

Gazette Project

Interview with

C. P. [Pat] Crow
Wasatch Railroad Station, New York
3 April 2001

Interviewer: Jim Barden

Jim Barden: This is Jim Barden, and I am talking with Pat Crow on April 3, 1901. And we are . . .

CC: 1901?

JB: Excuse me! [Laughter] That's 2001. I am a little discombobulated here. We are sitting in a car outside the Wasatch Railroad Station in almost upstate New York, but that's the only place we could find on this beautiful morning. Pat, let's get started. Give me a little history of your background. I believe you're a native of Arkansas?

CC: Yes, I was born in Jonesboro, July 14, 1938--Bastille Day to the French. Moved to Little Rock with my family when I was, I guess, probably three. I grew up there and went to Central High School. I graduated from Central High the year before, I guess, or maybe two years before--I graduated in 1956, and I guess it was 1957 when Orval Faubus called out the National Guard, later federalized by President Eisenhower, because of the eight or nine black kids who were going to integrate Central High. I went to the University of Arkansas for two years, at Fayetteville. That really was pretty much the only University of Arkansas at that time. They didn't really have the Little Rock campus. I think it was still Little

Rock University or maybe junior college even. And, after two years at the University of Arkansas, I went to the University of Missouri for two more years, at Columbia, Missouri. I went to Europe after that for a few months of bumming around, pretending to be Ernest Hemingway, and then came back and went to work for--my first newspaper job out of college was for the *Arkansas Democrat*, which was a really terrible paper. I had wanted to work for the *Gazette*, but there was nothing open at that time. The *Democrat* had fairly frequent openings. It seemed like almost anybody who wanted a newspaper job could get one at the *Democrat* whether you--one guy came in there whose previous experience was as a used car salesman [laughs], and he became one of their better reporters. Not that he was good, but he was one of their better reporters. It was amazing, the level of professionalism and the level of competence, level of intelligence, even, between the two newspapers. There was simply no comparison. The *Democrat* was not a paper that had much pride in product, and the *Gazette* obviously did. The *Gazette* had, of course, won those two Pulitzer Prizes in, I guess it was, 1958?

JB: Yes.

CC: Yes. Was that the year they were awarded for the 1958 . . .

JB: They won in 1958 for the 1957 crisis.

CC: There were a lot of people--natives, but not necessarily natives--who were attracted to the *Gazette*. It was a paper that was very well put together. It was probably as good as a small city newspaper ever gets. It had its faults, I suppose,

but what newspaper doesn't? But I was attracted to it. I knew it had won the two Pulitzers. I knew that it was on the right side of the race relations question. The *Democrat* was manifestly on the wrong side. It benefitted from the *Gazette's* loss of advertising during the late 1950s with the integration crisis. But you picked up the *Gazette* in those days and there was just some very good work being done. There were a lot of people of considerable talent who passed through its doors. You were there at one point, and then you went to Rome. You became a *Times* man at some point in your life. Roy, of course, went to work for the *Times* in London, and I think he was in the New Orleans bureau, too. Buddy Portis. You know Buddy, right?

JB: Oh, yes.

CC: Bob Douglas was about as good as they get as the desk man. Bill Whitworth was there, who later went to the *New Yorker*--well, the *Herald-Tribune*, the *New Yorker*, and then the *Atlantic*. I was there. Pat Owens was there, who later became a columnist for *Newsday*.

JB: There was quite a bunch, and Gene Foreman. But let me ask . . .

CC: Gene Foreman, too.

JB: Let me back up just one moment here. I realize not much experience or background was needed for the *Democrat*, but did you major in journalism in college, or was it just your idea to work on newspapers?

CC: No. Well, I was sort of wedded to the idea of journalism and writing in general, but I had gone--I had transferred to the University of Missouri because I knew it

had a good journalism school, so I studied journalism and history there and took a lot of English classes as well. But, yes, I did study journalism.

[Tape Stopped]

CC: Where do we pick up here?

JB: We pick up where you did study journalism with the idea of going to work for a newspaper. So you were well qualified for the *Democrat* at that point. Did you go to work on the desk, or was it as a reporter?

CC: Well, everybody was well qualified to work for the *Democrat* at that point.

[Laughs] The lame, the halt, the blind. I went to work there--the *Democrat* was not as structured in terms of a newsroom as other places I subsequently encountered. I was working on the desk, so maybe I was the assistant wire editor. It was kind of a--you know, doing some rewrite. I'd edit the wire copy. Mostly that sort of stuff, working with the wire editor and filling in for him when he was on vacation or whatever. I also did some reporting. There was a very well known, for Arkansas in those days, election fraud suit that had erupted involving two counties, Lonoke and Des Arc. Those were the two county seats. I forget the--or maybe it was Hazen, not Des Arc. I forget the two counties involved, but there was an arrangement whereby in each session of the legislature, one county would nominate the state senator and then in the next session, the other county would nominate the state senator, which was an odd arrangement. I think that it evolved simply to avoid the sort of hideous infighting that went on in some quarters in Democratic politics in those days. Of course, there was no true

Republican politics in Arkansas--in 1960, we're talking about. I was dispatched to cover that election suit, which went on for weeks, and it was there that I started spending time with Roy Reed, who was covering it for the *Arkansas Gazette*. We had a great time listening to some of the stuff. There was a fight that broke out between one of the senatorial candidates and the newspaper publisher, a bloody nose and threats of lawsuits. At one point, it was discovered in, I guess it was Lonoke county, that--and these were all paper ballots, of course. There were no voting machines in Arkansas, and for the most part, not anywhere else in those days. But in one township, which Roy, in his copy, had called the "Magness Miracle," he recalled that eighty-five people had voted in alphabetical order. [Laughter] That was good Democratic politics in those days. But I covered that. I did some other reporting. I remember, at some point I was making, I believe, sixty dollars a week. I went to the managing editor and told him I thought I was doing pretty good work and that sixty dollars didn't seem to be a princely sum. You had to have a car in those days to work, and even at the price of cars in those days, sixty dollars didn't get you very far. He agreed that he would give me a raise of ten dollars a week. I mentioned this to one of the photographers, and he said, "That's more than the cumulative raises that I've gotten here in twenty years." [Laughter] About that time, I got a call--Patrick Owens had left the *Gazette* and was writing editorials in Pine Bluff, thirty miles south and east of Little Rock. I was approached by the publisher to go to work down there and, in fact, I pretty much accepted the job. Months before--I think when I was still in

New York after coming back from Europe, I had written a letter to the *Gazette*, which was still on file there. That would have been the spring of 1960, so now we come up to the fall of 1960, and I was about to go to work in Pine Bluff. A friend and fellow student at the University of Missouri, Ernest Dumas, was working at the *Gazette* at that time. I think it was Ernie who called and said that one of the copy desk people was leaving. So I called and went over and got an interview with, I guess, Bob Douglas, and was hired for the *Gazette* copy desk in November 1960, at twenty dollars more a week than I was making at the *Democrat*.

JB: Wow.

CC: I mean, that's eighty a month! [Laughs]

JB: Eighty a week you were making then, right?

CC: Yes. And the managing editor, Arlee Nelson, or A.R., or we all called him Nelson. You knew Nelson, of course. He probably hired you, too, didn't he?

JB: Yes, he did.

CC: Now, for the sort of income we were making, Nelson was probably making twenty-five thousand a year. I mean, he drove a Jaguar, [laughs] a gray Jaguar. But he used to give us fairly regular raises, not anything dramatic, but his favorite technique was to, you know, you'd go into the men's room and you'd be standing there at the urinal, and Nelson would sidle up to the other one, and in the middle of the business, he'd say, "Oh, by the way, you got an extra ten dollars in your pay check." [Laughs] I don't know why he chose that venue. Maybe there was

something about porcelain that he found alluring. But I think I got two or three raises from Nelson.

JB: All of them in the bathroom?

CC: While urinating. [Laughs] Yes. All of them in the bathroom. But I stayed at the *Gazette* for, I guess--I went in November and I left in November two years later, so I was there two years. Mostly on the copy desk. Not exclusively. I did some reporting, some feature writing for the city desk as well. Sometime in the fall of 1962, Gene Foreman, who had been the state editor at the *Gazette*, had--he had gone to the *Times*, and sometime in the fall of 1962 I was in touch with him. Or maybe even late summer. The *Times* was hiring people to staff its copy desks because they had, as I mentioned to you earlier, two editions other than the principal New York edition. One was a Paris edition and one a Los Angeles edition. This was before the days of high tech that made editing papers in other time zones a lot easier than it was then, but they were editing for Paris out of New York. They were editing for Los Angeles out of New York. And, of course, doing papers in different time zones has a lot of attendant problems, so they needed extra hands on the copy desk. Foreman had mentioned this to me either in a phone call or a letter, and I wrote a letter to Richard Burrit who, I guess, was the personnel guy. I don't remember. I think he was an assistant managing editor. Is that right?

JB: I think he was. I think it was just his title, but he was definitely the personnel manager. He was, at that point, the man that everyone went through. But let me

just--before you get into your career at the *Times*, let me ask you something about the *Gazette*. Now, Ernie Dumas--he was, you say, a friend and a colleague in college?

CC: Yes.

JB: I'm told that there were these embarrassments that you used to lead him through when you found--you were on the copy desk and you would stand up and call his errors to him across the city room. [Laughs] Have you forgotten that?

CC: I have no memory of that. I occasionally threw an eraser at people [laughs] and banged them in the head, whatever, maybe, and certainly not in the spirit of humiliation, but you know, of play. We were all having fun. We were young, and it was just great fun. It was a good time. No, I probably didn't--did Ernie tell you that? He probably made that up. [Laughs]

JB: I've heard this story that you used to embarrass Ernie by calling his errors to him across the city room.

CC: Ernie was easily embarrassed, in those days. You could say the word "sex," and he would blush. So maybe it's possible. I don't deny it, but I don't remember it.

JB: [Laughs] Okay.

CC: I sound like Bill Clinton.

JB: [Laughs] Who were some of the other colorful characters that you remember? Elia Kazan's son was there at the time you were. What was his name, Dan?

CC: Chris.

JB: Chris.

CC: Chris Kazan showed up in maybe 1961, I'm not sure what year. His father was a friend, somehow, of the Carter family in Mississippi, Hodding Carter, et cetera--at the *Delta Democrat-Times*, I believe it was.

JB: Yes.

CC: Chris had gone to Harvard and went off to, where was it? It was Greenville, Mississippi, if I am remembering correctly where the *Delta Democrat-Times* came out? Does that sound right?

JB: I believe that is right, but I'm not sure on that.

CC: I wouldn't swear to it, but I'm pretty sure. He showed up down there. He did not get a job--I think that was a smaller paper than the *Gazette*, even. And I guess one of the Carters, whomever Chris had talked to, said, "You might want to go up to Little Rock. They have a bigger paper up there." And I guess he figured that it would be ideologically, if that's the word--I hate to use that in newspapers, too--more to Chris's liking than a lot of other papers around in the South. Not that Carter paper because that was fairly liberal and a good paper. So Chris showed up and he was hired as--he was doing rewrites, obituaries, and sometimes working on the copy desk. He stayed there probably until about 1970, and then he moved up to his father's place in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. He died maybe--I don't think it's been ten years, but maybe it has--he smoked a pipe a lot, and he had cancer of the jaw. But he was there. He was a good addition to the staff. In small town newspapers, you don't get a lot of Harvard boys just dropping in. Usually they want to work for the *Times* or the *L.A. Times* or one of the news

weeklies or something like that, but Chris was there. And there was a contingent of really kind of classic, old-time newspaper guys. Deacon Parker. Do you remember Deacon?

JB: No, I don't remember him.

CC: He was on the copy desk.

JB: Who were some of the others?

CC: Oh, who else was there? Jim Clark was there at the time. The copy desk had a fairly high turnover. Bill Rutherford was on the copy desk and probably would have preferred not to be. He had medical career ambitions, and he dropped out. I think he's one of those people who never quite focused on exactly what his true calling was.

JB: Yes.

CC: But Deacon Parker was one of those very typical old copy desk guys. He drank too much. Nelson, the managing editor, would occasionally go rescue him from his rooming house. He lived in a cheap hotel or rooming house just a few blocks from the paper, and he would take his lunch breaks--or dinner breaks I guess they were--and go drink a pint of bourbon and come back. He was very funny, very witty, and I think, to some degree, in constant pain because he had broken his neck at some point and moved rather stiffly, kind of in Frankenstein fashion, and couldn't turn his head all the way. He had to turn his whole body like this when he'd talk to you. But Nelson rescued him from somewhere. I think he was in Pittsburgh at one point. He sent Nelson a telegram saying "I need to come home,"

and Nelson wired him the money to get him a bus ticket. He was still there when I left. There was a wonderful sports writer named Jim Bailey. He was very good in the sports department. I think Bailey was still there when the paper folded.

Did you know Jim?

JB: Yes, I did. I knew him very well.

CC: What is he up to?

JB: I don't know what. I understand that he's writing a column, or has been writing, a column that had several papers subscribed to it.

CC: Oh, he was a wonderful writer. The *Gazette* had a guy--I think he was a former professor, or maybe a practicing professor, named Leland DuVall who was a business or economics columnist. As lucid as they ever got, he could explain things that pipe smokers on *The New York Times* suffer through endlessly and never get quite clear. Leland was just one of the clearest thinkers I've ever encountered. It was a terrific atmosphere. A lot of young people, as I suggested, [were] attracted by the liberal politics, by the not exactly crusading nature-- because the *Gazette* would rather not have lost twenty percent of its advertising in those years, which would be true of any paper--but there was this spirit of excitement and competence, and we can really do good work. Of course, all of those who had been there before us had done really good work. It simply did not apply at places like the *Democrat*. I went to the *Herald-Tribune* after the *Times*, and, again, it was a paper that was suffering from a lack of imagination, and it was struggling and, of course, a lack of revenue, too, because it had chosen to

take a lot of advertising during the Second World War, and the *Times* had cut back its advertising in order to get more news. The *Tribune*, finally, was suffering. Well, actually, there was not really that much need for two kind of overlapping morning papers in New York City, particularly since people were beginning to get more and more of their news from television in those days, being the sixties. But the *Gazette* was a wonderful experience, I think a wonderful experience for everybody. Bill Whitworth, I mentioned, was a close friend and still is. He and I used to go to maybe get a little bite to eat after work, and we were sitting in the parking lot of a barbecue joint one night, and Bill said, "Do you read the *New Yorker*?" And I said, "Sure," and he said, "Why don't we go up there and go to work for it?" And I said, "Well, that's a great idea, Bill." And here we are sitting in this barbecue joint in North Little Rock, Arkansas. And he said, "We really ought to do that." And I said, "Okay." And, to my great surprise, within maybe five years of that evening, we were both at the *New Yorker*. Now, the odds that that could happen are fairly fantastic. But I went to the *Times*. Buddy Portis--Charles Portis to those listening to the tape for the first time, who had remarkable success as a novelist--had left the *Gazette* and gone to work for the *Herald-Tribune*, and he put in a word for Bill, and Bill came up. Bill was a wonderful writer. Very painstaking. It cost him--he was not somebody who wrote easily. He took great pains and suffered great anguish trying to get a sentence just right, but he had a wonderful touch. He came to work for the *Herald-Tribune*, which would have been, oh, I suppose 1965.

JB: Now, by that time you had left *The New York Times*?

CC: No, I came to the *Trib*. Bill was at the *Trib* when I came there.

JB: I see.

CC: It was in the summer of 1965, so he may have come in the winter of 1964, some time in there, anyway. He was a general assignment and feature writer for the *Trib*, and he met some people at the *New Yorker*. I have forgotten exactly how, but he began to talk to them about the *New Yorker*, and before the *Trib* folded, Bill had left. It folded in April of 1966. He had left the *Herald-Tribune* and gone to work for the *New Yorker*. I stayed until it folded. I took a job after it folded for six months writing press releases, press kits for Expo 1967, for the public relations firm in New York City that had the contract to do PR for Expo 1967, which was a Canadian venture in Montreal, as I suppose everybody knows. And during that period--before I left the *Times*, I had written a letter to the *New Yorker* and, with this great, princely sense of time that the magazine had, it took between--let's see, I left the *Times* in the summer of 1965, and I finally went to work for the *New Yorker* in the late spring or mid spring of 1967, so it was a year plus, almost a two-year process for that. I had one interview, and then six months later I had another one. I edited two articles for them on a sort of trial basis and, as I mentioned to you earlier . . .

JB: That was Mr. Shawn, right?

CC: The last interviews were with William Shawn, yes. But after I had edited the second article, he called and said it was very good work, and would I come in and

talk to him? Then ten minutes later he called back and said, "Oh, but there are no jobs here." And my immediate reaction--of course, one never spoke harshly to Mr. Shawn or even of him, but my immediate reaction, just to myself, was "Then why the hell are you calling me? Why do I want to come in?" But it was his way, I assume, of keeping me from talking about the possibility of getting a job there, because he was very secretive, and he wanted to keep the business of the magazine very private. But when I did go in to see him on a Tuesday, he did have a job. He offered me a job. I think he didn't know initially what to do with me. Most of the editors there were in their forties or older, and I was twenty--let's see--I guess I was twenty-eight when I was hired.

JB: Extremely young. By that time, how long had Whitworth been there?

CC: He had been there probably a year and a half. Close to a year and a half--writing strange profiles. In fact, I think Bill later mentioned to me--I didn't take credit for this--that the first profile he wrote was of a man who used to go around--his name was Homer Tomlinson, and he lived in Queens, and he used to go around proclaiming himself King of the World. He had some strange bishop's mitre and a kind of bishop's robe. If he was affiliated with any church, it was one that he had originated himself. He had come through Little Rock at some point. He would go from state to state, and he'd go up on the state capitol steps, and he had a portable throne. He would proclaim himself King of Arkansas, which--the state-to-state thing seemed a little bit redundant if you're King of the World already, but it didn't bother Homer. Some architect in Little Rock, as I recall,

showed up on the steps of the Capitol. His appearance had been publicized somehow or the other. Some architect showed up with his pet chimp and proclaimed her Queen of the World, which didn't deter the bishop. He was good spirited about all of this. But I had mentioned this to Bill at some point, and I said, "By the way, that King of the World is living out in Queens. That seems a strange venue for the King of the World. If you can have your choice, why not Luxembourg or who knows where? Lots of beautiful places." But Bill wrote a profile of him, and I think that was the first profile he did for William Shawn. I arrived there, and, as I was saying, they didn't really know quite what to do with me. Somebody told me that I was really supposed to kind of absorb the atmosphere of the place for a while, so I read manuscripts for Shawn. I read manuscripts from agents. I read a lot of the over-the-transom manuscripts, but I wasn't allowed for some months to actually put a pencil to paper. [Laughs] And I would go maybe once a week with some manuscripts that I thought showed promise, and Shawn would patiently explain to me why I was wrong. Why this was not really a *New Yorker* piece, and while this was a good idea, it wasn't really right for the *New Yorker* precisely. I was in there one day, and I would usually go in with a stack of papers--eight or ten manuscripts--some that I was suggesting he might want to consider for publication and some that he had asked me to give him a long written opinion about. I was leaving one day and he said, "Oh, did you want to take this?" I thought I had forgotten something on his desk. I said, "Oh, did I leave something?" He said, "No, you might want to edit this." He didn't

want to get too pushy about it. I said, "Oh, you want me to edit this?" He said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, fine." I looked at it. I said, "How long should it take? When do you need this back?" Because I had come from a newspaper background, and everything was pretty much daily deadlines, as you well know--as all of us who have been in the newspaper business well know--everything is done--not so much these days. You know, there are pieces that take some time to develop, but in those days there was less leisure and less long-range planning and fewer large pieces that take intensive amounts of time for reporting. When I asked Shawn how much time I should take to edit this piece, which is maybe thirty manuscript pages, he said, "There's no way to answer that question." And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, some people might take two days, and some people might take two weeks." So I went off and edited it in my own good time and put it aside, and then read it a couple more times. I suppose I took a week before I got back to him, and he was very pleased with that. From that moment on, I began to do more and more work. He liked the work I did, I think we have to assume. He did tell others that. He would never actually go out of his way to compliment people too directly because he thought it might embarrass them. [Laughs] Well, it was an odd place. The background that you and I are from, Jim, you know--things are--well, you're working on the national desk now--things need to be done right then. The communication is always a lot more direct and immediate, and at the *New Yorker*, as much as they tried to avoid any sort of indirection in their prose, the personal relations were always

incredibly oblique and indirect and polite to a painful degree. There's a story of one young woman who came in. She was a student of Paul Brodeur, who was a *New Yorker* writer who was teaching a magazine writing class at Columbia at the time. He thought she was exceptionally promising at that time. Helen Epstein. Do you know her?

JB: No, I don't.

CC: She has written things for the *Times Magazine*. She may be on the *Times Magazine* staff now. She wrote a book about children--or a child, in her case, of course--of Auschwitz survivors, parents who had survived the Auschwitz camps. Paul thought she was a very promising writer, and she has, of course, since justified that. She has written, I think, several books and a large handful of magazine articles. But he got her an interview with Shawn. He went in and said he had this promising student at Columbia, and Shawn said, "Oh, please have her come in." She went in, and by this point, I guess Shawn was probably at the-- maybe at the peak or little past it even a distinguished career, and he was the monumental figure in American journalism, long before Ben Bradley and other pretenders to the throne came along. Helen was so impressed with the thought that she was going in to see the great William Shawn. She was apparently nervous beyond anything she had ever been, and she sat down, and Shawn, I'm sure, was doing his usual number. I mean, you'll go in and he would say, "Won't you please have a seat?" and he wouldn't sit down until you did. Or, if he had manuscripts on his couch, he'd say, "Oh, please sit here," so he pulled a chair up

by his desk and said, "Won't you please sit down?" and he thanked her for coming. She was so overwhelmed by all of this civility and politeness and greatness that she burst into tears [laughter] and continued to weep [laughs] uncontrollably for several minutes. She was later telling Paul Brodeur, her teacher at Columbia, about this and the way she had managed to embarrass herself somewhat. She had told Paul that Shawn has pulled his chair up close to her and began stroking her on the shoulder in an attempt to calm her and making cooing noises, like "coo," and she didn't know what quite that was about, but it caused her to cry some more. But I've never quite figured out what that technique--I guess it's somebody's technique. But, anyway, I was there. I edited--

JB: Well, let me ask you this. Did she ever--what became of that interview? Did she ever write for Shawn?

CC: She proposed various things that I guess he thought were not suitable. Writers want to go in certain directions. Not terribly long after that, she began working on a book about being the daughter of two people who had survived the Auschwitz camps. She was really working in that vein, and I think Shawn may have thought that was too specialized for the more general audience, or for whatever reasons. I don't know. Sometimes decisions like that are arbitrary, or maybe a better word is subjective. They were subjective. You have some sense of what you want to do with the magazine or newspaper, for that matter, and some things you will happily publish. And a magazine, I think, is a whole lot more subjective than a newspaper in those terms. But I don't know whether she ever

eventually published anything. I know she published a lot of stuff elsewhere, but I'm not sure if she ever published anything in the *New Yorker* subsequently. She went off and has had a distinguished career, but whether the *New Yorker* is actually part of it, I'm not sure.

JB: Well, now, you were--was Whitworth a writer only while he was there? Was he doing any editing as well?

CC: Well, when I went there, he was writing. He was writing profiles. In those days, Shawn thought, and I think correctly--and this is, remember, not the *New Yorker* that exists now. This was the *New Yorker* that pretty much died in 1987, when Shawn was fired and Bob Gottlieb came in, and then it was sort of struggling for its identity, and then it was assassinated by Tina Brown, when she came in in 1992. Bill was, at any rate, writing profiles, and occasionally "Talk of the Town" pieces and occasionally comment pieces, which was the little up-front, unsigned editorial that was, presumably, the voice of the magazine. He wrote a lot of very good profiles. As I have mentioned, Homer Tomlinson was one of them. He wrote a profile then of a radio and TV--a minor talk show guy named Joe Franklin, who was known and beloved by New Yorkers and on the air for God knows how many years. I don't know. He may still be out there somewhere. But he was on WOR for many years and even had a nighttime talk show that came on at about one in the morning, a very funny, kind of very typical New York piece. I think Shawn suggested that one to Bill. He did a profile of Colonel Sanders. A profile of Huntley and Brinkley, when they were a big item at NBC News. A

very short profile of a trumpet player for studio bands named Bernie Glow. Quite a handful of very good profiles. Bill got married in 1970, I believe it was. His wife had a child. They were from Little Rock. He had known this girl--woman--in high school. I think--and he was a slow and painstaking writer, as I have suggested, and I think that the economics of having a family in New York began to bother him, and he decided that he wanted to start editing. The writers were not paid a salary. They were paid on the famous *New Yorker* drawing account. I don't know if that arrangement still exists, but, in essence, they got a weekly loan of, let us say, two hundred dollars a week. No taxes taken out. You were paid as if you were--well, you were an independent contractor, and then when you sold a piece, the amount that you had taken on your drawing account versus the amount you were going to be paid for the piece were reconciled, and you were either behind or ahead, however it worked. And if you were a very fast and facile writer, you could make a lot of money at the *New Yorker*. And if you were a more typical New York writer, most of them not being fast and facile, you were never going to get rich or even approach being comfortable, probably. Anyway, Bill started editing probably mid-1970s. I don't precisely remember the date. He was also a very good editor. Very meticulous. He did that for X years. He worked with Elizabeth Drew and Jane Kramer and a lot of other writers. Most of us worked with a lot of the writers there. Sometimes Shawn would simply switch a writer to another editor because he did not want the writers to think that they had an editor. I mean, of course, they did, but he would sometimes switch them.

Maybe the writer wanted a change. But the switches did occur. At any rate, Bill--and, again, I'm guessing the dates. Your capable research assistant which, I'm sure, Roy is providing you with [laughs] can check these out--then he got a call from Morton Zuckerman, the Canadian real estate tycoon, who bought the *Atlantic* from . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JB: . . . up here with Whitworth going to the *Atlantic*, is that right?

CC: He went to the *Atlantic*, as I said, probably around 1980 and had a distinguished career there until probably 1999, I guess would be the year or maybe 2000. The end of 1999; he went when Zuckerman bought the magazine, and he left when Zuckerman sold the magazine.

JB: In the meantime, though, you were staying at the *New Yorker*. What--who were you editing at that point?

CC: The first piece that I mentioned that Shawn had sort of handed to me as if it were an afterthought was by a writer who never actually became a staff writer named Fred Powledge. He used to cover a lot of the civil rights crises in the South in the sixties for the *Times*. He was a very good writer. Lives in Maryland now, does freelance environmental writing, that sort of stuff. I began editing fairly early in my career there. John McPhee, with whom I had a long relationship as friend and editor, and I edited God knows how many words. I went recently--this being April 3, 2001--about a month ago, I went to a memorial service for a woman

named Andy Logan, who used to write the "Around City Hall" column. It served as a paradigm of politics in general, but it was focused on New York City Hall politics, of course. Somebody asked me at the memorial service--Andy died, I guess, Thanksgiving week of last year--how many of her columns I had edited, and I said I quit counting at about one hundred and twenty. I did the first hundred and twenty or so of them, and when I was going back home later that afternoon, I thought I edited millions--or maybe not millions, but a million words that she, alone, wrote. I worked right along with Jane Kramer, Paul Brodeur, who wrote wonderful--Paul Brodeur wrote about asbestos and microwaves and other workplace and environmental hazards. Tom Whiteside, I edited an awful lot of. I worked with Elizabeth Drew some. I edited quite a large number of Calvin Trillin's *U.S. Journal* pieces, plus any number of writers Shawn might buy one piece from. Calvin Tomkins, who writes about art, among other things, I edited a lot of. Alastair Reid, who's also a translator and who later got involved in a little crisis about--well, let's say, disguising quotes. I don't know whether you remember that or not.

JB: I do. I do.

CC: Now, I'm not sure quite how to characterize that--an interesting episode in the history of the *New Yorker*. But I suppose I worked with just about every writer whose name would have appeared in the magazine in those days from the sixties through the eighties. Alma Guillermoprieto, at one point, I edited a lot of her things.

JB: That's a very, very distinguished group of writers. Of course, any writers that you edit with the *New Yorker* usually is. But now, so you've been there about twenty years. Then, when you say Mr. Shawn was fired, and replaced by Gottlieb . . .

CC: Yes.

JB: And, I guess, of course, they tried to characterize that as anything but a firing. But, as an outsider, I wasn't quite sure it was that. But it was, indeed, a firing. Is that . . .

CC: Well, Jim, [laughs] we don't--you know--we have become hopelessly civilized, and nobody is ever fired anymore. People leave to pursue other interests. [Laughs] And, in Shawn's case, I don't think it was said that he was leaving to pursue other interests because he was, oh, seventy, maybe he was even eighty, by that time. Si Newhouse, whose Advanced Communications Company had bought the *New Yorker* in 1984 and 1985--beginning in 1984 and the sale was consummated, I think, at the end of March or in April of 1985--he bought in all of the stock. It was a publicly held company until that time. Of course, Newhouse said that he would never seek to control the *New Yorker* and that he would never fire Shawn. Well, there are two counts on which he has proved not to be a man of his word. There are many others. He--my understanding is that he arrived one day--I believe--there are inklings of this, and nobody will ever really know the whole story. It would be impossible for anybody, no matter how good a reporter they were, to piece it all together because some people won't talk, and some are dead. My understanding is that Shawn was making noises about going public

with the notion that Chip McGrath was to be his successor. Now, I don't know whether that's true or not. It doesn't matter. Newhouse acted as if it were true, if, indeed, he did hear it, and we assume he did. He arrived one day--came to Shawn's office with a press release announcing Shawn's resignation.

JB: Hmmm.

CC: So it wasn't as if Shawn acted in any sort of positive sense here. I mean, he was suddenly handed a press release in which he, himself, announced his resignation. I'm sure he was as surprised as anyone else.

JB: Well, I guess you can only characterize that as a firing. There's no other way.

CC: Well, yes, but again, we don't use that ugly little word, and I--it was a horrific moment. Shawn, for all of his quirkiness and for his kind of sometimes seemingly insane politeness and almost ironic civility because it was so thick. There is no irony intended, he was a wonderful man, a genius editor. He gave the magazine a voice that--very few magazines have a real voice these days. They're just magazines. But he came in, not long after that, came into my office with one paragraph typed on a piece of paper, and he said, "Could I interrupt you?" I don't even remember what I was doing. I said, "Oh, of course." And he said, "Would you edit this for me?" And he handed me this note. It was a note to the staff, talking about his great sadness and how what we had all built together there would endure beyond any changes in the magazine, et cetera And he was wrong if he thought the magazine would endure, but it was a very moving, eloquent, and ultimately incredibly sad paragraph that was sort of the epitaph of his career.

JB: Well, is this is how you got news that he had been asked to resign?

CC: We had heard before that. I was not surprised. No, this was not my first inkling. It may not even have been that same day. In fact, I think it was--no, it may have been the next day that he brought the paragraph in--although those things get kind of hazy because of all the emotion involved, in part. Anyway, he brought in what was essentially the epitaph for his career at the *New Yorker*. I was honored to be asked to edit it. I don't think anybody--maybe there's one or two other people who know this to this day. I looked at it, and I think I suggested the addition of word, like a "that," or something incredibly minor. I said it would read a little better. He left it with me, and I took it back in there to his office and said, "Well, it's perfect." I said, "I made one mark here." And he said, "Oh, thank you." Not long after that, maybe the end of that week, he was gone. There were three people standing in my office which was, oh, ten or fifteen feet from his office door on the day he left. He was not going to have any kind of formal goodbyes. He was really very emotional, understandably, after fifty years there. He had created what people came to think of and revere as the *New Yorker*. It was different from Harold Ross's *New Yorker*. It was better than, but it built on, Harold Ross's *New Yorker*. It did not attempt to destroy any aspects of it, so what Shawn did was a positive building on/adding on after he took over the magazine. On the day he left, again, he was avoiding all public farewells. But Nancy Franklin, who is now a very good drama critic for the magazine, John Bennet, who has been there now as long as any other editor and is still editing, and I were

standing in my office. It was a little office within an office. It didn't open directly onto the hallway. But Shawn was passing by with his big leather briefcase and his kind of crumpled hat and his long coat on, and he saw us standing there. He had avoided saying goodbye to people. He saw us standing in there, and he just stopped abruptly, and he came in and gave us all a hug and said goodbye. With that, he left. I did see him a few times on the street here and there after that, but that was the end for the *New Yorker*.

JB: That was a very quiet ending for an incredibly momentous half a century, wasn't it?

CC: Half a century and some of the most incredible journalism that was every done. I mean, we all know about the Hiroshima issue that John Hersey wrote and Shawn devoted the entire issue to. And I believe they offered it--you can actually go back and check in the archives. I believe there was a little box there offering it free to any newspaper or other publication that wanted to reprint it, just as a way of saying to humanity, "This is what will happen if you allow these weapons to continue." You know, I mean it was--you've read it, I assume.

JB: Yes.

CC: Horrifying. Horrifying. And nothing that has been written or published since really is any more terrifying and frightening--concerning nuclear weapons--than that piece was. But the distinguished or important or both journalism that he published, the list is very long indeed. *Silent Spring*. Rachel Carson, of course, was denounced as a lunatic "spinster." That word was used. *Time* magazine, I

believe, called her hysterical. And all this really a mere ten years before DDT use was banned in this country. I think it is still produced here, unfortunately, and exported to Mexico and other such places where its use is still legal. But it's still a hideous toxin. Paul Brodeur's pieces on asbestos and on microwave radiation, the political reporting about Vietnam, beginning at a period when opposing the Vietnam War was not a popular thing to do.

JB: Well, you know, you had been there about twenty years, just a rough calculation, when he left, is that correct?

CC: Just about precisely.

JB: And then Mr. Gottlieb came in at that point. Was there a dramatic change in the *New Yorker*? At that point I was still reading it from time to time. I don't recall one at that point.

CC: There was not a dramatic change. There was a change. Gottlieb, who became and remains a friend--and I think he's a brilliant editor, but I would distinguish brilliant editor from brilliant journalist because I don't think that that sort of gut journalistic instinct was there. He is, by all accounts of those who have had the privilege of having their books edited by him, a brilliant book editor. I don't think that he was ideally suited to be a magazine editor, and probably would have been certainly less suited to be a newspaper editor, as there are instant, quickened instincts that you acquire to stay on top of things. We're not there, and this is not a fault. I don't fault him. Si Newhouse had, after all, appointed him. The *New Yorker* staff went into virtual revolt, of course. There was a petition signed with

one hundred and forty-plus names on it, urging Gottlieb not to take the job, which was . . .

JB: I recall that. Did you sign that petition?

CC: I signed that petition. I think, in retrospect, I wouldn't, partly because it was a setup. Lillian Ross and some other people presented this petition as if it were a kind of spontaneous development when, in fact, the whole scenario, as it played out, was arranged in advance, and I don't know how much that really even matters anymore.

JB: By whom? Who arranged this?

CC: Well, if Lillian Ross was running around saying, "Let's get a petition up"--she was, by some accounts, Shawn's paramour, and therefore, Shawn would have arranged it himself. He's not above such things. As I say, I think he was a brilliant editor, and a man so gracious that it could be painful to some people. But, again, a complex person. My understanding is that--and several other people were sent off to write the letter that went on top of the petition--but my understanding was that they had already established a scenario whereby Shawn would come down the steps, be surprised at the fact that all these people were gathered down there, and then somebody would say, "Well, let's go do a petition and we'll fire it off." Then that happened. And, of course, to no avail. I mean, Gottlieb was not about to say, "Oh, my God, they've signed a petition," and it wouldn't have mattered anyway because--while Shawn, throughout the years, manifested, suggested, a proprietary interest in the *New Yorker*, the fact was that

he had no financial control, no business control. One of the interesting things about the press and Shawn in general was that throughout the years I was there, occasionally he would allow somebody to come and interview him, and, inevitably, the question of succession would come up because Shawn was not a young man. I think he may have been sixty-five when he hired me. And, of course, a lot of people think sixty-five is retirement age, in those days. In Shawn's generation it was generally thought to be. Not so much anymore, but-- Anyway, the question of what about a successor. And Shawn would inevitably say that he had been giving some thought to it, or that there were several possibilities that he had in mind. He did this on two or three occasions. *SoHo News* - Jane Perlez, who is now at the *Times*, you may know Jane.

JB: I've worked with her. I don't really know her.

CC: She did one of those pieces when she was a writer at the *SoHo News*. I think she is Australian.

JB: I think so. Yes.

CC: Married to Ray Bonner. None of these reporters, to my memory at any rate, ever said, "Why do you think you have the right to appoint your successor?" which would have been an interesting question. It was the kind of question nobody would ever ask Shawn, of course, because, again, he is this kind of monumental person, and I don't think many people, if any, ever asked him a rude question. That might have been a little bit of an affront. But why would somebody think he had the right to name a successor?

JB: Well, let me ask you this. I understood that you and Whitworth might have been among those who were being considered as his successor. Were you aware of that?

CC: Well, at one time . . .

JB: Did you think about it?

CC: At one time did I think about it? Well, it would have been a very daunting job. I never had the ambition to be William Shawn's successor. I was very happy with what I was doing. I wanted to edit serious journalism, longer journalism at a pace a little less hurried than that of newspapers. But at one time--I think, in fact, your paper--you don't own it, Jim, but if you did, we'd be sitting in the Bahamas doing this interview. [Laughs] *The Times* did an interview about the *New Yorker*, and I was mentioned in there as one of the new, young lights with the possibility of being--I think *Newsweek* mentioned us. Well, maybe not Whitworth at that time. I don't think he was editing when those mentions came out. He was working closely with Shawn.

JB: Well, in fact, I read several mentions of you. This was from *The New York Times* archives. That's where I saw--perhaps you have been mentioned even more than--

CC: More than I know.

JB: More than you know.

CC: I'm more famous than I think, huh? [Laughs]

JB: More than you realize.

CC: Whitworth was working closely with Shawn, and I think the truth is that as much

as Shawn might have admired Whitworth--or one time Jonathan Schell, or anybody else--Chip McGrath--any of those who might have been mentioned--I think Shawn was not capable of naming a successor. And I don't mean by that, I'm not suggesting the same question as whether he had the right to. I don't think he was capable of naming a successor and saying, "Here's the chair. It's yours." I think he was capable of entertaining the idea of doing that. I don't think he was capable of doing it.

JB: Well, then, okay. Under Gottlieb, did the atmosphere at the *New Yorker* change?

CC: Did the atmosphere change? Let me add one point about Whitworth, if I may.

JB: Oh, go ahead. Sorry.

CC: Shawn was working kind of closely with Bill, and people began to assume, and maybe with some justification, that Bill was being groomed, maybe--overstatement--but entertained as a successor. Bill was approached by Morton Zuckerman. They talked about Bill's going to work at the *Atlantic*. At one point, for reasons I don't remember, the talks stopped, and Bill had turned it down, and a month--two months went by, and Zuckerman approached him again because Zuckerman had decided Bill was the one he wanted. He was a wonderful choice. When Zuckerman first approached Bill, Bill went to Shawn and said that he was being asked to consider the possibility, and Shawn said, "Oh, well, that's very interesting," et cetera. He didn't say overtly, "Well, you should stay here because this job will be yours." The talks between Bill and Mort Zuckerman resumed, and the second go-round, Zuckerman prevailed and lured Bill to Boston to be the

editor of the *Atlantic*. Bill had been aboveboard with Shawn all the way, and he went in to tell him that he had finally agreed and had signed a contract. And, at that point, Shawn said, "Well, the job would've been yours here, you know."

JB: Well, that is quite amazing. That is an amazing story.

CC: It's an amazing story. [Laughs]

JB: And it's a wonderful story. Few people I know know about this. So what was Whitworth's reaction?

CC: That--it may--Bill and I have been close for years. He was best man at my wedding, and I at his. My memory tells me that his reaction was that he was being jerked around like a lot of other people had been. I know that at one point, when there was a lot of stockholder anxiety, et cetera, about a successor again--that seems to have been the recurring question--Shawn appointed John Bennet and Chip McGrath as co-managing editors. He began to take them to lunch once or twice a week. Bennet, who was not the most worldly of the people who have come to work there, shall we say, or the most sophisticated--at that time Shawn came in, and I think he was worried about what my reaction might be. He had decided that he was going to elevate me to articles editor. I said, "What would that mean?" He said, "Well, I guess it really wouldn't mean anything." And I said, "No, thanks." And I remember that Richard Harris, who used to write politics, called me and said, "What's going on with this announcement in the *Times*?" I don't remember this, and Harris said I just dropped the phone, I was laughing so hard. I said, "This is just crazy." What it was was Shawn's response

to stockholder pressure for a successor. Shawn did not even want to make it public, and then there was an executive editor named Tony Gibbs, who was actually the son of Wolcott Gibbs. He was not a dramatic or forceful presence. He never really made his presence felt at the *New Yorker*, but he convinced Shawn that if word got out that we had two managing editors whose presence had not been announced, that would look even weirder. So Shawn consented to issue a press release. These two guys were thus anointed, and Bennet was remarkably full of himself. It was--this was just preceded by not very much time--the sale of the magazine or Newhouse's moving in to buy the magazine. Shawn talked to Chip and John intensely for about three weeks, and then one day suddenly he wasn't talking to John anymore. No announcement, no nothing. He would continue to go to lunch now and then with Chip, but not with John anymore. And John was just berserk. He didn't know what had happened, what he had done. What both of them didn't know--I had a lot of friends in the business department, et cetera, and I used to talk to everybody who would talk to me. I wasn't writing a book, but they were sent off--Newhouse had bought in November of 1984--seventeen percent of the stock, and then there was another seventeen percent, so he had pretty much gotten control of the magazine, but not a hundred percent. He hadn't put his tender offer yet to bring in all of the stock, but I think he had thirty-four percent, which was a controlling block. They were having the sales meeting in Florida that year, and John and Chip were both invited down as the new managing editors. Neither of them knew it, but they went in and talked to

Newhouse and to Steve Florio, who was the publisher, or about to be made the publisher. They were done in at that meeting. Florio himself may have told me this later. I was on pretty good terms with him. But they showed up, and both Florio and Newhouse said, "These aren't the guys." And they never knew that. I think actually one of the ad salesmen told me that. So they were pretty much screwed before they ever even got their feet on the ground, and Bennett's role as co-managing editor just evaporated. He was, for years after that, furious at Shawn because he had been interviewed by the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, for instance, and the Hyde Park weekly, which is part of the Taconic weekly chain. He was suddenly thrust from the obscurity of a regular *New Yorker* editor into being a figure of paramount importance, and then the rug was pulled out from under him without his even knowing it. It was like those magicians who whisk the tablecloth off the table and leave everything intact. Suddenly, it was all gone, and I think he never quite got over it. But Gottlieb came--to get back to that question. Remember, we're both from Arkansas. We talk and--I try to explain this to people from time to time. I say, "I'll get back to the point. Just relax and bear with me."

JB: Bear with me. I understand.

CC: I know you do. Gottlieb tried to do a little more kind of specific foreign reporting. He wanted someone doing Asia, et cetera Not that we didn't have foreign reporting. It was kind of one of his notions, but, again, it's sort of a non-journalist's notion. Of course, you do foreign reporting, but you don't just create

some Asian specialist or whatever. He brought in Jane and Michael Stern, who are basically food writers, but they're also Americana writers. They were not, again, terribly sophisticated writers. They're very nice people. They really didn't know how to write for the *New Yorker*. They struggled. Of course, when Tina came, she got rid of them immediately. He also started doing some color illustrations in "Talk of the town." The magazine didn't change hugely, and I think some people would say that Bob was seduced by the *New Yorker* culture, and if he had an agenda to begin with, then his being seduced by the *New Yorker* culture caused him to stop that agenda. I think he realized what the *New Yorker* was and how much of it was worth preserving, so if he--and he never said that he had big plans to change. He always said he didn't have some kind of agenda for arriving at some particular place. The magazine wasn't talked about. Some people thought that when Shawn was fired, he himself had become a little bit tired, and maybe that's true. He was getting along--I forget how old he was when he was fired, but I think maybe people point to that five-part series on grains that E. J. Kahn did--Remember, there was corn and rice and wheat and barley and oats, maybe. [Laughs] A mystifying decision. But I think many writers who have been very vigorous in foreign correspondence, got tired. I talked to one who used to work at the *Times*. Still works with the *Times*, in fact. He told me once, and I said, "How come you came back to New York?" It was Mike Kaufman. I think he's still there, isn't he?

JB: Mike retired for the second time recently.

CC: Did he?

JB: Very recently, yes.

CC: And he had been in Poland, and I said, "How come you're writing a column?" And I said, "How come you came back to New York?" And he said, "I lost my legs," which--it's metaphoric, not in the terms of having--he just got tired of running up and down airport steps, et cetera, and got tired of doing what a foreign correspondent has to do. He had just had enough, and I can understand that. I think some writers do get kind of tired, and they want to phase themselves out. Some of them don't have the same energy. Some of them, of course, go on forever, but some of them don't have that same enthusiasm for looking at the blank screen or the blank piece of paper before the computers.

JB: Under Gottlieb, then, you didn't feel any more pressure as an editor to make things more "the *New Yorker*," or there was none of this kind of thing to "Let's keep things in the *New Yorker* style" with the writers that Gottlieb brought in?

CC: Well, I never edited with anything called a *New Yorker* style in mind. We were supposed to know what good prose was, and if the prose wasn't good, we were supposed to fix it. There was not any kind of list of *New Yorker* strictures or canons, or whatever, that we were obliged to follow, you know. There was no formula for editing for the *New Yorker*, just as there's not for any other place. You make it good. There were a lot of people, I think, who were not terribly subtle readers, who thought that the prose was homogenized in those days. I remember talking to a friend of mine who deplored the fact that I wanted to go to

work for the *New Yorker*, and she referred to the prose as homogenized. A couple of years later, I ran into her, and she had a new boyfriend who was a big *New Yorker* fan. She said, "Oh, I've been reading the *New Yorker* every week. It's so wonderful!" I think, in that case, it was really a matter of her actually reading it for the first time instead of simply--a lot of people disliked it because it seemed arrogant to them. In Gottlieb's case, he brought in a few writers, I think, who might not have been hired by Shawn. We did what we could--what was necessary--to make them readable pieces, but there was no *New Yorker* formula that they were required to fit into. I got along very well with Gottlieb. As I said earlier, he became a friend and remains one. I see him for lunch a few times a year with a few other people, and I have occasion and reason to know that he thought quite highly of my work. I ran into--I went to--after Tina Brown had taken over . . .

JB: Now, let me just get right into this. You were still there when--now Gottlieb was fired, right? He was relieved, at least . . .

CC: Well, I'm sure that the announcement, if you went and found it, would say that he has decided to return to book publishing or to pursue other interests--whatever. Again, we don't use this "he has been dismissed" or "relieved of his duties." At that level, it's never done.

JB: Well, that's true.

CC: And that's the only level that merits a press release. [Laughs]

JB: Well, whatever--on the euphemism side. But did you have any inkling that he

was on the way out because you were still there at that time, is that correct?

CC: Oh, yes, I was very much still there. I was in the middle of things. Bob, as I say, liked my work. I did a lot of problem pieces for him--rescued a lot of problem pieces. Again, he thought very highly--he was in Japan when the announcement was made. He was on some kind of translation panel, not that he speaks Japanese. Some kind of literary prize--he went to, I believe it was, Osaka every two years for this thing, and he had this position because of his many distinguished years as editor-in-chief at Knopf. But he was there when it was announced that Tina Brown would be taking over, and several of us, including me, talked to him on the phone.

JB: And what did you do? What was his reaction at that point, first of all?

CC: He was pretty close to Si Newhouse, and I thought, given the shabby manner in which the whole thing was handled, that he was far too forgiving. I think he and Si subsequently had a kind of falling out. Maybe it was retrospective disappointment or anger on his part, but I understand that they now go to the movies occasionally together, or whatever they do together. But when I talked to him that morning, I said, "How are you?" And he said, "I'm fine." He received a very generous golden parachute.

JB: So what did you do at that point? You knew Tina was coming, I assume, then.

CC: I didn't do anything. There was an overlap. Tina was going to come in "x" weeks or months later. Our first issue was going to be, maybe, an October issue. She called me and Chip McGrath and John Bennet, and we went over and met with

her one day in her office at *Vanity Fair*, and we had a pleasant and totally kind of noncommittal conversation. It didn't leave us impressed or not impressed. It was just a conversation. She consulted with us. She really wanted to keep the kind of core nonfiction editing staff together. At some point not long after she had arrived, maybe two or three months after her first issue, she had a party for all of the staff--invited to her apartment on 57th Street--or Sutton Place, probably, was the actual address. 57th was probably the actual address, but Sutton Place was what got put down. She gave all of us--well, those--me, and then John and Chip--maybe two months after she had got her first issue out--thirty- thousand-dollar-a-year raises. [Laughs]

JB: Wow. That's nice.

CC: Yes, that was nice.

JB: That's incredible.

CC: So she was eager to keep her staff intact. But, increasingly, you know, I mean--I was disappointed in what she was doing, and I think she was trying to do something different. She had a mandate to do something different. The story is that Donald Newhouse, Si's younger brother, kept telling Si that he didn't understand the *New Yorker*. He didn't know what it was supposed to be about and that sending Gottlieb over to change it somewhat--Si then decided he would change it so that Donald would understand it. Tina had a mandate. She didn't go in with a meat ax because of her own volition. She went in because Si wanted a *New Yorker* that was talked about in the literary circles and the salons, et cetera

And under Gottlieb it really wasn't being talked about in a way that it might have at one time been. And, I suppose, in the last couple of years under Shawn either. But Tina came in with a mandate from the owner to change it. I don't think she ever understood what it was before. She used to deplore it. She, of course, was very big on publicity. It was one of her things. It had to be "hot." It was one of her favorite words. "It's got to be hot" [as a Brit says it].

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 3, Side 1]

CC: This is Patrick Crow, back with Jim Barden. I am talking about my days at the *New Yorker*. The date now is April 21, resuming the interview we started a couple of weeks ago. I think we left off with Gottlieb's departure. I had been at the *New Yorker* since the spring of 1967, as I said previously, and it had been an absolutely grand career. There were, of course, moments of hair tearing. As I think any good editor from time to time tears his hair because he realizes that something before him can be fixed but that it takes an awful lot of effort. One of the great--one of the aspects of William Shawn's genius was that he could look at something that somebody else might reject out of hand and say, "There's a lot of good here," and then he would leave it up to the individual editors--the nonfiction editors or sometimes, I suppose, the fiction editors, but mostly the nonfiction editors--to extract what was good from that pile of material that he had seen the good in. At any rate, I had a wonderful time in the first twenty years I was there. I worked with John McPhee, as I'd said previously, and a great many of the other

established writers there, and with some of the newer ones, like Mark Singer and Ian Frazier, Sandy Frazier, who came along. I once had the privilege of working on an essay with Robert Penn Warren who was, of course, one of the American literary greats of all time. When Gottlieb arrived, there was a lot of hullabaloo, but I think that one could make a case, even though nobody was willing to make it at that time, that William Shawn was, while not "losing it," was tiring of his job. Or, perhaps another way of stating that is to say that his energies were flagging. It would have been understandable because I think by that time he was--well, let's see, he may have been in his eighties about then, but, at any rate, he was not, I think, inclined to leave on his own. He would never, I believe, have gotten up and walked out and said, "That's it. I'm retiring." There are people, as we all know, who can't do that. Their job is their life. It defines their life so much that it is what their life is. There were other aspects to Shawn, of course, but I don't think that he could envision himself as a particularly happy man without the *New Yorker*, although he did go on to do some other thing--Nothing full time or certainly as compelling as the *New Yorker* must have been--but he was a great editor, and he certainly gave me a great many privileges. It was a privilege to work there. It was a privilege to work with some of the wonderful writers I worked with. There were moments of frustration, and people got sometimes intensely weird about them. At one point, Shawn announced that Jonathan Schell was going to be his deputy. Well, Jonathan was writing a lot of comment pieces--the magazine's editorial, in effect, about Vietnam and about other things. Some

people thought he was just kind of handwringingly earnest, and others thought that maybe he would have been a good choice. He did have a few supporters, but few is the operative word there. A number of us--Calvin Trillin and I went in and talked to Shawn and said, "This is probably a mistake." Not that Shawn wanted to hear that, but Jonathan tried some editing, and the writers he tried to edit were upset with what he had done, and that experiment didn't last. As I had mentioned earlier, there were experiments with Chip McGrath and Bennet, and sort of discreetly with Bill Whitworth, another alum of the *Arkansas Gazette*. None of them, I think, were to be taken very seriously simply because, as I said earlier, I don't think Shawn was capable of getting up and walking out the door and saying, "Here. It's yours to run now." Whitworth and I once discussed this, and Bill expressed the opinion that having the job, even if Shawn left and became an emeritus editor, would be extremely difficult because he knew--I knew--I think everybody knew that Shawn would have been looking over your shoulder. But that was a kind of fantasy anyway because, again, he wasn't going anywhere. At any rate, at the end of 1984, which was when Shawn appointed his two deputy editors, John Bennet and Chip McGrath, that was, it's my understanding, in response to complaints by a stockholder named Philip Messenger. The stock was publicly held at that time, and the family--Peter Fleishmann, who was the chairman, I believe, at that point--owned thirty-two percent, something like that--maybe thirty-three. At any rate, Philip Messenger, according to various reports and rumors, had been pressuring the company for some time as a kind of activist

stockholder to have the magazine appoint a successor to Shawn, who was getting along in years--and he was certainly older than any other important operative figure in American journalism at that time. Still vigorous. Still putting out a good magazine, but when you start talking to stockholders and other corporate types, they have the world--they view the world with a more orderly eye, perhaps, than some of the rest of us do, and Messenger wanted some notion of succession in place. So I'm sure it was in response to that, or at least in response to pleadings from Peter Fleishmann as a result of talking to Messenger, that Shawn appointed John Bennet and Chip McGrath as his deputy editors. A friend of mine named Dick Harris, who later jumped out a window--a brilliant, brilliant writer--brilliant, brilliant, bitterly funny man--reminded me once--I don't really recall this, but he was trying to write a book about the *New Yorker*, which he couldn't finish for whatever reason, but he said that he had called me the morning that this was announced, that there was a story in *The New York Times*, and asked me what the hell was going on over there. Dick had left the magazine by this time and was writing novels and other things. He said I just burst out laughing because I did not think it had any significance at all. Well, in fact, Shawn had offered me a title, thinking, as I believe I said previously, that I might be upset, but I told him I didn't want the title because it would be meaningless, and he agreed in my office. He said, "Yes, it would be meaningless," and I think, implicitly, he was agreeing that the others' appointments were meaningless. At any rate, Philip Messenger, the stockholder who was, in part, behind all of this, I think he was disgusted

because he didn't feel that this was a real move, either. He put his stock up for sale--seventeen percent of the *New Yorker's* stock was his stake. There was, floating around out there, another seventeen percent being put together, according to what I recall--and I would not swear on this in court, of course--by a company called Lynn Broadcasting, and one of the other rumors was that George Green, the former president fired by Peter Fleishmann, or compelled by Peter Fleishmann to jump at any rate, was actively helping Lynn put together this seventeen percent. When Newhouse bought Philip Messenger's seventeen percent of the stock, this Lynn Broadcasting's seventeen percent suddenly seemed like a very nice bauble, and Mr. Newhouse was declaring that he didn't want to own the magazine, that it was not his intention. He was not acting aggressively to take this over. There was a meeting of the editors--senior people in general, but mostly the editors--in Shawn's office about that time, and one of the lessons that emerged from that is that brilliant people can be incredibly naive. One of the editors--well, hell, I'll name him--Roger Angell--responded to something I said at that meeting. I had said that--somebody remarked that Mr. Newhouse--Si Newhouse, that is--his brother, Donald, really constituted ownership of Advance Publications with other members of the family, of course--but Newhouse had said that he didn't plan to take over the magazine. I pointed out that his method of operating was never to have some sort of minority position. He owned what he wanted. He didn't go in and buy ten percent of a small company or something like that--or, if he did, it was with the intention of gaining a foothold that would

allow him to take over the company, as happened with the New Yorker. Anyway, I remarked at this meeting in Shawn's office that--this is probably late November of 1984--that Newhouse had never been a minority owner in anything, and Roger Angell, to my disbelief and dismay said, "Well, the man says that he doesn't plan to take over the magazine. I think, as gentlemen, we have to take him at his word." And perhaps one of the problems with the magazine in that whole area of stockholding and defending itself, et cetera, was the fact that some of the people who were in a position perhaps to have done something about it did operate as gentlemen. Well, I think we all know the folly of that. The business world is not a gentleman's world, despite the pretense to culture, learning, civility that some of the corporate devils manifest. At any rate, Newhouse said, of course, that he would never fire Shawn, but then he said he was a minority owner. Then suddenly he's got thirty-four percent of the stock, and the Fleishmann family had, as I said, thirty-two or thirty-three. Well, Newhouse is suddenly in charge just in terms of voting shares, and, of course, there's about another third of the hundred percent of stock out there because with--let's say, it's thirty-two and thirty-four is sixty-six, right? So there's another third. In April of 1985, I believe it was, Newhouse had made a tender offer to buy in all the remaining shares at "x" dollars a share. I forget what the actual price was, but the tender offer would, of course, allow him to control the magazine one hundred percent, and you don't have to do public statements, et cetera. It suddenly becomes a privately held company. That happened. People could have, of course, refused to sell their

shares, but their votes would have been meaningless, and only an idiot would have refused at that point because it was a done deal. Among the promises Newhouse made was that he would never fire--get rid of--William Shawn. Shawn was there with the implication, if not the outright statement, and he was there as long as he wanted to be. The fact is that Donald Newhouse--this is from Bob Gottlieb; I had started to go into this earlier --onald Newhouse never quite "got" the *New Yorker*. He didn't know what it was. Si decided--Si is the older of those two brothers. Si respects Donald's word and opinion and thoughts more, he has said, than those of any other human being on earth. At any rate, I guess he decided--he, Si, decided to change the magazine so Donald would "get it." He appointed Bob Gottlieb, a wonderful book editor and not, I think, a great journalist. Bob was not a journalist at all, in fact, really. Very smart, very competent, as I say, a brilliant, brilliant book editor, but when it came to the magazine, he was perhaps seduced by its culture, and he didn't have a huge agenda. He thought some of the pieces were too long, and I think there are a lot of people at the magazine and outside the magazine who had readily agreed with that. I agreed with it in many, many cases. In fact, I was called over to his office. He invited me over. I don't mean to suggest that he summoned me. He's not a majesterial sort. In a long conversation, he asked why none of the editors had ever tried to cut some of the longer pieces that to him seemed so dearly in need of cutting. And I said, "Why do you assume that nobody tried?" "Oh," he said, "You mean they did?" And I said, "Well, of course." I said, "I certainly did." I

said, "I can give you a list of examples where I suggested that a piece be cut or that a three-part piece be cut to two parts or, maybe, in some cases a two-part piece be cut to one part and that wasn't done." One of the reasons it wasn't done--this is speculation [coughs]--excuse me--which happens to be, I'm sure, as some speculation is, a hundred percent accurate--is that the magazine paid by the word. Shawn gave his writers the leisure to finish a piece if it took them a year to report and write, or in some cases, longer than that, and he knew that they had to live. I think he paid them and let the pieces run at greater length so he could pay them more, because I don't think, even with Peter Fleishmann at the helm, that Shawn could have published a ten-thousand-word piece, say, and paid eighty thousand dollars for it. But if he published a sixty-thousand-word piece in three installments, then maybe he could justify the eighty thousand dollars or whatever. Still, if that was his peculiar form of generosity, you can see readily that the writers weren't going to get rich anyway, for the most part. Incredibly productive ones could do very well, but most of them weren't incredibly productive. Most of them were slow and painstaking and very good, and if some of them got books out of their pieces and the books did well, that was all to the good. But, for the most part, none of them was ever going to get very rich being a *New Yorker* writer, even though they were among the better paid--well, they were the best paid writers. At any rate, Gottlieb came in, and there was some protest about that, as I had mentioned earlier, and a letter was signed urging him not to take the job which was, in retrospect--I mean, it looks very childish--but it was done,

nonetheless, and in--I think Shawn's "resignation" was announced in January of 1987 and, I suppose, in February of 1987, Bob took over. I remember, as I had mentioned on the previous tape, that John Bennet, Nancy Franklin and I were standing in my office, which was very close to Shawn's, and he was leaving without fanfare, without a party. He didn't want any of that. And he saw the three of us standing in my office, and he stopped, and he came in, and he put his bag down, and, one by one, he hugged each of us. His face was tortured with grief. He said goodbye, we hugged, and he left. It was a very quiet end to an illustrious, illustrious career. [Coughs] Excuse me. A little green tea for the throat's sake, here. I got along well with Gottlieb because I think he respected what I did. I became kind of a problem solver for him in terms of difficult manuscripts. There was one--he had brought in a writer who was essentially a newspaper writer, and there are newspaper writers who can make the transition to magazine work with hardly a stumble, and there are those who really don't get the fact that a magazine article and a newspaper piece aren't the same thing. That you--I mean, you could get very academic and formal and start talking about prose structure. I heard Joseph Mitchell once talking about magazine pieces in terms of Aristotle's ethics. Mitchell was an incredibly intelligent, articulate, and imposing man, but I think most of us don't tend to reach as far back as Aristotle for our roots. Nonetheless, the magazine piece is a work of art, or can be. Should be. Some of it is just journalism, of course. Anyway, the writer in question had written a long piece about the Sendero Luminoso, I think, in Peru, the Shining

Path, and Gottlieb gave it to me and asked what to do about it. He said, "Can we discuss it?" And I said--after I had read it, I went in there and said, "Bob, the piece begins on page seventeen," and he said, "Oh, the writer will never stand for that." Well, the guy wasn't a writer, in the first place. And the second place, it was one of those moments-- and we have a few of them in our careers whether we're writers or editors or other professions, I suppose--one of those moments when I knew damn well I was right. There wasn't any question. I could fix the piece beginning that way, and I said--Bob was just kind of wringing his hands; as I say, he wasn't a journalist--I said, "Let me talk to him." So I called the writer, and we chatted for a while, and I said, "Gee, you know, there's such a wonderful opening here where you start doing this and that," and he said, "You know, I never did figure out how to begin the piece." And he said, "You're right, that's wonderful." So I restructured the piece for him, and it actually read a whole lot better. It made a lot more sense. It was shorter because I cut much of the earlier material and reworked the rest of it into the narrative. But Gottlieb was very grateful [coughs], I think, for anybody who could solve problems. He had spent some money sending this guy down to Peru. At any rate, there were other pieces like that. There was one that most of the other nonfiction editors had looked at and kind of thrown up their hands. I remember having a meeting with Gottlieb and McGrath and John Bennet, and maybe there was somebody else in there--and they had not been eager to work on this particular piece. I was busy with several other things at the time, but they kind of gathered around in a circle and said, "We

don't know what to do. You're the only who can fix this if it can be fixed." And part of that was flattery because they didn't want to spend a few head-busting weeks, and part of it, I suppose, was their real feeling that I could solve this rather difficult problem. I went back to my office, and I sat there for a day and kind of stared at it. It's nice to have the luxury to stare at a problem for a day. You don't always. I went back, and I said, "This thing can be cast as kind of a mystery story." And I called the writer in. I knew him fairly well. I had worked with him. I said, "Here's what we should do." And he said, "Well, I was starting it that way, but I figured they wouldn't like it, so I changed it." And I said, "Your instincts were correct," so we changed it. Gottlieb loved it. I once ran into a gorgeous blonde who was a sort of freelance advertising salesman out of San Francisco for the *New Yorker*. There are such people here and there around the company, I suppose, for most magazines. They have a small ad agency in Houston or San Francisco or Miami. What they really do is work on a kind of percentage basis, I suppose, for various magazines, and they get sort of semi-official credentials so they can call on local businesses and say, "Gee, your company would benefit from an ad in the *New Yorker*. Even though you're local, you could do some national mail order," or whatever. At any rate, there was this absolutely stunningly beautiful blonde lady, and we were at a sales meeting in Florida. This was actually in Tina's tenure. Bob had left by the time of the sales meeting, about a few years later--Anyway, the woman approached me. She knew a few of the West Coast people I had worked with, and we were talking, and she

wanted to talk about how I got there and what I was doing, and she had heard nothing but praise from the West Coast writers, she said, and she said, "And I know Gottlieb loves you." And I said, "Well, how on earth would you know that?" And she said, "Well, he came out to San Francisco with Steve Florio, the publisher, at one point," and she was asking him about the editorial staff. She had told him she had heard some good things about me, and according to her, she said Gottlieb responded, "Pat Crow hung the moon. He can do anything, as far as I'm concerned." So that was very flattering and nice to hear. It's always nice to hear those things. Editors, as Jim Barden knows, and those of us who have worked on copy desks or in positions at magazines know, you don't necessarily very often get praised for what you do. Not that we should be praised all the time, but we do labor most of our lives in relative anonymity, and it is nice. Anyway, Bob stayed there. We had--maybe every six months or so, or maybe it was just once a year-- Bennet, McGrath and I, and Bob and Martha Kaplan, who was his managing editor, I think, was the title she had. She had come over with Bob from Knopf. We would have an annual kind of editorial meeting, usually in the office. Sandwiches after work. We would sit around and talk about what needed to be done and the future of magazine, how healthy or unhealthy it was. And the notion--rumor has always been that the magazine pretty much started losing money the day Newhouse bought it, that it had been profitable for many years up to that point. Whether there's a direct cause and effect is anybody's guess. At one point, I know, the magazine had an advertising conference in Montauk, out on the

end of Long Island. Some of the advertisers--when I discussed this later with Steve Florio, he told me much of this--some of the advertisers who had been in the magazine for a long time and had left with the arrival of Florio and Newhouse -- one of them in particular I remember was Waterford, the Irish crystal. He said that the *New Yorker* had always represented to him dignity, class--and he didn't feel that Florio and the Newhouse people represented those qualities, so he didn't want to be a part of their *New Yorker*. Now, how strong this sentiment was in the business community, I really have no idea, but the magazine started losing money. At one time there was a rumor, or more than a rumor, I suppose, that it used to keep six million dollars in an non-interest-bearing checking account. It went from that fairly quickly to being six million dollars a year in the red, and more. So Gottlieb was brought in to change it somewhat, not with an eye on the profit problem. He was there five years, and he brought in a few new writers. He started doing a bit more foreign correspondence. The magazine was still good. Today, under David Remnick, I think it's very good. It is still, as far as I know, not making a profit. It may be that the weekly general-interest magazine is simply not meant to survive in the current kind of media climate, although the *New Yorker* is there and it's struggling along. At any rate, as far as I know, there were no kind of constant rumblings or whatever about Bob's tenure at the *New Yorker*, and his firing was as much a surprise, as that of Shawn had been, although he took it very well, and I think he received a really quite handsome settlement from Mr. Newhouse that will allow him not to have to worry about

money ever again. He was in Japan. He was part of a panel that awarded a translation prize, and I think he had gone to Osaka for that. This would have been, I suppose, the late winter of 1992, perhaps. There were rumors all over the place for a day or two. I remember John Bennet used to complain or marvel--you can pick your own verb--He said once and it reminded me--he had called me at home, and he said he had just got confirmation that Tina Brown was going to be appointed the new editor. It was kind of late at night when he called, and I said, according to John, "Let's talk about it in the morning. I'm tired," and I just hung up the phone. I guess the point to that is, if it has much of a point, that once you're dealing with somebody like Si Newhouse, you're dealing with somebody who can be as arbitrary as he wants to. One of the great secrets of all this authoritarian or totalitarian behavior is that it can be and deliberately is arbitrary. You can't ever guess which direction the wind is going to be blowing, and if you try, you probably will guess wrong because you can't out-guess arbitrary. At any rate, I don't think I was particularly surprised by Tina Brown's appointment. I think some people were shocked by it or dismayed by it. She came in with a lot of presumably good intentions and was saying that she wanted to make the magazine more visible and her word, of course, as it subsequently turned out, was "haut." That's "hot" to Americans. It's not "haut." Tina, it turns out, was sent in with a mandate. Now, Bob did not arrive with some mandate for wholesale change. Si later told Bob, and Bob later told me, that Donald Newhouse, the younger brother, still didn't "get" the magazine. Didn't know what it was

supposed to be. And what Tina really came in to do was, according to her words, make it more competitive, and that meant, in her words, making it more like other magazines. Well, for decades other magazines had been trying to be more like the *New Yorker*, and suddenly we have this Brit who is trying to do things differently. I think on balance that Tina is given a lot of points for being smart and creative. Her husband, Harry Evans, has described her as having a rat-like cunning, and I think that's probably more accurate than to call her smart or creative. She put out a magazine that was lacking in dignity, lacking in interest, and I think the true measure of where she is can now be seen in the magazine *Talk*. Tina took an existing structure, *Vanity Fair*, and modified it. She took an existing structure, the *New Yorker*, and modified it, but with *Talk*, she created what she thought a magazine should really be. She wasn't building on or rearranging or remodeling somebody else's house of words, and she wanted the *New Yorker*, or *Vanity Fair* before that, of course, to be talked about. That was one of her great desires, one of Newhouse's great desires, and then she has ended up with *Talk*. God knows it isn't talked about, is it? But she came in. She tried to keep the staff in place, keep it stable, while she figured out what she wanted to do. Anyway, Tina certainly had an agenda for change that was greater than the one that she announced at the beginning. After she had been appointed, but while she still had an office at *Vanity Fair*, she called Chip McGrath and John Bennett and me over to her office. We had a chat with her and we left, all of us, unimpressed, and she had been very noncommittal, I think, saying some things

that were vague in general, not conveying her true intentions as far as I could tell or can tell. Remember, she redid the layout of the magazine to some degree, making it livelier. She was trying to get what she thought were livelier pieces in. I think Tina is a certain kind of English journalist whose tastes and notions just don't really work all that well here. Some people have said she made a success of *Vanity Fair*. I don't think it actually made money when she was there. She has claimed otherwise, and in conversations with me personally on two different occasions, she gave two fairly disparate numbers about how much money she claimed it made in her last year there. I think neither of them is accurate. I think in her last year there--in fact, the publisher at the time, Ron Galotti, gave an interview to *The New York Times* advertising column in which he said--one of the issues, I believe, was the August or September issue of that year. I think it was a September issue, and the interview was in August--said it was going to turn the corner and be in the black for the first time in its history. Well, that was the year that Tina claimed, I'm sure, that she had made a very nice profit at the magazine. That aside, when the magazine lost according to some estimates--the *New Yorker*, we switch back to the *New Yorker*. Now, the *New Yorker*, according to some estimates, lost thirty-five million dollars in her first year there. I don't think anybody necessarily knows the accurate figure. Another way of expressing that that I've heard is that she spent thirty-five million dollars her first year there. Well, the fact is that the magazine wasn't making any money, and it lost more when she arrived. She wanted her own people. I got along reasonably well with

her, I suppose. I didn't have much respect for the magazine, for the *New Yorker* she wanted to put out. I think there was--I don't mean to suggest there was no room for improvement in the William Shawn *New Yorker*. I would have done that *New Yorker* somewhat differently. There are things that Shawn loved and that--or at least he published--I wouldn't have. The same is true of Gottlieb, but Tina had edged it over to the magazine that was pretty much beginning to lack dignity or any voice. The *New Yorker* always had a strong voice as a magazine. It suddenly became a conflict, very visible conflict between the *New Yorker* and its having a voice, and between Tina Brown and the *New Yorker* being about her. The advertising that was sent out quickly began to plug as the hot book "Tina Brown's *New Yorker*." It was just not the *New Yorker* anymore. It was "Tina Brown's *New Yorker*." It had never been "William Shawn's *New Yorker*" or "Bob Gottlieb's *New Yorker*," but now it was "Tina Brown's *New Yorker*." I worked there less happily, I think, for two years under Tina. We were having lunch one day, and I was aware that she wanted to bring in some of her own people, that she wanted to make the magazine hers more than it was, and she wanted to make it certainly less of the *New Yorker* than it had been. She stopped running the anniversary issue cover with Eustice Tilly on it. That was, I believe, the third issue in February every year. She, in fact, had some artists deconstruct Eustice Tilly in a little illustrated spread. She claimed she hated the Eustice Tilly, the magazine's identifying logo. I think that was about the fact that she wanted the magazine to be not about itself, but about her. She had, I think, a pretty frail ego.

Of course, people with frail egos often manifest those by pretending to be kind of top dog--you know, Steven Potter's "I am the Top Person." I don't know if you remember the Potter books. Not *Harry Potter*, but Steven. *How to be Top Person* was one of them. But she did want the magazine to be more her voice, I think, than its own voice. A lot of changes were made, not necessarily for the better, but she thought they were, probably. Sometimes they seemed to be made just for the sake of change, to change it so that it wasn't the old *New Yorker*. At any rate, I was having lunch with her--oh, this would probably have been 1994 maybe--and she was talking about another editor who had just gone on a kind of part-time status, and we started talking about other arrangements. She mentioned this other editor who was working as a consultant, and she said, "I know you like to spent time at your house upstate," where I now live, being divorced now. And she said, "Would something like that interest you?" We continued talking, and I said, "You probably want to bring in some of your own editors," and she said, "Well-- And I finally said, "Tina, let's not kid around here. Why don't we put a number out on the table." And I think she was a little bit taken aback. But, at this point, I was tired, I think, of editing. At some point it occurred to me that I had begun to get somewhat weary of reading things to see what was wrong with them, which is what an editor does a lot of the time. Of course, you read things to see what's good about them and you read things to help them, but part of the job is reading things to see what's wrong with them. I think, given the shift that had taken place at the magazine, that that aspect of the job began to weigh more

heavily on me than it had, perhaps, in the past. At any rate, I worked out a deal where I was paid my full salary for three years, and one of the things Tina had done--as I say, she wanted to keep things in place when she first arrived--was giving, well, at least Bennet, McGrath and me thirty-thousand-dollar-a-year raises, so the salary was getting up there. It was pretty hefty. And with this new arrangement, when I became a consultant, I was not considered a salaried employee in terms of needing to come in five days a week. When I did come in, they were paying me close to a thousand dollars a day as a consultant. I couldn't even get paid that way.

[End of Tape Three, Side One]

[Beginning of Tape Three, Side Two]

CC: A consultant, which is essentially a contractor/freelance employee simultaneously, and the guy who was the human resources monkey, who was put to work on this, had no clue as to how to figure it out. He had not been in human resources elsewhere. He was simply a lackey of Tom Florio and a boot licker and a cost cutter and a string saver. But that's another question. At any rate, a financial adviser had given me some advice about how to invest 401K money and things like that, and I said, "Could you call this guy and help him figure it out?" So my friend and adviser, Byron Stinson, called the *New Yorker* and said, "Here's the way that you could do this and avoid these problems." And that way was, of course, for me simply to continue on salary, and when I left the *New Yorker*, they would pay me all the consultant money that they owed me. This seemed to

satisfy everybody. I'm not sure why that is, but it was the case. At any rate, I think that one of the things that they had felt was that this would be an economically advantageous arrangement because I wouldn't be needed as much on a consultant basis, but I think the first year I worked almost every day, or a great many days. I was constantly in conflict with Tina's managing editor, Pamela McCarthy, who would send me memos saying, "You have to give us notice when you're taking a vacation." Well, as a consultant, I didn't take vacation. I came in when I was asked. But several times I had to call the human resources people and say, "You'd better tell Miss McCarthy that I don't answer to her. I am a consultant. I don't work for her. I don't work for the magazine." That had begun to be somewhat irritating, and by the end of January 1997, I separated from my wife, moved up to Dutchess County, about the same time I left the *New Yorker*. At that point they were continuing to add people to the staff, never probably a great idea for a magazine that's losing money, but I think it was Tina's idea that if she just got the right combination of people, that it would somehow magically begin to make money again. It never did under her tenure, and I don't think it is now. Anyway, I left. They had a crunch for office space, so I left six months early. I continued to receive my full salary for that six months, of course. And then at the end of my salaried days, they owed me about a quarter of a million dollars in back pay for the consultant work. So I walked out of there. It was a fairly nice arrangement and good to have, and I needed some time to clear my head because I was in the throes of separation and subsequent divorce. I

moved to Dutchess County. I worked here doing some freelance things and working as an editor on a book that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation publishes annually about the medical and health areas to which it gives grant money, and there are a great many of them. That's a really worthwhile project, and I think we're doing our fifth volume now, the fifth year. At any rate, I had chosen to leave the *New Yorker*, not to go tell Tina when my last day was, or anything else because I didn't want to make--it wasn't a moment for celebration in my life. Not that I minded leaving, but with all the other things that were going on, it was just not a good time for me to celebrate a transition. Anyway, I came up here to Dutchess County and after, I guess, a couple of months, I had heard about a job at *Audubon Magazine*, the National Audubon Society at Fourth and Broadway in Manhattan, and I had written them a letter. I knew there was a new editor-in-chief because a friend had urged me to apply for that job some months before, but I had been busy with a book project, writing a book proposal for a doctor, and I didn't apply at the time. Who knows whether I would have got it or not, but at any rate, by this point--we are now talking about the late winter, January, February of 1998, Audubon had a new editor-in-chief in place, and I had written her a letter, and I was hired and went to work in March, I guess it was, as features editor. It was a very small staff. A mixed bag of talent. Of course, strength and weaknesses then stand out more. They become more prominent in a very small staff because they're much more visible. When I went to work there, it was not the happiest point of my life. The woman who ran the place had

experience at *Skiing* magazine and *Yachting* and at *Bicycling*. These are sports that are done outdoors, but they don't necessarily suggest an understanding of ecology or the environment, or the issues that go with those words. And it wasn't very long before she and I were butting heads, I think, in part because she was in over her head. She didn't really know what she wanted, and when she figured out what she thought she wanted, she didn't know how to go about getting it. She was, in my view, an absolutely awful editor-in-chief. She had no friends on the staff. I went in, I suppose, a year after I had been there--or after I had been there a year--I told her one day--she had completely lost--I mean, the staff was in near revolt. She had lost the support of the staff. I went in and I talked to her about it, and she burst into tears, and we had this long chat. I finally got another editor to go in and talk to her because I had to leave. It was late in the evening. And things got a little better for two weeks, and actually some of the people on the staff came up and thanked me, and then after that two weeks everything was backsliding again. She just didn't know how to talk to people. She would put her finger in their face and wag it like an angry old school marm. I think she was fundamentally--is fundamentally--a very disappointed and angry person. Too bad, but let's not put her in charge of a staff that needs to get out a magazine. It's only six times a year. At any rate, I was commuting from Dutchess County daily on Amtrak into Manhattan and then getting the train back home, and I suppose for those who don't know, maybe a word or two about the commuting life, or the long-range commuting life, is in order. I got up every morning at about 4:30 or

maybe 4:15. Got on the train--had to drive to the train station, which was about fifteen miles from the house. Got on the train at five minutes until six. Got into Manhattan usually around 7:45. Got to the office at 8:15 or so. Tried to get out by five when I could so I could get the train at 5:45 which got back to Rhinecliff in Dutchess County at about 7:15 or 7:20. And if they were doing track work or there were other causes for delay, then sometimes it would be 8:00 before I got home or maybe a little later. Obviously, leaving at five plus in the morning and getting back at eight at night doesn't give you a whole lot of time for a life. You can't go to the dry cleaner during the week. You don't really feel like going grocery shopping during the week. So a lot of stuff that you might have done in a normal week if you had lived in other circumstances simply didn't get done. After about a year of that, I was pretty much fed up with *Audubon*, and part of that, of course, was colored by the commute. And then I've run into my old commuting friends recently, and they're just constantly tired. I heard about a job at Bard College, which is about ten miles from my house in northern Dutchess County, and went up there, talked to the woman, applied. I happened to be an old friend of the college president, and, I suppose, his entree didn't hurt. I talked to the woman who was in charge of the publications department. They do various things. They put out a little magazine four times a year, I think it is, and they edit all the alumni letters that the president sends out, lots of things like that. I told the woman who was offering me the job that I wanted to take it, but I didn't want to come into an office beginning right away for a month or so. I said I would work

at home or I would work on a freelance basis for a month if that suited their needs, but I just didn't want to be in there every day because I had been doing that much of my adult life. And she said, "Well, let me think about that." There was a lot of dithering. A friend of mine who does CPA/accounting/financial kind of work took a job at Bard several years ago. On his first day there he was given a project, and towards the end of the week his boss came by and said, "How's it going on that--"whatever it was. And he said, "Oh, I finished it." And his boss said, "Why?" So I guess things don't move with undue haste on college campuses. They are bureaucracies of a sort, after all. At any rate, I went into *Audubon* to resign, and despite the difficulties we had had, the editor-in-chief said, "Oh, no, you can't do that," and she offered me a three-day week. So I was still waiting to hear from Bard, and finally I decided I would take the *Audubon* thing and try it for three days a week, and I wrote the lady at Bard a letter, saying, "Thank you, but I've decided to stay here." As far as I know, they may still be contemplating that notion and will get back to me someday. But I worked a three-day week, getting some wonderful pieces into the magazine: a wonderful piece by Bob Boyle on Chesapeake Bay and one on global warming, and wonderful pieces by Ted Karasote. He's a really good writer. Lives out in Kelly, Wyoming. A very nice guy. One of the pieces that I brought in illustrates some of the difficulties. It was written by scientists at the Institute for Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, and it was about forest system interrelationships among--in this particular case, the important or operative ones were the black-legged tick

and the white-footed mouse, and then the white-tailed deer. At any rate, the deer tick and the mouse that plays host to the deer tick and the virus--the Lyme disease virus, and of course, the deer themselves--there were other interrelationships, some of them interesting but not crucial to this situation. But when I first proposed this piece, the editor-in-chief gave sort of a scowl, and in a kind of angry tone--her tone was often angry--said, "Well, that's not really the story." While I did grow up in Arkansas, I left there at a fairly early age, but I hunted and I fished and I spent a lot of time, as many kids who grow up there do, in the woods and on lakes. I grew up with a considerable love of nature and the outdoors and have tried to understand those things most of my life. Anyway, she said in her rather angry tone, "The real story is not that. The real story is the explosion of the white-tailed deer population in the northeast." Well, that may have been the real story in 1955, and she may have heard it from some board member on the *Audubon* board who had lately discovered that there were a lot of white-tailed deer around. On the other hand, as I say, that story was possibly half a century old by this time, but, of course, editors, other journalists, too, writers--tend to think if they heard something for the first time, it must be new. Unfortunate, but we all have our failings. At any rate, I had to argue with her for several weeks, and, finally, she said, "Well, if you think it's so important, do it." And later she was flouncing around after the story had been published--brilliant piece. The scientists who wrote it--not all Ph.D.s are illiterate--actually did a wonderful, wonderful job of writing it. The editor-in-chief at *Audubon* was

running around saying, "Oh, this is just such a brilliant piece." And, of course, she was equally brilliant for having published it even though she had resisted it every step of the way. But I really didn't like the magazine or the job itself. I liked the issues. I liked the people there except for this one. The job was not any better for being three days a week instead of five. It was two days shorter. It was better in that regard, I suppose, but it was still a commute into Manhattan to a job I didn't really love, though I did love the issues and realized their importance. But the magazine should have been better, and I think it will be better. She's gone. She was fired. But last year--that would be the year 2000--the youngest editor there began coming to me, asking if I could help her find a job, and I tried. Eventually, she decided that she just wanted to do freelance science writing. She was interested more in the hard science end of our business than in the purely policy or nature-related things. She resigned and left in June of last year, almost a year ago, and I was talking subsequently to the editor-in-chief, and she was talking about the editing staff. She said, "And I guess you know that Gretel is leaving." That morning when I got up, I had nothing on my mind. It was just another day of going to work. I had vague thoughts of how long I would be at the magazine, and when she said, "I guess you know Gretel is leaving," it seemed one of those natural moments when things just happen the way they should without thought. I suppose the cliché of the moment would be it was kind of a "Zen moment," although since I've done some serious studying of Zen Buddhism and went to a zendo on 23rd Street in Manhattan fairly seriously for a few years and

meditated fairly seriously, I resist the cliché of the moment. “Zen” became a journalistic cliché for a while. I think it may have faded now. Anyway, it seemed the moment, and when she said, "I guess you know that Gretel is leaving," I said, "So am I." And she said, "What?" And I said, "Yes, I'll give you plenty of notice, so you won't be caught short, but I don't want to stay here anymore." And I told her I was going to write a book. I had written a novel--published about 1980 I think it was--called *No More Monday Mornings*, published by Viking. You can't find it anywhere now. And I have had in mind writing another book. And I also had in mind maybe changing and doing what, I don't know. It's nice to be able to not have an agenda, to be able to sit down and say, "What next, if anything?" So I stayed until the end of July in 2000. I took off. My financial adviser told me--when I talked to him, I said, "Let's figure out what I need to do. How much freelance work or how much--or do I need to work part time, et cetera?" He said, "Well, one of the troubles is that you probably should be spending more money than you are and not worrying about making more." So I guess through investing in the 401K and the stock market, et cetera, I've come out of things fairly well off, and it's a great pleasure. I take dance lessons now. I take Spanish classes. I still edit the book for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which is what I should be doing this afternoon instead of blathering on about myself. But I plan to continue taking Spanish until I'm fluent in it, and I don't have an agenda for that. I don't know where it will lead, if anywhere. It may not lead anywhere. It's just fun to do. The remark has become a cliché, but if you look on videotape at the

interviews that Bill Moyers did with Joseph Campbell, or look at the book that resulted from that PBS series, Campbell was fond of saying, "Follow your bliss." Too bad that interesting remarks have a tendency to become clichés in this country because they get absorbed and used for wrong purposes. But if I had anything to say about my career and about turning to Spanish at my advanced age, or taking ballroom dancing lessons and Spanish classes at this age, you know, I think "follow your bliss" is the message here. It's a great message, and I've had a great time. There's one--while I was talking--one *New Yorker* story came to me that I think I had forgotten to tell you, Jim. There was an editor named Derek Morgan, who worked there for some years, and when Gottlieb was there, Derek was pretty much drinking half the day. He would come in and he would sleep, and Gottlieb let him alone. He finally convinced him to retire. Anyway, at one point, we used to have a racing column. Well, when I went there, we still had a column--that was 1967--about Ivy League football, if you can believe that. But there were holdover things from the old, old, old *New Yorker*. The racing column was written by a man named George Riall, and it was signed with the pen name Audax Minor, but Riall was, I guess, senile, demented, whatever. He was at a nursing home in Baltimore, and he used to call this editor, the one who drank a lot, who was the last editor that George Riall had, and long after he had stopped writing his column, he would call from the nursing home and say--he had done this for so many years, he was under the impression that he was still doing it even though he wasn't--but he would call up and say, "Is the copy all right?" And the

editor would say, "Everything's fine, George." And he'd say, "Well, I just wanted to make sure, you know, that you got everything, and that it all made sense." And he was assured that the copy had arrived and that he had made sense. He hung up and went about his business, whatever it was. Ultimately, George died in the nursing home in Baltimore, and William Shawn--it's that era--called the editor, Derek,--he's dead now, too--and said that there was going to be a memorial service and would Derek mind going to Baltimore where it was to be to represent the magazine, and Derek said, "Sure," so he went to the memorial service. Now, at this time--an important detail here--is that Shawn was seventy-two years old and still fairly active. At any rate, he dispatched Derek to Baltimore, and Derek came back--and I had done a couple of things like this, gone to the national magazine awards as or the magazine's representative before the magazine decided to let it become a big deal. It never was when Shawn was there. He didn't believe in journalistic competitions. But Derek went and he came back, and Shawn called him, as he did anyone who had gone somewhere on behalf of the magazine. He asked Derek how it had gone, and Derek told Shawn this story. When they arrived at the memorial service, a gentleman came up and introduced himself as George Riall, Jr., the son of our deceased racing writer, and thanked him for coming and said it was wonderful that the magazine would have an editor down to remember Dad. So the service was held, and after it people were milling around. I guess there was a reception. And a different man walks up. First man said he was George Riall, Jr. A different man walks up after the service and

introduces himself as George Riall, Jr. And Derek said, "Well, wait a minute, I met somebody earlier," and the second George Riall, Jr., explained that Dad, the late Dad, had been something of a rascal and had, at some point early in his life, started a family but then left his wife and son to go follow the ponies and just abandoned them, I guess, and he had subsequently started a new family, so his second son--he, having forgotten the first one, I guess, was also George Rile, Jr. An odd bit of *New Yorker* history. So Shawn called Derek, and Derek explained all this to him. Shawn, who had known Audax Minor, or George Rile, Sr., for many years, had never heard this odd story about the two juniors from the two families. And, in his solicitous way, he said, "Well, what does the older Mr. Rile do?" being the one who was the first George, Jr. And Derek said--and this was after lunch, and Derek was a five Beefeater martini man at lunch--he said, "Well, for Christ's sake, he doesn't do anything. He's seventy-two years old." It wasn't very long after that that his duties began to diminish, and by the time Gottlieb arrived there, there really weren't any for him, so he was finally eased out of the place, and, thank God he wasn't there when Tina arrived because he would have been fired. But, anyway, I am sitting here now with a blank slate before me. I think that if I were asked at this point, you know, "What career would you have chosen if you could do it over again?" it probably would have been the same one. I would have done some more writing. I've done quite a bit of writing. I did write a novel. I wrote profiles, a couple of profiles for the *New Yorker*. Talk pieces. I wrote some fishing pieces for other magazines like *Town and Country*,

and it has been a really, really good career. I might do it differently, but I'd do it again. And I think I don't know whether I would urge others--younger people--to go into the business at this point because it has changed. It has become more corporate, more profit oriented, and I don't know whether the same sort of people who went to work with the *Arkansas Gazette* when I first went there are showing up in the business now, which is to say idealistic to a fault. Somewhat starry-eyed. People who could change the world.

[End of Interview]