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Charles H. Wickenberg, Jr.
(1923-2004)
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Papers, c. 1835-2004

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Biographical Note:

Charles H. Wickenberg, Jr. enjoyed a distinguished career as a journalist, chiefly with *The State* newspaper in Columbia, S.C., and served as Gov. George Bell Timmerman's Executive Secretary, 1955 to 1958. Wickenberg was born in Charleston on April 5, 1923, to Charles H. and Lois McAteer Wickenberg. He was educated in the Charleston and Columbia public schools, The Citadel, 1940 to 1943, the University of North Carolina, 1944 to 1945, and the University of South Carolina, 1946. He returned to USC later in life and in 1973 received his bachelor's degree in journalism.

Wickenberg served in the Marine Corps in both World War II and the Korean War. A letter to his parents, written late in 1942, tells of the growing realization that Citadel cadets could be drafted for service and of his resolve to join the Naval Air Reserves. "It's not a sudden whim. Dad knows, he knows how I feel about this fight, the same way he did back in '17 I'll wager. Only this time Charles Wickenberg is going in as an officer." He



enlisted in the Marine Corps on September 19, 1943, and trained at Camp Kearney in San Diego in 1943 and 1944. He was a college trainee at the University of North Carolina from July 1944 to July 1945, and then trained at Camp LeJeune from July to November of 1945, when he was honorably discharged. He was called back to service in November 1950, and by March of 1951 was serving in an artillery battery in Korea with the 11th Marine Regiment of the 1st Marine Division. He was discharged as a First Lieutenant on May 13, 1952, and was honorably discharged from the Army Reserve on June 20, 1963, holding the rank of Captain.

He began his professional career as a journalist in January 1947, when he accepted a job with the United Press Associations, chiefly covering politics and state government in Raleigh, Memphis, Columbia and St. Paul-Minneapolis, 1947 to 1949. During that time, he also worked for three months as night editor for the Associated Press in Columbia. In 1949 he joined the staff of the *Charleston News and Courier* as a political writer. He returned to that paper after his tour of duty in Korea.

In 1951, Wickenberg married Margaret Smith Gall of Batesburg, who was then the Society Editor at the *News and Courier*. Mrs. Wickenberg graduated from Winthrop College *cum laude* in 1948 and from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 1949. They had three daughters, Elizabeth Caroline, Nancy Ross, and Margaret Ann.

In 1952 Wickenberg returned to Columbia as correspondent for the *Charlotte Observer* and associate director of news and special events for radio station WMSC. From 1955 to 1958

Wickenberg served as Governor George Bell Timmerman's Executive Secretary. He left that position in January of 1958 to become head of the *Observer's* Columbia Bureau. In a letter of July 9, 1958, Managing Editor Tom Feserman complimented Wickenberg, "there never was a better-covered gubernatorial campaign story in South Carolina's history. That work of yours in the big race was really outstanding." Later, Wickenberg joined *The State* newspaper, where he stayed for the remainder of his career, retiring in 1987 as associate editor, a position he had held since 1972. He also served *The State* as governmental affairs editor, executive news editor, and public affairs editor. He was selected as South Carolina's newsmen of the year in 1963.

In the spring of 1970, Wickenberg traveled to Vietnam when billionaire H. Ross Perot led a group of over sixty journalists, five wives of American POWs, and others to South Vietnam to try to sway the North Vietnamese to release their POWs. Wickenberg and the others inspected prison camps in South Vietnam and toured a great deal of South Vietnam and Laos. Wickenberg wrote of Perot, "He is absolutely convinced that he can by this trip help rally world opinion to make the North allow inspection, international or otherwise, of the POW camps there." [letter of April 4, 1970] A communiqué from the North Vietnam government, April 7, 1970, criticized Perot's appearance at the Embassy in Vientiane seeking an interview with the Chargé d'Affaires, "Perot was adamant not to withdraw from the Embassy, even after the closing of the office. He remained from morning until seven in the evening at the Embassy, bringing along drinks and food.... It is clear that the so-called humanitarian activities of Perot are only aimed at appeasing world opinion."

On his retirement in 1987, Wickenberg noted his particular pride in helping see passed the state's 1972 Freedom of Information Act. Wickenberg had played a major role in this as chair of the Legislative Affairs Committee of the South Carolina Press Association.

Among his many friendships, few were stronger than that which he forged with John Carl West, governor and U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. In a letter written on Jan. 4, 1975, as West prepared to leave office as Governor, he wrote Wickenberg, "You have been my most valued advisor and the one whose judgment I have relied on in times of crises. You have the great capacity to see the broad picture, to separate emotion from fact and to sense the rightness of an involved and confused issue."

Wickenberg was also a leader in the community. He served as president of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce in the early 1970s, served on the Board of the John C. West Foundation, and was a leader in his church, St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church.

Scope and Content Note:

General papers chiefly consist of correspondence, and include letters home written during his time in the service, 1943-1945 and 1951-1952. In November 1943, while training, he spent a furlough in Hollywood and his newsy letters are filled of talk about how well men in uniform were treated and of his visits to the Hollywood Canteen, where he was served coffee by the likes of actor William Bendix. Diaries also help document his World War II service in 1943 and 1944.

His career as a journalist began while attending the University of North Carolina, “my name was submitted to the Publishing Union for approval as News Editor of the *TarHeel* [sic].... The female that calls herself a newspaper woman that is the editor of the paper and myself do not see eye to eye on many things... especially the race problem....” [July 26, 1944] He was approved as editor. Later letters discuss his journalism classes. “In the editorial class, I am the only student. Prof. Parker at first said there was no need of having the class but I explained to him what it meant to me so he’s going to help me out. It’s the next best thing to having a private tutor! ... He’ll let my *Tar Heel* editorials be a part of the work.” [Nov. 7, 1944] Wickenberg also involved himself in learning about radio production while at UNC. In December, he became Editor of *The Tar Heel*, and wrote, “The job is not easy. It will get harder as I go along. *The Tar Heel* is the object of most controversy and criticism of any activity on the campus, and there is still a great deal of bitter feeling over the outcome of the election [for editor].” [Dec. 5, 1944]



In 1950 [if not earlier] Wickenberg authored a regular column on government and politics titled “The Political Beat.” In a letter [April 12] African-American leader A. J. Clement of Charleston characterized the Democratic precinct meetings held in Charleston as being designed to preclude participation by blacks and asked that Wickenberg address this in his column, concluding, “No intelligent White group should believe that a similarly intelligent group of Negroes are going to continue to accept this political isolation without legally voicing their opposition.” The collection also includes a speech, c.1950, delivered by Clement in opposing L. Mendel Rivers for Congress, calling for voters to turn away from race-baiting politicians and elect one that will apply himself to “a new era of development and growth here in the South.”

Correspondence from late 1950, while Wickenberg was training at Quantico, Virginia, discusses plans for the Wickenbergs’ impending marriage. In a letter postmarked Dec. 1, 1950, Margaret wrote about a call to the *News and Courier* by the wife of controversial judge Julius Waring, “Mrs. Judge Waring called Jack and cussed him out because there wasn’t anything in *Time* [Magazine] on the pilgrimage Sunday. You probably read that one of the organizations connected with NAACP was going to go en mass to pay their respects to the judge. Mrs. Waring wanted to know whether Jack was there as a representative of *Time* or TN+C [The *News & Courier*].”

Wickenberg saw a wide variety of duty during the Korean War and described it well in his letters home. Ever the political observer, in a letter of April 11, 1951 he took the government to task, “I cannot help but wonder what the people back there [home] are thinking and why the people don’t

make themselves heard if they are tired of this confusion. The buck-passing among MacArthur, Truman and the UN is an insult to the intelligence of any human being – and it is spit in the blood of the 50,000 who have shed, bled, and died here.... What we want is a decision on our future. If we want to save the whole of Korea – we need more men, equipment and more everything.” After MacArthur’s recall to the States, Wickenberg wrote, “Perhaps the Chinese will be willing to deal with someone else besides MacArthur, who has insulted them.... There must be a political peace unless we are to continue this fight until doomsday.”

In May, he was removed from the line and reassigned as the 11th’s Public Information officer, basically serving as the unit’s historian and charged with writing a “comprehensive day to day picture of all phases of the regiment and its four battalions in combat.... Being ‘rear echelon’ is like another world.... I can sleep at night without having to worry about the radio going out...” [May 21, 1951] In October, he was reassigned as Adjutant of the 11th. In a letter to his parents, written on December 15 and to be opened by them on Christmas day, Wickenberg writes movingly about his philosophy of life and what they had taught him. Wickenberg was rotated back to the States in January 1952 and soon thereafter returned to civilian life. A pocket notebook is filed with the 1952 material and contains a variety of notes made while in Korea.

1954 material includes minutes of the Gressette Education Committee and notes of phone conversations with Edgar Brown and Strom Thurmond regarding a successor to Senator Burnett Maybank, suggesting that Donald S. Russell was considering throwing his hat in the ring as a write-in candidate.

Papers from 1955 through 1957 chiefly relate to Wickenberg’s service as Executive Secretary to Governor George Bell Timmerman. These include transcripts of phone conversations, January 6, 1956, with Gov. Thomas B. Stanley of Virginia, Governor-elect J. P. Coleman of Mississippi, and Gov. Marvin Griffin of Georgia, made following a meeting with the Gressette Education Committee discussing the state’s response to federal court rulings on segregated educational facilities. Timmerman was developing his annual message to the legislature and sought their input. He told Gov. Stanley that South Carolina intended to, “Adopt a resolution which will declare in essence that the Supreme Court has changed the Constitution.... In doing that they have usurped the authority of Congress to propose changes; have usurped the sovereignty of three-fourths of the states to accept the changes; then asking Congress, which is the only body that has the constitutional authority to do that; but not asking Congress to amend the Constitution to go so far as to take away from the states the right to operate the public schools - which is proposed in some of the interposition resolutions.” Timmerman was taking the lead in trying to get Southern governors to act more cautiously than Virginia, which was proposing to call upon Congress to “declare in plain and unequivocal language that the states do surrender their power to maintain public schools. Now that is asking, we think, Congress to do something we don’t want them to do.” [conversation with Gov.-elect Coleman]



George Bell Timmerman, Jr.

Correspondence beginning in 1958 provides great insights into his work for the *Observer* and into politics in the South. The file on the 1958 Democratic Primary, which at that time was, in essence, the election, includes information on many of that year's campaigns, in which Fritz Hollings defeated Donald Russell and Bill Johnston for governor, and H. Odelle Harman unsuccessfully challenged Secretary of Education Jesse Anderson. Included are campaign announcements and speeches.

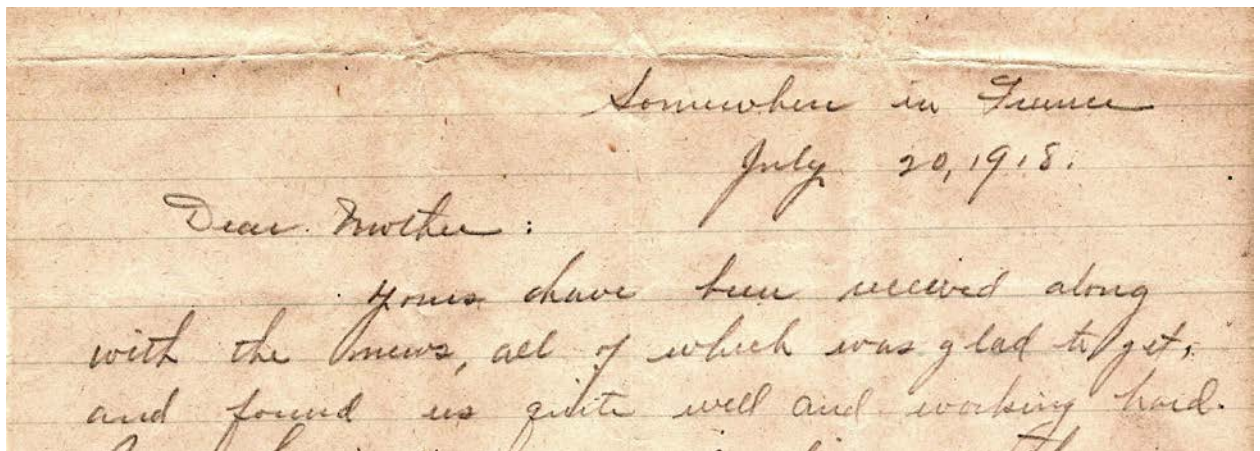
As an example of the value of Wickenberg's "insider" political commentary is the following memo, c.1961, "I ran into Bob Edwards, President of Clemson and discussed the integration problem with him. He made it plain that closing of Clemson will be the last thing he would do.... He is concerned, however, about the state leadership.... Politically, the most important issue now arising is the so-called 'loyalty' oath.... Many local officials are afraid of forcing the issue. Sen. John West, for example, in Kershaw County is a loyalist; but locally he has to rely on the so-called independent and conservative vote to get elected. He's up next time. If he favors the retention of the oath, his goose is cooked locally. If he's against it, he gets into hot water with the party high-ups.... Hollings has made his mind up that he must break with the Kennedy administration.... Hollings' popularity is at a low ebb in the state, but the tide may be changing. He has been on the road almost daily for the past month.... He has tremendous appeal and ability when he gets down to the citizens. The rate at which he is moving is almost superhuman and it is getting results.... He is determined to beat Olin Johnston.... He really believes he can be of service, especially of more service than [sic] Johnston."

Similarly, in a memo, c. Dec. 1961, to *Life* Magazine Regional Editor Dick Billings, Wickenberg reflected on the rise of the Republican Party, with two Republicans, Robert Chapman and William Workman, considering challenging incumbent U.S. Senator Olin D. Johnston. "The new S.C. Republicans have been working their hearts out to establish a two-party system, and they're making some surprising advances.... At the same time, both Johnston and Hollings act like the election is tomorrow. Both are beating the bushes, talking at the drop of an invitation. South Carolina has never seen anything like this before. The campaigning has always come just before election day – now it is a year ahead of schedule."

The 1970 trip to Vietnam with H. Ross Perot is well documented with letters and photographs. In the summer of 1971, Wickenberg accompanied Governor John West on a trade mission to Paris, France. While there, West met with Vietnamese officials seeking the release of American POWs. A file from that year documents West's efforts.

Earlier family papers date from 1835, representing the Wickenberg and Klinck families, which are so well documented in Wickenberg's family history, *Kith and Kin: Wickenberg and Klinck*, which he had published in 2000. Included are several letters by and about Theodore K. Klinck [1838-1862]. A letter of Feb. 1, 1856 from Columbia tells of his being made second Lieutenant at the Arsenal Academy. That of July 5, 1861, written from Richmond, recounts the trip by Hampton's Legion to that city. Klinck died in Philadelphia of wounds received in the battle of Seven Pines. Letters, 1873-1874, are present from Fabian Reinhold Wickenberg [1813-1875] to his wife, and 1892 from Mrs. Theodore Percy [May Taylor] Wickenberg [1868-1944].

Wickenberg's father attended The Citadel and fought in World War I. A number of letters from C. Herbert Wickenberg [1895-1988] date from 1905 and include letters written to his mother at home in Jacksonville, FL., while he attended Gaud's School in Charleston, 1911, and The Citadel, 1912-1913. Herbert Wickenberg enlisted in the Army in 1917. Early in May, he wrote his mother, by now living in Charleston, that he was being sent to Fort Oglethorpe to train for the artillery. He sailed for France in August, and by January of 1918 was serving as a draftsman with the Heavy Artillery School. On Nov. 14, 1918, following the Armistice, he wrote, "everybody is happy over the victory, but here at the school and camp things go on as usual, as if the war were good for five years more. No let up. We are all talking of home and when we get back...." In fact, he remained in France through most of 1919. By February of 1919 he was serving in the Headquarters Detachment of the American Peace Commission in Paris. On March 15, 1919, he wrote, "Things are beginning to rush now that the president has arrived, and the feeling is that the Peace will soon be signed. We are expecting to return with him on the same ship, when he sails home again." Charles Wickenberg created an index to his father's letters, transcribing some in full, providing a synopsis for others, and annotating many. This index is filed as a topical file under the heading, "Wickenberg, C. Herbert."



Somewhere in France
July 20, 1918.
Dear Mother:
Yours have been received along
with the news, all of which was glad to get,
and found us quite well and working hard.

Topical Files are present for a variety of subjects, including Fred Coe, a pioneer television producer whom Wickenberg knew while Coe served as director of Town Theatre, friends Gordon Sears and Thomas Thompson, material regarding Wickenberg's involvement with the Columbia Council for Internationals; Apollo space missions which Wickenberg covered, and his obituary files on several individuals. These were kept relatively up to date so *The State* would be prepared for the passing of major persons. Wickenberg was an avid actor in his younger days and the Town Theatre file contains playbills from his performances. Filed under U.S. Marine Corps are official records documenting Wickenberg's service and movements, 1945 to 1952. Topical files also document his trips to Vietnam and close association with John West. The Wickenberg Family file contains genealogical information. [Related clippings on family members are filed as "Clippings, Family."] Margaret Gall Wickenberg is represented by files from her days at Winthrop College and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. The latter includes class notes and a sampling of the articles written for her classes on subjects such as the modern family, freedom of information, and politics in Virginia.

Speeches chiefly contain drafts of talks given by Wickenberg, 1963 to 1981 and undated.

Writings include a series of delightful short pieces written for a journalism class, c.1944, reflecting on his induction into the Marine Corps, travel to San Diego, and training. Pieces written for the *New York Times* chiefly focus on politics and Civil Rights.

Clippings include articles by and about the Wickenbergs. Of note is Wickenberg's article for the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* of April 7, 1946, written while a USC journalism student, and his first front page byline.

Photographs include family photos as well as pictures of Wickenberg as student on the USC campus, actor, soldier, and journalist. Separate files document politics and his trip to Vietnam in 1970. The former includes photos of Sol Blatt, Charlie Boineau, Edgar Brown and Fritz Hollings. Eighteen slides chiefly seem to date from 1952 and include images taken in Korea as well as several family photos.

Audio tapes include interviews apparently conducted in updating obituaries of prominent South Carolinians during the late 1980s as well as earlier interviews with newsmakers like Fritz Hollings and coverage of political events.

Vertical File Materials consist of an interview transcript of Wickenberg and William Rone, a fellow editor at *The State*, conducted by Jack Bass on Feb. 15, 1974.



COLLECTION INVENTORY

Biographical Information

Box 1

General:

1835-1873 [10 mss]
1874-1877 [10 mss]
1885-1908 [13 mss]
1911 [12 mss]
1912-1913 [11 mss]
1917-1918 [25 mss]
1919 [12 mss]
1922-1941
1943
1944
1945
1947-1949
1950
1951
1952-1953
1954:
 General
 Governor's Race
 Gressette Committee
 Senate Race, Brown vs. Thurmond
1955
1956:
 General
 "Southern Unity" and Democratic Conventions
1957
1958:
 General
 Democratic Primary
 Governor's Message
1959-1960
1960 Presidential Campaign
1961

1962
1963
1964-1968
1969
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1971
1972
1973-1975
1977-1978
1980-1986
1987
1988-1991

Box 2

1992-1993
1994
1995-1996
1997
1998-1999
2000-2001
2002
2003-2004
n.d.

Topical:

Coe, Fred, 1993-2000 [including corres. W. Biographer Jon Krampner re this
pioneer television producer, former director of Town Theatre]

Correspondence:

Sears, Gordon M., c.1981-2004
Thompson, Thomas, c.1967-1998 [Marine friend]

Columbia Council for Internationals:

1989-1995
1996
1997-1998
1999-2000

Consolidation of Political Subdivisions, c.1970-1973 [re city-county relationship]

Dreher High School Reunion

Freedom of Information Bill, 1970-1980

Journalistic Notes, c. 1974-1985

NASA:

Apollo 11, 1969 [1979]
Apollo 12
Apollo 16, 1972

Obituary Files:

Dennis, Rembert [1915-1992]
Gibbes, A. Mason [1914-2007]
Lewis, J. Woodrow [1912-1999]
Morris, Ben R. [1922-2005]
Shafto, G. Richard [b.1904]
Simkins, Modjeska [1899-1992]

The State Newspaper

Town Theatre, c.1937-1943

United States Army Reserve, 1960-1963

United States Marine Corps:

1943-1948
1949
1950
1951
1952

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Class of 1945

Vietnam Trip, 1970-1972, w. H. Ross Perot

West, John Carl:

General, 1975-2004
Vietnam War Prisoners of War

Box 3

West, Shell [memoir by Sue Hornsby]
Wickenberg, C. Herbert
Wickenberg Family
Wickenberg, Margaret:
 Columbia University
 Winthrop College

Speeches:

Box 4

1963-1972
1974-1981 & n.d.
n.d., cont.

Writings:

Journalism Class Stories re WWII Service, c. 1944
Kith and Kin, Notes
New York Times, 1960-1961 & n.d.
“Q-Study of Perceptions of Selected Public Official-Decision Makers and Editorial
Writers of *The State* of the Editorial Influence of *The State*,” Journalism 701, 1973, 17pp.
Time Life, 1962
Misc.

Clippings:

General:

1930s
1940s
1950s
1960s
1970s
1980s
2000-2006
n.d.

Topical:

Wickenberg Family
Wickenberg, Margaret, articles by
Winthrop College

Audio-Visual Records

Audio CDs:

Lester Bates Speech and J. Byrnes Speech
W.D. Workman Interview
Edgar Brown Nomination

Photographs:

General
Political
Vietnam, 1970

Vertical File Materials, 1974