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“An Offense to Conventional Wisdom”:
Press independence and Publisher W.E. Chilton III,
1960 to 1987

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For more than two decades as owner/publisher of West Virginia’s largest daily newspaper, *The Charleston Gazette*, W.E. “Ned” Chilton III established a legacy of independence that serves as an apt framework to discuss today’s core issues surrounding the meaning of a free press. Through the prism of a public sphere invigorated by an independent press, this case study examines Chilton’s insistence on journalism as a seeker of truth – or at least his version of truth - and a hammer for change rather than a “neutral” purveyor of information. This paper, which uses Chilton’s archives, interviews, existing literature, and more than 200 articles of the time period, focuses on three episodes: His battle for *The Gazette*’s file compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which revealed to the nation for the first time that the FBI had investigated news organizations in addition to individual journalists; the run-up to the Vietnam War, in which the *Gazette* was cited as one of the first in the nation to challenge the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as a rationale for military action, and his long association with West Virginia U.S. Senator John Rockefeller, which eventually forced him to choose between friendship and independence.

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W.E. “Ned” Chilton III, owner and publisher of *The Charleston (West Virginia) Gazette*, was simultaneously intrigued and outraged when he learned through a casual conversation in 1976 with West Virginia Congressman Ken Hechler that the Federal Bureau of Investigation might have a file on him. Chilton quickly sent in a request to the agency for any “information or documents” relating to him, *The Gazette* or any of its editors.¹ What came back nine months later, after two follow-up letters, sent a shudder and more than a few chuckles through the nation’s press. Chilton’s request and the results revealed for the first time, as reported by the *New York Times* news service in a widely run article,² that the nation’s top law enforcement agency had maintained files and conducted investigations not only on celebrities and politicians, which had become well known by then, but also on a newspaper as an organization.

Particularly of interest to the nation’s press was that the FBI and Director J. Edgar Hoover would bother with a West Virginia newspaper, even its largest. While Chilton was well-known in elite journalism circles as a host and commentator on various Public Broadcasting programs, as a contributor to *The Nation* magazine, and as a friend of influential publisher Charles Peters and *The Washington Monthly*, he was not high-profile outside the meandering borders of the Mountain State. The file, however, revealed an essential element of why Hoover cared. When Chilton took over as publisher of *The Gazette* in 1961, he dramatically ramped up the newspaper’s questioning of the FBI, including what he considered its failure to enforce federal civil rights legislation. This was something Hoover could not abide.

The FBI episode is illustrative of Chilton’s legacy of independence during a twenty-five-year reign as owner/publisher of *The Gazette*, the state’s largest newspaper. During this time, Chilton established a reputation as a gruff, intense editorial writer and a staunch defender of a free press as he defined it—everyone was free to agree with him. This philosophy, that the owner of the machinery gets to call the shots, translated into what he referred to as “sustained outrage.” In addition to revealing the FBI’s investigation of newspapers, he established his independence during a series of other episodes, including being an early opponent of the Vietnam War and turning on political allies who might have presumed the publisher firmly in their corners. The latter included an episode where his independence came under fire and public pressure forced him to choose between friendship and an independent examination of campaign spending.

This study, using textual analysis,³ in-depth interview⁴ and the prism of the theories of a public sphere invigorated by an independent press that sought to set an agenda, examines Chilton’s unusually muscular approach to what he perceived as his First Amendment responsibilities in three separate episodes that illustrate the role of press independence in the public sphere. The purpose is to provide insight into the nature of the press’s historical function as a force in what information reaches the public, what doesn’t, and the role of press owners and publishers in this process. This study argues Chilton and his actions illustrate two key components that must exist for independence: The ability to decide and allegiance at some level to values higher than profit, party, or pals.

This is a vital question of the current age,

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and the episodes involving Chilton serve as an important case study and potential framework for this discussion. As daily print-oriented journalism retreats, creating what the U.S. Federal Communications Commission calls “media deficits” in many communities, the nature of what it means to have an independent press is under debate.⁵ The main lever into this study was to contribute to parameters for discussing foundational questions: What does press independence look like? What forces are at play in both defining and deploying elements of independence? The author was the first researcher to study the publisher’s archives, which were used extensively in this study. In addition to the archives, this study used interviews with key players, existing literature, and more than 200 published reports of the time period.

Press Independence

The concepts of an independent press, free to train its rhetorical cannons at whatever target it desires, and a people tasked with governing themselves have been entwined since the Enlightenment.⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, widely quoted for his observations linking the press, the public, and democracy, argued in the mid-1830s that newspapers served as the means for tying together a nation no longer bound by a central village commons: “This can be habitually and conveniently effected only by means of a newspaper; nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment.”⁷ The main hallmark of a free press, he noted, is journalism independent from government as a means of accountability through informing the “tribunal of public opinion.”⁸

For most of American history, however, journalism independence was seen through partisan and commercial issues rather than governmental. The distinction between “free” and “independent” has taken various forms. As private industry, the printing medium came under wide criticism, much of it focusing on the owners of the press, their agendas, and whether they were conducting their operations within the spirit of the First Amendment that protects their busi-

nesses. Early in the republic, those who owned the presses were seen as the politically elite, either politically powerful themselves or serving at the behest of the politically powerful.⁹ The expectation was that the papers would not, in fact, be independent but rather organs for a particular policy, party or movement. Noted scholar Jeffrey Pasley: “Newspapers . . . contributed in fundamental ways to the very existence of the parties and to the creation of a sense of membership, identity, and common cause between political activists and voters.”¹⁰

As the nation grew and the press stormed through the Penny Press days of the 1830s, which saw the rise of popular journalism and sparked Tocqueville’s observations, and into the more sensational Yellow Journalism period of the 1890s, more and more critics were taking note that the press as a private enterprise, while free from government censors (except during times of war when sedition became an issue), often had another, bigger barrier to independent reporting: those who owned the presses and paid the salaries of the journalists. In 1880, noted New York City journalist John Swinton, speaking to his colleagues, pointed out the differences between reporter and owner during an awards acceptance speech: “There is not one of you who dares to write his honest opinions, and if you did, you know beforehand that they would never appear in print. . . . We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes.”¹¹

Criticism that separates owners from the work of day-to-day journalists rests on the theory that the owners control journalists, either through direct orders or by establishing a culture that fosters obedience. In 1947, the Commission on Freedom of the Press, popularly known as the Hutchins Commission, examined the state of journalism, using as its underlying premise the idea that the press as big business was the single greatest threat to American free expression.¹²

In a 1955 study, Warren Breed suggested publishers established a culture of control through a variety of methods in an attempt to explain why newspapers, largely populated with college-educated, liberal thinkers, failed to report

some stories and largely stayed within the bounds of the status quo.¹³ Press critic A.J. Liebling, best known for his “Wayward Press” column in *New Yorker* magazine, noted established press owners often became giddy with profit, dazzled by the country club company they kept and the power they wielded.¹⁴

Ownership and control in constant tension with the value of press independence as a way of fostering public debate, creating agendas, and inflating the public sphere is a common theme in journalism history. In his examination of Horace Greeley, for instance, scholar Daxton Stewart argued the famed journalist was a key framer of the arguments for why independence was an essential element in defining a free press.¹⁵ Greeley, as Chilton would more than 100 years later, faced a variety of pressures. As he built his fortunes in the years before the Civil War, the founder of the *New Yorker* and the *New York Tribune* argued the press should not be neutral but a force for change and an advocate “to advance the needs of the downtrodden.”¹⁶ This often put him at odds with established business and at times with some of his own readers. The Civil War, however, perhaps presented him with his most difficult situation: To support or not President Abraham Lincoln’s repressive press policies. Greeley sided with Lincoln.¹⁷

This tension also is seen in industry ethical codes. Criticism over advertiser influence and loyalty on behalf of publishers to business concerns rather than a robust public sphere rose to such a din,¹⁸ that government intervention, rather than anathema to First Amendment principles, began to be seen as a way to preserve press independence. In 1912, the newspaper trade journal *Editor & Publisher* endorsed a plan for the licensing of newspapers as a way to check the growing number of critics upset over sensationalism and the thirst for circulation that supported more advertising.¹⁹ Appalled, many of the nation’s editors, as movie industry leaders would later in the century, decided self-regulation was preferable to government oversight. In 1922, *Editor & Publisher* giddily reported the adoption by the newly formed American Society of Newspaper Editors of journalism’s first Code

of Ethics.²⁰ The code called freedom of the press a “vital human right” and listed independence as its third canon, with a focus on banning “the promotion of any private interest not in the general welfare.”²¹ The group adopted the code as Oklahoma lawmakers were considering legislation that would have created a state board to craft qualifications for journalists.

After World War II, in which an acquiescent press readily cooperated with the federal Office of Censorship,²² the social upheaval of the 1960s and early 1970s, marked by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and the Nixon Watergate scandals, brought renewed attention to press independence. In 1975, the ASNE rewrote its code, renaming it a “Statement of Principles” and tying together the concepts of independence from government to freedom of the press.²³ The group rewrote the code just as the *Washington Post* was breaking the Watergate scandal and four years after the Pentagon Papers case.²⁴ The Radio, Television and Digital News Association’s Code of Ethics also lists “independence” as a core value.²⁵

Much of journalism history has been concerned with exploring and at times critiquing the press titans who shaped the industrial press, including William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, E.W. Scripps, and the like. The more recent scions of the press, such as Katherine Graham of the *Washington Post* and the Ochs family of the *New York Times*, have received much attention, but in a narrower sense. At least 120 scholarly articles, for instance, have been published on Watergate, ranging from the “heroic narrative” embodied in the work of the *Post*’s Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein²⁶ to contemporary examinations of how Watergate affected public opinion.²⁷ In a particularly intriguing study, Kathryn Olmsted argued that rather than invigorating the press, elite coverage of the intelligence community after Watergate was largely deferential, suggesting struggles with the concept of independence that has plagued the press from its founding.²⁸

While examinations of the press lords are illuminating about the development of the American press from a national perspective, these

tend to ignore or give only passing attention to the press closest to where most U.S. citizens live, their regions, states, and communities. Regional and local press owners likely were influenced by and frequently copied their better-known brethren, but they also fought their own battles and wrestled with their own definitions of what it means to be independent.

The trend of corporate newspaper ownership in 1970s and through to the 1990s shook the fundamental ideal, however mythologized and misinformed, of what a free and independent press looked like. Former U.S. Rep. Morris Udall, an Arizona Democrat, argued for the importance of the local and regional press while leading the fight in Congress to change the estate tax with the goal of incentivizing local newspaper owners to keep their operations in the family rather than sell out to larger corporations, a practice common during Chilton's reign as publisher of the *Gazette*.²⁹ Chilton, himself, railed against what he saw as the profit-driven takeover of the "keepers of the tablets" by corporations.³⁰ Perhaps the best-known example of resisting corporate overtures was Nelson Poynter's establishment of a trust to continue the *St. Petersburg (FL.) Times* as an independent operation.³¹ *Gazette* shareholders had been approached several times during Chilton's tenure by corporations seeking to buy the state's largest newspaper, offers the family never seriously considered.³²

In some cases, these local or regional owners were faulted for their eagerness, as Liebling noted, to be among the elite or overly interested in the business side of the press. In studying newspapers in Montana, for instance, scholar John McNay argued the majority of the state's press owners sold their newspapers to the Anaconda Mining Co., which wanted them mostly to keep them silent on matters of public concern dealing with environmental issues. It was not until Lee Enterprises bought some of the state's larger operations that the state press was unleashed.³³

At the center of the debate was the core idea that independent ownership was an essential ingredient of independent journalism and there-

fore a keystone of representative democracy.³⁴ Often unstated in the argument for local control, since it was self-apparent, was that local ownership meant local decision-making, with the implication being that those closest to communities were in the best position to make judgements on resources and issues. Several studies have sought to rebuke this intuitive idea. For instance, Hopson examined a local newspaper in Tennessee and found that rather than supporting a drive for African-American voter rights, the newspaper sided in its reporting and editorializing with local business leaders.³⁵ Friedman and Richardson, in investigating coverage of the civil rights movement, found that five leading Southern newspapers tended to discredit movement leaders and emphasize police action rather than issues presented by the protesters.³⁶

The intent of this study is not to argue for Chilton as a singular exemplar of independent ownership, but rather to use his unusual career to help illustrate the elements of independence, which includes the ability to make decisions on resources and agenda. Other regional or local journalists and/or owners have come under some examination for their independence and resistance to local pressures, though nearly all from a single issue. For instance, Claude Sitton eventually became editor for the *Raleigh News and Observer* after being the *New York Times*' chief Southern correspondent from 1958 to 1964. Though not an owner or publisher in charge of the business side, he was lauded as an independent force in examining deep cultural change.³⁷ Kaye Fanning, as owner of the *Anchorage (AL) Daily News*, led her staff to a Pulitzer Prize for an investigation of the Teamsters Union before selling the paper to McClatchy Newspapers in 1979. Hazel Brannon Smith, owner of the *Lexington Advertiser* in Mississippi, was widely praised for her evolving views on race and resistance to the local Citizens Council, which was formed to fight desegregation efforts.³⁸

This study argues that several factors make Chilton particularly well suited for a study on independence: First, he was a minority owner of his newspaper (controlling about 24 percent of

the privately held stock; the majority of the other shares were held by family members who never questioned Chilton's leadership rights). Second, he consciously chose to turn over day-to-day business operations to others, instead choosing to focus his time and considerable energies to the newsroom and the editorial page. Third, he maintained his interest and position for nearly three decades, allowing an examination such as this to encompass a variety of episodes. Fourth, Chilton served as a sort of bridge between national journalistic discussions and local. Indeed, he viewed *The Gazette* and himself as national players in politics and influence, though few others likely would agree with him despite his frequent contact with nation's journalism elite.

Independence and the Public Sphere

Theories of the public sphere and journalism as a key structural element of an informed citizenry underpin this study. Jürgen Habermas, in critiquing the political situation in post-World War II Germany, concluded that in order to exist, a true public sphere must have several elements present: a public space in which citizens may engage; topics of discussion that must be of general interest to all (or nearly all) citizens; an opportunity for feedback, and—above all, in Habermas' view—rational discourse that ultimately seeks consensus toward meaning.³⁹ He argued that the creation and energetic use of the public sphere are vital for any democracy.⁴⁰ The public sphere is the mechanism by which public opinion is formed and changed, and by which the public influences the direction of policy through mediated agreement, or at least acknowledgement and eventual acquiescence, of definitions and outcomes, which are then carried out by political actors dependent on the public will.⁴¹ Habermas' ideas have been evoked in scholarship from everything to a study of bumper stickers in an Israeli election to discourse on the Jerry Springer show.⁴²

The formation and potential manipulation of public opinion through what information is available for debate in the public sphere and

what is not underlies many historical examinations of the press. For instance, Vilja Hulden argued contention for public space in the sphere through the press was a key element in the labor movement battles at the close of the nineteenth century.⁴³ Others have examined newspaper control through corporate owners, such as E.W. Scripps exerting his influence with his newspaper chain and copy service to shield key Progressive leaders during the nascent environmental movement⁴⁴ and later using his newspapers to push America into entering World War I.⁴⁵

Underpinning the concept of the public sphere as a space where debate occurs is agenda setting, a theory that suggests how, why, and when topics crop up for discussion.⁴⁶ In their initial 1972 study, McCombs and Shaw revealed a complex interplay between source, journalist, and opinion leaders for directing and eliciting public dialogue. Since then, a variety of studies have added texture and nuance to the theory. For instance, Hester and Gibson found local media and national media had quite different audience effects, with local media having a stronger agenda-setting influence than the national media when the topic dealt with a national issue.⁴⁷ This is a particularly important finding within the context of this study. In other words, why study local and regional journalism institutions? The evidence, though far from conclusive, is that local and regional media matter for what audiences choose to talk about in terms of matters of public interest.⁴⁸

A variety of criticisms have developed around the idea of the public sphere, most attacking Habermas' overly optimistic view of the sphere and his explication of how it *should* work, not necessarily how it *really* works. For instance, scholars Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Hernan Galperin have argued for governmental regulation of the American newspaper based on Habermas' ideas of equal access to public debate. They note that the newspaper owner has no legal requirement to permit voices into her publication other than those with which she agrees. The result, they contend, is a stunted debate without real alternatives.⁴⁹ Media scholar

James Curran issued a particularly withering critique of Habermas's prescriptive ideas, arguing he failed to take into account how power moves through institutions and societies, what he termed the apparent collusion between government and industrial interests, including the press.⁵⁰ Chilton, himself, raised the issue of collusion between his fellow newspaper owners in West Virginia with established interests when he launched an investigative series he called the "Inspid Press."⁵¹

More contemporary critics, such as Robert McChesney, while acknowledging valid criticisms of consolidated newspaper ownership, have turned their sights toward digital communication. McChesney argues rhapsodic rhetoric over the empowering nature of the Internet is overblown and that its development and majority of its content largely have been controlled by corporate interests with no allegiance to independent journalism.⁵² This, he suggests, has endangered journalism as a separate institution that, with all its faults, stood as the watchdog for democracy. Thirty years prior to McChesney's argument, Chilton brought up the idea of the changing nature of journalism when he accepted the national Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award on November 8, 1982. During his speech, he predicted the death of newspapers. The press, he said in echoing Greeley's antebellum arguments, was not only under attack from an onslaught of electronic competition, including what he called the computer-spawned "cybernetic revolution," but also from corporate newspaper owners who insisted on mass profits, pap rather than news, and tepid chiding instead of editorials that demanded true reform.⁵³

Sustained Outrage

Chilton, born November 26, 1922, graduated from Yale University, where he met and began decades-long relationships with conservative scion William F. Buckley Jr. and *Catcher in the Rye* author J.D. Salinger.⁵⁴ He started working at *The Gazette* in 1951 as the promotion manager, which entailed running various events sponsored by the newspaper. In 1953, he was elected as a Democratic delegate to the West Virginia

House of Delegates. After four terms, he quit politics when he was named publisher in 1961, following his father and grandfather.⁵⁵ At the time, Chilton told his wife, the former Elizabeth Early, that he could not serve two masters—*The Gazette* and politics—and he far favored the newspaper.⁵⁶

Over the course of more than two decades as owner, publisher, and chief editorial writer, he built a reputation as a gruff, liberal crusader, slowly crafting his philosophy of "sustained outrage" through many battles with state and national elite. Handsome, athletic, and with a personality that engendered love or hate, he wrote editorials with a biting venom. He was known for frightening reporters, as *Gazette* columnist Rick Steelhammer noted, "when he had those blue eyes locked on you and he had his voice rising and he had his finger pointed at your chest."⁵⁷ Chilton owned 24 percent of the newspaper and held his position as publisher and the final word on editorial matters by virtue of appointment by a board populated by family members. He chose to spend his days in an oak-lined corner office of the newsroom rather than in business offices, either directing the content of editorials and investigations or writing them himself. He once became irate when James Haight, *The Gazette's* lead investigator reporter and then editorial page editor during most of Chilton's tenure, told a visiting reporter profiling the publisher that he was Chilton's stenographer.⁵⁸ He formally outlined his policy of institutional memory and outrage in a 1981 speech to the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association during a meeting in Memphis, Tennessee:

Our editorials too often sound like what they are: the voice of an extremely wealthy corporation that needs to be concerned about certain pressing problems. Our editorials make the sound of a decorous jackhammer, not the startling thump of a sledgehammer, and worst of all we don't keep hammering away, day after day, day after day.⁵⁹

For most of its existence, the *Gazette* was locked in a circulation battle with *The Charleston*

Daily Mail. *The Gazette* was delivered in the morning and the *Mail* in the evening. The two combined business operations in the early 1950s, with *The Gazette* being editorially responsible for a combined Sunday edition.⁶⁰

Chilton's role as unquestioned authority over *The Gazette* and what appeared in it was never seriously threatened. The newspaper was run by a board made up of primarily family members who met once a year to go over business matters and hire a publisher. Once ascending to the position, he took over the editorial operations of the newspaper, running both daily news meetings as well as the weekly editorial board meetings.⁶¹

Classic Liberal

Chilton was a liberal in the classic definition, tending to examine each candidate and issue from the angle of whether the person or policy supported those with power or those without power. His stands were stark. Either something was wrong or it was not, and he had little patience for nuance. He vehemently opposed, for instance, capital punishment, calling it "legal murder" anathema to a society that considered itself "humanitarian" and struggling to "improve itself."⁶² When two state senators suggested reinstating the death penalty in 1969, *The Gazette* suggested the new law should include a mandate that the executions be televised since "too few of those upon whom the dread punishment is supposed to have such a salutary impact will be able to witness the gory proceedings."⁶³ In 1963, he was praised by controversial national radio host Robert St. John for leading "America's most outspoken liberal newspaper."⁶⁴

While part of, and coming from, a Democratic family tradition, Chilton was in the process of carving his own place in West Virginia, national politics and in journalism as an independent thinker and liberal maverick who would take on issues regardless of party. Or business relationship, or acquaintance, or friendship. One morning, early in his dealings as Chilton's lawyer, Charleston attorney Rudolph L. DiTrapano awoke to find *The Gazette* had named him in an editorial as one of several legal leaders

in Kanawha County, where the newspaper was located, notorious "for slopping judges,"⁶⁵ the practice of attorneys donating to judicial political campaigns. Though time-honored and accepted as a routine part of being in the West Virginia bar, Chilton believed the tradition was a legal pay-off system that gave well-heeled attorneys an unfair advantage. DiTrapano found Chilton at the local country club, where he was playing his usual Saturday morning tennis match. He did not deny making donations of \$1,000 or so to each of the judges, but he told Chilton he had no pending cases in Kanawha County. In fact, he practiced little in the local circuit courts except for when Chilton either wanted to get government records through the state's sunshine laws or was defending a libel suit.

"I told him I wanted a correction; that it wasn't right. I was hopping mad." Chilton told him to "go screw" himself.⁶⁶ R.S. Wehrle, a bridge partner and a supporter of Chilton's runs for the House of Delegates, complained bitterly about a tepid endorsement in *The Gazette* for his successful run for the Kanawha County Board of Education that called him "mildly qualified." He said he would still be Chilton's friend "personally" but "politically, you are not."⁶⁷ Chilton sent a letter the same day, setting out his philosophy on independence, both politically and in the broader world of journalism, saying he refused to turn the paper into "an organ for those people" with whom he was connected,⁶⁸ something that would be constantly challenged during his tenure as publisher.

Vietnam

Chilton was among the first in the nation to challenge the premise of the Vietnam War. The war crept into American politics on soft shoes. President Dwight Eisenhower began United States involvement with financial support and military advisers in 1955. Kennedy dramatically increased U.S. presence through more advisers and air support. On August 4, 1964, Johnson announced to the nation that United States warships had been attacked by North Vietnamese forces in the Gulf of Tonkin, and that he had ordered retaliatory strikes against military targets

in the area. Two American aircraft were shot down in the ensuing fight. On August 5, he asked Congress for a vote on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. At *The Gazette*, where most of the attention for the past year had been on the ongoing debate in Congress over civil rights legislation and the battle for equal rights in West Virginia, Johnson's request required a bit of pondering.

As what would become the Vietnam War escalated, the vast majority of editors in West Virginia and nationally, sensing the mood of their readers, supported the president and the escalation of hostilities in Southeast Asia.⁶⁹ It would be another six to eight years before the nation's leading journalists and news outlets, picking up on rising student protests and congressional questioning, would seriously examine the Gulf of Tonkin incident and Johnson's arguments for rising involvement in Southeast Asia.⁷⁰ For *The Gazette*, it took seven days. On August 12, 1964, the newspaper printed an editorial that would later be quoted in the *Congressional Record* as part of an examination of press failings and an example of how there was another perspective, even at the start of the war. The editorial noted an "an air of unreality" about the attack and suggested any military options to solve conflicts in the region were limited and ultimately doomed.⁷¹

Chilton's philosophy of sustained outrage was on full display. In hundreds of editorials over the next decade, he hammered on what he called the folly of a "containment policy" in Southeast Asia that assumed the fall of South Vietnam would start a domino effect of other countries coming under communist sway. Early on he offered back-handed support to peaceful student protests, noting the right of dissent was the foundation of the First Amendment and that, "Heaven help us the day [when] only the brave dare exercise the right."⁷² In the month of April 1967 alone, *The Gazette* printed nine editorials slamming the war from every angle, including lambasting a military strategy of "incredible stupidity,"⁷³ a screed against the draft,⁷⁴ and ridiculing a local government program that asked residents to send in the dimensions of

their basements so a computer program could determine how much radiation protection they would provide in the event of a nuclear attack.⁷⁵

Chilton believed the war was being fought by the poor and minorities who could not "escape the whole thing by going to college."⁷⁶ Invited to speak to the West Virginia Political Science Association in 1968, he told the students and professors that there was "no honorable out in Vietnam" and that the U.S. presidential election would make no difference since "they [North Vietnamese] have no intention of quitting this fight before we quit it."⁷⁷ Chilton's comments came in the context of Walter Cronkite telling his audience after the Tet Offensive revealed surprising Viet Cong strength that negotiation was the only way to withdraw from Vietnam.⁷⁸

Independence Questioned

Yet, Chilton's independence came under repeated questioning in relation to his long and warm friendship with eventual United States Senator Jay Rockefeller. The din became so loud Chilton felt he had to choose between his longtime friend and the values of press independence. Chilton had a core belief in the role of government in improving the lives of citizens. He found an ally in Rockefeller, a young oil heir who was three years past his Harvard University degree in Asian studies and working as a special assistant to Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver.⁷⁹ At twenty-seven, John "Jay" D. Rockefeller IV was looking for a place to make his mark, ending up as a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) worker in tiny, rural Emmons, West Virginia, in 1964. He became acquainted with Charles Peters, a former Charleston attorney and longtime friend of Chilton, when both worked at the Peace Corps in Washington. Peters, who went on to found and lead the highly influential, liberal publication *The Washington Monthly*, was persuaded West Virginia would offer the challenges that Rockefeller was seeking and persuaded him to explore this for himself.⁸⁰

Chilton and Rockefeller developed a deep and warm friendship. When Rockefeller first

arrived in West Virginia, he spent nine months living in the guest suite in the basement of the publisher's home in South Hills, a wealthy neighborhood carved from the hills overlooking Charleston and minutes from *The Gazette*. Elizabeth Chilton remembers Rockefeller as a younger brother, who raided the refrigerator and popped in and out unexpectedly.⁸¹ When Rockefeller married the former Sharon Percy, the daughter of Illinois United States Senator Charles Percy, *The Gazette* ran a four-column, front-page photograph of the couple descending the steps of a Chicago church.⁸² The two families occasionally traveled together and exchanged notes and letters for the next two decades. Though philosophically attuned, Chilton and Rockefeller had opposite styles. The former was energetic, bounding up stairs and stalking rapidly from place to place, prone to yelling and pointing his finger when making a point and tending to see issues as right or wrong. Rockefeller was soft spoken behind horn-rimmed glasses and moved deliberately, framing arguments most often in terms of policy and programs rather than in moral or ethical terms. However, they shared privileged backgrounds, Ivy League educations, and wealth that separated them from the people they purportedly sought to serve.

Rockefeller ran successfully for secretary of state in 1968, the same year that Republican Arch Moore took the governor's mansion after six terms in Congress from northern West Virginia. *The Gazette*, as expected, endorsed the Democrats that year, but in an interview with the *Morgantown Dominion-News*, Chilton rejected any suggestions that he was interested in state-wide office and correctly predicted Moore's victory, saying he would "be sorry to see Moore win" but the "Democrats have ruled this state like Chinese warlords. I could sympathize with a Republican who would say, 'Let's clean this whole mess out.'" ⁸³ He was referring to ongoing corruption revelations by *The Gazette* relating to the Democratic W.W. Barron administration.⁸⁴

In 1972, Rockefeller, who was safely ensconced as secretary of state, decided to run against Moore in hopes of blocking a second term. Whether and how much Chilton influ-

enced this decision is not readily apparent from the record.⁸⁵ One of Rockefeller's top issues, however, was strip mining in the state, telling a gathering of reporters, "I am convinced, reluctantly but strongly, that strip-mining coal must be prohibited by law."⁸⁶ Chilton had championed the issue several years before as part of a state task force. At the time, strip mining accounted for thousands of union jobs in the state. The Republican Moore easily won the race, collecting 123,000 more votes than Rockefeller, despite voter registration in the state running 2-1 in favor of the Democrats.

Rockefeller became president of private Wesleyan College in West Virginia, leaving in 1975 to once again run for governor. The state Constitution restricts the governor's office to two consecutive terms, which barred Moore from entering the race. Having seen the light on the value of coal and the thousands of jobs strip mining created in the state, Rockefeller rarely mentioned environmental reform and easily defeated seven Democratic opponents in the primary and ultimately the Republican challenger.

In 1980, he ran for re-election. Moore, after sitting out the required four years, announced he would run, too. The race attracted national attention with some speculating that Rockefeller was preparing for an eventual run for the presidency.

Chilton became an issue, himself, in October when he told a visiting *Washington Post* reporter that Rockefeller's spending in the race was "outrageous" and that "in effect, he's trying to buy the state." The comment gave *The Gazette's* conservative rival, *The Charleston Daily Mail*, gleeful grist for two weeks, including several columns and editorials, most of which implied Chilton was hypocritical for editorially supporting Rockefeller but being critical of him in remarks to a national reporter. Finally, three days before the election, Chilton felt compelled to respond, writing a column that addressed his comment to the *Post*. He called Rockefeller honest though misguided while Moore was, simply, dishonest and "willing to sell the state ... to a coal company."⁸⁷

Rockefeller won the race by more than

60,000 votes, spending a record \$11 million, much of it his own money.⁸⁸ But Chilton was stung, and Rockefeller's personal wealth and his willingness to use it to finance his political campaigns became an increasingly bitter issue. As a one-time candidate himself and deeply familiar with the state's political figures, Chilton understood how money flowed at election time. He famously told Neal R. Pearce, author of *The Border South States*, which explored the Kennedy election and rumors of vote-buying in West Virginia, that JFK "bought a landslide, not an election."⁸⁹ In spring 1981, after Rockefeller's election, Chilton ordered *Gazette* investigative reporter James Haught to examine the system. What resulted was a three-part investigation called "Readin', 'riting & politickin.'" The first installment questioned Rockefeller sending \$10,000 to Wyoming County School Superintendent James Pizzino "to pay precinct workers on election day" in 1976.⁹⁰ Rockefeller gave Pizzino's brother, Jack, who served as both the county purchasing director and the civil defense chief, \$17,300 for precinct workers in the 1980 election.⁹¹ Haught also reported that Rockefeller had sent \$20,000 to Lincoln County school bus Director Johnnie Adkins in 1980. In response, Rockefeller simply said those people were identified as political leaders in their counties and therefore were designated as "fiscal agents."⁹²

In 1984, Rockefeller ran for the United States Senate seat vacated by an ailing Jennings Randolph. Chilton would not leave himself open to attacks that he ignored Rockefeller's "outrageous" spending out of political affinity or personal friendship. Rockefeller faced John Raese, a virulent Republican whose family owned the *Morgantown Dominion-Post* newspaper and several other businesses in Monongalia County. He was wealthy, but nowhere near Rockefeller's status. Readers of *The Gazette* could rightly be confused by the newspaper's stridency against both candidates. In a biting editorial directly attacking Rockefeller's spending, Chilton invoked muckraker Ida Tarbell's famous 1902 series for *McClure's* magazine that exposed the political influence and corruption that helped to build Standard Oil, the fount of the Rockefeller family

wealth. Chilton wrote: "Ironic isn't it that the vast fortune the original Rockefeller stole and cheated to stockpile in secret is the basis for another Rockefeller's arrogant abuse of money in politics?" The editorial noted that his opponent was a lightweight with "powers of logic . . . that would have a kindergarten class rolling on the floor" yet Rockefeller "continues to shell out the dough shamelessly."⁹³

Rockefeller beat Raese after spending a record \$12 million. Raese was upset with what he perceived as Chilton's relentless battering with such editorials as one headlined "Ridiculous Raese," in which *The Gazette* chided him for his seeming waffling on whether he was for or against a right-to-work law in the state. The issue was widely seen as the main cause for his defeat, with the heavily union West Virginia voters disinclined to take a chance on someone who might disadvantage the union.⁹⁴

Exactly what the reporting and editorializing did for the relationship between Chilton and Rockefeller is not entirely clear, although the record reveals that Sharon Rockefeller and Elizabeth Chilton remained close, exchanging holiday cards and keeping each other informed of their children's progress. Decades later, Elizabeth Chilton said her husband "respected Jay" and they were friends. "He had no respect for Moore; none at all."⁹⁵ Rockefeller, reached twenty-three years later about his relationship with the publisher, would not answer specific questions but called him a "dear friend and civic ally for the people of the Kanawha Valley and the entire state of West Virginia."⁹⁶

Chilton and the FBI

Chilton's demand to the FBI for any documents related to him, his paper, or his editors came at a time of swirling revelations about the FBI, Hoover's iron grip on the agency for five decades, and his penchant for investigating political foes and celebrities as part of an encompassing post-Watergate angst. In the wake of President Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974, it became known the president had used the FBI for domestic surveillance.⁹⁷ Subsequent scholarship has revealed a long history of the

FBI investigating reporters and using willing journalists as informants,⁹⁸ as well as attempting to use the press for political purposes.⁹⁹ No one knew in 1976, however, that the FBI had targeted newspapers as organizations.

The FBI not only had a voluminous file on *The Gazette* stretching back to the 1930s, but at one point Hoover had sent agents into the newsroom to identify editors unfriendly to the bureau. The files revealed numerous memos and letters from agents to Hoover and his office about editorials in *The Gazette* and included profiles on Editor Harry Hoffman, who was described as a “scurrilous character” who would not be open to reform, and Chilton, who was noted for writing editorials in “praise of Red China” and “highly critical of . . . the FBI.”¹⁰⁰ The file noted *The Gazette* in the 1930s and early 1940s was friendly to the FBI, in one editorial labeling Hoover as the nation’s “policeman No. 1.”¹⁰¹ That began to change in the late 1940s when Chilton Jr., Chilton III’s father, launched attacks on the Communist hunt in Hollywood. Then in 1953, when Chilton was the newspaper’s promotional director, Hoffman wrote an editorial critical of Hoover’s congressional testimony attacking President Harry S Truman. Since then, the FBI noted, under Chilton III’s leadership *The Gazette* had grown increasingly critical of the bureau, including criticizing its performance in investigating the deaths of civil rights activists in Mississippi and Alabama. When African American reporter Ed Peeks called the Atlanta, Georgia, FBI bureau in June 1964 as part of a *Gazette* probe into complaints by local civil rights activists that the agency was lax in responding to complaints about police brutality, Hoover issued an order that no assistance should be given to the newspaper. The reason, Hoover stated, was because it had been “consistently hostile to the bureau over the years.”¹⁰²

Hoover was apoplectic in 1959 when the special agent based in Charleston took four days to forward to his office a critical *Gazette* editorial, sending a blistering letter to the supervisor in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, office, demanding he “immediately submit an explanation

as to why the editorial of October 26, 1959 . . . wasn’t brought to the bureau’s attention until October 30. Not only should a full explanation be furnished, but your recommendation as to appropriate administrative action should also be included.”¹⁰³ It turned out that Hoover’s fury was unneeded. The editorial mistakenly attributed testimony about the FBI seeking the names of “liberals” when actually it was a Communist organizer seeking the names. Hoover sent a letter asking for a correction.¹⁰⁴

Gazette investigative reporter James Haight wrote an extensive report on the FBI files kept on the *Gazette* and Chilton’s efforts to get them. The Associated Press sent out the story under his own byline, an unusual practice for the wire service. *New York Times* reporter Ben A. Franklin did an article that moved on the *Times*’ wire service. Both stories received wide play, including in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* and *The (Nashville) Tennessean*. Franklin noted that “so far as it can be learned from the FBI and through a check of other newspapers by the Associated Press, the *Gazette* is the first such publication to avail itself of . . . disclosure provisions . . . establishing that the bureau kept files not only on individual journalists but also on publishing organizations.”¹⁰⁵

The response in the press industry was one of bemused outrage. The fact Hoover would be so personally interested in *The Gazette*, with a circulation at the time of the release of the files in 1976 of about 80,000 on Sunday and about 50,000 in 1953, raised interest not only in what other newspaper owners the FBI had probed but exactly how far the investigations went. For instance, while the files released noted that “Mr. and Mrs. Chilton” had not been investigated, a letter from then FBI Director Clarence Kelley said the files had been “edited” and that as many as eight pages would never be released because they concerned national security, violated privacy provisions, or revealed FBI techniques.¹⁰⁶ *Editor & Publisher*, the industry’s oldest and best-read trade journal, said the files represented “a police-state mentality and attitude that has no place in our society.”¹⁰⁷ *The Nation* magazine wrote that the files told of a

“love story gone sour” and revealed Hoover and the bureau as “so full of vanity and slapstick, pettiness and bureaucratic low comedy that one is tempted to cast Oliver Hardy in the role of the director.” Yet, the magazine wrote, “This was no laughing matter and the FBI . . . is still under no effective control by our elected representatives.”¹⁰⁸ The *Daily Mail* called the FBI’s activities “madness:”

As its faithful readers complain now and then, the *Gazette* is sometimes an offense to good sense and the conventional wisdom — and rather inordinately proud of its reputation in this department. But a threat to domestic tranquility and national security worth a moment’s serious consideration by the district constable? Hardly.¹⁰⁹

The 1976 fight for his files was not Chilton’s first direct contact with the FBI. In a letter dated January 26, 1953, which was not mentioned in any of the coverage twenty-three years later, Hoover sent Chilton a response to what apparently had been a request for information. Hoover declined: “I would like to point out also that this agency is strictly a fact-finding agency, and it is not within the limits of its prescribed functions to draw conclusions or make evaluations as to the character or integrity of any organization or individual.”¹¹⁰

Conclusion

In a wide-ranging report issued in the summer of 2010, the Federal Communications Commission detailed what it called the nation’s growing “media deficits.” The report’s authors studied the United States’ news landscape, coming to the conclusion that neither television nor web start-ups had replaced shuttered printing presses, shrinking delivery areas, and more than 30,000 laid-off journalists. The deficits, the report found, resulted in a dearth of locally produced news reports. Though some television stations were producing excellent programs, “a minority are exhibiting alarming tendencies to allow advertisers to dictate content. In most communities, commercial radio, cable, and satellite play a small role in reporting local news.

Public TV does little local programming; public radio makes an effort to contribute but has limited resources. Most important, too few Internet-native local news operations have so far gained sufficient traction financially to make enough of an impact.”¹¹¹ Journalism professor and textbook author Melvin Mencher, as have others, tied this decline in traditional newspapering to a trend toward thinner reporting that he contended threatened the very foundation of journalism independence.¹¹²

Chilton served as an illustration of what one version of an independent press looks like, news outlet owners with the authority, ability, and willingness to challenge the status quo in order to populate the public sphere with information essential for robust debate. Few would argue Chilton was “neutral,” as legal scholar Randall Bezanson believed the U.S. Supreme Court intended in addressing the legal implications of a free press.¹¹³ Chilton was not neutral. He had causes he believed in and would willingly use his paper, his fortune, and whatever else he needed to address those causes. Yet, he and *The Gazette* were independent in a deeper, perhaps truer, sense—no allegiance, personal or political, was stronger than the issue to be addressed. But this independence came at times from outside pressures, as in the case of Rockefeller’s political spending. Would Chilton have reached the same conclusion about his longtime friend without pressure from the public and the rival *Daily Mail*? Perhaps, but likely not within the same timeframe or with the same vehemence.

Chilton was not a believer in the industry’s ongoing trend toward professional standards that he felt forced a bland sameness in the name of objectivity. Since no one can be objective, he told the Charleston Kiwanis in 1986, the question was whether an article was “fair.” “My litmus test for a story isn’t necessarily its objectivity or subjectivity,” he said, “but an effort should be made to make it fair. I always ask, ‘Is it fair?’”¹¹⁴ And by fair, he meant true. Or, at least Chilton true, which many observers noted was not always the same as objective truth. It was this quest for what Chilton believed to be true that fueled his sustained outrage and set the

tone for his dealings with the power structure, of which he was, himself, a part. In the three episodes examined in this study—Chilton’s editorial stances on the Vietnam War, his friendship with an eventual United States senator, and his quest for *The Gazette* file from the FBI—the publisher displayed attributes essential to the concept of independence. As owner and publisher, he had unquestioned authority to make decisions on what would appear in the newspaper as well as what resources would be deployed to gather and report. Further, each episode represented a decision point to either go along with the status quo or to depart from it at the risk of alienating the established power structure, longtime political allegiances, or deeply held friendships.

An extension of this independence was his unpredictability. No one, not even those closest to him, could guess what outrage would sound the clarion call for reform in the publisher’s mind, triggering a new round of investigations and editorials. The result was a contingent of public servants who constantly scanned for a potential *Gazette* storm. Public servants that included J. Edgar Hoover, who chided his staff when a condemning editorial didn’t come quickly enough to his attention. Readers, too, were not exempt from jarring disruptions. A mass protest in 1986, for instance, resulted when *The Gazette* added sex therapist Ruth Westheimer as a syndicated columnist. Chilton dismissed the signature campaign as puritanical nonsense: “That seems to be an organized effort by, in my opinion, a know-nothing group.”¹¹⁵ Westheimer stayed.

Neither were advertisers immune from the publisher’s ire. At Chilton’s direction, investigative reporter Haught wrote in 1978 a series of scathing reports about shoddy repairs and business practices at local car dealers. The dealers banded together to pull their advertising, eventually costing the newspaper \$120,000.¹¹⁶ They came back after being out about three months. Wrote *Gazette* Editor Don Marsh:

As far as I could tell, W.E. Chilton III, the *Gazette* publisher, was most troubled by implications of the boycott. Chilton said he

believes that readers would be justified in assuming that we had made editorial concessions to lure back defectors.¹¹⁷

Chilton suffered a fatal heart attack on February 6, 1987, during the quarterfinals of the sixty-five and older division of the 28th Annual Woodruff Nee, a national squash tournament in Washington, D.C. In the 1982-83 rankings, he had been ranked eleventh in the nation in the sixty-plus division. At the time of his death, eighty-nine editorials, finished and unfinished, were found in his computer.¹¹⁸

As the news industry adjusts to ongoing disruption, deeper questions must be asked. The first, as the FCC noted, is whether the news exists at all. But, just as importantly, the question becomes what kind of news is it? Is it the result of an independence that seeks truth, as best it can be known, and fairness, as Chilton would say, or is it something else?

The angst-filled chatter through industry, government, and academia has spawned a wave of suggestions, though no concrete action, for how to promote and preserve independent journalism. The FCC report, for instance, concluded with a raft of recommendations for policy tweaks and reforms aimed at improving the public affairs information available for communities. These included changing Internal Revenue Service regulations to make it easier for newspaper owners to convert their operations to non-profit status, providing incentives for the formation of local community access and government cable channels, and making it easier for public broadcast stations, radio and television, to do and document local public affairs programming.¹¹⁹

Leonard Downie Jr., a journalism professor and an executive for the *Washington Post*, and noted news flow scholar Michael Schudson, offered suggestions for turning the “current moment of transformation into a reconstruction of American journalism.”¹²⁰ They recommended a far more textured business model for newspapers that included a “long-tail advertising” scheme to allow them to offer specific viewers of their websites to merchants at premium

prices.¹²¹ In foreshadowing the FCC report, they also endorsed passing new IRS regulations to make it easier for news organizations to be set up as non-profit, 501(c)3 corporations. In addition to releasing the profit pressure on commercial news organizations, charitable status would make it more attractive for foundations and philanthropic trusts to contribute on an ongoing rather than episodic basis.¹²² Legal scholar Richard Schmalbeck offered a particularly compelling argument that most newspapers, with a few tweaks to their operations, could qualify under current IRS guidelines as either educational or charitable groups. One barrier, he noted, could be changed by the IRS without an act of Congress through recasting its historic definition of “commerciality.”¹²³

Scholars Mike Ananny and Daniel Kreiss, in a particularly creative romp through the U.S. Constitution, connected the copyright clause to the First Amendment, arguing for a “positive” interpretation of the rights of free press and free speech. The founders, they suggested, clearly intended for public affairs information to be in the public domain and to be acted upon by the citizenry. The constitution was not meant solely to prevent government interference in this process, a negative right, but to actively promote the education of the public and their ability to take part in the discussion, a positive right. They suggested direct subsidy of journalism by reporters exchanging their copyrights for government payments.¹²⁴ Other scholars, such as James Curran and colleagues, have argued for a change from what they called entertainment-centered, market-driven journalism to a public service model supported by government. In comparing television industries across four countries, they found public service models did more and better public affairs programming but

that, overall, more and more countries were leaning toward the U.S. system of private, for-profit ownership and programming. “This trend seems set to foster an impoverished public life characterized by declining exposure to serious journalism and by reduced levels of public knowledge,” Curran wrote.¹²⁵

Rarely raised in these contemporary discussions of journalism at once in disarray and essential to representative democracy is the foundational question of what does an independent press look like? Chilton understand the principles of a free press are not found in technology but in the decisions made of what reaches an audience. Chilton, as this study has shown, was interested in national, regional, and local matters of public interest, most often directing his attention, energy, resources, and more than occasional vitriol toward what he viewed as a recalcitrant government failing the public. Debating new models of journalism is relatively meaningless without addressing the key question of independence, what it looks like, and how it will be maintained. Economic models that stress a continuing stream of resources are only part of the equation. The other part, perhaps the most important, is how decisions made for using those resources will remain as free as possible from influence.

This study sought to provide perspective on the issue of independence through the actions and philosophies of a publisher with an unusual drive to support what he perceived as his First Amendment obligations. This study demonstrated two essential elements of the concept of independence: The ability to make decisions, as Chilton could on a day to day basis, and a willingness to invoke, at least at times, values higher than party, profit, or pals.

Notes

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- ¹ James A. Haught, editor, *The Charleston Gazette*, interview with the author, Charleston, WV, June 9, 2009.
- ² Ben A. Franklin, *New York Times* News Service, “Files Show Paper Critical of FBI Monitored,” *The (Nashville) Tennessean*, November 28, 1976.
- ³ Textual analysis is a qualitative method of teasing out meaning from the totality of context associated with a given text, including tone, metaphor, diction and so on. The method is widely used in social science and historical research. The method can be further explored in Peter K. Manning Besty Cullum-Swan, “Narrative Content and Semiotic Analysis” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994), 464-467. An example of the method used in journalism historical research is Jane Marcellus, “Dear D”: Sophie Treadwell’s 1915 Correspondence from the “Big War Theatre,” *American Journalism*, 29 no. 4 (2012): 69-93.
- ⁴ In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research method that, like its journalistic counterpart, seeks to gather information. But, within the context of scholarship, the in-depth interview is more than the collection of facts from individuals with specific knowledge. The interview method includes backgrounding of the subject, exploration of potential motivations, context of the remarks and information, and so on. See John M. Johnson, “In-Depth Interviewing” in *The Handbook of Interview Research* eds Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001), 103-120.
- ⁵ Steven Waldman, “The Information Needs of Communities,” Federal Communications Commission, www.fcc.gov/needsreport (accessed September 30, 2011).
- ⁶ J. Herbert Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan: The Ideas Behind American Journalism* (New York: Longman, 1990). Altschull traces the philosophical roots of the First Amendment through the writings of Rousseau, Locke, Hume, and others, all of whom suggested in one form or another that free thinking required free access to new information and ideas.
- ⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Vol. II* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1945), 111.
- ⁸ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Vol. II*, 112.
- ⁹ Jeffrey L. Pasley, *Tyranny of Printers* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 12.
- ¹⁰ Jeffrey L. Pasley, “The Two National Gazettes: Newspapers and the Embodiment of American Political Parties,” *Early American Literature*, 35 no. 1 (2000): 52.
- ¹¹ Richard O. Boyer and Herbert Morais, *Labor’s Untold Story* (New York: United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, 1955/1979), 82.
- ¹² The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 1-2.
- ¹³ Warren Breed, “Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis” *Social Forces* 33 (1955): 326-335.
- ¹⁴ A.J. Liebling, *The Press* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 15-19.
- ¹⁵ Daxton R. “Chip” Stewart, “Freedom’s Vanguard: Horace Greeley on Threats to Press Freedom in the Early Years of the Penny Press,” *American Journalism*, 29 no. 1 (2012): 60-83.
- ¹⁶ Daxton R. “Chip” Stewart, “Freedom’s Vanguard,” 63.
- ¹⁷ Daxton R. “Chip” Stewart, “Freedom’s Vanguard,” 68.
- ¹⁸ Will Irwin, “The Advertising Influence” in *Our Unfree Press: 100 Years of Radical Media Criticism* eds. Robert W. McChensey and Ben Scott. (New York: The New Press, 2004): 121-131.

- ¹⁹ Donald R. Rodgers, "Journalism is a Loose-jointed Thing: A Content Analysis of *Editor & Publisher's* Discussion of Journalistic Conduct Prior to the Canons of Journalism, 1901-1922," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22 no. 1 (2002): 66-82.
- ²⁰ Donald R. Rodgers, "Journalism is a Loose-jointed Thing," 72.
- ²¹ ASNE, "Code of Ethics," available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/19499595/Canons-of-Journalism-ASNE-Code-of-Ethics-1922> (accessed March 1, 2011).
- ²² Peter Duffy, "Keeping Secrets," *Columbia Journalism Review*, September/October 2010, 58-59.
- ²³ ASNE, "Statement of Principles," http://asne.org/article_view/articleid/325/asnes-statement-of-principles.aspx (accessed January 24, 2011).
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- ²⁷ John P. Robinson, "Public Opinion during the Watergate Crisis," *Communication Research* 1, no. 4 (October 1974): 391-405.
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- ²⁹ Stuart Babington, "I'm Going to Introduce Them Again and Again:" Morris Udall's Attempts to Protect Independent Newspapers, 1975-1982," *Journalism History* 38 no. 4 (Winter 2013): 243-252.
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- ³² Elizabeth Chilton, Chilton's widow, interview with the author, Charleston, WV, January 29, 2009.
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- ³⁵ Cynthia Bond Hopson, "How One Southern Newspaper Supported Status Quo in 1960s," *Newspaper Research Journal* 26, no. 2/3 (Winter 2005): 72-84.
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- ³⁷ Kathleen Wickham, "Dean of the Civil Rights Reporters: A Conversation with Claude Sitton," *Journalism History*, 40 no. 2 (Summer 2014): 121-125.
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- ³⁹ William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 8-10.
- ⁴⁰ William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, 12.
- ⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1962/1989).
- ⁴² Lawrence R. Bloch, "Setting the Public Sphere in Motion: The Rhetoric of Political Bumper Stickers in Israel," *Political Communication*, 17 no. 4 (January 2006): 433-466; Peter Lunt and Paul

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- ⁴³ Vilja Hulden, Employer Organizations' Influence on the Progressive-Era Press," *Journalism History*, 38 no. 1 (2012): 43-54.
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- ⁵² Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, (New York: The New Press, 2013), XIII-XIV.
- ⁵³ Text of William E. Chilton III's prepared speech. William Edwin Chilton III Papers. A&M 3020 Addendum, Box 4, File 8, West Virginia and Regional History Collection (WVRHC), West Virginia University Library, Morgantown, WV.
- ⁵⁴ Salinger, Box 1, File 4 (variety of correspondence); and Buckley, Box 2, File 7b (variety of correspondence), Chilton Papers.
- ⁵⁵ Chilton Biography. *Charleston Gazette* microfilm, library, *The Charleston Gazette*.
- ⁵⁶ Elizabeth Chilton, Chilton's widow, interview with the author, Charleston, WV, January 29, 2009.
- ⁵⁷ Rick Steelhammer, reporter/columnist, *The Charleston Gazette*, interview with the author, Charleston, WV, January 29, 2009. Steelhammer has been a reporter and columnist at *The Charleston Gazette* since 1976. He got his popular Sunday life and humor column when Chilton called him to his office in 1984 after reading Steelhammer's frequent contributions to the "common queue," a file in the newsroom computer system to which everyone had access and was used as an electronic message board. Steelhammer often wrote amusing parodies of Chilton, which were popular reads among the staff. Chilton told him, "If you're going to write that on company time anyway, you may as well put it in the paper." Unfortunately, Steelhammer's common queue pieces were lost to subsequent computer systems.
- ⁵⁸ James Haught, interview.
- ⁵⁹ William E. Chilton III, "Hallmark of Crusading Journalism is Sustained Outrage," *The Charleston Gazette*, November 18, 1983, A6.
- ⁶⁰ James Haught, *Fascinating West Virginia* (Charleston, WV: The Printing Press Ltd., 2008), 109-117.
- ⁶¹ Haught, interview with the author; Elizabeth Chilton, interview with the author.
- ⁶² Editorial, "Practice of legal murder subsidies," *The Charleston Gazette*, February 3, 1969, A4.
- ⁶³ Editorial, "Show it on TV, that'll do the trick," *The Charleston Gazette*, February 14, 1969, A6.

- ⁶⁴ Robert St. John to W.E. Chilton III, undated, Chilton III Papers, Box 1, File 13, Chilton Papers.
- ⁶⁵ Rudolph L. DiTrapano, William E. Chilton III's attorney, interview with the author, Charleston, WV, June 16, 2009.
- ⁶⁶ Rudolph L. DiTrapano, interview. Noted DiTrapano: "I never got the correction."
- ⁶⁷ R.S. Werhle to Chilton III, May 10, 1966, Chilton III Papers. Box 1, File 19a, Chilton Papers.
- ⁶⁸ Chilton to Wehrle, May 10, 1966, Chilton III Papers. Box 1, File 19a, Chilton Papers.
- ⁶⁹ Craig Houston, "The Charleston Gazette's Editorial Response to the Vietnam War, 1963-1965," *West Virginia History* 51 (1992): 15-28. In his well-researched paper, Houston suggests *The Gazette's* main editorial impetus behind opposition to the war was Editor Harry Hoffman and City Editor L.T. Anderson, who wrote some of the newspaper's editorials and wrote columns against the war. They did write some of *The Gazette's* editorials and certainly weighed in on editorial policy, but by 1963 and 1964, Chilton was firmly in control and was establishing the stands the newspaper would take, including writing many of the editorials. A few phrases in the editorial argue for Chilton's direct involvement, if not authorship, such as "humanistically unthinkable" and the use of "furthermore" and "therefore" as transitions, which were classic early Chilton.
- ⁷⁰ Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics* 46 (February 1984): 2-24.
- ⁷¹ Editorial, "Conference Table Best Viet Nam Battleground," *The Charleston Gazette*, August 12, 1964, A4.
- ⁷² Editorial, "Policy criticism American right," *The Charleston Gazette*, October 20, 1965, A4.
- ⁷³ Editorial, "White man against yellow Asian – This is the present state of Viet war," *The Charleston Gazette*, April 2, 1967, A6
- ⁷⁴ Editorial, "Mercenaries view is invalid," *The Charleston Gazette*, April 9, 1967, A5.
- ⁷⁵ Editorial, "Path to fallout shelter isn't the one to peace," *The Charleston Gazette*, April 29, 1967, A6.
- ⁷⁶ Elizabeth Chilton, interview.
- ⁷⁷ William E. Chilton III speech to the West Virginia Political Science Association, October 4, 1968, Box 4, File 5, Chilton III Papers.
- ⁷⁸ Scott Sherman, "Walter Cronkite," *Columbia Journalism Review* 40 no. 4 (November 2001): 64.
- ⁷⁹ Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, *West Virginia: A History* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1985/1993), 285.
- ⁸⁰ Thomas Stafford, *Afflicting the Comfortable: Journalism and Politics in West Virginia*. (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2005), 256-257.
- ⁸¹ Elizabeth Chilton, interview.
- ⁸² Associated Press, "Tears, Joy, Gloom Mark Wedding of Miss Percy, Rockefeller," *Sunday Gazette-Mail*, April 2, 1967, A1. The tears and gloom refer to the death of Sharon Percy's stepgrandmother on the day of the wedding.
- ⁸³ Associated Press, "Gazette's publisher sees Moore victory," *The Charleston Daily Mail*, September 21, 1968, A7. The story was a pick-up by the AP from an interview first published in the Morgantown newspaper.
- ⁸⁴ Stafford, *Afflicting the Comfortable*, 243.
- ⁸⁵ John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV declined to be interviewed for this project, but sent a short statement through his press office addressing Chilton's legacy. Rockefeller called him a great friend and an important force for social change in West Virginia.
- ⁸⁶ Stafford, *Afflicting the Comfortable*, 258.
- ⁸⁷ William E. Chilton III, "Choice facing voters: honesty vs. dishonesty," *The Charleston Gazette*, November 1, 1980, A6.

- ⁸⁸ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia*, 286.
- ⁸⁹ Stafford, *Afflicting the Comfortable*, 76.
- ⁹⁰ James Haught, "In Wyoming, politics deeply rooted in schools," *Sunday Gazette-Mail*, May 31, 1981, A1.
- ⁹¹ James Haught, "In Wyoming, politics deeply rooted in schools," A1.
- ⁹² James Haught, "In Wyoming, politics deeply rooted in schools," A1.
- ⁹³ Editorial, "Corrupting elections," *The Charleston Gazette*, September 29, 1984, A5.
- ⁹⁴ Editorial, "Ridiculous Raese," *Charleston Gazette*, September 15, 1984.
- ⁹⁵ Interview, Elizabeth Chilton.
- ⁹⁶ John "Jay" Rockefeller IV to author, July 27, 2009, by e-mail.
- ⁹⁷ Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Challenging the Secret Government: The Post-Watergate Investigations of the FBI and CIA* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 16.
- ⁹⁸ Athan Theoharis, "The FBI, the Roosevelt administration, and the 'subversive' press," *Journalism History* 19 no. 1 (1993): 3-19.
- ⁹⁹ Stephen M. Underhill, "J. Edgar Hoover's Domestic Propaganda: Narrating the Spectacle of the Karpis Arrest," *Western Journal of Communication* 76 no. 4 (2012): 438-457.
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- ¹⁰³ James Haught, "Ex-Communist asked about *Gazette*," *The Charleston Gazette*, January 14, 1978, A1.
- ¹⁰⁴ James Haught, "Ex-Communist asked about *Gazette*," A1.
- ¹⁰⁵ Franklin, "Files Show Paper Critical of FBI Monitored."
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- ¹⁰⁸ Editorial, "FBI follies," *The Nation*, December 11, 1976, 4.
- ¹⁰⁹ Editorial, "*The Gazette* and the FBI," *The Charleston Daily Mail*, November 30, 1976, A5.
- ¹¹⁰ J. Edgar Hoover to William E. Chilton III, January 26, 1953, Box 1, File 5, Chilton Papers.
- ¹¹¹ J. Edgar Hoover to William E. Chilton III, Box 1, File 5.
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- ¹¹³ Randall P. Bezanson, "The New Free Press Guarantee," *Virginia Law Review*, 63 no. 5 (1977): 731-788.
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- ¹¹⁷ Don Marsh, "Car ads back because they sell," *The Charleston Gazette*, December 19, 1978, A6.
- ¹¹⁸ James Haught, interview.
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