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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

Gerald Jordan
Fayetteville, Arkansas
5 May 2005

Interviewer: George Arnold

George Arnold: This is an interview with Gerald Jordan about the *Arkansas Democrat*. My name is George Arnold, and I'll be asking a few questions. Gerald, to get started with, I guess I'll ask you to state your name and then indicate that you give permission to the [University of Arkansas's Pryor Center for Arkansas] Oral [and Visual] History to use this interview.

Gerald Jordan: Okay, I'm Gerald. G-E-R-A-L-D. Jordan. J-O-R-D-A-N. I do freely give my permission to the project to use [this recording] as an oral history.

GA: Okay, why don't we start at the very beginning. Tell me where and when you were born.

GJ: I was born September 14, 1948, in Malvern, Arkansas—I guess it's more properly Perla, Arkansas, which is now a suburb of Malvern—I was born in the house that I grew up in. You know that was the time no hospitals, except in Little Rock, would accept African-American patients, so I was born at home.

GA: Okay. Who were your parents?

GJ: My mom was Amanda Barker, who was also from Malvern, Arkansas. B-A-R-K-E-R. My dad was Rufus Jordan who moved up to Malvern from Alto, Texas. He was a Texan and he worked at the brickyard across the highway from where I grew up. He met my mother at a party, he said.

GA: Brothers and sisters?

GJ: I have two brothers. I'm the second of four children. I have two brothers, an older, a younger and the baby of the family is a little girl. So we're all—there are four of us. Three of us now live in Arkansas. My sister's in Ft. Smith. My younger brother is in Sherwood, Arkansas. My older brother is in Riverside, California.

GA: Okay. So you grew up in Malvern, then?

GJ: I grew up—well, it's an interesting story in that regard because I was a baby [during] the great black migration North. You know, a lot of African Americans left the South [and] moved to the North looking for jobs, for opportunity.

GA: Late forties [1940s], early fifties [1950s]?

GJ: It was for me—it would have been 1949 because I was nine months old when my family moved to Kansas City, and that became my Kansas City connection there. We lived there until I was about ten years old, and my great uncle, who was really more like my grandfather because he and his wife reared my mother, retired from his general store business because of his illness. He developed adult onset diabetes and just decided he couldn't handle the store anymore with what he needed to do to take care of himself, so he

asked my mother who was, in effect, their only child, to come back and take over the store. So we moved back to Arkansas in 1960, I guess it was.

GA: This would be back in Malvern?

GJ: Yes. Back to Malvern. Ran the store. That's where I went through junior high school and high school.

GA: Okay.

GJ: At Wilson—Annie Agnes Wilson High School. That was named for one of the just all time great teachers. I never knew Ms. Wilson, but I heard Ms. Wilson's stories all the time I was growing up. Our school was one of those. .

GA: You probably ought to spell that name, too. Annie Agnes?

GJ: Yes. A-N-N-I-E A-G-N-E-S W-I-L-S-O-N. And our school was one of the many black schools across the South that was built in part by a grant from the [Julius] Rosenwald Foundation [a charitable organization that helped fund construction of over 5,000 schools], so there's a little bit of history there in that little school.

GA: How old was the school?

GJ: It was opened in 1954, I believe. 1953 or 1954. Maybe even 1952, but the high school—until Wilson High School opened, the drill basically for the black students was that after you got to ninth grade, if your family had the wherewithal [they] would send you to Pine Bluff to Merrill High School [or] to Little Rock to Dunbar—and everybody's heard the legendary thing about Dunbar High School—or one of the others across the state. Those were the

big two [where] you could finish high school, but that effectively meant that you were basically boarding, which, you know, for all intents and purposes, is as expensive as sending a kid to college. As you can imagine, not a whole bunch of kids had the opportunity to go ahead and finish high school. So my mother went to Merrill and on to AM&N [Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal School, now the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, UAPB]. And her brothers went to Dunbar and on to—well, one went to Philander [Smith College, Little Rock], and another went to Washburn in Topeka, Kansas. So really fascinating there.

GA: Okay, so you got out of high school what year?

GJ: I graduated in 1966.

GA: Okay.

GJ: The class of 1966.

GA: Was there any kind of journalism program in high school?

GJ: No. In fact, my arrival at journalism was quite by accident. I went out for the football team when I was in ninth grade. I weighed all of 128 pounds then and wasn't particularly fast and didn't have particularly good hands, so that moved me away from running back and wide receiver, and there was a line behind every position except center, so I went out for center. And at 128, as you can imagine, I didn't stop many people from rushing, so after one practice when I just got flattened, I guess, for the umpteenth time, the coach pulled me aside and said, "You know what? You've been keeping the stats." I did that in eighth grade and went out [for football in the ninth grade]. "You've been

keeping the statistics and stuff.” He said, “You probably ought to keep doing that before you really get hurt.” [Laughs] I saw him, Lindsey Henry, great guy. He was a fascinating character. He played—he played quarterback at AM&N, which is now UAPB. He was drafted by the Dallas Texans in the old AFL [American Football League]—you know, the Texans went on to become the Chiefs. [He] went down to Dallas and played for a season, and his knee just got destroyed and he became our coach. He was a really young guy and a fascinating character. He came back to one of our school reunions one year and I pretty well told him, I said, “You realize you’re responsible for my career in journalism. If you hadn’t steered me back to keep the stats, which later on became writing game accounts and submitting it to the *Malvern Daily Record*, who knows? Maybe I would have been a high school band director or worked at the brickyard. Who knows what would have happened.” But I told Coach Henry that. He just laughed. So that was the initial contact with journalism, but still I wasn’t thinking about it as a career, even though there were lots of newspapers in our house when I grew up. We—God, I was trying to remember—I think one time we counted maybe five or six a week coming into the house—you know, by mail—and we subscribed to the *Democrat*, the *Malvern Daily Record* and a weekly paper called *Malvern Meteor Journal*, and we took the *Arkansas Baptist Voice* and we took the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier* and those papers came in. So it wasn’t until I was very grown and my sister and I were having a conversation. She said, “I don’t know how you could avoid journalism, you kept sitting there reading papers

all the time.” And that—you know, that never occurred to me [that] that’s what I did, but apparently that’s what I did.

GA: So your whole family was big newspaper readers?

GJ: Oh, yes, yes. Big time. Newspaper. We watched the “Huntley-Brinkley Report.” Remember that?

GA: Oh yes.

GJ: That was big news. We were a Huntley-Brinkley family instead of a Cronkite family and I—the reason we took the *Democrat* instead of the *Gazette* because I realized the difference in editorial columns then, particularly coming out of [the integration crisis at] Central [High School in Little Rock] in 1957.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Apparently, the *Gazette* carrier was pretty rude or something and my great uncle, whom I said was more like my grandfather, drew the line and said, “That paper is never coming in my house.” And that was it. So we were sort of a defacto *Democrat* family, apparently. [Laughter]

GA: Before we go on. Do you have memories of the 1957 crisis? Do you remember those . . .?

GJ: No, we were in Kansas City and it was one of those things that you saw on the news and [was] kind of surreal. You know, I didn’t have any particularly strong feelings or emotions or fears or anything like that. It was way away because we were in Kansas City. So it wasn’t like it was up the road if we had been in Malvern.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I don't remember any of the tension or anything like that.

GA: Yes. Okay, so . . .

GJ: But we were a *Democrat* family and it was an afternoon newspaper, so in the summers I remember I would sit out on the porch there practicing trumpet or whatever when the carrier would come by and throw the paper on the porch, and I'd get it and take a look. The rule in the house was that Uncle Shag got the first crack at the paper—he didn't like a messed up paper, and that's another thing I got from him, too. I try to get the paper now before my mother-in-law gets to it because when she gets through with it, it looks like something from abstract art. You can't find the "A" section, you know, page one is now wrapped around behind the comics. So I learned how to sit at the kitchen table and fold that broad sheet out lengthwise, carefully lift up the page, sit there and read it, take a look at another page, close it back and fix the sides of it so that they weren't uneven. Then fold it back, leave it on the [table], brand new. Just as good as new. [Laughter] And I still do that to this day. I still do—even if I'm through with the paper. I recycle it that way. I wrote high school sports stories, ninth grade, tenth grade and on through for the—well, for the high school, but [they were] submitted to the *Malvern Daily Record*. And when I—let's see, my junior year . . .

GA: How did you get that job?

GJ: The counselor and the coach just basically said, "If you'll do these write-ups, they'll print them in the paper."

GA: Okay.

GJ: So, after games I would write the stories longhand, take them down to the *Daily Record*, slip them through the mail slot, and they mysteriously appeared in the paper the next day. I had no idea how that worked. Sometimes on Saturday mornings I'd be a little late and get one into them and leave them at the desk there. I remember seeing Ms. Beerstecher—Frances Beerstecher was the publisher.

GA: Can you spell that please?

GJ: I think it's B-E-E-R-S-T-E-C-H-E-R.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Frances. But I also remember that they never said, "Are you interested in doing this for a living?" Or, "Won't you come in sometime and see how we do all this?" Or anything like that. It wasn't that they were just bad people, but it just never occurred to them [that] "here's somebody we should nurture and develop." And it never occurred to me, even though I'd read all these papers and knew some great sports writers like A. S. "Doc" Young, and—God, I can't remember, I'm having a Bella Vista moment. I can't think of the guy from Pittsburgh. I knew of these great sports writers, but that was all way away, you know, Pittsburgh, Chicago. There was nobody right around me.

GA: Another world?

GJ: Yes, and even though I had this Kansas City experience in my childhood, I didn't think I was necessarily going to go to Kansas City again or anything like that.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So, I mean, I'd like to, but I wasn't sitting there saying, "I can't wait to get out of here." I was thinking, "[I'm] going to be an engineer." That was what my dad wanted to be, and he didn't have the opportunity, and we'd talked all these years about being an engineer, and I could do that. I could be an electrical engineer and I was good at math and had—so I got to my senior year of high school and our trigonometry class was cancelled. Apparently either not enough students or [the school] didn't have the faculty member to offer it, but it was gone. So I talked to our guidance counselor, Henrietta Bailey and said, "I can't go to engineering school without trig." I mean, all I had was two years of algebra and one year of geometry. I said, "I'll get killed. I'll end up having to go to prep school for a year and engineering is already a five-year curriculum. I'll be in college all my life trying to get an engineering degree." And in all the same instant, she said, "Well, you've been writing these sports stories and stuff for four years, why don't you major in journalism?" And it never occurred to me. It had never occurred to me that that was a major, and it was a career, and you can do it. So that's when I shifted focus and applied for the University [of Arkansas, Fayetteville], the only journalism program that I was aware of in the state.

GA: Yes.

GJ: And came up here and met Ernie Deane and, boy, just, shhhh. The whole world changed. My whole world changed. It was just a good bunch up here at the time with [a] very small faculty and a very small department, but the

things I learned, I learned well—the fundamentals, the basics. I learned very well.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So, I've always given credit and been grateful to them.

GA: You started here in 1966?

GJ: Yes, September of 1966.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Yes. And . . .

GA: Have you . . .

GJ: Go ahead.

GA: Not like me, who went to college and didn't know what I was going to do, I just floundered around. [Laughs]

GJ: Well, yes, and the funny thing is that when I talk to some of my classmates, we talk about what we've done, what we—some of them would say to me, “Well, you always said you were going to do this, you always said you were going to major in journalism, that you were going to work for the newspaper, and you were going to the *Kansas City Star* and that you'd come back one day and teach.” I don't remember being that anal about it. [Laughter] But maybe I was because my classmates tell me that's what I said I wanted to do, so that was a good experience for me, to get here and take on this wonderful craft called journalism.

GA: Can you tell me a little more about the program at the time with teachers you might have run into?

GJ: Jess Covington was the department chairman. William Good was on the faculty. Al Blake was on the faculty, and that was essentially it. The next year, Ernie Deane showed up. So Ernie was here, I guess, my sophomore year. All the folk were good and fair and honest, and I really have to say that. This was before a lot of special programs or targeted programs to identify and develop minority journalists.

GA: Yes.

GJ: And before a lot of—right before a lot of things happened. I mean, that was then.

GA: Yes.

GJ: What I remember was that they didn't make a big deal. I guess looking back [I was] probably the only black journalism major.

GA: I wanted to ask you if you were alone.

GJ: I probably was. I'm not aware that there was anybody else, but nobody ever said, "You are the only one. You've got to make it." So, it wasn't that kind of pressure or anything like that. What I remember as much as anything is that they were just straight ahead and fair. There was no coddling, but also no obstacles. And that's good. Just give me the opportunity. Don't get in my way, just give me the opportunity. And they saw and were aware of a lot of stuff that I just absolutely had no idea about, and the first of those things was scholarships. You know, this was back in the days when the scholarship money was very precious. I can remember that in my sophomore year I got a Lemke scholarship for about \$100, and I thought, "Man, that's pretty good

stuff right there.” At the time, I think registration was only \$75 a semester, so that helped a lot. I didn’t get active in the *Traveler* [the University of Arkansas’s student newspaper] right away—I tried to figure out this place first—but I did by the spring semester. So Sylvia Spencer, who is now Sylvia Orton, was the outgoing *Traveler* editor my freshman year and Russ Williams was the appointed editor for the following year, so they hired me. I told them I wanted to write sports. I think I did a couple of audition stories for them, and they said, “Okay.” And that was the beginning of it. That was fun. So my sophomore year I was on the sports staff. Bill Wright was sports editor. My junior year, I applied for sports editor and got that, and was sports editor of the *Traveler* and the yearbook [at] the same time, so that was a whole lot of fun doing that—traveling with the Razorbacks—and when you look back at it, there had to be just a truckload of irony there, that this all-white team was covered by an African-American sports writer. It was a predominantly white school. It was [unique] in a lot of ways. So funny.

GA: Was there any resistance to that?

GJ: No, no, no. Because then everything was tightly controlled and obviously it still is, but it was a small press corps and the Razorbacks were certainly big stuff, but they weren’t the corporation that they are now. It was a matter of going to practice, getting a little access with the players outside the locker room and you could talk to them through Bob Cheyne, [who] was the athletic director. C-H-E-Y-N-E. Bob was—I’m sorry, not athletic director, sports

information director. George Cole was the athletic director. I think that [John] Barnhill was an emeritus. I got to meet Coach Barnhill.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So it was just a matter of showing up, doing some stories, getting back to the typewriter, writing and phoning them in. Somebody, I have no idea who, arranged for all the travel. I just had to show up [and] get on the plane. It was me and a photographer, maybe two photographers, depending on how flush we were for the moment. We'd fly all over the Southwest Conference and go to games. I got to see quite a bit, and it was good, a great experience. I said, "I want to be a sports writer. I can do this," and it was a lot of fun. A whole lot of fun, and after—let's see, after my sophomore year I was given this internship at the *Arkansas Democrat*. I remember that Bob McCord and Marcus George showed up at J-Days [Journalism Days] and I met them and we talked about an internship and [they said], "Can you come up, come down this summer and work?" "You bet." So that was my first experience in working with the *Arkansas Democrat*.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I went there as an intern in sports.

GA: This would have been what year?

GJ: This would have been the summer of 1968. The next year I worked an internship on the city desk. That's where I got to know Gene Foreman a little better. He was a very helpful man. He was a very youthful managing editor then. I can remember one day I spelled Pittsburgh—our cable signal up here,

as you can imagine in Fayetteville got a Kansas station. If you don't get cable you pretty well don't get but one station.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So our cable system up here, it was really rudimentary then. I think we might have gotten three or four stations and the public station.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I believe the ABC affiliate was Pittsburg, Kansas, and, of course, Pittsburg, Kansas is spelled P-I-T-T-S-B-U-R-G. Well, I was doing a story, and I spelled Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, P-I-T-T-S-B-U-R-G. Gene Foreman came over, threw the copy down on my desk and said, "For as long as you're in journalism, Pittsburgh is spelled with an H and don't you forget it," and I didn't have the courage to say, "Well, not in Kansas." Okay, you're right. I've never forgotten that. That was a lesson.

GA: We've all had those lessons, yes.

GJ: That was a lesson. I mean, that was in the day when you weren't touchy-feely in newsroom, [you] just came over and if the new kid screwed up you let them know right away. You're not calling [them] to the side [in order to] not dis[respect] them in front of peers or anything like that. You let them know, "You messed up." But he was a good teacher, a really good teacher. My summer of 1968, I worked on sports. I worked for Jack Keady. K-E-A-D-Y. Jack was sports editor then, and he was a reasonable person. Again, I don't know, the way I approach editing—particularly with interns and young kids—is to work with them before they write, work with them after they write and

then at some point in the week, we sit together and we talk about stories and how things are going. That never really happened, and I didn't think that I was setting the world on fire, but I was okay. You know, I wasn't getting the paper sued or anything like that. So I'll never know whether their—and it seemed like that was kind of the way the desk went, so it wasn't like I was isolated and left to the side. There were a couple other interns there and actually very young sports writers in high school and young college kids who worked there nights and weekends. Rodney Lorenzen and Arlin Fields, man they were characters. So I think that was basically the way that the thing ran. I wish that very early on I had gotten more feedback.

GA: Not much feedback?

GJ: Not much. I wish I'd gotten a lot more hands-on editing, training. I mean, who knows? It might have discouraged me some. Maybe that was the hand of providence in there to keep me going. But that was a good summer of experience for me as I [parlayed that] going back to being sports editor, so I learned a lot. The following year I was on the city desk and Fred Petrucelli—P-E-T-R-U-C-E-L-L-I—was the city editor. I think Fred is still—I think he's actually at the *Log Cabin Democrat* now or something in Conway. I think he's playing out the string down there. But Fred Petrucelli was just as smooth as glass, just easygoing—never got ruffled and he would call you over and give you an assignment, put you out on the street, come back and fiddle a little bit with the stories and get them in the paper. But still, again, not a whole lot of hands-on, “Okay, here's where it worked, here's where it didn't.” So I

guess in a way that was sort of the paper. We've learned a lot about working with young kids since then, and I guess I know it's a lot more competitive, you know, just in that pre-Watergate era the newsroom was full of World War II vintage veterans and not a whole lot of young folk and they're pretty no-nonsense even though they had that newsroom buzz and idiocy that went with American newspapers, but they were still pretty no nonsense.

GA: Yes.

GJ: So I guess that was all part of the era.

GA: Okay, so two summers and . . . ?

GJ: Two summers and that was my *Democrat* experience. I was a stringer for the paper—you know, obviously, when I got back from sports I continued to string for them and would write Razorback sidebars, so I was still getting into the paper during the school year, and that was a really good thing. [I] did that into my senior year and I was replaced by Ish Haley. I-S-H H-A-L-E-Y. [He] was a great guy. He's still a friend to this day. He had done some stringing for, I think, maybe the *Gazette*. I'm not sure. I don't know when Ish came on to the scene, but I was replaced by Ish Haley, who was a much better writer, much better reporter. He just knew where all the bodies were buried and where everything was going on. So, while I was disappointed at the time, I certainly understand. I would have done the same thing. I would have dumped me, too, for Ish Haley. [Laughs] He went on to work for [the] *Dallas Times Herald*, and he's really good. His paper closed and he's now, I think he's doing PR [public relations] for EDS [formerly known as Electronic

Data Systems] in Dallas. But those were good summers, and that was basically my *Democrat* experience. I do remember that the paper made a big deal of having two black interns. Me, from the University, and someone named Betty—and I can't think of her last name to save my life—who was at AM&N. And the reason I know they made a big deal [is] because they took our pictures and ran a house ad. It was about a half-page ad, got a picture of me in Quigley Stadium holding my tablet and pencil, looking intrepid. And Betty out on assignment, and they ran it, "Meet our interns," or it was somewhat showy. Considering [the] 1968 *Arkansas Democrat* or *Arkansas* period, I guess it was quite a statement to make.

GA: Yes.

GJ: As I said, you know nobody ever said that in the newsroom. You know, "We're glad to have black interns here," or anything like that. It was like, "Okay, you're in here, start swinging." It was a good experience, a good place.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I can remember that the first payday—you know they used to pay in cash, which I think would get you in trouble these days.

GA: Yes, I've heard that story. Little brown envelopes. . .

GJ: Little brown envelopes, pocket-size envelopes. You'd go down to the business office and sign and get your pay, and I counted through there—I think I had something like \$47, or might have been all of \$67. I thought I was

swimming in money. I said, “Man, this is just too good. I can’t go back to school. I gotta make this money.”

GA: That was weekly?

GJ: That was weekly, yes.

GA: They paid you every week?

GJ: Yes, in cash, and I would walk out of there on Saturday thinking, “Wow, I gotta get some breakfast before I lose this.” I wasn’t thinking of getting robbed, I was just thinking of falling down and the money spilling out.

[Laughter] That was quite an experience.

GA: Do you recall any of the stories that you worked on while you were there?

GJ: You know, I was thinking about that when you asked me if I’d talk. Much of what I did was sort of intern stock—life features and a lot of stuff that comes in over the transom. Nobody else wanted to do anything like that. I remember two in particular that were interesting because they generated a little buzz. One was a kid named Joe Trotter—I think it was Joe Trotter. He ran track at Pine Bluff [Editor’s note: It was at Pine Bluff Merrill], and I think that by then Pine Bluff High School was integrated. I’m not clear on that, but he ran track. He ran high hurdles, and that was, you know, really difficult, like 120 yard high hurdles. He was really good. He came in one day to talk about how he was being mistreated—just came into the office [and told] about how he was mistreated, and I sat down . . .

GA: At his high school?

GJ: Yes, but not by the students, by the administration.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So I did a story on him—and this shows you how long ago it was—I never went to the high school. I did stuff by phone, but I should have gone to the high school. I should have been told, “Well, we gotta get you over there so you can see this and you can feel this,” and what have you. And maybe it wasn’t Pine Bluff. I might be mis-remembering that. But I just remember that he was the state’s best hurdler, and they accused the kid of being a flake—that he just was not mentally stable, and that he had lots of what they say in contemporary [speech]—he had issues. Well, in retrospect, a lot of track people are flakes. [Laughs] Surpassed only by swimmers, who are super flakes. I just remember doing that story and people were calling, “Well you didn’t find out about this,” or, “You didn’t ask, you should have talked to me, I could have told you the whole story.” That was kind of an early buzz or alarm on, “Just report the hell out of the story before you turn it in.” That was obviously mostly my fault, but I think that the editors probably could have stopped that story, too. I mean it, there were no threats or lawsuits or anything, it was just catching flak. I just remember that was kind of the first time I got caught in this vice here where everybody was not happy. The track star and his family weren’t happy that I didn’t pour it on just the way they’d told me the story. Well, obviously there was another part of the story. And then some of the other folks involved, even though they weren’t named [said], “Well you should have talked to us because this guy has got stuff going on.” That was one [story]. Another one I remember was when I interviewed Joe

Louis, former heavyweight champion of the world. He was going to be in town to—he had almost hit bottom—I think he was refereeing some wrestling matches.

GA: I remember him doing that, yes.

GJ: He was in town, so I connected with the limo service that was picking him up at the airport, and that was my time. I guess the PR people set this up so I could talk to him from the airport until he got to his hotel.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So we were talking and, you know, we were doing the thing, “Who’s the toughest guy you ever fought?” and all the cliché questions, and I remember it—I have this memory [from] maybe when I was five, six years old. I remember that there were some Sundays—and this was on Sundays before my dad became a minister that he would take me to Swope Park golf course in Kansas City. He and his buddies would play golf and my mother would fix these wonderful vanilla wafer sandwiches. She would take this little single box of vanilla wafers and empty that and then she would put peanut butter on them, put two together for me. So I had that—that was my lunch. And I remember sitting on some of the benches there on the course, sitting cross-legged eating vanilla wafers just as happy as I can be. I’m out there watching my dad hitting these towering golf shots. I remember my dad saying that he had played golf with Joe Louis and some of the Kansas City As, you know, Harry Simpson and I forget who else—but he would name these guys like they were his golf buddies, but every now and then I guess he would catch a

game with them. So I said to Joe Louis, “I think my dad might have played golf with you.” And he said, “What’s your dad’s name?” I said, “Rufus Jordan,” and he said, “You mean ‘Static’?” That was his nickname. I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Oh, man, your dad could hit a golf ball. Oh, he could play golf.” Oh, I was just swollen [with] pride with Joe Louis remembering my dad.

GA: Yes.

GJ: So we were wrapping up the interview and he said, “Where can I get a game around here?” I said, “Well, I’ll ask my sports editor,” because I didn’t know anything about golf. I was so far removed from it. So I got back to the *Democrat* and told Jack Keady that I had a good interview with Joe Louis. “By the way, he’s looking to play a game of golf, do you have any idea?” And Jack said, “I can’t get him on any golf courses around here.” And it wasn’t like he even thought about it or anything like that. He just dismissed it right off. So I didn’t try to make anything of it. I thought, “There was Jack’s chance.” He could’ve gotten a great column out of that—taken Joe Louis out to play some golf. Those were just a couple of the sports stories I remember. There was a lot of high school stuff and, as I said, a lot of features. It was pretty production-intense, you know, we had a paper to put out. I learned very early on that when that monster is sitting there yawning, it’s ready to eat, [and] you’ve got to shovel something. Shovel some copy in there or pay the price. So a lot of it was quick turnaround stories. I mean, most of those things weren’t projects or any deep stories that got your attention. Also, the

same summer, Jack Olsen's story in the *Sports Illustrated*—a series in *Sports Illustrated*—I think it was called “The Black Athlete—a Shameful Story.” I remember reading that and just being riveted by it. I never thought there was a chance that the *Democrat* was going to take on a series like that, nor did I think I was up to it, but I just remember reading *Sports Illustrated* and, of course, doing what I was doing, you know, just going out talking to two or three people, turning around the stories I heard. So that's what I did.

GA: Okay.

GJ: As I say, it was good experience. Coming from where I did, and the limited experience that I had, it was great. It was great to do that.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Proving I could work on deadline [and] that I had a responsibility to get stuff done. So I think that worked, and they worked around well enough they invited me back on city desk, so that really was good.

GA: What were the deadlines? Do you recall on the afternoon paper?

GJ: It was an afternoon paper, so crack of dawn is kind of the last thing in, but most of the stuff I did was in the night. I'd come in mornings and turn in stories by maybe one or two or three or whatever, and I was writing for the next day, so I didn't do any on deadline reporting until I got to the *Kansas Star*, but it was good. I can't remember Ryne's last name.

GA: Who did sports?

GJ: Yes, he was—I think his name was R-Y-N-E, [Editor's note: It was Rhine Seymore] but he was the—basically the sports rewrite and copy chief and kind of all-in-one there. So he did that.

GA: Do you remember how big the sports department was, roughly?

GJ: Maybe at peak a dozen people, but, as I said, several of them were kids.

GA: Okay.

GJ: We had one guy [who] covered the Travelers. Jack wrote his column. We had another guy who covered, I think, the AIC, Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference. I can't even remember who covered the Razorbacks. It was Keady who wrote his column, I can't remember if there was a Razorbacks beat writer. I know we didn't have anybody up here—that's how I got to be a stringer—but I can't recall that. I'm absolutely blanking on that. There was somebody who did—I think we had somebody who covered racing, like dirt track stuff, drag racing [and] things like that.

GA: Okay.

GJ: That's about it. It was not a huge staff. It wasn't as big as the *Gazette* staff because I don't think that—other than the organization of the network of stringers, I'm not sure if we got into the high schools as big as the *Gazette* did.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Like around the state, every school in there. We had the roundups for the games that season and everybody got to write those stories.

GA: Summertime was the time that all that was coming out?

GJ: Yes, that's when you were getting letters out and phone calls and getting information back and writing these big preseason roundups. Making everybody look like All-Americans. [Laughs]

GA: Before reality sets in.

GJ: Before reality. Everybody's undefeated in the preseason.

GA: Okay. Why don't you talk about the city desk—that summer spent on the city desk.

GJ: The city desk was an abbreviated internship because by then I had signed up for advanced ROTC [**Reserve Officers' Training Corps**]. At the University back then, all the men who attended Land Grant colleges had to take two years of ROTC. That was called basic, and it was up to you to decide whether you wanted to take the advanced course and get your commission. Well, as you can imagine with Vietnam percolating, I [was] thinking, “My mother can get a check for me as a dead private or as a dead lieutenant. I think she's going to get a little more money if she gets a dead lieutenant check.” So, it didn't take me long to connect those dots, and I only had two years so, you know—two more and, again, it's nice money. You got paid. So I had an abbreviated internship on the city desk because I had to go to Fort Sill by late July—maybe the third week in July. So I did all kinds of little GA [general assignment] stuff, going out to—I mean, I did the banquets and the luncheon speakers and did [the column] “Answer Please,” and people would call up and say, “My cat keeps puking.” Well, I would call the vet and find out “what's wrong with this woman's cat?” So I did all that roustabout stuff, and the story

that I remember again from my city desk internship was covering a speech by the governor, then Winthrop Rockefeller, and it was serendipitous. He knew my dad. My dad keeps popping up—you know, Walter Mitty. By then my dad was a minister and [was] doing some things up in northwest Arkansas. They moved to Van Buren—that's where his church was. So in northwest Arkansas I guess he was more involved in Republican politics than he was down in Malvern, Arkansas. And of course in that time in the 1960s, the Republicans were the progressive party in the state, the Rockefeller party. So I interviewed the governor as we were walking out, doing what I later learned was a bump-and-run interview. He's walking, you keep walking with him and talking. And when I finished the interview—I learned a little professionalism, a little ethics and I said, "I think you know my father." And he said, "What's your name again?" "Jordan." And he said, "Man, your dad's a preacher." I said, "Yes sir, he is." "Oh, he's a good man, good man." So I was again swollen with pride—my dad's back on my assignment. But I don't remember any really earthshaking stories. No big fires. I didn't get involved in any of the coverage of when things were happening. There were some upheavals. I really didn't call them riots because I'm not sure the police ever called them that, but there were some things going on in Little Rock—a few rocks being thrown and police . . .

GA: Summer of 1969.

GJ: Yes, police running through. I was never involved in the coverage of that or anything like that. I don't know if I was up to it . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape One, Side 2]

GJ: I believe the religion editor was [Lelia] Maude Funston, and I couldn't even begin to tell you how to spell her name. But the women—now remember, this is still when we had women's news.

GA: Yes.

GJ: The women were in a room that was beyond sports, and they would walk through sports and then turn left to get to the city desk. Maude Funston would walk through and she was very proper and she'd hold her head high, throw her nose in the air and just—it was as though she was walking through a toxic area when she went through sports.

GA: [Laughs]

GJ: She just didn't want anything to do with us, and I remember that Arlin and Rodney would do all kinds of things and try to distract her to get her attention. They would grab an empty trashcan—there'd be coke bottles in it; they'd shake it—and she was completely unruffled. She'd walk through and just never even acknowledge their presence on the planet. There was another good reporter over there—of course, she had a lot of stories, Jackye Shipley, and I just remember that she came over and introduced herself and said welcome, yadda yadda. And I've always remembered that because she didn't have to, it wasn't even her department. She didn't have to be nice, but she was.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Jon Kennedy, the cartoonist—I became a friend of his. He even drew a caricature of me and I always thought that was really nice. Of course, Bob McCord is just a wonderful human being. Bob will not let you get away if you try. Every time I'd change jobs, I'd get a nice note from Bob McCord: "I read this in *E&P* [*Editor and Publisher*], Congratulations." Just a great guy. Marcus George was nice, but you know he wasn't touchy feely or anything like that. You know, "You're here, you're doing okay. Good job. Keep moving." Harry King, who was an AP [Associated Press] sports [reporter] was a fun guy to talk to, [he] came in every now and then—the AP bureau chief was a guy named Bob Starr. This was before he was John Robert Starr. It was Bob Starr. I just remember there was always just a little tornado going on over there at the AP corner. And the photographers were characters. I think there was one named [Mac] McCants who was always sort of dashing hither, thither, and yon. I can't think of his first name but McCants. M-C-C-A-N-T-S. [He] was really a good photographer.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Really good photographer. There was a reporter who, even by today's standards, would look like a reporter. I mean, you'd walk into the newsroom and you'd go straight to Ashley. What was Ashley's last name? His last name went right out of my head. Ashley worked—I think he was a wire editor or something like that. Ashley always wore chinos, which we called khakis—chinos and plaid shirts and had this just marvelously perfect black moustache and a head full of hair and rollup sleeves and always looked just

busier than everybody else in the newsroom. You just knew that Ashley had it going on. But he was a good guy. John Lammers was one of the sports writers. L-A-M-M-E-R-S. That's who I forgot to mention earlier. And John Lammers was the golf writer. He was really good. Just really good. I think later he went on to teach journalism at UCA [University of Central Arkansas, Conway] and getting into a nice dustup down there. But a really good wordsmith. We had some talented people there, some really talented people. God, I can't think of Ashley's last name. It wasn't a pretty newsroom. There were not a lot of offices or anything like that. They had that tradition. So it was a good place to work, a good place to learn. A very good place.

GA: I guess at that time Bob McCord was doing the editorial page?

GJ: Yes, he was the editorial page editor.

GA: Okay.

GJ: And one of the interesting things—I think about this now because of how maybe I would approach young kids in the newsroom, particularly young black kids or other minorities—nobody ever told me about Ozell Sutton and [that] the *Democrat* desegregated the staff before the *Traveler*—the *Traveler*, listen to me—I mean before the *Gazette* did.

GA: Yes.

GJ: And I think that Sutton was there in 1956 before Central. I think so. And so nobody ever said, “You're not the first you know,” or, “You two are not the first”—me and Betty. So that's one thing that's kind of missing, being able to connect with Mr. Sutton in that way.

GA: Yes.

GJ: I've since met him and we've talked about a lot of stuff, and he's quite a character. But I guess there was just no sense of, again, cultivating, developing and doing all that.

GA: That was with the black interns and black people or just in journalism?

GJ: I don't know overall, but I would just think that if you had somebody that was sort of walking in the trail of history like that, you might want to let him know, "You're not walking alone because here's somebody who was here ten years ago and that had to be quite a time for him."

GA: What had he gone on to do?

GJ: He went to work for the federal government as information officer, he might have worked for HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. I'm not sure whether it was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I think that's what he did. He left journalism and went into PR. He's now living in Atlanta. If there is any problem tracking him down, you can find through Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. That's his big frat. Alpha Phi Alpha. He's big time Alpha. And they will—they'll know where he is, but I think he's still in Atlanta.

GA: Okay, great.

GJ: That was just it. I just remember it was a good summer. A great summer for learning. A lot of opportunities. In my off hours I did a lot of goofing off. I should have been in the library. I was too busy experiencing life.

GA: Learning the newspaper.

GJ: Yes, that's true. Seeing those street stories. But it was good. Good summer.

GA: Okay. Marcus George, what was his position, his job at the time?

GJ: He was editor.

GA: He was the editor. Okay.

GJ: Yes, and might have even been publisher. No. He was definitely editor. I just remember that.

GA: Okay. And then Gene Foreman was managing editor over here?

GJ: Managing editor, yes.

GA: Do you remember anything about the copy desk at the time, any dealings with them?

GJ: No, and there was not, again, not a lot of call you over, sit down and here let me show this. I submitted stuff to Petrucelli and there it went. It was just this mysterious process to me. Not a whole lot of hands-on editing.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I'm not saying that to say it was a bad place. I'm just saying that was the way it was.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Yes, that was about it. As I said, I have no recollection—they could have had staff meetings every week, but I have no recollection of attending a staff meeting. I just think about that because I think about how the [*Philadelphia*] *Inquirer* runs and, you know, I can't avoid a meeting there.

GA: Okay. I guess the newsroom was on the second floor and the press was on up in the printers, third floor.

GJ: In fact, I never saw the press or anything like that, so I guess it was. I just remember business was on the street level.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Yes, that's where you went in and went up to the second floor.

GA: Yes, that was the same when I went through there. Remember that iron circular stair that went up to production right in the middle of the newsroom?

GJ: Yes. I knew there was something up there. I never went to it.

GA: Okay. So you went back to the University for the last year, then what happened?

GJ: Well, I tell you. By then I was focused. One day in my sophomore year, Ernie Deane came up to me. We had this huge round table I'll never forget—there should be a plaque with something saying who gave us that, and I forget. But there's this huge round table that's now in the reading room in Kimpel Hall. This was on kind of the main classroom level in Hill Hall, which was the second oldest building on campus—Old Main, Hill Hall, Carnall Hall. I was sitting there sort of in between classes. I don't remember particularly what I was doing, if anything. Most of the time we just sat there reading newspapers, or did some homework or sat there and talked and dreamed. And Ernie Deane sidled up to me and said, "You know you're doing okay here." I was taking it as a compliment, and he said, "But you can do a lot better. I think you ought to get your grades up and I think you ought to start thinking about going to graduate school." Well, I never thought, "I'm going to go to graduate school." You know if I can cover high school sports in Malvern,

Arkansas, that's as big as it gets. And lord, if I get to go to Little Rock to live, whoa! There's no stopping me. "Well," he said, "we haven't sent anybody to Northwestern in a long time, and I'd like to see you go." I knew about Northwestern from College Bowl and from Saturday games through scores. I knew about the Big Ten, but, again, me at Northwestern—that wasn't yet part of the dream.

GA: Yes.

GJ: So I started working on my dreams and taking things a little more seriously in the classroom. I was doing okay, getting by. I wasn't excelling. I had done real well in high school and I was just glad to be here. And, I was enjoying myself too much. So Ernie got me focused and I applied [to] Northwestern, got accepted and, boy, the whole dynamic changed. I mean, left here—I had an educational deferment because I had my commission, and I was subject to active duty. But I got an educational deferment to go to graduate school, so I finished my graduate degree. While I was at Northwestern I met John DeMott. D-E-M-O-T-T. John DeMott used to be state editor for the *Kansas City Star*, and he taught one of the graduate classes at Medill. Early in the semester we were doing these little bios that he wanted to do so he could have an idea of who we were, and I said, "I think I'd like to work at the *Kansas City Star*."

GA: Why did you come up with that?

GJ: Well, because I used to live there and now that I had sort of gone from Fayetteville to Evanston, Illinois, by Chicago. I was thinking, "Wait a minute,

Kansas City. I can do that.” So I thought I’d like to work at the *Kansas City Star* and Professor DeMott came up to me after and said, “You’re going to do all right here. You don’t have to butter me up.” I said, “I’m not buttering you up.” He said, “You’re serious about Kansas City?” “Oh, yeah.” And I guess he thought I saw Kansas City on his résumé and was trying to gain a little advantage there and the truth is, I really didn’t pay that much attention. I mean, I knew it, but I didn’t. I wasn’t thinking, “Network.” I slowly learned the concept of networking. So he said, “I have some friends there and I might be able to help you.” I said, “I would appreciate it.” This was the fall semester, fall trimester—you know Northwestern was on the trimester system, actually quarter system because the summer counts, too.

GA: What year are we talking about here?

GJ: Fall of 1970.

GA: Okay.

GJ: I graduated in 1970; I went to Northwestern in the fall of 1970. And he said, “If you’re going to be in Kansas City over the holidays, maybe I can meet you there and we can—I can introduce you to these folks.” He was still commuting back to Lawrence, Kansas. I think he had lived in Lawrence or something like that. He’s retired there now. And my older brother then lived in Kansas City, so I worked out this deal where I could go to Kansas City for Thanksgiving and went there for Thanksgiving. John’s wife got sick and they didn’t get to make the trip, so he didn’t really get to introduce me. So he wrote them a letter that I never saw, but one of my classmates who was a

work study [student] said, “What did you do to John DeMott?” I said, “Nothing.” She said, “He just wrote the *Kansas Star* a letter that said that if they didn’t hire you immediately they were damn fools.”

GA: [Laughs]

GJ: So they got in touch with me and asked me if I could come by [at] Christmas for an interview. So I went back to Kansas City over the Christmas holiday, had my interview, and everything went seemingly fine. I went on to do the winter quarter in Washington in the Washington program, enjoyed that thoroughly, and when I got back to Evanston, had a call and a message to call Joe McGuff, *Kansas City Star* sports editor. So I called him and we worked up the whole deal long distance. So I was sitting there in spring of 1971 with a job in March that was waiting for me in June. That was so good, let me tell you.

GA: [Laughs]

GJ: Talk about angels watching over you. So I was the envy of my class. I had a job. Everybody was hustling trying to find a job. I had one. I wasn’t looking right now. I worked there for about twelve years. Had a good time at the *Star*, really good, good paper. It was good for young people. There were still a lot of the World War [II] vintage editors in the newsroom or in sports and all the other departments, but they were starting to get a lot of young people coming in in the 1970s so that gave the place a different little lift there.

GA: Was Tom Duffy around at that time?

GJ: He—you know he might—at the time there was a *Kansas City Times*, which was the morning paper.

GA: Yes.

GJ: And there was a *Kansas City Star*—afternoon staff. The sports people—sports, features all—everybody [except] news worked for both papers.

GA: Oh, okay.

GJ: So after my first week there working days, fooling myself into thinking, “Hey, I’m going to work for an afternoon newspaper. I’ll have the evenings off.” [Laughter] Looked at the book, the schedule said 5:00 [p.m.] to 1:00 [a.m.]. Whoa. So once I hit nights—and I worked nights for seven years—I didn’t know anybody on the afternoon staff. You know, I would sometimes get there early enough to see the afternoon staff as they were leaving, but I didn’t know a bunch of them. I did not.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Until I went over to the editorial and worked daytime, but that was funny. I thought, “I’m working days.” Life was good. Next thing I know, I’m working nights. I’ve got to buy a car. [Laughter] That was funny. But no, I didn’t know Tom. He could have been there, but I just didn’t [know].

GA: Okay. You were there—how long—how many years did you stay?

GJ: Twelve years.

GA: And then what happened?

GJ: There were two breaks there, in 1978, 1979 over that winter, literally from October until April, I was on the editorial page in the *Boston Globe*. And it’s

a funny thing. I was sitting there thinking, “This legendary newspaper called me.” [They] said, “We want to interview you,” and I went there for the interview. I didn’t like Boston. Went back for apartment hunting. I didn’t like Boston. I moved there. I didn’t like Boston. I should’ve listened to my instinct. I was sitting there thinking, “This is one of the best newspapers in America, you can’t say no.”

GA: How can you turn that down?

GJ: Yes, and you know it was kind of the tail-end of the Boston school busing crisis so they were still working some things out. In retrospect I should’ve just bitten the bullet, paid a lot in rent, and lived in Cambridge. I would’ve been a happier person and I would have stayed at the *Globe*, but I didn’t like Boston. Cambridge was an entirely different world. So I came back with my tail tucked between my legs, having been humbled by my experience in the East and, in retrospect, it was culture shock. Kansas City is midwestern/southern and was not terribly different, plus I had the background of a childhood there so it was—somehow or another it was all inside of [me] to be relearned. But Boston was the first time I ever ran headlong into ethnicity. I’m not talking about white and black, I’m talking about Italian, Irish, Jewish—all the things that’s sort of the melting pot that everybody writes about—there was still a lot of trying to figure it out. And that was tough. It was tougher than I was. I just didn’t belong there. So I got back to the *Star* in 1979 and started writing a TV/radio column, enjoyed that tremendously. In 1981, I applied for a Nieman Fellowship and did that from

1981 to 1982 and that just changed my world for me. So then I had the East on those terms and I thought, “I can do this. I can do this.”

GA: Yes.

GJ: So I applied at a couple of places after coming back, giving my year back to the *Star*.

GA: For the Nieman?

GJ: And thought I was headed for the *New York Times* and just got derailed there in the worst way. Roy Reed had gotten this interview at the *Times* for me and Roy Reed said, “Well, just sometimes they make a mistake and I’ve gotta think that you’re one of their mistakes.” And he said, “I have another friend that I [can] call.” He called Gene Roberts. And, see, I didn’t know this, Foreman was at the [*Philadelphia*] *Inquirer*. Again, I was still working out this networking thing. Had I known that, I—Philadelphia wasn’t necessarily on my radar, so I was thinking New York, Chicago, maybe Los Angeles, but definitely New York, Chicago. In fact, I had a nice—I had an offer to write sports at Chicago, and it coincided with my dad having a heart attack and dying. My mother moved in with me and she said, “I’m not sure if I want to live in Chicago.” I said, “Don’t worry.” I can’t blame her for my turning down that job because I was also told by the *Star* people, “You know we can’t beat this offer, but if you’ll give us a little time to work on it, we’ll make it worth your while.” And sure enough [Joe McGuff] did. So I can’t complain about that, it worked out fine.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So I wound up covering pro[essional] sports in Kansas City. So I would've gotten [paid] really well. But I went to the *Times* and had my interview there and just thought that I had a job offer and the guy even said, "We're going to want to talk to you again." And they sent out this letter saying, "Sorry, Charlie." I was pretty demoralized about that. Part of it was ego, but part of it was thinking I'd really done a good job. Now how I'm going—all of these—out of the things that just fallen in my lap, how am I going to complain? You know I graduated; I had got a job waiting on me. So Roy called Gene and said, "Here's somebody you ought to talk to." I interviewed in Philadelphia and, man, next thing you know I'm headed for the *Inquirer* in the fall of 1983 and I've been associated with that paper since October of 1983. So twenty-two years. It's been wonderful. And, in retrospect, I didn't belong at the *New York Times*. I belonged at the *Inquirer*. Oh, the lunacy there. Their willingness to put up with eccentrics—and it's okay to laugh out loud in the newsroom. So that just turned out to be just Disneyland to me. I got to do a lot of things there. That was the thing about going to a bigger paper than the *Star*. I wasn't going to stay there [Kansas City] and become some sort of expert on TV, but I was starting to get bored. I kept in mind this sort of rule that once I start to develop contempt for the people I'm covering, it's time to change. [Laughter] So covering all these general managers who've come up through sales and they're just destroying news departments at local stations—you know, I was known as the "Ayatollah" at one of the—I just set fire to them for some of the stuff they did, so it was time to move on. And at the

Star there were not many national slots, and I really did want to do some bigger reporting.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So I went to the *Inquirer* on a promise that if you'll take this job and move me back to features and that's what I was trying to kind of shake because I'd been sports, editorial and features. And three years after moving there, they put me on the national desk. So it worked out real well. After my national job, I went into editing and just never looked back. It's great.

GA: So when did you come [to the University of Arkansas]?

GJ: I came here in the fall of 1995. A few years earlier than I thought. I thought that maybe by my mid- to late-fifties I would start to teach and I had over the years come back to visit the department and talked to classes and stuff like that. I thought that one of these days it would be good to come home and teach.

GA: Okay.

GJ: Roy Reed retired after the spring semester of 1995, and I got a phone call saying, "You know your school needs you. It's time to come home." I said, "Well, I'm just getting started on this editing thing." So we talked and I moved my wife here, dragging, kicking and screaming. She was born and reared in Chicago, lived in Philadelphia and Washington. We met in Kansas City. The smallest place she'd ever lived in was Jefferson City, Missouri, where she spent four years at Lincoln University.

GA: Okay.

GJ: So Fayetteville, Arkansas, was not on her radar, let me tell you. [Laughter]
That was a tough sale, really a tough sale. The first few years, I kept looking to see if she was home every night.

GA: [Laughs]

GJ: But it's been a good move.

GA: Did y'all [you all] have kids?

GJ: She has a daughter from her first marriage. Candice lives in Baltimore, Candice is terrific. We talked to Candice about moving here. She said, "Do they have an airport?" "Yeah." She said, "You can move whenever you want to." So that's been a good move for us. And I'm glad that I did do it sooner [rather] than later because there's a lot more energy required in dealing with these kids than I'd imagined. You know, it wasn't that I planned to come in and tell war stories and sit back and be the grand old man, but one of the things I learned early in editing was when you go out and you're working in the suburban bureau with these really inexperienced reporters, gee whiz. That's work. That's not like you sitting there editing David Zucchino or Michael Ruane—I'm thinking of Pulitzer Prize winners—or Mike Vatez or any veteran or Mark Bowden. You read their stuff. You help them out a little bit, but mostly you stay out of their way. And yet, working with these suburban reporters and some of these kids, particularly the stringers we were hiring would actually sit down and write that the meeting began at 7:00 and I'd say to myself, "Oh, this is going to be a long edit."

GA: [Laughs]

GJ: So that's when I sort of developed the knack for working with inexperienced reporters. I thought, "Well, if I can do that then I can teach."

GA: Okay

GJ: Everything that I've sent out [as] one assignment comes back to me [as] eighteen stories so, yes, I'm staying up late and getting stuff done. I have to get it back to them right away. There's no need waiting weeks on end and giving stuff back.

GA: Yes.

GJ: And see that they, in the interim, have made the same mistake about forty times again, so I try to catch these mistakes before the interim. I'm glad that I did do it in my forties as opposed to waiting until I was almost sixty. And, you know, our newspaper business is changing so much. So much has changed at the *Inquirer*. Roberts left in 1990. That was the end of an era.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Everybody looks back and says [that] there was no golden era in newspapers, but [when] you're young and you're doing all these things and you're involved, it's golden for you.

GA: Yes.

GJ: Those were some special days—some special days at the *Democrat*, just learning—some really special days at the *Kansas City Star*. We had a great sports staff. I mean, guys left there and went to Toronto, Pittsburgh, went to Boston, went to Philadelphia. Two went to Philadelphia. There were some burners, really good sports reporting. And, of course, the *Inquirer*—you

know, seventeen Pulitzers in fifteen years. They were just knocking the socks out every night. I learned a lot up there. So I'm glad I did. I'm glad I did. The young kids coming along now—I'm sure that it's special for them, although I look at how the corporations have taken a bigger hand and everybody's doing more with less. You know, sometimes I go back [and] the staff is exhausted. A lot of them are demoralized. I'm glad that I left. I'm glad to get back and work and enjoy some time there with old friends and meeting new friends, but it's just not the same place. And maybe that's a good thing. Maybe the people who remember twenty years ago shouldn't be in the same newsroom because you're trying to recreate then, and that's just not going to be anywhere. You know the stuff we used to do. When I started there, assigning editors—these are the folks who have some status in the newsroom but, you know, they're not on the masthead. They can make some judgment calls, but they're not upper level editors, they're midlevel editors. Assigning editors could authorize travel, but department heads would basically say, "Okay," if that's the story. He or she would rubber stamp it unless it was overseas, but that's gone. Travel now goes, I think, to the managing editor. [Laughter]

GA: Made it part of his own house.

GJ: Yes, exactly. Yes, we didn't ask how much it would cost to cover a story. We didn't ask [if] we could afford to do this story.

GA: Yes.

GJ: If it was a good story, we did the story. We worried about paying for it later on, but it's a different world now. You worry about paying for it right off the bat and that's, as I said, for the kids coming in that's all they'll know, so they'll meet it on those terms and it won't be hard on them. It will be what they know. But for the old hands, it's just annoying. Just some lunatics who would check out company cars and leave them at airports in Allentown and stuff like that. We would ask, "Where's that car?" "Oh, it's in Allentown. How is it in Allentown?" "That's where I had to go to catch old so and so." When I was in the Washington Bureau I was trying to get this interview with the House Budget Committee Chairman, William H. Gray, III. Bill Gray, who was involved in wrangling or did something through the budget process—and I needed the Bill Gray story. The national editor was pushing for it. The only time I could get [to interview him] was [to] fly with him to this program in Philadelphia and fly back. And the national editor said, "Do it." I get on the plane, and it's a charter. That flight cost \$700 and something dollars. That wouldn't happen today. This was 1988, 1987. That would not happen today. The first thing they'd say is, "How much is this plane, who's on it?" That would not happen. And it was a good story. [I] had some time with him. This was before cell phones—well no, there were these huge cell phones. But those things just don't happen, and I'm a little sad about that because we miss some stuff. But we've still done some good stuff. It's different today.

GA: At any point I guess, back when you were still in Arkansas, still in school, did your family predilection to stay away from the *Gazette* ever change for you? Did you ever aspire to go over there? A lot of the people from the *Democrat*—at least in my time that was kind of the career path you took in Arkansas.

GJ: Well, I did when I was covering the Razorback stuff. I got to meet Mr. [Orville] Henry and we were acquaintances. I wouldn't really begin to say we were friends. I guess at one point I just started filing away at the back of my mind to think about working at the *Gazette*. But I didn't think that the *Democrat* was a bad place so I was not necessarily that far removed from the *Gazette* but I just sort of filed it away. In fact, I got a very nice job offer from the Sanders family to write sports in Springdale. [I said,] "I've got to go to graduate school. My dad was insistent that I go to graduate school. I can't accept your generous offer, but thank you."

GA: Going into this, your dad's nickname was "Static." Do you know where that came from?

GJ: He was always tinkering around with electrical stuff. That was sort of family lore. I've heard other people called that, so I guess it was probably a nickname that was—I don't want to say was common, but certainly was in his generation. But the explanation was he was always fiddling around with electrical stuff.

GA: Okay, we've actually covered a lot of ground here. Anything else you can think of off the top of your head?

GJ: No, I'm sorry. I just don't remember a whole lot more about the place. There were a couple of intern stints, and that's my experience with the venerable *Democrat*. Like I say, there were some good people there. Very good folk.

GA: Okay. I guess we'll leave it at that.

GJ: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Brenna Berry]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]