

Gazette Project

Interview with

W. L. (Pat) Patterson

1 June 2001

Arkansas State Police Headquarters

Little Rock, Arkansas

Interviewer: Jerol Garrison

Jerol Garrison: It is June 1, the year 2001. This is Jerol Garrison. I am interviewing Pat Patterson, former photographer for the *Arkansas Gazette*. We are at the headquarters of the Arkansas State Police, where Pat has worked since shortly after the *Gazette* closed. Pat, this interview is part of an oral history project being conducted by the Arkansas Center for Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. The Center will transcribe the interview, and you will have an opportunity to review the transcript and make changes before the document goes into the archives of the University Library. It will be available to persons interested in Arkansas history. Pat, are you willing to proceed with this interview?

PP: Oh, you bet!

JG: I have a form for you to read and sign if you would, please.

PP: You could maybe do Wayne Jordan, too. He's down on the other end of the building in the Family Protection Unit, so there's a thought. [Laughs]

JG: Pat, I wonder if you would start off by describing the time that you worked for the *Arkansas Gazette* and talk about your duties.

PP: Okay. Let me give you maybe a little bit of background. I started in newspaper work in 1952, when I was still in junior high school. After getting out of the service, I worked for a small newspaper in Nebraska for about five years.

JG: What was the name of that paper?

PP: That was the *Hastings Tribune*, owned by Fred Seaton, who was Secretary of the Interior under Eisenhower. It was one of those newspapers where you get great experience, which, of course, is synonymous with slowly starving to death. So [laughs] I had a wife and three children by that time, and after having asked for a raise, I got a fifteen-cent-an-hour raise, which aggravated me. I fired off several resumés and, within a couple of days, heard from A. R. Nelson, who was the managing editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* at that time. This was in the summer of 1968. A. R. Nelson was originally from El Dorado, which was my home town. A. R. hired me sight unseen on the telephone. So I came down --- I forget --- oh, I guess it was around noon one day. I went up to the photo department in the *Arkansas Gazette*, and Gene Prescott was in there. Gene asked me who I was, and I told him, and he said, "Well, I had heard some rumors that you might be coming. The boss, Larry Obsitnik, doesn't know anything about this. Boy, this is going to be fun!" [Laughter] And Larry was, I think, just a little bit miffed, maybe, for the first six months or so that I was there, but he turned out to be a really good friend. [Laughs] Let's see. I remember in 1971, Steve Keese had

just gotten out of the Air Force. He had been doing some work for the Jacksonville paper and also for the *Democrat*. The *Democrat* hired him. Of course, there was Glenn Moon and Owen Gunter, some old timers at the *Democrat*. But Steve was new talent and very talented, and I thought the *Gazette* needed Steve, so I set up a meeting between Steve and A. R. Nelson at the old Brunswick Pool Hall, which is where Ashley's is in the Capitol Hotel now. It was kind of a semi-sleazy pool hall. They sold beer. A. R. and Jimmy Jones, who was the state editor, used to like to go over there early in the afternoon and shoot a little pool and drink a beer. That's where A. R. interviewed Steve Keese. So he hired him, and I did this all behind Larry's back. I think that pissed Larry off again. [Laughs]

JG: You were getting off to a good start!

PP: Oh, man! [Laughs] At that time, let's see --- the photographers were just Gene and Larry. I think Larry officially came on board in about 1949 and Gene Prescott in about 1951. There was one other photographer, Morris White. Morris --- I think his wife had family in Springdale, so Morris eventually ended up going with his wife back up to the Springdale area. He went to work for the *Springdale News*, I believe, although I don't know how much work he ever did as a photographer. There was Charlie Bickford, who was a photographer there at that time. Morris ended up, I think, working for, or running, their circulation department. But Morris White was quite a character. I liked him.

JG: Could you talk a little bit about your duties at the *Gazette* and how you went

about operating during a typical day?

PP: Oh, what would be a typical day? I worked mostly evenings, early on, at least. Some days I would come in at 10:00 a.m. and work through until 7:00 p.m., and the rest of the time I would come in at 1:00 p.m. and be on duty until 10:00 p.m. We just did whatever was necessary. I, pretty early on, got a lot of society assignments. This worked out later on, as the paper evolved, to be doing a lot of food and fashion assignments. In 1989, I think it was, I became picture editor. I was picture editor for right at nine-and-a-half to ten years.

JG: What was the year you became picture editor?

PP: I think about 1989.

JG: The *Gazette* closed in 1991.

PP: I'm sorry. Not 1989. 1979 to 1989. Something like that. I didn't do as much spot news photography then --- I merely worked with the other photographers. I got to hire an awfully good staff. Among them was Kelly Quinn, Art Meripol, and Jeff Mitchell. Jeff is somewhere in the Dallas area now. I think he mostly works as a photographer for Reuters. Art Meripol is one of the senior photographers doing mostly travel stuff for *Southern Living* magazine. Kelly Quinn lives in Little Rock and does mostly commercial photography now.

JG: When you first went to work for the *Gazette*, did you get your assignments from Larry Obsitnik, or did you get them from the *Gazette* city editor, Bill Shelton, or how did that work?

PP: They were, at that point in time, mostly sent to Larry, and Larry would dole them

out to whoever he thought he wanted to send on an assignment.

JG: These were little slips of paper Bill Shelton had typed out on the typewriter?

PP: Or scribbled! [Laughs] Or scribbled!

JG: He didn't always type them, then?

PP: No. No. And they usually contained a minimal amount of information. I remember back in the, I guess, late 1960s or early 1970s, one time I got an assignment to --- oh, for goodness sakes --- to go out and cover someone who had killed a rattlesnake or something, maybe in the Hillcrest area. I made the mistake of photographing the snake. Shelton, old stoneface, he was just acting bad as he could be --- threw the picture down. "Don't you know it's in our style book that we don't make pictures of snakes because Mr. Heiskell, at some point, had decided that we shouldn't show pictures of snakes to disturb people over their morning coffee." [Laughs] Oh, me!

JG: From then on, you didn't run them. You didn't take them, either.

PP: Didn't run them. Didn't take them. But I was supposed to just make a picture of the person who had killed the snake and show where it had been. "Okay. All right. Let's just file this away." [Laughter]

JG: Sort of a non-picture. [Laughter] So you were taking care of these assignments provided by Larry Obsitnik. You described a lot of it as being society pictures and fashion. Did you get involved in covering accidents occasionally?

PP: Yes. As that would happen, anybody who was on call would go out and do that.

JG: Did you get some calls in the middle of the night?

PP: Very rarely. Very rarely. Mostly because we had someone on duty until about 10:00 at night. Usually that person would take care of that. I got a lot of sports assignments, too. I began covering the Razorbacks the first year that I was there. I got to photograph them for twenty-five years, until they sold the paper out from under us.

JG: Razorbacks --- that would be the football team, the basketball team, the track team, or what did you cover?

PP: Football.

JG: Football.

PP: Football. At that point in time, 1968, basketball was just a sort of incidental sport. Track, if it was even existent [laughs], it was hardly ever reported on. Now, when I lived in Nebraska, track was quite big up there, and I photographed a lot of track and field events.

JG: What about women's sports? Did you get involved in covering any of that?

PP: Not early on because, again, it was almost nonexistent. We didn't have a woman sports reporter, either, until --- I'm going to guess --- maybe mid-1970s, when Orville Henry hired Brenda Scisson. She was the first woman reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* Sports Department.

JG: I remember her. Well, how did things change when you were named picture editor? You actually either had to handle the assignments yourself or farm them out to the staff?

PP: That's right. That's right. And I began being really on call for about seven days a

week. I would go in even on the weekends a lot just to take a look around and check things out. It got to be old. [Laughs]

JG: Was Obsitnik still there when you became picture editor?

PP: Oh, yes. Obsitnik was there. Larry retired, I think, in about 1983, was it? And then almost within, I think, six months, he got stomach cancer or colon cancer and was dead in 1984. We miss him.

JG: Yes. He was a great guy. He was a very colorful personality type.

PP: Gene, I think, worked there until around the time of Gannett. Gannett owned the *Gazette* for about five years before they bailed out.

JG: Did you ever get into a dispute with Bill Shelton over picture assignments?

PP: Rarely over picture assignments, but over picture content, I did. In 1973, Nikon came out with their first fish-eye lens. Sixteen-millimeter fish-eye lens. Vertical lines were curved on the periphery of the image. I bought one and used it for some things. Now, it's an ideal lens if you're shooting in an igloo, or an airplane fuselage, or someplace where you've got some curved surfaces. The curvature of lines is more . . .

JG: Blends in with the negative.

PP: Yes. You don't notice them, and all. But I used the thing a time or two for some things just for the distortion. Shelton didn't like it. He said, "Put that funny lens away!" [Laughter] He wanted pictures that were different, but not too different.

JG: There was a time when the *Gazette* made a lot of pictures of officers of organizations. Groups of four looking at the camera. When did that policy

change? When did that stop?

PP: Oh, I don't know. This was an old, traditional thing. I think all newspapers used to do this. That just kind of went away after awhile. Then, with competition and the price of newsprint and all, they don't do very much of this now because that could be used for part of the news hole. I think the *Gazette* was never really known to be a picture newspaper. They more wanted pictures to break up the page a little bit to keep it from looking so gray. That was the main idea in having pictures, although I think, early on, I began shooting some things and pitching them for a picture page, particularly on weekends --- like Bill Rutherford, who was an assistant managing editor, he would run a picture page or half a picture page. I remember one I did of just "arty" pictures of the bridges of Little Rock that got used.

JG: As a picture page?

PP: Yes.

JG: When did you start taking these pictures for a picture page? Would that have been in the 1970s, or was it in the 1980s?

PP: Oh, I think that was in the 1970s. Yes.

JG: When did the *Gazette* stop using those pictures of four officers of a club looking at the camera. When did that go away?

PP: Boy, I'm not really sure. That just sort of slowly disappeared. Of course, you know, we were still doing that sort of thing in the society section.

JG: Yes.

PP: Years ago, it was nothing to run a full-length bride in the society section, but anymore now, they just pretty well use mug shots of the brides.

JG: While you were picture editor, did the paper gradually start using more action shots to break up the news hole? I'm talking about pictures like they run now, of kids playing with their mother in a city park. When did that trend get going?

PP: Oh, that trend had always been there to a degree. Usually, it was on the --- you know, the photographer himself would initiate these things --- when you're not busy, you know? It's pointless and boring to sit around the office, and you're not going to find any pictures if you are sitting around the office. Even back in the 1950s, Larry Obsitnik really started doing that. "Larry Obsitnik's side show pictures." And Larry had . . .

JG: "Side show pictures?"

PP: Yes. That's what they called them. "Larry's side show."

JG: That name was on the pictures, you mean?

PP: Yes, above the pictures. But it would be, maybe, an owl or something on a parking meter, or just something that Larry had found.

JG: A little something unusual?

PP: Yes. But I encouraged all of my photographers to just go out and look for things. If you didn't find anything, I mean, that's fine, too. But anytime you were on your way to an assignment, you were just expected to look for whatever you could find.

JG: What about pagers? When did you all start using pagers so that you could be in

close touch with the city desk in case of a severe accident or major breaking news?

PP: I think that probably was in the early 1980s. I'm guessing that that's about when we started using pagers. The *Gazette* had had radios, too. We had a radio on an assigned frequency, and an antenna on top of the *Gazette* building, but this was used only by the circulation department until, all of a sudden, it occurred to us that, "Hey, we could buy little two-ways [radios] with this frequency and assign both reporters and photographers." So we did this, I guess, again, around the mid-1980s. Probably, also, in the mid- to early 1980s, we bought a transmitter for photographs of --- we had both AP [Associated Press] and UPI [United Press International] wire photo service, and we thought the UPI transmitter was maybe a little bit better deal than the AP at that point in time. And so we bought one of those so that, in particular, when we went to football games down in Texas, we could take a portable darkroom along. We would usually work with --- oh, say, at Texas A&M, we would work with the student newspaper people and use their lab and process and transmit pictures from the game.

JG: So what transmitter did you use there? Did you use the Texas A&M transmitter, or . . . ?

PP: No, no. We used this little suitcase-sized --- well, small, maybe briefcase-sized transmitter along with us. It was a UPI transmitter, but it belonged to us.

JG: And so it could go anywhere you went?

PP: Yes.

JG: Did you have to plug it into an electricity source?

PP: Oh, sure. Yes. We had to do that. We had to access a telephone. We all got really good about taking a telephone mouthpiece apart and hooking it onto the terminals there.

JG: Did this suitcase carry the paraphenalia for developing the pictures?

PP: Oh, no, this was just a transmitter. It probably weighed twenty pounds and . . .

JG: How did you develop the pictures when you were on the road like that?

PP: We took a complete darkroom set along with us.

JG: Oh, so you had two things. You had the portable darkroom and the . . .

PP: For film processing and also for making prints. For example, I went to the Orange Bowl in December of 1985, down in Miami. I did pictures every day for about a week prior to the game and went back to the hotel and processed and printed. Dried the prints with a hair dryer. Put them on the drum of the transmitter, dialed up, and moved them back to the *Gazette*.

JG: Right from your hotel room?

PP: Yes. These transmitters, both the UPI and the AP transmitters, at that point in time, took about ten minutes to move a black and white picture. Then, later, AP came out with another analog transmitter like this that had red, blue and green filters, so you could move color pictures. Then we changed our procedure. We had a little device called "the road warrior." It was a stainless steel tank that had room for four one-liter chemistry bottles and little pockets on the side and an immersion heater that we kept at about one hundred two degrees Fahrenheit. The

bottles that were in there we used for our film chemistry. We shot color negative film. We took a color enlarger along and actually made color prints right there, which developed in one of the little pockets on one side of "the road warrior" and bleach fixed on the other side. About that time --- this was probably 1987, 1988, 1989 --- somewhere around in there, Kodak gave us the new generation rapid-access paper. Our development time was about forty-five seconds for the developer and another forty-five seconds for the bleach fix. Then rinse it a little bit and dry it with a hair dryer. We would put little register marks on the four corners, a little gray-scale strip, and a color bar. [We'd] scribble in the caption and put it on the drum of the transmitter. Then [we'd] begin the transmission. Now, we've got ten minutes for the cyan, ten minutes for the magenta, and ten minutes for the yellow image, so there's half an hour to move one color picture, but that was the state of the game at that time.

JG: This would have been in the late 1980s, I guess?

PP: Yes. Late 1980s. And then, of course, all of that changed with the digital darkroom equipment.

JG: Oh. Everything's different now, isn't it?

PP: Oh, yes. Yes!

JG: Do people transmit pictures anymore?

PP: Yes, they do. I think as late as the demise of the *Gazette*, you were able to move a digital picture, scanned from a negative or a transparency, in three or four minutes for the whole project. And I think that's down, now, to --- if you've got

DSL, you can probably do it in ninety seconds or thereabouts. It doesn't take very long.

[Tape Stopped]

JG: Pat, I wonder if you could describe the people that you worked with there at the *Gazette*. Could you tell me a little bit about them?

PP: Oh, let's see. My memories of Mr. Heiskell are just of this little, old, incredibly ancient man [laughs] who just sort of dotted around. I remember his desk was just piled high with all manner of crap. I should talk, because my desk is also that way! [Laughs]

JG: His went up higher.

PP: Oh, yes. It certainly did! [Laughs] I remember his hundredth birthday. And when did he die? He died not too long after his hundredth birthday. Then Shelton was the city editor. I liked Shelton, and I think he put the fear of God into reporters more than he did photographers. I think he had just a natural disdain for photographers as a necessary evil. [Laughs] Orville Henry, I liked Orville and his wife, Carolyn. I remember them on our road trips down to Texas. We would charter a plane and fly back. I usually rode "shotgun" with the pilot, and Orville and Carolyn, right behind me, and Jim Bailey, I think, back behind them. Orville and Carolyn smoking Lucky Strike after Lucky Strike, and me just gasping for air. [Laughs] Oh, me! I remember road trips down to Baylor. At this point in time --- I'm going to say early 1970s --- we would charter --- we would fly down early in the day to Dallas. We would stop off there. Bailey and

Orville would --- we covered the Texas v. Oklahoma game because a couple of weeks later, we [the Arkansas Razorbacks] were going to be playing Texas. And so I would photograph that game, and that would just almost wear me out because both Barry Switzer and Darrell Royal would just give out so many sideline passes. You had all manner of people on the sideline, and I had to act like a berzerker, that I was going to hit somebody in the head with a long lens, to be able to get a position to photograph the game. And then after that game, Orville would stay and finish writing his story. Bailey and I would take the rental car and beat it on down to Waco to the Baylor game.

JG: The Baylor v. Razorback game?

PP: The Baylor v. Razorback game. It was at night. And then Orville would, after he had filed his story, fly on down there and meet us at the game. Back in those days, Baylor students and the fans --- there just weren't --- there'd be more Razorback fans there. Maybe three or four thousand, or so. And they would be outnumbering the Baylor fans, the students, who would have gone home, probably, or gone to parties at halftime! [Laughter] It was almost anti-climactic! [Laughs]

JG: Boy, that was a busy weekend when you did that! Two games!

PP: It was. It was. And then I had to come in on Sunday and process and print for the Monday paper. Back then, we didn't have our own pictures in on the Sunday paper.

JG: They didn't?

PP: From those early days, because we didn't have transmitters.

JG: You would rely on the . . .

PP: Just on AP and UPI. Yes.

JG: But you would get yours processed for the Monday paper?

PP: Yes.

JG: Maybe run a whole page.

PP: Let me back that up, now. I said early 1970s. Come to think of it, we were doing that in 1969. Yes. Because I remember that was with --- oh my, who was the quarterback then? Bill Montgomery. In 1969 --- Bill Montgomery and his dad, Catfish. What a character that guy was! [Laughs] Oh, man! And Billy Burnett, I believe, whose older brother, Bobby, had also been a great Razorback. Billy Burnett --- I remember him just incredibly leaping over the line of scrimmage to gain ground and make touchdowns and stuff like that. And for years afterwards, whenever I would see some other player do that, it always gave me a little bit of a flashback to him. His dad had been a coach. They moved up to north Arkansas somewhere, but he was down at Smackover back when I was growing up.

JG: So you started using your own *Gazette* pictures in the Sunday paper following a football game along about 1969? Or later?

PP: Well, let's see now. If it had been in state, either at Fayetteville or at Little Rock, the photographers would charter a plane and we'd fly to Fayetteville, shoot the game, then fly back to Little Rock, process, and it would make the Sunday paper then.

JG: Oh.

PP: And, of course, if it had been at War Memorial Stadium, it would make the Sunday paper. But if it was a game in Texas, we relied on wire photos and had a follow-up because Orville --- Orville wrote just volumes. He'd write thirty inches if it was a great win on game day. He'd write forty inches if we lost because he had to "splain why." [Laughter] And then he'd do almost as much for the Monday paper, analytically and all. [Laughs]

JG: Well, now, when you were photographing these football games, did you ever get bumped by players on the edge of the field and get your camera knocked away?

PP: I never did. I never did. I've always worked with long enough lenses and was alert enough that I never got run over on the football field. Now, on the other hand, when Arkansas got into having a decent basketball program and we began covering that, I used to love working with a wide-angle lens right under the goal. I got run over by basketball players a lot of times. They don't have the padding and all, and so it's probably rougher, although they didn't weigh as much. [Laughter] I never got any equipment damaged or seriously injured myself, but I've seen a lot of that.

JG: So you were using a wide-angle lens. That's interesting. That way you could cover an exciting play, one way or the other. It might be on the edge of your negative, but you'd still get it.

PP: Well, I would just shoot --- it would be like a full-length shot of whoever was working under the goal. [Laughs]

JG: So the wide-angle lens enabled you to get the whole player instead of maybe just his head.

PP: Oh, yes --- instead of just faces. Yes.

JG: There's that fish-eye lens again.

PP: Well, it wouldn't be a fish-eye but, oh, a twenty-four millimeter! [Laughs]

JG: What do you remember about Larry Obsitnik? What was it like when you were working for him there in the early years that you were at the *Gazette*?

PP: Larry was one of these bigger-than-life characters. He was a big, teddy bear-like man with a seemingly gruff demeanor, and a reputation for partying. He was fond of going to the --- he would go to the Downtown Officer's Club in the evening and tank up a little bit. I remember one time going along with him and him telling me, "Pat, you need to learn how to do this, so you can be prepared to be able to work under adverse conditions." [Laughter]

JG: You wouldn't be as afraid to take on the adverse conditions!

PP: [Laughs]. Oh, me! Gene Prescott, he was a clown. He was the Art Carney of the department. He was Art Carney to Obsitnik's Jackie Gleason.

JG: Oh!

PP: [Laughter] That's maybe the best way to describe that. [Laughter]

JG: Very good! Were you working at the *Gazette* when it closed in 1991?

PP: Yes, I was.

JG: You were the picture editor?

PP: No, I was not at that time. After me, Carrick hired a guy . . .

JG: Carrick Patterson?

PP: Yes. He hired a guy named Jerry McCullough. He wanted to be our "photo coach," and he wanted to inspire us to compete among ourselves, and everybody hated him. I had, over the years, hired people who I felt worked well together --- worked like family, acted like family. We were a very close-knit group. Everybody would help one another. We didn't feel like we needed to compete with each other. There are photo staffs that have little cliques. I think this is not the way to go. I don't know. But, as I say, nobody liked McCullough. I don't think he was there six months to a year, then he was gone.

JG: This would have been in the late 1980s?

PP: Maybe 1990 --- about 1990 --- something like that. And then Jeff Mitchell handled the photo desk until the close of the *Gazette*.

JG: You said McCullough wanted the photographers to compete with each other to get the better picture, is that it?

PP: Yes, yes! I mean --- my goodness! We had three television stations and another newspaper to compete with. Why in the world waste your effort --- oh, well, whatever. My last assignment for the *Gazette* was with Marty Epes and Sharon Mosley to shoot our fall fashion section, which I did in Blanchard Caverns. We had four models and I photographed them down there in the caverns with studio strobes. I had the girls do freeze modeling. In other words, they had to hit their pose and hold perfectly still because after I had everything all set up, I had to turn off my modeling lights on the strobes, and I think I was doing about a two-second

time exposure at maybe f/5.6 to pick up the ambient light of the caverns behind them and then hit them at the end of the exposure with the flash.

[End of Side One, Tape One]

[Beginning of Side Two, Tape One]

JG: Okay. We will continue with the interview.

PP: This was just a great assignment --- kind of challenging --- to be able to show both the caverns and the models. I enjoyed that assignment very much. Unfortunately, before that section ran, the *Gazette* closed.

JG: And so the section never ran?

PP: No, it never ran! [Laughs]

JG: Did it get made up in page form?

PP: No, no. Never got that far. It was going to run, I think, maybe the Sunday following the close of the *Gazette*. That was a terrible, terrible experience.

JG: The closing?

PP: Yes, it was just . . .

JG: What day of the week was that?

PP: You know, I don't remember. I do remember it was just . . .

JG: Seems like it was a Friday.

PP: . . . it was pretty funereal, though.

JG: Were you able to get your photo equipment out?

PP: Oh, yes. That was no problem.

JG: So you didn't have to leave anything behind?

PP: No. No.

JG: How about negatives? Those just stayed there, I guess.

PP: Yes. I had some --- there are some negatives that I kind of wish I had from some of those earlier days. But at the same time that I was shooting black and white on a lot of this stuff, I was also shooting color. A lot of those early days of football, I would always shoot a little color along with that. I have pictures from Frank Broyles' and Darrell Royal's last game. That was, what, 1973, was it? Or was it 1974? It was, as the old saying goes, "It was a dark and stormy night." It poured the early part of the game, and then it kind of eased up. Just prior to the second half, Frank and Darrell met out in the middle of the field and talked. I got color pictures of them out there.

JG: Where are those negatives?

PP: Somewhere in my files at my other photo lab. [Laughs]

JG: So you have them?

PP: Yes. Yes. I remember a couple of guys who worked for Channel 7 at that time. They were shooting film at this time. Jim Casey, who's still with Channel 7, worked up on the photo deck and shot each game play with an overhead camera. And then there was Joe Thompson, who was down shooting sideline and highlight-type things down on the field. I remember Joe was typically dressed in jeans, tennis shoes, sweatshirt. He was just soaked. He was just soaked.

JG: Who is this?

PP: Joe Thompson. Parenthetically, Joe Thompson went on to shoot for one of the

fishing show guys and kind of got out of the business. I think he's in fishing charters down on the Gulf Coast of Florida now, somewhere down around Pensacola. I remember going down there and Joe handing me his camera --- what was it? A Bolex, think, with an optical viewfinder. He said, "You want to see something stupid? Look through the viewfinder." I looked in there, and it's got water in there. There's a little bubble moving back and forth! But, of course, it didn't hurt his film or anything! [Laughs]

JG: Just in the viewfinder.

PP: Yes! [Laughs] Oh, me!

[Tape Stopped]

JG: Okay. We are continuing with the interview with Pat Patterson.

PP: I remember one payday that I wasn't scheduled to come to work until 1:00 p.m., I think, that day. My wife was with me. We had come in --- we heard about a plane crash up at the air base, so she and I went up there to make pictures of it, which we eventually did. Typical Air Force: "No, you can't go out there now. Now you can go out there, but you can't approach." And so on and so forth. And all the news media are there. We had actually been, I think, bussed into the area near the runway where the plane had crashed. You know, the tail section is sticking up here --- it was a C-130, I think. Then we got back on the bus, went back to some building, and there the information officer gave us the information about the crew and what had happened, and so on and so forth. I was taking notes in a notebook. One of the wire service people --- I won't use her name, but

everybody knew her --- She was a little, short gal who worked for UPI. [Laughs]
And I see Jerol grinning, so he knows exactly who I'm talking about. [Laughs]
But she got on the phone and started calling this thing in, and she had everything
all turned around. My wife was looking at her and at me, like, "Was she at the
same briefing that we were?" [Laughter]

JG: What was your wife's name?

PP: That was my wife, Adele.

JG: A-D-E-L-E?

PP: Yes. We were married thirty-three years, or we were in our thirty-third year. She
died five days before Christmas of 1992, after the *Gazette* had closed. But,
anyway, we got back, and Bill Lewis got the assignment to do the story on the
crash, which he did by telephone. I have the utmost respect for Bill Lewis
because he could get information over the telephone, put it together, and start his
lead just effortlessly. Anytime I had to write something, beads of sweat would
pop out on my forehead, and I agonized over the lead. Of course, once you get
your lead, the rest of it just follows. But of all the wire news stories and the story
that was in our competitor's, the *Democrat*, Bill Lewis's was the one that made
the most sense. I have utmost respect for him. I also remember a reporter named
Jerol Garrison, who --- I think there were a lot of photographers who didn't like to
go on assignment with Jerol because Jerol would be so meticulous about getting
every little bit of detail [laughs] that I think it frustrated the photographers who
wanted to "get in and get out quickly." [Laughs]

JG: And you'd be stuck with me until I got my details.

PP: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! [Laughs]

JG: Well, after the *Gazette* closed, when did you come to work for the Arkansas State Police?

PP: I was out of work for a little while. First of all, I began working for a little photo lab down in Pine Bluff. Driving back and forth every day, that was not fun. And then in July of 1992, I started to work at the Secretary of State's photography lab with Hubert Smith and Rodney Worthington. I worked there until early in 1995. I guess six or eight months prior to that, they began recruiting me to come to the State Police, so all of a sudden it occurred to me, "Dummy! They want you. Why not go there?" So I came here.

JG: This was in 1975?

PP: No, this was in 1995.

JG: 1995. Excuse me.

PP: About a year before, Major Jim Tyler had come over. Well, he had asked me to come out to the State Police. We were in the building that's out at number three natural resources at that time. He wanted me to take a look at what the Arkansas State Police photo lab had at that time and make some recommendations. Almost everything that I had recommended, they had gotten, so I was quite happy to come to work for the State Police. I've been with them since 1995, and I'm kind of a one-man show here. I get the film and process it from the highway patrol's coverage of wrecks and the criminal investigating division's coverage of all

manner of criminal activities: drugs, thefts, homicides, suicides. You wouldn't believe how many homicides and suicides there are that I get practically daily, that, for some reason or other --- I guess they're just not interested --- you don't see them in the papers, I guess, unless they're high profile or really interesting. They are so common. And anymore now, also, probably a third of the film that I get is from our family protection division, mostly child abuse cases, and of that, probably it's about half and half physical abuse and sexual abuse, which is just quite disheartening. But I enjoy it.

JG: So you process the negatives and make prints, and then those prints go with the file for the different cases, is that right?

PP: Yes. Yes. The routine is that, unless I'm requested otherwise, I normally just make a contact sheet to go with the file to go to the investigator and to go to, possibly, the prosecuting attorney. And then, as requested, I'll make prints for court.

JG: Do the news media run any of these pictures?

PP: Oh, no. They don't really have access to them unless they file an FOI [Freedom of Information], in which case, we actually recoup a little bit of our costs by charging them a service fee on it.

JG: Could the news media request pictures from your investigative files?

PP: Sure. I think so. Yes. Certainly. I don't just volunteer pictures for anything like that. Okay, let's say a trooper has been killed. I will immediately begin trying to find the negative of a portrait of him so that I can make a print available to the

news media because I know they're going to want it.

JG: Is there anything else, Pat, that you'd like to add about your work --- your career in photography, and here at the state police?

PP: No, I don't think I want to go back into working for the news media. I really enjoy what I do here at the State Police. I think I provide a service that actually has some value other than the transitive value of something that's going to be read one day and then lining the bird cage the next. [Laughs]

JG: Of course, a lot of those pictures would be saved by people who are involved.

PP: Oh, sure. Yes, I know there is a lot of that, but I'm happy that I'm somewhere that I feel like I'm doing something that they appreciate. I have no plans to retire as long as my health is good.

JG: How old are you?

PP: I'm sixty-three now. A mere youth! [Laughs]

JG: Didn't you get married here?

PP: I did, in 1998! I was lucky enough to find a young widow. She is forty-nine.

JG: What is your wife's name?

PP: Her name is Darlene. Kelly Quinn sort of introduced us.

[Tape Stopped]

PP: I'm just lucky that she's a "geezerphile!" [Laughs]

JG: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it very much.

[End of Interview]