

Gazette Project

Interview with

Ray Moseley,
London, England
4 November 2000

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: Okay, this is Ray Moseley and Roy Reed, November 4, 2000, in London.

Ray, we have your permission to turn this over to the University of
Arkansas Library?

Ray Moseley: Right.

RR: Start with the beginning. Tell me where you were born and when and to whom.

RM: I was born in Marshall, Texas, December 2, 1932. My father was a, had a small
grocery store there. So I grew up rather poor.

RR: Yes. [Laughs] Mine had a small grocery store, so I . . . [laughs].

RM: I went to North Texas. What was then known as North Texas State College now
calls itself University of North Texas in Denton. After that I went — do you
want all the history where I worked?

RR: What were your parents' names before we get away from there?

RM: My father's name was an unusual name, Cordeus. C-O-R-D-E-U-S.

RR: Okay.

RM: And my mother's name was Veta. V-E-T-A.

RR: Okay. So you went to North Texas State.

RM: Yes.

RR: Did you go to work after that?

RM: Well, after that, I applied for three jobs when I left the university. The first was in, one was in Galveston. I went there and I was only there two weeks and hated the place, the *Galveston Daily News*. The *Wichita Falls Record News* called me up and asked me if I was still looking for a job. And I said, “Yes,” so I quit after two weeks and went to Wichita Falls. And I was there about four and a half months, and the *Dallas Times Herald* rang me up and said they had an opening. So I went to the *Times Herald*. All in the first five months after I graduated. That was in 1952. I worked on the copy desk at the *Times Herald* for a while and then they made me state editor, which was kind of a one-man operation.

RR: It was a meteoric rise!

RM: And I hated it because I really wanted to do a reporting job, but I didn’t want to report for the *Times Herald* because I thought it was a pretty sorry newspaper then. So somebody mentioned to me — I can’t remember who it was — that the *Arkansas Gazette* was a good paper. And I wrote to A.R. Nelson, and he invited me up for an interview and that’s it. I went there in the beginning of 1956.

RR: You were single at that time.

RM: Yes.

RR: What was the job?

RM: Well, an Air Force base had just opened in Little Rock, or was just about to open, and the *Gazette* thought they needed somebody to cover this base full time. They hadn’t quite figured out what they were going to do with it, so they hired me for

that. And I went out to this air base and, well, I produced a fair number of stories, I guess, but it wasn't really a full-time job, not enough to keep me busy there. And I don't think I was — probably wasn't on that job six months and they decided they didn't need full-time coverage of the air base. In fact, I think we rarely covered it at all after I left there. Anyway, I came back into town and worked on general assignment from then on.

RR: You went to work there in '56?

RM: Yes. Early '56.

RR: What sort of stories did you do on general assignment?

RM: Good Lord, Roy.

RR: Do you remember any of them? Do you remember a single one? I'd be hard put to remember any of mine . . .

RM: Yes. I'd have to think about it. I remember — it's funny this would pop in my mind, but I remember Little Rock hired a city manager from a small town near Dallas, and they sent me down to do interviews with him on how he was going to run the Little Rock city government. And I did a series of articles about that.

RR: They sent you to Texas to interview this guy?

RM: Yes.

RR: You know that's a pretty fair indication of what kind of a paper it was, that they would spend several hundred dollars to send a reporter out of state to do an interview like that.

RM: Yes, right. It got a fair amount of attention, as I recall. It was two or three articles

I did on the whole thing. And I remember something I did, which — hell, I don't remember what it was now. It won an award from the National Home Builders' Association. That was the first journalistic award that I ever got. [Laughs] And I don't remember what the story was. But I did a lot of kind of feature stories and not much in the way of politics. And I remember Harry Ashmore assigned me to do a thing about the involvement in Arkansas Gas, if that's what it's called . . .

RR: Arkansas and Louisiana?

RM: Yes. And the electric company.

RR: A, P and L.

RM: Yes. And I had to go interview the — it was some kind of fight going on between the two of them, as I recall. I had to go over and interview the heads of both of them. I remember interviewing Witt Stephens.

RR: That series, you did a series.

RM: Yes.

RR: And that series is still in my file somewhere. Years later, I did a biography of Orval Faubus and I used that story of yours for background. It held up real well you'll be glad to know.

RM: I can't even remember . . . you probably know more about it at this point than I do.

RR: Well, it was serious reporting, complete with numbers. You know how newspapers don't like, reporters don't like numbers.

RM: Yes.

RR: But you had a lot in there that explained the political background, what was going on in Arkansas and how it fit into politics [?]. It helped me to understand how Witt Stephens became the power behind Orval Faubus.

RM: Right. Yes, I remember Witt Stephens made some fairly outrageous comments about this guy who ran the electric company. And I went to see him and quoted them back to him, and he almost leapt out of the chair. And he said, "I don't believe Witt Stephens said those things about me! I'm going to call him right now!" And he grabbed the phone, and I said, "Go ahead and call him." So he put the phone down. [Laughter] I remember another story I did. Some small town over near Memphis, just on the Arkansas side, somebody absolutely stole an election in the most flagrant manner. And I remember going over and interviewing everybody over there who was extremely hostile and came back and quoted Arkansas statutes on various things to show the way he had stolen this election.

RR: How do you deal with hostile sources like that? Or how did you?

RM: Well, the way I deal with anybody else, I guess. Just listen to them and tell them what the job is.

RR: Did they threaten you?

RM: No, they didn't threaten me. They were just extremely belligerent and not forthcoming with answers.

RR: You don't remember the town, do you?

RM: I don't. It was right across the river from Memphis.

RR: Well, that would be West Memphis. Does that sound right?

RM: I don't think it was West Memphis.

RR: Okay.

RM: It was somewhere near there.

RR: But, anyway, you had been doing general assignment for a year or so when Central High broke out?

RM: Well, let's see. That was fall of '57, wasn't it?

RR: September, '57.

RM: Yes, that's right. About a year on general assignment.

RR: How'd it happen that you went out to Central?

RM: I don't remember.

RR: It must have been Shelton.

RM: It was certainly Bill Shelton who sent me out there.

RR: Do you remember the first story that you . . .

RM: You know, I'd forgotten this, but I had briefly covered the state capitol before this came up. I was covering Faubus. Funny I had forgotten that. But it was very briefly before all this happened. I suppose that's how I got — I was kind of backing up. Mathilda Tuohey was covering the Capitol, and I did a bit of that. I never liked beat reporting. I still don't. So I don't think I was ever good at it.

RR: Why didn't you like it?

RM: Why didn't I like beat reporting?

RR: Yes.

RM: I don't know. It's going around seeing the same people everyday and trying to pull what you can out of them. I just like the variety of general assignment. I liked doing different things and not covering the same institution. I later covered the state department for a couple of years, and I hated that. I just don't like covering institutions.

RR: Is it the buttering up of people that you have to do everyday?

RM: Well, that's part of it, I guess, yes. But I think it has more to do with just liking to do a variety of different things.

RR: Well, there is that about general assignment. You never know what's going to happen that day.

RM: Right. Anyway, I think that's probably why I got assigned to do Central.

RR: Do you remember going out there to Central the first day?

RM: Yes, I do. I mean, I remember in a general sort of way. I just remember the big crowds of people and particularly remember a lot of railway workers from North Little Rock out there who seemed to be among the most militant, bigoted people around.

RR: Pretty loud, were they?

RM: Yes. Very loud. And . . .

RR: What sort of things did they have on their minds?

RM: Well, you know, I just remember them doing a lot of shouting. They didn't get, at that point, they weren't particularly hostile to the press, which surprised me a bit, or, at least, because I worked for the *Gazette*, I would have thought they'd have

been more hostile than they were to us, but I never had any serious trouble with them. I remember — do you remember Dr. Benjamin Fine, the *New York Times* education writer?

RR: Yes, I sure do.

RM: He was out there one morning and this young guy came up and started baiting him. He said something like, “That’s a nice pencil you’ve got there, Dr. Fine. Could I have a look at it?” And old Fine handed it over to him and, of course, this guy put it in his pocket and left Fine with nothing to take notes with. [Laughs] So I had an extra pen in my pocket and gave him one. But that was the only --- you know, there were never any threats from people out there toward us.

RR: Didn’t Fine get in some other trouble during the coverage of Central?

RM: I think he did. They eventually replaced him anyway. They sent down somebody younger, a little more . . . I mean, he was strictly an education writer, not a guy to cover riots in the streets and that sort of thing.

RR: Well, this was supposed to be a success story in education, isn’t that right?

RM: Yes. Yes. And he never even thanked me for giving him my pen. [Laughter] I think he was pretty frightened.

RR: Yes. Yes. Did you get acquainted with the other *New York Times* reporters who came down?

RM: Yes. Well, I got acquainted with all of the national press who came in. Names . . .

RR: Johnny Popham was [one of the first from the *Times*?].

RM: Yes. I thought he was still at the . . . I thought he was from the Nashville paper.

RR: He eventually went to Chattanooga, but he was *The Times'* southern correspondent at the time.

RM: Was he?

RR: And then Claude Sitton came in.

RM: Claude Sitton I knew very well. I'm sorry about my memory for names. Who was the NBC anchor who died a few years?

RR: Oh, yes . . .

RM: He was based in Chicago.

RR: John Chancellor?

RM: Yes, John Chancellor.

RR: Yes, that's right. I've heard him say that this was the first real television news story, Little Rock.

RM: Yes. I think it made his name. I think it was the thing that really put him on the map.

RR: Yes.

RM: And then Relman [Pat] Morin from AP, who got a Pulitzer Prize. They were all working out of the *Gazette* office, as you recall.

RR: Yes.

RM: Clay Gowran from the *Chicago Tribune*.

RR: Clay who?

RM: Gowran. G-O-W-R-A-N, I think.

RR: G-O-W-R-A-N.

RM: Yes.

RR: Yes. I barely remember . . . What did you make of Relman Morin's — they called him Pat, didn't they? —

RM: Yes.

RR: Pat Morin's story that won the Pulitzer? Did you see it?

RM: I don't remember whether I did or not. I always found Morin a little bit of a, kind of a highly opinionated, slightly arrogant character. [Laughs]

RR: My memory of the piece, and it's been years, is that it was a fairly subjective piece of reporting. But, of course, that fit the tone of *The Times*.

RM: Hmm. Right. Was it just one piece, or was it . . . ?

RR: I think it was one main story that he did on a particular day. I'm not sure about that. I remember being a little annoyed that our own reporters didn't get the Prize instead of . . .

RM: I remember Nelson was pretty upset about this and he said, "We should have put you and Dhonau in for a Prize." It never even occurred to me whether they had or hadn't, but apparently they never even made a submission.

RR: Although the paper did win . . .

RM: The paper got two.

RR: Two, yes.

RM: I mean, Harry Ashmore got one and . . .

RR: Yes.

RM: But I think the prize that went to the *Gazette* was principally a prize to J.N. Heiskell for putting his money on the line. [Laughs] Which he well deserved. But anyway, you know, I felt proud to have been part of the newspaper that took the kind of stand it did, and it won the Prize for Public Service regardless of whether it went to me or not.

RR: The stand that it took editorially, how'd that play out for you as a reporter out on the street?

RM: You mean, how did it affect the way people treated me?

RR: Yes.

RM: Not all that much, I would say. I spent a lot of time during all of this going to these White Citizens' Council meetings, which I had to cover for the *Gazette*. This guy, I think his name was Amis Guthridge?

RR: Amis Guthridge.

RM: Guthridge was always very friendly to me. I think he had a sense of playing to the press. I remember going to one of these meetings one night, and they had some guy there from Mississippi. And he started talking about some incident, and he said, "Are there any reporters here? If so, I'd like to go off the record." And I stood up and said, "I'm from the *Arkansas Gazette* and my paper's policy is if this is a public meeting, you can't go off the record." People started screaming, or shouting, "*Gazette* scab! Throw him out!" [Laughter] I felt pretty uncomfortable. As soon as that meeting was over, old Amis Guthridge rushed up to me and said in a very loud voice, "Ray, I think you were absolutely right!" [Laughter] I think

he was afraid they were all going to pounce on me.

RR: Yes. Well, you know, it is kind of amazing that more reporters were not pounced on.

RM: Yes, it is.

RR: Because speakers were, in those days, liked to get a crowd going against the *Arkansas Gazette* or some other paper.

RM: Sure, yes.

RR: George Wallace. Did you ever cover Wallace?

RM: No.

RR: That was a favorite ploy of his. He'd denounce some national paper and then he'd point to the reporter from that paper out in the audience.

RM: Faubus did that to me once at an election rally. He said, he pointed down to me and said — he was talking about the “lying *Arkansas Gazette*,” and he said, “We’ve got a *Gazette* reporter here.” And he said, “He’s a nice young man, but he’s not responsible for what appears in the paper. They twist his stories.”

[Laughs]

RR: Yes. What about twisting the stories? As you probably remember that was a pretty widespread, probably a widespread belief among people who didn't like Harry Ashmore or the editorial page, that the news coverage was slanted to agree with the editorial page. Did you ever have any feeling at all that there might have been any truth to that?

RM: Well, I don't remember Harry ever talking to me about the way I wrote anything.

Nor do I remember my copy being changed in any significant way, but, no, I didn't. . . . Did you think so?

RR: No, I didn't, but I've wondered whether — well, if we were to go back and look on the microfilm now, or copies, I wonder whether we might see, you know, a word here and a word there that would suggest our own personal feelings. And I don't know.

RM: It's possible.

RR: I wrote some of that story later on. Not that fall, but later on, and I've wondered whether my own copy would stand up.

RM: Well, that's a good point. I suppose I still have my clippings around somewhere. I haven't read them in a long time.

RR: I'm not too worried about it, but . . .

RM: I remember Harry made me very uncomfortable once when I was covering Faubus's election campaign. He called me up and said "Sid McMath is going to come down and confront Faubus at the rally tomorrow" — because Faubus had been attacking McMath — and so I just would rather not have known because I had to sit there and pretend this was all a surprise to me when Faubus is speaking, and, suddenly, there is McMath standing in the background. And I had to go up to Faubus and say, "Did you see McMath? What's your reaction?" I just felt it was something I didn't need to know in advance.

RR: Did he confront him, or did he say something?

RM: No, he never said a word. He just stood there.

RR: Had Faubus seen him?

RM: Yes, Faubus saw him right away, apparently. He said, "I saw him standing there, but it didn't make any difference."

RR: These were old friends who had fallen enemies.

RM: Yes.

RR: I guess it ought to be pointed out that Harry was pretty close to McMath.

RM: Yes, he was.

RR: And that was fairly common on Southern newspapers in those years for the editor of the paper to be involved politically with . . .

RM: Right.

RR: Were you aware at the time that our boss was kind of a political figure?

RM: Harry?

RR: Yes.

RM: Well, I guess so. You know he'd been involved, I mean, he'd been involved in the Stevenson campaign, hadn't he?

RR: For President, yes.

RM: Yes. I wasn't fully aware of his involvement in Arkansas politics to any extent.

RR: Yes, I guess I knew it, but it was not something I thought about all the time. He and Henry Woods and Sid McMath, kind of the liberal faction there.

RM: Yes. This guy who had been on the Supreme Court who used to — Do you remember him?

RR: Ed Dunaway.

RM: Ed Dunaway, yes. He used to come around the Press Club a lot.

RR: Do you remember what your own personal feelings were about integration?

RM: Integration.

RR: In 1957, yes.

RM: Well, yes, I didn't have any qualms about integration. I was all for it. And I thought that if Faubus hadn't acted as he had, this would have probably gone on peacefully. And what he did was disgraceful.

RR: Do you remember how you came to have that attitude about race?

RM: I think it happened when I was in college. I certainly grew up in a — you know, Marshall, Texas was a town with about 60% black population. And I kind of took in the usual prejudices of everybody in town there. And, I don't know. I just found myself in a more liberal climate when I went to college, and I just started thinking about this more and realized that I, you know, was just prejudiced.

RR: Was it the teachers, the students or what?

RM: I think probably one of my journalism teachers had a lot to do with it, but I can't remember precisely what it was.

RR: I remember with me it was a sociology teacher at the University of Missouri.

RM: Really?

RR: Yes, and a roommate from New York who hounded me day and night. [Laughter]

But it was a pretty traumatic experience giving up all of the prejudice of a lifetime.

RM: Yes. Well, that's right. You know, once I'd changed my mind about all of this, I

became rather ashamed of my previous attitudes.

RR: What about the family back home? How'd they feel?

RM: Well, first of all, my father died when I was eight years old. My mother, while she had the conventional attitudes of people in my hometown, she was never rabid on the subject. She took over the grocery store after my father had died, and she had black boys working for her in the store. And I would, you know, as a kid, I'd spend a lot of time with them and play with them when they weren't working. And I suppose that had something to do with helping me get over this attitude because these were people I liked.

RR: That's interesting. I had a very similar experience in Hot Springs where my dad had a grocery store out on the edge of town. And a lot of his customers were black people, and they became friends of mine because they were customers. And I would take them home on Saturdays with a load of groceries or feed or whatever. I discovered that this one guy was a kind of political croney of my dad's. And every election they would get their heads together and decide who they were going to support and then they would kind of farm out the job of converting the white voters and the black voters.

RM: Yes. You know Juneteenth?

RR: Juneteenth, yes.

RM: One Juneteenth, my mother was sick or something. I was running the grocery store by myself and every little black kid that came in the store that day I gave them free candy. [Laughter] It didn't make my mother too happy when she found

out.

RR: Tell me about covering Central High in '57.

RM: Well, I think my memories are probably pretty vague at this point. I remember, you know, seeing these kids escorted to school. We never actually got quite that near them except when they passed through. But after Eisenhower federalized the National Guard and sent in troops and everything, then they were driving these crowds back, and people were taking refuge on people's front porches nearby. And these people in the mob there were pretty outraged the troops were invading private property.

RR: [Laughs] At bayonet point!

RM: [Laughs] Yes. But, you know, I haven't a lot of specific memories of that whole thing. It's all kind of . . .

RR: Did you have any dealings with General Edwin Walker?

RM: Well, I certainly interviewed him on the street along with other reporters from time to time. And, you know, he would kind of surprise me later when it came out what a right-wing nut he was because I didn't get quite that impression. I thought that this was a guy who had a job to do and was being very tough about the way he was doing it. And I certainly didn't know that he was the kind of guy he was.

RR: Didn't he have some kind of brush with Lee Harvey Oswald later on?

RM: I don't know.

RR: Somehow his name is connected with Oswald's and [then became?] after the

assassination of Kennedy, but I can't remember how it went.

RM: Yes. Right. No, I don't either.

RR: I'm not sure he's still alive, Walker.

RM: No, he's bound to be dead by now.

RR: They put him in an insane asylum somewhere, didn't they?

RM: Did they?

RR: I think so.

RM: Well, at that time, he must have been, what, late forties, early fifties?

RR: Yes. He must be dead. Those people who were outraged, do you remember the day that somebody got a cut from a bayonet? Were you there that day?

RM: Yes, I vaguely remember that. Yes. I think it was one of those railway guys from North Little Rock. They were — I can't remember what the actual incident was.

RR: Blood was drawn.

RM: Yes.

RR: Actually a little nick on the arm or face, I don't know. Huge news, you know. Finally, the mob had something to pin their rage on.

RM: I later met a *Washington Post* reporter out in Beirut who told me he was one of the Little Rock Nine, or whatever they were. And I don't remember him being a part of that group.

RR: Really.

RM: Do you know who I'm talking about?

RR: No, but the only *Washington Post* guy who was ever down there, I think, was old

Robert Baker.

RM: No, he said he was one of the students.

RR: Oh.

RM: I think he must have come along in the second year or something because I don't remember him being in that — I mean, I pretty much remembered those names over the years. I couldn't call them up now. He died of AIDS a few years ago.

RR: No, he was not one of the Little Rock — they are all still alive.

RM: Are they?

RR: Yes. In fact, they were all down in Little Rock together a couple of years ago.

RM: Well, he told everybody he was one of the Little Rock Nine. I never contradicted him, but I knew he wasn't.

RR: You said he was with the *Post*?

RM: Yes.

RR: No, I don't remember who that would be.

RM: I can't remember his name now.

RR: But he was not one of the Little Rock Nine. They've had an interesting life, those nine kids, as you might imagine. Some of them have done very well, and one or two have just been — one especially was so traumatized. Elizabeth Eckford. Were you there the day Elizabeth Eckford . . .

RM: Little tiny girl.

RR: Yes. . . . that she walked down the sidewalk and kept being turned away by herself?

RM: Yes. Yes. People kind of coming up and shouting in her face.

RR: Yes.

RM: Yes. She was pretty frightened that day, as I guess anyone would be.

RR: Didn't old Benjamin Fine kind of comfort her?

RM: I don't remember that.

RR: I think I saw a picture of him sitting on a bench at the bus stop with her, next to Grace Lorch. Do you remember Grace Lorch, the so-called Communist?

RM: Yes.

RR: Anyway, Elizabeth is the one who was very traumatized and just never quite got over it.

RM: Really?

RR: Until the last two or three years and she's started speaking out again in public, but a fairly lonely life. And I don't know who knows what else might have caused it, but in my mind it was because of the way she was treated at Central.

RM: Well, I learned more about what happened at Central from reading your biography of Faubus than I knew at the time. It made me realize what a lousy reporter I was to read your book. [Laughter]

RR: You know, have you had that experience when you go back later on and look into a story that you covered years before and realize how little we knew?

RM: Yes.

RR: I've had it over and over, and it's really kind of dismaying.

RM: It is, yes. [Laughter]

RR: But it really takes time, and it takes an opening up of sources.

RM: Right. People who weren't available to you at the time. Of course, when I was spending most of my time in the street in those days, I'd get back to the office and, I suppose, call up people about various things, but I wasn't doing the kind of in-depth reporting that probably if I'd had a little more experience, I might have gotten more detailed than I did. But, as you say, it is easier after the passage of time to go back . . .

RR: Well, you know, some of the most experienced reporters in the United States were covering that story.

RM: Right.

RR: And they didn't do any better job. [Laughter] It's the deadline, you know. There's only so much you can do.

RM: Right.

RR: [Scotty Reston?] told a bunch of us one time that we ought to, after a big story and after it's dropped out of the news, to go back and explore it again. And he said that it's amazing how many people will open up after, you know, a year or . . .

RM: Yes.

RR: He said there is always a good story to be had if you just . . . you know, in newspapers, even that's a luxury.

RM: Yes. It's probably something newspapers don't do enough of.

RR: What did you do after the Central High story at the *Gazette*?

RM: Well, I left the *Gazette* — when was it? '58, I think. Toward the end of '58.

Maybe early '59. Because I was tired of doing the same story. Another school term had started at Central High, and I was going out and listening to people saying the same things over and over. It's a bit like covering the Middle East or covering Northern Ireland, both of which I cover from time to time. I was out in Israel two weeks ago and hearing people say the same things I heard them say in 1967. And Little Rock was very much the same thing. I got a little fed up with it, and I also thought it was time I moved on. I didn't really think — not being from Arkansas, I didn't really think of staying there for my whole career anyway. So I talked to Tom Davis, who had left the *Gazette* and gone to the *Detroit Free Press* and he helped me get a job there. I think it was early '59 when I left.

RR: Incidentally, he is in Fayetteville now.

RM: Is he? I always wondered what happened to Tom.

RR: He and Jane retired to Fayetteville about fifteen years ago.

RM: Okay.

RR: Part of a Sunday morning breakfast group that we built.

RM: Please remember me to him.

RR: I will. Who were some of the other people that you remember from Little Rock?

RM: You mean from outside the *Gazette*?

RR: Yes. You mentioned Amis Guthridge, for example, when we talked about Faubus.

RM: Yes. Well, Wes Pruden, of course. I never had much to do with him. He was kind of aloof from reporters. I'm talking about the preacher who was head of the

White Citizens' Council, the father of . . .

RR: The father.

RM: Yes. I remember Ed Dunaway, as you said, and Virgil Blossom.

RR: What was your impression of Blossom?

RM: Basically, a kind of weak man.

RR: In over his head?

RM: Probably so, yes. I don't think he quite knew what hit him or how to deal with it.

RR: Were you aware at the time — Let me back up. The conventional wisdom in town in 1957 is that Blossom had prepared the community. He had made scores of speeches at civic clubs, to people around town, to talk about integration. Do you remember being aware that the town might not be prepared by what he had done?

RM: Well, I certainly didn't have any sense that the town wasn't prepared, regardless of what he might have done. I thought the town was ready except I thought there might be a little bit of trouble, but nothing like what developed. Faubus called out the Guard. No, I thought — maybe I just gauged the mood wrong, but I didn't see any sign that there was going to be a huge uproar over this. I mean, it happened elsewhere. I couldn't see why it couldn't happen there.

RR: Turns out that he had prepared civic clubs . . .

RM: [Laughs] Not much else.

RR: and what Faubus derisively called the "silk stocking crowd." They were all prepared.

RM: Right.

RR: We just didn't know about all those folks out . . .

RM: Right, the ones who come into Little Rock from places like southeast Arkansas, I suppose. The mood was totally different. I mean, I always thought that Little Rock was, probably partly because of the *Gazette*, was a kind of liberal Southern town. Didn't you think so?

RR: Yes, I did. And there's still no doubt in my mind that it had more liberals than most other Southern towns, but there were also a lot of other folks out there who didn't see things that way. We didn't know much about them.

RM: Right. Whether they, you know, had the influence that they had. Had the governor made it clear that he was going to uphold the law was another matter.

RR: Yes. It took that to set them loose. Who else do you remember? You mentioned Virgil Blossom. Do you remember Jim Johnson?

RM: I remember Jim Johnson very well. I covered his campaign against Faubus. I traveled around with him a lot. Later I was in Washington. I was covering Congress for UPI. I looked up and there was old Jim Johnson who had come up to the Press gallery and said hello to me. He was always friendly to me. His wife once thought I wrote something that she didn't like, but I never had any squawks from him.

RR: He's still that way.

RM: I remember the first day I went out to cover his campaign. He was supposed to be in a town and I got there and he wasn't there. I had to call back to Little Rock to

try to find out where he was. I finally tracked him down, I think, in Hot Springs, but it was in the evening when I was getting very close to deadline. I had to write something and I was so frantic to get something out of him. I was in his hotel room, and he walked in the bathroom to take a pee, and I didn't even notice. I followed him in there [laughter] and stood there interviewing him while he was taking a leak. [Laughter]

RR: Sounds like one of those Lyndon Johnson stories we used to hear about! He invited the reporters into the bathroom.

RM: [Laughs] It didn't seem to faze him at all. He went right on, never . . .

RR: What kind of guy was Jim?

RM: He was, well, I suppose he was sincere in what he said, but there was a great deal of opportunism about him as well. Just as a person, he was easy to get along with.

RR: How about as a speaker, a stump speaker, was he any good?

RM: I'm trying to remember. I never thought Faubus was a very good stump speaker, did you?

RR: I didn't at first, but after I followed him around for a few weeks, I . . . I had an epiphany one day and figured out that he really was getting to this crowd.

RM: Well, he certainly got to crowds, but just as an orator I didn't think he was — I mean, he just said the right things, but he wasn't exactly a stem winder. I think Johnson probably could wind up people a little bit better than Faubus did.

RR: Yes. He was pretty spectacular, Johnson was. Still have one of your stories about Johnson? Do you remember those end-of-the-campaign stories that we all had to

do, kind of profiles of the candidate we'd been covering?

RM: Right.

RR: Yours was about Johnson, and it had something to do with the bucket that he used to collect money.

RM: Oh, yes. I think that was the piece his wife didn't like and gave me a hard time about.

RR: Do you remember any other figures throughout Arkansas at that time that you covered?

RM: I'm trying to remember.

RR: What about in the paper, around the paper? You mentioned Ashmore a while ago. What's your memory of Ashmore?

RM: Well, I was always kind of star struck by Harry. I thought he was extremely bright and articulate, and I always had great admiration for him.

RR: A great talker.

RM: Yes, he was a great talker, and he'd sometimes come around the Press Club in the evenings and have a drink with us and talk. And I'd always listen, fascinated with everything he had to say. [Laughs]

RR: Did you ever see him in the news room?

RM: Yes, but not too often. He didn't come out there a lot.

RR: Now and then, he'd come and look at the wire, and then he'd grab a typewriter and sit down and just bat out an editorial. My memory of it is it didn't take him more than three or four minutes. I'm sure that's not [unintelligible] [laughter].

RM: Yes.

RR: He was a very fluid writer.

RM: Yes. I remember his book, too, which I always thought was very good.

RR: The first one, *An Epitaph for Dixie*?

RM: Yes.

RR: Yes. A terrific little book. Did you know J.N. Heiskell at all?

RM: You know, I never got to know him very well. He'd always speak to me and he once did something very touching. I came in the office one morning very early and he walked in carrying this package, I mean, this big cardboard box, and he said, "This was the tuxedo of my son who was killed in the war, and I'd like for you to have it." And I was really overwhelmed by that. It was such a nice gesture. And he'd never paid that much attention to me as far as I knew. I don't know why he picked me out, but, anyway, it was quite something.

RR: What became of that tuxedo?

RM: I hate to say, I — you know Richard Davis, I don't know if you remember him, but he was a good friend of mine and when I left Little Rock, I didn't really think I had any use for a tuxedo at that time. It was quite a while [laughs] after that before I wore one. And I left it in his mother's attic. She kind of put it away for me, and that's the last I ever saw it. I always felt bad about it afterwards that I'd . . .

RR: May still be in that attic!

RM: Probably so [laughs].

RR: Richard died, didn't he?

RM: Yes. He died while I was out in Cairo. I only learned about it years later.

RR: Talk about Richard a little bit.

RM: Richard Davis?

RR: Yes.

RM: Well, I thought Richard was one of the most extraordinary people I ever knew.

He was a — I mean, I thought so at the time. He was extremely bright. He was a great conversationalist, articulate. And he was my best friend in Little Rock.

RR: He's part of the *Gazette's* story, and I don't really understand why because he didn't work there.

RM: No, he never worked there. He was always great friends with the people there, and he worked for an insurance company. When I first knew him, he sold me a life insurance policy. I suppose that's part of it. But I think he just liked journalists and liked being around them. He was always interested in politics and current affairs. He went off to New York, and I used to write him long letters and get letters back. He got married there and went to work for, I guess, I think it was United Airlines, wasn't it? Some airlines . . .

RR: I think so, yes.

RM: And I was out in Cairo, and I got a letter from Ina Claire Jones saying something about Richard having died.

RR: Was it a heart attack?

RM: No. He had bronchitis or something, and he, anyway, it all settled in his chest and

when they did an autopsy, they said they were amazed that — I mean, there was such massive infection that they were amazed he could even sit up or anything. His wife said he'd get up and shave in the morning, but that was about all he was capable of. You know, he had this withered left arm from polio, and I think maybe that had weakened him. Anyway, he was an extraordinary person. I still think of him as one of the great, most interesting people I knew.

RR: A very funny guy.

RM: Yes, extremely funny.

RR: Douglas tells about seeing him on the golf course. Apparently, he played golf in spite of that withered arm. [Bob?] says he was a pretty fair golfer.

RM: Yes. I used to play golf with him from time to time. He wasn't bad.

RR: Douglas claims that Richard's style was to wait until the other, his playing partner, was teed up and ready to hit the ball, and then he would say something like, "Are you saved?" [Laughter] He'd catch a guy on his back swing and say, "I never swing at a ball until I remember that Jesus is my best friend." Or some such [clatter?].

RM: He was quite something.

RR: What about other people in the news room that you remember. Do you recall any particular . . . ?

RM: Well, you know, I roomed with several of them. Gene Foreman, Jerry Jones, Jim Barden. They were all good friends of mine.

RR: Tell me about Foreman. What's your memory of Foreman?

RM: Gene was one of the --- was a very gentle person, I think. He had — a very, very, kind and thoughtful guy, but shy like some of the rest of us. But, I don't know, I always thought that Gene was a very good reporter. I liked him a lot.

RR: Douglas used to say that you could not cut Foreman's copy, that it was written so tight there was no place to cut it.

RM: [Laughs] Yes.

RR: Of course, he eventually became – what was it? — the executive director of the *Philadelphia Enquirer*?

RM: Yes. Well, I saw in that thing the *Arkansas Democrat* did, Gene quoting me as saying, “We're covering probably the biggest story we'll ever cover in our lives.” I don't remember having said that, but . . .

RR: Didn't turn out to be the truth, did it?

RM: Well, I wouldn't call it the biggest story I ever covered, but it was one that is stuck in my memory as probably, certainly, the first big story I ever covered.

RR: It was a big story.

RM: It was a helluva story. I mean, it was a very exciting time. I remember how hard we all worked and so we partied hard on the weekends at times. I think I probably did more drinking then than I . . .

RR: Those *Gazette* parties were something.

RM: Yes.

RR: Where would they be held usually?

RM: Well, it was usually where we were — Foreman, Jerry Jones and I — were living.

Somebody christened us the “Jolly Boys,” [laughter] which I thought was a peculiar name, but, anyway, we’d put up a notice that we were going to have a party.

RR: Wasn’t there a party at Mary Powell’s house one night?

RM: Yes, there was a party at Mary Powell’s house after a University of Arkansas football game, and I remember Richard Davis and I took a bottle of rye whiskey to the football game. — I shouldn’t be telling such stories as this — By the time I left, I was absolutely, didn’t know where I was. I think Hugh Patterson and his wife showed up at this party. Anyway, I woke up in an upstairs bedroom in Mary’s house with a note pinned to the blanket saying, “Mother knows you’re here.” [Laughs] And I said, “Where is everybody?” And she said, “Well, they’ve all gone on to a party at Bob Douglas’s house.” So I got up and drove over there and continued partying. [Laughs]

RR: [Tape beeps] That thing has a minute or two to run, but this might be a good time . . .

RM: . . . to switch it over?

RR: Yes.

[End of Tape One, Side One]

[Beginning of Tape One, Side Two]

RR: Now, I’ve got it turned over. You were talking about people around the *Gazette*, and you mentioned Hugh Patterson. What do you remember about Patterson?

RM: Patterson was always — he always liked to be very chummy with the reporters. I

remember Gene Foreman started this kind of crazy business of calling us all by the first syllable of our last names. He called me, “Mo.”

RR: I was “Ree.”

RM: [Laughs] Well, Hugh picked that up. To this day, he calls me, “Mo.” [Laughter]
But I remember a piece I did about — who was the senator? John . . . the senator from Arkansas?

RR: Fulbright?

RM: Not Fulbright.

RR: McClellan?

RM: McClellan. I wrote a piece about McClellan and it involved some guy who was — I can’t remember the full details but it was somebody who was, seemed a little bit shady or something. Anyway, I called up, found this guy was having dinner with McClellan when I interviewed him, and I mentioned that in the story. McClellan thought this was a real low blow. That he was having dinner with this guy didn’t prove anything. Maybe he was right. Anyway, he called up — Hugh was up in the news room the next day, and McClellan called up and was really hot under the collar and demanded that I be fired. And Hugh said, “Senator, if you don’t moderate your language I’m afraid I’m going to have to hang up on you.”
[Laughs] In the end, he did. He hung up on him.

RR: Did he? Great.

RM: Yes. But he stood up for me, anyway.

RR: Well, I think, generally, he was that kind of publisher. A rare breed, knowing

publishers, but . . .

RM: Right.

RR: But, generally, he was . . . yes. What do you remember about Tom Swint?

RM: Well, do you remember my incident with Tom Swint?

RR: I was not there that night, but I've certainly heard about it.

RM: Yes, well, Bill Shelton, who was city editor, of course, was on vacation, and I was asked to fill in at the city desk. This was after the — it was during the Little Rock school integration crisis, but after the main events had passed, I think. Again, I don't remember the details, but some wire story came out of New York. And Swint came over to me and said, "I think we ought to get some reaction on this here." And I said, "Well, we covered that in the paper yesterday." And he went away, kind of grumbling. And, you know, I wondered afterwards. He may have been right. Maybe I should have done it even though we had already . . . Anyway, I was working away there at the desk, and he came by. There was a coat rack there, and he started putting on his coat to go out to dinner, and I looked up and he gave me a really dirty look, and he said, "Don't you say a word." And he really said it in an angry voice. And I said, "Fuck you, Tom." [Laughter] The next thing I knew I woke up in the hospital because he knocked me out with one punch. I'd had a front tooth, half of it knocked out by a baseball when I was young. He knocked the cap off that tooth. And I was down on the floor, bleeding, I guess, and Tom was on top of me, still pounding away at me, apparently. I can't remember the guy — he later went to Mississippi — I think he went . . .

RR: Ron Farrar.

RM: Yes. He came up and pulled Swint off me. If he hadn't, I suppose I might have died because people said I was choking on my blood and turning blue. Anyway, I remember waking up for a second in the ambulance taking me to the hospital and then I was out again. And then I finally woke up in the hospital, and there was a young blond reporter there. Bill Rutherford. I saw him standing there and I said, "Bill, what happened?" And he said, "I don't know, Ray, I was back in the composing room," or something. And I lay there and I said, "I remember what happened. Tom Swint hit me." And he said, "Well, I don't know anything about it." Anyway, Tom Swint was asked to leave, I think, after that. I'd already given notice I was leaving. I left the *Gazette* about a week or two after that. But . . .

RR: How bad was the injury?

RM: Well, I don't know. Other than having to get the cap on my tooth replaced . . .

RR: Did you spend the night in the hospital?

RM: I can't remember. No, I don't think so. I never spent a night in the hospital until I was much older.

RR: Didn't you have a concussion or anything like that?

RM: No, I don't think so, but he must have hit me pretty well for me to be out for as long as I was. That's probably why I am brain damaged today. [Laughter] I wondered, you know, I seriously wondered, whether I should bring a baseball bat with me when I came to work the next day, but Tom Swint and I never exchanged another word in the time we spent . . . I told my sister about it. My sister was

living in Houston. She got so angry she and her husband called up Tom Swint and gave him hell over the phone. [Laughs]

RR: Really?

RM: It kind of embarrassed me later when I found out about it.

RR: But he never said anything to you after that?

RM: Not another word.

RR: What became of Swint?

RM: Well, he went to the *Seattle Times* from there. That's the last I heard of him.

RR: I haven't been able to find him. Somebody said he may be dead.

RM: Really?

RR: Nobody seems to know.

RM: About several weeks before that, there was a party at — what was his name? Jim Burkhart? Charlie Burkhart.

RR: Charlie Burkhart.

RM: Remember him?

RR: Sort of, yes. Yes, I do.

RM: He had this gorgeous wife we were all in love with. Judy Burkhart. And there was a party at his house, and Tom Swint had almost gotten in a fight with Richard Davis there because he had made a sandwich or something and left it, and Richard took a bite out of it. And Swint just went to pieces over it. I guess he was just ready to slug him. I think Bob Douglas pulled them apart.

RR: I barely knew Swint. In fact, I am not even sure what his job was. Was he news

editor?

RM: He was news editor, yes.

RR: For some reason, I never had any dealings with him.

RM: No, I didn't either, as a rule. And I'd, you know, he'd come to these parties, and he wasn't somebody I spent a lot of time with, but I never had any trouble with him before that.

RR: No reason to think he was hotheaded or . . .

RM: No.

RR: . . . hair triggered temper or anything?

RM: No.

RR: Boy, you pushed his button that night, didn't you?

RM: I sure did.

RR: Well, I don't know if it's any satisfaction or not, but people are still talking about it. [Laughter] All these, how many years? 40? What do you remember about Joe Wirges?

RM: Joe Wirges. I'm sure you remember the famous quote from Joe that we all . . .

RR: Yes. [Laughs] Yes.

RM: That's . . .

RR: I've been told it never happened, but . . .

RM: Really? I always remember Joe sitting there with a cigarette in the corner of his mouth. He was like something out of the *Front Page*, I thought. I don't remember what his copy was like ever.

RR: It took a lot of rewriting, I think.

RM: I'd expect so, yes.

RR: But a helluva reporter.

RM: Yes.

RR: I just remember sort of what his voice sounded like.

RM: Yes, it was kind of a gravelly voice, wasn't it?

RR: Gravelly, yes. And I'm sure he didn't really wear his hat in the news room, but that's the way I choose to remember him.

RM: No, I don't remember that. I just remember the cigarette constantly dangling there in the corner of his mouth, kind of biting off his words.

RR: Are you aware that he died the same day J.N. Heiskell did?

RM: No, I wasn't.

RR: Their obituaries were both on the front page of the *Gazette*.

RM: Really? Was he still working when he died?

RR: I don't think so. I think he had finally retired. What can you say about Bill Lewis?

RM: Well, as I mentioned to you earlier, I went off to dinner one night with Bill Lewis and, I think, Jerry Jones. In the course of the dinner, Bill Lewis started telling me how biased my reporting on Central High School was. And I didn't take it too well. We had some very angry words, and I don't think Bill Lewis and I ever spoke to each other after that night because it was quite clear where he was coming from on the subject.

RR: Why did he think you were biased?

RM: Well, I suppose he spelled it out to me, but I don't remember precisely what he said. He just thought that I had too liberal a viewpoint for Bill to stomach.

RR: What about Bill Shelton?

RM: Is Bill still alive?

RR: Yes. He has some heart trouble, in not very good health, but still playing golf. Still doing some work.

RM: Really?

RR: Yes, most recently, he was driving every day, four days a week, to Pine Bluff to work on the copy desk

RM: No kidding?

RR: I think he's finally stopped doing that.

RM: Yes. Well, I thought Bill was a great city editor, undoubtedly the best city editor for whom I have ever worked. I respected him. He was a very taciturn kind of individual. You never got a lot of small talk out of him, but I think he taught me a lot about how to put stories together. He and — you, know, Tom Davis was the assistant city editor there under Bill at one time, and . . .

RR: I'd forgotten that.

RM: I remember I wrote — Tom came back and told me how he wanted something written, and I didn't really pay any attention to him and I turned in this story in which I'd ignored everything he said. And he came back and really ripped me apart. [Laughs] It kind of taught me a lesson!

RR: This was Tom?

RM: Tom, yes. But I thought Bill was a good editor. I mean, you know, he had pretty good story ideas a lot of the time.

RR: Do you remember any particular thing about Bill and the language? Seems to me he had a feel for certain niceties of the language. For example, I know it was Bill Shelton who first uttered the words, “Sequence of tenses.” I’d never heard of that before, and he spelled it out, you know, what he meant. So it was little things like that. I mean, if it wasn’t Shelton . . . that’s the only place I could have learned these things.

RM: Right. Yes.

RR: And how he found time to do it. As you said, he never talked. [Laughter]

RM: He had a look on his face of being perpetually unhappy. I don’t think he necessarily was, but . . .

RR: Well, he might well have been.

RM: May have been.

RR: Do you remember — did his wife die while you were there?

RM: Yes. And then — I can’t remember if I’d met his new wife before I left there, but they came to Rome once when I was there, and I took them around sightseeing.

RR: Dixie.

RM: Dixie, yes. She was — I thought she had a very positive effect on Bill.

RR: Yes.

RM: Yes. Helen, I think, was his first wife, wasn’t she?

RR: Yes.

RM: Yes, I didn't get to know her very well.

RR: And then they had a son who died, probably a suicide, but . . .

RM: Yes. He always swore it was an accident.

RR: Yes. What do you remember about Douglas?

RM: Bob Douglas?

RR: Yes.

RM: Well, very wry sense of humor more than anything else, I think. But also, well, a real dedication to the job and a sense of integrity, but somebody always fun to be around. He was one of my favorite people at the *Gazette*. We occasionally had parties at his house which were very, very good.

RR: Was he telegraph editor when you came there? He moved up to news editor at some point.

RM: Yes. I don't ever remember him sitting in that slot around that horseshoe desk where Tom Swint worked. Didn't Bob have back trouble at some point so he had to work standing up?

RR: Well, he did work standing up. I guess it was his back. You know, he had been thrown across the deck of an aircraft carrier by a Japanese shell.

RM: Really?

RR: Yes, he thinks that caused his back trouble, but I hadn't put it together that that might have been why he stood up, but that's right. He did. He worked standing up.

RM: Yes. Well, there was always a kind of sense of camaraderie among the *Gazette* staff which was probably closer than any I've experienced in any place I've worked, and Bob was a very essential part of that.

RR: Yes. He had a good feel for what a newspaper ought to be.

RM: Yes, exactly.

RR: That sense of humor — this guy, Pat Owens, that I mentioned a while ago — he came after you'd left — was one of these reporters who had a real keen eye for absurdity. Once a guy came to town who advertised himself as the “King of the World.” Did you ever hear about this guy?

RM: No.

RR: [Bishop?] Tomlinson from New York, and he'd go from one state capital to another and crown himself “King of the World” and collect his clippings from that day's newspaper and go on. And when he came to Little Rock, Owens did the story. A terrific story as I remember. I think I saw the raw copy. Owens could grasp the essence of a piece of an absurdity like this and tell the story very well. And when he got up the next day, the story had been cut to three or four paragraphs. You can imagine how Owens — Owens did not go to Shelton. You know none of us really had the nerve [laughter] to go to Shelton about something like that, but he complained to Douglas about what Shelton had done to his story. And Douglas said, “Well, you know why he did it, don't you? I mean why he cut the story.” And Pat said, “No.” And Douglas said, “Well, Shelton's on to this guy. He knows he's not the king of the world.” [Laughter]

How about Charlie Albright? What do you remember about Albright?

RM: Well, Charlie Albright had a desk right behind mine, so I spent a lot of time during the day talking to him. He was a funny guy. I mean funny in the sense of having a good sense of humor. He was doing his — I can't remember if he was a reporter when I first went there, but he was certainly already doing some columns when I used to sit there in front of him. He was kind of a man-about-town type.

RR: Still had a full head of hair, I guess, when you — red hair.

RM: Yes, I saw a photograph of him recently, and he was as bald as I am, but he had very red hair, kind of crinkly red hair

RR: You know, it just occurs to me how many of these *Gazette* people that we've talked about who were funny. I wonder if a sense of humor may be a job requirement for working in this trade.

RM: Well, very likely so. It's not a job you get in to get rich. [Laughter] And if you can't look on at the world with a certain degree of detachment and humor, I don't know what it's all worth.

RR: This next guy I am going to ask about was funny. Nelson. A.R. Nelson. You spent some time with him, didn't you?

RM: Yes. Nelson used to — he had a — for a time he would invite me out to his house in the evening after work, and we'd sit around and drink wine or beer or whatever. I remember once he had what he thought was a particularly good wine there, and he got rather upset that I didn't stop drinking! He thought I was getting too much of it. But I always wondered about Nelson. I never felt after the Little Rock

integration thing broke that he really had his heart in it. I may be doing him an injustice, but I thought he was probably not a segregationist as such, but I don't think he was exactly in tune with the *Gazette's* role in all of this. Yet he never manifested it openly. I always liked him a lot. He — When I quit the paper, he tried to get me to stay on, offered me more money, but I wanted to move on. And he'd come over to the Press Club in the evening a lot, too, and drink beer with us, and he and I got in a lot of arguments because we didn't agree on most things about politics. He couldn't stand Sid McMath, for one thing. While Sid had been governor before I got there, I kind of had a feel for what he was like and I didn't agree with Nelson about this. So we had some fairly heated but, you know, still friendly arguments about politics. He was a good guy.

RR: I had much the same feeling about Nelson and his discomfort over the role of the *Gazette*, although I never heard him say a word.

RM: No, he was careful about it. But [there was] just a sense that he wasn't exactly . . . I don't know.

RR: Here he was — not only the editorial page done by Ashmore, which certainly would have been out of touch with his south Arkansas feelings, I guess, but my guess is the dominant tone in Nelson's news room was alien to his feelings.

RM: Yes, probably. But I think he was professional about it despite his personal feelings.

RR: Yes. An old copy desk man, someone who cared about the language and that sort of thing.

RM: Yes.

RR: I've gone back and forth in my opinion about who makes the best managing editor, a copy editor or a reporter. [Laughter]

RM: A lot of reporters would be disasters as editors.

RR: Yes. I can think of one who was brilliant at it, Gene [Roberts?].

RM: Yes. What happened to Roberts? Where is he now?

RR: He's left the *Inquirer* . . .

RM: Yes, I knew that.

RR: . . . to teach at the University of Maryland, and he's still there.

RM: Oh.

RR: Well, he left the *Inquirer* and went to be managing editor of *The Times*.

RM: *The Times*, yes.

RR: But he finally retired from there and went back to Maryland where he had been a few years before. He's got a book coming out soon on the civil rights coverage during the '60s. I'm looking forward to that. It ought to be a good one.

RM: Yes, Jack Nelson, of course, a good friend of his and a friend of mine, every time I see Jack, he talks about Gene Roberts a lot. Always telling stories about him.

RR: Do you see Jack much?

RM: Well, he and his wife come here from time to time and then we see him in Washington.

RR: Didn't he come over here for several months?

RM: Yes, I think it was a kind of pay off when he was removed as bureau chief in

Washington. They told him he could kind of do whatever he wanted, and they rented a hugely expensive apartment for him here and let him kind of do whatever stories he wanted to do. And he had a great time.

RR: Yes, that's pretty nice. Well, you left the *Gazette* in '59 and went to the *Detroit Free Press*?

RM: The *Detroit Free Press*, yes. And I was there about two years.

RR: What kind of stories were you doing?

RM: I did a lot of — again, it was general assignment. I didn't like the *Free Press* very much. I wrote a series of articles about welfare problems in Detroit at the time, which I then turned into a piece for *The Atlantic Monthly*. That was the main thing I remember about my time in Detroit.

RR: In the early '60s, this has to have been some of the earliest reporting on welfare. Later on, many years later, it got to be a big subject.

RM: Yes, right. Yes, it wasn't that big a subject then, you're right. I can't remember how I got on to that. I remember that police chief in Little Rock.

RR: Gene Smith?

RM: Gene, was that his name? Gene somebody.

RR: Gene Smith was kind of the hero of the . . .

RM: Yes. I remember he died shortly after I got to the *Free Press*, and Tom Davis had me write a piece about him, of my memories of him.

RR: You mean a first-person story?

RM: I think it was, yes.

RR: That's rare in our business, a first-person story.

RM: Yes. I think it had to be or else there was an editor's note that said I'd worked on the *Arkansas Gazette* and covered that fact.

RR: You do any labor reporting?

RM: No, I never did that. We had a guy who was a labor specialist at the *Free Press* [that] you'd have to have in Detroit.

RR: Oh, yes.

RM: He later went to *Newsweek*, a guy named Tom Nicholson.

RR: Nicholson?

RM: Yes.

RR: Where'd you go from the *Free Press*?

RM: You know Jim Barden, who was on the *Gazette*, had gone to work for a paper in White Plains, New York. And he went to a party in New York where he met a banker named Landon K. Thorne. And Landon Thorne owned the *Rome Daily American*, and Jim knew that I was interested in going abroad. As a matter of fact, after I — to go back a little bit, right after I left the *Gazette*, I went to New York, and I tried to find a job there. I never came up with anything. And Richard Davis kind of encouraged me. He said, "You know, you haven't got anything to do and you've got some money in the bank. Why don't you go to Europe?" I never had thought of going to Europe. So I came over here. I came here and tried to get a job here. I sold a piece to *The Economist* about Little Rock, which wasn't a very good piece, as I remember, and another piece to the *New Statesman*. I

never did land a job here. So I went back and got this job in Detroit. And then, anyway, to go back to Jim Barden — he met Landon Thorne who owned the *Rome Daily American* and he offered Jim a job there. And Jim was just getting married, or gotten married, and he didn't want to leave. So he called me and told me about it. And I called up Thorne and went to New York and met him, and he hired me. So I went to Rome and about two or three months after I got there, the managing editor of the *Rome Daily American* quit, so I replaced him. I really planned to spend a year in Rome and then go back and look for serious work. I never thought I'd stay. But after I'd been at the *Rome Daily American* about a year, UPI offered me a job. They had an opening in their bureau there.

RR: It had become UPI by then?

RM: Yes, it was already UPI. So I took that job. I think I even took a \$10 a week pay cut from the *Rome Daily American*. UPI paid so poorly. Again, I didn't really plan to stay with them. A friend of mine, shortly after I got there, a friend of mine at the *Rome Daily American* met a guy who was editor of the *Teheran Times*.

RR: The *Teheran Times*?

RM: Yes. And he was looking for a sports writer and an editor, so my friend and I took these jobs. He was going to be the sports editor, and I was going to be the editor.

RR: This was an English-language paper?

RM: Yes, an English-language paper, run by this rather corrupt character, I think.

Anyway, I told UPI I was quitting to go to Teheran. And so they said, "We'll give you a \$10 a week raise to stay, but we can't get it approved by New York right

now, so you'll have to put in a phony expense account each week for \$10.”

[Laughter] So my friend went to Teheran, and I stayed. Thank God. Because he went out there and stayed about three months and couldn't take it anymore and just left without even telling them he was leaving. He just got in his car and drove off. Anyway, I stayed at UPI in Rome for — that was '62 when I went to them, and I was there until '64 when they offered me the job of bureau manager in Cairo. So I went to Cairo and stayed with UPI for thirteen years. I went from Cairo to Belgrade. Then I went back to Rome as bureau manager. I — Let me see, I was in London briefly before I went to Belgrade. I met my wife here. My first wife. We had known each other about six weeks when I proposed to her. We got married and went off to a temporary job, just filling in in the Moscow bureau while the bureau chief was on vacation. Then I went to Belgrade. I was there a year. I happened to be in Athens on assignment when the Six Day War broke out, and so I went to Israel from there. Anyway, after a year in Belgrade, I was back in Rome. Then — where did I go? I went to Washington, and I worked in the Washington bureau for UPI for about a year. And I was then hired by the *Philadelphia Bulletin* to be their State Department correspondent.

RR: So that's when you had your beat.

RM: Yes, yes. Well, I did that job twice actually, but, anyway, I was . . .

RR: Who was Secretary of State at that time?

RM: Bill Rogers.

RR: Oh, yes.

RM: Covering the State Department wasn't much fun at that time anyway because Henry Kissinger was really running foreign policy out of the White House, and Rogers was a fairly weak figure.

RR: Were you ever aware of Bill Rogers's part in the Central High story?

RM: No.

RR: You know he succeeded Herb Brownell as Attorney General just a couple of months after the story broke. And he — Let me see if I can get this straight. At some point the case was in court and he could have — the U.S. attorney on the scene wanted permission to use some evidence or something that he had, and Bill Rogers wouldn't approve it, apparently out of fear of exposing an FBI informant or some such thing. Anyhow, the case went bad. And this old U.S. attorney always blamed Bill Rogers for not doing the right thing. And, apparently, it sent the wrong message all across the South.

RM: Yes.

RR: That if you do certain things, you can get away from them.

RM: Right.

RR: Anyway, Henry Kissinger was running things, so this was in the Nixon years.

RM: And I didn't like the *Bulletin* too much, and the guy who hired me was a guy named George Packard. Did you ever run into him?

RR: Never did.

RM: George was from one of these mainline Philadelphia families, very wealthy. He had been a CIA man in Tokyo, and I only discovered sometime after I'd joined the

paper that he was kind of on the skids. There were some people at the *Bulletin* who were kind of a, I don't know, funny crowd. They didn't like the idea that George had spent money to hire somebody to cover the State Department. They thought if he was going to spend money, it should be to hire, to have somebody, another guy, in City Hall or something like that. I mean, they were a totally locally oriented paper, and they didn't care for this kind of stuff. So I was getting really good play in the first months I was on the paper, but then more and more I was being shoved back among the truss ads. That was a little discouraging. I could tell George was on his way out. He later went to Johns Hopkins in Washington. So UPI told me that the Moscow bureau chief's job was coming open. Henry Shapiro, who had been there forty years, was retiring. And they offered me the job, so . . .

RR: A pretty choice assignment.

RM: Yes. So I went to Moscow and stayed there.

RR: Who was there for *The New York Times*?

RM: Rick Smith and Ted Shabad.

RR: How do you spell Shabad?

RM: S-H-A-B-A-D

RR: I don't remember — I just barely remember that byline.

RM: And Ted was a geographer who somehow got into journalism. He was a more academic type than a journalist. I remember once Nixon was coming to Moscow, and so Brezhnev invited all the American correspondents to come down to the

Kremlin one night for an interview, which he never ordinarily gave. He never ordinarily saw us at all. Anyway, we had this interview with Brezhnev which went on till nearly midnight. And when we came out of there, Ted wanted to — I think he was a slow writer, anyway, and he suggested we all hold the story until the next day. He wanted to go home and go to bed! And I said, “Sorry. I work for a wire service. There’s no way I’m going to hold this story.” I got back to the office and found out, of course, Tass had moved the photographs on this thing on the wire. I mean, giving it to UPI, AP and everybody else, and it all moved around the world. So we were supposed to sit on this thing for another twenty-four hours. Anyway, Ted was a very good guy, but he was not thoroughly cut out for some aspects of daily journalism.

RR: Soon after that, Rick wrote a book about the Soviet Union.

RM: Yes. Right. A bestseller. He and Bob Kaiser both wrote books, and I think Rick got his out about a month or so before Kaiser did. So his became a bestseller and Kaiser’s kind of disappeared. I never read Kaiser’s, but a number of people said it was the better book.

RR: Really? What was the best story to come out of your Moscow years?

RM: The arrest of Solzhenitsyn and the expulsion. There was a time when the only real Russian sources we had were the dissidents, and there was always the danger of spending too much time with dissidents and getting a distorted view of what was really happening. On the other hand, you got a certain number of insights about Soviet life from talking to them. And I remember once there was a

demonstration by these dissidents, and they'd tipped us off they were going to demonstrate in front of the Central Committee, Communist Party's Central Committee offices down near the Kremlin, so I went down there with a camera concealed under my coat. And Chris Ogden, who was in the bureau with me, also had a camera, and these guys, these demonstrators, they just marched along like an ordinary crowd of peasants, and suddenly they got in front of the Central Committee and pulled out their banners. We whipped out our cameras and started taking pictures until the police grabbed us and then they took us to a police station. Ogden and I sat in the back of a police car about 50 minutes before anything happened. And I was about dying to go to the bathroom and kept asking these Russians to let me go to the bathroom. And they said, "Nyet. Just stay there." And so, eventually, they took us into an office where this KGB major was sitting at the end of a long table. Ogden and I discussed how we were going to handle this beforehand, and he said, "Don't give them any indication we know any Russian." In fact, my Russian wasn't worth a damn anyway. So we got in there and this guy in a booming voice said, "vigovorite po Russki," "You speak Russian." And we said, "No." And he kept repeating that. He was an intimidating kind of figure. But the upshot was he said, "You hand over your film to us and this incident is closed. Otherwise, you'll be expelled from the Soviet Union." So in the end we said, "Look. We are not going to hand over our film to you, but if you want to take it, we are not going to resist." So we gave the cameras to this young interpreter who was sitting there. This guy had finally

given up on trying to make us speak Russian. And he brought in an interpreter. The interpreter didn't know how to open a camera, and he was about to wreck my camera, so I had to show him how. And he took the film out and spoiled it and he let us go. But we learned later they'd kept a guy from the American embassy cooling his heels upstairs while we were in there because our colleagues had told them we had been arrested. Then I got arrested again, later, with a guy from AP in a similar incident. After that, UPI told me to stop taking cameras to these demonstrations. [Laughs]

RR: [?] a big film bill.

RM: [Laughs] But I was there less than two years, and UPI then had its European headquarters in Brussels because they had run into a lot of union problems here in London. They thought they'd get away from them by going to Brussels. They didn't realize it, but they were just as bad when they got over there. But the guy who was editor for the European-African-Middle East division was being reassigned to Washington, so they asked me to take this job. So I came to Brussels. I remember my greatest shock was having to look at the payroll for the bureau and seeing how poorly most people were being paid. Some of them really terrible salaries. But I was in Brussels from '74 to '77. At one point, I had been angling for an interview with Sadat. I didn't really like being an editor. It always irritated me to be sending people off to cover stories that I wanted to cover myself. But I wanted to get this interview with Sadat, and he finally agreed to it. He was going to meet me at Aswan. And just as I got to Cairo, food riots broke out. They

had raised the price of bread, which is a staple, of course, in the Egyptian diet.

And there were these terrible food riots, and Sadat had to fly back from Aswan to deal with it. And I never got my interview with him, but I got a much better story covering the food riots. When I was out in Cairo, the guy who was deputizing for me in Brussels called up and he said, “Howard Tyner” — who was in the Moscow bureau for UPI — “has just quit. He’s going to work for the *Chicago Tribune*.” And I thought — of course, as soon as I got back from Cairo, I was heading back to the states to look for a job, and the *Tribune* was one of the places I’d applied. And I thought, “Oh, hell, Tyner’s got the last job at the *Tribune*.” I was pretty upset by this, but, anyway, I came back and went to Chicago and found they had two jobs. Howard and I started work there the same day.

RR: And that was what year? ‘77?

RM: ‘77, yes.

RR: And you’ve been with them ever since?

RM: Yes. Well, I spent two years in Chicago, and they used me a lot to parachute into stories overseas. I did a lot of local reporting, but anytime a big story broke overseas, they’d send me out. And at that time I covered what I think was the biggest story of my career, which was the revolution in Iran. And I was out there with Joe Alex Morris. I was along side him when he was killed.

RR: Tell us about that, will you?

RM: Well, it was the penultimate day of the Iranian revolution. Late that night I got — you couldn’t get incoming phone calls. You could only — the telephone workers

wouldn't allow calls to come in, but you could — I'm sorry. I mean you couldn't call out, but you could only get incoming calls. So we had to wait up, sometimes, until three or four in the morning before our paper could get a call through. And then have to dictate copy. There was no other way to file. One night about one o'clock in the morning, I got a call from Chicago saying that there had been a gun battle at this air force base on the edge of Tehran between air cadets who were supporting Khomeini and the Imperial Guard who, of course, were supporting the Shah. So I said, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it now. There's a curfew on." But I set my alarm for 5:00 the next morning and I went out there. I called up Arthur Higbee, who was working for UPI and was a friend of mine, and asked him if he wanted to come with me. Normally, I'd been working with Joe Alex Morris, Jr., of the *Los Angeles Times*. He was one of my old friends from Cairo days. I thought that Joe was getting ready to leave there, and go cover a story in Pakistan. And I thought, "Well, Joe won't want to get out of bed to cover this one." So, anyway, I got out to this air base, and we went to the main entrance and everything was all quiet. We couldn't find any sign of trouble. While we were there, Joe and Bill Branigan, of the *Washington Post*, drove up in another cab, and he said, "Why the hell didn't you call me?" And I said, "Well, I didn't think you were interested." So we drove around to the back entrance to this air base and all these airmen were having to show their identity cards as they went in, so we pulled out our press cards and showed them, and the guy just motioned us in. We got in there and thought, "Well, what the hell do we do now? We went to the

hospital to see if anybody, you know, had been hurt in this battle, and we couldn't get anywhere there. Finally, this colonel came along and said, "How did you get on this base?" And we said, "Well, we just walked in." And he said, "Well, you are going to have to leave." We went out, and we were standing there on the sidewalk, and I said — it was about seven o'clock by then, and I said, "Why don't we just go back to the hotel and have breakfast?" And Joe said, "Good idea." And so we were getting into the car and, suddenly, the gate of this base was flung open, and these air cadets came out shooting at the Imperial Guards who were out swaggering around in the street there. We stood there, sheltered in an entrance way there for awhile watching this, and then we thought it wasn't really safe to be on the street, so some Iranian guy came along and took us up to this photographer's studio on the second floor of this building, and it had a . . .

RR: Still on the base?

RM: No, outside the base. We had left because the colonel kicked us out, but, anyway, this photographer's studio had this big picture window, covered with Venetian blinds. So we were going up and raising up the corner of the blinds and looking out. And it was quite dramatic to see these Imperial Guards get shot and collapse there on the street. And then the air cadets came out and set fire to a jeep, and it exploded. A great ball of flame went up and everything. And as I was standing there watching, crouching by the window, I heard bullets hit the wall just below the window. And I said, "Hey, those last bullets hit the wall here. We better get away from this window." Because I was afraid they'd shoot through the window

and if nothing else, glass would shatter and fall on me. Joe said, “Are you sure?” And I said, “Yes, I could hear them.” So I started crawling across the floor. I didn’t want to stand up in case a bullet did come in. And I was still crawling across the floor, and then there was this, a kind of explosion filled this room. And one bullet came through and got Joe right here, right below the neck. And it was a terrible moment. He — we all, everybody else who was at the window at this point got up and ran back to the back of the room. And Joe kind of turned around slowly, and I could see blood coming out of the corners of his mouth. And I said, “Joe’s been shot.” And the next thing, his mouth flew open and this stream of blood flew out. It was an awful thing to witness. It went on there for two or three times, blood just shooting out. And then he collapsed. I am sure he was dead at that point. And I went back in the kitchen, the darkroom of this photographer’s studio and just crouched under a sink there for a couple of hours. And the sound of battle after that was absolutely deafening. It sounded like World War III. And I just remember sitting there with my legs trembling uncontrollably. Finally, the shooting died down for a bit at one point, and a couple of these young air cadets came in, and they saw Joe lying there and said, “What’s happened?” And so we explained and they knocked down a door to make a stretcher and put him on this door and carried him out to the air base. And Higbee went with them, and Bill Branigan and I stayed behind for some reason. I can’t remember why. But just after they left, the shooting started up again. And so we didn’t feel it was safe to get out of there. Anyway, they got Joe over to the base, and a doctor looked at

him and said, “He’s dead.” And Higbee went back to his bureau. Branigan and I didn’t get out of there until eleven or twelve o’clock.

RR: In the morning?

RM: Yes. And we made — our drivers were still with us. The cars had been shot up and the tires shot out, at least one tire on each car. So we went, we walked for several blocks and came to a place where — and the shooting had started up again, and we took refuge in this Iranian house, and they gave us lunch there. And I sat there and started composing my story in my notebook while I was sitting there. One of the drivers went back when the thing finally died down a bit and changed the tire on his car and came back and picked us up and we finally got back to the hotel at something like five o’clock in the evening. There were fires all over town, fighting going on everywhere. And I came back and, eventually, the *Tribune* called me, and I started dictating my story. And midway through the dictation, a guy, obviously from the phone company, came on the phone and said, “Yankee, go home.” And I said, “Fine, I’ll be happy to go home if you’ll get off the phone and let me finish dictating my story.” And they didn’t know what it was back in Chicago. They thought it was somebody in the room or in the hotel. Anyway, the line went dead. They had *Tribune* correspondents all over the world trying to get a call through to me. And, finally, somebody in New York got through to me, and I finished dictating the story. But that was — I mean every aspect of that story was just the most dramatic story I ever covered and this was, of course, a horrible end to it. For months after that, I couldn’t get this out of my

mind. I'd wake up in the morning, and it was the first thing I thought about. I'd find myself reliving this whole experience a couple of times each day. And it wasn't until — this was in February — it wasn't until May or June when I transferred to Nairobi and I had. . .

RR: What year was this?

RM: This was '79.

RR: '79.

RM: Till I got involved with this move to Nairobi that I could get this off my mind at all. It was really a terribly traumatic event. Anyway, I spent two years in Africa.

RR: You say that turned out to be the end of the revolution?

RM: Yes, it was — the next day the regime collapsed.

RR: So you were really right in the middle of the worst of the fighting, then.

RM: Yes. Well, there were other times there when I could've been killed. I went out — I heard shooting one day from the hotel and went — the hotel was just up from Teheran University. I went down to the university to see what was happening. I got down there and found these students all demonstrating outside a police station there. And I was in the middle of this square, and all of a sudden, really heavy shooting broke out, and I dived behind a truck there. I was halfway under this truck and I looked up, and there were soldiers on every building around this square, firing down into the square at these students. And I looked up and there was just a clump of five or six bodies all piled on top of each other at one end of the square. And then these bullets started pinging on the pavement right within

inches of me. I crawled under the truck a bit more. Eric Pace of *The New York Times* was with me and, finally, there was a moment when everything died down and I said, "Let's take a run for it." So we got up and ran like hell. I expected to get a bullet in the back, but we got to a building on the edge of the square where we were safe. The place was filled with tear gas. We were all breathing tear gas for a long time, and the shooting went on for quite a while. We didn't get back to the hotel until quite late. But, you know, there were several moments like that where — I mean, some of the people there — I was never in Vietnam, but some of the correspondents who had covered Vietnam said they never experienced anything as . . .

RR: Yes.

RM: . . . frightening as the revolution was.

RR: This tape's running out. Let me change that.

RM: I'm probably giving you more than you want.

[End of Tape One, Side Two]

[Beginning of Tape Two, Side One]

RR: This is tape number two with Ray Moseley. We were talking about foreign correspondents and some of the things they put up with. Besides from the danger that comes with the job, could you talk a little bit about just kind of every day rigors of being a foreign correspondent?

RM: Well, as you've been one yourself, you know what it's like. I think being a foreign correspondent is in many ways a tougher job than being a correspondent at

home. For one thing, you are very much on your own. You have to be a self starter. And you have to learn a lot pretty quickly about a lot of different countries and different cultures. And it's not as — most places abroad, it is not nearly as easy to have access to sources of information as it is in the U.S. No society in the world is as open as the American society. Working here in the U.K., I find Britain is one of the most closed. Its government is one of the most closed in Europe, I think. The Labor government came into office three years ago, talking about bringing in a freedom-of-information act, and they've now drafted an act which is a travesty. It just guarantees the right of anybody to suppress almost any information they want to.

RR: Really?

RM: Yes.

RR: I'm disappointed to hear that. I had no idea.

RM: They've been very bad on issues of that type. But — and you work in a lot of countries where you don't know the language, and you have to use interpreters and you have to be able to find good people to work with you. It's — but it's — I don't know. I've enjoyed being a foreign correspondent more than, I suppose, than I ever enjoyed working at home because I don't really like working out of a home office. I don't like the politics of newspaper offices and being at the beck and call of a city editor. I like to just kind of be my own boss, which is essentially what you are when you're a foreign correspondent, obviously. The foreign desk back home will call you up with story suggestions from time to time, but for the

most part, they leave you to tell them what you're doing or what you want to do. It's a great variety of things. There are life-threatening situations. There are wars and revolutions and coups and that sort of thing to cover, but also you get to do a lot of delightful things like going and writing about a three-star restaurant in Paris occasionally, and that sort of thing that makes it worthwhile. But I've always been interested in the politics of Europe, particularly, and of the Middle East. I am no longer enthralled by the Middle East because I had my fill of that.

RR: You still go . . . ?

RM: I still go from time to time when these situations arise. Not too often anymore.

RR: You were telling me just a few days ago you were there, and . . .

RM: I was in Israel for two weeks, until a couple of weeks ago.

RR: Who was it who was beaten up?

RM: It was my colleague who's based in Jerusalem. He was on Temple Mount, and he was attacked by these Arab youths. When they asked him if he was an American, he said, "Yes." And he thought he had had it until the bodyguard of one of these Palestinian leaders rescued him, but he came back to the office with his face fairly banged up and he had two nice black eyes after that. He thought he had a broken rib because they had kicked him in the ribs when he was down.

RR: What was his name?

RM: Hugh Dellios. D-E-L-L-I-O-S. But he was all right.

RR: Day in and day out, what was the biggest problem that you have as a foreign correspondent?

RM: Well, I don't know. I think 60% of this job is logistics, and 40% is actually reporting and writing. If I take a trip anywhere in Europe, I have to spend a lot of time on the phone ahead of time, setting up appointments, or if I don't happen to have a fixer in that particular country, I have to find one.

RR: A fixer?

RM: A fixer is somebody who will arrange the appointments and act as interpreter when I get there.

RR: These are paid?

RM: Yes. I have a pretty good network of people doing this kind of stuff for me in most places in Europe.

RR: I'd think that would be vital, to have a fixer in any particular country.

RM: Absolutely. And then I work here on my own. I don't have a secretary, so I have to make my hotel bookings and plane bookings and all that. And often when you get to a place, you still haven't got all the appointments you want, so you spend a lot of time setting those up, arranging to see people. Most of the time it works out well. But about a month ago, I went to Spain. And I got there and found my fixer had not been able to — I was doing a story on the Basque separatist movement, and she hadn't been able to find anybody who was willing to talk to me. I spent a day and a half there absolutely spinning my wheels. I told her — she never had done this before — I said, "Somehow it always works out in the end." And it did. After a day and a half, the interviews suddenly fell into place. But, you know, it could drive you mad when you think you are not going to be able to — you've

spent this time and money to get someplace and you're not going to be able to see people.

RR: Do you speak Spanish?

RM: No, I can read a bit of Spanish. I should be able to speak it. I studied it a year in high school and a year in college, but it all went. Italian is the only language I speak.

RR: You're pretty good in Italian?

RM: Yes, I can read French and Spanish, and I know a little bit of German, but not enough to work in it.

RR: So you have to work through an interpreter in most places?

RM: In most places, yes. I mean, if you go to the Netherlands or Scandinavia, practically everybody there speaks English, but otherwise you are pretty reliant on interpreters and finding good ones.

RR: What about the communication system nowadays?

RM: Well, I mean it's so much easier now. When I was based in Cairo, back in the '60s with UPI, we had to file our copy by cable to London. And you had to write everything in "cablese," so you'd write it in a way that — the minimum number of words, for example, United States was Unistates or things like that. You abbreviated everything. And then you'd sit there and wait for anything up to three hours for the copy to come back on the UPI wire because it all depended on how fast the people in the cable office in Cairo were, and they usually weren't very fast. If you filed it in an urgent rate, it would usually be back in an hour, but it

was maddening then. A lot of situations I've had to — in the old days, I'd have to telex stories from hotels. I usually — I'm pretty fast on a typewriter, so I'd usually punch out the tape myself rather than depending on the hotel staff to do it and get it out that way. But nowadays, wherever I go, — and then when computers first came in, we always used to have to kind of take a screwdriver along and open up the telephone wires and hook alligator clips up to the phone lines. Now I have a mobile phone that I use everywhere. I just go there and plug in the mobile phone to my computer, and off it goes, easy as can be. And I can, you know, I can file a story from anywhere. Riding in a taxi cab or something, I can sit there and file a story.

RR: I've told a few people that if they had Radio Shack six-pound computers, I might still be a reporter. Boy, you know, filing a story sometimes is the biggest part of the job.

RM: Oh, yes. The worst situation is what I described in Iran, where you couldn't get a phone call out, and you had to wait for your office to call you, but particularly when I was in Africa, you'd go to some of these places where the phone lines were very bad and — I mean, generally, I wound up telexing from hotels there, but communications were pretty awful in Africa.

RR: I'd forgotten about telexes. Telexing as a verb and as a noun. So what's the big story of the last few years for you?

RM: Last few years. I should say, I forgot where we left off on my various moves, but at one point the *Tribune* — I was here and I was supposed to be going to Rome,

and they had an opening, suddenly had an opening at the State Department. They dragged me back there and forced me to cover the State Department again. And I really didn't like that, particularly the second time around. So one day the managing editor was in Washington, and I said, "You know, I'm not very happy here. I'd like to get back overseas." And he said, "Well, I can't get you a posting right now, but why don't you go to Germany and do some stories for us?" So I took off for Germany. And ten days after I got there, the Berlin Wall fell.

RR: Oh, boy.

RM: I had no idea this was coming up when I went there, but, you know, most of the big stories you cover are terrible things happening to people. This was the biggest story I ever covered where it was a really positive story.

RR: They weren't killing each other.

RM: They weren't killing each other, and everybody was overjoyed. I mean, it was a hugely dramatic moment to be there. I stayed — you know, this happened on November 9th, and I stayed there until shortly before Christmas. And I called up Chicago and said, "You really ought to have a bureau here, and I want to be head." So the *Tribune* isn't usually very fast about deciding anything, but within a few days, they called me back and said, "Fine. Go home for Christmas and then go back to Berlin and open a bureau." So I did.

RR: Interesting choice of cities for that time. Why Berlin and not Bonn?

RM: Well, I initially went to Bonn, and I — when I'm on this trip, and I talked to a lot of — I can't even remember what I was particularly doing there or where things

stood. But I went to Berlin, and then I heard about a big demonstration coming up in East Germany, so I flew up to Berlin and stayed there the rest of the time.

RR: So how long did you stay in Berlin?

RM: You mean after I went back on the . . .

RR: Yes.

RM: Well, I was there two years, but the second year, I was hardly there at all. I went up to cover the Gulf War, and from there I had to go into northern Iraq to cover this Kurdish story in Kurdistan. I was there about — a long while. And then after I got back to Berlin, I just — I don't know, one thing and another. I was in different places. Spain, you name it. I was hardly — I think I was out of Germany for about two hundred days that second year. Interest in the story had waned a little bit anyway after Germany.

RR: I've heard Berlin is hard to fly in and out of.

RM: Well, it's a tiny little airport there at Tegel. They keep talking about building a new one outside of town, but they haven't gotten around to it.

RR: Is it true that you still can't fly from Berlin to the United States, you have to go somewhere else?

RM: I think that's probably true. I don't think 747's — I've never seen them there. I think you have to go to Frankfurt to fly.

RR: Yes. Where'd you go after Berlin? Back here?

RM: I came back here, yes.

RR: And that would've been what year?

RM: November, '91. I've been here ever since.

RR: '91 is the year the *Arkansas Gazette* closed for good.

RM: Was it?

RR: Yes. Did you follow that at all?

RM: Well, I don't think I — I can't remember at what point I knew about it. I just heard this guy at the *Democrat* had deep pockets and was giving ads away or virtually so, and driving the *Gazette* to the wall. And I heard about it a few years ago. Bill Clinton came here, and they had a reception at the American Embassy. And I went up to him and introduced myself and said, "I used to work at the *Arkansas Gazette*." And he just looked at me a moment, and he said, "It broke my heart when that paper died." And I said, "It did mine, too." That was about the only conversation we had because it was a fast moving line.

RR: Well, as it turns out, he had good reason. Whitewater never would have developed as a story if the *Arkansas Gazette* had been alive. Because you — well, you know all those national reporters were there in '57. When those same guys started coming to Little Rock to do their version of Whitewater, the *Gazette* news room would've been the place to work, and they knew what the story was. And it never would have gotten legs if the *Gazette* had still been there.

RM: Right, yes. Well, was it somebody at the *Democrat* who was responsible?

RR: No, but the people they did contact at the *Democrat*, John Robert Starr and Paul [?], both hated Bill Clinton, so they were not eager to help straighten the thing out. So what about these last few years in London? What sort of things have you been

mainly doing?

RM: Well, the Labor government was a big change here, of course. The government under John Major had gotten so dull that American papers weren't particularly interested in it. Then Labor came in and it all picked up there. British politics, though, is never a subject that grabs papers very much except possibly *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*.

RR: I saw a headline about Ted Heath retiring, but it was in the airplane coming over here. It was in one of the British papers. I hadn't read a word about it in the states.

RM: Really? I did a profile on him when he retired.

RR: Did you?

RM: He was the man who took Britain into the Common Market, of course. Whatever else people say about his Prime Ministership, that put him in the history books. I don't know. I go to Germany a lot. I've done a lot on the neo-Nazi movement in East Germany and the fact that East Germany — the great problems they've had in integrating East and West Germany still go on despite having put a trillion Deutsche marks into the East. I no longer cover Italy because we have opened a bureau there, but our correspondent there isn't particularly interested of the Vatican, and I've covered the deaths and elections of a couple of Popes, so I am still interested in that story. I was down there recently, preparing obit material for this Pope, who is determined to go forever. It's been — the last few months has been a fairly quiet period in Europe. I was up in Denmark recently, covering the

referendum on the euro. Again, it's a story I have trouble getting my paper terribly interested in, but in the end they ran it on the first page. The Danes voted against adopting the Euro. What else? I don't know.

RR: So now are you thinking of retiring?

RM: [Laughs] Between you and me, yes. I haven't told the *Tribune*. I am, though. I am thinking of retiring. Probably this spring. I've been at this a long time. I've probably been in one city too long because I find myself doing — anywhere I go in Europe, going out and doing stories I've done before, and that's getting a little stale.

RR: When you do retire, you'd like to stay in London or somewhere?

RM: Yes, well, my wife is English. She's never lived anywhere else. And I like living here. It just happens to be the most expensive city in Europe at the moment. That gives me some pause, but I suppose I'll stay here.

RR: Before we finish this up, let me back up a moment and ask you to remember one of your roommates from Little Rock, Jim Barden. What kind of a guy was Barden?

RM: Well, I remember Jim when he first came to Little Rock and joined the *Gazette*. He told me he had — where did he go? The university, I've forgotten. I think I remember somewhere in eastern Arkansas. He said he'd been a member of the Scott Fitzgerald Society in college. He always had an interest in literature, but he was — I've kept up with Jim more than I have with anybody I knew in Little Rock simply because I have more opportunity to see him. Whenever I go to New York

I see him and his wife.

RR: He's been at *The Times* for a long time.

RM: Yes, he was at UPI for a time when I was still there. But he's just one of the nicest people I know.

RR: Weren't you a Scott Fitzgerald fan in Little Rock? Seems to me I remember that about you.

RM: Yes, I was. That's why I remember it so much when Jim told me this.

RR: You and I knew each other in Little Rock.

RM: Jim used — I have to tell you, Jim was one of my roommates when we all had these apartments. He'd go out and he'd get drunk in the evening from time to time, but he would always come home and read from his Bible before going to bed no matter how drunk he was. [Laughter]

RR: Good practice! You and I were — I was married and had kids, and you were single, so we never saw each other much outside the office.

RM: No, it's true. I don't think I ever met your wife until Rick Smith had that dinner in Washington where you and Bob Semple and your wives came.

RR: Lord, I'd forgotten about that. That's been a long time ago, too.

RM: Yes.

RR: Well, is there anything else you remember that we haven't talked about that we ought to get?

RM: No, I can't think of anything. The only thing I didn't mention about my time in Africa, when I was there, the beginning — well, it was getting near the end of two

years there. January of '81, they called me up. We had a new publisher and he had cut their budget. And so they said, "We've got to close the Nairobi bureau. You've got to close immediately." And I said, "Well, hold on. My kids are in school. I'm working on a major project right now. I've paid the rent until June already." And they said, "Okay, you can stay." So I went ahead. This project, I was traveling all over Africa to do a series of articles looking at where Africa was going in the remainder of the twentieth century. Mainly, it was going down hill. Anyway, they let me stay long enough to complete that. And that series that year was the runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize. John Darnton won it for his coverage in Warsaw. That was one of the more satisfying projects I ever worked at, I think, because they gave me a lot of time and a lot of money to spend on it. I was really fascinated by the whole subject. I got a certain amount of shtick from professors in the U.S. of black consciousness courses, or whatever they are called, saying this was all nonsense, but look at what has happened to Africa since. It all, unfortunately, came true.

RR: Yes, that story out of Zimbabwe the last few months has really been — have you been down there any?

RM: Not lately, no. I spent a lot of time in Zimbabwe when I was — well, I spent a lot of time covering the civil war in Rhodesia before it became Zimbabwe, but as soon as Mugabe came in, I thought he was bad news. I thought it had the most hopeful future of almost any black African country because throughout that civil war, Britain and the United States had taken some of the brightest people there

and taken them to British and American universities and trained them. So they had a much better cadre of trained people than almost any African country at their independence, but Mugabe wrecked the whole thing.

RR: They are probably not through wrecking it yet.

RM: No.

RR: I was there about 15 years ago, just very briefly. I talked to some white people in the government who had been there for generations — farmers and that sort of thing. They were still hanging on and very hopeful. And I've wondered, "What's going to become of those people and their optimism?"

RM: Yes. I mean, you can understand the problem of land hunger with the blacks. On the other hand, the white farmers are the backbone of the country's economy. Without some more considered program of land reform . . .

RR: When you were working out of Nairobi — what was it, two years?

RM: Yes.

RR: Nairobi was sort of headquarters for U.S. news organizations and [?] correspondents?

RM: Yes, it was the nicest place to live. All that is mainly why people went there.

RR: Who were some of the other correspondents?

RM: Jack White of *Time* magazine, Nick Profitt of *Newsweek*, Pranay Gupte. *The Times* had two people there. Charles Wallace and Ray Wilkinson of UPI. Andy Torchia of the AP.

RR: Pranay Gupte and who was the other *New York Times* reporter?

RM: Greg Jaynes.

RR: Greg Jaynes

RM: Jaynes.

RR: Jaynes. J-A-Y-N-E-S.

RM: Yes.

RR: A Southern boy, I believe.

RM: Yes. Deep Southern accent. Went to work at *Time*, I think.

RR: I knew he was gone, but I didn't know where he'd landed.

RM: And David Lamb for the *L.A. Times*.

RR: Did you ever travel with any of these correspondents?

RM: Very rarely. I mean, that was one of the worst things about being based in Africa.

People tended to go off in different directions, and when you got to a particular country, there weren't any colleagues based there. So it was kind of a lonely job.

There was not a lot of night life in Africa. I spent most of my time getting attacks of diarrhea everywhere I went in Africa anyway. That was the thing I remember most about it, what a lonely job it was, being off in some hell hole in west Africa, nobody around to talk to in the evenings or go out to a meal with.

RR: Were there stories that did attract all of you at once, some big . . .

RM: Well, certainly, the civil war in Rhodesia did, but a number of people were actually based there or based in South Africa and came up and did it. And then I spent a lot of time in South Africa as well and, of course, there were a lot of correspondents who were based there.

RR: You were talking earlier about the situation in Iran and mentioned going out with this or that correspondent from another organization. Could you talk about how that works for people who might not know anything about how the news business — you go out with a competitor, but you work together.

RM: Yes, well, by and large, most of these people were not competing against each other. When I was in the — you find this more in the Third World — when I was in the Middle East and in Tehran, you tend just to work with people you like and, mostly, over the years, I tended to work in those places with people from the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Post* or *The New York Times*. And we weren't really competitors. I mean, I've known places where even the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* guys, who, I think, are competitors, would still work together. For example, Jon Randal and Joe Alex Morris were best friends and they tended to work together wherever they went.

RR: Yes, I used to work with Jack Nelson that way. Compare notes and swap tidbits.

RM: Yes. During the revolution in Iran, we would all type up our notes at the end of the day and swap notes. I mean, Randal and Joe Alex Morris and I and Johnny Apple.

RR: Was Apple there?

RM: Yes. Apple was there for a time. And Jim Markham came in.

RR: Oh, Jim. I knew him.

RM: He was scared of his shadow. Hardly ventured out of the hotel, but don't repeat I said that!

RR: He came to a bad end.

RM: Yes, he sure did. One thing I didn't mention — when I first came to London in '81, the first story I covered here, within a month after I got here, was the wedding of Charles and Diana. Of course, one of the biggest stories in recent years was her death. I was supposed to be going up to Scotland to cover an election. That Sunday morning, I got a call from Chicago at 1:30 in the morning, saying — I was so sound asleep I hardly took in what they were saying until the guy came to the point where he said, "And Dodie's dead." And I said, "What?!" And then my wife, who hates being woken up in the middle of the night — she can't get back to sleep easily — said, "What are they calling about this time?" I said, "Do you really want to know? Diana's been in a car wreck, and Dodie's dead." So I just said — I wasn't even thinking very clearly — I said, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. I am going up to Scotland in the morning." And I went back to sleep. They called me at 4:00 and said, "Diana's dead." So I piled out of bed pretty quickly and filed a story, even though it happened in Paris. By 7:00, I was out in front of Buckingham Palace, interviewing people who were out there placing wreaths already. That was an extraordinary week.

RR: It was an enormous story all over the world.

RM: Oh, yes.

RR: This thing about Jim Markham — we knew him and his wife a little bit. And our son lived in Madrid while they were there. He was just knocking around and landed in Madrid. They had some little kids and they hired Johnny to babysit their

kids. More than once, he was out at their house babysitting their kids. It wasn't very long after that that he shot himself. That really tore up the news room at *The New York Times*, as you can imagine.

RM: I bet. It's one of those things — as I said, I thought Markham was a coward, basically, in Tehran, and people who knew him in Beirut said the same thing there. But you don't think of a guy like that killing himself.

RR: Yes. Maybe the last desperate courage he had.

RM: But you knew the circumstances.

RR: Yes. Anything else we haven't covered in the life and times of Ray Moseley? That's what these interviews are designed to be. It's more than just the *Gazette*. It's the people.

RM: Yes. Well, the only other personal item was that I was remarried here in 1993. I've had two English wives named Jennifer. And I've got two children, a son here and a daughter at the University of Chicago.

RR: What are their names?

RM: My son's name is John and my daughter's name is Ann.

RR: A-N-N?

RM: That's it.

RR: Okay. Well, Ray, why don't we wind it up?

RM: Okay. I'm sorry that my memories about Little Rock are not clearer than they are, but it's been a long time.

RR: It has been a long time.

[Tape Stopped]

[Tape Started Again]

RR: We've thought of something else, and it's a book that you did on Mussolini's son-in-law. Tell me about that book.

RM: Well, it's about the man called Count Galeazzo Ciano. And I first learned about Ciano back in the '60s when I read William Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. And I thought he just sounded like a fascinating character. And I was particularly intrigued by the fact that here was this man in the heart of the Fascist regime who was going around calling Mussolini a fool and Hitler a madman and all this. And I didn't really know very much about him, but I told myself at the time, I said, "I should write a book about this guy some day." I was based in Rome for five years, one year with the *Rome Daily American* and the others, two different tours with UPI, and I never did a thing about it when I was there. But I kept saying to myself over the years, "I really should find out more about Ciano and write about him." So back in '94, I thought, "Hell, if I'm going to do this book, I'd better get down to it." So I started work on this book about a month after Edda, his wife, died in Rome.

RR: E-D-D-A?

RM: E-D-D-A, yes. Edda Mussolini Ciano. So I was still covering Rome at the time, and between doing stories for the *Tribune* when I was down there, I got in touch with various people. There were still some of the people who served in his regime or members of his family [who] were still alive, and I got some interviews there,

but I didn't get that much from them, just things that helped fill out the story.

Basically, I did most of the research in the U.S. National Archives or in the libraries here. I spent a lot of time in the British Library and in the London Library, mostly books in Italian. First of all, Ciano's diaries were a big source of information.

RR: They are where, now?

RM: Well, they were published after the war. And I quoted the diaries quite extensively in the book. They were an important part of the story. Anyway, the basic story of Ciano, which you now know, is he was Mussolini's Foreign Minister. He was initially a strong supporter of the Axis with Germany, and then he became disillusioned with the Germans, tried to get Mussolini to break with them. He wouldn't. Ciano helped overthrow Mussolini and then, eventually, was arrested, put on trial for treason and shot, but he'd kept this diary throughout his time as Foreign Minister. And while he was in prison, awaiting trial, Edda escaped to Switzerland with his diary and later turned it over to Allen Dulles, who was then head of the OSS in Switzerland and later head of the CIA, of course. The Germans put a woman SS agent in prison with him to try to find where he had hidden the diary and instead she fell for him and helped Edda to escape. It was all a very dramatic story, right? Most of these more dramatic details I didn't even know initially. I was just interested in him as a person. The further I got into it, I realized I had a really fascinating story, at least fascinating to me. I spent a lot of time writing this book and a lot more time trying to find a publisher.

Practically all the American publishers said, “This is a fascinating story, but we don’t think it will sell because young people don’t care about this period.” So, eventually, I went to Yale University Press here in London, and they were quite eager to publish it. And it came out last November, November, ‘99, in the U.K. And it was published in the States in the spring of this year. Before that, I found a publisher of my own in Germany, so it’s published there. It’s also going to be published by a Polish publisher. And it came out in Italian in September, and it seems to be doing pretty well in Italy.

RR: What kind of reviews did it get in Italy?

RM: Well, I’ve only seen about three so far. The publisher is supposed to be sending me reviews, but I got nearly a full page in the *Corriere della Sera*. And I am told there was a program on Rai 3, one of the three main tv channels there, which devoted a lot of time to it. All the reviews I’ve had everywhere have been very good reviews except two I had in this country. One was in a scholarly publication called *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, and it was reviewed by some professor at Leeds University who, first of all, accused me of having ignored a number of vital sources all of whom I had quoted at great length in the book. And then he accused me of two very serious factual errors, and he was wrong on both of them. So just last week, I wrote a very sharp letter to *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, saying what I thought of this man. No, the reviews generally have been very good.

RR: Well, it was, in fact, in the *Atlantic Monthly* that I first learned of the book.

RM: Yes, the *Atlantic* review was one of the better ones.

RR: It was the lead review in that particular issue.

RM: Yes. Well, I've been disappointed not getting reviews in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *L.A. Times*. None of them have touched it. I have friends on all three of those papers who have tried to get their book editors to review it.

RR: What's become of the book review of *The Times*?

RM: Well, I think one of the problems with a subject like this is that people who didn't live through that period — younger people, I think, don't have a great interest in history. Of course, not many people know about Ciano who are under the age of 50, let's say.

RR: Yes. I gather the Italian reviews you've seen have been favorable reviews?

RM: Very good reviews, yes.

RR: What was that one publication? Could you spell that?

RM: *Corriere della Sera*?

RR: Yes.

RM: It's right over here. There you are.

RR: Oh, there it is. Okay.

RM: That's one of the two or three most important papers in Italy.

RR: What's that lead story, Palestine?

RM: "Palestinian Revolt - 56 Dead."

RR: Oh, yes.

RM: [untelligible]

RR: Well, I'm glad you caught me up to date on the book. You said you've got

another — you'd like to write some more books. Do you have some topic . . .

RM: I'd like to write another, but — I like doing biography, but I just haven't gotten a subject in mind at the moment. I tried my hand at writing novels, but I've never been successful at it. I'm actually trying to write one now, seeing if I've learned anything. Who knows?

RR: I have a friend at home who is a novelist and he says that the journalists — he says they cannot write fiction because they have learned to deal in facts too well and they cannot enter in the world of imagination enough.

RM: I understand that. I think that was my problem before when I . . .

RR: Well, you have a separate life out there in the imagination that nobody knows anything about. I hope you pull it off.

RM: Well . . .

RR: Well, thanks.

RM: Okay.

[End of Interview]