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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

John Ward
Little Rock, Arkansas
23 September 2005

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here with John Ward for an interview for the Pryor Center for [Arkansas] Oral and Visual History on the *Arkansas Democrat*. We're sitting in John's office at the [Winthrop] Rockefeller Complex on top of Petit Jean Mountain. John, I know that you had a long and distinguished and somewhat varied career, including working with Winthrop Rockefeller, but let's just go back to the beginning and tell me your full name.

John Ward: John Lewis Ward.

JM: Okay. L-E-W-I-S?

JW: Yes. John Lewis Ward. I was born December 17, 1930, in Damascus, Arkansas, to Roy and Mamie Ward. He was a Baptist preacher. I lived some of my early life in Damascus, and [with] my dad being a preacher, we moved around a lot, so I lived in lots of different places. But anyway, he was a self-educated man—had a little study out beside his house. Early on, I found that a fascinating place to go hang out and read his books, and I think I read everything he had, even the religious things. As I progressed through school, at age thirteen I had an

opportunity to—we had moved to Morrilton [Arkansas] by then—had an opportunity to go to work for the *Morrilton Headlight* [later the *Petit Jean Country Headlight*] at age thirteen, just as a stereotyper. A member of the church was the co-owner and told my dad that if I wanted to learn something—because I had already expressed an interest in printing and newspapering—this would be a job and would pay me twenty-five cents an hour—I remember that. I think I had more money then than I've had since. Anyway, I took the job and that's how my newspaper career began. My dad had a religious publication, which he published, and I wrote some stuff for him. I started at a very early age, and I still have some of that stuff. Sophomoric, but there it is, you know. When I became interested in music, I took up the saxophone, flute, and clarinet. This gave me an opportunity to attract the attention of UCA [University of Central Arkansas, Conway]—it was ASTC, Arkansas State Teachers College, then—and the chairman of the department was a guy named Dr. Milton S. Trusler. He invited me to apply for a scholarship there.

JM: How do you spell his name?

JW: T-R-U-S-L-E-R.

JM: Okay.

JW: He's deceased now, but he lived to be about ninety-two. In fact, about three years ago, he came to Conway, but I was away, and I never got to see him again. Anyway, he invited me to apply for a scholarship, and he assured me that I would get a scholarship to play in the symphony orchestra and band. I explained at that time—I was seventeen or whatever, and I was playing in bands in Little Rock and

so on. I was really getting into jazz and all that. I said, "Dr. Trusler, I can't afford that. Even with a scholarship, I can't afford to—I have to work. I have to make a living, and I just can't afford it. I couldn't even pay my room and board with just that scholarship." He said, "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. I'll let you stay in my house. You can come and live with me." Which I did for a couple of semesters. I was working at the *Log Cabin* at night setting type—I was a Linotype operator—evolved into that. [I] was a music major until I got an opportunity—before I graduated I had done everything except my practice teaching. Hampton High School needed a band director; the guy had quit kind of suddenly. And Dr. Trusler said, "Do you want to go down there and be a band director, or finish out the year and just see how you like it?" I did that, and that's when I decided I really didn't want to be a band director, so I came back to school. But before I did that, I went on the road and played a couple years in a little jazz combo, traveling around in Indiana and Illinois and all up in that area—a lot of resorts around there. Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, I remember was one place we held out quite a bit. So I did that for a while. Finally, Betty [Chandler] and I—my future wife and I were communicating. I didn't have a sense of place, and I didn't think I was really getting anywhere. I didn't belong anywhere. You know, you just play six or eight weeks and pack up and go somewhere else and play. And the only people you know are people in the band. They were fine, but I wanted something more, with more roots associated with it. So I just came on back to Little Rock. I just quit. I resigned from the band, gave them my clothes so they could give them to somebody else—we had uniforms and all that crap. [I]

came on back and went to Betty's home, and her mother, Valeria Chandler—we had met, but I didn't really know her. This was a long time ago—I mean, I'd been gone for a long time when she had met me. I'll never forget this—I got to Betty's house—her parents' house. Her grandmother and grandfather also lived with them. I went in there and, of course I kind of had long hair, and I think I was probably wearing shades and—you know the drill back in those days. And Betty's mother—we got in there and I was trying to make friendly with everybody. Betty's mother called her to one of the rooms in the back of the house—I didn't learn this till two years later. Betty said her mother said to her, "Betty, you can do better than that." Anyway, we got married, and then I went to work for the *Arkansas Democrat*.

JM: Okay.

JW: Because I needed to do better. I still hadn't finished my degree—I later did finish it at UALR [University of Arkansas, Little Rock]. I went to work with the *Arkansas Democrat* as a reporter, and Marcus George was the editor and befriended me—can you turn it off?

JM: Sure

[Tape Stopped]

JM: I want you to resume there about the *Democrat* in just a second, John, but one thing I wanted to clear up [is] you said you went to work for the *Log Cabin*. Of course, you mean the *Log Cabin Democrat*, which is the newspaper in Conway, right?

JW: The daily newspaper in Conway, that's correct.

JM: Now then, when was this that you went to work for the *Democrat*?

JW: 1958. I was at the *Log Cabin* as a reporter during the 1957 crisis in Little Rock, [reference to the Little Rock Central High School integration crisis] and even went down there a time or two and covered some of that. But I got to the *Democrat* in 1958, and I was there until 1964.

JM: Okay, you were there six years, then. Okay.

JW: Yes.

JM: And Marcus George was what—the city editor?

JW: He was the city editor and my boss. Gene Herrington was the managing editor. Marcus, frankly, took a liking to me and encouraged me to develop my reportorial skills and also enabled me to pursue my interest in photography. I wound up doing lots of my own photography, and I wound up with the best job there, which was traveling around making my own assignments, making my own photographs. I covered all the development of the Arkansas River. I'd go to Tulsa [Oklahoma] and up and down—that was one of my assignments. I was also the medical news editor; I covered everything at the medical center and developed a science-news-writing function that the *Democrat* liked. And I did some other things like that. I covered—really and truly, and this sounds like I'm bragging [but] I'm not—I later wound up covering the big stories, whatever they were. You know, the boys industrial school fire at Traskwood, or whatever it was. [Editor's note: This refers to the Arkansas Negro Boys' Industrial School fire of 1959.] I wound up getting assigned to it. And the jet—Little Rock Air Force Base crash in Little Rock—well, that was my story. And other stories like that. The *Democrat* was an

interesting place. We didn't make very much money. We were poorly paid, and the people there were there because they were relaxed about things. They were not three-piece suit guys and intense stuff. It was a relaxed place to work. We did a lot of decent reporting. We were not the *Arkansas Gazette*. It was secondary to that paper. I'm going to close the door—just a minute.

JM: Okay.

JW: All right, the *Arkansas Democrat* was the second paper. It was an afternoon paper in those days. It was not a great newspaper. We took a lot of clippings from the *Gazette* and rewrote them for the *Democrat*. That was—first thing in the morning, that's what—Marcus had gone through the *Gazette* and clipped out everything that we hadn't had anything about and divided up the clippings among people's desks and encouraged us to follow up with phone calls and try to update the stories. A lot of them we did, [and] some of them we didn't, but that was step one every morning. Then we were given assignments and we'd go out and do reporting on daytime activities, whatever they were. But the *Democrat* was always secondary in the newspaper market in Little Rock—Mr. [K. August] Engel was a fine fellow, but he was as tight as the bark on a tree, and he was not interested in paying real salaries. I don't think he ever really quite figured out that reporting was important to newspapers. You know, selling ads was, but reporting wasn't all that important. But the *Democrat* was a very profitable paper because of the way it was operated like that—we had a good circulation. It wasn't anything like the *Gazette*, but we had a good circulation. We didn't feel competitive, really, with the *Gazette* because they were morning [and] we were

afternoon. We didn't think we were in their league. We all were wise enough as reporters and journalists to know that they were putting the most resources into local reporting and the quality of their stuff was just—it was pretty high. So we didn't—but we didn't have an inferiority complex about it. We just did what we did. I remember Mr. Engel didn't even air-condition the newsroom for a long, long time. When I was working the Saturday night shift, which I frequently had to do to get the Sunday paper out, we would raise all those windows along there and, of course, the bugs would just be in there by the millions—grasshoppers and flies and everything else. It was really, really very interesting. We had some great camaraderie there. Martin Holmes, I've mentioned—Rod Powers, Fred Petrucelli, R.B. Mayfield, Maurice Moore, and a lot of really great guys who were actually very good journalists. You know, we just got along fine. Everybody tried to do the best they could. I think if you would go back and review those papers and look at the quality of the reporting and everything, a lot of it was pretty good. Some of it wasn't so good, but most of it was pretty good. But it was always "Try to find the cheapest way to do things"—that was Mr. Engel's style. We had No. 5 Underwood typewriters and Stanley Berry, one of his nephews, who was—he and Marcus George were the nephews, and they later inherited it all. Stanley Berry—one of his jobs was to come up and oil the typewriters and things that were—and change the light bulbs. It was such a strange, kind of low-budget type thing. And we were always paid in cash—that was a big deal with Mr. Engel. You'd go down to the pay office and there would be your money, and it would be crisp—mostly new money in a little brown

envelope that would fit in your shirt pocket. It wasn't very much money; I remember that. But Betty and I got along okay. She did not work because we already had kids coming along. And we opted right away that she would stay home and help with those kids and raise those kids. I always worked at night over at Hot Springs playing [music], which was killing me—five or six nights a week over there. I was playing with all the big names—the Ames Brothers and all those big acts—because Hot Springs was wide open back in those days. The clubs could bring in big-time entertainment, and they did. I was always part of the pick-up band they would have, and played for all of them. And [I was] making pretty good money. Between that and the *Democrat*, we were able to get by, but it was killing me. And at some point, I told Betty, "I can't keep doing this. She said, "Well, don't." In effect, "Why are you doing all that you're doing?" And I said, "Well, I don't know if we can make it or not." She said, "We'll make it. We'll try. We'll make it. You just quit that and help me with Barry and Jenifer, and we'll just be all right." So anyway, I did quit playing. In fact, I put my horn up and didn't even get it out for about fifteen years.

JM: Is that right?

JW: Yes. And plugged in on the family and all that, and trying to further develop my newspaper career, and everything was going really good. I started to write features of various kinds, and that was mainly what I was doing. I was getting off the hard news stuff and writing feature stories. As I said earlier, I would travel around and do my own stuff and find my own stories. And they were well received—at least by Marcus and everybody. They seemed to like them. And I

guess our readers did, too, although I never did get much input from that. But it was about 1964, and everything's rocked along. I got this call; it was a call from a guy named Everett Ham, he's dead now. But at that time, he was one of Rockefeller's close associates. He called me and said, "Mr. Rockefeller is thinking about getting into politics, and he is looking for someone who knows the media that he could hire and become a full-time part of his staff. And he asked me to give you a call and see if you had an interest." I said, "Why on earth did he zero in on me?" He said, "Well, I think that Mrs. Rockefeller recommended you." I had written a series of stories about a mental health situation, and she liked them so much she had them published. So I guess that's where the impetus to contact me came from. He said, "Would you be interested in talking to him?" And I said, "Are you kidding? Of course, I would." He said, "Well, can you come up this afternoon?" I said, "My goodness. Wait a minute. I guess I could." And he said, "Well, he wants to send a plane down for you." I said, "What?" He said, "Yes." So I went out to Central Flying Service at the appropriate time, and there was this plane sitting there for me. Of course, I'd never even ridden in an airplane. I'm from Bee Branch, you know.

JM: Yes.

JW: So I crawled in there nervous as a cat, and the pilot—he could tell right away that—I said, "Hey, I haven't flown during the daytime." I don't know what kind of stupid comment I made, but he knew right away that this ol' boy from Bee Branch hadn't been in an airplane. We flew up there and landed, and Mr. Rockefeller met me at the airport in that big maroon Cadillac of his. He put me at

ease very quickly. [He] was very nice. He talked and asked me all about myself. He didn't try to talk about himself; he talked about me. And we talked on the way up—it's about a five-minute drive, or maybe ten-minute drive, up to his office. So we got up there, and got in there, and he said, "Has Everett explained?" And I said, "Well, yes, he said you wanted someone to help you with the media." He said, "Well, I may need more than that." He said, "Now you would not be a public—you would be my personal employee." And he said, "I don't know the title, but the marketing and the public relations stuff—I want you involved not just with my political interests, but also my private interests. Winrock Farms, Dawn Hill Country Club Resort, White Winrock out in Albuquerque [New Mexico]—those kinds of things." And I said, "Oh, boy, that sounds really very interesting. You know, I've never actually been a public relations person, *per se*." He said, "Well, that's the best kind that there is. I want you to consider it." And I said, "Well, what would my title be?" He said, "Well, what would you think?" And I said, "If I can just be bold." He said, "Be bold." I said, "Director of marketing and public relations." He said, "That sounds good to me." He said, "Let's just change it to director of public relations." And I said, "Okay, that'll be fine, too." We talked a little bit further, and he said, "Now, when could you go to work?" And I said, "Well, right away." And he said, "We need to talk about salary, money. And how much do you think you would need?" And, of course, I just mentally doubled my salary at the *Arkansas Democrat*, which wasn't much even doubled, and I gave him that figure, and he said, "That's fine." I told Betty later, "Of course, I left tons of money on the table probably." But anyway, it was

satisfactory to me, and we parted, shook hands. He wanted to know [if] I wanted to think about it anymore, and I said, "Not really. I'm ready to go." He said, "Okay, I'll see you Monday morning. Come up here and we'll get started." And that's how I got hooked up with Rockefeller. I handled all his advertising, all the marketing stuff, and later was his campaign manager, as you probably know. He was determined to succeed in politics, but he also knew, and he even told us—Tom Eisele, myself, Marion Burton and others around him, that we might lose this first race against [Governor] Orval Faubus. He knew that the challenge was big-time, and, of course, we were all amateurs. And we showed it in many ways. We did things that were amateurish, and Faubus, I'm sure, was amused. For example, Faubus made the charge that Rockefeller had taken his big ol' bulldozers to make room for his big red cows and bulldozed down this cemetery over in eastern Arkansas. As it turned out, what really happened [was] a bulldozer did go in there. They didn't know it was a cemetery—it had been neglected for probably—literally fifty years—and knocked over a tombstone. Boy, they backed right out of there and put a fence up around it, and that was the end of that. But Faubus was making a big deal out of that. And we knew it was wrong—it was a lie, so we did a documentary film on it, which was a stupid mistake. The title of it was *Here Lies Orval Faubus*. We thought it was so cute—it was so stupid, because everybody—"Wait a minute, what is this?" You know, they'd never even connected with it until we . . .

JM: Hadn't heard . . .

JW: . . . to connect with it. That was just one of the things we did. But anyway, we ran that campaign—this was in 1964—and we lost. We didn't do all that well. I think we got forty-three percent [of the votes], which, I guess, in some respects for a Republican . . .

JM: Pretty good.

JW: And running against a guy that was in there like Orval Faubus, forty-three percent probably wasn't too bad. We did not leave that campaign depressed or down, because Rockefeller had told us, "Look, we're going to run again, and we're going to win this next time." And we started gearing up, building our campaign organization, trying to learn from the many boo-boos we had made. And we did. We really worked at [it]. We got a computer, an IBM Model 360 computer, so we could computerize names and addresses and all that. We had some misfortune with it, but also some good fortune with it. One of the things we did was try to do a direct mail effort, and communicate with people about problems that they were concerned with. We could kind of regionalize the state. I could write you a letter about a problem—an issue in your region—that we were trying to address. But we made a lot of mistakes. Two of them that I remember—I'll just tick them off. One, we sent a letter to all state employees saying, "If I'm elected, you're not going to lose your job." One of those employees was Orval Faubus, and he was waving that letter around for two or three weeks. Another one we sent—I remember very well—to Harris Funeral Home, Morrilton, Arkansas, "Dear Funeral." By and large, though, the computer was an asset, and we just—we really made use of it. Then when Jim Johnson became the nominee, we felt real

good about that because he had really—he was the last right-wing segregationist to ever seek public office in Arkansas. You know, that was the campaign when he wouldn't even shake hands with black people and stuff like that. He probably didn't feel quite that way, but it was an act, you know? We beat him pretty good, and we knew we were going to beat him. We went into office, and I stayed on Rockefeller's payroll, of course, handling the public relations and advertising. I got accused of running the state of Arkansas by Bill Simmons and other media types because Rockefeller would come over to my office every afternoon. We were in the National Old Line Building, and he would come over there. Really, he was coming over to have a couple of drinks, as much as anything else. I wasn't running the State of Arkansas, but he would come over there and we would talk about issues and problems—talk about appointments, appointees. And I didn't have to convince him of this, he had it himself, that we were not going to appoint anybody to anything just because they were a Republican—that's stupid. If there was a Republican and a Democrat of equal competence and ability, we would appoint the Republican. But if not, we would appoint the Democrat. And frankly, 90%—well, I don't know how many percent, but most of his appointees were Democrats because there just weren't enough Republicans out there that were qualified, and he was not about to put somebody in there who was going to embarrass the coon dog out of him. We did—one or two probably got in there that shouldn't [have], but by and large [we] did a pretty good job. And all the Democrats—the Democrat Party was pleased with that, and we had a very strong organization in those days called the Democrats for Rockefeller. These were

people coming from them that were winding up in appointive office, and we did not look back or [feel] embarrassed about that. We said, “We have a two-party system; we want to have a two-party system. This state is more Democrat than Republican, and we’re going to function like that.” He was governor, and he was a Republican, but, boy, he was so nominal as a Republican, not even—he wasn’t even a Republican, frankly. He really didn’t go along with that, and he later canned ol’ Everett and all those hard-nosed Republican types. One thing we fought—and I fought—when I was campaign manager in 1968, they were determined that they were going to get Rockefeller to be more “Republican.” And they were determined that they were going to get “Republican” on the billboards and everything like that. Boy, they were putting the pressure on me and on him. I said, “We need to talk about this.” He said, “Okay.” We met over at the Governor’s Mansion about this reelection campaign. And I said, “I’m going to give you the benefit of my advice; it may not be any good. You can take it or leave it. But if we succeed in drawing the line between Republican and Democrat, you’re beat. We can’t do that. This is not a state for a Republican. These are Democrats. And if you make them—force them—these Republican types—they may care about your best interests in your reelection, but I’m not so sure. They’re trying to build the party on your back. And, in fact, I’ll confess to you, I’m not even a Republican myself. I don’t care about building the party. And I think we fool with that at our peril.” He said, “You’re absolutely right. We won’t do that.” Besides that, you know, Bill Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] was running, and the Democrats for Rockefeller were supporting him. And that guy—

that One-Hour Martinizing [dry cleaners] guy—Charles Bernard [Charles T. Bernard]—was running against him. Bernard was a right-wing Republican type who I didn't like anyway, and was very angry during the campaign because I was not giving him any money—I was the conduit for money to these other candidates. In fact, when the election was over and we had won reelection—beat ol' Marion Crank—Bernard wanted to have a meeting with me and the governor in the Governor's Mansion. I knew what was coming, so we went over there and we sat down and Bernard's opening shot was, "You cut my throat." And I—W. R. was startled by that—I said, "Yes, that's correct." I said, "We did not want to favor you over Bill Fulbright because this man's support base was voting for Bill Fulbright; they were Democrats—Democrats for Rockefeller. Had we given you a leg up and money and all that, and let you conduct a major race against Bill Fulbright, we would have driven off our own support base. It was stupid to even think about it." "Well, what about the party? Look what you've done to the party." He later went to prison, incidentally—or got into trouble. I don't know if he ever went to prison, but he got into trouble. But I said, "Well, I don't care about all that. I'm not speaking for Mr. Rockefeller. I'm not speaking for Governor Rockefeller. I'm speaking for myself. I don't care about all that—about the party—about you. I was interested in this guy being reelected, and he's been reelected, and I'm proud of it. And we're going to move on from here, as far as I'm concerned. Now he can do what he wants to." And W. R. said, "Well, no, we're going—I'm going to support the party"—he was talking about money—"and I will be available. And my support of the party will continue and will even

perhaps grow. But I'm not going to argue with what we did or how we did it.

And I'm sorry, Charles, but—" in effect, goodbye. That was the end of that.

Then the 1968—after the 1968 campaign, okay, now 1969, W. R. was in his last term, it turns out. And he was doing fine, but of course, a second term, you don't get jack out of the legislature. Even for a Democrat, and certainly for a Republican.

JM: Yes.

JW: They had done a lot of stuff—given him a lot of good things that he asked for in the first term. They were scared of him and didn't know what was worse, but he'd said he wasn't going to seek a third term, so school was out for the second term. They didn't care. He wasn't going to run for a third term. Quote, unquote. Okay. So we got on down the road and who should surface but Orval Faubus in the Democratic primary. He was going to run. There was a guy nobody ever heard of named Dale Bumpers in there, and some other people. And Rockefeller came in my office one afternoon and said, "I'm going to run for a third term." I said, "What?" I'd already made arrangements to go to Oxford University, [Oxford, England], and had been accepted to Greyfriars College [Greyfriars Hall, Oxford University]—just to get away from all this and read for the diploma in social studies. I was looking forward to it. Already had—Betty and I and the kids were going. I'd gone to see Finley Vinson at First National Bank—borrowed \$15,000. I was ready to leave, you know, and I wanted to leave. I wanted to get over there and breathe some fresh air. Well, he said, "I want to seek a third term." I said, "You said—you promised. It's printed. You will not—I will not seek a

third term.”” He said, “I know that.” I said, “You’re breaking your word.” And he said, “I know that. You’re going to have to help me with that.” I said, “Well, why are you doing this?” He said, “Because that s.o.b. [son of a bitch] Orval Faubus—I’m not turning this back over to him.” And that’s what it looked like was going to happen at that point.

JM: Yes.

JW: People forget that. They don’t realize that Orval Faubus—when he first got in there, boy, he looked like he was going to be the man. He was going to win the governor’s office back again. Well, here came the race that developed. There was the Democratic primary and Rockefeller was running for a third term, and we were all doing the best we could with him. We were doing polls and we were buying ads and all—doing all that crap. So Orval and Dale are in a runoff. And Dale beats him in the runoff. Gene Newsom was our pollster, and he called me. “Ward?” “Yes.” “This is Ol’ Man Newsom.” “Hey, Gene, what’s happening?” “It’s all over.” “Huh?” “It’s all over.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Dale Bumpers [is] going to be your next governor.” I said, “Wait a minute. We’ve got all this stuff,” and I started—“That don’t matter. You’re not going to win that race; I’m just going to tell you right now on the front end. It’s going his way. He’s going to win that thing. Ain’t nothing you can do, John. Think about that.” Of course, we had already committed millions of dollars, I guess—a lot. And I went back and told everybody, including W. R. Well—in effect, “We’ll see about that. We’ll turn this thing around.” I don’t think—I don’t remember the poll numbers exactly, but I don’t think we gained one percentage point. Whatever

it was between us and Dale to begin with—that's where it ended up. Dale beat us like a drum. Then Dale won the—at first wasn't very gracious, at the end of 1970. He was nice but not very gracious. Later he was very gracious to Rockefeller and about Rockefeller. And he appreciated Rockefeller commuting those death sentences. He said, "Man, that was a big, big deal when he did that." Then Rockefeller had, out of his own pocket, paid for a very professional reorganization of state government, which Rockefeller could never have gotten through. Well, Dale Bumpers—because he was a Democrat and the governor's office—it took him some doing, but he got it done. And, of course, the state benefits from it even to this day. Dale has been since then very gracious with Rockefeller. And I got to thinking about this, Jerry—about Rockefeller and Dale Bumpers. Sonny Walker said this at the memorial service. I guess it was at the memorial service. It might have been in an interview for the documentary film, I don't know which. Do you have a copy of that, by the way?

JM: No.

JW: You want that. Remind me and I'll give you one in a minute.

JM: Okay.

JW: But Sonny Walker put it well, and I hadn't thought about it quite the way he characterized it, and, boy, he was right on. He said, "Try to imagine what kind of a governor Dale Bumpers would have become had he followed Orval Faubus." When you start thinking about that, and thinking about Dale having to try to inherit and deal with all the stuff Orval had going, it would have been—he couldn't have been a good governor at all. Rockefeller cleaned—drove

everybody away from the trough, cleaned out state government—people—put in professional people at all levels. And Dale Bumpers could come in there, and, man, he had, in effect, a clean slate to write on. And he did, and did a great job. He was a great governor, thanks to Rockefeller. He gives Rockefeller credit now. He didn't right away, but he does now.

JM: Yes.

JW: All right, since that race was over, then I went to—when he got sick—well, I left a little before he got sick. Marcus George and Bob McCord asked me [if] I would like to be the managing editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*. They came to see me. In fact, I had lunch with them. I said—I'd already—Frank Robins, my old buddy up at Conway—*The Log Cabin Democrat*—he had already—he had also asked me would I want to be managing editor of the *Log Cabin Democrat*. It wasn't a hard decision for me to make because the *Democrat* was shaky even then. I saw it was shaky. *The Log Cabin* was solid and secure and Frank and I were then and are now old buddies, and I knew I would have *carte blanche* however I wanted to do that. And a good salary—in fact, it was better than what the *Democrat* was offering, and I could have jacked it up, but it was better. I had my world there, and if I pushed a button a light would come on, and I knew it was going to be like that, and sure enough it was. It was great. So I said, "No," and I turned them down. They went and got [John Robert] Starr after that. He doesn't know this—oh, he's gone, it doesn't matter.

JM: Well, they brought—I think they brought in Foreman.

JW: Oh, Gene Foreman—he didn't last long. He went on to Philadelphia.

JM: He stayed three years.

JW: Yes, he went on to Philadelphia, that's right. And then it was Starr..

JM: No, then it was me.

JW: Then you. Oh, that's right.

JM: Then me and then Starr.

JW: Okay. I'd lost that sequence. That's very interesting.

JM: Okay. But, nevertheless . . .

JW: Anyway—yes, that's good. Is Foreman retired now?

JM: Yes. He's teaching at Penn State.

JW: Okay. Fine. I went up there one time, I've forgotten now why, and met—Bob Lancaster was still up there as a columnist. Lancaster said, “I’m going to leave here.” I said, “Why?”—we had lunch. He said, “I’ve run out of stuff.” He said, “I write a column and I realize I’ve already written it sometime years back.” He said, “I’m just out of stuff.” And so he did. But anyway, I went to *The Log Cabin* and became the managing editor and worked very hard to make it a good newspaper. Frank was willing to put money into local reporting, and did. We built what I consider to be a very good newspaper. We won all the awards. That doesn’t necessarily mean anything, but we did well. And the townspeople really liked that paper—they accepted it. We fought the voting machine issue, and some other issues, and we won. We fought Mutt Jones and his cohorts and we won. And we did that editorially and otherwise. We had the reputation of being a courageous newspaper and a good newspaper, and I think we were both. I was there for twelve years, and one day I told Betty—she knew I was getting a little

bit restless—I said, “You know, I’m not getting any younger, and I’m going to get up tomorrow and do just what I did yesterday, I’m afraid.” Because I had it all worked out and had everybody laid out. I said, “I’m thinking about I want to leave there.” “Well, what are you going to do?” I said, “Well, I don’t know. And I’ve got to think about that before I jump off the ship there, so to speak.” She said, “Okay.” So anyway, Bill Hughes [a former United Press reporter and an aide to several University of Arkansas presidents] was in my office one day, a day or two later, and I told him about my restlessness—that’s all I did. Well, in about two days, Bill—oh, what’s his name? He was the former managing editor of the *Gazette*.

JM: Bob Douglas?

JW: Bob Douglas called me—God, I can’t imagine I forgot that name—Douglas called me and said, “Are you interested in teaching journalism?” And I said, “I’ve never taught journalism or anything.” He said, “Well, we’d be interested in talking to you.” He said, “We’d like to have somebody like you.” I said, “Well—” and I had been called before that—before Bob—to see if I had an interest in being chairman of the journalism department at the University of Arkansas, [Fayetteville]. What was the guy’s name who owned the *Springdale News*? T. C. Sanders.

JM: Sanders, yes.

JW: He had called me and wrote me a letter, and I turned him down because of *The Log Cabin* thing. This was a year or two before that. It was going great, and I was enjoying it. And somehow, I didn’t feel like I could do that. Or that I could

do the job up there. So anyway, Douglas called and said, "Are you interested?" And I said, "Well, you know, I would be interested in talking about it." So I drove up there. He put me up at the Mountain Inn. I think they're closing it down now, but anyway, he gathered the entire journalism faculty and everybody up there—ol' Roy Reed and all those people. There were about twenty of them—some people from [the] English [department] and from the Fulbright College. I met with them, and we talked for an hour or two, and then we went out to Roy Reed's place that [architect] E. Fay Jones had built for him—great house. We went out there and had a party and all that. It was all real fun, and they offered me the job as associate professor of journalism, so I accepted it. And I hadn't been in the job but about—and I really got into it and I loved it. I love teaching. Enjoyed it then, and I would now.

JM: Yes.

JW: But I got into it, and I hadn't been there too long and Ray Thornton, who was president of the university at that time, called me and said, "I want you to come over and talk to me." So I went over to talk to him, and he said, "Boy, I need some help, and you're the guy who can help me." He said, "I just don't have anybody who knows anything about the media or journalism or anything else, and I need your help. Would you want to work over here?" And I said, "Well, Ray—" because I could call him Ray—I said, "You know, I'm committed. I've signed a contract. I'm committed to teach over there for the year." I said, "I can't do that." I mean, *you* know. He said, "Well, would you do this part-time?" And I said, "Well, yes, I could do that." He said, "Well, how much money would you

have to have?" And I said, "Well, I don't know, how much do you—" He said, "What about if I give you \$10,000 a year? And you just work when you can." I said, "I'll take that deal." So I did take it. I started working with him, and he said, "I want you to go full-time as soon as you can." I said, "No, I'm going to finish that out." And I did. I said, "I'm not going to do Bob Douglas that way." So I did. I finished it out, went into administration full-time, then moved with the administration to the—across from MacArthur Park when the central administration moved there. I worked there with Jack Meriwether and Joyce Wroten and Win Thompson, who was still with the university at that time—Gary Chamberlin—you may not know all these people. It worked out real, real good, and everything, except working for Ray was not a great thing. Ray was such a strange—well not strange, but such an ego-centered guy. He just—you know. So I didn't much like that, but I managed. I did it for four years. When Win Thompson became president of the University of Central Arkansas, he called and wanted me to apply for the vice presidency of public affairs. I did, and, of course I got that. We had a "screening" process and all that, but I think they knew.

JM: Yes.

JW: But I did that until I retired in 1996. The day of my retirement party in the president's office I got this call from Win [Winthrop] Paul Rockefeller. "John, I'm going to run for lieutenant governor." "Yes?" "And I want you to be my campaign manager." I said, "Well, okay. I'll do that." And to make a long story short, I did that and managed his campaign for him, and we won. It wasn't a very big victory, but we did win. Meanwhile, the University of Arkansas system

invited me in to become part of their administrative staff, so I slid right into that. Joyce Wroten and I developed this proposal for this up here. In fact, Joyce and I are the architects of essentially that whole thing. When we put this together, got the wheels, got it done, and got it approved by the charitable trust, they gave us what all we asked for—\$53 million over the next ten years to get this thing going. When that was a done deal, I had the option of having whatever job up here I wanted, so I took the marketing/public relations directorship, and that's where I am right now.

JM: Now explain what this project is.

JW: This is a manifestation of the trust's interest in carrying on the legacy of Winthrop Rockefeller. When Winrock International moved away from here and abandoned—not abandoned—moved out of all these buildings—the trust owns the property. They wanted us to come in here and occupy this and provide not only conference services—which we already had going up here, and which we do now, only we're upgrading and elevating those and expanding them—we're fixing to build some more rooms, as a matter of fact—but also provide some educational programs for—not college-age kids, but for adults. You know, Culinary Arts Institute. Arts Institute. Horticulture. Those kinds of things that grown-ups like to do and like to be involved with. We would bring in top-notch people. Well, the culinary arts thing is a case in point. We're bringing in—and it's starting right away—we're bringing in some heavyweight chefs who will teach these people how to cook and what to do. With kitchen set-ups. In fact, we're going to build a kitchen—we don't have it quite yet. But that's what we're

going to have for them. The whole idea is educational. How do we improve Arkansas? How do we improve the lives of people in Arkansas? Because that's what Winthrop Rockefeller wanted to do and tried to do all his life. He had over 200 conferences and meetings up here when he was alive and living at Winrock with that idea in mind. All the way from clean water, to what's wrong with the aquifer over there, to how do you get rural development going in the state, to whatever you want to think that would improve people's lives in Arkansas. He had a great interest in health care and all that. He built a rural health clinic over in Perryville with that idea. Out of his own pocket. And he built Reynolds Elementary School out of his own pocket to say, "Here's the way a school could be." A model school. And he did lots of stuff like that. But he also had these meetings and conferences to send people away with good information and with objective information they could take back to their communities and work with it and make something good happen in their communities. That was the whole point of his life and his activity, and that's what we're trying to do here. We bring these people in—these conferences and meetings—we bring faculty from other campuses, if they need them, to engage these people. With good information—late information—from an academic point of view that will help to increase the quality of their meetings and conferences and let them go away with something that they can use after they get back home. That's what we're doing.

JM: Do you have an alliance with other groups in this?

JW: Well, alliances—no, not exactly. We do have a hook-up with the [University of Arkansas] Community College in Morrilton.

JM: Okay.

JW: And, of course, the University of Arkansas system. We're part of that . . .

JM: Okay.

JW: . . . University of Arkansas system. So we're hooked up that way. But no, we bring in people independently. Like the Clinton School [of Public Service in Little Rock]. They were up here the other day. The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation was here just this past weekend, having their meeting and conference. Quality people. High-dollar types. But mainly high-quality groups. We have the chamber of commerce stuff and public school groups, too. And we don't try to discriminate, but we want those heavyweight gatherings of people [whose] meetings and conferences have intellectual depth, and they mean something. And the conferees go back home and take knowledge and incorporate it into what they're doing in their communities. That's what we really care about. We care about Arkansas more than we do anything else. Now we have—or will have—other out-of-state things will come in here, and already do. But our interest, our focus, is Arkansas. What can we do to help Arkansas, to improve Arkansas? Our objective, our vision, is to provide a mechanism—if you want to call it that—for Arkansas to improve itself, to create a better life for its citizens. What all that entails—you know, we could spend weeks talking about it, but that's where we're going with all this. And we don't have that vision and that dream exactly on paper yet. We're getting there. We're going to do an annual report, which I'm going to be responsible for. Hopefully I'll complete it by the end of the year, and we'll probably issue it in March or April. That will have in it the vision of who

we are and why we're here and where we're going. It will have all the details going on with the Rockefeller Center.

JM: But you are part of the University of Arkansas system.

JW: We are independent of them in many ways. We're private.

JM: Okay.

JW: This is private money, but Dr. [B. Alan] Sugg, the president of the University of Arkansas system, appointed our board of directors, and still has an interest in it. Through him and through the University of Arkansas system, we have access to these campuses, but we are private.

JM: Okay.

JW: We are private. We take no state appropriations, so to speak. In other words, we're not—we would take state money if it were a grant of some kind to do something—we'd do that. But we're not on the appropriations list, you might say.

JM: Okay. So the money comes from the . . .

JW: The charitable trust.

JM: From the Rockefeller Charitable Trust.

JW: Yes. The Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust, which is where all the assets went after he died. After whatever he did for his son, Win Paul. And when the will was executed . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: This is Jerry McConnell with John Ward again, and this is side two of our taped interview. Now, John, go ahead about the money.

JW: All right, the charitable trust was created with the excess that remained after Winthrop died and after the will was executed, and Winthrop Paul—his only son and only child—got what he was going to get. I think the will also provided money for Bruce and Ann Bartley, the stepchildren. He had long since divorced Jeannette, and he had made a settlement with Jeannette before he died, so I don't think she was included in the will at all. There were a few other bequests for small things, really and truly, but the bulk of the money went into the Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust. I think it was right around \$200 million. It might have been a little more than that, but somewhere in that neighborhood—I can't remember, but it could have been more. And out of that the trust was charged with continuing on with the legacy of Winthrop Rockefeller and providing resources for those kinds of things that he had a great interest in—be it race relations, building Arkansas, the arts, and those kinds of things. As a matter of fact, the charitable trust made some significant gifts to the Arkansas Arts Center after he died, and also to what is Williamsburg [Virginia] and some other things that he had a great interest in that preserved our heritage as a nation, and, also, giving to the arts and that sort of thing. So the trust has continued on. Their interest turned toward this as a way—in a kind of centralized way—[to] carry on his legacy. On the ground that he loved. In his own barns, right here on Petit Jean Mountain, the place that he always wanted to come back to no matter how far away he got. This was where he wanted to be. And he developed that airport

with that one idea in mind, so they could land those big jets here. That's one of the longest air strips in Arkansas. Even now. But we have now taken over the buildings and offices, and we are attempting to carry on that very thing—his legacy. What is it he would want to do? What would he do if he were here today? What kinds of things would he want to put his money in? That's what we're trying to do. We have a lot of activity going on here, and if we're in error at all, it's because of trying to do so many things that the vision gets lost in the details. And we're going to have to fix that. I'm working with that idea. But it's going good.

JM: Very good. Now, John, all these things you were doing over the years—you also wrote at least one and maybe more books.

JW: I wrote two books. The first book came out in 1979, published by LSU [Louisiana State University] Press. It was a political biography, and I think the name of it was *The Arkansas Rockefeller*. I was given access to all his stuff, thanks to the charitable trust, which then had it in their purview. I spent a lot of time at UALR, where the papers wound up, and wrote that book. Then about three or four years ago, I was invited by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation to write another book that they would support, and they did, about his charities—the charitable contributions. What did he give away? Who to? When? Why? And all that. So, [in] the second book there's a lot more detail than most people want to try to soak up, but that's what it is. It is a record of his gifts, from day one.

JM: What's the name of that book?

JW: It's called *Winthrop Rockefeller, Philanthropist: A Life of Change*.

JM: Okay.

JW: And if we will remember, I will give you a copy of that book. I'll give you a copy of the documentary film. I don't have a copy of the first book because it was out of print long ago.

JM: I've got a copy of the first book, autographed by you.

JW: Okay, good.

JM: With one of my favorite—you had—it was a very charitable autograph that you signed.

JW: Well, great. Well, I'll tell you what—about that first book—this guy called me about a year ago, year and a half ago. They were going to have a fund-raiser here in Conway County, and they were going to have an auction. He said, "I want to get a copy of your book and auction it." And I said, "Well, Ted, I don't even have a copy—I've got two or three old battered up copies, and I can't let those go." I said, "I don't have any copies." He said, "I wanted a mint condition one." And I said, "I don't have one." He said, "Well, I'll try used bookstores; I'll try to find one." So he called me a few days later and said, "Well, I found one." He said, "I had to pay \$70 for it." I said, "And you're going to auction it?" I said, "Ted, you will never get anything close to \$70 for that. What have you done?" He said, "Oh, well, I think we'll do all right." Well, they auctioned it and got \$400 for it.

[Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

JW: I thought that was just wonderful. I'm so proud of that.

JM: [Laughs] That's great.

JW: I wrote those two books. I have been invited to—I do lots of wonderful things in my life. I founded Toad Suck Daze [a music, arts, and food festival] in Conway. I put that together. I also founded the Arkansas Institute of Politics in Government, and I'm proud of that. I've got lots of awards. I know you have, too, from the Press Association and from UALR—you know, Man of the Year and all that. I was chairman of the—I was president of the Sigma Delta Chi. I had my run at that, and probably you did, too. I was a charter member of the Arkansas Chapter. I remember that. I served on the board of the Arkansas Press Association for a long time and was the lobbyist for the Press Association for a while. I'm going to give you—I think he's got my computer back up, so I'll give you a bio. And you may not want any of the stuff, but it'll be all. . .

JM: Yes, let me have it.

JW: I've had a real good life. My daughter and my son—Barry and Jenifer—they've done well. Jenifer is a professor at Gustavus Adolphus College, a very fine Lutheran College up in Minnesota. She's chair of the Language Department. And Barry is a lawyer—he works for Judge Susan Webber Wright. He's done well. So Betty and I have got our kids up and self-supporting, and we feel pretty good about that.

JM: That is pretty good.

JW: It's going good, and I'm thinking about retiring before too long. I've got one more book that I'm thinking about working—and I'm working on it already. And I don't know if I'll do it or not, but they asked me to do it. It's a book about the mountain—the culture of the mountain. The development of Petit Jean Mountain,

going back 30,000 years ago when the first red [Native American] man, so to speak, migrated up the Arkansas River and said, "What is that up there?" Until now. We've been doing some oral history interviews with all these people that live up here, especially people who are descendants of early settlers and all that—and gathering stories about Petit Jean Mountain and all that good stuff. I'm gathering all kinds of great, great information, and I'm real pleased with that. I've got other people helping me pull all that together, and I might take a shot at that before I retire. But I'm thinking about moving toward retirement.

JM: Great, John. Let's go back to the *Arkansas Democrat* for a little while—for a minute—and discuss that. Do you remember how much money you were making at the *Democrat*?

JW: Yes, I do, because not too long ago I looked at a yellow legal pad sheet I had calculated to see what I had to have. And counting overtime and everything, it was \$92 a week.

JM: Counting some overtime.

JW: Oh, yes. It included a lot of overtime. Yes. I figured that in.

JM: Oh, good. Okay. Who else was on the staff at that time? Do you remember who else . . . ?

JW: Marvin Balding was there.

JM: Okay. What was Marvin doing then?

JW: He was kind of a feature-writing [reporter] and maybe wrote some editorials.

JM: Okay.

JW: Sam Dickinson wrote editorials—was there then. Bob Trout was there as a reporter. Let's see, Dawson, who's now a federal judge . . .

JM: Bob Dawson.

JW: He was on staff and a very good guy. He didn't stay there too long. Let's see. Bobbie Forster. She was just part of the furniture almost—was there for many, many years. I'm trying to think who else.

JM: Was Douthit there?

JW: George Douthit—yes, absolutely—George Douthit. In fact, my first expense account—when I first got there, he went over and sat down with me afterwards and said, "Now, let me give you some instruction about this." He didn't like the way I'd done it—I was real honest and straight. "No, that's not the way we do it." Douthit was so funny.

JM: I guess he was covering Faubus at that time—covering the capitol and . . .

JW: That's right; he was covering the capital and covering Faubus. And he was kind of close to Faubus.

JM: Yes, he was.

JW: He was a little too close. Let's see, who else was there? I can't remember.

JM: R. B. . . .

JW: R. B. Mayfield. Yes, I mentioned him already.

JM: You've mentioned him, but was he still doing the capital at that time?

JW: Yes—committed suicide later.

JM: Yes, I know he did. He was a friend of mine.

JW: He was a good reporter.

JM: I liked him.

JW: R. B. was a good man. I'm trying to think who else was there at that time.

JM: Well, you've covered a lot of them. I'm wondering if maybe there was less drinking on that staff then than there was earlier when I was there. When I was there my first go-around—boy, I'm telling you, I think half the editors or more were drunks.

JW: Yes, I know it.

JM: And—but what . . .?

JW: I think we had quite a few people that were—oh, wait a minute. What was his name? Now, let me see. Bud Lemke.

JM: Oh, yes—Bud.

JW: Now, he was bad to drink.

JM: Yes.

JW: Bud was bad to drink. But Bud was there. And, let's see . . .

JM: He could put away that beer.

JW: Oh, man! Lord, have mercy. See, I was never a drinker.

JM: Yes.

JW: Never in my life. Never did get into that much. I'd take a drink, but—that's kind of a fish out of water down there for a lot of those guys. Rod Powers never drank. Martin Holmes—I never saw him drink.

JM: Yes, I didn't think he . . .

JW: Those guys never did drink. Fred didn't—Fred Petrucelli—I never saw him drinking or drunk.

JM: What was Fred doing at that time?

JW: I think he was a sports reporter.

JM: Was he still in sports? Okay, I couldn't . . .

JW: Sports reporter, right.

JM: But—and Rod was . . .

JW: He was assistant city editor, like I said. He was . . .

JM: Yes, okay.

JW: He'd kind of sit on the copy editor, sit on the rim there.

JM: Okay. Of course, you were gone by then, but later when Engel died, Marcus inherited and . . .

JW: Marcus and Stanley Berry.

JM: Yes. He became the editor.

JW: They also inherited his stock in Channel 11; he owned stock in Channel 11.

JM: Do you remember any of the big stories that the paper had the years that you were there or that you worked on?

JW: Yes—I think the Little Rock Air Force Base plane crashing into Little Rock story. I think the Boys Industrial School fire was a big story—real big story. Golly, I can't even remember what else we had.

JM: When I was doing some research for this—when I started this project, I was going back and I saw that page. The story on the plane—I saw the plane crash. Did you have a joint byline with Bob Trout on that? Do you remember?

JW: I don't know; I might have. I don't think I did. I think he did a sidebar-type story.

JM: I was thinking I saw one.

JW: Because he interviewed the guy who survived it. He parachuted out. I worked with Bob on a lot of stuff. He was not a bad reporter.

JM: Yes. But, at any rate, that was the crash in which Harriet Aldrich's husband was killed. He was one of the crew members. She later became the food editor over at the *Gazette*.

JW: That's right. Yes. I was trying to think of any other really big stories. I think another—what I consider to be a big story, and I had a lot of reporting to do with it—was when President [John F.] Kennedy came to Little Rock and went to dedicate Greers Ferry—the dam at Greers Ferry—and Orval wasn't very nice to him up there at the dedication.

JM: He wasn't?

JW: No. He—Orval was—here was the president of the United States and Orval was—you've got to have some negative personal comments. Awful. We reported it. I mean, it's in there. There were others. I don't know what they were. I don't even remember.

JM: Yes.

JW: I truly don't remember.

JM: But it was just an operation which they didn't spend a whole lot of money.

JW: They didn't.

JM: Mr. Engel wouldn't spend a lot.

JW: We—in today's world, Mr. Engel wouldn't even have that many reporters. He would have cut that way back. But AP [Associated Press] was in the other room,

and we just went in there and stole their carbon paper and did it ourselves and gave them a carbon.

JM: Yes.

JW: I can see us doing that. But it was good. We had a good relationship with AP. Al Dopking was the bureau chief there, and he was good—big Indian guy.

JM: I remember that when you were at the *Conway Log Cabin Democrat*, you turned out a lot of good reporters there who—I probably hired some of them later.

JW: Sure. You did, you did. What we did—what I did—and I'll give you one of the stories about that. I sent him to the *Gazette*, but one day I called John Brummett in—he was a sports writer. I called him in and sat him down, and I said, “John, we've got to find you another job.” [He said,] “Are you firing me? I don't want another job; I like it here.” I said, “Well, you're vegetating. You're dying on the vine here.” I said, “You've got too much ability and too much talent for you to either let your life ebb away like it's ebbing away here—your professional life.” “No, no, I'll do better.” He started making all these promises. I said, “No.” I said, “I'm not firing you, and you can continue to work here. But I'm going to help you find another job.” So I called Jim Standard up at the *Daily Oklahoman* and talked to him about it, and he said, “Oh, gosh, yes, I'll send him a ticket. Yes, send him up here on your recommendation.” Then I talked to Bob Douglas, and Bob said, “Well, send him down here, let me talk to him.” So Brummett went down and talked to Douglas first, and of course Douglas hired him. Then Brummett sent Jim the ticket back to the *Daily Oklahoman* because he wanted to stay in Arkansas; he was kind of a home-boy type kid. And it worked out about

fine. About a month later Jimmy Jones was calling, “Did you fire John Brummett?” I loved it. [Laughs] I said, “No,” and I told him the story. He said, “He’s telling everybody you fired him.” And I said, “I don’t care. He can tell them. I don’t care whether he tells them or not.” And Brummett has continued through the years to tell people, “This is the guy right over here—” when I’m with him at a speaking engagement—“this guy over here fired me.” And I always [say], “I did, he needed to be fired.”

JM: [Laughs]

JW: But, yes. We trained a lot of people and some of them were pretty good.

JM: Did David Terrell work for you?

JW: Yes, he did.

JM: David—and Mel White, did Mel . . . ?

JW: No.

JM: Oh, I guess he came straight out of Hendrix [College in Conway, Arkansas].

JW: I don’t remember him.

JM: I probably hired him right out of Hendrix.

JW: But David Terrell did—he worked for me a long time. He wrote a book about Wilbur Mills, but he never got it published. It was too dense. He sent me some of it to read. It was dense. Hard to follow.

JM: Was it?

JW: I mean—it was well done.

JM: Yes.

JW: But what happens, Jerry—people like that, they—somehow they think that very skillful, creative writing will cover the lack of content. And cover not really doing their homework and research. That's the kind of book it was. It was a greatly written book, but it didn't have a lot of stuff in it.

JM: Hard facts.

JW: Yes. It really didn't. Because that's hard work. You know, you have to go do research.

JM: Yes, yes. I understand that.

JW: And go talk to people, write stuff down. But D. T. [David Terrell] did a good job down there, and Wames Qualls was a good guy on my staff. He went on up to the paper at Mountain Home and edited that for a while, and then he was over at Lyon College [Batesville, Arkansas]. And Martin Shell was on my staff for a long time, then he's in charge of—he's the chief development officer at Princeton [University]. So he's done pretty well.

JM: Yes, I'll say.

JW: His dad—the other day I saw him, he said, “Well, I appreciate you giving Martin a start.” Because I got Martin a job in Washington [DC]. . .

JM: Yes.

JW: . . . with Ed Bethune, because I knew Ed and knew his wife. And I told Ed, I said, “This guy wants to go to Washington in the worst way. He's a good reporter, but he wants to go to Washington.” He said, “I'll hire him.”

JM: Yes.

JW: So I sent him up there. He did a good job for Ed. Ed liked him, but he moved on from there.

JM: One other thing. You did go back to play on your instruments, though.

JW: I did. I picked up the horn and started playing again, and really enjoyed it all over again. Betty, of course, always continued to play, and she is very, very good.

JM: Yes.

JW: She formed a little combo, and we started playing together like that. Then she got me into this big band—the old Little Rock Central High School 1957-era-type big band, and I've been doing that. Betty and I play—just she and I go and entertain a lot of times. It's just great. I've enjoyed it. I've got my lip all back up, and I'm playing a lot.

JM: Betty plays the piano. She's a pianist.

JW: Oh, yes. She does that all the time.

JM: And you're playing mostly the tenor sax?

JW: Yes. That's all I play.

JM: Okay. John, this has been a very enjoyable and informative interview. Anything else you can think of that we haven't covered?

JW: No, you've done great. You've done great. You've asked all the right questions.

JM: Well . . .

JW: I want to get that bio over there for you.

JM: Okay, that's great. Well, I really appreciate it.

JW: Okay, well, it was my pleasure.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Lu Ann Smith-Lacy]

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