

Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History
Special Collections Department
University of Arkansas Libraries
365 N. McIlroy Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-5330

This oral history interview is based on the memories and opinions of the subject being interviewed. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using this interview should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with:

Charles Hemingway
Telephone Interview
30 June 2006

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here in my home in Greenwood, Arkansas, on Friday, June 30, 2006. I'm talking by telephone with Chuck Hemingway, who is in Bend, Oregon. Is that correct?

Charles Hemingway: That's right.

JM: Yes. Okay. This is an interview for the oral history project on the *Arkansas Democrat* and [*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*] for the Pryor Center for [Arkansas] Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville]. The first thing I need to do, Chuck, is just ask you—do I have your permission to tape this interview and to turn it as well as your written recollections of your career at the *Democrat* over to the Pryor Center?

CH: Yes. Certainly.

JM: Okay. Very good. As I said, you have written some of your recollections, since you're at a great distance up there, and some of them are really good and I enjoyed

them. But I want to cover some of the other information, such as your own personal information and other things about what you did before you went to work for the *Democrat* and what you did after [laughs] you worked for the *Democrat*.

CH: Okay.

JM: So I think the first thing we need to do is just start out and tell me when and where you were born.

CH: I was born on October 28, 1946, in Little Rock, Arkansas, at Baptist Hospital.

JM: Okay. What were your parents' names?

CH: Billie Sibley Hemingway and Bill Hemingway.

JM: Okay. Hold just a second.

CH: Okay.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Okay, Chuck. You say in your recollections, of course, that you went to Little Rock Central [High School], and you ran track, and you started working at the *Democrat* while you were still in high school out there. I think the one thing that you *didn't* mention, which I want to go ahead and get on record, is that not only did you run track, but you set the state record in the mile run in both your junior year and senior year. Is that not correct?

CH: That's right. Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. And you went to the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville] on a track scholarship?

CH: Right.

JM: Okay. Now, you started at the *Democrat* in the summer one year while you were still in high school. You worked that summer, but you still worked at the *Democ-*

rat during the school year some, too, didn't you?

CH: Right. Yes. At the end of the summer, Jack Keady was kind enough to let me stay on.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CH: So I would come in and cover some football games on Friday nights and then come in on Saturdays to help put out the Sunday sports section.

JM: Did you work some during the week before you went to school?

CH: Gosh, I don't remember. It seems like it was—as often as I could get down there and work, I had that open invitation.

JM: Yes.

CH: I [laughs] didn't have a whole lot of money, so I took every opportunity to work as much as I could.

JM: Yes. As I recollect—and we can try to figure out whether I'm right or not, but, of course—say that I covered both of your state-record runs in the mile run, and—also, I wrote a story one time. I think that maybe you were, on occasion, working some before school and then you had to take off—about 8:00—boy, you'd go [in] maybe [at] something like 6:00 [a.m.] and work until about 8:00 [a.m.] and go to school, or something like that. Does that ring a bell?

CH: That's starting to come back. Yes.

JM: Yes.

CH: I think I had forgotten that. [Laughs]

JM: Also, were you delivering the *Gazette* at that time?

CH: We may have stopped by then, but my brothers and I had a *Gazette* paper route that we kept.

JM: Yes.

CH: We kind of kept that in the family and would help each other out. We also peddled groceries for this little place called Flack's Groceries that was down the street from where we lived.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CH: So that was an after-school job. After I got off track practice, I could go over there and work from 4:00 to 5:00, 5:30 or 6:00—whenever Mr. Flack would close his grocery.

JM: As I remember, you lived close to Central High School on—what was that street? Sixteenth?

CH: I think we lived—well, we lived over on Dennison Street.

JM: Oh, okay.

CH: At 1214 Dennison. But we lived all around there. We used to live over on Booker Street.

JM: Oh, okay.

CH: At Sixteenth and Booker, or something like that.

JM: One of my other recollections—and I don't know how accurate it is—was that on some of those days when you went to the *Democrat* and maybe worked a little while, you were getting up and running early in the morning at, say, 4:00 or something like that—and running thirteen miles every morning. Is that correct?

CH: We'd get up sometimes and we had a route we'd run out by—we called it Roller-coaster Hill. It was—gosh, I can't think of the name of the road now.

JM: Somewhere around Reservoir Road?

CH: Reservoir Road. Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CH: Yes, we'd run out Reservoir Road and hit Highway 10, and go out Highway 10 to Rodney Parham [Street] and then come back Rodney Parham back to where it hit Twelfth Street, and come back in. And sometimes we'd get up and ride a bike out toward Benton. [Laughs]

JM: You say we—who else?

CH: Gosh, there was a fellow named Mark [Stevens? Stephens?]
—he ran track. On one occasion there was a guy who used to be a Little Rock policeman named Bill Ferguson. He almost [laughs] didn't make it back. He tuckered out somewhere [].

JM: Yes. Seems to me like I remember him, but I can't . . .

CH: In fact, I was late to work on that occasion because I had to wait for Bill, and Bill was pushing his bike along. [Laughter]

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughter] So you kept working at the *Democrat*, then you went to the university on a track scholarship, as I said.

CH: That's right.

JM: But you were stringing for the *Democrat* all the time that you were in the university.

CH: Right.

JM: As I recollect one other point of your competitive career, you had an accident on a sled and tore up something—was it your knee?

CH: It was my thigh.

JM: Oh, thigh. Okay.

CH: Yes. We had a big Coke sign, and we turned it upside down. It had been a

marker on a golf course—on a driving range.

JM: Yes. [Laughs]

CH: Somehow, we got that. A fellow had a Volkswagen, and the parking lot at Razor-back Stadium [at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville] was all iced over, so we had a ski rope. We'd slide on that Coke sign thing turned upside down and be pulled around in the parking lot. I went around—I cut it really sharp, and I whipped around and lost the rope and went sailing off on that thing.

JM: [Laughs]

CH: I wound up hitting a curb and flying, and then hitting my thigh against the curb on the other side of the road.

JM: Yes. So, needless to say, that curbed some of your competitive [laughs] work.

CH: That pretty much ended my career. I came back and ran cross country as a senior.

JM: Yes.

CH: I was the seventh guy on the team.

JM: All this time while you were going to school and you were corresponding for the *Democrat*, you were also working for the [university's] student newspaper, the *Arkansas Traveler*. Is that correct?

CH: Right.

JM: What different jobs did you hold with the *Traveler*?

CH: I think I was a sports editor and then I was assistant editor and maybe news editor. Gosh—reporter.

JM: Okay.

CH: I did a mish-mash of everything.

JM: And you got a journalism degree. Is that correct?

CH: Right.

JM: Okay. But you stayed at school to work on a master's [degree]. Is that correct?

CH: Right. Yes. I got a master's in speech.

JM: Okay. But at some point in time you went to work for the *Springdale Morning News*, right?

CH: I think it was probably around 1969.

JM: Okay.

CH: Something like that.

JM: Okay. Was this while you were working on your master's?

CH: It was, I believe, my senior year.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CH: And I stayed around to work on—I worked pretty much full-time while I was working on a master's.

JM: Okay. You were working for the Springdale paper full-time while you were working on your master's?

CH: Yes.

JM: Okay. As I recollect, when you got your master's, you also had been in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] and you got a commission. Is that correct?

CH: Yes.

JM: Okay. You were commissioned to second lieutenant?

CH: Right. I graduated in January of 1969 and got my commission then, but I had an educational deferment to stay to work on a master's.

JM: Okay.

CH: I finished the master's. Actually, before I finished the master's, I came down to

North Little Rock and had taken a job as the assistant editor at the *North Little Rock Times*.

JM: Who were you working for then?

CH: John Thompson.

JM: Yes, I remember John Thompson. Okay. He had—I guess that was after—yes, I'm sure it was—it was after he had bought the paper from Bob McCord.

CH: Right. Yes.

JM: So how long did you work for the *Times*?

CH: About nine months. I went on active duty in April of 1971.

JM: Okay. Where did you go?

CH: When I went on active duty?

JM: Yes.

CH: To the infantry school at Fort Benning.

JM: To the infantry school?

CH: Right, at Fort Benning, Georgia.

JM: At Fort Benning.

CH: And then airborne and all that.

JM: Yes. Unfortunately, I've been there. [Laughs] Fort Benning.

CH: [Laughs] Columbus, Georgia. Yes.

JM: Yes, across the river from Phoenix City, Alabama, too. [Laughs]

CH: Right. Yes.

JM: [Laughs] Which was a pretty wild city in those days.

CH: It kind of was still was then. Everybody went over the river to party in Phenix City—the soldiers.

JM: Yes. You went into the Airborne—is that correct?

CH: Right. Yes.

JM: What did you do in the Airborne?

CH: I was with the only airborne military intelligence unit in the army—218th Military Intelligence Detachment at Fort Bragg.

JM: Okay. Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

CH: Yes. We were part of an outfit called 18th Airborne Corps, and we were satellited a lot of times with the 82nd Airborne.

JM: Okay. What else did you do? Did you do anything else for the Airborne?

CH: Well, I was a counter-intelligence officer.

JM: Okay. But I was thinking back—were you also a jump master or something?

CH: Oh, well, yes. Yes, I was a jump master. [Laughs] Yes.

JM: What did a jump master do—teach other people how to jump [out of an airplane wearing a parachute]?

CH: Well, I was basically in charge of an aircraft.

JM: Oh, I see.

CH: It was either a C-130 or a C-141. You'd get everybody who was going to be under your command, essentially, on that aircraft, and you'd get them all suited up and you'd check them out and make sure they have the equipment on right. Then you'd get them loaded onto the aircraft and give them the commands as you were en route, when you were getting ready to jump when the door is open. Then give them the signal to jump, and you kind of push them out the door—not push them out the door, but you kind of pat them on the butt to let them know to jump.

JM: Yes. Time to go.

CH: And you were the last one out the door.

JM: Yes. Okay. So you did a number of jumps yourself?

CH: I had someone ask me one time, and I said, "Well, I took off about thirty-five times in a C-130 before I ever landed in one." [Laughter] "And [laughs] about nine times in a C-141 before I ever landed in one."

JM: Yes.

CH: I think I probably had about, I don't know, sixty-something jumps.

JM: Yes. Okay. From that point, what happened?

CH: Well, the Vietnam War ended. I had been on orders to go to Vietnam when I was at Fort Bragg. [Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger and the folks in North Vietnam finally got the argument settled about the size and shape of the table in Paris [France] peace talks. The North Vietnamese wanted a round table and the South Vietnamese wanted a square table.

JM: [Laughs]

CH: So they started bringing troops home. As people were coming back from Vietnam at Fort Bragg, they would be there a couple of months and suddenly get a letter saying, "This is the United States Army. We thank you for your service, but we don't need you anymore."

JM: Yes.

CH: I was sitting there as a lieutenant looking at captains coming back, and [laughs] they were getting these letters. And I was thinking, "Well, gee, I haven't even *been*, so this is not the best career to be in." I applied for a program to go to law school through the army. I got selected, so I went back to the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville] as a law student.

JM: In other words, the army paid your way and you went back to the University of Arkansas as a law student.

CH: Well, they didn't pay my way.

JM: Oh, they didn't?

CH: They let me go on what's called excess leave.

JM: Oh, okay.

CH: I was able to use my G.I. Bill benefits to pay tuition, books and a little to live on. And during the summers, they'd bring me on as kind of like a legal clerk—bring me back on active duty, and I would get paid for that.

JM: Okay.

CH: And I'd go up to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and work up there doing legal stuff. But while I was back in Fayetteville during the school year, I worked again at the *Springdale [Morning] News* there.

JM: Were you working full-time at the *News*?

CH: Yes, pretty much full-time.

JM: While you were working on your law degree?

CH: Right.

JM: And you got a law degree from the University of Arkansas?

CH: Right.

JM: Okay. And from there, I think you went on to a number of other assignments, but can you just give me some of the highlights of the rest of your career?

CH: Well, let's see—after I graduated from law school and got licensed, I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was a prosecutor and defense counsel there. I worked in something called legal assistance. After that, I came back to Arkansas and went

to Pine Bluff Arsenal. I was what was called the command judge advocate there for about three years. I did environmental law, a lot of contract law—gosh—a lot of what they call administrative law.

JM: Yes.

CH: But I got to see some pretty interesting things involving chemical munitions and all the stuff that they had there at Pine Bluff Arsenal that I never had an idea of when I was growing up here in Arkansas.

JM: Yes.

CH: Then I went out to a place called the Judge Advocate General School in Charlottesville [Virginia] for a graduate program in military law there.

JM: Yes.

CH: I stayed on the faculty and taught administrative law for three years.

JM: Was that at the University of Virginia?

CH: Yes, it's on the grounds of the University of Virginia. It's almost a sin to call the University of Virginia campus a campus. It's "the grounds of Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson."

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs]

CH: So that's where the Judge Advocate General School is. I went on to get a master's in law at the University of Virginia with a specialization in labor and employment law.

JM: Okay.

CH: I went off to Europe to the U.S. Army headquarters in Europe, and I was a . . .

JM: Where was that?

CH: What's that?

JM: Where was the headquarters?

CH: That's in [Heidelberg?], Germany.

JM: Okay.

CH: I was deputy chief of administrative law there, and then I was—oh, gosh—deputy ethics counselor for a bunch of generals, and what they call the labor counselor. I was in charge of all the civilian personnel stuff that had to do with the forces in the European Theater at that time.

JM: Okay. Didn't you wind up back at the Pentagon?

CH: Right. I came on back from Europe and went to the Pentagon. I was the chief of Labor and Employment Law in the Office of the Judge Advocate General, and the Legal Adviser to the Army Director of Civilian Personnel from 1990 to 1994.

JM: Okay. About that time, you retired, did you not?

CH: Yes. I retired in May of 1994.

JM: Okay. At what rank?

CH: Lieutenant colonel.

JM: Lieutenant colonel. Okay. And you formed your own company at that time. Is that correct?

CH: Yes. I opened a private law practice specializing in federal administrative law. Then for a couple of years I was executive director for an outfit that did training for folks in labor and employment law related to the federal government. Then in 1996 I opened my own company doing that.

JM: Okay. You eventually closed that company down, though.

CH: Right. In 2000 I officially retired from the practice of law and from everything, I suppose.

JM: Yes. Okay. And since then, you have moved to Bend, Oregon. Is that correct?

CH: Yes.

JM: Where . . . ?

CH: What's that?

JM: Well, I was just going to say where your brother, Collins, also lives, who also worked for the *Arkansas Democrat*. [Laughs] Correct?

CH: Right. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs] And now you are going back to college. Is that correct?

CH: Right. Yes. I'm working on a master's in counseling with kind of a specialization in wilderness therapy.

JM: Wilderness therapy? What is that?

CH: It involves taking, I guess, what you'd call at-risk youth, or anybody else who might have some mental health issues and taking them out into a unique outdoor environment, giving them a chance to learn some new skills in a completely different setting that kind of helps build their self-esteem and teaches them some new coping strategies for dealing with whatever problems they might be having.

JM: Yes. Okay. Are you also working while you're going to school, too?

CH: Well, I was. I was working as an addictions counselor until last September and then went back to school full-time.

JM: Oh, I see. Okay. And when are you going to get your degree?

CH: What's that?

JM: When are you going to get your master's degree?

CH: June of 2007.

JM: Next June. You've got a year to go, then?

CH: Right.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right. Very good. Well, that sort of gives me the whole range of the picture and everything. You did quite a bit of work in journalism before you got involved in all that.

CH: Right.

JM: You got your start at the *Democrat*. I enjoyed your comments about so many people there because we seem to know tons of the same people. And, of course, I've worked with a lot of them, too, along the way, but I'll be in touch with some of them. I can't think of anything else. Can you think of anything else that we haven't covered, Chuck?

CH: No. It's been a great experience going back and remembering all these people and thinking about those days. It was an exciting time and a style of life that doesn't exist anymore.

JM: Yes. Well, you remembered a lot about them, which I [laughs] appreciated because you brought up some recollections that nobody else has mentioned about some of the people who worked back at that time. I thought they were really good. You can't think of anything else at this time?

CH: Not at this time, but I would like the opportunity if something does come up . . .

JM: Yes, you'll get that opportunity to edit this interview as well as your other stuff. You can edit it; you can add to it. Feel free to do so. Okay, Chuck. I'm going to say thank you very much, and I'm going to stop right here and I'm going to go back and check and make sure we're getting all this on tape. So hold on.

CH: Okay.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Chuck, I think all the way through this interview that I addressed you as Chuck Hemingway, which I've known you for [laughs] all these many years, but what is your full name?

CH: It's Charles W.

JM: Charles W.

CH: The W stands for William.

JM: For William. Okay. And I might add, also, that Hemingway is one M, right?

CH: Right.

JM: Okay. Just like Ernest and Collins. [Laughter]

CH: Right.

JM: Okay. Very good. That's one thing that I wanted to add. Thanks.

CH: Okay.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]