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*Arkansas Democrat* Project

Interview with

Betty Funk  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
24 February 2006

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm sitting here this morning with Betty Castellaw Funk, who worked at the [*Arkansas*] *Democrat* for a number of years back in the era when I first worked at the *Democrat*. She remembers a lot about it. I need to start out first, Betty, and ask you if we have your permission to tape this interview and turn it over to the University of Arkansas [Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History].

Betty Funk: Yes, that's fine.

JM: Okay. Thanks very much. Now then, give me your name and spell it—give me your full name and spell it.

BF: Okay. My name is Betty Castellaw Funk. I don't need to spell Betty. I will if . . .

JM: Yes. Okay.

BF: C-A-S-T-E-L-L-A-W. F-U-N-K.

JM: Okay. Betty, let's just start at the beginning and see how you got to the [*Arkansas*] *Democrat*. Where and when were you born?

BF: Let's see, I was born on September 17, 1927. I came to the *Democrat*—I went to school in Conway [Arkansas] and then I—went all the way through college in

Conway [laughs] at [Arkansas] State Teachers [College] [now the University of Central Arkansas].

JM: Okay.

BF: Then I got a job—no, I taught one year. I forgot that one. I taught one year first at Stuttgart [Arkansas] and came home and got a job at the *Democrat*.

JM: Just a minute.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Okay, Betty. You were born in Conway, right?

BF: No. I was born in Memphis, Tennessee.

JM: Oh, you were?

BF: In those days it was because momma had to go home to momma. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, okay.

BF: And she lived in Memphis.

JM: And [your] momma was from—what were your parents' names?

BF: My . . . ?

JM: Your parents, yes.

BF: Yes. [Laughs] That's sort of confusing, but, anyway, my grandparents were in Memphis.

JM: Okay.

BF: Mother went home to the Methodist Hospital in Memphis to have me.

JM: Okay. What was your dad's name?

BF: Henry Ben Castellaw.

JM: Okay. What did he do?

BF: He owned a retail store—grocery store—[and] whatever in Quitman, Arkansas, right on the corner. Do you know Quitman?

JM: No, I don't—not well.

BF: You don't!

JM: Well, I know I've been there.

BF: Oh, you have.

JM: I've been through there.

BF: Well, anyway, it was *the* store in Quitman and right behind the bank.

JM: What was your mother's name?

BF: What was my mother's last name?

JM: Yes.

BF: My mother's last name was Laughter, spelled like "laughter."

JM: Oh, okay. What was her first name?

BF: Her name was Eunice.

JM: E-U-N-I-C-E?

BF: Right.

JM: Okay. Okay.

BF: She came to Quitman because she had been teaching in Memphis and Memphis— [it] was sort of hard, I guess, to teach in Memphis, and she got sick. Her doctor told her to go to some smaller town where they were nice and slow and easy, and that was how she got there.

JM: How she got to Quitman. Okay. How did you get a job at the *Democrat*?

BF: [Laughs] Sue Maxey lived across the street from me in Conway. Sue came over one afternoon and told me—I was just finishing college and Sue was about four years older. She said she was quitting the *Democrat* and I loved her job, so I said, “Do you think that they would hire me?” She said, “I’ll go with you and tell them about you.” And she did, and they hired me on the spot. We came to Little Rock and I was interviewed. I was hired. I was ready to go to work the next day.

JM: Now, Maxey, that’s M-A-X-E-Y. Is that correct? How did Sue Maxey spell her last name? M-A-X . . . ?

BF: Oh, M-A-X-E-Y.

JM: That’s what I thought. Okay. Who hired you? Do you know who you talked to? Who interviewed you?

BF: Yes. Oh, can I think of his name? Who owned the *Democrat* at that time?

JM: Mr. Engel owned it. K. August Engel.

BF: Well, it wouldn’t have been Engel.

JM: But probably . . .

BF: I don’t think I ever talked to him.

JM: What [year] was this that you went to work there?

BF: [Laughs] I knew you’d ask some years and I thought, “I don’t remember years as I should.” Let’s see, I don’t know. When did you go to work at the *Democrat*?

JM: I went to work there in 1951.

BF: Well, I guess, so . . .

JM: I think, maybe, you’d been there a little while before . . .

BF: I’d been there a year, at least.

JM: Okay. Okay. Well, it might have been then . . .

BF: Were you there the year that the big tornado hit central Arkansas?

JM: All the various places, Judsonia [Arkansas] and all?

BF: Yes. And remember, that was our big story?

JM: Yes. I remember that. Yes, because I was the one that turned the tip in to the office on it.

BF: Oh, were you?

JM: Yes, I was.

BF: Oh, I'm so impressed!

JM: Yes, I was working a police beat and I had called the state police. I'm going to tell this story in my own interview.

BF: Go ahead.

JM: Anyway, they said there had been a tornado at Dierks [Arkansas] and I called them and then called the office. They sent Roy Bosson and Bill Secrest to Dierks, then I got in up there and called again. They said there had been more people killed at Dierks, so they got worried. They sent George Douthit and me to Dierks. Then, after we get out there, we found out that they [tornadoes] were hitting all over the United States—I mean, all over Arkansas—and a lot worse than Dierks—England, Augusta, and . . .

BF: I was in Conway when it happened, and I wanted to go. I remember that I went over to Sue's house and said, "Sue, how do I get to go?" because, you know, girls didn't get to go on things like that at that time.

JM: Yes. No. Yes, I understand.

BF: She said, “You know some of the boys, don’t you?” And I said, “I know them all.” She said, “Get in their car and go.” I think I rode up there with Bill, and then I lost him.

JM: Yes.

BF: That was . . .

JM: Yes, but it could have been that the managing editor then, I think, was Ed Liske.

BF: That’s who interviewed me.

JM: Is that who interviewed you?

BF: That is who interviewed me.

JM: I thought it might have been. Okay. What was your first job? What job did you take at the *Democrat*?

BF: My first job was—[tape recorder jostled] . . .

JM: Sorry.

BF: Okay. My first job was what they called the women’s editor.

JM: Okay.

BF: I wrote up all the daily clubs and I worked at every club meeting in town. Then it sort of spread out, and I—because people would be absent and stuff, they’d ask me to do certain things. I would go down to the city board [meeting] or something and sit in on that, but I didn’t like those so much. Finally, I got more into going to all of the fashion style shows and so forth. I found that, if I wanted to, I could go to New York. They would let me go, and pay my way. At that time, Nell Cotnam had the same job that I had—a little difference in our ages, but anyway—at the [*Arkansas*] *Gazette*. She called me one day and said, “I’m going

to New York at so-and-so time, ask if you can go with me.” I said, “Okay.” So I did! They said, “Fine, you can go.” It turned out that she went a week or two ahead of me for some reason, and I went to New York by myself—first time ever up there. [I] really had a great time. I guess the fear of God was put into me. I was not afraid of anything. Even though, when I arrived in New York and finally got a taxi to my hotel, the taxi driver said, “Well, this is where you want off.” I took him at his word and got out of the cab, and I was on a corner and I did not know where I was. I did not know the address. I didn’t know anything about it and I was standing there, a little ol’ girl from Arkansas with her little suitcase. So we went on anyway and . . .

JM: But you found a place where . . . ?

BF: Well, when I was—I stood there—I don’t know, but I wasn’t scared, I wasn’t. Now, I think I’d be scared, but then I wasn’t scared. It didn’t faze me too much. Another taxi finally came by and [the driver] said, “Where [do] you want to go?” [He asked,] “Where are you from?” I started to say, “Arkansas.” And he said, “I bet you are from Arkansas.” [Laughs] And I said, “How can you tell?” [Laughs] I gave Arkansas a bad name, no doubt. He said, “Get in and I’ll take you to where you’re going.” And he did. He took me to my hotel and took me right to the door where I should have been put out to begin with. He said that the taxi drivers at that time liked to get people like me that didn’t know the city and they’d make me pay as much as if I had gone the whole way, and so forth.

JM: Yes. So you became the fashion editor?

BF: Fashion editor, yes.



JM: You said you had been a women's editor. Was there a difference between being a women's editor and a society editor?

BF: Yes.

JM: Okay.

BF: The society editor was the one who did the weddings and all that kind of thing.

JM: Okay.

BF: The women's editor did the civic clubs. Then, let's see . . .

JM: Who was the society editor when you started there?

BF: Dorothy Carroll.

JM: Dorothy Dungan  
Carroll. Wasn't that her middle name, Dungan?

BF: Yes, you are right. Dorothy Dungan Carroll.

JM: D-U-N-G-A-N, if I remember.

BF: Yes.

JM: C-A-R-R-O-L-L.

BF: C-A-R-R-O-L-L.

JM: Okay. Was she your boss, or were you separate?

BF: No.

JM: Okay.

BF: She was my boss—here was my desk and here next to me was Dorothy's.

JM: You were right next to her.

BF: She was very bossy and very much—she told me all day long—she told me what to do, and how to do it, and why I should do it, but I did not have to answer to her in any way, whatsoever.

JM: Okay. Okay. What kind of society editor was she? Do you recall anything?

BF: I think, maybe, she was probably a very good one. She knew everyone in Little Rock.

JM: Yes.

BF: She grew up in Little Rock, and . . .

JM: Had she been in the job quite a while at that time?

BF: Oh, a long time, already. When I got there she had been there a long time.

JM: Okay.

BF: She had been a widow for a long time, and her—I was trying to think—I think she was when she even came to the paper. I'm not sure about that. Anyway, her son was killed in World War II.

JM: We were discussing at one time—didn't you tell me that she was a big baseball fan?

BF: Oh, heavens, yes. Yes. She went—as soon as the baseball season opened, Dorothy went to the first game. I think one time they let her throw out the ball. She was so excited over it—so excited. She loved baseball. .

JM: These were Arkansas Traveler games you are talking about? The Little Rock Travelers at that time.

BF: Oh, yes. *The* ball game here.

JM: Yes. Yes.

BF: I remember after I got married—my husband was a baseball fan, therefore we went to a lot more games than I did before I got married. I was always saying, “Don’t sit down there, that’s Dorothy’s seat.” Everyone knew where Dorothy’s seat was.

JM: She—what was your husband’s name?

BF: James Funk. He was an accountant. He died of a heart attack in 1968.

JM: Okay. Did you tell me—and I was trying to remember—was it Dorothy and someone else in the office that wouldn’t—got to where they wouldn’t talk to each other? They would ask people to tell somebody else about this [unintelligible]. Did she have a falling out with somebody and then they would have a . . . ?

BF: She had a falling out with everybody.

JM: Did she?

BF: I don’t remember that particular time.

JM: Well, I was thinking it was—maybe it was Lelia Maude Funston or something.

BF: Oh, okay. Okay.

JM: Is that correct?

BF: That was the church editor.

JM: Yes, right. Okay.

BF: Oh, listen. She had it—she would have had a falling out with you if you came into the office too often, even though you had nothing whatsoever to do with her and her job. It was just that she felt that she should, and she would—and I liked—I was always interested in art and I liked to hang around the editorial

department. I used to watch John Deering as he got his—he first started his bit. I taught John Deering, by the way.

JM: You mean John Deering or Jon Kennedy?

BF: No, Jon—Oh, wait a minute. I hung around Jon Kennedy; I taught John Deering.

JM: Oh, did you? Okay.

BF: Because—see, I taught school after I left. It was—I never knew John Deering as an adult, really.

JM: The current *Democrat* cartoonist, you are talking about—the *Democrat-Gazette* cartoonist?

BF: Right.

JM: Where did you teach him?

BF: Where did I—I taught him at [Forest Heights Middle School?].

JM: Oh, did you? Okay. So you became the fashion editor, but then at some point—did Dorothy Carroll die or retire?

BF: Yes. I don't know exactly when. It was after I left and got married, and I didn't pay as much attention to some of that.

JM: Oh, okay. She was still there when you left, I gather?

BF: Yes, she was.

JM: Okay. What do you remember about the *Democrat* at that time? What do you remember about the building? [Do] you remember anything [about] your offices and what it was like up there on the second floor?

BF: Well, I loved being on the second floor because that was [where] the whole works were. It was fun to be there. I remember that part. I didn't—remember that I

didn't mind going to work early and even staying late if it was necessary. [It] never occurred much for me, but some people had to stay late. Who was our city editor?

JM: Well, one—well, when I first went there, it was Allen Tilden.

BF: Right. And didn't he die?

JM: Well, he retired at some point in time, and I think that Gene Herrington took his place.

BF: That's right. You've got all that.

JM: I think Allen Tilden was there when I first went there, but then he retired right before I left. I think Gene Herrington took his place.

BF: Yes. Gene Herrington was already there—I mean, he was working when I was there.

JM: He was assistant city editor when I was—he was Tilden's assistant.

BF: It was—I remember my office was in the little corner of the building. Those were the days when we weren't air-conditioned. I don't think it was air-conditioned at all. I don't recall it being.

JM: No, it wasn't. I don't think.

BF: Because I remember my office was like right here and this huge window was in back of it and, you know, the noise didn't faze me at all. I liked the fact that the breezes blew in on me quite often.

JM: That was the only way you could stay cool in the summertime.

BF: [Laughs] That's right.

JM: And we had on the other side of the room—you may have had some on your side too—they had the windows open, but they had these huge fans, too.

BF: Oh, yes. I'd forgotten those.

JM: They would blow on you and . . .

BF: You know, I always walked up those steps. I never rode in that elevator. I just didn't want to at that time.

JM: Probably smart. That wasn't—that was kind of a rickety elevator even then, I think.

BF: Oh, my. [Laughs] Is that elevator still there?

JM: I don't know the answer to that. I'm not sure. I haven't . . .

BF: Have you been down there?

JM: Oh, yes. I've been down there just a few months ago. No, a few weeks ago, but . . .

BF: I have often thought . . .

JM: . . . I took a different elevator.

BF: I have often thought that I would go down there and wander through it just for the heck of it, but I'm not sure that they would be glad to have me wander through.

JM: Well, anymore you'd have to get a pass to do that.

BF: Oh, you do?

JM: They have guards at the front door.

BF: Oh, as a kid, wouldn't we have loved that?

JM: Oh, yes. What else do you remember about the *Democrat* and other people that worked at the *Democrat*?

BF: Well, let's see, in particular—I don't know. I don't—you know, it had changed even by the time—I have, in my lifetime, raised two girls, both of whom, of course, got married, and that involved going to the *Democrat* at one time or another. I was so surprised that they had put another office between where my office was and where the sports department was out there. I remember that we used to get together before work and eat breakfast together if we could.

JM: Down at Lane's Drugstore?

BF: Yes. Yes. We would go, and it was fun. I thought that was what everyone did.  
[Laughs]

JM: Yes. Do you remember anybody else in particular, reporters [or] editors that stand out in your memory?

BF: Well, let's see—well, of course, I remember Gunter, our photographer.

JM: O. D. Yes. O. D. Gunter. G-U-N-T-E-R.

BF: G-U-N-T-E-R. We got to be pretty good friends because he was always taking pictures for me and telling me what to do, and how to do it, and so forth. You know, that was a good time. [Do] you remember Dorothy Menard, now Hays?

JM: Yes.

BF: Did you know her husband just died last year?

JM: Yes, I do know—I talked to Dorothy a few months ago.

BF: Oh, did you? How is she doing?

JM: Doing pretty good, except she is losing her hearing. Outside of that, she seems to be doing fine.

BF: Is that right? She is not working at all, I'm sure?

JM: No, I don't think so. She is retired, now.

BF: Is she still in Memphis?

JM: Right outside of Memphis. She lives in a little town in Northern Mississippi, just right outside of Memphis.

BF: Well, everyone in Memphis is moving down there.

JM: Yes.

BF: I'm just talking. I don't know.

JM: So, how long did you stay at the *Democrat*? [Do] you remember how many years you worked there?

BF: [A] long time. Well, sort of. I would say five years.

JM: Okay.

BF: Somewhere in there, maybe eight.

JM: Then what did you do?

BF: Dorothy stayed a shorter time than me.

JM: Yes.

BF: At the time I was there, what we really enjoyed the most, was, I guess, the time you were there and Bill and Jack—wait, not Jack.

JM: Bill Secret?

BF: Bill and there was another boy—oh, Ferd Kaufman.

JM: Ferd Kaufman, or Ken Kaufman? There were two of them.

BF: Both of them.

JM: Yes, right. Ferd was a photographer and Ken Kaufman was a reporter.

BF: That's right.



JM: Yes, okay.

BF: Oh, I'm so glad that you came. This is good for me.

JM: Yes.

BF: Then Dorothy came. Dorothy and her husband and my husband and I all got together in Memphis because we all lived there. I taught and . . .

JM: You . . .

BF: We got together and I remember that [laughs] her husband loved to play poker and I didn't know what a poker card looked like. They didn't like having me play with them too well. [Laughs]

JM: So, you—did you—when you left the *Democrat*, did you move to Memphis?

BF: Yes.

JM: Right away, then? Okay, yes.

BF: By that time, I had gotten married and my husband worked for an accounting firm. They sent him to Memphis.

JM: I see, okay.

BF: So that was the end of my career with . . .

JM: Okay. And how long did you stay in Memphis?

BF: Oh, we didn't stay too long. Two years, I think.

JM: Oh, was that it? Okay.

BF: Because my husband had trouble with his eyes, and so forth. That was the beginning, and he died pretty soon thereafter.

JM: Okay, so y'all moved back to Little Rock from there?

BF: Yes.

JM: Okay. What [did] you do then, start teaching?

BF: Started teaching. I came over here—and, I tell you, getting a job for me, in my whole career, was easy. Never did I have trouble. I don't—I have heard people tell about, "Oh, you know, so-so." I never did. I came back over here, and I walked into Dr. Walthall's office and I said, "I would like to have a job teaching in your school because it's out here where we've bought a house." That was my whole reasoning right there. [Laughs] And he said, "What do you want to teach?" I said, "Art," because they didn't teach journalism then. I said, "Well, I think I would prefer art." And he said, "You know something? The teacher quit last week." [Laughs] Or something—I don't know what happened to her.

JM: What school was this?

BF: [Forest Heights?]. And I said . . .

JM: [Forest Heights was close?] And what was he? The principal?

BF: At that time, he was the principal.

JM: Walthall.

BF: Walthall.

JM: W-A-L . . . ?

BF: T-H-A-L-L.

JM: T-H-A-L? Or two Ls?

BF: Two Ls.

JM: All right. Do you remember his first name?

BF: Harvey.

JM: Harvey, okay.

BF: Harvey Walthall.

JM: I met—I remember him, now. Okay.

BF: Did you go to school over there?

JM: No. I went to school in Greenwood, Arkansas, and then to the University.

BF: You're really a northerner. [Laughs]

JM: No, now Greenwood is sort of west central, but people think of it as north because it's a little farther north. It's nearer Fayetteville and the other mountains in that way. [Is there] anybody else that you recall at the *Democrat*? What kind of person was Lelia Maude Funston? I think that was F-U-N-S-T-O-N. She was there a long time, too. Do you remember?

BF: Very strange.

JM: Was she?

BF: Very strange. She didn't want to have anything to do with any of us.

JM: Oh, okay.

BF: I think that she was of the considered opinion that we were—what do you want to say? That we were long gone no-Christian type people.

JM: Yes, we were hopeless.

BF: “Hopeless” is really, I think, what I was looking for.

JM: We were all sinners?

BF: We were all sinners, and she sort of—she was a little nicer to me and to the younger one than she was to Dorothy Carroll. But she and Dorothy had a thing going anyway. Didn't Dorothy Carroll—oh, I remember Dorothy Carroll got an assistant—I mean, someone else to work with her. What was her name? What

was her name? I haven't thought of her in years. Anyway, she worked with Dorothy. And when Dorothy got someone to work with her, Dorothy sort of sat back and she would do the big weddings. I'm talking about the people who were well-known here in town. She wanted to be at the wedding and so forth. She would do those but, if some other [one] came in, she would just automatically—what was her name? What was her name? I can't think of her name.

JM: Well, we'll [wait and] see.

BF: It doesn't matter to me, anyway.

JM: So, all the other weddings she foisted off on this other girl?

BF: She'd say, "This is yours," talking to her. And we were all three at one time sitting right there, and even *I* caught on to it. I wanted her to complain, but she didn't.

JM: Somebody—do you remember this? Somebody told me that one time that they were particularly up in arms—Dorothy and Lelia Maude. Dorothy would tell someone else and say, "So-and-so, tell Lelia Maude such-and-such." And Lelia Maude would be standing there—sitting there in earshot; and then Maude would tell this girl, "Well, you tell Dorothy such-and-such." They were using this girl to relay messages when they were just not . . .

BF: I don't know any part of that.

JM: Yes, okay.

BF: I didn't . . .

JM: But, at any rate, do you remember Gladys Fearnside?

BF: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes. She was in charge of the morgue.

JM: Yes, right.

BF: She was—and you had better be careful when you went in there. You’d better not mess up any of her things. If you wanted something out of the morgue, she’d tell you where it was. “And don’t mess it up,” she’d say. [Laughs] I’m sure she told you the same thing.

JM: I know she did. But for people who are not newspaper people to clarify, the morgue was where they kept all the clippings there—the newspaper clippings from previous stories.

BF: Oh, yes.

JM: When you wanted to look up some background over there on somebody—some prominent person—you would go in there and ask for the file.

BF: Right.

JM: On C. Hamilton Moses, or somebody else.

BF: Say a person—yes, was going—say they died unexpectedly, that’s where you got your information from.

JM: Yes. And they’re going to ask me, so I think—Fearnside was F-E-A-R-N-S-I-D-E.

BF: No, just F-E-R-N. Wasn’t it? .

JM: Was it? I’m not sure. Okay, I’ll look it up.

BF: I’m not sure, either.

JM: I’ve got a directory somewhere.

BF: I’m not sure.

JM: I believe it was F-E-A-R-N-S-I-D-E, but I’ll look it up.

BF: Well, it might be.

JM: What else do you remember about her?

BF: Well, I remember that—bless her heart—she was sort of pudgy and she always wore those old black shoes [laughs] that women used to wear a long time ago.

JM: Yes.

BF: She wore the same pair constantly.

JM: Yes.

BF: All the time she wore those. She got to where she wanted to go and drink coffee with us in the morning. We didn't care whether she came or she didn't.

JM: Yes.

BF: I mean, we didn't care who came.

JM: Yes.

BF: It was okay.

JM: I remember that.

BF: We'd pick up a stranger on the street and it was okay, I guess. [Laughs] I don't know.

JM: Did she—I'm not sure she was one of the ones there [who] were—there were some around who used to keep a little nip in their bottom drawer. She wasn't one of those, was she?

BF: Not that I recall.

JM: Yes, okay.

BF: Not that I—but, that could have gone on and, you know, they wouldn't have told me for some reason.

JM: Yes. I think, maybe, some of the editors out in . . .

BF: Who was the sports editor? Jack Keady?

JM: Jack Keady, yes. K-E-A-D-Y.

BF: Right. He was a nice guy.

JM: Yes.

BF: He—the time that I remember him most is when we were eating breakfast at what turned out to be—okay, down here at the mall they used to have a breakfast place right in one side of that store. I was trying to think. Jack Keady was always there, and I think he came because of us and he didn't want us to act like we were really with him. He liked to sit and listen to us.

JM: Yes. Jack was a nice guy.

BF: He was very nice.

JM: And Fred Petrucelli was over there then, probably.

BF: Oh, that's right, he and Fred.

JM: Yes.

BF: Fred was always—I guess Fred is dead.

JM: No, he is still alive.

BF: Is he really? Where is he?

JM: Very much. Conway.

BF: He is in Conway?

JM: Yes, he is.

BF: What does he do in Conway? Well, of course, he is retired.

JM: Well, he went up there and retired, but he kept working, I think, within the last year, for the *Log Cabin Democrat*. He worked for them, then he did freelance work for the [*Log Cabin Democrat*?]. I think he, maybe, lives out on the lake out there somewhere.

BF: I'm going to check him out. The reason I say that is I go to Conway really often. The Farrises in Conway are kin to me.

JM: Are they? Okay.

BF: Yes.

JM: [Are] you talking about the Farrises that were with the State Teachers College?

BF: No, not those Farrises.

JM: Not those Farrises, okay.

BF: Other—Bill Farris had owned the—what did he own—an insurance office.

JM: Okay.

BF: He died last spring and his wife lives up there. They had gotten a divorce just shortly before. She said, “We don't like to talk about it.” And I said, “I know you don't, so don't talk to me about it.” [Laughs] But she always talked to me about it because we were first cousins, and so on.

JM: What do you remember about the women's section, and the society section, as far as—and this may not be a fair question—how did it compare with the *Gazette* and what the *Gazette* was doing in women's news?

BF: I think we were just about “nip and tuck.” In those days, the big weddings always were on the front page.

JM: Right.



BF: When anyone came in that was so-called “society” in Little Rock, you sort of let Dorothy Carroll do it. And Dorothy put them on the front page.

JM: She decided who went on the front page.

BF: Yes, but you know, she was very good. She was very good about anyone who got married at the paper. That bride usually got on—like I got on the front page and I wasn’t even from Little Rock.

JM: Yes.

BF: That was most unusual, but that was because I worked at the *Democrat* at the time. I wouldn’t have, otherwise.

JM: At that time, as I recall, both newspapers—the people that they put on the front page—the weddings—were people, usually, from very influential families—families that had wealth or had been prominent in some way or the other.

BF: That was what they called “society.”

JM: Yes. Maybe they had been prominent in government or something, or were wealthy businessmen.

BF: Yes.

JM: So, they put the wealthy kids’ pictures on the front page, and everybody else . . .

BF: Well-known people, one way or another . . .

JM: Yes, okay.

BF: Their kids went on the front page. Yes. And the boys didn’t care. I’m sure y’all didn’t care one way or another.

JM: No, that was fairly typical for papers all across the country at that time. There wasn’t anybody else . . .

BF: It was. It was. It was what happened. Yes.

JM: At some point in time, it began to—a few years later, it began to turn a little and the papers used to get . . .

BF: That was when we became integrated.

JM: Yes, I guess so.

BF: Really, that—really. Ozell Sutton was our first black employee, wasn't he?

JM: Right—reporter.

BF: He was a reporter, but, I mean, he was the first black one that we had, I think.

JM: Yes. Yes. He was.

BF: He was very nice, I thought. Quite nice.

JM: Yes. He was a good reporter, too.

BF: I bet he was. I bet he was.

JM: I've talked to Ozell recently. He was a good reporter. He still lives in Atlanta [Georgia].

BF: Oh, does he?

JM: Do you remember anything about Ozell?

BF: No.

JM: How the rest of the staff treated him, or anything?

BF: No. I think we treated him—you know, I think we treated him just like we treated the rest of us. I think there is one thing that you can say about a staff for a newspaper, that they're pretty lenient.

JM: Yes. Yes.

BF: Don't you think so?

JM: Liberal. Open-minded.

BF: Open-minded is a better term.

JM: Open-minded—more so, okay.

BF: Yes. It was okay. Now, my mother was from Mississippi, and I just didn't discuss Ozell at home.

JM: Yes. Yes.

BF: It was best that she didn't know. [Laughs]

JM: Okay. Do you remember any of the other editors? Joe Crossley or Deane Allen? [Do] you remember anything about either of them?

BF: Not particularly. No.

JM: I think some of the other reporters at that time—some of this I know, because I went back and looked up some of the old clippings—I mean, stories on microfilm. Some of the other reporters there—Bud Lemke. Do you remember Bud?

BF: Oh, yes.

JM: Bud Lemke.

BF: Yes. Yes. His father taught at [the] University of [Arkansas].

JM: Roy Bosson was there for a while.

BF: That's right.

JM: And Marcus George.

BF: Oh, yes. I know—yes.

JM: Marcus was the . . .

BF: They were all really nice people. To me they were nice. Now, I don't know—they had—oh, do you remember—who was that other reporter that was your age about that time? Oh, shoot.

JM: Well, let's see. I can think of—wasn't Charlie Rixse . . . ?

BF: Margaret [Branton?].

JM: Margaret Frick.

BF: [Branton?]. Her name was [Branton?] when she . . .

JM: Oh, okay.

BF: Died.

JM: Oh, okay.

BF: But it was her father. Margaret, Margaret . . .

JM: Well, there was one woman reporter there that covered the Federal building named Margaret Frick. No, that wasn't the one. Okay. I'm trying to think—outside of Roy Bosson and George Douthit—of course, you remember George Douthit, and he was there for a long time. Do you remember how much you were paid? What was your starting salary when you went to work?

BF: Oh, yes, let's see. I think it was \$200 a month.

JM: Yes.

BF: And I thought I was doing great.

JM: Yes.

BF: I think that was during the time that they paid the girls less than they did the boys.

JM: Probably, yes. But that wouldn't have been much less because I started at \$45.12 a week. That's what mine—so that would figure out somewhere around \$200 a month or somewhere up in there, maybe a little bit more.

BF: I remember \$200. Two hundred may have been what I [was paid when I] started teaching school. [Laughs]

JM: They—but no retirement, though?

BF: Oh, heavens no. But I didn't intend to retire then, anyway, so it was okay.

JM: [Laughs] Yes. You did—you talked about [how] you would stay long hours. Did you get paid any overtime when you . . .?

BF: No! I didn't even know what it was.

JM: No, me neither.

BF: It was okay with me.

JM: Yes.

BF: The paper was just the paper to me, which was—do you remember the parties we went to?

JM: Some of them, yes.

BF: Some of them. It was always—I remember how we worked those. If, through my department, I found out there was someone in town who was entertaining the staff at both papers, it was my duty to report it to our group over here. If we wanted to go, we went. And we usually went as a group, or we left at the same time, or something like that. I remember that.

JM: You mean . . .

BF: I remember that—well, there were some others over at the *Gazette* that would tell us, “So and so is in town that is well-known. Let’s go. We’ll never get to meet him, otherwise.”

JM: At that time, as I recall, some of the big businesses, and maybe even some politicians, used to have a Christmas party. They would throw parties around Christmas time in which they invited the newspaper people to. I think Southwestern Bell, maybe, used to have a Christmas party nearly every year.

BF: Oh, yes. Yes.

JM: I don’t remember who else. Okay, Betty, is there anything else you remember about your career at the *Democrat*?

BF: I think I just—you’ve made me remember a lot. Thank you.

JM: I take it that you enjoyed your time working there.

BF: I did. I enjoyed it very much, very much. I wanted—when I left it and I was married and everything—but I was pregnant, and therefore—I couldn’t decide whether to keep working, or what. I wanted, when I went to Memphis, to work for the *Commercial Appeal*, but I couldn’t get a job at that time. Then I decided not to work, and that was it.

JM: Okay. [Is there] anything else that you recall about your days there?

BF: My days there? No, I don’t.

JM: Or the paper itself?

BF: I do remember that right after I got married, my husband was carrying me to work one day and [laughs] he stopped in front of the *Democrat* and the engine of our

car just went up in flames. I remember that so well. [Laughs] That shows what kind of car we were driving.

JM: Probably about the kind that I was driving. Okay, Betty, I guess that's covered it pretty much. If there is not anything else that you can think of, well, I'll just say thank you very much and I appreciate it.

BF: Well, I'm glad to do it, and if I think of something really great, I'll call you and let you know.

JM: Do that.

BF: Leave your telephone number.

JM: Okay, I will. Okay.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Geoffrey Stark]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]