

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Manuscript Collection Finding Aids

Manuscripts

9-12-2023

Whittle, Joseph Merle, b. 1933 (MSS 756)

Manuscripts & Folklife Archives

Western Kentucky University, mssfa@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid



Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Whittle, Joseph Merle, b. 1933 (MSS 756)" (2023). *Manuscript Collection Finding Aids*. Paper 5091.

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid/5091

This Finding Aid is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Manuscript Collection Finding Aids by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
 Department of Library Special Collections
 Western Kentucky University
 Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 756 WHITTLE, Joseph Merle, b. 1933

2 boxes. 19 folders. 288 items. 1949-2010. Originals, photocopies, photographs, DVD, objects.

SC2023.38.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Joseph M. "Joe" Whittle, the son of Lillian Maude Skaggs and Charles Edward Whittle, Sr., was born on 7 February 1933 in Brownsville (Edmonson County), Kentucky. After graduation from Brownsville High School in 1948, he began undergraduate studies at Transylvania University, then attended Western Kentucky University and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He earned his J.D. degree from the University of Louisville in 1955.

Whittle served in the U.S. Navy (1956) and, after attending Judge Advocate General's School at the University of Virginia, served as German Claims Commissioner in the U.S. Army (1957-1959). From 1960-1963, he was an attorney advisor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Whittle opened a private law practice in 1963 in Leitchfield (Grayson County), Kentucky, where he was City Attorney (1964-1966) and County Attorney (1965-1973). In 1975, he ran unsuccessfully for Attorney General of Kentucky on the Republican ticket headed by gubernatorial candidate Robert "Bob" Gable.

A delegate to the 1980 Republican National Convention, Whittle served in various local political posts and was elected State Republican Party Chairman in May 1984. He resigned the position in March 1985 after becoming interested in succeeding Ron Meredith, a U.S. Attorney who had been nominated for a federal judgeship. With the endorsement of U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, Whittle was nominated by President Ronald Reagan in December 1985 and confirmed as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky in February 1986; he was then reappointed under the George H. W. Bush administration.

In March 1993, after the inauguration of Democrat Bill Clinton as president, Attorney General Janet Reno made a controversial decision to ask for the resignations of all U.S. Attorneys under the Bush administration. Consequently, Whittle left his position on 31 July 1993.

During his tenure as U.S. Attorney, Whittle gained the respect of earlier critics who had questioned his qualifications and lack of federal court experience. He enlarged and modernized the office and was active in cases involving civil rights, environmental issues, collection of debts owed to the government, and public corruption. One of his high-profile cases was an investigation, commenced in secret, into bribery and corruption among members of the Kentucky General Assembly. Known as "Operation BOPTROT" or simply "BOPTROT," the

investigation and resulting prosecutions continued after Whittle left the U.S. Attorney's Office and led to the conviction of more than twenty people, including state government officials, from 1992 to 1995. From 1988-1992, Whittle also served on the Attorney General's Advisory Committee, a group of U.S. Attorneys who worked on policy with the U.S. Attorney General; he was chairman of the Financial Litigation Subcommittee, and was Committee chairman from 1990-1991. Whittle's other accomplishments and honors included service on Murray State University's Board of Regents (1968-1972), the U.S. Attorney General's Award for Leadership in Financial Litigation (1988), and a Kentucky Bar Association Outstanding Lawyer for 1995.

After leaving the U.S. Attorney's Office, Whittle was encouraged to run for Congress, and considered running for governor of Kentucky, but instead returned to private law practice. He also acted as a mediator, helping to form the Federal Alternative Dispute Resolution Council, Inc. and serving as its first president.

In 1997, Whittle and his wife, Mary Leura Armstrong (a past president of the Kentucky Federation of Republican Women), began spending winters in Florida, with Whittle occasionally commuting to Louisville, Kentucky for his law practice. Whittle largely retired from the practice of law in the early 2000s.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists of correspondence and papers relating to the political and legal career of Joseph M. Whittle, particularly as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky. Included is biographical data, clippings, and speeches; also photographs (some inscribed), mostly of Whittle with various national political figures from the 1980s and 1990s. Whittle collected numerous clippings relating to legal cases and law enforcement in Kentucky and to Operation BOPTR0T, but given the availability of these online, particularly from the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, only a representative sampling has been retained.

Items of interest include:

1. Biographical articles outlining Whittle's career, Operation BOPTR0T and the controversy surrounding the replacement of U.S. Attorneys by the Clinton administration while the investigation was ongoing; and articles reviewing Whittle's achievements and the state of the U.S. Attorney's office at the time of his departure (Box 1, Folder 2);
2. Correspondence relating to Whittle's 1975 campaign for Kentucky Attorney General, including a letter asking for his support in rescinding Kentucky's ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and a lengthy letter from the widow of former Kentucky Governor Simeon Willis with comments and advice on how to improve the Republican campaign to retake the governorship of the state (Box 1, Folder 4);
3. Correspondence regarding Whittle's nomination by President Reagan for U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky, including recommendation letters and Whittle's summary of his political activities in support of a position in the administration (Box 1, Folder 4);

4. A detailed schedule of Vice President George H. W. Bush's visit to Bowling Green Kentucky, in October 1984, and a letter of Whittle's placed in the cornerstone of the Leitchfield Deposit Bank in July 1985 containing some prescient predictions (Box 1, Folder 4);
5. Materials relating to Whittle's work as U.S. Attorney, including letters of congratulation on his appointment; materials relating to his involvement in financial litigation, drug law enforcement, and various legal cases; and Senator Mitch McConnell's 1990 recommendation that he be reappointed as U.S. Attorney by the Bush administration (Box 1, Folder 5). Also included is correspondence regarding an invitation to speak in Japan on the forfeiture of assets derived from crime as a weapon of prosecutors (see also Box 1, Folder 10);
6. A representative sampling of newspaper reporting on Operation BOPTR0T (Box 1, Folder 6);
7. Letters from other U.S. Attorneys asked to resign in 1993, praising their offices and advising of future plans; letters of praise to Whittle from law enforcement officers; and a DVD of a "roast" for the departing Whittle in August 1993 (Box 1, Folder 7);
8. A 1993 appeal by Whittle and U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky Karen Caldwell to FBI Director Louis Freeh urging more federal resources for ensuring election integrity in Kentucky (Box 1, Folder 8);
9. Clippings regarding "Street Heat," a rock band formed at Whittle's suggestion and composed of law enforcement professionals in Louisville and Jefferson County who performed with an anti-drug message (Box 1, Folder 9);
10. Statements and speeches by Whittle made mostly during and after his tenure as U.S. Attorney, several of which include a historical survey of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Kentucky and a review of Operation BOPTR0T; included is a speech of Mary Whittle to a group of Republican women (Box 1, Folders 10 & 11); and
11. Miscellaneous personal papers, including Whittle's military separation papers, bar admission papers, and visa applications for his and his wife's travel to Japan (Box 1, Folder 12).

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Joseph M. Whittle	1949-2010	274 items
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Biographical – Clippings, resumes	1985-2010, n.d.	21 items
Folder 3	Campaign materials and buttons	1965-1975, n.d.	6 items
Folder 4	Correspondence and papers	1975-1985	30 items

Folder 5	Correspondence and papers	1986-1992	41 items
Folder 6	Operation BOPTR0T	1992-1996	24 items
Folder 7	Correspondence and papers	1993	58 items
Folder 8	Correspondence and papers	1994-2005	22 items
Folder 9	“Street Heat” (rock band)	1991-1993	9 items
Folder 10	Speeches	1964-1992	8 items
Folder 11	Speeches	1993-2001, n.d.	8 items
Folder 12	Miscellaneous personal papers	1949-2003	11 items
Folder 13	Certificates and awards	1975-2004	7 items
Folder 14	Photographs	1967-1992, n.d.	28 items
BOX 2	Joseph M. Whittle	1975-1993	14 items
Folder 1	Buttons (“Way to Go Joe”)		2 items
Folder 2	Book clip; Republican National Convention delegate badge	1980, n.d.	2 items
Folder 3	Attorney General campaign materials; <i>Congressional Record</i> tribute; “The United States Attorney”	1975-1993, n.d.	4 items
Folder 4	Matted, inscribed photographs	n.d.	4 items
Folder 5	Attorney General’s Advisory Committee of U.S. Attorneys – Inscribed farewells to Whittle as chairman	1992	2 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS WHITTLE, Joseph Merle, 1949-2010
756 b. 1933

Correspondence and papers of Joseph M. Whittle, a Grayson County attorney who served as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky from 1986-1993.

2 boxes. 19 folders. 288 items. Originals, photocopies, photographs, DVD, objects.

SC2023.38.1

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Banks and banking – Grayson County – Leitchfield Deposit Bank – Relating to B1,F4
Barr, William Pelham, b. 1950 B1,F8
Barr, William Pelham, b. 1950 – Photographs B1,F14
Barr, William Pelham, b. 1950 – Relating to B1,F8
Betsalel, Shmuel, 1947-1985 – Relating to B1,F5
Bork, Robert Heron, 1927-2012 – Photograph B1,F14
Boyle, Germain P. “Pat” B1,F8
Bratcher, Clifton Rhodes, 1917-1977 – Relating to B1,F10
Brown, Joe Blackburn – Letter to B1,f8
Brown, Julie A. – Photograph B2,F4
Bunning, James Paul David “Jim,” 1931-2017 B1,F4,7
Bunning, James Paul David “Jim,” 1931-2017 – Photograph B1,F14
Bush, George Herbert Walker, 1924-2018 – Photographs B1,F14
Bush, George Herbert Walker, 1924-2018 – Relating to B1,F4
Clarke, Floyd I., b. 1942 B1,F5
Cooper, D. B. – Relating to B1,F7
Crime – Kentucky
Danforth, John Claggett, b. 1936 – Photograph B1,F14
Dole, Mary Elizabeth Alexander (Hanford), b. 1936 – Photograph B1,F14
Dole, Robert Joseph “Bob,” 1923-2021 – Photographs B1,F14
Driver licences – International B1,F12
Elections and election campaigns – Grayson County, 1975 B1,F3,4
Elections and election campaigns – Kentucky, 1975 B1,F3,4; B2,F3
Elections and election campaigns – Kentucky, 1995 – Relating to B1,F8
Equal Rights Amendment – Comments about, 1975 B1,F4
Ford, Gerald Rudolph, Jr., 1913-2006 – Photograph B1,F14
Freeh, Louis Joseph, b. 1950 – Letter to B1,F8
Gable, Robert Elledy “Bob,” b. 1934 – Comments about, 1975 B1,F4
Gable, Robert Elledy “Bob,” b. 1934 – Relating to B1,F4
Gingrich, Newton Leroy “Newt,” b. 1943 – Photograph B1,F14

Hubbard, Carroll, Jr., 1937-2022 B1,F8
 Inauguration – Presidents, 1981 B1,F4
 Inauguration – Vice Presidents, 1981 B1,F4
 Keating, Francis Anthony “Frank,” b. 1944 – Photographs B2,F4
 Kentucky Bar Association – Relating to B1,F8
 Kentucky Derby, 1993 – Relating to B1,F12
 Lugar, Richard Green “Dick,” 1932-2019 – Photograph B1,F14
 Mazzoli, Romano Louis “Ron,” 1932-2022 – Correspondence B1,F5,7,8
 McConnell, Addison Mitchell “Mitch,” b. 1942 B1,F5,7; B2,F3
 McConnell, Addison Mitchell “Mitch,” b. 1942 – Photographs B1,F14
 McConnell, Addison Mitchell “Mitch,” b. 1942 – Relating to B1,F7
 McWhorter, Laurence S. “Larry” – Photograph B2,F4
 Meese, Edwin, III, b. 1931 B1,F5
 Meese, Edwin, III, b. 1931 – Photographs B2,F4
 Meese, Edwin, III, b. 1931 – Relating to B1,F8
 Meredith, Ronald Edward, 1946-1994 B1,F5
 Mueller, Robert Swan, III, b. 1944 – Relating to B1,F7
 Natcher, William Huston, 1909-1994 B1,F7
 Natcher, William Huston, 1909-1994 – Relating to B1,F10
 Nunn, Louie Broady, 1924-2004 – Photographs B1,F14
 Operation BOPTR0T – Relating to B1,F2,6,7,11
 Persian Gulf War, 1991 – Photograph B1,F14
 Philately B1,F12
 Reagan, Nancy (Davis), 1921-2016 – Photographs B1,F14
 Reagan, Ronald Wilson, 1911-2004 – Letter to B1,F4
 Reagan, Ronald Wilson, 1911-2004 – Photographs B1,F14
 Reno, Janet Wood, 1938-2016 – Letter to B1,F7
 Republican Party – Kentucky, 1975-1984 B1,F4,13; B2,F3
 Republican Party – National Convention, 1980 – Relating to B2,F2
 Schools – Edmonson County – Brownsville High School, 1949 – Relating to B1,F12
 Simpson, Alan Kooi, b. 1931 – Photograph B1,F14
 Smith, William French, II, 1917-1990 – Correspondence B1,F4
 Snyder, Marion Eugene “Gene,” 1928-2007 B1,F4,5
 Snyder, Marion Eugene “Gene,” 1928-2007 – Comments about B1,F7
 Speeches – Whittle, Joseph Merle, b. 1933 B1,F10,11
 Speeches – Whittle, Mary Leura (Armstrong), b. 1938 B1,F10
 Thornburgh, Richard Lewis “Dick,” 1932-2020 – Correspondence B1,F5
 Thornburgh, Richard Lewis “Dick,” 1932-2020 – Relating to B1,F8
 United States – Attorney General’s Advisory Committee of United States Attorneys –
 Relating to B1,F14; B2,F5
 United States Attorneys – Kentucky – Western District
 United States Attorneys – Kentucky – Western District – History B1,F10,11
 Whittle, Charles Edward, Sr., 1900-1973 – Comments about, 1975 B1,F4
 Whittle, Joseph Merle, b. 1933 – Photographs B1,F14; B2,F4
 Whittle, Mary Leura (Armstrong), b. 1938 – Photographs B1,F14; B2,F4
 Whittle, Mary Leura (Armstrong), b. 1938 – Relating to B1,F12

Willis, Ida Lee (Millis), 1897-1978 B1,F4
Willis, Simeon Slavens, 1879-1965 – Relating to B1,F4
Wilson, James S. W. B1,F8

Niedermeier 09/18/2023