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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

Gerald Doty
29 August 2006
Telephone Interview

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

[00:00:00.00]

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here in my home in Greenwood, Arkansas, preparing to conduct an interview on tape with Gerald Doty, who's in his home in Detroit, Texas. Gerald, the first thing I need to do is to ask you if I have your permission to conduct this interview and turn the tape over to the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville].

GD: Yes, you do.

JM: Okay. This, of course, is for the Pryor Center for [Arkansas] Oral and Visual History. It's on the history of the *Arkansas Democrat*. Gerald, let's first start out—your last name is Doty—D-O-T-Y—correct?

GD: Correct.

JM: And Gerald. G-E-R-A-L-D.

GD: Correct.

JM: Let's start out. Where and when were you born?

GD: I was born in January of 1926.

JM: January of 1926. Okay, and where?

GD: In Detroit, Texas.

JM: Detroit, Texas. Okay. Well, you were just about—I was born in 1927, so we're not to far apart there.

GD: Oh, really? You're still a young fellow. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, yes. At any rate—and who were your parents?

GD: Roy and Mary Doty.

JM: Okay. Where did you go to school, Gerald?

GD: I was raised in Dallas [Texas] and went to school in Dallas.

JM: Yes. You went all the way through the twelfth grade [at] schools in Dallas?

GD: Yes, and then I went to SMU [Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas].

JM: You went to SMU.

GD: Right.

JM: Did you graduate there?

GD: No.

JM: Yes. Okay. All righty. Let's discuss how you got to the *Democrat*. How did you get into the newspaper business. What did you do first, I guess?

GD: Well, Jerry, when I was twelve years old I started delivering the newspaper for the *Dallas Times Herald* in Dallas.

JM: Yes.

GD: I delivered them for four years all through—went on through high school, actually. After I served in the navy in World War II, I came back and went to work for the *Times Herald* as a district manager.

JM: In delivery and circulation?

GD: Right.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: Yes, at the *Dallas Times Herald*. I worked through the ranks of district manager, zone manager, assistant city manager, city manager, circulation manager.

JM: Okay. Just a second, Gerald. I'm going to check my tape and make sure I'm . . .

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Start out again, then. All right. Before we go any further, how long were you in the navy?

GD: I was in the navy for thirty months—two and a half years.

JM: Okay. Where did you serve?

GD: Where did I serve?

JM: Yes.

GD: In the Pacific.

JM: In the Pacific?

GD: Yes.

JM: What were you doing over there?

GD: I was a storekeeper.

JM: You were a what?

GD: A storekeeper.

JM: Oh, okay.

GD: That was my rank.

JM: Yes.

GD: I used a gun—I was a gunner on a twenty millimeter.

JM: Okay. That was on a ship?

GD: Yes, right, out on a ship.

JM: Yes. Okay. What kind of ship?

GD: A destroyer.

JM: Okay. All right. Were you in action?

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. Didn't get wounded, did you?

GD: No, I survived all that.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right. Very good. Now, then, we're back to the *Times Herald* and you're working your way up. Go on from there.

GD: Okay. I spent twenty-eight years at the *Times Herald* in Dallas, then Mr. Hussman called me in March of 1974.

JM: Okay. And when you say Mr. Hussman, you mean Walter, Jr.?

GD: Walter Hussman, Jr. Right.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: They had just bought the *Democrat* and wanted to know if I'd be interested in considering moving out there. So I went to Little Rock for an interview.

JM: Yes.

GD: They had a circulation meeting going on in Florida. He asked me if I'd like to fly down there with him for a couple of days. [I said], "Sure."

JM: Yes.

GD: So we went down there and spent a couple of days and came back to Little Rock. Then I flew back to—went in and Walter offered me the job, and I flew back to Dallas and discussed it with my wife, and so forth.

JM: Yes.

GD: I contacted them and decided to take the opportunity.

JM: Yes.

GD: I went to work on April 6, 1974.

JM: Okay. What was your last job at the *Times Herald* before you left to take that?

GD: Circulation manager.

JM: You were the circulation manager?

GD: Yes.

JM: Okay. What prompted you to take the *Democrat* job?

GD: Well, I just felt like I needed a change. I felt I was at the high spot I was going to be at the *Times Herald* in Dallas.

JM: Yes.

GD: I was about forty-eight years old at the time, and I just didn't feel I wanted to spend the next seventeen years in that position.

JM: Yes. Okay. So what did you find when you got to Little Rock and the *Democrat*?

GD: A total disaster. [Laughs]

JM: Was it?

GD: To say the least. Oh, man. Yes. [Laughs]

JM: In what sense?

GD: Well, in the sense that the morale was as low as it could get. No one was doing their job. No one was paying their bills. The turnover was bad.

JM: Yes.

GD: It was just a complete, total disaster.

JM: Yes, I had heard from other people that your predecessor was not exactly gung-ho about everything, and [laughs] I guess you discovered that.

GD: Yes.

JM: So when you say the morale was terribly low, you're talking about the circulation department?

GD: Right. Circulation department.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right. What did you do to try to get things going?

GD: Well, the first thing I did was try to get the confidence of the people that we could turn it around and get the job done—serve the readers. So we made some changes in mid-management. We just worked at it. The first thing I tried to do was to get the confidence of the people that I worked with. And that I was on their side and all that kind of good stuff, and just reorganize the department, quite frankly, is what it amounted to.

JM: Yes. Did you change the way they tried to sell circulation and deliver the paper, or routes or anything?

GD: Well, we had an awful lot of down routes. The carriers were short at that time, and the district manager did a lot of down-route delivery until we got to the point

that we had them all covered. Just a matter of organizing and doing some good delivery service, which was in bad shape.

JM: Yes.

GD: And we also convinced Mr. Hussman that we needed some consistent press runs.

JM: Yes.

GD: Mr. Hussman and the editorial department. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs]

GD: And Mr. [Bob] McCord.

JM: Yes. Okay. I don't know why you mention the editorial department, but [laughter] nevertheless . . .

GD: Yes. But that worked out, and it just took time. The one thing that gave us the biggest boost of all, I think, was our competition. The [*Arkansas*] *Gazette* did not have a Sunday TV [television] guide, and we had one.

JM: Yes.

GD: We made some tremendous gains on Sunday, as you remember. And that was, I think, one of the bigger—as a matter of fact, we forced them to come on later with a TV guide on Sunday.

JM: Yes. You don't recall what the circulation was when you got there, do you?

GD: Jerry, I'm trying to think it was—and I wouldn't swear to this—but in the neighborhood of—at least it was on paper. I'm trying to think it was in the neighborhood of [about] 59,000. I may be wrong.

JM: That sounds somewhere in the ball park—just what I remember, and I don't remember for sure. Okay.

GD: Yes.

JM: And the Sunday circulation was what?

GD: You know, I really don't know.

JM: Yes. Okay. That's okay.

GD: I don't remember. I'm trying to think that we had increased our Sunday up to about 77,000.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: I don't remember the low mark. Now, we combined with the *Hot Springs Sentinel*, as you remember.

JM: Yes.

GD: Which helped a great deal and boosted our numbers.

JM: Yes. I don't remember at which time that that happened, but I do remember after Walter got there that you—as I remember, you delivered both papers to the people in Hot Springs [who were] taking it, right?

GD: Exactly right.

JM: Yes.

GD: In other words, we took their circulation and we added our Sunday paper to the delivery.

JM: Yes. Okay. And you counted that as your circulation.

GD: Right.

JM: Okay. Did they have to pay for the *Democrat*, or were they just paying for the Sentinel?

GD: No, we had to increase the price.

JM: Yes.

GD: And I don't remember what that was.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: Yes, we had to so we could get credit for it.

JM: Yes. You upped the price, so were getting credit for . . .

GD: []. Right.

JM: ABC [Audit Bureau of Circulations]. Okay. As things began to rock along there, what was happening on circulation and everything—you know, as time starting going on?

GD: Things were beginning to smooth out. We were losing a tremendous amount of money because they weren't collecting, or if they were, they weren't turning it in. We got to the point where we were getting all of our collection money in.

JM: Yes.

GD: And we were doing a lot of selling. We had hired an outside sales operation—a telemarketing operation, which helped us a great deal.

JM: Okay. Now, let's see, was there anything else that the paper tried at that time to pick up circulation and pick up attention, I guess? Did they go to zone editions while you were there?

GD: No, we didn't go.

JM: Okay.

GD: See, we were still an afternoon [paper] when I left. They went to morning after I left.

JM: Yes, I knew they did. Yes. But at some point in time—and I can't even remember this, either—I remember that they had started putting out some neighborhood editions, and once a week they would deliver to these different neighborhoods. Then at one time they started delivering it to everybody, I think, that . . .

GD: I don't recall putting out any zone editions when I was there, and I know we didn't deliver to everyone.

JM: Yes.

GD: That was after my time.

JM: Yes, I was thinking that maybe on Wednesday they were trying to deliver the *Democrat* . . .

GD: That must have been after my time.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: See, I've been gone thirty-two years.

JM: Good night! [Laughs]

GD: Now, I take that back—twenty-eight years.

JM: Yes, I've been gone about the same—in fact, I left the same year you did, I think. You left in 1978, didn't you?

GD: Yes.

JM: That's when I left.

GD: Yes. I remember that now. I had forgotten about that.

JM: Yes. I went to Oklahoma City in 1978. What was your perception of the rest of the operation—the rest of the paper?

GD: Well, I think, generally speaking—of course, the *Gazette* was beating their brains out. I think, generally speaking, the morale of most of the people there was not the best in the world.

JM: Yes.

GD: Because they were not doing very well, but they had some very good people, really good people there in all departments.

JM: Yes.

GD: I had met several of those people when I was in Dallas.

JM: Yes. Do you remember how the advertising was going during that period of time?

GD: Well, the thing that really hurt us as bad as anything was we had no classified [advertisements section], as you remember.

JM: Yes.

GD: Advertising was just practically nil.

JM: Yes.

GD: I don't know how Walter survived all that [laughter] for many years.

JM: What was your perception of the two papers, and the quality of the two papers?

GD: Oh, I think they were comparable papers. Of course, I mentioned earlier, I think the thing that really hurt us was the lack of classified advertising, which generally is a rule of our readership.

JM: Yes.

GD: I thought both products were quality products. We didn't have the volume that the *Gazette* had.

JM: Yes, and didn't have the space.

GD: Well, as I remember, their numbers at the time I got there were double ours.

JM: Is that right?

GD: Yes.

JM: Okay.

GD: I'm trying to think they were about 120,000, and we were about half of that.

JM: Yes. Okay. Did the circulation of the paper—it kept declining, though, didn't it—or did it?

GD: No, it increased.

JM: Oh, did it? Okay.

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes.

GD: And I remember, specifically, we had a pretty good gain on Sunday circulation.

JM: Yes.

GD: We showed some steady gains.

JM: Yes. Okay. So was there anything as far as—and you can feel free to speak—about the news side of the operation that was a problem or a help? Anything that you perceived in that?

GD: I don't recall any problems. I know it seems that the editorial department was doing their damndest to put out a good product. I wasn't really that close to editorial.

JM: Yes, I understand. Well, now, I . . .

GD: You were the managing editor there, weren't you?

JM: Yes. Yes.

GD: Yes, I thought so.

JM: Yes. We were doing our damndest. We had quite a bit of turnover on the staff, and that was one of our problems with always getting new people in and everything.

GD: Yes.

JM: But as it turned out, the *Gazette* at that time was a tough opponent, wasn't it?

GD: Oh, yes, it really was.

JM: Yes.

GD: They had a lot of experience over there, and they had a much more stable operation than we had.

JM: Yes, and probably in all departments.

GD: Right. Exactly.

JM: Yes. So as time went on—you stayed four years—why did you leave, Gerald?

GD: Well, I had started in the summer. [About] July of 1978 I started kind of looking around.

JM: Yes.

GD: And then I think the—as a matter of fact, I'd almost bet my life that Tony Biggs called me acting as a headhunter.

JM: Oh, yes.

GD: I nearly know he did. Apparently, he had gotten the word that I was looking around [] or whatever.

JM: Yes.

GD: I think he taped a conversation between me and—and at that time, I didn't realize it, but I think he did.

JM: Yes.

GD: And he took that information in to Walter.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: Walter asked me about it, and I said, "Well, at one point I was kind of looking, but I decided to kind of stick it out there." That was [in about] December. So he asked me to leave.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: So it wasn't long after—well, I left there the first of January.

JM: Yes. Okay. Did Tony go to work about the same time you did?

GD: Yes. As a matter of fact, he applied for the circulation job.

JM: Did he? Okay. All right. He came in here from Oakland [California], right?

GD: Right.

JM: Yes. Okay. And when you left, he got the circulation job.

GD: Right.

JM: Yes. Well, for what it's worth, I've had three people tell me that Tony was undercutting you [laughs] during that time. He got the circulation job, so the same three people said they don't think he really wanted it [laughter], but he—he didn't stay long. He didn't stay long in that job, I don't think. Where did you go when you left the *Democrat*?

GD: I went to Houston [Texas]. A headhunter [laughs]—a true headhunter out of Chicago [Illinois] contacted me. As a matter of fact, he had contacted my competition at the *Gazette*, Leon Reed. I don't know whether you knew Leon.

JM: Yes, I did.

GD: He'd been there for many years.

JM: Yes.

GD: Leon called me to kind of give me a hard time. [Laughs] He told me—I forget this guy's name—he said, "So—and—so contacted me and asked me about you." So I have gave him my opinion of you." I said, "Surely, you didn't!" [Laughs] Anyway, that was the first of January, and they invited me to Houston for an interview.

JM: Yes.

GD: I went to Houston and interviewed with Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby and Bill Hobby and the board and all that kind of stuff.

JM: Yes. That was at the Houston Post?

GD: Right. Right.

JM: Okay.

GD: I came back, and about two days later they called me and offered me a job. They wanted to know when I'd come, so I said, "Well, in a couple of weeks." I went to work for them—I think it was February 13 or something like that.

JM: Okay, in 1979?

GD: In seventy . . .

JM: Or 1978?

GD: Wait a minute. 1978. Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay.

GD: Yes, 1978.

JM: Okay. What did you start doing for them?

GD: I was circulation director.

JM: Oh, were you? Okay.

GD: Yes.

JM: Okay. How long did you stay in that job?

GD: I was there until 1984.

JM: Okay.

GD: I went from the frying pan into the fire in Houston, boy! [Laughs]

JM: Did you?

GD: Yes. [Laughs]

JM: Okay. Was that when the war heated up between the [Houston] Chronicle and the [Houston] Post?

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. When did this—and I've forgotten this—when did the Post finally go out of business?

GD: Well, let's see if I can remember. [Dean] Singleton bought them in—I mean, the Toronto Sun bought them in 1984. That's when I left.

JM: Oh, okay.

GD: They came in and asked me to leave.

JM: Oh, okay.

GD: They brought their own people in in 1984.

JM: Yes.

GD: And they completely ruined us immediately. [Laughs] And [Dean] Singleton bought them—I believe it was 1986, two years later.

JM: Yes. Okay. So the Toronto Sun people bought it first, and then Singleton bought it.

GD: Right.

JM: Now, the Post was the morning or the afternoon paper?

GD: Morning.

JM: It was the morning paper. That's what I thought. And the Chronicle was the afternoon paper.

GD: Right.

JM: And the Chronicle eventually won that war.

GD: What?

JM: The Chronicle eventually won that war, if I remember.

GD: Yes. Oh, yes.

JM: Yes. Which was unusual for the afternoon paper to win it.

GD: No. See, they were morning at that time.

JM: Oh, were they?

GD: Yes. They had gone morning.

JM: Oh, they had switched to morning?

GD: Yes. Actually, I think they were considered all-day.

JM: Yes. Oh, okay. So they went morning . . .

GD: And one time back—when I was in Dallas, I remember the difference in the two newspapers was the Chronicle had a 100-paper circulation lead over the Post.

[Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

GD: Yes. [Laughs]

JM: Just 100. Okay.

GD: When I left, there was a difference—let's see, I believe the Post was about 402,000 and the Chronicle about 450,000.

JM: Yes. Okay. So was that pretty heated competition between those two papers, too?

GD: Oh, man alive, tell me about it! [Laughs] It really, really was.

JM: Yes.

GD: See, the Chronicle was an endowment. As a matter of fact, their circulation budget was about \$75 million, and my circulation budget at the Post was \$35 million.

JM: I'll be darned.

GD: They were under an endowment, and they didn't want to make money. You know, they just spent it.

JM: Yes. Where did they get the endowment from? What was that from?

GD: It was from [] Jones—Jones [], I believe was his name.

JM: Oh, I remember those—was it one of those Joneses who served in [President Franklin Delano] Roosevelt's Administration, or do you know?

GD: In what?

JM: In the Roosevelt Administration, serving in the government?

GD: I don't know. That was before my time.

JM: There was a Jesse Jones from down there somewhere that . . .

GD: Yes. That was his name, Jesse Jones. [Editor's note: Jesse Jones, who owned the Chronicle, for years served in the administration of Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.]

JM: Yes. Okay. What kind of issues did you get into in circulation down there?

GD: Well, I went down there, and on the books they had a total of 299,000 circulation, of which there was about 100,000 of it that was bogus. So first we had to square that away and get everybody paying, and all that kind of stuff.

JM: Yes.

GD: And did a lot of selling. There was—oh, gosh—dating back into the 1970s, there was a large number of lawsuits against both newspapers for price-fixing. Both newspapers were independent contractors. But there were, I don't know, forty or fifty lawsuits, and none of them was ever settled.

JM: Yes.

GD: But over a period of time—now, the Post went into an employee-type operation with their distributors in, I believe, 1976 or something like that.

JM: Yes.

GD: Over a period of time, the people left the newspaper—both of them—and they died and whatever. None of the lawsuits was ever settled, but Mrs. Hobby, whose husband had been the governor of Texas—you mention lawsuit—they didn't even want to hear it, you know? [Laughs] [They'll?] settle for anything.

JM: Yes.

GD: So, to tell you, it was unbelievable. When they converted from an independent contractor to an employee operation—that was before my time . . .

JM: Yes.

GD: . . . the people would come in there to pay their bill, which might be \$50,000.

JM: Yes.

GD: They'd go to the cashier, and the cashier would say, "Well, we're not set up to handle that." They wouldn't even take the money. [Laughter]

JM: Yes.

GD: [They were the guys that left there?]. [Laughs] I missed out on all that good stuff. There was a guy who left there with about \$300,000 or \$400,000 in their pockets.

JM: Good night!

GD: Yes. [Laughs]

JM: So what did you do after you left the Post?

GD: Well, I worked for a supply company for about two years and then I started my own company in 1986.

JM: Yes.

GD: Doty Equipment and Supply Company, which I'm still operating.

JM: Okay. What's the name of it?

GD: Doty Equipment and Supply Company.

JM: Okay. So what kind of stuff do you sell?

GD: Circulation equipment and supplies.

JM: Oh, okay.

GD: As a matter of fact, I do a lot of business with the *Democrat*.

JM: Oh, do you?

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes. Do you do business with Walter?

GD: No, with the circulation people.

JM: The circulation people. Let's see, who is their circulation manager now?

GD: Larry Graham.

JM: Larry Graham, isn't it?

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes, I interviewed him. And Paul Smith—do you ever see Paul?

GD: Yes, I see him every once in a while. I walk by and say hello to him.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right.

GD: See, Larry came there right after Tony took over. Larry came in as city manager. I think Tony left after about six months.

JM: Yes, He went to Elkhart, Indiana, or somewhere like that.

GD: Yes, the Elkhart Truth.

JM: Yes. Okay. Going back to the *Democrat*, though, was there anything in particular that you noted that was different, say, from the what had been at the *Times Herald* and what appealed to the people and what helped sell the paper? Anything in particular you remember being different about Little Rock and about Arkansas?

GD: Well, of course, they were both afternoon newspapers—the *Times Herald* and the *Democrat*—at that time.

JM: Yes.

GD: Of course, the *Democrat* didn't have near the resources that the *Times Herald* had in Dallas, in terms of organization people.

JM: Yes.

GD: They had some good people, but they had no—I know when I went in there, my promotion budget was [about] \$100,000 a year, which wasn't very much.

JM: Yes.

GD: I was spending in Dallas \$2 million a year in promotion.

JM: Yes.

GD: But at some point as I've kind of watched over the years, Larry was able to get what he needed from Walter to really make that thing go.

JM: Yes.

GD: I go in there and I see all that stuff I can't believe, in terms of people and . . .

JM: Yes, and how big an operation it is and . . .

GD: Yes, really.

JM: Yes. What was the impact of sports on the circulation? Was it very similar between Little Rock and Dallas, or was there higher interest in sports coverage in one or the other?

GD: Well, I think there was a much higher interest in sports in the Dallas market and the *Times Herald*.

JM: Yes.

GD: Number one, they had some—I'm not being critical at this point [laughs], but they had some outstanding sportswriters at the *Times Herald* in Dallas.

JM: Yes, like Blackie Sherrod?

GD: Like Blackie Sherrod.

JM: Yes. Yes. [Laughs]

GD: Felix McKnight, who came over—he was sports editor at the *Dallas Morning News*.

JM: Yes.

GD: He came to the *Times Herald* when I was there and brought with him people like Blackie Sherrod, Bud Shrake—some of those guys.

JM: Yes.

GD: Blackie really put *Times Herald* sports on the map.

JM: Yes, he was a heck of a hand.

GD: Yes, he really was.

JM: Really entertaining. Good and entertaining.

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes. Were you surprised at the way the [newspaper] war came out? Were you surprised that the *Gazette* folded and the *Democrat* survived?

GD: Yes, quite frankly, I was. Yes.

JM: Yes. I don't know whether you were keeping up with it any from afar or not. Did you have any feeling about why it happened that way?

GD: Well, I think you have to give someone—and I think Larry Graham—credit for getting the tools that he really needed to do the job.

JM: Yes.

GD: Because they spent—oh, I just don't have any idea what the figures were, but just from the overall observation, the total number of people—they just had the tools to get the job done that we didn't have back in the 1970s.

JM: Yes. I suspect that going morning was a big factor there, too.

GD: That's probably right. Yes. That was the way the entire market was going.

JM: And, of course, one other thing they did in the part that was weak when you were there is that they went to free classifieds and just wound up with pages and pages and pages.

GD: Yes. Right. Exactly.

JM: In fact, I think one of the guys that they had who was their classified manager came up there from Houston, I think, and had worked maybe for—I don't know. He may have worked for both papers down there. One of them, anyway—Dave Reddock—did you know him?

GD: No, I don't remember him.

JM: I think he came up as a classified manager.

GD: That name rings a bell.

JM: But he had been involved in the classified war down there and everything. He came in with the—he told me—I interviewed him. He said he came in with the feeling of—what he said is that you've got to have more personal classifieds. You're going to have individual people wanting to sell stuff, and cars and everything else, not just car lots or something advertising. But you need a lot of those, then, so . . .

GD: Yes. Well, what happened to the *Democrat*—they followed—there was a newspaper, the Telegraph in Canada that was giving away free classifieds.

JM: Yes.

GD: I think it was [a] smart move on Walter's part, but without that it would've been tough.

JM: Yes.

GD: But I give him credit. Boy, he stuck with it.

JM: Yes, he stuck with it and spent a lot of money fighting that battle and everything. Do you still see Walter on occasion?

GD: I haven't seen him in a couple of years. I was at a meeting at the Press Association or something a few years ago, and I ran into him. We visited for a little bit.

JM: Yes. Okay. Okay, Gerald. Anything else you can think of about your time at the *Democrat* and what you remember about the paper, about your struggles—how it turned out or anything?

GD: Well, I think it was a tremendous experience for me.

JM: You what?

GD: I think it changed my life, quite frankly. It was hard and tough.

JM: Yes. I'm having difficulty hearing you now. All of a sudden we started getting some static.

GD: Yes, we're getting some static.

JM: Yes, but at any rate . . .

GD: But it was a good experience.

JM: Was it? Yes.

GD: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right. Okay, well, you were there at an interesting time . . .

GD: Yes.

JM: . . . as Walter came in and started making changes. And, of course, later on he made a lot of changes. So it wound up—I think it was a surprise to nearly everybody who had been around there for very many years that the *Democrat* won the war and the *Gazette* folded.

GD: Yes.

JM: Let me ask you one other thing. What was Leon Reed like? Did you have any perception of what kind of circulation director he was and how they ran their operation?

GD: Who was that?

JM: Leon Reed.

GD: I think Leon was a good man. I didn't know him that well.

JM: Yes.

GD: I think he was a good circulator.

JM: Yes.

GD: I think he had the tools at the time—those early years of Walter's operation that we didn't have at the *Democrat*, quite frankly. But I think Leon was a good man. He did a good job. He came from Indiana also, I think.

JM: Yes, I think you're right. I think he was somewhere in there that he and . . .

GD: You know, he just passed away here within the last year or so.

JM: Yes. He and Jim Williamson, I think, maybe came down together from somewhere up in Indiana—somewhere up in there. Yes.

GD: I didn't realize he came in.

JM: Yes, I think they came from—I think they'd been at the same newspaper, but I'm not sure.

GD: Yes.

JM: Okay, Gerald. Anything else you can think of?

GD: No. It was quite an experience. I'd spent most of my adult life in Dallas . . .

JM: Yes.

GD: . . . and to take on something like that. I don't know. Had I realized what I was really getting into [laughs], I don't know whether I would've done it or not.

[Laughter]

JM: Yes. [Laughter] I understand the feeling.

GD: But there were some good people there—Ralph Casey, Bill Taylor.

JM: Yes.

GD: There were really some good people there.

JM: Yes. Bill is in bad health.

GD: Yes, he is.

JM: I've asked somebody down there to interview him, and they haven't done it yet because they said his health has not been good. I interviewed Ralph Casey myself.

GD: Oh, really?

JM: Yes. I interviewed Ralph Casey and . . .

GD: How is that rascal doing? I haven't seen him in a long time.

JM: He's doing pretty good, you know, for ninety-one years old.

GD: I figured he was about ninety.

JM: Yes, I think he's ninety-one. He and his wife live in a nice little retirement area, but they've got an apartment.

GD: I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but I guess about six months after I went down there, Tony went to Walter to try to get me to get rid of Ralph.

JM: Did he really? No, I didn't know that.

GD: Yes. And I wouldn't do it.

JM: Well, Ralph had been around there a long time.

GD: He sure had. I don't know how old Bill is, but he has to be in his eighties, isn't he?

JM: I would suspect that he is. Yes. Yes, I would think so. Probably early eighties. I interviewed Chester Garrett, too. Of course, you know Chester died a few months ago.

GD: Yes.

JM: But, yes, I know Ralph started—I think he started selling the *Democrat* on the street or delivering it back in the 1920s or something like that.

GD: If Ralph Casey told me this once, he told me a million times that he used to deliver newspapers in those—what did you call those short pants in those days?

JM: Oh, knickers?

GD: Yes, knickers. [Laughs] "Yes, I used to deliver newspapers at the capitol building in my knickers." [Laughter]

JM: Yes. He told me one story that there was one governor out there he was delivering to, and he hadn't paid up, so he just stopped delivering it to him. The governor called down to complain. [Laughter] They called him in and said, "Well, why did you stop?" And he said, "They didn't pay me!" [Laughter] They got that taken care of. Okay, Gerald. Nothing else you can think of?

GD: No, that's about it.

JM: We were having a little bit of static a while ago. I think you said that it was a good experience, or I wasn't sure if you said it was a great experience or a terrible experience, but . . . [Laughs]

GD: No, it was a—I mentioned that had I known, really, I'm not sure I would've taken the job. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

GD: But it was a good experience, really.

JM: Yes.

GD: Yes, I had worked under a pretty controlled operation for many years and had never been in a situation like that, so it was quite an experience for me.

JM: Yes.

GD: And I ran into the same thing in Houston. [Laughs]

JM: Of course, you were gone for a long time with them, but then they had the big war in Dallas, too.

GD: Yes. Right.

JM: And the *Morning News* survived and the Times . . .

GD: The *Times Herald* there always held the circulation lead in the city zone.

JM: Yes.

GD: The day I left there in 1974, we got the ABC audit report on a Friday.

JM: Yes.

GD: Well, back in those days you could pretty well, according to the past trends, figure out what your competition was going to come up with, and so forth.

JM: Yes.

GD: I had figured that we were going to surpass the *Dallas News* 200 copies for the first time ever.

JM: Yes.

GD: Well, this was on a Wednesday before I was going to leave on a Friday—the circulation manager at the *Dallas News*, Carlton Barnes—we were friends and competitors. He called me and said, "Gerald, I'd like to visit with you before you go. I always go to the barbershop on Wednesday afternoons and get a haircut, and then after that I'd like to come by and pick you up, and we can go out to the country club and have dinner or whatever." And I said, "Okay. Sounds good." So [laughs] Carlton picked me up. We went out to the country club. I didn't live too far from there. So we went into the lounge and we had a drink. I guess we were there ten minutes and he started pumping me. [Laughs] Apparently, he had done some figuring, too.

JM: Yes.

GD: I can see him right now. He said, "Gerald, what kind of numbers are you gonna have?" I said, "Carlton, I'm not going to tell you what my numbers are gonna be." So we talked there, and he said, "Well, is it going to be more than 305,000?" I

said, "Carlton, I'm not going to tell you what the numbers are. You're gonna know in a few days anyway." [Laughs] So he put up two fingers, and he said, "Bartender, two more drinks." [Laughter] He sat there a minute, and he said, "Is it gonna be more than 310,000?" And I said, "Carlton, I'm not going to tell you what them numbers are." He said, "You're not, are you?" I said, "No, I'm not." [Laughs] So he said, "Well, let's go eat then."

JM: I'll be darned.

GD: Sure enough. And the figures came out—my last Friday at the *Times Herald*—I don't remember the exact number, but we had surpassed them by about 200 copies.

JM: Yes. [Laughter]

GD: I'll never forget that.

JM: Yes. Anything else you can think of, Gerald?

GD: No, that'll about do it, Jerry. Good to talk to you.

JM: Well, it's good to talk to you, and I really appreciate it.

GD: What's Bob up to?

JM: McCord?

GD: Yes.

JM: Oh, he's still around—still pretty active. Let me hang up here and cut this off, then I'll tell you.

GD: Okay.

JM: Anyway, I really do appreciate this. Thanks a lot.

GD: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]

[00:41:46.27]

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