

*Gazette* Project

Interview with

Carrick Patterson,  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
20 March 2000

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: Carrick, we have your permission to record this interview and turn it over to the Arkansas Center for Visual and Oral History?

Carrick Patterson: I do hereby grant such provisions. [Laughs]

RR: All right, [laughs] could we start out with a little biographical information on yourself? When and where you were born?

CP: I was born on September 11, 1945, in Little Rock, at the old St. Vincent hospital. And I went to school in Little Rock. Both at first and second grade, I went to a local private school. And then, third through eighth grade, I went to Little Rock public schools, Forest Park Elementary School, and Forest Heights Junior High School, and then I went to Washington, D.C., for the remainder of high school at St. Albans School in Washington. And then, I attended Stanford University where I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music in 1968. And after that went to work for the *Gazette* and stayed there until 1988, when I was encouraged by the Gannett people to find other employment. Then I went to work for an advertising agency, opened my own advertising agency, and now I'm a free-lance writer and photographer.

RR: You have a wife and children?

CP: Yes, I have one child from my first marriage. I was married to Barbara Ragan Patterson on September 1, 1967, and we had two children, Catherine and John. Catherine was killed in a car accident when she was sixteen, and John is now twenty-four and lives in Chicago. My second wife, Pat Trimble Patterson, had a daughter from her first marriage to Jimmy Jones, and their daughter's name is Julia Jones. She is now Julia Taylor. She's married and teaches first grade in the Little Rock school system.

RR: And was Catherine spelled with a "C?"

CP: C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E, yes, Catherine Ragan, R-A-G-A-N, Patterson.

RR: R-A-G-A-N?

CP: Yes.

RR: O.K.

RR: The year you went to work for the *Gazette*, 1968?

CP: 1968, right.

RR: Could you sketch your work at the *Gazette* from 1968 right on through?

CP: Well, actually, I had started working summers at the *Gazette* a good deal earlier than that. Probably in 1962 or so, I had started working summers at the *Gazette*. I apprenticed around on different jobs during the summer. Started out, actually, working the photography department and really, the first summer particularly, just sort of followed the photographers around and matched their shots, and everything, just to learn a little bit, and I got to where on a couple of other summers they would trust me to do some assignments. So I actually took some

pictures that got in the paper. And during high school, I sort of went over to doing summer jobs as fill-in reporter and worked the “crap desk,” as we called it then, which was the city desk clerk’s job and wrote the obits and the daily record type duties, and then did some general assignment reporting. When I graduated from college, I had studied music in college, and I was a singer actually. And I declared a music major just because it turned out that you could get private voice lessons cheaper if you had a music major declared. So I just sort of stuck with that and learned my journalism by apprenticing at the *Gazette*. I didn’t ever take any journalism courses, which was a cause of some upset at various times here in my career—since I hadn’t studied journalism—at least the teachers I did have were the best. And so then in 1968, I came as a reporter. And that’s really the extent of your question, I guess.

RR: Let me back up and ask you about music. Talk to me about your interest in music. When did it start, how early?

CP: My mother was always real interested in music, and we took piano lessons when we were kids. I played in the junior high school band here in Little Rock.

RR: What instrument?

CP: The flute. I played the flute in the band and actually stopped taking piano lessons because my mother thought you shouldn’t take all your time doing two instruments, that you ought to spend some of your time on academics. And so, she always said she wished she hadn’t made me stop the piano. Then, when I went away to prep school there in Washington, at St. Albans School, there was

not a band there, but there was a glee club, a vocal group. So I went and started singing with them. Learned a little bit about singing from them and started singing in some church choirs up there. It turned out that you could get paid for singing in a church choir up in Washington, D.C., and, being a student, I could always use some money. So I made—I don't know—I think twenty-five dollars a month singing for church choirs. First as an alto singing falsetto, and then as a baritone. And I was interested in that and had gotten some support as far as being able to sing a little bit. So, when I went out to college, I was interested in continuing to do some choral music and so forth. I auditioned for a couple of the choral groups that they had as a part of the music department there. They had a chapel there, actually a church. They called it the Memorial Church at Stanford. It had a very elaborate music department, and I auditioned for that choir. To my surprise, I was asked to be the baritone soloist for that choir just on the basis of my audition. They were going to pay me the stupendous sum of one-hundred-and-fifty dollars an academic year to be the soloist. Plus, you got academic credit for it, which was wonderful. You got, you know, two or three hours a week—semester hours or quarter hours—just for being in the choir, plus you got paid. That was wonderful. I decided to pursue that a little bit more and wanted to take some private voice lessons. And, as I say, I found out that those were cheaper if you had a music major declared. And since I really—I guess it really, for some reason, didn't occur to me to study journalism because I felt like I had had the opportunity to be exposed to it for most of my life. So I declared the

music major and, I think, a little bit to my folks' distress. But I started doing a bunch of music and singing and what not out there at Stanford and, turned out, they started a student opera group. I was in that and got some pretty big roles in the opera. I started doing some studying up in San Francisco with opera coaches and singers, and what not, and I really thought about making a little bit of a go of that as a career at one point. I was asked to sing at a summer Bach festival after graduation and really thought about doing it. And I went up to New York and auditioned for some teachers. They were, you know, pretty excited, and I auditioned for the guy who taught Robert Merrill, who was a great Metropolitan Opera baritone. He said, "Yeah, I think you can have a career," you know, "but you've got to learn some." And, just one morning—there in that New York thing—I was up there about three days doing auditions, just walking down the street in New York City, and I thought, "I want to go back to the newspaper. That's what I want to do." And so, I did.

RR: That was after you'd graduated from Stanford?

CP: After I graduated from Stanford. That would be the summer of 1968.

RR: I know you still sing.

CP: Not much anymore, but I did some. After I came back here, I sang in the church choir for a while. They started up a local opera company, and I sang with that a little while. Then they—as those musical organizations would do, they outgrow their humble ranks—decided that they were good enough to start bringing in outside people and paying them. The local people were never paid, but the

outside people came in when there started being some money. Then, the local people [laughs] were not asked to participate as much or were going to be relegated to smaller—I had enough artistic ego and temperament that I figured maybe I . . .

RR: You still sing at the “Farkleberry Follies”?

CP: I haven’t in quite a while, no. I haven’t done that in about four years. Maybe it’s six years now. I still do some writing for it every now and again, though.

RR: Yes, I guess it wouldn’t be a bad idea to have you digress a moment and explain what the Farkleberry Follies are.

CP: The Farkleberry Follies is a biennial gridiron show, put on by what used to be called Sigma Delta Chi, now called the Society of Professional Journalists. It started in 1966, and I wasn’t in that first one, but Leroy Donald, former state editor of the *Gazette*, and George Fisher and some other people—the former editorial cartoonist, at that time, for the *North Little Rock Times*—started it. It was called the “Farkleberry Follies” in reference to Orval Faubus’s famous Farkleberry tree. I got in on it after I came back in 1968. And it was about twenty years before I started taking some years off, just because it’s pretty grueling, but it still goes on. And Leroy Donald’s still the man in charge.

RR: It’s pretty professional in its . . .

CP: Well, no, not really, [laughs], but on alternate years, the Bar Association, the local Bar Association, does a gridiron show. We’ve always said that they have the better performers. They’re much more, of course. It’s lawyers—you’d expect they

can sing and dance and everything. But we have the better writers [laughs].

RR: Right. You mentioned a while ago that your first job at the *Gazette*, when you were working summers, was in photography. How did that come about?

CP: I had been given a camera and was interested in it, playing with it, and having some fun trying to take some pictures. Since it was just to be a summer job, I said, "Well, let me follow the photographers around." That was fine. I wasn't paid, but later I was paid. I wasn't that summer. I may have gotten a little expense money or something. But it was something that a publisher's kid got to do that no one else would have gotten to do. I was lucky enough to get to do it. The chief photographer at that time was Larry Obsitnik. The other photographers were Gene Prescott, Dan Miller, and Rodney Dungan.

RR: Prescott, Miller, and Dungan?

CP: Yes.

RR: Larry Miller?

CP: Dan Miller.

RR: Dan Miller.

CP: And Rodney Dungan. They were real nice to show me tricks and techniques, and they taught me how to develop film and make prints, and they taught me the various equipment that they used, including the big ol' Speed Graphic 4x 5 cameras, how to do that. So it was a real learning experience for me because these were old pros who'd been working, in Larry's case and Gene's case, ever since they came to the *Gazette* right after World War II.

RR: Yes. Larry was still using the Speed Graphic at that time?

CP: Yes, yes, and the Rolleiflexes, the medium format—what we now call the medium format cameras—the 35mm cameras were just coming in at that time. It was so important to be able to develop your film quickly in those days because you had to get the film developed and a print made and evaluated, and the editor had to decide whether to use it. Then you had a long delay when it had to go out to have an engraving made. That didn't even take place at our own shop at that time. We used a third-party supplier called Peerless Engraving to do all our, what we called “zincs,” our flat pieces of metal that were acid-etched to make the half-toned pattern that produces a photograph in a newspaper. So it took several hours from the time a photograph was made to where you actually had the device that you use to put it in the paper. So we had to print real quick. Well, usually in photography, there are trade-offs between speed and quality. So the 4 x 5 film was used because the techniques of development were such that the fastest mode would deteriorate the quality, but the size of the 4 x 5 negative made up for that. [Laughs] So, when we improved the technology, it improved a good deal as far as films and everything. We used the two-and-a-quarter and the 35mm stuff. But I was there right at the transition from the old 4 x 5 cameras.

RR: I can remember when Larry stopped carrying the big, old, awkward Speed Graphic and started using the 35mm.

CP: Right.

RR: And my recollection is it was considered kind of daring on his part to make that

change.

CP: Yes. The 35mm's had come in—the war correspondents used them in the second world war—actually, they started using them, I think, in the Spanish Civil War. And they were considered really neat for those uses because you could conceal them and you could carry them and everything, whereas, the big cameras were harder to do. You could change the lenses somewhat more readily and so forth. But the quality hadn't come up to what we like to think were the newspaper standards for ordinary stuff at that time. Well, it quickly got there.

RR: How good were these photographers Obsitnik, Prescott, Dungan, Miller? How good were they compared to what you've seen of other newspaper photographers?

CP: I think they were the equal of any that I've seen. I mean, if you looked at comparable events, to even the big papers, I mean, like if the president came to town, you would get photographs that equaled the Washington press corps taking pictures of the president. I mean, you'd have the mayor of Little Rock—maybe you weren't quite as impressed because it wasn't the same personality—but the technical quality was just as good. Of course, what photography is really supposed to do in a newspaper is illustrate the written part, and it requires, because of that, an appreciation of what the news story is about. In that way, the photographers at the *Gazette* were excellent. And sometimes their photographs would tell the story as eloquently or more eloquently than the written matter. Of course, the one that comes most instantly to mind is Larry's famous picture of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne troops coming across the Broadway Bridge in 1957.

RR: Yes. I can see in my mind another one of Larry's pictures: a picture of President Harry Truman and Governor Sid McMath walking down the street side-by-side leading a parade, I guess.

CP: I don't recall that particular one.

RR: That was before your time.

CP: There was another real famous one that Rodney Dungan took in one of Faubus's early campaigns, of Faubus with his jacket slung over his shoulder, holding a campaign banner, and the caption on that was, "Down From the Hill." Of course, that was the story—which you know better than me—of Faubus.

RR: I guess you're aware that Faubus himself liked that picture so well that he used it in his election campaign?

CP: I know, yes, and that was a little bit of a controversy around the paper, that somehow our news photograph had gotten into being used in a partisan election campaign, especially for a man who at least our editorial crew didn't approve of.

RR: [Laughs] That's right, yes.

CP: So the answer to your question is, yes, they were good.

RR: Yes. What kind of a guy was Obsitnik?

CP: Obsitnik was very consciously, very self-consciously, a character. First of all, he was a very good photographic craftsman, but he didn't take himself too seriously. And he didn't really take life too seriously. Like many of us, he enjoyed a good party, and he enjoyed—he'd even occasionally have a drink of alcohol.

RR: [Laughs] Yes.

CP: He loved to tell stories. He loved to be with friends. There was a “watering-hole” at that time called “The Downtown Officers Club.” In those days, Little Rock was a, supposedly, dry place. There weren’t bars, but of course there were bars. They were all private clubs. This place was about two blocks from the *Gazette*. All of them would gather up there and tell stories. Everybody called Larry Obsitnik, “Chief,” just called him, “Chief.” His title was Chief Photographer. Everybody called him “Chief.” He used to have run-ins with the people he took photographs of. He was not a bit above ordering people around to make a better photograph. From the governor on down to anybody, he would say, “Now, stop. Move over here,” or “Move to your right,” “Move to your left,” “Smile,” “Hold this up,” “No, do it again, you didn’t do it right.” He would boss them around. A famous story about Obsitnik is—one time the head of the Ford Motor Company came to Little Rock to speak at some event or other. The service club luncheons were a big thing that was always covered in those days, both by reporters and photographers. And, of course, if somebody, Mr. Ford—I forget. It may have been Edsel Ford. I don’t know which Ford it was, I must say—came and spoke, and there was a session where the photographers afterwards took a picture of him. Larry Obsitnik, the Chief, took Mr. Ford’s picture and said, “Now, Mr. Ford, my . . .” —I’ve forgotten what model, the cheapest one, the cheapest model of Ford he had—and Mr. Ford said, “We don’t like to hear that. Take it into the shop and tell them I said to fix it.” Well, it developed that Larry ended up with a free, new engine out of it, by confronting the head of Ford Motor Company.

RR: He was not shy.

CP: Not a bit shy.

RR: All the photographers had a reputation for being a little different.

CP: A little different, yes. Whether it was the chemical fumes or some other fumes, they're a little bit different. Larry, during the army, had been stationed in the Aleutians, and he had great stories about those days, about fighting the "evil menace" from the East. Of course, he never really saw any, but he could have.

RR: That's right. [Laughter] But it did get awfully cold up there.

CP: Yes, well, and Larry probably felt the cold a little less than some of us.

RR: You started out when you became a full-time, before you were a reporter...

CP: Right.

RR: ... general assignment?

CP: General assignment, right. I don't know if anybody listening to this would know, but the reporting was divided up into beats, in general. A beat was a specific area of expertise. You might be on the education beat, or on the City Hall beat, or on the County Courthouse beat, or on the Federal Courthouse beat, or the State Capitol beat, or what not. Or you were a general assignment reporter, where you were just in a pool, and whenever something came up, the city editor decided how you were to be used and assigned you to whatever story that might have been. So I started as a general.

RR: You remember any stories that you covered during that period?

CC: No, I sure don't.

RR: Were you on that very long?

CP: No, I pretty quickly went over to sort of apprentice and assist at the Little Rock City Hall beat. The City Hall beat reporter, at that time, was Jimmy Jones. And City Hall was growing. It was getting to be a pretty big beat. And I didn't pretend—even though I hadn't taken any journalism classes at school, I still didn't really claim to know everything. So I was lucky enough to get over and sort of apprentice on the City Hall beat under Jimmy Jones, who knew everything about City Hall. He taught me an awful lot about how you develop sources on a beat and how you got to know people. There were all kinds of meetings always going on at City Hall, and we covered them like the dew. We were a newspaper of record at that time. The City Board of Directors, a city manager form of government at that time, had not only regular meetings, but on alternate weeks they had an agenda meeting. And then there was the Planning Commission and several other groups that met. And then there were always things happening, the water service and the sewer service and all the things that happen at City Hall. So it was a pretty big beat. And so, quickly, I was writing stories separate from what Jimmy was doing. And then Jimmy moved on to other assignments, and I inherited that beat at City Hall by myself for a while.

RR: Was Werner Knoop still the mayor at that time?

CP: No, he had just gone out. The mayor when I first got there was Haco Boyd.

RR: H-A-C-O, wasn't it?

CP: Yes, B-O-Y-D. He was an old insurance man.

RR: Right. The city manager, you remember who that was?

CP: The acting city—they had just lost the City Manager and—Let’s see, the city manager was Jack Murphy.

RR: This was before Meriwether came?

CP: Yes, this was right before Meriwether came. Jack Meriwether came up from Texarkana to be city manager at Little Rock while I was there. And I covered Meriwether for the first . . .

RR: Then he went on to join the *Gazette*?

CP: Yes, that’s how I got to know Meriwether. After we needed some more help in the general management, I suggested to my dad he consider Jack Meriwether. And they hit it off, and so Jack came to work as general manager.

RR: Stayed there several years?

CP: Yes, a number of years. Then went to work at the University of Arkansas.

RR: After city hall, do you remember what your next step was?

CP: Let’s see, at some point in there I went in to work on the Sunday magazine. At that time they had a broadsheet section that they called the “Sunday Magazine” that was—oh, it’d probably be called kind of a perspective section today. It had the editorial page and the op-ed and columns, and so forth, letters-to-the-editor in it, but it also would have one or two long, general features in it, about, perhaps, a historical subject or something about Arkansas, or national/international-type subject, or even occasionally a political subject. And it also had entertainment news in there like movies and concerts, and whatnot. The man who put that out

was Charlie Davis, who was an old veteran person at the *Gazette*, and I was asked to go in there to help him some. So that's where I learned the way of laying that out, and everything was real different from the rest of the paper. So I learned how to do that stuff for him. And I would substitute when Charlie was on vacation, and I would substitute when the television writer, Martha Douglas, was on vacation. I stayed doing that for a while and, I think, went back to reporting for a while, but I would still fill-in in there. I don't remember exactly what the sequence was, but . . .

RR: I suppose this would have been your first experience as an editor?

CP: Yes.

RR: Making up pages?

CP: Right.

RR: Deciding on play of stories, that sort of thing?

CP: Yes, pretty much, yes.

RR: It just occurred to me that that section you're talking about was where a lot of our, what we called, JNH's ended up.

CP: Yes. [Laughs]

RR: Probably had the task of putting some of those in the paper?

CP: Right. JNH's, of course, referred to my grandfather, John Netherland Heiskell, the editor at that time. He was famous for coming up with assignments that, really, nobody else ever would have thought of [laughs]. A lot of them having to do with the history of Little Rock and the history of Arkansas, but also stuff that

just caught his attention. And that was a very wide range of stuff, that would—I wish I could think of some particular examples. I hope you get some in the course of this thing.

RR: I've written enough of them myself, you'd think I could remember.

CP: Well, me, too. Me, too. But he'd wonder why a certain tree bloomed at a certain time, and you'd have to go find sources that knew something about trees. He'd wonder about—oh, I can't think of what all—what happened to some creek that he remembered from his youth. . . .

RR: Were "The Chronicles of Arkansas" still running at that time?

CP: Yes. Yes, the *Gazette* was one of the few papers anywhere to employ an actual historian, and her name was Margaret Smith Ross. She wrote a weekly feature called, "The Chronicles of Arkansas," which was literally that. It was about Arkansas history and was one of the few really good sources of Arkansas history. It's her work. And she worked very closely with J.N. Heiskell because that was a subject that he dearly loved. It was under his direction that the *Gazette* was one of the few papers probably anywhere to have a staff historian.

RR: Talk to me about J. N. Heiskell.

CP: By the time I got there, it was clear that he was already—he was, of course, in his seventies when I got there. But he was, of course, a legend and very much respected and very much thought of as "The Grand Old Man," even though he was still very, very active. He came to work five-and-a-half days a week. And even though he didn't deal so much with the day-to-day running of the newsroom,

he constantly fired off memos and notes and little scribbled reminders. He saw everything that was in the news section, anyway. If you ever figured he wasn't going to see it, that was the thing he would see. [Laughter] We didn't have an official style book at that time. We had a collection of loose-leaf folders, which was mainly full of things like memos from J. N. Heiskell, that had established the style. And some memos from the other people like Bill Shelton, the city editor, and A. R. Nelson, the managing editor. But the JNH legacy was the major part of our style book. He had some really interesting rules—for instance, the possessive of the word “Arkansas” was always to be spelled, “s's.” And his reasoning on that was that . . . in the word Arkansas itself, the final “s,” though written, was not pronounced in the French form. But when you added the possessive, it was. So his logic was that that final “s” in “s's” was required to reflect the way the word was actually pronounced. And so, we used that style as long as our family had anything to do with setting style on the *Gazette*. He had a number of other spelling styles. For instance, the word that is now almost always spelled D-R-O-U-G-H-T, meaning a dry period, at that time was pronounced “drouth” in the South. And so, in the *Gazette* the word was spelled D-R-O-U-T-H.

RR: I still spell it that way and run into a lot of trouble with editors.

CP: It took me a long time to get away from it. We always spelled it—when there was a choice between two ways to spell a word, we always spelled it the shorter way so it'd fit in the headline. Like the word “employee” was always spelled with a single final “e.” And it took me forever to get to be able to put two “e's” on it.

“Canceled” only had one “l,” you know, “Canceled,” C-A-N-C-E-L-E-D.

RR: Yes.

CP: I think I still spell it that way most of the time.

RR: It’s coming back to me why I do so many things. Arkansas’s is with an “’s.” I still write it that way.

CP: Yes.

RR: And I’d forgotten where I learned to do that.

CP: Well, it is more elegant. [Laughs]

RR: That’s what it is.

CP: That’s the way to do it.

RR: It is.

CP: Boy, I’ve had terrible fights. Of course, you get into advertising and public relations writing, and you’re writing for somebody else and you have to spell it their way, and it’s really annoying. [Laughter]

RR: Didn’t the paper, at some point, actually produce a written style book?

CP: Right. A man named Paul Johnson, who was on the copy desk at that time, volunteered and gathered up all those loose-leaf things and compiled them into a style book. It’s one of the greatest newspaper style books probably ever written because he explained all the reasons for all those things. Oh, we had any number of things similar to that.

RR: Do you remember that he incorporated Mr. Heiskell’s memos?

CP: Absolutely.

RR: His spellings and all?

CP: Right. And some of the things my grandfather was actually wrong about. . . .

RR: That's the first time I've ever heard anybody say that [laughs].

CP: Well, it's true, though. And one of them was the style thing. He was of the opinion that the—a number of German names, aristocratic names, have the word “V-O-N”, von, Werner von Braun—and “von” was to be lower case because the German name or word means “from” or “of.” It would have been lower case in English, so he made it lower case in German. And that's how the Germans actually use it. But the Dutch word “V-A-N”, as part of names, he had come to the notion somehow that was part of the name. Your name was “Van.” Like a lot of people, it was a pretty popular Southern first name at that time, Van. So he thought that that was a proper name, so should be upper case. Well, it turns out, of course, that the word in Dutch means exactly the same thing as the word “V-O-N” does in German, and it is properly spelled with the lower case letter, but never while Mr. Heiskell was alive.

RR: [Laughs] I never knew that. I never knew that. I'm surprised I didn't run into that.

CP: He had a rule about what we called the City Board of Directors. Little Rock had gone from a mayor/alderman system of government that had had some controversy with it, and actually some scandals, to a city manager form of government, city manager, board of directors government. And he insisted that the board of directors not be called the City Board of Directors, but be called the

City Manager Board. The people at City Hall would say, “Why do you all keep doing this? Why do you call it that? That is not the name of it.” And when Bob Douglas became Managing Editor, that was his first decree [laughter], that we were going to call it the City Board of Directors, which was its proper name. And in other things Mr. Heiskell was a stickler. Like, for instance, the state legislature was always spelled with a lower case “l” because that was not the name of the body. It was the state General Assembly. General Assembly was always capitalized. But if you said, legislature, it was lower case. So he was a little inconsistent.

RR: What about your personal dealings with him?

CP: Oh, he was a great grandfather. He was just a great grandfather to have. He loved to talk with you and tell you stories and listen to you, and he encouraged me a lot in photography. He was an amateur photographer. He loved taking pictures. He gave me a Rolleiflex camera that he’d had for years. I still have it. He was real pleased that I’d come to work for the *Gazette*. He would have me in and ask me what was going on. And then, of course, we saw him at all the family things. We had dinner with him probably once a week. Holidays, we always saw him. It was a tradition. When I was growing up, we would visit either maternal grandparents or paternal grandparents on alternating Sundays. He always gave great, interesting Christmas gifts. It was a really, really nice relationship.

RR: Stories. Do you remember, did any of them go back into his early days, his childhood? Do you remember?

CP: You know, he didn't talk as much about that as you would think he would have, knowing how conscious he was, at that time, of his own historical importance. But, for some reason, he was more interested in talking about general things than sort of going on about himself.

RR: Here's a man who was born in 1872, and his father was up in years, I gather, when J. N. was born. In a matter of three generations you all spanned almost a century.

CP: Yes, of course, he spanned almost a century himself. He didn't die until after his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. And his father had been a Civil War colonel and then later was a judge.

RR: Did he ever talk about his father?

CP: Almost never, almost never. And I didn't remark on it. I mean it was sort of general knowledge who he had been and everything. But it wasn't that he was reluctant. It's just—I don't know—it didn't come up [laughs].

RR: Tell me about your Grandmother Heiskell.

CP: She was a great grandmother. She used to . . .

RR: Her name was?

CP: Wilhelmina.

RR: Wilhelmina.

CP: Wilhelmina Mann Heiskell. Her father was George R. Mann, who was a great architect in Little Rock, and among other things designed the present state capitol and the *Gazette* building.

RR: Yes, George?

CP: Yes, and she was very artistic. She was a very gifted painter. She didn't paint canvases, but she painted scenes on trays and on furniture. She made artistic items. She was great. She started a tradition that my mother continued, of wrapping elaborately wrapped Christmas presents. Both my grandfather and she loved to travel. They traveled all over the world and just loved it. They loved to go to newspaper meetings in exotic places: South America, Europe, and even Asia. And she was a really grandmotherly grandmother. As small children we would spend the night with her, and she'd come read us stories. She could read *Winnie the Pooh* better than just about anybody. She was a really—they were, both of them, very much in the old southern aristocratic tradition. Something that you didn't see too much, even by then.

RR: I'm sorry, didn't what?

CP: Even as early as I'm talking about, the 1950s and 1960s, still there weren't as many of those [aristocratic types] around. There still were some. They were, of course, wealthier than a lot of people. But they also understood that a life of service was called for. If you were called on to do that, if you had the resources to do so. He, for instance, had helped found the Little Rock Public Library. He had library card No. 1. So he was very active and civic-minded.

RR: Yes. What year did your grandmother Heiskell die, do you remember? She was a lot younger than he was.

CP: She was a good deal younger. She was in her 90s when she died, and it must

have been in . . .

RR: Sometime in the 1980s?

CP: Probably in the early 1980s, yes—I can't remember.

RR: Do you remember your Patterson grandparents?

CP: Oh, yes, very much.

RR: So they had not died when you were . . .?

CP: Oh, no. We continued to—like I say, we went to see them on alternate Sunday afternoons. When I was a young man, my Grandfather Patterson and Grandmother Patterson ran Ferncliff Camp, a Presbyterian Church camp out west of Little Rock. And they lived out there full time, and we loved to go out there. There was a little lake and woods, and we loved to go out there and play. When my grandfather retired from that position, they moved to Little Rock. And they lived in Little Rock in a little house on Palm Street for a long time. My grandmother died, and my grandfather moved to a little, smaller house and, ultimately, went to stay at the original St. Vincent Hospital, which sort of became a kind of a nursing home. He stayed there for a while and lived downtown. He loved to go around and sort of sidewalk-supervise the construction projects around town. But he eventually moved out to a pretty much full-time nursing home in west Little Rock.

RR: Yes, you were lucky to have all four grandparents until you were . . .

CP: Yes. Well, they all lived into their nineties and stayed, all of them, pretty spry and pretty with-it for as long as I knew them. My great-grandmother—I knew my

great-grandmother, my Grandmother Heiskell's mother, real well.

RR: What was her name?

CP: Her name was [laughs], it was Granny Mann. She had a first name, of course.

RR: I remember hearing about Granny Mann.

CP: Isn't that odd that I don't even know her first name. I think it may have been Elizabeth.

RR: That's right. She lived here.

CP: She lived here with her daughter Elizabeth, who was called Bess. Aunt Bess lived to a hundred-and-one, and I knew her real well. I never knew George R. Mann. He died before I was born.

RR: You were—I guess we were in the 1970s when you moved over to the Sunday section. After that do you remember what your next job was?

CP: Yes, I worked on the copy desk, on the rim, and I really liked that. That was a good job, as far as I was concerned. And after working there sometime I asked—it's one of the times, I guess, that I took advantage of being part of the family. I asked if I could be made news editor. At that time Bob Douglas was news editor. And so I was made news editor, and Bob was made assistant managing editor. There certainly wasn't any reason to replace Bob as news editor. He was a splendid news editor. It was just something I wanted to do, and since I was supposed to be learning the business, I guess, it was agreed that I could do it. And I really enjoyed that job. That was a great job. It was my favorite job I ever had on the paper. But, you know, it did mean displacing Bob,

and that was something that, I guess, I wasn't sensitive enough to at the time. I don't think he—oh, Bob and I stayed friends and everything, but I don't think he—I imagine he resented that a little bit.

RR: How early in your life were you aware that you would probably become the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*?

CP: I guess I was pretty aware that I was going to be at least part of the management of it as soon as I got there. It was very much a family business, and that's really kind of one of the reasons I wanted to do it. It was literally in my blood that I wanted to come back. And I wish in a lot of ways now, although I would have missed some incredible experiences in learning, that I'd had gone to work as a non-family member in another paper at some point. Sort of earned my spurs there rather than . . . you know—be promoted by merit rather than by family connections and so forth. I think that things might have been a little different then. But I just enjoyed being at the *Gazette* so much that I really felt very much a part of the newsroom and the newsroom family there. And that was very generous of my colleagues to give me that feeling.

RR: Your, I presume, namesake, Carrick Heiskell, had been in line to be the editor.

CP: That's right. That was my uncle. He was killed during World War II, and that's one reason my father came to the paper. There was a gap there, and I don't think there was any question of it going out of the family line somewhere, so it shifted over there to him to keep the management in the family.

RR: In later years there might have been speculation that one of the female members

of the family would end up running the paper, but back then, I guess, that was not  
a . . .

CP: Right, and that was really too bad because my mother's older sister, Elizabeth Heiskell, was called Ebi.

RR: Called what?

CP: Ebi, E-B-I. It was her nickname, great southern nickname. Worked at the paper during World War II, when there was a shortage of male people. She would have been—oh, she was a great lady. She was a really smart, sharp, a bon vivant type of lady, and she would have been a splendid, splendid editor of the paper, I think. But in those days that just wasn't done, and my grandfather was very old-fashioned in that regard. And when the men came back from the war, by golly, women shouldn't be taking their jobs, so she was invited to not work there anymore. I don't know, of course—I wasn't there at the time—but I've heard that story, and it's a great tragedy. My mother would have been great, but Ebi, particularly, actually worked there, and it's really too bad because she would have been a splendid choice.

RR: I wonder how she took it.

CP: I do, too. I had the impression she didn't really take it all that well.

RR: Yes, can't blame her much for that.

CP: No.

RR: You became news editor, do you remember the year?

CP: It was probably 1972, maybe.

RR: Yes, and how long did you stay in that position?

CP: I really only stayed there about eighteen months. I loved the job, but I had some family pressures to sort of be available during the day for other stuff. So I moved up to assistant managing editor, or something like that, and knew right away that was a mistake. I really wanted to keep actually putting out the paper, but by that time it was a done deal.

RR: What did this mean, and what were your new duties?

CP: Well, it was sort of general supervisory, and that turned out to be not a very good thing. I was, throughout, a much better hands-on person than I was a supervisory person. I really liked to put out the paper. I liked that best of all. Of course, in those days we were working with the old hot type and everything, and it was a lot of fun. But I got into, you know, just various administrative-type stuff and policy-type stuff. But one of the things I got interested in was—of course, it was the 1970s by then—the sort of changing priorities in society and so forth—and we realized we were not really representing the soft news, as well as—it was becoming evident that the soft news needed to be a part of the mix.

RR: Meaning?

CP: Meaning features and entertainment and, you know, cooking, and that sort of thing. We still had a society section, and it was a society section. It was not just a women's section. It was the society section that went to elaborate lengths to rank, for instance, brides by their social importance.

RR: Yes.

CP: And covered the debutantes and so forth. And the whole process of ranking the brides by their social importance was a big deal in those days. They took up a lot of space with it. You were—your picture was— if you were a white person—despite the *Gazette*'s reputation for being a liberal racial institution, it didn't apply in the society pages. If you were a white Little Rock person who was engaged, your picture was in the paper, and then, when you were married, your picture was in the paper. It was almost like the right to an obit. [Laughs] But you made the front page if you were socially prominent.

RR: Yes.

CP: And you made the upper left-hand side of the front page if you were really socially prominent enough. Well, being a young, liberal person, I thought that perhaps the day for that was passing. And I persuaded the powers-that-be at the *Gazette* to let me start up a general features section using the resources that, among other things, had been put into that elaborate bride business. And we called that the Omnibus section, the daily features section. And it was to be modeled in my mind—even though I hadn't heard of this—I somehow wasn't aware of it—but it was the same idea as the *Washington Post* Style section, that it would be a spot section. It would cover not only human interest-type stories, but art, culture. It would have spot performance reviews. It would cover, you know, somebody interesting visiting from India, as well as the ballet and the opera and the arts center and—what else happened?—but it would be very much a timely spot type section. Well, I had really miscalculated what people in the newsroom would

think about that. There was a lot of resentment in the old, traditional newsroom about it.

RR: Why?

CP: I don't know. But Bill Shelton and Bob Douglas and people like that thought it was frivolous to be doing and didn't want their spot material used in it. And because of press considerations, it was decided to make it an advance section. So I never had the power, if you will, to get it made a spot section. It was always a twenty-four hour later section.

RR: That was the difference, you had an advance section that could be printed a day ahead?

CP: Right.

RR: A spot, of course, meant . . .

CP: That you could get, for instance, that night's performance reviews in it.

RR: Yes.

CP: And that sort of thing. . . but we had a real good crop of writers in there. Mike Trimble was in there and the ladies who had formerly worked for the bride's section, for the society section. We just told them, "You're now feature writers. You're full-fledged writers." –They were kind of considered second-class citizens in a way, and I wanted them to consider themselves first-class citizens, and everybody really responded well. Well, almost everybody. The old society editor, then, Betty Fulkerson, did the advice page on Sunday for a while. It was hard for her to get used to. But, gosh, before we made those changes, we still

literally had a column called, “Among Ourselves.”

RR: Written by Miss Nell Cotnam.

CP: Nell Cotnam and later by Buff Blass. [Laughs] And it was just—it was the 1970s, you know. We were very much conscious, or at least I was, at that time of how things needed to change a little bit. I thought so anyway.

RR: Yes.

CP: But the Omnibus section, I was proud of that, and I think everybody who worked for it was. Because they did some really, really interesting features and really interesting even layouts and so forth that were real different from what the paper had been doing and didn’t take a thing away from the spot news. I mean, we still covered—we were the newspaper of record for all the governmental, politics, and everything else. But it just added that element that, I think, rounded out the paper a little bit more.

RR: You didn’t take any of the news holes from the news section?

CP: Absolutely not. It was its own section.

RR: Yes.

CP: It stood alone. We still had an A and a B section for news and a sports section.

RR: How many pages a day would it run?

CP: It would run six to eight.

RR: So, that would be in addition . . .

CP: Sometimes twelve.

RR: In addition to what the paper had been before?

CP: Yes.

RR: Let's see, if the paper had been forty-eight pages before, it would go on up to . . .

CP: Yes.

RR: Fifty-six, yes—or more. Did that mean increased costs for the paper?

CP: Oh, yes.

RR: Did you have enough advertising in the section?

CP: Well, it attracted some advertising. Advertisers, no matter how much they like the rest of the paper, tend to want to be in the A section.

RR: Yes.

CP: It's just the way it is. So . . .

RR: It would have been Blass's department store back then?

CP: Yes. And it was somewhat frustrating to the business management people that we couldn't—that we refused on the editorial side of the Omnibus section to sort of slant it more toward what they thought they could sell advertising in.

RR: Yes.

CP: Which was to be—they wanted very much to have it be Wednesday about furniture and Thursday about frozen foods, or something like that. We just refused to do that. We wanted to be as timely as the hard news sections and to reflect what was really going on.

RR: Yes.

CP: And, as a result, had a nice little run on the thing, but, finally, the pressure from the people who resented it and also the notion that it should become more aimed

toward attracting advertising took over, and it stopped being that same kind of section. They brought in a new editor, a guy named Bill McIlwain, to try to shake loose the obstreperous young man who insisted on doing all this stuff. So, at that time, I kind of . . .

RR: How do you spell McIlwain?

CP: M-C-capital I-L-W-A-I-N, I think.

RR: No "E" on the end?

CP: I frankly don't remember.

RR: All right.

CP: He didn't stay very long. But he had the notion—he'd come from the Long Island *Newsday*, which was a tabloid—and he had the notion of making it a tabloid. He came in with a number of ideas that didn't really fit in with the *Gazette*. And it turned out to be, perhaps, a mistake to have hired him, and he was gone.

RR: Did the Omnibus section go on?

CP: No, it was changed. It just was named Features, or something like that.

RR: How long did it last as the Omnibus?

CP: Probably about two years.

RR: Yes. And by then, we're in, what, the mid-1970s?

CP: Yes.

RR: And your job by then was—were you still assistant managing editor?

CP: Yes, I was assistant managing editor, and it had become sort of features editor while I was, you know, trying to get that section started up. And I even did the

day-to-day editing of it for a while.

RR: Yes.

CP: But just as part of learning more about the newspaper, I was taken to a meeting of the American Newspaper Publishers Association Research Institute. This was a big annual conference and exhibition about newspaper equipment, which, at that time, was mainly Linotype machines and printing presses, and so forth. I was fascinated by the production side of it. I loved working in the composing room and learning about the various machines and the techniques of actually producing the paper. And so, I went to this thing, and they had this funny little machine there that looked like a TV set with a typewriter attached to it. Off in a corner somewhere among all these great hulking iron machines and clattering things. And they explained to me what this thing could do. That you could feed a paper tape, a punched paper tape that somebody had done into this thing, and you could make corrections. It would come up on the screen, the story, or whatever, would come up on the screen, and you could correct the—you could move a little spot of light up to where there was an error, and you could put in the proper letter to correct a misspelling or even change the way a sentence was written, or even a paragraph. And then you could push a button and a new paper tape, including the corrections would be punched out, and then you'd feed that paper tape into a Linotype machine. Well, I'd never. I had seen something like that in college. A friend of mine was a major in Slavic linguistics, and he got a part-time job transliterating Russian words into Roman characters. He used a thing that I later

found out the name of—it was a video display terminal—to do that. So I kind of remembered this, but I saw this at this ANPRIA show and got to talking with the people who were making this thing and got to where I understood what it did.

Well, I thought that was just marvelous because we had a terrible time with typos and everything in the old hot type days at the *Gazette*. The first edition—we did three editions. They went to press at different times. And the state was divided into concentric circles, so the papers that had to go furthest were in the first edition, so that all papers could be delivered early in the morning wherever their destination was. That first edition had to be on the press by about 10 p.m. in those days. Well, since a lot of the state Capitol and City Hall really didn't shut down until 5 o'clock or so, it was tremendous pressure on the reporters to come in and get their stories written and then the news desk and everybody to get it edited and get headlines written and then get the type set. And what ended up happening was that the first edition was often not proofread because there just wasn't time.

RR: Yes.

C.P: And it was truly embarrassing, the quality that the first edition had as far as typos of various sorts. And I got the notion that this device could be used to keep that from happening. Well, I got more and more into that, and it turned out that, yes, it could be made into a system of interfaced equipment and that you could actually write stories and edit and everything else. So I sort of got real big into promoting that and setting that up at the *Gazette*. So that took a couple of years of my time.

RR: And this would be in the late 1970s?

CP: Yes.

RR: Yes.

CP: So the *Gazette* turned out to be, actually, one of the first newspapers to computerize.

RR: I remember that you were taking the lead at the paper in computerizing the paper.

CP: Right.

RR: When was it actually done?

CP: About 1976 is when we got the first one pretty much working.

RR: That puts the *Arkansas Gazette* roughly ten years ahead of *The New York Times*.

CP: Yes, probably. We were about the third paper in the country to do it. The *ChicagoTribune* and the *Detroit News* were the first two, and we were pretty much the third. And it really did work. It really cleaned up the paper. And it turned out that those things at that time—the old hot type, Linotype machines were going out—and it turned out that those things were particularly able to drive the new photo-typesetting machines, where it was a lot harder to make corrections and so forth and it was more important that it be right the first time. So we were able to really make that transition easier than some newspapers because of the fact that we had invested the time and effort in learning about those things.

RR: From hot type to cold type?

CP: Right.

RR: And that happened in the late 1970s?

CP: Yes, in that period of time.

RR: That changed the feel of the newspaper, didn't it?

CP: You know, it was popular among some people to say that. To me, it didn't. I mean, yes, it certainly changed the feel of the back shop, of the composing room because of those old, clattering machines and the smell and everything back there of the gas pots going to melt the hot lead and whatnot, but as far as the feeling of what you did to be a reporter or an editor—now, there are certainly people who would disagree with me on this—but to me, it was no different than using a typewriter instead of writing it out in longhand. I mean, I'm sure that when they stopped writing things out in longhand and started using typewriters, somebody said, "Well, you know, this is the end of the newspaper business as we know it." I don't know. To me, I made real, real sure that the jobs didn't change, that everybody was still doing what they had done before, and that all the steps were gone through, in the newsroom side, at least—there were still assigning editors and you know, city editors, and then there were copy editors who did headline writing as well, and they were supervised by slot people and layout editors and news editors—that all the steps still were taken and all the values that were put into keeping the quality up and keeping the supervision and the editing, as well as the good reporting. They were just using different tools to do it.

RR: Did some of the reporters and editors insist on keeping their typewriters?

CP: Absolutely, yes.

RR: Do you remember who?

CP: Oh, the most notorious was Charlie Allbright. He wrote the “Arkansas Traveler” column and still does. And to this day, I believe he writes his column on a typewriter [laughter] and then transcribes it into the computer. Leland DuVall never got onto the computer. He continues to use a typewriter. And a couple of others, but, frankly, we didn’t let everybody have that choice. Senior people like Leland DuVall and Charlie Allbright, we let them have a choice.

RR: Who were the reporters who caught onto the new system most readily?

CP: I don’t know if I could pick anybody out as getting into it most readily. I think everybody was real cooperative. Most people were real cooperative. I mean, the younger ones, particularly, but even some of the older ones, you know. It was surprising how people like, say, Bill Lewis, got onto it. He was good about it. Bill Shelton was the city editor. He was very reluctant about it. And never—I mean, he did it. He was, boy, he was a trooper. He did it, but he wasn’t real happy about it.

RR: Yes.

CP: Even though, I mean, intellectually, everybody came to realize that it was the way it had to be. Still, you know, nobody likes change. Especially in something as traditional as the *Gazette*. But I believe that we put out a better paper for having been leaders in that. And certainly it was in no little way thanks to people like Bill Shelton, who allowed us to keep the standards up during those transitions.

RR: I just remembered a funny little problem that we had at *The New York Times* when they brought computers in, and I’ll bet you had it, the carpet. You know,

first of all, they required carpet because there was something about it. But the carpet we had at the London Bureau put off static electricity, and they discovered that we kept shorting out the computers. They finally had to buy some rubber mats to put under the reporter's feet, so the static electricity would not transfer to the computer. Did you all have that problem?

CP: When we first put in the computers, we put them in the old newsroom, which had a parquet floor. Nobody told us we were supposed to have carpet. If that was a fact, nobody told us about it. And so, we didn't have that as much of a problem when we first put them in. And when we finally did move into what became the new newsroom, and it did have the carpet, we made sure that the carpet had anti-static treatment, which they'd come up with by then, a way to do that. But, still, on a cold, dry day, if you were scooting around on your chair sometime and touched that thing, you'd zap it.

RR: Yes.

CP: You could ruin your whole day. [Laughs]

RR: It turned out I was the worst culprit at the London Bureau. They had four or five of us reporters using the same computer terminal, and the guy in charge of the computers figured out that every time the computer went out, it was while I was using it. And he told me one time what I would do. I had the habit of scuffing my feet as I composed.

CP: Yes.

RR: Of course, that just stirs up the static electricity.

- CP: Yes. Computers were very insensitive to that and they still are.
- RR: I guess so. When did you become managing editor?
- CP: I don't know. I think it was when Bill McIlwain—the editor that was brought in to sort of kill off the Omnibus section—[laughs] I think I was made managing editor when he came.
- RR: Now Douglas left the *Gazette* in 1981. I know because he took my place as chairman of the Journalism department.
- CP: Yes. He had been made sort of executive managing editor, or something like that. Frankly, we were getting a little too top heavy. A lot of it was because of my having sort of shoved everybody above me up as I rose up. That ended up with us being a little top heavy. And then, the McIlwain thing, which was an effort to change the direction that I'd been trying to take things, exacerbated that for its period of time, which was pretty brief. But during that period when McIlwain came, then there were finally too many chiefs in there, and Bob got the opportunity to go to the university, and it seemed like a good idea for him to do that.
- RR: Yes. Do you remember your years as managing editor? What sort of things were happening at the paper, and what your part in it was?
- CP: Well, it was still trying to adapt to the new technology a lot. I really got to where I spent a lot of time on that. Also, there was a feeling, I think, of trying to keep the old standards and the old traditions going in the face of a pretty dramatically changing economic situation. It was becoming much more expensive to put out

newspapers. Newsprint was going up. The whole nature of the thing was changing. And then by that time the so-called newspaper war had started. There was a whole lot of preoccupation about that.

RR: In the late 1970s?

CP: Yes. And that became, sort of, the dominating theme there for the next, almost, decade.

RR: You became executive editor. How many years did you hold that title?

CP: I really can't remember because my actual function hardly changed. My title changed a few times, but my actual function hardly ever did.

RR: While you were effectively running the news operation, do you remember dealing with your father, the publisher?

CP: Yes, oh, sure.

RR: In what ways?

CP: Well, sometimes we would have some differences of opinion. He was very much into trying to see to it that the advertising succeeded. And he felt that there were very ethical ways to adjust, particularly, the feature operation, as I said, to make it more appealing to advertisers. And certainly he was the most—is, was and is—the most ethical of people. And I would never say that he was not a wonderful journalist first, and only after that, a publisher. Still, it being a matter of degree, we couldn't always see a hundred percent together on that. So there was some friction over that.

RR: From his point of view, he's reading those financial statements.

CP: Right. And, you know, I'm educated by J. N. Heiskell and A. R. Nelson and Bill Shelton and all the rest of them, and despite the fact that by this time, I suppose, I was a little controversial with those people [laughs], I was still trying my best to hold up the ideals that they had instilled in me.

RR: Was it significant that J. N. Heiskell always carried the title "editor" and not "publisher"?

CP: It was to me and to him, I think. That was rooted in history, of course, because there had been—despite what people thought, the Heiskell family didn't own the *Gazette* outright. And, certainly, in the years before my dad came and, certainly, before I came, there had been very much a partnership with another family who were sort of in charge of the business side. And only about the time that my dad came had that situation begun to change. But by that time it was sort of established that J. N. Heiskell would be the editor, and the news and editorial, and the business operations were pretty much a separate deal.

RR: Did Mr. Heiskell involve himself much in the business side?

CP: No, not that I know of. I mean, certainly as far as going out and attracting advertising or anything like that, no. Of course, by the time all this took place, he was in his upper seventies. So by the time that he actually had any opportunity to involve himself in the business side, I expect he wasn't very inclined to. [Laughs]

RR: Yes.

CP: We certainly never talked about it.

RR: Yes. Anyway, you had this in your background, and did you have it somewhere

in the back of your head you might eventually become publisher of the *Gazette*?

CP: I never really wanted the title publisher. I would have liked to have had a title that my grandfather had at one time: editor-in-chief, which I would have liked to have been—in overall charge of the whole thing. I had some ideas about how to run the business department. I thought, for instance, that the advertising department relied way too much on special sections and special promotions and that, really, they ought to be concentrating more on selling the run of the press, that we ought not to be distracted by these frozen foods sections and, you know, spring garden sections, and that sort of thing. Even though for a long time the newsroom actually produced the editorial for those, I was able to get that moved down, exclusively, to the advertising department.

RR: Good. [Laughs] Every reporter ought to be grateful to you.

CP: Well, I hope they were, but that was controversial, the notion that it had to be some sort of special, attractive deal to get people to advertise. To me, it was a big philosophical error and was selling short what the real strength of the paper was, what people read. And I never was in a position to get that idea across. And would have liked to have been.

RR: Yes.

CP: I would have liked to have supervised some of the spending practices and everything a little more carefully. A little bit, not necessarily more carefully, but more thoroughly than what I . . .

RR: What areas?

CP: All areas. I mean, there was some—oh, you know, a young man's seeing stuff he's always going to disagree with it and sees areas where he might have done it a little bit differently. And, you know, the older people who thought they'd been doing a perfectly damn good job of that weren't necessarily the most excited people [laughter] in the world to have that [happen to].

RR: Could we talk about the change in ownership of the paper?

CP: Sure.

RR: If you could, describe what happened leading up to that and then how that came about.

CP: The newspaper war was in two stages. The Hussman family bought the, then, afternoon *Democrat* in 1974 and tried to enhance it editorially. They brought in Bob McCord to be editor, and they beefed up their news hole. They hired a bunch of people and did a bunch of things and tried to compete in terms of quality and everything. They had a lot going against them, not the least of which was being an afternoon newspaper, which was a very difficult situation to be in at that time—which was the way the times had changed. And they really did not do well economically with their changes. They made some significant changes and improvements in the *Democrat*, but it wasn't enough to get them out of a pretty bad economic hole. That, among other things, had to do with them being an afternoon newspaper. So they approached the *Gazette* about a joint operating agreement, which would involve sharing production facilities, and so forth, money-saving things, and would involve some sharing of revenues. And the deal

would be that they would be guaranteed a certain amount of revenue.

RR: A percentage or a flat dollar amount?

CP: I think, it was going to be a percentage. I'm not sure. I wasn't actually involved in the negotiations. My dad, I think correctly, at that time, didn't want to do that because he had looked at the industry, and this same pattern had occurred in a number of other cities, that they had indeed started up joint operating agreements, with a dominant morning paper and a secondary— I'm going to have to answer this, I'm sorry.

[Phone interrupts.]

RR: You were talking about the JOA proposition?

CP: Right. He had seen that the afternoon paper in those circumstances never did do very well and was an economic drain on the joint operations. And, of course, there was a lot more competition than just the other newspaper. The broadcast was becoming very, very aggressive as competition, less money to go around and costs were going up significantly. Newsprint had soared, but all the new equipment that you needed to be competitive, time wise—the computers—and then the huge expense of keeping the presses up to date. It was becoming really obvious that you needed to be going into offset printing to compete, in terms of being able to print color and that sort of thing. There were incredibly huge expenses that needed to be made just to sort of stay up with the industry and to be competitive. So he turned down the offer for the JOA for those reasons. And so, Walter Hussman, to his credit, said, “Okay, instead of just giving up, I have

myself the economic resources to put into this, to try to make a go of it. Despite the real economic realities, I will make the decision to subsidize this operation and to do whatever is necessary to do to make it viable.” He was an immensely wealthy person with other newspapers and oil and broadcast interests and had a good deal of money. And I wouldn’t be a bit surprised—although he’d never said this, certainly, to me or maybe to anybody else—if he didn’t have just a little bit of ego tied up into it, as far as being turned down on the joint operating thing. That may or may not be true. I don’t know, just speculating on that. In any case, they decided to take some really dramatic moves to make the *Democrat* competitive. They shifted it over to morning publication, which absolutely had to be done if they were going to compete. They subsidized the circulation practices and the publication practices by offering the biggest advertisers below-cost rates. They did a general circulation weekly throw-away section. They threw the paper away for free on Wednesdays to everybody in the circulation area. They started giving away classified advertising to non-commercial people for free. Very, very costly things to do. They were swimming in red ink. But, overall, they could afford to do it. Well, the competition, the economic competition situation changed dramatically because although the *Gazette* was profitable, it was by no means lavishly profitable.

RR: Could you put a percentage figure on the profit margin at that time?

CP: I sure couldn’t. I would not know, but given what was needed to be done in terms of capital improvements, particularly the printing press, it was something you

couldn't do and still try to equal those promotional activities, in terms of, you know, classified and underselling [ below-cost advertising rates].

RR: How do you respond to free papers, free advertising, that sort of thing?

CP: Well, really, we didn't know what to do. Ironically, it was something that was hard to react to, and what we did was try to fall back on what we thought we did best, which was putting out a good newspaper. But that wasn't enough to keep the advertisers, for instance, totally loyal to us. It was—well, you can understand. They're driven by economics. If you have a chance to buy advertising for a dollar an inch, versus fifteen dollars an inch, you're going to do it. I mean, you know, that's just the way it is. And they also did a pretty good job over there at the *Democrat* of identifying interesting things to report on. They didn't do as good a job of covering the traditional news of record, perhaps, as we did, but they covered for that to some extent by having, you know, interesting stories about what people were doing and what was going on and that sort of thing. So, to say it was totally economic competition is wrong, but that was the key factor, the economics. Despite the fact that the *Democrat* itself was not successful economically, there was enough economic power that could be put into it to create a great, long, wide-open paper full of news hole unencumbered by advertising, so you could do all kinds of layout stuff. You could have a very substantial classified section. And because people were getting their ads in there for free, I mean, you could sell a teaspoon in there, you know, and get a nice little ad for free. Of course, the circulation went up because of that. Because if people

wanted a cheap teaspoon, they'd look in the *Democrat's* classifieds, buy the *Democrat*— you'd probably buy the *Democrat* even if you didn't subscribe to it to see if your ad ran.

RR: Yes.

CP: They put a lot of stuff into, you know, covering that sort of thing. They established a personality for themselves that they had not had, through the writings of John Robert Starr, the managing editor. And with all that they had a nice little thing going that certain people really, really liked. And, of course, the *Gazette* had never been universally popular among the people of this conservative Southern state. You see, being a liberal newspaper was something that, you know, earned the paper a lot of respect, but, also, a lot of resentment. But the economic power that they [the *Democrat*] had kept mounting. And in our opinion their activities violated the law. Our opinion was that selling below the cost of producing was illegal.

RR: Yes.

CP: And we tried to get various enforcement agencies, such as the Attorney General's office and the anti-trust division of the Justice Department, and so forth, interested in taking action on that. And we were never successful. So, finally, it became obvious it couldn't go on that way, that we would be driven out of business. So we filed a lawsuit in federal court asking that they be enjoined from selling things below their cost of producing and so forth. And after a lengthy trial, we lost the suit. They did a much better job of presenting their case than we

did of ours. We simply didn't do a good enough job. And after that, there was no question of our being able to survive economically.

RR: Let me digress for just a brief question. Was Judge Overton's terminal illness a factor in the way that trial went?

CP: Not that I'm aware. I don't think we even knew he was ill at that time.

RR: O.K. Anyway, was that sort of the beginning of the end?

CP: Yes, well, that was almost the middle of the end. But, yes, it became obvious then that we, as the ownership, did not have the economic forces to compete economically at the level that the Hussmans had established.

RR: Yes.

CP: We couldn't give away classifieds. We couldn't sell advertising for a dollar an inch or two dollars an inch. We couldn't do a free circulation.

RR: Yes.

CP: We couldn't do all the things that they were doing.

RR: Did the *Gazette* try to match any of the economic—for example, did the *Gazette* ever cut any advertising rates?

CP: No, not really. We didn't raise them as fast.

RR: O.K.

CP: I am not personally aware of any that were cut, but I might not have been—but there was a lot of talk at that time, and I think that's probably the mistake we made, about something called the “integrity of the rate card.” And the idea there was that you had a set of rates—advertising rates in the newspaper varied by the

quantity. The largest advertisers get the smallest unit rate, and it's a sliding scale. And it was very much thought at that time, and something that our people were very proud of, that they weren't going to compromise on that for momentary expediency. More later about that. [Laughs] And though that was, probably, the right thing to do, still, it tied your hands. There wasn't really any dispute of the fact in the trial, that, indeed, the *Democrat* would make compromises on their rates for expediency, and so forth. We either wouldn't or couldn't or didn't employ even the flexibility that we could have, perhaps, ethically to deal with—I think there would have been ways to do it. Now, I don't know, maybe not. Anyhow, I've sort of forgotten what the main subject was here, [laughs] I'm sorry.

RR: No, no apology needed. We were really heading up to the decision to sell the paper.

CP: Right. Well, it was clear that if the economic competition went on like that, that we would lose, that we couldn't afford—the paper would be bankrupt; the family would be bankrupt; all the three hundred plus people who depended on the paper for their livelihood would be out of work. And that wasn't something that we were willing to accept even for the ego of owning it for ourselves. We couldn't just let all those people be sacrificed, so the only other alternative, the legal one being exhausted, practically, was to find somebody with more capital, who could compete. Well, it was very disappointing, particularly to my dad. I think it was really surprising to him. It wasn't surprising to me, but it was really surprising to

him how little interest there was among the respected, larger newspaper organizations in the *Gazette*. I think it really must have hurt his feelings a lot. People one would think of as being happy to have something like the *Gazette* in their ownership, people like the *Times Mirror* and Knight-Ridder, *The New York Times* were not interested. They had problems of their own, all of them, at that time. It wasn't a real good economic period for anybody.

RR: Yes.

CP: But they had problems of their own, and they just weren't interested. Well, you know, shoot, what do you do? Well, we had some feelers from people we'd never heard of and people who had been printing some suburban newspapers and turned out to be not really able to appreciate what was going on with the *Gazette*.

RR: What company was that? Do you remember?

CP: I don't even remember.

RR: That wasn't Ingersoll?

CP: Yes, that was Ingersoll.

RR: Ingersoll, yes.

CP: Yes, that was Ingersoll. And nothing ever came of that. Well, finally, the Gannett people approached us. Al Neuharth, the head of Gannett, was kind of at the end of his career. He managed to convince us that he was now looking for respectability, that they were going to get some papers that they could be proud of having, papers that would have a new feeling of quality. And they demonstrated that by getting the Des Moines paper and the Louisville paper, and convinced us

that they—or at least made a strong case to us that—they wanted to do that at the *Gazette*, that they had no interest in changing the nature of the *Gazette*, that they merely wanted the prestige of being associated with that kind of paper, and that they would lend their vast economic resources and also their resources in advertising and promotion and so forth. And so, it was the only game in town at that time. Of course, the clock was very loudly ticking on how long we could survive without the infusion of capital.

RR: What was your own feeling about Gannett?

CP: Well, I didn't have a whole lot of respect for them as a chain. I didn't have much respect for the way they ran their newspapers. But, either naively or for whatever reason, I thought that going with Gannett, with the assurances we'd been given, was better than shutting the thing down.

RR: And it came to that? It was Gannett or nobody?

CP: It literally was Gannett or nobody at that time. There was no other choice.

RR: Was there a period in this process when you saw alternatives you yourself? Not the whole family, but just you yourself?

CP: Yes. I mean, I thought that you could, and my dad had this thought, too—although I don't think he ever really followed through on it—that there was an alternative: that you could shut down and just be a central Arkansas newspaper and not go through all the expense of having the newsprint, transportation and everything that you had to have to circulate papers in Fayetteville, where, after all, your core advertisers had no interest in advertising.

RR: Would that enable you to compete effectively against the subsidized paper across town?

CP: Probably not, but it would have been something you could do trying to eke it out. But the problem with that was you still needed to provide the bloody printing press. See, that was the rub: the darn printing press had to be bought.

RR: Yes.

CP: You had to go offset so you could do the color and stuff. I mean, there just was no other way.

RR: Yes. So it became a done deal that the—I'm going to quit the tape.

[Tape Stops]

RR: O.K., this is the second tape with Carrick Patterson and Roy Reed, on March the twentieth.

RR: Carrick, you were telling me about how the *Gazette* came to be sold to the Gannett company.

CP: Right.

RR: If you'd just pick up there, and go ahead and finish with that part.

CP: Well, as the transition went along, I had hoped that I might be able to be named in overall charge of the local operation, that I could have the title of editor-in-chief as I had wanted, or publisher or something like that. And I was asked to stay as editor, but not to have the business office responsibility.

RR: This was after Gannett?

CP: Yes, after Gannett. And they brought in a man named Bill Malone, who was

actually a native of Arkansas, to be the publisher. And, indeed, they did give us some resources in terms of capital in advertising and circulation and that sort of thing, but, as it also turned out, about that time Al Neuharth left for good. He left his post as chairman of Gannett. It turned out, the people who were left there were not of his same point of view about keeping the *Gazette* the way it had been. And they started bringing in people asking us to do things a certain way, and I resisted. I resisted very strongly because I thought we'd been assured that that wasn't going to happen. And they did it in kind of subtle ways. They called them contests among all their papers, and you were graded on certain things. And what it turned out you were graded on was not anything that we thought was anything that contributed to the newspaper's merit. So we got low grades.

RR: Things like what?

CP: Oh, like how long your average story was, how many stories you had on page one, how neat your weather map was, whether you had daily color comics or not. And they'd do silly things. They'd just—Malone decided that we, by God, would have daily color comics. Well, at that time we had three pages of comics because I thought that people liked to read comics. We ought to have a lot of comics. Well, the way the press worked, you could only have one color page devoted to comics. You couldn't have all three comic pages be in color. So he said, "Well, you know, comics are so popular and everything, we need to have color comics." I said, "Fine, but we can only have one page of them." He said, "Well, you'll just have to cut it back to one page then." And so it was just completely opposing

points of view. I mean, on the one hand, he wanted to go to all the effort to make the daily comics come out in color, but on the other, he wanted to cut back the popular feature—the comics itself—just so you could do the color. I mean, it was just stupid. So I said, “We can’t do that because, you know, which comics are you going to cut out? People are used to all these things.” “Well, why don’t you make them real small, where they will fit on the page?” I said, “Well, no, we’ve got a lot of older readers. We can’t do that. We tried to make the obit type smaller from time to time. We tried to do something with the stock market and every time, we couldn’t do it, you know, because the older people are, you know, very important to us as readers.” Well, you can’t do any of that. Okay, so we ended up with one page of color comics and two pages of black and white comics and, I mean, it was incredible the expense of it to do. We had to hire people to, literally, color those things every day and to go through all the mechanical problems of separating the color plates and everything to make the darn thing work, and it was just stupid.

RR: This thing of comics, I’ve heard editors down through the years say that one of the most troublesome things in running a newspaper is trying to change a single comic strip, take an old one out and put a new one in.

CP: It really is. Or any feature, any feature. One time we redesigned a page on which our columns, like the bridge column and stuff like that used to be. And as part of that we moved the Billy Graham column from the upper right-hand side of the page to the lower right-hand side of that page. And the day we did that, the phone

didn't stop ringing for seventy-two hours, people wanting to know where Billy Graham was. We said, "Well he's right down there on the page." "Well, no, he isn't." "But, yeah, you go look." "Well why'd you do that for?" You know. I mean angry, angry, angry people. Oh, yes, people love those things. And fine, that's their right.

RR: What were some of the other things that Gannett did that, in hindsight, turned out not to have been the wisest course?

CP: At that time, we didn't have a Monday business section, the theory being that businesses were closed on Sunday, so there wasn't any news on Sunday to put in Monday's paper. There weren't any stock markets or anything. So we just didn't have a Monday business section. Well, they decided, by God, we were going to have a Monday business section. For no reason but that that was just kind of a fad in the country at that time. There wasn't any advertiser interest. There wasn't particularly any reader interest. Oh, we came up with a pretty good Monday business section, but it was just more newsprint being put out. There was no advertising to support it, and staff resources being spent on it that could have been used for news that was actually of more, you know, compelling and more vital interest to the readers. But they said, "Well, you don't have to do the Monday business section, but we are not going to give you any resources to do anything else. So if you want any resources at all it's going to have to be for the Monday business section." Okay, fine. About that time, after we'd been fighting little stuff like that and having visiting firemen come in and give us ideas and notions,

and what all, for a while, they decided that they'd have this Michael Gartner, the editor who had been in Des Moines, whom they'd inherited in Des Moines, and who had moved up to their corporate level. They decided they'd show him a week of *Gazettes* and have him write a critique. And he wrote a critique that I just thought was—the technical newspaper term is “chicken-shit.” [Laughter] He criticized the front page. He criticized the little “In the News” column that we had on the lefthand column, which was a little briefs column. He criticized the weather map. He said, “The weather map's useless.” He criticized the river bulletin, which is the thing we ran that showed the different flood stages of the river. The river was vital. It was vital information for agriculture and that sort of thing. He didn't understand that. Five or six pages of just nit-picking stuff, ignorant, shoot-from-the-hip stuff, I mean, and I say ignorant just because he didn't know the state of Arkansas and he didn't know what we were trying to do. Nobody asked what we were trying to do. They just said, “Oh, this is bad; this is bad; this is second rate; this is amateurish, this is . . .” We weren't used to people talking to us that way.

RR: Yes.

CP: And I reacted very strongly. I wrote a very, very strong letter back, and the phone started ringing from Washington, and I was told how bad a mistake I'd make if I didn't show more tact. Another time I went to a national Gannett meeting in Washington, and they had the editors of *USA Today* there, and they were talking about how wonderful they were. And they were talking about their daily process

of putting out the paper and that they were going to find the one story that they thought they wanted America to talk about that day, and they would put all their resources behind that. They would have a page-one thing about it; then they'd have a sidebar, and then they'd have editorials about it and op-ed. On the day I was there, there was some prizefight that was to take place. And I got up in the meeting and I said, "You know, that's very interesting what you're doing, but don't you think it shows a little contempt for your readers, that you decide on this frivolous thing that it's going to be the big topic every day?" And they sort of looked at me like, "Well, what's your point? Of course, that's what we're doing. Yeah, yeah, we have contempt for our readers, sure we do." Well, that wasn't popular for me to sass them like that. I mean, my name was put down in a book somewhere, and so Malone, the publisher, had me in and said, "You know, this isn't working. You've got to go." So I said, "Well, I don't want to go. Why don't you let me go up and work on the editorial page?" So I did that for a while, but that wasn't really viable long term. I had some fun writing editorials for a while, but—so I had an opportunity to go to work for an advertising agency, so that's what I did.

RR: What year?

CP: 1988.

RR: Okay, three years before—I find I can't refer to the closing of the paper in any way except death.

CP: Yes, well, that's what it was. To me, it was already dead. The people who stayed

behind, even some of the old *Gazette* people, really fought the good fight with all their might and they tried to go along with what was asked of them at Gannett and tried to their ability to uphold their own standards as well, but it became more and more frivolous, more and more a contest of irrelevancies. Both papers became very concerned about how many column inches they could write on a single subject. Both of them had this convention of having, what I call, black bar pages, where they have three or four pages in sequence on a single story with the title in a black bar above the page. Well, of course, I always thought that one of the things that newspapers did for their readers was to help set the agenda, to help prioritize, and make digestible and understandable the relevant news of the day. Just being long was not a virtue. Just being short was not a virtue, either. But being concise and communicative of the various events and such interpretation as was appropriate for the reasons behind it was what a newspaper did for its readers. It wasn't just putting all this raw data out there. It was prioritizing it, presenting it in such a way that people could have that input of knowledge in a way that was most useful and most expedient for them. So it became pretty silly as far as I was concerned.

RR: Yes.

CP: And they brought in a lot of people who had very, very different ideas about writing and about what was news and what wasn't.

RR: Talk about that a little bit. What was news and what wasn't.

CP: They did a lot of things, like the *Democrat* does now with sort of star writers, you

know, who would just write about the whichness of what, and their belly button lint and that sort of thing. Oh, they brought in one or two really good people. One hilarious guy they brought in, who wrote—actually, he wrote fashion news. Rod Haygood, I think, was his name. He was a really funny guy. He wrote a wonderful story about the Blue Angels, the flight team that came to town. They used to take a reporter up with them the day before [their show], as a promo thing. He went up, and he was very fashion conscious, so he was very proud to have the jumpsuit and everything. But he'd worn shoes different from what the real pilots were wearing, and he was real concerned that he had to. He made such fun of himself for that, and he wrote a tremendously funny story. So it wasn't all bad in those days, but a lot of it was.

RR: What about the page-one news play on Gannett? How would you characterize it?

CP: I think page one probably suffered less than the inside pages did, but they had a succession of editors. They went through several editors, and one of them was very much into—what was the—he had a term—I heard all this stuff third-hand, people telling me, or second-hand, people telling me about it because I wasn't there any more—but that he was very much into wanting every day a story about some sort of heroics on the front page. There should be some hero on the front page. Of course, you know, there isn't always a hero story. [Laughter] So when you are in a position of trying to create something like that, you end up doing some pretty ludicrous stuff. And they did.

RR: Yes.

CP: And then there was the thing of who could write the longest story, or who could have the most stories about a single topic every day. And both papers fell into it, and it was just incredible to watch. And it wasn't working. And they got to where they were spending as much money on the promotions and extra newsprint and various non-actual news type activities as the *Democrat* was, and both newspapers were losing tens of millions of dollars. Well, Gannett was the one that went first. And that's the end of it.

RR: Yes, and what about since then? How do you judge the remaining paper put out by Walter Hussman?

CP: I think it's remarkably better than I thought it would be, under the circumstances. I feared that Hussman, having put so much money into the war, would try to recoup the money by cutting the paper down to as small as he could get away with, and he didn't do that. He didn't do that at all. He's kept a pretty good news hole. He's kept a good staff. He's cut out the free classifieds [laughs] and started charging for obituaries and what not, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. He is not running the paper the way I would. He doesn't emphasize—they don't cover local news as a matter of record anymore. That's the basic change, I think. And they still have a few star writers they let go on and on. They are pretty top-heavy in their features management, and they've gone to a thing in their features section where it's all named columns. There's almost no CQ features. It's all just columns with, you know, people's faces on it. My personal preference is away from that. I think if you have all those people writing, you can have them write

about, you know, toads every week, but put it under a headline and make it look like, at least, that it's a regular story. The thing doesn't look exactly the same every day.

RR: Yes.

CP: And you don't get in a rut producing it, of knowing that you're just following a formula—you know, Mr. X's column goes up the upper right of the page, and Ms. Y's column goes in the upper left, and in between is a two-column photograph. It takes all spontaneity and flexibility and everything out of running it. So I criticize him for that. But I think that, at the same time, they're putting out a better paper than is being put out in almost any other market this size, that I'm aware of, anywhere in this country, and, really, better than markets in cities that are many multiples of our size.

RR: If Gannett had won the war, what do you think the paper would be like?

CP: I think it'd probably be pretty much like what I feared the *Democrat* might be like, that they would've cut it pretty far down.

RR: In other words, we've ended up with a better paper than we would have if Gannett had come out on top?

CP: I believe that's right.

RR: Yes.

CP: I believe it would have taken a while to get there, but there were still some *Gazette* people there, fighting the good fight, as they say, but they had limited powers to do that.

RR: This last question refers to what you and I would think of as the old *Arkansas Gazette*, not the *Gannett Gazette*. What has the death of the *Arkansas Gazette* meant to the state of Arkansas?

CP: Well, the knee-jerk response to that is that people aren't as serious about the social and political agenda as they were when the *Gazette* was there. And that's a real nice self-congratulatory thought. I'm sure there is a degree of truth about that statement. However, I think that simultaneous with the demise of the *Gazette*—but not totally because of it—there has been a sea change in the way people regard the government and regard their civic obligations. The way information is disseminated and consumed has changed to the point that the line between entertainment and news has become so blurred as to be indistinguishable, for the two to be indistinguishable. You see that not only in all the news shows and reality shows and the, you know, “48 Hours,” “60 Minutes,” type shows that purport to be news but are really entertainment. You see it in the shows, like “COPS” and “Greatest Police Chases” and scandals, and all of that. You see it in what's happened with both collegiate and professional sports, where it's become entertainment, totally about money, not about athletics or amateur competing, or anything like that. Even the beloved old Arkansas Razorbacks, it's all about money now. College basketball, it's just so obviously just a professional thing, you know, because the kids come and they don't graduate, and that sort of thing. But all those things, I think, would have happened whether the *Gazette* would have been there or not. I think we might have, I would have liked to think that we

might have, delayed it a little bit [laughs]. But I'm not sure whether we would have been able to keep our role, as being taken seriously on the one side, as agenda setters, and the other side as, perhaps, gadflies or watch-dogs, or whatever you want to call it, troublemakers. People who try to make the role of governing as uncomfortable as possible for those doing it [laughs]. I'm not sure we would have been able to keep that up anyway and have as much influence as we liked to think the *Gazette* had. As I go around, there's a lot of people my age and older—I'm 54, now—who say, "Oh, gosh, we sure miss the *Gazette*." There's hardly anybody much younger than me who says, "Oh, geez, we sure miss the *Gazette*." I've worked now in advertising or public relations, or something approaching that, for twelve years now. And even people in that industry, that is, the communications industry, who should really be interested for their own economic survival, for their own competitiveness, in knowing what's going on in the community, they don't read the paper. People in their forties don't read the paper. Is that because the paper isn't any good? The *Democrat* is not as good as I would like to see it be, but it's still better than most papers, as I say, in this country. So it's not because it's a bad paper. It's because they're not interested. The things that were the newspaper's stock and trade—politics, government, social issues, civic issues—are simply not relevant to a lot of people anymore. And it's, I think, largely because it doesn't qualify as entertainment. Of course, in our day, a lot of it was [laughs]. Some of the old characters in government, they were entertainment. Maybe I shouldn't be sitting on my high horse quite as much, but,

at least, we took it a little more seriously.

RR: Where is Marlin Hawkins when we need him?

CP: Yes, I was going to say, you can't, you know . . .

RR: What about the editorial page? I notice you didn't mention the difference in the *Gazette's* and the *Democrat's* editorial page.

CP: Well, okay, first of all, I agree with hardly anything the *Democrat* writes on their editorial page, but it's their newspaper. They have the right to their editorial voice. And to the extent that the role of the editorial page is to provoke thought, even with expressing views with which I don't personally agree, they're still provoking thought. And so, perhaps, they're doing their role.

RR: If you took the view that the *Gazette*, with its liberal editorial page, was pretty constantly bucking the trend in the state, whereas the *Democrat* is going with the trend over a period of ten years—and we're approaching the ten-year mark—would that make a difference? In other words, if we still had a liberal editorial page as the leading editorial page in Arkansas, could you tell the difference in the state's politics now?

CP: I'm not qualified to answer that question. I don't know the answer. I wish I could have seen.

RR: Yes.

CP: I wish I could have seen. I wish I'd had the opportunity to see what it would have been like, but I guess I've gotten pretty cynical. The death of the paper affected me very strongly. Having to leave the paper affected me very strongly. I've had

a lot of deaths of things that I loved dearly happen in my life, and I guess it's made me somewhat cynical. But I'm not, as I just got through saying, I'm not sure we could have made as much a difference as we may have liked to or think we could have. But I sure as hell would have liked to have given it a try.

RR: Yes. Carrick, do you think of anything else that we've not talked about that you would like to get on the record?

CP: I watched on A&E a biography of Jackie Kennedy the other night, and there was a lot of talk about Camelot and that sort of thing. And what that really meant, I think, was how excited those people were to be there, how really vital they felt, how they felt they were doing something important—that they were changing things, that they were doing good, that they were blowing and going, that they were having an influence—and how stimulating it was to be in that intellectual and productive environment. And I think that's what they meant by Camelot, more than the actual accomplishments at the time. Being at the *Gazette* in the time I was there, before the economic pressures from the newspaper war became so exhausting and all-consuming, was a similar environment to that. You were working on something that you thought was really important to do with people that you really respected and that you were learning from. You were working alongside, toward a common goal that everybody pretty much understood and was signed up for. You were having a hell of a good time doing it, and you were feeling good about yourself while you were doing it. Your victories were shared, victories that everyone enjoyed. Your failures were only an incentive to go out

and work harder the next day. You were in an environment not only of colleagues, but of friends. Of almost a vocation, a feeling of a vocation as well as an occupation, and it was an incredible feeling to be part of that. And that's what, I think, everybody who worked there at that time misses the most. It would have been that way without me. I certainly didn't cause it. My dad didn't cause it. My grandfather may have caused it somewhat, but, at the same time, we did help create an atmosphere where it could take place. So I give us credit for that. And, in return, I got to partake of that atmosphere, and it was a wonderful feeling to be part of that group. And I think those who consumed the product felt some of that. And so, to that extent, they're also missing out, now that it's gone.

RR: Thank you, Carrick.

CP: Thank you.

[End of Interview]