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## ***Arkansas Democrat Project***

Interview with  
Ralph Casey  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
29 July 2005

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

[00:00:00.00]

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here on July 29, 2005, with Ralph Casey. We're going to do an interview for the University of Arkansas [Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History]'s oral history project on the *Arkansas Democrat* and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. The first thing I need to do, Ralph, is to start out by asking you if I have your permission to make this tape and then turn it over to the university.

Ralph Casey: You have permission to make it and turn it over to the university.

JM: Okay. Now, just start out. Tell me your full name.

RC: James Ralph Casey. But, as I told you earlier, I go by J. Ralph. At about twenty-one or twenty-two, my father's name was James Robert, so I wasn't a junior. We started getting mail, and he'd get mine and I'd get his. To separate it, I started with J. Ralph, and he still went as J. R. Casey.

JM: Yes. Okay.

RC: And that has stuck with me since then.

JM: Okay. Ralph, where and when were you born?

RC: I was born here in Little Rock on November 6, 1914.

JM: Have you always lived in Little Rock?

RC: I would say the Little Rock area. I moved to Lakewood and lived there for fifteen years, and moved back to Little Rock, but I consider—yes, Little Rock, all my life.

JM: Okay. And where did you go to school?

RC: Little Rock Central—well, it was Little Rock High School then. I went first to Centennial to grammar school, then Westside Junior High School, and then Little Rock High School.

JM: Okay. What were your parents' names? I know your father's name. What was your mother's name?

RC: My father's name was James Robert Casey. My mother was Minnie Lee Rogers Casey. Rogers was her maiden name.

JM: Is that R-O-G-E-R-S?

RC: Yes.

JM: Did you go to college?

RC: Only business school.

JM: All right. So how did you wind up—I know you started pretty early—how did you wind up working for the *Arkansas Democrat*?

RC: All right. Here we go. [Laughs]

JM: Okay. Let's go.

RC: At twelve years old, I took a Little Rock Daily News paper route. Few people have ever heard of it. It was printed between Fourth and Fifth [Streets] on Center Street.

JM: Okay.

RC: I picked up my route papers at Ninth and High Streets. It cost ten cents a week, and it was a daily-only paper. I worked for them about three months and they went broke. [Laughs] On my way walking home, a man stopped me who delivered our *Democrat* at our home. He said, "What are you doing? Aren't you going to carry your paper route today?" I said, "No, I'm not. They went broke." He said, "Well, one of my boys didn't show up. How about going to work for me?" So I went to work for him as a bouncer—no, rolling papers. He had about 350 papers. I sat in the back seat and rolled them. I got paid a dime for it.

JM: A dime for how long?

RC: Oh, I could get out—I could either ride with him until I got to my home or I could get out early and go home when I got all the papers rolled.

JM: So it was a dime for that day.

RC: For that day.

JM: Ten cents a day.

RC: Then I got promoted [laughs]. Instead of me rolling them, I stood on the running-board with my arm locked through where the two windows were, and I'd reach into the front seat to get papers and throw them to both sides of the street as we drove down the street. And that paid twenty cents a day.

JM: What year was that when you first started?

RC: 1927.

JM: 1927—when you started rolling them. Okay.

RC: From that—one of the things—L. L. Ellis was the man's name that I went to work for. He delivered papers at the Capitol Hill Apartments, the state capitol, from the state capitol west to the railroad, north to the railroad, and south to 16th Street. Now, that encompasses where Central High School is now.

JM: Yes.

RC: Mr. Ellis had to stop while I went and put papers in the Capitol Hill Apartments. Incidentally, Mr. [K. August] Engel lived in 405 at the Capitol Hill Apartments. Then we'd stop and I'd deliver three papers in the state capitol, then we'd go on the route. It happened that as I would be delivering those three papers—one to the governor's office, the secretary of state's office, and to a railroad commission that they had then—somebody would say, "Well, can I buy a paper from you?" "I don't have any to sell." So I started carrying two or three. From that—starting to carry two or three—there would be a few more I'd sell every day.

JM: Yes.

RC: And some people would see me, and they'd say, "Why don't you come by my office, too?" And it wound up that I was selling about 125 a day in there.

JM: [Laughs]

RC: Then it became—before that happened—because he had lost so much time at the Capitol Hill Apartments just sitting waiting while somebody delivered it, they wanted him to get through with the rest of the route—they took that off him and gave it to me. Then from 7th Street north to the railroad and 7th Street from the

state capitol to the railroad is all some really steep hills. All those houses have been torn down. He didn't like that because he had to wait for kids to run up and—so they put that on me. So I had that, I sold papers for him, and then I delivered them. That was my route.

JM: Yes.

RC: Then they decided they needed to take it off of—with my route, that was enough. They took it off him, and they let a fellow have it who worked in the circulation department. He brought the papers out to me. He paid me a quarter a day. I sold them. He brought them out on the streetcar and took them back on the streetcar. You didn't have to pay what you didn't sell. After two or three months, when he came out one day, he said, "I had a run-in with the bosses. They're going to fire me when I get back. You ought to have this run anyhow instead of me. I'll pay your car fare to town and then home if you'll go down there with me." So we went down, and he told them that he was through, "He was the one who was doing it and can do it. Let him have it." So then they let me have the route at the state capitol, too. I wound up delivering at the state capitol seven years. I was nineteen years old when I gave it up. There are a lot of stories in there about the capitol, or one or two I could tell now, or come back to them if you want to.

JM: I remember hearing one about the governor's office.

RC: Well, there are two that I like to tell, and that one.

JM: Okay.

RC: And I'll tell lots of them, but one more. To explain that a little more, both in junior high and high school I had a work permit and got out the last period of school

to work, which you could do, and I guess you still can. I don't know. I'd get out of school, catch the streetcar, go to the *Democrat* and pick up my papers for the capitol, and come back out and deliver them. Those [papers] I had left, I went back to the *Democrat* and paid the ones I sold that day and returned those I didn't sell. And this one day I got—and this was about 1930. I'm not positive of the date, but it was in that area. When I got back to the *Democrat*, a man was standing in the door who was the circulation manager, R. M. Dunston. I didn't even know him until then.

JM: Is that D-U-N-S-T-O-N? Does that sound right?

RC: R.M. Dunston. That sounds right.

JM: Okay.

RC: He said, "Are you the boy who delivers papers at the state capitol?" "Yes, sir." He said, "Son, did you leave the governor's office a paper today?" and I said, "No, sir." He went about a foot off the ground. [Laughs] "What do you mean, you didn't leave the governor's office"—I said, "Just wait a minute. With my other paper route I pay the bill by the month. It's paid. The papers I sell daily, I pay for daily. In another few minutes, I'll have them paid for, and I don't owe the *Democrat* a dime. The governor's office owes me for three months and won't pay me, and that's why." He said, "Are you sure of that?" I said, "Yes, I'm sure of it." He said, "Come with me," and we went to his office. He got on the phone and called the governor's office and talked to somebody. He was going to wait there at the office to see why they didn't get the paper. He said, "The boy is here. He tells me that you owe him over three months and won't pay him, and that's why he didn't

deliver the paper. Is that right?" The fellow told him, "Yes, it's right. I just haven't had time to fool with it." He said, "I'll tell you what to do. You have his money tomorrow and I'll see that he leaves you a paper." [Laughter]

JM: Who was the governor then?

RC: I wish I remembered, but it was in the 1930 area. That would be the best way to say it. The other one . . .

JM: Would it have been Futrall?

RC: I was familiar with Futrall. Also, there was a Tom Terrell, and I think it might have been Tom Terrell.

JM: Terrell. Okay. [Harvey Parnell was governor from 1928 to 1933.]

RC: [00:10:44.02] The other one—like I said, I have lots of stories I can tell about it—but there were five supreme court justices there, and they all bought papers from me every day. On some rare occasions when I'd come back between 3:30 and 4:15—it took 45 minutes to do it—they would be in session. I'd stick my head in the door, and they'd see me, and they'd tell the lawyers, "Hold up a minute. Hold up a minute." I'd sell them all papers [laughs], and, to me, it was funny. They'd start reading the paper, and then they'd tell the lawyers to go on ahead with their talking as I walked out the door. [00:11:28.13] I might add one other thing—when the legislature was in session, and I had to call every day from the *Democrat* to see if they were in and what time it looked like they were going to adjourn—but I could sell on some days as many as 350 papers a day when the legislature was in session. It was quite lucrative to me. But I carried that. I also—and I don't know how I started that—but I worked in the mailing room on Saturday nights stuffing

papers. Of course, doing that other, I had finished high school and business school, and one day they asked me if I wouldn't like to come down and work in the office. I worked really as a clerk in the circulation department. This was when C. A. Lane was there. He was from *The Oklahoman* circulation department.

JM: Okay, now what year was that?

RC: 1934.

JM: Let me ask you one more question before we go on. When you were selling all these papers yourself, like selling to the legislature and everything—how much did the paper sell for?

RC: Three cents. And the paper then was five cents on Sunday.

JM: Okay. And how much did you get out of that three cents?

RC: A cent and a half. I paid the cent and a half and then made a cent and a half.

JM: Oh, okay.

RC: The Sunday paper cost three cents and I made two cents on them.

JM: But in 1934 you started working in the office rather than delivering a route.

RC: Now, there's a good point. I kept pretty close records of it, and I was making about \$22 a week on my paper route.

JM: Yes.

RC: But I was tired of being a paper boy. When they offered me that, I went to work in the office, supposedly forty-five hours a week, for \$15 a week. Now, I still had my \$2 I made in the mailing room. I felt like I just wanted to get out of selling papers and start a career.

JM: Yes.



RC: I continued working in the mailing room. I could do that with that job, but the other thing is that they came closer to working me sixty hours than they did forty-five.

JM: Yes.

RC: There was no wage and hour law there then.

JM: And they didn't pay you overtime.

RC: Didn't pay—well, this was still during the heart of the [Great] Depression. You were lucky to even have a job. They said they had people working for as low as \$12 a week.

JM: And this was during the heart of the depression.

RC: That's right.

JM: Yes.

RC: But I was glad to do it, and glad I did. They'd have me go out—that will be a story I'll tell because that's part of it.

JM: Okay.

RC: They had a boy who had carried a route for nine weeks. This is what I did at night. That's why I was working over the forty-five hours. He'd had a route nine weeks, and if he went to your house one time to collect and you didn't pay him, he never did go back. He owed a big paper bill. So I went out with him to explain to the people why they owed so much and to collect it. I went to George W. Donaghey's, the ex-governor who lived on Gaines Street. We went to his house and found him home. We told him what he owed, and he wasn't upset about it. Some of them were upset because it was \$1.80 they owed—twenty cents a week then.

JM: Yes.

RC: He said his wife had been in the hospital and he hadn't been home much, so that was the reason—but he said, "I'll pay you in just a minute." He went back and said, "Would you believe I haven't got any money here at the house? I'll go write you a check." So when he came back, he had a regular letterhead. He said, "I didn't have any checks here. They're in my office. But here's a check." On the letterhead, he wrote pay to the order of and his name, and he signed it, and how much it was. He said, "Everybody who will have to handle this will fuss about it, but this is good or better than a printed check. You tell them I said that was a good piece of paper." [Laughs] I've often thought that if that boy kept that as a souvenir, it would have been worth more than \$1.80. [Laughs]

JM: Yes, I'll say. [Laughs]

RC: All right. I was working in the circulation department answering the phone and [handling] whatever came up—most of them were women in there—and I was there to handle it. At some point, in a year or so, they decided I was ready to be a district manager, managing route boys. So I changed to that and lasted about a year on it. I had south Little Rock from the airport back to about High Street, from about 15th Street south—a good part of it. They just had five in the whole city, and most of it were poor people. I'll use that word.

JM: Yes. Okay.

RC: I had several of those who worked in carrying routes for me. I didn't do too good at it, so they took me off of it and I got a motor route. That's where you deliver papers in a car. It was one of the top motor routes they had, out Asher Avenue

from Roselawn Cemetery, and then Asher Avenue as we know it even today, to a mile the other side of the county line to a road called [Shobes?] Road that's still there. I delivered about 350 papers on that route. It was two hours to two hours and a half to deliver it, seven days a week. I made pretty good on it, and after I'd had it about nine months, they said, "We want you back in as a district manager." So I came back in as a district manager and took over that same district. Well, they had made another district, and I took over another district—that's when—20th and State is where the boys got the papers. At the other one it was across from Westside Junior High School—14th and Marshall was where the boys got their papers. From that, as a district manager, I went to North Little Rock. I had that for quite a few years. Then, from that, I came back to Station A there at the *Democrat* as the route manager. From that, I'd have to do a lot of thinking to be able to give you how long between that. Then I was picked to be a zone manager for district managers. From that—this is covering quite a few years—in 1964, I was selected to be city circulation manager.

JM: 1964. Okay. Hold up a minute there. I want to go back and ask you a quick question, and then we're going to come back. Just a minute.

RC: All right.

[Tape Stopped]

[00:19:31.25]

JM: Okay, Ralph. Didn't you leave the *Democrat* for a while before that?

RC: Yes, I did leave the *Democrat*. I left out something else.

JM: Okay.

RC: Between District B, I was North Little Rock, and as a district manager in North Little Rock, it composed of all of North Little Rock that had boy carriers, and I was there five or six years in North Little Rock.

JM: Okay.

RC: I left that out. Yes, in 1942—now, the war [World War II] was kind of over—no, it was going then.

JM: It was going good then. Yes.

RC: I had taken the exam for a railway mail clerk, and I went to them, but it was a wartime appointment, which I didn't know when I was taking it, that it was a wartime appointment. I worked for them for two years and did really well with it. But as the war started getting over and veterans started coming back, there was a federal law passed that the post office could only use veterans. And that lasted for seventeen years. There were several of us who had gone to work during that period that—they had to let us go. There wasn't any question about it. When they let us go, my father was a building contractor. He built lots of commercial buildings and homes in Little Rock, and he normally had a pretty big crew. I worked with him about a year, but my heart was at the *Democrat*. I went down and talked to them, and they wanted me to go to work that day. [Laughs] I still remember that. I said, "No, I've got some things I still want to do. Let's put it off until Monday before I come back to work." So then I went back to work as a district manager.

JM: Okay. During that period in the 1930s and the early 1940s before you took this other job, how were the *Democrat* sales? You talk about your circulation. Do you remember how the *Democrat* was doing as far as circulation was concerned?

RC: Slowly growing. Yes.

JM: Okay.

RC: We had to work, and that might explain that. If a boy carried a paper route, on Tuesday and Thursday nights he had to come out and work soliciting for new subscribers for about an hour to an hour and a half every Tuesday and Thursday night. If he wouldn't do that or couldn't do that or didn't want to do that, then you had to make him change and find a boy for the route who would do that. Normally, in a district you had thirty to thirty-five carriers. They had different kinds of prizes that they would give for getting so many orders. They had trips that you could win. The contest would last four or five or six weeks. The boys who got the most orders would go to that, but there were always some prizes they could win along with that. But the boys who got the most orders from each district got to make those trips.

JM: Do you have any idea how the *Democrat* circulation compared to the *Gazette* circulation at that time?

RC: We were always behind them.

JM: Okay.

RC: And, at one time—I bet there's not many people who know this—our Sunday circulation was running poor to what Sunday circulation ought to, so the district managers had to hustle up eight or ten boys—twelve, whatever you could get—to

sell papers just on Sunday. And the district manager had to deliver bundles to those boys, and at about noon [they'd] go see how many papers they didn't sell that they didn't have to pay for, and those you sold, they'd pay you for them. And that was a real pain in the neck. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

RC: And the reason for that is at that time, downtown on Main Street—5th and Main, 4th and Main, the Marion Hotel, on up Main Street and some of the other streets—at 5th and Main, 4th and Main, 6th and Main—they had four boys, one on each corner selling papers. And the two best spots was one that sold at the Gus Blass Company. He sold more papers than anybody else. [Laughs] And then the one selling at the Marion Hotel—but they sold so many that way that they weren't getting those Sunday sales, and that's the reason they had those boys—we had to go dig up boys to sell them on Sunday morning.

JM: And the Gus Blass Company was where at that time?

RC: 4th and Main—the northwest corner.

JM: Okay.

RC: [No], the northwest corner.

JM: Okay. But the circulation wasn't terrific, then, at that time, because this was during the depression.

RC: During the depression and after.

JM: Did you ever hear—I've heard a story, and, of course, this could've happened before you came into the office full time in 1934—I heard a story one time that when the stock market crashed that Mr. Engel had told somebody, "Man, if they

really crashed—if they're closing the banks," no, that might have been later in the early 1930s—he said, "If they're closing the banks, I'm broke." And I heard a story that he actually—some of the grocers were paying for their advertising with groceries. And I guess he was giving those groceries to some of the employees that . . .

RC: I can fill you in on some of that.

JM: Okay, tell me about that.

RC: The first thing, personally—I carried the Capitol Hill Apartments, and Mr. Engel lived there, by the way.

JM: Right.

RC: When it came time to collect, I had about thirty customers in there. I took a bill to the office, they checked it and gave me a check for all thirty of them—I didn't have to collect from each individual one. When the banks closed, they said they couldn't do that anymore, and I had to collect individually for them. I've heard this story—I'm not aware—of course, I was still a carrier. I wasn't an employee.

JM: Yes.

RC: But even back when I went—well, I was in part of that—1934 was when I started working in the office and then district manager and all. But you could borrow money, up to \$10, on next week's paycheck. And a lot of people—there were one or two—they said whether they needed it or not, they borrowed the \$10 every week so if the paper went broke, they'd be \$10 ahead. [Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

RC: And I did understand that if you were hard-up and had to, that you could make some arrangements getting a slip from the *Democrat* to a grocery store that was applied to the store's advertising bill. I do know that later on in the circulation department—this is still part of the depression—that there were companies that owed the *Democrat* money for advertising, and the prizes we gave to carriers—some clothing, shoes, radios—a bunch of things like that. Things that kids would want.

JM: Yes.

RC: If they sold them, we could go there and not have to pay for them. We would credit their account for that much money that we'd spend there. And one of the places, which is not in existence now, where we got things was Steinkamp Furniture Company. I'm not trying to run them down because I did a lot of business with them.

JM: Yes, I remember them.

RC: And in later years I did a lot of business with them.

JM: Yes. Okay.

RC: And I knew Mr. Steinkamp really well personally. But something like that did happen. I never heard that Engel was close to going broke, though.

JM: Yes. Do you have any idea—the *Gazette* had bigger circulation at that time, though.

RC: Yes.

JM: Even in the city, did they have bigger circulation in the city?

RC: Yes.



JM: Okay.

RC: They led us, even more in the state because they covered more of the state than we did. But they led us also in just city [circulation].

JM: Yes. Because in the state, the *Democrat* being an afternoon paper, they didn't have time to deliver to all the far reaches of the state.

RC: That's right.

JM: Okay.

RC: Oh, and the *Gazette* did not work their boys as hard at soliciting at night as we did. Where we worked two nights a week—sometimes if a kid didn't want to do it, they wouldn't make them do it, or they didn't have to work but one night a week doing that.

JM: Yes.

RC: But we were always pushing more that we were working two nights a week.

JM: Do you have any idea—a comparison just of the quality of the two newspapers at that time? Was the *Gazette* a bigger paper? Did it have more pages?

RC: There were more pages in the paper and [it was] a larger paper. Yes.

JM: Okay.

RC: I could tell you another little story there about Mr. Engel.

JM: Go right ahead.

RC: Mr. Engel—this was told enough to me that I believe it. Now, let me say that.

JM: Okay.

RC: And I think it's true. He was from New Braunfels, Texas—somewhere down there in south Texas.

JM: New Braunfels, yes.

RC: His daddy wanted him to go to the University of Texas, and he didn't want to. He went to Texas A&M. Now, I can be wrong on some of this.

JM: Okay.

RC: I've heard that story told several times. Then, somewhere and how, he went to work for a man named Mr. Clark in New Orleans. Later, Mr. Clark bought the *Democrat*. When Mr. Clark retired, then Mr. Engel acquired it.

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, also, somewhere—and where there's records that can prove this, I do not know—but around 1900, an uncle—kinfolks of mine named Naylor—owned and ran the *Democrat* for a while.

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, somewhere back—I don't know where there's any record of that.

JM: I've got a record of it.

RC: I've often wondered, you know, had it stayed in that family—there are so many ifs in it.

[00:31:04.02]

JM: Yes. [00:32:10.06] Okay, now, after you came back after having worked for the railroads postal service—in the late 1940s, what was the situation then as far as the circulation of the two newspaper?

RC: It was always an uphill battle.

JM: Okay.

RC: The only relief we got—and I guess it's all right to put this in—is during the 1957 integration [crisis at Little Rock Central High School] . . .

JM: Right.

RC: . . . there were towns—this was published, so it can't hurt to say it now—that wouldn't even let *Gazettes* come in town. They wouldn't let them leave bundles there. And the circulation of the *Gazette* dropped, and the *Democrat* picked up because of that.

JM: Yes.

RC: There were people—this is my opinion, now, and I remember there being talk, but how do you prove this is what happened? I can't tell you. But [people] tried to get Mr. Engel to put a little more in the *Democrat*—features is what I'm speaking of—features in the *Democrat* because the *Gazette* carried more features than we did, and that's one reason we were struggling so. And he wouldn't do it. He said, "No. If I was that—that's taking advantage of a situation, and I don't want to do that."

JM: Yes.

RC: And he wouldn't do it. That integration situation kind of leveled out a little bit, then the *Gazette* came back up again strong after several years.

JM: After a couple years, actually.

RC: And I've also understood, right or wrong, that the *Democrat* really made more money than the *Gazette*, but they [the *Gazette*] paid their employees more. They had more and more advertising. Well, every way they could have more money to do that than the *Democrat* did.

JM: And the *Gazette* paid their employees more.

RC: Yes.

JM: Okay. And they had more advertising. But your understanding is that the *Democrat's* profit margin was larger than the *Gazette's*, but they weren't paying nearly as much or not as much as the *Gazette*.

RC: That's right.

JM: I've heard that story, and I've also heard that the same thing happened at the TV station when Mr. Engel started the TV station.

RC: Can I tell you a story about that?

JM: Yes.

RC: All right. I belonged to a club at the YMCA—the Y's Men's Club.

JM: Yes.

RC: It was a group of young fellows—this was in the 1940s—who met and had a dinner and speakers, like civic clubs. And as a money-making project, we sold Easter lilies from Garrett Florists. I made the arrangements because I knew the Garrett family. Their son had carried a paper route for me. We would sell them to people we knew going door to door or house to house.

JM: Yes.

RC: Then we would go to the florist, put the foil and ribbon on them, and deliver them to people. Now, I got around town—I sold more of them than anybody else. I think I'm a salesman.

JM: Yes.

RC: I'd sell about 125 of them. I had bought several cars at old Critz Chevrolet, and I sold a bunch there. And I don't know it happened to be that National Old Line Insurance—Clyde Lowry—that name may be familiar to you.

JM: I remember the name.

RC: I called on Mr. Clyde Lowry and I sold him about five that would have three in them. That meant I sold him fifteen, see?

JM: Yes.

RC: One year when I was calling on Mr. Lowry, he said, "You know, that's funny. You told me you worked for the *Democrat*, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "August Engel called me and said, 'Clyde, I'm fixing to start a TV station and just wondered if you'd be interested in it.' And I told him, 'Heck, yes!'" He said that anything August Engel put his money in[to] had to be good or he wouldn't be getting into it. [Laughter] Now, that actually happened.

JM: Okay.

RC: But that's how I happened to be in Mr. Lowry's office.

JM: Right.

RC: But I had regular customers—I even would have people come—we sold them a little cheaper than these other places sold them and delivered them for them.

JM: Yes.

RC: Some of the florists in town would get on Garretts Florist—they raised them. "You're selling to those people, and that's keeping us from having business!" They said, "Well, we sell them about 1,200 or 1,500 a year. If you want to buy that many from us, we'll quit selling them and let you have them." They couldn't

touch that! [Laughs] We did that for quite a few years. All right, that's about Mr. Engel.

JM: Well, one other thing that I had heard, and this may tie in with what you were saying—that Gene Herrington was telling a story that's during this integration crisis, that some people from eastern Arkansas came over here and said they were really mad at the *Gazette* for their editorial stand, and they wanted him to start a morning edition. And Mr. Engel said, "No, I wouldn't take advantage of a friend." But I had always wondered why—and this sort of touches on something you said—why, when he was ahead and was making a lot of money, why he didn't take that money and put it back into the newspaper and maybe hire more people and more space and more stories? Apparently, he just never bothered to do that.

RC: I'll tell you something else. I get so mad today—that doesn't enter into this—Mr. Engel tried to tell both sides of a story. He wouldn't let you go too far this way or too far that way.

JM: Yes.

RC: Stay in the middle of the road. Some of them wanted him to take more of a stand one way or the other.

JM: Yes.

RC: The *Gazette* took the stand for integration, and that caused their trouble, but they came back from it.

JM: Yes.

RC: And Gene Herrington—you said you had talked to him—they used to furnish the circulation department every week a list of stories we had number one before the *Gazette* ran them or those the *Gazette* had ahead of us.

JM: Yes.

RC: And we always had more on that list than the *Gazette* had.

JM: Yes.

RC: But we had a wider hour spread in there and things happening in the morning that we could get—owe really had an advantage time-wise, does that make sense?

JM: Oh, yes, because the government offices and everything were open in the day-time, and the *Gazette* didn't come out until the night.

RC: And as long as we could get it before noon—see, we could still get it into the paper.

JM: Yes.

RC: But he [Mr. Engel] tried to be fair with people.

JM: Why do you think that after the *Democrat* had that lead for two or three years or whenever it was in there, that the *Gazette* went back ahead? Do you have any feeling about why the *Democrat* started tapering off again and the *Gazette* started getting back ahead?

RC: I can answer that question, I believe.

JM: Okay.

RC: To start with, the *Gazette* was the oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi River. People who had been taking the *Gazette* all their lives—so they might have gotten mad at them and they might have quit it, but they still wanted the *Gazette*. In get-

ting new subscribers for the *Democrat*, most of them were already taking the *Gazette* anyhow and you were putting a second newspaper that—we had some who didn't take the *Gazette*—the price way back there was the same on them. You didn't save any money going one to the other. But they were just considered—a lot of people would tell you there was no comparison as far as the quality and what you got for your money.

JM: Yes.

RC: You were getting more when you got the *Gazette*.

JM: Yes.

RC: And I think that's the reason they came back is because of people who had always taken the *Gazette*. And I still—people still today are just fussing because there's not a *Gazette* and there [ought to be a?] *Democrat*.

JM: Yes.

[00:41:24.28]

[Tape Stopped]

JM: [00:41:29.24] Okay. Now, Ralph, go ahead.

RC: The *Gazette's* reputation for so many years—they got top stories on society. There were just a lot of places that they could get in and we couldn't get in. And at one time—didn't you say that you were in the sports department?

JM: At the *Gazette* I was.

RC: At the *Gazette*. At one time, the *Democrat* had a sports editor who got crosswise with the *Democrat*, and he had to leave the *Democrat*. He couldn't get anything out of Fayetteville at all. [Laughs]



JM: Do you remember who that was?

RC: I can't remember the name.

JM: Okay. And you don't remember what years those were?

RC: No, I can't. And there was another fellow who was sports editor who left, and I never did understand—it wasn't Jack Keady, now, I know that.

JM: Okay.

RC: I knew Jack really well personally.

JM: The one that left—you might have been talking about Fred Morrow. Fred was there about six years.

RC: That sounds like the name. Didn't he go to *The Oklahoman*?

JM: No, he went to Denver. He went to the Rocky Mountain News in Denver.

RC: Okay. That sounds like the name.

JM: Did you notice—of course, we all remember that, and I was working there then, but [*Gazette* sports editor] Orville Henry was going great guns at that time and covering the heck out of the [Arkansas] Razorbacks.

RC: Yes.

JM: Could you tell—did that affect the circulation? Did people want the *Gazette* to read?

RC: I don't think there's any question in that. That's right.

JM: I had heard that. I knew there were some people who just doted on the Razorback  
...

RC: Of course, they built him up. I'd say the *Democrat*[-*Gazette*] today has built Wally Hall up like that. If they can build somebody up and make people want it, and then they get used to it, they like to do what they're used to doing.

JM: Yes. Okay. If I remember correctly, the *Democrat* took the lead in the circulation. Of course, the integration crisis started in about 1957, but they didn't actually take the lead until about 1959 or 1960 or something like that, when I think they finally got into the lead. But then they started going downhill, I guess, in the early sixties [1960s]. And you became the city circulation director in 1964.

RC: 1964. I'm reasonably sure that's [correct].

JM: Yes.

RC: I know one thing, I was supposed to take over January 1, and on January 1, I fainted and had the flu, I guess, or something, and passed out in the bathroom. And my wife had to go across the street to get some help to get me into bed.  
[Laughs]

JM: Oh.

RC: That was the first day I was supposed to be at work as city circulation manager.

JM: Okay, let's go ahead and stop here. Then we'll resume in a minute.

[00:44:45.09]

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Okay, Ralph. We were talking about that in 1964 you took over as the city circulation manager.

RC: Yes.

JM: What [had] happened to the *Democrat's* circulation at that time? It had started a decline, right, from the early sixties [1960s] when . . . ?

RC: No, it was slowly gaining.

JM: Oh, was it?

JM: Not . . .

[00:45:26.06]

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

[00:46:51.07]

RC: . . . the lack of strong management of somebody with the foresight to have some new plans—what we had been doing wasn't changed. We were doing things the same way we always had. I doubt that Stanley Berry and Marcus George pushed the circulation manager as much as they had before, as Mr. Engel had his thumb on them and kept things going. And seeing that it wasn't working, we would do other things to change it and do it different[ly]. But we didn't change much pattern. Now, that's the best I can . . .

JM: Okay. Let me ask you one other question while we're talking about this. How much impact did you see on the *Democrat's* circulation from the advent of television, when television really began to come in?

RC: Well, I have to go back. When radio came in, they said that was going to ruin newspapers, and it didn't. When they said television was going to ruin newspapers, it hasn't. Yes, I guess it has. I think it's making more of an impact now than

it did [then]. Yes, probably some slight—and I have no knowledge on this. Some of those advertising dollars were going to TV stations instead of newspapers.

JM: So the TV stations I remember here started coming in in about 1953 or 1954—somewhere along in there—1955. Mid-fifties, maybe. Does that sound about right, that we started getting TV stations . . . ?

RC: Yes, I'm trying to think—the first station here was an FM station. You don't even hear about that anymore. It wasn't your regular channels. It was started out at Kavanaugh and Beech. I lived in that area, close to War Memorial Stadium. I lived there thirty-two years. When they put the antenna on that building, it was at an old theater. I was out there watching them put the antenna on that building.

JM: Prospect Theater?

RC: Prospect Theater. That's right.

JM: I remember that.

RC: I lived there. I knew it was happening. Because my father was a building contractor, I watched buildings more than the average person would, and worked with him in the business. So I went out there—it was raining or sprinkling and misty—and the steelworkers wouldn't do it because it's slippery when it's raining. And they waited—how long I can't tell you—an hour. Finally, they decided they could go ahead and do it. And I stayed there until they had it up in place and were bolting it down.

JM: I had heard and read that when television really started coming in, though, that people started—they wanted to watch television when they went home in the afternoon, so there wasn't that big a demand for the afternoon newspaper. They

didn't particularly want to read the afternoon newspaper. They wanted to watch TV.

RC: I've never heard that.

JM: You didn't?

RC: I never heard that.

JM: At any rate, after Mr. Engel died in 1968 . . .

RC: Let me add one thing in there.

JM: Okay.

RC: Mr. Engel never—they wanted him to publicize or—so many people didn't know that Engel owned the *Democrat* and Engel owned the TV station. He never would let—in some places, I understand, in Oklahoma City, that's *The Oklahoman's* TV station and *The Oklahoman's* newspaper.

JM: It was at one time.

RC: But he always kept the two completely separated. Good or bad, I don't know.

JM: I think they made the Gaylords divest themselves of their [TV station?], didn't they?

RC: They did. Well, back then it didn't—but evidently Mr. Engel and [unintelligible] maybe someone else has told you this—he was supposed to be sharper than a tick on figuring. And he belonged to the board of the Federal Reserve out of St. Louis that Little Rock is a part of. And every now and then when they would have something big coming up and what[not], they would call him to St. Louis to help make the decisions on what they would do in that. And, supposedly, if it was something they had to figure out what and how to do, they wanted him there to

help do it. And my opinion of him has always been that he was a very, very smart man.

JM: Yes. I understand and I've been told that he was a very frugal man, also. [Laughter]

RC: I'll verify that. That's right.

JM: Can you give me some examples of his frugality in operating the paper? Can you tell me anything about what you . . . ?

RC: The only thing I can tell you on that is [that] certainly our salaries were poor. Like I said, I went to work for \$15 a week. [Laughs] They said that somebody needed a raise—had to have a raise. And I don't know who or what department. They said, "Well, you go talk to Mr. Engel about it." [Laughs] They said that the fellow went in and talked to Mr. Engel and told him, and Mr. Engel shook his head. He said, "That's not my fault. I wasn't the one sleeping with her that caused the baby." [Laughs] And he didn't get a raise.

JM: Oh, he said he had to have a raise because he had a kid?

RC: Because he had a baby. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, that's some being frugal then!

JM: What was the story about the pencils? Was there something that he did about pencils?

RC: Yes. Oh, you didn't get that one? At night—see, we'd be out with these boys soliciting, and come into the office to make our reports—he would come in—he would work until 10:00 or 11:00 at night a lot of times.

JM: Yes.

RC: But he would come out of his office and go look in the wastebaskets and the little pencils people had thrown away, he'd pick them up and take them back to his office. Anytime you'd see him use a pencil, it was just a little short pencil that he had gotten out of a wastebasket.

JM: Yes. So he would keep it for himself?

RC: Yes.

JM: Okay.

RC: And I told you about using that newsprint to write notes on.

JM: Well, you didn't tell us that on tape. Tell me that now.

RC: Oh, I didn't tell you that on tape?

JM: Well, you told me, but not on tape, so go ahead and tell me.

RC: Oh, yes. If he would write you a note, it would be on newsprint, not the other. If you wrote him a note on good paper, he didn't get another piece of paper. He'd just answer it on that piece of paper and not waste any paper.

JM: Yes. And there was something you were saying about using carbons when you make . . .

RC: Oh, no, what I said about that—when they used carbons, they used newsprint instead of regular letterhead paper that most people used.

JM: Right. Yes.

RC: They had it downstairs. I don't know whether you were down in the basement. I'm sure maybe you were—this big paper—cutting machine—and when there were a few feet left, or quite a few feet, I'm sure, on those rolls, they would take

and cut them off and make notepads. But they would cut them 8 1/2 by 11 inches—a regular sheet—and that's what they used for seconds.

JM: For seconds—to make the carbon copy on.

RC: Carbon copy. Yes.

JM: All right. Now, then, in 1968—do you know when the paper started losing money? Did you ever hear?

RC: All that is hearsay. I could not—in fact, I heard they were losing—now, somewhere this is in my mind. Chester [Garrett] probably could tell you something on that better than I can.

JM: Okay.

RC: \$80,000 a month.

JM: What time was that? What period was that?

RC: This was the last few years that Marcus and Stanley were running it.

JM: Okay. You heard they were losing \$80,000 a month.

RC: This would be between 1968 and 1974.

JM: 1974. Okay. So you were still the city circulation manager . . .

RC: City circulation manager.

JM: . . . when Walter Hussman bought the paper in 1974?

RC: That's right.

JM: And what happened then?

RC: Well, for about three months I was acting circulation manager. He interviewed two or three or four people—I don't know how many—but two or three he gave to me, and I would take them and show them the city and answer any questions they



wanted to ask. Then they went back with Hussman. And that's when Gerald Doty was hired from the Dallas Evening News. Was that the name of the one he came from?

JM: Well, there was a Dallas Morning News and a Dallas Times Herald.

RC: He was at the Times Herald.

JM: Times Herald. Okay.

RC: And I think Doty was a really, really good man, and Doty was making some headway. Oh, he hired—this is what I expected to happen—he hired a new city circulation manager.

JM: Who was that? What was his name? Do you remember?

RC: There was a fellow from Florida—wait a minute. There was a fellow—Bob—no, there was a fellow he brought in here from Florida.

JM: Okay.

RC: And the fellow was a magician, too, by the way—pretty good. Later, he made a boy named Bob Francis city circulation manager. But that didn't last long. I can't really tell you what happened after that.

JM: What position did you take then, after he hired a new [city circulation manager]?

RC: I was put in charge of supplies and purchasing, and then at about that same time, Eileen Narey, who had kept the ABC [Audit Bureau of Circulation] records for years, died kind of suddenly. And when that happened—I remember this vividly—he came into my office—I still had an office that I—and said, "We're going to have to have somebody for these ABC reports. Do you think you can handle it?" Well, I knew from regulations I had to carry in my job about it a little bit, but

I didn't know a whole lot about it. But my daddy told me—the best thing my daddy left with me is, "Son, if somebody else can do it, you can do it." Now, that was more in construction work than it was something else. But he had me primed. So when he [asked], I said, "Yes, I can do it." But if I've ever had a long suit, it's figures and numbers. If you want to know a fifth or a tenth or a quarter of something—big figures—it's just automatic in my mind, like a calculator, almost.

JM: Oh.

RC: So getting into figures didn't disturb me at all. And, in fact, in handling it, you're furnished material by other people to make it. Sometimes they'd give me something, and in a minute I'd say, "This is not right." "Oh, yes, it is." "No, it's not." My memory here would tell me that. I'll tell you one story. I'll have to quit telling these stories. One day after I got a report in for Mr. Doty, he came out of there—and [this was] the only time that ever happened—he slammed it on my desk and said, "This is not right, Ralph. Get it right and bring it to me." And I spent about a day double-checking everything, and I took it back in there to him. At that time, Bill Taylor was in there, who was the state circulation manager then. I said, "Mr. Doty, I've gone over every bit of this, and this is right." Evidently, he and Bill had been talking about it. It was during December when the schools are out and circulation in these schools drops—vacation time and all that—and Bill mentioned where in his part of it that we'd had a pretty good drop. So he said, "All right. I guess we'll have to live with it." And two or three days later, he came in and sat down at my desk and apologized to me [laughs] for raising cane

about that report not being right. And I always appreciated the fact that he did that. You can see that I did. But he was really on me about it.

JM: But after Hussman bought the paper, though, and he made changes and everything, the circulation still continued to go down, right? For a period of time there?

RC: I think it was on a decline. He tried, if you remember—the first thing is he threw the classified ad section out free to people who didn't take the paper. He did what I said earlier—somebody new [needed to] do something different.

JM: Yes.

RC: And he kept—if there was a turning point, when he started the free classified advertising—[that], to me, would seem to be the turning point when things went to doing a little better. And he probably got his advertising department on the ball. Of course, Doty left, and Tony Biggs was in. Tony Biggs brought Larry Graham in. And, of course, Larry Graham is still there. Larry Graham was a really aggressive fellow and pushed things—had some background to know things to do. And I think that a man who has the ability to see potential and get the right people in the right job, and then those who are doing good, move them on up or what, and those who are not doing, moving them out. Does that make sense, what I'm saying?

JM: Yes.

RC: And I think Bob Sorrells had that ability when he was circulation manager. Of course, he picked me, so that's why I think that. [Laughs]

JM: And another big change that he [Hussman] made, along with free classified advertising, was changing to a morning paper.

RC: That's right. They changed the state edition first and then the city.

JM: Okay.

RC: They got it to working fairly smooth[ly] and then changed the city [edition]. But, see, that must take some real thinking, except all over the country, evening newspapers were going out.

JM: Yes.

RC: When you see that record, that country-wise, evening [papers] are going out.

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, that goes back to what you said a while ago—one of the reasons for that is people watching television.

JM: Television. Yes.

RC: And this was after television was getting it set more than it was when it started. See the difference?

JM: Yes. In your view, did going [to] morning [circulation] have a big impact, too, on the *Democrat*? Did it turn out to be a big help to them?

RC: I think so. I think so. Yes.

JM: All right. Is there anything else that you think helped turn the situation around? Of course, I'm not sure how completely it got turned around until the *Gazette* went out of . . .

RC: They were slowly gaining on the *Gazette*, enough that it was hurting the *Gazette*, and that's the reason the *Gazette* filed suit on them [for] unfair practices. And if they hadn't been hurting the *Gazette* some, they wouldn't have filed that suit.

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, also, in there—hearsay, not that I know—that the *Democrat* was losing about twelve million dollars a year during that period that the fight was going on, and that Gannett with the *Gazette* was losing about twenty-five million a year. And something had to give somewhere.

JM: When did you retire?

RC: November 6, 1989.

JM: 1989. That was long about—when did the . . . ?

RC: 1991 or 1992.

JM: They bought the *Gazette* [the *Democrat* bought the *Gazette* assets in 1991].

RC: Now, I'm not positive of that.

JM: So you . . .

RC: No, I retired before they bought the *Gazette*. That's what I'm trying to tell you.

JM: Okay. you were seventy-five years old when you retired. Is that correct?

RC: That was my seventy-fifth birthday. They had asked me—now, I say this, and to my knowledge, I'm telling the truth—from age sixty-five on, they would ask me if I'd work another year. And at seventy-four, I said, "Yes, I will." My wife [Lorene Lewis Casey] had been retired seven or eight years, and I kept saying, "I'll retire if you want me to." She said, "No, you want to keep working." I'm one of those rare people that enjoyed my work. I'm going to have to put this in, and it

won't sound good, but I was respected down there. My age had something to do with that. And I felt like I was appreciated. I liked what I was doing, and I really didn't have anybody on me, the ABC reports, the purchasing I did—I handled it all without any big push or ease. The only thing—they should have gone to putting those ABC reports on computer before they did, but they never did do it. And when I left, one of the first things they did was to put those ABC reports on computer. Bragging—the auditors, I'm told—they told me—that they had a lot of places they had a lot of trouble with, but I kept those ABC records really good, and that the circulation manager ought to appreciate me for the way I kept the records for them. Now, I wouldn't say that if I hadn't been told that.

JM: Okay. Let me ask you another question here. Were you surprised that the *Democrat* won the [newspaper] war? Were you surprised that it was the *Gazette* that folded and not the *Democrat*?

RC: First, I'm going to say because of losing money, something had to give, that wouldn't go.

JM: Yes.

RC: There was an article that was in the paper that I read in the *Commercial Appeal* that I asked Bob Starr for one time, and he spent 30 minutes looking for it and couldn't find it. [Clears throat] My throat is tightening up. I'm sorry.

JM: It's okay.

RC: And it was to the effect—so, was I surprised? No, I wasn't surprised. When I get through, you'll understand why.

JM: Okay.

RC: They said that it was a war of money—who had the most money and who had the deepest pockets.

JM: Yes.

RC: That the *Gazette* was a family-owned [business] and didn't have other sources of money. The *Democrat* owned other newspapers, TV stations, cable TV things. They had a diversified—at one time I could tell you some of those things—sixteen or seventeen different companies. And they had the money to fight with it just as long as they felt like they had a chance or wanted to. And that's pretty well what happened. After that suit the *Democrat* had them on the run, and they saw that and didn't know what to do. So that's why they sold out and got out of it themselves.

JM: Well, they sold out to Gannett.

RC: Yes.

JM: And Gannett had the deep pockets, but apparently they didn't want to sacrifice any more money. [Laughs]

RC: My understanding is [that they] were used to running newspapers where they were the only newspaper in town without competition.

JM: Right.

RC: It was a new ballgame to them to have competition.

JM: Let's go back and . . .

RC: Oh, and to add one other thing to that . . .

JM: Go ahead.

RC: They [the *Gazette*] wrote something about Dillard's [department store] and lost their advertising, and they wrote something about Wal-Mart and lost theirs. Those were their two biggest advertisers. And when that happened, that brought the thing to a head. Now, that's what I've heard.

JM: Okay. Let's go back a little earlier. In the earlier years, as you got along towards the end, you could see the handwriting on the wall, so to speak. For most of the years that you worked at the *Democrat*, though, would it have ever occurred to you that the *Democrat* would survive and the *Gazette* would go under?

RC: Yes. Yes. The fact that it was the *Democrat* that bought the *Gazette*—yes. I was just as surprised as other people were.

JM: Yes.

RC: I figured one of them would go at some time, but . . .

JM: Considering their early history, then . . .

RC: Except that article I told you about in the Commercial Appeal. Now, it predicted this.

JM: Yes. But before that time, say, in 1970 or 1960, you would never have . . .

RC: You'd have bet a thousand to one that it wouldn't happen.

JM: Yes, that's what I meant.

RC: That's right.

JM: It was a big turnaround of fortune. What was your impression of Walter's management after he took over the *Democrat*?

RC: Now, that's a good question. I said earlier—a man smart enough to pick the right people . . . To pick the right people and the right job, and where they're doing



good and know what they're doing. He picked the right man. He brought some of them with him. Paul Smith is one he brought with him. I think he brought John Mobbs with him.

JM: Okay.

RC: I'm pretty sure he did. He brought a classified ad man who didn't stay with him. He moved him out. Now, I don't mean to run him down or anything. There may be some other reason that he left, but that's a big department, and to lose that—so that backs up what I said, "Move 'em out if they're not doing it." Now, he brought another classified ad man in from Florida, again, I think, but he didn't stay too long, and he made another move there. And I don't even know who's in charge of classified ads, so I don't know. The man who had it when he bought it—he moved him out pretty quick after he'd bought it.

JM: Yes.

RC: So how do I think Hussman handled it?

JM: Yes.

RC: He tried different things. He tried that free paper—that free classified business, and that didn't seem to make much of that. He picked up that free advertising. That did help, and all the time these other people were getting settled, understanding what the problems were, and Gannett making the mistake of making those two [advertisers] mad [laughs], which helped considerably. He made the right moves. That's my guess. That's my thinking on it.

JM: Okay.

RC: With what he has done since then—you said that Chattanooga paper was another story—I asked somebody not long ago about it, and they said they thought he was doing really good.

JM: That may be right.

RC: I do not know. I am interested enough, and, Ralph, you ought not to say that, but I'm known for saying what I ought not to say—my wife says I gave my life to the *Democrat*. Years ago in the early circulation as the district manager, I worked sixty and seventy hours a week. Chester Garrett is the only one who worked more than I did. He did, too. Same thing.

JM: Yes.

RC: After he came in[to] the office—Chester Garrett, my very best friend—people call me Chester and him Ralph—we were together all the time. Chester would carry work home with him and work on the weekends. He'd even come down to the office and work. On several occasions, and he may not agree with this a hundred percent, but there's a lot of truth to it—they'd hire him somebody to help give him some help, and he'd use them [for] a week or two and tell them he could do it better himself, that he'd rather do it himself. And he wouldn't use them any longer. He brought a lot of it on himself with that because he wanted to personally take care of it.

JM: Yes.

RC: But he was a good, hard worker. Boy, if a company ever got their money's worth out of somebody, it was Chester Garrett. But another thing is that I kept working

at seventy-five. Now, the money didn't hurt, because I liked what I what I'd been doing, and for a year and a half after I'd quit, I wish I hadn't.

JM: Did the money get better later on?

RC: When Hussman got there, it moved up good.

JM: Yes. Okay.

RC: When he first walked in, I got an immediate raise. I don't know about anybody else. Well, I know in the circulation department there were two or three of us, and that was immediate. Then, from time to time, [we] got regular raises that we hadn't been getting back with Stanley and Marcus. And, you know, a company can only pay you with money they're taking in. If they're not taking in, they can't pay you.

JM: I don't know whether you were in a position to tell about that, but did all his changes in technology and everything—could you see any direct benefit to the paper in those changes?

RC: Oh, yes. Yes. I think, and the one I know about best is when a start or a complaint or stop came in, you could go to the computer and tell which route carrier it needed to go to. The previous system we had was good, but it wasn't as good as that. That computer—when you found a mistake, you could change it easier on the computer than you could [on] our old system.

JM: Oh.

RC: Now, he made other changes. I saw the—oh, do you remember somebody in the composing room named Pat Casey?

JM: Oh, yes.

RC: Well, Pat is my brother.

JM: Is that right?

RC: Yes. Then he left the *Democrat* and went to the *Gazette*.

JM: Yes.

RC: Then he left that and went with the department of labor, bureau of apprenticeship and training.

JM: I didn't know that. I've known both of you for years.

RC: Oh, yes.

JM: You know, Pat Casey was the best makeup man I ever saw.

RC: That's right.

JM: And working with the hot metal and taking them out and putting them in the page and everything. He was absolutely the best I ever saw.

RC: This won't have a thing to do with this story, but I want to tell it. They had an opening in the printing department. Pat had worked in the circulation department—several different things and had done well on them. They had an opening up there. Pat heard about it. He applied for it. After something—of course, I was in the office and could hear things—that a boy was going to get it who had carried a paper route for me. And I knew—his daddy was a printer, too, by the way—but he still owed an \$80 paper bill that had never been paid, and it had been a couple of years. But it was still in the books and had never been written off tax-wise. And when that happened, I went to Mr. Lane and said, "Mr. Lane"—used to, a lot of people from circulation department would go to work in the mailing room, editorial—different spots. It was a starting place to get in with the newspaper. Here

was my brother—he had done what all he'd done and what he's doing now. I said, "He was passed up for this job, and here's this boy who carried a paper route for us and still owes us \$80 that we haven't been able to collect, and his daddy is working here." He said, "Are you sure of that, Ralph?" I said, "Sure, I'm sure of it." "Go get me the books." I went and got the book where it was, opened it, and there it was. He said, "Well, I'll be darned. Wait right here." He went up to see Mr. Engel. He came back in five minutes and said, "Pat gets the job," and that's how Pat got his job in the composing room.

JM: I'll be darned.

RC: And do you know Jim Shuemaker?

JM: Yes.

RC: I got James—he was in the circulation department and didn't like it at all.

JM: Yes, I knew he was in circulation.

RC: And he heard there was a mechanical job open, and I recommended him and told him to go see about it. And Jim until this day gives me credit for getting him transferred to that department.

JM: Yes. I interviewed Jim about a week or two ago. See, I worked with him a lot. And when we got the computers and everything in, he was working on the technology and everything. I really like Jim.

RC: Well, now, Mr. Hussman . . .

JM: Good man.

RC: Mr. Hussman brought in the computers that we hadn't had at all.

JM: Yes.

RC: He had knowledge of it, a lot of it I'd never even heard of before.

JM: Yes.

RC: So those changes just helped in a lot of ways.

JM: Incidentally, and I'll try to get this on tape tomorrow because I'm interviewing Chester Garrett tomorrow—Chester and I were talking on the phone. He said, "Jerry, the *Democrat* was a great place to work, but they sure didn't pay much."

RC: Well, that's the reason my wife said I sacrificed myself to the *Democrat*. But let me just ask you one question.

JM: Okay.

RC: If you were as happy with your work as I happened to be, which would be more important, the money or being happy in your work?

JM: Being happy with your work.

RC: And I was happy. I took my work—dealing with the boys, and that's where I spent a good part of the time and then moved on up in the office. I'm serious about this—like a schoolteacher teaching—I can't tell you how many boys who carried paper routes made doctors, lawyers, insurance men. I'm going to tell you two stories. An insurance man who did extremely good in insurance—one time I went to a civic club meeting, and here he was talking to four or five fellows. He hollered at me to come over. He introduced me around. He said, "Now, I want to tell y'all [you all] about this man. I carried a paper route about two and a half years for him, and you talk about some hard guy! He really worked me over! If I was late delivering those papers, I got in trouble. If I got a complaint, I got in trouble. If I was slow paying my paper bill, I got in trouble. If we went out to get

new orders and I didn't get orders, he could really get on you. And, all the time, I was feeling just a little lower. "But," he says, "I tell you one thing, the training I got under him is what has made me a success in this insurance business." Now, I've had a lot of boys do that same thing. Do you by any chance know who Harold Gwatney is?

JM: Are you talking about Gwatney Chevrolet?

RC: Yes. He and his brother [Jack] carried routes for me. That's another place I did pretty good. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

RC: Do you know that he not long ago—well, it was in the paper, so you may have seen—he just gave two million dollars to the Scottish Rite Foundation in Washington, D.C.

JM: No, I didn't see that.

RC: Now, you've got to have a little money to give two million dollars away.  
[Laughs]

JM: Yes.

RC: Now, what I'm trying to say is that besides supervising boys, I felt that I was—and I worked with families. A lot of district managers wouldn't hardly—had as little to do with the boys' family as they could, and I had as much to do with them as I could. And I've had families call me and say, "Can you help me do this with my boy?" [ ? ] Stanley Berry. Now, that's what I was talking about.

JM: Yes.

RC: I wasn't just supervising his work and learning how to make money on a paper route. Now, I know that's bragging a little bit, but that's the way I feel.

JM: That's fine. It's good to hear people who enjoyed their job and had fun doing it. A lot of people enjoyed the newspaper business. There was always some regret that they didn't make more money at it.

RC: Well, there were a lot of them who left and came back to it just because they liked to work for a newspaper. You're right.

JM: Okay. Ralph, is there anything else about your career at the *Democrat* that we haven't touched on that you might talk about or do you think we've pretty much covered the field?

RC: I covered it. I'm glad that I didn't have—my throat is just tightening up. In spite of the hours that I worked, I've been very active in my church. I belong to Asbury Methodist Church. I was head usher there fifty years. In fact, I've got two plaques on the wall in there that they gave me for service as usher.

JM: Yes.

RC: I've also been very active in Masonic work, which I've enjoyed. Do you know anything about that? I'm a 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason.

JM: I know something about it. Yes.

RC: I've a 33rd Degree and have had that twenty-some-odd years.

JM: Yes. That's terrific.

RC: It has allowed me to—I told you about being on the YMCA board.

JM: Yes. Right.



RC: It has allowed me to do other things and spread myself over. I'd sure hate to live my life over, but I sure have had a good life. Oh, there's one other thing. I've done an extreme amount of traveling. Instead of chasing women, drinking or gambling, I've spent my money on traveling. And along with fifteen or twenty other places, I've been to China and Russia. Now, how about that?

JM: Hey, that's all right. That's great.

RC: So if I say I'm a happy fellow—I'm lucky to be able to do all that.

JM: Well, that's great, Ralph. Well, Ralph, I really appreciate it. I think we've got a good view of the circulation department and how it operates. Of course, it's obviously a key element in newspapers, and I appreciate it. Thanks very much.

RC: All right.

[Tape Stopped]

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[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce]

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