

Gazette Project

Interview with Julia Jones

At her residence

20 July 2003

Interviewer: Gerald Drury

Gerald Drury: My Name is Gerald Drury, G-E-R-A-L-D D-R-U-R-Y. I am sitting here on July 20, 2003, with Julia Jones, former employee of the *Arkansas Gazette*. This interview is part of the Arkansas Center for Oral and Visual History Project on the *Arkansas Gazette* for the University of Arkansas. To get started, tell me Julia, your name and that you are willing to give the center permission to use this tape to make a transcription to make it available to others.

Julia Jones: My name is Julia Jones; you have my permission to do whatever you want with this tape.

GD: Let's start with your birthplace and your parents.

JJ: I am Julia McNutt, M-C-N-U-T-T, Jones. I was born in Little Rock in 1936. My sister and I were the fourth generation of the family to live in that house at 202 West 17th. My mother was Helen Newton McNutt. She was born in 1909 in Little Rock. She was a cartographer. She drew maps from aerial photographs for the Army [Corps of] Engineers during World War II. Then later on she worked for the Arkansas State Highway Department drawing county maps. My father was Charles Glenn

McNutt. He was born in Little Rock in 1908. He was the original “Good Time Charlie.” I have a newspaper clipping with a headline: “Deputy Sheriff Wins at Track” on March 18, 1938. Charlie had the only winning daily double ticket at Oaklawn Park on a combination of Miss Firefly in the first race and Peggy Torch in the second. The track paid him \$6,446.80. That was the largest ticket Oaklawn had ever paid up to that time. That was the best life ever got for him. He died of a heart attack at home in bed at age 47.

GD: Tell us about your early schooling.

JJ: I went to Rightsell Grammar School and then East Side Junior High. Then Little Rock Central High. I started writing at the school newspaper in the fifth grade at Rightsell. By that time I already had had a neighborhood newspaper.

GD: Rightsell is R-I-G-H-T-S-E-L-L.

JJ: Correct. I had this neighborhood newspaper, which I wrote, edited, typed and distributed by myself. Plus, I even drew the comic strip. I am not able to remember the point of that anymore. It sure wasn't funny. I was using an old typewriter. I could only make three copies. So I would go and deliver it to the people in the neighborhood and stand there while they read it, so I got used to criticism very early. And I knew how to make corrections. It didn't last very long. It was fun while I was doing it. I graduated from Little Rock Central High School in 1954, even

though I had been thrown out of journalism class for insubordination to the journalism teacher Edna Middlebrook.

GD: Edna --- spell her name.

JJ: M-I-D-D-L-E-B-R-O-O-K

GD: What was that all about?

JJ: Well, Miss Middlebrook had been teaching journalism for a long time and she had gotten to the point where she was very bossy and at the same time, I thought she was senile. We would turn our stories in and she would put them in a drawer and forget where they were. And then during class, raise all kind of hell with us because we hadn't written any stories. And it just kind of got under my skin and I said way too much back to her and that was the end of my high school journalism career in my senior year.

GD: So, what about college? Did you have any college?

JJ: Well, I have had some college now, but back when I should have gone to college I didn't. I had an older sister, two years older than I was, and she got a wonderful scholarship to the University of Chicago. It still took every cent that the family could scrape together to keep her up there. So, I went to work and tried to go to college at night. But it came down to a matter of money. And so I couldn't go. Since we moved out here, out here to Phoenix in 1994, the *Phoenix Gazette* had a program where you could at that time go to college and if you made a decent grade, the newspaper would pay for the tuition and the books and the materials and

all like that. So I did that for several years, but I have not gotten a degree.

GD: What about some work experience? Starting off when you got out of school?

JJ: Well, I read the classified ads, and saw that an office was looking for a “Gal Friday.” That is what they used to call it. So, I went to see about it. Tom Hockersmith’s Advertising Agency had just gotten the contract for the AIDC, that would be the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission. So there was a lot of excitement in the office and I was there in a secretarial capacity. I didn’t get to do any of the copywriting. And then one of the copywriters, who also worked at the *Arkansas Democrat*, told me that there were a couple of openings there. And I left right that minute and went over to the *Democrat* to see what they had open. There were two jobs one Mabel Berry got the job to do rewriting on the city desk and I think it was kind of funny. If I had gotten that job, I probably would have gone into hard news. Since that was filled, I went over to the Sunday Magazine and talked with Bob McCord, the editor. I had no degree, I had no professional experience writing for a newspaper but I had some clippings from the high school newspaper, and a short story in a literary magazine. But he asked me, “Why do you want this job?” I just told him that I always wanted to work for a newspaper and I really think that was what he wanted to hear.

GD: When was that when you started work for the newspaper, the *Democrat*?

JJ: Well I graduated from high school in 1954, so this was 1955. I really think I was very lucky to be in that job. Both McCord and his assistant Roberta Martin were born teachers, so I was able to learn a lot without going to college. I made \$43.00 a week. All the employees at the *Democrat* had to line up in the business office to collect their pay each week. The *Democrat* paid in cash and they were always brand new bills. So, you stand there forever, finally you get a little envelope. I took home \$29.00 a week. I didn't have a car, so I rode the city bus to interviews. And then I finally discovered if I asked for a photograph of the person I was interviewing, that I could ride with the photographer.

GD: How long were you at the *Democrat*?

JJ: It is hard to say, my memory is going, but I was there during the Central High crisis, and I remember that McCord wanted me to put on my white bucks—lace-up shoes with red rubber soles --- and mingle with the kids going into school. I would have done that --- I wasn't worried afraid to do that --- but I knew I couldn't get in the school because Miss Middlebrook would be on one door watching the kids and the registrar, Ernestine Opie, would be on another door. I didn't stand a chance of getting in that school. I was a known troublemaker and they would have spotted me a block away. I left the *Democrat* in 1958. I had gotten married in 1957 and in 1958 I was pregnant. So, of course, I told the boss, and Bob said that he was happy for me, but I would have to leave, quit the newspaper, when I began to "show." That was what we called it

then, because he thought it might embarrass the men I was interviewing. He was really nice about it, but he was firm. There was no discussion. I found out later that he wasn't the only one who felt that way. I worked for a while later in the office of Travelers Insurance and I was pregnant again and the office manager said, "Well, that is nice, but you will have to quit when you start 'showing' because it will embarrass the men in the office." That was a little bit different. I never went out of the office. I was a typist and I sat in the office every day. Anyway, the men were still able to get embarrassed over a woman being pregnant. I went back to the *Democrat* when I had three daughters, and I was divorced from their father. Bob McCord was at the North Little Rock paper by then, and Roberta Martin was the magazine editor. And I worked for her, and I picked up another \$10.00 a week writing about someone's new house and how it was decorated and landscaped. Pretty boring stuff.

GD: When did you move to the *Arkansas Gazette* and why?

JJ: I think that is funny, the day I got a phone call from Gene Prescott . . .

GD: Gene Prescott was who?

JJ: Gene was a photographer for the *Arkansas Gazette*. I was familiar with the name because he took photographs of the house story that the *Gazette* ran. He could not have been nicer. He said that it probably wasn't any of his business, but he understood, he heard in the *Gazette* newsroom a rumor that the home and food editor, Millie Woods, was going to retire, and they were going to probably need someone right

away to write their house story. So I went right over and talked to Nelson, the managing editor, and got the job.

GD: That is A.R. Nelson?

JJ: Yes, A.R. Nelson.

GD: What did you think of the two newspapers at this time? You were in town during the 1957 crisis and the *Gazette* had taken “the stand.” People at the *Democrat* were pretty wishy washy about where they stood on the issues. What did you think about the two newspapers?

JJ: You know that I was so young, and I was so lucky to have a job with a newspaper. My family had always read both and the difference between the two was not important to me. The big city press came in and used the *Democrat* facilities and I thought that was interesting. Will Counts, C-O-U-N-T-S, the photographer spent a lot of time at the magazine office because he and McCord were good friends. He was older than I was, but not really dry behind the ears either. So I heard a lot about what was going on out at the school. But my main concern I didn't want to have to go out there in any capacity because I felt like I would get sent to detention hall--- the school's punishment--- by one of those two women--- Miss Middlebrook or Miss Opie.

GD: So, then you met with A.R.Nelson and applied for the job?

JJ: Yes. Nelson told me to come in, in two weeks. So, I went right on back to the *Democrat* and told Gene Herrington, the managing editor then, that I was giving notice, that I had found another job and he was

really nice about it. He was interested and was wondering what I would be doing and would I make more money. I said, “Yes, I am going to go over to the *Gazette* and write their home story.” When I said that he jumped right up out of his chair and his face got really red and he said, “If that’s where you’re going, you can get your hat and leave right now. We will get somebody to clean out your desk and we’ll send it to you.” I was pretty shocked. I had never seen Gene Herrington mad. I had no idea that there was a “gentlemen’s agreement” between the two newspapers, that they didn’t hire one another’s staff. I heard that later on. Anyway I left and stopped at the first pay phone on the street, and I called Nelson and told him what happened. And he laughed and said “I figured that’s what would happen. You can come in tomorrow or in a day or two or whatever you need.” So, at least I wasn’t out of a job.

GD: So what did you do at the *Gazette* then?

JJ: My main job was writing that house story. I don’t know why both newspapers did it and I don’t know who read it. I hear now that Little Rock has a glossy magazine about this same subject.

GD: Did you spend anytime at all in the newsroom at the *Gazette*?

JJ: Well, no, not at first. I went in and got the mail in the morning and nobody would be there at that time except Bill Shelton and it was no more than “Good morning” with him. As soon as I could I jumped

over to the woman's section, that is W-O-M-A-N-'-S section, and Betty Fulkerson was the editor.

GD: We have to take a break right now.

[Tape Stopped]

GD: Now we are back.

JJ: You had asked me about how things were in the home and food section, and I have to say that as soon as I could I went over to the Woman's section, which was in the next office. F-U-L-K-E-R-S-O-N, was editor. I had grown up across the street from Betty's house, a really fine, old mansion which was at 17th and Center Street. My grandmother went to school with Betty's brothers. But Betty and I never discussed that at all.

GD: What was the difference in the woman's section then and the woman's section today? We don't really have a woman's section anymore, do we?

JJ: I am trying to think about when the last time I saw a woman's section, and this is the reason: We were in the bride business. That's what drives a woman's section. During Betty's time --- she was a widow at this point --- but when she was a young woman, a woman would only have her name in the paper three times, when she was born, when she was married and when she died. So we were sort of still operating under that attitude. We tried to follow the *Gazette's* style, but the stories that we wrote didn't have much to do with the *Gazette's*

newsroom stylebook. So we knew --- we were all aware we were kind of the stepchild of the newspaper, but as long as Mr. [J.N.] Heiskell wanted such a section, we were there to put it out. I guess there were usually about four of us and Betty in that office. Typing bride stories -- and this is back in the Linotype days --- we typed on long strings of copy paper and always made a carbon. The original went out to the composing room to be set on a Linotype machine. There were glossy photos of every bride and we sent them over to Peerless Engraving and they came back as 1"x 3"-inch cuts, and there would be a proof of each cut. So we had a strange problem because all these women were in white and all of them had flowers, and all of them had some kind of a headdress so they all sort of looked alike. It was an incredible job to make sure that the face and the name matched the story. We read the stories before they went out several times and we read the page proofs with the carbon copies in our hands. So in all the time that I was there, I don't remember that we had to make a single correction. I don't even know where we would run it if we had to make a correction.

GD: That is a problem that remains today with me, the newspapers have to print corrections of the wrong picture with the wrong name.

JJ: That happens, but I don't think anybody took the elaborate steps we did to prevent errors.

GD: Is that all you did, is brides?

JJ: Well, no. There are only about five big bride weeks in a year. They go with Valentine's Day, Christmas Day, and holidays like that. Our lives revolved around those heavy periods. In between them, we could write features. Betty wrote about fashion.

GD: What years was this?

JJ: I guess mid 1960s and into the 1970s.

GD: Well, you did leave at one point when you were pregnant again, is that not correct?

JJ: Yes, but the odd thing was that no one told me I had to leave --- that was 1969. I just kind of worked until I waddled around and until it got too awkward. So then I left. But, you know, the staff in the woman's section was very stable.

GD: You didn't have any men that were embarrassed by your pregnancy?

JJ: That was the thing, because we were down at the end of the hall --- no men ever came down there.

GD: After you had the baby what happened?

JJ: I called Mr. Nelson and I told him I was ready to come back to work now. He said, "You left. You're gone." "Well yes, but I didn't quit to go to work for another newspaper or write an expose or anything. I just had this baby." All he said was, "You left. You're gone." So I was pretty depressed about that again.

GD: So what did you do after that? We know you came back to the *Gazette*, what did you do in the interim?

JJ: I had some little piddly jobs, but mostly I sold Avon [cosmetics], I was a Girl Scout Leader --- I did a lot of that kind of stuff. I guess Nelson finally retired and Bob Douglas became managing editor. He called me and said I should come back to work when I got ready. It didn't take me long, maybe five minutes. I had heard that --- I don't know where I heard this, but that Douglas had called Charlie Allbright to come back and then he called me. I think that Charlie had left to go work for Winthrop Rockefeller, and so Nelson wouldn't take him back either. So that was about the first thing that Douglas did when he was named managing editor.

GD: What did you do when you came back to the *Gazette*?

JJ: I wrote more brides. There were four or five of us in there and I remember Pat Trimble, and Kay K-O-E-H-L-E-R, Ann T-R-E-A-D-W-A-Y, and we had Carol S-T-O-N-E-C-I-P-H-E-R--- I've forgotten her married name-- and Nell Cotnam. Nell had been there before Betty came, and Nell had been a bridesmaid in Mr. Heiskell's wedding. So, she got to call him Ned. She was the only one on the second floor who did that. Anyway, she wrote a social notes column, "Among Ourselves." She was an old lady, but she was fun. I remember one day Mr. Nelson came down the hall and we knew it was him because he had those half-moon taps on the heels of his shoes and you could tell it was him. He was always looking for someone to go to lunch with him, and he had stopped to talk with Harriett Aldredge, and then

he came on in to our office to see who else wanted to go. Nell started kidding him about how people were going to say that he had a harem if all of us went to lunch with him. She got tickled in the middle of trying to say, "You're going to get a reputation," and it came out "You're going to get an erection." So we were all falling around laughing about that. But Nell took off her green eye-shade and stood up and went over and got her hat and put it on and left with never cracking a grin and never said anything. I need to say something else about the brides, because this was such big part of our lives. On Monday and Tuesday, we would all cram into Betty Fulkerson's office, and we would go through these brides to rank them, to see if they had a known family name, what kind of dress they were wearing, who designed it, and where the wedding was going to be and where the honeymoon was going to be, look at all the attendants to see if they were "anyone." We looked at the jewelry she wore. We even looked at the photographer. All these things would give the bride points, and if you got enough points, then you got to be on page one. You got the most points if the bride's father brought the picture in. I remember a guy I went to high school with brought his stepdaughter's picture in one day and we talked about school for a couple of minutes and then he left. We weren't close friends, but that girl's picture was on page one. I was shocked to death. I can't imagine what that boy's family thought, but that's what got the picture on page one. We even had a

special, flowery way of writing for the page one brides. It was really depraved. It was an amazing amount of time and effort. Then the pages were made up on Thursday for Sunday. Somebody had to go out in the composing room and kind of hang around while they were making up the pages in case there was a trim of a few words or whatever. Betty usually did that herself because she didn't like for us to go out in the composing room. She didn't like that because, of course, they were all men. She apparently felt that they were almost animals. And it was okay if one of us "older" women went out in the newsroom to get the mail, but if it was a summer intern then they had to go in pairs, like a chaperone. She was really concerned about protecting her interns. She would tell them to be sure, and kneel down to get the mail in the newsroom. Our box was right down on the floor, the bottom shelf. In those days we were all wearing skirts several inches above our knees, and she did not want you to bend from the hip and get that mail out of that box because it would show way too much leg to those animals in the newsroom.

GD: You came out worked for another section later on, entertainment or something like that?

JJ: Yes, that happened after I came back after my son Matt was born and Douglas called and I came back to work. I am typing brides again and the magazine editor was Jerry Rush then and he stuck his head in the door one day and asked if I wanted to be assistant magazine editor. It

took me maybe two minutes to grab my purse and was ready to go. Rush said, "Well, you're going to have to tell Betty and all," and so I went right in there and she was just appalled. She said, "This move will not do anything for you. I have it set up in here that when I retire, Kay Koehler will be editor and you will be assistant editor. I remember thinking "I just cannot type brides the rest of my life." She was very disappointed. It was quite a while before she wanted to talk to me again. Anyway, I talked to Jerry Rush and we went down to the magazine office. I had a desk of my own, a typewriter and a telephone and a filing cabinet. There were three people in that office, Martha Douglas wrote what's on TV today, and then she processed some wire copy for the church page once a week. There were three of us in there. Nobody was handing me bride forms to type up, so it was great. What I really did in there was the Mickey Mouse page. That cartoon had been gone forever, but it was the page opposite the daily comic page and it was filled with syndicated columns that came in the mail. They were always the right size, it was just a matter of putting that around the edges. In the middle there was a picture and some kind of a feature story. That usually came from the city desk. Bill Shelton would ship them over with a picture and a little copy, 14 to 16 inches, something like that. And so, this is my first week in there, I guess, and he dropped the stuff off and I marked it and sent it out to the composing room. I had looked up to see who had written it and I had put the

byline on and marks on the photos so they could be sized. Halfway into that first week, Shelton came in and said, "Where are all these bylines coming from?" And I said, "I typed them on there because I could see who wrote the story." And he said, "If I wanted a byline on this story I would have put it there." So I didn't do that anymore, and he didn't send me very many stories either.

GD: Shelton had very strict policy on bylines.

JJ: I didn't know that --- I had no way [of knowing] because I don't think Jerry Rush spelled that out for me. It was not bad.

GD: Did you ever get into the newsroom to work at all?

JJ: No, not really. I filled in for someone on the copy desk for a while. I had started out writing features and I was pretty comfortable doing that. I didn't care much for hard news writing. But, you know, by that time I knew most of the people in the newsroom anyway. I need to say a few words about the parties at the *Gazette* because they were pretty famous and had been for a long time before I ever heard of the place. I had gotten to know Pat Trimble, and it was her brother Mike Trimble who had the party house at that time. He and George Carter had something like a fourth of a big, old house, in a nice, old neighborhood. Their apartment had the living room of the original house. So he had a good room to have parties in. I don't know why their landlord didn't throw them out because there were a lot of parties. We didn't miss a holiday. They had birthday parties and we

celebrated the arrival of someone at the *Gazette* or someone's departure. It wasn't just a matter of opening the doors. We made plans and bought food and cake and stuff. We always had Christmas parties. Since I had these three little girls at this time in the 1960s, I was always carrying their Christmas toys over there for all of us to play with. One [box game] was called "Twister," and it was a plastic mat, it is a little too complicated to describe completely. There was a mat with a lot of colored dots on it, and you had to put your hands on the red dots and your feet on the green dots. And then somebody else would spin the gadget that tells you where to move, so he has his hands over here and his feet over there and it always ended up like a wrestling match. But it was fun. Everyone got into it. And that thing is still on the market. It is still fun. I had a Chatty Cathy Doll one year that one of my daughters got. She was defective and you pulled the string on her back and the only thing she would ever say was "Let's have a party." So that was our mascot. I remember one year the bachelors in the newsroom hosted another Christmas party and they had engraved invitations. At Mike's, we always ended up singing along with Peter, Paul and Mary [Note: a band that was popular in the 1960s]. And I remember "Old Stewball was a Race Horse." We listened to it so much that we sang with it, that we could do all the harmony. That was fun a thing to do. The important thing about this was it was a community, we all knew each other. If we didn't work

together we were on the same floor. And we look at it now it was all really innocent fun. It was just a friendly thing to do. We didn't tear up anybody's house. Nobody ever got into a fight. Nobody ever made off with somebody else's wife. Some of us would borrow a bedroom and take a nap. But the men in the newsroom didn't have to go to work until noon. If you were in the woman's section we had to go in at nine. I guess everybody remembers the old telephone parties, the telephone company would have the first Christmas party, and they had it at Hotel Lafayette. Betty Fowler would play the piano and we would gather around and sing. They would have the boiled shrimp and have that brought out and it wouldn't last five minutes. I heard some say years later that the telephone company people that hosted that party that they thought we were all animals, too. We went to Bill Shelton's house. His wife, Dixie, was quite an accomplished artist --- very successful. Sometimes she would put some of her work out around the room. It was like we had an excuse to go there, but we didn't really need an excuse. I remember when Max Brantley came to the *Gazette* we had a whole new kind of party. Max celebrated the Chinese New Year. And he would find a restaurant, check it out and order up about six- or seven-course meal. And people would sign up and pay him and he would deal with the restaurant. It would usually be some nice little family restaurant and they wouldn't have a liquor license. We'd roll in with big coolers with plum wine and saki and Chinese beer. I imagine

after such a party somebody posted a note by the cash register, "Do not accept reservations from these people." I do remember one time that there was a bunch of us standing at the officer's club over on the East Side and we had a drink. We were just talking and I looked back over there and Max had put his eye in his drink.

GD: Max Brantley had a glass eye?

JJ: Yes. It wasn't that big of a deal. I don't remember him drinking martinis, but it seems like it was there in a martini glass. Then we went to one of the bars where there was a band or some music, and we were all out there on the dance floor moving around and suddenly --- this happened several times --- Max and Mike Trimble would both leap up into the air and fall on the floor on their bellies and kind of writhe around. They called it the 'gator. They only did this in bars because these are two pretty big guys and there wouldn't be room in somebody's home. I don't know how they made it to work the next day. One day I remember going into the newsroom when I was working on the magazine, and Max was sitting there in full monkey suit. It had long orange hair on it and he was just sitting there typing away. And no one said anything to him at all.

GD: I remember Max in the monkey suit. That was pretty funny.

JJ: Leroy Donald had some wonderful parties, too. He and Lottie were living out --- now I forget, it's where Cantrell Road turns into, I don't know if it is Highway 5 or what. But they had a nice house. It was

north of the highway and it was set back away from the street, on a rise. Nice rolling lawn. We would go out there in the wintertime and have snowball fights. Then in the summer time we would go out there and Leroy's son would beat us all at croquet. One day Leroy went home from work and the landlord had sold the lawn. They had gone out there and cut the turf off, and their house was sitting up on top of a mud hill so, of course, they moved then. But the house isn't there anymore and all of that land was removed to create an approach for that new bridge to North Little Rock out there. And then later on I discovered a whole new party gang, the folks on the copy desk. They didn't get off until midnight, so there was no use going to the newsroom parties because they were winding down by that time. So, the copy desk had their own parties. It seems like a lot of it took place on Saturday night and you would go over to someone's house and watch Saturday Night Live [on television]. It was very funny and there were women on the copy desk by that time and the food was pretty good. At that time, the copy desk had a bunch of really funny people on it. Paul Johnson --- just about anything he said was funny. And in there somewhere we had both Jonathan Portis and Richard Portis. I don't think they were on the copy desk at the same time, but they were both at some of these parties. I remember once they were --- I don't remember whose house it was, but they had been jawing at each other all evening, and kind of arguing about something --- they would do

that, and it was over nothing. But I remember that Jon got up and went into the kitchen and got a bowl of Jell-O salad out of the fridge . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

GD: This is side two, and you were talking about Jonathon Portis arguing with his brother.

JJ: They had been jawing for a long time that night, I don't think it was anything important, but they were some hard hitters. So at some point John went out into the Kitchen and got some Jell-O salad that had not set yet, he carried it in and dumped it in Richard's lap. I am pretty sure that it was at the house of one or the other, because nobody ever did anything like that, that would ruin somebody's sofa. I guess you could do that if it was your brother's

GD: Let's get back to the newspaper now. What about your pay?

JJ: I don't I believe I got a raise when I went to the magazine. But I worked relief when Rush was gone or when Martha was gone so I got some overtime. I remember one Christmas they were both gone. I was working 11 and 12-hour days. I wasn't killing myself--- I wasn't out there pouring concrete. But it was a long day and I got some nice overtime. I think that was the first time we ever had anything approaching a lavish Christmas at my house. So after that was over I looked real hard at my check. And I am thinking this is not enough to cover expenses, so I went in and told Douglas that I needed a raise.

And he said you are making what you were when you left here (to have my son Matt) and I said “Well, that is not enough any more.” He said the men make more because they have families to take care of and I said look I have this family to take care of myself and I need a raise. He said I am sorry. I was so ticked off that I went down to the social services office and applied for food stamps. I don’t remember what I was making at that time, but it was low enough that I qualified for food stamps, so, I got a book of them and I took it back up to the office and tossed it on Douglas’ desk. His color came up. He was really mad. But then I was mad too. I still didn’t get a raise. I think he got the point but it just wasn’t strong enough I guess.

GD: Did you ever feel the pride that the newsroom side took in working for the Gazette, the fact that they were a special newspaper that they felt that way? Did you feel that?

JJ: I know they felt a certain amount of that, but we were so isolated from the newsroom, the woman’s section. We were just so isolated. It meant a very great deal for a bride to have her picture on Page One. It was just like we were in another world. But it was another business. I think there was pride but I think for different reasons.

GD: Did you ever meet Mr. Heiskell?

JJ: Oh yes, his office was essentially next door to ours. He would often come out and speak to Miss Nell and he would always have a paper in his hand. He was very quiet. He would come behind you and take

your upper arm, in his hand and scare you to death. Then you couldn't turn around and slap him. He was an elderly man.

[Break]

GD: Okay, we are back again. I am talking with Julia Jones. There was a period of time which you were a fashion reporter, how did that come about?

JJ: Well, they made all these plans and tried two or three different ways to have a big feature section. Bill Lewis was the first editor of that; he didn't realize that everyone wasn't a self-starter like he was. So he had a lot of trouble getting copy out of his staff. I don't think he understood that some of those folks, you had to use a cattle prod on them to get them started. So, he stepped down from the editor's position and wrote travel and book reviews and music and things of that nature. Then they named David Petty as editor but I don't know that he knew a lot about handling a staff. If you asked a direct question he would say, "I don't have a problem with that." Can you imagine Bill Shelton answering a question like that? So we had our differences, but one of the funny things that developed is that they finally realized that they had brides to deal with and they didn't have any place to put them. They certainly didn't fit in the feature section.

GD: What had happened to the woman's section at this time? Did it disappear?

JJ: Betty Fulkerson was still there, but at some point one of the powers decided that the brides would be de-emphasized, that they would become smaller. The pictures were smaller with not much copy. Of course there was no such thing as a Page One bride. They had put it inside the feature section, but it didn't work. So they decided they were going to have to have a Woman's Section anyway. They posted the job, and I was still working on the feature section. I got to thinking about it and realized that they didn't have anybody there that was better qualified than I was. So I went in and told Carrick Patterson I was applying for the job. Then two to three days later, I got the job. As luck would have it, it was about time for Betty Fulkerson to make her trip to New York. She went up there twice a year to write on the fashion designs for the upcoming season. She went spring and fall. Of course the odd thing is in the fall you are writing about warm weather fashions that you would wear next spring and in the spring you were writing about coats with fur on them. But she was concerned; she asked Hugh Patterson if he would send both of us to New York this time so that she could show me the ropes. I could hardly believe that he said yes. That was extraordinary, considering the expense of it all. So Betty and I flew to New York, and went to the St. Regis Hotel first and saw four or five days of fashion shows there. Then we packed our bags and got on a charter bus and went up to Spring Lake, New Jersey, to see a week of menswear. That was

extraordinary. We went to a wonderful old restored hotel with the entertainment itself after dinner, like Lionel Hampton and his orchestra. Then we packed up again and got on the bus and went back to New York, this time we checked into the Plaza Hotel. We had adjoining rooms; I still can't get over the expense of this. And the fashion shows were presented in the Ball Room of the Plaza. Back in Little Rock, Betty wrote a few stories about the shows. After she retired, I decided to tie in with local merchants and have a local angle. So I tried real hard to do that. I got to know everybody that sold a dress in Pulaski County. So that was one of the first things that was changed; it just seemed logical. In the process of Betty leaving and my getting the desk, somehow they had forgotten to tell me who my boss was. Betty had always turned her expense account in to the managing editor, so I did that too. I had a Sunday Woman's Section. There was usually some kind of a fashion thing on Page One, or the debutante season at the country club or new members to the junior league. I had started a couple of little features inside like "You Can Do It," showing different ways to accessorize a dress, according to a store's fashion director. Or take a pair of shoes, odd shoes, and show what kind of clothes you could wear these things with. I got some pretty good feedback on that. And we covered some local designers; Connie Fails comes to mind. We had a few standing wire features in the woman's section, but everything else inside, I wrote myself.

Except the brides; a clerk wrote the brides. The first clerk had a master's degree in journalism. Now that I think about it all the clerks had masters, which I thought was kind of funny. I never did tell any of them that I barely got out of high school. That was the first job people got when they first got hired to the feature section. Now, it was a great life for awhile. I would go to New York for two or three weeks twice a year. I go off to the menswear show for a week twice a year. I had three weeks of vacation. I didn't spend a lot of time in the office. You make friends in New York and see other editors and it is like a reunion. I knew Betty Woods, the women's editor at the Democrat so we would travel together. Betty had always done a little fashion section but it was two or three or four pages inside the woman's section. Her semi annual fashion section was small: she would make a few photographs about a dozen, and talk about the season. So when I had to do a fashion section, we kind of did the first one that way and blended it into the woman's section, but after that I decided it would be better if it would stand alone. I found places to go and make the pictures, the old Terry mansion before it was turned into the arts center, or one time we went to the building site of the new Excelsior Hotel. We had all these models in these wonderful evening gowns walking around in the mud. I would get one photographer to make these pictures and every shop would send two or three outfits with a model. So it wouldn't cost anything but our time, two days of that and

the photographer would print it all up and I would have these great stacks of 8x 10's and I would kind of sort them out into stacks. Each stack would have a story with it. It could be color or a line, or the new pants to wear to work. I had to group them, then the guy in advertising, George would bring the page dummies with the actual ads drawn in, and then I would size the pictures to put on these pages and leave myself a copy block. I would write the cutlines and the copy block and by the time the second section came around it was well supported by the advertisers. I never did talk about ads to the fashion people that owned the fashion stores or the fashion directors of the big department stores; we didn't discuss ads with them. I guess they decided it was a great place to have ads. When George brought the dummies up, it didn't always have the name of the firm that had bought the ad. So, I am not saying there was a firewall but there was not a project teamed with the advertising department. David was still wandering around trying to get control of the woman's section. So one time he had the copy desk in features to lay out the pages, each of them were taking full pictures and laying them out and it didn't make any sense at all. There is no way you could write a story about these unrelated pictures. So, that didn't work. Then next time, they had a staff artist make the layouts. He was crazy for dropping out the background, so what is the point of going to a special location to take all the pictures? So finally they said okay you could have it back and I

would go down on the weekends and do all the layouts. It was a lot of work, but the section kept getting bigger and bigger. I do not know to this day why nobody at the Gazette ever said anything about it. They had to be making money. The only one who had anything to say at all was Bill McIlwayne, who was, I think, the first one they brought in to “make over” the Gazette. McIlwayne said this is obviously a moneymaker but it was not like somebody actually at the Gazette said “you’re doing a great job.” I guess if they said it was good, they would have to pay me more money.

Also about this time, the fashion director of M.M. Cohn asked if we wanted to photograph the official wardrobe of Miss Arkansas, the outfits that she would take to the pageant in Atlantic City. I talked to the guy that would fix her hair, talked to Betty Fowler about her talent and it was all fun. It was an okay fashion story. In the South pageants are really big business. I just kind of threw that into the mix and we found a readership for that. So then of course, I had to go to Atlantic City, because what is the point of writing about Miss Arkansas if you don’t go up there and see how she does in the big time. I went up there for a while, once a year. I got to see Vanessa Williams being crowned that was the first black woman that got the honor. After awhile she came to Little Rock and made an appearance at Kmart and I went out to see her and when she and her chaperone walked up to the table I noticed Vanessa’s shoes. They were high heeled, white, strap

sandal shoes. They were awful. The heels were run over, skinned up and they were dirty. They had seen some hard wear. This is not a class act. We took some pictures and I went back to the office. Then that afternoon, a friend of mine in New York, a publicity guy, called and said, did you hear about Miss America? He went on to say that in her past somewhere there is photo spread that was, you could only call it pornography, it was a big scandal up there already. He assured me that we would hear about it. I had a copy of her itinerary in Little Rock. She was speaking at a dinner meeting with the Kmart executives, and I knew where she was staying. By this time it was after dinner, in the evening. And the only boss that was still around was Bill Rutherford, the news editor. I went out and said, Bill, this friend of mine in New York says that Miss America, who is here in town, has appeared in pornography films and in a magazine and the news is about to break. She is here in Little Rock and I know where she is. I can get a couple of photographers and we can have that story. Rutherford said no, and we wouldn't run that kind of a story. I don't care if she is here or not. It is not our kind of story. I said okay, but of course the next morning there was a page one-wire story about Vanessa Williams and these photographs. It didn't even have Little Rock dateline. I thought that was kind of funny. I still do. It was a story for days and days and days.

GD: During this period when you were having all this fun, doing this job. Were you aware there was a newspaper war going on? Did it impact you at all?

JJ: I do know when Bill McIlwayne came but mostly it all kind of just floated by. I was really busy. I had a lot on my plate. My youngest daughter, who was 17 had just been diagnosed as schizophrenic. I was not overly concerned about the newspaper war because I knew my section was good and we all knew the Gazette was the best paper.

GD: Did you hear any rumors that the Gazette might have been in trouble?

JJ: Yes, but more immediately, I had an idea that I might be in trouble. I was a small section of the larger problem. I don't want to make too much of it, but David got really tired of the independent operation and me running it. He would come over all the time and aggravate me, and say well what are you doing right now. He had me making minute-by-minute lists of what I did all day. I was just working on the section or planning the next one. I felt like everything was off center. Nothing was quite right. I think Carrick was managing editor then. It was kind of off balance in the building—strange people wandering around. I don't think I ever imagined that the Gazette could be sold. Again I was so far removed from the day-to-day operation of it that was not a big danger in my mind.

GD: What made you leave the paper and go to Phoenix?

JJ: On these various fashion trips I had met Dorothy Goebel, who was the feature editor at the Phoenix Gazette in Arizona.

GD: Goebel is G-O-E-B-E-L,

JJ: That is right. She was on the phone all the time nagging me, saying why don't you come out here. I had sent her many tear sheets that she had asked for. As it happened, we had just had a pretty good story on the marriage of Win Paul Rockefeller, up on Petit Jean. My friend Connie Fails had designed the bridesmaid dresses, so I knew all about that. I had pictures of them. Another friend Bucky Farnor, that is F-A-R-N-O-R, and his first name was Bucky, B-U-C-K-Y, he was a floral designer. He had brought in all these flowers to create an English garden up on the top of Petit Jean Mountain, if you can imagine that. We already had the details. Rockefeller said, all right then, you can come then and take a picture of the wedding party. But you have to know your place and don't mix with the guests and that kind of thing. Pat, W.L. Patterson, the chief photographer and I drove up there, made the pictures, and discussed the layout and we put this page together, with a medium length story and I sent a copy of that to Dorothy in Phoenix. She said I really think you need to think about coming out here. So that was the right thing to say at the right time. I was married to Gerald Drury by that time. He had already left the Gazette. As I said that there was some handwriting on the wall. So, I went out to Phoenix for a try out in January 1985. I couldn't believe it. It was truly

another world. I had no idea people spent money like that. We went, Dorothy and I, to some charity balls during my week's visit. I couldn't believe that people actually bought these incredible gowns that I had been seeing in New York all this time. They were beautiful events in luxurious resorts. I had a wonderful time. I was writing a story every day I was out there. At the end of the two weeks, the managing editor Lynn Holt, L-Y-N-N H-O-L-T, said we want you to come to work here. We will pay for your moving expenses and this will be your salary. I don't know what it was but it was twice what I was making in Little Rock. So, that wasn't much of a decision. So I flew back home and went in and told whoever—David or Carrick—was managing editor that I was giving notice and I was going to work for the Phoenix Gazette. They could have cared less; it wasn't like, don't go, here we'll give you more money. It was a good solution all the way around. Two weeks later I was in Phoenix, working. As soon as Dru could get our house sold, and packed up, he followed me out here.

GD: You were there in Phoenix when you got the news about what was going on about the sale, the first sale of the paper to Gannett. What did you think then? Did you have any thoughts?

JJ: Well, my first thought was, I am sure glad we got out when we did. And then I don't think anybody believed what was happening, even the people who were there. My son was in Little Rock and kept me posted about what was going on, with the candlelight ceremony they

had at the empty Gazette building. There were some things I wish I had packed up and taken with me. I didn't think it could happen. The funny thing, though, is that later, the same thing happened in Phoenix. Here I am working for the Phoenix Gazette, having so little to do, it was like retirement. My husband, Dru, D-R-U, because that was part of his first system name, when the computers first came to the Gazette, is on the Republic as copy editor in the editorial section. He wasn't having any problems either. So we were rocking along pretty good. Then my friend Dorothy retired, and her parting words were, "Don't worry about the Gazette, it's the smaller paper but they can not close because it is all tied up in a family trust, it belongs to the Pulliam family, P-U-L-L-I-A-M, in Indianapolis. Those are Dan Quayle's folks. It is all in a family trust, and it cannot be sold. You're safe." Well one morning, you go into work and you find that the Gazette has been closed. And then in the next week the Republic was sold to Gannett. So the same thing was happening in Phoenix that happened in Little Rock, the paper was sold and everything was turned upside down. But it was not nearly the upheaval in Phoenix that it was in Little Rock because the Republic never was the Gazette.

GD: We are about down to the end of this tape so I think we will just close this interview.

JJ: I guess I would end by saying that I suppose it was just stubbornness that kept me working at newspapers all my life. I had a terrible time

staying employed but I don't think it was because of my work. I never got fired. I never thought I would leave Little Rock. When I was a child I played in the Governor's Mansion as it was being built—I grew up around the corner. And before that we played in the Old Blind School that was on that property before the Mansion. The first Governor that I remember living up there was Sid McMath. He had a huge Great Dane that would come down every day and get up on our front porch and scratch on the front-door screen to open it and come in and see what we were having for supper. That dog was so big he didn't even have to put a foot up on the table to see what we were having but he never seemed to want any of it. Ten minutes later or so the governor would walk down, the governor himself without a bodyguard or a car or anything, and he would come and collect his dog and stand and talk for awhile. I think that was funny, but that was the kind of town I grew up in. I grew up reading both the Democrat and the Gazette. That was just the way it was and it was supposed to be that way. Like getting mail delivered to a box on the front porch twice a day. That was the way it was supposed to be. We went downtown on Halloween and paraded in a sidewalk parade in our costumes and no one worried about being shot or mugged. There wasn't even such a word. When I grew up our Christmas tree was pine. And the school proms were held in the school gym. And the Gazette came in the

morning and the Democrat in the afternoon and you see none of that,
not a single thing of that is true anymore.

GD: That is true, well that is it. Thank you very much for your memories.

This is the end interview.

{End of Tape 1, Side B}