

*Gazette Project*

Interview with

Dean Duncan  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
7 September 2000

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: This is Dean Duncan and Roy Reed in Little Rock on September 7, 2000.

Dean, we have your permission, I gather, to take this interview and turn it over to the University archives?

Dean Duncan: Oh, yes.

RR: Tell me where you started. By that, I mean where and when were you born and to whom.

DD: I was born October 29, 1924, in Van Buren County, near a little place called Choctaw.

RR: Like the Indian tribe?

DD: Like the Indians. It was said it got its name because of a band of Choctaw Indians once lived on the creek there. My father was Benjamin Andrew Duncan. He had the nickname of "Boss." I think he got that from his father shortly after he was born. He sort of took over the household. My mother was a member of a pioneer family in Van Buren County. Her name was Dicie Edna Huie.

RR: Is that D-I-C-E-Y?

DD: D-I-C-I-E.

RR: Okay, Dicie Edna Huie.

DD: Her family had lived in Van Buren County since about 1848. My father's folks got there rather late. They got there in, we think, in 1868, coming in from eastern Tennessee around Maryville, Tennessee.

RR: In the mountains?

DD: In the mountains.

RR: Were your mother's folks Tennessee folks?

DD: Yes, they were supposed to have come over about 1848 from near Lexington, Tennessee. This was western Tennessee.

RR: Let me guess. They were either Scotch-Irish or English from the north of England. Would that be correct?

DD: We always regarded the Duncan name as one of those Scotch-Irish names. Scotch-Irish was a person of pure Scotch. My father's father was Duncan, Joseph Houston Duncan. He was from mostly a Scotch background. His wife was Margaret Tennessee Chilton, an English name. I think she had some Scotch in her background. My ancestry is mixed, mostly Scotch and mostly English. I assume there is a dab of Welsh in there. We learned, in just the last fifteen or twenty years, that there is a little Cherokee Indian blood in there. The records seem to show that I have a great-great-great-great-great grandmother who was pure Cherokee Indian. Her daughter, who continued the line in my direction, was born in 1799. I am estimating that this great-great-great-great-great grandmother was born about 1780 or 1785.

RR: Was that name Chilton?

DD: C-H-I-L-T-O-N.

RR: Her first name was what?

DD: M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T.

RR: Tennessee?

DD: Tennessee. Her folks came from Tennessee.

RR: I believe you said that you moved to St. Louis?

DD: At the age of three. We moved in stages. At the age of three, which would have been about 1927, we moved to a little place called Biscoe. My father was a sharecropper. I don't know what he was. I think he farmed one season there. We moved to Brasfield, two miles away, where he worked at a sawmill for the better part of the year. We then moved to St. Louis. Another member of the family had gone to St. Louis and got a job with Kroger. He [my father] moved there in 1927. We followed on a train in 1928. He got a job with Kroger. At one point, there were these three brothers in St. Louis. All of them were managers of Kroger stores. Of course, the stores were not the supermarkets that they are today. They were probably modest, well-supplied stores. They had that job for several years until the depression hit. He lost his job, I would guess, in 1933. My mother came down with crippling arthritis. One leg drew up about three inches shorter than the other. She came back to Arkansas, and she wanted him to come back to Arkansas. It was a convenience when he lost his job. He came back initially to Biscoe, and we lived there for about three months. We then moved to Brinkley. That would have been sometime in 1934. I continued school there until

graduation in 1943. All three of us boys lost a year of school because my father did not enroll us in school at the beginning of the school year in 1934. When we went over to Brinkley, they set us all back a grade. I finished high school in 1943 instead of 1942. I spent thirty-three months in the service in World War Two. I came back in the spring of 1946. My parents were living in Brinkley, so that was where I lived.

RR: Did you go into service right after high school?

DD: Right. For thirty-three months I was in the army.

RR: Where did you serve most of the war?

DD: My first job was ten months at Camp Robinson. I was eighteen years old and fresh out of high school. They made me a teacher.

RR: This is in the army?

DD: Yes, in the army. They were bringing people through and testing them for literacy. If you did not reach the fourth grade in literacy, you were made to stay in this special training unit. We were able to bring some of them up to a fourth-grade level. Those who did not achieve the fourth-grade level in reading and writing were discharged. They were mostly from Arkansas, blacks and whites, although after I left there, they brought in some Cajuns from Louisiana. Young men who were perfectly functional in French, but they could not speak and understand English to any great degree. They were trained there. There must have been close to a thousand of those at one point. I went in March of 1944 to Signal Corps training in Camp Crowder, in Missouri. I trained as a cryptographer

for four months. I shipped out and went by stages to Camp Reynolds and later spent some time at Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania. Then they shipped us up to Presque Isle, Maine, for plane transportation overseas. They shipped us to the Azores, the Portuguese-owned islands in the mid-Atlantic. I spent thirteen months there.

RR: I did not realize we had an installation there.

DD: It was a tricky diplomatic situation. The British had been long time allies with the Portuguese, and when the war started, the British decided that it would be strategically nice to have allied support in the Azores, refueling places for the planes. The Portuguese agreed to let the British settle there and create bases. The British were invited. We were never invited by the Portuguese to set up an American post there. The British invited us in, so the U.S. government decided it would never publicize that. People came through all the time. They knew where the Azores were, and they knew the English were there and the United States had military people there. One of my jobs, my main job at the beginning, was as a censorship clerk. I had been checked out by the security people and knew a little bit about security from my experience as a cryptographer. I worked in the chief base censor's office. There was a first lieutenant who was the chief base censor. The corporal and I, by then I was a high ranking PFC — were the assistant-base censors. We checked on the company commanders to make sure they were censoring their mail. They would send their company mail, and we would randomly select letters, clip into them and seal them up afterwards. We would

make sure they were not saying anything about being in the Azores or anything about the Portuguese or anything about this being an island or its cultures. On festive occasions there were firecrackers that were set off. It was feared that mentioning this in a letter would tell people that this could be a Latin sort of outpost. Censorship went off after the war in Europe ended.

RR: How many Americans were on this?

DD: I am not sure. When I went there, they had not even completed the barracks. We had it tough. We had to sleep in tents. [Joking] Maybe close to a thousand. Later, they probably had close to a couple of thousand.

RR: Which island were you on?

DD: When we first went over, we were on the Island of Santa Maria. This was where they had the main base then. No, the first island was Terceira. They had the established base there. I was there about two weeks, and we were cleared to go to Santa Maria.

RR: You were there altogether, what, a year or so?

DD: Thirteen months. During that thirteen months, I did take a leave. An enlisted man never gets a leave. He gets a furlough. I went over to Rome. On the way over we got stranded in Casablanca. The idea was to catch available transportation, a C-54, for the most part. We got to Casablanca and spent a whole week there. We thought we were going to have to turn and go back to the Azores if we couldn't find a plane going to Rome. We finally caught a plane to Rome.

RR: Was it anything like it was in the movie, "Casablanca"?

DD: It was dusty and dry. I saw no Rick's Café while I was there. It was an interesting place.

RR: You finally made it to Rome, I guess.

DD: I spent two weeks there.

RR: Were you in the Azores when the European war ended?

DD: Yes, I was. The news came to us at night, and everybody started marching around in their underwear down the roads. Finally, we were close to the base chapel, so some person with presence of mind suggested we go over to the church and offer a prayer for what had happened. So we did. Everybody was quiet and meek during the brief prayer. Then we marched out again.

RR: In your underwear?

DD: In our underwear. [Laughter]

RR: I guess there were fireworks since this was the Azores?

DD: I don't remember fireworks going up. I don't think we had any available.

RR: All that censorship for nothing. Did you get to come home soon after that?

DD: I was there roughly about six months after the war ended. When the victory over Japan came through, we had the same sort of celebration. It came at night, and we were marching around. Some people who had been to college were talking about the atomic bomb. It was a mystery to all of us. Just a huge bomb was as near as we got to understanding it. It was really a joyous occasion. We were as happy as could be.

RR: What did you do when you got back?

DD: Not much of anything for several weeks. I signed up to go to classes at Arkansas State Teachers College. It is now known as the University of Central Arkansas at Conway. Since I had lost out on all of those years to the service, I decided I would go through as quickly as I could. I signed up for every course available. They had one special ten-day course. You could study Political Science and get three hours of credit for ten days of work. By the calendar, I spent about two-and-a-half years there. My grades were great in the beginning. They leveled out. I started there in June of 1946 and completed my degree requirements in January of 1949.

RR: What was your major?

DD: It was a hybrid. It was called English Journalism. It consisted of about eighteen hours of English. I probably had more than that. I also had about twelve to fourteen hours of Journalism. A lady there by the name of Roberta Clay was an exceptional person. She didn't have a Ph.D., but she had a master's degree from the Holy Trinity of Journalism. She had a Master's Degree from Columbia and from the University of Missouri and from Northwestern. It was due to her influence that I wound up going to study for a master's degree from Northwestern.

RR: Did you go directly to Northwestern after?

DD: No, I had to lie out for a semester. I worked at Brinkley.

RR: At the paper?

DD: No, mostly for an uncle. He was building things. One of my jobs was standing

guard at a place. He bought a lot just to get the dirt there. People would shovel it into trucks and I would count the truckloads. It was not a difficult job.

[Laughter]

RR: Did you go up to the *Gazette* after Northwestern?

DD: Right. I had never worked on a newspaper in my life. I think I had written two stories in the *Brinkley Citizen*, which, you know, was operated by Tom Allen and Dorathy.

RR: Tell me about how you ended up working at the *Gazette*.

DD: Well, it was primarily Tom Allen. I remember that I wrote a letter of application to one place. I think it was the daily newspaper at Rogers, Arkansas. Meanwhile, Tom Allen got in touch with me. I don't know if I met him in person or if he wrote me a letter. He said they were looking for somebody at the *Arkansas Gazette*. I got in touch down there, and it was a success. I don't think they realized that I didn't know what a newsroom was.

RR: You had good training. Northwestern is a good school.

DD: It was good.

RR: What year did you get out?

DD: I got out --- I had to take some undergraduate courses. I got out in late December of 1950. I went to work at the *Arkansas Gazette* January 1 of 1951. I said December of 1949. I finished at Northwestern in late December of 1950. I started work at the *Gazette* on January 1, 1951.

RR: Who hired you at the *Gazette*?

DD: Officially, it was Carroll McGaughey. He was the managing editor.

RR: I never knew him.

DD: He was a nice fellow. He had a warm heart. At least I found that he did. I guess some people might have come a little short in their estimation of him due to rivalries back and forth. Again, because I had no experience, I was all thumbs the first three months. The first three months that I was there, the *Gazette* had every right to fire me, to just tell me to get out of the office because I didn't know what I was doing. They were very patient with me, and I will always appreciate that.

RR: Whom did you work directly for?

DD: Sam Harris was the city editor. I worked closely with Bill Shelton, who was then the night city editor on the weekend. I guess you could call him assistant city editor in charge of the weekend desk. I worked what was called the crap desk. Actually, it was a clerical job. I didn't think of it as that, but that was what it was. Now and then, I would get an assignment out of the office, mainly when the Little Rock Realtors Club met over at the Marion Hotel. I would be there covering that. That was about the only meeting that I got to in the first two or three months. Somebody would call something in, and I would take it. I would handle the obits, the usual beginnings.

RR: You stayed on the crap desk for, what, two or three months?

DD: At least three months, maybe four or five.

RR: Then on general assignment?

DD: Then general assignment. After general assignment — I guess I spent a year or so

on general assignment — I was then assigned to the county court house. I was there off and on until I left. In 1955, I was assigned to cover part of the Legislature. I had the Governor's office. That was Faubus's first term, in 1955. I also had the Supreme Court. The back-country organizations, what they call Siberia, welfare and education, public health, and so forth.

RR: Tell me about covering Faubus.

DD: I always sort of liked him. I left before he got into trouble with the integration business. He was sort of close-lipped. He was sort of secretive, I thought. He would do little things like walk up to me and help himself to a package of cigarettes in my shirt pocket. He never bought a pack of cigarettes. At least, I don't think he did. He would reach in there and help himself. This was a connection with the Governor. I always had the feeling that he never knew who I was. Every time that I would come in and start talking to him, I would make sure that I told him who I was. Even in the later years, when he lived in Conway, I had him out to speak to some of my journalism classes. Every time that I saw him then, I would tell him I was Dean Duncan, and that I used to work for the *Gazette*. I made sure that I gave him my name.

RR: He once confessed to me when I was researching his biography, contrary to the popular notion, he had a terrible memory for names. He said he had devised all kinds of schemes for getting a person's name out of him before he spoke.

DD: I got something out of him. I remember after he would speak to the class that I would take him down to a local restaurant. I think it was called "The Restaurant."

It was very popular at the time. I had always wondered - he had come up from nothing, a hillbilly. Our backgrounds are similar except that I didn't have to deal with stark poverty like he did. Poverty was part of the culture. I was acquainted with it. He had gone into the army and become a major. I asked him one time, "Did you take the AGCT, the Army General Classification Test?" It was the army's intelligence test. He said, "Yes." I asked him how he did on that. He told me to my surprise. It was either 126 or 127. I think it was 126. I remember when I was in Washington, D.C., I talked to a psychologist about that because I wondered about the correlation between the AGCT and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test. I am confused a little bit here. Let me correct. I asked him about the AGCT score and he said it was 136 or 137. I think it was 136. The psychologist told me that the AGCT was a little easier by about five, six, or seven points. That would make his Stanford-Binet IQ about 130.

RR: That is pretty high.

DD: In the army, the AGCT was divided into about three or four classes. The top class was rated superior, which started at 130. He was in the top superior category.

RR: He had no trouble getting into officer training school after he volunteered for the army.

DD: I knew from your book that he took this officer training while he was still a civilian before the war.

RR: Do you remember any particular stories that you wrote about Faubus? This would have been his first year in office as governor in 1955.

DD: I wrote quite a few stories. Maybe one or two at a personal angle. I remember that there was some concern over riparian rights, the rights to the flow of streams and so forth. During an interview with Faubus, I asked him about it. He said that we needed these rights, the riparian rights. I said, "What should they do?" He said, "I am not sure of that. I don't know." My lead for that day was, "I can only give what is said as fact. Governor Faubus said yesterday that he believed that Arkansas should have some river rights, some riparian rights." The second paragraph said that he had no idea what they should be. As I recall, Bill Shelton started chuckling at that. He commented that it was safe from libel, so we will run it. That was the gist of it, I do remember that.

RR: Did you ever make him mad with a story that you wrote?

DD: I don't think so.

RR: He was an old newspaperman, so I guess he cut reporters a little slack.

DD: Back then he was on pretty good terms with the *Gazette*. I can remember on occasion seeing Mr. Ashmore, Harry Ashmore, sitting in his office waiting his turn to talk with the Governor. He was accessible, very accessible, and we would have our – just about every workday, we would meet with him about twice a day. It seems it would be about ten in the morning and then again about three in the afternoon.

RR: You knew Bill Hughes probably, didn't you?

DD: Yes, I did.

RR: Who was he working for at that time?

DD: He was working for the *United Press*. He was in on the press conferences. That was where I first got acquainted with him.

RR: Did you know Ken Johnson?

DD: Yes, I knew Ken. Ken was with the *Commercial Appeal*. He was in on those also.

RR: Matilda Tuohey?

DD: I don't think she was in on that session at all, unless she was covering the Senate that year.

RR: Sam Harris had become city editor. Tell me about Sam Harris, what kind of guy was he?

DD: Colorful, outspoken, and master when it came to reaming out a person. He didn't get on to me too bad. One time, I think I was left in charge of the city desk. A guy came by and said, "Let's go to lunch." Absentmindedly, I said, "Sure." I left the desk unguarded for about an hour. He was not pleased with that. The reaming that he gave me was tolerable, and I deserved it. I heard him chew on Larry Obsitnik. That was outrageous. Of course, I could only hear one side of it. Ordinarily when he talked to Larry, he didn't call him Larry. He called him "Rembrandt." [Laughter] I think by and large they got along fine. He was good with insult.

RR: The way that he would make assignments, did he seem to have a gift for story ideas?

DD: I don't know if he had a gift or not. He was good enough, I think. I never had

any problems in that way. He did what a city editor was supposed to do, to tell you what you were supposed to do and who you were going to see. He would give you the background that would be very helpful for the story.

RR: Did Shelton become the city editor while you were there?

DD: As I recall, that change took place in about January of 1952. In other words, I had only been there for about a year.

RR: Was that when Sam went over to the Capitol beat?

DD: Yes, I think so. He became a political writer overnight.

RR: How would you compare those two men as a city editor? Just doing the job as city editor.

DD: Well, they both had gifts. Bill was tight-lipped. He often suffered our mistakes in silence. In my presence, he never blew up. It was a wonder that he never had a heart attack or some sort of ulcer. Maybe he did, and I just don't know about it.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

DD: I think he was the city editor on those nights that first year. Often we would go over to his house when we got off work about 2 a.m., and we would have conversations. Sometimes a young man by the name of Richard Davis, who was a Yale dropout, as I recall - He and Bill were awful close. Richard was intellectually gifted. To me, he was a very exotic character. I had never been around anyone like that.

RR: I knew him a little.

DD: He later worked as a handler for Faubus during his first campaign. Still later he went off to New York and wound up working for one of the airlines.

RR: He had a bad arm as I remember.

DD: I think his left arm was somewhat stunted.

RR: He used to play golf pretty well in spite of that.

DD: I am not surprised.

RR: Douglas was full of Richard Davis stories.

DD: He was born in Lebanon. His father was a minister who was stationed overseas.

RR: You were on general assignment, weren't you, when you went out to the Capitol?

DD: I was working on the courthouse beat. I was there [at the Capitol] for about four months because the session ended after about three, as I recall. I remained out there for another month.

RR: Did you go back to the court house?

DD: I went back to the court house.

RR: Were you still on the court house beat when you left the paper?

DD: Yes, I was. Back then only one man was assigned. We also had to get the daily legals. Later I think they hired some beginning reporter or clerk to go over and get that, the new suits filed each day.

RR: I guess George Bentley took your place.

DD: He did. He came down from Fort Smith, as I recall.

RR: Did you leave in 1956?

DD: I left in October of 1956.

RR: You were still there when I came in the summer of 1956.

DD: I had forgotten. I was thinking you came there in the spring.

RR: It might have been the spring. George and I went to work at the same month and maybe the same day. He had experience, so he had the court house beat. They put me on North Little Rock. Tell me the story how it came about that you went to Toad Suck Ferry and did a story.

DD: We got word through the Associated Press that a part-Cherokee Indian -- it seems like he had an Irish name -- His nickname was Pushmataha, who was one of the exalted leaders of the Cherokees in the days of old. Somebody decided it would be a great [loggin?], sort of a newsroom conspiracy. Everybody got in on it and was issuing advisement on how to handle this story. Bill helped to shape the whole thing and finally sent me up to -- I joined this guy up at Morrilton early one morning. He had a string of boats. He had been a fishing guide at or near Tulsa, Oklahoma. The thing that caught our attention was this AP story saying he planned to become a fishing guide at Batesville. He was quoted as saying the fish up there were tremendous. We decided it was a lark and would cover his oddity. I went up there. He had two boats in the water. In the second boat that was being towed by the big boat, he had a couple of smaller boats.

RR: Were these motor boats?

DD: I think they may have all been motor boats, but the big boat had an inboard motor. He was accompanied by his wife and daughter, who was about thirteen years old. It took us two days. Back then there was no dam system, so the Arkansas River

consisted of various pools. You could get your boat stuck in the sand and have to push it to the next deepest pool to get it floating again. At certain places -- I put this in the story -- he would direct his daughter to march ahead of the lead boat in shallow water, and when she would sink, he would know it was safe to proceed.

[Laughter] An unusual system. John Fleming -- I think it was John. It may have been Bill Shelton. I think it was John who suggested I spend the night at Toad Suck Ferry, so my opening line would be --- this fellow had a lot of medical doctors as clients in the Tulsa area. His name for the lead boat was *Coronary Thrombosis*. John suggested that I arrange to spend the night at Toad Suck Ferry so that I could write, as a dateline, "Aboard the *Coronary Thrombosis* off Toad Suck Ferry." [Laughter] I don't think I have seen a better dateline.

RR: It might be the best dateline in the history of the *Arkansas Gazette*.

DD: We did that, and I slept in the lead boat. Surely, I didn't sleep anywhere else. I went up to a liquor store at Palarm and called in my story. The next day we proceeded into Little Rock. We got to the environs of Little Rock a little early, so we actually had to shut down the operation and beach ourselves and to play in the sand for a while. I lost a pair of sunglasses doing somersaults. Finally, at the appointed time, we knew that there was going to be this fireboat with the mayor of North Little Rock in it.

RR: I can call his name in a minute.

DD: I am trying to think. He was a long-time mayor there, Ross Lawhon. He had what looked like an Indian blanket around him. I think he had head feathers on.

There was this North Little Rock boat shooting water into the air. Like it was a big New York reception. That was how we came in.

RR: There is more to this story than I ever heard. What year was that?

DD: I would guess it was the year that “The Old Man and the Sea” came out. I think that may have gotten us interested in it. Arkansas River was the nearest thing we had to a sea, and we were all influenced by Hemingway’s book.

RR: Could it have been 1956, the year that you left?

DD: I think it was earlier than that. I would guess 1954.

RR: They were still talking about it when I got there in 1956. One of the first pieces of *Gazette* lore that I picked up was that wonderful dateline and your by-line on the story. DD: Incidentally, I think I called it in to Bill Meehan.

RR: Was he a North Little Rock reporter?

DD: He was.

RR: Tell me a little bit about him.

DD: He was a great guy. I remember him most because of his advice about women. I wasn’t married then, and I am still not married, unfortunately. He told me the best approach to remember that was that women were not subtle and were not as delicate as advertised. When you approach a woman, you should treat her as if you were hitting somebody in the face with a fish. [Laughter] He never got married. Maybe that explains it. I never did it. I later encountered him in Kentucky in a phone call. I think he needed assistance for some work he was doing with the Salvation Army.

RR: He was a noted drinker, wasn't he?

DD: Yes, he was.

RR: We had a few of those at the *Gazette*.

DD: I don't think I saw him on the job after he had drunk some booze. Somehow, it suggested to me that he did drink.

RR: Yes, smoking and drinking were just as common as air.

DD: When I see Bill now, I can just see his fingers like this at his face. Putting a cigarette in and pulling it out. He smoked like that.

RR: He held it between those middle finger?

DD: Yes.

RR: Who else do you remember, especially, from the newsroom?

DD: I guess Bill Shelton, most of all. Sam Harris also because of his colorful actions and the help he gave me. He taught me more about writing than any journalism school did.

RR: What about Carroll McGaughey?

DD: I liked Carroll. He gave me encouragement in those early days, and I was all thumbs. I always appreciated him. He was a good and warm-hearted man. Maybe sometimes he disguised that fact.

RR: I never knew him. Was he a nephew of Mr. Heiskell?

DD: A nephew or a great nephew. He didn't last too long at the job after I got there. I don't know how long he had been managing editor before I came. Somewhere, two or three years later, he got interested in local TV, which was just coming in.

He did some work in one of the stations. I guess that is how he got started in TV.

RR: Did A. R. Nelson succeed him as managing editor?

DD: Right.

RR: Did you know Nelson very well?

DD: Fairly well. I don't think anyone could know him too well. Again, here is a man that I admired. First of all, because he knew what he was doing. I remember that one time he told me one of his grandmothers was a Cherokee Indian. He looked like an Indian. He had what you would describe as sharp features, a hatchet face to a certain extent. Again, here is a fellow that I found very human and very likable.

RR: An old copy editor?

DD: Yes, that is what he was.

RR: I don't know if he had ever done any reporting.

DD: I don't know if he even went to college. He learned it from the newspaper. He was smart, and he was kind.

RR: Did you know Matilda Tuohey very well?

DD: Not very well. I knew her enough to know that I liked her.

RR: What kind of personality was she?

DD: In those early days she was always out of the office. I forget what her beat was. During Legislature time, it started in 1952, she and Sam were always out there. It was years later before she became full-time in the office. She worked on the state desk.

RR: After you left.

DD: I liked her. I don't remember anybody around the *Gazette* who was harsh and unreasonable or that I had any degree of dislike for.

RR: Do you remember other women around the newsroom?

DD: Well, Martha Douglas. Back then she was handling church items, and one thing and another. She could do pretty much what anybody could do. Later she got into TV and wrote TV columns.

RR: I guess you knew Bob Douglas, too.

DD: Oh, yes, we got acquainted pretty early.

RR: What about Mr. Heiskell? What can you tell me about your memories of him? What sort of man was he?

DD: First of all, I respected him. I don't know of anyone in Arkansas that I respected more than Mr. Heiskell. The record speaks for itself, I think. He had his quirks that made him sort of lovable. For instance, I didn't spend much time in his office, but when I was in there, I was amazed at the amount of crap on his desk. There were mountains of old newspapers. I don't see how he ever found anything. From time to time, he would come up with an idea for a story. It was always sort of convoluted, somewhat difficult sometimes. I had to do two or three of what we called "J. N. Musts." These were stories suggested by Mr J. N., and you had to get them. You had to do your best work. My first one, as I recall, was the history of the Little Rock Country Club. He came in about a Wednesday and wanted it for Sunday. I trotted around and talked to some of the pioneer

members of the Little Rock Country Club. I went out there and eyeballed the place and got the story together. It was really a pain doing it. It was a perfectly legitimate story.

RR: Tell me about going to dinner with him.

DD: In 1951 -- it was late spring or early summer -- somebody around Mr. Heiskell got the idea that it would be nice for him to associate more with his staff people. He needed to get acquainted personally with his new reporters, and so forth. A series of dinner meetings were arranged. They weren't really meetings. They were social get togethers. When my turn came, it was arranged for me to take my newly purchased car. I don't think I had had it for more than a week. I drove by his address over on Louisiana and picked up him and his wife, Mrs. Heiskell. We went to a nice restaurant that was known for having tasty steaks. We had a nice steak dinner and talked back and forth. He inquired about who I was and where I came from. What did I think about this and that. It was just a nice evening. As I recall, I was impressed by Mrs. Heiskell. She was a dignified woman. I thought a beautiful woman in a way. She was nice looking then even though she was of advanced age. She must have been a beauty in her youth. There was another reporter or two at the meeting, although I have forgotten who they were. It was just a nice social evening.

RR: Was it a pretty lively time?

DD: Yes, I think so. I don't remember any lack of conversation.

RR: He was a good conversationalist, as I remember. I was always impressed with his

wit.

DD: He had a good wit and had it up to the time that he passed away. He was interested in a lot of things, including history. If you happened to have an interest in history, you could talk to him. He seemed to delight in this sort of exchange.

RR: I did some of those J. N. H.'s that you talked about. It nearly always had something to do with history.

DD: I just happened to think of something that somebody told me. I think I read it in a paper that somebody did for the journalism school at UALR. The first summer that I was at the *Gazette*, there was no air-conditioning. You had fans, and it really created havoc. It threw our papers everywhere. Incidentally, back then I was noted as a chain smoker. I wish that I had never taken up that filthy habit. I must have been responsible over the years for at least a dozen wastebasket fires. [Laughter] Sometimes the flames would come out of there three feet high.

[Laughter] I would wonder, "What is all this to-do about?" Somebody would be there to stamp it out. That first year was very hot. After that first summer they put in air conditioning. As I understand it, according to the research paper that I read, over at the *Democrat*, they didn't have air conditioning. The owner of the paper arranged to have his office equipped with a cooling unit. He was completely surrounded by glass. You could look in and see this man. You might wonder, "Why he wasn't he sweating, too?" Well, he had air-conditioning.

RR: Was that August Engel?

DD: Yes, August Engel. He had air conditioning in this glassed-in area. Everybody

else was sweltering. According to this paper, somebody said to Mr. Heiskell, "Why don't you do that? You are too old to go through this hot summer." He said, "No, I couldn't do that. It wouldn't be right with those other guys sweating out there, and I am in here in an air-conditioned office." Somewhere in the next few months he arranged to have his room area air-conditioned, along with the newsroom.

RR: Speaking of newsroom fires, were you there when Tom Davis set his wastebasket on fire?

DD: I don't remember that particular incident. I was there when we had a fire in the basement and had to put out the paper from the bank across the street. I forget what year that was. I don't know if it was an electrical fire or what. I wrote one of the main stories about that, I think, a follow-up story. The smoke came through the building, and the damage was confined largely to the basement where they had all the files. We had to go to the First National Bank, a fairly new bank. Later on, a TV station came in there. It was catty-corner from the *Gazette* building. We put out ---- It seems like the fire happened on a Friday, and we put out the paper from the bank on Saturday. I am not real sure of that.

RR: It is a wonder that more newspapers did not burn up in those days. They were not noted for being kept clean.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

RR: Tell me about how you happened to end up at the *Louisville Courier*.

DD: After working six years at the *Gazette*, I moved over to the *Commercial Appeal* and spent three years there.

RR: I knew that but had forgotten. What did you do at the *Commercial Appeal*?

DD: General assignment. At one point I was their river writer. They had an old-timer on that beat when I went there. He finally died. He was an elderly man in his upper eighties. I took over that beat. It just consumed part-time. I tried to keep up with the development on the river and President's Island and so forth. A guy came through Memphis on a Chinese junk, and I would rush down on the dockside and interview him.

RR: You had a history on that, so you. . .

DD: I was also covering the airport, although I didn't spend much time there. If something happened, I had to check into it. I would call out there from time to time to see if anything new was going on.

RR: They had two features at the *Commercial Appeal* that were well known far beyond Memphis. One was "Hambone's Meditations." The other was Lydel Sims. Can you talk a little bit about those two?

DD: I can remember "Hambone's Meditations" from the short time I lived in Biscoe. People there who took the *Democrat* would read that feature first thing and laugh at it.

RR: He was on page one, wasn't he?

DD: On page one, yes. When I went there, Mr. Alley's son was the cartoonist. He was nice and easy to get to know.

RR: Who drew this Hambone? Do you remember the name of the cartoonist?

DD: That was Alley, I think. I don't know if his son took it up or if they were just going to the files to get those earlier renditions.

RR: Kind of describe it.

DD: You have heard of the philosopher king whose handle was sort of a philosopher peasant. He was dressed in something like bib overalls, but he had every day, down-to-earth common sense. I can't think of any examples of what he would say. You would see this figure speaking, and then you would see the caption under the print, and this would tell you what his thoughts of the day were. Usually, you could get a pretty good chuckle.

RR: He had an old flop hat.

DD: As I recall, he did have an old flop hat on. It looked as if it had been moth-eaten. It had holes in it.

RR: He was a black man and spoke in dialect.

DD: In dialect, right.

RR: I remember "gwine." That sort of thing was common.

DD: It was still going as I went there. I can only guess roughly as to when they might have pulled that. It was sometime in the 1960s, maybe.

RR: I think it might have been after Martin Luther King was assassinated because Gary Wills went to Memphis and did a magazine piece for somebody after the King assassination. One of the sub-themes of his article was that Martin Luther King was kind of the Hambone character. He was an upper-class Hambone in his

appeal to ordinary white people. He wrote about this “Hambone’s Meditations” in the paper. It was still there in 1968. I don’t know how much longer after that. You would never see that in any American newspaper now.

DD: I am trying to think. It seems like some Arkansas weekly. I think it was shortly after I came back to Conway to teach at UCA, which was then State College of Arkansas. I remember one of the papers in eastern Arkansas still had segregated news. The news about white people would be in just about every page of the paper, but they had reserved one inside page for the black people. The heading on it was the same every week. It said, “With the Colored Race.”

RR: That was the Brinkley paper?

DD: I don’t think it was the Brinkley paper. It was down around Dewitt, I think.

RR: Dewitt, yes. Didn’t the *Gazette* have segregated obituaries for the black people?

DD: As I recall they did.

RR: They did when I was still there. “Negro Deaths” was the head of the column.

DD: When I went to the *Commercial Appeal* in Memphis, it was part of the style to address people by courtesy titles. First reference was to John Jones and after that Mr. Jones if he was white. They did not use the courtesy title for blacks. That changed while I was still there.

RR: In fact, it is my belief that it was a fairly common practice for newspapers across the south. What is the chance that the change of attitudes towards race might have caused newspapers to simply do away with courtesy titles for everybody? I think *The New York Times* is the only paper left that still uses courtesy titles.

DD: I don't know why it is, but I have always believed that we are better off without courtesy titles. You can be a little more objective that way for some reason.

RR: I kind of like them. It adds a little note of civility. I should state that *The Times* did not give a courtesy title to a murderer.

DD: As I recall, at Memphis they finally decided that they would use courtesy titles for second references of black people but not if they were ever convicted of anything. I seemed to recall, in one particular story, that the name Daisy Bates came up. Under the new style you could refer to her as Mrs. Bates. They decided that since she had been convicted of some piddling thing like jaywalking that they wouldn't.

RR: I mentioned Lydel Sims while ago. He was a reasonably famous humor columnist. Did you know him?

DD: Yes, I did but not all that well. I remember a crackerjack sports editor named Walter Stewart, who was a colonel in World War II. He came back to his job as sports editor. We [Lydel and I] went over to his funeral and, apparently, he did not have all that many friends, although he was a jovial person. There was no reason why his funeral should not have drawn a huge crowd of people. I guess our editor, Frank Algren, was trying to pack the house. He did what he could to make sure that a certain number of people attended. I drove over with Lydel in his car. We were talking about one thing and another. I remember a particular column that he wrote while I was still at the *Gazette*. I would read his column then, and it was so funny. He was writing about a process. Somebody came up with the idea of using cotton bolls to make coffee. He saw this as a new product

and it would catch on. You grind it up and put it in the water with whatever flavorings you wanted, and it would be a new coffee. His conclusion was that there would only be one thing wrong, "It tastes awful." [Laughter] He was always pulling stuff like that. He was widely read.

RR: Page-one column, daily, five days a week?

DD: As you know, he later became Postmaster of Memphis.

RR: I did not know that.

DD: It surprised me, too. He certainly was a man of intelligence.

RR: For folks who do not understand anything about newspapers, what does writing a column five days a week mean to you?

DD: It means a lot of work to me. It takes a good man to do something like that.

RR: You don't see it anymore.

DD: Now you are lucky if you get three or four. Four would be a great burden, I think.

RR: Back then, a daily column was not considered unusual.

DD: Our people did "Our Town" column five days a week.

RR: I was just about to ask you if Allbright did "Our Town" five days a week.

DD: I think he did, but I am not sure of that.

RR: I think he did, too. I would have to go back and look at the files to be sure. He sweated blood with every column.

DD: I am sure that he did. In my opinion, he was gifted in that sort of thing. I have always thought of Charlie as a great guy. I always thought he was wasted on that column. I think he would have made an unusually good reporter. Politics, this or

that, whatever he tried, he would be good at.

RR: He was so intelligent.

DD: He was able to project creativity into any story. I remember one time they sent him to interview the new mayor then by the name of Woodrow Mann. He and the mayor went on a walking tour of downtown Little Rock. He went back to the office and wrote this story. Instead of the usual inverted pyramid style of writing he listed the mayor's comments block by block. It was creative and very readable.

RR: You were at Memphis for three years and then went to Louisville?

DD: I got wind of a summer school in Oxford University. I decided that would be pleasant. I went to see Mr. Frank Algren — it is funny how many used to refer to him as “Mr. Algren.” It wasn't an insult. They just didn't know better. I said, “Mr. Algren, I would like to get into this if I qualify. I would like for you to give me a leave of absence. I would like to take three months.” He said, “Yes.” I spent six weeks studying modern British government. We spent three weeks at Exeter College and three weeks at Worcester College. I went back to Memphis, and I feel I was fairly well satisfied. Although there was something lacking when comparing the *Commercial Appeal* to the *Gazette*. In Little Rock you have this big news town. You have the state capitol and an active court system, so many of your test suits are filed in Pulaski County. It is a lively place. Memphis was not like that. All the political action was taking place in Nashville. To me, the Memphis atmosphere was a little stifling, a little too much of Old South to suit

me. I thought the atmosphere in Little Rock was better. Little Rock got all that bad publicity through the integration squabbling. It always seemed to me that Little Rock was a much more tolerant town than Memphis ever was. I just didn't like the atmosphere. I did not think about leaving. I went back and was subjected to the indignity of having to write obits again. I said, "The heck with this." I sent a letter to Mr. Jim Pope, the executive editor of the *Courier Journal*, a morning paper. He invited me out, and I went up. We looked things over, and he talked with me and hired me. I guess it was just a couple of months after I came back from England. That would have been in the fall of 1959, probably about October of 1959. I spent six years there. It was an excellent newspaper. Again, all the big political news was happening in Frankfort. In both Memphis and Louisville ,the one difference in them and Little Rock, in a larger town having more population and more money, you did attract certain political celebrities. A lot of stories could be written about the comings and goings of these kinds of people.

RR: Did you have a beat there?

DD: In the beginning I worked mostly general, although after a while I picked up the airport as a beat. I would cover their board meetings and keep up with the developments of the airport. They had two airports there. I got into politics, working as sort of a second-string political reporter. I enjoyed that because I met a lot of politicians who came through.

RR: There were some famous newspaper people in Louisville. How about some of them? Start with the owners.

DD: The Bingham family. Barry Bingham had a dual title. He was the editor-in-chief and also the publisher. He tried to make that place an ideal operation. Everybody there of the upper level belonged to all the national journalism associations. For years and years, including the years that I was there, the *Courier Journal*, in nationwide polls, was voted as one of the ten or fifteen best papers in the country. It happened to be a liberal-slanted newspaper on the editorial page. That may have counted for something. Mainly, I think it was the approach to the news.

RR: There was Norman Isaacs.

DD: Norman Isaacs started out in journalism in Indianapolis and went up the ladder fast. At the age of twenty-four, twenty-five, or twenty-six, he was the city editor of one of the Indianapolis papers. It may have been the *Star*. Sooner or later he got to Louisville, and when I moved there in late 1959, he was the managing editor of the *Louisville Times*. He had a crackerjack staff. It was more talented and livelier than the morning newspaper I worked on. Later, in a fairly short period of time, I would say that at least six people from the *Times* got jobs on the *Washington Post* and did well there. Bill Greider --- when I went there, I was working on the school beats at various times. Bill would be working on the school beat for the *Times*. As I recall, Bill was a graduate of Princeton. You couldn't tell it by the way that he dressed. He dressed as if he were going fishing or something, very plain clothing. A very likable fellow. I have been around more talkative people, but he was always helpful. He was a good man. Pete Milius, a man from Texas, was very down to earth and friendly. Here was a guy

anybody could know and like. He drifted off to Washington. I shouldn't say drifted. He went there with purpose, I am sure. When last I heard -- this has been five or six years ago -- he was an editorial writer for the *Post*. Now, before that, I remember Mr. Broder came to town to speak.

RR: David?

DD: David Broder came to town to speak to Sigma Delta Chi. I remember talking to him and asking how these people were getting along. He said, "Oh, yes, Greider is my boss." [Laughter] Steve Isaacs went to the *Post* and in very short order was named something like "Metropolitan Editor." Still later he went to Minneapolis to be the editor of the *Tribune*. As I recall, the *Tribune* had a crash landing under his tenure. I don't think it was necessarily his fault. There were two or three others at least. Dave Hacker, who used to work in sports at the *Gazette*, went to Washington, D. C. He wound up on the Dow Jones *National Observer*.

RR: The same paper that Wesley Pruden worked for.

DD: Right. There were a couple of others. Dave, as I recall, went off to another newspaper. I forget which one it was. I think somewhere in there he won a Pulitzer Prize for writing under deadline.

RR: Speaking of Pruden, did you know him at the *Gazette*?

DD: Not so well at the *Gazette*, but I got acquainted with him at the *Commercial Appeal*. In fact, we were roommates for at least a year and a half.

RR: Is that right? Talk a little about him. I never knew him. He had left the *Gazette*

before I came there.

DD: Wes was a really nice fellow. I thought he was a bit immature. He was always a good writer. I didn't pay much attention to his writing at the *Gazette*. He was sort of a part-time worker. He was almost an office boy when he first came to the *Gazette*. He had a job writing for the state desk. Now and then, he would write a story, and I would hear the other guys talking about it. I didn't pay any attention to it. I read the story, and it was very well done, and I appreciated that. It was only after I got to the *Commercial Appeal* and began working part-time as an assistant city editor that I got acquainted with his copy. He was the smoothest and snappiest writer that I ever came across. Although they had a fellow there by the name of Michaels, who was generally conceded --- Tom Michaels was his name --- conceded to be the best writer on the staff.

RR: Are you staying in touch with Wes Pruden?

DD: No, I haven't. I wrote him a couple of letters and never did get an answer. I called it a day on Wes.

RR: You were in Memphis during the Central High crisis.

DD: As a matter of fact, I came over and spent a week or two covering the crisis.

RR: Did you and Wes talk about that? His father played a role there.

DD: Yes, I have met Mr. Pruden on occasion. It seems that I have met him a couple of times. I guess most of my friends around Arkansas were segregationists at that time.

RR: Somebody told me that after he moved to Washington, I guess to go to work for

the *National Observer*, whoever this was had occasion to visit him at his room and said it was decorated with Confederate flags and other sorts of Old South memorabilia. Did he have anything like that in his room?

DD: I wouldn't be surprised if that was the case. When I first went to Washington, I spent the first two weeks with him at his apartment in Silver Springs. I don't remember anything like that, but it seems in keeping with his personality.

RR: Back in Memphis when the two of you were rooming together, you don't remember anything like that?

DD: I don't remember that. He may have had something.

RR: He has certainly become a figure in Washington journalism in the last several years.

DD: Apparently so. I used to see him occasionally on C-Span. He was always dressed in a white suit – linen, I suppose, sort of like a southern colonel. Wes, unfortunately, in my opinion, is not what you would call a gifted speaker. He is a fine writer. It depends on what you want. I am not sure if *The Times* would like his style. He could fetch up a really great lead. He got a lot of assignments. He was working on the *National Observer*, and I had just begun work at UCA as a teacher in 1967. He came up a couple of times. The last time was about 1971 or 1972. I remember asking him how many countries he had been to while working at the *National Observer*. It was some ungodly number like fifty-five. He had covered some of the strife in Northern Ireland. He had been headquartered in Hong Kong. He had made at least two trips into Vietnam. As a matter of fact, he

wrote what amounted to columns for the paper. They later took these columns and put them into book form.

RR: You were there for six years altogether?

DD: I was there from the fall of 1959 until the fall of 1965.

RR: Then you went where?

DD: I went to the Peace Corps in Washington D. C. I was a public information officer. What I actually did was --- my title on the books was Media Liaison Officer, among other things. I would try to place Peace Corps stories in the Washington press. This was a very difficult job to do.

RR: That would have been in 1960-what?

DD: I was there for twenty-two months. It was from fall of 1965 until early September of 1967.

RR: Was Sargent Shriver still the head of the Peace Corps?

DD: He was head of the Peace Corps when I went there.

RR: Did you deal with him?

DD: Almost not at all. I was around him in meetings, but that was about it.

RR: This was in Washington? You were there in the headquarters?

DD: In the headquarters, just across from the White House.

RR: Did you do some traveling overseas?

DD: I took one trip down to Columbia and Venezuela to get information for a sports brochure. We would recruit ex-athletes to do general projects with emphasis on sports projects down in South America.

RR: It sounds like an interesting time. Did you like Washington?

DD: I got there too late. I was about age forty when I went there. I should have gone there when I was about twenty-three or twenty-four. I have the same feeling about New York City.

RR: What happened after the Peace Corps?

DD: The Peace Corps was known as an agency where you work there a year or two and then you pull out. A lot of people found the Peace Corps sort of an interchange point where they go from a business career to, maybe, the ministry. Sometimes it was vice-versa. Shortly after I got there, Jack Hood Vaughn succeeded Shriver as Peace Corps director. Hood was a former Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. He was a funny and witty guy, very smart. He was a live wire. I really enjoyed being around him. Some of the little lackey jobs you did were to write speeches or magazine articles for the Peace Corps director. You would have to know something about his personality and style before you could do that. I remember one time I was writing for a national publication put out by registered nurses. I wrote this little piece. It didn't take much effort. That very evening as I was going out the door, he was coming in. He said, "Hello." I said, "I just got through writing a piece for you under your name." He had one question, "Did I use good grammar?" [Laughter] He was really a nice fellow.

RR: Was this a transition time for you?

DD: Yes. Bob Poteete was a friend of mine -- we had gone to school together at

Arkansas State Teachers College, and he worked for years on the *New York Herald Trib*. The *Trib* was a paper that I always wanted to work for -- Sometime in 1960, he wrote me a letter saying he had seen some of my work. He said there was an opening on the *Trib* and was wondering if I might be interested in applying. I was, and wrote a letter of application. They invited me up around election time in November of 1960. I talked to the city editor there. I have forgotten his name, but it was sort of an Irish name. He was a rough-hewn person, but he had a degree from Harvard. He was saying, "Well, our administration is changing and our owner, Mr. Jock Whitney, who has been U.S. Ambassador in London, is going to be coming back. He is going to have to decide something. He is going to have to decide whether we can add some more reporters to compete more favorably with *The New York Times*. I think his decision will be to go ahead and hire new people." I assumed that I had the job all but locked up. He sounded so favorable. I went back and didn't hear from anybody. After a month I wrote a letter to Bob Poteete and asked him what was going on. He said, "Well, Whitney came back as expected. His first action was to fire this city editor." There went my job chance, up in smoke. After that I worked at Louisville for five more years. Then I decided to get on home. My parents were aging, and I needed to spend more time with them. That was when I was in Louisville. I went to Washington with the idea of turning back around and going to Arkansas. I had my twenty-two months in Washington D.C. That was really all I wanted. It was a nutty place, fast paced. You hear a lot about

government offices, employees loafing on the job. My experience in the Peace Corps was that we worked ourselves to death.

RR: That was my observation about every government office that I covered.

RR: You came back to Arkansas after that?

DD: Yes, shortly after that. I think it was September of 1967 that I moved to Conway as Director of Public Information and a teacher of journalism at UCA. I stayed there for twenty-three years. I left in June of 1990.

RR: What was Tom Davis's relationship? Did he come down and teach with you for a while?

DD: Yes, we were looking around for teachers. He replaced Dorothy Finklea for one year. Ms. Finklea had been there for a number of years. She retired and moved to Oklahoma. Ms. Dorothy Finklea recently died, just a couple of weeks ago.

RR: So he was on your faculty there?

DD: Yes, it was late in the hiring season. We had about three weeks to go, and we had a need for another journalism teacher. It occurred to me that Tom had moved back to Arkansas and was living in Russellville. I told them about him. They said they were desperate so to go ahead and see what I could do. Tom agreed to come down and to teach. Tom, at that time, had just been through some sort of major surgery. He was worried about his health. He didn't know if he would have the endurance to hold down a job like that. He specified that the school would need to have a room that he could retire to and rest if the need arose. I don't know if the school ever honored that. I told them that was one of the

conditions. He came down, and the salary was paltry. It seems like it was fifteen or sixteen thousand dollars a year. He didn't know if he would like it [the job] or not. I remember at the end of his tenure, we met, and he said that he had been here for a year and liked it. I went to the academic dean, Bob McChesney. I told him that Tom liked UCA and liked teaching and would like to resume next year. McChesney wouldn't hear of it. Apparently, Tom had been a pressuring sort of guy. He did some things that McChesney did not approve of. For instance, on more than one occasion they were late with his check. They were deducting something from the check that he did not understand. He went over to the business office and asked the accountant. He did not go in yelling or anything. He just went in a civil manner, requesting them to please explain the deductions. Word that he was doing that got to McChesney. He thought this was awful. Basically, I think he did not like the fact that Tom was a full-fledged professional.

RR: Not an academic.

DD: Not an academic guy that he could twist around his finger. Things went on, and I didn't see much going for Tom. At the end of the season I remember accosting Dr. McChesney in the parking lot at the administration building. I asked him, "What about Tom Davis?" He said, "Let me ask you this. Can you work with . . .?" -- he called off the name of the replacement, who was a TV man from Little Rock. I said, "Yes, I can work with him. He would not have Tom's qualifications." A funny little thing after this, Tom went to work teaching in an endowed position at Marshall University in West Virginia. He told me that his

starting salary was thirty-two thousand, five hundred. That was a pretty good salary back in those times. That would have been in about 1979. I arranged to get a story in the *Echo*. The story was intended for Dr. McChesney, really, to tell about Tom's new position and salary. On at least two occasions during the next three or four years while McChesney was there, I would be in touch with Tom. I would always ask him, "How much are you making now?" He would tell me. It seems like he got it up into the high thirties. Each time I would arrange to have a story put in the *Echo* about Tom Davis and his salary of \$36,000 a year. I remember one day a student came in and cocked his head and said, "This is a peculiar story. This guy is so proud of his salary." Tom had no idea that I was doing that. McChesney got the message.

RR: Did you have some students at UCA who went on to work for the *Gazette*?

DD: Yes, I had several. John Arwood, from Forrest City, who also had worked at the *Log Cabin Democrat*. One of the best students I ever had, Melinda Wilson, and she was from near Brinkley.

RR: She went to the *Gazette*?

DD: I think she worked on the state desk. Later she went to a newspaper in North Carolina. John received his master's degree from the University of Missouri. He went to the *Charlotte Observer*. He is the chief correspondent for South Carolina. James Meriweather, another UCA man, worked at the *Gazette*.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 2]

DD: I had several who worked for the *Democrat*. There are others, but I can't think of them. One of my students, Kyle Massey, worked at the *Democrat* and is now a copy editor at *The New York Times*.

RR: That is what makes teaching rewarding, watching your young folks go out into the world and do well.

DD: You learn pretty soon that whatever measurements you took of those students were often wrong, that they have much more ability than you ever thought they had.

RR: Yes, absolutely. Back to the *Gazette* for a minute, Dean. When you think of the *Gazette* nowadays, what is the main overall impression that you carry with you?

DD: I just think about it being a great paper. It is a shame that it is not still running. It was vital for the state. We lost such a great resource. You hear all kinds of jokes about reporters. I remember back in Memphis --- back then there was no noticeable drug culture. There used to be jokes about journalism. One guy said, "I don't tell my folks that I work for the newspaper. I tell them I sell drugs."  
[Laughter]

RR: You mentioned that the *Gazette* was vital to the state. Can you see what effect the newspaper had on the state's public lot?

DD: I would be hard pressed to state specific things. It seems to me that the *Democrat-Gazette* goes out of its way to give you contrary opinions. Certainly, it couldn't do it to the extent that the *Gazette* did. There is just no way one newspaper with one chief political viewpoint can cover everything.

RR: Has there been a political impact since the *Gazette* has been gone these nine years? Has it had an impact on the politics of Arkansas?

DD: I would guess that it has. A newspaper just being there and publishing can exert pressure without even knowing it. It has been gone for many years, and the state is still seemingly Democratic to me.

RR: Well, we have a Republican Governor and a Republican Senator, and two Republican Congressmen.

DD: I wish that you had not brought that up.

RR: Most of the cities and counties. . .

DD: They still talk Democratic. It has always been a mixed-up state when it came to voting. Remember the year they voted for the Democrat President?

RR: I think it was George Wallace for President, J.W. Fulbright for senator, and Winthrop Rockefeller for governor. I would guess that without the *Gazette* things are changing whether we know it or not.

RR: Can you think of anything that we haven't covered?

DD: No, but maybe I will think of something or a clarification.

RR: If you do, then jot it down. Well, why don't we wind it up for now?

[End of Interview]