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*Arkansas Democrat* Project

Interview with

Barbara Day  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
23 February 2006

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm here today, February 23, 2006, interviewing Barbara Day for the Pryor [Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual] History project on the History of the *Arkansas Democrat* and [*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*]. And the first thing I need to do, Barbara, is just ask if I have your permission to record this interview and turn it over to the University of Arkansas?

Barbara Day: Yes. Certainly.

JM: Okay. And the next thing—I think we need to just specify that Barbara Day is [spelled] just like it sounds?

BD: Absolutely, just night and day. D-A-Y.

JM: B-A-R-B-A-R-A.

BD: Yes.

JM: D-A-Y. Okay. Barbara had a sort of key vantage point in the newspaper war in that she worked in advertising for Dillard's department stores and the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Arkansas Democrat*, [which] later became the [*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*]. But first Barbara, let's just go back and start from the beginning. Where and when were you born?

BD: I was born in Poteau, Oklahoma in August 1931, and lived there for four or five years. The [Great] Depression hit my folks pretty hard, and we lived here in Little Rock with my grandparents on Vance Street.

JM: And their names?

BD: Honeycutt, Mac and Hettye Honeycutt.

JM: How do you spell Honeycutt?

BD: H-O-N-E-Y-C-U-T-T.

JM: Okay.

BD: Then we lived in Booneville [Arkansas] with my paternal grandfather. Like Depression people, we kind of moved around. Then in 1936 we went to California—all the Okies going to California. My dad formed a construction company and . . .

[Tape Stopped]

BD: So he formed a construction company and we went to California. We were there—they were building electrical lines. When the war hit [reference to World War II], his company started building steel towers around Long Beach, San Francisco and the coast—putting up for blimps that they were flying over California. He liked that part of the country, and we moved to Washington State. In 1946 we returned to Oklahoma, back to Poteau. I finished school there, then went to Oklahoma A&M [Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Oklahoma State University, Stillwater]. [I] graduated with a degree in advertising, and started my career with Brown-Dunkin and later Vandever's in

Tulsa [Oklahoma]. [I] moved on to Lincoln, Nebraska, as ad[vertising] director.  
I ended up in Little Rock in 1958.

JM: Just one second. Who were you director for in Lincoln?

BD: Oh, in Lincoln, it was a small boutique called Hovland-Swanson, very similar to what M. M. Cohn's [department store] was many, many years ago.

JM: Okay. How do you spell that?

BD: It's H-O-V-L-A-N-D. Dash. Swanson. S-W-A-N-S-O-N.

JM: Okay. How did you wind up in Little Rock?

BD: Well, it was very interesting. Of course, my grandparents lived here, and my former boss with Vandever's, Bob Schonhoff . . .

JM: Spell it.

BD: Schonhoff is S-C-H-O-N-H-O-F-F.

JM: Okay.

BD: He was a wonderful boss. [He] was at Pfeifer's of Arkansas and his ad manager had left. He called and asked if I was interested in getting out of the snow and coming back to the South. I most certainly was at that point, so I moved back in 1958 and became ad manager for Pfeifer's. I met my husband the next year, and we married in 1960. Our first son, Bryan [Day], was born in 1963.

JM: And your husband's name is?

BD: Raymond.

JM: Raymond.

BD: Raymond Day, yes.

JM: Okay.

BD: He has always been in the kitchen design business. I quit to have children and we have three sons Bryan, Brad and Brent. And when Mr. [William] Dillard bought Pfeifer's, I went back to work—just part-time, freelancing, writing copy, [and] helping do layouts. A few years later, Tom Kemp became the ad director there and I started working more full-time. When the ad manager left, I became ad manager. [I] just stayed there, and when Mr. Kemp left to go to the *Gazette*, I became sales promotion director for Dillard's.

JM: Do you remember—what year was [it] that he . . .

BD: That was 1977, I believe, when he went to the *Gazette*.

JM: Okay.

BD: I went to the *Gazette*, then, in 1980.

JM: Okay.

BD: I was sales promotion director at Dillard's when Walter Hussman, [Jr.] decided to take the *Democrat* to a morning paper. I remember he and Paul Smith, who is the general manager, came over to see me at Dillard's. I think we were sitting in my office and they were sitting on the sofa. Mr. Hussman said, "I'm going to go head-to-toe against the *Gazette*." I said, "You mean you're going morning?" and he said, "Yes, I am." At that point, advertising in the *Democrat* was not very lucrative; circulation was down, so most advertisers, especially Dillard's, invested their money in advertising in the *Gazette*. Our budget leaned heavily toward the *Gazette* at that time. Walter and Paul were making a proposal that if we would match [or] duplicate the advertising in the *Gazette*, we could purchase it for \$1 an inch. They made this presentation to pretty much all the major advertisers in the

city. At that time, Dillard's did not take the offer, but we did support the *Democrat* with smaller amounts of advertising. It was an interesting thing to watch because I had been a strong proponent of the *Democrat* because my grandparents had always had it in their house. It was an afternoon paper. My grandfather worked for the railroad, and, [when] he got off about 4:00, he was ready to come home, clean up, and read the paper. So I always thought it was a great paper. In fact, my son was a *Democrat* carrier at the time, and that was fine because he could deliver it after school. But when Walter took it morning, he became a morning delivery boy and it changed our routine a lot.

JM: Was that Bryan?

BD: No, that was Brent, our youngest son.

JM: Your youngest, okay.

BD: Yes.

JM: As your role at that time with Dillard's—you were advertising director—what role did you play in placing ads and stuff?

BD: I budgeted the schedule and I pretty much went over with the buyers as to where their ads would go. We would take so many ads into the *Democrat*, [and] it was my decision which ads to put in with the support of the buyer. A lot of the buyers felt, at that time, ready-to-wear [clothing] would not get the result from the *Democrat* that it would [from] the *Gazette* because of the woman reader. However, appliances and furniture seemed to do very well in the *Democrat*. So we had a schedule. We would sometimes duplicate ads in both papers and sometimes we'd run this ad in the *Gazette* and that ad in the *Democrat*.

JM: So when Walter came to you to tell you that he was going mornings, it was along that time also that he made the pitch about the \$1 . . . ?

BD: Yes, at the same time.

JM: Okay, refresh my memory on that. As I recall, they told the major advertisers that for the ads that they might be running in the *Gazette*—that they might be paying say \$5 an inch, or something, for them—if they would run the same ad in the *Democrat*, then they could have that for just \$1 an inch.

BD: Yes. That's right.

JM: Did they get—use the same place or stuff to . . .

BD: Yes. We would duplicate or get the art from the *Gazette* and send it—at that point, it was using the old lead zinc and hot type, so we would have to have the *Gazette* either send us back the artwork [or?] send it to the *Democrat*. In some cases, we would try to duplicate or use two different pieces.

JM: So, at that time, Mr. Dillard decided not to take up the \$1 offer?

BD: Right.

JM: But at some point he did.

BD: Later on, as the *Democrat* seemed to increase circulation and became more of a viable paper, we did. We started to duplicate our ads into the *Gazette*. In 1980 I became a special events coordinator at Dillard's.

JM: Okay.

BD: I was having to travel a lot because at that point the Arkansas division had ten stores: three in Little Rock, Baton Rouge [Louisiana], two in Shreveport [Louisiana], Pine Bluff [Arkansas], Hot Springs [Arkansas], Fayetteville

[Arkansas], [and] Jonesboro [Arkansas]. I had to go almost every day—fly to a different store—and we had three teenage boys. I think what really clinched it [was] I had flown to Baton Rouge in January, and Baton Rouge was beautiful [and] sunny and Little Rock got snowed in. I had to stay in Baton Rouge for four days because I couldn't get back to Little Rock. And every time I talked to my husband the boys were out of school and he was either making hot chocolate [or] washing blue jeans. And he said “When are you coming home?” I was down there eating wonderful seafood and reading and just having a grand time. So when I came back, I thought my home life was much more important. And I—Tom Kemp, who had been my boss at Dillard's—all those years that I was at Dillard's—was at the *Gazette*, and he was really overcome and needed an assistant—an administrative assistant. He offered me the job and I thought, “Well, why not?” You know, I wouldn't have to be traveling. I could stay home. So I did go to the *Gazette*, and it was really an eye-opener. Having been on the other side and buying advertising—from that viewpoint—now I became involved in selling advertising. Truthfully, I liked it. One thing I learned real quickly, though—having come from a department store where everybody works for one result, and that was to present the merchandise in the best light and to sell the merchandise; where everybody from receiving, to the buyers, to the sales people, to the advertising department, to the credit department [had] one goal [which] was to sell merchandise. But I found when I came to the *Gazette* that, though they had an accounting department and they had an advertising department and an editorial department, they all worked very separately. Advertising people were not

welcome on the editorial floor. Accounting people didn't like the advertising people coming in. It really overwhelmed me at first because I could not see why there was such a difference between all of the departments. Later, when I went to the *Democrat*, it was the same situation. I began to understand the integrity of the editorial department not wanting to be influenced by the advertising dollars. So it all made sense to me, but at first I was really bewildered why all these people couldn't just work together and put out this paper. It was totally different.

JM: This was 1980 [when] you went to work for the . . .

BD: [In] 1980 I went to work for the *Gazette*.

JM: When you went to work for the *Gazette*. What had been your experiences with the two newspapers up until that time—say, dealing with the *Democrat* and dealing with the *Gazette*?

BD: The *Democrat* was much easier to deal with. The *Gazette* had very strict policies about killing ads, even for Dillard's. If we had an ad scheduled and the merchandise didn't get in, or it snowed and we wanted to cancel the ad—it was almost impossible to do that at the *Gazette*. They would charge us for the space, sometimes, and say, "You cannot cancel the ad." Whereas the *Democrat*, because they were in this position [that] they really wanted the business, would just bend over backwards to accommodate the advertiser. I would get frustrated, especially when Louis Munos was at the *Gazette*. He told me one day—I had called to cancel an ad because the weather was so bad—and he—I have never been called Barb or Barbie [laughs] except by Louis Munos—and he said to me, "Now, Barbie, you know you can't cancel that ad" and I said, "Mr. Munos, I am

canceling the ad. You can either run it blank, or charge us, but we're not running that ad." He kind of laughed and said, "Well, let me see what I can do." He did finally relent and took the ad out of the paper.

JM: Okay. Okay. Who were you dealing with at the *Democrat*? Who was their advertising . . . ?

BD: Bill May, but that was before Walter bought the *Democrat*.

JM: Okay.

BD: Wames Qualls was our account representative. I know Wames would get so frustrated because he was so nice and he just kept coming and calling on me—just wanting to go to lunch and anything they could do. Mr. May would come over—it was like night and day dealing with them. If we wanted something from the *Gazette* we had to initiate it, but the *Democrat* always seemed to want to be there and to help us. It was really different.

JM: As I recall—and the people transcribing this will ask me, anyway—Wames Qualls [is] W-A-M-E-S.

BD: Yes. W-A-M-E-S.

JM: Q-U-A-L-L-S.

BD: He had been at the *Democrat* [for] I don't know how many years and he finally retired.

JM: A long time . . .

BD: Oh, a *long* time, a *long* time.

JM: Because I think he was there when I started.

BD: A long time.

JM: And Julian Herndon is J-U-L-I-A-N, is that correct?

BD: Yes.

JM: Okay. H-E-R-N-D-O-N?

BD: Both Julian and Bill May were just so gentlemanly. They were very well thought of, and I had a great deal of respect for them.

JM: Okay.

BD: Later, you know, of course, when Walter bought the paper, I dealt primarily with—because I became sales promotion director at Dillard's—I would deal primarily with Paul Smith or Wames would still make calls all the time.

JM: So in 1980 you went the *Gazette*. What was your role? What were your duties at the *Gazette*?

BD: I was the administrative assistant to the marketing director and I would institute some sales ideas for the sales staff. At that time the *Gazette* had an all-male sales staff. They didn't have any females other than secretarial positions. I hired the first female sales rep for the *Gazette*. Now I think both papers are probably half-and-half—female and male. But I worked primarily with the ad sales people. I did the budget, and my first job at the *Gazette* was planning their budget for the next year. Having dealt with budgets at Dillard's, I had dealt with a lot of dollars and could pretty well anticipate revenue against expenses. When I did the *Gazette* budget, basing it off of last year's expenses and last year's revenue with percentage of increase—because of the rate increase—and anticipating increase and expenses—so when I finished the budget—Glen Barber was the controller and Tom Kemp was the ad director . . .

JM: Now, Glen—is that G-L-E-N?

BD: Yes. Glen Barber.

JM: And . . . ?

BD: Barber. B-A-R-B-E-R.

JM: Okay.

BD: Jack Meriwether was the general manager.

JM: Okay.

BD: We met—and I really do not remember who was in this budget meeting when—I had all these spreadsheets and I had one for everybody—I presented the budget and, according to my figures, the expenses were going to outrun the revenue. My recommendation, as I was sitting there with all these gentlemen, was that we needed to cut expenses. And I cannot remember who said it, but they said, “We can’t cut expenses. Just increase the revenue budget.” I thought to myself, “How am I going to increase the revenue budget, knowing we will not have this increase in revenue, when the simple thing and the logical thing would be to cut expenses?” Well, we didn’t—we increased the revenue budget to overrun and show a profit over the expenses.

JM: Projected profit?

BD: Projected profit.

JM: Yes. Yes. Okay.

BD: Because you knew that we would not get . . .

JM: And this was—what year was this? Do you remember?

BD: This was in 1980.

JM: Okay.

BD: And I stayed there until 1983. The *Gazette* had come out with what they called—right before I joined them—a three-three-three plan: three lines, three days, three dollars.

JM: That was for classifieds?

BD: For classifieds; whereas the *Democrat* came out with free classifieds.

JM: Before that?

BD: Before that. So the *Gazette* thought they could offset it with their three-three-three plan. Everybody wore buttons proclaiming “three-three-three.” To me, if the *Democrat* was giving free classifieds, even though their classified was part of the paper—at that time, the *Democrat* did not have separate sections. The *Democrat* had main news, sports, style—everything was one section. But their classifieds continued to grow, and soon they had a separate classified section, which is what people really read a newspaper for: to buy a car, or rent an apartment, or something; so they really had inroads to readers with their classified section. I remember in one meeting the *Gazette* was very worried about the free classifieds. Hugh [B.] Patterson, [Jr.]’s comment was, “I will not give my paper away. It’s worth more.” I think he did not want to acknowledge that the *Democrat* was really breathing hard on his heels because the *Gazette* had been such a powerhouse forever. In my mind, I felt if the Pattersons had maintained control of the *Gazette*, it would not have sold. I really feel, because of local ownership, they would have struggled with it because they would have had to change some of their policies and be competitive with the *Democrat*. But I think

that when Gannett bought it and had to answer to stockholders, it was a wise decision on their part.

JM: Did you find any particular thing about the attitude of the people—and I guess this is particularly in the advertisement department and management, though—when you were at the *Gazette*?

BD: Well, yes and no. I mean, everybody was really trying to do the best they could. I think there was a lot of—in the advertising department—I think there was a lot of “You need us” attitude given to the retailers that maybe should not have been. If they had taken the attitude “We’re here to help you,” rather than “Well, you can’t survive without us”—it was a little bit of an arrogant attitude [that] I think they had. All these sales people [at] the *Gazette* had been there forever, and that was their demeanor. So it made a difference. And the *Democrat* came along with a lot of young inexperienced people because sales people that had the experience didn’t want to go to work for the *Democrat*. So all these young people—they were so eager [that] they would go in and they would [with] great enthusiasm present their product, and it seemed to work.

JM: You weren’t involved in the—or were you involved in the classified decision that—what to charge?

BD: No.

JM: That wasn’t your department?

BD: No. They had already done that before I came over.

JM: Yes. Okay.

BD: Then in 1983 the war [between the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*] was going strong and they were both morning papers. The *Democrat* seemed to be making progress in their efforts and Hugh Patterson had a real problem with Glen Barber and Tom Kemp. He felt they were trying to take over his paper. The ad manager who was at the *Gazette*, Doug Oliver, had resigned. They hired a young man named Tom Griffin, and—and where he came from I don't know, but he was really a very classy person. Hugh loved his personality. Tom was into opera and symphonies, and that's what Hugh liked; whereas Tom Kemp and Glen were totally different. Hugh felt Tom Griffin should be the ad director, so at that point he, Tom Kemp, and Glen Barber all separated. Tom and Glen were both fired and got good severance packages. About a month later—Tom Griffin was the ad director and Ralph [B.] Patterson was in his office and they called me in. Tom Griffin said that they really wanted to do away with the Glen Barber—Barber-Kemp regime—so they did not need me anymore. I immediately—when I went back to my office—called Dick [E.] Browning, who I knew very well at the *Democrat* because he had been in scouting with us. I said, “I'm looking for a job. Is there anything over there?” He said, “Let me get back with you.” John Mobbs called me back and they didn't have anything other than a sales position, [and asked if] I would be interested. I said, “Right now I'm interested in anything.” I did file suit against the *Gazette* for discrimination, and I did win. Hugh Patterson, in the depositions, was just as gentlemanly as always. I went to work for the *Democrat*.

JM: Okay. When was that?

BD: In January of 1983.

JM: Okay.

BD: And [I] was a sales rep and thoroughly enjoyed it. I had always been buying advertising, but here I was in a position that—I felt with my experience of creating ads and copy and layout, I could help advertisers. I really fell in love with my job. Then when my lawsuit was settled—Phil Kaplan was my lawyer.

JM: Okay.

BD: And it was settled, about . . .

JM: Do you know what year that was?

BD: Yes, 1983. It settled in 1983.

JM: 1983. Okay. It settled in 1983. How much did you win, if you care to say?

BD: Well, I really can't [say]. That's part of the settlement.

JM: Okay. But you did win?

BD: I did win and was given a very nice settlement. About three days later, Paul Smith walked by touched me on the shoulder and said, "You really must have made them mad." I said, "What are you talking about?" And he said, "We have just been sued by the *Gazette*." I was embarrassed by it, but knew I had nothing to do with that because this was probably one reason they settled with me—because they wanted to get this other suit filed. So that started the lawsuit.

JM: What was your experience at this time? Didn't you—well, let's go ahead and do a part of it. You stayed at the *Democrat* for quite some time.

BD: Right. I retired at—I went in 1983 and retired in 2001.

JM: Okay. Did you remain a sales manager . . .?

BD: No. I had many positions over there. I was a sales manager, then I became an administrative assistant to John Mobbs. I became the co-op manager, then I ended my career as sales manager.

JM: Okay. So what was your experience there? What was happening at this time, as far as advertising, in the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*? First—cover before Gannett bought it. What was happening during that period of time?

BD: The *Gazette* was still taking the attitude that the advertisers needed them. The *Democrat* was becoming very aggressive not only in rates, but in proposals: offers of free color, running their first ad at full price, second ad [a] third off, and a third ad at half price. Advertisers liked the consistency. As always, it has been proven that consistent advertising schedules are what get results. The reader may not see it the first time, but, certainly, if you're running it three times, at some point in time, they will see your ad. The consistent ad program really worked very well for the *Democrat*, and they seemed to be making great progress. At that point, Dillard's was strong in the *Democrat*. The theaters had pulled out of the *Gazette*, and had come slowly to the *Democrat*.

JM: The movie theaters were [coming over?] . . .

BD: The movie theaters were running all of their ads on in the *Democrat*, and, at one point, Dillard's finally pulled out of the *Gazette*.

JM: Why? Was this while the Pattersons still owned it?

BD: No. This was not. This was after Gannett bought it.

JM: Yes. Okay, but anyway.

BD: When [the] Pattersons had it, they really seemed to be running more ads in the *Democrat* than they did in the *Gazette*. I mean, the *Democrat* circulation was wonderful. When I was at the *Gazette*, there was a company in town called Red River Pottery, and the *Democrat* had billboards all over town that said, “Arkansas’s largest newspaper”—you may have remembered that—which depends on—an advertiser can take it one way. I called on Red River Pottery to get them into the *Gazette*, and his comment to me was, “Why should I run in the *Gazette* when the *Democrat* is the largest paper?” At that time, the *Democrat* printed more pages, but circulation was not the largest.

JM: The *Gazette* still had the biggest circulation.

BD: The *Gazette* still had the largest circulation. But to this advertiser, and to many advertisers new in the market, seeing these billboards that said, “Arkansas’s largest newspaper”—they immediately related it to circulation.

JM: Yes. Okay.

BD: So it was an interesting concept. The *Democrat* could—when I was at the *Gazette*, we would talk about doing a program, or a project, or an offer; and before we knew it, the *Democrat* had it out on the street. We always felt there was somebody inside telling them what was going on, but the *Gazette* procrastinated so much. It was slow to make a decision, whereas the *Democrat* could turn it almost overnight. And they did. They were aggressive. They made decisions and they followed through really quickly. I do know that when I went to the *Democrat* I still had the same feeling of [the] editorial being separate. Accounting had its responsibilities, advertising had its responsibilities, and

circulation had their responsibilities. So you still had all these different departments that weren't totally working together, but they did work better together at the *Democrat* because they were in a war. They were all trying to accomplish the same thing. Walter was so supportive of all the departments, and the first year that Walter made a profit he split that profit between all of the employees. I think we all got \$40. Everybody felt the *Democrat* was their paper. People that worked there were very loyal to the *Democrat*. I don't know whether I should tell this or not—I'm sure most people know it—but Walter called all department heads and sales manager and people together at a meeting. And he said [that] when his circulation got to be 100,000—and everybody who was in that room, if they were still with him—he would pay everybody a bonus of \$5,000, which he did. When circulation hit 100,000 he had a big luncheon [and] handed everybody checks.

JM: Was “everybody” in the whole paper?

BD: No. Everybody—all the department heads that had stayed with him.

JM: Oh, all the department heads. Okay.

BD: Because it took him about five or six years to do it.

JM: Yes. Okay.

BD: So those people who were still there—I think there were maybe twenty-three that were still with him at that point.

JM: Okay.

BD: I mean, people just felt—who worked at the *Democrat*—just thought it was the only place to work.

JM: He had—so he paid out over \$100,000 in bonuses when he hit 100,000 [?].

BD: Yes. That’s right. He did, when he hit 100,000. Yes.

JM: Do you remember what year that was? I’m curious.

BD: I’m going to say it was, like, 1985 or 1987.

JM: Okay. What—when did Mr. Dillard, or the Dillards, start switching quite a bit of advertising to the *Democrat*?

BD: I’m going to say they started switching a lot in the early 1980s, but when the *Gazette* was sold to Gannett there was a confrontation between the general manager of Gannett and the owner of the Gannett [organization] who came to call on Dillard’s. It was not a profitable meeting, and, at that point, Mr. Dillard pulled all of his advertising. I’ve heard so many stories—and whether they’re rumors or not—but I’d heard that one of the gentlemen with Gannett said, “Well how would you feel if I canceled my charge account at Dillard’s?” Mr. Dillard didn’t respond, he just said, “The meeting is over.” I guess he took it as a threat. I’m sure the charge account was not too much monthly, and it cost them about \$2.2 million a year in Dillard’s advertising.

JM: In Dillard’s advertising. Over what—how long a period of time?

BD: Well, they pulled—I really can’t remember when they pulled their advertising. I must say it was about fifteen months before the *Gazette* closed.

JM: Yes. Something like that.

BD: And they just didn’t give them anymore advertising. They had lost the movie theaters at that point. They had lost Dillard’s.

JM: Why did they lose the movie theaters? Do you know?

BD: Newspapers have retail rates and they have what they call local general rates. The local generals are pretty much for national advertisers. They were charging the movie theaters that national rate, and they found out about it.

JM: The *Gazette* was?

BD: Yes.

JM: Okay.

BD: So they just pulled their advertising. They wanted to pay local rates because . . .

JM: Because they're cheaper.

BD: Because they are cheaper. They were being placed locally by the general manager of the UA [United Artists] theaters, and they believed it should be a local rate. They just canceled all their advertising. Now, that was done early, though, because I was at the *Gazette* when that happened. So that had to be around 1981 or 1982 [when] that happened.

JM: Did you—were you in a position to make any recommendations, while you were still at the *Gazette*, for dealing with the competition from the *Democrat*?

BD: I was. And again, because of the history of the *Gazette* and the power of the *Gazette*, I don't think Mr. Patterson felt that he had to do that. I don't think he recognized the *Democrat* as a newspaper, as a *real* newspaper. I think he felt he could override anything that they did, so he was not really willing to get into what he would term "a war," to be that competitive against them. Very few things were done to offset anything the *Democrat* did.

JM: I've heard from other sources, and people who probably would have been involved in some of their advertising, that they were making recommendations to

him—well, like Cranford Johnson—and that, you know, “You shouldn’t ignore this competition, you should meet them,” but he wasn’t willing to do it.

BD: No. For some reason—I think he felt the strength of the *Gazette*—I mean, the history of the *Gazette* is just phenomenal. It really is, and everybody respected it. I do know that once Gannett took it over, it changed, and it did not please the local folks. You know, Little Rock people and Arkansas people are very proud of our heritage and the state and things that have happened. I think the picture, in my mind, which did Gannett the most harm was a picture of a very pregnant girl sitting on a quilt in the River Market area with her big pregnant stomach exposed. People took offense at that. I don’t think Gannett realized the softness and the tradition of what the *Gazette* had meant to people in Arkansas.

JM: On the proposal of buying ads from the major advertisers at \$1 an inch, when did that start making any impact? Do you remember?

BD: Dillard’s bought into the \$1-an-inch [offer] after I left. It was presented to Sears, Osco [Drug Store], Wards, [J. C.] Penney’s [Department Store], Dillard’s, and [M. M.] Cohn’s at that time. All but [M. M.] Cohn’s took the proposal, but once the balance of the circulation started changing and the readership started changing, more advertising dollars from all of these majors were put into the *Democrat*. So their advertising lineage was going up, and all of the sudden, the *Democrat* was a viable paper. It had an “A” section, an Arkansas section, a sports section, a business section, a classified section, which was fabulous—it was a big paper.

JM: Then along came the lawsuit and everything and . . .

BD: The suit was interesting.

JM: Yes.

BD: Everybody at the *Democrat*—it was like it was us against them. Every employee from the dispatch delivery person, to the secretaries, to the sales reps, to department heads were so engrossed in uniting against this big monster sitting down at 3rd and Louisiana [streets] that it became fun. It was really an exciting time. When somebody would go out—in our department in advertising—if somebody would go out and get a big contract signed. I mean, it was celebration time because this was—we had accomplished something. The day the suit was settled—you talk about jubilation. But we also worked into the night getting—you know, doing our thing and getting together, and they ordered pizza and everything and we really worked hard. When Gannett came in, there was a big concern. You know, deep pockets coming in and could we compete? But it became very easy because they maintained that arrogance of the big corporate giant coming into the state. And it made it easier for us to sell advertising.

JM: The lawsuit, in effect, though, sort of inspired or united the people at the *Democrat*?

BD: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

JM: Charged them up.

BD: It did, and Walter, who is just so well-respected, would come through the departments—he walked that building all the time. He wanted to know what was going on. He would be in on the advertising floor and he would speak to everybody. Everybody was really supportive. [He would say,] “Just go out and

do your thing and do what you can.” We were charged with great enthusiasm to get out there and do it.

JM: After the decision came down in favor of the *Democrat*, and I know you had a big—it wasn’t long after that until they sold to Gannett. What was your experience after Gannett came in? As far as from the advertising standpoint?

BD: Well, not a lot different. Our sales people could go out and not make real strong offers, but we did have the flexibility to go out to an advertiser and say, “This is what we can do for you if you’ll run this ad.” You know, “How would you like free color?” or, “Maybe we can get you in the A section.” So we had options that we could deal with advertisers; whereas, again, Gannett was strictly operating by old newspaper rules. They were there to make money. They had stockholders to answer to, and they didn’t have quite the guidelines that we had. I mean, theirs were more strict and, “This is the way it’s going to be,” where ours was a little more lenient. Sales people had lots of options at the *Democrat*.

JM: The *Democrat* was still making gains in advertising at this time?

BD: Absolutely. Absolutely.

JM: Yes.

BD: We were told never to criticize Gannett or the *Gazette* or their sales people, but we were going to go out and sell the *Democrat*. Not sell against the *Gazette*, but sell what we could do. Whereas, a couple of the *Gazette* sales people really did the *Democrat* a favor. One told an advertiser who had placed an ad in the *Democrat*—this sales rep for the *Gazette* went out and said, “You know that was really stupid on your part.” Well, no advertiser wants to be told they’re stupid, so

this gentleman called the *Democrat* sales rep and said, “I’ve got a whole schedule I want to place with you.” He pulled all of his ads out of the *Gazette* for a few days, and . . .

JM: And who was that?

BD: I’d rather not say.

JM: Oh, okay.

BD: But you don’t tell an advertiser that they’re making a dumb move because it’s they’re money [and] it’s an investment. The *Democrat* fell into a lot of lucky breaks thanks to some of the *Gazette* people.

JM: How did—did you ever perceive that the tide was turning there?

BD: You could feel it. It was like a football game—one team has the momentum. The *Democrat* seemed to be gaining—our lineage was going up, our circulation was just growing in leaps and bounds—I think it’s all because of the classified section. [It] became such a force with readers and it made it easy to sell. Car dealers started getting in classified, and real-estate people were jumping in to that classified section. The momentum had switched quite a bit toward the *Democrat*, and it became much easier to sell. We came up with a lot of products. We had our metro section where people could buy just [within] the five counties. We even started a West Little Rock paper called *Neighbors*, and we had *Mid-Week*, which was published on Wednesday. The *Democrat* came up with products that would reduce the advertising expense of an advertiser and he could target specific zip codes or areas—whatever he wanted to reach. “High Profile” was a great, great product that the *Democrat* came up with. It just changed the force of high-

end, upscale boutique stores. They wanted to be in “High Profile” because it was such a . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: This is Jerry McConnell, again, here on side two interviewing Barbara Day. Barbara, we were just discussing “High Profile,” and I had heard from other sources, too, that “High Profile” was very influential in the advertising development. I understand that the reason that they started “High Profile” is that the *Democrat* had hardly had any penetration, say, in Pulaski Heights [Little Rock], in the richer environs. Starting this coverage and covering all the parties and everything else really changed things.

BD: Yes, they did. It became a great vehicle for advertisers of boutique shops, dresses, high priced shoes—even Mercedes and Rolls Royce [automobile manufacturers] advertised in “High Profile” because it was directed to an influential group of readers. Those who were doing the parties and setting the scenes and getting their names in the paper—really the people in the social whirl were featured in that section. When the Excelsior hotel [now the Peabody] had the Profiles restaurant, they had all the “High Profile” front pages displayed on the walls, it really added to the creditability of “High Profile.”

JM: At some point in time, and I guess this was after Gannett bought it, Mr. Dillard pulled all of his advertising out of the *Gazette*. Is that correct?

BD: Yes, he did.

JM: Are you—do you know what that was all about?

BD: I think it was, again, the feeling that Gannett—he felt maybe they had vocally threatened him—and to tell him that he couldn't get along without the *Gazette*. Dillard's was such a strong factor in the retail community, with their Park Plaza store at one time the leading store in the whole chain. Of course, now they have so many stores over the whole country. But I think that Mr. Dillard felt the Dillard's name was a draw, and they were anchoring all these major shopping centers, and people would shop Dillard's.

JM: I know that—I've heard that they—Gannett sent some people down there that really irritated Mr. Dillard, but had he not already canceled his advertising before they came down here? Wasn't that in response to him canceling [and they came back?] . . .

BD: Yes, it was in response to him canceling. And they went in and . . .

JM: Do you know why he canceled? I've heard various stories about it.

BD: Well, he felt like he was being—his rate, Dillard's rate should [have been] probably the lowest rate that anybody has because of the volume of advertising that they did. He found out that his rate was not the best; that they were giving—Gannett was offering the same rate to other advertisers. So he just felt that they had really not been fair with him. Then when they came down and went to his office—Mr. Dillard was a very strong person. He had strong ideas on what was right and wrong, and integrity that he had. I've seen him deal with people or manufacturers—I think he just felt Gannett was coming into town and not being fair. So he just decided he was going to support the *Democrat*.

JM: Do you know what kind of deals they were offering to other advertisers?

BD: No, I really don't. I had just heard that. I've never heard of any specific thing, but I think that the rate was an issue with Dillard's.

JM: I've also heard—and I don't know whether you know anything about this or not—I'd heard two different stories, and I never had heard or known anything. One story was that he got mad at them because they had criticized his office—where he was going to [put] his new offices and everything. The other one I heard was that he got mad because his grandson was involved in something and . . .

BD: And they really played it up.

JM: On the front page, or something.

BD: I think a lot of that probably influenced him because I know that Dillard's, a lot of times, would not make comments about things that reporters would call and ask them for. It was always, "No Dillard official is available to comment on it." He really did not like employees giving statements. I think that they worked around it and surmised a lot of things that maybe somebody would have said if they would have responded. So, yes, he was very much against any type of editorial or stories about the organization or the corporation or his family. He'd just—he didn't like that, and so many of us who worked for Dillard's would never comment to reporters on any issue.

JM: After Gannett bought the paper, did you see any difference in the way people in Little Rock and Arkansas were responding to it as perhaps a big national corporation? Was that . . . ?

BD: We're a very easygoing group of people in Arkansas. We like our traditions. We like our heritage. And I think with Gannett coming in that they tried to come in as this big corporation, big shot company, big newspaper that was set to rule the world. People here who had been to Shreveport and seen a Gannett paper or to Jackson [Mississippi] and seen a Gannett paper, realized that it was all advertising and very little news. I think that's where the *Democrat* was very smart. They put more news percentage to advertising in their paper, whereas Gannett cut back and had a higher advertising percentage to news. I think it made a big difference. People still wanted their newspaper with a lot of news—a lot of local, [and] lots of national news. Gannett was really cutting back. People that would go out of town and read these other newspapers, especially friends of mine who traveled a lot, came back and said, "I just saw another Gannett paper, and I don't like their paper." I think that hurt them where they tried to cut back on their news hole.

JM: When Mr. Dillard canceled his advertising with the *Gazette*, did he throw a lot more advertising to the *Democrat*?

BD: Not really. It—they maintained—most stores, especially the major department stores, have a budget. They're going to spend so much percentage of their sales on advertising. He had planned to spend "X" dollars in the *Democrat*. It didn't change. What he did [was] he just didn't put "X" dollars in the *Gazette*. So all the dollars he was spending were going into the *Democrat*. I don't know what Dillard's budget is now, but at one time it was probably several million; whereas smaller boutiques may spend \$500 a month on advertising. Some of these stores will spend \$500,000 a month on advertising. The dollars are going to be spent

according to the budget. [It] doesn't make any difference what your rate is or what you offer. They're going to spend "X" dollars because that is what their budget allows.

JM: [Do] you have any idea how much, say, Dillard's might have been spending with the *Gazette* before he canceled the . . . ?

BD: I had heard that when he pulled out that *Gazette* lost, like, \$2.2 million.

JM: Is that over a period . . . ?

BD: Of a year.

JM: Of a year, okay.

BD: A year.

JM: Just a year. Okay.

BD: So, you know, that probably really hurt their expense budget.

JM: [Laughs] I would expect.

BD: I imagine.

JM: I like that. Okay. All this time, as time went on—before the final sale and Walter bought the *Gazette* assets—were things still changing as far as advertising was going, or was it still pretty much on an even keel?

BD: No. It was changing. It was changing.

JM: More going . . .

BD: We were getting more advertising going into the *Democrat*.

JM: It was.

BD: Once again, it was because we had a lot of young enthusiastic sales reps. [The] circulation department was really coming up with great plans for carriers. They

had parties for their carriers, and all [of] a sudden, the carriers were no longer kids and teenagers delivering the *Democrat*. They were young couples, young married couples, or people who had retired—much more responsible people than the young teenagers. Circulation had their district managers, and they were really pushing for circulation. They had all kinds of prizes, and gimmicks, and giveaways. Everybody was really aggressive at the *Democrat* from advertising, circulation, and editorial stories. We were creating products, again, that would help advertisers, and we had advertorial writers; so it made a big difference not only in what the reader was getting, but what the advertisers were getting for their investment.

JM: Who was in charge in the advertising department at the *Democrat* at this time?

BD: John Mobbs.

JM: John Mobbs. Okay.

BD: He had been at [M. M.] Cohn's as a buyer and went to the *Democrat* in the late 1970s. Paul Smith was the ad director, and he moved to general manager. When that happened back in the early 1980s, John Mobbs became the ad director and he is still there.

JM: Okay. Was it a big surprise when you found out that the *Gazette* was closing? That Walter was buying out their assets?

BD: It was really interesting. The rumor had floated around, and when it finally happened all of the ads that were scheduled to run in the *Gazette*—our sales managers and management people went over to the *Gazette* [and] got all the ads, brought them back, and we ran them in the *Democrat* the next day because we

knew the advertisers were planning on their ad. We did get some rebuttals from advertisers who were still—they did not want their ad in the *Democrat*, so a lot of the ads were credited. But most people were very appreciative of getting their message out because that's what they depended on. We worked late late hours that night. You know how the *Democrat* is set up, you have the *Democrat* building, then Walter's corporate offices are a couple of buildings over.

JM: Yes.

BD: They brought in copy machines like you wouldn't believe, and we just lined that hall with copy machines. We were copying statements because Walter had bought all the assets in the building. So we were copying *Gazette* statements, and we were copying ads, and we were copying files, and anything you could imagine. It was just an all-night thing. I remember we all were sitting around on the floor in blue jeans and eating pizza at midnight because that was the day that Walter bought the *Gazette*. And it was—nobody was tired. Everybody was happy, jubilant. But at the same time the next day, comments going from people—"It's a sad day because the *Gazette* is no more." So you had lots of experience and, also, you lost your competition. That really derailed everybody for a little bit. "What are we going to do with no competition?" We missed that. We liked the adrenaline flowing.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: On the day it was announced that Walter was buying the *Gazette* assets, as I understand you, you went over—and the staff—went over to the *Gazette* and got

all of their ads that were scheduled to run in the *Gazette* that day, every one of them.

BD: Yes. Yes.

JM: And brought them back and ran them in the *Democrat-Gazette* the next morning?

BD: Right.

JM: And you didn't have time, of course, to check over every advertiser?

BD: No. No.

JM: You just brought them all back.

BD: We just got a whole room and put them in there.

JM: And put them in the paper and ran them?

BD: Yes.

JM: A lot of the advertisers were pleased because they had been counting on it, but there were a few who . . .

BD: That were a little upset that we had taken the liberty of doing that.

JM: Yes.

BD: You know, you had a lot of mixed emotions. And I think, again, it was the mixed emotion of the *Gazette* closing. There was a lot of pride in people that—here we had the oldest paper—the old adage west of the Mississippi.

JM: Yes.

BD: And it was gone. And I think they blamed Walter for it [when] really they should have blamed Gannett. Walter didn't have anything to do with it. I think Gannett—we had heard they were losing \$57,000 a day and stockholders are not going to stand for that. So it was probably the management and CEO [Chief

Executive Officer] of Gannett [that] realized, “Hey, we need to do something or we’re going to have all kinds of uproar”—and stock going down and everything so . . .

JM: As I recall, the trial, when it was going on—a lot of the complaints filed by the *Gazette* involved advertising?

BD: Predatory pricing.

JM: Predatory pricing. What do you know about—what do you remember about that?

BD: We just always would—our rates were so much lower. The *Gazette* was charging maybe \$18 an inch the *Democrat* might be charging \$5 because Walter was trying to survive. He was not interested in making a profit, at that point. He just wanted to put out a paper and break even. So his rates were based on breaking even; whereas the *Gazette*’s rates were based on making a profit. And predatory pricing became an ugly word. It was used over and over, but being the smaller paper, the *Democrat* had the right to charge what they wanted to. They did not have to match the *Gazette* rate.

JM: Do you remember anywhere the particular rates that they claimed were predatory pricing or . . .?

BD: No. Not really. I think that they felt the free classifieds were, but no other papers across the county were doing that. Our full price, third off, and half price ads, I think, they thought were predatory pricing. Whoever heard of charging half price for an ad? But, once again, it was smart on Walter’s part. He knew how to get in there and put up a good front and a good fight, and he came up with some great ideas.

JM: Did they also complain that the \$1 for your ad—if you ran it in the *Gazette* and the *Democrat*, too—did they claim that was predatory pricing?

BD: No, because I don't think that was an issue at that time. It was an offer, but I don't think that every store accepted it.

JM: Yes, okay. After the sale—after the *Gazette* closed and became the *Democrat-Gazette*—you were there another ten years.

BD: Right.

JM: What was your experience then, as far as what was happening in the advertising department?

BD: The enthusiasm of the advertising department never changed, it was still, “Do your best [and] be excited.” We did a lot of sales training, at that point, on selling the *Democrat*. That's what we were doing. We were selling the *Democrat*. We weren't selling against anyone else. We felt we had the best product. We knew we had the highest circulation in the state, and it maintained itself as a fun job. You were helping an advertiser, and it was just great to go out and present your product. There was a lot of pride in selling the *Democrat*, at that point.

JM: What happened to the advertising rates?

BD: Well, they just went up.

JM: Yes.

BD: Went up real quick. I can't remember where it was, but I do know that if we made offers to major advertisers or any—actually, any advertiser—that if they would spend the same amount of dollars that they were spending in the *Gazette* and the *Democrat* the year before the *Gazette* closed, we would offer them a

phase-in rate. Instead of going to the rate card, they could have a phase-in rate, and many advertisers did that. And they offered that for, like, five years. So advertisers were never—all of these who had agreed to do this, to spend the same dollars, got a wonderful rate. It wasn't a rate card rate, but it was a phase-in rate and it was leading up to getting them up on the rate card. So they didn't jump immediately from what they were paying to the rate card. Again, it was [a] very logical [and] smart move to get all of those advertising dollars that were being spent. They had budgeted that many dollars, so the object was to continue on their budget.

JM: How significant—and I think it's obvious it was significant—how significant was Dillard's advertising to the newspapers?

BD: Oh, very, very important.

JM: Do you have any idea, say, at the *Gazette*, before—while Patterson still owned it—what percentage of their advertising came from Dillard's?

BD: I would say probably—maybe ten percent to twenty percent of their advertising was Dillard's, not counting classifieds.

JM: Okay.

BD: Because Dillard's was running full-page ads [and] nobody else was. [M. M.] Cohn's was running half a page on Sundays and maybe on Wednesday. But Dillard's would have a full-page or a ninety-inch ad once or twice a day, every day.

JM: And several on Sunday didn't they?

BD: Several on Sunday [and] several on Friday. Furniture was always good on Friday, and they would run ready-to-wear. On Sunday they would have their fashion and cosmetics. So it would have been a big, big loss.

JM: When—and I know you weren't in the meeting—but, as I understand it, when he canceled their advertising, then they—Gannett sent somebody down from national headquarters . . .

BD: Right, to go call on them.

JM: To go call on him, along with the . . .

BD: With the . . .

JM: With the publisher.

BD: I think his name was [Craig] Moon. I think he was the general manager at that time.

JM: Young guy. Okay, I think the same thing. But, at any rate, Moon—and who was the national guy, do you know?

BD: Oh, I can't think of his name. But Ed Majors, who was the ad director at the time—I think he was in the meeting with Moon and the man from Gannett headquarters. I think all three of them went to the meeting.

JM: As you understand the story, the national guy said to Mr. Dillard—and I guess he was getting frustrated—“How would you feel . . .?”

BD: “If I canceled my charge account?”

JM: Was he talking about his own charge account or a . . . ?

BD: Yes, his personal charge account.

JM: His charge account.

BD: His personal charge account. At that point, Mr. Dillard, as I understand, stood up and said “This meeting is over.” I cannot imagine why anybody would make a threat like that when you are trying to get some . . .

JM: Yes, especially not one as . . .

BD: No, [it] probably wasn’t more than \$5,000 a month, if that much.

JM: No bigger than that. But, at any rate, that certainly made a big difference in the outcome of the newspaper . . .

BD: It did.

JM: Did Wal-Mart cancel their advertising for a while or . . .?

BD: Yes. They did. A funny statement was made—and, again, I can’t say that this is an actual statement, but—Tom Kemp, Glen Barber, and somebody else went to call on the Wal-Mart ad director. And they asked about getting . . .

JM: Was this when they were still at the *Gazette*?

BD: Yes, still at the *Gazette*. And he said that the *Gazette* was like a sore. He said if you have a scab and you pick at it [then] it’ll erupt again and you’ll have to let it scab over. And he said “That’s kind of how I feel about the *Gazette*.” Now, that’s a rumor.

JM: That was the man from Wal-Mart saying that?

BD: The man from Wal-Mart saying that—that it was like picking at a scab.

JM: Were they advertising or [had they] started advertising more in the *Democrat*?

BD: They had done some in the *Democrat* because, really, they probably felt the *Democrat* reader, at that time, was more their customer.

JM: Yes.

BD: You know, the middle income, whereas the *Gazette* certainly had the influential—the affluent reader.

JM: So you stayed until 2000 and . . .

BD: I stayed until 2000. I think it was 2001. I wish—in fact, when we won the war, I told Paul Smith, “I wish I was about ten years younger and could be here a little bit longer.” He said “Well, you’re going to stay a while.” I said “Oh, yes. I wouldn’t miss this for anything.”

JM: I think we pretty much covered it now, but, again, if we could go back, [are there] any particular impressions that you remember about the way the two operated—the newspapers operated differently? Maybe we covered all that.

BD: Not really. I think the *Democrat* tried harder to please everybody, not only the reader but the advertiser and the employee. It was truly—having worked for Dillard’s with the stress of big business, and working for the *Gazette* with their attitude, going to the *Democrat* was really a refreshing experience for me. People worked together. It was—everybody was united in one cause, and it makes all the difference in the world.

JM: Although he ran a lot of advertising with them, Mr. Dillard, was he—he wasn’t really a big fan of the *Gazette*, was he? Or was he?

BD: No, he really wasn’t. He and Mr. Patterson lived on the same street. They were neighbors, but I don’t think they socialized with each other. I don’t think they particularly cared for each other. Sometimes when you get people in that social status, they find fault with each other.

JM: Yes.

BD: And Mr. Dillard really didn't have a lot to do with people at the *Democrat*, either. Mr. Dillard—he was this fabulous merchant. He knew what to do.

JM: Yes.

BD: He lived his life the way he wanted to and he ran his business the way he wanted to. And he just didn't like to be threatened or bribed or anything. I think that's why he turned down the *Democrat* \$1 offer at first. He just didn't want to get involved in that kind of business.

JM: Okay, I think that this is about to wrap up. I think it has been a very interesting and informative interview. Barbara, is there anything else you can think of that we haven't covered?

BD: No, I think that's probably about it.

JM: Okay, well . . .

BD: Thank you, Jerry.

JM: Thank you, very much.

[Tape Stopped]

JM: Again, I want to go back . . .

BD: Is the tape in there?

JM: Yes, Ma'am. I want—no I don't—Barbara, I want to ask you one other thing that—I know Walter says that he went to Hugh Patterson and proposed a joint operating agreement. Were you aware of this? And did you have any idea of what was happening?

BD: Yes. I was at the *Gazette* when he went back and made the second proposal to Mr. Patterson about having a joint operating agreement, and Mr. Patterson asked

him to leave his office because he wasn't interested. Later, Mr. Patterson came down to the advertising department and was telling us about it and said that he really wasn't worried about the *Democrat* [and] that he didn't think they'd ever make it, so he was not going to do a joint operating agreement. He really didn't acknowledge the *Democrat* as a newspaper.

JM: Okay. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Geoffery Stark]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]