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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

Fred Morrow
Telephone Interview
12 June and 19 June 2005

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell, and I'm here speaking by telephone with Fred Morrow, [who is] in Loveland, Colorado, on June 12, 2005. This is an interview for the *Arkansas Democrat* Project. The first thing I need to ask you, Fred, is do I have your permission to tape this interview and then turn it over to the University of Arkansas [Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History] archives?

Fred Morrow: You sure do.

JM: Okay, good deal. Now then, let's just start from the beginning. This is sort of a free-ranging interview. Why don't you just start off telling me first—let's make sure so that the transcriber will know that—give me your full name.

FM: Well, my full name is Fredrick Michael Morrow.

JM: Frederick Michael Morrow. M-O-R-R-O-W?

FM: Like tomorrow, you're right.

JM: Yes, okay, very good. Fred, where and when were you born?

FM: I was born June 11, 1942, in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

JM: Poplar Bluff, Missouri, okay. And who were your parents?

FM: My dad was Fred Morrow and my mother was Lois.

JM: Okay.

FM: Hastings—Hastings was her maiden name.

JM: Hastings was her maiden name. Okay. Did you—tell me where you went to school.

FM: Well, I went to school at a number of little rural schools because I grew up on a farm, and then I went to Neelyville High School through my sophomore year.

JM: What was the name of that high school?

FM: Neelyville, just like “Neely” and then “ville.” It was named after a fellow named Neely.

JM: N-E-E-L-Y?

FM: Right.

JM: Neelyville, and that’s in Missouri.

FM: It’s five miles north of the Arkansas border, and it would be about ten miles—or not that far—from Corning, Arkansas.

JM: Yes, okay. That was just—that was your sophomore year?

FM: I went to Neelyville through my sophomore year, and then we moved to Poplar Bluff, the hub city of that area.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: About twelve miles north of Neelyville.

JM: Did you finish high school there?

FM: Right.

JM: Yes. Was your dad a superintendent or a school official, or something?

FM: He was the county school superintendent for a number of years, which was an elective office.

JM: Yes.

FM: He did that for eight or twelve years, and then he became the school superintendent at Poplar Bluff High School. He was there for eighteen years.

JM: I understand that there's a stadium named after him or you in Poplar Bluff, right?

FM: [Laughs] Yes. The high school football stadium is named Morrow Stadium, and I tell everybody—whenever I'm ever back in town—it was because of my athletic ability.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: It's actually named for my father.

JM: Yes, okay. How much athletics did you play?

FM: I played high school basketball and, of course, at Neelyville I played baseball. At Poplar Bluff they didn't have a baseball program, [so] I just played basketball.

JM: Yes, yes, okay. Were you pretty good?

FM: No, but we had a pretty good team.

JM: Okay.

FM: We played twice against Bill Bradley in the state playoffs and beat them one year.

[Editor's note: Bill Bradley was an All-American at Princeton University, [New Haven, Connecticut], and later a star for the New York Knicks professional basketball team.]

JM: Did you really?

FM: Yes, and the next year they beat us. He [Bradley] played at Crystal City, which is just south of St. Louis.

JM: That's what I was getting ready to say it was—I thought it was Crystal City, Missouri.

FM: They were in our region—Southern region or, more exact, Southeastern region.

JM: Yes, okay. Where did you go to college?

FM: I went to the University of Missouri, [Columbia], for about three and a half years. A guy said, "Missouri by a decision."

JM: Do what?

FM: "Missouri by a decision."

JM: Okay. So, you didn't finish?

FM: No, I did three and a half years and then I ended up in the military, and the next thing I knew, I was in Vietnam.

JM: Oh, really?

FM: Yes, that wasn't a good career move.

JM: Well, I can imagine. How long were you in Vietnam?

FM: I served one year.

JM: What were you doing?

FM: I was in a line company—that's an infantry company.

JM: About the worst thing you could be in.

FM: Yes, you don't want to be in that.

JM: No, I know.

FM: I was telling somebody the other night that when we left, we went over in strike force of forty-eight, which was a platoon—a full strike force would be forty-eight,

but you never operated at that because there was always somebody, or bodies, missing.

JM: Yes.

FM: But when we left after a year—there were only four of us that did the whole year.

JM: Oh, is that right?

FM: If I'd have known those odds, [laughs] I would have gone to Canada. Not everybody got killed, but—I mean, some got wounded and a few others got malaria—but there were only four of us that did the whole year.

JM: Yes, but you lasted the whole year?

FM: Yes. That's the last piece of luck I had, I think. [Laughs]

JM: Yes, that's—boy, that's tough duty.

FM: I was in the First Cavalry—First Air Cavalry.

JM: Oh, were you? I had a brother who was there—he was a spotter pilot—and he was there, I guess, in about 1968. What year were you there?

FM: I went over with the unit—we sailed over in 1965. I came back in 1966.

JM: Yes, yes, okay. So, what did you do after that?

FM: Well, then I did—you know, [I] ended up getting married.

JM: Yes.

FM: That wasn't a good career choice either, but it happened, and then I banged around. I was working in Poplar Bluff as the assistant manager of a Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.

JM: Yes.

FM: I had a cousin at that time who was in journalism school at Arkansas State [University, Jonesboro]. One weekend he said, “You know, they’re looking for a sports writer at the *Pine Bluff Commercial*.” He’d seen that [advertised] somewhere at the school. I applied and they hired me.

JM: They hired you. Was Gene Foreman at the *Commercial* then?

FM: No, he wasn’t there. He had just left.

JM: Oh, okay.

FM: A guy named—maybe you’d know—John. He was a real nice fellow and I can’t think of [his last name].

JM: Yes. I’ll know him if you think of his name, probably.

FM: John something. You know, it’s terrible that I forget names.

JM: Yes, I know.

FM: I can’t remember. He was a managing editor. [Editor’s note: His name was John Thompson.]

JM: Okay.

FM: I don’t know. Funny thing about that, I’d been there at that paper, like, two months and they won a Pulitzer Prize.

JM: Yes.

FM: [I thought,] “What’s this all about?” [Laughs]

JM: [Paul] Greenberg won it. [Editor’s note: Paul Greenberg won the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Writing in 1969.]

FM: Greenberg was the editorial writer.

JM: So, you went to Pine Bluff? You had—had you ever had any journalism?

FM: Yes, I studied journalism at Missouri.

JM: Oh, did you? Okay.

FM: As a matter of fact, Jerry, one year—the last year [I was there] I worked on the paper.

JM: Did you?

FM: The university had its own newspaper.

JM: Yes.

FM: I'm not even sure I can remember the name of that. [Editor's note: It was the *Columbia Missourian*].

JM: Yes.

FM: It was in Missouri and everything . . .

JM: Yes, I remember that. Good journalism school for the most part.

FM: Well, it had that reputation.

JM: Yes, yes. Well, that's true, but—so then you went to Pine Bluff as a sports writer, right?

FM: Right. It was a two-man staff.

JM: Yes. Who was the other guy?

FM: Well, the editor was a guy named Bob Jones. He'd gotten a divorce, and he wanted a break from Memphis. He was working for the *Commercial Appeal*.

JM: Yes, yes.

FM: He got the sports editor's job over there in Pine Bluff.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: I think the guy had been—Bill Young is who he replaced, I think.

JM: Yes, I remember him, too. Yes.

FM: Bill Young?

JM: Yes.

FM: Bill went to Memphis, as a matter of fact, and Bob came over to Pine Bluff. It was just a two-man staff with a number of stringers—five or six stringers.

JM: So, how long were you at Pine Bluff?

FM: I was there two years. After one year, Bob went back to the *Commercial Appeal* and I became the sports editor.

JM: Okay.

FM: I was under him for one year and then I was the sports editor for a year.

JM: Yes, okay. Then did the [Arkansas] *Democrat* hire you?

FM: Right. I went there in August of 1970.

JM: Okay, and who hired you? [Gene] Foreman?

FM: Yes, it was Gene. He was the managing editor. Marcus George was the head editor, but he was one of the owners.

JM: What were the circumstances when you went to the *Democrat*? Did they hire you as a sports editor or as sports director?

FM: Yes, sports director.

JM: Yes.

FM: You know, it was not a pleasant situation. [Laughs] It was like combat all over again. People were falling left and right. [Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

FM: They gave me a title like sports director because Jack Keady was still there. He kept the title as sports editor and he sat at one end of that big room behind a desk and they had me down at the other. It was uncomfortable. I never had any problems with Jack, but he was obviously upset.

JM: Yes, yes. In fact, you were the sports editor.

FM: Yes.

JM: Yes.

FM: I think he kept the title for a very . . .

JM: Well, I know that, but I mean, who was making the decisions?

FM: Oh, he didn't have any [role in the] decision process. He just wrote a column every once in a while and got up and left.

JM: Yes, yes. That's what I thought. Okay.

FM: Maybe he wrote three or four a week. He had a nice job then. He would come in and write a little column and leave.

JM: Yes. Was there pressure on him to leave, or do you know?

FM: Well, you know, maybe not—well, you know how it is. Playing with this guy's ego. I mean, you know he had to be hurt—he had to be—and eventually—you know, I guess the people in power think, “Well, eventually they'll go away.” And eventually he did go away.

JM: Yes. Of course, I don't remember the circumstances either. You came there in August [of] 1970?

FM: Right.

JM: I came over in August of 1971 as the managing editor. You were the sports editor then—the sports director.

FM: Was he gone by then?

JM: No, Jack was still there for a little while, I believe. Now, I'm kind of guessing a little bit myself. I think he was still there for a little while and then I think he retired, or something.

FM: Well, somebody said he went up to the northern part of Arkansas somewhere and his son was a house painter. He painted houses with his son.

JM: I did not know that. I didn't know what [he did after he left].

FM: I'm not sure that's true, but I remember somebody telling me that.

JM: Yes, okay. So, what do you remember about your career at the *Democrat*?

FM: [Laughs] I don't know. I had kids then, and just the trouble of making a living—I remember that. It was a lot of work, but it was fun. We were young and we were so downtrodden and beat up by the [*Arkansas*] *Gazette*, you know.

JM: Yes.

FM: We just let it fly. I hired a bunch of young kids and they all—some of them were really good.

JM: Who in particular do you remember that you hired?

FM: Oh, there was Teri Thompson and John Bloom and John Brummett—Bloom and Brummett were still high school kids when they came to work for me.

JM: Is that right? You did hire some good ones.

FM: Yes, and Carol Stogsdill came over—she was over on the copy desk. She came over and managed the sports department near the end of my time. She was very

good at that, because at that time I was covering Arkansas and writing a column—I think as many as six a week, at least five. I have no idea how I did that. Those columns must have been terrible.

JM: No, they weren't.

FM: There's no way you can drag up that many columns.

JM: I know that's tough, and that's too many. But I remember you were a good columnist.

FM: But so, you know, like Teri Thompson—it just dawned on me that it would be nice to have a female in the sports department.

JM: Yes.

FM: At that time it was a revolutionary thing. I made sure there was a—there might have been one or two more in the country, in larger papers of circulation, at that time.

JM: There weren't very many.

FM: There weren't very many. I think there was a girl at the *Washington Post* maybe, but anyway that was a . . .

JM: Yes, I can't remember who was at the *Washington Post*, whether it was Jenkins or Christine Brennan.

FM: Probably Christine Brennan. There might have been another one somewhere.

JM: Yes. Yes.

FM: This was like—there weren't many. It was definitely a male-dominated thing.

JM: Yes.

FM: Teri had a lot of ability. I think now she's into editing stuff, but she was really— she should've stayed in writing.

JM: Yes.

FM: She'd been better served in there.

JM: She's really a good writer. Yes. She came out of Clarksville, is that right?

FM: Yes, she's from Clarksville, Arkansas.

JM: Yes. Do you remember any particular—how did you all compare, say, with the *Gazette* at that time?

FM: Well, we were way down in experience and under-funded. We were probably not nearly as good, just to be truthful about it.

JM: Yes.

FM: But we'd do things that they wouldn't do, you know what I mean? We tried things whether they were right or wrong, and probably because of me we sort of became the anti-establishment paper, at least in that sports section, because I was always after [Frank] Broyles.

JM: Yes.

FM: Not as much as he perceived, I don't think. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. [Laughs]

FM: But you know Frank was like God, so with any kind of a little strike, you know, he's not going to take that very well. So, I don't know. We kept plugging on.

JM: Any particular reason that you were after Broyles?

FM: Oh, not really. When I came there—I mean, I found out real quick that anything that came out of the University of Arkansas was going to be the privilege of Orville Henry [sports editor of the *Gazette*].

JM: Yes.

FM: I mean, how do you fight that? Even if I'd have sucked up to Arkansas, all scoops still would have gone through Orville first.

JM: Yes.

FM: You know, then I would have been—what's the point of that?

JM: Yes, I think you're right.

FM: I began to—and don't get me wrong because I liked Orville, I actually did.

JM: Yes.

FM: That's all I can say. He promoted the Arkansas Razorbacks football team, God bless him, and there's nothing wrong with that. In those days, there was somewhat—in those days—I think it's gone away where people in the country—they called them chipmunks. They were always like nibbling at the [sports establishment]. They got that nickname—chipmunks—and I sort of became one of those, I guess, in time.

JM: Yes, but I remember—do you remember the column that you wrote about something to the effect that Arkansas wasn't real successful at that time and you said something about, you know, maybe their problem was that they were—I'm paraphrasing—that they were real active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, but back in the old days when they were really good they had a bunch of guys like

Billy Moore and Lloyd Phillips and everything else that you didn't really see in the FCA?

FM: Yes, that's true.

JM: You remember that one?

FM: I don't remember.

JM: I think the switchboard lit up quite a bit after [that one].

FM: And Barry Switzer.

JM: Oh, yes, Barry Switzer, yes. But, anyway. What kind of paper was the *Democrat* overall at that time? Do you remember? What was your impression of it?

FM: At that time, Gene brought in a lot of young, aggressive guys and girls that tried to do those stories that maybe the *Gazette* wouldn't do.

JM: Yes.

FM: Got after it, and it was hectic and it was fun. The more I think about it, I really feel bad about a lot of the older people that were just [shunted aside].

JM: Yes, like who?

FM: Well, Betty Wood's husband, Ted—I remember he was run off. There wasn't anything wrong with Ted. He was a bright guy, but he just happened to be the old order there—you know, had some age on him. A lot of those people—and Gene was bringing in all those young guys and girls and wanting them to do things his way. There was a guy over at the sports department. I can't remember his name. He sort of managed the desk. He sort of ran it, and he was white-haired and had this velvet-toned voice and had been in radio for years. I can't remember his name.

JM: I'm trying to think of who that was. It wasn't Fred Petrucelli?

FM: Oh, no.

JM: Fred had already gone over to—had left the paper.

FM: I think his name might have been John something, but—by the way, the managing editor at Pine Bluff was John Thompson.

JM: John Thompson. I remember John.

FM: When I worked there. He was a wonderful guy. A nice fellow.

JM: Yes, he later wound up buying the *North Little Rock Times*. He bought out the *North Little Rock Times* and ran it for a number of years. I can't remember who would have been in the sports department then, but we'll think of it. Do you remember anything about the salaries?

FM: They weren't very high—I remember that.

JM: [Laughs]

FM: I think I started at about \$130 a week.

JM: Yes. As a sports editor you started at \$130 a week, and that was in 1970. That wasn't real high. How big a staff did you have?

FM: I probably had five or six reporters, a few stringers, and probably two or three people that worked the desk. It wasn't a lot.

JM: Yes.

FM: I remember I had to sit down there on Friday nights on high school coverage—got off there about 1:00 a.m. and practically stayed up until the next day and [had to] be in the car at 5:00 or 6:00 going up toward Fayetteville.

JM: Yes, I can remember . . .

FM: To cover Arkansas when they were at home.

JM: I remember those nights, but you had to stay in the office on Friday nights and help out on the desk?

FM: I learned all the nicknames of those towns' schools. The Stamps "Outlaws," the Conway "Wampus Cats," and [the] Winslow "Squirrels."

JM: Yes, you're right.

FM: I knew all the nicknames.

JM: Yes. You had a Saturday afternoon paper at that time, right, that you had to get all the stuff ready for?

FM: Right. That's why I always stayed later for the high school [sports reports] because we weren't on a deadline—it was a morning paper. Sunday would be morning, you know.

JM: Yes, but then you covered—on Saturday you covered the Razorbacks right when they were playing.

FM: Right. I sure did.

JM: Yes. Did you . . . ?

FM: I covered basketball. Basketball at that time was—you know, when I got there [it] was not anything. I can't even think of his name. Who was the coach before Lanny Van Eman?

JM: Before Lanny Van Eman?

FM: What was that guy's name?

JM: Was it Duddy Waller?

FM: Yes, it was Duddy.

JM: Yes, it could have been.

FM: They had no interest there. They didn't play with any real ability. I became good friends with the center on that team, Gary Stephens—I wonder if he is still in Little Rock. He was working for a bank.

JM: Oh, I saw Gary—I'm trying to remember, it's been a few years now. The last I heard I think he was still with the bank although the bank had changed ownership, so I don't know about now, but . . .

FM: Me and him were together on their—we sort of put together that—some yearly thing where we'd have a speaker, nice speakers. I mean, one year we had Cosell, and one year we had Frank Gifford. We'd honor pro[fessional] athletes—I remember that—I don't remember if it was the Walton Foundation or the Waltons.

JM: Well, it could have been.

FM: I know one year [1972] we honored Larry Czonka after the Miami Dolphins won the Super Bowl.

JM: Yes, because it could have been the Walton Foundation. But [at] any rate, how many kids did you have then?

FM: When I came there?

JM: Yes.

FM: I had two children.

JM: You had two children, yes, okay.

FM: I later had a third one.

JM: Yes, I couldn't remember where you had three or four. At any rate, so [are there] any other people you remember while you were there at the *Democrat*? The good people, bad people?

FM: I loved Betty Woods. She was wonderful. I think in those days they called that section, "Society," didn't they?

JM: Yes, yes, they did.

FM: She was wonderful—she was raised by Owney Madden, who was a noted mobster. Madden dated her sister, I guess, when he lived in Hot Springs. [I don't know] how often he was there, but [Betty's] sister was raising [her], so, in effect, Owney raised her. Betty Woods was wonderful. I liked Marcus George. I liked—I'm trying to remember. You know, it's been so long ago. Jerry McConnell was the easiest guy in the world to work with. And, God, so many—like Bill Husted. He was a wild cat. He went out to Oregon or Washington. After Oregon, I think he started working for [an] advertising company.

JM: Yes, Harry and David, or something.

FM: Yes.

JM: Like that, yes. He's at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* now.

FM: Oh, is he?

JM: Yes.

FM: Oh, he's back in the newspaper business?

JM: Yes, he got back in the newspaper business. Bill writes a technology column. Apparently he's a real specialist in computers and everything, and I think he may

even be syndicated. He's done well. So, how long were you at the *Democrat*, Fred?

FM: I was there until the fall of 1975.

JM: You were there until 1975?

FM: Or 1976, I can't even remember.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: Wait, it was the fall of 1976.

JM: Okay, this may be a good place to take a little break here and I want to check and make sure that I'm getting all this on tape. Hold on just a minute.

FM: All right.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Okay, let's start up again here with Fred Morrow. What did you do? Where did you go when you left the *Democrat*, Fred?

FM: I went to the *Rocky Mountain News*.

JM: The *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver, Colorado.

FM: Denver, Colorado.

JM: And what did you . . . ?

FM: It was the morning paper.

JM: And what—it was the morning paper? What did you do there?

FM: Yes. Actually, when I went there, I covered the [Denver] Broncos [professional football team].

JM: Did you? Okay.

FM: I was hired to become the sports editor, but when I got there—well, you know, things change, and pretty soon I was covering the Broncos. I covered them one year. Then I worked in features and then I did a column—a page one type column while there—that was on the inside because it was a tabloid, it wasn't a . . .

JM: Yes.

FM: I did that for a year. I went back and forth.

JM: What happened on the sports editor job?

FM: You know, I don't know. They gave it to somebody else. The politics were kind of strange there. The guy in my corner, Tom Gavin, was the editor. He left. He got in the—he didn't like it. He went to Washington, D.C., and wrote a column. I don't [know] whether it was syndicated, or whose—so I don't think it was with the [*News*]. He left, and so right after I got there, things started changing. It was all [in] an uproar. Michael Howard was the main editor, and he was one of the owners of the [Scripps-Howard chain]. He was into problems, and it was kind of an upheaval, but at that time we—I'll give them credit, the *News* was way behind the [*Denver Post*] and we were just kicking them. It was sort of like the *Democrat* and the *Gazette* all over again. Although I didn't stay for that final triumph of the *Democrat*. I did miss where they overtook the *Gazette* and, I guess, forced them to surrender?

JM: Yes, sort of did, yes.

FM: The *News* just rocketed past the *Post*. Maybe part of it was that Michael was a lot like Gene Foreman; he brought in a lot of these young kids that raised hell. I

guess people that read the newspapers kind of like that, you know. It's often said that maybe I'm not reading the establishment paper. It was the same scenario, really, and pretty soon the *News* had rocketed past the *Post*. Part of that probably was because the *Post* was an afternoon paper, and those afternoon papers were dying like crazy. So, you know, I feel like every paper I went to just sort of beat the other one. [Laughs]

JM: Of course the *Democrat* eventually switched to morning, too.

FM: Right.

JM: How long were [you] at the *Rocky Mountain News*?

FM: I was there until [the] fall of 1985.

JM: Yes, then what did you do after that?

FM: I just sort of kicked around [for] a couple of years. I sort of was playing the dogs [Greyhounds]. I'd had a little money I'd won, and about two years—or actually about three or four years, [I spent] just messing around. I had a lot of money. I had written a gambling column for the *Rocky Mountain News* for two or three years and, of course, I made friends with all those gamblers. [Laughs]

JM: Yes, when you say gambling, you're talking about racing gambling or all kinds of gambling?

FM: Well, they gambled on anything, but mainly these were dog players. I got to know all the big dog bettors in America. Many of them came to Denver in the summer.

JM: Okay, so they have a big dog track out there?

FM: Well, the dog business is now finished, but then they did. The dog business is just hanging on in Colorado—too many Lottos and casinos. They don't handle anything anymore. I used to—I can remember Saturday nights in Loveland, they used to handle—I can remember when they handled over \$1 million on Saturday night. Now they handle about \$150,000.

JM: Oh, is that right? That's Pari-Mutuel [Wagering] you're talking about?

FM: Yes. You can see the state of that business.

JM: Yes. I thought about that for some reason, and I was kind of halfway keeping up with you—I thought it was horse racing that you were doing, but it was dog racing.

FM: No, I did both.

JM: Oh, did you?

FM: I also covered—there was a horse track at that time called Centennial, now called Arapaho Park. But, yes, I did that, too.

JM: Okay. I thought so. That was Centennial?

FM: Yes.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: They went out of business and they reopened as Arapaho Park.

JM: Yes, so what—you wrote—you wrote columns about the . . .

FM: Not only did I write columns, I made picks every day—dogs and horses.

[Laughs]

JM: So, you also had the morning line, so to speak.

FM: I had the morning line. I wrote gambling columns. I did that for probably five years.

JM: Yes, yes, okay. Did you enjoy that?

FM: It was all right, but I enjoyed that game. I mean [sports reporter and writer Damon] Runyon was right—all horse players die broke. [Laughs] I don't know. It was fun. I still do it.

JM: It's a hard way to make a living, though, isn't it?

FM: You can't make a living. They tax you twice.

JM: Okay.

FM: You're taxed before you bet, and if you hit a ticket big enough, you're taxed again.

JM: Okay. Did you get back to working in newspapers for a while?

FM: In 1989, I went to the *Pueblo Chieftain*. There was a kid down there who was the editor, and he was a big fan of mine when I worked at the *Rocky Mountain News*. I'm so old now, I forget all the names, but he is now working at Pittsburgh at the paper as editor. His name is Simonich. Milo Simonich. He said, "Come down here, we'd like to have you." I went down there [and] had a wonderful time, spent three years there. Pueblo is a town of 100,000. It's sort of isolated in the southern Colorado desert and it [the newspaper] just controls the town. There's no voice—there's no real radio or TVs and they get their television out of Colorado Springs. So, they practically elect who they want. It's a very powerful []. It's a town of 100,000 and their circulation is, like, 60,000. I mean, they almost just completely cover that. Of course, they also circulate all through

southern Colorado. From Lamar all the way over to Alamosa. They have a big circulation area. They go all over southern Colorado. I had a great time there.

It's a wonderful town and I did a lot—mainly just features—and there was a lot of fun.

JM: What all did you do there?

FM: Mainly features, but I would cover murder trials.

JM: These weren't just sports features.

FM: Oh, I wasn't in sports at all.

JM: You weren't in sports at all, okay.

FM: I did features. I'd cover a murder trial. Of course, it's a union town, so the pay is really good. It was a steel mill town—a union town. Outside of the Denver papers, Pueblo is the only other paper in Colorado that has a union. The pay was good, and it was a nice town. It had a nice ethnic mix. It was Mexican and Italian and those Slovenians that had come over to work in the steel mill. They call them “Bo-johns.” So, we had that mix with us gringos. It was good to have that ethnic mix.

JM: Yes. Then you left there and went to Loveland.

FM: I left there to come to Loveland because during my days of writing columns I befriended the owner of the track up here. He went back in greyhound racing so far that he was in it when it was like a traveling carnival. You'd go to the county, give the sheriff some money, set up your board and your track, and run until the local citizenry would complain. Then you'd pack up and leave. [Laughs] He went back before it was legal. It didn't become legal until, like, 1931, and he was

doing it in the 1920s. His name was Jack Donahue, and he was a real estate genius. Anytime he'd make money at the track, he would buy real estate.

Another gambler told me that during World War II it seemed like Jack owned half of Miami, Florida. Anyway, he called me, and he wanted me—we'd become good friends—he wanted me to be the manager. The general manager was getting ready to retire. I was there for two or three years. I was helping run the computer room. I was the assistant racing secretary, just working and getting the feel of the business. Then Jack died. He was ninety-three when he died, and the minority owners threw his wife out. They saw their chance because Jack had been "the man." So, [when the] man went, the whole place rebelled. When that happened, I was out, too. Then I came in here one time to eat Mexican food and I saw Adelita Maria Cordova Chavez, and pretty soon we were holding hands. [Laughs] So, I've been waiting tables and bar tending and fry cooking and doing whatever she wants. She has a tremendous business here. [On] Friday and Saturday nights the wait is two hours.

JM: Is that right? What's the name of her place?

FM: Adelita's in Loveland, Colorado.

JM: I may have to come out there and eat sometime.

FM: Yes, you won't be disappointed.

JM: Yes, okay. I love Mexican food.

FM: You'll like this.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: And the margaritas are great, too.

JM: I love margaritas, too. [Laughter]

FM: I've been here since 1995 or 1996, I don't remember. In that interim, I did work for the *Denver Post* for a few years.

JM: Yes, I was going to ask you about that. You were a stringer for the *Post*?

FM: Yes. [I] mainly covered the University of Wyoming, football and basketball.

JM: Yes, Okay.

FM: You know, they're close, so it's not that far from Denver, about 110-120 miles, but, of course, part of that is the toughest miles you'll ever drive—especially in the winter.

JM: Yes, I bet in the winter.

FM: I covered [the University of] Northern Colorado, [Greeley], every once in a while when they'd get something going. They won a couple of division II national football titles. I did some of that for them, too. And I'd do a feature for them every once in a while.

JM: You still doing any of that?

FM: No. In the last couple of years, I have gotten down to doing the restaurant business.

JM: This is a little bit [of a] change of pace here, but where did you develop your style? How did you develop your style? I'll always remember you as a very literate and usually a lot of humor and everything, but . . .

FM: Well, I think I'm like everybody at that age at that time. I think almost all of us at least read other papers. Almost all of us tried to copy Jim Murray. I would say that. I don't think I would have the same style now—well, I haven't written a

column in a long time. When you're covering stuff, you just try to get the score right then, but later, as time went on—to me, Red Smith was the guy. To me, he was by far the best sports columnist of the last century—at least since World War II.

JM: Yes, yes.

FM: I don't want to go back to Damon Runyon or Ring Lardner or anybody like that.

JM: Well, that's pretty far back.

FM: Yes, let's don't go that far back.

JM: Yes.

FM: Just after World War II, I think that . . .

JM: Yes. I think I met Red Smith one time, and he was a great writer.

FM: Oh, I met him a number of times.

JM: Did you?

FM: Oh, yes. Don't you remember near the end before I left, you had me on that beat where I was going out to the Super Bowls and Masters [golf tournaments] and wherever? Remember that—I was just freelancing out? We were covering those national events.

JM: Yes, yes. I remember that. Yes.

FM: Yes. I remember [in 1975] I went to the Super Bowl between [the] Pittsburgh [Steelers] and Minnesota [Vikings] in New Orleans. We had no connection there.

JM: Yes, well you did a hell-of-a-job.

FM: But that was a funny thing at that Super Bowl. After the game and all that—and interviews—you went back to the hotel to write the story. I went in there. Jim

Murray came in, and he was writing his column for [the] *LA Times*. He sat down and wrote that thing in about ten minutes, got up, and at that time they were still handling copy and people were sending copy. He handed his copy to one of the copy boys and that was it. I went, “Wow!” [Laughs]

JM: Geez.

FM: I mean, he came down, banged it out, and got up and left.

JM: He maybe had it in his mind before he got there.

FM: Oh, yes. He had his own little gag structure.

JM: Yes, he did.

FM: He had his thing going.

JM: Sort of like Mickey Herskowitz. Did you know Mickey?

FM: I’ve met him, but I didn’t really know him.

JM: Mickey used to have this notebook in which he thought of all these really clever leads and everything, you know.

FM: Yes, somebody told me that. He wrote them all down.

JM: He’d write them down, and then he’d get to the game or something, and he’d start flipping through that notebook looking for one that fit. [Laughter]

FM: That’s a good idea.

JM: Yes, it was.

FM: Once you get past that lead, you can pretty well go on. Especially if it’s a good lead.

JM: Yes, that’s right. When you were at the *Democrat*—to go back again—any of the particular people that worked in sports that you recall? What they were like?

FM: Oh, yes. Well, I thought they had talent for kids, like John Bloom. I thought he had talent, and everybody knew that. He'd won that scholarship—the Grantland Rice Scholarship at Vanderbilt [University, Nashville, Tennessee]. There's only one kid in America that gets that every year, right?

JM: Right. Right.

FM: He was kind of a shy type [of] boy, but he was a nice kid. His parents were wonderful people.

JM: Yes.

FM: And there was John Brummett. He was a big, bumbling sort of guy. He got good. I remember when he started, he was just so bad. I would say [that] John—he worked at it and he got good. I don't know what he does [now].

JM: Yes. He writes a political column now, [and] has really made a name for himself.

FM: Teri Thompson had a world of ability.

JM: Yes, she did.

FM: She seems to be doing good.

JM: Was she working at the *Post* or the *Rocky Mountain News*?

FM: She worked at the *Rocky* [*Mountain News*].

JM: Did she, okay.

FM: She came out there and got a job at the *Colorado Springs Gazette*.

JM: Oh, okay.

FM: She later brought Ralph Routon out there—[he] had been my correspondent out of Fayetteville, you know.

JM: Yes.

FM: Do you remember that?

JM: Yes.

FM: She brought him out there, and he became the sports editor.

JM: Yes.

FM: He was the sports editor for years.

JM: I think after you left I hired Ralph as the sports editor of the *Democrat*.

FM: Oh, you did?

JM: Yes, and he didn't stay very long but he went to . . .

FM: I thought Wally Hall replaced me.

JM: No, I didn't hire Wally Hall. [Laughs] You know better than that.

FM: Yes. We'll let that go.

JM: But at any rate, then Ralph came out to Colorado Springs, and I guess he was the sports editor there for a while. You were working at Denver?

FM: Ralph was probably the sports editor almost twenty years.

JM: Yes, I think so.

FM: He got caught in some upheaval and they were moving him out of the sports editor position. He took some job at [a] little paper in Florida.

JM: Yes, that's what I've heard and I haven't been able to run him down. Somebody told me they thought maybe he was at Fort Myers.

FM: You know, that's the ideal spot for him to get old like that. Get you a nice little paper where there's not that angst, you know?

JM: Yes, right, right.

FM: Ralph's probably having a good time down there [in the] warm weather.

JM: You knew Jim Lassiter was at the *Democrat* when you were.

FM: I hired him from the *Gazette*.

JM: Did you, okay.

FM: I thought he wrote the best locker room stories. That's why I hired him to do the main locker room stories for the Razorback games. I wasn't crazy about him [as a columnist], but he had the ability to go in[to] the locker room and get a good story out of there. That can be just—the pressure of that—I thought he was very good at that.

JM: Yes.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: Here we are again, side two of this tape with Jerry McConnell with Fred Morrow. Did you run into Lassiter any after he went to work at Colorado Springs?

FM: Yes, I ran into him occasionally.

JM: Yes, of course, you know he died.

FM: Yes, oh, yes. I covered a few [United States] Air Force games and I'd see him down there. I saw him at a couple of [Denver Nuggets professional basketball] games because sometimes I'd be called in to do a game.

JM: Yes, yes.

FM: So, yes. I remember Bob Merrick was on the desk.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: He was like the original hippie when I hired him.

JM: Yes.

FM: He later tried to get me a job. He went out of his way. He later shaved and married, and—oh, he looked like a Brooks Brothers advertisement.

JM: Oh, really?

FM: He got me an interview at the *Kansas City Star* to be a columnist. He was the head desk man there. I flew out there. It didn't work out. I didn't have a good feeling about it. The editor was from England and I . . .

JM: Yes, I think maybe he's still at the *Kansas City Star*. I've been trying to track him down and somebody told me he was still there.

FM: Who, Bob Merrick?

JM: Yes.

FM: He straightened up and married. He married a woman that, I think, had some kids. He became the super father. They lived out in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, or one of those suburbs.

JM: Yes. Well, that's great. Yes.

FM: He's just completely different. Remember when he started there? He was just like a hippie.

JM: Oh, yes, yes. I know.

FM: He even had the mannerism. He was laid back.

JM: Yes, he was a good make up man, though.

FM: Yes, he was.

JM: Yes.

FM: He was good at make up.

JM: Yes, lay out—but, Fred, anything else you remember in particular about your *Democrat* days?

FM: No, I just—you know, it's like life. All you remember mainly are those bits and pieces. They make up the big picture. It's that. Really, I liked everybody, and I had to fire two or three people, but that was because, you know, Foreman insisted. I always felt bad about that because I never thought they really deserved it. I mean, they weren't good, either, but yet they probably weren't any worse than some of the others we kept.

JM: Yes, yes.

FM: No, just a number of those death threats I used to get. [Laughs]

JM: Number of death threats?

FM: Yes.

JM: Did you get some of those?

FM: From those Arkansas people.

JM: Oh, really?

FM: Oh, yes, stuff like that. But, you know, you're young. I wasn't too far removed from Vietnam, so I really wasn't scared. Today I'd be scared to death of all that.

JM: Yes, that was because you might have written an anti-Broyles or an anti-Razorback column?

FM: That's an interesting thing about Broyles—you know, in 1969, which was his watershed game—that Texas [football] game [against] Arkansas. I was still at Pine Bluff, but I covered that game. They outplayed Texas. They dominated Texas and Royal [Darrell Royal, coach of the University of Texas Longhorns

from 1956 to 1976] went on that fourth [down] and one [yard] long pass and he said, “I just decided to roll the dice.” Broyles never recovered from that. He never did. The next year Texas just destroyed them. And two or three years later, he had Joe Ferguson, who he had recruited as the greatest passing quarterback of that high school class in the nation.

JM: Yes.

FM: His senior year, he had Joe Ferguson running the wishbone. Do you remember that? Trying to copy Texas.

JM: Yes.

FM: And I thought, “My God.” Later John Ralston, who was the Denver Broncos coach when I came to Denver, told a group of us, “If we had drafted Joe Ferguson, I think we’d have won the Super Bowl.” He was really a big Ferguson fan, John Ralston.

JM: Yes. Well, he could throw the ball.

FM: It’s just sad, you know. I was probably unfair to Broyles, but he was unfair to me. [Laughs] It was all good fun. It’s just sports, Jerry, golly. I know with some of those people it’s now a religion. People like me are gone, I think, because of ESPN [Entertainment & Sports Programming Network], you know. ESPN so dominates sports, and I think it has become almost [too] serious. People that are in the writing industry now want to be in broadcast[ing], you know? When I started, sports broadcasters were made fun of. Now, all the writers want to be in TV or radio.

JM: Yes.

FM: I guess they can see where newspapers are headed.

JM: Yes.

FM: You know, you sometimes have to live with those cultures. You hear newspaper writers use words like “were” for “was” and other grammatically incorrect words. If I was an editor of a paper, I wouldn’t want this guy out there talking.

JM: [Laughs] Yes.

FM: *The New York Times*, I think, doesn’t let their people do that sort of stuff.

JM: I don’t believe they do, either. I’m not sure.

FM: It’s more like, “You either work for us, or forget it.”

JM: Yes.

FM: I think instead of making papers look good—I think it makes papers look bad.

JM: Yes. Do you know—I’m trying to remember the story. You were talking about that Texas game. They were going to have a reunion this year at Fayetteville.

FM: The 1969 team?

JM: Yes. The two 1969 teams—they were going to invite Texas players.

FM: Oh, my.

JM: They were going to invite Texas players and Arkansas players and they were going to have them down on the field at halftime, or something, and Broyles wouldn’t let them do it.

FM: Is that right?

JM: Yes. He refused.

FM: It still nags him then, doesn’t it?

JM: Oh, yes it does. So, they went ahead and had a dinner in downtown Fayetteville someplace. They all got together and there were quite a few of the Texas guys there, and a whole lot of the Arkansas guys. They didn't have a whole lot of kind things to say about John Franklin [Broyles].

FM: [Laughs]

JM: Yes, I'm sure it still nags him. You know, and that one call that he made—the third down, you know, and eight [yards] or something on the goal line and he could have played it safe. [He] had one of the best field goal kickers in the nation [and] could have kicked a field goal and would have been out ahead seventeen to seven, I think. And he threw a pass and got it intercepted.

FM: Oh, they were?

JM: Yes, they were ahead fourteen to seven. That would have made it seventeen to seven, and then they wound up getting beat fifteen to fourteen.

FM: Oh, yes, that's right.

JM: Yes, but at any rate.

FM: At any rate.

JM: Okay, well.

FM: I saw—just to sum this up today about news coverage—I saw—I was reading—this has been a couple, three years ago, whenever [sportswriter] Blackie Sherrod retired. Some AP [Associated Press] writer out of Dallas did a story, and he used a phrase about Blackie: “Well, Blackie is now leaving a business that's dominated by political correctness and grammatical incorrectness.” [Laughter] I thought that was a pretty good line.

JM: Yes, Blackie was [a] pretty good hand.

FM: Oh, yes.

JM: He was a great hand.

FM: See, I grew up there with all those old Texas guys like him and Dan Cook and, oh, I can't remember all of them. A guy from Fort Worth.

JM: Yes.

FM: They were all good old hands. They were good journalists.

JM: Yes, well, let's see. I don't remember whether Dan Jenkins was there. He might have been with *Sports Illustrated*.

FM: He was with *Sports Illustrated*. I mean, he was around every once in a while.

JM: Yes, yes. Anything else you—well, let me ask one question. The *Gazette*, what did you—you said they were a better paper. [Did] anything in particular impress you about the *Gazette*'s coverage at that time?

FM: Oh, they just had some good writers. Jim Bailey was a good writer.

JM: Yes.

FM: And Orville. Orville just dominated it because he got all the inside information. He knew the thing. He knew what he was doing. And who's that guy used to write a column—Aldridge? What was his name? This wasn't in sports, it was like a page one.

JM: Allbright?

FM: Oh, yes, Charlie Allbright.

JM: Charlie Allbright, yes.

FM: I thought he used to write the funniest little columns. You know, they were light. They weren't anything serious. But the *Gazette* had it over us in [that] mainly they had a lot of seasoned veterans. We were a bunch of kids just stumbling along trying to—half of us were probably trying to think how we could get a job selling insurance and the other half thinking, “How can I get a job with the *Washington Post*?” We were just sort of stumbling through.

JM: Yes, yes.

FM: We had something they didn't have. We had nothing to lose, basically. We were way below them and we had a lot more energy.

JM: Yes, yes. Any particular stories that you remember that you tried that you thought worked, or anything?

FM: I remember one time we decided to go with that story that Arkansas hired [basketball coach Bill] Guthridge from [the University of] North Carolina, [Chapel Hill], to replace Lanny Van Eman. You remember that? We decided to go with it.

JM: That they'd hired who?

FM: Bill Guthridge. I thought to myself, “We went to him without talking about that with Broyles, and if he sees this he will deliberately hire somebody else.”

JM: [Laughs]

FM: I always wondered if he'd actually hired Guthridge and then later called him and said, “No, this paper says you're being hired so I've got [to] hire somebody else.” They hired Eddie Sutton.

JM: Yes. I'd forgotten that, but that's one time he did hire a good guy though—good hand.

FM: Oh, yes. I remember Eddie had been there about a week and [he] came to the *Democrat* one day. I was coming out of the building. He came over and said, "Are you Fred Morrow?" I said, "Yes." He grabbed my hand and started pumping it, and he said, "I need all the help I can get from you." [Laughs] Eddie knew how to do it.

JM: That was refreshing.

FM: Yes, he was out on the beat. But, you know, he took that first team and had that little old skinny white kid from Cave City, Arkansas, and they had a tremendous record.

JM: Yes.

FM: At Arkansas. I thought, "Well this guy is going to win here as soon as he gets some players." He was winning with guys that weren't much better than me. I think his name was Metcalf. I mean, he was a good shooter, but he really had no great athletic ability.

JM: Yes.

FM: I thought, "If he can win with this kid, then, man." And he got some players. Then he had the luck of those three kids, you know, that came at the same time.

JM: The triplets, yes.

FM: The triplets, and once you have fallen into that . . .

JM: Brewer, Moncrief and what . . .

FM: Delph? They all happened to come to Arkansas. Of course, he had to recruit them, but he did. [Editor's note: The "triplets" were Sidney Moncrief, Ron Brewer, and Marvin Delph, members of the University of Arkansas Razorback basketball team.]

JM: Yes, yes. I covered Eddie about a year or two before I retired while he was at Oklahoma State. You know, after he went to Oklahoma State, he did a hell-of-a-job out there. He was a hell-of-a-coach.

FM: You know, I remember when Desha Central had all those Jones boys and Arkansas State had Caldwell Jones. He played in that state tournament against a bunch of little white guys from Pyatt.

JM: Yes.

FM: And they fouled Caldwell out. He had four fouls [during] the first three minutes.

JM: Is that right?

FM: They had to put him on the bench. He later fouled out. I remember that [Desha Central] team—there was no way he was staying in this state. So, you know, things happen.

JM: Yes.

FM: You know, I love Arkansas. One of my great-grandfathers was a woodsman in the Marshall area in the 1830s. Another great-grandfather crossed over from Mississippi after the Civil War and settled in Watson, that's a small southeastern Arkansas town not far from Dumas. I root for them. You know, I like to see them do well, but, once again, Broyles made a terrible decision to go to the Southeast Conference. If he would have just held on, he would have been the one

instead of Baylor in the Big 12. Do you think that's where they're suited, in the Big 12?

JM: Sure, I think it is. I'm glad to find somebody else that thinks that.

FM: Well, my God, geographically they're up there, but Texas was always the big rival when I was there.

JM: Yes, it still is. People still go ape over Texas.

FM: Right, instead of Mississippi, right?

JM: Yes, they played Texas in the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] baseball tournament last week, and people were just gaga over that game, you know. Plus, it's so close—it's not very far to Oklahoma State and Oklahoma and Kansas or Missouri.

FM: It's all right there. Those are within driving distance. You could just drive up there.

JM: Oh, yes. I think that was a big mistake. I think they should have stayed in the Southwest conference and became the Big 12.

FM: If they would have replaced Baylor, that would have made it even stronger.

JM: Yes, yes. They'd have been a heck of a conference, too.

FM: Somebody was telling me the other day, "Well, maybe they'll kick Baylor out." I said, "I don't think so." Now, you know, they won the national title with the women. That sort of gives them a little staying power.

JM: Yes, yes. And they're—of course, they've done well at track.

FM: Right, oh, yes.

JM: Fred, anything else you can think of we need to add to this?

FM: No.

JM: Fred, it's been great.

FM: Well, Jerry. I hope everything is well and you and Jo are doing fine and all that.

JM: Well, the same to you and I hope we get to see each other again one of these days.

FM: Yes, if you're ever out this way. I don't know how long I'll be here. I tend to move around a lot, but I've been here ten years. If you're ever in this area, come by and I'll buy you dinner and some margaritas.

JM: That'd be terrific. You know where—you got my telephone number and everything.

FM: I've got your telephone number.

JM: . . . and e-mail, so keep me posted.

FM: Okay.

JM: Okay.

FM: Have a good day.

JM: Okay, Fred, thanks a lot.

FM: You bet. Bye.

JM: Bye.

[End of Interview Session]

[Beginning of Interview Session Two]

JM: I'm [here] again with Fred Morrow. This is June 19, [2005], and, Fred, I had a couple of questions that I should've followed up on earlier. One of them simply was that you went three and half years to the University of Missouri and you dropped out at that point. Is that correct?

FM: That's right.

JM: Yes, okay. When you dropped out, you got drafted, right?

FM: That's right. Anybody who dropped out—your local county selective service board got word immediately. [Laughter]

JM: Yes.

FM: I was gone a couple of months later.

JM: Yes, okay. So, you got sent to Vietnam and you were in the First Air Cavalry. Is that correct?

FM: Yes, the First Air Cavalry.

JM: Yes.

FM: We just called it the First Cav.

JM: Yes, okay. But you were telling me earlier that out of what should have been forty-eight in your platoon, only four of you made it all the way through one year of service. Can you talk a little bit about that? Tell me where you were in that year and how much action you were in.

FM: The base camp was in An Khe [Vietnam] and we were in Pleiku [Vietnam] a lot and that area, but being Air Cav.—that was sort of a revolutionary division in which helicopters for the first time became like horses in the old days. We were all over the place. We'd just jump in those 'copters [helicopters] and take off. We were riding them almost every day, really, looking for somebody to shoot.

JM: Looking for the enemy?

FM: Yes, and so that was it. I do have a story. We were in the An Lao Valley one time, [and] I'm not sure where that is. It's spelled A-N L-A-O.

JM: A-N L-A-O?

FM: Yes, two words. A-N L-A-O.

JM: Yes, okay.

FM: [We] took some heavy casualties over there. Our battalion commander told us that the Americans had never been in that area, so it was not going to be any fun. Anyway, a company out of—one of our companies got pinned down one night and got slaughtered there—was getting slaughtered—and so we went in the next morning to try to relieve them and see how many we could get out. I happened to be on the point as we were going in. They [the North Vietnamese] had basically left, but they'd left a lot of snipers back there in the trees, so we were drawing a lot of sniper fire. A kid next to me got killed. I remember that. He got shot right in the chest, and you never forget that because when a bullet hits, it makes that “thump” sound. It's a sound you never forget. So, it wasn't not a fun time, but suddenly I heard this guy yelling, “Come on you s.o.b.s,” [sons of bitches] “Let's go, let's get up here on the line.” I looked over, and he was walking right next to me, and it was a Colonel. And this was like, wow! Colonels were not up there. I mean, they were always five miles back.

JM: Yes.

FM: Anyway, it wasn't my battalion commander. It was Colonel Moore, who had a reputation. Everybody knew about him because he was gung-ho, but he's the guy who later wrote that book and made a movie of it. It was maybe part of his battalion that we were rescuing. They just made that movie a couple—three years

ago. *We Were Soldiers Once. . . and Young*. [Editor's note: The colonel was Harold G. "Hal" Moore, who later became a general.]

JM: Oh, is that right, okay.

FM: I didn't see it, but he wrote a book.

JM: Yes.

FM: I learned one thing from that lesson. Combat is all about leadership, so if you've got some Colonel out there saying, "Come on," then everybody's coming on, you know? If he was willing to die, then why not us? I do remember that.

JM: You were in action quite a bit throughout that year, then?

FM: Yes, I remember one time reading in the—they had a little paper they put out every so often—that we were in constant combat one time for thirty-seven straight days. We made contact with the enemy for thirty-seven straight days. That's a long time, believe me.

JM: Yes, I can believe it.

FM: That'll drive you crazy, like [being] as scared as I was. I don't want anybody to think I was war hero, but I was around—a few I know that—but unfortunately they're all dead, I think.

JM: Yes, okay. Did you win any medals?

FM: Oh, yes, you know, just the general stuff. I never got wounded or anything. I didn't want any of those kinds of medals.

JM: Yes. Didn't want a purple heart?

FM: I got a combat infantry badge and a letter of commendation from the president.

[Laughs] You know, that kind of stuff. But the combat infantry badge—it means

you've been under fire when you get that. I got one medal. I don't have any of them, but one medal I got was a medal from the South Vietnamese Government. Is that a tribute of peace? I mean, since the government hasn't existed for a long time. [Laughter]

JM: Yes, I don't know. What rank were you?

FM: Most of the time I was an E-4, which is a specialist fourth class, and in the old days it would have been a corporal. But I made sergeant at the end. Actually, I would have made staff sergeant if I re-upped, but I thought, "Gee, are you kidding me? You've got to be kidding me." I'll never forget that—and a \$5,000 bonus, which was a lot of money in those days.

JM: Yes.

FM: I mean, it's not worth your life for that.

JM: No, no.

FM: They made me an E-5 and cut orders, but I don't know. I was gone. I don't know if that ever went through.

JM: What weapon did you carry?

FM: I was—for a while I was an M-60 machine gunner. I carried an M-60 machine gun and then [I was] a grenadier [and] I carried a grenade launcher. It's a little launcher—you put a grenade in it and it launches it out. When you carry the grenade launcher, you also carry a .45 [caliber] pistol. If you get in close, the grenade launcher is no good. So, you have to have some in-close firepower.

JM: Yes.

FM: Well, a grenade launcher might be okay, but you'll blow yourself up.

JM: [Laughs]

FM: You can't promise.

JM: Oh, geez. Okay. What was it you were telling me, that your first sergeant was telling you? What was that comment about the First Cav.—the first in, or something?

FM: What?

JM: Well, you were saying that your sergeant—when you were leaving, I think . . .

FM: He said [that] out of the forty-eight who went over as strike force—and an army platoon is forty-eight people. There were eleven to a squad, then there's the t-sergeant, the medic, the radio guy and the platoon leader, who was usually a second lieutenant. Those are—that would be forty-eight, that's a strike force.

JM: Yes, yes. So, he said only four of you made it all the way through?

FM: Yes. For the whole year. Not that everybody was killed. Some were wounded and some got malaria. And I think some were—their times were up, you know, and they just went back. There were only four of us [left], that's what he said.

JM: Yes. All kinds of weather, I guess, while you were there?

FM: Oh, yes, yes. Blistering heat, and we were in a monsoon for a month. That was no fun. It was a monsoon. You know, I've never been as cold and miserable in my life as I was that monsoon season.

JM: Well, it's like—I guess it was like combat—it just—it didn't ease up. You just kept getting it day after day.

FM: Yes, it was just a terrible thing, really. Especially when you were out in the woods, because you were on two hours, [then] you were off two hours. You had

to stand guard so you never got any sleep. Then when you got wet, you couldn't get dry. You learned to always keep your socks up around your chest—tried to keep them dry when you were trying to sleep. The main thing was to keep your socks dry.

JM: I can understand why you weren't exactly running out to re-up when you got out.

FM: Oh, Lord, no. We all knew—I think most of us—that this was a bullshit war. We knew that by 1966. You know, you went out. When we went over there—they lied to us when we went over there—[they] said, “You'll just be support forces for the South Vietnamese Army.” That lasted about two months—less than that. The first mission we went on with them, all they'd do is go in these villages and steal all the chickens—tie them to their ammo [ammunition] belts and these chickens would be screaming and cackling and carrying on. That was all they were interested in. How many chickens they could steal. [Laughs]

JM: So, you went in, [and] your first mission was to go in and get all the chickens.

FM: Yes, that was it. [To] see how many chickens you could steal.

JM: To deprive them of their food, I guess.

FM: Right, yes.

JM: Jesus.

FM: You can see how popular they were.

JM: [Laughs] Yes. I can imagine. Geez. That gives me some more insight into it. Then you came back and got discharged.

FM: Yes.

JM: Then you started work—was it Poplar Bluff?

FM: I had to go to work. I worked for the Railway Express. I worked in Lexington, Kentucky, [and] Jacksonville, Illinois, which is outside of St. Louis.

JM: Oh, okay.

FM: I ended up in Poplar Bluff at the Firestone Tire [and] Rubber Company and I took a job there. [My former wife] was a girl who didn't want to leave home. She's still there. [As] I told you, after that I had a cousin who was at Arkansas State.

JM: Yes, yes. And he told you there was an opening on the . . .

FM: He was working on his masters in education, but he was also taking some journalism classes. And he saw on the board—they posted a job on the board about a sports writer for the *Pine Bluff Commercial*. That's how it all began.

JM: That's how it all started? Okay.

FM: I moved down to Arkansas.

JM: Well, that fills me in a lot better. I feel a lot better about it now, Fred. I needed some extra detail on that. Yes, okay got it. Well, I feel lots better about this. You filled me in on some good stuff there. I think that's in good shape, and I'm going to send this tape off tomorrow, Fred. I really appreciate it.

FM: Yes, Jerry, it's always a pleasure to talk to you. Jo sounded perky and in good spirits and everything.

JM: Yes, oh, yes. She's doing just fine. She's plugging along.

FM: All these years you haven't worn her down. [Laughs]

JM: No, not yet. It may be the other way around.

FM: Oh. [Laughs]

JM: Everything is going good. But at any rate, I'll keep in touch, Fred, and you do the same.

FM: Okay. Have a good evening.

JM: Okay, and thanks a lot.

FM: You bet, thanks.

JM: Bye.

[Tape Stopped]

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Brenna Drindak]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]