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ELSON

ELSON, EDWARD

OH-133

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PRCQ

Pastor of the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.

DESCRIPTION – Interview #1: Childhood and family background; education and early work experiences; childhood experience with religion; interest in military history; decision to enter the ministry; college; involvement in Student Volunteers in 1925; more details of student life; student pastorate and job as assistant minister at the First Presbyterian Church in Santa Monica, California; marriage; assuming a pastorate in La Jolla; entering the Chaplain Reserve in 1940; meeting DDE at Fort Lewis; meeting George Patton in California; made chaplain for 75th Infantry Division under General Willard Paul; survey of Christian clergymen imprisoned at Dachau; torture and humiliation clergymen were subjected to; conditions at Dachau at the time it was liberated; delivering DDE's message to the ruling body of the German Protestant Church after the war; attending the execution of Pvt. Eddie Slovak; problems faced when William Huie wrote a book on Slovak.

Interview #2: Appointed pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C. in 1946; helping with post-war restoration fund; comments on President Harry Truman; Covenant-First Presbyterian Church became the National Presbyterian Church in 1947; history of the First Presbyterian Church and Church of the Covenant; additional comments on Truman; problems in the creation of the state of Israel; conflicts between Truman and the Baptist Church on the appointment of a U.S. representative to the Vatican; Truman attending a service at Elson's church; sermon on "The Church and Military Measures for Peace".

Interview #3: DDE's religious affiliations throughout his life; DDE and MDE became members of the Presbyterian Church; discussions with DDE over church membership; notes from his diary on discussions regarding church membership with DDE and Milton Eisenhower; DDE's baptism; the Eisenhowers attendance at and support of the church; additional diary entries regarding the Eisenhowers; correspondence with Billy Graham, DDE, MDE and others; Senator Edward Martin; press releases regarding DDE choosing a church.

Interview #4: Different types of people who attend his services; population in Washington, D.C. divided into official, civil service, professional and business, and economically disadvantaged; school integration; difficulties in serving as pastor to a congregation of temporary residents; preparing sermons when high-level government officials will in the congregation; MDE and church activities; the Eisenhower grandchildren; Washington social life.

Interview #5: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip.

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Interview #6: Lifelong interest in Palestine; creation of the state of Israel; problems between Arabs and Israel; creation of American Friends of the Middle East; trips to the Middle East; meeting with heads of state in the Middle East; readings from his correspondence relating to the situation in the Middle East; more trips and meetings in the Middle East.

Interview #7: DDE's funeral.

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[Columbia University Oral History Project, interview by Paul Hopper, January 11, 19, February 8, March 1, June 27, September 22, 1968 and May 7, 1969]