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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with:

Teri Thompson
Telephone Interview
22 January 2007

Interviewers: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell, and this is January 22, 2007. I'm getting ready to do a taped interview by telephone with Teri Thompson. I'm here in my home in Greenwood, Arkansas, and Teri is in her home in Connecticut. Teri, the first thing I need to do is to confirm that it is okay with you to do this interview and to turn it over to the [Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville].

Teri Thompson: Sure.

JM: Okay, very good. Now, your current position—you are now with *The New York Daily News*, correct?

TT: Yes.

JM: And tell me what your title is there.

TT: I'm the Sunday sports editor and the sports investigations editor.

JM: Okay. You're in charge of their sports investigation team?

TT: Yes.

JM: Okay. But you did . . .

TT: But I'm also in charge of the Sunday sports section.

JM: Right. But you *did* get your start at the *Arkansas Democrat*, though, is that correct?

TT: Right.

JM: Yes. Okay. Well, first, let's just start off, Teri, by making sure we have the correct spelling of your name, to begin with. Will you tell me how to spell it?

TT: T-E-R-I.

JM: Okay.

TT: Thompson. T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.

JM: Okay. And is that your real name—Teri?

TT: Well, Teresa.

JM: Teresa?

TT: Teresa—but Teri is what I go by and always have.

JM: Yes. Okay. But it's T-E-R-E-S-A?

TT: Yes.

JM: Okay. Where were you born, Teri?

TT: Oakland, California.

JM: Oakland, California. And when was this?

TT: 1953.

JM: 1953. Okay. And how did you get to Arkansas?

TT: Well, my dad was in the Navy and stationed in Oakland, so my parents were living there when I was born. Once he completed his service, they moved back to

Clarksville, Arkansas, which is where they were both born and where I grew up.

JM: Okay. How old were you when they moved back to Clarksville?

TT: I would've just been an infant—probably a year or two.

JM: Yes. Okay. And what were your parents' names?

TT: Jess—J-E-S-S—Thompson.

JM: Okay.

TT: And Nettie—N-E-T-T-I-E—Thompson.

JM: Okay. What was her maiden name?

TT: Mine?

JM: Your mother's maiden name.

TT: Oh. Tinsley. T-I-N-S-L-E-Y.

JM: Okay. And where did you go to school, Teri?

TT: Clarksville High School.

JM: You went all the way through school—the first twelve years at Clarksville?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: I graduated from Clarksville High School.

JM: Okay. And then after that?

TT: University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where I went to college. And then I went to law school later on.

JM: At UALR?

TT: No, I went to law school at Columbia [University]. I got a fellowship from *The New York Times* for a mid-career journalist to go to Columbia Law School in 1992. And that fellowship was for one year.

JM: Yes.

TT: And once you're done with your year there, they like you to return to the newspaper business, but as you probably know, the first year of law school is the roughest, so I decided to continue on after that. I had to transfer out of that program to the Cardoza Law School in New York City. And so my law degree is from Cardoza.

JM: Oh. So you have a law degree, also?

TT: Yes.

JM: Which I did not know. Very good.

TT: I am a member of the Connecticut Bar [Association].

JM: Are you really?

TT: Yes.

JM: Okay. Very good. So how did you get started in the newspaper business?

TT: Well, I majored in journalism at UALR, and it was a new program there at the time. A lot of the people who ended up at the *Democrat*, especially in sports, came through that program. It was a fledgling program, but it was really good. They had some good instructors and we put out a newspaper there and a yearbook, of which I worked on both of those. And my professors there just encouraged me to try to break in in sports. As you know, it was post-Watergate era. Everybody thought they wanted to be a reporter. This was in the mid to late 1970s, and it was difficult to get into the newspaper business, as it still is. But I applied at the *Democrat* in sports, and Fred Morrow, who was sports editor then, had just come back from a conference in New York City where I think he had talked to, I think, Jane Gross—one of those very first women sportswriters, who

had encouraged him to hire a woman in sports.

JM: Yes.

TT: And I had applied. I had done a little work at the *Jacksonville* [Arkansas] *Leader* just covering high school games and things like that, but my sports clips were pretty weak. But I had done some—what I think he saw as some interesting feature stories, and he kind of liked my rudimentary ability to write. So he called and offered me a job there at the *Democrat*. I think he was really interested in bringing diversity into the paper and having a woman sportswriter.

JM: That's very good. That was my take on Fred, also. Who were your instructors at UALR?

TT: You know, I can't even remember their names, I'm sorry to say. It was a guy who had come from southern Illinois, and I could look that up, probably.

JM: No, that's all right. Was Cliff Lawhorn head of the department?

TT: He was. That was him.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: I just—my memory is terrible.

JM: And then there was another guy there around that time who had married a woman from Australia, and I can't remember his name myself.

TT: Yes. There were two or three really, really good guys that made a big impact on me. You know, I had always loved writing, and I just sort of got into that program on a—just kind of accidentally.

JM: Yes.

TT: Like, I had a friend who was in the program, and he said, "You should try this," and I just immediately loved it. And part of the reason was these guys brought a

real sense of the business to that program. Lots of times in journalism school I think you *don't* get that. You get a little more clinical setting or a more scholarly approach to it—more in theory. And they really showed us how to do it and brought in a lot of people like Fred and like other people from the *Democrat* or the *Gazette* to speak to us.

JM: Yes.

TT: And I think that's where I got—I realized I really could love this business.

JM: Yes. Who were the other people at UALR that went to the *Democrat*?

TT: Well, Lee Crum—he was a photographer, and Ralph Routon, who ended up being sports editor.

JM: Yes.

TT: Wally went there—Wally Hall.

JM: Yes.

TT: That's probably all I can think of from my time, but I'm sure there have been—there's probably more than this is what I'm thinking of.

JM: Yes. So when did you go to work at the *Democrat*.

TT: It would've been—I finished college in three and a half years, so that would've been about—I think 1975.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: Sometime in the spring or summer of 1975, because when I first got out, I worked briefly writing copy for pharmaceutical catalogs or something, which I absolutely hated.

JM: [Laughs]

TT: That was horrible. And I remember getting this phone call from Fred Morrow. I

had sent my résumé, of course, to the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*.

JM: Yes.

TT: And I remember being outside my apartment washing my car, and these were the days before you had answering machines. So the phone started ringing, and it just rang and rang and rang, and I thought, “Well, who the heck is *that*? It must be important because they keep—they’re not hanging up.” [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

TT: So I went in and answered the phone, and I’ll never forget that phone call. It was really the most amazing phone call, you know, for my future that I guess I would get. It was Fred, and he was asking me if I was interested in working for them.

JM: Yes. And you said yes?

TT: Well, of course.

JM: Yes. Did you interview after that or did he hire you on the spot?

TT: Well, he basically—as I recall, I went in and interviewed, but it was pretty clear—he had made it pretty clear that he wanted to hire me.

JM: Yes.

TT: I think there had been one other candidate that he was looking at, if I recall, but I don’t even know who that was. But it was—I think he had made his decision pretty much based on what he saw—some little flair of some kind, again, in my clips, which, I’m sure, were—you would’ve had to look hard to find that flair. But, fortunately, he did.

JM: Yes. So you went to work at the *Democrat* right away. Do you remember what you got paid?

TT: \$125 a week.

JM: \$125 a week.

TT: Because I was making even *less* than that at this other place.

JM: Oh.

TT: When he told me what the salary was, I was so excited. And he said, “You can’t be *serious*. That’s a terrible salary.” [Laughter] He was deeply apologetic.

JM: That sounds like Fred.

TT: I said, “That sounds great to me.”

JM: Yes, I understand. It’s okay. All right. So what did you do when you started to work for the *Democrat*?

TT: Well, I just began covering all kinds of sports. I was thrown into the ring. I mean, I really knew *nothing* about sports. I had not played sports. It was in the pre-Title IX era. And, somehow, in my high school there were no sports for girls. And, as you know, back then there were all kinds of bizarre rules about half-court basketball and “girls aren’t strong enough to run up and down the court,” and all kinds of crazy things.

JM: Yes. I understand.

TT: I never played any kind of sports, and my parents weren’t really big sports fans. My dad and I had gone to the race track in Hot Springs a lot [reference to Oak-lawn Park horse-racing track] a lot. We both enjoyed that, so I knew something about that. But I had to, like, just learn on the job. And, fortunately, there were people there, including Fred, who helped me get a grasp of [laughs] what I was covering. And, believe me, without that help, I could never have done anything. He was exceptionally good at not only the writing end. I think he paid even more attention to the writing than he did to the nuts and bolts of covering sports be-

cause he felt that was the most important thing.

JM: Yes.

TT: But I would go out on my days off and just watch games and try to figure out what was going on at high school games or whatever I could find. But I covered all the major—high schools, colleges, horse racing, tennis. You know, we had a pretty eclectic sports section, and I was allowed to cover everything.

JM: Yes. Did you ever have a beat, as such?

TT: I think I covered small colleges, like UAC? Is that . . . ?

JM: UCA [University of Central Arkansas].

TT: The one in—UCA—the one in Conway.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: But I covered some of the—I think back then they called it the Southern League.

JM: Yes. Well, I can't remember.

TT: I did some of that.

JM: It changed from time to time, but at one time it was the Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference.

TT: Well, yes, but there was also the all-black colleges.

JM: Oh, yes. Right.

TT: Yes. UAPB [University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff], Grambling College, all those.

JM: Yes. Now, that *was* the Southern League, I think.

TT: I did some of that, but mainly I did—I don't think I ever really covered the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville]. I think the more experienced people did that.

JM: Yes.

TT: But I did the horse-racing beat and the Oaklawn Park thing, which was great.

JM: Yes. You enjoyed that?

TT: Yes. It was a lot of fun. I really got a sense of press boxes and the beauty that can be sports writing.

JM: Yes.

TT: Through that—I mean, there’s a lot of great writing that’s come through the race track. Not that mine was among it, but other people.

JM: Who else was on the *Democrat* sports staff at that time?

TT: Oh, you know, there was Pat [McGinnis?]? Was that his name?

JM: Yes, I think so. Yes.

TT: He was there. Fred—gee, I don’t even really remember. I don’t remember who was covering the University of Arkansas. Fred did a lot of that himself. You know, I don’t remember who his deputy was. I just can’t remember who exactly was . . .

JM: Well, they changed quite a bit in through there, but—was Rodney Lorenzen there at the time?

TT: I think so. Yes.

JM: Yes, I was trying to think of who the desk staff might have been—Rodney.

TT: Frank Fellone. And he went to UALR.

JM: Yes.

TT: I think he was on there.

JM: Yes.

TT: We went together. In fact, he was the one who encouraged me to try the journalism program.

JM: Fellone was?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes.

TT: Because he was in it. Wally was not there until after I left, I don't think.

JM: Yes.

TT: Ralph Routon may have been there.

JM: Ralph probably came over from the *Gazette*. I'm not positive. Now, was Jim Lassiter there at the time you were there?

TT: You know, Jim and I worked together in Colorado. But Jim was at the *Gazette*.

JM: He was still at the *Gazette* at the time you were there?

TT: Yes.

JM: Okay. What kind of a sports section was the *Democrat* at that time?

TT: Well, it had—because Fred was such a dominant columnist—I mean, he was so good and so—the tone was set by him—he was a good writer and took on the University of Arkansas and Frank Broyles, which nobody else really did—kind of the opposite of the *Gazette* and Orville Henry. It was really his vision in the section. We did a lot of things. Tennis—I can remember covering a lot of tennis back when [professional tennis players Bjorn] Borg and [Jimmie] Connors would come through.

JM: Yes.

TT: Just even local stuff around the state. It had a nice mixture of game coverage, columns, and features. I thought it was a pretty good section

JM: Yes. How did it compare at that time in your view with the *Gazette*'s sports section?

TT: Well, of course, the *Gazette* had a reputation of being the house organ for the

University of Arkansas. So in the minds of—at least the way *we* looked at it, we thought ours was much better because it was, to us, more real journalism. You know, where we weren't afraid to take on issues, even back then, you know? And you weren't, like, kept from, you know—you didn't have to be a homer for the team or whatever.

JM: Yes. Okay. So did you get into any column-writing while you were at the *Democrat*?

TT: You know, I think I did. [Laughs] I was only there about a year and a half.

JM: Were you?

TT: But I believe I did. I think I recall—I'm *sure* I did. I have no idea what it was on—probably some on horse racing and I'm not sure what else. I remember taking on my first real big issue-oriented topic—was the Title IX thing. Where—well, I'm not sure that that's the way you would phrase it, but it was the basketball—it was the half-court basketball thing.

JM: Oh, okay.

TT: There were girls in Arkansas [who] weren't allowed to play up and down the court. You had to pass the ball off at half-court.

JM: Yes. Right.

TT: Because they were considered to be not physically able to do that.

JM: Yes. I understand.

TT: So I took on that issue because girls were not getting scholarships to college programs that had come about because of Title IX because they were not being—that no one could tell them that they could really *play*. And it was grossly unfair.

JM: Yes.

TT: You know, there were a lot of talented girls even then in the state who just got denied an opportunity to play at college because they had this bizarre rule, which they eventually changed—which, I've certainly always believed that the *Democrat's* willingness to let me take that on, you know, kind of led to that. So that was my first exposure to “you *can* make a difference in sports writing.” Sports can involve lots of serious issues, which has sort of defined my entire career.

JM: Yes. In half-court basketball, you either played guard or you played forward. You didn't get to play both.

TT: Right. And no one could tell if you could really run the floor, and if you understood the game. So there were many girls who lost out. And a lot of girls, especially from poorer areas in Arkansas, who just would never go to college without a scholarship or without the ability to play on a team. And so they just—they were denied a huge opportunity. I found that outrageous, and fortunately, as you can see today [laughs], it seems ridiculous that that ever happened.

JM: Yes. I can't remember when it happened, but at one time hardly any of the larger high schools in Arkansas had girls' sports of any kind.

TT: Well, no, that's what I'm saying. Like, in my high school there was *no* girls' sports—nothing. I mean, you could play in the band, you could be a cheerleader, or in the pep squad, but you do not play.

JM: Yes. I know Greenwood, where I came from, always had girls' basketball and good teams, but the larger schools, you know—and when I got down there and got to writing sports, none of the larger schools had girls' teams.

TT: Right.

JM: And so that was—you know, that was something that had to be attacked and

changed and everything. So as I remember, though, I think you did do some columns. I remember that I thought you wrote very well.

TT: Well, thank you.

JM: So you stayed about a year and a half at the *Democrat*? What else do you remember about the *Democrat*? Tell me any highlights of any recollections you have about the *Democrat* itself—the paper, the staff, the building?

TT: Well, I just remember it being an exciting newsroom. We were all in one big room. We were kind of over to the side near the photo department. I was close friends with several photographers, including Lee. Lee and I were best friends.

JM: Yes.

TT: A woman named Jan Houseman—she was a really good, talented photographer. And Robert Ike [Thomas], of course, was there. And I remember thinking, “This is as exciting as it could possibly ever be.”

JM: Yes.

TT: You know, it was—you were the managing editor. What was the editor’s name?
Bob . . . ?

JM: Bob McCord.

TT: Bob McCord.

JM: Yes.

TT: And then we had very talented news reporters. You know, famous people who went on to do other things that—Fred was among those of the most talented people I’ve ever seen in this business.

JM: Yes, he was.

TT: Who was the guy—Bob—who ended up at the *Philadelphia* [Pennsylvania] *In-*

quirer?

JM: Let me think about that.

TT: Who is a very well-known guy.

JM: Oh, Bob Lancaster.

TT: Yes. Lancaster. Does he still write for them?

JM: No, he left and came back to Arkansas and has been a columnist and at one time was editor, but has been a columnist for the *Arkansas Times* for a long time—a very idiosyncratic columnist, of course, who moves to his own beat. Still a great writer. And maybe writing some other stuff that—I suspect that he may be working on some fiction and other things.

TT: Yes. You had some real—a real sense of people who actually knew how to write. Larry Gordon was there, and I thought he was a good city editor.

JM: Yes.

TT: Carol Gordon, his wife, at the time, and now she's, of course—well, she *was* at the *L.A. [Los Angeles] Times* [California]. I think she's at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] or somewhere.

JM: Yes, she's at UCLA now.

TT: And we just had some really—I just remember it being a real exciting place—proud to work there. Even though the *Gazette* was considered, you know, the superior paper in many ways . . .

JM: Yes.

TT: We were always scrapping and scrambling. You know, it really got in your blood. It was a great place to break in. I mean, a lot of people start at a really small paper and learn the ropes there. I think I was fortunate enough to get on a

pretty big paper and an important paper at that age and, you know, go from there.

JM: Yes, there were a lot of people on that staff on both sides who went on to some really big papers, really big jobs, and everything else. That was—we did have some talent. But, at any rate . . .

TT: Yes. It was a formidable newsroom. I mean it was fun to work there. We had a lot of fun, but it was a difficult, hard, challenging place.

JM: Yes. Did you have any problems while you were there?

TT: Oh, I'm sure I did, but I don't really remember them.

JM: Yes. [Laughs] Okay.

TT: You know, I don't have any bad memories of anything happening there, you know? I was among the first woman sportswriters in the country, so I had to learn to deal with that really quickly. The denial of access to the locker room, to the press boxes, to that kind of thing—just fighting that access battle. I mean, that began then. And I had support from Fred on that, but, you know, the paper wouldn't have even *known* about that, probably.

JM: Yes, probably not.

TT: So you tried to kind of deal with your own problems. But that's something that all—you know, the women who are beginning to break into the business *all* thought that and still do.

JM: Yes. Did you have access problems there in Little Rock and around the state?

TT: Oh, yes. I mean, sure, I had access problems. You were not allowed in the locker rooms, so you would have to wait outside—try to get whatever you could from whoever you could and hope that somebody would be kind enough to stop and talk to you or help you. So you were really at a disadvantage—a *huge* disadvan-

tage, competitively speaking, so you had to find a way to make up for that. And I learned then—you've got to work harder than everybody else [laughs] or you're going to get just swamped by the competition. And we were very competitive, as you know.

JM: Yes.

TT: The worst thing you could do was get beat on a story, so whether you're a woman or not [laughs], there was really no excuse. So, yes, those battles began. I began fighting those battles then, and continued throughout my career.

JM: Yes. Did you have problems both with, say, high school-level and college-level?

TT: Oh, yes. I mean, the high schools wouldn't have been as bad because there's just less—you know, you could probably grab people on the field and you could do—you probably wouldn't have been covering things on real strict deadline. But, sure—covering any other thing—you know, any woman would've faced that.

JM: Yes. You know how women first broke into the press boxes? At least on my recollection—when I started, they weren't allowed in the press box, but everybody back then was sending their stories in by Western Union—particularly, say, like, university games and everything—and they started running out of male Western Union operators—didn't have enough operators to send the stories. So they said, "Yes, we better let women in here." So then they started letting women into the press box.

TT: Well, that's . . .

JM: That's a heck of a note, isn't it?

TT: It is. I mean, I didn't really feel like I was discriminated against in the newsroom. I don't recall that.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: But, of course, outside [laughs] you *definitely* were.

JM: Yes. Okay. But there were quite a few women in the newsroom as a whole at that time, anyway, I think.

TT: Yes, I mean if you can do the work . . .

JM: In the *Democrat* newsroom, at any rate.

TT: Right.

JM: Okay. So did you have any feelings about the two papers as a whole—not just the sports—but the quality of the two papers, the *Gazette* and the *Democrat* at that time?

TT: Well, when I first came to the *Democrat*, you know, I applied at the *Gazette*, and coming out of college, you were sort of ignorant of how exactly the papers were put together and who worked on them.

JM: Yes.

TT: So everybody at school always thought the *Gazette* was the superior paper. So when I got a job at the *Democrat*, I remember telling my parents—you know, I was so excited, but I'm, like, "Well, it's the *Democrat*, not the *Gazette*." And my dad was, like, "Are you kidding? The *Democrat* is a *much* better paper." You know, he was *so* thrilled that I was working there. And then, of course, once I got there I realized that what we did was equally as important as what the *Gazette* did. I mean, they had won Pulitzer Prizes and had an editorial page that was highly regarded. And that goes without saying that that was all there. I felt like we really—we were the scrappy paper in a competitive environment. We could hold our own—even on the news pages, too. But that competition—once you learn—if

you come up that way in this business in a competitive environment, I think that stays with you for the rest of your career. And there's really nothing like that.

These one-newspaper towns are—I kind of feel bad for the people who work in them and who came up that way. I think they lack some of the sense of immediacy and competitiveness that permeates our business now with the electronic elements that have come in.

JM: Yes. Do you remember any other projects that you worked on at the *Democrat* or that the *Democrat* staff took on?

TT: You know, I really don't. I can probably look back.

JM: No, that's all right.

TT: I don't . . .

JM: Yes. But you do remember the girls' basketball issue and . . . ?

TT: Yes, that was my big issue.

JM: Yes, and Title IX was coming along at that time, too. It was just beginning to get into the colleges, probably, at that time because of Title IX.

TT: Right.

JM: All right. So you stayed at the *Democrat* about a year and a half, you say. And then what happened? Then where did you go?

TT: I went to the *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph* [Colorado]. I think maybe I was there two years at the *Democrat*. I don't really remember. But I'm pretty sure I could look on a résumé and see.

JM: That's all right.

TT: I was there, like, a year and a half or two years, and then I went to the *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, where I was for a year and a half or two years, also.

JM: How did that happen that you went to the Colorado Springs paper?

TT: Well, Fred Morrow had gone—he left the *Democrat* and went to the *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver [Colorado].

JM: Yes.

TT: So I had sort of kept up with what was going on in Denver and he encouraged me to apply for a job there. So I remember calling up the managing editor at the *Gazette-Telegraph* and saying, “Look, I’m going to be visiting Colorado . . .

[tape stopped]

JM: Okay. Now, we had a telephone glitch here. So you called and you were talking to the managing editor at the *Gazette-Telegraph*. And then what happened?

TT: Well, he asked me to come by. He said they needed someone on their staff, and I went there, and I got the job right away. So it was another lucky circumstance for me.

JM: Okay. Why—might I interject in there—why did you want to leave the *Democrat*? Why did you leave the *Democrat* to go to Colorado?

TT: Well, I was just looking for kind of a different experience, and once Fred left I thought I wasn’t sure where the sports department would be headed or—I thought the *Democrat* really lost a lot when he left.

JM: Yes.

TT: So I was just kind of seeing if my career could take a little different direction. There was no real big reason that I recall.

JM: Do you remember who took Fred’s place at the *Democrat*?

TT: Would it have been Ralph?

JM: It could have been Ralph. It could’ve been Ralph Routon at that time. Later on I

think I hired David McCollum, but it's possible that it was Ralph.

TT: Well, maybe it *was* David. And I just really don't remember exactly who it would've been. There was another guy there who was the deputy—was his name Don something?

JM: I can't remember. Lyndon Finney was in as . . .

TT: No. Yes, maybe Lyndon was there. Yes, Lyndon was there when I worked there.

JM: But I think—no, Ralph Routon, I think, was there ahead of David McCollum and everything. But he didn't stay long, either. In fact, I guess he went to the *Gazette-Telegraph*, didn't he?

TT: Yes, he did. [Laughter]

JM: Yes. But, at any rate—so you got a job, though—this would've been—when did you go to work for the *Gazette-Telegraph*? Do you remember?

TT: It probably would've been about 1977—something like that.

JM: Okay. And so you went to work for the *Gazette-Telegraph* in Colorado Springs. What did you do there?

TT: I covered Air Force Academy sports, Colorado College—I did hockey. I did some high schools, but mainly a lot of features. I did some of the Denver sports teams. Occasionally, I would cover the Broncos [professional football team] or whatever was going on. My main beat, as I recall, was the Western Athletic Conference.

JM: Yes. And was the Air Force Academy in that?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes, I thought they were. Okay. Was Ken Hatfield there then or . . .?

TT: Yes, he was.

JM: Yes. Okay. And he was coaching the Air Force Academy football team?

TT: Yes.

JM: Okay. So you were there at the *Gazette-Telegraph* a year and a half or two years?

TT: Yes.

JM: Anything in particular you remember about that?

TT: I just remember working even harder than [laughs] you had to work at the *Democrat*. It was like a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, basically. I did other things, too. Like, it was my first—I think at the *Democrat* I had done a little bit of stuff on the desk. Occasionally, you had to pitch in and do agate or headlines or something like that, which I was not very good at. And I did some of that at the *Gazette*. You would work, like, a couple hours inside and then you would go cover whatever—a high school game or something—you would cover car racing. We did the Pike's Peak hill climb. You would do all kinds of things all day and night, so it was—I remember it just being like a real busy, demanding kind of job.

JM: Yes. But the *Gazette-Telegraph* was the dominant paper at that time in Colorado Springs, right?

TT: Yes.

JM: The *Sun* was there, but . . .

TT: Yes, the *Sun*. And it was another competitive situation. We hated everybody at the *Sun* and they hated us.

JM: Yes. [Laughs]

TT: My eventual husband [laughs] worked at the *Sun*. He was a sports editor there.

JM: What was his name?

TT: His name is Jim Herre. H-E-R-R-E. [Pronounced: Harry]

JM: Okay. That's what I thought. Okay.

TT: And so we were bitter enemies there.

JM: Okay. He was the sports editor at the *Sun*?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: He was very young at the time. He had come in as a copy boy there and just as this sometimes happens in our business, he just—within six months he was, like, the sports editor. [Laughs] He was a fast riser.

JM: Yes. Right. Okay. I think probably Frank Boggs was at the *Sun* there then.

TT: Yes.

JM: I can't remember which capacity he might've been for the . . .

TT: He was a sports editor then.

JM: Okay.

TT: He had had that trouble in Oklahoma [at the *Daily Oklahoman*] where—much like Fred Morrow, he was a very controversial columnist there, you know?

JM: Yes.

TT: Well, you worked there, too.

JM: Yes.

TT: So Frank hired Jim. He is one of Jim's—well, he was Jim's mentor and was probably like the most influential person in his career.

JM: Yes. Okay. So did you have any particular problems at that time being a woman in sports?

TT: Yes, just more of the same.

JM: Was it?

TT: The Air Force Academy was especially difficult to cover because they sure didn't let women in the locker room. The athletic director there, however, was a guy named John Clune, who has since died, but he was great to me. He would try to help me in every way he could, short of letting me in the locker room. So I just ran into the same issues of access.

JM: Yes. Yes, I remember John Clune. Okay. So did you take on any big project stories at that time, or do you remember?

TT: You know, I don't really—I was there a brief time as well, and I went to the *Rocky Mountain News* after that. Not that I really remember.

JM: Yes. Okay. Well, tell me about your transition to the *Rocky Mountain News*.

TT: Well, a guy named Bob Jones was the sports editor at the *Rocky Mountain News*. I just got a call from him one day saying, "Are you interested in coming up here?" And that was like a huge thing because they were a Newspaper Guild paper, and they paid much better than anybody else. I remember I was at the *Gazette*—I was making \$175 a week, which was, of course, better than the *Democrat*, but not a lot. And the *Rocky Mountain News* bumped me up to \$350 a week, which seemed like a fortune then. That was a big, huge thing for me. I went there in about—it would've been about the late 1970s or 1980 or something.

JM: Yes. Okay. And so—in sports, correct?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. And at that time there were two very competitive papers in Denver, right—the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post*.

TT: Yes.

JM: And I can't remember—which is the morning paper?

TT: Well, now they both are, but then it was the *Rocky Mountain News*.

JM: That's what I thought—the *Rocky Mountain News* was a morning paper. At that time, the *Post* had the biggest circulation, or did they?

TT: You know, they may have. I don't really know if that's true or not. I don't think so.

JM: I think the—well, I remember that the *Rocky Mountain News* caught them at some point in time. I know the *Post* had been dominant for a long time, but I remember the *Post* came back and caught them. But at any rate—so the *Rocky Mountain News*—was the *Gazette-Telegraph* a morning paper?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes, it was. Okay.

TT: The *Sun* went out of business.

JM: Yes, I knew that. Okay. So you went to work for the *Rocky Mountain News*. What were you doing at the *Rocky Mountain News*?

TT: Well, I continued to cover the Western Athletic Conference when I first got there, and I covered the WCHA, which was the Western Collegiate Hockey Association. And I did the usual pickup stuff—sidebars—things for the pro teams, some University of Colorado work. Mainly, the Western Athletic Conference, which was Colorado State [University], Air Force [Academy], Hawaii, San Diego, New Mexico, UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas]. Great conference to cover, especially skywriters. [Laughs]

JM: Yes. Especially what?

TT: You know, they used to have those skywriters tours? Those were always fun.

JM: Travel around to all the different schools.

TT: Yes, they were totally crazy.

JM: Yes.

TT: So I did that for probably about three, four years. And then I was given a column, so I then became one of the first real daily women sports columnists in the country.

JM: Okay.

TT: I did that until I left there.

JM: Okay. So you did that for how many years?

TT: The column?

JM: Yes.

TT: I guess I did it for about four years—four or five years.

JM: Yes. Okay. Four or five years. Okay. Did you have your freedom of topics and everything else?

TT: Yes, I did. It was a real challenge to do that column. There was a lot of opposition from crazy readers who didn't really think women should be offering opinions. It's one thing to have a woman covering an event, but it's another to offer an opinion on issues or on the teams or whatever. So it was not an easy road.

JM: Yes.

TT: But, yes, I covered everything from the Olympics to the NFL [National Football League] to whatever I was either sent to cover or chose to cover—baseball. All kinds of things.

JM: Okay. Did you cover the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles?

TT: No, I covered the 1988 Olympics in Seoul [Korea].

JM: Now, I *know* you covered the 1988 Olympics in Seoul because I remember seeing

you there.

TT: Oh! Were you *there*?

JM: Yes, I was.

TT: Oh, yes, you were with the [*Daily*] *Oklahoman* then, right?

JM: Yes, I was. Right. Yes. I remember running into you on the bus one day going out to some event and everything, and then I think I saw you a few more times after that.

TT: Yes, that's right.

JM: But you were still with the *Rocky Mountain News* at that time, right?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. All right. Did you enjoy the Olympics?

TT: Well, as you know [laughs]—talk about your twenty-four hours a day—but I did. It was a great experience. We had—I don't remember if you [knew] Marvin West. He was the Scripps-Howard editor in charge of our newsroom there at the Olympics, and we sort of combined all of the Scripps-Howard papers, so I was working with a lot of different people that I had not worked with in the past that I got to know and became friends with from Memphis [Tennessee] and Cincinnati [Ohio] and Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania] and various places.

JM: Yes. Okay. Yes, I remember the name Marvin West. I don't think that I ever—but several of the—some of the bigger organizations, you know, they utilized staff like that. I know Gannett had people from different Gannett papers there, but they all were filing for any of the Gannett papers. I assume that you were doing the same for Scripps-Howard?

TT: Right. That's a fun event. We saw the whole steroids thing. It was the first in-

stance of that—well, first big one, anyway.

JM: Yes. What was the guy's name that . . . ?

TT: Ben Johnson

JM: Ben Johnson—100 meters and won it—beat Carl Lewis, then got disqualified.

Yes.

TT: Yes, with Carl Lewis. And then Florence Griffith was there, you know. She was widely believed to be using steroids at the time.

JM: Yes, I know. Well, she did times—she ran times that nobody has still even approached yet.

TT: I know. That's an amazing thing.

JM: And she was so muscular. She had muscled up a lot between the 1984 Olympics and the 1988 Olympics. I saw her at both of them. But she had . . .

TT: Yes, she looked like a different person.

JM: Yes. But she was a gorgeous person, too, though.

TT: Yes, she was.

JM: Yes, but at any rate—so I knew her and her husband both. I got to know him reasonably well. And, of course, her husband, Al Joyner, had gone to school at Arkansas State [University] in Jonesboro.

TT: Yes. Right.

JM: Then was a triple jump Olympic champion in L.A. But, at any rate—so . . .

TT: And then there was Jackie Joyner-Kersey, too.

JM: Yes, Al's sister, who was sensational.

TT: She was married to Bob Kersey who was widely believed to be the dispenser of all the . . .

JM: Yes [laughter], the dispenser of the steroids. Sort of like the guy in South Carolina now, the sprint coach. What's his name? Graham?

TT: Trevor Graham.

JM: Yes. But at any rate—so you stayed—now, let me ask you another question. Fred had left at some point—was he at the *Rocky Mountain News* when you got there?

TT: Yes, he was.

JM: But then he left at some point in time.

TT: Well, you know, I guess he left before I left there. I'm not even sure. Yes, I guess he did.

JM: Yes, I can't remember either, although I'm sure I've got that timeline somewhere because I did an interview with Fred. But when did you leave the *Rocky Mountain News*?

TT: Nineteen-ninety.

JM: Okay. And then did you go to the *Daily News* then?

TT: No. Actually, Jim, my husband, had ended up back in Denver—he left the *Colorado Springs Sun* and went to the [*Los Angeles*] *Herald Examiner*, where he was assistant sports editor there.

JM: In Los Angeles?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay.

TT: Then he came back to Denver from the *Herald Examiner* at about the same time that I came there. And then he worked briefly at the *Rocky Mountain News*, where he was my boss, and then he went to the *Denver Post*, where he was sports

editor there when the *Times-Mirror* bought the *Post*, and they had a tremendous section. I mean, they had a great sports section there.

JM: Yes.

TT: So anyway, Jim had gone from the *Denver Post* to *Golf Digest* [magazine], and he had—by then we were married. I think he went there in 1989, so we were sort of splitting time between Colorado and here. And I ended up moving here in 1991, I think, or 1990—1990 or 1991.

JM: Okay.

TT: Where I worked here doing a column for *Westword*, which is an alternative newspaper in Denver.

JM: *Westword*?

TT: It's called *Westword*. It's a pretty well known . . .

JM: Yes, I've heard of it. Is that W-E-S-T-W-A-R-D?

TT: -W-O-R-D.

JM: Oh, -W-O-R-D. Is that correct?

TT: Yes.

JM: Oh, *Westword*, not *-ward*.

TT: Yes, a little play there.

JM: Okay. But at any rate—okay.

TT: And then I got—I writing so much, even for *Westword*, and had been at the *Rocky Mountain News* about so many issues—legal issues—things going on, especially with CU.

JM: Especially with what?

TT: The University of Colorado.

JM: Oh, okay.

TT: All kinds of scandals and things happening. That I applied for this *New York Times* fellowship to Columbia [University] Law School, which was meant to help people who are writing about legal issues—dealing with that kind of thing. Get a better understanding of what they were dealing with. So I was fortunate enough to get that fellowship, and then I ended up in law school, so that took three years. I think I took the bar [exam] in about 1996, and then I decided for about a year I'd just freelance. I did some work for *Sports Illustrated* [magazine]—for various other publications—and I did legal work for media clients—some contract work for media people who needed contracts. And then I decided I would—I really missed the newspaper business, and decided that I would try to get back in . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: This is Jerry McConnell again. This is side two of this tape. So you had decided that you would try to get back in the newspaper business. Then what happened?

TT: Yes, after law school—you know, that took about—you know, it takes, like, three years of law school and then you've got to get through the bar process, which is painful.

JM: Yes.

TT: So after that, then I decided to try to get back into the business, and I ended up at the *Daily News* as an editor. So I was there—I was “content editor” is what they called it, and Sunday sports editor until 1999, I think, and then I went to ESPN [Entertainment and Sports Programming Network] in Bristol [Connecticut], where I was a coordinating producer for “SportsCenter,” and, basically, I was in

charge of the—I was the news editor for “SportsCenter.”

JM: Okay.

TT: Before I had left the *Daily News*, I had pitched a plan to the owner of the paper, Mort Zuckerman, for a sports investigative team, and he had been very interested in doing that. But by the time he kind of figured that out, I was already at ESPN—[laughs] I was already going to ESPN. I had already committed to them. So I went ahead and went. But he stuck with that idea and, you know, basically lured me back there to run this team in 2000 or 2001. I’m not sure which. I think, 2000.

JM: Okay. So how long were you at ESPN?

TT: I was only there about a year before I went back. It was a difficult decision because I liked ESPN a lot. I loved the people there. It was a fun place to work. But this seemed like exactly the perfect fit for me, to go do this thing.

JM: Who did you work with at ESPN?

TT: Well, everyone you see on “SportsCenter.” As far as the news operation goes, Jim [Cohen?] was in charge of that, and Chuck Salituro.

JM: Spell Salituro.

TT: A guy named Bob Eaton. I worked with him a lot. Then you work with all the talent and other coordinating producers. So I was in charge of news for “SportsCenter” and ESPN Radio—ESPN.com, which has now taken off in a bigger way—ESPN News, and the whole thing. They have more than just *me* doing that, obviously.

JM: Oh, sure. Okay. So then you went back to the *Daily News* in about . . . ?

TT: I think around 2000.

JM: Around 2000.

TT: Like, late in 2000 or something.

JM: As the Sunday sports editor and the . . .

TT: No, then I was just in charge of the *Daily News* sports investigative team.

JM: Okay. All right.

TT: And then I got additional duties [laughs] added on in about 2003 or 2004.

JM: Okay—which was Sunday sports editor?

TT: Yes. But I had already done that before, so they kind of put that back on.

JM: Okay. So what kind of projects did you all tackle as the investigative team?

TT: Well, we had been in the forefront of the steroid coverage. Since I was there, my team when I first came there was me, Luke Cyphers, who's now with *ESPN* magazine.

JM: Spell it.

TT: And Michael O'Keeffe.

JM: Spell Cyphers.

TT: C-Y-P-H-E-R-S.

JM: Okay.

TT: He was on the team then. We did—we began doing the coverage of supplements—unregulated supplements, which has morphed into the steroid issue—the banning of ephedra and andro and various other over-the-counter supplements that are totally unregulated. More so—they're regulated more now than they were then when we started. And we did really groundbreaking work on that, and the ephedra laws, I think, changed at least in part because of our coverage. Then we also went into the whole steroid coverage. I mean, I think our coverage of that

has been second only to the *Chronicle* in San Francisco, and they've been in front, of course, on the Balco issue. But we've been right there, too.

JM: Yes.

TT: Last week we just broke the story that Barry Bonds [professional baseball player] had tested positive for amphetamines.

JM: I saw that story.

TT: That was our story.

JM: Was it?

TT: In 2005 we broke the McGwire—we did a long investigation of Mark McGwire's steroid use, and we talked to FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] informants, agents, tons of players, and people in baseball, people in gyms in California. We did a very, very solid, good story on McGwire and the steroids that he used as he broke the homerun record, and that led to the congressional hearings in the House [of Representatives] in 2005 in March, where he famously said, "I'm not here to talk about the past."

JM: I saw some of that. Yes.

TT: Our stories had appeared three days before that hearing. And that was a very tense moment for us because we were all down there. By then, our team had changed. Luke had gone to ESPN and was replaced by T. J. Quinn and Christian Red.

JM: Quinn, did you say?

TT: Yes, Q-U-I-N-N. T. J.

JM: Okay.

TT: And a guy named Christian Red.

JM: R-E-D?

TT: Yes—who works with us on our team now. So we all were down there for the hearing, and we were just [laughs] waiting—the usual tense moment when someone can challenge your story if they’re going to.

JM: Yes.

TT: Of course, he did not, so . . .

JM: No. And, of course, there were those who did completely deny that they ever even—almost even [laughs] ever heard of steroids, of course.

TT: Well, yes, that’s been the long history. I mean, Jose Canseco’s book [*Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant ‘Roids, Small Hits, and How Baseball Got Big*], which we also broke on the cover of our newspaper before it was released. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

TT: No, we did our own reporting confirming much of what was in that book. You know, even when he wrote his book, people were, like, “No, it wasn’t me. I didn’t do it.” And that kind of thing. So . . .

JM: Well, McGwire at one point in time, he was taking some of the andro stuff, wasn’t he? But at that time it wasn’t on the banned list. Is that correct?

TT: Right. There was no steroid testing then, although baseball had a policy of—you know, steroids were banned in baseball then, but there was no testing. I mean, I think [MLB Commissioner Francis T.] Vincent had put out some sort of, you know—some sort of unilateral ban on them that didn’t involved the players’ union. But then testing didn’t come in until 2000 in the 2001 agreement.

JM: Yes, you’re talking about Fay Vincent, who was then the baseball commissioner?

TT: The commissioner. Yes.

JM: And so—and you were the head of this team, though, correct?

TT: Yes.

JM: Yes. Okay. Did you write some of the stories yourself or did you just supervise the . . . ?

TT: Yes, I do occasionally have my byline on these stories. Usually, I'm just editing them. I don't recall—I think I probably did. I don't know if I had my byline on that one or not. We work totally—you know, it's a team effort, so . . .

JM: Yes.

TT: Usually, they are the ones that get their byline on it.

JM: Yes. Right. And what do you do as the Sunday sports editor?

TT: Well, we have an award-winning Sunday sports section, so I'm in charge of that. It's a very big, thirty-five- to forty-page section.

JM: Yes. Now, this is a tabloid-size paper, right?

TT: It is. Yes. We have all kinds of really interesting stories. We try to set the table on issues on profiles on anything that's going on. Our next thing—the fact that there are two black coaches [reference to Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy and Chicago Bears coach Lovie Smith in the Super Bowl XLI] is an amazing thing—a great thing—and we'll look very deeply at that. We have some very talented writers beyond just the investigative team—feature-writers and columnists that are really terrific. I think we're considered one of the best sports sections in the country, and, certainly, on Sunday.

JM: Yes. Okay. Who are your top sports columnists at the *Daily News*?

TT: Well, Mike Lupica.

JM: Oh, yes, I know him.

TT: Yes, Mike Lupica would be our top guy.

JM: Yes.

TT: And Filip Bondy, Lisa Olson.

JM: Okay.

TT: Wayne Coffey is a top-notch feature-writer—I'd say the best in the business. He just does amazing work. The I-team [investigative team] guys are terrific. We have really good beat people as well.

JM: Yes. Okay. Is your husband still with *Golf Digest*?

TT: No, he's an assistant managing editor for *Sports Illustrated*.

JM: Oh, is he? Okay, somewhere I missed that.

TT: He's in charge of their golf—he mainly does their golf—"golf plus," it's called. I don't know if you ever see it. It's a big section in . . .

JM: No, I quit reading *Sports Illustrated* some time back, I'm sorry to say. [Laughs]

TT: Yes. Well, he's an AME [assistant managing editor] there, and his main focus is golf.

JM: Yes. Okay. Does he know Dan Jenkins?

TT: Oh, yes, as do I.

JM: Do you? Yes.

TT: You know, Dan had one of the greatest—oh, no, it was Blackie, actually, that had the great line that I always repeat to all my guys that I work with.

JM: Yes, what's that?

TT: Write it or read it.

JM: What's that?

TT: Write it or read it.

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs]

TT: Blackie always sits in the press box and says that—you know, if you were wondering if you should write something.

JM: Yes. Okay. Or read it somewhere else.

TT: Exactly.

JM: Yes. Well, that was two pretty good hands there, though.

TT: [Laughs]

JM: Coming out of Texas—Blackie Sherrod and Dan Jenkins.

TT: Exactly.

JM: But, at any rate, so . . .

TT: But, see, I think Lupica of today's columnists—he's on par with those guys. He's one of the most interesting and delightful people to work with. Sometimes these guys—people think they have huge egos and maybe they do, but when push comes to shove, they're there for you, and they'll do great work.

JM: Yes. Okay. So you're zipping right ahead in the newspaper business.

TT: I'm sorry?

JM: I said you're zipping right along in the newspaper business again.

TT: Oh, you know—yes. You know, I'm telling you, moving into the editing role has really been—you sort of did the opposite thing, but—and I've really enjoyed it.

JM: Yes. Well, that's good because I liked editing all right, but, frankly, my own preference was I'd rather be a writer and a reporter than an editor. [Laughs]

TT: Well, I think in this role I'm able to—I report a lot. You know, a lot of reporting comes through me. So I'm able to do that, and especially as we head into this digital age, you're going to just be able to do much more with that.

JM: Yes. But you seem very issue-oriented.

TT: Yes, you know, I always have been. To me, that's where it's at. Sports has always been sort of a microcosm of life and all the issues involved in life. So it's a great platform to look at things that affect people—rights and wrongs and all the stuff that you get into this business to address.

JM: I understand, because that was—the farther I went into it, the more I discovered that I was issue-oriented, too—that I was more interested in the issues than I was in trying to . . .

TT: The games.

JM: Yes, the game or some big exposé of some momentary thing or how the game came out. But of the issues behind the scenes that affected the people and the game and everything. Okay. And as I understand, your parents—are they both still alive?

TT: Yes, they are.

JM: Okay. And they still live in Clarksville?

TT: Yes.

JM: And you come back to visit them on occasion, I understand.

TT: Yes. I come back all the time and they come up here.

JM: Yes, that's great. Okay.

TT: Yes, they're still a huge part of my life.

JM: Yes. So how do you like working in New York City?

TT: It's really great. Jim and I—we split time between New York City and here.

JM: Yes.

TT: So that's kind of—we have an apartment there that I'm at most of the time. So

it's difficult to find time to be together and spend as much—you know, you can get sucked up into this business as far as you can go, as you know. So you have to try to balance it a little bit, but I think New York for the media is the place to be in the world. It's a great place to work.

JM: Yes, I understand. Okay. All right, Teri—very good, and I'll hold on a minute. I'm going to cut off the interview here, but I've got a couple more things that I need to tell you, and then we'll go on.

TT: Okay.

JM: But, anyway, this has been a very enlightening interview, and I've really appreciated it.

TT: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you.

JM: And thanks a lot.

[End of Interview]