

Gazette Project

Interview with

Jim Barden,
The New York Times Office, Manhattan,
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Interviewer: Drummond Ayres

Drummond Ayres: This is Drummond Ayres of *The New York Times*, interviewing Jim Barden of *The New York Times* on the fourteenth day of February, 2001. Jim, would you give us the basic biographical birth date, family, schooling, and the career before the *Gazette*, to start off with?

Jim Barden: Okay. Why, yes. I am an Arkansan, born in Pocahontas, Arkansas, on October 24, 1935. I graduated from high school there and graduated from Arkansas State in Jonesboro. And in the summer --- that fateful summer of 1957, I went to work for the *Arkansas Gazette* as a reporter --- or they would call it a summer intern now. I had one semester to go in school.

DA: Had you done any writing at all --- journalism at all?

JB: Yes. I had been a stringer. I majored in journalism at Arkansas State and had been a stringer for the *Arkansas Gazette* for the last two years there, and I covered the football games for the *Gazette*. Then they invited me down for this tryout for the summer job, which consisted of rewriting handouts, and after that, they asked me to come back to work that summer.

DA: How did you come by your interest in journalism originally? Has anybody in your family or --- what led you down this path that eventually took you to the

Gazette?

JB: Well, it was just an interest in reading, actually, and when I got to Arkansas State, I was going to be a lawyer, I thought, and I started out in pre-law. But I became interested in newspapers through a couple of guys there, and I actually thought I might be a newspaper man. They had a good journalism program there run by a guy named Tex Plunkett, who's really a legend there. I got in his class, and he taught me how to be a newspaper man.

DA: But you don't remember any particular moment when you said --- or any particular incident that said, "Wait a minute. Maybe I'd like to be a writer. Maybe I'd like to be a reporter," or anything that happened --- or did it just evolve slowly over a . . . ?

JB: I guess it was just more --- there was no eureka moment. No, it was just something that I had thought, "Well, I might be able to learn to do this and I would enjoy it more than being a lawyer."

DA: And so, did you just walk into the *Gazette* and say, "I'd like to have a job," or . . . ?

JB: No, as I said, a great *Gazette* man --- a great newspaper man --- was sort of my mentor there, Gene Foreman. He sort of took me under his wing, even at Arkansas State, and he was the press man there or the PR guy for Arkansas State. They just had one college man doing it then, and he sort of helped me out there. He went on to the *Gazette*, and I believe it was he who recommended me to the *Gazette*.

DA: And when you started at the *Gazette* --- tell us a little bit about the progression --- how they worked you up through it and a little bit about what the paper was like

when you got on --- how large the staff was and their circulation and so forth.

JB: Well, the circulation at that time was about 100,000, or more than 100,000, as I recall. The staff at that time --- as I say, I went down, and it was originally just supposedly a summer job. They didn't call you an intern, which they do now. You were just like a reporter, although certainly a junior one because they had some terrific guys there, and you just started off writing stories for them. I had the great fortune to live with some great newspaper guys in a household called the "Jolly Boy" household. There was Gene Foreman and a guy named Ray Moseley who, was the star of the *Gazette* at that time, and Jerry Jones, who was there for many years and, I think, was the city editor when he left.

DA: Back in those days --- because I started back then, too --- reporters tended to live a lot in houses and stuff together when they started out. I think now it probably doesn't happen. But did you all have a lot of parties at the house [with] all of you working nights and stuff, and split weekends off, and stuff like that? What was it like, and what kind of stories were you working on initially?

JB: Well, that first summer I don't recall too many of the stories I had, other than it seemed to me, being the junior person there, I covered Girls' State and Boys' State day after day as long as they were in existence. Those were the kind of things I was on while the real reporters were out doing, you know, the major stuff. There was a party --- most of us went out drinking every night. That was just what you were supposed to do.

DA: Yes, exactly.

JB: Now, Gene Foreman, I want to make clear --- he never touched a drop. He was

totally different from every other newspaper man that I've ever known and any of us even at that time. But the other three of us, Moseley, Jones, and myself, were out drinking, I think, every night after work.

DA: Moseley, what, went on to UPI [United Press International] and . . . ?

JB: Yes. He went on from there. He came to New York and --- I came to New York, and Ray worked for the *New York Post*. He worked in Rome, though, after leaving New York. He worked at Rome for UPI. He is now the European chief correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*.

DA: And Foreman went on and ended up at Philadelphia, right?

JB: Yes, he was at Philadelphia.

DA: With Gene Robertson.

JB: Yes. I can't remember his title. He was the second in command down there at Philadelphia.

DA: And this was in 1957?

JB: 1957, at the *Arkansas Gazette*.

DA: What were the major stories that you were covering there? The racial thing was getting ready to break loose. What was going on in Arkansas at that point? And what was it like working on a Deep South paper that was beginning to have to grapple with the race issue, and so forth? How did they go about it? What do you recall?

JB: Well, I can remember how it affected me in a very personal sense. I don't remember the specifics about how it was heating up that summer, but it was actually coming to a boil because Ray and I would get --- at that time, having

been brought up in the South, I must admit I was a child of segregation, and that was sort of the way it was. I didn't see the inherent wrong in separate but supposed equal, but I was totally blind. It was not only a great news story, but it was a revelation to me what happened that summer. Moseley kept talking to me about what was happening and if I thought it was right, and I began to question my own views. And then, at the end of that summer before I went back to school, the big event happened. The school opened. I had not yet gone back to college, so I was still on the paper. Faubus called out the Guard, and when I saw those nine students kept out of the school and what was going on there, it was just like an epiphany for me, how wrong the system was and how wrong we were to perpetuate it. So it was very eye-opening for me at that time. It had been coming to a boil at the end of that summer, and it just hit in my last week there.

DA: Were there people on the paper that you recall who helped bring you along? In other words, when you got there, you already knew a little bit about how to write stories and report stories and so forth. But were there people who kind of nurtured you and taught you the finer points of feature writing and hard news and so forth that you recall? Did they have any kind of training, or was it all informal?

JB: At that point, it was really informal. As I say, they didn't even call it a summer intern there. Foreman was a great help. Bill Shelton, who was the city editor, was another guy who really helped me out. I just had another --- I had a semester to go --- I'd had a car accident and that's why I had to go back for one semester. And I went back a week after Little Rock opened, and of course, the events went

on down there. Then I came back to the *Gazette*. They took me back in January. I went back to work there in January. I felt like I had matured quite a bit. I don't know what it was. Maybe it was their guidance on things in my writing by that point, and so then I got much better stories. I recall I even got to cover Faubus on a couple of occasions, which was a pretty big deal for me at that point because of what was going on. But as far as the integration crisis, they had the top guys on that. I remember Ray Moseley was the chief guy, and Roy Reed, who did some and reporting on the story, was, for many years, back here with the *The Times*. I know that he was instrumental in that coverage.

DA: What was the paper like in terms of --- there was competition at this point, right, with another paper and time? How did the two papers go about that? And what were the differences in the way you all viewed them and the way they viewed you? What was it like to work in a competitive situation?

JB: Well, at that time, the *Democrat*, the opponent, was just the dregs. I mean, [the paper was] for the status quo, and they had George Douthit, who, I believe, was their chief man in the coverage, and he was as conservative as anyone could get, or probably as conservative as the people who ran the *Democrat*. They were just really looked down on. I don't know that we viewed them so much as competition as just a little thorn in the side because, at that point, the *Democrat* couldn't hold a candle as far as quality went to the *Gazette*.

DA: Looking back on it, how did the *Gazette* handle the racial issue? When they covered it, what did the editorial pages do, for instance, and were there any so-called rules, regulations, any times when you felt the paper was sliding off? Not

on the editorial page, of course, because they could do what they wanted, but the day-to-day coverage. Looking back on it, what do you think it was like?

JB: I never felt like they did. They always had at least two people out there, which is --- and now *The Times* would have, of course, twenty ---

DA: Right. [Laughter]

JB: But in that time, there were two or three people at the site of what was going on. It seemed like a lot of the coverage was terrific. One thing that I will always remember is Harry Ashmore coming in and --- I never saw Harry Ashmore hardly at all that summer, except that he came in on the night the school opened and wrote his editorial in the city room. I will never forget that. What inspired him or what made him do that, I don't know, or it was just the feeling of the moment of everything. But that's how big it was. He came out and wrote his editorial in the city room, the first editorial that went on to win the Pulitzer that year.

DA: That was the year that he won . . .

JB: The *Gazette* won two that year, for the coverage and also for the editorial, as I believe. I know it won two, and I'm sure that . . .

DA: One of them was for the hard news coverage of the school . . .

JB: Of the crisis, right.

DA: Yes.

JB: And the other was for editorial.

DA: When it was ongoing, the actual crisis and so forth, do you recall it as a moment of great intensity, that you were --- day after day after day, you were aware of the history that was being made in your town or . . .?

JB: You know, as I said, I was there for the first week of the coverage. I didn't have that momentous feeling at that point, and when I came back three months later, of course, it had tapered off. But I felt like others definitely did. They felt like they had been through an historic event, as they well had. I must admit, I was still young and probably didn't grasp all of how big that it really was. I knew it was big.

DA: But then you went back to school . . . ?

JB: Just for three months, until January.

DA: And by then you were through?

JB: And then I was through, yes, and I came back to the *Gazette*.

DA: And when you came back, where did they assign you? What sort of . . . ?

JB: Again, I was just what they called a general assignment reporter, covering various things. Just come in every day, and they gave you whatever was . . .

DA: Right. You were working days from . . .

JB: Coming in every night, I should say. We were all working nights. Just about everybody worked nights at that point because that was the morning paper.

DA: Yes, and working a lot of weekends and stuff because you were the young crowd. Young people always worked nights, worked weekends, split days off, and such.

JB: I don't recall having split days off, but I never got a weekend off, that's for sure, while I was there. [Laughter]

DA: Yes, but none of you all were married then or anything, right?

JB: No, we were all --- in fact, when I went back, I continued to live in the Jolly Boy house. I guess they kept a place open for me.

DA: Yes.

JB: I remember Ray Miller . . .

DA: How did it get the name of the Jolly Boy?

JB: Well, I think [Bob] Douglas, there at the *Gazette*, if I'm not mistaken, he was married and he was always sort of referring to us as the Jolly Boys because none of us were married and we were all going out and living it up, except Foreman, who was just going out. We didn't feel like he was living it up. So I believe it was Bob Douglas who gave us that name.

DA: Did these houses pass from one series --- reporters would come in and then end up getting married, move out, somebody else would move in, and it would go on for six, eight, and ten years?

JB: I don't remember that. We actually lived in an apartment. I remember the first summer that we were so --- I guess, too jolly. The guy pleaded with us to move out. The other people in the complex --- there were about three or four other people in it --- and he pleaded for us to move out. So he finally enticed us by giving us a month's rent. So when I went back to school, the guys moved into a larger apartment complex where there weren't so many complaints. The parties continued there. We had some great parties.

DA: How big was the staff?

JB: The staff seemed like it was about --- I would say, about seventy-five people. I am just looking at --- thinking about the sports and the city room and photography and the basic news elements, I would think. But it's been a long time.

DA: Who are the people who were on the staff that you remember most vividly? The

ones in particular that you worked with and who may have influenced you in your career, helped move you along? Looking back on it, since you just started cold and came in, was there any logical way they moved you along from journal assignment to more serious stuff, or was it kind of hit or miss? Were there people who worked with you and said, "Now, this is probably the best way to write this story, Jim. Let me show you what we did here." Do you recall much of that?

JB: Well, I know that Foreman, as I say, Gene Foreman was the main one who helped me out at the paper.

DA: He was how much older?

JB: I believe they made him assistant city editor. If he wasn't informal, he was acting that way. He was just actually a year older than I. And when I talk about age, I being so young, I was --- the other guys who were really in the bulk of this were only a couple, three years older than me. But, I mean, they seemed, in experience and background and everything, much older. They really weren't, but they really were. Maybe I was just a late bloomer, but . . .

DA: Who were the people who influenced you, though, to this day, that you ran into who still affect the way you see newspaper?

JB: I think Ray Moseley is the second man there. One thing, I was always intimidated. I started out with some guys who were really --- I realize, going back on it --- who were really good. And there were even more who came along later. They just happened to have a staff at the *Arkansas Gazette* that had some really terrific newspaper men. I always felt that I would never manage to be as good as they were. I wanted to be. My aim was to try to be as good as they were.

DA: Yes.

JB: I don't think I ever achieved that, but, anyway, I was always shooting for that, but I had pretty high aim because these guys were damned good.

DA: Well, you ended up on *The New York Times*. [Laughter]

JB: Well, yes.

DA: None of them did. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, how many had the paper sent to *The New York Times* at that point, and how many have they sent since?

JB: Well, you know, at that point, I really don't know of any. Now, let's see. How many of those guys came on to work for *The Times*? Well, I know there's one here right now, who is on the metropolitan desk. I can't think of his name.

DA: Yes. Of course, a lot of years --- are there colleagues from back then that you are still close to and stuff? Do you still stay in touch with [anyone]?

JB: Yes. Ray Moseley and Gene Foreman are the two guys that I do stay in touch with, and Roy Reed I'm in touch with.

DA: Yes.

JB: Those are the three.

DA: And who were the . . . ?

JB: Oh, wait a minute, speaking of who came to *The Times* from the *Gazette*, Roy Reed was probably the most well known.

DA: Was Roy there at the time that you were there?

JB: Absolutely, he was.

DA: Foreman and Moseley and Roy, and who else were the big stars on the paper at that point?

JB: Well, they were the three and . . .

DA: Were they the ones who were assigned, say, to the Little Rock story?

JB: Yes, and Jerry Dhonau, I believe, who later came up here and went to Columbia graduate school after having been and went back to the *Gazette* as an editorial writer. Jerry Dhonau was another. Bill Lewis was another, and Bob Douglas. But Bob, at that point, was already the state editor, so I don't believe --- he was not in on the coverage. I am not sure that Gene was on the coverage. Yes, I believe he was on the desk at that point, too.

DA: Who was doing the political coverage? In other words, when you're in a capital city like that, did people want to graduate up to where they were covering the legislature and governor?

JB: Well, I think they did. And, again, I think that was, to my recollection, it was primarily Ray Moseley. Now, there was also a woman there, I'm sorry, whose name I cannot recall. --- Matilda Tuohey, who also covered the legislature in the Capitol. But that was definitely a big job.

DA: But Moseley did most of the --- and would they pull people off like that to cover the school crisis and stuff?

JB: Yes, I think they did.

DA: Tell me --- every day life --- what were the little things that people didn't like? Were there things about the paper that would irritate you? What were the gripes that they had?

JB: Well, I don't really remember too many gripes about anything.

DA: Not enough money or something?

JB: No.

DA: What were they paying back then?

JB: Well, I remember I worked that summer at \$65.00 a week, and when I came back as a permanent reporter, I was raised to \$75.00 a week, which I thought was plenty.

DA: Yes, it was a lot for what they were paying back then.

JB: But, anyway, I was not griping about my pay. Ray Moseley made the exorbitant sum of something like about \$100.00. I mean, it was just incredible. If I'm not mistaken, he even made over \$100.00. I thought if I ever got to that level, I would be set for life.

DA: Tell me about J. N. Heiskell, the old editor. Did you work with him?

JB: Well, he was there, and I saw him. He would come in the newsroom, but I didn't know him. He was a spry old guy, as everybody says, but I didn't really know Heiskell at all.

DA: So he didn't impact on you a lot?

JB: No.

DA: I mean, the people you dealt with were probably the city editor and . . .

JB: That's right.

DA: Government. Did you stay the whole time you were there? Did you stay on the reporting staff or did you go onto the desk?

JB: No, I was on the reporting staff, and I didn't stay there too much longer. After a year I went into the army, and I had to, at that point, do some time as everybody does. I went into a reserve unit there, and they activated me and sent me in for six

months, and that's how I got to New York. They sent me to the Army Information School in Fort Slocum, New York.

DA: Oh, okay, so they sent --- but you were through --- you were one of the six-months people? This was doing UMT [Universal Military Training], right?

JB: That's right.

DA: And they sent you up here to be trained.

JB: That's right. Yes, they sent me, one of the people they sent to the right place. I went into the Army Information Unit down there in the reserves. They had an Army Information School at an island down here called Fort Slocum one time. There was a Chaplain's School and an Army Information School there.

DA: Yes.

JB: So that's where I went. Once I got to New York, I loved this place, and I've been here mostly ever since.

DA: Really? You mean, when you got a job here after that . . .

JB: Yes, I did. After I got out of the army --- it was in 1959 --- I went to work for the *White Plains Reporter Dispatch*, and then I worked here for a couple of years and went to the *Jersey Journal*, and then I decided I wanted to work abroad, and I met a guy who owned the *Rome Daily American*. I went to Italy for three years and came back. I thought I was going to go to work with *World Telegram* or the *Herald Tribune*. That's how long ago it was. I knew people there, and they talked to me, and it sounded like I had good prospects at both places. The day I was supposed to go looking for a job, they went out on strike. [Laughter] It was one of those . . .

DA: Was this 1963?

JB: It was the strike of 1965. It was one of those epic strikes that went on. So I went to Louisville and worked for AP [Associated Press] for a year.

DA: Oh, you left New York?

JB: Yes. I left New York for a year and went to --- spent a very unhappy year in Louisville with AP.

DA: Didn't like working wire service?

JB: I didn't, but I came back with the wire service because I couldn't get a job at the paper. I was so unhappy there. I took a job with UPI in New York.

DA: Yes.

JB: And came back that way.

DA: Was H. L. Stevenson up there then?

JB: Absolutely. He was the guy who hired me. H. L. Stevenson.

DA: I worked with him in Richmond.

JB: Did you?

DA: I did.

JB: Well, H. L. was the man who hired me and was sort of my mentor there.

DA: Yes.

JB: He liked me.

DA: He's dead now. Yes.

JB: He is?

DA: Yes. He died --- I don't know, we put it in the paper about two years ago. He was as classic a wire service man as there ever was.

JB: He was a hard guy.

DA: I'll never forget when I told him --- I gave him my two-weeks' notice. I was coming to *The Times*. I was making \$12,500 a year at UPI. I told him I was coming, and he said, "Well, look, how much are they going to pay you? Maybe we can help you out, and you might want to stay here." I told him they were going to pay me \$14,500, and he said, "Well, there's no way we can match that."
[Laughter]

DA: Did you --- had you been working the desk up here for UPI?

JB: Yes, I was working at the desk, and I was a reporter, and . . .

DA: And what did they hire you here at the paper for?

JB:: At the paper here? I came to work for the news service as a rim man in the news service.

DA: And this was when?

JB: In 1969. And then after working there several months, I was in the slot in the news service. And after seven years there, the guy I got to know here asked me if I'd like to work for the paper, and so I said I was interested. I tried out on the national desk --- this was about 1973 because at that time, I'm telling you, the jobs moved so slowly that it was over a year, I think, before I was hired for the national desk. They had hired one guy and that was Wells, who went on to the *Herald-Tribune* in Paris.

DA: Walter Wells, yes.

JB: Walter Wells, who went on to . . .

DA: Speaking of Richmond.

JB: Yes. And they hired him before me, and then they hired me next.

DA: So you came on in 1973?

JB: I came on in 1975. I tried out probably about 1973.

DA: I was in Atlanta. That's right. And you've been here ever since?

JB: And I've been here ever since.

DA: Let me jump back to the *Gazette* then. Tell me a little bit about what the newsroom was like, what the atmosphere was like, what you remember about it, any incidents, sort of the work habits, the way people dressed and lived. We just want to get a feel for what that newsroom was like, working in that newsroom, and if it had any particular feel or anything. And a little bit about the competition. I know we touched on it --- working in *The Times*, working with competition. I just never worked with any competition.

JB: Again, I never felt like we were in competition with the *Democrat*. It was just so beneath us, and it was an afternoon newspaper. It's like, "Hey, we're just getting our stuff out. If anybody reads the *Democrat*, you've got to be crazy." But in the newsroom, I remember there were people there who --- in fact, Roy sat right behind me. Roy Reed. And Bill Lewis, who was there for many years --- I sat by Bill Lewis. Bill was an incredibly fast writer and typist. For some reason, we would have typing races when there was nothing to do. [Laughter] I mean, we'd sit around and see who could type --- I never beat him. I never beat him. Talking about competition, the staff was very competitive about everything and on everybody about everything. Any mistakes were --- people were constantly on top of each other and made fun of --- maybe not good, but well deserved. I

remember at one point there was going to be a [contest over] who was the worst speller as far as their copy went, and I think it was between me and, again, Bill Lewis, who had disdained ever looking at a dictionary. I would go to the dictionary, and Bill never bothered. He used to say that wasn't part of the writer's job. It was the editor's.

DA: It was the copy editor's job.

JB: Yes, right. The editors were supposed to correct his spelling. I believe that Bill Lewis was the worst speller by one or two words during the week of the competition. He beat me out by one or two words. But he never consulted the dictionary.

DA: Talking about the *Democrat*, you looked down on them with disdain. But looking back on it, were they fairly good competitors?

JB: Well, they certainly were to the extent that we were always trying to outdo them. I knew that. But, again, our stories were so much better. But, yes, it was a competition. What was amazing was how the *Arkansas Democrat* could take over the *Gazette*.

DA: Yes. Looking back, did they have a different editorial outlook than the *Gazette* did, or were they more conservative? I mean, you all had Ashmore and stuff. But what sort of newspaper were they compared to you? I mean, afternoon and morning I understand, but do you recall much about that kind of feel and time? Did you all feel that you were not only better written, but an intellectual cut above them, heavy and more dramatized, whatever?

JB: Yes, I think we definitely did. The *Gazette* --- we were just superior. We were

certainly much better staffed. Heiskell at that time --- our opinion, or in my opinion, we had quite a staff for covering the city, where the *Democrat* had many fewer people. And George Douthit, he did everything by himself.

DA: Did the paper have much state circulation? Did it have a state desk and reporters who went out into the state, too?

JB: Well, yes. They had a big state desk. I don't recall how much the reporters went out. They did a lot of it with stringers, of course.

DA: Yes.

JB: Now, I am a little vague on that. It seemed to me that there was not a lot of --- not as much as there is today --- of reporters going out into the state to cover specific events --- unless it's politicians. They were always following politicians all around.

DA: Yes.

JB: But as far as going out and covering specific stories, there didn't seem to be too many assignments going, unless it was a totally huge story.

DA: Yes. All told, you were there . . .

JB: About a year.

DA: About a year after you came back from getting out of school?

JB: Yes, right.

DA: And then you left because the army called you, and then you found work in New York?

JB: Yes.

DA: Do you look back on it as --- for a paper in the South at that time, how

enlightened was the *Gazette*? How good was the *Gazette*? Did it do things that made it proud, do you think, looking back on the crisis that the South was going through at that point, compared to a lot of other papers that --- you know, massive resistance kind of stuff I saw in Richmond and so forth?

JB: Oh, definitely. Definitely. To not have worked there but for a little over a year, it was just --- you know, it's amazing what a highlight it was to my life.

DA: Yes.

JB: When I came to New York, everybody at that point knew about the *Gazette* in Arkansas, so that was a great help in getting me a job.

DA: Yes.

JB: It was a tremendous light that everybody in the nation in the newspaper business knew at that time.

DA: It was an enlightened paper.

JB: Absolutely. In fact, I remember when I went back, I was there the year they won the Pulitzers. I mean, it was after the next year, and I can remember there had been word that the *Gazette* was going to win a prize or some prize. Anyway, I can remember that we were all in the wire room, watching as it came over the wire --- the winners of the Pulitzers that year --- what a big deal it was.

DA: Were you back in the newsroom by then?

JB: Yes.

DA: What was it like in the newsroom when they announced they'd won?

JB: Well, euphoria! I mean, it was just really incredible, and I thought it was wonderful. But, again, I was so young. And it's only in hindsight that I can

appreciate so many of the things that happened, and the fact that they won two Pulitzers that year.

DA: Yes.

JB: I knew it was big, but you know, you've got to live a little to really --- you know, you're starting out, you're twenty-one years old, you just don't realize how big an event like that is.

DA: Was there a big party that night?

JB: Oh, there was a huge party. There was.

DA: Did reporters come in from out of town to do stories about you all?

JB: I don't remember. I don't remember that. I know that there was The Press Club across the street, at that time, where we used to go and drink. It was very conveniently right across the street. So we all . . .

DA: Was this when --- at a time when they had to take in a lot of public relations types and insurance men to take it going?

JB: Absolutely. There was never . . .

DA: Not enough newspaper men to do it.

JB: Not enough newspaper men to keep it going. But they had --- it was one of these pseudo-private clubs.

DA: Yes, right. Bottle club.

JB: That's right. We would always go over there and do most of our heavy drinking.

DA: Was it one where you could bribe the bartender to stay open all night long?

JB: Well, I think you didn't have to bribe him much. [Laughter] It was a guy who ran it with his wife, and they usually stayed open about as long as anybody wanted to

do any drinking.

DA: Now, the paper was located, what, right in the middle of town?

JB: Yes, right in the middle.

DA: So you were in the heart of everything. You could walk almost everywhere you had to go.

JB: Right. It was downtown. Yes.

DA: You were in the time, for a while, when the troops were there and everything?

JB: Oh, yes, I was here.

DA: What was it like being in an armed camp, as it were?

JB: Well, there was not much indication that they were around except at the high school, as I recall. I don't recall any of that siege mentality as it was apparently in some of the civil rights . . .

DA: Did they send you over to do any of the kids going into the school?

JB: No, I never did.

DA: You never did see any of that?

JB: I never did go over to the school. I was never involved.

DA: Yes. Yes. And all this is too early for any Bill Clinton stuff. I mean, he was still in --- he was too young for any of this.

JB: Absolutely right. It would be interesting to know what his recollections were, but he was a generation behind.

DA: And, well, you left again. The paper was still, again, in the same mode that you and I were talking about when you left. The changes came after you left.

JB: Right. And, in fact, the staff apparently approves, you know, of anything. Now,

that's what I heard. Because, you know, the fact that they had won two prizes brought in some very good people.

DA: Yes.

JB: But that is just what I've heard.

DA: What do you attribute the enlightenment to? I mean, you get somebody like these editors. How do they get there to begin with? What was the thing that enabled people whose minds were --- who work in a more enlightened manner --- to ever end up there to begin with? I mean, somebody had to be hiring folks, but where did that come from?

JB: Well, it must have come from the old man Heiskell. I mean, obviously, he had to hire Harry Ashmore and to have the guts at that time to stand up --- because of the advertising the paper lost and because, certainly, the feelings or at least the public feelings in the most of the people . . .

DA: Did you run into any animosity when you'd say, "I'm from the *Gazette*" when you'd walk in stores?

JB: I don't recall personally ever running into any of that.

DA: Yes.

JB: Talking about the *Gazette*. But it's been a long time ago because I was out quite a bit on a story, so I'd tell them I'm from the *Gazette*. I don't recall any animosity.

DA: But you recall a sense in the newsroom that the *Gazette* was kind of in a cutting-edge situation, where they weren't acting like the rest of the South.

JB: That's for sure. That's for sure.

DA: And you knew that at the time?

JB: Oh, absolutely.

DA: And you felt it.

JB: It was a thrilling feeling at that time.

DA: Yes. Yes.

JB: You really felt that you were being part of history.

DA: Even at twenty-one.

JB: Even at twenty-one. I was elated by all of this, but it was only in hindsight that I really realized what a privilege it was.

DA: Yes. Going back to how you got into journalism, a little bit. When you were in high school, did you do any?

JB: I wrote for a high school newspaper, but I never thought the idea of --- Being a journalist as a career never occurred to me at that point. I mean, it was just something that just --- not any in my family, and it was just like a little bit too far out, I think.

DA: Yes. You mean, you just did it because it was there. You don't recall any decision . . .

JB: No.

DA: . . . that took you . . .

JB: No. In high school I didn't, but then when I got to college, I enjoyed --- in fact, now that you pressed me on this, I think that I was going with a girl at that time who might have swayed me. She might have been the one who said "Hey," you know, talking about this, "you can do this."

DA: That's what I'm trying to get at is that at some point you crossed into this and, as

you said, maybe there wasn't any great epiphany at any point, but at some point you tipped over and went in this direction.

JB: Yes, I would say it was pretty early on because I know it was the middle of my sophomore year that I thought --- I went in and talked to Tex Plunkett, who was there. I told him I was interested in taking his news writing course.

DA: Yes.

JB: It was a basic course. He was somewhat dubious. He said later that I didn't show enough, at that point, initiative --- it didn't look like to him. I guess I was rather hanging back. But, in any event, he said later on that I surprised him when I did. Anyway, he was the guy --- you really learned journalism there because he assigned you stories around the college, and you had a beat, and you wrote for the newspaper. And the senior journalism students edited your copy.

DA: Had Plunkett worked for the *Gazette* himself?

JB: No, he had not. He worked very briefly on a newspaper, I remember, before he went into education

DA: But his class --- by the time you were through his class, the basics of journalism -- - honesty, accuracy, and so forth --- had been poured into the copy head.

JB: That's exactly right. 101 and 102 Journalism and you got it. And then if you were interested, you stayed around and you edited the guys who came on. All of this was for the college newspaper, so every . . .

[End of Tape One, Side One]

[Beginning of Tape One, Side Two]

Note: The Jim Barden/Drummond Ayres interview ended abruptly at the end of Side One. Side Two contains stories told by Jim Barden but relate to items discussed in the JB/DA interview. They are as follows:

JB: I just want to tell a couple of things about the way we lived there with the Jolly Boy household. Actually, most of the things that went on at the Jolly Boy household, or a good many of them, are just too raunchy to tell. But one of the more humorous things involved Ray Moseley. It was a running deal because I worked there during the summer of 1957, as I said, when the big, great crisis started, and then came back in January of 1958. During the two and a half months I was gone, Ray Moseley, who was the star newspaper man but was not much of a woman's man, had met a nurse that he became enraptured with, and he asked her to marry him on the first date. Now, within a week he had given her a \$500 ring. A \$500 ring at that time being about \$10,000 today. Moseley was that kind of guy. He would take the plunge at anything he thought was worthwhile, especially a news story. But, in any event, by the time I came back in a couple and a half months, this engagement had already begun to wear thin, and it wasn't long before it erupted. She gave Ray his ring back, plus, the Jolly Boy household was saddled with \$500 worth of pots and pans that Moseley had gone out and bought but wouldn't open. They were in a big box in our kitchen, and we kicked these things around. Moseley absolutely refused to let anybody in there. We only had one dented pot that we cooked soup in, but Moseley wasn't about to let anyone open his pots and pans, even after the engagement was off. Later, he sold his wedding ring at discount to Jerry Jones, another one of the Jolly Boy members, who got married, and Jerry actually used it. I don't recall if Moseley sold him the pots and pans, too, but I do know that we never did get to open them.

A continuation of the Moseley story --- It wasn't long before Moseley's engagement was off that somehow I started going with Moseley's ex-fiance. I just cannot recall the details of how this started, but she must have been wanting to make Ray jealous. It didn't work on Ray, and I recall that we went together until I went into the army. That was the last I ever saw of her. In any event, one of the great parties given by the Jolly Boys was my farewell into the army. It was memorable because, from out of the blue, showed up a very young, handsome brother and sister that we had never seen before, and I don't know whose friends they were, but they were there. The brother came alone, but the sister came with a date. As the evening wore on, and the dancing, this brother would start trying to put the make on the sister, to the delight of everyone there, and I guess some were aghast. But, finally, in the wee hours of the morning, he had her off in the corner, kissing her and making passionate love. I had to leave. I was there, again, with Moseley's ex-fiancé, and she was living in North Little Rock, so we left. I remember by the time I got back home, the sun was breaking, and lo and behold, lying out in the courtyard of our apartment house was the brother, flat on his face. So I went in. There were a few guys at the party, among them, Frank Peters and a guy from Springfield, Missouri. I asked Frank if he thought we ought to revive the guy. Frank said no, he deserved to be out there where he was. But, this being my final morning in Little Rock, Frank took me out on a drive around Little Rock. Some of the great scenes, I don't remember what we took in. But by the time we got back, the brother had managed to get himself up, or someone had come and gotten him, and he was gone. The last we ever saw of the brother and sister. But

a little later that morning I went on down to the bus station. Frank took me down to get the Greyhound bus to Chaffee. This being a Sunday and the *Gazette* being what it was, Foreman was the assistant city editor there, so he came over to see me off, and he brought the staff photographer. We had one photographer on the weekends then. I don't recall who it was. Foreman came with the photographer. Ray Moseley was there. Jerry Jones was there, and Frank Peters, among others. The photographer was taking pictures of me like I was some rock star, and indeed, everybody on the bus thought I must be. Later on, he made a composite of all of those pictures --- put them on the bulletin board at the *Gazette* with appropriate cutlines, and Foreman wrote a story. So they took a picture of it, sent it to me, and I have it on my wall right now. In fact, I went over to look at it a while ago, and I find that I was in a suit and tie as I went off to the army. I must have still been drunk. I really don't recall. I can't imagine what I was thinking, going off to the Army in a suit and tie.

But, in any event, Moseley and Peters and I wound up in Rome together. Moseley went over to work for the *Rome Daily American*. Frank Peters followed, and I came after him, by which time, Moseley had gone on to UPI. But I just wanted to relate that tale about the party as an example of how we lived back then.

[End of Interview]