Gazette Project

Interview with

Leland DuVall and his wife, Letty DuVall,
Pottsville, Arkansas,
11 May 2000

Interviewer: Ernie Dumas (with Roy Reed)

Roy Reed: Okay, this will be Leland DuVall, and Ernest Dumas, and Roy Reed, and Leland's wife, Letty DuVall, on May the eleventh, 2000, at Pottsville, Arkansas.

Leland DuVall: Crow Mountain.

RR: Crow Mountain. Crow Mountain. Okay, Ernie, you go ahead.

Ernest Dumas: Let me just say that we're interviewing Leland DuVall, who was, for many years, a farm and business editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*, and a columnist, and in the latter years, associate editor, and editorial writer for the *Gazette*. And known thereabouts as the "Great Sage," in the latter years of the *Gazette*. Leland, first we need to ask you, we have your permission both to tape this interview and your permission for the University of Arkansas archives to use it?

LD: Sure.

ED: It will be in the Public Domain?

LD: Sure.

ED: First, let's get you to talk about when you were born and your life. If you could take us through your early years.

LD: Well, that's not a very interesting [laughs] aspect. I was born at Moreland in 1911.

RR: Where was that, Leland?

LD: Moreland. M-O-R-E-L-A-N-D. That's the town you don't want to forget, you know. [Laughs]

RR: Right.

ED: It's north of Russellville, right?

LD: Yes, north of Russellville. Of course, I was born out in the country around Moreland, not in Moreland itself.

ED: Not downtown Moreland?

LD: No. [Laughter]

RR: No, out in the country around Moreland.

ED: Okay.

LD: You know, a mile or two east of the post office. Of course, we were a farm family. Dad was a renter at that time. He later bought a farm. I was the oldest. And we lived the same way that renters lived in Arkansas. I mean, that's just the way it was. And as far as a background, I didn't have any. I was self-uneducated. [Laughter] I'd be by myself, nobody to help me. But I worked any number of jobs after I grew up, in addition to farm jobs.

ED: How far did you go in school?

LD: Well, there we went through the eighth grade. And I briefly went to school at Atkins. And I also briefly went to school at Hector. But just a part of the year

each time. And I didn't get very far.

Letty DuVall: He always told me the money ran out. [Laughter]

LD: I'd start and the money would run out, you know. And, you see, where I lived, there was no connection to any school. I didn't know anybody who went to high school.

ED: They didn't have a high school in Moreland?

LD: No.

ED: And Hector had a high school?

LD: Hector put one in in 1929. Atkins had one all the time. I went to Atkins in 1929 and continued school there for three or four months until the money ran out. The next year I went to Hector and stayed there for three or four months.

ED: Did you have to drive, I mean, to go to high school? How'd you get from Moreland over to Atkins to high school?

LD: I boarded down there.

ED: You boarded at Atkins?

LD: Yes, and they ran a school bus from Moreland to Hector the following year. So I rode the school bus from Moreland. I walked up to Moreland and rode the school bus on up to Hector. They were just experimenting with school buses in rural areas at that time. They had one bus that Hector started twenty-three miles up on the mountain and came down and picked up the bootlegger's sons and whatever else. And it was a great experiment in trying to teach those boys. [Laughter] Some of them did real good. Some of them did very bad. [Laughs]

RR: Were you in a minority, Leland, in going to high school? Or did most boys your age go to high school?

LD: I didn't know anybody who went to high school. Not from out around there.

RR: You mean you were the only one in your neighborhood?

LD: I was the only one that tried to go.

ED: You got three or four months of it?

LD: Yes.

RR: How did it happen that you went? What caused you to go to high school?

LD: I just wanted to go. [Laughs] No reason.

Letty D: Leland got his license to teach school when he was fourteen years old.

RR: Fourteen?

Letty D: Yes. [Laughter]

ED: You got a state license to teach school at fourteen?

LD: That's right. [Laughs] I'd never been to high school at that time. We had a great arrangement in Arkansas education in those days. In order to qualify as a teacher they'd have teacher's examinations spring and fall. Tom Bullock, at the time, was the County Examiner. If you wanted to be a schoolteacher, you went to Russellville for two days, and they'd give you printed questions. He ran the show. And so you took the examination. It took you two days to do it. And then he sent the papers to Little Rock to have them graded. There were two girls at Moreland. They were three or four years older than I was, and they wanted to be teachers. So they decided they'd take the teacher's examination, and they let me

go along with them. One of them had a car. She drove a T-model to Russellville. So the three of us went down there to take this teacher's examination, and all three of us passed. [Laughs] I mean there was no question about it. [Laughter] Of course, they were four years older than I was. They were eighteen, and I was fourteen.

Letty D: They wrote on his, "Too young to teach."

LD: I've got that lying around here somewhere. [Laughter] They weren't going to let me teach. They just . . .

ED: You passed it, but they wrote on there, "Too young to teach?"

LD: Said I couldn't teach. [Laughs] Of course, that wasn't the only reason I couldn't teach. I didn't have sense enough to teach anyway. [Laughter]

RR: Were you kind of a bookish kid?

LD: More or less. That came about because, well, I don't know why it did. We didn't have any books. But Dad borrowed them once in a while. And he had a habit of sitting around after supper — this was long before they invented radio — and reading novels aloud when I was too young to read, I mean, Harold Bell Wright and [laughs] Zane Grey, and those people. And so he'd borrow those books and read them. And I got interested in them. I had a cousin who boarded at our house a time or two when she taught school at Oak Grove, and she'd get books. Dad would read them. Sit around the fire after supper, you know, and that replaced radio and television and everything else. Then when I was about twelve years old, I guess, we moved to my grandfather's farm. His wife had died. He was up

there alone. So we rented the farm and moved up there. Dad had a brother who stayed with us for a few years. He was a teacher. And he had quite a few books. And the house was a great big old house, and [there was] one big room where we stayed most of the time, Leonard and I. Leonard was a great reader. He did a lot of reading. And so because he read, I'd sit over there and read, too. And the next thing you know, I'd read all the books he had. And I thought that was interesting. [Laughs] The most books I'd seen.

RR: You know, we ought to back up just a minute and get the names of your mother and father and your birth date.

LD: I was born June 19, 1911.

RR: And your parent's names?

LD: Dad was Omer O-M-E-R DuVall. And mother was Esther E-S-T-H-E-R Singleton.

RR: S-I-N-G-L-E-T-O-N?

LD: That's right.

RR: Okay, now go ahead, Ernie. I'm sorry.

ED: So you got a few months of high school at Atkins and Hector. And then what did you do? Did you ever teach?

LD: Yes, I taught two terms.

ED: Taught two terms? How old were you when you taught? And where did you teach?

LD: I taught a term at Oak Grove when I was nineteen.

ED: Is that Oak Grove down near Little Rock?

LD: No, Oak Grove out north of Atkins.

ED: North of Atkins? Okay.

LD: Yes, where I grew up. I taught out there a little term of school when I was nineteen. When I was twenty, I taught a term at Moreland. And I was kind of discouraged with the idea of being an educator, because when I got through teaching the term up there, they didn't have enough money to pay me. So [laughs] I carried that note for two or three years before they finally paid me. [Laughter] I thought that was a raw deal. But that wasn't the best story. I had an uncle who was a teacher, another uncle in addition to the one who lived with us, and of course, when they ran out of money to pay me, they didn't have any money to hire anybody else. So they were prepared not to have any school. And Adrian, that's my other uncle, called a meeting and made an offer they couldn't refuse. He told them he'd teach them a term of school, that it would be a tragedy not to have school. "I'll teach you a term of school, if you'll cut wood for my family this winter so they won't get cold, and help my wife take care of the livestock a little bit in the morning and in the afternoon." So that was the pay he got for teaching a term of school. [Laughs]

RR: That was during the Depression or the 1920s?

LD: Yes, in the Depression, early part of it.

ED: What was your salary in the terms you taught? Do you recall what your salary was for the year?

LD: I'm trying to remember. Seems like I got thirty-five dollars a month at Oak Grove, and forty dollars a month, on credit, at Moreland. [Laughs]

ED: And you got paid two or three years later?

LD: Yes, two or three years later I got paid.

ED: Yes.

LD: But it was a profession that I lost interest in immediately. [Laughs] First, I wasn't any good at it, and second, it wasn't worth the effort. And, of course, by that time the Depression was on in full force, and we had the dust storms in the west, you know, that you've heard about. Maybe read Erskine Caldwell or somebody about how they did it. And all the people around the country that were loose went to California. A lot of them did. And when they did that, they vacated the Dust Bowl, and I went to the Dust Bowl. So if you start [laughs] to think about that [laughs] for a minute, that's how well off I was. They left the Dust Bowl, and I went in there. [Laughs]

ED: That was progress for you.

LD: That was progress for me, but it didn't do any good.

Letty D: Here's his library when he was a kid. (Shows a box of small books.) And he said that's where he got his education.

ED(?): Needed the books?

Letty D: Yes.

ED: [Laughs] (?) That Greek, can't read that now, the type's too small.

Letty D: Yes.

LD: I could read it then. [Laughs] But Leonard would order those things. They were called the "Little Leather Library." You got Russian short stories and Shakespeare and all that stuff somewhere in there. [Laughs]

ED: Yes. Well, when did you go to the Dust Bowl?

LD: I went in 1937.

ED: This is what part of Oklahoma?

LD: Texas.

ED: You went to Texas?

LD: Yes. It was worse than Oklahoma.

ED: Did you have a job out there?

LD: I went out there to help harvest the crops and just stayed another year, and we farmed.

ED: What part of Texas? Do you remember the county?

LD: Yes, Hall County, Memphis, Texas. You can't find it on the map. But it's not too far from Amarillo, up in that part of the state. I went out there to help harvest the crops, and I stayed over in the next year. The man I worked for had a section of land. And he hired me on as an assistant. By that I mean I got a little pay every month and then thirty acres of cotton at the end of the year. That was my pay. It was better than teaching school, but not much.

ED: What was the price of cotton then? What did you get for cotton?

LD: I really don't remember, but it wasn't much.

ED: And you would have been, what, about twenty-six years old then?

LD: Yes.

ED: And so you stayed out there about a year?

LD: A year and a half.

ED: A year and a half, and then you came back to Pope County?

LD: Yes.

Letty D: When did you sell Wearever cookware?

LD: While I was out there.

Letty D: I didn't know if that was while you were in Mississippi County in the delta or . . . [Laughs]

LD: No, that was while I was out there. [Laughs]

ED: What? Was that Wearever?

LD: Wearever, she's got it all wrong. [Laughs] She's not a very good salesman. We had a chap named Buck Weaver, who was a Wearever salesman in that part of the country. Wearever was a brand of aluminum cookware. They had a sales system you wouldn't believe. You'd line up a bunch of people and go cook a meal at somebody's house, with their permission. You'd provide the groceries and cook the meal in this equipment. It was a waterless cooker version. So you'd cook this meal, and they'd all eat it, but while they were eating it, they'd line up to allow you to come to their house to show them how this works. If you sold a set of it, you made money because it was priced high. We'd get up at four o'clock the next morning and cook breakfast for some family, you know, one of your prospects. And after you'd made all the rounds, that evening you'd go cook supper for five

or six more families at somebody's house. You'd provide the groceries and all that sort of thing.

Letty D: And they'd invite neighbors in.

LD: And they invited their neighbors. They would invite three or four families, and you'd cook. And we had a specific menu that we provided. It was pretty good, I think, food and all. There was beef and all the vegetables. And I followed that for a while, but I never could find any time to go to bed, you know? You'd cook that thing and even have to wash those dishes and everything and get done around eleven or twelve o'clock at night. And then you had to be somewhere else at four o'clock in the morning to cook somebody's breakfast. I decided there wasn't any future in that.

ED: Did you find many people out there in the panhandle that could afford Everware?

LD: Yes, a few of them that could, because you sold it to them on credit. So much a month, and you can sell anything if you sell it at so much a month. Even in the Dust Bowl. So it was interesting.

RR: I was a Wearever salesman one time.

LD: You were? Well, good for you.

RR: I lasted one day. [Laughter] Rodney Dungan's daddy was taking me out as a favor to my daddy, and at the end of the day, we all agreed that young Roy didn't have any future as a salesman.

LD: Happens.

ED: Did you have to do the cooking, too?

RR: No, we didn't even get that far along. [Laughs]

LD: You're the only man I ever saw that was also a Wearever salesman. [Laughter]

RR: I'd totally forgotten. I never have thought to put that on my resume.

LD: Well, you better put it on there because that is a rare thing. [Laughs]

RR: Yes, it is.

ED: Well, did we skip anything? Were there any other jobs or work that you did in the intervening years?

LD: Yes. Before I went to Texas, I went to Mississippi County. If you want to know about the delta, I know about that.

ED: All right. You wrote a lot about the delta. Tell us about the delta.

LD: I lived down there, the reason I wrote about it. I went over there to work for a fellow. I lived in his home. I went to help him harvest his cotton crop. After I'd done just a little of that cotton picking, the old man who owned a gin there at that place put me to work. Of course, this was a plantation where the man owned the gin and all the land around it, and this guy I went down there with was a sharecropper on this plantation. So after a few days, I got a job working at the gin instead of picking cotton. Well, I wasn't very good at picking cotton, so I went to work at the gin and worked there all fall. When the ginning season was over, he had a sawmill, and I went to work at the sawmill. So I worked there for a period. And then we had the big flood, and it drove me out. [Laughs] So I didn't bother to go back.

RR: In 1927?

LD: No, this was the 1936 flood.

RR: '30?

LD: '37.

RR: '37?

LD: Yes.

RR: Okay.

LD: But it was a marvelous flood. It covered a great deal of that country down there. And I learned how sharecroppers lived down there because I lived with one of them.

Letty D: He was one of the lucky ones, he said, because some of them had to sleep on the front porch. [Laughs]

LD: [Laughs] That was an interesting thing. This was just before the cotton-picking machine came in. And the cotton pickers came there from every direction to harvest the cotton. And so I knew where I was going when I went down there. This fellow I worked for didn't know it, but I had the expectation that I could stay with him. He lived in a shotgun house, in one of several along the road. And so he provided me with a bed, and I slept inside. Another fellow from Pope County went down there a few days after I got there. This family that I stayed with had cotton all over the place and didn't have anyplace to put it, so they dumped a lot of it on the front porch. And it was just outside the window where I slept. So this guy from Pope County came down there to pick cotton, and the man I was with said, "I'd hire you, but I don't have anyplace to let you stay." And he said, "I can

sleep on that cotton." "Okay." So he went to bed on this cotton outside the window. He was a Pentecost preacher. And I had known him all my life, you know. Of course, he just got stretched out in there and the mosquitoes found him. [Laughter] I mean they found him. He was just outside the window, and I was inside and I'd hear that, (swats leg with his hand) "Praise the Lord!" (Swats leg with his hand) "Amen!" (Swats leg with his hand) "Hallelujah!" [Laughter] That went on all night. He got up and went back to Russellville the next morning.

ED: Those are big mosquitoes in Mississippi County, too.

LD: Yes, as big as they get and so many of them.

ED: Well, this is the foundation, I guess, for that wonderful series you did years later on colony and state. I mean, you were just writing first-hand accounts about what you were doing there?

LD: Yes, sure.

ED: You didn't have to do any research? You wrote it all first-hand?

LD: That's right. I didn't have to do any special research for a lot of that stuff because I'd already been there.

ED: So let's bring this up to — you've come back from Texas, the panhandle, in 1938 approximately?

LD: Yes.

ED: And then what did you do?

LD: I had an interlude in there where I didn't do anything. Didn't have anything to do. In 1941, three years later, I went back to Texas to harvest the crop and help a

fellow. I worked for a different man that time. My main job that fall was running a row binder. So we did that and whatever else was to be done. I stayed until December and came home. Pearl Harbor had happened about that time. So I went to Little Rock and became a part of the army. I worked down there for three months before I went in.

Letty D: Where?

LD: Jacksonville.

ED: You worked at Jacksonville?

LD: Yes.

Letty D: He forgot to tell you all something important that happened at his job in 1935.

ED: Tell us about your job in 1935.

Letty D: He taught a singing school. [Laughs]

LD: Aw . . .

ED: Yes, that's got to be in there. You taught singing school?

Letty D: Yes.

LD: That's right.

Letty D: Up here on Crow Mountain. That's where we met. [Laughs]

ED: You met Letty at the singing school?

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: In 1935.

LD: We had a fellow at Moreland who was a particularly talented musician. He really

was. During the Depression, of course, you did whatever you could. He became a pretty good pianist. He played real well. And he taught music in the little communities around. He would teach the music, and they'd pay him a modest amount. He got a school on Crow Mountain. He asked me if I wanted to come up here with him, and I said yes. Didn't have anything else to do. So I came up here. He taught the whole thing. He taught the music part of it and the harmony. And then he also taught lyrics — matching the words to the music. I mean, somebody would write the melody, and somebody would write the poetry, and you'd match it together. And he didn't want to teach that. He wanted me to, and I did. [Laughter] You can't hardly beat that. So I did that. What Letty wants me to point out was she was a little ol' girl, fifteen years old, you know? And I spotted her while I was up there and I put her on layaway. I thought now one day . . . [laughter] . . . she's going to grow up and it may work out. [Laughter]

Letty D: That's the most important job he ever had. Now you see why I didn't want to skip over it. [Laughter]

LD: Well now, what else do you do? You see a little kid over there running around, and you put her on layaway. You hope she'll grow up someday.

RR: Sure. When did you come back and get her?

LD: I didn't come back for . . . don't pursue that. She brought it up. [Laughter] While she was on layaway and I'm waiting for her to grow up, she starts to growing up faster than I expected. So she found her a man.

RR: Yes.

LD: So he was a man of some substance, had an automobile and one thing or another, so she's courting him. And I got back from Texas one of those times, and she's already engaged to this character. What do you do? [Laughter] So you just sit and wait. So she was engaged to him and they broke up just about the time I went into the Army, or something like that. Turned out he didn't know me and I knew him. And he and I got drafted on the same day. And [we] went to Little Rock and to California together, you see? [Laughter] Every time I got a chance, I'd go over and talk to old [Drittley?], you know, and ask him about all this. And he'd tell me about his broken romances and one thing and another. [Laughter] That went on for a long time.

ED: You commiserated with him?

LD: Oh, yes.

Letty D: Until he got to California.

LD: We went to California. You see, the man had money and property. Only trouble is he didn't have much sense.

Letty D: Well, he certainly did. [Laughter]

LD: Depends on what you had, you know. [Laughter] He and I went along together, and he was in "B Troop" and I was in "A Troop," you know, just across the street. And I'd go over and talk to him pretty often. I discovered how he had money. He never did spend any. [Laughter]

Letty D: Anyway, when he got his first pass, he wrote me a letter. Since I was no longer dating that guy, he got his first pass, and I got a letter from him.

[Laughs]

LD: But anyway, this fellow, he was a bit interesting. She was mad at him because he didn't like to spend money. [Laughs]

Letty D: Well, he wasn't tight with me. He just probably was with you. He wouldn't buy you some pipe tobacco or such. [Laughter]

LD: We'd sit around after supper, you know. I'd go over and talk to him. He'd be sitting around there sewing some stripes on somebody's shirt. He'd charge them a dime for sewing the stripes on. [Laughs]

RR: Are we going to name this fellow or not?

Letty D: No. We're not.

LD: Well, I don't care. [Laughs]

Letty D: No, we're not! [Laughter]

ED: All right.

LD: He's still around.

ED: Oh, he's still around?

LD: He's still around. At any rate . . .

ED: But you all got married after the war though?

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: It was after the war before you all really got around . . . ?

LD: Oh, yes. We didn't marry until after the war.

Letty D: Two weeks after he was home.

ED: Two weeks after you got out of the service you all got married?

LD: Yes.

ED: Well, let's go back to your draft. You got drafted and went down to Little Rock? And there was another fellow from Moreland who went with you, didn't he? A guy who had a little drinking problem?

LD: There were a lots of people in with me who had drinking problems and one thing or another. [Laughs]

Letty D: He's talking about Bowden. He was from Crow Mountain.

LD: Oh, Bowden. Old Bowden, he was from Crow Mountain. I knew him. We went down to get drafted, to report. And so they were calling the roll of all [the men]. They had a busload that were supposed to go to Little Rock. And, while they were calling the roll, they'd come down the list alphabetically, and they got to Bowden and nobody answered. So they went all through the list and then they backed up and said, "Where's Bowden?" John Forehand was sheriff here in the county, and he said, "I think I know where he is." [Laughs] So he went on upstairs to the jailhouse and Bowden was lying on the floor outside the door. He normally went to jail every time he went to town. [Laughter] So this particular night they knew he was to be drafted the next morning and they wouldn't put him in jail, so he just went to sleep on the floor outside the door. See? So that's where Bowden got prepared to go in the Army. Sleeping on the outside of the jailhouse door. We went to California, and they had a little trouble making a soldier out of Bowden. They kept him on K.P. all the time. [Laughter] There was the one incident that I thought was funny at the time. We had a little first

sergeant who was an old Army man.

RR: He was a what?

LD: An old Army man. He'd been in the Army for twenty or thirty years. His name was Habberchock.

RR: Habberchock?

LD: Yes. And he was the first sergeant of the troop. And we got out on the desert pulling a maneuver in the summer. It was on the Mojave Desert in California. We pulled in to patch up our equipment, and they set up a kitchen tent, a headquarters tent, and everybody else just slept on the ground wherever they wanted to. I was up in the headquarters tent one day, and somebody came up there and told the first sergeant, "You're going to have to go down there and straighten old Bowden out. He's tearing everything up around that kitchen." Habberchock said, "I'll get him." He went down there to talk to him, and Bowden was drunk. [Laughs] So I watched him. He went into the kitchen tent down there. He just went in and kind of turned around and came out, and Bowden came after him with a butcher knife. He was a running. [Laughter] Nobody figured out how in the Christmas anybody out in the middle of the Mojave Desert found something to get drunk on. I mean, they didn't have a place to get drunk there for fifty miles, you know?

RR: Yes.

LD: But he was drunk. He'd found that the mess sergeant had bunch of lemon extract in there somewhere. He did fancy cooking once in awhile, and Bowden found his

lemon extract. [Laughter]

RR: Must have a high alcohol content?

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: Is Bowden still with us?

LD: No, he's dead. He was a great man though.

ED: So you were in California, and did your training there and what? Shipped out to Europe?

LD: No. We went to California, Camp Cook, which is now — What is that air base there where they fire off all the . . . ?

RR: Not Edwards?

LD: No. It's the one that they used to fire long-range rockets.

RR: No, I can't think what that is.

LD: Anyway, that's where we went. It was a new camp they'd just started building. It was only partly built when we got there. So they filled it up after they got it built and based an armored division there. They had commissioned the armored division over at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. Had just put a little cadre there, and then they shipped the cadre to California. And then got a bunch of us "old rusties" from everywhere pouring in there and filled up the Division. And those guys who were already there provided the backbone of the Division. So we got there in the winter and stayed through the next summer. Except we went out on the desert when summer came and stayed out there until October, I guess, or something like that. Then we came back to camp, patched everything up, and

moved to Tennessee and pulled maneuvers there. So we stayed in Tennessee for a while pulling maneuvers, and then they moved us to upstate New York and we spent a few months up there. Then they pulled us down to Pennsylvania and shipped us out from there. Then we got to Europe, to England, and we didn't go in with the invasion forces across the channel. We were a little behind the original wave. We weren't the part that did the invading. We still had to off load our equipment on a little LST. And then wade in.

ED: This was out on Normandy Beach?

LD: Yes.

ED: Omaha Beach? Utah Beach? One of those?

LD: No, Omaha.

ED: Omaha Beach.

LD: And we still had to wade in. I mean they were still shooting at you once in a while. But nothing happened.

RR: You were in an armored division?

LD: Yes, cavalry part of the armored division. Scouts.

Letty D: He went first. And if he didn't get shot at the rest of them came. [Laughs]

RR: Oh.

LD: Wasn't that. [Laughs] Send a few expendables out there and if they didn't get shot at, then they sent the rest of them.

RR: Did you go out in a jeep or a . . .?

LD: We had jeeps and scout cars. The scout car we ended up with was what they call

an M-8. It was a six-wheeler, three wheels to a side. It would go just about anywhere. It was armed with a thirty-seven millimeter gun and a co-axial machine gun. So that was the scout vehicle. Every once in a while, you'd . . .

ED: So you were in the Normandy invasion. Did anything happen? Did you get shot at much?

LD: Oh, yes, you got shot at a little. And not much happened. We, well, I don't know, culled out a few people or started to. Because they — you never can tell in advance who's going to stand up when they're shooting at you. There's no way to tell. The toughest guys you have may be the first ones to take off. But after you have a little skirmish or two, you cull out those people. They go back, you know, to the hospital or someplace. And anyone that's there, they have sense enough to leave. So [laughs] we stayed.

ED: Now you got a little shrapnel wound at one point?

LD: Yes.

ED: Tell us how that happened.

LD: I got one at three points, but one of them is still with me.

Letty D: He's got a . . . what kind of heart?

ED: A Purple Heart?

Letty D: A Purple Heart.

ED: Yes.

LD: Yes.

Letty D: He said he could have gotten two more, but he didn't have sense enough

to take them. He says if he would have taken them, why, he could have come home earlier. [Laughs]

LD: I didn't know that in the war a Purple Heart's worth five points toward discharge. We got so many points, see? So I didn't get a Purple Heart the first time I got hit or the second time. And I finally got a Purple Heart, and they gave me five points, and I came home a little earlier. And I thought, "Hell, my stupidity cost me."

RR: You were wounded three times?

LD: None of them bad.

ED: Were they all shrapnel, or did you get the bullet wounds?

LD: They were all shrapnel.

ED: All shrapnel? Well, the one that's still in you — there was an explosion right beside you?

LD: That was a mortar. We were sitting on a hill with timber all around. A timber-covered hill and the Germans tried to knock us off. They sent an outfit over to drive us out, and we stayed. And when they withdrew, then they showered us with mortars. I'd already been hit once that night with a hand grenade, and then they hit us with those mortars. They were small mortars. Sitting down on the river, throwing those shells in. And so this particular one, I was standing by a tree, and it fell that close (points a yard to his right) and knocked me that way. And sprinkled me pretty good with little stuff, nothing big. So I had to go to the Medics when I got a chance and get all that stuff cleaned out, you know, gravel

and one thing and another. And there's one of them they didn't get, and I've still got it.

Letty D: Just a few nights ago he woke me up. He was yelling. When he turned over, he hit that shrapnel. Used to, it never bothered him, but just here lately he turns over, and he hollers. And I jumped up and went in there and asked him. And he's all excited, "I just turned over on a bit of shrapnel." [Laughs]

LD: That's right. I mean, you don't pay attention to it. You avoid it if you're awake. But if you turn over on it at night when you're asleep, it feels like somebody's sticking a knife, an ice pick, or something in your hip. (rubs right hip)

ED: Yes.

LD: I mean it goes in pretty good. You can't keep from hollering and waking up.

ED: Right.

LD: [Laughs] That isn't the way it works.

Letty D: Tell them about the house we visited when we went to Germany that time.

LD: Well, I don't know, this probably gets boring after a while. [Laughs]

ED: No, no.

RR: No, no.

LD: But at any rate, Letty and I went back to Germany. What year was that?

Letty D: '80.

LD: It wasn't that late, was it?

Letty D: Yes, it was in '80.

ED: 1980?

Letty D: Yes.

LD: We went back over there, and we went to various places. Some places we just wanted to go and one place I wanted to go see again. Our company — you start with a hundred and forty men in an Army troop, one hundred and forty line soldiers — And we were in the Hurtgen Forest, which is where the Battle of the Bulge came off.

RR: Yes. Hurtgen?

LD: Hurtgen. H-U-R-T-G-E-N. Hurtgen, it's where the Battle of the Bulge — you know, it was just north of Bastogne. It wasn't in a bad part of it. But we were up in that part of the front, and we battled for a week or two before it really broke out. They were hitting us with artillery all the time. By artillery, and one thing or another, we lost a hundred of our men, out of a hundred and forty. We lost half of them, I guess, to frozen feet. The snow was about that deep (hand half way up to knee), you know, and we didn't have anywhere to go. So your feet would just rot. There wasn't anything you could do about it. So you keep them wet all the time, and cold, and the blood would retreat from the foot so that the skin would just start dying. We were down to forty men. And the strategy of the outfit was that they organized what they call a ninth army. And it was going to go to the north and circle the Germans, and the first army was going to go to the south and circle from that direction. And we were just going to wrap them up and whip the tar out of them right there, you know? Well, while we were going up there, here they

come through the middle with this [laughs] Battle of the Bulge, you know. And they did a good job on us. [Laughs] Except we were up on the north, on the point on the north side and still advancing, and they were advancing to the south of us through the Bulge to Bastogne. And we advanced to the point where we were sitting out there by ourselves, forty men. And the strategy was there was a little river down there called the Roer River. And it runs on down to Duren, the city of Duren, and there was a bridge running across this river at a little place called Untermaubach. And so they told us what we'd do is go down there and get between Untermaubach and Duren, so that if the Germans tried to reinforce the bridge up here we'd interrupt them, see? We saved this bridge and then the main bulk of the division could cross this bridge and keep on going. So we got up there on the river, and before they knew, we were there, in a house. And about that time, the Bulge really broke down south of us, and they pulled all these people out and left us sitting up there. [Laughs] There wasn't anybody to come and get us. We were supposed to capture them at this house by ten o'clock one night and by ten o'clock the next morning reinforcements were supposed to come up and relieve us and save the bridge and all that sort of thing. So they didn't have anyone to come after us and left us sitting there. And we were forty men sitting in two houses. And that's what Letty talked about when she and I went back to Germany. I told her I wanted to see that house. [Laughs]

ED: I was wondering about that.

Letty D: He almost starved.

LD: Anyway, we came into the house from the back side through the woods. And when we went out, we went the other direction. So we got over to Cologne, Germany, and I told Letty I wanted to go see that house. And I said, "I don't really know where it is. I don't know how to get there. It's in the middle of the woods, but we'll find it." So we loaded up in a rental car and took off. So I got to Duren, and I knew it was on the other side of the river. So we began to go through the countryside, little roads and one thing and another. I couldn't talk to the Germans, and the natives couldn't talk to me, but we went through. And Letty kept telling me I didn't have the slightest idea where I was or where I was going. And I told her she was right. [Laughs] I didn't know where I was. I just knew where I wanted to go. So we kept on going and about dinner we came up on a hill. We were on a little road. Just a one-way road and looked down and I said, [laughs] "There it is right there!" And sure enough it was. [Laughs] That's where we found it, right in the middle of the woods.

Letty D: He said there was one book that he could read that was in this house. It was a fine house. And this is while they were there. How long were you there?

LD: Well, they were supposed to get us out by dinner and we stayed for about two weeks. [Laughter] Nearly two weeks.

Letty D: And he had the book rebound.

RR: A book in English?

LD: Yes. This house was marvelous, one of the few country houses that you'd see.

Most of them were in villages. So we get in this house. It was a three-story house. Had a basement and then two more floors above. And so we got in there, and all we were supposed to do was to stay there so the Germans couldn't come up the river and blow the bridge. And so we stayed. And while we were there, they shot at us from across the river with assorted artillery. And the top floor was a library, a big library in this house. It had just two books in English. That's one of them. Just two books in English in that library.

RR: This is *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*.

LD: That's right.

RR: Appears to be leather bound.

LD: Well, I had it rebound with the same leather that they had.

RR: Okay.

LD: So I was up on the third floor watching to see what was happening, and they set the joint on fire [laughs] with a shell. And we had to put the fire out. We're in there, and we can't get out because they've got us surrounded by that time. So we had to put the fire out, and we did. And when I came out of there, I took those books with me to remember I'd been there.

RR: Two books?

LD: Two books.

RR: What was the other one?

Letty D: Was it this one, the German stories?

LD: *German Popular Stories*, yes.

RR: Well, how did you finally get out of there?

LD: Well, we just out-waited them. We stayed there for several days. I don't know how long.

Letty D: Some of you got killed there.

LD: Oh, yes, we lost men there, but that's what you do in war, you lose some men. But our problem primarily was we didn't have any food. We went in there with a couple of K-rations that were supposed to get us through the day, so, of course, we ran out of food the first day. And after that, why, we just starved it out. There was one thing that saved us. The basement of this house had a bunch of old potato bread in it. Had mold all over it and that sort of stuff, but you could still eat it. And that's what we ate. [Laughs]

RR: I gather the owners of the house were nowhere around?

LD: They were gone.

RR: Yes. I want to hear that part of it because I'd asked Leland how many men were there in those two houses, and he said about forty.

LD: About forty in two houses. And we were in one house, and the other half of the group was in the other house. After the first day I guess it was . . .

Letty D: Ernie, do you want a glass of water?

ED: No, I'm fine, Letty.

LD: After the first day some of the boys — you know, you can just stand that so long — and they decided that they could get out. So they tried to make a run for it. There was a hill that came down to the back of the house. They were going to run

into those woods and see if they couldn't get out because we weren't doing any good down there. [Laughs] And some of them were killed. One old boy from London who . . .

RR: That's London, Arkansas, just down the road?

LD: Yes. He got killed. His name was O.C. Harris. And some old boy from up in Huntsville, I forgot his name, but he was killed there. I'm just trying to remember the ones that I can think of that got killed there. And after that we would lose one every once and a while because they had some 88's across the river and they'd shoot through the house every so often. And every once and a while, they killed somebody, you know. We lost some that way.

ED: Do you know how many of that forty made it out of there at the end?

LD: No, I don't know. I don't think we lost over six or eight while we were down there. I don't believe we did.

RR: When you and Letty went back in 1980, you found the house.

LD: Yes.

RR: Did you go into the house or did you talk to the people or anything?

LD: No. We didn't go into the house. I knew no German and I couldn't talk, so we just walked around.

ED: They might make you give these books back too, I guess.

LD: Yes, they might. [Laughs]

RR: You never found out who the house belonged to?

LD: No. The people who lived there were gone at the time, and the German artillery

shot it up pretty good. You know, shooting every once and a while. Of course, Letty and I drove up there and looked. I reminded myself that up on the third floor there was a library and a bathroom. I was at the window of the third floor — this was a masonry house — and I was up there on the third floor and an '88 came through there and killed a Frenchman who was a soldier with us. He was right there. They shot him right in two. You know, straight through. And I remember I was pretty stupid because I was standing in the window back there, and one of those '88's came through and, man, it showered me real good with rocks. You know? [Laughs] Shells go through rocks. Then there was some guy from down in the valley who got to shooting through that window, and I had to go somewhere else. You know? [Laughs] He hit that window twice while I was there and hit the window sill by the window. But one of these shells went through the house. The top floor of the house had a slope to it. We drove up, and I said, "Letty, I remember those windows when a shell went through there." There's a place on the roof, you know? They had patched that up and made a sky light out of it. I said I remembered when a shell went through there! [Laughter] Which I did. But it was an interesting interlude.

ED: But you finally just wore them down? And you got out.

LD: Yes. The Battle of the Bulge was going on south of us down there. But we had a new captain when we went down there. His name was Seymour Scott. And when we went down there, he insisted — I heard him talking on the radio — that we had to have some artillery protection. We found out we were down there and

couldn't get out, you know? He got on the radio with a corps artillery unit. I'd have to have a while to explain what corps artillery is. But anyway . . .

ED: Okay.

LD: Each division had its artillery, and then when you put two or three divisions together, well, you have a corps, and then, they have an artillery. So all the artillery and all these divisions were called a corps artillery. I don't know how many guns there are, but there's a good bunch of them. So he got on the radio and insisted that they zero in on this territory where we are. What you have is a house here and a house here. It's five acres or so further down the river. So Captain Scott was calling back, and they'd fire in there and land near the house. And he was zeroing in on the artillery from back behind us. And we had some guns that were 75mm that were in our division, and we had some that were 105's, and we had some that were 155's. Corps artillery had the big guns. They were fifteen miles back somewhere. So Scott and whoever the general in charge was got a hold of these guns, and he zeroed in on that unit. [Laughs] The shells were just falling all over the place, you know? And when they did that, why, they let up on it. And then the next day, the Germans decided they'd fooled around with us as long as they wanted to, so they came to get us. They could have, no problem. So we were watching down the river, and they began to come out of the woods down there, about half a mile down there. They had three little tanks . . .

Letty D: I couldn't decide whether you all needed a fork or a spoon or both. [Laughs] So you got both.

RR: Wonderful. Look at that. [Laughs]

LD: So they started coming out of the woods down there, marching across that meadow. And when they got a pretty good bunch of them in that meadow . . .

Letty D: Would you like a T.V. tray there?

RR: No.

LD: When they were coming across that meadow, Captain Scott began telling the artillery to get on it. And they did. And after they fired two or three rounds and got the range just exactly like they wanted it, they turned loose the whole thing. [Laughs] You talk about tearing a place up. They tore it up. Of course, that's what saved us. There wasn't any way we could have got out.

RR: Yes.

Letty D: Ernie, don't you want something to drink?

ED: No thanks, I'll have a little coffee when you make it.

Letty D: Okay.

RR: What was the name of that river?

LD: Roer. R-O-E-R. If I remember right.

RR: Yes, I thought that's what you said, but I couldn't be sure.

LD: I think they call it the Roer River. I can find it on the map.

RR: Yes.

LD: But I think that's the way it is.

ED: You mentioned some town also connected with that.

LD: Untermaubach.

ED: Could you spell that?

LD: No. [Laughter]

ED: Okay.

RR: Say it again.

LD: Untermaubach.

RR: I'm just going to put Untermaubach.

LD: Yes, that's "under the mountain," or something, I think.

RR: [Laughs] Okay.

ED: Probably something like U-N-T-E-R?

LD: Yes.

ED: M-A-U-B-A-C-H, or something like that?

LD: Yes.

ED: That might be close?

LD: There was another town called Obermaubach. It was up on top of the hill. And Untermaubach was down at the bottom, see?

RR: Yes. Well, Leland you had a pretty fierce war, sounds to me like. How long were you in Europe?

LD: Well, I don't know. Our division was in the five major campaigns, starting with Normandy. Normandy and northern France, and Belgium, Luxembourg, and north Germany, whatever it was. We had five major campaigns, and Normandy being one of them.

RR: Did you stay until the war was over?

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: 1945?

LD: Yes, we stayed until it was over. I was just about to go to Japan when they settled that one. Normandy, northern France, Ardennes, the Rhine-land, and central Europe, that's our campaign. This here along the top is the names of them.

ED: Leland, you got a couple of those guns, German guns, rifles, down there.

LD: Yes.

ED: There are some pretty good stories of how you obtained those two weapons, one involving a little house. I wonder if you could tell that story?

LD: I don't know. I guess . . .

Letty D: Wasn't it the guy was in the stable next . . .?

LD: Oh.

ED: In the stable, that's right.

Letty D: Yes.

ED: Yes, the German was in the stable.

LD: That was nearly at the end of the war. They got that far along. We got to the Elbe River, and the Elbe was as far as the American soldier was supposed to go. They had an agreement between the Russians and the Americans [that] it would be at the Elbe River.

RR: That decision is still controversial, isn't it?

LD: Yes, they're still arguing about that. So we got there well before the Russians did. I mean, the part of the river that we went to, we got there. Of course, we just

got there to start with maybe a hundred men, I don't know. The scouts [were] out front, you know. We got to the river, and that's as far as we could go. So we stayed there for several days, running up and down the river. They gave us ten miles, I believe it was, along the riverbank to guard, you know, because the Germans are on the other side being pushed by the Russians. And we're supposed to keep them from crossing the river to our side. They were trying to quit fighting, anyway. I mean, the war was over as far as they were concerned. So they gave my particular group. There were twenty-eight of us. They gave us ten miles of the riverbank and said, "Scout this. See that they don't cross here." So we set up a headquarters right in the middle of this. We'd go five miles down the river and back and five miles up the river and back. You know, just patrolling back and forth. And so we were doing that twenty-four hours a day. Down the river there was a village at the end of our patrol. [Laughs] I can't tell you the name of it. But at the end of our patrol down the river, there's this little village. And it's a village right out of the middle ages. I mean, it's the kind they built around the courtyard, surrounded on four sides. Over here there were stables, and over here were places where people lived, and over here on the side next to the river was a distillery. And then back here was a fence. It was on the side next to the street, the road. So our patrol would go down there to that village. And [there was] this big old gate there. They'd go through this gate and drive in and drive around and come back. And these British prisoners-of-war there were not doing anything. Of course, there was nothing we could do about it, just give them some

food and let it go at that. That was as good a place as they could be until somebody could get them out. So we'd go down there and drive in, and this British sergeant would say, "You chaps just missed them. They [Germans] came across while you were gone." They watched from across the river, you know. [Laughs] When we got down there, they'd be gone, and when we left, they came back. What they were doing was picking up this distillery stuff that they would drink. I think they would make it for jet fuel, but they would drink it anyway. [Laughter] So the British would say, "You chaps just missed them."

RR: Are you talking about the Germans?

LD: Yes. The Germans would come across the river in little boats. A river about the size of the Arkansas, or something like that. So we missed them several times. But we weren't hunting them. [Laughs] You know, it was all right that we missed them. But the patrol went down there one time and drove in, and they didn't miss the Germans. They were still there.

RR: What were these Germans doing there? Coming to get that stuff to drink?

LD: Yes, and take it back across the river. [Laughter] You know, they weren't trying to fight. There wasn't any fight left in them. But there was a British soldier, a British POW that was reporting on them. And so that particular time we had a boy from Wisconsin named Frank Kala.

RR: Frank what?

LD: Kala. He's dead now. But, anyway, he took the patrol down to check on them, and somebody called on the radio and said, "Ol' Kala's in trouble." What he'd

done was drive down there, and he had two jeeps. He had one at the gate and one he drove into the courtyard. So he was the one who drove in, and the Germans were inside this courtyard. When he came in, they ran into the stables. He was exposed right out there in the middle, so he ran into the stable right beside them [laughs] with only a wall in between them. [Laughter] They called on the radio and said, “He’s in trouble.” I had a scout car that was my vehicle, an armored scout car. So we loaded up right quick and drove down there. It was a mile or two down there, or three. And we drove in and the men out there at the gate said, “He’s in that stable over there.” So they pointed it out to us. We just drove in and the Germans were in the next stable right by him. So we just drove in and turned our old 37mm down to the door [laughs] of where the Germans were, and, of course, they came out with their hands up. I mean, [laughter], with that 37mm pointed at you, that’s as far as you’re going. So they came out, and one of them had this rifle. It was a sporting Mauser . It had been changed to a sporting gun with a scope on it. They had been shooting at us across the river with that thing, see? And they hadn’t hit anybody. So Frank got the gun and gave it to me for getting him out of the stables. [Laughter] That’s the reason I happen to have that gun.

RR: So you’ve still got it?

LD: Oh, yes. It’s a beautiful gun.

RR: How do you spell Kala?

LD: K-A-L-A.

RR: Okay. That seemed too simple. I wrote it down that way. [Laughs]

LD: He died about two or three years ago.

RR: Yes.

Letty D: Ernie, he told you about the time he had a chance to be rich too, didn't he?

ED: I don't recall. A chance to be rich? Told us that? I don't know. You want to shut this off for a second and let Leland finish his strawberries?

RR: Sure. Yes.

LD: [Laughs] Like I say, I think I'm holding you guys up too much.

RR: No, you're not.

[Tape Stopped]

RR: We're starting up again after strawberries and coffee. Go ahead, Ernie.

ED: Well, after the war, you got out in 1945 — did you come back to Crow Mountain?

LD: No, I came back . . . see, I had the best deal.

ED: Or back to Hector?

LD: I had the best deal there was going. See, I came out and I didn't have any job skills. I didn't have any education. And I didn't have any money. But I knew a woman who had a job, so I married her. [Laughter] And you can't hardly beat that.

Letty D: Not on my salary anyway.

LD: Not only that, but it didn't work out like I wanted it to because she quit. [Laughter] And there we sat. I still didn't have a job or money, or job skills, or

anything else. But she did have an apartment down in Russellville. So I just moved in. And we started living there. But after she quit — she didn't know me very well, you know? Because we had just written back and forth and hadn't done any courting to speak of. So . . .

RR: This is the girl that you'd put on layaway back in . . . ?

Letty D: He had been home on two furloughs.

LD: Yes, she'd been on layaway all this time. [Laughs] But she decided, not knowing me very well, she decided after a week or two, that she'd married a lazy man. [Laughs]

Letty D: He didn't go look for a job.

LD: She made a startling discovery that she'd married a lazy man. [Laughter] So we'd get up every Monday, and she'd say, "Are you going to look for a job today?" And I'd say, "No." [Laughs]

Letty D: I didn't know he was trying to get the battle fatigue out of his mind.

LD: Well, literally, that's what I was doing, see? I wanted to rest a while. But after a while, she decided she'd get a job again. So she went back and got herself a job, and I started school at Tech.

ED: On the G.I. Bill?

LD: Yes, the G.I. Bill. They paid you a hundred dollars a month, I think it was, and your tuition. That was better than nothing, you know? So I went out to Tech and enrolled in the mid-term. So they paid my tuition and got me started. I went to school out there for a year. That was the end of that.

RR: Were you aiming at any particular line of work when you were studying there?

LD: No, not really. I thought, what little I knew about the game, I thought journalism was probably the best thing going. I didn't think I could do it, you know, but I thought it was probably the best deal around.

ED: Did they have some journalism courses out there? Were they teaching journalism?

LD: Yes. Oh, yes. And I took all of them that were available. After I'd been out there a few days, or a few weeks, I . . . Al Crabaugh, you may remember.

ED: Dean Crabaugh?

LD: Yes.

ED: C-R-A-B-A-U-G-H?

LD: That's right. Crabaugh and I got along pretty good. And he suggested that I write a story for the *Gazette* and *Courier* and whatever paper I could get them published in. So I started doing that. So I freelanced around there a while.

ED: How did it come [about] that you got the job at the *Russellville Courier Democrat*?

LD: Well, that's pure luck. I mean, you couldn't get any luckier than that. The *Courier* was a locally owned paper. The old man who had owned it since, oh, 1916, or sometime, was Livingston, J.A. Livingston. He was the owner, editor, and publisher. And he had a news editor. Well, he had a staff that consisted of himself, a news editor, and a society editor. His news editor was named Seaton Ross.

ED: S-E-A-T-O-N?

LD: Yes.

ED: And R-O-S-S, right?

LD: That's right. Seaton Ross had been there four years. Nobody knew where he came from and nobody knew where he'd been. You know, he just got a job from old man Livingston back during the war, and nobody knew anything about him and didn't question anything about him. Anyway, he was the man who put out the paper. The society editor had been there since 1920, I guess, an old maid. She had for some reason or another fallen in love with a fellow in Russellville, one of the Henry brothers. They were a big family, an upscale family of this town. They had a bunch of land in the river bottom and owned a bunch of buildings in Russellville and the mule barn. [Laughs] That was equal to the automobile agency in that day. So they had all that stuff, and all of them had various executive-type jobs except one. They'd make him work in the bank for a while, and this, that, and the other, and he'd didn't stay in one job very long. He had an annoying habit of getting drunk, you know. And he and this old gal who worked at the *Courier* had been going together for years, but they never could settle on when to get married. Of course, she wouldn't marry him when he was drunk, and he wouldn't marry her when he was sober, [laughs] so, between them, they just didn't make it, you know? [Laughs] Anyway, she was a society editor, and she just ran everything. She sold classifieds and did everything else. But she had been there a long time. When Mr. Livingston died, he had a daughter who

lived in New York. She was working for some ad agency up there. So he, in his will, stipulated that she was to inherit the paper if she'd come to Russellville and run it for a year. He could just imagine that if she'd get out of the wickedness of that big city [laughs] and come down here for a year, she'd just love it so much she wouldn't leave at all. So he left her the paper on a stipulation that she had to run it for a year. And so Seaton Ross — he knew her from when she'd come back here and visit once in a while — he made an announcement down at the paper that he wasn't going to work for that "damn woman" at any price, you know. [Laughs] Forget it. He'd quit. And so, sure enough, he did. He told them on a certain day he'd be gone. And they didn't have anybody to put out the paper. I mean, there you are, you know? You've got a newspaper and nobody to put it out. Livingston was dead. The new owner was in New York, and there wasn't anything else they could do. A fellow by the name of Charlie Lovesy was selling ads there, and they gave him the authority to write the checks, but he didn't have anybody to rely on, about the paper, you know? So he put out the word at Tech and everywhere else. He wanted somebody to come down there and put out the paper, at least until Rita, the daughter, got down here.

ED: Her name was Rita?

LD: Rita Livingston.

ED: Rita Livingston?

LD: They came out to Tech looking around, and they asked Crabaugh if he had anybody out there at Tech who could edit a paper. And he said he thought I could

do it, maybe. And they asked me, and I told them I didn't know. I never had tried it, so I didn't know if I could do it or not. You don't ever know until you try. So they talked me into coming down there. Let's see, it was coming up at the Christmas holidays. So I went down there. And Seaton sort of gave me a one-day lesson in journalism, and he showed me what you had to do to put out a paper, you know, things that you'd have to do. And I set up there and watched him all day long. And he talked all the time about what he was doing. Then he was gone the next day, and I had to put out the paper. [Laughs] And I didn't know until years later when Joe McCarthy got to stirring around, you know, in the 50s, who Seaton was. They were having hearings here and there, and one place, and another. And I picked up the *Gazette* one morning, and there's Seaton's picture. A big spread there, you know? And he'd just testified before the Senate committee on whatever it was McCarthy was investigating. He'd been [laughs] the editor of *The Daily Worker* back in the old days. [Laughter] So I was always, after that, able to tell everybody I'd had a one-day course in journalism from the editor of *The Daily Worker*. And that's as much journalism as I had. [Laughter]

ED: What year was it that you took over as editor of the *Courier-Democrat*? Do you remember what year it was?

LD: Yes, that was 1947, I believe, yes.

Letty D: Let's see . . . we married in '45, and you started to Tech then at mid-term. We married in November, and he started at Tech at mid-term. And he was there that second mid-term, through the summer, and the first mid-term

until the Christmas holidays.

LD: See, Rita, I didn't know her. I'd never seen her. So she was, of course, frantically calling on the phone, "Who's putting out the paper?" and all that sort of thing. And so when she looked around to find her an editor in New York, she found her one, name of Bob Spurge.

ED: S-P-U-R-G-E?

LD: Yes. He came down as her editor. She didn't know him. He didn't know her. She gave him a three-month contract to put out the paper. So he comes down here, and I gave him a one-day lesson in journalism [Laughter] because he'd never had one either, I found out right fast.

Letty D: And you went back to school.

LD: And I went back to school. This was right after Christmas, and I went on until mid-term. And so Spurge was putting out the paper, and Rita came down from New York. She got acquainted with him. She didn't know him before. And she kind of tries to tell him how to put out the paper, and he just won't learn. So she fired him on the spot. I mean, [she] paid him the rest of the three-month contract and told him to get gone, see? So then, she came out to the house. I'd never seen her before. So she came out to the house and hired me [laughs] to be her news editor. And so I went to work for her.

RR: Were you going to school at that point?

LD: Yes. I quit going to school because I figured a man as old as I was didn't have time to go to school.

ED: So this would have been when you were hired permanently as the editor? This would have been in 1948 probably, ‘47 or ’48?

LD: ’47, I reckon.

ED: Yes, ’47. So you were editor there how long?

LD: Eight years.

Letty D: That might not have been his title.

LD: Oh, no, title, I never did know about that. All I did was put out the paper.

Letty D: Yes.

LD: I didn’t think what the title was. [Laughs]

Letty D: And all that eight years he wished he could work at the *Arkansas Gazette*. That was his ambition.

ED: Your ambition was to work at the *Gazette* all that time?

LD: Yes, thought that’d be pretty good fun.

ED: Had you read the *Gazette* a lot before then?

LD: All my life.

ED: All your life?

LD: Yes.

Letty D: He liked it. What it stood for it, its policy and everything. He’d say, “Oh, I’d give anything if I could work there.” And I’d say, “Why don’t you go put your application in?” “Why they wouldn’t hire me. I don’t have a degree.” And . . . [Laughs]

ED: Well, you had written a little bit for them hadn’t you?

LD: Well, eight years I wrote for them but just as a stringer.

ED: Just a stringer for the *Gazette*.

LD: See, Seaton had been a stringer for them, and when he left, well, I just started doing what he'd been doing, which was provide the obits and one thing and another from up here, and they published them. And they paid you by the page, whatever the copy was, and after a little while . . . What was Mr. Heiskell's nephew's name?

RR: Carroll McGaughey.

LD: McGaughey. Carroll figured out that there's an opportunity to do better coverage around the state. And he devised a plan. I think I give him full credit for it. If he could put a stringer in each of the four corners of the state and let them write feature-type, larger stories, that it would give the *Gazette* more status. And so he got me to write the northwest Arkansas stories for the *Gazette*. Every Sunday I had a sizable story about something in northwest Arkansas.

ED: And you were still the editor at Russellville at that time?

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: You were still working full-time there, too?

LD: Yes. But, on a Sunday, I'd go out and get a story somewhere. And write it and send it in, and they'd publish it.

ED: You were the editor in May, 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the school desegregation decision, *Brown vs Board of Education*?

LD: I sure was. [Laughs] I sure was. I remember that very well.

ED: What did . . . how did you all handle that?

LD: Well, there wasn't anybody to make any policy about the thing because Rita wasn't here. She'd already gone somewhere else. And I don't remember who was signing the checks at that time. I think maybe I was. I don't know. But, anyway, there wasn't anybody to make policy out there. The court came up with that decision, and I saw it on the wire. We had a teletype. And Russellville had the most fascinating arrangement you ever saw, with its school problems. There was a little school out in southwest Russellville there, a grade school called James School for Black Children. And they had room for the eighth grade. And if a black wanted to go to school beyond that, then a bus that started somewhere over south of the river rolled through Russellville and went to Morrillton because they had a black high school at Morrillton.

ED: So James School was a school for black children?

LD: Yes. It was a grade school.

ED: A grade school for up to the eighth grade?

LD: It was a school for up to the eighth grade for black children. Then all the rest of them, they picked up the Yell County kids and the Russellville kids, and they took off to Morrillton. That's the high school. They had built a new school in Russellville after the war and had a little surplus space. What I did in those days was when everybody else went out to lunch at noon, I wrote an editorial during the lunch period. That was my schedule, you know. The rest of the time you just had to write like crazy [laughter] to keep the Linotypes busy. Because you had to

keep the machines busy to get enough copy to put out the paper. I mean, there were days you didn't have anything left over. So while everybody was out to lunch, I'd write an editorial. You couldn't afford to be very selective. You just wrote about whatever was in front of you.

RR: That's fast. [Laughs] I don't think . . .

LD: Went through it once and that was all of it, you know? So when they made that Supreme Court decision, I noticed it there, and I just said, "Well, I can get something for an editorial from that story. We've got a situation here in Russellville." So I remember writing the editorial and asking the question of how law-abiding are we going to be? Are we going to abide by the law, or are we going to fool around? [Laughs] I suggested that we abide by the law. And we had a Linotype operator, I always laugh about that when I think of it, named Clyde Bollinger.

ED: Clyde Bollinger?

LD: Yes.

ED: B-O-L-L-I-N-G-E-R?

LD: Yes. He was a Linotype operator. He was just an old-timer, you know, like everybody else. So I hung it on his spike back there to be set, and he [laughs] came up there, and he was holding it just like [laughs] that, you know. [Laughter]

ED: Between his forefinger and his thumb?

LD: Yes. And he said, "Do we run this?" And I said, "Well, I thought we would." And he said, "Man, that'll get us in trouble." And I said, "I hope it does." It

didn't make any difference to me because I wasn't getting paid enough for it to make a difference anyway. And he wouldn't hardly set it. I had to talk to him a little while to get him to set it into type. He set it in type finally. Nobody else knew what was in it, just me and him. And they made it up for the paper and put it on the press. We had a little Duplex press that they ran the paper through. Oh, we hadn't made more that a fourth of the press run until the first delegation got there. We had a lawyer, and a banker, and a merchant, and two or three more people come in. They were raising hell about this editorial, you know? There wasn't anyone for them to talk to except me because everybody else was gone.

ED: So what was the upshot of it? Did your editorial stay throughout all the press runs?

LD: Yes, sir. It stayed right through the press run. I think it was three days later before I wrote some other things on the subject. [Laughter]

ED: Was Rita still in town?

LD: No, no.

ED: Rita had gone back to New York?

LD: Yes. She didn't last more than one year.

ED: But she continued to own the paper?

LD: Yes, you see, she owned the paper.

Letty D: Not for long though.

LD: But not for very long. She owned the paper and ran it for a year.

ED: Okay.

LD: And then she leased it to an old man named Harry Robinson of Fort Smith. He'd been displaced by all the juggling-around on the Fort Smith papers, you know? So he came down here and leased this paper. He ran it for a year or two, and then she sold it to three people. One of them was Senator Fulbright. One of them was Edgar Brown. And one of them was Clyde Palmer. And you can imagine [laughs] Clyde Palmer and Bill Fulbright jointly owning the paper and the third man in the deal being a drunk, then you got the situation. [Laughs]

ED: Was Edgar Brown from Russellville?

LD: No, he was from . . . his last paper had been Stuttgart.

ED: Okay. So they owned the paper in 1954? The three of them did?

LD: Well, by that time it seems like somebody else— yes, Edgar had already gotten out of it by '54. So it was just Fulbright and Palmer. But Edgar lasted a while. He'd been with Palmer down in Stuttgart and one place and another, and he had a strange case of alcoholism. His style was that he'd stay sober around there for a few days, then he'd go buy him two fifths of whiskey, and he and his wife would go to bed and drink this two fifths. You know, they'd take a while to do it, and you'd never see them until that two fifths was gone. [Laughs] So they ran it for a while. Then it ended up with Fulbright and Palmer owning it.

RR: Were they the owners in '54, at the time the *Brown* decision came down?

LD: Yes, I think so.

ED: Did they say anything to you about it? Did you get any feedback, any criticism from the owners about taking the stand that you did on that?

LD: No. Not on that one. I did on some other things after Brown got out. Palmer and Fulbright jointly owned the paper. Each one of them had a half of it. But with that arrangement I could write anything I wanted to because Palmer thought Fulbright was in favor of it, and Fulbright thought Palmer was. So they just left it up to me, and I did whatever I wanted to. [Laughter] I told everybody it didn't make any difference to me because if they fired me, they were not paying me enough to make any difference anyway, you know? And not only that, but I was working so cheap that Palmer wouldn't have fired me at all. I mean, he couldn't find anybody else to work that cheap. So he wouldn't have fired me at all. I never did find two of them on the same side of any question except once. I don't know whether you remember the deal or not, but the Dixon-Yates plant in West Memphis in which AP& L, Middle South Utilities, and the Southern company had a utility holding company comparable to Middle South, what Middle South became. This is in the Eisenhower administration. Between them they figured out a scheme to build a power plant at West Memphis to curb TVA. Each one of them would own half of it. Their seed capital was to be six million dollars. This detail was worked out very simply. It cost a hundred-and-six million dollars to build the plant. [All] they had was six million dollars, three million apiece. And the hundred million dollars left over was to be provided by government guaranteed borrowers. They could borrow the money for three-and-a-half percent, I think it was at that time. Government backed. You see, this was the key to the whole thing. They looked at the REA and the TVA as being a form of

socialism, and this was going to be a private enterprise between the two. It was going to show the way private enterprise ought to run. You put up six million dollars and the government puts up a hundred million, and you've got private enterprise. This is the way it works. And the government guaranteed that their rates would be such that they would get us a return of six percent on the one-hundred-and-six million. Of course, that way they get all their money back the second year and the rest of it was all free, you know? I didn't know anything about utilities, bookkeeping, and things like that, but it looked pretty suspicious to me. I wrote a big, long editorial saying that it was the biggest steal since the Teapot Dome. [Laughter] You know, nothing like that since Teapot Dome. Man, Fulbright and Palmer both got angry on that one. Fulbright, of course, as far as he was concerned, this was a project for Arkansas. He had to be in favor of it for that reason. Palmer wrote him a letter, two pages, single-spaced, saying, "What kind of a communist is this we've got over in Russellville?" [Laughter] The reason I know what he said, Fulbright sent me the letter. And Fulbright had him a little note at the bottom of it, saying he always figured a newspaper editor ought to write what he wanted to. So he favored Dixon-Yates plan, but that was just his opinion. I never did hear any more about it. I mean, [laughs] that two-page letter was the longest letter that Clyde Palmer ever wrote in his life, I guarantee you.

ED: Let's do a little side tracking here while we're on the point about Clyde Palmer. Now I think you told me about A.R. Nelson, who was working for Palmer at El Dorado?

LD: Yes.

ED: Tell that story about how Nelson came to leave. A.R. Nelson, by the way, later became the managing editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*.

LD: That's right.

ED: At that time, I guess, he was from El Dorado and worked at the *El Dorado Daily News*?

LD: Yes. The reason I knew about it is that someone, name of Copeland — it wasn't Clovis. It was Clovis's relative.

ED: Was it Curt Copeland or was it Clovis, or Curt, either one?

LD: Neither one. It was the one that was out at ASCS for years.

ED: Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service?

LD: Yes. He was out there for years, but he was from El Dorado.

ED: Okay.

LD: The deal was he was just busting to tell the story because it tickled him. He and Nelson both worked for the El Dorado paper. El Dorado was a morning and an afternoon paper in those days. El Dorado had a team in the Cotton States league, you know, a baseball team.

ED: The El Dorado Oilers.

LD: [Laughs] The El Dorado Oilers. So, of course, the paper covered them in great detail all the time. And Nelson was the day news editor, Copeland was the night news editor. And so Nelson, being the day editor, had the night off, and he'd go to the ball games. They played night ball games. He'd go out there and score the

game. He was the official scorer when the Oilers were in town. The league paid him a couple of dollars to be the scorer. So he'd score that, and, of course, he'd collect all the information and put it in his story, but he was still doubling up on the pay. And Palmer somehow learned that he was getting paid a couple of dollars for scoring each home game.

ED: What was he getting paid by the newspaper, fourteen dollars or something like that, wasn't it?

LD: Their salaries — each of them was getting sixteen dollars a week.

ED: Okay.

LD: To be the news editor, morning and evening news editor. So Nelson was getting this extra two dollars. He was making two dollars more than Copeland was. And Palmer discovered that. So he called them in for a meeting one day and said it had come to his attention that Nelson was making two dollars more than Copeland was. And he thought it would be fair if Nelson would just kick in that two dollars and he would have that much more money to make his payroll with. [Laughter]

ED: So he cut his salary by two dollars?

LD: In effect, yes. And Copeland, he'd always laugh about that. He said they were sitting in this little office and Palmer brought that up and Nelson didn't say a word. He just got up, put his hat on and walked out. And he didn't come back to work the next day or tell them he was quitting, or nothing. [Laughter]

[End of Tape One, Side Two]

[Beginning of Tape Two, Side One]

RR: Okay, this is tape #2 with Leland DuVall. Go ahead, Ernie.

ED: Okay, well, what year did you leave the *Courier-Democrat* and go full time with the *Gazette*? I'm wondering if you could tell the story about how you did that?

LD: In 1955. See, this paper kept changing hands, management changes and one thing and another. Finally, they sold it to two fellows. I've forgotten their names. And Charlie Lovesey bought a little of it. So he was going to come over there and be the manager.

ED: Is that L-O-V-E-S-E-Y?

LD: I think so. And he had a son named Craig who was going to be the editor. Charlie was going to be the publisher and the manager. And when they got it all figured out, I was supposed to be the court reporter. They told me what the arrangement was, and I just quit on the spot. I didn't have a job or any prospects of one. But I got three job offers that same afternoon. [Laughs] It went on the wire that I was out, and that was it. I got a job offer from the *Texarkana Gazette*, which I didn't consider, and the *Arkansas Democrat*, which I didn't consider, and the *Gazette*. Ken Parker, the state editor down there, whom I'd worked with some back and forth, somehow recommended me to A.R. Nelson. On Nelson's request he called me and asked me if I wanted a job, and I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, Nelson would like to talk to you about it." So I went down there. I went to the *Democrat* to see what they had, and they offered me a job. Then I went over to the *Gazette*. I'd never seen Nelson. Didn't know him at all. I talked to him for

maybe five minutes. It was a busy time of the day, and he hired me, with the stipulation that I come to work when I wanted to. He said just whenever it was convenient. I could come to work.

ED: Right.

LD: I went to work for him, and he told me in about a minute what he wanted me to do. And he never told me another thing. I worked there until he quit, and he [laughs] never mentioned another thing he wanted me to do at all.

ED: What did he tell you he wanted you to do?

LD: Write a column.

ED: Wanted you to write a column?

LD: On your own.

ED: Was it supposed to be farm and business?

LD: Supposed to be farm.

ED: A farming column?

LD: Yes. And he said, "We don't have any farmers on the *Gazette*. These people around here don't know a horse from a cow, and I think you know that much." And I said, "Yes, I think I know that much." And he said, "You're hired. You start when you want to." So we agreed on the price, which was highly satisfactory to me because I hadn't been making [laughs] that much money.

ED: So this would have been, do you remember?

LD: 1955.

ED: 1955?

LD: January.

ED: So that's what you did for all those years? How many years did you write? Well, you wrote a farm and a business column?

LD: Well, they had John Fletcher, who was a business columnist at that time.

ED: Yes.

LD: His column had a fair following. I mean John had a knack of getting everybody's name in there, and everybody whose name that was in there liked to read it. And so he was the business columnist. He'd been city editor and he'd been one thing and another, but they finally got him down to business columnist. They didn't have very much stock reporting in those days. Just a little bit and a little wire service news. Nelson wanted two columns in the paper over in that section. One of them on agriculture and one on business. And Fletcher and I would write them. So they set that up, and they went that way a little while. Then Fletcher had a heart attack. And that wiped out that plan.

RR: That didn't kill him, did it?

LD: No. He went ahead and recuperated from that. And for some years, he wrote a Sunday column.

RR: Because he was still there when I came to the paper.

LD: Yes.

RR: I didn't know about the heart attack.

LD: Well, he wrote a Sunday business column.

RR: Okay.

LD: And during the week Nelson said the arrangement would be all right and if anything came up in the world of business and I wanted to cover that, I could, or I could write about farming. But I should reserve Sunday for Fletcher and business. By that time it was a habit, so there wasn't any problem. So I wrote the business or farm news during the week, and Fletcher wrote a Sunday business column and I wrote a Sunday farm column.

ED: Tell us a little bit about Fletcher?

LD: I never knew Fletcher very well. He was there when I went to work there, but I never knew him too well. He was a very emphatic writer. I mean, he could write well.

ED: Yes, he'd been a political columnist, I mean, a political writer too for a while, hadn't he? Didn't he cover the Capitol, too?

LD: Oh, yes, he was city editor at one time.

ED: City editor?

LD: Yes. He was that. Just before I went there, they juggled the staff around some way, and they tried somebody else for the city editor before they put [Bill] Shelton in. And . . .

ED: Sam Harris did it for a while.

LD: Yes, he tried for a little while. Somebody else — I can't remember who the other one was, but they tried two or three of them before they finally settled on Shelton.

RR: Ernie, let me stop this for a minute.

[Tape Stopped]

RR: This is after our break for lunch. Talking about Leland's column. Leland, I got the impression reading your column that this was not merely an opinion column. You did a lot of reporting.

LD: Right.

RR: Am I right about that? Can you give us some examples of how that worked?

LD: I never did know. [Laughter] Everyday I faced the task of filling up so much space, and whatever was on my mind that day was what I did. And sometimes it was tied to local events, and sometimes national events, and whatever else. And you had to keep up with it the best you could, what the Congress was doing and what the farm program was at that particular time, you know. You had to try to understand how that was working. So you stayed in touch with the state representative of the Agriculture Department, and you got information from them. And you didn't necessarily rely on it because there were other sources. You had to take them and form your own opinion. But you did keep up with the ASCS [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service], and the Soil Conservation [Service], and the Extension Service and all that. You had to keep up with all those. And then you had to have the opinions of farmers and see what they thought about it. And between all of them you tried to fill up your space.

RR: I know you did a lot of reading. You'd go back to your office and be covered up with reading material, but didn't you also spend a lot of time on the telephone?

LD: Quite a bit, yes.

RR: Talking to sources?

LD: Had to call whomever. Eventually, you build up a list of people who would know about this or that or something else. And if that subject came up, you called somebody, and if he lived in Texarkana, he might know what you wanted to know. If the story involved Blytheville, you called somebody up there. And that helped always.

RR: This column was not what we sometimes call a "thumb-sucking" column.

LD: No.

RR: You actually stayed on top of the thing?

LD: Well, you tried to, yes.

RR: You wrote it every day, didn't you?

LD: Yes.

RR: Yes, so that would be a lot of research and reporting.

LD: You see, for the longest time the schedule was seven farm columns a week. And then after a while, I got to where I also wrote about business. And after John Fletcher got to where he couldn't write, I mixed it, one or the other. And then on Sunday I'd write a business column and a farm column. And they were two different animals, you know, but I'd write two for Sunday.

RR: So you were doing eight?

LD: Eight a lot of times.

RR: So how does that compare? Ernie, what's considered a full-time job for a columnist on a newspaper now?

ED: Oh, a maximum of about four a week.

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: Three or four a week is the maximum.

LD: That was easy. [Laughs]

ED: Three or four columns a week is a murderous rate of column writing.

LD: The difference was this: it was a whole lot easier than working at the cotton gin.

ED: Okay. I see.

LD: Yes, I did that, too.

ED: I was always amazed that when we were writing editorials — we'll get to that later — at four o'clock on Friday afternoon, we'd be short about three or four editorials because we couldn't fill up the Sunday and Monday's papers. And we would say, "Leland, we need some editorials." And he'd say, "Well, how much you need?" And he'd just turn around and at five o'clock [laughs] he'd filled up the Sunday and Monday editorial pages.

LD: Well, that's the way it should have been. Like I said, it's easier than some of the other stuff.

RR: Now these columns, a daily column, typically, would be two columns wide, wouldn't it?

LD: Yes.

RR: Now how did it work that the . . . ?

LD: Lord, I don't know. I knew at the time.

RR: Was it set in the regular size type or was it larger?

LD: It was regular size.

RR: So that would be fourteen-and-a-quarter, more or less?

LD: But see, I reserved the right to cover two or three subjects if I wanted to.

RR: Yes.

LD: I would have a major item and then two or three short ones. Whatever it would take to fill out the space. And you'd fill that in. There'd be little things happen and you'd drop that in. It was a combination of little things in the news and junk and whatever you had to put in.

RR: Seems to me that you would sometimes go over the column length, the two-column spread and then jump to another page.

LD: I tried to avoid that.

RR: Well, now Leland, I've seen it. [Laughs]

LD: I know I did once in a while, but you just get so full of it that you just keep on going. [Laughter]

RR: You know when you think just of this matter of productivity, fourteen hundred words for a news story, that's a big day's work.

LD: It isn't nearly as big as putting out a whole newspaper, you know.

RR: So this seemed easy to you after the *Courier-Democrat*?

LD: Which I had done in Russellville the first day I went to work up there. [Laughs] I took the whole paper, you know. All except the little amount that Miss Edith used to put in there. All the rest of it was mine. I had to get something to put in there. And so when I went to work for the *Gazette*, I was coasting. [Laughter]

ED: Coasted the rest of your life, huh?

LD: Yes, you couldn't hardly beat that.

ED: It seemed like a mammoth burden to the rest of us who'd never worked at a cotton gin.

LD: No, you hadn't worked at a cotton gin. You didn't know about that stuff.

ED: Leland, I have a vague recollection of your having written something that caught the attention of Orville Freeman . . .

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: The Agricultural Secretary under John Kennedy? Do you remember that? A citation or something?

LD: Orville and I got along very well. He was a pretty good Secretary of Agriculture.

ED: Yes, he was a former governor of Minnesota?

LD: Yes. And he was a pretty good Secretary of Agriculture. And so he and I swapped ideas all the time.

ED: How'd you do that?

LD: Telephone, or he'd write to me, and I'd write to him. No trick to it.

ED: And I've forgotten, some citation or something, I don't remember what it was, but it came to my attention.

LD: Anyway, Freeman was an easy guy to talk to. Had a pretty good idea what farm programs should be.

ED: You didn't have the same relationship with Earl Butz?

LD: No, [laughs] Earl and I didn't get along. I had a run-in or two with him.

RR: What kind of run-in?

LD: I don't know. We just disagreed on policy and one thing and another, you know?

ED: You didn't see eye-to-eye with the Farm Bureau either? You weren't on the same wavelength with the American Farm Bureau?

LD: No, I had a few disagreements with the Farm Bureau. That was always fun. So there were enough of them around the state that if you disagreed with them you always stirred up a hornet's nest. Because somebody was raising hell with them. And . . .

ED: You had [Lewis] Red Johnson with the Farmer's Union.

LD: Yes, we had no trouble getting along with Red and the rest of them. Because he had a different set of ideas.

ED: Leland, there came a point, you wrote a marvelous series of articles called, "Arkansas: Colony and State." I think Rose Publishing Company put it out as a book?

LD: Yes.

ED: A lot of people cite that. A great piece of history, a twentieth-century history primarily, that's my recollection. How did you come to write that series?

LD: Well . . .

ED: Was it the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary?

LD: Yes, one hundred and fiftieth anniversary [of the *Arkansas Gazette*] and Hugh Patterson figured out they ought to do something special about the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, but he didn't know what. Naturally, I mean, he wasn't supposed to know. And we sat around and talked about it. He decided that one

article a week for that whole year would just about cover it. And we ran it on the front page of the magazine section, and we got one of the Oberste boys to illustrate it and do all that sort of thing. And so I wrote it and Oberste illustrated it. Charlie Davis was still the magazine man at that time, so he'd have it ready by Wednesday or something like that, you know? And just put it together and get it ready to go. I wrote one a week for fifty-two weeks.

ED: You did that in addition to everything else?

LD: Yes. Spare time, sort of.

ED: Spare time. Did you have to do a lot of research on that? A lot of it came from out of your experiences and your own experiences in Mississippi County and Pope County. I gather a lot of that was personal knowledge?

LD: Yes, I didn't do a lot of research on it because I didn't have time.

Letty D: There were some guest writers.

LD: What was that?

Letty D: Guest writers also.

LD: A few.

ED: Occasionally?

LD: Not enough to do any good. I found a few.

ED: Yes.

LD: See, I picked the subjects. I sat down at the beginning and picked the subjects. I had one article on the development of the Arkansas medical education system. Of course, I got somebody else to do that, I didn't know about it. And then those

other things I intended to start with and do a whole lot of guest stuff, but immediately I ran out of enough people who would be willing to do it. So I had to go do it myself. And I had a little fun doing it. The University of Connecticut, fortunately, was running a national contest on business writing. And they selected the chapter I had on the evolution of farm credit. So they gave me a big plaque and a thousand dollars [laughs], or some such a thing, you know? And I had to go to New York to get it. But I'd go again after that.

ED: That was a great series of articles, and I still run across the book in the library from time to time. People mention it to me as the one history book that they've read, although it's really not a history book at all.

LD: I don't know what it is.

ED: I don't either. But it's a great series of articles.

RR: Does that title have a colon in it, Arkansas, colon?

ED: Yes.

LD: I started on the premise that Arkansas, initially and for a long, long time, served the same economic role that colonies traditionally served. They provided raw materials for the rest of the country. We had a lot of raw materials from Arkansas that supplied the cotton mills and the lumber mills, and whatever else. But in that degree we were a colony of the rest of the country.

ED: And happy to be one, yes?

LD: Happy to be one.

ED: To serve the interests of the big shots?

LD: And so we did that. And, of course, that was the pattern in which Great Britain operated its whole world empire. They had places where they got the raw materials, and they sent them to Britain. And one of the places in the United States that the material [was] is here in Arkansas. And as you say, we were happy to have it. And my premise on that was that — and I don't know whether it was original or not, but I never did see anybody else who thought about it — but the premise was that we provided the raw materials for a long time, and by that time we were one hundred-and-fifty years old. We began to behave like a state. We did the processing. We also did things that were unrelated to raw materials. But that was the premise of the book.

ED: And it was necessary in order to maintain the relationship that we workers had to be subservient?

LD: That's right. Absolutely.

ED: Taxes had to be kept low on minerals and everything else, so you could serve the parent?

LD: Absolutely. That's the way a colony works, you know?

ED: Yes. I was thinking that one hundred-and-fifty years would have been . . . ?

RR: '86.

ED: '86. But it was before that.

LD: Yes.

ED: That series ran . . .

LD: In 1969 when I wrote it.

ED: Okay. All right. I guess it was the one hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the *Gazette*? That's it.

LD: Yes, the *Gazette*'s.

ED: Not the state, but the *Gazette*.

LD: You see, that coincided with the establishment of the Arkansas territory in 1819.

ED: Yes. So that would have been about 1960s, late 60s, 1969, when they started the series?

LD: Yes, 1969. You see, I know when it was because it was the one hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the *Gazette* and of the Territory of Arkansas.

ED: Okay.

LD: And that's what Hugh wanted to observe was the one hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the *Gazette* and of Arkansas. Showing that the two coincided. So that's how we happened to have hit on that.

ED: You were also right about a lot of things. One particular thing that stands out is the savings and loan crisis.

LD: Yes.

ED: As I recall back at the . . .

LD: Oh, yes, I had a lot of fun with that. [Laughs]

ED: Back at the outset, when Congress and the Reagan administration kind of swung open the gates of the corral and said, "S & L's go out . . ."

LD: Yes. I had a lot of fun with that.

ED: You wrote that no good was going to come of this.

LD: That's right. I think I was right, too. [Laughs]

ED: I mean, it collapsed, and so the result of it was the whole S & L industry fell apart and almost vanished as a result of that.

LD: I think I saw that before they started doing it [laughs] because that's why I started writing about it.

ED: Well, you did. You started almost at the time that the regulators were cutting them loose.

LD: Yes. That's what they started doing, and I thought that would be a tragedy and it was.

ED: What was the premise of that? Why did you think it was going to? Human nature?

LD: Yes, and I can remember when we didn't have the regulations and the result was the Great Depression. And so if the "no regulations" of the '20s contributed to the Depression of the '30s, and later, I suppose if we do it all over again, we'd have the same results. So they wiped them out. You see, the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 was the basis for re-establishing the credit industry of the United States. It was in complete collapse. So they passed the Glass-Steagall Act and started setting up somebody to look after these things. And so they did. It worked like a charm. Before Glass-Steagall, almost all of them went broke. And when we passed that law and put up the regulators there were years when one bank failure was too many. We just didn't have them. And I thought that was a marvelous thing if you go along here and the banks don't fail. But then when you, in effect,

repeal Glass-Steagall and relax the regulators, then the greed of the bankers will do just what it did, you know? It'll wipe out a lot of them, and it'll send a lot of them into bankruptcy. And if they hadn't stepped in and stopped it, it would have sent all of them down the drain. And I thought I could see that before they did it. And that's what I wrote about for a year or two. And it didn't do any good, but I wrote about it anyway.

ED: There's a little bit of Jim McDougal in every S & L office in the country.

LD: Oh, yes, every one in the country. He was a small, small operator, and it was the big ones that were doing the same thing exactly on a bigger scale.

RR: Perhaps you seem to be suggesting that if the country had paid attention to Leland DuVall, we never would have had the Whitewater scandal.

ED: Well, we might have, I guess.

LD: Well, you might. I never underestimate the ability of the Republicans to "raise old Ned." [Laughter] They can always do that. So we might have had it anyway.

ED: They cut Jim McDougal loose to follow his baser instincts because of that.

LD: Yes, and that's the only instincts he had. [Laughs]

ED: Did you know McDougal? I remember you used to talk about it at the time. McDougal and his wife, Susan, were out peddling lots out in that . . .

LD: Yes.

ED: What was that development they had out on the Sheridan Highway?

Letty D: Maple . . .

ED: Maple Creek Farms.

LD: Yes.

ED: You said at the time, "That thing is going down."

LD: Well, yes.

ED: And, "Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan Company is going to collapse." And, of course, it did.

LD: Why, sure. I thought that, you know, you can just look at that and see where it doesn't work.

Letty D: He's a little bit uneasy about the regulations now with the banks.

LD: Yes. They're disturbing me a little bit now.

ED: Well, they're pretty much repealing Glass-Steagall.

LD: Yes, that's what I mean. And the question is whether they can survive without it or not. I don't know.

ED: Everybody, I mean, both parties seem to be going along.

LD: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. See, this is the danger of democracy. Because if we have a democratic form of government in which the people decide what they want and if you get a situation where a majority of the people want something that will kill them, we go ahead and do that and kill ourselves.

RR: One of the other subjects that I remember Leland dealt with over a period of some years, was the insurance companies.

LD: Oh, man. I had more fun out of them than anybody. There again, that was like pissing in a blue-serge suit. [Laughs] Nobody paid any attention to it for a long time, but it was there.

ED: Arkansas was a haven for these fly-by-night insurance companies because of the lax laws.

LD: Yes, the way this started, Texas had two hundred insurance companies — I don't remember exactly, but some massive number of insurance companies. And about 1956 or something like that, they got a commissioner who tried to put regulations on these insurance companies. And when they did, why, some of the promoters came to Arkansas. And I always remember the first one that came to Arkansas, got Phil Back as the front man. Do you remember Phil?

ED: Phil Back?

LD: Yes.

ED: Advertising?

LD: Public relations.

RR: Was he a Texan? Phil Back?

LD: No, he was just a plain old promoter. [Laughs]

RR: I thought he was one of [?].

LD: No, he was a local man, but there were three Texans who hired him to do their preliminary work. And he came over — you know how he walked — he came over to the office, and I didn't know anything about these deals at all. And he told me about this great thing that was just about to develop in Arkansas business. We were going to get a new insurance company. We hadn't had a new one since Union Life started in 1908 or whenever it was. And we were going to get another one, and it was going to turn everything upside down. It was just going to work

like magic. And they were going to have the organizational meeting over at the First National Bank the following afternoon at three o'clock. And so I went over to cover it. I didn't know what the heck to look for. And there were three people from Texas, somebody named Yost, and somebody named something else, I've forgotten, a woman, Davis, Yost, and somebody else. The woman was the brains of the thing. And Yost was the front man. And Phil was running around handing out all the papers, you know, doing all that sort of thing. They were organizing a new insurance company. They spelled it out where you could buy two shares of stock for fifteen dollars. The preferred share was fourteen dollars and ninety-five cents, and the common stock was just five cents. So you got both of them for fifteen dollars. And it didn't take you long to figure it out. That they could buy a whole lot more common stock for a nickel apiece than you could buy preferred at $14.95 apiece, you know? [Laughs] And that's the way they were going to finance it was with the people who were buying the preferred stock. Because if you call it preferred stock, well, that's what people wanted, you know, even though the preferred stock didn't have any vote or anything like that. That only meant, they would explain to you, that when the company started making money, you got first cut at it. Of course, it isn't going to start making money, but that's beside the point. And so they were going to sell stock — I forgot how many — and they spelled it all out just as clear as it could be. And I thought, "Well, now, if I write that the way it is, nobody's going to buy that stock because any fool can see you're going to get gypped." [Laughs] If you pay fifteen dollars for two

shares of stock and you get one vote, and they buy a thousand dollar's worth of common stock for five cents a share, they're going to outvote you. You can figure that out.

ED: Two hundred to one. [Laughs]

LD: [Laughs] And so I thought, "Well, now, if I spell that out, they won't sell any stock. So that's the way I'll write it." [Laughs] And I did. And that was my column the next day. And I wrote that column and expected them just to raise Cain with it. Because it was clear. You couldn't miss it. And three or four days after that Phil came over, and he had this sales package and my column was the lead item. [Laughter]

ED: Was that Phil's idea?

LD: Yes.

ED: Phil might have been dumb enough to realize there was no advantage to it.

LD: No. He knew. See, what he'd do is, he was going to sell these stocks. They'd start turning through this packet and they'd say, "Now, here's what the *Gazette* thinks about it." Two-column story and all, big time. [Laughs] And they didn't read what was in there. They just saw how much type there was to it.

ED: They assumed it was favorable?

LD: They assumed it was going to be favorable. [Laughter] And nobody ever complained about that, I mean Yost or anyone. So they started out with General Life. And nothing outranks a general, you may remember that, on the battlefield. And so that's what they sold their stock on. And that was the very first one. And

it wasn't long until everybody was doing it because that was the best deal that had come along.

RR: How did General Life end up?

LD: They put several million dollars worth of insurance on the books in no time at all, and the three Texans sold out to — I forgot who they sold to, but what they did was sell their stock which went with it, several million dollars' worth of insurance on the books, to some other little company. They got the money and the other company got the insurance on the books. And that's all there was to it. The people who owned the stock got a very minor part of the ownership because this other company had a few hundred thousand shares floating around, too. And they put theirs with this and there wasn't much left. And they went through three or four mergers. I don't know where it ended up, but that was the trick of the whole insurance business. It was to start a new company, get the stockholders to finance it one way or the other, and then you sell your major interest in common stock to some existing company. They pay you cash for it because they're buying that much insurance, you see? And that's cheaper than having agents run up and down the street trying to sell it. And you come out with the money you started after in the first place. I don't remember how many of those companies there were, just one after another. And there was one — I forget the name. Empire Life, or something — out on University, and they started to sell it, which they did. There were two men who started it. And while they were still in the business of selling stock and charter policies, the federal government caught up with one of

them [and] sent him to jail. They came here from New Mexico. One was a used-car salesman, and the other one had a land development thing on one of the desert spots out in New Mexico.

ED: Angel Fire or someplace like that?

LD: Yes. And so they'd been in that promotion and they put in this insurance thing. And so they sent this guy to jail. And while he was in jail, the one who didn't go to jail stole the other one's interest in the company. [Laughs] So he ended up with all of it. And the jailbird got out, he was livid with rage because he'd lost everything he'd had in it, you know? [Laughs] And he came down to my office complaining about that other crook stealing him out while he was in jail. And so I asked him. I said, "Well, how did you people sell this stock in the first place? What was your sales point? Sell me stock in your company. I mean I'm a prospect and you do the selling." So he started selling me. And it was the most convincing sales pitch you ever heard. I mean there wasn't a way you could lose. He sold a deal that sounded solid. "You know, what you do is you buy common stock and preferred shares, and in ninety days, if you don't like what you've got, they'll give you your money back. Except you can keep the common stock that goes with the package. And they'll give you all your money back. And you know, you just can't lose." Except, when you read it — he had a prospectus there — and when you read down in it, they promise to do that if you make the claim on January the fifteenth or whatever day it was at that time. And if the company has five million dollars in unassigned surplus in their treasury, they pay you out

of that. If they don't have the five million in unassigned surplus, why they don't pay you, you know? [Laughs] They're not obligated. Well, unless you read that you don't know that that's what they're going to do. And it turns out that's the way they sell the stock. I said, "Well, how do you sell that when people can look at that and see that you're not going to make the payment?" He said, "They don't have to do that. They just read down to where it says you'll get your money back if you don't like it." He said, "That's as far as they go." Just get your money back. [Laughs]

ED: So all these companies had some kind of scheme like that?

LD: Every one of them had a gimmick. Now, Pat Jones had one. There were lots of companies.

ED: That was Jerry Jones's daddy, wasn't it?

LD: Yes.

ED: Yes.

LD: So Pat had one.

ED: Jerry Jones of the Dallas Cowboys?

LD: Yes, the Dallas Cowboys.

RR: Not our Jerry Jones?

ED: No, Jerry Jones of the Dallas Cowboys.

LD: Pat was the greatest promoter you ever saw. Did you ever know him?

ED: Didn't know him.

LD: Well, he had a supermarket on East Broadway in North Little Rock. And he was

promoting everything. He had a pretty good store. We used to buy groceries there sometimes. And Kroger put in a supermarket right across the road from him, right across the street on East Broadway. And you know, his store burned down in six weeks. I mean it didn't make it over six weeks after Kroger went in until Pat's store burned down. I know it's a strange coincidence. There wasn't anything they could do about it. And then he started an insurance company.

ED: He had insurance on his store, obviously?

LD: Yes. But he started a life insurance company.

ED: He used the insurance proceeds to start it?

LD: Life insurance company. When he got it started, he was always coming down to the office telling us about how good it was going. It was one of the few companies I ever saw that made a profit the first year. I mean you just don't do that in insurance. He did. And the way he did it, he conned all his salesmen. He talked them into the notion of accepting common stock in the company instead of money. And they are selling all these charter policies and everything else, and if they earned money, they took it out in stock. And that didn't take anything out of the treasury. The first thing you know, in less than a year, he was showing a profit. And that was a good deal. He could sell insurance, too. I mean he knew how to get that done. He picked up somebody named Barton in Oklahoma and merged with him. Barton was as good a promoter as you ever saw. And they teamed up and, man, they were going like a house afire. And then they found a company up in Missouri that would pay them cash for their stock. And that gets

them out of the insurance business all together. And Jones got into the wildlife business in Missouri. And I believe he stayed in that business until he died. I don't know.

RR: Wildlife business?

LD: Yes.

Letty D: One of these parks, drive-thru parks.

RR: Oh.

LD: He had a huge drive-thru park and they had…

Letty D: He had all these animals down there you could see from the car.

LD: . . . lions, and tigers, and giraffes, and one thing and another. You'd get in the car and drive around through there, and there they were just as if you were in Africa. But he charged a sizeable amount for you to go through there and made a profit on it.

RR: Yes. You started writing about insurance regulation or the lack of it in the late fifties, I guess?

LD: Yes.

RR: And my recollection is that you wrote about it, off and on, over a period of several years?

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: Through the Faubus years, when all this flourished, and then when Winthrop Rockefeller finally became governor in '66, he got John Norman Harkey in there as state insurance commissioner.

LD: Yes.

RR: So it took about ten years . . .

LD: Yes.

RR: . . . of publicity?

LD: Harkey was a man that mapped it all out.

RR: But you had laid the groundwork in your column?

LD: Well, he started doing the job.

RR: Yes. Why did it take so long?

LD: Why, everybody wanted to get rich. [Laughter] We had just discovered in Arkansas — we were in the process of evolving from a colony to an American style state — and we had just discovered there was money to be made from owning an interest in an American business, you know? And we needed stockholders. And we put money in for the deal. So the fact that you lost it only meant that you hadn't guessed right. If you'd been on the other side, you'd have made a million. I mean they can tell you that right off. And so Harkey was the first one that really went after them. But a couple of guys came up here from Texas. A lot of them came here from Texas and organized insurance companies. But Texas had a law, up until then, that you could start an insurance company if you had net assets of fifty-thousand dollars, I believe it was, but that didn't have to be in cash. It had to be a thousand dollars in cash, and the rest of it could be whatever assets you decided were worth forty-nine thousand dollars. And the insurance department would approve it. So the trick was that anybody that

wanted to start an insurance company put up a thousand dollars and then they bought an old house in Houston or someplace and called that the headquarters and appraised it for whatever value they wanted to and that counted [laughs] as the assets of the company, see? It was all tied up in old real estate and one thing and another. And that's all they had to have, a thousand dollars in cash. Then they got themselves a new commissioner, and he cracked down on that and made them have a little more, and they all came to Arkansas. And that's how we got our new insurance companies.

ED: Our laws were about as lax as that too, weren't they?

LD: Oh, fully, fully.

ED: A thousand dollars, wasn't that all you had to have in Arkansas?

LD: Yes, that and get through — who was our insurance commissioner?

ED: Harvey Combs.

LD: Harvey Combs. If you could get through Harvey Combs, and you could get through any way you wanted to, but there were two of them that came over from Texas. I was fortunate enough to meet Gary [Allred ?] for some reason or another, and they came over from Texas and put together a company. And one of them went to jail and the other one didn't. I don't know how they decided who went to jail. But the one that didn't, I was talking to him later, and I asked him how he managed to get by. And he said, "Well, all you had to do was get Combs and Dick Simpson . . ."

ED: The Bank Commissioner.

LD: The Bank Commissioner. You had to get him to approve the sale of the stock and you had to get Harvey to approve the charter of the company. See?

ED: Or maybe Clint Jones, the Securities Commissioner. He probably had to approve some stock or something. I don't know.

LD: I don't remember. But, anyway, I think that Harvey Combs and Dick Simpson were the only two you had to have to get it going. And I said, "Well, how'd you two go about that?" And he said he came up here with the application all worked out and, of course, they wouldn't even look at him, wouldn't even talk to him. And I said, "Well, what did you do?" Well, he said he found somebody in the highway department — he told me who it was — and asked him how you go about getting a clearance for the sale of stock on an insurance company. And he said, "I paid him a thousand dollars," and he might have been lying, I don't know. "I paid him a thousand dollars and he told me how to do it." And I said, "What'd you do?" And he said the deal was to hire this lawyer. His name escapes me. Anyway, one of Faubus's lawyers.

ED: Claude Carpenter?

LD: Claude Carpenter. He said he paid Claude Carpenter his fee, five hundred dollars. "If you pay Claude five hundred dollars," he said, "he'll get you in." And he said, "You know, I paid him five hundred dollars and my application went through [snaps his fingers] just like that."

ED: Claude Carpenter and Kay Matthews were law partners, and both of them were hooked up with Faubus.

LD: That's right. And Claude was the one that he paid, and I'm sure Matthews could get the same results.

ED: Jess Odom was a pioneer in starting insurance companie at that time?

LD: Yes, Jess was one of the fine examples. He was an outstanding promoter.

RR: I'm going to turn this tape over.

ED: Yes. Okay.

[End of Tape Two, Side One]

[Beginning of Tape Two, Side Two]

LD: I'm going to wear this machine out here. [Laughs]

RR: Okay.

ED: Witt Stephens?

LD: Yes. Witt was one of my favorite operators. I liked him a lot.

ED: Used to go up there occasionally and have lunch at Witt's place.

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: And hear his lies.

LD: Yes, enjoyed all of them.

ED: Did you ever go out to Witt's farm?

LD: Oh, yes. We went out there. Lindsey Hatchett was his vice president, you remember him?

ED: Yes, he had once been State Police Director for a while.

LD: State Police Director. And so I knew who Lindsey was before he knew who I was. And back when Cherry was governor, Lindsey was a top policeman, you

know? And we had a situation in Russellville where we had a state senator and another fellow, and the other fellow was Cherry's top political dog here in Pope County. And while Bob Bailey, Jr., was state senator from up here. And one night they got drunk. We had a policy in the paper that if they caught somebody driving drunk, we put a story in the paper about it. And so we wrote a little story about Bob and this other guy getting caught driving drunk. They were driving up the sidewalk on Main Street, you know? [Laughs] They weren't on the street. They were driving up the sidewalk. The story made them mad. Cherry was their man, so they called down to Little Rock to see if they could get that deleted, and they didn't succeed in doing it because I went ahead and ran the story anyway just like it was. But they got real mad at me, and they called Lindsey and he got mad because the story ran. And then when Cherry was out and I got to Little Rock, Lindsey was the head man for Stephens, one of his vice presidents over there. So Witt wanted to go out to his farm one day and wanted me and Lindsey to go with him, which we did. [Laughs] And Lindsey might have figured out who I was. He still had a little gripe about it, but there wasn't anything he could do about it. But we went down there, and Witt had a man and his wife as caretakers and they cooked lunch. Witt had specialized in having them cook stuff that grew on the farm. You know, peas and cornbread, and all that sort of thing, a good lunch, marvelous. And we stayed around there until three or four o'clock. Sam Harris was down there, too. So Sam and I decided to come back to Little Rock. Sam worked for Stephens then. And so it was a hot summer day and we got ready to

leave. Witt said, "Lindsey, I reckon it's time for us to go to work, don't you guess?" And he said, "Yes." They went in and put their overalls on and started hauling hay. [Laughs] Had a bunch of hay out there, you know? So they went out there and started loading that hay on that old bob truck, Lindsey Hatchett and Witt Stephens. The next time I was over there at Witt's, I said, "Now there's one job I don't want." They said, "What's that?" I said, "I don't want to be Witt's vice president. I've already hauled hay." [Laughs]

ED: Yes. Well, didn't Hatchett go out there and hoe the garden or something?

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: Had Lindsey Hatchett or somebody out there hoeing the garden?

LD: Well, see we were down there one time, and Witt wanted to show me the farm. They had the old Stephens farm, and they'd bought a bunch of land around it, you know. We had lunch, and Witt said, "Well, Lindsey, you've seen this place. We're going to go look at the farm, if DuVall doesn't mind riding in the jeep." He said, "You can hoe the garden while we're gone." And I'll swear, that man went in and put on his overalls and went out there and started hoeing the garden. In July, August or whatever. [Laughter]

ED: The vice president of the gas company. Well, that was probably the only good he got out of Lindsey Hatchett though, wasn't it?

LD: Perhaps, except he was a good PR man.

ED: You worked with Charlie Davis, didn't you? Can you tell us anything about Charlie Davis?

LD: Never knew many stories about Charlie because he was usually drunk. [Laughter]

RR: Well everybody's told stories.

ED: Yes. Apparently got drunk early in the day, didn't he?

LD: Yes. He started when he got to work in the morning. He wasn't that way at first, but he got to where he'd start getting drunk early in the morning, and by afternoon he'd be pretty well lit. And if you did any pieces for Charlie's section of the paper, you'd need to have them in pretty good shape, you know, or he wouldn't get them in there. Because he had other things to do.

ED: When did you start writing editorials? I've forgotten. You first kind of went in as filling in when somebody was sick or on vacation?

LD: Well, I first got into it early on. We had Charlie and Jerry Neil.

ED: Charlie Allbright?

LD: No.

ED: Charlie Davis?

LD: Charlie Davis and Jerry Neil and then Charlie Allbright, wrote for a while. And Harry Ashmore left and went somewhere. I think he was a speech writer for Adlai Stevenson or somebody and came back. But while he was gone, they were having trouble filling up his space. Each one of them had to write six inches and man, that'll kill you. [Laughter]

ED: They hadn't picked cotton?

LD: [Laughs] No, they didn't and never worked in a cotton gin. And Mr. Heiskell, he'd come out to the newsroom or my office where I was, and he'd say, "I'd like

for you to sit in on the editorial board meeting today." And I'd go in there, and he'd assign somebody to write this and somebody to write that, and they'd decide what they wanted to do. And then if he found something that they didn't know about, he'd ask me if I knew anything about it. "Could you write us an editorial on that subject?" And I'd say, "Yes." Which I did, you know. And that happened about three times a week. So every time I'd go in there, he'd have some subject that he'd want me to write on.

ED: This would have been in 1956, probably?

LD: Probably sometime after that.

ED: Ashmore went off to write for Stevenson that year, I think.

LD: Anyway, the rest of the time I always went into the editorial board two or three times a week. Mr. Heiskell would want me to, and I'd go in there and write whatever he wanted written.

ED: Then after Ashmore came back did you write any — did you fill in from time to time when Ashmore was there?

LD: Oh, yes. Of course, you didn't have any shortage of material when Harry was there because he could write the whole thing by himself if necessary.

ED: Yes. So you filled in all those years from time to time?

LD: All those years I filled in an occasional editorial, two or three a week maybe.

ED: And then, I guess, when Jim Powell was, maybe in the '70s, you were putting in a lot of time up there.

LD: I was putting in quite a bit.

ED: And then became full-time, what year? Do you remember when that was?

LD: I don't remember what year it was.

ED: Probably been in the early '80s?

LD: Yes, at least that time. Jim, he came to work there. He was always kidding about it, you know. Said he'd straighten me out. I referred to him as an "aging boy editorial writer." He was young fellow, you know, in the face.

ED: Yes. Did you ever think about leaving the *Gazette*?

LD: Why, no.

ED: Did you ever get any offers?

LD: Oh, yes. I had an offer here and there.

ED: Other newspapers?

LD: I had one or two from other newspapers. I had three or four offers to go to Washington for bureaucratic jobs, one thing and another. Orville Freeman. He offered me a job. Somebody at the Soil Conservation Service had a standing offer, you know, if I'd do that. I had an offer to become Insurance Commissioner of Arkansas. [Laughs]

ED: That's under Rockefeller . . . or no, under Bumpers?

LD: Yes.

ED: Under Bumpers. So Bumpers was a big fan, I know. And I think I heard out at the Capitol that he tried to get you to be the Insurance Commissioner?

LD: Yes, they asked me to take that job. And I wouldn't have that job at all.

ED: Well, you had a marvelous facility for writing editorials on an amazing number of

subjects. And all in very short order and they're all long.

LD: Yes, oh, yes. That's the only thing J. N. Heiskell ever objected to about any of my editorials, they were always too long.

ED: He always wanted very short editorials.

LD: Very short ones.

ED: Compact. His ideal was one paragraph.

LD: Yes.

ED: His ideal editorial. One of your wonderful stylistic techniques was to begin an editorial with a parable, a Biblical parable.

LD: Yes, I wanted to catch people's attention, I thought. It might not have worked, but I thought it might.

ED: There's always kind of a good Biblical lesson to read your editorial.

LD: Yes. [Laughs]

RR: Literally, parables from the Bible.

ED: Yes.

LD: That was you understood the fact that Arkansas was a Bible-belt state, so you figured you'd get more attention with that than you would with anything else.

ED: Well, it would be hard for people to argue. If you disagree with the editorial, you're kind of disagreeing with God.

LD: Yes, you don't want to . . .

ED: If you disagree with the editorial, right?

Letty D: Well, Leland disagrees with Him all the time. [Laughter]

RR: Still does?

LD: I reserve a right to disagree on all subjects. [Laughter]

Letty D: He did a Bible class over here, and he got about all them to disagreeing with Him. [Laughter]

LD: We had more fun over that than you ever saw.

ED: Do you maintain that God didn't really part the Red Sea?

LD: That's right. [Laughs]

RR: We may be stepping over the line on this tape here, but they'll be over soon. [Laughter] Or worse.

LD: But you can get more discussion in a group by questioning something like that than you can by trying to agree with them, you know?

ED: I also remember that when you used to be on the editorial board, we'd have these, from time to time, groups come in wanting to talk to us about something.

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: Like some federal regulatory agency to talk about some issue. Usually something you had written about. The oil company executive wanting to come in and talk about legislation. You'd written about "big oil" all the time.

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: So we'd have an editorial board meeting to meet with these people. And usually what would happen is that the morning they came you would have an editorial about "big oil." [Laughs]

LD: Well, yes. That's the time if you know they're coming.

ED: They'd have to come in there and it's already laid out there.

LD: I think the best deal I ever saw that tickled me more than anything else was something that didn't amount to anything. But the President of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis was involved in something. He was trying to follow the central bank's line. He made a speech somewhere. I don't know where it was, but they sent out a press release on it. And it was something that was slightly controversial. And then the Fed changed its minds, which they do from time to time, and so they advanced this other line that was slightly different. I wrote a column about this change in policy of the Federal Reserve, which was a logical subject to write a business column on. And I said something about it they didn't like. The President of the Federal Reserve in Little Rock wanted to discuss that column. It didn't say what the policy was. He wanted to go back and discuss it. And the St. Louis man was coming down here the next week and called me and asked me if I'd talk to him, and I said, "Sure." And he said, "We'll come over to see you." And you've seen my desk? How knee-deep it was? [Laughter] So I dug out this old press release that reflected the old policy, and I had a stack of press releases and one thing and another, that high, on the corner of the desk, over on the back corner of the desk. I put the Fed release up and pushed it in the stack with the corner sticking out. And this guy comes down there and we get into a heated argument discussing it back and forth. And I said, "Well, on a certain night you said so-and-so." And he said, "When?" And I said, "Here." And I just reached up, didn't even look, you know, just reached and pulled the release

out. I said, “Here it is.” He looked at me. [Laughter] He didn’t know how in the Christmas I found that. And, of course, I’d already set it up. I knew where it was. [Laughter] He didn’t think I knew where anything was. Of course, that’s the only piece of paper on the desk I knew where it was.

RR: I recollect your desk looked a lot like J. N. Heiskell’s.

LD: Yes. I learned that from him partly.

Letty D: It was a mess.

LD: I also learned that from Seaton Ross. You know, that was one of the one-day lessons in journalism that Seaton Ross gave me. He had a dining table, one of those old, old dining tables for a desk. One that had big legs, you know, and all that sort of thing. It covered the whole corner of the office. And they’d sawn out a place over to one side. They’d lowered one side of it for a typewriter, but he couldn’t use that. Sort of had too much on the desk. And when he gave me my one-day lesson in journalism, and he got the paper out. And he had another story he wrote about something to be run later. And then he got up on that table with his feet and kicked all that stuff off in the floor. All of it. [Laughter] And went and got the broom from the back and swept the desk off and he said, “Now, it’s yours.” [Laughter] And that’s how I started with a clean desk. It didn’t take me long to take care of that, you know. And, of course, when I got to Little Rock and got a chance to look at J. N. Heiskell’s desk, it looked a great deal like Seaton Ross’s desk.

RR: Ernie, I can see a headline somewhere now in the future some right-wing outfit

looking through Leland's transcript and come across Seaton Ross, and it's going to say something like, "Former *Gazette* Editor Admits That He Learned All He Knew About Newspapering From a Member of the Communist Party."

LD: Editor of the *Daily Worker*. [Laughter] Right.

ED: That's the one thing Johnny Wells needed to finish out his thesis.

RR: That's right.

ED: For his big conspiracy theory.

RR: Conspiracy theory on that.

LD: Oh, yes, yes.

ED: That would have filled it out. If he'd have known that. [Laughter]

LD: Never did tell Johnny about that.

ED: No, it's a good thing. That would have, you'd have had your picture in, what was it, *Time Bomb*?

RR: *Time Bomb* was his book.

ED: *Time Bomb* was his book about '57, where he traced it all back to Lenin.

LD: Yes, all the way back. And I had that so well covered Johnny never did know. He tried to get me to come over and take over that sheet of his.

ED: *The Daily Record*?

LD: Yes. When he got old and saw he was going to have to quit, or whatever he was going to do, he wanted me to take that over. He'd sell it to me; he'd lease it to me. He'd do anything I wanted to do, just take it over because it needed to be done.

ED: He talked to me about it, too.

LD: Well, he talked to everybody about it, I guess.

RR: It did need to be done. That was a valuable publication in a lot of ways.

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: I've got a volume of stolen *Records* in my basement. It was Mamie Ruth Williams's and she stole it from somebody else. I don't know if I should give it back or not.

LD: It was purely impersonal. I mean it was just matter-of-fact sort of stuff.

Letty D: Did it just die?

ED: No, it's still in existence. I've forgotten who owns it now. Somebody, some young man owns it from Little Rock now. I can't think who it is.

RR: Leland, didn't you and Charlie Allbright have offices next door to each other for a long time?

LD: Oh, yes.

RR: Was that when he was writing the "Arkansas Traveler" column?

LD: Yes.

RR: So you got to know Charlie pretty well.

LD: Yes.

RR: What kind of guy is Charlie?

LD: Oh, he's a great fellow. I think a lot of Charlie. He has a sense of humor you'll miss if you don't know it. You know, he can go over your head. But he's a nice fellow.

RR: What did you all talk about? What was on Charlie's mind?

LD: Oh, a little of everything. He had a sense of humor that I caught on to pretty fast. And I liked to use it because you could start a subject and you knew that Charlie was loaded for something that way. So you'd start him, and he'd go ahead and tell you some funny stories.

Letty D: He did see Leland while he was down at the heart hospital. And Leland said, "I guess you thought I was really over the hill." [Laughs]

LD: He knew I was. [Laughs]

Letty D: Well, you weren't.

RR: Did you work next to Jerry Neil?

LD: Neil was up in the other end of the building, but I went up to his office pretty often because I found Neil to be an extremely interesting sort of a fellow. He was an unabashed liberal on all subjects. And so I visited him every few days up in his office. And he'd come down to my office every few days so we exchanged ideas a lot.

RR: A very well-read man, wasn't he?

LD: Oh, yes. And he was smart as a whip. When I first got to know him, and then for several years thereafter, he got to where he'd take a drink every once in a while. [Laughs] And I don't know . . .

RR: Sometimes at lunch?

LD: Yes. Like three or four a day.

RR: I went to lunch with him and A. R. Nelson a few times, and I couldn't keep up

with them.

LD: Naturally.

ED: He went down to what? That building over on the interstate, the Quapaw Tower where they were drinking, the Flaming Arrow?

RR: The Flaming Arrow, I believe, yes.

ED: They used to have some drinks over there.

RR: Of course. Were there some of the other people around the paper that you especially remember for one reason or another?

LD: Well, I just remember all of them real fondly because they were a whole bunch of people I liked very much. And I stayed around there a long time and never had any reason to dislike any of them. Some of them weren't the sharpest people in the world, [laughs] but some of them were, I'm sure.

RR: What about J. N. Heiskell? Did you get to know him pretty well?

LD: Yes, I did, without trying. He had an attitude he reserved for his reporters, I reckon. And he almost never suggested that I do anything. But as long as he lived, even after he retired, every so often, the phone would ring, and he was home, of course, for the last year, and he'd say, "This is J. N. Heiskell. I used to work down there." [Laughter] That was the way he opened his conversations. And he said, "I just heard that . . . ," and he'd tell me something that happened. He said, "If I were a reporter on the *Arkansas Gazette*, I'd go out and see if there wasn't a story there on that subject." And that's as close as he'd come to telling you to get the heck out of there and get that story, you know? People would come

in to see him and they'd tell him something and he'd always listen. And if he thought there was a story in it, why, he'd take the appropriate person that was on the staff that was somebody he thought might listen to it, he'd tell them that he was J. N. Heiskell and he used to work down there. [Laughs]

RR: What did he call you? How did he address you?

LD: Mister. Mr. DuVall. It never got beyond that.

RR: He always called me Mr. Reed.

LD: Yes.

RR: Did he do that with you Ernie?

ED: He was never sure who I was. [Laughter] And I think, the only impression I ever made on Mr. Heiskell was my skill as a typist. I was the fastest typist around. He came out one Sunday. I was on the city desk. He had written out one of these obituary editorials.

LD: Yes.

ED: Some friend of his had died, and he'd written it out. And he'd kind of scratched it out and brought it to the city desk and said, "Young man, can you type this for me?" And I said, "Yes, sir." So I pulled out a piece of typing paper and I batted it out. And he watched it. And when I got through, I handed it to him, and he looked at it and he said, "Thank you." And he went back to the library and he went to Betty Jo Bittinger, who was the librarian. She came out later and told me about it. She came out and looked at me and went back in. And she said later, Mr. Heiskell came into the library and said, "Who is that young man out there on

the desk? That's the fastest typist I have ever seen in my life. I can't believe he can type that fast." So she said, "Mr. Heiskell, I'll go and see." And she goes out and comes back and says, "His name is Ernie Dumas." And he said, "Well, thank you." [Laughs] And as far as I know, that's the only impression I ever made on Mr. Heiskell.

Letty D: Leland wasn't the fastest. He'd use these two fingers [illustrates with two index fingers 'typing'] and I think his elbow. [Laughter]

ED: Yes, two fingers. He was about as fast as I was with ten fingers. It sort of makes sense. What about the editorial? You had to sit in on some of J. N. Heiskell's editorial board meetings. I know Jim Powell and Jerry Dhonau just hated them.

LD: Oh, I didn't mind them at all. You know, we'd just go back there and sit around like we're doing here and talk about what was happening and current events. Dhonau and Powell, they'd be completely bored.

ED: Yes.

LD: But I wasn't because they were talking about what was happening. I enjoyed going back there.

ED: Powell hated to have meetings.

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: He hated meetings. So as soon as Mr. Heiskell left, the editorial board meetings ceased, and there was never another one until Gannett came in, I gather.

LD: They ceased, that's right.

ED: His policy was to just kind of go around to each one of us and talk about what we

might write that day and then we'd all write them. That was the extent of our discussions.

LD: Yes, that's it.

Letty D: How is Jim Powell doing?

ED: He's doing pretty well. I talk to Jim about once a month, and he and Ruth both are doing pretty well. He still goes fishing down at Witt's pond. Witt gave him lifetime fishing privileges on his pond down there.

LD: Yes.

ED: Down at Prattsville.

LD: He wouldn't try to catch anything bigger than a bream.

ED: No, but they're big old bream down there, big old pet bream.

LD: Yes.

ED: They apparently go out there and feed them every day, and so they're great big old fat bream. There's no fishing to it. You just toss a hook out in the water and wait about five seconds and then you just pull it in. And there's a bream about that big and about that thick. Big old fat bream. Jim calls that fishing. [Laughs]

LD: Yes, I guess.

ED: You might as well just get a seine out there and just seine the thing out. You stay about thirty minutes, and you've got all the fish you can carry back. And that's the extent of fishing.

RR: You know we probably ought to think about winding it down pretty soon.

ED: Okay.

RR: I know you've got a few more questions.

ED: Well, just a couple. You mentioned it early on, and Letty mentioned it, that you had always wanted to write for the *Gazette*.

LD: Yes.

ED: You had read the *Gazette* since you were very young. Why did you want to work for the *Gazette*? What was it about the *Gazette* that made you want to work there?

LD: I thought it was a good newspaper. It was a — you know, it wasn't all flash or anything like that. It was just news and opinion. I thought it was a good newspaper.

ED: Did you read the editorials?

LD: Oh, yes.

ED: And liked it? Ashmore, I guess, was writing editorials.

LD: Before Ashmore. Back then they had a certain number of editorial writers back before Harry came along. And then they had Charlie Davis, a long-time editorial writer. I don't know when he started writing. He did it early on. And they converted Jerry Neil from a reporter, and Sam Harris wrote some editorials. Of course, Sam wasn't the deepest editorial writer you ever read, but they were all right. But I didn't have the slightest idea who was writing them when I first started reading the editorials. I thought they made some sense.

RR: What was the difference between a good newspaper and a bad one?

LD: The difference was the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Arkansas Democrat*. That was

the difference between a good one and a bad one to me. [Laughs]

RR: Was it in the way they covered the news?

LD: Yes, and the policy and so on.

Letty D: The *Gazette* was a Democrat, leaning Democrat, didn't they? Wasn't that it in a nutshell? [Laughter]

RR: I've had the impression that Leland might have been a New Deal Democrat. Or maybe even before then, I don't know.

LD: Well, really I was. [Laughs] I was hoping somebody would do something like that.

RR: What difference has it made that we don't have the *Gazette* anymore?

LD: Well, I think it's deprived us of a different viewpoint on the news. Editorials on the *Democrat* are articulate and reasonably well done, but they're also wrong, you know? [Laughter]

ED: The latter years there, one thing that we didn't cover is, briefly, 1986. Gannett came in.

LD: Yes, that was an interesting thing.

ED: And you served, I guess, about four years under the Gannett regime on the editorial page. How was that different?

LD: Oh, that wasn't much different. What was that guy's name that came in?

ED: Bill Malone was the publisher.

LD: Yes, I know, but then . . .

ED: Walker Lundy.

LD: The promoter man?

Letty D: Neuharth?

LD: Yes, Neuharth.

ED: Al Neuharth.

LD: It was the Neuharth school of journalism was what we got. And Malone was a nice enough fellow. As far as I know, he never pretended to know anything about newspaper policy or anything like that. He responded to whatever would come up in front of him.

Letty D: What was the name of that guy that came and stayed not too long?

ED: You had Walker Lundy, and Craig Moon, and Keith Moyer . . .

LD: Yes.

ED: Were the big guys.

Letty D: This guy, he didn't bring his, his wife never did move down.

RR: Moe Hickey?

LD: No.

ED: No, it was before that. Bill McIlwain.

LD: Yes.

Letty D: Yes, yes.

ED: Bill McIlwain. M-C-I-L-W-A-I-N.

Letty D: That's what I was trying to talk about.

ED: That was before Gannett.

LD: That was one of them. One of Hugh's . . .

Letty D: Was that before?

LD: Oh, yes.

Letty D: I thought he came . . .

LD: Hugh and he struck up a friendship somewhere, and Hugh hired him. I never did know the details of it, but that's what had to happen.

ED: Well, he lost his job.

LD: Yes, I'm sure.

ED: He was with the *Washington Star*. And when the *Washington Star* collapsed, there was a little interim after that, and then we hired him to come in.

LD: Yes.

ED: And I think he was supposed to be the transition to Carrick becoming the editor.

LD: Yes, the one I know about.

ED: The idea was to ease Bob Douglas out. McIlwain would train Carrick, or whatever.

LD: But that's what that was all about. I understood that.

ED: The Gannett people tried subtly to influence the editorial page, but they couldn't get us to understand.

LD: They didn't know what it was all about. That was their trouble.

Letty D: Well, I thought it was understood. Do I remember this, or am I imagining that you told me that it was part of the deal they weren't supposed to bother the editorial?

LD: That's what they said they weren't going to do.

ED: Yes, that's what Neuharth said at the outset.

Letty D: Yes. That's what I . . .

ED: Somebody asked him, and he said, "No, the editorial page will remain . . ."

LD: That's right.

ED: " . . . as it is, the same independent voice." And I think they tried very subtly to change it, but they finally realized they were going to have to fire all of us.

LD: Yes.

ED: And they weren't willing to do that. At least before they finally shut us down.

LD: But McIlwain, I always regarded him all the time as a man who was just in the business of getting over a drunk. You know, he always had a hangover. And he would go to people who knew what they were doing and tell them how to do whatever they've known how to do for thirty years.

ED: Yes.

LD: [Laughs] And he didn't have any business in that newspaper because he was talking to people who knew what they were doing.

RR: He was executive editor.

ED: He was executive editor, and then he'd go off and find himself a young girl.

LD: Oh, yes. He had . . .

ED: Spent most of his time with girls.

LD: His favorite girl was the one that ran the Arkansas Press Association. I forgot her name. Didn't know, but that was his number two project.

ED: Yes.

RR: So he was over the editorial page as well as the . . . ?

LD: Yes, he was over the whole thing.

ED: He was over everything, I guess, but he really made no effort. I don't think he really made any effort to do anything about the editorial page.

LD: No.

ED: I think he just left it alone altogether.

LD: Except that if he read the paper and thought he would have done it some other way — why, if he thought that, he'd get a blue pencil and say it ought to be done this way. — But he wouldn't advise you on something that hadn't been done yet. And he never questioned me about anything except one time. One time, I forget the guy's name, but there was some man in government that spelled his name a different way, and I had mentioned him, and Bill blue-penciled it real good and said that, "A careful reporter always spells the name correctly." Wrote that on the margin. And so I had it right and he didn't. And I went in and told him, and he never said another word to me from then on. [Laughter]

RR: Ernie, you got anymore?

ED: No, I don't think so.

RR: Can you think of anything we haven't touched on, Leland? That ought to be in this interview?

LD: You've done ten times as much as needed to be done. [Laughs]

RR: Nothing just jumps out in your mind?

LD: No.

RR: No terrible omission?

LD: I did another variety of jobs for some years. I don't have but one copy of the book, but the National Association of Conservation Districts — National Association has an annual thing every May that they called a Soil Stewardship Sunday. And what they'd do is write, in effect, a sermon to be distributed to about forty thousand churches around the United States. It emphasizes the importance of stewardship of resources. So they hired me for several years to write the sermon. So I wrote them a Soil Stewardship Sunday sermon every year for a good many years. It was an interesting sort of assignment because they had an editorial board consisting of ministers from all sorts of churches. You had a Pentecostal, you had an Episcopalian, you had a Catholic, you had a dozen different . . .

Letty D: Lutheran?

LD: Yes, Lutheran. He was a prominent man. But that was the editorial board. You'd write the piece, and then you'd go to Chicago, and all this board would come together there at some hotel in Chicago, and they'd go over this line by line to test the validity of it. [Laughs] And you had to defend what you were saying. So I learned to argue with Lutherans, and Catholics, and Episcopalians, and whatever else and we had a lot of fun. It lasted all day once a year.

RR: Was this something you did since you retired or was that back . . . ?

LD: No, it was in my spare time back then.

RR: Okay.

ED: All that spare time you had when you were writing editorials and the business columns and farm columns.

Letty D: He also wrote with that investment . . .

LD: Yes, I did that, too.

RR: For what?

Letty D: He could tell you. . . . That lasted for a long time. You'd do that on a Saturday [laughs] at home.

LD: But that was, you know, that was something I was not really very proud of. [Laughter]

RR: I didn't understand what you said it was you were doing.

LD: Well, there was an outfit in Little Rock that wrote an investment letter.

RR: Oh, an investment letter, yes.

LD: They had all these clients, you know, and they'd tell all these clients how to invest their money. Well, heck, I didn't know how to invest it either. [Laughter]

ED: You were the perfect one to write it?

LD: Yes. [Laughter]

Letty D: He didn't write and tell them things.

LD: But I told them when they hired me to do that. They wanted to put out an investment letter every week. And I told them when I was hired, "Now, I don't want to have anything to do about advising anybody how to invest their money. Forget it." I said, "I can write you a synopsis on what's happening in the economy. Anything that's happening I can write all that down. And if there's

anything else you want, you have to put it in there yourself." And they developed a format, and I wrote the general synopsis of what was happening in the economy each week, and they published it, and they paid me every week. And that's all I knew about it.

RR: Yes.

LD: [Laughs] I sure never advised anybody how to invest his money.

ED: You were also a ghostwriter for Ronald Reagan, right? [Laughter]

LD: I wish I was.

ED: Well, didn't you ghostwrite a Sunday school column for Reagan once under his name for him to put under his name?

LD: Yes, but I didn't get paid for that.

RR: What was that about?

LD: A lot of religion. [Laughs] Always covered all subjects, you know?

RR: I mean, how'd you tie up with Ronald Reagan on a Sunday school lesson?

LD: I don't know, but if I can remember right, I didn't know I was doing that for Reagan when I was doing it. It just turned out that way.

ED: Did you end up putting his name on it?

Letty D: I never have heard about this.

RR: Yes.

LD: I've been ashamed of it for all these years. [Laughter]

RR: Better come clean, Leland.

ED: It was kind of a Sunday school. Wasn't it in some kind of booklet that published

every year? Might have been for the church?

LD: Well, I did a few church pieces.

ED: Yes.

LD: But that booklet every year thing was the Soil Stewardship thing.

ED: There was one – anyway, I remember you told me about it once — and you wrote it, and Ronald Reagan's name and picture appeared beside it.

LD: Yes, I remember now which one that was. That was one of those Soil Stewardship things, and the President of the United States would write a foreword for it every year. And so we ran my piece, but Reagan had the introduction, you know, telling what a great thing it was.

RR: I think it ought to be recorded that in this room that we're in, on Crow Mountain, the walls are lined with landscape paintings by Letty DuVall. From where I'm sitting, I see one, two, three, four, five, six. Am I right, Letty? You've done all these?

Letty D: Yes.

RR: And this is a small percentage of the artistic output. You've done a lot of paintings?

Letty D: Yes, I've done a lot of them.

RR: Yes.

ED: There are dozens of them out in the pondering house out back, on the walls back there.

Letty D: Yes, hanging all the rest through the house.

RR: Beautiful landscapes.

ED: These are scenes from your growing up, up here, right? Kind of rustic scenes that might be familiar to your childhood?

Letty D: Some of them.

RR: The pondering house was where you, Leland, wrote a couple of novels. Is that right? After you retired?

LD: Three, I think. But they aren't any good, so forget it.

Letty D: They're in boxes.

RR: You're not going to let the world see these?

LD: No. [Laughs] I'm not going to offer them to anyone. [Laughter]

RR: Okay. Ernie, what do you think?

ED: I think we've worn Leland out.

LD: Well, I've worn out you people. [Laughs] I'm the one that's worn you out.

RR: We sure thank you, Leland. We'll get this back to you before long. But start over with that will you? When was that now?

LD: Well, after I started working at the *Courier-Democrat*. I didn't get enough money to make any difference up there.

ED: Do you know about what your salary was?

LD: Thirty-two dollars and fifty cents a week.

ED: Thirty-two-fifty a week.

LD: When I started. And that was in my initial effort as a newspaperman was thirty-two-fifty a week. And that was better than you could make at a gin, you know?

You couldn't do that. But in order to survive on that, I moved up here. Mrs. Jones, Letty's mother, owned this farm here. We'd bought forty acres off of it. At that time she owned a hundred-acre farm. And we moved up on it and she lived with us. And so I got me a herd of cattle. I had some registered Jerseys. They were good cows. And it was sort of a system in which one thing worked for another. See, I separated that milk and came up with gallons of skim milk and I had me a pack of hounds, so I fed the milk to the dogs. And it worked out fine. [Laughs] You know, the dogs, they could run a fox.

Letty D: They didn't just have milk. He used part of that thirty-two dollars a week and bought sacks of dog food. [Laughter]

LD: Naturally.

Letty D: And then I'd make him a big pan of cornbread like that, you know? [Laughter]

LD: But you take that cornbread and put skim milk on it, and those dogs do all right. [Laughter]

ED: So you'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and go down and milk the cows?

LD: Milk the cows. And turn the cream separators.

ED: And run the milk through the cream separator and get all that done . . .

LD: And then you'd go to work.

ED: And then you'd go to work and put out the *Russellville Courier-Democrat*?

LD: And then rush back home that evening and do it all over again.

ED: You milked the cows twice a day?

LD: Twice a day. And you had enough . . .

Letty D: And he also ran a taxi up here to Russellville because there was always somebody wanting a ride to town. [Laughs]

LD: I never got any money for that. [Laughter]

ED: And then in your spare time you wrote the Sunday piece for the *Gazette*?

LD: [Laughs] That's right. Yes.

ED: Okay. [Laughter] All right. We wanted to get that on the record.

LD: All right. [Laughter]

[End of Interview]