

Gazette Project

Interview with

Bob Douglas,
Fayetteville, Arkansas,
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Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: 1997, Bob Douglas, Roy Reed. Talk about the *Arkansas Gazette*. Why don't you start off telling how you happened to go to work there?

Bob Douglas: Okay. Well, it actually started in 1947. When we — up here [the University of Arkansas] we read an editorial, that was unlike any *Gazette* editorial, entitled “The New South,” and it was written by Harry Ashmore. It stirred a lot of interest, especially among journalism students.

RR: Here at the university.

DB: Yes. At the university. The *Gazette* had never done anything that. It was not known as a progressive paper, A solid paper, but it sure wasn't progressive. Most of the editorials were about geological artifacts or parks or book clubs.

RR: Trees, the old man [J.N. Heiskell] was crazy about trees.

DB: Trees. Yes, that is why he liked parks, because they had trees. But this was a progressive editorial called “The New South.” And it — we had never seen anything like it before in an Arkansas newspaper, so we got interested in the paper. I always had been. I always had been interested in the *Gazette* because it was just a good, solid paper, and I'd read it since I was a little bitty kid. I subscribed to the *Gazette* with my lawn-mowing money when I was in about the sixth grade.

RR: Was that in Kensett?

BD: Yes. I think it was seventy-five cents a month, which took a big chunk out of it. That's three large lawns. [Laughter] Jerry Neil felt the same way. He had been

interested in going to work for the *Gazette*. We decided we didn't want to go anywhere [outside of Arkansas], really.

RR: Was Jerry here at the university at that time?

BD: Yes. He went to the *Gazette* before I did. And so did Martin Holmes, who was another young journalism student. I think we were the only three at the university. A whole passel of them went to the *Democrat* about that time. These were the post-war journalism boomers. [Laughs]

RR: What about McCord?

BD: McCord was a little bit younger. He was still in school, but he had already been working for the *Democrat* at his high school.

RR: How about Shelton?

BD: Shelton was at Columbia. He came later, about a year or two later.

RR: So you all were kind of the equivalent to a GI movement?

BD: That is pretty much what it was. There were others who did not attend the university, who had just gotten out of the service. Some of the *Gazette* people who had been in the service hadn't been discharged. It was pretty much a new staff, except for the people who already worked at the *Gazette* and had gone in the service. I went to visit. I hadn't planned to go to work at all. I was thinking about going to Norway. I don't remember why. Bicycling across Norway. Or I played with going to law school. I still had another year of the GI loan eligibility. But I went to Little Rock for some other reason and went to see Jerry at the *Gazette*. And they hired me, told me to come to work Monday. Which, of course I did. That's what you did. Someone gives you a job, and you go to work. [Laughs] I was happy to do it, anyhow. Carroll McGaughey, who was the grandnephew of Mr. Heiskell, at that time appeared to be the heir apparent to the editorship.

RR: Let me spell Carroll . . .

BD: C- A-R-R-O-L-L McGaughey, essentially, M-C-G-A-U-G-H-E-Y. And he interviewed me. He was the assistant city editor and the city editor, J.B. Reeves, had died about a year before.

RR: J.B. Reeves.

BD: Reeves. Whom I never knew. So they hired Sam Harris, who was at Associated Press. Had a good reputation as a political reporter. They hired him as city editor, but he hadn't come yet. He was on vacation, going to take a vacation before he came to work. So Carroll takes me in to old Count Dew, Count Clyde Dew, an old Michigander. I don't know how long Clyde had been there, but he was — as far as the newsroom was concerned, he was pretty much the *Gazette*.

RR: D-E-W. Clyde Dew.

BD: Yes. Arbitrary old son of a gun. He had a way of doing things.

RR: He'd been there a long time?

BD: I don't know how long. He'd been there since the 1920s, anyhow.

RR: Oh, well, way back to Fred. He knew Fred and all that.

BD: Yes, I am pretty sure that he did. He was pretty much a character [unintelligible]. I guess he was a good newspaper man. He would — he read all the copy himself. Didn't matter if it had been read before.

RR: He was the managing editor?

BD: Yes. The *Gazette* wasn't that big, so it didn't take all that much time. [Laughs] And he had a habit. He changed his clothes when he came to work. He put on some old clothes, old rags, and, of course, an eyeshade.

RR: I had an editor who did that, changed jackets, put on an old mothy sweater.

BD: Yes. Oh, yes, a shirt and everything.

RR: Yes.

BD: And he smoked a pipe, and he was careless with his matches, so he was always setting fires right behind him in stacks of discarded paper — newsprint — and

he'd throw a match in it. [Laughs] And that would happen about once a week.

RR: Yes.

BD: And he wanted to put them out himself. He didn't want any help. He'd stomp it out and didn't want any discussion. [Laughter] Those were things I had to learn. [Laughs] Harry was editor of the editorial section, which was an editorial page, a single page. He was not executive editor yet. And Count Dew was managing editor. News editors were A.R. Nelson and Heinie Loesch.

RR: How do you spell that?

BD: L-O-E-S-C-H.

RR: Heinie?

BD: Heinie Loesch.

RR: H-E-I-N-I-E.

BD: Yes. Henry Loesch, but known as Heinie. Who had been there a long time. Of course, Sam Harris was the city editor. Orville Henry had been sports editor since he was a small boy. [Laughter] And he still was really. Orville didn't get his growth until much later. They discovered sometime in the 1960s, I guess it was, that he had this allergy he didn't know about to wheat products. When he started laying off the wheat products, he grew for the first time. [Laughter]

RR: He was in his thirties by then.

BD: Yes. He hadn't been in the service and that's why.

RR: Let me back up to that question I asked before. That "New South" editorial that garnered everyone's attention. Do you remember anything about what it said?

BD: No. I wish I could. I know it was forward-looking, and there was a strong suggestion that the South was going to have to change.

RR: Talking about the race issue?

BD: That was implied, but you didn't have to read that into it unless you wanted to. [Laughs]

RR: I guess implied was about as strong as you could go in 1947.

BD: About as strong. Right. And the newsroom was as Spartan an office as you ever saw. They brought in some new desks, which were orange crates. There was a strange-looking old desk, culled from some source, an old rolltop desk that some reporter used up against the wall with a bunch of books on the Arkansas statutes, about to fall down. [Laughter]

RR: They literally had orange crates, are you kidding?

BD: No, no, I am not kidding.

RR: For desks? They replaced the crates with these desks, did they?

BD: Much, much later. [Laughter] Well, two or three years later.

RR: Did you have a desk?

BD: Had a crate.

RR: Did you have a telephone?

BD: They did a little work on the crates. Yes, you had a telephone.

RR: And a typewriter.

BD: And a typewriter.

RR: Set up on a crate.

BD: Yes.

RR: I am having trouble picturing that. Orange crates, I remember from working in my Daddy's store, were pretty narrow and very shaky.

BD: I think they may have been bolstered. They seemed more substantial than you would expect. I think they were orange crates. That is what somebody told me. Mr. Heiskell, who held the title of editor — which he never relinquished until he died — had an office, if you could call it that, in the corner of the newsroom, on the Markham Street side.

RR: You don't mean Markham.

BD: I don't mean Markham. I mean the Third Street side.

RR: Third.

BD: It was more a cage than an office. Some kind of wire contraption.

RR: So it kind of opened to the newsroom?

BD: Well, it had a door, but he left that open. And he'd sit in there, reading editorials mostly, I guess. I don't know what he read. He read a lot of newspapers. But he didn't keep — he was way behind in his newspaper reading because there was a stack of old yellow newspapers all over the place.

RR: He still had that stack when I was there. [Laughter]

BD: He kept that stack to the last. Hot as hell, and no screens on the windows, naked light bulbs. And at night, in the summer — and this was in the summer when I went there — about July, a terribly hot summer, bugs would come in through those windows. The paste we had was old flour paste, to paste up pieces of copy, and bugs would get into that and also get into our hair, wherever they wanted to go. But it still was the most exciting place in the world as far as I was concerned. Still is. Still would be.

RR: Well, it was pretty snazzed up when I got there. They had screens on the windows.

BD: Oh, shoot, and air conditioning. Yes, they did all that after the strike, which I will get to a little later. [Laughs]

RR: Let me go back again to something else. When you were a kid, up in Kensett and started taking the *Gazette*, were you delivering the *Gazette*?

BD: No. I delivered the *Democrat* for a short time, but I never delivered the *Gazette*.

RR: But you [unintelligible] subscribed to the *Gazette*.

BD: Yes. The *Gazette*.

RR: What was it that — you were about six years old?

BD: No, I was older than that. I was about in the sixth grade, eleven or twelve.

RR: About sixth grade. What was it in the paper that appealed to you?

BD: Sports first.

RR: Okay. Do you remember any particular sports writers that — I guess things like bylines weren't used much.

BD: They didn't use bylines. There was a byline on Orville's column. The only way you could get a byline back in those days was to go out of town. Then you automatically got one. It didn't make any difference what you wrote, you got a byline. But if you wrote a great story within the borders of Little Rock, you got no byline.

RR: You're talking about all reporters?

BD: All reporters.

RR: Sports, everybody, yes.

BD: John L. Fletcher was a star reporter, and he had a title, day city editor, because he had been city editor during the war and wanted to hang on to some kind of title. He had all the major stories. It was the political season, and it was a very exciting governor's race: Sid McMath, Jack Holt, Uncle Mack, David Terry, and Horace Thompson.

RR: This is the summer of 1948?

BD: Summer of 1948. This is 1948 when I went to work there. The editorial may have appeared in early 1948.

RR: I remember that race, McMath and all of them, Mack MacKrell.

BD: It was a hell of a race. Yes. Sid won it. Jack Holt finished second, although I think Uncle Mack really finished second and would have been in the runoff, but he sold his spot to Jack Holt. [Laughter]

RR: Spider Rowland was still there.

BD: Spider Rowland was there. I was a Spider fan. I'd always read his column. He wrote a very funny column. Spider was not really a Daymon Runyan character, because he — he was one *of* them. [Laughs] He was a gambler and con man.

Very good writer.

RR: Participatory journalism, I guess. What they would call it now.

BD: If you could call it.

RR: But you had been reading him since you were a kid?

BD: Well, Spider came to work, I guess, in about 1940, and he worked a decade.

RR: He'd gone off to the war for a good part of it.

BD: Yes. And Spider joined the Merchant Marine, but he still wrote. Not a regular column, but he wrote every once in a while. He wrote a book on etiquette called *Burp* while he was in the Merchant Marine.

RR: Called *Burp*. [Laughs]

BD: Yes. My first encounter with Spider, I was walking across the newsroom, and he was coming from sports where he worked, did his column at the sports desk. He was bringing it up to Ashmore and we passed in the newsroom. He had a cigar in his mouth, a constant prop, and he said, "Hello, Junior." [Laughs] Well, hell, I had been through a war. I had my college degree, and, well, I didn't like being called Junior, and I told him. I said, "I don't care whether you speak to me, but don't call me Junior." Well, he got a big grin in the corner of his mouth and went on. He didn't remember it ten seconds, but I remembered all the rest of my life. [Laughs] Little robideau [?].

RR: He was a great fan of Sid McMath.

BD: Oh, yes, they were pretty close. Only he called him the Champ.

RR: The Champ.

BD: And rode with him to various functions, football games, rode up in the governor's — well, I guess, what constituted the governor's limousine.

RR: What was Spider's real name?

BD: Hardy.

RR: H-A-R-D-Y.

BD: Yes, and Rowland is R-O-W-L-A-N-D. He was born in Hardy, Arkansas. Although he was from south Arkansas, his mother went to Hardy, to be with her own mother, I guess, and give birth to Spider. [Unintelligible] So, as I understand it, he was named after the town. How he got to being Spider, I don't know.

RR: Let's just run down the hierarchy of the departments while I have it in my head. Start with the old man at the top, who was editor, managing editor was Clyde Dew.

BD: Yes.

RR: And then Ashmore was off to one side as the editorial page editor.

BD: Yes, back down the hall.

RR: Yes. And who would have been next in line? Nelson or . . .

BD: I suppose, yes, Nelson.

RR: As news editor?

BD: As news editor. Yes, well — well, yes, Nelson, although he was just half news editor. At first he shared the job with Heinie Loesch. Before long, they made Heinie the Sunday editor. And Nelson ran a great copy desk. I learned an awful lot from A.R. Nelson.

RR: Had he been there all his career or . . .

BD: He had been there before the war, but I think he started in El Dorado working for C.A. Palmer.

RR: He was from somewhere down in south Arkansas.

BD: He was from the oil regions,

RR: Dorado County. And then the city editor would have been, in that . . .

BD: City editor . . . let's see. Hell, what was the arrangement? The city editors. We didn't have copy desk, as such, at first. There were desks pushed together, and the city editor sat at one of those desks. It made sort of a rectangle.

RR: Yes. Were the news editor and the city editor kind of equals, as they were in later years?

BD: I suppose.

RR: In the chain of command.

BD: I suppose, but Nelson had more authority than Sam, although Sam, of course, passed out the assignments. Nelson was respected a little more.

RR: Did the matter of who was in charge ever matter? Do you remember any occasions like that?

BD: It didn't seem to, but then, of course, Count Dew was in charge.

RR: Yes.

BD: But the Count was only there for about two or three months. Yes, when — I'm trying to think if it was September of that year. No, I know it was. Mr. Heiskell named Harry Ashmore executive editor and put him over the newsroom, as well as over the editorial page. And the Count didn't like that and he left.

RR: Wonder where he went?

BD: He went to work for John Weld's radio station at first and then eventually went back to Michigan.

RR: What caused the old man to make that change?

BD: Well, he had brought Ashmore in to do what Ashmore was doing and planned to do. He [Heiskell] wanted a different kind of paper after the war. He wanted to catch up.

RR: So he had had it in mind all along that Ashmore would be over the news operations as well?

BD: I think he had, yes. I'm pretty sure he must have. And Ashmore was a great newspaper man. He was great to work for.

RR: What was the difference in outlook between Dew and Ashmore? As far as how to run the paper, run the paper off the . . .

BD: Well, Harry didn't insist that it be exactly what he wanted it to be. Count Dew did, every word. Harry gave us a lot more latitude. Before . . .

RR: Right off, that would be important to the people who did the writing, the reporters. Of course, I can see where that . . .

BD: Yes. Well, Sam Harris as city editor, of course, had immediate supervision over the reporters. I don't know how it worked before that. I don't know what was said or what the story had been.

RR: Did Harry seem to have a different view of news coverage?

BD: Yes, he did, and he wanted more sparkling stuff. Not necessarily more accurate. We were — the *Gazette* was already an accurate newspaper.

RR: I remember, years later, after I had worked there, somebody still had a copy of a long memo Harry had written, way back there early on, a critique of the paper. And it was pretty harsh. Not, you know, on any personal level. Do you remember what I'm talking about?

BD: Yes, I think I do. He wrote several memos, but they were good, to the point — yes, yes. I got lucky. I kind of caught his eye, I guess. They changed the byline rule that summer. You could get a byline if you wrote a story in the city. And something I wrote he liked. I think I was about to get fired. [Laughter] I'd been called in to cover North Little Rock on a substitute basis, and I didn't notice there was a Council meeting that night. [Laughs] Well, I came in, I guess it was the following Monday, and there were two notes in my box. One of them was Sam Harris reminding me I'd failed to cover the North Little Rock City Council, and the other was Ashmore's complimenting me on a story: "We need more of this sort of thing." So I think he saved my job. [Laughs] I started at forty dollars a week. I'd been promised a raise, a five-dollar raise, after three months. Three months passed, I didn't see any raise. Four months passed, no raise. So I took it up with them. Well, Sam Harris finally recommended the raise, a five-dollar

raise. His recommendation got down to the business office, where Hugh Patterson had been brought in as, at first not as publisher, but as business manager. Well, that summer they bought — the Allsopps owned about twenty-five percent of the paper, or maybe more. The Heiskell family bought them out, so they cut my raise from five bucks to two and a half because it had to go to a little extra expense to buy the Allsopps. Well, I wouldn't take it, and so I went to see Ashmore. Ashmore got me a raise of seven and a half. [Laughter] But then I was also assigned to the copy desk for a time. A part-time reporter and worked at the copy desk.

RR: I guess you think of that as a turning point in your career?

BD: I guess, yes, it was. I'm pretty sure it was. It was a pretty good arrangement. I worked at the copy desk about three days, reported two days, worked on Saturdays, and all I had to do on Saturday was write the top story. The big shots were not working on the weekends, so it fell to me. [Laughs]

RR: John Fletcher and them.

BD: Yes.

RR: Who were the other main reporters at that time?

BD: Joe Wirges, of course, you know, the legendary police reporter who was police reporter for forty-nine years. A remarkable man. Let's see, well, other reporters — there were a lot of new ones: Walter Damtoft, Janet Russell, who became Janet Damtoft.

RR: How do you spell Walter . . .

BD: D-A-M-T-O-F-T. He was from North Carolina, and she was from Iowa. Bob Poteet. He worked there that summer, but he was going to Northwestern, so he was going to go to Northwestern and come back. And he was a ball of fire. He got more bylines than anybody. He worked on the run, and he was good. Bob went on, of course, to work for the *Herald Tribune* during the strike. So the strike

pretty well scattered — well, it did scatter us. The copy desk . . .

RR: What about Matilda?

BD: Matilda had come over about the time I did. She and Sam were very good friends, and he had hired her from the *Democrat*.

RR: Oh, she was at the *Democrat*?

BD: Yes.

RR: Okay. You'd already mentioned John Fletcher, so those were the main reporters?

BD: Yes. Those were the main reporters.

RR: The main [unintelligible].

BD: Jerry Neil started as a reporter. He went on to become a brilliant editorial writer, but he was a reporter first.

RR: Do you remember who was covering North Little Rock? What person? I have a personal interest in this.

BD: Jay Hightower.

RR: Jay Hightower.

BD: An Oklahoman.

RR: Anyway, copy desk. You were going to tell who was on . . .

BD: Yes. Well, we got the editors. Safe to say, we got all the editors. Harry Young was state editor. Orville on sports. Charlotte McWhorter was society editor. Charlotte was a sexy blond.

RR: Mc- what?

BD: McWhorter. M-C-W-H-O-R-T-E-R.

RR: She was Betty's predecessor, wasn't she?

BD: Yes. Miss [Nothotum?] was there. She put out a children's page.

RR: She wasn't sports, I mean, the society editor?

BD: I don't know if she had been or not.

RR: Of course, she was already old as the hills.

BD: Yes, she was a contemporary of Mrs. Heiskell. They were about the same age. Mr. Heiskell, of course, was several years older than Mrs. Heiskell. She called him Ned. Nobody else tried to do that.

RR: I always wondered if anybody else had the . . .

BD: Yes, she would joke with me and call him “Whitey” behind his back. Well behind his back. [Laughter]

RR: I remember a story about someone sidling up to him in the newsroom one day and calling him “boy”. “How are you doing, boy?” or something like that. Thought I’d heard that.

BD: I don’t know. I never . . .

RR: Everybody understood that he was not serious.

BD: Oh.

RR: Somehow the old man took it. They went on to die the same day.

BD: Two, three hours apart. Other reporters, Martin Holmes was a reporter. John Haskett [sp?] was not there very long. There were a lot of new sports reporters. Not a lot of sports reporters — they didn’t have anything, but they were new and not many lasted.

RR: I think Martin was at the *Democrat* when I came there.

BD: Martin left. They had three of us competing for the same job, but they didn’t tell us. Anyway, there was Martin and John Haskett. Turned out, of course, there was one job for one of the three of us, and I got it. And I think it was because of Ashmore. I’m pretty sure it was. I think Sam was going to fire me. Let’s see, the rest of the copy desk — Jim McDaniel, who became managing editor at the *Commercial Appeal* in Memphis. Ray Stevens, who had a very successful career with the Associated Press and then became editor of the Booth newspapers, which is a chain. Gene Fretz, who got a law degree in Virginia.

RR: F-R-E-T-Z. I never knew Gene had a law degree.

BD: Yes. I don't know how Gene got down here. I don't remember who was telegraph editor. I think they had two guys. Rusty Ross being one.

RR: You mean the guy who went over to television?

BD: Yes. But Rusty was not there very long at all. K. Bryan McGinnis, who was called "Bishop" and who was prone to drink, as we all were. It was the sort of thing you did. [With] everybody [just] out of the service, when you got off work, you were on liberty.

RR: Was it ever kept around the newsroom?

BD: No. I never saw a bottle around the newsroom.

RR: Not, not like old Deacon Parker had to do later on.

BD: He hid it over there somewhere. Yes. No. I don't know if anybody ever did it or not. I never saw it.

RR: When was the strike?

BD: The strike was in December '49. We formed a chapter of the American Newspaper Guild in early fall of '49. We won an election. And the way that happened is that — I wasn't in on this — they had had some kind of jackleg union. They were affiliated with the Teamsters. I don't know how it worked. It didn't work very well because they didn't get anything. The word was that Mr. Heiskell had promised that the newsroom would get a raise any time the printers got a raise, and they got raises fairly regularly because they were a union, a strong one. They made more money than we did. But Hugh Patterson had come and, I guess, he became publisher about the time Harry became executive editor. September '48. And Hugh, in the service, in the Army, had been a personnel officer, so he had some ideas about structure. Well, instead of a raise, we got a system. Everybody was in a certain notch. You know, if, say, you're a copy reader, well, you would be a junior copy reader, then a maybe a middle-weight copy reader, then a senior copy reader, until you got to the end of your graph.

That was the most you could make at that level, and then you moved up. The problem with that, in the first place, nobody was very excited about it. But the real problem was that nobody got a nickel. Everybody, just coincidentally I'm sure, wound up right where they were. [Laughter] The thing was structured so you stayed where you were. There wasn't a scale, say, for the copy desk or for the city staff. You were put in a strange category. So we started talking about Guild and got a union representative.

RR: Who was the main promoter of the Guild in the newsroom?

BD: It's hard to say and I'm not sure. Al Wineman, who was also on the copy desk and, I failed to mention, who became a lawyer. He was from Dallas or Chicago. He was the first president of the Guild. I was vice president. I was elected president after Al left. He left during the strike.

RR: He went and got a union representative?

BD: Yes. And held an election, which we won, won overwhelmingly. Well, I learned later and somewhat suspected at the time, we weren't going to have a Guild. We were going to be forced into a strike. Of course, we were forced a whole lot earlier than we should have been. It was a dumb mistake. We asked for a model contract. You had to do that. It was somewhat ridiculous, we weren't going to get that, and we should have known it. Well, the *Gazette* seized on one or two requests — not requests, demands — Guild demands for a contract, and we asked for a voice in hiring and firing. Well, they played that out. And I suppose that's what we struck over, but it didn't make any sense. No, we struck over — yes, we struck over firings.

RR: It wasn't over money then?

BD: What?

RR: The strike wasn't for higher wages?

BD: Oh, yes. That was it. Yes, sir. Well, not immediately. The whole thing was for

higher wages. So we went out in December, near Christmas, '49. It snowed immediately, of course. We walked the picket line in ice and snow.

RR: How many of you went out?

BD: About twenty-six, twenty-seven, including Joe Wirges. Spider Rowland joined us for a couple of weeks. Spider's complaint was Ashmore changed some of his copy. [Laughter]

RR: I've never heard of a better reason to go on strike.

BD: Spider quit the strike, and I think I've got something he printed for the little publication we put out called *Strike*. I think I've got it. It was a bawdy joke. So he wasn't interested in the strike anymore or mad at Ashmore. [Laughter] Spider wasn't quite as good then. I think he had gotten a little too full of himself.

RR: Anyway, you were walking the picket line in the snow?

BD: Yes. Our weapon was supposed to have been the circulation department. The international representative, a guy named Al Iken, and Wineman engineered this. They got the circulation people to join us, and we blocked the newspaper for a few days. There were some delivery, but a lot were late, and a lot of them never got there. We'd picket all these carrier folks, which was a rotten thing to do. It was not a good time. I sometimes felt it was silly. Joe, I think Joe went out because of us his son Gene, who was a photographer there. Gene was all for it. It might not have worked to Gene's advantage. They might have put a clause in a contract saying you had work. [Laughs] He'd rather do without the money.
[Laughs]

RR: How long did it last?

BD: It lasted until summer. Well, officially, it lasted about two years. [It was] about a year and a half, though, before the picket line was dissolved. People started scattering, and I did, too, although I think I was about the last to leave the picket line. Because I was president, I didn't feel I could go. I got a job with a radio

station, KARK, and was striking also at the same time.

RR: Owned by the same . . . that wasn't the *Gazette's*?

BD: No, the *Gazette's* was KLRA a CBS station. This was an NBC station.

RR: And they were on strike, too?

BD: No, no. I got a job there. Of course, I mean, we got some stipend, but other Guild members chipped in, you know. We got a little bit of money. Not quite enough for enough whiskey. [Laughs] And I got married, a very, very serious mistake on my part. But I got an offer from the *Asheville* [North Carolina] *Citizen*. Walt Damtoft was working there. They had a gambler, a racketeer, who had been picked up in Little Rock, and there was a series of extradition hearings to get him back to North Carolina, and they asked me to cover that. So I covered that for them, and then they offered me a job. So I went up there. The *Gazette* offered me a job back. I should have taken it back, but I figured it wasn't quite seemly as president of the Guild. The strike wasn't officially over. So I went to North Carolina for nearly a year and a half. Went there in the spring of '50 or '51. I think it was in '51. I came back in '52, October of 1952, because I wanted to.

RR: Been gone a year and a half.

BD: Yes.

RR: How many came back after the strike?

BD: Well, Joe did. Jerry Neil did. And that's about it. And me. But I didn't go back immediately.

RR: Twenty-some-odd people.

BD: Yes. They all did pretty well though. Like Jim McDaniel and Ray Stevens. Fretz didn't strike, so he stayed.

RR: I gather Matilda didn't.

BD: Matilda didn't. Inez Hillman Duff [?] Some of the oldtimers. Heinie Loesch

didn't, but he really wanted to. He cried. He actually said, "I'm an old man and I've got to work."

RR: Were there any hard feelings when you came back?

BD: No, not as far as I know. I'd stayed pretty friendly. Carroll McGaughey was a very good friend of mine. During the strike he got married in Virginia, and I went up as the best man for the wedding. [Laughs] I stood with Mr. Heiskell and Hugh Patterson, and we all partied together. It was a heck of a party, too. A Virginia party is a nice thing to attend.

RR: What became of McGaughey?

BD: He died a few years ago. Carroll became managing editor during the strike, and while I was in Asheville, there was a coup of some sort, and Nelson became managing editor, and Carroll became a columnist and eventually quit and went into television. I don't know how it came about.

RR: Even though he was sort of the heir apparent to Mr. Heiskell?

BD: Yes.

RR: He got pushed out?

BD: Well, Nelson was pretty valuable. [?] At the same time, Ashmore was not satisfied with our Capitol coverage or Matilda's coverage of the Capitol. And I think Morris Stern was also a reporter who didn't go out. He went to the *Denver Post* later and then was dean of the Alabama School of Journalism later.

RR: One of Orval Faubus' bete noires in the Central High crisis.

BD: What?

RR: He wrote a famous editorial in the *Denver Post* condemning Faubus for [unintelligible].

BD: I thought that was Palmer Holden.

RR: That was Palmer Holden. He came down and made a speech. That's why I thought that . . .

BD: Yes, that was Palmer Holden. Yes, I was there that night.

RR: Anyway, McGaughey — where did McGaughey end up?

BD: Charlotte, North Carolina. Carroll was a good man. I guess he tried to do too much at once. Apparently got unpopular. It's too bad. I think he would have been a good — I think he was a good heir apparent.

RR: Tell the story about how he happened to be Mr. Heiskell's kind of chosen one.

BD: Oh. Mr. Heiskell had a son named Carrick, Carrick Heiskell, who was to take over the paper whenever, if ever, Mr. Heiskell departed. Carrick was killed in the war, flying the Hump across Burma.

RR: Was he a pilot?

BD: He was a pilot. Cargo plane.

RR: How many kids did the Heiskells have? There was Louise . . .

BD: They had Carrick and Louise and another daughter named Elizabeth, and one child who was put in a home. I don't know anything about that. No one ever talked about it. Who was, I guess, retarded.

RR: But only the son, I guess, was ever seriously considered as the next editor.

BD: Yes. But Carroll — the way I saw it, Carroll was sort of taking Carrick Heiskell's place.

RR: Whose son was he? Carroll.

BD: Carroll. He was the son of one of Mr. Heiskell's sisters.

RR: Sister, okay.

BD: Or niece. Niece. He was his grand-nephew.

RR: Did you know any of the pre-war crowd besides Count Dew?

BD: No.

RR: Of course, you knew Mr. Heiskell.

BD: Yes.

RR: But what about Fred? Did you ever know him?

BD: No, Fred was long dead before I came.

RR: How about the Allsopps?

BD: I never had anything to do with the Allsopps. They stayed downstairs and counted the money.

RR: They were still there at the *Gazette*?

BD: They were there for just two or three months.

[End of Tape One, Side One]

[Start of Tape One, Side Two]

RR: . . . Not long ago you said something to me about the Allsopps. Then she alluded to [the time] when they bought them out, the Heiskells bought them out and . . . But I never knew them. They were long gone before I ever came to the paper, so I . . .

BD: As far as I know, they never came upstairs. I understand that one of them came up once, one of the Allsopps and asked if we needed anything in the newsroom. They were just a shambles, living in a shambles, working in a shambles, and Count Dew assured them, “No, nothing, not a thing in the world.” [Laughs] They had some extra money after some kind of tax rebate. [Laughs]

RR: These orange creates are just fine.

BD: Fine for him. Heinie Loesch was there a long, long time. I remember before the strike they didn’t actually do any remodeling, but they moved in a few chairs, and Heinie Loesch lost his box. And I ran into him in the restroom, and he actually had tears in his eyes. He said, “I sat on that box for thirty years, and I come in and it’s gone.”

RR: Symbol . . .

BD: Yes. As a chair. A kind of a keg. [Laughter]

RR: Oh, Lordy. Aside from the glamour of it, I’m just as happy I missed that part of it. [Laughter]

BD: Yes. Those were some turbulent years, too. I thought, of course, we had some more turbulence [Laughs] starting in '57. But a lot of things happened there quickly.

RR: What sort of things?

BD: Well, like Ashmore taking over and the coup I was telling you about. And another, also, on the city desk. As I understand it, Ashmore was complaining about the coverage, and Sam Harris, the city editor, said, "Well, I ought to go out there myself." And Ashmore said okay, so he went out and stayed, and they made Bill Shelton city editor. This was just before I came back.

RR: Bill had been . . .

BD: Been on the copy desk. Bill went to the copy desk. He wouldn't go until it was obvious the strike was, for all practical purposes, over. He'd gone to work for AP&L in the interim.

RR: Was he out on strike?

BD: No. He wasn't there at that time. He wouldn't start at work there until it was obvious that the Guild was dead.

RR: Wasn't Bill working somewhere up in Jonesboro somewhere?

BD: He had worked at the *Jonesboro Senator*. And he worked for AP&L at a sort of interim job, short-term job. I knew Bill wanted to be, was going to be a newspaperman. And he was a darn good one.

RR: So that's how Sam lost his job as city editor?

BD: Yes.

RR: He made the mistake of volunteering.

BD: Yes. Sam always talked — sometimes when he shouldn't have been talking.

RR: What were the big stories in those years?

BD: Politics was the big story. The 1948 election was the biggest news. And that was an exciting time, and not just the local races. We had Henry Wallace come to

town. Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats. I covered both of them. No violence. [Laughs] I think I got a byline out of the Henry Wallace story. There were a few Henry supporters – Communists all [Laughs] – that picketed the school board. The board wouldn't let them use the school board building for a meeting. So they picketed, and I covered that. It was on a Sunday afternoon. I think I got my first byline that day.

RR: C. Hamilton Moses was doing very big things . . .

BD: Oh, he was a giant.

RR: [unintelligible]

BD: But only the *Gazette* would take him on. Mr. Heiskell actually sometimes went out of his way to take him on. He felt they were just too big and powerful. And there are some issues they differed on, like running utility lines through the parks. [Laughter]

RR: You mentioned some things this morning that you talked about that probably come much later on than [unintelligible] going on. But I didn't come till 1956, so a lot of this is interesting to me, because I was just a kid when I came there. You were all still telling stories about Fred Heiskell and things like that . . .

BD: Well, we were, we were telling them second or third hand. None of us knew.

RR: Like Fred Heiskell winning, what was his name, James Warren?

BD: In a crap game with Booker Worthen.

RR: Booker Worthen. Was it Booker Worthen?

BD: Yes.

RR: Was he the father of the president . . .

BD: I forget.

RR: Bill, Bill Worthen.

BD: Yes. Yes.

RR: Or maybe grandfather.

BD: Or maybe grandfather.

RR: What was that story? First, do you think . . .

BD: That's all I heard. That he just won him in a crap game.

RR: James would have been just a boy at that time, ten or twelve years old.

BD: He'd have been older than that.

RR: Oh, he was a teenager?

BD: Well, he would have been in his twenties. James was pretty old.

RR: Oh, I misunderstood the story. I thought somehow that he was kind of a house boy.

BD: Well, he might have been, but he would have been in his twenties.

RR: Yes. The other story I remember about Fred Heiskell that you all were still telling, was the night he threw the a governor of Arkansas down the stairs. Which governor was that?

BD: I don't remember that story at all. He threw a prostitute down the stairs and killed her.

RR: I never knew that.

BD: And they kept it out of the paper. Now this, this I hear. But it was simply pretty well established. The story was that the *Gazette* didn't run it, but the *Commercial Appeal* did. Now, I don't know if there is anything to this, but they intercepted the *Commercial Appeal* when it came in on the train to be distributed in Little Rock. Hit the guy over the head [Laughs]. Trashed all the copies.

RR: What made him — as the story went, why did he throw the woman down the stairs?

BD: He was at a whorehouse. They got a little rowdy, I guess.

RR: Oh, oh at her whorehouse. I thought it was at the *Gazette*.

BD: No. I think it was a whorehouse.

RR: Oh, okay.

BD: Or a hotel.

RR: Yes. And I gather he spent a little time at places like this.

BD: Quite a bit. He and Mr. Heiskell didn't have a whole lot in common.

RR: I thought the story was about the governor [unintelligible] Tom Terrell, one of the really bad governors.

DB: I never heard that. Could have happened if I [unintelligible].

RR: On election night they had a room, and nobody could come and visit the room, unless they worked there. The governor had the presumption to show up there while they were counting votes. Fred was supposed to have thrown him down the back stairs.

DB: Well, if the stories about Fred were true, he was capable of doing it. I think there was a sharp division, as there was later [unintelligible], in the newsroom, which Fred ran, and the editorial department, which Mr. Heiskell ran. That's what I heard.

RR: You know, it would be easy for me to understand, what little I've heard about Fred Heiskell, that he might have been a better newsman than J.N. That he was more suited to the trade.

DB: That's what they said. Now, Joe Wirges would have known him and John L. Fletcher might have known him, but that was the impression we were all left with. Maybe it was everybody just wanted to think of him in that way because he was such a rounder.

RR: Yes.

DB: And so some of the other people at the *Gazette* were, too. Some of us were pretenders.

RR: Those two men, those two brothers, entirely different personalities. I remember the old man apparently started his day drinking with a glass of sherry.

DB: A glass of sherry.

RR: A great, gentle, gentleman.

BD: Mrs. Heiskell would knock it down.

RR: Oh, really?

BD: Yes, she would drink scotch. The first time I ever met her was in Virginia, at that wedding I talked about. I introduced myself, and her first words were, "Would you get me another glass of scotch?" [Laughs]

RR: What was her first name? Wilhemina?

BD: Wilhemina.

RR: What about the middle 1950s? Anything, any changes along in there that stick in your mind?

BD: There were some gradual changes in the newsroom. When I first went there, the printers laid out the paper, all except page one. They put stories where they wanted to put them. It wasn't any of our business.

RR: Was that kind of common practice on a paper that size?

BD: I don't know, but that's the way it was at the *Gazette*. That changed. Ashmore changed a lot of things, and that was one of them.

RR: It was a pretty important change.

BD: Yes, so it was.

RR: Well, I guess he was pretty well trained in newspapers when he came here from his experience over in . . .

BD: Greensboro and Charlotte.

RR: Charlotte, Greenville and Charlotte.

BD: Greensboro, I think.

RR: Was it Greensboro?

BD: I think it was Greensboro. Yes. Ashmore had more to do with my staying in the newspaper business than anybody.

RR: Really? That's funny.

BD: I learned a lot from him.

RR: He was pretty directly responsible for my coming to the *Gazette*.

BD: Was he?

RR: He was already kind of a hero to us young guys around the state. He made a lot of people like me wanted to be newspapermen. We were all influenced by Ashmore. I can't even remember why now. In 1956, he was nothing special, long before he won the Pulitzer Prize and all that.

BD: He changed a lot of things. He really came to prominence in 1948, through the editorials he wrote about the governor's race. The *Gazette* had never endorsed a candidate for anything. It had a policy against endorsement. Well, we didn't endorse one that year, anyhow, but Harry took out after Jack Holt because Jack interjected the race issue into the campaign. So he pretty well blasted him and that hadn't been done before.

RR: That's interesting. I didn't know that. Now, he wasn't there when Ben Laney was there, was he? Harry. I mean Harry wasn't.

BD: Yes. Ben Laney was governor when I was there, and one of my early assignments had been to interview Ben Laney over the phone. I remember somebody telling me, "You won't get a straight answer. You won't understand the answers." Well, I didn't, not one of them, so I just wrote it as a Q&A story. [Laughter] What do you do?

RR: Yes. Well, then came 1957. You were in the thick of that. What's your main memory of the paper from that time?

BD: Well, I remember all the turbulence of that year and the anxiety or concern. There was never a doubt in my mind at all that the *Gazette* would win and that it would stick to its guns. And I guess I was really sold on just staying in Little Rock and working at the *Gazette* that year. If I had ever had any idea of leaving — and, oh, I did have some feelers, especially from the *Herald Tribune* —that's

when I never wanted to leave the *Gazette*.

RR: I wonder if anybody of any standing on the paper did have doubts about leaving the paper.

BD: I don't know. I think they probably did in the business office, but I don't think any of us did.

RR: [unintelligible] business folks. They were down there counting those declining dollars.

BD: Yes, that's right.

RR: And . . .

BD: And they deserve the credit because they stayed with it. The general manager was Jim Weeks from Indiana, and the circulation director was Leon Reed, also from Indiana.

RR: I know Leon.

BD: He came from Fort Wayne paper, I think, which had folded. [Laughs]

RR: Leon told me that the *Gazette* really lost a lot of circulation during that time.

BD: Oh, an enormous amount.

RR: Something like a thousand subscribers [a week?]. I forget, but it added up to about a twenty percent loss of circulation.

BD: They lost a lot during the strike, which they then — I'm not sure they ever regained that. They got the circulation back from '57, but those union people, a lot of them were railroad men who wouldn't — they canceled, and stayed canceled.

RR: That's interesting. You know, when I went to work at the paper, they put me on the North Little Rock beat, and one of the things that I was aware of was the hostility of the railroad people.

BD: That's why.

RR: Toward — and I had no idea what it was about.

BD: That was it, that sort of thing, that I don't much like to dwell on. We didn't want

— I didn't want to destroy the paper or even damage it. In fact, I wish we wouldn't have drawn the circulation guys in. It didn't help, anyway. It came pretty close though. The *Gazette* did want to settle with the newsroom and accept the Guild, but they wouldn't accept circulation. [Laughs] But they might not have wanted to give in at all if it hadn't been for the fact that we did have circulation.

RR: Did they have their own union?

BD: No, they were part of the Guild. They came to the Guild.

RR: I know that the Guild encompassed a lot of people outside of the newsroom, but I didn't realize that circulation was in that.

BD: Some of them you didn't particularly want to be around much. Some were pretty nice, and some were pretty bad. [Laughs]

RR: What did you say, they had a little [unintelligible] like you read about in the Chicago newspaper wars when the circulation people find out . . .

BD: No, it wasn't that as much. There never was any violence that I know of, but it just, I don't know, sort of no-goodniks. I know when I was president of the Guild, . . . [the] international representative suspected me of not having my heart in it. And he went back to Texas for a week or so and told the circulation guy to keep an eye on me. I learned about that. Well, then in later years I learned that the circulation guy was a double agent. He was reporting back to his head.

RR: [Let's] take a little break.

BD: [Let's] see if we can get through 1957, anyhow.

RR: Yes.

BD: Well, I know I will have left out things that will occur to me later.

RR: Well, jot them down, and we'll go back.

BD: Well, of course, Faubus made his move in 1957. And Ashmore and J.N. Heiskell and Hugh Patterson were towers of strength. Ashmore was very persuasive, but

Mr. Heiskell deserves an enormous amount of credit. Because he was not — Mr. Heiskell was not an integrationist. He believed in segregation. He was the son of a Confederate colonel. But he was for obeying the law and hated mobs.

RR: I wonder if that might not have been a real hard thing [unintelligible] a little bit of a . . . If there was some way of saying this without a pejorative spin to it, a little bit of class antagonism. [Laughs]

BD: Yes.

RR: Wrong people were for it.

BD: Yes, I am sure that is true. Well, a lot of us [who] weren't close to Mr. Heiskell's social credentials felt that way. [Laughter]

RR: Yes. And he lost a lot of money on it.

BD: He gained it back though. It came back stronger, and circulation really zoomed. It went well beyond the point that it had been in a very short time — than it had been at the time of the crisis. Going back to 1948, let me see, there is something else I might have wanted to say about that 1948 election. About the *Gazette*. I don't know. It wasn't until after 1948 that it started endorsing candidates.

RR: Do you remember who covered the 1948 election, the reporter? I am sure they had different ones.

BD: Yes, we all covered a little. We went around the headquarters everyday, whether the candidate was there or not, and that is where you got a lot of news. I don't know if they still do that or not, whether it is still possible to do that or not. But you find out more, quite often, than you do covering a speech. Of course, we covered all the speeches.

RR: Did you travel with the candidates around the state?

BD: I didn't. I didn't cover that much of it. I know we did some. John L. Fletcher did the big stories. I remember he covered a crowd at Hot Springs. Carroll McGaughey liked gadgets. He bought a recording machine. Actually it used a

disc, you know, just like one of those old records, about the size of a forty-five. So you were supposed to be able to dictate, and we would take that information and play it back and get a guy's story. Except he put me in charge of it. [Laughs] And John L. read me his entire story, and I started to play it back and there was nothing there. [Laughter] So I think that may be the only time we ever used it.

RR: Can you remember who covered Jack Holt? Did they have a reporter to cover a candidate like we did in later years?

BD: I don't think so. And I think John L. covered them all. They went around together a lot. There were these rallies, and they would all make their speeches together.

RR: That was left over from the old days then.

BD: Yes, but they may have appeared separately, too. No, different reporters were assigned every once in a while, but we didn't do a hell of a lot of traveling. The *Gazette* would not put up the money back then. [Laughs]

RR: Was there any speculation or any reason to think that the reporters ever got too close to the politicians they were covering in those days?

BD: I don't think so. John L. Fletcher was a little suspect. I won't say that he was on the take, but I think he could be influenced by gifts or bottles of whiskey, possibly even cash. There was a story that Jack Holt gave him the amount of two thousand dollars. Henry Woods could confirm that. Well, of course, John L. did these wrap-up profiles on each candidate, and McMath's wasn't all that great, but Jack Holt's was tremendous.

RR: I assume the *Democrat* covered this election, too. Did they cover it in anything like the same thoroughness?

BD: Pretty much. Yes. Pretty much. George Alvin and John Scutter were their top political reporters.

RR: Were the two papers closer in size at that time than later on?

BD: Yes, they were.

RR: This is the era of afternoon papers.

BD: That's right.

RR: The *Democrat* would still have been strong.

BD: When I first went to work for the *Gazette*, there was real competition. The *Democrat* might — no, I guess they didn't have the edge in experience that we had in Joe Wirges and John Fletcher — but at a certain level they had more experience than we had. They had more people who had been there before, at least on the reporter side, the city staff side.

RR: My vague recollection is that you just glanced at those two papers and could tell the difference at once, that they were entirely different in their attitudes, their looks, the way they read. But I couldn't describe — I couldn't tell you why they were different.

BD: Well, that was more obvious later than it was then, except that we were much better edited and had better writers. And we got the break on most stories, we beat them to the punch. The only time we were in head-to-head competition was on Saturday night, but we would usually beat them pretty badly on Sundays. They were doing some silly things, Sam Harris and whoever was making that, well, Alan Teldon over at the *Democrat*. Every reporter was obligated to produce at least one feature a week, and they got pretty silly, you know, especially those at the *Democrat*. I had to do two. Jerry Neil had to do two. I don't know — I never got out of the damn building. I don't know how I was supposed to originate two feature stories, sitting there on that orange crate. But I guess I managed to do it. No assignments, you just did it, you know? You wrote a feature story. John Scudder over at the *Democrat* called them "punchy crunchers," and he'd put up — you remember the old Lifebouy charts — you washed your hands and you got a gold star and . . .

RR: Oh, yes.

BD: Well, he put the names of all the reporters down on a Lifebouy chart [Laughs], and if they got their punchy cruncher in, they got a gold star. [Laughter] John did one once on what to do if an airplane crashes into your backyard. [Laughs] He got good play and was complimented on it. [Laughter]

RR: One thing that I remember about both papers back then was the enormous number of stories that appeared in any day's paper.

BD: Yes.

RR: Not just page one, but you opened up the inside, and there might be a dozen stories on page two or page three.

BD: Yes, and we covered the state, too, largely with correspondents. And we had some good ones. There were some exceptional ones. Gil McGee at Conway was very good and did [unintelligible]. I guess, it took a while [for me] to get confidence, to get comfortable there. I felt a little bit intimidated at first and I guess I should have.

RR: Why?

BD: Well, I was new. A lot of the people had been there thirty or forty years.

RR: Hell, like you said, you were a war veteran. You were not just a grown man, but . . .

BD: Well, I had that. That gave me what little confidence I had, I suppose.

RR: Were most of the newsroom people at that time college graduates?

BD: No. The new ones were, but certainly Joe wasn't. I don't know. I guess John L. Fletcher was. Heinie Loesch wasn't. None of those old guys had ever been to college.

RR: Old Dew go to college?

BD: I think he might have been to college, but I don't know if he was a graduate. Either of the ladies, I don't know where Inez Hellman Duff [?] went to college or

not.

RR: Who were the other women around the newspaper?

BD: There weren't very many.

RR: You mentioned Matilda.

BD: Matilda and Inez Hellman Duff [?] in the newsroom, but Inez got transferred to the magazine page very shortly. I guess Matilda and Janet Russell and Ruth Jacquemine, whom I failed to mention a while ago.

RR: Ruth who?

BD: Jacquemine, J-A-C-Q-U-E-M-I-N-E, called Jackie. [She] was city hall reporter, and she was a dandy.

RR: What's her story?

BD: She was a Little Rock girl [unintelligible].

RR: Did she come work during the war?

BD: She worked during the war and stuck.

RR: Matilda did, too. Well, I mean . . .

BD: Yes.

RR: What you said.

BD: Yes.

RR: Actually you said Matilda came after you did, if I remember.

BD: I think maybe a week or two, about the time Sam came back from whatever or wherever he was and took over as city editor.

RR: I had the mistaken idea that she had come to the *Gazette* during the war.

BD: I don't think so.

RR: When all the men were off in the service.

BD: They had a lot of ladies in the family. Elizabeth Heiskell, who — I forget what her married name was — worked there. And Louise may have worked there. And they weren't very good. [Laughs]

RR: How did Betty Fulkerson come there?

BD: Harry brought her over while I was gone. They got to be friends, and he thought Betty would make a good society editor. Which she did.

RR: Wasn't she kind of on her uppers? Her husband died young and [unintelligible].

BD: Husband, yes.

RR: Bachman [?].

BD: Bachman [?]

RR: She needed the work. She had known Mr. Heiskell, to hear her talk.

BD: Yes, this would have been in the same circles.

RR: She stayed a long time. I guess she was the society editor for, what, twenty years or so?

BD: Yes. She was there about as many years as I was almost, maybe longer.

RR: Well, down through the years a lot of other people came and went. There were a lot of people like me who have come and stayed... Well, I stayed eight years, and Dumas came before I left and stayed until the end. Ray Moseley was there for, what, three or four years?

BD: Yes. Ray Moseley.

RR: Bill Whitworth.

BD: Bill Whitworth. Some good ones came, and we had a new wave of very good young reporters, you, certainly, among them, and Jerol Garrison.

RR: Charles Portis came.

BD: Yes.

RR: Allbright.

BD: Allbright came over from the *Democrat*.

RR: And is still there.

BD: He was gone for a while, you know. He worked for Rockefeller, and went into advertising for a very short time. Didn't fit.

RR: Dick Allin, from the *Commercial Appeal* while I was there.

BD: Yes. And Nelson brought him in.

RR: Good lunch buddies. I remember Nelson and Jerry Neil now and then.

BD: They got to be pretty good friends.

RR: They would go to lunch a lot. Now and then they would ask me to go with them, just every now and then. I think they would just kind of look around the newsroom and see some young fellow.

BD: Yes.

RR: What I remember about those lunches was the amount of alcohol that was put away. Nelson was a beer drinker.

BD: And Jerry drank martinis.

RR: Martinis, he always had them. I'd say about two or three.

BD: He had four.

RR: Was it four? I don't remember him eating very much. He must have.

BD: Yes, he ate, but not until he got his martinis.

RR: And then, at least once coming back from lunch, something set Jerry off about toothpicks being used in public. He had one of the most eloquent denunciations of the habit that I ever heard, and even to this day I can't use a toothpick in public without looking over my shoulder or . . .

BD: Nelson used toothpicks. [Laughter]

RR: It might have been directed at Nelson. They were unlikely friends.

BD: Well, they were. They didn't get along when Jerry was a reporter. Nelson didn't like him. Bill Shelton didn't like him. I guess they thought he was uppity. I don't know. They had trouble while I was gone. Shelton and Nelson were getting ready to fire him.

RR: What about? Just because they didn't like him?

BD: Because they didn't like him. They felt he was a — because he talked back.

RR: He did have a mouth on him.

BD: [unintelligible] he did not mind talking. Had to do with some story he didn't turn in when they wanted him to. I remember him telling me about it. It was about two blind people at the movie, and he tried telling them, "It takes, you know, it takes a little while to write one of these." Well, they had to have it within the next thirty minutes. So he went back to Ashmore and told him, you know, "This is it. You said something about wanting me back here. Well, now is the time." Well, Harry hired him, and, of course, he became one of the best editorial writers that ever lived.

RR: I found out sometime in the past few years that it was not Harry, but Jerry who wrote that editorial about the death of Joe McCarthy.

BD: Yes.

RR: I can still quote lines from that. "Joe was a bad guy."

BD: Yes.

RR: "The evil that he did will live after him."

BD: Harry Ashmore was—he was very proud of you, he was good to you, and they were very good to me.

RR: Who else . . .

BD: Jerry got an offer from *Wall Street Journal*.

RR: Did he?

BD: And he wouldn't take it.

RR: Well, history might have different had Jerry ended up at the *Wall Street Journal*.
[Laughter]

BD: I don't think he would have lasted. [Laughter]

RR: No, but it might have set a different tone.

BD: Well, again, Jerry, you know, he was — a lot of us came back from the war, and you felt a certain obligation to do something at home. That was the attitude. I

know that Jerry felt that way, I felt that way, Bill Shelton felt that way.

RR: Jerry was Berryville. Sheldon was Jonesboro.

BD: Jonesboro.

RR: Who else was on the editorial staff at that time?

BD: A guy named John Lofton, from South Carolina, who was to the left of everybody. And then Charlie Davis. Charlie was from Pittsburgh.

RR: Did you say from Pittsburgh?

BD: Yes, he worked on — he had been the labor reporter on the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, and that is their top reporting job.

RR: Was he a native of Arkansas?

BD: Yes. Yes, he was from Arkansas. And his dad, of course, was C.T. Davis, who was a legendary editorial writer. Actually, he was a legendary editorial paragraph writer. He used to run all those little paragraphs, sort of fillers, and he supposedly was very good at that. And had been a good reporter, a very good reporter, C.T. Davis. Charlie was C.T. Jr.

RR: Those paragraphs, I had forgotten all about them. They hadn't run them for years.

BD: No, you don't see shorts anymore in newspapers.

RR: Mr. Heiskell wrote a lot them, didn't he?

BD: He wrote a lot of them, yes. Slip in a little innuendo there once in a while. I don't know if I ought to tell this or not. [Laughter]

RR: Go ahead.

BD: Well, I remember one was a — there was a story about airline pilots, maybe in Belgium or maybe it was Italy, carrying on with the stewardesses — and they would cover them with chocolate. A little wire story. [Laughs] He wrote that — he apparently wrote a paragraph, as I said, that went something like this: “Any airline stewardess who allows herself to be covered with chocolate is in for a good licking.” [Laughter]

RR: J.N. Heiskell wrote that? [Laughter]

BD: Well, I saw it on proof. You know, we'd usually hang those proofs up by the telegraph desk, and I was telegraph editor and I saw it. And Hugh Patterson came by and I called his attention to it, chuckling. "Oh, we can't have that," and he took the proof and went off somewhere. The next thing I knew, it was in the paper. Well, I couldn't resist and I called him at home and said, "You know that paragraph you killed? It's in the paper." "Well, I just, just let it alone."

[Laughter] I'm sure he had taken it back to Mr. Heiskell and got thrown out of his office.

RR: Title of editor does carry a certain power of persuasion.

BD: Well, he owned the paper.

RR: The next time I see Molly Ivins I have to tell her that story. It was just such a thing as that that led to her leaving the *New York Times*.

BD: He wrote another one, something about men with a bulge in their pants.

RR: Oh, really?

BD: I think he meant waistline, but that's not the way it came out. [Laughter] And maybe he didn't. He wrote some clever — sex was on his mind, not, of course, that it wasn't on everybody else's mind, but more than your average person would suspect. What was it he wrote? You remember when James Roosevelt wrote a letter to his wife confessing he had all these affairs and gave the names of a long list of women?

RR: No, I don't remember that.

BD: Oh, that was before your time, I guess. Mr. Heiskell wrote a paragraph saying that "James Roosevelt certainly had a good memory for faces." [Laughter]

RR: He had been a U.S. Senator for a while.

BD: Yes, he took over for Jeff Davis, I guess.

RR: 1913, I believe it was.

BD: Yes, it may not have been a full year. Made a speech though, on the virtues of Arkansas.

RR: It must have been very satisfying for him to replace that man of all people. They couldn't stand each other.

BD: No, Lord no, they hated each other. Yes, I am sure he enjoyed that. [Laughs]

RR: Oh yes.

BD: I don't know whether you remember, John McClellan died, both Hugh Patterson and Carrick Patterson were expecting to be named as senators.

RR: Really?

BD: But I don't think it got any consideration. It was Kaneaster Hodges. You know, my memory is a whole lot better for those early years, the events. The rest of it seems pretty like a blur. I guess I need to talk a little bit more about some personalities. Nelson, as I said, was the greatest copy editor I ever saw and worked under — plus, he had solid judgment and good news judgment. But when he got to be managing editor, Nelson didn't want to offend anybody, not in the paper, and he believed in supporting the establishment and he believed in keeping things out of the paper. So that was a — there was a struggle there. Both Shelton and I both had our problems and would consult on how we were going to get our stories in the paper. Sometimes we managed to do it

RR: You mean stories that might have embarrassed somebody at the . . .

BD: Well, some were about -- a crime story, one that the sheriff, Tom Gully, had done a miserable job of investigating. Just a factual story on that. He thought it was controversial. Even when I was news editor, on Christmas I was going to run a picture of a sign in front of some people's house, a big sign that said "Bah, humbug." I thought that was clever, and he killed that. Thought it was an invasion of privacy. If someone puts up a big sign in their front yard, I don't think they are interested in privacy. [Laughs]

RR: Yes.

BD: But there were a number of those, which was too bad.

RR: Did he ever . . .

BD: Ashmore wasn't like that, of course. He [Nelson] didn't like the stories on politics.

RR: Nelson?

BD: Yes.

RR: Of course Ashmore lived and breathed politics. What did you make of Ashmore's being involved in politics, his extracurricular activities?

BD: Well, I would have preferred that he not be [involved], but Harry could do it, you know. It certainly didn't affect his objectivity at all.

RR: Over and over again.

BD: He liked for things to come out his way, but if they didn't, he wasn't going to tell you to make it come out like he wanted. [Laughs]

RR: He worked for Adlai Stevenson in 1952.

BD: Yes, in 1952 and 1956.

RR: Both of them.

BD: Well, of course, he wrote speeches for McMath and for Orval. Wrote the famous speech that Orval gave, so he was an activist. But Harry never told anybody how to write a story. I remember Tom Davis once was writing a series on education, and Hugh Patterson was on the committee, and he sort of interfered and suggested things. So when Tom wrote the story, he asked that his byline be kept off. He said, "It's not mine. It's not the way I would have done it." I guess Shelton reported up to Harry Ashmore, and he came out and said, "Throw it all away and start all over." He said, "No one at this paper is going to write a story to which they don't want their byline attached."

RR: That's a good story. I never heard that. That must have been on the governor's

Advisory Committee on Education.

BD: That's what it was.

RR: Set up in the early Faubus years.

BD: Hugh never quite understood that, although Harry schooled him enough, but he never really quite got it, as I discovered much later.

RR: Tell me about that.

BD: Well, it was a battle to get things in the paper. He wanted some names kept out whenever the stories were embarrassing. It never happened, but he wanted it that way. He didn't have the same concept of a newspaper as Mr. Heiskell did. Mr. Heiskell didn't bother us.

RR: Even on big names?

BD: He might second-guess you, and he would criticize the hell out of something he didn't like, but, no, nothing. In fact, Mr. Heiskell decided that people with prominence should have stories when they filed for divorce, not just those agate listings. So he started with his own daughter.

RR: Really?

BD: Yes. And then when Ralph Patterson got divorced, I ran a story on that and caught hell. [Laughs] But I ran the story.

RR: What about the department store people while [unintelligible]. Did they ever try to . . .

BD: Yes, they did. They couldn't do it when they met with Harry. They could influence the . . . I have got to give him [Hugh Patterson] a lot of credit, though. I know a lot of times he was — he was a very fair-minded person, and he would back you up if you explained it to him.

RR: Harry?

BD: No, Hugh.

RR: Hugh.

BD: Yes, oh, Harry was always fair. But he [Patterson] told me, oh once, to kill a story that Dillard's didn't like. "I just can't do it," I said. "Back me up on this." He said, "Well, OK."

RR: Then later on Dillard's helped kill the paper.

BD: Yes, sure.

RR: In later years.

BD: [unintelligible] Dillard was his neighbor. They didn't get along.

[End of Tape One, Side Two]

[Beginning of Tape Two, Side Two]

RR: Where were we?

BD: Well, I'm not sure. I think we were talking about getting stories in the paper.

RR: Yes.

BD: You dealt with Mr. Heiskell sometimes, and Mr. Heiskell might disagree with you, but if you were pretty firm in your opinion, he'd let you do if it he thought he was wrong. "Well, all right," you know, he'd always said. We didn't have the same frame of references. We were running a bunch of stories about layoffs once, so he called me in back and said, you know, Mr. Heiskell said, "This isn't news. We have to be concerned about scaring people here, you know, overplaying these things." He had a point, of course, but I didn't think he did. He said -- well, he's remembering the Depression when he thought the country talked itself into a depression. "Mr. Heiskell, that is not the way I remember it. I remember that they kind of tried to sweep it under the rug at first, and everybody was giving these rosy forecasts and then it knocked the hell out of the country." Well, I was talking about 1930, and he was talking about 1898. [Laughter]

RR: Panic of 1898.

BD: Yes.

RR: Do you remember the JNH's, the JNH assignments that we all got?

BD: Yes. I used to forge JNH's. [Laughter]

RR: Well, you son of a bitch. I probably got some of them.

BD: What I did was get them through, get something done in the composing room.
[unintelligible]

RR: When I quit the paper, I had a whole drawer full of JNH's that I never had gotten around to doing, assignments like — the one that sticks in my mind that I spent weeks on — for some reason the old man got interested in some pre-Civil War Carolinian, whose name I have now forgotten. This guy had bucked the tide and was opposed to slavery, and was an abolitionist in Atlanta. And I don't know how he did it, but he became one of these minor historical figures, and for some reason Mr. Heiskell thought the *Arkansas Gazette* in 1960 needed to tell that story, and we did at great length. It covered most of a page.

BD: Yes, yes. The first JNH I ever had, I hadn't been there a month. They wanted a story on a big conveyer belt up at Bull Shoals. Well, the *Democrat* had a long story on it. And I was not sent up there. I was just supposed to write a story about the conveyer belt. Well, [with] two stories on a conveyer belt, you are not going to find much new, but I did the best I could. He called me in and we went over it, you know, word by word, sentence by sentence, and the only thing I remember about it is that he told me that you can't have two alternatives. You've got an alternative. That's always stuck with me. I am not sure he was right. Ashmore didn't think he was right. But he may have been. [Laughs]

RR: Interesting observation, anyway. Do a study about that sometime. I never knew how seriously Shelton took the JNH notes. They would come on these little — I don't know how Shelton got them — but when the reporters got them, they would be translated by Shelton, in his typewriter, and the assignment would be on a piece of copy paper that he would tear off. For some reason, Shelton was stingy with copy paper. And these assignments, these pieces of paper, would be about

two inches long, and so you would throw them in a drawer, and now and then they would go all the way to the back and just get lost, whereas if they were on an full eight-by-ten normal piece of paper, you had a better chance to keep up with them. I literally had a drawer full of them.

BD: You remember “As Time Allows.” Every reporter had a long list of those they never got to and those were Shelton. I was told that Shelton — Nelson picked Shelton as city editor, you know, a great choice. But he told him -- Nelson didn’t much reporters, he thought it all should be done by copy editors and just use the wire services. He was against using local copy on 1957. He thought we should have used wire services.

RR: Is that true?

BD: He told me that. That he didn’t believe there should be an editorial page. You could offend somebody with a wire story if they were miles away, but you weren’t supposed to offend anybody close to home.

RR: Was that his motive for wanting to use wire copy on something like...

BD: That’s what he said. He said we’d be in a lot better shape. [That] was his reason.

RR: Was he thinking about the paper’s reputation among the readers?

BD: He was thinking about the boycott and the damage that was being done, cancellation of subscriptions and advertising.

RR: Well, undoubtedly, he was right about that.

BD: Well, yes, no question about that.

RR: They wouldn’t have lost any readers at all, probably, if there hadn’t been any editorials.

BD: We wouldn’t have been much of a paper.

RR: That’s right.

BD: Mr. Heiskell didn’t feel that way.

RR: They had some crackerjack reporters covering that story, too. Ray Moseley . . .

BD: Yes.

RR: And Jerry Dhonau, Bill Lewis — who else was out there?

BD: Everybody got out there sooner or later.

RR: Well, but . . .

BD: The main reporters?

RR: Yes.

BD: I think . . .

RR: I didn't cover any of . . .

BD: Moseley and Dhonau did most of the spot stories, but a lot of the sidebars were Bill Lewis. He did a number of sidebars.

RR: He did one very important sidebar, Lewis did, called "Guns and Knives."

BD: Yes, yes. That was Bill's story.

RR: There was this huge sale of guns and knives to Negro youths. Bill called every pawn shop and gun salesman in Little Rock and couldn't find any.

BD: There weren't any. In fact, some of the stories had it that there was a little decline in business, the FBI had. There was no such report. They checked.

RR: Interesting piece of reporting for another reason. Bill's personal opinion was the exact opposite of most everybody else in the newsroom. He was a segregationist.

BD: Yes.

RR: And very vocal about it.

BD: Oh, yes.

RR: And when he came by to sit down and talk about it, never guessed what it [unintelligible].

BD: Damn, he was a good reporter. When I got to be managing editor, I sure loaded him down.

RR: Did what?

BD: Loaded him down with assignments because he did them so well and so fast.

RR: Yes.

BD: “As Time Allows,” there is sort of a story there, too. As I understand it, when Nelson made Bill city editor, Nelson didn’t like reporters and he told Shelton, “Keep them busy. I want to see their heads down.” Well, you know you tell Bill to do something, and if it is his duty, he does it. I remember — Of course, I wasn’t a reporter, so I never got those things, but I used to see them. Other people showed them to me, a list that long, “As Time Allows.” Well, at the time, they were allowed — there was no allowance of time some of them.

RR: That’s actually what my drawer was full of mostly, a few JNH’s, mostly “As Time Allows.”

BD: They’re probably still up there somewhere.

RR: Yes. Locked away. [Laughs]

BD: A lot of them were good, very good ideas, and should have been assigned.

RR: What about after you became managing editor? How did things go?

BD: Well, there’s a little different world. You aren’t as close to people.

RR: What year did you?

BD: By the way, that surprised me. 1972, first of the year.

RR: Why did that surprise you?

BD: I don’t know. I guess I should have known better. I knew there would be a little difference, but [it was] much more than I thought. [I was] treated differently, and I . . .

RR: By the reporters, you mean?

BD: The reporters, staff members. People were not as open, but I don’t know. There was, again, another terrible period. We had strike number two, although it wasn’t a strike, guild movement number two, which I fought tooth and nail and won that one.

RR: What year was that?

BD: That was 197 - oh, that would have been about 1973. I had just been named managing editor. Kind of got hit with that. They were justified in asking for more money, God knows, but we were under guidelines. Nobody was supposed to get any raises nationwide. I mean, not a guideline we were under . . .

RR: Nixon's wage and hour freeze . . .

BD: Yes. Very strict rules. You weren't supposed to increase your payroll. And then after that, they went to guidelines and those were not compulsory, but Hugh was negotiating with the printers, and he was using that argument, I guess, not to give them a raise. So we had to put everything on hold. And I already had assurances that we would give raises across the board, but we couldn't do anything when the guild movement came up. You couldn't give a raise, or they would put you in the federal penitentiary. [Laughs] And I was never ever to tell anybody. I never told anybody we were going to do this, unless we did it. So . . .

RR: Was there much bitterness over that campaign?

BD: Yes, a lot. We had four days of representation hearing and then had an unfair labor practices charge. And I was it — I was the paper at both those hearings. We won every point. I knew something about unions. I had been president of a guild chapter. I knew what the rules were, but I heard a lot of lying — that disappointed me — and a lot of unfairness.

RR: Like what?

BD: Well, they were trying to pretend -- supervisors are not eligible for any protection from the NLRB. Well, some supervisors were saying they weren't [supervisors]. They were lying about what their jobs were. And in the case of the librarian who filed an unfair labor practices charge, I fired her. She had the people who worked for her saying that she didn't supervise, which was an out and out lie.

RR: Who was that?

BD: Detra Rivers. [unintelligible]. But it was tough at the hearing because I was

hearing stuff that was not true, and all I could say was “That’s not so.” They took my word over theirs. That’s what it boiled down to.

RR: The newsroom had changed a lot by that time.

BD: Well, we had — it was a feminist movement is what it was, by and large.

RR: The guild?

BD: Yes, that was just the thing to do then. Women were feeling their oats. [Laughs] Now, [they] were rebellious. They wanted to get us white males, us good old boys. I have never been a God damned good old boy in all my life. [Laughter] Well, then they told me that I shouldn’t take it personally, and I said, “Hell, I sure will take it personally. I don’t want you to do it.” And I told Hugh that if he’d stay out of it, we might have a chance. The night before the election they claimed over 80% of the vote by their headcount, and it ended up a tie, which is a victory for management. I got to talk to them three times. You can’t promise anything. You have to be awfully careful what you say. Certainly, you can’t threaten, but I wouldn’t have done that anyhow. What I did was take their own propaganda, which the guild was shipping in to them, and read it and discuss it and make fun of it. That is all I could do. I guess it worked.

RR: That pretty well ended the guild organizing?

BD: It was over. It was over after the unfair labor practices hearings we won. We won on that.

RR: What were the other main problems you got into as managing editor?

BD: Dealing with the publisher, and then when Carrick came along, it really got rough.

RR: Do you want to talk about that?

BD: Well, let’s leave that for another time. [Laughter]

RR: Let’s wind this up with a couple of yarns. I remember something you saw yourself that I did not, the night Ray Moseley got beat up.

BD: I didn’t see it. I was out getting a beer. He been carted off in the ambulance by

the time I got back.

RR: Somehow I missed it all together.

BD: Tom Swent kind of had it in for Ray, and some said it was because Ray was going to New York, and he resented that. I don't know whether that is true or not, but it was silly, the whole argument. You couldn't even call it an argument. Tom hit him. Tom's a big guy, strong, pretty good hands. He hit him when he was sitting down and had his face turned. Tom wasn't a coward, but it was just — he wasn't a cowardly man -- but it was a brutal thing to do. And then he jumped on him when he was down and beat him some more until he was unconscious, got a concussion. And Ronnie Farrar, I didn't see this, but Ronnie Farrar is the one who broke it up.

RR: One of the newest reporters on the staff at that time.

BD: Yes. And Nelson came down. Swent called him and said, "I just beat the hell out of one of your reporters, and I am about ready to get another one." Nelson came down, and he was shaking like a leaf. He joked about it later, but he wasn't joking that night.

RR: You ever see anything like that happen in the newsroom ever before or after?

BD: No, I never saw a fight. Count Dew used to have fights, they said, before I was there, the Count would fight anybody. He never won, but he would fight. He'd had a big argument with the printer and been through a galley [unintelligible] and he went home about midnight or after — walked, I think, about sixteen blocks to the house. He'd gone back to put on his regular clothes, which were nothing to brag about, but they were a little bit nicer than the rags he wore for working clothes. This printer came in and said, "Wait a minute, Mr. Dew. We have to settle this argument." Count Dew said, "Well, will you let me put my work clothes back on?" And he did, and they squared off. They moved the desk back and they fought, and Count Dew lost. [Laughter] He had old — do you

remember Clovis Scopin?

RR: Yes.

BD: Clovis's job was really to be kind of a bodyguard, to help throw people out of the office. Which makes a lot of sense

RR: He was on the reporting staff?

BD: Yes. He was not there when I got there and then during the war.

RR: Heard a story about Clovis. Interviewed the former sheriff of Yell County for my Faubus book. And he told me about one night old Clovis was driving across Yell County and at that time he was working for Orval Faubus, parks and recreation, or something like that, and one of the sheriff's deputies had to arrest old Clovis for drunk driving. He kept him until he sobered up and sent him on his way.

BD: Well, another story about Clovis they told — Clovis was a pilot. I don't think he was in the Air Force. He was in the CAP, Civilian Air Patrol, something like that. And he always had excuses to be late showing up for work. This one [time] he called and said he was in Atlanta and he was rained in, having trouble taking off, and he might be a little late. Well, he was there in about twenty or thirty minutes [Laughs]. Came in with an old World War I pilot's uniform, one of those caps, and drunk as a bull owl. [Laughter]

RR: Flew from Atlanta in twenty minutes.

BD: There really are so many good stories, I can't . . .

RR: I actually saw this one with my own eyes. Our friend Tom Davis set fire to a wastebasket. I think you were there. Do you remember that?

BD: No, I don't remember that.

RR: It was getting along toward deadline, and Tom had this fierce concentration as he was smoking cigars at that time. Dumped an ashtray and it blazed up.

BD: Oh.

RR: Copy boy came and put it out and Tom never knew anything about it. Flames

were leaping in the air three or four feet right at his elbow. [Laughter] He went on editing copy.

BD: Well, apparently Count Dew did that on a regular basis, would set, not a wastebasket, but a pile of papers on fire in the newsroom. God, that was a dirty newsroom. [Laughs] Unpainted.

RR: Old wooden floor, I guess.

BD: Yes, old wooden floor. Yes. Everything needed paint.

RR: Noisy.

BD: Yes.

RR: Not just the typewriters, but those teletype machines.

BD: Teletypes. Well, the teletypes were someplace else at first. AP had a little office off the newsroom— then they moved them all out, so the telegraph editor could get to them. We had about eight wires.

RR: Pat Carithers was the telegraph editor for a lot of the time you were there.

BD: Pat succeeded me as telegraph editor. When I became news editor, he became telegraph editor and he was a darned good one.

RR: Copy boys. Any copy boys that stand out in your mind?

BD: Well, there were a couple who used to — who rang up these football betting sheets. One of them became president of First National Bank, Eddie [Cain?] [unintelligible]. [Laughs] My favorite was a guy named Bill Sausbee [sp?], who was a cunning little rascal. I sent him out for cigars — four Dutch Masters maybe was a dollar — so he came back with an arm full of them. I said, “Bill, how did you get these for a dollar?” “Them old ladies don’t look.” [Laughter] “Just hand them a dollar.” They were taking bets mostly. Bill was a smart kid. You know, he was school smart and didn’t know it. Nobody ever told him he was smart, and he started learning a lot of things at the *Gazette* and became a very good student, good grades in English and everything. He was smart little devil.

RR: What became of him?

BD: He was vice president of some chemical supply company the last I heard. That was several years ago.

RR: Of course, they didn't have copy girls.

BD: No.

RR: The newsroom was not considered a fit place for a girl, I guess.

BD: No, that was another one of the feminist gimmicks, too. They would try to apply for jobs as copy boys. The copy boy system was a bastion of white male supremacy. [Laughs] Its — But I remember Mary Lou Portis came out. Mary Lou Portis became Mary Lou Trimble after the place turned into a regular Peyton Place. She came out and wanted to be a copy boy, copy girl. She was working in the library, and I said, "Mary Lou, go back in the library. You don't want to be in copy." But some women would come up and apply for the jobs, and I would give them to them and then they'd never show up. They wanted me to say no. Even when I didn't have an opening, I'd say, "Well, yes, you can come and work," knowing they wouldn't show.

RR: Well, I heard Nelson, with my own ears, say that he didn't think that the newsroom was a fit place for a woman.

BD: Yes, that was a big thing for him. Yes, I guess he was around while the war was going on, and they started bringing in people who had never been in the newsroom. That was largely a pose later on.

RR: Like what?

BD: A pose kind of thing.

RR: [unintelligible], did it? Well, he must have hired Georgia Davis.

BD: He hired Georgia Davis. She was the first woman on the copy desk. That was a problem — when I took over as managing editor, you had those things to deal with, the feminist movement and entrapment. Black women, when I had three or

four coming in, they would all say the same thing: they wanted a job. And I'd say, "Well, do you have any experience, you know, in journalism?" "No, I expect you to train me." And I would say, "Okay, go down to the public library and check out a book on journalism, read it, and come back and I will give you a test." [Laughs] One came up once and applied for a job in the newsroom and didn't get it, so she went downstairs and applied in the advertising department and then filed against them. They'd said the wrong thing.

RR: You hired some black reporters.

BD: Oh, yes., about three or four anyhow. Very good reporters. Jim Meriwether was an excellent reporter. Jennifer Hopkins.

RR: Who?

BD: Jennifer Hopkins.

RR: Yes.

BD: I hired her out of [University of James?] in central Arkansas. Then there were at least two in sports. Wadie Moor was first, and Wadie had no experience at all. In fact, what Wadie did at first was just type, type stories from the *Sporting News*. You know, learn to type and learn how to do a story. He turned out to be a, well, *the* authority on high school sports. In fact, that's the job he has now. When the *Gazette* folded, he got a job with Arkansas Athletic Activities Committee.

RR: What's become of Meriwether? James Meriwether?

BD: I don't know where James — James went to somewhere out of state.

RR: I was thinking about him the other day. I needed to get a hold of him for some reason or other.

BD: I think it was with Gannett. I've got a book here about the Gannett empire. Have you heard about this? Well, not about the *Gazette*, [unintelligible].

RR: Oh, I would like to read that.

BD: Well, I will give it to you.

RR: Well, I am about to head out.

RR: Well, let me know when you get back. I'll try my best . . .

[End of Session I]