

Gazette Project

Interview with

Richard Allen
12 November 2000
Paris, France

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: Hi. This is Richard Allen and Roy Reed. This is November 12, 2000.

Richard, do we have your permission to record this interview and put it in the University of Arkansas Library?

Richard Allen: Yes.

RR: Okay. Start at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born, and to whom.

RA: Okay. I was born on May 30, 1947, in Little Rock, Arkansas, to Charles and Gloria Allen.

RR: Tell me about growing up there. Where did you go to school?

RA: Well, I lived in Pulaski Heights, a really nice neighborhood in Little Rock. I went to Holy Souls Elementary School, where my uncle, Monsignor Frank Allen, was the monsignor for fifty years. I was in grade school there and then went to Catholic High School and graduated from Catholic High in 1965.

RR: This profile that our friend at the *Democrat* did --- I thought she mentioned Central High as --- you didn't go to Central High?

RA: No, I didn't go to Central. I went to Catholic High.

RR: Okay. I want to be clear on that. After high school, what?

RA: After high school, I went to LRU for three years, and then I graduated from the University of Arkansas. I spent a year and a half up there and graduated in 1970.

RR: Studying what?

RA: Studying political science and history.

RR: Yes. At LRU --- that was Little Rock University?

RA: Right.

RR: Did you study political science there?

RA: History and political science. Right.

RR: Yes.

RA: Of course, all this time I was working at the *Gazette*, or most of the time I was already working at the *Gazette*.

RR: You were born in what year? 1950 . . .

RA: 1947.

RR: 1947. Do you have any direct recollection of the Central High crisis, or were you just too young?

RA: Sure. I was ten. I remember my father taking me down to the Main Street bridge in Little Rock and watching the troops come in from --- I guess they landed in Jacksonville. This is what I remember: I remember going down to the Main Street bridge and watching these trucks come across the bridge with all these soldiers in them. It was amazing I hadn't known about it. I was completely isolated from all this because we lived in Pulaski Heights, away from the turmoil. We never saw anything. And, of course, as I say, I ended up going to Catholic

High, which was an all-boys school, probably about four hundred boys. It was just an oasis. There were never any problems.

RR: But the Main Street bridge --- whichever bridge it was --- do you happen to remember the billboard that was the subject of Obsitnik's famous picture, "Who will build Arkansas if her own people do not?"?

RA: Right. I seem to remember it, but I probably remember it from a picture.

RR: Yes. I could see that.

RA: It really does ring a bell.

RR: Yes.

RA: Almost like I was standing in front of it.

RR: Where in the Heights did you live, by the way?

RA: You know, up along Kavanaugh on Ash Street.

RR: Right.

RA: Ash and Oak and Beech, and so on and so forth.

RR: Yes. We lived out there for a while. My son still lives down below there. So you went to work at the *Gazette* when you were what age?

RA: Sixteen.

RR: Sixteen.

RA: I was a sophomore at Catholic High in 1963.

RR: How did you happen to get a job?

RA: What happened? My brother, Frank Allen, was a sports --- worked on the wire desk at the *Gazette*. I guess he had gotten interested in journalism from friends,

and he got a job there. I was working at Ben Segalla's Esso station in Pulaski Heights.

RR: Ben what?

RA: Ben Segalla. S-E-G-A-L-L-A, I think. Segalla. I worked there. He hired me there the summer I was sixteen years old, just old enough to start driving. I was working there, pumping gas at Ben Segalla's Esso station. My brother came up and said, "Okay, look. There's a copy boy position open at the *Gazette*. I'm not going to say another thing about it. If you want to go try to get it, you can go do it." And I did, so I didn't spend the rest of my life pumping gas at a filling station. I went to the *Gazette*. They hired me as a copy boy. This was August of 1963, or maybe the start of September — I'm not sure exactly when I started — But I was a sophomore in high school.

RR: So that conversation with your brother changed your life?

RA: Absolutely. It was his model, actually. He was a sports writer. He was very, very good. He covered the Razorbacks. He wrote some beautiful stories after some of the games, and some stories appeared on page one. He was a really terrific model for me.

RR: Older than you?

RA: Older than me. Ten years older.

RR: Ten years. I didn't know that.

RA: And so what happened then, of course, was --- I liked it all the time, but then there was the Kennedy assassination in --- what, November 22 that year. It was

just fascinating, you know, just to follow it and feel like you were almost inside the story. To sit there and watch the ticker news wires and the bulletins and the flashes coming across. It was just an absolutely amazing experience.

RR: Back then we had bells on the teletype machines.

RA: Absolutely.

RR: Do you, by chance, remember how many bells or how long they rang meant such-and-such a story?

RA: I've forgotten.

RR: I have, too.

RA: But one bell it was an "urgent." The machines chewed up a lot of paper.

RR: Oh, yes.

RA: That's what I did. I was the copy boy. I changed the paper and changed the ribbon on the teletypes, and I went and got people coffee. I went and got people cigarettes. But, mainly, I carried the copy from the desk. You know, you'd pick it up off a spike and take it back in the back shop to the typographer. I don't know if you've talked to people about . . .

RR: It was really noisy!

RA: It was noisy. There were great, big, wonderful, old, noisy, smelly Linotype machines. It was just fantastic to watch that all transferred into hot type. And, you know, you'd bring proofs back, and you'd read them as you go along, and you try to find the errors and point them out to people. I was a copy boy for nine months. I was very enthusiastic about it. I would run the copy. I, literally, would

run it.

RR: Wow!

RA: And this caught Orville's eye --- Orville Henry's eye, of course --- the sports editor. As I remember it, he saw me. He was impressed by the hard work and diligence. The other people weren't so impressed because you weren't supposed to run in the back shop. It was dangerous around the machines. But I was a boy and didn't know any better. Anyway, it impressed Orville, and so nine months after I'd started, I got to start writing as well. Tiny little things at first.

RR: What sort of sports did you cover?

RA: Well, there at the first, I started absolutely at the bottom. I answered the telephones. If you wrote anything, it would be an H head [one graf]. Somebody would call in --- ladies' golf or women's golf. I forget what it was back then. They called them women rather than ladies. Orville said they weren't all ladies, but --- He'd just start with one paragraph. And, you know, answering the phones, telling people scores of games. I'd edit an H head and edit a little short, and write a little headline, and you just gradually worked along. And, I guess, first I was covering swimming and schoolboy basketball, schoolboy football. Jerry McConnell was covering the main schoolboy sports, I believe. Jim Bailey was covering the college football other than the Razorbacks. And, of course, Orville was doing all the Razorbacks. So I was covering schoolboy basketball and football, and even American Legion baseball. Jerry would do the biggest games. He'd do the Thanksgiving game between Central and Hall High. He would do

that. And I would, maybe, cover the Catholic High Rockets and the Hall High Warriors, or something like that. But I just gradually worked my way along with that sort of experience. It was very fundamental and basic.

RR: What were they called? The Rockets and the what?

RA: The Catholic High Rockets and the Hall High Warriors, and the Central High Tigers.

RR: Yes. What was your first byline about?

RA: My first byline was a golf match play tournament at Rebsamen Golf Course, I think, probably, in 1964. August of 1964. I went down there and followed these guys around the golf course. I didn't know much about golf, but figured it out and wrote my first byline article as Dick Allen. Now I'm Richard because Dick sounds so terrible in French. I didn't like that, so I became Richard.

RR: Oh. Okay.

RA: That's why all the bylines were Dick Allen, but now I prefer Richard in France. But that was the first byline. I guess it was Chuck Miller who saved me from great embarrassment because I said, "So-and-so had a shot and had a good lay under a tree." [Laughter] Fortunately, the editor laughed and showed it to everybody in the sports department, but he changed it. [Laughs] That was a good catch. I always appreciate editors for doing things like that.

RR: What are the odds that that would not be caught in the year 2000 because so many people don't know how to use "lie" and "lay"?

RA: That's right. I think there's a very good chance.

RR: I was trying to make a point in a class where two or three students said "lay" when they meant "lie." I made some awful joke about this being obscene. Nobody got it! [Laughs] So I just let it go. I tried something else.

RA: It could have been worse for me. One of my colleagues, I think, wrote about golf and painting his balls red and playing in the snow.

RR: [Laughs] Yes. Tell me about your colleagues in the sports department. You mentioned Jerry McConnell. What do you remember about Jerry?

RA: Well, he was a very graceful writer. He really wrote well. He wrote intelligently, and he had terrific relationships with the coaches. You could see him on the telephone interviewing these guys, and it was just impressive to see how he handled himself and how he could get into the story. Bailey --- I remember how well he wrote. I can say the same about Jim and the same about Orville, but that's what I was doing. I was watching these men and reading carefully what they were doing and trying to figure out how to write like them .

RR: What kind of a personality was Jim Bailey?

RA: I don't know. I really can't talk about his personality that much. I don't know . . .

RR: I always thought of him as a quiet man.

RA: Quiet and very, very reticent. He had an incredible sense of humor. Very funny, wry, insightful sort of humor. I don't remember a lot of stories, though.

RR: Very knowledgeable about sports.

RA: Incredibly knowledgeable about sports --- about the colleges, about the school in Jonesboro. What was it? The other school . . .

RR: Arkansas State.

RA: He was covering all those. Arkansas State and Hendrix. He was covering the second ranking colleges behind the University back then, behind Arkansas.

RR: I've heard that he carried a lot of sports information in his head, baseball statistics, boxing, that sort of thing.

RA: Yes. He knew all the names. He knew all the nicknames. He would give me a quiz, and he'd type out, "Who was the 'Brown Bomber'?" I forget exactly how it was structured, but he'd leave a blank for me to try to fill in these quizzes. He'd just sit down and just whip them off. It was fun.

RR: I'll bet. How come he was giving you quizzes? [Laughs]

RA: Just for fun. Just sitting around, you know, if there was nothing going on --- just to see what I knew and to teach me what he knew.

RR: Pretty good education there.

RA: Oh, yes. He knew all the players going back. And, of course, his specialty was boxing. Boy, he knew more about that than anybody else I knew and covered some of the matches. I think he covered Mohammed Ali at the start.

RR: He was an obscure boxer.

RA: Oh, yes. I mean, Bailey knew everything. He knew it all.

RR: So how long did you write sports?

RA: About five years, up until 1968.

RR: And what were you doing in the later years?

RA: Well, like I said, it ended up with the school boys, covering basketball and

football, and so forth. It was terrific because the last couple of years or so, Orville let me help cover the Razorback games. I would do the dressing room story. Of course, Orville would write the main story, but I got to sit next to him at War Memorial Stadium, in the press box up there, to watch these football games and then go down and talk to whichever side I was covering. It was usually the visiting team. Somebody else was always covering the Razorbacks. But that was terrific experience, wasn't it?

RR: Yes.

RA: To get to do that and go to Fayetteville sometimes. Once I went to Waco. I got to go to the Astrodome, probably the first year it was open. I went down to cover a game with Orville. Here I was --- I was an eighteen-year-old kid. By the time I left I was, what, twenty-one? And I got to do all these sorts of things as a very young man.

RR: Meanwhile, you're going to school. Now what kind of grades did you have?

RA: Awful. What kind of grades?

RR: No. I'm talking about what kind of working arrangement did you have? What kind of hours?

RA: Well, in high school it was okay. I worked from probably five o'clock p.m. to midnight. It was manageable, so when I was in high school, it was okay. My grades probably suffered a bit, but I did okay. And then in college, what happened was I was just a part-time student. You had to take like a twenty-five hour minimum to keep your new student deferment. It slowed things down a bit

as far as getting a degree.

RR: And then when you went to Fayetteville, were you still on the *Gazette*?

RA: What I did, I went there as a "stringer." Originally, I was going to go and cover sports, but then I decided I wanted to move on to the news side. So I still covered some sports. Basically, I was covering the news side. That's when I started moving the news. I would cover the board meetings, [David] Mullins, or whatever his name was back then, who was the president of the university at the time.

RR: David Mullins. Yes.

RA: David Mullins. It was a fascinating time, Vietnam, some of the protests at the time. There was a lot to do with civil rights. One of my best stories was an exclusive on a HUD [Housing and Urban Development] report talking about apparent discrimination in the football scene. There were no black football players. There were a few black students. I mean, this was all in evolution during that time.

RR: A HUD report?

RA: Housing and Urban Development report criticizing the apparent discrimination in the athletic program. It was a nice, top-of-page-one exclusive that somebody at the university had given me that.

RR: You wrote some good stuff then. That would have been, by then, what, the late 1960s?

RA: Yes. Probably 1968.

RR: Yes. Those were hot times in the news business.

RA: Oh, yes.

RR: When I got to Fayetteville, I learned that the campus had been making more news than we realized. By then, I had gone off to *The [New York] Times*. I didn't get back to Arkansas for a long time because civil rights meant Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Arkansas seemed to be off to one side. But later I learned, no, there was quite a lot going on in Arkansas and apparently, on the university campus.

RA: Yes. Now, again, when I was there, I made contact with the black students. There wasn't but a handful of these kids by 1968-1969. There were no black football players, as I remember. That came afterwards. One of the things I remember most about that was one of the football games. I guess maybe partly because of that HUD report. There was this demonstration on campus by whites and blacks. "RazorBlacks." You know, they wanted to integrate the football team. And so they had a little demonstration out there on a Saturday afternoon --- fifty thousand Razorback fans screaming in the Razorback Stadium, and here this handful of kids up there on the mountainside with their little signs saying, "We want RazorBlacks --- We want RazorBlacks." And I knew about it because I had contacted them, so I ran down from the stadium press box and covered this thing, one of my proudest moments. My dad saw me. I was just up standing with them, covering the thing, but my father saw me --- my father, of course, growing up in a whole different environment. He came up and shook my hand. He told me later

that if they had listened to these students, these protestors, they would have been the first to have the advantage of some of the talented black athletes who ended up going to all sorts of other schools. Finally, it was a player at Rice who broke the barrier in the Southwest Conference. But I covered that protest, and, to my amazement, the next morning I woke up and picked up the *Gazette*, and it was on page one, the story about this protest. I was shocked. But then the next week I tried the same thing, and two weeks later or whenever it happened again, and I picked up the paper full of expectations, and it was two paragraphs way back in the back of the paper. Well, I don't know what happened. I don't know if it was a one-off deal, where it was just interesting the first time, but the second time less so. I don't know.

RR: You mentioned your father. What was his interest in the civil rights story?

RA: Well, none. I am just talking about him and --- he was working for the state. No, he didn't have anything to do --- I'm just saying that he was --- you know, from that time, from that era when we . . .

RR: He wanted to see black athletes, is that what you're saying?

RA: No. What I'm saying is that he had the courage to come up and do something that would have been offensive for a lot of people. He had the courage to come up and talk to his son among a bunch of demonstrators.

RR: Well, yes. And the fact that he worked in the state government when Faubus was governor, do you ever talk about that any?

RA: Well, what can I say? There were just certain things you couldn't say.

RR: But I gather he had to be pretty cautious what he . . .

RA: Absolutely. It was back in the 1950s and 1960s. Things were hard. Arkansas was so radically different back then. A very poor state. Things were progressing very, very slowly. He had six children to take care of. Obviously, that influences things, I would say, but we were lucky. Like I say, we weren't touched by it. I went to an all-boys school --- an all-white school, and it was sort of [].

RR: Those black students --- did you, by any chance, know a black student named Gerald Jordan?

RA: You're talking when?

RR: He was there at that time in the journalism program. He eventually worked for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and has now taken my place on the faculty at the journalism department. He was in that first generation, you might say, of black students at the university.

RA: No. I don't remember him.

RR: I've heard him talking about walking past the Kappa Sig[ma Alpha] house and being yelled at.

RA: Yes. It was pretty[strained.

RR: Tell about Frank.

RA: Frank, my brother? Well, do you know any of this story? Did anybody say anything about this?

RR: Well, I heard it at the time.

RA: Well, you know, it's just absolutely heartbreaking. Well, we were playing a touch

football game down in Allsopp Park, and Eric King and probably Robert Shaw and some of the others from the paper. He had a stroke. He collapsed and died. He was twenty-seven years old. Of course, it was just completely devastating for the whole family. But he was, I think, a very talented journalist already at that age, and very committed to working very hard and would have been an excellent journalist, whatever he wanted to do there at the *Gazette* and whatever else he would have done.

RR: What year was that?

RA: 1965.

RR: 1965?

RA: November the second of 1965.

RR: Yes, I was gone from the paper by then, and I remember hearing about it and following it when I came back for a visit. Everybody on the paper was kind of devastated by that. Apparently, Frank was very well liked, not just in the sports department, but all over.

RA: I think so. He was very, very smart guy. It was a very difficult thing for all of us.

RR: So you got your degree up in Fayetteville? About what year would that have been?

RA: It was in January of 1970.

RR: Okay.

RA: I had dropped out for six months. I took some time off. I was under a lot of pressure, partly because of the work, partly because of the school. So I stopped

in 1969. That's right. I should point that out. What happened actually is important in what happened, but I stopped for six months. I was in Little Rock. I was looking for work. Oh, and this is important, too. Then I went to the *Democrat*. I tried to go back to the *Gazette* in 1969. I went and talked to the state editor --- what was his name? Doug Smith? Doug Smith, right? No, no. Leroy Donald.

RR: Leroy Donald.

RA: Leroy Donald. I talked to him about going to work for him on the state desk, right? Leroy decided, "Yes, sure." Terrific. We got some great travel around northeast Arkansas and Indiana. I was excited that I could get back in there. He goes in and talks to A. R. Nelson, and A. R. Nelson said, "No!" Do you know about this?

RR: No, I've never heard it.

RA: It was a policy --- A. R. Nelson's --- as I understand it, you could not go back to the *Arkansas Gazette* once you left.

RR: I didn't know that.

RA: You didn't know that? This is what I understand. That's what I was told.

RR: I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised.

RA: But he said no, and so I go to the *Democrat*. Of course, as a *Gazette* person, I hated the *Democrat*. I held it in the utmost contempt. Right?

RR: Yes.

RA: So I go over there, and who's over there, but Gene Foreman, right? Now, why is

Gene Foreman at the *Arkansas Democrat*? One of the most talented journalists in the world, in the United States. Well, I wish you'd ask him this. He left the *Gazette* to go to *The New York Times* in 1965 or so, got stuck in the strike, went back to Arkansas, and couldn't go to the *Gazette* because A. R. Nelson --- I think -- I hope I'm not . . .

RR: Well, that probably was right. Probably was right.

RA: . . . slandering A. R. Nelson.

RR: Well, you know, *The Times* has --- I've always been told --- that *The New York Times* has a similar policy. I've never tested it first hand, but . . . [laughs].

RA: Yes. I don't understand that philosophy, but I had a lot of respect for A. R. Nelson. He hired me. Well, he hired me as a copy boy. He almost fired me as a copy boy because I was --- it was terrific back then. One of the things you did as a copy boy was you handled the switchboard, right? When the switchboard operator went out, you handled the switchboard that had the wires and poking things in there, and the lights would come on. When I was talking to my girlfriend, I cut off A. R. Nelson, right? Wouldn't you imagine, I was talking to my girlfriend? He calls back and he says, "Were you talking to your girlfriend?"

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

RA: So I was called into his office the next day. I just thought he was going to bawl me out. But he said, "Normally, I would just fire you, but you've got some friends here. Some people came to me and told me that you work really hard, so I'm

going to give you one more chance." [Laughs] But I never talked to my girlfriend again after that! [Laughter]

RR: Oh! That's funny!

RA: It was an amazing newsroom back then. I don't know. I'm sure you know there was one woman in that place, Matilda Tuohey. I remember the newsroom. Obviously, there were other people in the women's pages, but as I remember, when I got there, it was only Matilda Tuohey. There were no --- there were all white males. There were no blacks. The blacks came later. Everybody smoking and it was radically different from today.

RR: Hardwood floors.

RA: Hardwood floors.

RR: No carpeting.

RA: No carpeting. Yes, there must have been a reason for that, I guess.

RR: That's because you can't put out a decent newspaper if you have carpet on your floor!

RA: [Laughter] Oh, is that it? The terrific thing was that nobody whistled. You know, it was bad luck to whistle in a newsroom. I learned this from Bob Douglas. Anybody whistles around me in the newsroom, I start screaming at them.

[Laughter] It was an old tradition. Do not whistle in a newsroom. I saw Bob Douglas telling copy editors to stop whistling in the newsroom.

RR: I'm going to get him on that when I get a chance.

RA: Well, I hope so. If it's not true, please tell me, because I make people here stop

whistling in the newsroom because it's bad luck. [Laughter]

RR: Well, it probably is! I'm just sorry it came too late to do me any good. [Laughs]

Talk about Orville Henry.

RA: Well, what can you say? Again, he loved the Razorbacks so much in every regard. He wrote it down so well, and, you know, he was just part of the state lore. Again, he was just a model for me, someone I admired and respected and, of course, he let me write for the newspaper. I can't believe that somebody let a kid like me do what I did. And he would help and edit and push and give me good assignments and, you know, if it didn't turn out well, he'd kill it. Spike it.

RR: Maybe he gave you a break because he had been so young himself when he went to work there.

RA: Yes.

RR: No, he was just a kid.

RA: I don't know. How old was he when I got there? He was probably in his forties.

RR: Yes.

RA: I don't remember that.

RR: Yes.

RA: Was that when he started . . .

RR: I think during the war. I think he was in his late teens when he went there and presently found himself editor of the sports section because of the war. He was a hardworking kid. Sounds like Dick Allen, really.

RA: I don't know. Maybe that was it. I never understood. I wish I could have sat

down and talked to him later [laughter] about why that was.

RR: Did he give you your assignments?

RA: No. Jerry handled that. Jerry would do the assignment book. You would look in there to see what you were assigned to do that Friday, which game you were covering. Then, of course, Orville must have talked to Jerry about what was going to be done. I mean, you know, when I got to cover the Razorback game, obviously, Orville would have been involved.

RR: You sat beside him in the press box some . . .

RA: Right.

RR: . . . at the football games.

RA: Right.

RR: Can you describe that scene --- Orville, the press box? How did he work?

RA: I seem to remember him writing as the game goes along. You know, he wrote enormous articles. The stories would start on page one and, as I recall, jumped to, like, an open page inside, so he was writing as he went along. He wasn't getting up and chatting. You know, there have been some incredible meals. Some of the best meals I ate back then was at the halftime at the football games, but he wasn't off doing that. Maybe I'd go get him a plate so he could keep working and he was writing the story as it went along. As I recall, at halftime, he's writing the first quarter and the second quarter of play-by-play description, descriptive story of facts. As I recall, it was almost virtually play-by-play as it went along.

RR: Did he make notes in a notebook, pencil notes, and then type them out?

RA: Well, I remember things. They taught me how to do it, but you'd have the lined notebook, and you'd write. One side would be one team and the other side would be the other as the game went along. I forgot about that, but I can't remember how he'd do that. He'd probably do it on a typewriter as well. They are always speeding to give you a play-by-play. Back then it was mimeographed. I don't know how they do it now, but they'd type up the very basic play-by-play that they would . . .

RR: Who would do that?

RA: The sports department of the University of Arkansas, I guess.

RR: Yes.

RA: They gave that to all the journalists right out. It was structured for everybody --- you know, every fifty or hundred journalists, however many there were, and they were getting all this information.

RR: What kind of information was it?

RA: The play-by-play description, you know? Each play would be, you know, "so-and-so, hand-off, two yards to the Arkansas thirty-seven."

RR: Okay.

RA: Just the basic thing.

RR: Right.

RA: And then Orville would fill in around all of that.

RR: Yes.

RA: You know, who threw the block or who caught the pass or who did this, that or

the other.

RR: Yes. It almost reminds you of those old-fashioned radio announcers who would do games play-by-play.

RA: Oh, yes. I had forgotten about that. Dave Campbell? Was that his name?

RR: I think so.

RA: But that's what Orville was doing, basically, but then he was elaborating on it as well.

RR: Yes. My recollection is that he was a very fluid writer, that his copy was clear, and it flowed. It was not fancy, but it was clear. What's your . . .

RA: That's true. I think that's true. I mean, it was solid and not overly flashy. But he had a touch to his work. I mean, he was different. Jerry, Jim and Orville were different kinds of writers, but they were all special in their own way. I think Jim was probably the most eloquent and elegant writer of the three, but they were all good. I mean, they all were good, solid. The prose was good. The prose was fun.

RR: Okay.

RA: Sometimes I would struggle with that. Sometimes I just couldn't do it. I was getting better. They always seemed to come up with a fascinating angle or a fun angle, you know, that made it special.

RR: Orville used adjectives.

RA: I don't remember seeing a lot of that. He wasn't like that. I mean, it wasn't like the stuff you see now, inasmuch as he didn't get carried away about anything. I

mean, obviously, he loved the Razorbacks. He loved the program, but he never got carried away at all. You know, it's not like "The fabulous home team trampled so-and-so," or . . .

RR: Yes.

RA: . . . "We lost because we were unlucky." I mean, it was good, solid reporting.

RR: What was the year of the big game with Texas?

RA: I have no idea.

RR: The one they still talk about.

RA: 1973? Oh, no, the 1969 game.

RR: 1969.

RA: 1969 game.

RR: Were you there?

RA: I wasn't there.

RR: Okay.

RA: I was watching it on TV. Some people thought I might cover that, but, no, I didn't.

RR: "Denies covering the Texas game in 1969." Okay.

RA: Huh?

RR: I'm just making a bad joke. "Denies covering the . . ." [Laughter]

RA: Yes, right. Unfortunately.

RR: Okay, you were at the *Democrat*. Was it 1969 that you went to the . . .?

RA: January of 1969, until, I guess, November of 1971.

RR: And what did . . .

RA: I was on the copy desk, started on the copy desk, and worked my way up to a slot [editor], working for Gene Foreman.

RR: You were the news editor, then?

RA: No, the news editor was someone else. I was a slot editor. I worked my way up to a slot, from the copy desk. The slot editor, you know, you know, approves the heads and the articles. But again, it was with Gene Foreman, which was fantastic. He was a superb journalist. Did you know him? Do you know who I'm talking about?

RR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Sure.

RA: He worked at the *Inquirer* with Gene Roberts.

RR: I knew him at the *Gazette*.

RA: You knew him at the *Gazette*?

RR: Yes.

RA: Oh, well.

RR: Yes. He looked about fifteen when he worked at the *Gazette*. He was just a very good reporter. Bob Douglas still says that he was the only reporter that he had ever dealt with whose copy could not be cut. Gene had already slashed it to the bone. Well, that year at the *Democrat* sounds like good experience learning how to put out a newspaper.

RA: It was. I moved from reporting to editing, and I've never gone back to reporting. I mean, I've always stayed an editor and I've preferred doing that for a lot of

different reasons. That's why I made the transition, basically. In September of 1970, I went back to the University of Arkansas, this time covering the University for the *Democrat*, and so I stayed there. That was my last semester, and I graduated in 1970. Then I went back to the *Democrat* for a while and then to *Newsday* and then *The New York Times*.

RR: *Newsday* in about 1970? 1971?

RA: November of 1971, I went to *Newsday*.

RR: And what did you do there?

RA: They hired me as a copy editor for the Sunday edition. They were starting a Sunday paper, so they hired me on the copy desk. Gene had gone there. The "Arkansas Mafia" moved up to New York. Gene went to New York, a few other people --- Pat Owens. From the *Gazette* to *Newsday*, and I guess that was the connection for Gene. Or --- I don't know how that happened, but he left the *Democrat* for *Newsday* and, gradually, I followed him, and several other people at the *Democrat* found Gene [at] *Newsday*. I stayed there five years, and then Gene went to the *Inquirer*, and several people followed Gene to Philadelphia. I decided to try my hand at *The [New York] Times*. I figured that I wanted to work for the best paper in the country, if not the world, and so I went the other way.

RR: So what year was that?

RA: This was 1976, and I was on the foreign copy desk.

RR: First? Your first job at *The Times* was on the foreign desk?

RA: I didn't work anywhere except there.

RR: Why?

RA: Because it was the best. It had the reputation as the best desk. When I was at *Newsday*, in the end, I was doing the foreign report. I was very, very interested in foreign news. I also had been involved in coverage of Watergate, and it was just a fantastic experience there at the end, but mainly, I was doing the foreign news for *Newsday*. They were just starting to open up some space. This was before they opened *New York Newsday*. It was really [laughs] an interesting foreign newsroom. You know, a more global sort of perspective, but that was a lot of fun for me, too. But then I got interested in foreign news, and when I went to *The Times*, I wanted only to work --- I wouldn't have worked for the national desk or the metro --- I wanted the foreign desk, and so that's what I did.

RR: Tell me about getting on at *The Times*.

RA: Getting on at *The Times*?

RR: Yes.

RA: Well, it was a tryout. I had a week-long tryout. You know, I went to Al Siegal and I was terrified. That first day, it was so overwhelming in that enormous newsroom.

RR: How do you spell Al's name? S-I-E-G-A-L?

RA: Yes. S-I-E-G-A-L. Yes.

RR: I've written him so many letters of complaint . . .

RA: Oh, really?

RR: . . . about mistakes in the paper . . .

RA: [Laughs] All right! [?]. Wow.

RR: . . . that I don't dare . . .

RA: Wow. Boy, I saw some of those because he used to send them around with little memos in green ink and stuff.

RR: Yes. He was over the foreign desk?

RA: No, the Bull Pen. He was still --- had he moved over? I can't remember. I think he was --- during this time I was very close --- he moved from the foreign desk --- deputy foreign editor, assistant foreign editor, to the news desk.

RR: Right.

RA: But it was terrifying that first week and handling it. I didn't realize. I thought you guys all wrote beautifully from when it came out of your typewriter.

[Laughter]. I had no idea how much help they needed from the copy desk. And so I thought they were setting me up with the tryout. Some of the articles, of course, you wouldn't have to touch much at all. Others you had to edit heavily.

RR: Yes.

RA: And that's what I enjoyed. I really enjoyed editing copy, getting down and trying to make sense out of it, wherever I've worked, whatever newspaper I was working for.

RR: Well, obviously, they liked your work after the tryout. They put you on!

RA: Yes. I had five years there. Five years either on the copy desk or in the backfield. I did backfield as well. And then . . .

RR: Explain backfield.

RA: Backfield was closer to assigning --- dealing with correspondents, getting the copy from the correspondents, giving it the first read and making sure that the structure of the story was correct, that it was coherent and in the correct order, and the first basic editing, and then it goes on to the copy desk, of course, for the next stage of the editing process. In the backfield, you have a more global view of things. You're not trying to check the name, check the flags, check the facts. That's done on the copy desk.

RR: When you deal with reporters, any massaging bruised egos?

RA: Absolutely! It depends on the reporter. That's part of what I do now is trying to manage relationships with them. I mean, they're covering the stories, basically. But you're just calling to see when they are going to file --- getting a basic idea of the story, make a story budget, tell people that the story is coming, and things like that.

RR: Do you remember dealing with any of my stories from London?

RA: Yes, a little bit. I don't remember any problems with them.

RR: No specific stories that you had to call me about and say, "Roy, what do you mean?"?

RA: I don't think so. I don't remember having to do that.

RR: Yes.

RA: No, I don't. Do you? Do you remember calls from New York?

RR: No. No.

RA: No. That's a good sign, right?

RR: Well, we'd get messages on the --- what did we use, Telex?

RA: Well, they went in the mail room or you would call in. There were several ways you could do it. I guess you could probably Telex it.

RR: Yes.

RA: There was also --- it was not the mail room but the transcription room, where they call to dictate. You'd dictate your stories into a machine or live.

RR: That's how we did it on the national desk, recording it. But in London, we sent them a wire, and they had just installed computers. I remember once I filed a story, and it never made it to New York. I reckon it's still floating around over the Atlantic Ocean somewhere.

RA: It must have been incredibly frustrating.

RR: Oh, yes.

RA: When I got there, they were just moving over to computers. And, of course, I had worked all my career on paper, and it was amazing, the difference, to go from pen and paper, and all that, to being on computers.

RR: Can you talk about that a little more, about that transition? Because that was a big technological transition for newspapers everywhere.

RA: Yes. Well, of course, up until I got to *Newsday* --- *Newsday*, I guess, went on computers in 1973, but we used to sit there and cut up the stories on paper. You'd cut the stories you'd get from the agencies --- from United Press International (UPI) or Reuters, Associated Press (AP) — and your basic structure would be the AP story. If they were missing a paragraph, missing something

important, some element, you'd cut it out of the Reuters paper. You'd cut out the paragraph, paste it on a piece of copy paper, and then paste in the middle of the AP story. You're editing with pencil. You know, drawing the lines. People don't know how to do that anymore. They wouldn't recognize it. I can't believe that I've got people working with me who've never edited with pencil and paper. I mean, one of the joys of my life was writing a story on an old Underwood typewriter. They were glorious machines. They were so much fun.

RR: Oh, yes!

RA: There was a tactile sense to handling copy like that from a typewriter and with a pencil and glue that you don't get with a computer.

RR: Yes.

RA: The computer has cost us a terrible price, I think. It has taken the drudgery out of the lot of the work, but the involvement for the editors is certainly not what it used to be on paper. You don't see things the same way. I don't know about the reporters, but certainly for the editing process, the degree of engagement is not the same as the work on paper. You've lost something. You get on a screen, and you don't see the top to the bottom of the story. If you want --- it's very hard, you know --- you can't remember. It's not all on the screen, where before, you just, you know, you look at the copy. "Oh, it's down there. There's a duplication error."

RR: Scrolling is not the same.

RA: Exactly. Exactly. You don't see the typos. You don't get the sense of it. You

feel like it looks good on a computer screen, but it's not . . .

RR: You don't see the typos.

RA: You don't see the typos as easily.

RR: Why would that be?

RA: The engagement is not the same. I don't know. You look at it two or three times, and then you just say, "I don't care."

RR: Did you cut the paper with scissors or a ruler?

RA: I think I prefer the ruler.

RR: Yes.

RA: You had the scissors, too, depending on what you were doing.

RR: The ruler . . .

RA: You had the pica pole, right? You had your pica pole.

RR: Pica . . .

RA: Pica pole.

RR: P-O-L-E? Is that what it was called?

RA: Yes. It was called a pica pole . . .

RR: Yes.

RA: . . . because it had the measures on one side. I don't have mine.

RR: They were made out of lead, weren't they?

RA: No, they were --- they were like --- this is . . .

RR: Oh, there it is. Yes, that's a steel . . .

RA: Does that have picas on it or not? They'd have inches. No, this is not a pica pole,

actually.

RR: I seem to recall in the *Gazette* newsroom that some of the copy editors used just a long stretch of lead . . .

RA: Lead, yes! That's right. I had forgotten about it. It was just lead that they would be feeding in the machines, or it was lead that they would use that led out the headlines.

RR: Very effective for tearing paper.

RA: Absolutely. That's what you'd use. You're tearing paper either to the editor or take it off the sheet because, you know, we'd take it off the AP and the teletype machines.

RR: And there it comes in by the bushel --- by the bale, you might say.

RA: Absolutely.

RR: What percentage of the average day's wire copy wound up in the paper?

RA: I have no idea.

RR: Not very much.

RA: Not very much. It's much worse now because with high-speed machines.

RR: Oh, yes.

RA: Before, they sent you a one-graf correction on a story. Now, they send you the whole story. AP will send the same story sixteen times. They'll change it because there's a typo. They'll change it to add photo credit, to add photo something or other. It's madness. The feed that comes in is just --- I mean, you don't use the paper anymore, you know? It comes in the computer.

RR: Yes.

RA: And you don't even know what they're doing sometimes, like, "Why are you doing this?"

[Tape Stopped]

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

RR: This is side two. You mentioned A. R. Nelson. There was something else about Nelson that needs to be said.

RA: No, I just wanted to mention you know, again, how much I respected him and just --- he died a few years ago, and when he died, it was on the wire. I put his obit in the *Herald Tribune*.

RR: Good.

RA: I mean, it was a small obit, but that was my mark of respect for him. There must be a lot of people out there wondering why the former managing editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* was mentioned in the *Herald Tribune*, but that was sort of my tribute to him for what he had done and the respect that I had for him.

RR: Well, I'm grateful that he hired me, too. And I had a lot of respect for him. Did you ever know Pat Crow?

RA: I know that name, but I did not know him. I've heard that name.

RR: After he left the *Gazette*, he was on the copy desk of *The New York Times* and ended up at *The New Yorker*. But, while he was at *The Times* --- this was during the Vietnam War --- I've heard him talking about editing David Halberstam's

copy. You were talking a while about writers who looked good because of the desk? Well, Crow said they had to rewrite him extensively, which shocked me at the time. But everybody needs an editor.

RA: They still talk about Halberstam. I left *The Times* nineteen years ago, but they were still talking about it, I'll tell you!

RR: Really? Who do you remember from --- who do you remember working with at *The Times* who might be a name that newspaper folks --- you know, we all kind of run in the same little club. Who were the stand-out names around the newsroom? Ted Bernstein? Do you remember, was he still alive?

RA: He was. I think when I started, he was just about to retire. He was about to leave. Who were the people? Well, I worked with --- a lot of them are still there. You know, there was Drew Middleton, who was the correspondent for military affairs. There was Johnny Apple, who's still one of the premiere political reporters in the United States. When I was there, I worked with John Burns, one of the finest reporters in the country. He's won two Pulitzer Prizes now. I worked with him when he was at *The Times*. I was there when he started working for *The Times*, when he covered South Africa. Later on, he covered Bosnia. He's still reporting. He was in India, one of his last assignments. He's just a fantastic guy, a reporter. So approachable. And, really, both at *The Times* and at the *Herald Tribune*, I've worked with some of the best names in the business.

RR: Yes. Did you deal with Rosenthal? Abe Rosenthal?

RA: Yes, definitely. Yes, of course. But, as an editor, I'm on dangerous ground here.

[Laughter]

RR: I'm just wondering how much of a presence he was for those of you on the desk.

RA: Oh, yes. Well, he's been an enormous presence. He's an enormous presence in the newsroom and on the desk and on all of our lives. He can be --- how can I say it nicely? His interest, you know, was obviously important. If you were a reporter, then you were a special breed of person. He must have been wonderful to you. You know this better than I do because you were a reporter, one of Abe Rosenthal's reporters, right?

RR: Yes.

RA: So, from my perspective as an editor, a desk editor, you guys were set apart. He didn't --- well, we always talked about how sad it was that he didn't like editors. I mean, he didn't want to acknowledge the role of the editor, that the editors were as critical to this process as they were. I mean, that's what we think. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. I never sat down and talked to Abe about anything like this. But that was our view, that the editors were doing a lot of very important work on some of the topics. My view was about a third of the copy was terrific and didn't need any work at all. A third of it needed some work, and a third of it needed a lot. There were reporters who --- hey, there's no shame in it. They were just better reporters than they were writers. There's nothing wrong with that.

RR: Yes.

RA: And we just helped that. I was amazed to pick up *The New York Times* every day and see everything look so good. Well, it gets there because it's been through an

editing process that brings it all up to that standard.

RR: Yes.

RA: Now, there are writers who don't like that because they don't want their copy to read like everything else in *The New York Times*. I know you probably share that in some regard, too.

RR: Now, I have to tell you. I can do a little confessing. There were stories of mine that I still read with blushing embarrassment, wishing that you guys had been tougher on it. When I was on the national desk, I would send in a story now and then that would get a little low-rent around the edges [laughs]. As I said to you the other day, or last night, Gene Roberts, who was a reporter's editor. I think he sat on his copy desk pretty hard and, we thought, protected us from that end, but probably had the effect of making the copy desk a little antsy about not doing some work on our copy that really ought to have been done. I can still remember a story or two that would have benefitted having some work, but that's a hard thing for a reporter to acknowledge. It's now been twenty years, so it comes pretty easy, but [laughter], you know, it probably would have taken at least a year back then. There's so much ego involved among reporters.

RA: You've got to have an ego. I mean, really! You have to have one to do this sort of --- you're putting your name on something every day. It's out there for hundreds and thousands of people reading it. I mean, it takes courage. That's what I didn't like to do in the end. I didn't want to have to get up and worry about --- I was never comfortable the next day until I got through the day and

nobody called and complained about an article [laughs]. I don't think I had the personality to put up with that. I mean, I prefer the editing side in the end.

RR: Yes.

RA: Reporting was glorious and fun, but there are other advantages to being an editor than being a reporter.

RR: Yes.

RA: Like I don't have two-year tours of duty. I'm in Paris for as long as I want to be. You go off, and you're some sort of poor reporter who comes along and learns to speak French and gets a two-year assignment. These guys send him off to India or send him off to Russia or something, which is fine. If you like that, that's fine, but that's hard work. I know it's hard work.

RR: Oh, yes. So you came to Paris, you came to the *International Herald Tribune* in what year?

RA: 1981.

RR: Okay. And you've been there ever since?

RA: Been there ever since.

RR: Your job until the end, your present job, is?

RA: I'm the regional editor responsible for Asia and the Americas.

RR: And that means?

RA: That means the whole world is divided in two, and my other colleague has Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and I have Asia and the Americas. I'm responsible for putting together the news budget, the basic story list, the outlines

of the stories we're going to do every day for the Americas and for Asia. It's a big chunk of the world, but that's the way we do it.

RR: Yes.

RA: What I'm doing is I'm sitting down and reading everything I can of what's coming out of the agencies, from *The [New York] Times*, the [*Washington*] *Post*, any agencies. I'm supposed to gather the list of what I think is the best --- the budget, and making my recommendations for page one or where the stories go. You go through the process, of course, and then other people involved in deciding what's on page one help make those choices, but I have a voice in all that.

RR: That's the managing editor, I guess, and . . .

RA: Right. The executive editor and the managing editor and the day editor and the other people involved in it.

RR: You have that news meeting every day? . . .

[Brief Interruption]

RR: . . . I wanted to be clear on your present job because this --- I think this is of considerable interest. Let's take the example of the 2000 presidential election in the United States. Can you describe a little of what your part has been in getting that story into the *International Herald Tribune*?

RA: Well, basically, what I'm doing is sort of the triage. I'm just clearing out a lot of the underbrush and trying to get the best story from *The Times* and the *Post* in the newspaper. I'm responsible, . . . I mean, the other editors are jumping in and some people can overrule me and do other things, but I'm basically responsible

for shaping that report and getting that story in. We have a correspondent in Washington [D.C.] who wrote critical stories for us because we've got a time difference here. It's six hours later here than it is in Washington, so [when] our first edition is closing around six o'clock in the evening, it was noon in Washington. The day has hardly started in Washington when we're putting out our first edition, so we've got to be smart enough to hit the news early enough in the cycle to see what's important, to write it and edit it and get it in this paper that early. I mean, that's twelve hours before *The Times* or the *Post* have to do that story. They've got twelve hours more to let it --- well, it may be ten hours now. It's ten o'clock at night, or whatever the deadlines are, but they've got the luxury of sitting there and thinking about it and writing and making it all beautiful. We're trying to write smart stories about something much earlier in the cycle, and that's part of my job. I'm looking at one thing, the stories that they did the day before, taken from *The Times* and the *Post* again, with smart stuff written by Johnny Apple, or Dan Balz at the *Post*, or [David] Broder at the *Post*, and trying to take those stories and get them into newspapers in limited space, so our readers understand what's going on back there. The smartest coverage that you can get outside of the United States I would argue is in the *Herald Tribune*. It's more --- if you want to sit and watch CNN for twenty-four hours a day, be my guest, but after twenty-four hours, I don't know if you're going to know anything about what's actually going on. You'll know the headlines, but you can't stop and sit down and think about what's actually happened.

RR: So, in this very confusing election, you all probably had as many as --- how many stories a day about the election?

RA: Well, okay. Last week --- the week before I did a special section. I put out a two-page special section with our own reporters. We try not to overdo it. We try to tell the essential things in the campaign over six months or a year, so everybody has a sense of the issues and what was going on, and what they were saying. And that was all terrific. Then, look what happened . . .

RR: Right.

RA: . . . with what's happening. It's just amazing. Almost all page ones, a jump page, and two open inside pages on this incredible election. Again, we're trying to manage it so the reader can absorb this and read two or three stories and know what's going on. Otherwise, it's just overwhelming. But that's what I'm doing. I'm reading, absorbing a lot so that we can weed out a lot of stuff that's marginal and that you don't need to know. Look in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*[and in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* --- we can't do it. We don't have that much room.

RR: Yes. Let's double back. When you came here, in 1981 . . .

RA: 1981.

RR: . . . what was your first job on the *Herald Tribune*?

RA: Copy editor. I was the copy editor editing the copy.

RR: And then what?

RA: And then just worked my way up to the regional desk, and to the jobs I'm doing

now. This job opened up, like, five years ago. I had been doing Europe part of the time, and Asia and the Americas part of the time. I just took this as a full-time job in the Americas and Asia.

RR: Yes.

RA: But I covered some of the greatest stories. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War and other things. I was part of all that coverage.

RR: Yes.

RA: Unbelievable stories!

RR: Yes! The Berlin Wall coming down.

RA: Berlin --- one of the most important, striking moments of my life. I thought I'd never see the end of the Berlin Wall. I was there the night the guy said, "You can leave East Germany by any direction." I knew what he meant. He meant that if you can leave by any direction, that means they're going to open the Wall.

RR: Yes.

RA: Walter Wells bought us champagne that night. Walter used to work at *The New York Times*, of course. I'll never forget that night we went out, not because anybody won or lost, but just because it was such a wonderful story [laughs].

RR: Yes.

RA: Typical.

RR: You mentioned something to me last evening that I wish you would elaborate on. Before Bill Clinton was elected president, when you told a French person that you were from Arkansas, that meant Orval Faubus to them and that meant the Central

High [School] story, and people actually turned away from you. Did I hear you right, that you've had that happen?

RA: Well, yes. When I first got here, they'd say, "Where are you from?" I'd say, "From Arkansas." It's "Ark-on-sasse" in French, and they would remember Faubus --- I mean, not everybody, but people would say, "Ah, Faubus. Faubus." That's what they remembered. That's what stuck in their minds about Arkansas. That's all they knew about it. I would explain. They'd say, "Where is it?" I'd say, "Sitting right on top of Texas." You know, you'd explain a little bit about the geography, but that happened to me a few times.

RR: Yes.

RA: I remember, too, other people, back before Clinton, I'd be sitting in the cafe or something and people would start talking, "Where are you from?" I'd be having a good conversation talking politics in French or whatever, you know, and they'd say, "Where are you from?" And I'd say, "I'm from Arkansas," and they'd just sort of turn away. They lost interest. They were from California or they were from New York or something. Maybe it was just prejudice, but, always, they didn't like it. They didn't like it. And then Clinton came along, and all that changed. I couldn't believe it. I went to the Presidential Inauguration [of Clinton] in 1992.

RR: You went --- in Washington?

RA: Yes, yes. For the party. I wanted to see what it was all about. But I would meet people, and they'd say, "Who are you and what do you do?" I'd say, "Richard

Allen. I work for the *Herald Tribune* in Paris.” We’d talk --- we’d even be speaking in French. I’d say, “I’m from Arkansas.” They’d say, “Oh, right!” I couldn’t believe it! “This guy --- he’s from Paris and speaking French, and here he says he’s from Arkansas!” They thought I was lying about that. Before, you might have lied and said you weren’t from Arkansas. Now, you’d say, “I’m from Arkansas,” and, “Oh, I’ve got friends who know somebody from Arkansas.” It was just so much fun.

RR: Yes. You told [Phyllis?] about meeting a Canadian at the party and both of you speaking French.

RA: Right. That was at *The Times* that I would be talking French and he didn’t believe it was possible to be speaking French and be from Arkansas.

RR: [Laughs]. Yes. Tell me about your family here. You married when? To whom?

RA: Well, I’m married to Brigitte LeFeuvre. We got married in . . .

RR: You’ll have to spell that.

RA: Okay. Brigitte. B-R-I-G-I-T-T-E L-E-F-E-U-V-R-E. It means blacksmith in English.

RR: Okay. And you were married when?

RA: We got married in February of 1986.

RR: And you have three children?

RA: We have three children. Right.

RR: Who are?

RA: Who are Melanie, who will be fourteen in January, Dylan, who will be twelve in

January, and Matthew, who will be eight on November 26, who was actually born on Thanksgiving.

RR: How is it that the children all have, well, I guess, American names?

RA: Well, gee, I don't know. Well, I mean --- Melanie and Matthew are very common names. Matthew, spelled in the English, fashion that is actually, in French, it is M-A-T-T-H-I-E-U, or something like that. But we preferred the American spelling. Melanie is --- it can --- we wanted names that would work in either language, okay?

RR: Okay.

RA: So we didn't do anything too fancy because it gets too complicated in French or in English. Dylan, I just --- he's named after the poet [Dylan Thomas], not the singer [Bob Dylan].

RR: Good. Good boy!

RR: And your wife is a physician?

RA: She's a doctor, a medical doctor --- an epidemiologist.

RR: Yes. We'll let the transcriber handle that on her own.

RA: Yes, look that one up.

RR: So you still have ties to the States, to Arkansas, I guess?

RA: Sure. Sure. I still have family there. My mother lives there, my brother lives there and, of course, a lot of aunts and uncles. We still try to get back. Either Mother comes over here --- she came over here this year --- and we try to get back every other year or so. We're probably going back next summer because

Matthew wants to go to Arkansas, and we feel like we very much owe him that. I mean, the other kids have been, and he wants to go discover his Arkansas roots and see where his grandfather is buried.

RR: Yes. Did I ask you your mother's maiden name?

RA: No. It's Gloria Richard. Gloria Richard. R-I-C-H-A-R-D. The Richard family.

RR: Okay.

RA: So I would be Richard Richard, as such.

RR: Right! [Laughter] Well, Dick, as I knew you then, I don't think of anything else that --- what have we left out? What else needs to be said?

RA: Well, anything about the *Gazette*? What do I need to say about the *Gazette*? One of the saddest days of my life . . .

RR: Yes.

RA: . . . was the day that newspaper closed. I knew it was in trouble. I had followed the story. I couldn't believe it. It is unimaginable that the state lost that glorious and wonderful voice. It was just --- I mean, I know it changed. That one thing, see? I didn't see the change. By the time I left Arkansas, I can't say what happened to the paper during that period. But I remember what a beacon it was for me back then. But was a very, very sad day.

RR: Oldest paper west of the Mississippi. I guess there was stuff on the wire about the closing?

RA: Sure.

RR: Yes.

RA: Yes, and I didn't know what to say. I tried to sit down and craft a message, but I just --- in the end, I didn't send it. I didn't know what to say.

RR: Who else do you remember from the *Gazette*? We've talked about Orville and Jim Bailey.

RA: We talked about Jim. Ernie Dumas. Doug Smith. We talked about Doug Smith. Who else? Bill Rutherford. Bill was a terrific guy to me. You knew Harry King? Harry King was in the sports department. I should mention Harry.

RR: Yes.

RA: He's now at the AP, of course, and he was a very good friend, and a very good sportswriter back then. You know, one of the funniest things was covering the Friday night football games, and they would try to cover all these ball games, and they would have --- they would work overtime. Ernie Dumas would come in and pick up a couple of hours of overtime on Friday night, writing schoolboy football. It was funny to see Doug Smith and all of them picking up a few extra dollars by coming back there and writing these little stories.

RR: Ernie told me, in fact, that he and some of the other reporters got to smarting off and would try to outdo each other writing outrageous, cliched leads on their football stories. Do you remember having to deal with some of that?

RA: [Laughs] Oh, yes, of course. That's pretty much the way it was. That's what we were doing. We were getting the score in there and the names of the players and then the fact that they had scored, and it was always, "Fullback Jim Jones rambled twenty-seven yards for a touchdown and defeated the Jonesboro so-and-so's."

But then you'd clean that. You'd take some of the cliches out, but, hey, writing --
- there were a hundred or two hundred football games on a Friday night.

RR: Do you remember Mr. Heiskell?

RA: Not very well. I mean, yes, of course, I remember him, but I didn't know him. I
was the copy boy at that point.

RR: You remember Douglas? Bob Douglas?

RA: Sure. Of course. Bob

RR: Allbright? What do you remember about Charlie Allbright?

RA: Charlie Allbright? Well, I loved his column. He was a terrific columnist. I
remember when he left. He went to work for [Winthrop] Rockefeller, right? In
public relations? I'd see him around town from time to time.

RR: Yes.

RA: But he wrote a great column.

RR: Yes.

RA: But nothing beyond that.

RR: Yes.

RA: Just that it was fun to read.

RR: Yes.

RA: Who else was I dealing with? James Thompson, of course, came on about the
same time. I don't know if you knew him. He was a sportswriter at that time.

RR: I knew him.

RA: Waddy Moore came about in about 1968. He was the first black. Chuck Miller

was the best person, he was terrific to me. He was another --- he's dead now, he edited those stories. He's the one who changed the golf story I was telling you about. Eddie Best was there back then. Do you know that name?

RR: Oh, yes. I knew Eddie. He and his wife, Pat, both worked at the paper. She was the switchboard operator.

RA: Oh, really? That rings a bell.

RR: Well, let me ask one last question, and then I'll let you finish your winding up. Do you have any idea what it was that made the *Gazette* special? You talked about it being a beacon. I remember it as being a golden place to work. What was it? What made it that way?

RA: I don't know where their standards came from. I don't know if it was Heiskell or Ashmore. I don't know where that tradition came from. I don't know who set that standard, but it was there when I got there. Maybe I remember it being stronger than it was, but it influenced me, and it influenced me the rest of my life, both as a person and a professional journalist. I mean, it set a standard for me that exists to this day. I carried it from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat* to *Newsday* to *The New York Times*. Sometimes I felt like the standards I had were higher than *The New York Times*. I mean, that's silly! But sometimes you felt like that, and it's the same thing at the *Herald Tribune*. It has fallen away, but it came from the *Gazette*. It started at the *Gazette*.

RR: How does that translate into practical terms, day by day, having the high standards? What does that mean?

RA: Well, it means that you keep yourself out of it. I mean, I have to deal with inflammatory copy sometimes. The political coverage has to be neutral and fair and objective. It has to be. Otherwise, why read it? You know, you go on the editorial page and that's something else, but when I'm reading a story, I've got to keep it objective, keep it fair. That standard came from the *Gazette*, trying to have balance and fairness in your coverage. It's got to be that way. It's hard sometimes. You cannot ever let yourself go. Of course, sometimes you make mistakes and you miss something, but it's the idea. It's the idea. Look, I handled a big part of the coverage of Monica Lewinsky. And that, as an Arkansan, I think --- if you put the journalism aside or whatever --- I mean, it was a painful thing to have to deal with because of the excitement that we all felt about Bill Clinton and the whole thing, but also the fact that he's an Arkansan. Well, I was handling his coverage. I put things in the newspaper that I didn't like at all, but I had to do it. Some of the things --- well, I won't get into how it turned out in the end, but you couldn't just say, "No, I'm not going to put this in because it's bad for Clinton," or something. You just have to go forward. You have to deal with this. And it's a standard that's either there, or it isn't. You have to be objective on the stories. When it's hardest, that's when you need those standards the most. That's what we got back there. But you probably feel the same way about the *Gazette* as well.

RR: Yes. Inaccuracy and mistakes have no place. It ruins the credibility. Some papers seem to care more about that than others, but neutrality was the big thing. Anything else we've not talked about?

RA: I [laughter] [].

RR: If you think of something else, you'll have another chance . . .

[End of Interview]