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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with:

Gerald Koonce
Little Rock, Arkansas
22 August 2007

Interviewer: Garry Hoffmann

Garry Hoffmannn: I have to read this statement first. This is Garry Hoffmannn and I'm interviewing Gerald Koonce for the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, which is now the *Democrat-Gazette*. I'm sorry—the *Arkansas Democrat*, which is now the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. And I'm interviewing Gerald on August 22, [2007] in Little Rock. And Gerald, we'll transcribe this interview to make it available for anyone interested in Arkansas history. You get an opportunity to review the transcript, at which point you will sign a release. So now I need you to state your name and say that you—indicate if you are willing to give the Center permission to use this tape and make the transcript available to others.

Gerald Koonce: My name is Gerald Koonce, and I am willing to do what you just stated to make this transcript available to others.

GH: There you go. Let's start a little bio on you.

GK: And the *David Copperfield* stuff? [Laughs]

GH: Where you were born and raised, and [what were your] interests as a young person and [your] education.

GK: Okay. I was born November 4, 1947, in Evansville, Indiana, which is on the Ohio River just before it comes into the Mississippi [River]. It's actually very much like a northern Indiana factory town that's just been transplanted to south Indiana. My parents met in high school. They were both in the band. My dad's name is Elbert Eugene Koonce.

GH: E-L-B-E-R-T.

GK: E-L-B-E-R-T. And my mother's name is Patricia Racster Koonce.

GH: How do you spell that middle name?

GK: R-A-C-S-T-E-R.

GH: Okay.

GK: My dad was a Marine in World War II, and he also was in the Korean War. He was in the reserves. When I was just a little boy he went off to Korea. I was—I'm the oldest of four children that they had. My brother, Bob, who's two and a half years younger than me; and my sister, Wilma, who's five years younger than me; and my sister, Janice, who's six years younger than me. Bob and I were both born in Evansville. And then my dad, who went and joined the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]—was a special agent after Korea—was transferred to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where my two sisters were born. And then very soon after my youngest sister was born, he got transferred to Little Rock. And less than a year after we moved to Little Rock, my parents separated and eventually di-

vorced. So we were raised by my mother. She was a single mother raising four kids. She's a very stubborn, strong-willed individual, and she was not willing to admit that she had made a mistake by moving to Little Rock. So even though she knew hardly anyone here, she was determined to stay and raise us in Little Rock.

GH: What year was this?

GK: I was seven years old. My youngest sister was barely a year old when this happened. I was a little scrawny kid and an avid reader. I was small for my size. And because I had started school in Minnesota, I was actually younger than most of my classmates, too. I was only seventeen when I graduated from high school. Most of my classmates were eighteen, you know? I had a—we had—we took the *Gazette* at my house, not the *Democrat*, because my mother liked to read the paper in the morning before she went to work. And, as it turned out, I had a *Gazette* [newspaper delivery] route from the time I was in the seventh through the twelfth grades. My brother helped me my first three years. Then he got a *Gazette* route of his own when he went into the seventh grade. After I graduated from high school, he took over my route.

GH: What high school did you graduate from?

GK: I went to Little Rock Hall [High School], class of 1965. Quite a few prominent people in Little Rock were also in my class. And it was the—we were, of course, barely struggling to make ends meet because my mother just had the one salary, and she was—she worked at the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department. By the way, my dad was in the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover, who had a strict rule that agents could not be divorced. So when he—my parents divorced, he got—he had to leave the FBI. He ended up working for Reynolds Metals—

ended up in Portland, Oregon—had a very successful career with Reynolds. But he was very unhappy about having to leave the FBI. He never got over that. My mother went to work for the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, and she worked there, like, thirty years—retired finally. She was very happy with her career at the Highway and Transportation Department. Anyway, I forgot where I was. I was talking about . . .

GH: You had a *Gazette* route.

GK: I had a *Gazette* route, yes. Well, I went to school. I went to all—I went to Jefferson Elementary, Forest Heights Junior High, and Hall High School, which were all like the Little Rock Country Club set of schools. So I was very different than most of my classmates, or so it seemed to me. I mean, they—they lived in a world that I didn't know—cotillions, country clubs, the like.

GH: [Laughs]

GK: Those were all completely alien concepts to me. Like I said, I often lived in sort of an imaginary world because I read so much. I was such a ferocious reader. In the summers I would go down—take the bus down to the library—check out, like, a dozen books and come back a week later and do the same thing again. And I've always been a reader. But, surprisingly for someone who ended up in journalism, I was a very indifferent English student. Math was my strong point. I was good at math. I was a terrible speller—an awful speller, and pretty much indifferent to grammar, even though I liked literature and liked reading. And one thing I forgot to say—when I was—when my mother became pregnant with me, she was actually working as a proofreader at the *Evansville Press* in Evansville, so it was sort of prenatal influence, maybe, that I ended up in journalism.

GH: Kind of a daily paper or . . .?

GK: Yes, daily—it was the afternoon—it was like—it was the *Democrat* to the *Evansville Courier's Gazette*. It [was] the afternoon paper in Evansville. And eventually they merged also as so many papers have. So anyway, out of high school I got a scholarship to Southwestern at Memphis, which is now Rhodes College. But I was very immature and I had no self-discipline and no study habits, and college was a big difference from high school. I had been an honor student in high school without really trying. And college just—I didn't—I got away from home. I ran wild—played cards a lot—cut class—flunked out after a year. And then went to Little Rock University or "Last Resort University," as it was known then.

GH: [Laughs]

GK: And flunked out of there after one semester. So then I worked at odd jobs for a while and took what we in those days called a "McNamara Fellowship"—I enlisted in the Army—ended up in Vietnam—one of the best things I ever did. It taught me self-discipline, self-reliance. I came back—a friend of mine from high school and Southwestern talked me into giving Southwestern a second chance. I went back up there. They admitted me under—on probation, and I ended up graduating in 1973, four years after I should have graduated. And that's how I also ended up in newspapers—my—I had only been in school a few weeks and I was dating—you know, I was in school, you know, in the fall semester, and I was dating a woman who was the managing editor of the school paper. She asked me sweetly one day if I knew how to type. Well, I could type, like, twenty words a minute. I wasn't exactly a sterling typist, but I said, "Sure, I can type." And she

said, "We really need typists at the newspaper." So I went down there and we broke up, like, less than two weeks later, but I was hooked. I was on the newspaper staff the rest of the time I was at Southwestern. That summer I worked as a volunteer for an anti-poverty organization called Respect, Incorporated, in West Memphis. They published an anti-poverty newspaper—or, actually, it was listed as a black newspaper, even though there wasn't a single black person on the staff—called *Many Voices*. They were all—all Respect people were ex-VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America—who had been in Arkansas but were frustrated because VISTA didn't allow them to engage in political activities. So when their VISTA terms expired, they stayed in Arkansas and started this organization. And the editor's name was Earl Anthes, and one of the other main guys I remember is a guy named Eugene Richards, mainly because he has become quite famous since then. He's a well-known photojournalist/filmmaker. In fact, I recently—he's got several books out, and I recently saw some photographs that he did in The *New York Times Magazine*. But Earl was the editor, and he was a great guy. He—he's, like a tireless hard worker. He'd give you the shirt off his back. But all these guys were—typical journalists—and they were just, like, completely cynical in their statements and things they would say. But they were obviously very altruistic, but they always hid it under this apparent cynicism. And it was a great experience for me. I got to write a lot of different stories. I got to go to Marianna, where they had the boycott, which I know some of the other people in the oral history project have talked about from the prospective of the established newspapers—the *Gazette* and the *Democrat*. We came at it from a different perspective—got to meet Prentice and Ollie Neal. Got to meet a lot of the little organiz-

ers in small towns, like Cotton Plant and Earle.

GH: Now, this was a boycott of . . .

GK: Yes, the boycott in Marianna was—the black people felt like they were being cheated by the downtown establishments—discriminated against, et cetera. And they boycotted all the business on the square in Marianna. And the Marianna paper—as far as I know, my understanding is—never printed one word that there was a boycott. And they would march every day around the square and they would go to Forrest City or elsewhere to shop. And this went on for quite a while. There were some pretty heated exchanges between the various sides on it. It's quite a thing in Arkansas history. Respect was behind some of the people who were organizing this. So that was—that was a really good experience for me. It got me charged up about journalism being my career. And, now, Southwestern had no journalism department or even a journalism course. So I majored in anthropology, but basically I majored in being on the newspaper, which was just a weekly. My junior year I was the copy editor. My senior year I was the editor. We had a really good newspaper my senior year. I was very lucky. There was a lot of really dedicated freshmen and sophomores. The hardest thing about a newspaper at a place like Southwestern was keeping a staff. And I was lucky—I had a good staff—there was a good staff on the paper who wanted to be with it and were some of the people who were leaders in the school as junior and seniors. It was a real joy working with them. So I graduated with my degree in anthropology, but, of course, I had no desire to be an anthropologist. What I did was I sent my resume to the Arkansas Press Association, which is the small-town paper organization in Arkansas, and they published a short—you know, description of

who I was and how to get a hold of me to their members, and I got three serious job offers at—one guy, Fred Wulfekuhler —whose name I can't spell—from Paragould just wanted to talk to me because he was interested in people who wanted to work for small-town newspapers. [Laughter] So I drove from Memphis to Paragould, and, I mean, he was just shooting the breeze with me and everything. I finally said, "Now, about this job—" And he says, "Well, I don't have a job." [Laughter] "I just wanted to talk to—I just like to talk to people that are interested in working at small-town papers." I got a—I ended up working at the *Newport Daily Independent*, which was a Monday through Friday paper. Orville Richolson—R-I-C-H-O-L-S-O-N—was the publisher—and Orville was spelled O-R-V-I-L-L-E. And Ken Opper—O-P-P-E-R—was the editor. And Ken and I were the staff. We all—they also—Mr. Richolson also owned the *Bald Knob Banner*, which was a weekly, and the *Tuckerman Record*, which was a weekly, and we put those papers out, too. So one day a week I would go down to Bald Knob where they had a woman who did the sales—advertising and sales stuff—and she would give me the little country corn, we called it, that people had turned in, and what kind of notices and stuff. I would scrounge up a feature story and then I would go watch the football team play and write a big article about the football game. And that would be my—I was editor of the *Bald Knob Banner*, and I'd—you know, one afternoon/evening a week is how much I worked on it. For the Newport paper I did a bit of everything. I was the sports editor. I was the court reporter. I was the police reporter. I covered the speakers at the Rotary Club, Lions Club, who were often quite good and well-known people, and I wrote feature stories. It was a great experience. And then I got to do a little bit of eve-

rything. I was making a whopping $125 a week, so I was happy, too. And I worked there for a year. A couple of interesting things that happened to me in my year I guess might be worth talking about. The first was we had a big murder trial. A guy named Booker Murray—I think it's M-U-R-R-A-Y—was accused of killing a man whose name—I'm not sure I remember correctly—I think it was Ernest Dinks. He was a well-known local hobo recluse who supposedly had lived in a hollow log. And Booker Murray was accused of killing him in an altercation over some pecans, a phrase that I typed many times—altercation over some pecans.

GH: [Laughs]

GK: When they arrested him, the police—they arrested him for breaking into the Ben Franklin, and just coincidentally, while in police custody, he confessed to killing Ernest—you know, killing this guy a couple of days earlier. And when they—the police announced that they had made the arrest in the murder case, they said he had signed a confession. We reported all that in the newspaper. Well, when Booker—when it came time for Booker to go to trial, he couldn't afford an attorney. So the judge, Andrew Ponder—P-O-N-D-E-R—appointed David Hodges, who's now a Little Rock lawyer, but was in Newport then, and the brother of Kaneaster Hodges, who later became a US senator, to be his defense attorney. Well, it became pretty obvious pretty quickly that what had been a murder trial originally now was a battle of wills between the defense attorney and the judge. And David Hodges filed, like, ten motions or something in pre-trial, one of which was to suppress the confession. I was at the pre-trial hearing, and the judge denied all his motions. And in the middle of the hearing, for some reason the judge

saw me there—I wasn't normally in his court—said, "Now, of course, you realize you—you don't want to do write anything that would prejudice the right of Mr. Murray to a fair trial." So I covered what happened at the pre-trial hearing, including that he had suppressed the—that he had denied a motion to suppress the confession. Well, David Hodges went ballistic—filed ten more motions, one of which was for change of venue and another which was to hold me in contempt of court for revealing that there had been a confession. So now I found myself and Ken Opper, the editor—we found ourselves called before the court. Ken had to testify, and I had to testify about what I had written. I was just completely shook up. They showed me something that I had written, and I couldn't even read it, you know? I was so—just flabbergasted by this whole thing. And I said, "Well, you know, we reported when he was arrested that he had signed a confession, so if anything, this helped his chances of getting a fair trial by casting doubt upon the confession." So anyway, the judge denied all the motions. And as I'm walking out of the court, the municipal court judge—this was circuit court—the municipal court judge had for some reason attended the hearing. And he braced me and said if I ever set foot in his court, he would throw me in jail for contempt of court on sight.

GH: Why?

GK: Because he didn't like my attitude. [Laughs] Anyway, they—then Mr. Richolson took me off the story, and so I didn't get to cover any more of it. And I wrote this—wrote John Robert Starr, who was the head of the FOI Committee for the—I guess, for whatever it was in Arkansas.

GH: Freedom of Information.

GK: Freedom of Information—and told him what had happened, and he wrote me back this short, little note that said, "*Woods* vs. *Grayson* says anything that happens in an open court hearing is a matter of public record," which I looked up. It's—it's a Texarkana case, and he's correct. "But since your publisher's taken you off the story, there's nothing I can do about it." Well, shortly thereafter, Judge Ponder had finally had enough of David Hodges, and he fired him and appointed another attorney, and less than a week later, Booker Murray copped a plea and the case was over. Another thing that I did when I was there at Newport—I was a stringer for the *Arkansas Gazette*. I was their Jackson County stringer. And J. William Fulbright, who was a US senator at that time—he spoke at some kind of little gathering in Beebe, and they asked me to cover it. I went down there, and he—it was during Watergate, and he off the cuff started speaking about Watergate without actually specifically saying—he said, "People are asking about the situation in Washington [DC]." And he went on and talked and gave this great little speech. He talked about basically how the institutions of democracy were so strong that they would survive this. So I—I run back—run to the pay phone and I call the *Gazette* state desk and tell them I've got the story. And they said, "Oh, his—after we talked to you, his office gave [us] a press release, so we know what he said." I said, "Oh, that stuff about Watergate?" They said, "No, it's some kind of boilerplate speech." I told them what he'd said. They said, "Call us back in thirty minutes with a story." I, like, put it all together and dictated it to them, and had the story in the paper. You know, "*Gazette* state news." No byline. [Laughter] That was a really good election year, too. It was 1974. David Pryor was running for governor against Orval Faubus, and Dale Bumpers was running for the US Senate

against Fulbright. Also, Sid McMath had been mentioned as a possible Republican candidate, and I got to interview all these people except Bumpers, who I had just covered his speech by. That was for me a real eye-opening experience and quite something to have done in my one year of being in Newport. At the—at the end of the year, they—I was a Vietnam veteran, and they extended the GI Bill an extra nine months, so I said, "Well, I'll just go to UALR [University of Arkansas, Little Rock] and get a journalism degree," because UALR had this program where if you take at least thirty hours to satisfy the requirements for a major, they'll give you a—and you already have one bachelor's degree, they'll give you another. So I went to UALR and took nothing but journalism courses. I mean, I was taking introduction to journalism at the same time I was taking First Amendment law. And got a BA in journalism. Quite a few people I worked with at the *Democrat* were at UALR the same time as me. Margaret Arnold—that's Mara Leveritt now, but Margaret Arnold then—Wally Hall, David Walton, Frank Fellone. Frank Fellone and I took editorial writing together. He wrote this wonderful essay about butter beans that I can still remember to this day. Anyway, but the only job offer I got—it was a—the economy was in bad shape. It was 1975, and the only job offer I got was with the *Pine Bluff Commercial* for less than I had been making in Newport. And I didn't really want to live in Pine Bluff anyway—no offense to the wonderful people in Pine Bluff, but it just didn't fit me at that time in my life. So I also got a fellowship to Ole Miss [University of Mississippi], so I went to Ole Miss for a year to try to get a graduate degree in journalism. It seemed like a good idea because the fellowship paid for everything. And while I was there I was the head of the copy desk on the Ole Miss daily newspaper. Well, I came

back to work for the summer and got a job at TGI Friday's [restaurant]. All I had left to do to get my master's was to do a thesis and take one course on investigative journalism, I think. And while I was—I got a job at TGI Friday's during the summer, and for some reason I stopped by UALR or something and saw Dr. Luther "Sonny" Sanders, who had been one of my professors, and just chatted with him for a little bit. About a week or two later, I got a call at Friday's from Jerry McConnell, who was the managing editor of the *Democrat*. He wanted to know if I was interested in—they had an opening on the copy desk and would I be interested in it. Well, I was—I was at Friday's [laughs]. I was actually working a double shift. I was working the lunch and the evening both, but I had, like, two hours off. And I told him I had two hours off and I could come—but I didn't have a car, I'd take the bus—take the bus downtown—I could meet him, and would that be okay. And he said, "Sure." So to back up just a little bit—my understanding of how this came about is that they had a—they had the opening and they had interviewed somebody that I had gone to school with at UALR, and they were—didn't really think this person was up to the job, but they decided they would call his references to see, and one of them was Dr. Sanders. And Sanders said to Jerry, "Well, you know, to be truthful I really can't recommend this person. But I know someone who's perfect for the job, but he's in graduate school at Ole Miss." Well, Jerry had worked at the *Gazette* with Ron Farrar, who was the head of the journalism department at Ole Miss. So he called him, and Ron said, "Well, hell, Jerry. He's working at TGI Friday's in Little Rock." [Laughter] So Jerry called TGI Friday's and got me. So anyway, I show up—I'm wearing this garish red and white waiter's shirt . . .

GH: Right.

GK: . . . that they—people at Friday's wore, and my hair is, like, all greasy because I'm in "expediting," which means the fumes—the stuff—the heat and the grease from the kitchen's been wafting over me all day. So I talk to Jerry and I have to say that the first time I ever talked to Jerry—Jerry McConnell—I got, like, a huge man crush on him. I mean, he—to me, he just seemed like a great guy—seemed like the kind of person you'd want to be your friend—the kind of person you would want to work for. I just have nothing but the highest respect for Jerry, and always have. So, I mean, I was really—I really hadn't had much intention—because I remember the *Democrat* from growing up with the Hambone cartoon on the front page—Karr Shannon, who was, like, this Neanderthal columnist they had who'd thunder from the right all the time, although it was great reading. But I really hadn't read it very much, but I didn't have a very high opinion of the *Democrat*, to be truthful. But, you know, I'm talking to Jerry—he—and he seems like a really great guy, and, you know, really appreciated the chance to talk to him. And when I ask him, "I heard the *Democrat*'s losing money. Is that true? And, if so, how much?" He—he told me. But he said, "You know, the publisher is really committed to making a go of this, so don't—you know, we're not going to go out of business. He's going to do what it takes to stay in business and be successful."

GH: Walter Hussman [Jr.] had bought the paper about two years earlier.

GK: Walter Hussman, yes. Or maybe his dad was still alive and he was just the publisher of the *Democrat* only. And then I said, "Well, you know, I'll be truthful. If I take this job, the only reason I'm taking it is because I know the *Gazette* hires

people from the *Democrat*, and I really want to work for the *Gazette*. But if you hire me, I promise you I will work here at least one year." So anyway, he thanked me and he called me back the next day and offered me the job and I took it. I—today, I can't believe I actually said that to him, and that he actually hired me after I said that. And I kept my word. I worked for the *Democrat* for a year to the day.

GH: What day—what day did you start?

GK: It was in August of 1976—somewhere in August—and I left—maybe I worked a couple days more than a year, but I had worked the year I promised him I would work.

GH: As a copy editor.

GK: As a copy editor. I—and it was crazy hours—5:30 in the morning 'til 1:30 in the afternoon—just straight through. Later on, I worked 6:30 to 2:30 a bunch, but—and I lived near Stifft Station, right on the—I shared a house with two guys I had gone to college with who were—one of them was in law school and one of them was just a bum. But he had—[laughs] his dad was wealthy. And he just kind of did odd jobs and managed his dad's apartments that he owned and, you know, that was the way he was. But the other one was in law school, and then I was working for the *Democrat*. I had already started living there when I was with Friday's, but planning on going back to Ole Miss. But, of course, I cancelled that. And the 7th Street bus conveniently stopped right in front of my house just in time for me to go to work at 5:30 or 6:30, either one, so I always just caught the bus to work. I didn't have a car. I get to work at 5:30 in the morning and, you know, the news-room was—I mean, it looked like something out of—it looked like it was black and white. It didn't have any color at all. It was just the—it had black and white

tile floor squares. At 5:30 in the morning it was, you know, like something out of a bad movie. It used to remind me for some reason—though it's not an exact fit—of the Centerville scene in *200 Motels*. You know, it was this really cheesy set with a black and white floor. It wasn't that it was cheesy; it was just everything was sort of old and worn, you know? And at 5:30 in the morning it just looked like some kind of horrible nightmare. And then about 7:00—by the time the sun started coming up and the birds started chirping, I really started feeling alive. I really got to liking this working—getting up early in the morning after having been a night person for most of the last few years before then. And by the time I left work at 1:30 in the afternoon, I would catch the bus home or sometimes I'd walk from downtown to Stifft Station, which wasn't, you know—wasn't that far—two or three miles. The bus ran so infrequently that I'd frequently be, like, just a half a mile away from home when the bus would pass me, and I'd just keep going. On the copy desk was a really talented group of people. Margaret Arnold, again—then Margaret Arnold, now Mara Leveritt, was on it—Leslie Newell, now Leslie Newell Peacock (both later went to work at the *Gazette*)—Patti Cox, who was married to a lawyer, and moved to Greenwood, I think. Patti used to give Jerry hell because he hired me without making me take a spelling test and he made her take one.

GH: Could you spell at this time?

GK: [Laughs]

GH: You do learn to spell.

GK: I had learned to spell through—you know, through working for the—I had taught myself to be a speller. I was sort of a decent speller by that point. Lyndon Finney

was on the copy desk. Mel White, who is a tremendously talented, funny guy. He wrote this super-hilarious satire of the newsroom that I just—made you roll—I wish I had a copy of it now. It made me laugh 'til I hurt. Patsy McKown was the slot person. She was a great person to work for. I learned a lot from her. I learned how to crop pictures. I didn't have any idea of the proper way to crop a picture, and she taught me how to do it, you know, quite well. She was great at distributing the work. She was great at keeping the copy desk loose and—and laughing. I have to say that later on our situations were reversed, when at the *Gazette*, I was the slot person and she was a copy editor. I was not nearly as good a boss to her as she was to me. Yes. But she was a great person to work for—great person. Sy Dunn was the news editor, but I had almost no contact with him. I never was really sure exactly what he did as news editor. Amanda Husted was the wire editor. She was the wife of Bill Husted, who was the city editor. I'm trying to think of who else was on the copy desk at that time. Later on—oh, there was a blonde woman who was married to a police officer. I cannot remember her name, but she—you know, she was—it was always strange because she—she was married to a police officer, and some of us were doing things we really wouldn't want police officers to know about. So it was sort of—sometimes had sort of a water-throwing-on effect when we started a conversation about something and then all of a sudden stopped because we realized we were getting into territory we didn't need to be saying around her—even though, you know, she wasn't going to do anything. It was just uncomfortable for her because of the fact that she was married to the police officer.

GH: Now, was the copy desk actually shaped like a U?

GK: Yes, it was shaped like a U—like a horseshoe—and Patsy would be in the slot. We had—we had—all the copy was printed out. If it was wire copy it came off a teletype machine, and all the seats—we didn't have terminals. All the seats had spikes in front of them, and Patsy would slap down the copy on the spike with the headline. And if somebody got behind, she picked some of it up and moved it over to somebody else's so it was—the work flow was always pretty even. There were only four terminals for working on the computer, and you would write a headline—you would have to count it manually. And you would show it to Patsy, and she would say "Yay" or "Nay." Then you would run and get a terminal and call up your story and edit it and put the headline on it and then send it. There was nobody that read it behind you—and [you] sent it to be typeset.

GH: Now, when you say write, it was actually handwritten.

GK: Yes, we'd write—hand write the headlines and show them to Patsy. Then you would—you know, if you needed to edit the story you would edit—you know, edit by hand so that you knew when you pulled—if it had to be—like, if it was fifteen inches and it had to be eight, you would chop seven inches of it out of it by X-ing through it so that when you called it up you could edit it quickly, because the terminals were scarce resources and needed—your time on the terminal needed to be used as effectively as possible. I always prided myself when I did cut stories that I would actually read all the way through. I wouldn't just go down eight inches and slash, which some people did. We had one person on the copy desk who was renowned for being really fast, and basically all that person did was read the first paragraph of the story, write the headline, and then cut from the bottom—you know, go down the required length and cut the rest. I never did that. I

took pride in being a good copy editor and, you know, treating the story with the respect it deserved. Later on, David Walton, who I had worked—who I had known at UALR, came to work on the copy desk. And Eric Harrison joined us later. And then right before I left, Mike Storey came on the copy desk. Mike and I had gone through grade school, junior high, and high school together. He was a year behind me. And he actually went to Southwestern, but he went in the four years in between my freshman year and my sophomore year. So we didn't actually go to school at Southwestern together. Oh, it was a fast-paced thing to do. We worked—I don't remember what days. I know I always worked Saturdays and Fridays. The only people that—on Fridays we put out two newspapers. We put out the Friday paper and the Saturday paper. But the—it was the same crew that—the people who worked Friday night got Saturday off. And I always worked Fridays and Saturdays and had some other day off. I did work a couple of Friday nights. That was a really fun—that was different than all the rest of the times because Jerry took Si Dunn's place on Friday nights.

GH: Jerry McConnell.

GK: Jerry McConnell. And it was like his little pets. I mean, it was Leslie and Patti and Patsy. And they were like a loose, fun group and they had a great time, and they would actually hang out after—at the office after they finished. George Arnold, who is now with the—now the editorial director up in northwest Arkansas, also came on board afterwards—after I got started. And he was, like, the business editor, and he worked at night. He did the business section at night in the newsroom by himself. I also started something at the *Democrat* that as far as I know they had never done. And, of course, I don't know very much about the his-

tory of the paper, so maybe it had, but they weren't doing it when I got there, which was criticism of the local theater productions. They had no theater critic. They had nothing—you know, nothing in the paper saying anything about the plays that were going on. And The Rep [Arkansas Repertory Theatre] was just getting started, and I pitched this to—I don't know to whom—I don't remember to whom—but I said, "I would be glad to sort of like just one hour's overtime and pay for my tickets—I would do reviews of all the local theater productions." And so I did that. I had a great time doing it. I reviewed the very first play The Rep did officially as The Rep and, you know, several of their early plays and the community theater and even did a children's theater play one time. That was just a—I recently went through and reread some of my reviews. I can't believe I was that literate at that time because I was always writing them under, you know, a huge deadline because I'd have to write them that night after—after the play happened and get them—you know . . .

GH: Yes.

GK: That was another thing about how the paper worked. The wire stories came in, you know, and we could call them up on the computer, but all the reporter stories had to be written on special optical character reader—OCR is, you know, what we call it—the acronym for that—and then fed into the computer. And if there were corrections—editing on a reporter line editor side, they had to, like, line through and then type it out. And Bobbie Forster, I remember in particular, was the business editor, and she could barely see. When she would try to correct copies in the OCR, she would be, like, leaning until she was like almost—you know, right to the little screen with her eyes, like, right against it. They had a lot of good report-

ers at the *Democrat*, too, at that time. You were there. I think you actually got there before I did, Garry. I think you were there—Mark Oswald, Steele Hays, James Scudder—Bob Sallee was there as a reporter. A. L. [Al] May. I shouldn't mention him in the same group with those others because I had very little respect for A. L. May's ability. He was very stuck on himself, and he wasn't nearly as good as he thought he was. But he was the exception, I thought. Most of the other people there were—you know, were young, eager—you know, hardworking. I'm not saying A. L. May wasn't hardworking, I just think he had a conceited view of his abilities. Maybe I'm a little prejudiced against him because he got me in—I got myself in big trouble, but he helped.

GH: What was that?

GK: This—I forgot exactly what Ralph Patrick's title was. He was, like—because Jerry was the managing editor, but Ralph was, like, somehow over the newsroom.

GH: I think he was—he had been city editor, and I think he was assistant managing editor.

GK: Assistant managing editor, maybe.

GH: That was his title when I came to work there, which was roughly the same time you did.

GK: Yes. So anyway, I was doing some layout and I had a page that had—A. L. May or Al May had written a little "short" that fit in perfectly with his longer story that almost—between the two of them, fit the space. And his little short would make a box. But I needed a paragraph more of copy. And there was a hole in his little story, too. I went back to the clips and found some background information that filled out the space—made the box—and actually made the story better. I added

it to the story, you know—printed it in the paper. Well, A. L. came running to Patrick. The clip that I had put in was something that they'd had to print a correction about. It was incorrect information. But that wasn't in the clip file—the little correction.

GH: The correction was not in . . .

GK: The correction was not in the clip file. Well, I've always hated large meetings—group meetings—for many reasons, and after this next one, I've hated them for even more reasons. For some reason, we had a huge staff-wide meeting, and Patrick got up and went on a little tirade about what I had done without mentioning me by name and said, you know—and I stood up and said, "I did that," and defended myself. And he basically went ballistic—said it was the worst thing that had ever been in the newspaper forever—for years, if not forever. He was screaming. His face turned, like, tomato red, and Jerry McConnell finally had to, like, drag him off and pat—"Now, now, Ralph, now, now." Everybody's just sitting there sort of, you know, dumbfounded, and I'm thinking, "God, this is awful." [Laughs] And maybe a week or two later, we were leading the newspaper with this really stupid story about how—it was—it was winter, and the low in Little Rock had been lower than the low in Anchorage, Alaska. And it was, like, a banner headline—lead story on the front page, and I—I wrote a headline for it that said something like, "Colder here than in Alaska." I mean, just something simple—straightforward that's—you know? And Ralph turned to me and said, "That's a really good headline." And Jerry McConnell said, "That was his way of saying he was sorry he yelled at you." [Laughter]

GH: That's funny.

GK: And—some other people there at the *Democrat* when I was there—David Hawkins was the editorial page editor. I don't think David Hawkins and I could've been any further apart politically in what we believed, but David really liked me, and I liked him. We used to have really interesting conversations. He said I was a guy he could really talk to, and he—he had certain ideas about things that he liked to try on me. One of them was the extreme importance of vocabulary—that he thought that one of the best things a person can do was expand his vocabulary. I always enjoyed talking with him. David McCollum was the sports editor. He was an interesting guy. Bob McCord was the editor—I think [that] was his title.

GH: Executive editor . . .

GK: Executive editor.

GH: . . . I believe.

GK: Yes. And Robert Ike Thomas was the head of photography. I think Jim Lassiter was working there, too, in sports.

GH: Sports columnist.

GK: Sports columnist—plagiarist. But I didn't really know him. Anyway, that's . . .

GH: Now, during this time when you told Jerry that "I'm going to work here. I'll give you a year." I assume you also knew some people who were at the *Gazette*?

GK: Actually, I didn't. Let me get back to that, about how I actually ended up at the *Gazette*. Another thing we did at the *Democrat* that I thought was really cool was, you know, we put out a green sheet edition for the front page. We had the first edition, then we had the final edition, which was a green sheet. And there was always—later on in my time there, I got to work the 6:30 to 2:30 shift, and got to do—you know, because most of the copy editors left at 1:30 and there was

only, like, a late crew to do the final edition. And then two main things we had to do was to find something breaking to put in the—on the—in the green sheet—a new news item of some sort and get the most recent Dow Jones, NASDAQ figures—what they—what the stock market was so that people would—the idea was that people would buy this on the street. And that was always a challenge and a fun thing to do. Okay, so how I ended up at the *Gazette*—actually . . .

GH: Let me ask you one question before that.

GK: Okay.

GH: While you were at the *Democrat*, did you—did you always consider the *Gazette* to be a better—a much better paper?

GK: I'm glad you asked that question. You know, if you remember, I said I didn't have a very high opinion of the *Democrat* when I first interviewed with Jerry. Working at the *Democrat* was like a huge eye-opener for me. It was actually a very good product—even then—understaffed, you know, short on resources. I would tell my friends, "Don't laugh, the *Democrat* is one of the better half of the newspapers in the country." I mean, I still didn't—I did not think it was as good as the *Gazette*, but I thought it was a good newspaper, and I was actually proud to work on it. I was going to sort of finish this interview by saying that, but let me say it now. I had lots of respect for the people I worked with. Maybe I was a little arrogant and full of myself when I came to work there. But working at the *Democrat*, I learned an awful lot from a lot of people. I had nothing but the highest—even—despite what I said about A. L. May—I have respect for almost everybody that worked there. I thought they all worked hard, they did good jobs, they had talent, and I was proud to be one of them.

GH: But you weren't going to stay there.

GK: I wasn't going to stay there because the *Gazette* was where my heart was. Yes. But, you know, I didn't—I didn't actually really—I didn't know anybody at the *Gazette*, except for one person. Brenda Spillman, who was a copy editor at the *Gazette*, and I only knew her because she had gone to high school with my brother. She and my brother had graduated from high school together. That's how I met her. The end of July 1977, I'm walking down the MetroCentre Mall and I run into Brenda Spillman, also walking across the mall. I said, "Hi" to her, and she said, "You're working at the *Democrat*, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." She says, "You know, we have openings—we have an opening on the copy desk at the *Gazette*." And she told me who to call, and I went down there and interviewed. That was a huge contrast. We already talked about what the *Democrat* newsroom looked like. The *Gazette*—many, many years ago I had been up in the *Gazette* newsroom, and if you remember what the *Gazette* looked like when we were there, the sports/library area was the whole newsroom. That's all. That was it. And that was still the case when I interviewed. But the rest of the newsroom was—city desk, state desk, copy desk, and all that was—when you and I worked there—was new—newly constructed. It was sitting there unused—hadn't been used. I interviewed in the unused part of the newsroom. It was just, like, amazing. You know, there were terminals on every desk instead of just four for the whole news room. When I actually started to work at the *Gazette*, they had already—they had moved into the new newsroom, so I never got a chance to work at the old—in the old newsroom—you know, just in the new newsroom. The—you know, a lot of my life—is just coincidence in falling into things. I mean, I go

see Sonny Sanders—Jerry calls him—Jerry knows Ron Farrar—I get a job at the *Democrat*—just casually walking down Metrocentre Mall and I run into the only person I know at the *Gazette*, and she tells me they have an opening.

GH: You know, I think that—my theory is the *Gazette* would send out people to walk the mall . . .

GK: [Laughs]

GH: . . . and look for people coming out of the *Democrat*, because I know many people who were approached in similar ways. "We have an opening. Why don't you apply at the *Gazette*?"

GK: Well, it's funny because Bill Rutherford, who was the news editor, told me, "We had our eye on you." I can't believe they even knew who I was.

GH: So it was before you ran into Brenda Spillman . . .

GK: I—I . . .

GH: Were you preparing to . . .?

GK: No, I was not.

GH: I mean, did you have . . .?

GK: Actually, I was not.

GH: So you hadn't—you hadn't called over saying . . .

GK: No.

GH: . . . "I've been here for a year. I'd like to work there."

GK: I had not prepared in any way to go interview. I mean, I knew I had made the promise to Jerry about a year, but I really was happy at the *Democrat*.

GH: So Jerry was still at the paper when you . . .

GK: Yes. Yes, he was.

GH: Did you give him notice?_

GK: I did. It was a sad day, but I did. I gave him notice and I told him that I had kept my promise and that I really appreciated working with him and that he had been a great person to work for.

GH: Did you leave immediately or . . .?

GK: I gave two weeks' notice. I gave full notice.

GH: And they did let you . . .

GK: Yes. This was pre-John Robert Starr, okay?

GH: Okay. All right. [Laughs]

GK: Yes, Meredith Martin, as she was then instead of Meredith Oakley—she was also at the *Democrat*.

GH: That's right.

GK: She was the education reporter.

GH: Yes. She started about—I think she was federal court.

GK: Maybe she was. I—she was either—I thought she was education.

GH: No, I believe Margaret Arnold moved over to become a reporter about the . . .

GK: Yes, I think—I think Margaret did leave the copy desk to become a reporter.

GH: She did do education then. There weren't very many reporters. So, I mean, I guess there was actually different—what about the work—the talent level at the *Gazette*?

GK: Well, obviously, the experience level was the big difference.

GH: Yes.

GK: I mean, the *Gazette* had all this institutional memory. It had all these resources. You know, the people at the *Democrat* were either lifers, like the business report-

ers—you know, Bobbie Forster, Randy Tardy, Inez McDuff, Bob Sallee—you know, you didn't—either had—for whatever reason had no desire to work for the *Gazette* or had no desire to go anywhere else or they were young, aggressive people on the way up, like you and Steele and Mark Oswald.

GH: Steele Hays.

GK: Steele Hays. Yes. You know, there were people [for] whom the *Gazette* was a stepping stone. The *Gazette* was a—for most people it was a destination place. I mean, some people moved on from the *Gazette*, but for most people—for me it was a destination.

GH: And you worked on the copy desk there for . . .

GK: I was on the copy desk. I started in August of 1977 and worked—except for a few weeks, worked until it folded in 1991—October of 1991. I was a copy editor, and then I became assistant news editor sometime in the 1980s. Sometime after Gannett bought it, I just—I really don't want to talk that much about the *Gazette* in the context of the *Democrat*.

GH: Sure.

GK: But about myself. When Gannett bought the *Gazette*, I was afraid that it would change the way the *Gazette* was. And in some ways it did. But in some ways those were good and some ways those were bad. But it caused me to make a decision about my future, and I decided I wanted to change careers. I had—the *Gazette* had bought this computer system that was like a really good computer system. It was the third one I was on there. And they sent Jan Cottingham and me to Sacramento, California, to learn how to use it and to train everybody else in it. Well, Jan and I were in this class, and we were the only non-computer people

there. Everybody else was—no—none of the other people in this training were journalists. All the rest of them were computer professionals. And we set up a mock newsroom with routing and everything. Well, the wire stuff started coming in and it all went to the wrong place. It was all being shut off. And they're all sitting there scratching their heads, and I figured out what the problem was. And I said, "You know, hey, I can do this. I can be a computer programmer." So I started saving all my overtime money, and after I had enough saved up I gave notice and said I was going to go back to school and get a computer science degree. Another big factor in the decision to leave was I have always—like working at the *Democrat*, I—my skill set as a copy editor—as I already said, I was not a good speller. I became a good speller, but I was not a great speller. I was only an average grammarian. I was definitely an average headline writer. I had sort of good overall knowledge, but my real skill was getting the paper out. I knew how to do the things to get the paper out. And one of the main ones was the ability to trim stories under deadline and get them in the paper. You know, we—we'd lay out the paper, and the printers had to actually paste up the copy. And, of course, it never worked out right, and then you'd have to maneuver and tell them what to do. Let me say one funny thing about Jerry. I loved working with the printers and I loved doing that, and . . .

GH: The printers at the *Democrat*?

GK: They—they were up on the—they were a floor above and . . .

GH: You'd go up this spiral staircase.

GK: You'd go up this spiral staircase. I loved running up and down that spiral staircase, too. And the printers would call Jerry "Errr—uhhh" because when he would

have to start making cuts or trims, and he'd get indecisive and he'd say, "Errr—uhhh," like that.

GH: Is that where that nickname came from?

GK: Yes, that's where it came from.

GH: [Laughs]

GK: From him saying it. [Laughs] Well, Patsy McKown and I were, like, whizzes at that. We had no problem cutting stuff. You know, I mean, I was just ruthless, and I could cut. I could say, "This story has to get in. Cut this one here. Put that one there." You know, I was really good at that. That was my strongest skill. Okay. About the time Gannett bought the *Gazette*, I started getting the "yips." It's a golfer term for the benefit of people of reading this where a golfer will stand over a putt and can't putt. And I started getting that—just a little tinge of it—that indecisiveness about how to lay out a page or what to cut. I said, "I'm going to get out while I'm on the top of my game. I'm not going to hang around," you know? So—and then this thing came with the computers and it all just fit together. I gave notice. I went back to school at UALR full-time. That lasted, like, two weeks. They called me up. Walker Lundy, the very—the much-maligned Walker Lundy—but he was always good to me—I know what other people have said about him. I'm not disputing any of that, but he was always good to me—called me up. I came in—he said, "How would you like to be the *Gazette* systems editor?" He said, "I don't know what a systems editor does, but every paper I've ever been that had a systems editor wished they had two. So would you take this job? You can work half-time. You can go to school in the mornings, work as system editor, you know, like 12:00 to 6:00." It was actually more than half-time.

"And not only that, but I'll let you decide what the systems editor's job is. I'll send you to Dallas and Houston. You can learn—you know, talk to the systems editors there—see what they do." So I said, "Sure." So I worked afternoons and evenings as a systems editor and went to school at UALR. Again, the same gig—thirty hours to satisfy the requirements for my major—got a degree in computer science. And then they hired me to be a computer programmer, and I was working as a computer programmer when the *Gazette* folded. And that—the coincidence thing, again, is how I ended up back at the *Democrat-Gazette* for a brief while, to sort of finish all this.

GH: Okay.

GK: Okay. It seems like I've been talking a long time. Shortly after the *Gazette* closed—you know, the *Democrat* got all the *Gazette*'s assets for the *Democrat-Gazette*, and that included their computer system—both their business system and their newsroom's computer system. And the *Democrat*'s newsroom computer system was, like, on its death throes. I mean, it—it was ready to—to crash at any minute. And so Lynn Hamilton called me and said, "How would you like to come work for us to install the *Gazette*'s computer system at the *Democrat-Gazette*?" I said, "Well, I can't work for you, but I'd be glad to work as an independent contractor to do that." So they drew up a contract. I came in . . .

GH: Now, you said—so you did not want to be—become an employee of the *Democrat-Gazette*.

GK: I was not an employee of the *Democrat-Gazette*. I was an independent contractor.

GH: Okay.

GK: Or let's just say—even though I've—all through the years I've always gotten along

really well with people that worked at the *Democrat*. I've always had nothing but good relations. But I did as—have very bitter feelings about the end of the war, so I was not going to work for the *Democrat-Gazette*. But I thought it was a good computer system. The people who worked at *Democrat* deserved to have a good computer system, so I—I was ready, willing, able to help set the computer system up. So then I met a whole bunch of new friends at the *Democrat*—people—*Democrat-Gazette*—people I hadn't already known—hadn't known before. You know, some of the people I had—you know, like Sonny Rhodes had gone from the *Gazette* to the *Democrat*. David Walton had gone from the *Democrat* to the *Gazette* [and] back to the *Democrat*. So some of the people were new. Some of the people were still there from when I had been there before, like Bob Sallee. So Lynn Hamilton drew up this contract and I signed it. It had a bunch of incentive clauses built into it, and I hit all my incentive clauses that—it was supposed to last a year. I did it all in six months—trained everybody—set it up—got it all organized—got it running. The newsroom at the *Democrat* [laughs] was, like, night-and-day difference between when I had last been there. They had moved to the top floor. They had these skylights. It was brand-spanking new. It was just—"Oh, man, this is great! This is really a cool place to work." And that was a lot of fun doing that. I was glad to do it, and Lynn Hamilton is a great person to work with. I had nothing but the highest respect for him. He—you know, he bent over backwards to do the things the way I wanted them—you know, to set the contract up the way I wanted, and he didn't show any resentment for me saying I didn't want to work for the *Democrat-Gazette*. That was great. I got to meet some really cool people—Joe Riddle, Carla Koen—that I didn't know—that I hadn't

met before. So I'm . . .

GH: How long did this go on?

GK: Six months. It was supposed to last a year, but I finished in six months.

GH: Now, this was 1991-1992?

GK: Yes, would have actually—yes. Yes, 1991-1992. It was a few months after the—what, October 1991 was when the *Gazette* went under, so it was—I think, like, all—the first six months in 1992.

GH: Okay.

GK: Then I went to work for the Highway Department—my mother's old stomping place—after taking a few months off. And after a year at the Highway Department, I went to work for a company called Arkansas Systems, and it's changed names three or four times since then, but I'm still with that same company. It's interesting because as a copy editor I used to edit stories with all these exotic datelines, like Karachi, Pakistan—Asunción, Paraguay. Now, with my current company, I've been to those places.

GH: Yes.

GK: I've walked the streets of Karachi. I've seen the place in Bucharest [Romania] where they bombed the secret police headquarters and where they had the demonstrations at "the center of freedom and democracy in Romania." I've been on—I've walked Red Square in Moscow [Russia]. So it's really been a great experience for me, too. So I've had—I've been very fortunate in my life. I'm married to a wonderful woman that I met through—you know, working in the newspaper at the *Gazette*, and I have a very good life. So I really enjoy the travel, and the great thing about computers—you know, compared to a newspaper—[a] newspaper

has, like, no positive feedback at all. None, or very, very little. I get more positive feedback in a day at my current job than I got in a year in a newspaper—and not only that, but with a newspaper you're always dealing with these issues that—some of them don't have resolutions. I remember when I was a reporter in Newport. It was like a twenty-four-hour-a-day job because I could never let the stories go. That was one thing good about being a copy editor. Once the paper was out, the mistakes were done. [Laughs] You couldn't do anything about them. But, you know, when you're a reporter, they live with you forever. Computers—yes, there are problems. Yes, there are crises. Yes, there are deadlines. But there's almost always solutions. They always get resolved, and that's just a great feeling when that happens.

GH: You said you left the newspaper business when you felt you were at the top of your game. Do you ever regret leaving?

GK: No, especially the way journalism has changed [laughs] since I came in during Watergate. I mean, I—1973 was when I started. That was in the height of it. The way the press is these days, it's not very inspiring. The way they've rolled over—you know, rolled over and played dead on the run up to Iraq—the way they let the current [presidential] administration [George W. Bush], if I may say this, get away with murder and, you know, do this "he said, she said" stuff, you know? I don't regret it. It's—well, I do have dreams occasionally. You know, I frequently have dreams where I'm back working on the copy desk and I'm like—I almost wish a psychologist could tell me about this. It's never I'm on the copy desk at the *Gazette*. It's always I'm on the copy desk at the *Democrat*. I worked at the *Democrat* for a year. I worked at the *Gazette* for fourteen years. But I never have

dreams about working on the copy desk at the *Gazette*. Any time I dream about I'm back on the copy desk or the few times I've dreamed I'm back being a reporter, it's always at the *Democrat*.

GH: Are these good dreams?

GK: Oh, it's hard to say. I mean, they're not nightmares. Usually, I'm—and it's not the I'm in school, and I haven't been to class for [laughs] all semester, and I've got to find the classroom and take the final. No, they're—I'm just there. It's just, you know, I'm doing my job. I guess they're not really good dreams or bad dreams. But when I do dream about the newspaper business, it's always about the *Democrat*.

GH: Now, I guess a final question unless you have other things to add. But do you still read the *Democrat-Gazette* and . . .?

GK: I do, although I'm still bitter, and Myrna, my wife, has the subscription. It's in her name.

GH: Okay.

GK: I also read The *New York Times* on Sunday.

GH: And what do you think about the—the future of the newspaper. Let's just—let's just confine ourselves to Arkansas. Do you think the *Democrat-Gazette* is going to have to go more online?

GK: Oh . . .

GH: Is it going to destroy the print edition or what do you—how do you feel about that?

GK: I had an argument with a guy a few years back about this. I—I may be wrong, but I think there's a future in the printed word and a future in reading because it has a

permanency that you don't have with all this disk space on the computers. There's something about holding it in your hands or, you know the little things like your name—your child's name as being an Eagle Scout, you know, that you can cut out and paste up. And the convenience of not having to be wired into the Internet—I mean, yes, it's convenient to be able to be in Karachi, Pakistan, and call the *Democrat-Gazette* up on your screen and read the local news. But when you're home, it's also convenient to have it to where you can sit there and read it while you're eating breakfast or sitting out on your deck in the evening—where you can take it with you to where you are. I think newspapers have a healthy future. I—I have to give Mr. Hussman props about one thing. Other markets where a single newspaper has taken over the news hole has just gotten slashed to ribbons 'til like nothing, and they're just cash cows—you know, they're just bare-bones news with ads. The *Democrat-Gazette* still has a healthy news hole, and I applaud him for that. I wanted to back up a couple of things. One thing I forgot about—positive reinforcement. The whole year I was at the *Democrat* I got positive reinforcement one time. Roger Armbrust, who was, like, this political reporter with long hair—I—he had written a story and, like, it was just all scrambled, and I rewrote it completely. And I went—you know, the paper came out—I went home, and I'm asleep. My lifestyle at that time was just that I would get up at 4:30 in the morning, eat breakfast, catch the bus, go to work. I'd come home and take a nap, and then I would go out at night and get to bed about 1:00 a.m. and do the whole thing over again. Anyway, so I'm asleep. I'm taking my afternoon nap, and the phone rings. My roommate knocks on my bedroom door. It's Armbrust—he has called me. I thought, "Oh, God, I'm in trouble now." He said, "Man, Gerald, I

just wanted to thank you for editing that story. That's exactly what I wanted to write and I just wasn't able to do it, and I really appreciate what you did, and you just did a great job." And [laughs] that's the difference, you know? One time in a year. The rest of the time it's, you know, "This is the worst thing that's ever been in the newspaper." [Laughter] I guess I don't really have anything else to say. I've enjoyed taking part in this interview. I hope it comes out well, and I'll be looking forward to reading it.

GH: All right. That'll do it. Thank you.

GK: Yes.

[End of Interview]

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