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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with:

Pam Terrell
Telephone Interview
28 March, 2007

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. I'm here at my home in Greenwood, Arkansas, on March 28, 2007. [I'm] preparing to do a telephone interview with Pam Terrell who is in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Is that correct Pam?

Pam Terrell: Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Right.

JM: Very good. [We're] doing this interview as part of the oral history of the *Arkansas Democrat* and *Democrat-Gazette* for the Pryor archives—the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas. Pam, the first thing I need to do is ask you if I have your permission to tape this interview and turn it over to the university?

PM: You do.

JM: Okay. Now, as I understand, you worked for the *Arkansas Democrat* for several years. [You] probably started shortly before the war began, and stayed there several years through the war. Is that correct?

PM: I can tell you that I was there first in the fall of 1978. I think around October. I left, I believe, in 1981 when I was in Washington, [DC].

JM: Okay. But, you were still at the *Democrat* though?

PM: I was at the *Democrat* that whole time, and the wars—as far as I knew—had just begun. Maybe they had begun earlier, but I didn't have any knowledge of that.

JM: No, I don't think so. Now, okay so—let's get you—let's start out from the beginning and get you to the *Democrat*. First, let's start—when and where were you born?

PM: I was born in Washington, DC, just a couple of blocks away from the White House.

JM: Oh.

PM: When they had a hospital there. I was born November 21, 1943, during World War II.

JM: Well, that's sort of a significant date to me, because that's also my birthday.

PM: It isn't!

JM: Yes, it is. [Laughs]

PM: Oh, go. [Laughs]

JM: Only—now, I was born a few years before that. [Laughter] Nevertheless—anyway—okay—all right, so what were your parents' names?

PM: My mother is Patricia Cox Murphy, and my dad is Julian George Murphy.

JM: Julian. J-U-L-I-A-N?

PM: Yes. J-U-L-I-A-N.

JM: What did they do?

PM: My dad was—actually, after he came back from World War II—he was a PT [pa-

trol torpedo] boat commander in the Pacific. He had just gotten out of the University of Maryland, and was trying to figure out whether he should go to law school or med[ical] school—because he had been accepted. He ultimately decided—since he had two little kids and a wife—that he would take us to New York City and join the ranks of the advertising industry at the dawn of the TV advertising age.

JM: Oh, okay.

PM: So I was in New York for awhile.

JM: Very interesting. Where did you go to school?

PM: From the beginning or . . . ?

JM: Yes, from the beginning.

PM: Okay. I started kindergarten in Chevy Chase, Maryland, in a school called Rosemary Elementary. [I] went there to first grade. I think we moved up to New York about the time I was in first grade—first to Long Beach, where I finished first grade and then by second grade we had moved to Valley Spring, New York. I went to a couple of different elementary schools there. We came back to Washington, DC, when I was in the middle of my fifth grade, and [I] went to school at Washington, DC, at Ben Murch.

JM: Spell that.

PM: Ben is B-E-N. Murch is M-U-R-C-H.

JM: Okay.

PM: Then I went back to Rosemary Elementary in Chevy Chase to graduate from sixth grade.

JM: Why did you move back to Washington, DC? What did your father do then?

PM: I think my mom was basically homesick.

JM: Okay.

PM: My dad—it was a wild and crazy life in the advertising industry, and he was barely home. So I guess they agreed, for the purpose of the family, it would be better to move back and go into the calmer territory of life insurance. Dad worked for New York Life and various agencies before he started his own agency.

JM: Now then, go on with your schooling. You graduated from grammar school? Or wherever you were?

PM: Okay. Then I went to Leland Junior High School in seventh and eighth grade. That was also in Chevy Chase.

JM: Okay.

PM: Then we moved out to Bethesda, Maryland, and I went to North Bethesda Junior High.

JM: Okay.

PM: By the way, I had five siblings, so . . .

JM: Oh, okay.

PM: [Laughs] I was the second oldest.

JM: Okay.

PM: By this time—oh, let's see, at least four of them—one, two, three—four of my siblings were with me. My dad decided to move us out West because he had terrible allergies. He couldn't get rid of them. First, we tried Arizona, and that didn't work. So we went to San Francisco. We were out there for several months, but it was pretty hard starting over in the insurance business and having a family. So ultimately after I went to—in my sophomore year—half a year at—I

think it was Lowell Senior High School in San Francisco, we moved back to the Washington area—in fact to Washington, DC, itself.

JM: Okay.

PT: There in the middle of tenth grade I went to Woodrow Wilson High School, and finished there.

JM: Okay. Did you go off to college right away?

PT: I did. I went to Ohio Wesleyan University—which is in Delaware, Ohio—for my first year.

JM: Okay.

PT: It was very expensive, and I was an urban kind of kid. Those two things—I decided to go back to Washington. And I went part-time to George Washington University for four years, until I didn't think I could do it anymore. I had to finish soon, or I wouldn't have the energy to do it.

JM: Yes.

PT: So I went out to the University of California at Berkeley for my senior year and graduated there.

JM: Okay. What were you majoring in?

PT: English.

JM: English, okay. And you finished and got your bachelors degree in English at Berkeley. Correct?

PT: Right. That is correct. I had to take a few extra tests to make up some requirements that they had, but they did let me finish in a year.

JM: When did you get interested in journalism?

PT: Well, you know, I grew up reading the *Washington Post* and listening to Walter

Cronkite and Eric Sevareid. And to this day, I wish they were still here.

JM: You and me. [Laughter]

PT: Actually, I was first enamored with writing when I was a kid. I can remember asking my grandmother before I even went to kindergarten—I'd be scribbling on a page and I'd say, "What did I write?" [Laughs] Thinking that somebody could read it just because I scribbled something on a page. And later—I think it was in fifth grade or so—they started asking us what we wanted to be. I was pretty sure that I wanted to be an author of some sort. Then—but Journalism per se—to tell you the truth, it scared me a little, because I didn't think I could ever write a story in a day. It was something that was beyond my comprehension, because I was sort of a perfectionist. [I] would write things and rewrite and that sort of thing.

JM: And think about it.

PT: Yes, and think about it. And, "Is this the right order to put them in?" And, "Should I put the adverb here?" And that sort of thing that can drive you nuts. I went—after college—I almost went into the Peace Corps, but didn't want the assignment that they gave me. So I worked on Capitol Hill. I worked for Senator Jacob [K.] Javits for almost a year, I suppose. And then, I taught English briefly in Washington, DC, in an inner-city school the spring that Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. [Editor's note: Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on June 4, 1968 in Los Angeles, California.]

JM: 1968.

PT: They closed the school down . . .

JM: Correct. 1968.

PT: Right. So I was sort of world-weary and we were in the middle of the Vietnam War. I was so upset about that that I sort of just wanted to get away. I ended up arranging to save some money and took a trip with a friend overseas. We traveled to North Africa [and] went up through Europe, and I decided that I didn't want to come home yet. So I ended up working in Germany and studying German. Then I ended up going to the university there to study.

JM: Which university?

PT: The University of Munich.

JM: Okay.

PT: I actually studied Slavic studies. [It] was going to take me a long time because I didn't have the number of years you needed in Latin. [Laughs] But, actually, I got there because—I got to that point of my story because I wanted to tell you that that's really where I first got my editing experience. I started working for the Max Planck Institute for Patent and Copyright Law.

JM: You're talking about M-A-X P-L-A-N-C-K. Is that correct?

PT: Right.

JM: Okay. He was a physicist.

PT: He was, but he had a lot of research institutes named after him.

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: This particular one had an international publication on patent and copyright law. They needed someone who was somewhat bilingual to help them edit it [and] make sure that the English was—or the German was being translated correctly into the English and so forth. I had a wonderful time there. I stayed in Germany for almost six years and decided that it was time to come home in my late twen-

ties. I got a job with the *International Development Review*, which was a quarterly publication on exactly what it said it was—development of the third world. I did mainly editing, some writing. So I was mainly an editor up to then.

JM: Okay.

PT: Then I got an offer to go to Jackson, Mississippi, with AP [Associated Press], but, again, I was a little bit intimidated. I just didn't see myself being able to do it.

Then I ended up taking a year or two with a friend of mine who opened a fabulous seafood restaurant at Corpus Christi, Texas. She needed a partner for a couple of years. I agreed to do that, and that was a wonderful and very rich learning experience in small business. When her partner returned, I came to Arkansas because, at that time, I had met David Terrell.

JM: Oh, yes.

PT: He had been a reporter for the *Democrat* and later for the *Gazette*. I came up in the summer—or fall, I guess, of 1978. That's when I joined the *Arkansas Democrat*.

JM: Okay.

PT: Bill Husted hired me. Bless his heart.

JM: Okay.

PT: I had a long talk with him, and I told him my reservations about myself [Laughs]—that I could do it, but it would take me a while to get up the speed to write a story or two a day. He said, "Oh, you can do it." Well, I suffered for about a week, then I could do it. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. Yes.

PT: But it was exciting times at the *Democrat*.

JM: Well, you learn by doing it. Okay. Was David working at the *Gazette* at that time?

PT: He was.

JM: Yes, okay. All right. So you started about—did you say about October?

PT: Right.

JM: I think that—well, it depends on your benchmarks—but that was just a hair or two before the [newspaper] war got started. I think maybe the first big move was when they started free classifieds, which would have been about December. Then I think in January they started moving to a morning publication and adding space; that really started the war.

PT: I do remember that clearly. I do remember those specific campaigns. I didn't know a lot about the newspaper business at that point, but I remember clearly. I remember there was a lot of talk about it.

JM: Yes. Any particular thing you remember how it was working in the newsroom at that time?

PT: Well, of course, I had nothing to compare it with, but for me it was just great fun, basically. I loved what I was doing, and I had never had something that I liked to do better up to that point.

JM: What were you doing?

PT: Well, first they put me on night cop beat, the way, I guess, most reporters begin. It was exciting. [Laughs] I had a good time doing that; although I have to say I did see my first dead body ever in my life the first couple of days I worked there, so that was a reality check about what I was going to be in for in the news business.

JM: How did that happen?

PT: There was a murder in the early morning. I guess I had still been on the beat, so they asked me to go over and check out what was happening at this crime scene. And there it was.

JM: You were the police reporter.

PT: Yes, police reporter.

JM: Yes, okay. That's the way I started.

PT: Oh.

JM: But it was a daytime beat there, because we were an afternoon paper.

PT: Well, actually, it was an afternoon paper when I was there.

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: Well, at least for the first couple of months.

JM: Okay. Now, tell me about what transpired then. Do you remember when they went to morning?

PT: I remember—I cannot remember when, but I can remember it was—I felt a luxury in being able to have more time to write deadline stories and that sort of thing. I remember that we—I remember a lot of talk about going head-to-head against the *Gazette* and trying to beat them out on stories. It was exciting times, actually. We were the David, and they were the Goliath. That was often part of the excitement, as far as I was concerned. I thought it was a good experience.

JM: So how did—what kind of paper was the *Democrat* at that point in time? What do you remember about it?

PT: Well, I remember that it was getting fatter than [it was] when I first arrived.

[Laughs]

JM: Yes.

PT: I do remember that John Robert Starr was the managing editor. He was indefatigable in his desire to get the story, to get the scoop. He was a big presence in the newsroom. I remember the one time that—I think—I felt uneasy about a story I was doing—because I felt like it was being pursued too aggressively—was a gang rape story—a girl who had brought charges against four or five high school boys. I was just leery of the story from the beginning, and I didn't want to play it up. Sure enough, we got to court and the girl—the witness never arrived for the case, so then the big pursuit was after her. I felt I was supposed to be the bloodhound now chasing the girl. It was just—to me, that was the part of the newspaper business that was very hard, because I didn't think in either case that it should have been pursued so aggressively. And the way it was—these were just kids who didn't even know what was up.

JM: Who was pushing that?

PT: It was pushing the envelope to me.

JM: I know, but who was pushing it, as far as your higher up?

PT: Starr and then others.

JM: Starr?

PT: Yes. I was supposed to be doing some big weekend column about the girl. I wrote it as sensitively as I could. In fact, I remember getting a call or a note from the mother thanking me for doing it the way that I did it, because it was really a hard story to do. Should I go into detail about some of those stories? Or was that too much?

JM: Sure.

PT: The other thing—actually, I had some luck, because during the presidential elections that came up, I was sent to do the Republican convention. No one in the world guessed what was going to happen that year. Everyone thought that it was going to be the Democrats, Democrats, Democrats. So—being the new kid on the block—after I had been sent up to Washington, they sent me to the Republican convention, and Starr, with Meredith Oakley, went to the Democratic convention. Well, guess who became president?

JM: Ronald Reagan.

PT: Ronald Reagan. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. I remember that. At that time, though—this is the—well, yes, the convention would have been in 1980, right?

PT: Yes. This is after they had moved me up to Washington.

JM: Okay. Okay. All right. So—all right, well, let's get from—we'll get into that a little bit more. Let's get from how you get to where you are—as a cop reporter how you get to Washington. What else did you do?

PT: [Laughs] What else did I do? After that, I think they moved me from cop beat to the county court beat. That's where I was—I did some state court general assignment as well, but then they put me on the county court beat.

JM: County courthouse.

PT: Yes.

JM: Okay. Do you remember anything—particular stories from there?

PT: I was with Bob Sallee. He helped me a heck of a lot. He was a great guy to work with, and he showed me the rounds. I think he was about ready to leave to become a desk editor.

JM: Was he still a police reporter at that time, or was he . . . ?

PT: No, he was on the county.

JM: Oh, he was on the county. Okay.

PT: Yes, because he was showing me around. I remember that. I loved covering the courts—I have to say. I can't remember the prosecutor's name now, to tell you the truth, but there was always some drama going on there. I loved covering the courts per se more than county politics. It was a good beat. You really got a good feel for what was happening in the area.

JM: Who was covering it for the *Gazette*? Was George Bentley there?

PT: Yes, George Bentley was there, and I don't know who was with him. It must have—Chuck Heinbockel was there for a little while.

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: Oh, I just—something was just fleeting through my mind. Oh, yes. That was the first time I had seen Hillary Clinton, because she was representing some sort of a dispute on the civil side. I can't remember the—it was a big case at the time—and I can't remember what it was, but I remember just watching her in her arguments. It was amazing. It was an amazing piece of work. She was really impressive.

JM: Okay. Who else do you remember on the *Democrat* staff at that time? Give me your impressions on what kind of staff the *Democrat* had.

PT: Overall, I thought they were very talented. You know, there was always some—a morale problem, because we were paid so much less than the *Gazette* reporters. That was tough. We felt we were working just as hard, and what was the justice in that? [Laughs] But there was some wonderful talent. I remember Bob Lancas-

ter was there. I often sat in front of him. He looked like he—sometimes he had his head down on the table when he was writing. He always turned out this great copy. I thought, “Maybe I should put my head down on my desk.” [Laughs] “Maybe that would work for me, too!”

JM: He used to lay it down on his typewriter, as I remember. Yes. [Laughs]

PT: Oh, yes. But, boy, that stuff he turned out was great.

JM: Yes.

PT: And Bill Dawson was there. Janet—and I can’t remember the last name now—a wonderful person.

JM: Bill Dawson—that’s not the one that became the federal judge? Is it?

PT: Bill Dawson? No. He eventually became an environmental reporter.

JM: No, that’s Bob Dawson. Bob Dawson was there earlier. Okay, so Bob Dawson, who is now a federal judge in Fort Smith [Arkansas], worked at the *Democrat* for a while.

PT: Oh, I didn’t realize that. Oh, my gosh.

JM: But at any rate—Bill Dawson—yes, I remember him too. Okay.

PT: Yes, and Garry Hoffmann. He was an excellent editor and wonderful to work with—very even-tempered. Bill Husted was there on the—I guess he was the city editor for a while.

JM: City editor, yes.

PT: If you could throw out a few names, then maybe I could—I know there was a very conservative editorialist at that time.

JM: Well, that could have been David Hawkins.

PT: Yes, that’s his name.

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: Then there was a woman who had been a long-time reporter who was head of business? For a while she was there?

JM: Bobbie Forster?

PT: That sounds familiar, because when she left they started to talk to me about possibly taking over that position. I was too enamored with government politics, courts, and so forth, to do that.

JM: That would have been—it's probably Bobbie, but she may have been gone by then. Inez Hale McDuff also wrote business at one time there. But I think that at the time you are talking about, it was probably Bobbie.

PT: It sounds familiar.

JM: How did the paper compare with the *Gazette* at that time?

PT: Well, I think they had more—they had longer stories. I think we were told more or less to write crisp short and then we would do some analysis. Besides that, I remember the *Gazette* had a lot of meat in a lot of the stories—per se. I think, obviously, they had the thicker paper. They were the paper of record—very respected. You never felt they were going to make an error. [Laughs] Sometimes I had some experiences, when calling in stories. I held my breath because I wasn't sure, for example, if there would be a homonym that would be misspelled or something like that when I was at the *Democrat*. It was a daily miracle, as we called it, so you can't put too much stock in that. I had come from a journal and also an academic writing background, so committing those little errors was something that always pained me, even though I realized mistakes are made on daily newspapers.

JM: You probably didn't have to work at that speed on the other . . .

PT: That, and—boy, I learned to respect that in a big way. It amazed me what people could do and how creative people could be. Sometimes that created the creativity—when you had to move fast. I found that, too.

JM: Anything else that you remember in particular in that step before you went off to Washington?

PT: Well, I remember they were doing—you know, dropping newspapers on all lawns. On a certain day, I think that was it. And I remember they were getting aggressive about advertising. I don't remember specifics because, again, I was totally engrossed in the newsroom. The newsroom, per se, I remember—basically I thought there was an attitude of “Let's get the news. Let's get it before the Big Guy, and let's try to beat them at their own game.” I think there was a very serious news attempt. Even though I know that a lot of people ended up moving over to the *Gazette*, I do really feel in the news department people really worked hard to put out the news right and get as much as they could.

JM: How was Starr to work for?

PT: He was sort of tough. Most of the time, as far as I'm concerned, I—put it this way, I don't put up with aggressive people, so it didn't bother me. I mean, if he was going to be aggressive, it didn't bother me, because my father was rather aggressive, so I learned how to deal with that at a young age.

JM: Okay.

PT: But I think that at one point he did sort of give me an ultimatum. It might have been on the rape story that I talked about, because I didn't want to write it. He said, “Who is the editor? I hire and fire.” And I said, “Okay. I'll write the story,

but I'm going to write it as I see it." So . . .

JM: Okay. How did you get to Washington?

PT: They asked me to go. [Laughs]

JM: Who asked you?

PT: Starr.

JM: Okay, so he . . .

PT: But I think that he—I only met [Walter] Hussman [Jr.] a couple of times. I should say Mr. Hussman, I suppose, but he was always referred to as Hussman. I don't know if he played a role in it. I know his sister was up there covering some things, and I don't know if it was really a full-time effort or not. I just wasn't in the know as far as that was concerned, but I got the nice offer. I thought about it, and I thought, "This is really a good opportunity." And I went.

JM: So John Robert [Starr] asked you to go to their Washington bureau, correct?

PT: Right.

JM: And were you supposed to be head of it? Or did you know whether there was anybody else in it or not?

PT: I was told—is it Gail Hussman?

JM: Yes. Well, there was Gail—yes, it was Gail Hussman originally. Then she married Judge Richard Arnold, and [she] became Gail Arnold.

PT: Okay, that's right. I was told that she was up there, but I was told to—they used the word "reestablish"—the Washington bureau.

JM: Okay.

PT: So I went up there with the notion that I was to be the main correspondent, but she would continue to do her columns. That was the assignment that was given me. I

went up with both guns in the holsters—I guess—ready to go.

JM: Yes, okay. So when would that have been? Do you remember the time?

PT: I actually went up there around—it was the beginning of the year. It was either the end of 1979 or the beginning of 1980.

JM: Okay. So you went up there and then what happened when you got there?

PT: I learned my way around the news beat, and I tried to find a place to work, which, at first, was my home. Eventually, we opened an office in the National Press Bureau—or press building, I should say.

JM: Okay.

PT: I worked a lot out of the press gallery. [I] did much of my work—my assignment was to get as much locally connected news as possible—not to be the big national newspaper. In other words, I wasn't covering anything unless it really directly affected the Arkansas readers. So I covered our local delegation. At first I was up against—I guess Tom Hamburger was there most of the time when I was up there.

JM: Okay.

PT: His assignment seemed to be different, because he covered a lot of the bigger national issues as well.

JM: Okay, were [Dale] Bumpers and [David] Pryor the two senators then?

PT: Right.

JM: Yes. Okay. Okay.

PT: I should also say that I covered the White House and the Supreme Court when things came up that were related. I did get to go to the Rose Garden after Reagan gave his inaugural [speech]. I was there when they announced that the Iranians

freed the hostages. [Editor's note: On November 4, 1979, militant university students took over the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran. Fifty-two hostages were held for 444 days and released on January 20, 1981, shortly after Ronald Reagan was sworn in as president.]

JM: Okay.

PT: So that was a really exciting time, too.

JM: So what happened as far as your working relationship in the office? [Laughs]

PT: Getting down to the nitty gritty? [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

PT: Well, I tried to call Gail a couple of times. I didn't get a response. I walked into the news gallery to be approached by Sarah McLendon, who ripped me a good one for daring to come up and try to horn in on Gail's territory. I guess I didn't feel I owed her or anyone else an explanation.

JM: What was she—do you remember what her background was?

PT: I don't know if she was a reporter for several newspapers, but she was the one who asked the first question at the White House press conference.

JM: Yes. I think she was at Texas newspapers.

PT: Yes, that sounds right.

JM: She was a long-time reporter who had been there for some time.

PT: She was well-known for being crotchety.

JM: Yes, but because of her length of service—I think—she was the one they called on to ask the first question. Is that correct?

PT: I think that is true, because later they did that with Helen Thomas.

JM: That was what I was going to say; later, Helen Thomas got the first shot. Yes,

okay. But Sarah McLendon reamed you out for coming out there and horning in on Gail's territory?

PT: Right. So I didn't disabuse her of that notion. I said that I'm sure she's a very good reporter and went on my way.

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: There was some kind of confusion with the congressional delegation, I believe, because they were in a tough spot not knowing who to call when there was a story. And I said, "I guess it would be too much to ask you to call us both?" [Laughs] So why don't you straighten it out with Mr. Hussman and Mr. Starr, then we'll go from there."

JM: Okay.

PT: They straightened it out, and I was the one to be contacted first on all the stories.

JM: So someone in Little Rock said to contact you first?

PT: Right. I don't know who it was, but . . .

JM: Okay. You don't know who it was.

PT: I don't know who it was, but I do remember one of the aides in Pryor's office said, "Well, we called, and we'll be notifying you of news stories."

JM: Okay, but you don't know whether it was Walter or John Robert?

PT: I have no idea.

JM: Okay, that's fine. So how did it go from there? Okay, at some point in that year you got the assignment to go to the Republican Convention, which was where that year?

PT: It was Detroit [Michigan].

JM: Detroit, okay.

PT: It was in Detroit. I forget where the Democratic one was. It might have been in New York that year. [Editor's note: The Democratic Convention of 1980 was held in Madison Square Garden in New York City from August 11 to August 14.]

JM: Don't remember for sure, but . . .

PT: I felt a little slighted at first because I knew the Democratic one was supposed to be the big one.

JM: Yes.

PT: But I had the big chuckle in the end.

JM: Yes, okay. I'm trying to remember where the Democratic Convention was, but you say that John Robert and Meredith went to the Democratic Convention?

PT: Meredith Oakley.

JM: Yes, Meredith Oakley. Yes, yes, okay. So did you—you covered all the developments there?

PT: Right. That was when [George Herbert Walker] Bush became vice-president, despite his "voodoo economics." [Editor's note: Before aligning with presidential candidate Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush said that Reagan would have to practice "voodoo economics" if he wanted to successfully increase federal revenue and lower taxes as well.]

JM: Did you . . .

PT: His statement about voodoo economics, I should say.

JM: Yes. Did you develop close contacts with the administration?

PT: I was primarily covering Congress, so not really with the Reagan administration.

JM: Okay.

PT: I did meet Bush senior briefly. I got to know [John Paul] Hammerschmidt who

was the Congressman from the Fayetteville area—Northwest Arkansas.

JM: Third district.

PT: Right.

JM: John Paul.

PT: John Paul. I got to know him a little. He was very helpful, and at that time Congressman [Ed] Bethune was representing—you can probably remember the district?

JM: Second district—Ed Bethune.

PT: Ed Bethune?

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: And Bill Alexander was the eastern part.

JM: First.

PT: Then I want to say Beryl Anthony.

JM: That's probably right. [It] sounds right.

PT: It was . . .

JM: Fourth district.

PT: The fourth district, so—I contacted their offices, I would say daily, and sometimes—depending on the thrust of the news—I would be in contact with one more than the other. But I did check those traps almost every day.

JM: How do you file in those days?

PT: At this point, I had a computer. It was very awkward, but we had some sort of a system that we could send it over the telephone lines.

JM: Okay. It wasn't a laptop computer though, was it?

PT: I don't think it was.

JM: Okay, I couldn't remember when those came in.

PT: I really—I'm sure it wasn't a laptop as we know it today.

JM: Yes, okay. All right. But you could put it on the computer and then hook up to the telephone and send it in?

PT: Right.

JM: It would zip right into the main computer in Little Rock and then they could call it up.

PT: That's what I understand.

JM: That was a marvelous invention they had to do that.

PT: Oh, my goodness yes, because when I first started, you typed it and then they put it into a scanner. You had to go over to the desk to make sure that it came up the way it was supposed to. It was very long and arduous.

JM: Yes I remember. Yes, it was. But at any rate, how long did you stay in the Washington Bureau?

PT: I was up there until the summer of 1981. At that point I think that David Terrell and I decided we would get married and be together for the rest of our lives.

JM: Okay.

PT: He was not having luck finding something he wanted to do there. More or less, I opened the door and said, "Well, you find something and I'll go where your heart is this time."

JM: Yes, okay.

PT: So that's when we moved to Memphis [Tennessee]. He joined the *Commercial Appeal* and I joined UPI [United Press International].

JM: Oh, okay, so David had left the *Gazette* and gone up there—if I remember my

story—going up there because you were going up there. Is that correct?

PT: Right.

JM: So when he couldn't get a newspaper job up there, then he went to Memphis.

And you say he went to work for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, and you were with UPI. Okay, now proceed on from there.

PT: From UPI?

JM: Yes.

PT: Well, I was working at the graveyard shift for a while in Memphis. I loved wire service. I could work for a wire service today. I absolutely loved it.

JM: Oh, okay.

PT: Then I went on days. We actually had a shift switch here now and again. So when I went on days I got to cover the Doctor [George] Nichcopoulos trial—Elvis Presley's doctor.

JM: So what was he being tried for?

PT: Giving Elvis Presley a deadly amount of drugs.

JM: Okay.

PT: It was a six-week trial, and they had mountains of evidence against him, but he was acquitted in three hours. Who would have guessed?

JM: But you covered the trial?

PT: Yes, I covered that trial. I covered everything from—Memphis is an interesting town. It was the headquarters of Holiday Inn at some point. It had a lot going on, so there was a lot of news to cover. They were just building that big river museum down on the Mississippi, and Beale Street was being revitalized. Of course, politics is [as] endlessly interesting in Tennessee as it is in Arkansas.

JM: So how long did y'all [you all] stay there? Do you remember?

PT: This is a case once again—UPI asked me to go to Washington.

JM: Okay.

PT: So we revolved back to Washington in—I'm going to say in 1983. So I went back up in the beginning of 1983 to open a bureau for UPI in Alexandria, Virginia.

JM: Okay.

PT: The reason they wanted a bureau there is primarily because they had a lot of newspaper clients and also because they had the federal courthouse where there was many a spy case going on.

JM: Okay.

PT: So that was their dual purpose. David followed up in about six months after he found work, and that was eventually as a speechwriter for Senator Jim Sasser of Tennessee.

JM: Okay. So he came up and went to work for Sasser, and you went to work for UPI.

PT: Right.

JM: How long did that last?

PT: It lasted over several years. You can take out about a year and a half after I gave birth to Christine.

JM: Okay.

PT: I took about fifteen months off. So after I went back to UPI, I actually didn't go back to Northern Virginia bureau. I went to the national desk and then eventually I moved to the Washington desk at UPI.

JM: Okay. Any particular stories you remember there?

PT: Well, they had the explosion of the Challenger [Space Shuttle on January 28, 1986].

JM: Yes.

PT: That's the big one that I remember that was going on.

JM: Okay. And David—was he still with Sasser at that time?

PT: Yes.

JM: Okay. All right. And at some point—and there may have been some other job switches in there—he went to work for the Interior Department. Is that correct?

PT: Right. And that happened, actually, shortly after Christine's birth, because it was too much travel. Actually, a lot of people don't know this, but when you travel for the government, you don't make money often—at least not if you are not senior executive staff. He ended up having to pay [for] a lot of his own meals and everything. We couldn't afford it because at that point, during the fifteen months that I was with Christine at home, I was freelancing. It didn't bring in a normal salary.

JM: Yes.

PT: When I went back to work for UPI, as I say, for a few years—but then when I was working graveyard shifts, again mainly to make the extra money, I fell asleep at a traffic light and woke up a few hours later one time. [I] decided, “Nope, I can't do this anymore.” I decided to work where I could make more money. I ended up working for *Press Time* magazine, which was the American Newspaper Publishers Association magazine. There I learned lots and lots about the newspaper business.

JM: That was *Press Time*? Is that the name of it?

PT: Yes, *Press Time* magazine.

JM: Okay. Okay. This is ANPA—American Newspaper Publishers Association—is that correct?

PT: Yes, and they changed their name somewhere along the line. It was ANPA, but they changed it to Newspaper Association of America or something.

JM: Okay.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: Do you remember where you were working when you heard that Gannett had bought out the *Gazette*?

PT: What year was it?

JM: 1986.

PT: I would have been . . .

JM: Well, I think . . .

PT: I would have been probably at *Press Time* magazine at that point.

JM: Yes, or—I remember you saying that you covered the Challenger, though, and I thought that was in 1986—but I wouldn't swear to it.

PT: Well, wait. No, I could have still been over at UPI. Anyway it was a great shock to me.

JM: It was?

PT: Oh, my gosh! I really wanted to shed a few tears on that one.

JM: Yes.

PT: My jaw literally dropped to the floor.

JM: You're talking about when Gannett bought the *Gazette*, or when the *Gazette* . . .?

PT: Well, both, but mainly when it died.

JM: Okay. Yes. That was what I was going to ask you about. What was your reaction when it died?

PT: I was stunned, because I didn't think anybody could beat Gannett. It's such a gorilla. I know, because later I worked for one Gannett newspaper.

JM: I have interviewed a lot of people and had other people interview a lot of people. Until just right at the last, I don't think anybody ever forecast that the *Democrat* would win the war and the *Gazette* would be the one who went under.

PT: I have to say that after—I didn't know the Pattersons—I think, from what I knew from afar, they were in a way mimicking what Walter Hussman was doing with the paper in order to compete with him. In other words, they were trying to outdo what Hussman was doing as part of their battle strategy. I mean, I can't say whether they could have been saved in another way. It just could be that the town couldn't support two newspapers, and Walter Hussman was determined to be the one to stay. And once the *Gazette* started doing that, to me it was like, "Well, what's the difference then?" I mean, you don't have two different newspapers. You have two newspapers doing the same thing. When the papers started doing that, I was less personally upset by it. Put it that way.

JM: But the *Gazette* started becoming less of a newspaper of record? Or do you . . . ?

PT: I wasn't there reading it.

JM: Okay.

PT: But occasionally, when I came through town, I still thought it was a good newspaper, but it looked like every other newspaper in the world. It didn't have that distinguished look that I liked. I know I'm sort of old fashioned, but I really did

like the way it looked before.

JM: Yes. Gray? [Laughs]

PT: [Laughs] Yes. Well, I don't mind a little color, but it was the print style, maybe?

JM: Yes. I understand what you mean—not quite so flamboyant and [?].

PT: Right. It wasn't trying to put—every paper started to have the big photo in the middle at the front page. Every paper in the world started to look like a Gannett paper, which was trying to look like television. I mean, to me, it became the original thing to do.

JM: Yes. So at some point in time—there may be some other transitions in here—but in some point in time y'all—David got sent somewhere else for the Interior Department, right?

PT: Right. He went out to Reston [Virginia] with the U.S. Geological Survey. I was commuting downtown to UPI for a while and then I went to *Press Time* out in Reston. So that was more convenient.

JM: Okay.

PT: Then I left *Press Time* after a while to—again, to try and spend more time with my daughter, who was in elementary school.

JM: Okay.

PT: I worked at George Mason University [Fairfax, Virginia] as their editor of publications before we moved out to South Dakota. Who would have believed it?

JM: So the Interior Department sent David out to South Dakota. Is that correct?

PT: Right.

JM: And where? Was it Rapid City [South Dakota]?

PT: No, Sioux Falls [South Dakota].

JM: Sioux Falls, okay.

PT: The eastern part.

JM: Yes, okay. Sioux Falls. And what was he doing there for the Interior Department?

PT: Beats me. [Laughs]

JM: Yes, okay. Good.

PT: No. He was a federal manager. They were working on some national mapping issues.

JM: Okay. He was already into mapping then?

PT: Yes.

JM: Okay. All right.

PT: And he did some marketing and that sort of thing.

JM: Okay. And you got a job with the Sioux Falls paper. Is that correct?

PT: Right. The *Argus-Leader*, A-R-G-U-S hyphen Leader.

JM: Yes, okay. And you were what editorial writer?

PT: I was editorial page—first I was the assistant editorial page editor.

JM: Okay.

PT: And I was promoted after a year or so to editorial page editor.

JM: Okay. So you y'all remained there in South Dakota till the snow got over the top of David's head? [Laughter] That's something. But at any rate, at some point in time you moved to where you are now. Is that correct?

PT: That is right.

JM: You moved to Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, and he is still with the Interior Department. And you are not working? Oh, you are working. You are working.

PT: I am working. I'm working hard. [Laughs]

JM: You're in real estate. Is that correct?

PT: Yes. I work for Coldwell Banker.

JM: Oh, do you? Okay. All right. Yes, in fact, David told me you were sort of a workaholic, anyway.

PT: Well, yes, it fits, but this is a nice flexible schedule. Even though when you say that, it really means that you get to work a lot. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. Yes. I understand. Takes time. But at any rate—so he's still with the Interior Department, then?

PT: That is right.

JM: Yes, okay. All right. Okay, Pam, is there anything else that you recall specifically about your time at the *Democrat*—how the paper operated, and what went on at that time—that we haven't already touched on?

PT: I don't know anything specific. I guess I have an opinion.

JM: Okay, go ahead.

PT: When all was said and done, I am sad that it is not a two-newspaper town, but I have to admire the business acumen and determination behind the *Democrat*. You have to say that that was—whether you like the results or not—I guess there has to be something said for somebody who has that determination and cares that much about something to do it.

JM: Yes, and put so much into it.

PT: Oh, yes, and to risk all that.

JM: Yes. Yes.

PT: Being in business for a while, I've come to appreciate that a lot.

JM: Yes. Yes.

PT: There's a lot of risk.

JM: I've had several people that I've interviewed at the *Democrat*, and the higher-ups have said that one good thing was that the *Gazette*, before they—they gave them time to learn how to compete. They said that they didn't try to squash us right at first; [they] let us hang around. We were trying a lot of things, and not all of them worked. But, eventually, we learned how to compete. And they kept thrashing around in a lot of different directions, but, apparently, eventually, got it right.

PT: Well, exactly. Hussman knew what he wanted to do earlier, and the *Gazette* sort of got caught off guard, I would think. They didn't know what hit them, in a way. And because they were, perhaps, complacent and perhaps had reason to be, up to that point—and then when they were trying to get into the mix, Hussman already had his game plan, I guess.

JM: Okay. Anything else? Any other stories that you remember along the way that you did, or were involved in, or the paper did? Anything else that you remember, in particular?

PT: Nothing strikes me at the moment.

JM: Okay.

PT: But exciting times.

JM: Yes. Do you still like the newspaper business?

PT: Oh, I still read newspapers—you know, every one I can get at.

JM: Yes.

PT: I do read news online a lot now.

JM: Yes. Yes.

PT: I love the newspapers.

JM: So do I. But at any rate, okay—well, let's see—anything else you can think of that we haven't covered that might give some insight to what kind of paper the *Democrat* was and what it became?

PT: I think it is a better newspaper now. I would imagine. The last time I came through Little Rock—it certainly is—I enjoyed reading it.

JM: Okay.

PT: I thought it had a lot in it. It's probably—I just don't like a one-newspaper town because there's not competition for ideas. It's my biggest sadness about the whole thing. There's too much media domination of newspapers. I believe that most people now are looking for the truth on the Internet—trying to find out what the truth is—because they don't trust big media the way we used to read newspapers.

JM: Yes. Well, I'm not sure that the Internet is a good place to find the truth, either.

PT: Well, that is true, but they're looking to read all different kinds of sources to try to figure out what they think is the truth. Put it that way.

JM: Yes. Yes. Get various takes on it.

PT: Yes.

JM: Rather than just one.

PT: I just hope that they don't close down the Internet now. [That's?] what they're talking about.

JM: Yes. But it came as a great shock to you when the *Gazette* folded, though, and they were the ones that went out of business?

PT: Oh, yes. You could have knocked me over with a feather.

JM: Yes. And I assume that you probably asked that—you interviewed David for me.
I assume that he felt the same way.

PT: I think that it was just general disbelief.

JM: Yes. Yes. Yes.

PT: But if you look back at it and analyze it, you can see how it happened. But at the time—because Gannett is what it is—you just couldn't imagine Gannett folding because of Hussman. But Hussman had passion. Gannett just had a business. It was those two things—business plus passion—that seldom fall together.

JM: Yes. And fortunately for Walter, they also had a style, which was *USA Today* style, that they apparently tried to go to too much with the *Gazette*.

PT: Yes. You don't want to ram too much of that down someone's throat.

JM: No, and that didn't exactly fly in Little Rock, Arkansas, or in the state of Arkansas. Okay, Pam, anything else you can think of?

PT: No. I enjoyed talking about it.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by: Geoffery L. Stark]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]

