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Interview with

Charles Rixse
Hot Springs, Arkansas
15 July 2005

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here with Charlie Rixse in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on July 15, 2005, conducting an interview for an oral history project on the *Arkansas Democrat* and *Democrat-Gazette* [for the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville]. The first thing I need to know, Charlie, is do I have your permission to make this interview and to turn the tape over to the University of Arkansas's oral history project?

Charles Rixse: Yes, indeed.

JM: Very good. Well, let's just start at the beginning. Tell me your full name and where and when you were born.

CR: Charles E. Rixse, Jr. [Pronounced Rick-see]

JM: Will you spell Rixse?

CR: R-I-X-S-E.

JM: Okay. Where and when were you born?

CR: September 29, 1929, in the old Little Rock Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas.

JM: That was the name of it—Little Rock Hospital?

CR: Oh, probably not the exact name. It was also the medical school, too, I think.

JM: Okay. The University of Arkansas Medical School?

CR: Yes.

JM: Yes. All right. Who were your parents?

CR: Charles E. Rixse, Sr., and Myrtle Brewer Rixse.

JM: That's M-Y-R-T-L-E?

CR: Yes.

JM: All right. Where did you go to school?

CR: I went to school at Park Hill School, Fourth Street Junior High, North Little Rock, and North Little Rock High School, and [the] University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Charlie, when did you first become interested in journalism?

CR: It was probably in my senior year at North Little Rock High School, when I was cajoled into being sports editor of the school paper, *The Hi-Comet*.

JM: *The Hi-Comet*. Is that *H-I-Comet*?

CR: *Hi-Comet*.

JM: Okay.

CR: *Hi-hyphen-Comet*.

JM: Yes. Okay. After that, you went on to the University of Arkansas and majored in journalism there. Is that correct?

CR: That's correct.

JM: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences at the University and taking journalism and working on the school paper the *Traveler*?

CR: Well, I started out as the intramural sports reporter for the school paper. Then I worked as a sports writer and sports editor. I think I was a sports editor for maybe three semesters.

JM: Who were some of the other people on the *Traveler* at that time—your editors, et cetera?

CR: John Troutt was an editor one year and Robert McCord was an editor. I can't remember the ones before them.

JM: Was it Dusty [“Sonny”] Rhodes?

CR: I think Dusty Rhodes was already done.

JM: Was he? Okay. So John Troutt of Jonesboro fame and then Bob McCord, right?

CR: Yes.

JM: So you got a journalism degree?

CR: Right.

JM: And you intended to work in journalism?

CR: Yes, I did.

JM: Okay. So how did you get to working in professional journalism? Sort of explain your route there.

CR: Well, the next stop after the university was the *Cavalier*, the newspaper of the First Cavalry Division in Hokkaido, Japan, at that time. The Korean War was under way.

JM: Can you spell Hokkaido?

CR: H-O-K-K-A-I-D-O.

JM: Okay. Back up just a little bit, though. How did you get into the service? You

graduated from the university, but you didn't immediately go into the service, right?

CR: No. In those days, they had a thing called the draft.

JM: Yes. [Laughs]

CR: And you couldn't dodge it too easily, but I thought probably it was something I ought to do anyway.

JM: What did you do until you were drafted?

CR: I worked as a delivery boy for the summer, knowing that I was going into the army in about September or early October.

JM: And was that the case? Was that when you got drafted and went in?

CR: Yes.

JM: And you were sent to Japan.

CR: Yes, by way of Camp Roberts, California. After Camp Roberts, I was assigned to the public relations school at Fort Slocum in Long Island Sound, New York. That was an interesting couple of months. Once I graduated from there, I was sent down to the base in Waco, [Texas]. Anyway, I was there a month serving as company clerk. It didn't take any time to get on the boat and go overseas.

JM: Okay. They sent you to Japan and you started working for—was it the *Cavalier*?

CR: Yes.

JM: *C-A-V-A-L-I-E-R*, I assume.

CR: Yes.

JM: What did you do with that newspaper?

CR: Well, I was technically the managing editor, but I also wrote all the editorials and

stuff because the sergeant who was the editor wouldn't write it.

JM: Did you have any staff?

CR: Yes. I had a staff of two reporters most of the time. Two reporters in Hokkaido most of the time, and I had a remote reporter at the other branch of the division in Sapporo. Also, we always had a staff artist. They were pretty good, too. I had two while I was there.

JM: Spell Sapporo for me.

CR: S-A-P-P-O-R-O.

JM: Sapporo. Okay. All right. So how long were you there?

CR: I was there about a year.

JM: Okay. Any particular thing you remember about your journalistic efforts there?

CR: Yes. I learned some very valuable lessons about how to produce a newspaper with film.

JM: Tell me what you mean, "with film."

CR: Oh, I can't think of the term [reference to offset printing].

JM: Okay. How about any of the stories? Are there any particular stories that you did of any distinction that you remember?

CR: No. I wrote a column and I wrote a lot of stuff sort of modeled after *The New Yorker*.

JM: Okay. That wasn't a bad model. [Laughs]

CR: That was fun. They let me write pretty much whatever I wanted to.

JM: Yes. Okay. It wasn't just necessarily or maybe even sports.

CR: No, I was the managing editor. I didn't even do the sports.

JM: Yes.

CR: I forgot to tell you about that. We also had a sports person most of the time.

JM: Okay. When did you get out of the service?

CR: I got out of the service in 1953.

JM: I guess I'd better go back. You got out of the service in 1953. You graduated from the university, as I well remember, in 1951. Right?

CR: Right.

JM: Okay.

CR: The Korean War ended while I was overseas, so they started bringing everybody home and giving them early discharges, thank goodness.

JM: All right. What did you do when you got out of the service?

CR: I started looking for a job in newspapering. I was lucky enough to find a position at the *Arkansas Democrat*, the evening newspaper in Little Rock, Arkansas.

JM: Okay.

CR: I think I got an inside on that job from a fellow named Jerry McConnell.

JM: Is that possible? [Laughs] Yes, I was there. Okay. What did you do when you started working for the *Democrat*?

CR: Basically, I was the city hall reporter.

JM: Okay.

CR: That was a most enjoyable job. On the weekends I always worked in the sports department.

JM: Okay. Is there anything in particular you remember about covering city hall—any of the stories that came up and developed?

CR: Yes, there was a controversy over the development of the city reservoir at Lake Winona. There was a lot of controversy about that. I sort of found out about what was controversial and got it published for the first time.

JM: Okay.

CR: Then there was a series of stories that I wrote on the slum housing situation in Little Rock, particularly for the blacks. That got a lot of attention, and I think it actually helped [solve] the problem some.

JM: That brings something back to mind. Did you write in particular about one of the slum landlords?

CR: Yes, I did.

JM: Do you remember his name?

CR: No, I can't. [Laughs]

JM: I thought I remembered that you sort of exposed how that slum landlord operated.

CR: Yes, I did.

JM: Did it produce any results as far as how the city regulated it or anything? Do you remember?

CR: I think it did. I think they got a little tougher on those landlords.

JM: Yes.

CR: It was one of those situations where you'd go down there and look at where those people lived, and the only water they had was out of a pipe coming up out of the ground, and everybody had to share it. Just like the Third World still is today.

JM: And this was inside the city limits, right?

CR: Oh, yes.

JM: Yes. And you originated those stories, right?

CR: Yes, I did.

JM: Anything else that you recall about your days covering city hall in Little Rock?

CR: Well, I was really intrigued by the public financing and how the city budget worked and all that kind of stuff. I wrote a lot of stories on city operations.

JM: Who was the mayor then?

CR: Pratt Remmel.

JM: Pratt. Okay. A republican.

CR: A republican.

JM: Yes. How did you get along with Pratt?

CR: Well, he was one of the few republicans I ever liked.

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs] Who was your competition at the [Arkansas] *Gazette* at that time?

CR: A fellow named Jason Rouby. He was very formidable competition.

JM: Spell that for me.

CR: R-O-U-B-Y.

JM: Jason Rouby—we all know and love. Okay. So you stayed—well, let's go back. What kind of a newspaper was the *Democrat* at that time? How did you feel about the *Democrat* as a newspaper in that era when you were covering city hall?

CR: Well, an afternoon newspaper is put out under certain time constrictions that made it hard to be a really good newspaper. The *Democrat* labored under those difficulties and did some good things. But on the whole, it was much inferior to the competition that was the morning newspaper, the *Gazette*. I shouldn't assess

the staff. I was too young then to know too much about whether the managing staff was very good or not, but I didn't think they were very good at the time.

JM: You're talking about the *Democrat* staff?

CR: Yes.

JM: You're talking about the editors. Is that what you're referring to?

CR: Yes.

JM: Anybody in particular that you want to comment—[laughs] or do you just want to tell us who some of the editors were at that time that you recall?

CR: Gene Herrington, of course, was the city editor, and he was the one I had the most dealings with. He was a nice guy. I had a couple—well, let's see, Roy Bosson—he was managing editor when I first got there, I think. He was replaced by an older guy who was kind of innovative and a pretty good newspaper guy, but maybe a little old for the job, too. Maybe he didn't have enough . . .

JM: Who was that? That wasn't Ed [Edwin] Liske, was it?

CR: No. Well, I can't remember his name. He was a gray-headed fellow. We all are now.

JM: Allen Tilden wasn't still city editor when you first went there?

CR: I don't think so. I think Herrington was there.

JM: Okay. I knew at one time that Herrington replaced him, but I couldn't remember when it was.

CR: This other managing editor—he liked to run a column of shorts down the front page on the left side. His name was Joe something, I think.

JM: I remember a Joe Crossley, but I don't remember him being managing editor.

CR: Joe Crossley. Well, I thought he was managing editor.

JM: No, he was the news editor, I think.

CR: Okay. News editor. All right. I got the positions mixed up.

JM: Okay—if I remember correctly. Joe Crossley was the guy who ran the picture of the upside-down cake upside down one day. [Laughs] I think on purpose, but I don't know that for sure.

CR: I would like to believe that it was on purpose.

JM: How about the rest of the staff? Do you remember much about the rest of the *Democrat* staff at that time?

CR: I thought they were fairly competent.

JM: Anybody in particular that you remember?

CR: Well, your successor, Sy Ramsey, was a police reporter at that time. He was replaced by a guy named [Ron] Burnham. I can't remember right offhand any of the other people. There was a girl who was—the lady—no . . .

JM: Maybe federal?

CR: Federal.

JM: Margaret Frick?

CR: Margaret Frick. Yes.

JM: All right. Let's see, on city hall—you probably replaced R. B. Mayfield. Is that correct? Do you remember if you took his place covering city hall?

CR: Yes, I probably did, and then he went on the desk.

JM: No, he went to the capitol.

CR: He went to the capitol. That's right.

JM: Yes. Sy Ramsey. That was S-Y, wasn't it?

CR: S-Y Ramsey.

JM: He was a pretty good reporter, wasn't he?

CR: He was pretty fair.

JM: Okay. I had gone to the capitol, too, I think, at the time that Sy took my place. Some of the others that I recall when I first went there might have already been gone by then. Of course, we had quite a bit of turnover. Was Bill Secrest gone then?

CR: Bill was gone.

JM: Yes. Was Ken Kaufman still there?

CR: Ken was still there.

JM: And Bud Lemke, of course, was still there.

CR: Yes.

JM: Did there seem to be a rather rapid rate of turnover on the staff?

CR: No, I turned over pretty fast myself.

JM: Okay.

CR: [Laughter] To really get to know.

JM: Do you—what do you remember about just the basics of the *Democrat*? Pay, for one.

CR: Well, it was about as low as it could get, I think. I think I started at \$30 a week.

JM: What about the working conditions?

CR: Well, it was pretty rough. That was bad duty. The city room was in between the business department on the bottom floor and the Linotypes and all the hot

machines on the top floor, and summers were a real test of your endurance and stamina and all that kind of stuff.

JM: No air-conditioning?

CR: No air-conditioning.

JM: Okay. And the fringe benefits? [Laughs] You don't remember any fringe benefits?

CR: [Laughs] No.

JM: You don't remember any sick leave?

CR: No.

JM: Or retirement benefits?

CR: None whatsoever.

JM: I doubt that anybody else can remember any, either. Anything else that you remember about the *Democrat* at that time?

CR: Well, I also did some writing for the little magazine that they had. I got to do a piece on some of the jazz musicians of the time.

JM: Oh, was that the Sunday magazine?

CR: Yes.

JM: Who was editor of that then? Was it Allard?

CR: Allard. Chet Allard.

JM: Chet Allard. Chester Allard. Okay. McCord had not taken over the Sunday magazine at that time. He came on a little later, maybe.

CR: I think maybe he took it over while I was still there.

JM: Oh, did he?

CR: I wouldn't swear to that.

JM: Okay.

CR: Yes, I know he did because that jazz article that I wrote—he was the editor then.

JM: Do you remember—in covering city hall—what the situation was like down there—the press room and how you sent your stories in?

CR: Well, we had a machine. I don't remember what the name for it was then [reference to a Teletype machine]. It was connected by wire. I don't think it was telephone. It had to be hard-wired to the *Democrat*, and you just typed copy on that thing. You didn't have time to do anything but compose on it. I guess it made us write a little faster.

JM: Okay. So the press room—that was a joint operation, I guess, that was available to both the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*.

CR: Yes.

JM: And anybody from radio that showed up, which was almost never, right? That wasn't air-conditioned, either, was it?

CR: Oh, no.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CR: I don't think there was any place in the city hall that was air-conditioned.

JM: Yes. That was up on the—I thought there were some, but I don't remember for sure. That was on the second floor, right?

CR: I think so.

JM: The police department was on the first floor.

CR: Yes.

JM: And the city hall offices were on the second floor and the third, too, I guess.

CR: Yes. Let's see, I think the council chambers were on the second floor, too.

JM: Okay. Do you remember anything—did you pay any attention to what the *Democrat* editorial policy was like in the days that you worked for the paper?

CR: No. I wrote whatever I wanted to write and turned it in. [Laughs] I don't even think I knew that they had an editorial policy.

JM: Okay. You don't remember any of the editorials that had any particular slant or anything?

CR: I'm not sure I even read their editorials in those days.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CR: I probably read more of the *Gazette's* at that time than the *Democrat's*.

JM: How were the *Gazette* editorials?

CR: Well, I liked them just fine, then.

JM: Okay. How long were you at the *Democrat* during that period of time?

CR: About a year.

JM: Is that all? Just a year?

CR: Yes. Well, I decided to get married while I was there in that first year. I couldn't live on \$30 [a week] and be married, so I had to leave and go to KARK-TV as a so-called “news person.” They paid me \$70 [a week]. My father and I had figured out that we probably could make it as a married couple on \$70. I hated it, of course, because mostly what you were doing was taking stuff off the AP [Associated Press] machine—a wire machine—and pasting it up for those guys to read. And most of them couldn't read very well.

JM: That was which radio station?

CR: KARK-TV.

JM: Was that before you went to the *Gazette*?

CR: Yes. Gene Herrington called me a couple or three months after I had taken the TV job and offered me the job back at the *Democrat* at the \$70 salary, so I went.

[Laughs] I was glad to get back to the *Democrat*.

JM: Oh, you went back to the *Democrat*, then?

CR: Yes.

JM: And you went back to covering city hall, or—what did you cover?

CR: I went back to city hall.

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

CR: Probably about six months.

JM: Anything you remember about that time—that six-month period or anything different from your first stint?

CR: No, it was pretty much the same stuff.

JM: Yes. Okay.

CR: It was interesting to watch the interactions of the city council members and the mayor and the department heads and all that. I learned a lot about that or from that.

JM: Oh, wait. I'm trying to remember now. I said earlier that you might have replaced R. B. Mayfield, covering city hall. But I covered city hall for a while, and I'm trying to remember who I replaced. I don't recall.

CR: The first thing I remember of you there was on the police beat.

JM: Yes, that's what I did in my first job. I covered the police for a while, and then I wound up covering city hall. I was covering city hall when the 1954 election came up, that's why they assigned me to cover Pratt Remmel. He ran for governor that year—ran as a republican. When that was over, they sent me to the state capitol. But I must have covered city hall while you were gone to the . . .

CR: To the radio station.

JM: To the radio, yes. That must have been what happened.

CR: I expect it was.

JM: Yes, I think that it was. I guess maybe when I went to the state capitol, then Herrington hired you back to take back over on city hall again, but at any rate—you were there about six months that time. Then where did you go?

CR: I went to work for the *Gazette*. I was sports editor for the state college teams.

JM: You were covering the Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference—AIC teams.

CR: Right.

JM: Most of them, I guess, were in the AIC then. All the smaller state colleges, not including the University of Arkansas, [Fayetteville] or Arkansas State [University, Jonesboro]. Is that correct?

CR: Right. Before we leave the *Democrat* thing, I'd like to mention that while Jason Rouby and I were great competitors, we also became great friends. That was probably an unusual type of thing. You got to be a great friend of his, too.

JM: Yes.

CR: We ended up with a tennis foursome that lasted a number of years.

JM: That's right.

JM: Later on, with Bob McCord.

JM: Yes, that's right. Jason Rouby, Charles Rixse, Bob McCord, and Jerry McConnell. That was great fun. From the standpoint of the people at the *Democrat* at that time—I don't ever remember hearing anything out of the *Democrat* hierarchy that said you shouldn't be buddies or shouldn't be friends with the people at the *Gazette*. Did you ever hear any sentiment like that?

CR: No. Never. I wouldn't have paid any attention if I had.

JM: Yes. Did you sense such a sentiment at the *Gazette*?

CR: No.

JM: You didn't think there was a feeling over there that you shouldn't consort with the people . . .?

CR: No, I didn't feel that.

JM: Okay. Do you remember—I assume that you got a raise to go to the *Gazette*.

CR: Yes, I did.

JM: You don't remember how much, do you?

CR: Well, it was probably \$10 or \$15 a week.

JM: And probably had to work one less day, wasn't it?

CR: Yes. Yes. Maybe two less days. [Laughter]

JM: Yes, because sometimes you worked a seven-day shift at the *Democrat*.

CR: Yes.

JM: Okay. The only day you got off was Sunday. Is that correct?

CR: Yes.

JM: So you had a five-day week at the *Gazette* and air-conditioning. [Laughs]

CR: And air-conditioning. It was much more organized and [had a] professional feel to it.

JM: Yes. Okay. That included sports and all the rest of it.

CR: Yes. Orville Henry was the best manager I ever worked under. I really learned so much from him. [Laughs] I only lasted one full sports season before an opening came up as the first night city editor at the *Gazette*. The managing editor asked me to take that. Orville didn't mind, so I did.

JM: Okay. So had you been wanting to go back to straight news?

CR: Yes, I really did. Sports just began to seem like the "same ol', same ol'" to me. I guess I always liked to do new things.

JM: Okay. You had done sports at the university and then you did it for a while at that stint at the *Gazette*, but, of course, you had done hard news, obviously, and you had done city hall. Did that sort of seem a little bit more significant to you than doing the sports?

CR: Right.

JM: So you became—and I think we've covered this in your interview for the *Gazette*—but then you became the assistant city editor under Bill Shelton.

CR: Right.

JM: I think we've covered the rest of your experiences there, and I can't remember now for sure, but I think that we talked about—did we talk about what you did after you left the *Gazette*? I can't remember.

CR: I can't remember, either.

JM: Fill me in. How long were you at the *Gazette*? And then tell me what you've

done since then.

CR: Yes, we did cover that.

JM: Did we? Okay.

CR: I was there about two years, I guess. Bob McCord bought the *North Little Rock Times*, which was the traditional, old small-town newspaper across the river from the *Gazette* and the *Democrat*. It sounded like a really good thing to go back and work on a paper in your home town. It was a lot of fun and a lot of hard work. It went back to seven days a week then.

JM: Yes. How long were you there?

CR: About three years.

JM: Okay. And then you did what?

CR: Then I thought I needed to leave the *Times* because the advertising wasn't enough to support the staff at the time, and I thought Bob McCord was capable of doing anything that needed to be done, and I should cease to be a burden. There weren't any newspaper jobs around, so I became a public relations person for a domestic insurance company.

JM: I don't know that I've ever asked you this question. When you left the *Times*, did you make any effort to go back to the *Gazette*?

CR: Yes, I think I did, as a matter of fact. They had a policy—well, the managing editor had a policy of never hiring anyone back. And he held to that policy with me.

JM: That was who?

CR: A. R. Nelson.

JM: A. R. Nelson. I had heard that. Did he tell you that he wouldn't hire you back because you had left, or did he just refuse to hire you back?

CR: I think he probably told me that.

JM: Yes.

CR: It seems like he did.

JM: I had heard that he had that policy. It seems to me like a few other people got caught in that situation, too.

CR: I think he warned me when I left for the *Times* that I never would get hired back. He reminded me of that when I called him and asked him.

JM: Yes. You didn't try the *Democrat*, did you?

CR: No, I wasn't interested in the *Democrat* by then.

JM: Yes. [Laughs] For what reason? Salaries or . . .?

CR: Well, I was used to making a little more money by then.

JM: Yes. You knew about what the *Democrat* salaries were likely to be like, and you also knew it was going to be a long week. [Laughs]

CR: Yes.

JM: Okay. Did you apply for any jobs out of the city—any other newspaper?

CR: No, I didn't.

JM: Who did you go to work for?

CR: Southland Security Life Insurance Company.

JM: Okay. And how long did you do that?

CR: I did that for about a year.

JM: Then you went where?

CR: Well, the company was moving its headquarters to Chicago, where they had another branch, and I didn't want to raise a family in Chicago. So I decided I wouldn't like to go up there. Another old journalism friend of mine, Bill Henderson, who I had known at the *Traveler*, had been made the general manager of the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce. He needed a convention bureau salesperson and director. I didn't know what a convention bureau was, but I thought I might try it, since I wouldn't have to go to Chicago.

JM: Yes.

CR: And it turned out to be the career of my life.

JM: So you stayed in that the rest of your life, but did you . . . ?

CR: Well, not the rest of my life.

JM: Well, I mean, not the rest of your life, but for a long time that was your career. From doing that job at Little Rock under Bill Henderson, then where did you—what transpired after that?

CR: Well, I started the convention bureau in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Then Little Rock decided they wanted me back to be there as a city employee with a lot more financing, so I took that. I stayed in Hot Springs on that job five years, and then I stayed nine years in Little Rock the second time.

JM: Then you went to Knoxville, Tennessee.

CR: I went to Knoxville, Tennessee, and did three years there.

JM: That was when they were planning to put on a World's Fair. Is that correct?

CR: Yes.

JM: Okay. And you helped with the planning on that?

CR: Right. We were able to use one of the buildings at the World's Fair as a pretty good convention center for after the fair. All my early career in the convention bureau business dealt with learning how to and doing campaigns to get convention centers built.

JM: So then from Knoxville you went where?

CR: From Knoxville I went to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority in Las Vegas, Nevada. I went as the construction oversight person and the future general manager of a downtown baseball stadium and convention center that was being constructed in Las Vegas. I stayed there three years.

JM: And then from there?

CR: From there I went to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

JM: You were head of the convention bureau there?

CR: Right.

JM: Okay.

CR: And was the impetus for a very good new convention center for them.

JM: Then you retired from Myrtle Beach, right?

CR: Yes. I sort of went into business for myself as a consultant, managing small convention bureaus and setting them up and so forth.

JM: And now you are completely retired and living in Birmingham, Alabama. Is that correct?

CR: Well, I wouldn't say I'm completely retired.

JM: Oh? [Laughs] Well, what are you doing?

CR: I still do a little consulting work from time to time.

JM: Oh, do you? Okay.

CR: I haven't done much lately.

JM: All right.

CR: I'm also caregiver for my wife, Pat, who is a stroke victim. That takes more and more of my time.

JM: Yes, I understand. Actually, you met your wife at the *Democrat*.

CR: Yes, I did. That was sort of a nice little romance story.

JM: Yes. She was working at the *Democrat*?

CR: Well, when I met her, I was working on the weekend, and the state fair was on. I had gone out to the state fair and covered a story on a dwarf man marrying the fat woman or something like that. I came back to write the story, and this girl walked in and sat down, and she was applying for the job as a—well, we called it the crap desk. [Laughter] I asked her, "Who cut and got the first slice of a wedding cake?" I needed that for my article. I asked her that, and we had a little conversation. I don't think she knew. Anyway, from that we became kind of close over a few months, and not too long after that, we were married.

JM: Okay. And touching on the *Democrat* itself, which this is mostly about—is there anything else about the newspaper at that time that you haven't touched on? Anything about working conditions or attitudes or the building?

CR: Well, everything seemed shabby and second-class or third, maybe.

JM: Yes.

CR: Even the elevator.

JM: [Laughs] Yes. It was kind of rickety. Did you still have to come in early in the

morning and do *Gazette* rewrites?

CR: Oh, yes, that was part of the routine.

JM: You came in—even when you were on city hall, you came in and the editors had clipped the *Gazette*?

CR: Right.

JM: They'd put all the related city hall stories on your typewriter in there. Were you part of that crowd that went out to breakfast? After you finished that, you went to breakfast or [to get] coffee over at Lane's Drug Store?

CR: Yes, probably coffee.

JM: Coffee. Yes. There were usually quite a few people. How many people usually wound up going over to Lane's?

CR: I only remember three or four, but there might have been a bunch of them.

JM: Yes. I was thinking that sometimes there were more than that. Were you in the group when we changed our place of breakfast from Lane's temporarily to Franke's Cafeteria?

CR: No, I don't think I was involved in that.

JM: Yes. Okay. Anything else that you can think of about your experiences at the *Democrat* that particularly stand out in your memory?

CR: No, I think I've covered about all of it that I can remember.

JM: Okay. Any reason that you can think of—and you've already mentioned some of them—that the *Democrat* might have been struggling? It certainly wasn't as strong a newspaper as its cross-town rival.

CR: Well, I know all of us there sort of had an underdog attitude. We knew we were

second-rate and we were just trying to do a little better—whip the opposition.

JM: Yes—working hard to do something about it.

CR: Yes.

JM: Sometimes the staff did produce stories that the *Gazette* didn't have or had missed. Is that correct?

CR: Right. But after all this was said and done, the biggest story of my career was the [1957] integration of Central High School in Little Rock. As I look back on it, I think that news-wise—in covering what was really news, the *Democrat* outdid the *Gazette*.

JM: But the *Gazette* got a Pulitzer Prize, right?

CR: Right.

JM: But you thought that the *Democrat* covered more of what was breaking. Do you remember who was—well, you weren't at the *Democrat* at that time, though, so you might not remember who particularly was involved in that coverage for the *Democrat*. Does anybody in particular . . .?

CR: I know George Douthit did some of it. He was never one of my favorite people, but I remember he did a lot of it.

JM: He was probably covering [Arkansas Governor Orval] Faubus a lot, too, at that time, wasn't he?

CR: Yes. He did cover Faubus. And there was a very good photographer—well, there were a couple of good photographers at the *Democrat*. I can't think of their names.

JM: Will Counts.

CR: Will Counts, and then the old guy was pretty good, too.

JM: Who was that? O. D. Gunter?

CR: O. D.

JM: So they got some good pictures. Okay. Anything else, Charlie, that you can think of?

CR: Nothing worthwhile.

JM: Yes. Well, that's fine. [Laughs] This has been an informative interview about a period that was a little while ago. I appreciate your time. You will get a chance to edit this interview later on, so if you think of anything that you want to add, feel free to do so.

CR: Will do.

JM: Thanks very much.

CR: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce]

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