one thing—Jennings Randolph, who was a pretty good campaigner by West Virginia standards—no matter where he went, would always vehemently support President Kennedy and tell people what a wonderful person he was and went all out for him. Jennings won big, as you well know, and I think Barron did pretty much the same thing, so there wasn't any question about that.

YOUNG: Well, if you have nothing more then on either the primary or the General Election, I'd like to turn to the reception in West Virginia of the Kennedy Administration. Do you feel that West Virginians felt that President Kennedy in his administration did right by them, so to speak?

CHILTON: Well again, my answer that I would give would be subjective, but I would have to say—this is not, I hope, sentimentality or I'm being maudlin—but I think he did magnificently. I think he lived up to his promises—I think that most West Virginians feel this. I think that partisan Republicans would be inclined to doubt it, but I think that Democrats as a whole—main, this is a subjective evaluation—objective people within the state can't help but be impressed by what Kennedy did. One of the first orders that he put out was a thing that Eisenhower had consistently refused to do, which was to increase the amount of food—put in a stamp

[-9 -]

program. Shortly after Kennedy was in, a plant was located in Bluefield—an aircraft plant—I've forgotten the name of it. Now, I can't prove this—who can?—but my own feeling is, that somebody somewhere told these people to get their cotton picking tails down to West Virginia and they got down there. There isn't any question that West Virginia's economy is far better today than it was then, and I think the state administration had done a good job on this, but I think without Kennedy's devotion and help and assistance and the fact that he was shocked and depressed and I think this was intellectually. I question that the President was an emotional person about it, but I think that intellectually he thought this was an outrage and he was determined to do something about it, and I think he did do something about it. I think that most people recognize this. It's significant that Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] came in this state about two months ago—don't pin me down on my dates—I'm terrible on them—but if I remember correctly, about two months ago, in connection with a local program that was set up under Kennedy—set up in the Attorney General's office—an AAY [All Around Youth] program—Youth to Help Delinquent Youth—underprivileged youth. The Attorney General came down here, and I think there's been a transference of love by West Virginians from the President to the Attorney General. My own feeling is that the Attorney General did not have the magnetism that the President had and yet, when he was here in Charleston, kids were following him—people were misty eyed. He spoke at the auditorium, a very moving, feeling speech and a good speech. Handkerchiefs were in abundance. If Mr. Kennedy wanted to be United States Senator today, I don't think there'd be any question that he could come down in this state and run and win—and win against Bob Byrd [Robert C. Byrd]. I don't think anybody else in the country could beat Bob Byrd in the state of West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, Ned, to go back from a vantage point of four years again, what do you think was the longest range contribution to West Virginia that this primary fight made? In other words, what lasting values came out of the fact that West Virginia, for a brief moment, enjoyed being on the center of the state in terms of history? Was the image damaged by the revelation of poverty and, as you have indicated, probably the over-exaggeration of the religious issue—or do you feel that the state benefited from it?

CHILTON: Well, my own feeling is that it absolutely benefited. I do not share the general opinion of, unfortunately which I consider an unfortunate opinion, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers viewpoints—which is, if you have a problem and forget about it, it will disappear.

[-10-]

We've got problems and, incidentally, these problems aren't just endemic, if that's the correct word, in West Virginia—they're endemic throughout all Appalachia. West Virginia, however, constitutes, if I'm not mistaken—is a state, all of which is in Appalachia. I don't think that's true of other states. The fact that this was brought to the attention of the nation, I think more people today are aware of West Virginia to use the trite old statement “there isn't as much mail coming into the state addressed Charleston, Virginia or Richmond, West Virginia.” I mean the people have become aware of West Virginia. I think for those West

Virginians who have given any thought to it or who think seriously about these things, I think that Kennedy coming down here and pointing out our problems, our disappointments, has meant a great deal. It's given us a chance to take a second look at ourselves, which we should take. We've made many, many mistakes. We've got some wonderful things going for us, but we've made bad mistakes throughout our history. We've been a state that unfortunately has been owned by outside interests, and we've allowed these interests to kick us about, to use our magnificent resources, a factor which Kennedy brought out. Furthermore, if it hadn't been for Kennedy, would Theodore White in his book have made the magnificent comment about the West Virginia citizens, which I think is the greatest compliment that West Virginia has ever received, and I think one of the finest compliments paid to citizens of any state in the Union. This is something we can be proud of, and we can lead from strength. I think it was all for the good.

YOUNG: Do you have any other observations on the election, again from the point of four years later?

CHILTON: Well, shortly before the Primary election in West Virginia, it may have been a long time before—as a matter of fact, I happened to be in this hotel where we are this evening discussing another matter with Senator Randolph, and after we thoroughly explored the other matter, I started to query him to give me his private opinions and assessments of the various candidates running for president on the Democratic ticket. And if I remember correctly, we explored every possibility pretty thoroughly—Stevenson, Humphrey, Kennedy, Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson], and there may have been some others, whom I've since forgotten. But I think it's significant and interesting that Senator Randolph had pertinent remarks to make about each man, and I've forgotten precisely what he said. He never committed himself, I might add, as to whom he was personally for, but he did say that the most intelligent man of the group was Senator Kennedy.

[-11-]

One other story possibly shows the extent to which the Kennedy organization—of why they got a reputation of being extremely aware politicians. As I said previously, I was not a Kennedy supporter, although I had voted for him in the Primary as a choice between him and Humphrey, because I thought he had made a slightly better campaign. But there was no way of Kennedy knowing this, and our paper had remained neutral. As a matter of fact, we consistently had editorials saying that it was absolutely mandatory that Adlai E. Stevenson be the nominee. I received after the primary a book from President Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*—it was either *Profiles in Courage* or—in fact, I think I have two books from him. Possibly the *Profiles in Courage* was received earlier. Then there was another one on foreign policy or speeches or something. It was addressed to Elizabeth and Edwin: “Thank you so much for being so kind to my sister-in-law [Virginia Joan Bennett Kennedy].” What had happened was that my wife, who as I said was for Kennedy right from the very beginning—all the way—had told the local volunteer group that she would be happy to assist in any way that she could, and near the end of the primary campaign, there was a parade through downtown Charleston. I don't believe that Kennedy was here, but a number of the

family were, and my wife was assigned for one day to drive Joannie around. I think it was a day she took her to a local church service, in the middle of the day—it was at a time when it was a religious week or something and they were holding services at noon. She took her there and drove her around to various events, and she invited her up to the house for cocktails—there were some other people who were supposed to come in the organization but they couldn't make it but Joannie did appear. I was very, very busy that day and I remember that when she appeared, Betty called me and I rushed home from the office. I don't believe I had a drink because I had to go back to the office, but we sat and talked for about half an hour. I was amazed when I received the book. This must have been what President Kennedy was referring to, because this was the only time that he had an opportunity to be hospitable to any member of his family. But someone had briefed him on it, obviously, and it was a little comment—whether it was in his handwriting I wouldn't know for sure—I suspect it is, but it might not be—maybe it's somebody who could copy—but anyway, I think it is.

In case there's any misunderstanding that he didn't know my name, and there was no reason for him to know my name, my nickname is Ned. It's a corruption—a shortening of Edwin but technically he was absolutely correct in calling me Edwin. It's just that I haven't been called that for many, many years.

[-12-]

One last incident, Congressman Slack [John M. Slack, Jr.], who happens to be a friend of mine, recalled an incident one night in the White House. He served under Eisenhower—he said that the affairs in the White House under Eisenhower were always very stiff and formal, and he was privileged to attend several of them. He also attended several under President Kennedy, and he said that it was magnificent—you find a string quartet in one corner, the Marine Band playing in another, and then off down the hall somewhere, a hot combo playing swing, jazz time and modern tempo music. This particular evening, he said that he and four or five other Congressmen were sitting wherever they sit in the White House—I've never been in it—and the President was in an easy chair, feet up on the table, tie pulled slightly askew, completely relaxed, and they were sitting there having a nice easy chat with a couple of highballs. It sounded very delightful and, as you said earlier, no Lawrence Welk.

YOUNG: Well, Ned, do you have any final observations before we conclude this discussion?

CHILTON: One last one. I've given the impression possibly—either before or during the course of this interview—of being slightly negative to former Senator and former President Kennedy—this is true. I was negative toward his candidacy in the beginning—quite negative, possibly because I have grave reservations about his Church—although I'm not anti-Catholic per se, I did have reservations about him. But I just kick myself today, because I felt he grew every single day. I thought he was a magnificent President. He didn't always do what I wanted him to do, but I thought he was a terrific President and got better all the time, and I just kick myself that I did not take advantage of some opportunities that I did have to be with him and to meet him. I could have—I was in a

position to have seen more of him if I had wanted to. For instance, at that reception, I could have stayed longer but I left, and I've been kicking my rear end ever since.

YOUNG: This has been an interview with W. E. Chilton, III, of Charleston, West Virginia, made at the Daniel Boone Hotel on July 14, 1964. During the 1960 West Virginia Primary, Mr. Chilton was Associate to the Publisher of the *Charleston Gazette*—Assistant to the Publisher, rather. At the present time, 1964, he is publisher of the *Charleston Gazette* in Charleston, West Virginia.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-13-]

W. E. Chilton, III Oral History Transcript
Name List

A

Alsop, Joseph W., 5, 7
Anderson, Andy, 5, 6

B

Barron, William W., 8, 9
Byrd, Robert C., 10

C

Chilton, Elizabeth Early "Betty", 1, 2, 12
Considine, Robert V., 7

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 2, 9, 13

F

Fleeson, Doris, 2, 3

H

Humphrey, Hubert E., 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12

J

Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 11

K

Kennedy, John F., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,
12, 13
Kennedy, Robert F., 10
Kennedy, Virginia Joan Bennett, 12
Kent, Carleton V., 7

L

Lawrence, William H. "Bill", 7

M

Morgan, Edward P., 5

P

Potter, Philip, 7

R

Randolph, Jennings, 8, 9, 11
Roosevelt, Eleanor R., 6
Roosevelt, Franklin D., Jr., 6

S

Slack, John M., Jr., 13
Smith, Alfred E., 9
Stevenson, Adlai E., 1, 4, 11, 12

U

Underwood, Cecil H., 9

W

Welk, Lawrence, 13
White, Theodore H., 5, 11