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Arkansas Democrat Project

Interview with

Jim Shuemake
Vilonia, Arkansas
16 July 2005

Interviewer: Jerry McConnell

Jerry McConnell: This is Jerry McConnell. This is July 16, 2005. I'm here in the home of Jim Shuemake, conducting an interview for the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History Project] on the history of the *Arkansas Democrat* and the [*Arkansas*] *Democrat-Gazette*. The first thing I need to do, Jim, is to ask you if I have your permission to make this tape and to turn this tape over to the University of Arkansas.

Jim Shuemake: Yes, you do.

JM: Okay. Now, Jim, let's just start at the beginning. First, tell me your name and tell me how to spell it.

JS: I'm Jim Shuemake. S-H-U-E-M-A-K-E.

JM: Okay. Jim, where and when were you born?

JS: I was born in Conway [Arkansas] on January 28, 1935.

JM: Okay. Who are you parents?

JS: Sam and Alma Shuemake.

JM: What did Sam do?

JS: He worked for—well, he wound up working for the gas company. He worked for the Arkansas-Louisiana Gas Company [ARKLA], and when they sold to—City

Service owned them, and they sold to Witt Stephens. He [Sam] didn't like the way that ran, so he left and went to California. They all went to California, and that was in 1956.

JM: Okay. You didn't go with him?

JS: No.

JM: Okay. All right.

JS: I was about to get drafted and knew it. I was already married and about to be drafted, so I stayed here.

JM: Where did you go to school?

JS: In Conway.

JM: High school—all the way through Conway schools and everything?

JS: Yes. I started and finished in Conway schools. Of course, it wasn't nearly as large then as it is now.

JM: Did you have any college [education] at all?

JS: No.

JM: Okay. When did you go to work for the *Democrat*?

JS: In April of 1954. I went to work in circulation. They had street sales. You know, they had old men who sold papers on the street corners.

JM: Yes.

JS: They had two people who did that, and they had one who did the racks who was out all over the city. Well, the city was divided into four rack runs. I put papers in one of them and collected all four of them.

JM: Okay.

JS: That was my start. My claim to fame was bringing in all the pennies and nickels from the . . .

JM: That you took out of the machines and everything.

JS: The paper was a nickel then.

JM: Yes. Do you remember or have any idea how many papers they sold on the streets in those days, or out of the racks?

JS: I don't remember out of the racks. I did that for about a year, then I went in as the second man in street sales, and then finally into street sales manager. But we had a hard time getting a thousand papers. TV had come in and TV was still new then. We were an afternoon paper. People had changed their habits. They watched TV at night instead of reading newspapers.

JM: Yes.

JS: That was the big thing. Street sales were declining.

JM: Yes. They were going down at that time. Yes.

JS: Yes. And we were having a hard time maintaining it. I was glad to get out of that.

JM: Were you? How long were you doing that?

JS: I did that for—well, overall, in street sales, I was there for three years, I guess. That was 1954 to—no, two years. And then I was a district manager over carrier boys for a year.

JM: Okay.

JS: Then I was drafted and went into the service for two years.

JM: Okay. Who was the circulation manager then?

JS: Bob Sorrells.

JM: Bob Sorrells. Okay. When you were in charge of street sales, that was for about two years?

JS: Yes.

JM: But they sort of steadily went down during that time and everything.

JS: Yes. It kept going down.

JM: Yes, I can imagine.

JS: They finally did away with it and just put racks around.

JM: I'm sure the overall circulation—that was happening to it, too, wasn't it?

JS: That's right, it was.

JM: Wasn't it going down at that time?

JS: Yes.

JM: You went into the service in what year?

JS: In 1957. I went into the service in August. This was when—our circulation was going down—but this was when the [Little Rock Central High School] integration [crisis] started. I was gone.

JM: Okay.

JS: I went in in August, and the Central deal was in September.

JM: It blew up in September of 1957. Yes.

JS: So I missed all that, and was glad of it. But our circulation came back up. It

came back up during that deal because of the stand we took and the stand the *Gazette* took.

JM: Yes.

JS: But I was glad I was out of it.

JM: Yes. Do you remember anything about the stand that the *Democrat* took on their editorial policy?

JS: Yes. We were against integration, and the *Gazette* was for it.

JM: Yes.

JS: I mean, not everybody. And I know it was wrong. I know it was wrong *now*. Still, it was the thing to do *then*.

JM: Yes.

JS: People were just against integration.

JM: Yes. How long were you in the service?

JS: Two years.

JM: Two years. What did you do in the service?

JS: [Laughs] I was a tank mechanic.

JM: Were you? Okay. So that was in 1957 that you went in, and you came back in 1959.

JS: Yes.

JM: You came back to the *Democrat*.

JS: Right. I said when I left circulation that I would not come back to the paper. When I went into the service, I said, "Oh, my paper days are over."

JM: Yes.

JS: I mean, you couldn't even eat a meal without some parent [of one of the boys] calling you, [saying] "My boy is not getting the treatment that somebody else is getting. And he's carrying too many papers," and all of that.

JM: Yes.

JS: I said I would not come back to that. It's just a headache.

JM: Yes.

JS: But I forgot all that when I was in the service. The service was so much *worse* than the *Democrat* was that I forgot all that, and I came back to circulation.

JM: Yes.

JS: I went back to work in circulation in October, and I worked until March of the next year, 1960. I went to the composing room then. It cut my salary in half.

JM: You went where?

JS: As an apprentice in the composing room.

JM: Oh, I see. Okay. And that cut your salary in half?

JS: Yes.

JM: You were not a member of the union then, at first? Or did you have to join the union when you started working there?

JS: You didn't join the union; you had an apprenticeship to serve. It was a six-year apprenticeship.

JM: Oh, I see. Okay.

JS: Then you got your [union] card. Of course, you were an apprentice in the union,

but you weren't—it wasn't like being in the union.

JM: Yes.

JS: The first six months you were on probation. You were just there.

JM: Yes. But you weren't getting full union wages.

JS: Forty percent of the scale. The scale was $3.

JM: Is that right? And you got forty percent of $3?

JS: For a year I worked for $43 a week.

JM: Is that right? That sounds about like a reporter. [Laughter]

JS: Yes.

JM: So you stayed with the union, then, and eventually you served out your apprenticeship?

JS: I was just a kid and I was sort of hot-headed. There was a guy up there who had been in the service who I couldn't get along with at all and—he repaired TVs at night.

JM: Yes.

JS: The head machinist told me that if I didn't start studying electronics, the day was coming when that guy could do my job better than I could. And I said, "That day will *never* come." I mean, we couldn't even say, "Good morning," without getting into an argument or a fight or something. You didn't know him. He was a great big guy. He was just a parts changer for TVs, but he had been to the Draughan's electronic school.

JM: Okay. What were you doing in the composing room at that time? You were

doing mechanical work?

JS: Yes.

JM: You weren't punching out—you weren't typing . . .

JS: No, I was a machinist. I went up there as a machinist's apprentice, and that was taken care of. We were getting operating units. Now, this was after I had been there three years. We got three tape-operating units to go on three Linotype machines. They put a guy who was the head machinist's son who had served his apprenticeship as a machinist but was now working as an operator. He was one of the best operators we had.

JM: Yes.

JS: He was doing ads.

JM: Who was that?

JS: Ed Lucy.

JM: Okay.

JS: They put him *back* in as a machinist to take care of nothing but these three machines on these three units.

JM: Three tape . . .

JS: Three tape-operating units and the three machines they were on. That's all he had to do.

JM: Explain to me how the tapes operated. A lot of the people are going to—we're going to get into all this. And maybe you ought to go back first because we're not going to have a lot of expert testimony on this—just tell me how a Linotype

machine operated, to begin with, by printing out the rows of metal type.

JS: Yes, the slugs.

JM: Okay. The slugs. The Linotype operator sat there and typed the stories . . .

JS: It had a keyboard, but it was nothing like a typewriter keyboard.

JM: Yes.

JS: Your keys went up and down instead of across, like typewriter keys. And they were in order of the most-used character. The most-used character was the "e," and it was the first character up there.

JM: Okay.

JS: And you did it with your hands like so. You had a space bar just like a typewriter, but it dropped a space band. And each time you hit a key it dropped a mat.

JM: It dropped a mat that had that one letter on it.

JS: Right.

JM: Right.

JS: And it went into your assembler, they called it, where you're assembling a line.

JM: Yes.

JS: And when you hit a space, it would drop a space band in there, and that was a wedge shape. It had a sleeve on it and a wedge at the bottom that would drive up to make more or less space. When you got your line assembled, you could tell when the space bands would come up high enough to make the line spread out to make it square on the ends.

JM: To justify it.

JS: Justified. Right.

JM: That width of type that you were going to use in the paper.

JS: Right. Then you'd send it up and it would go over, and you'd cast that slug with hot—it had a pot of hot lead on it. It would come up to lock up and squirt that hot metal out against these mats that you had just put in there with the characters in them, and it made a line.

JM: It made a one-line slug.

JS: One line. Right.

JM: Which could be, say, like in typical body type, maybe ten points or something like that.

JS: Yes.

JM: But the type was maybe nine points or something like that.

JS: Yes.

JM: And there was a little extra width on there, but you got that one line and then it dropped out. Then you kept setting them, and they just . . .

JS: Yes. After you set your line in, you could start setting your other line while it was doing all this casting and all that.

JM: Yes.

JS: Then an arm came down from the top that picked these mats up that you'd just cast this line from and redistributed them back into the magazine that the mats went in. And they went in the right channel and fell back into the right slot.

JM: Yes.

JS: Except sometimes they'd fall in the wrong one. [Laughter]

JM: Yes. [It was an] amazing operation, though. When you got all those slugs left for that particular story or whatever they were typing up, what happened to them?

JS: They'd take them to the dump. They'd pull a proof of it and send that proof to the proofreaders.

JM: Yes.

JS: That was a galley proof. And they'd keep these stories—they just had galleys and galleys of type.

JM: Yes.

JS: And the makeup man would take them and put them together in the page.

JM: Yes. They'd sit there, and the whole thing was maybe about an inch or an inch and a half deep or something—that line.

JS: Yes. It was a little bit less than an inch. Nine hundred and something thousandths. I've forgotten the exact measurements, but it's a little bit less than an inch.

JM: Okay. They were all pressed together there in the width of the column, and they'd make the proof from it and send it to the proofreader. Then the proofreaders were also ITU [International Typographers Union] employees. They were union employees, and they read for mistakes and . . .

JS: And they had a copy-holder working with them. One of them read—the copy-holder read and the proofreader marked the copy.

JM: Oh, I was confused about that. Somebody told me that their daughter worked

there as a copy-holder, and I've forgotten what the copy-holder did. What does a copy-holder do? Read the copy . . .

JS: They would read the copy to the proofreader.

JM: The proofreader wasn't looking at the copy and trying to make corrections.

JS: No.

JM: They were listening—somebody was reading it to them and they were checking it out. Okay.

JS: Yes.

JM: So you had two people doing that operation. Okay. And, of course, after those had been corrected, theoretically—they didn't always get corrected before they got on a page, I don't think. [Laughs]

JS: Yes. Right.

JM: Then the makeup man took them and put them on a—there was a form there the size of a page, and they started sticking them in the page where they were supposed to go.

JS: Well, at first they put them in as galleys—the stories, but then the corrections. They had to pry out one of those little lines—the slugs that had this line on it that had the error—and put the new line in there.

JM: Yes. The type is set in sort of a metal tray, and that's what you call a galley.

JS: Yes, that's a galley.

JM: Yes. When they got ready to start making out the page, they took those galleys and carried them over there and started putting them in the paper. Some papers

had page dummies from which they operated, and they laid it in the page like the page dummy. But I think at the *Democrat* the only page that was dummied was the front page. Is that right?

JS: The front page. Yes.

JM: And the makeup man in the composing room decided where to put them in all the other pages. Isn't that correct?

JS: That's right.

JM: How to put them around the ads and everything else.

JS: Yes.

JM: And I don't think that the newsroom ever saw—they didn't know where the ads were or what ads were on what page or anything like that.

JS: Well, before the makeup man got it, the heads went—the heads were set on a different machine.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: It was a bigger machine that cast heads, and even some of them were too big for Linotype and were cast on a Ludlow. And the galley boy . . .

JM: What's a Ludlow? Tell me how that would work.

JS: It was where they got it out of the case a character at a time, with their hand, and put it in a—they called it a stick—they put it in a stick . . .

JM: Put it in a form, so to speak. Yes.

JS: Yes. And made up a line of words, or whatever, of different sizes.

JM: Yes.

JS: And then it went into a casting machine and cast this same kind of slug.

JM: Cast a big, wide slug . . . . Let's say, if it was seventy-two-point type, then it would cast a slug at least seventy-two points wide, which is . . .

JS: Yes, but it only had—on the Ludlow, the whole slug wasn't seventy-two points wide. The slug was the same size, and the type hung over the sides of it. It was not like a Linotype, where the type was on the same size slug as the . . .

JM: Refresh my memory. How many points in an inch? Were there seventy-two points to an inch?

JS: No—I don't remember! Twelve points to the pica and twelve picas to the inch, I believe is what it was. Maybe six picas to an inch.

JM: Yes. Okay. That makes—I think that sounds more like it.

JS: Yes. I believe that's the way it was.

JM: Okay. At any rate, they set the heads on the Linotype. It's the same kind of operation. The guy just typed it. It came out and dropped down and cast it and everything. And they'd take them over and put them with the stories, then they'd put those in the page.

JS: Right.

JM: So that's a little digression there, but I have not seen anywhere else in any of these interviews where somebody is explaining how all that happened. I had somebody at the university say, "You're going to have to explain some terms to us. We're getting terms here that a lot of people don't know what you're saying." [Laughter]

JS: Yes.

JM: At any rate, you were a machinist and you were working with all these different Linotypes, and what else?

JS: We did the Ludlows. We took care of all the equipment in the composing room. We kept it running.

JM: Yes.

JS: They'd have a—a lot of it was not keeping it running, it was keeping it running for the operators. The operator had a switch on the side of the machine, and we had a board up on the wall that had a number. Each machine was numbered. He could turn that light on if he needed a machinist. And we'd go back—they'd call machinists if they ran out of mats, like, for an "e." You've got to have a bunch of "e"s in there because you've got three or four lines tied up here at the same time, and you've got a bunch of "e"s in there. If you didn't have enough, you had to stop and wait until it got back in there. Or you had a lot of distributor stops, where it's distributing the mats back into the magazine. You'd have to go—machinists did that. You had to get up on the back of the machine and figure out why it was not—maybe they weren't going down into the magazine. They'd hang and then another would come in and hit it, and it would stop. If the distributor—it was made with long screw shafts, and they ran between two of them. If one of them didn't keep up, it was designed so it would stop. That's what happened if the mat hit something; it would make one of them get ahead of the other one and it would stop, and the machinist would have to go fix it.

JM: Oh. Did you go to school somewhere to take training in any of this?

JS: No, that was the apprenticeship. That's why I was making $43 a week.

JM: That's on-the-job training.

JS: Yes. [Laughs]

JM: Okay. How long did you keep doing this?

JS: I started that story a while ago. Because of the head machinist telling me that this guy was going to do my job better than I could if I didn't start studying electronics, I started studying electronics *that night*. I mean, *that night*.

JM: Oh, okay.

JS: I took correspondence courses. He brought me a correspondence course that he had taken earlier, and I started with that. I'd take it and take the tests back, and he'd grade them.

JM: Who told you this?

JS: Charlie Lucy.

JM: Okay.

JS: Anyway, I said that Ed Lucy had the job of taking care of these three machines with the three tape units on them.

JM: Yes. These were the printers.

JS: He did that for a year.

JM: Yes.

JS: And the Merganthalers—the people who made the Linotype—Merganthaler—now, I've got not idea how you spell that.

JM: Yes. I think I have a faint idea, but I can look it up.

JS: [Laughs] The representative from them came in. Ed had part of this thing torn apart. He told the company that they needed to hire *that* man, that he could tear this equipment apart and put it back together and make it work.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, they hired him. He had been doing this for a year.

JM: Yes.

JS: I had four years then in my apprenticeship, but I had been studying electronics for a year. So they gave me my card two years early.

JM: Your union card?

JS: Yes. They made me a journeyman.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: I got—I've forgotten now what—a $40-a-week raise. I think by that time I was making $80 a week.

JM: Yes.

JS: And they raised me to $120, so then I felt like I was in . . .

JM: In tall cotton now. [Laughter]

JS: Yes, right.

JM: At that time—that would've been along about the sixties [1960s] some time, I guess—late sixties or mid-sixties?

JS: It was 1960 when I went to work, so this was 1964.

JM: 1964. Okay.

JS: Before Ed left town to go to his new job, I had to tear this same piece of

equipment apart. [Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

JS: I had four years' experience.

JM: Yes.

JS: And he had served a six-year apprenticeship and had been around Linotypes for no telling how long.

JM: Yes.

JS: But I tore it apart and put together and made it work.

JM: Got it to work, too.

JS: Nobody told the company that they needed to hire me, that I was . . .

JM: Okay. Now, these were for the printers, right?

JS: Yes.

JM: Explain to me how the printers were different in the old way of doing it and how they set the type and what happened there.

JS: Well, these were for the tape-operating units. This was the part—it was the only mechanical part on the whole thing—it was the thing that fit on the back of the keyboard. The keyboard on a Linotype machine—a whole Linotype machine was made from cams. I mean, everything it did, a cam made it work—*everything*. You hit a key and a little pin would pull out from under one end of a cam. The cam would drop on a rubber roller and it would turn—raise a reed that would hit another little deal up there that would release the mat. Well, this was the thing that fit on the back of the keyboard, and it was done with solenoids. When you

hit a key—when it got [an electrical] pulse from the tape, it would energize a solenoid that would push this same little lever out from under this cam, and the cam would still drop and turn.

JM: Yes.

JS: It had—well, I don't remember how many keys were on a Linotype machine, but it had a solenoid for each key.

JM: Yes.

JS: And it had a jillion little levers and all kinds of stuff in it—springs and . . .

JM: A complicated piece of equipment. Yes. Okay. When they started doing the tapes, they punched out—am I correct that they punched out perforated tapes that had little holes in it . . .?

JS: Right.

JM: Then that ran through the machine and told it what to drop and everything else.

JS: That's right.

JM: So you did not have a Linotype operator sitting at that machine.

JS: That's right.

JM: The typist had typed it in there, and that told it how to drop—and I assume that the point for that was that the typist doing the perforator could do it faster than a Linotype operator. Is that correct?

JS: Yes, they could.

JM: Yes.

JS: At first, they had to justify each line—the tape punchers had to justify each line.

JM: Yes.

JS: They had two pointers and another pointer that every time you put a space band in, it would—and when that space pointer got between these other two, your line would justify.

JM: Yes.

JS: Then we got a computer that did that, and they'd start at the beginning of a paragraph. They'd indent for the beginning of a paragraph and just set straight through to the end of that paragraph, then run it through a reader that ran it through the computer, and it would generate another tape that had a space in it to make the—it didn't use space bands then. The computer figured out the amount of space to put in there to make it . . .

JM: But this was the electronic part of it—the tapes telling the computer what to . . .

JS: Right. What mat to drop.

JM: What mat to drop. Yes.

JS: What character needed to drop.

JM: Okay. This computer wasn't like the later computers we got with the keyboard, terminal, and everything else.

JS: No. It was just a big box that sat back there on the wall—I guess the wall with the—it had a reader—just a little reader that read this tape.

JM: Yes.

JS: You ran it through there, and that computer justified it and spit out another tape.

JM: Yes. So how long did you do this job as the mechanic and—continue on as a

mechanic in the composing room?

JS: I did it a little over fourteen years.

JM: Okay.

JS: When Walter [Hussman, Jr.] came in 1974—now, this was in 1964 that I got my [union] card.

JM: Right.

JS: I had served a four-year apprenticeship, so [from] 1964 to 1974 I was all phases up to the head machinist. I was head machinist when Walter came.

JM: Okay. So you just kept moving up as far as the machinists went, and everything?

JS: Yes.

JM: What other kinds of machinery were there for you to deal with, or have we basically discussed most of them?

JS: Well, yes. We did the Ludlow. Then we had strip-casters. At some point in this, the machinists started running the strip-casters than ran—like, the rule that went between the classifieds?

JM: Yes.

JS: They had a cut-off rule that went—well, it was the same rule, I guess, that went in between stories—at the end of a story.

JM: Yes.

JS: You had to run base—that they put etched pictures on or ads that came in from a plate that you had to make an etching of. Pictures—they etched pictures onto zinc

plates and you had to make a base that—everything had to be the right height, you know? So this base had to be the right height to put this zinc plate on to make it come up to the right height to print. We ran—sometimes during this time—and I don't remember when—in the process, the machinists started running those strip-casters.

JM: Yes.

JS: Because they had time to run them.

JM: Yes.

JS: They didn't take constant care, you just started them and let them go if something happened to them.

JM: These would make lines that you put in between the stories, and it was sort of—in essence, said, "That's the end of the story. There's a different story down here."

JS: Right. Yes.

JM: They just separated them so you'd see them on a page.

JS: We called them cut-off rules.

JM: So as you were going on, was the equipment changing much, say, for the next few years? You didn't get into cold type at that time, did you?

JS: Well, during that time, we did get into cold type for ads. We got our first cold-type typesetter.

JM: Okay.

JS: And I went to—that was a Super-Quick made by Merganthaler.

JM: Okay.

JS: I went to school on that. I was the first person from the *Democrat* to ever go to school on any kind of equipment. I was going to take vacation and go to the unions. The union in Colorado Springs [Colorado] had a school for training printers on things like that. I was going to use vacation and go to school at Colorado Springs. Marcus George came up one day and said, "If the company would pay your way—pay for you to go and pay for the school—would you still take vacation to go, and go to the company school on this?" I said, "Why, sure I would." [Laughs] So I did. I went to—it was on Long Island in New York—for a month.

JM: Okay.

JS: I was just going to get to go to Colorado Springs for two weeks, but I still—I had to use two weeks of vacation. That was fine.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: I finished at the top of the class. They sent a letter that I was—I've still got the letter somewhere.

JM: Yes. I'm not surprised. Explain to me, now, a little bit about—we're getting into some technical things—about how cold type operates. How is cold type different from hot type?

JS: Well, we still had tape-punchers to punch the tapes for the ads. They punched the tapes, and we ran it through the—I'm not sure if it ran through the computer. Yes, it did run through the computer, and it re-justified it and made—put the right codes in to get typeface changes and all that, for ads. Ads, you know—there

wasn't just one typeface in that. You changed typefaces and sizes and everything.

JM: Yes.

JS: The computer did all that—took the code that the tape-punchers put in and converted that to something that the typesetter would read. The typesetter—do you want me to explain the typesetter?

JM: Yes.

JS: The Super Quick—it had four six-inch square grids in it that had the typeface or fonts. It had the fonts on it. It had a single light source back behind it that shined through what they call wedges, and those wedges were free to move crossways or up and down.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: And the combination of that would move that light beam around so you could get any point on that six-inch square grid. I thought that was amazing. I had never seen anything like that. It had—if you had to use another typeface, that thing would rotate around to put the other typeface in there, and it would use that. You could put four in there at once, but it was slow.

JM: Yes.

JS: The tape had to read—I think it was three times. It had to read each line three times to get everything set up.

JM: Yes.

JS: This was back in the "Dark Ages."

JM: Yes.

JS: It was slow. It had discreet components. Everything was—it had a card that—now you've got four of in a little sixteen-pin chip or fourteen-pin chip. It was on a six-inch square card, just crammed full of transistors and resistors and all kinds of things.

JM: Yes.

JS: And it had two of those on it. Now they put them in little bitty chips.

JM: But the end of this operation was that it printed on film? How did that image get out to go on the page?

JS: Yes, well, it printed on—it wasn't film, but it was photosensitive paper.

JM: Oh, okay.

JS: It was still paper, but you had to run it through a processor.

JM: Okay.

JS: It was photosensitive paper, and you pasted that up.

JM: Yes. Anyway, this paper came out that was photosensitive, so it came out with the picture of the ad on it and didn't have to go through the Linotype or anything. It came out with a picture of the ad on it, and I think, maybe, the back of the photosensitive paper—did it have a sticky substance on it?

JS: No, they had to run it through a waxer.

JM: Oh, okay. All right. I remember that.

JS: Yes.

JM: They ran that paper through the waxer, then you had a thick paper page there, and you would paste this stuff on a page in lieu of having to put the big, heavy types

in the form and everything. You were pasting this up on the page, and you didn't have any hot lead or anything else. That's why they called it cold type.

JS: Right. Then you'd take it to the camera room and they'd shoot a picture of that paste-up page, and that would make a negative. And from the negative, then, you'd make a plate. Are you getting hot?

JM: No, I'm fine. Just keep going. This is good.

JS: [Laughs] You'd make a plate for the stereotypers to use to make the plate for the press.

JM: Yes. Okay. Tell me what the stereotypers did, because I don't think I have any stereotypers I'm going to be talking to.

JS: Yes, they've . . .

JM: Long gone.

JS: Yes, they're long gone. Yes. They would take the type—it started out when the make-up men made up the pages in the form that they made it up in to make it to be a page. They'd take it to the stereotypers that rolled—they put a mat on top of it. They had a thing that had—that was humidity-controlled. It had to be in a humidifier, and it was like—it wasn't like cork. It was more like—I don't know what you'd call that substance it was made out of, but it had moisture in it, and they would put that on top of this form that the page was made up in and run it through a mat roller, they called it. It was a big roller—I mean, a *big* roller that the thing went through.

JM: Yes.

JS: And it rolled this big roller across and made a mat out of it. It pressed this mat down on it . . .

JM: It pressed this mat down on it, which left the indentations in it.

JS: Right. And then they'd have to put that in a dryer and cook the moisture out of it. [Laughs] Then they would put it in the thing to cast the plate from. It would be a half-round—it would be a whole page, but it would be halfway around the cylinder on the press.

JM: Yes. In other words, it was circular because the press was circular.

JS: Right. You'd have to make two of those for each page.

JM: This is coming back to me slowly now. I had forgotten a lot of that. But it pressed this mat down onto to the type, and it made indentations showing the type as they were—the letters and everything else.

JS: Yes, the reverse of it.

JM: Yes. Then you dried it and put this in the form, and then they poured—was it hot lead that they poured in on top of it?

JS: Yes, it was.

JM: And made this big cast, which was maybe an inch thick, or something like that.

JS: Yes—heavy duty.

JM: It was circular.

JS: Half-round.

JM: Half-round, and then they would take those down and put them on the press.

JS: They had a conveyor that would go straight down to the press room. They were

directly over the press room. It would go straight down to the press room. They'd take them out and the pressmen would put them on whatever cylinder they went on. When they got through, they'd re-melt that metal. They had another conveyor that brought them back up, and they went back into this re-melt pot. I mean, you just used that metal over and over.

JM: Yes. You'd heat it again and melt it.

JS: That made a terrible noise. Remember that was just on a slope—that conveyor that came back up went up high and then it just sloped down and into this pot. It made, I don't know, a couple of turns.

JM: As I remember, it made quite a bit of heat, too.

JS: Oh, it made a lot of heat. [Laughter] Every once in a while it would catch fire—the flue where it went up would catch fire. The firemen would come screaming in with their axes.

JM: [Laughs] So you kept doing this operating—the machinists—you became head machinist. Of course, one of the key things coming up here is when Walter Hussman [Jr.] bought the paper. Had anything else changed much before Walter came in, or did a lot of the other innovations start coming in after Walter came?

JS: They came after Walter came in. When Walter came, the ads were the only thing we had on cold type.

JM: And that's something I might add.

JS: Yes. We had progressed to different typesetters by then.

JM: Yes.

JS: We had Photons that—and I don't remember how many we had. Probably two, maybe three—Photons. I think it was just two. When he came, he brought another. He [Walter] bought another one. He had one in Texarkana in case he had union problems.

JM: Yes.

JS: I had to go down there [laughs] a time or two to get parts off it to use to keep ours going. That was the one we started putting the news—setting the news on, when we went to cold type on the news. The first thing we did after Walter came was to start using the bigger computer—the 1145—and do the news on cold type.

JM: I thought that was the progression as I remembered it, but that we went to doing news on the cold type after Walter got there. Is that correct?

JS: Yes, that's correct. We hadn't even tried that before.

JM: And you were the head machinist at that time.

JS: Yes.

JM: Now, then, tell me—what was your reaction when Walter Hussman bought the paper?

JS: Well, it was [laughs]—the composing room was union. I knew Walter was—they had a—what do you call it?

JM: A reputation?

JS: They had a reputation for being anti-union.

JM: Yes.

JS: And I was going to beat it. I said, "I'm not staying here and putting up with that.

I'm *leaving* right now."

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, that went for a day or so. This was a surprise. And, you know, nobody knew that it was even for *sale* until, all of a sudden, they came in and said, "Walter Hussman bought the paper."

JM: Yes.

JS: "It's sold, and we're getting out." It was such a surprise that it took—that's the first thing you thought of, was, "Walter's going to run me off. They've got a guy in El Dorado who does what I do, and I *know* he'll come up here and do my job, so I'm just going to leave."

JM: Yes.

JS: In the union days, machinists were in demand. I mean, *everywhere, anywhere*. I've gone to places and they'd say, "Lock the door and don't let him out." [Laughter] I could have gone *anywhere* and gone to work.

JM: Yes.

JS: At that time, I didn't have any kids. I was free and could've gone anywhere. But then I decided, "What the heck, I'll just stay and see how far I can go with this."

JM: Yes.

JS: And I did, and it's the best thing that ever happened to me. I stayed. Now, when Walter bought the paper, I had been there—this was 1974, and I had gone to work there in 1954. I'd had twenty years. I had $1,200 in a retirement fund [laughs] after twenty years.

JM: Was that a company retirement fund, or just your own retirement?

JS: No, it was a union retirement.

JM: Oh, union. Okay.

JS: Now, the union had a fraternal pension that worked like Social Security. The people working paid the pensions for the people who weren't working. But that was—they were getting fewer and fewer by this time. They were getting fewer and fewer people working because printers weren't needed anymore. They weren't cold type. A lot of people had already replaced their union printers with just paste-up people. They didn't have to know a whole lot. So it looked like that might go away, and that's what most of your dues went with. I mean, I was paying [about] $700 a year, and that was a lot of money.

JM: Union dues?

JS: Yes, union dues. It was based on how much you made and how much your pension was going to be and all that. But then some time back in there, we got—they called it an industrial pension plan, where the company paid into a pension plan. They paid fifty cents a shift to start with. I think they were paying $1 a shift when they quit, but it was not very much. $1 a shift. That's $1 a day.

JM: They paid it into the union pension plan.

JS: Yes.

JM: They weren't paying one for the reporters, as I recall. [Laughter]

JS: No. This is just the union.

JM: Okay. Was that under Marcus [George] and Stanley [Berry]?

JS: Yes. And Mr. [K. August] Engel. Now, Mr. Engel died in 1968, so I worked there while he was there.

JM: Right.

JS: Yes, it was—Marcus and Stanley took over after that. They were the ones who negotiated the dollar, anyway. Mr. Engel might have done the fifty cents. I don't remember.

JM: Okay. So what happened to you and the composing room after Walter took over?

JS: Well, he took over in March . . .

JM: That's 1974.

JS: 1974. Right. And in July, he called me down and offered me everything that I ever could want, but he had a stipulation—I had to get out of the union. This was to go to school on the computer. This was to take over and share in the profits from not having to have a service policy on the computer. Everything that I had ever even *dreamed* about wanting, I was offered—except I never thought about having to get out of the union.

JM: Yes.

JS: But that was one of the stipulations.

JM: Okay. He hadn't bought a computer yet, had he, or had he bought . . .?

JS: Yes, he had already bought . . .

JM: By that time, he had already bought the computer.

JS: Yes, it was downstairs in a room by itself.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: And it was just . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

JM: Here we are again—Jerry McConnell with Jim Shuemake. This is side two of this tape. Jim, you were talking about that Walter had called you in and offered you just about everything—to send you off to school and learn the computers and all this stuff, but you had to get out of the union. But I think you had mentioned at one time—in the union you had been getting a lot of money on overtime, right?

JS: Right. For the last five years, I had made more in overtime than I had made in straight time.

JM: Yes.

JS: And, you know, after a while—when you first start working overtime, it's gravy, you know? But after a while it gets to be—if you're making it all the time, it gets to be just part of your salary.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, it was part of my salary. [Laughs]

JM: Yes.

JS: He had decided—anyway, I guess he had decided if he was going to be able to keep me, he was going to have to put me on salary. I was still going to have to put the same hours in, but I was—I mean, I *was* putting a lot of hours in.

JM: Yes, I'm sure you were.

JS: I was putting a lot of hours, even when I was in the union, that didn't go on the

payroll, too.

JM: Yes.

JS: Anyway, he called me down and he wanted me to do this—to get out of the union.

JM: Yes.

JS: That was the hardest decision I ever made. I mean, I had worked with these guys for fifteen years and then I was going to have to be ostracized by them. And I thought I was the only one.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, it turned out there were two more, and they really were ostracized. I mean, they really were. I was not because of what I did and the way I had been doing—I had been carrying the union. I had been doing a lot more for the union than the union had been doing for me. And everybody knew that. So I was not as ostracized as the others.

JM: Who were the other two people?

JS: Fred Campbell and Ronnie Henson.

JM: Okay. Fred had been the foreman of the composing room, right?

JS: Right.

JM: And Ronnie Henson—what did he do?

JS: He was doing the cold type for the ads. He was in charge of the computer—the coding of the cold type ads—for the ads. He was going to be instrumental in this taking over and putting everything on cold type and going to this new computer.

JM: Putting the news on cold type, too.

JS: Yes. And he did that.

JM: Both Fred and Ronnie did take Walter's offer?

JS: Right.

JM: And dropped out of the union.

JS: I'm sure it was just as hard for them as it was for me. We were all going through this, and each of us thought we were the only one.

JM: Yes.

JS: But we all decided that we didn't have any other choice but to do it, so we did.

JM: Freddy remained the foreman in the composing room. Is that correct?

JS: Yes. And that's another thing. See, they both still had to work there—to work with these people.

JM: Directly with the people, in other words. Freddy had to supervise all the printers and put pages together and everything else.

JS: They both had to do jobs that were being done by union people—had *always* been done by union people, and now they were not union people.

JM: And they did get ostracized, then, you say?

JS: Right.

JM: Yes. You don't remember—I'll have somebody ask Fred about that—what kinds of things happened to him. You never got any threats, did you?

JS: No, not—no.

JM: Yes.

JS: They understood my part of it.

JM: Yes. Did your salary—was it enough to make up?

JS: No. [Laughs]

JM: It wasn't enough to make up for your overtime, then?

JS: No. [Laughter]

JM: Okay. But he did send you to school, right, on the computer?

JS: He did. I went to school for—I don't know—I guess a year and a half. Just every part of the computer school to the photo comp machine schools—just everything. I even went to one class that I was the only one there. [Laughs]

JM: Is that right?

JS: There was nobody to ask the stupid questions, so I didn't learn anything.

JM: Where was the school?

JS: In Maynard, Massachusetts—at DEC.

JM: That's Digital Equipment Company, right?

JS: Right.

JM: What kind of computer was it that he bought?

JS: It was a DEC 1145.

JM: DEC 1145. Okay. But he only bought one computer, right?

JS: Right.

JM: He didn't buy a backup.

JS: The only one. No backup. [Laughter]

JM: Okay. So you weren't gone full-time, though, during that second year?

JS: No.

JM: You would go to school for a while and come back and work for a while, then?

JS: Yes. Now, the longest I was gone was a month. I went to two two-week schools back-to-back at one time. That only happened once. The rest of the time it was for about two weeks and then back for a while.

JM: Okay. We need to get into the operation of the computer here in a minute. First, he brought some other technology in, too, didn't he? After Walter came in—and maybe we had it before he came in—what was the device that we used to catch the *Times-Post* wire and everything else? Was it a Shaffstall, or something like that?

JS: Oh, yes. [Laughs] I'd forgotten that. Yes.

JM: Did Walter bring that in?

JS: I can't . . .

JM: It was along about in there. I think maybe he brought it in.

JS: Oh, he probably did. I can't remember for sure, but I'll bet he did.

JM: The scanner, too—that I'm sure he brought.

JS: I *know* he brought the scanner. Yes, because that was after the computer. That was the way to get the news into the computer.

JM: Yes—other than the terminals? Well, I'm a little bit confused on that. But the scanner, as I remember it—it was supposed to scan the copy and the reporters were supposed to type up their story on a sheet of paper, and you ran that sheet of paper through there. Then it punched out a tape, like the old perforated tape.

JS: That's right.

JM: Theoretically, it punched out a tape.

JS: Yes. And that's what we did—I mean, we had this computer, but we only had—I think it started out with three—three terminals on it.

JM: I was thinking four.

JS: Four. Maybe it was four. I guess it was because they came in pairs of two—I mean, two.

JM: Yes.

JS: You had to buy another computer to hook two terminals to.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: So I guess it was four.

JM: So we only had four terminals up in the newsroom to . . .

JS: But then he bought all the reporters [IBM] Selectric typewriters, and they had to type their stories on these typewriters that—well, and it had to be typed. They couldn't type like reporters had *normally* been typing, where they typed through the lines and all that. It had to be typed clean.

JM: Clean. Yes.

JS: You ran through—double-spaced and everything. And you ran that through this scanner, and it scanned each thing and each page—each *line* and punched out a tape. Then you'd run the tape through the reader? I've forgotten how that worked.

JM: They ran the tape somehow, and this put the story in the computer. Is that . . .?

JS: It eventually did, but at first it punched out a tape, and you had to run that tape into the computer.

JM: Yes.

JS: Then we interfaced it to the computer and it punched it out, and the story wound up in the computer without going to tape.

JM: Yes. Then the copy editors, as I recall—correct me if I'm wrong on this—they called the story up on their terminal that they got out of the computer and edited it on the terminal. Then they wrote in the headlines and stuff like that that they intended to put on that story. Then they—whatever—an old phrase I remember—they "J Sed" it.

JS: Yes, "J Sed" it. Justified and set.

JM: Justified and set—sent it away to be set into type. And it would have been cold type.

JS: Yes.

JM: Then it went up to the composing room and it was supposed to go through the cold type machines and set this into type and everything. Is that correct?

JS: Yes.

JM: Okay.

JS: This was done on the Photon. The Photon worked a little bit differently than the Super Quick had worked. It had a rotating disk that was just micro-inches [laughs] away from a light source, and it had a mark on it that was the beginning. It could get the characters off of that, and they were in a row around this—some of them had more than one row, and it would move it up or down to get it—to get the right row off of it. But the whole font was in one row around this rotating

disk. You had to be *very* careful with that rotating disk because it was so close to that light source, if you touched that while it was rotating—if the light source got too close and it touched that, it would put a streak through it.

JM: Okay.

JS: The installation man—when he was installing it—did that and ruined the first disk. We were one of the first ones to get that kind of machine.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: And these disks weren't readily had. They had to—he ruined it, and we had to wait for another one to get there before we could continue to use it. Walter didn't like that. [Laughs]

JM: I'll bet.

JS: I mean, he was ready right now.

JM: Well, weren't we one of the first papers to—I know we were one of the first with DEC, but we were one of the earlier papers in the country to go to computerized typesetting as well, weren't we?

JS: Yes, we were.

JM: Do you remember how early we were in DEC? Seems to like we were just the second or third.

JS: Well, Texarkana was already doing it.

JM: Were they?

JS: Now, this was so new with DEC that they moved a technician—DEC did—and stationed him in Texarkana so he would be where he could take care of this one

computer.

JM: Yes. I see. Okay.

JS: But when we got one, he had to take care of the two, and that was halfway across the state, but, still . . . .

JM: Who was the technician?

JS: John Passmore.

JM: I remember that name. Yes. So they put this system in, and we had four terminals for the copy editors. And we had more than four copy editors.

JS: Right. [Laughs]

JM: So they had to take their turn, and we would have a lot of stories coming in close to deadline. Right?

JS: Yes.

JM: So these had to be processed—I'm assuming—I never knew a new computer systems there weren't bugs in and everything when you start out. Didn't we have a lot of bugs in this one?

JS: We had a lot of bugs in this one.

JM: And problems at the start. Do you remember any of those specific details, or anything?

JS: Well, it was all new. It was a new computer. We had to really do something to this.

JM: Yes.

JS: The computer we'd had before only had readers on it. You didn't have to do

anything to it. And this one—you had a terminal—you had to start it up and shut it down systematically, and wait until it decided to do all the things you told it to do. It was just a lot different than anything we'd ever done before.

JM: Yes.

JS: It had problems, too. There weren't a lot of people using it. There were things that happened to it that—maybe they weren't really big later, but at first they were really big.

JM: Yes. And DEC wasn't even aware of some of the things that were going to happen with it. Is that correct?

JS: Yes, that's right. And there was no time. We only had one. When it was down, we didn't have a backup.

JM: Yes. And if we'd had two and one went down, then you could've kept operating with the other.

JS: Right. So you couldn't shut it down just because you wanted to, to see what was making it tick.

JM: Yes. So you had that problem. Were we also having problems with the scanner at the same time?

JS: [Laughs] Yes, all this was new at the same time.

JM: Yes.

JS: The scanners were the same way.

JM: Yes.

JS: They weren't common, either.

JM: They were pretty new to the newspaper business, too, at that time. Okay.

JS: Right.

JM: And we were dealing with all of that.

JS: I went to school on the scanner.

JM: Did you?

JS: That was one of the schools that I went to. Two two-week schools back to back. And I had walking pneumonia when I was at that one. I thought I was going to die.

JM: Yes.

JS: But every time—the top of the thing was already up showing the works, you know? The ones at school would—you just walked up to it and you'd start working on it.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, we got back, and the first thing—Walter—it was right outside of Walter's office. It was right there against that rail, right outside Walter's office. Every time it made an error or every time it found an error, it—you know, you corrected your errors with a pencil, and it would stop on it, and you'd type in—if you had put in a . . .

JM: You'd type in a right character. Yes.

JS: You'd type in a right character. Well, it beeped when it did this. He wanted that beeping stopped. I couldn't figure out how to get the hood up to disconnect the beeper—the speaker.

JM: Yes. [Laughs]

JS: I had to go into the logic on that thing and bend a pin out on the chip that made it do it [Laughs] because I couldn't figure out how to get the hood open. [Laughter] Things like that—there were things you had to get used to.

JM: As I remember—of course, the problem with only having the one computer—and you were responsible for keeping all this stuff and running and everything.

JS: Yes, *me*!

JM: Yes, you.

JS: I was the only one who knew how little I knew about it.

JM: But at any rate, as I remember—refresh my mind on this—as we first got into operation and printing out the stories and everything else, and trying to put out the paper on the terminals and with the computer and everything, the system started crashing a lot. And it was particularly crashing right on deadline, which is the time above all you didn't want it to crash, right?

JS: Right.

JM: So we would be in the midst of sending a story up to go on page one or something, and the computer would crash. Then we didn't have a story to go there and we were just hung up. We were facing deadlines and everything else. My recollection of it, and I want to get [yours], is that after some considerable investigation—maybe you were the one who found this out—and this is my interpretation—that when the copy editor edited the copy, they wrote the headline on it and specified what kind of headline it was supposed to be. They might

say—and I think they put asterisks around each side of the headline—*K60*—which meant they wanted sixty points. Set this headline in sixty points. Then it came down. You finished with that and then you—you could do a deck, but we won't get into that. Then you were going to the regular type, you know, that you read the story in and everything, which might be set in nine points or ten points, and you would say *10 point*. But when it got through, there was some symbol that we had that was supposed to tell the computer after the headline, "Okay, stop doing this, and do what we tell you to do next." We discovered that the copy editors were forgetting to put that symbol in there sometimes, so it was trying to set the whole story in sixty points or forty-eight points. Is that correct?

JS: Yes.

JM: And that caused the system to crash. Is that right?

JS: Yes, it took up too much—now, you've got to understand, too—we were doing this—you know how big computers are now.

JM: Yes.

JS: I just put a new hard drive in my computer, and I put an eighty-gig [gigabyte] hard drive in it.

JM: Yes.

JS: We were doing this whole thing—putting out this newspaper—with 128K—not megs [megabytes] but K [kilobytes] of memory.

JM: Is that right?

JS: And an eighty-meg hard drive. It was on eleven platters that were like thirty-three

RPM [revolutions per minute] records. They were that big around.

JM: Yes.

JS: There were eleven of them. It was a disk pack.

JM: Yes. So how big was this computer? Do you remember the approximate size of it?

JS: Well, it was about ten feet long and six feet high and three feet thick.

JM: Yes. And these didn't have any more memory on that than you got in . . .

JS: You didn't have near as much!

JM: . . . as you got in just a little laptop [computer] or something.

JS: No. I just installed this printer, and it said it needed 190 megs of memory—or RAM [random access memory]. And I had 128.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, this had 128K, not megs, but K.

JM: Megs are less than K, right?

JS: No, Ks are less than Megs. It takes a thousand K to make one meg.

JM: Oh, okay. That's what I meant. So it had a lot less memory—this big one that we were operating with.

JS: Yes.

JM: Does that square with your recollection of what was happening to us . . ?

JS: Yes.

JM: . . . that we were leaving out this symbol, and we called DEC about it. DEC said, "Well, just tell them not to leave that symbol *out*!" [Laughter] I was sitting there,

and I almost exploded on that. I told them, "Hey, we've never operated a computer before. We've never done any of this stuff before. We're operating right on a deadline. You've got just two minutes to get this thing up and everything." And I said, "Sometimes they're going to make a mistake, you know?" I said, "It shouldn't do that, anyway. There ought to be some kind of damn default in there, you know, that it wouldn't crash." Is that correct?

JS: Yes.

JM: So they finally figured out a system, I think, didn't they?

JS: Just let it do three lines or something like that, because most of the heads weren't more than three lines—set three lines and default to the . . .

JM: Yes. Default to the other one. Yes. But didn't it take them about a month or something?

JS: It took a long time. I mean, we had to get software people involved in that to write new software for—to write a patch for it. Oh, yes, we put a lot of patches in. We put a lot of patches in.

JM: What do you mean by patches?

JS: To patch the software.

JM: Okay.

JS: It was just something that changed—I mean, it would be just a little short something that you'd run through and it would patch the software. Some of them were even toggled in on the switches. It told you how to put in—you could do a program. You could load a whole program. It would take forever to do it on the

switches.

JM: Yes.

JS: But on some of them we had to do like that, if there weren't many instructions in the patch, you could just do it that way and it would be simpler.

JM: Anyway, we kept crashing the system and you kept having to run down and have to bring it back up and get it running again and everything. So there were a lot of problems like that just starting out on it.

JS: Now, all this time, we were an afternoon paper.

JM: Yes. Right.

JS: Yes. That changed, too. But at this time, we were an afternoon paper and all this was happening in the daytime.

JM: Yes. And you were in a rush—you had a lot of deadlines, so you were in a bind on your time element, anyway, from the . . .

JS: That's the reason there were more alcoholics in the newspaper [laughter] field than anything else.

JM: Than anywhere else because of the time—the pressure. The time element. But you were responsible for keeping all this stuff running. Did you have an assistant to help you with anything?

JS: No. It was me.

JM: Just you, huh? You had to keep the scanner running . . .

JS: And only one system.

JM: And one—yes.

JS: We had one system. I believe it was eight years that we ran with one system.

JM: Okay. That was the . . .

JS: And we never missed an edition. We were—of course, we were late [laughs] on a few, but we weren't really that late on any of them.

JM: Yes. I remember. Of course, I was there when Walter came in 1974, and I stayed until 1978. I left in 1978, but I don't remember us ever missing an edition or anything. As you say, we were late, but still you were operating with just that one computer.

JS: For eight years we did that with one computer.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: Again, then . . .

JM: Go ahead.

JS: By that time—but we did have more terminals than that before that.

JM: Yes.

JS: I think we got up to—we could put sixteen on it. I'm not sure if we had sixteen. I think we had fourteen. I think fourteen was the most we ever got until we bought some more computers from Raleigh, and that was after you left.

JM: Yes.

JS: We bought three—well, we bought two trailer-truck loads of computer equipment from Raleigh, North Carolina.

JM: Did you?

JS: They'd had a fire in their press room. It got smoke-damaged and everything, and

they had upgraded.

JM: They had gone in with DEC. They were one of the early ones—them and Baton Rouge [Louisiana], as I remember.

JS: Yes. We bought one from Baton Rouge, but we used it for a business system.

JM: So when you got the sixteen terminals, some of the reporters started inputting their stories on the terminals, right? Rather than having to go through the scanner?

JS: Yes.

JM: They could go type it up on the . . .

JS: And the scanners were getting old by then. They were really causing problems then. [Laughter]

JM: That was a big help. And as I remember—this is a little digression—but I had to go to school to learn how to operate those computer terminals and everything. One of the early problems was that, I think, when the computer makers—the companies—decided to start doing this, they consulted the back shop. They consulted the people in the back shop—the typesetter people and like that—and not the reporters and editors. As it wound up, it was the reporters and editors who wound up having to use them, but they hadn't taken into consideration what the reporters and editors knew or what they did on something like that.

JS: Yes.

JM: I remember, though, to their credit, that DEC started a users' school—a DEC users' school—in which they brought in reporters and editors and said, "Okay, tell

us what's giving you problems and tell us what you need to do." I can remember it was something as simple as that—I was sitting there talking to somebody, and it may even have been Nolan DeLaughter [pronounced Dee-Lotter]—he said something about upper rail and lower rail. I said, "What?" And he said, "Well, you know upper rail and lower rail."

JS: [Laughs]

JM: I said, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about, Nolan." He said, "Well, like on a Linotype machine, all the caps are on one rail and the uncaps are on another rail. One of them's an upper rail and [the other is an] lower rail." I said, "I didn't know that. There aren't two reporters in the country who are going to understand that."

JS: [Laughs] It wasn't caps, it was italics or bold face. It had the upper rail for bold face and the lower rail for lite face.

JM: Okay, I'm glad you explained that. I had forgotten that. I was thinking it was . . .

JS: And it was a *rail*—actually, in their assembler—they pulled a little button that pushed a rail in and the mats wouldn't go as far down.

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughs] I think by this time, though, that for a period there—I mentioned this name—Nolan DeLaughter—that he had been the production manager. Is that right?

JS: Yes.

JM: And he stayed around—how long did he stay?

JS: Well, I'm not sure. I can't remember for sure, but I think it was until the early part

of 1976.

JM: Okay. Do you remember—and this is skipping around a little bit—do you remember when they decertified the ITU [International Typographers Union]?

JS: It was some time after that because . . .

JM: Yes, I'm sure it was.

JS: It was not that year. It was probably the next year.

JM: Yes. When Nolan was the production manager, they'd had a strike by the pressmen. Is that right? Because I think Walter had probably been wanting to change something there, like manning rules or something like that. Is that correct?

JS: Yes. Right. All publishers were beginning to realize that the pressmen—all pressmen had a manning rule in their—manning law, they called it—in their contract.

JM: Yes.

JS: That they had to have so many pressmen for so many units, and the color unit counted more than one. On Saturday night they'd have so many pressmen—because of the number of pages, they'd have so many pressmen that they couldn't all get in the pressroom at the same time.

JM: And they couldn't all work.

JS: And the publishers were beginning to realize that, and they were paying people they shouldn't have had to.

JM: They were paying people who never did work, right?

JS: They were *all* beginning to realize that they were not going to have—well, they were trying to take the manning clauses out, and a lot of pressmen struck.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: That's what they struck for there.

JM: As I recall, and I didn't know much about it, but when they went on strike, they brought in pressmen from out of state—probably affiliated with the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association.

JS: Yes, that's right. And they brought in some from their other papers.

JM: Yes.

JS: I remember a guy came from El Dorado who came back as an ad salesman and worked for us for a while. He came and helped them out on the press there.

JM: Yes.

JS: There was a guy who worked there who had been to school on the press a long time ago when they had—they'd never had a strike before, but they'd had union troubles, and they had sent him to school on the press. And they sent him down to help. Nolan helped.

JM: Yes.

JS: And they got the paper out. The pressmen didn't think they could get it out, but all the other crafts crossed the lines.

JM: Yes. And most of the crafts were organized at the *Democrat*, as I remember. The people who cast the pictures—the engravers . . .

JS: No, the engravers were not. They were the only craft that was not unionized.

JM: Okay.

JS: It was the printers, the stereotypers, the mailers—they were all organized.

JM: And the pressmen.

JS: And the pressmen. Right.

JM: The other three crossed the picket line, and they brought in people who knew how to operate the press, so they kept putting out the paper.

JS: Right.

JM: Eventually they broke the strike. And, of course, Nolan only stayed maybe a year or so after that. Then did you take his place as production manager?

JS: Yes.

JM: So you became the production manager.

JS: And still had to take care of the computer. [Laughter] I still had to do all the work on the computer. Yes.

JM: Did you not even have an assistant yet?

JS: No, I still didn't have an assistant. [Laughs]

JM: Okay.

JS: And the reason the ITU—I think it was the next year—is because we were negotiating and trying to get a decertification hearing for the first year in June, when the had the ANPA [American Newspaper Publishers Association] meeting and I didn't go.

JM: Yes.

JS: The next year was the first one I went to, and I had to go in late because of the

decertification hearing.

JM: Yes.

JS: So I think it was—I'm pretty sure it was 1977.

JM: Okay. But at that time, though, the handwriting was on the wall, in essence, that there wasn't much stuff left for the old typesetters to do.

JS: That was another thing that happened after I was named production manager. I had problems with getting out of the union because of these guys I had worked with for fifteen years.

JM: Yes.

JS: Now I was production manager, and they were cutting the force. I mean, cutting the force to the *bone*. I had to lay those people off knowing they were never going to come back. They were the same people that I had worked with for fifteen years.

JM: Yes. But, as I said, the handwriting was on the wall. Everything was going to be done by computer and machine that the old typesetters and printers had done in the past, except pasting up the pages. And, of course, that was going to go by the wayside. They may not have known it then, but when pagination came in, that went by the wayside.

JS: Yes. And some of those old printers walked out the door saying, "Those computers will *never* work. They'll never take our place." As they were walking out the door they were still saying that. [Laughter]

JM: Yes. But they voted to decertify, isn't that correct?

JS: Well, that was the ones who were left.

JM: Oh, okay.

JS: By this time, when Walter bought the paper, there were seventy people in the composing room. Seventy printers.

JM: Okay.

JS: When it finally got down to decertifying—I can't remember how many there were, but there weren't but twelve or something like that.

JM: Oh, is that right?

JS: It had all evolved into—the computer was going and everything was—it was all different.

JM: How did you get by with letting all those people go? Did the union not file a complaint over that?

JS: Well, no, because that was just part of it. There were jobs being cut out. They weren't being replaced by non-union people.

JM: Yes, I see.

JS: They were just cutting off jobs.

JM: They just didn't have . . .

JS: They were trying to make a paying proposition out of it. [Laughs]

JM: Yes, out of the newspaper. But they were just positions cut out that you had no need for.

JS: That's right.

JM: As you said, you weren't trying to bring in non-union people to do it.

JS: No.

JM: Okay. So the new technology had taken over so much and did so much of the stuff, [that] you had gone from—by the time all this happened—from seventy to about twelve people in the composing room.

JS: Yes.

JM: I've heard, and I don't know whether—that when they decertified Walter told them if they voted to decertify, they would have a job with the *Democrat* as long as they lived, if they wanted it.

JS: He couldn't tell them that before they decertified.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: He *did* tell them that later.

JM: Yes. Okay.

JS: But he didn't tell them that before they . . .

JM: I wondered about that. I had heard that he promised them a lifetime job, because I know . . .

JS: He did. And Cecil Atwood is still there.

JM: Yes, that's what I understand. I missed him. I went down by the *Democrat*. I knew he was a guard at the front desk, but I asked for him and they said, "Well, he just went home. He went home at 3:00," or something like that.

JS: Yes. And he's in his eighties.

JM: Yes. He has to be. Yes. At any rate—all this was going on while you were the production manager, and then—okay, you were explaining that after eight years—

what happened with the computer?

JS: We bought two moving vans—I mean, they just piled equipment in there—but it took two moving vans to move it all—of computer equipment. We made—I don't know how many systems they tore down to make that. I didn't go get it, but there were four or five people who went over there and [they] just started taking things apart and piling it in. They threw a lot of stuff away.

JM: This is Raleigh you're talking about?

JS: Raleigh—yes.

JM: Bringing in terminals and things.

JS: Yes, and new systems. A system was not supposed to take but sixteen terminals, and we figured out how to put sixteen more on one system.

JM: Okay.

JS: We figured that out—DEC said it wouldn't work, but it did work.

JM: Yes. Were you still using the same old basic mainframe computer? It was the same computer?

JS: Right.

JM: You had new terminals and a new operating system—you [were] working all this stuff in, but you still had just the one computer.

JS: Yes. And when we got the second computer, it really wasn't a backup for the first.

JM: Yes.

JS: We could've *used* it that way, but we would've had to change everything around,

and people would have [had] to go onto other terminals. We had one system for the news and one for—I've forgotten what it was now. All I know is that Phyllis Brandon was on it.

JM: Well, that would've been the women's section—the High Profile section.

JS: The women's section. Yes.

JM: Okay. So you had one system for news and one for that?

JS: Yes.

JM: A different computer or just . . .?

JS: A different computer. Yes.

JM: Okay. So at some point he bought a new computer. Is that right?

JS: Yes.

JM: And brought it . . .

JS: We made it—we put them together.

JM: Okay.

JS: By this time—well, Geoff went back later, but he was software. He was not—he still didn't do the hardware.

JM: This is Geoff George you're talking about?

JS: Yes.

JM: And that's G-E-O-F-F, I believe . . .

JS: Right.

JM: . . . who was no relation to Marcus, I don't think.

JS: No. [Laughter]

JM: At any rate . . .

JS: I forgot when he came, but it was quite a while back. We just missed that. DEC didn't have a classified system for this computer.

JM: Okay.

JS: They didn't have the software for it.

JM: Yes.

JS: He had worked for ANPA [American Newspaper Publishers Association], and he and another guy had written a classified program for this DEC computer. He came in to install it, and they hired him. He had already installed the one in Texarkana. When he came in to install Little Rock's, they just hired him.

JM: Now, was that in Easton, Pennsylvania? ANPA is American Newspaper Publishers Association?

JS: That's right.

JM: As I remember, they had a research institute at Easton.

JS: Right. That's what that was—the ANPA/RI—Research Institute.

JM: Right. But when you got the new computer—what year did you get the second computer? Do you remember when that was?

JS: No, I can't remember. It's all running together. We installed two of them at Hot Springs [Arkansas]. We did theirs right. We put them in a backup, but we didn't try to back the one up we had. We needed more space. We needed more . . .

JM: Computer power.

JS: . . . computer power than we had, so we just put in two computers.

JM: They were both running different things, so, in effect, you had two computers, but you didn't have a backup system for one. If it crashed, the other one couldn't back it up.

JS: That's right.

JM: Okay. So you still had . . .

JS: It would have—it could have.

JM: It could have.

JS: But it took at lot of people changing things around.

JM: Okay. So you didn't fool with it.

JS: It wasn't really something you could flip a switch and it's on another computer.

JM: So were you still having trouble all along that time, you know, about getting the paper out and having . . .

JS: This computer was getting old, and the air-conditioning was not strong enough anymore. You had to leave the drawers pulled out to keep the things cool. Now, this was this ten-foot-long computer, but it still had the same amount of memory and the same amount of hard drive space. We did have another hard drive—a disk-drive unit on it by that time, but it was still all the same little computer that it started out [as].

JM: Yes. So you were still having troubles. After I left in 1978, I heard at some point in time that the computer crashed or something happened, and they couldn't get it running up again for a few days. I don't know how long. They were only able to change the front page or something like that on the paper. Is that correct? What

happened at that time?

JS: Well, we had to go to Texarkana. We flew some people to Texarkana. Of course, it didn't look the same.

JM: Yes.

JS: The type didn't look the same, but we were getting something out, anyway.

JM: Yes.

JS: And we fixed it. But one time it crashed too late to go to Texarkana. We couldn't get it back up, and we put the same front page out two days in a row.

JM: Oh, did you? Okay, the same paper—the whole paper . . .

JS: No, it wasn't the whole paper. It was close enough to deadline that we had most of the stuff done, but the front page hadn't been touched.

JM: Okay. The inside pages had been changed. Okay.

JS: Yes. But the front page had not been done. It might have had some of the stories done. I'm not sure about that. But they decided—and Walter decided himself—this was after we were a morning paper. This was in the middle of the night. We put the same front page on. We were really taken to task. Now, this was during the war.

JM: This was during the newspaper war [between the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*].

JS: The newspaper war. Yes. The TV station came in the next day. Now, this was after the computer was up, and they came in and wanted to take a shot of me working on the computer. Well, the computer was already up, and if you had known anything at all about the computer, you could tell from that shot that it was

running because of the lights—you know, how the lights raced across?

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, they were racing across. They stood out in the lobby and the guy was wrapping up his story, you know, and he said, "In the newspaper war in Little Rock, the *Democrat* just shot themselves in the foot." And Walter took bad offense to that. [Laughs]

JM: Did he?

JS: After that . . .

JM: What station was that? Do you remember?

JS: No, I don't remember. After that, no TV people could get into the paper unless Walter approved them.

JM: Is that right? [Laughs]

JS: I don't blame him. That was bad stuff.

JM: Okay. What happened when you had to go to Texarkana? What had gone wrong? Had the main computer shut down? Is that what the problem was? And you just couldn't get it up and operating again for a while?

JS: It seems to me that—I'm not really sure what part of it was, but it seems like it was the—they called it a fixed-head disk. It's what we now call a hard disk. The heads don't move. You had one disk that had one platter, and you had a bunch of heads on the bottom and the top. And it could read any point on that disk in one revolution. Well, that's where J and H was done.

JM: Justification and hyphenation.

JS: It's J and S you were saying a while ago. It was J and H—justification and hyphenation. You said J and S. That was justified and set.

JM: Yes, it was supposed to be justified and set, and this was justified and hyphenation that they . . .

JS: It was doing it on that because it was too slow to do it anywhere else.

JM: Yes.

JS: And that part wasn't working.

JM: Yes.

JS: And it didn't work for a long time. Well, not for a long time. I don't remember. It was a day or so.

JM: Yes. Do you remember how many days you had to go to Texarkana?

JS: No. It wasn't very many days. It was—well, we couldn't have done it very many times.

JM: Couldn't have gotten . . . [Laughter]

JS: I don't remember how long it was, but it was—it seemed like a long time in the paper—in the daily operation of things, but it really wasn't very long.

JM: Through a lot of this time, were you still the only computer technician and everything?

JS: Yes.

JM: I think you were. And we had a whole lot of different shifts, right? We had night shifts, and on the weekend we had weekend shifts, because I remember—as I was telling you before we started the interview, they told me that I was the managing

editor and I was going to have to learn how to bring the big computer up when it crashed because he couldn't keep you down there twenty-four hours a day. He had to give you some time off. [Laughs]

JS: Yes. [Laughs] This is not—I don't have any bad feelings about any of it, but Nolan—he was the production manager.

JM: Yes.

JS: I had a place at the lake at Choctaw [Arkansas] that I liked to go to on the weekend. And he wouldn't let me go. I mean, he said, "You can't leave town. If this computer goes down, I'm not going in to tell Walter that we couldn't get the paper out because I couldn't get a hold of Jim Shuemake."

JM: Yes.

JS: I let him do that. I finally sold the place because I couldn't ever go.

JM: Is that right? Well, I'll be darned.

JS: I don't feel bad about Nolan for doing it. I don't blame him. I would've done the same thing if I'd been in his situation, but it was bad for me.

JM: Yes. Were there any big problems in switching from afternoon publication to morning publication? How did that change your operation?

JS: Well, it didn't change it a whole lot because there were some things that were done—for a while we still had an afternoon paper, too, besides the morning paper.

JM: Yes.

JS: So if worse came to worse, we could pretty well go with what we had for the afternoon paper.

JM: Yes.

JS: But I had to go back an awful lot at night.

JM: Did you?

JS: I've come home—after I moved up here, and I moved up here in 1978.

JM: Did you? Okay.

JS: Labor Day of 1978 I moved up here.

JM: Okay.

JS: I came home one night . . .

JM: And here is near Vilonia.

JS: Yes. Right. That's about thirty miles from Little Rock.

JM: Yes.

JS: For some reason, my wife met me at the front door. This was something like 12:00 or something like that at night. There was snow on the ground, and I had just gotten home. She said, "They've already called for you." Well, I was give out. Tee-totally out. I said, "Well, I'm going to bed. If they still need me, they'll call back." [Laughter] I went to bed, and my head hadn't hit the pillow until the phone rang, and I had to get up and go back down there. I don't remember how long I worked then. But I've had to take a nap before I could come home, I had worked so long. One time I stretched out on the . . .

JM: No telling how many hours a week you were working.

JS: I've slept beside the computer in the computer room.

JM: I remember that we in the newsroom were calling you and saying, "Hey, Jim, can

you come up and take care of this."

JS: [Laughs]

JM: So you never really solved—or did you—some of those problems until you bought the *Gazette* assets—is that right—and got their equipment? Is that true? Or had you done something before then to alleviate the situation?

JS: I had another—I finally got a helper that . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

JM: [This is Jerry McConnell]. I'm still here with Jim Shuemake, and this is tape two. Jim, let's see—what were we discussing just as we finished the other tape?

JS: We were talking about that I had gotten a helper that had come in. I don't remember exactly when that was.

JM: Yes.

JS: He was an electronics person. He knew electronics, but still he didn't know the computer and all that. But he was a lot of help.

JM: Yes. Who was that?

JS: Jim Armstrong.

JM: Jim Armstrong. Okay.

JS: And he's still there.

JM: Is he? All right. The newspaper war—Walter eventually switched over completely to morning in the war with the *Gazette*. From your observation, what could you tell was happening during all that time? Did you see much—I don't

know whether there were any changes in your procedures or anything else, but what was your . . .?

JS: Well, money was tight. It looked like for a while we weren't going to make it.

JM: Yes.

JS: In fact, I was going to quit and go to work for DEC, one time.

JM: Oh, is that right? Okay.

JS: I went so far as to—that was after my daughter was sick. I went so far as to have a guy from DEC come down and talk to me about—would her insurance still be in? Would she still be covered if I changed jobs and all that? And I would be, so I went and told Walter. He talked me out of it. I mean, it didn't take much.

JM: Yes.

JS: But he did talk me out of it, and I decided to stay. He told me that he had a job for me. It didn't make any—I mean, I told him, "You know, I can get a job now," and it didn't look like we were going to make it.

JM: Yes.

JS: And if I didn't take this, then when we didn't make it, I would be out of a job, and what was I going to do then? I couldn't get a job then.

JM: Yes.

JS: So he said—well, I didn't know how valuable I was to their operation. If we didn't make it at the *Democrat*, that I would have a job. I didn't have to worry about that. So I decided not to go.

JM: Do you remember about what time this was when you were considering taking the

job with DEC?

JS: It was about the time we went morning—just after we went morning, I guess, in 1979 or 1980.

JM: Yes. Okay. So you were aware that the finances were really tight then, and you must've had some idea of what was happening with the company finances and stuff.

JS: Yes.

JM: The money was really tight for you, as far as being able to hire people or do anything.

JS: Yes.

JM: When did you see that situation easing up? Or did it ever ease up until the end?

JS: No, it never did really ease up. It was people—the people we had are the reason that we won that war.

JM: Yes.

JS: I mean, it [was] Walter's money. He had the money and was able to use—to make enough money off the others that he was satisfied with the profits he was making. Maybe not satisfied, but at least it was making enough to get by. [Laughs] Yes, get by.

JM: Yes.

JS: It was just—you just knew what was going on. You just . . .

JM: Yes. So when you say it was the people you had, what are you talking about there?

JS: We were willing to give the time and whatever it took to get the paper out—to keep the paper going—to keep the machines and equipment—computers and everything going. We were on salary, so we weren't making anything extra. We were there night and day. I had done this all the time, but we had other people that did this.

JM: Which people are you talking about, now?

JS: Well, there were people in the newsroom, people in the—all over the building.

JM: Yes.

JS: They knew their jobs were at stake there. They just did whatever it took. Even the people who had been union people who were still there—they worked seven and a quarter hours a day. That's all they wanted to work, and they put in extra time.

JM: Yes.

JS: Everybody put in extra time and did extra—made an extra effort to help. And I think that's what helped . . .

JM: So in all departments they knew the war was going on. They knew the straits were bad for the *Democrat*, that their jobs were at risk, and that they had to keep going.

JS: That's right.

JM: Was there any particular thing that you think energized those people, or was it just . . . ? Did you sense that they had any animosity toward the *Gazette*?

JS: No. No, I don't think they had any animosity. Now, there was—before—when

they were both union, we borrowed parts back and forth. We traded parts. If we had a part that they needed, we'd let them have it. I went over there and went to some—they had factory people—Merganthaler people come in for training, and I'd go over there. I'd work nights at the *Democrat*, and then I'd go over there in the daytime and go to their schools that they had for their machinists.

JM: Yes.

JS: And that had stopped long ago.

JM: Yes.

JS: That didn't go on anymore.

JM: They had kind of cut that out, I guess.

JS: But that was not the people. That was not the ordinary working people, that was more . . .

JM: Management?

JS: Management, yes.

JM: But as far as being the crunch, it never really changed much until the end of the war. Is that right?

JS: Right. That came—and that was a surprise. Just like when Walter bought the paper—that was almost as big a surprise as that.

JM: Was it? When was that? I've forgotten what year that was.

JS: 1991.

JM: 1991. Okay. So it was announced that Walter was buying the assets of the *Gazette*, and the *Gazette* would cease publication.

JS: Yes.

JM: How did that impact your job?

JS: Well, things just got easier. It was easier to buy things—parts and . . .

JM: In other words, he had some more money.

JS: Yes. Well, he didn't have any more, he just wasn't losing as much. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, okay. Did you pick up a bunch of equipment from the *Gazette* that you were able to use in computer . . .?

JS: Yes, we did. We got their photo comp typesetters, their cold-type news—it was a lot better than ours. And their computer system was a lot better than ours. It was a dual system. It was all in one system, but everything was backed up in the system.

JM: What kind of computer was that?

JS: I wish you hadn't asked that. I can't remember.

JM: Okay. But you got their computer. You got a big computer that you could use that could do all your operations.

JS: Right. And we got people from the *Gazette*.

JM: In the computer area, you're talking about?

JS: In the computer area—from the machinists. We got some of the people who had come up through hot-metal machinists and took care of the cameras—the camera room. We didn't mention this, but, you know, I did all that, too—the mail room, the camera room. When I was doing this computer stuff, I was doing all of that, too.

JM: Oh, were you really?

JS: Yes. And taking care of the mail room equipment and the—no, I didn't take care of the press room very much.

JM: No.

JS: I did some of that, though. I used to have to—when we got the new press, I'd have to be there every time they started that thing.

JM: Which new press are you talking about?

JS: The one that was installed on Markham.

JM: And the one the *Gazette*—is that—? No.

JS: No.

JM: Okay. So Walter had bought a—had he bought a press?

JS: Yes.

JM: Before the end of the war, then.

JS: Yes. But it was still not as good as the *Gazette*'s.

JM: Where did he put it?

JS: In Terminal Warehouse.

JM: Yes, down on East Markham. Right?

JS: On East Markham. Right.

JM: Do you remember about when that was that he bought that press?

JS: No. It was—no, I can't. It was before 1991. That's when the *Gazette* went out.

JM: Yes, the old press in the *Democrat* building had been wearing out, I think. Is that correct?

JS: Yes.

JM: He bought a new press and put it in Terminal Warehouse down there.

JS: Yes.

JM: What did you do, truck . . .?

JS: It was brand new.

JM: Was it? What did you do, truck the pages down there?

JS: Yes. They had a runner that ran them.

JM: Was that an offset press that they put in the Terminal Warehouse?

JS: Yes.

JM: Okay. So you had that changed and everything. But when you bought out the *Gazette* assets, you eventually started using the *Gazette* press. Is that correct?

JS: Right. And the mail room equipment and . . .

JM: It was over on the east side, too.

JS: We're still using that.

JM: Yes, it was a better press even than the new one he had put in, right? Is that correct?

JS: Well, they had two press lines.

JM: Okay.

JS: In fact, they moved the one that he had put in on Markham Street. They tore that down and moved it to Lowell.

JM: Oh, did they?

JS: They installed it in Lowell.

JM: Oh, okay—for his Northwest Arkansas edition.

JS: Right.

JM: Okay. All right. After the end of the war, things did start getting a little easier and better, from your standpoint. And you were getting more help, too, I assume?

JS: Yes. [Laughter] We got a lot of the *Gazette* people—some of them were good and some of them weren't.

JM: Yes.

JS: Some of them stayed and some of them didn't.

JM: Yes.

JS: But we did get some good ones.

JM: Yes.

JS: I got a good one from the computer room who knew their computer, and we tore it down over there and moved it over to the *Democrat* and set it up. I mean, we two by ourselves did it.

JM: Is that right? Who was that?

JS: Rick Stegall. He was probably their sharpest guy on the computer. Maybe not *the* sharpest, but close.

JM: Yes. You moved the computer itself over to the *Democrat* building, but surely more than the two of you had to move it, though.

JS: Oh, yes, I didn't mean we moved it—we tore it apart.

JM: You tore it apart and you . . .

JS: We labeled everything so we could put it back together.

JM: You had other people help cart it over there and then you put it back together.

JS: Yes. I learned a lot about it in tearing it down and putting it back [together].

JM: Yes. Yes.

JS: And how it was hooked up, anyway. Not about how to use it, but how to put it together.

JM: Yes. So when you got that into operation, that really smoothed out your problems in the newsroom and getting to press and everything else.

JS: Yes.

JM: Because if something went wrong, you had a backup. I bet you breathed a few sighs of relief along there somewhere.

JS: [Laughter] Yes.

JM: Did you ever think that the *Democrat* was going to win the war before it was actually over? At any time along there did you begin to feel fairly confident that it might turn out?

JS: No.

JM: You still were worried about it right up until the end.

JS: [Laughs] I felt more confident than I did when I went in to tell Walter I was going to quit because it had gone on for a while longer. That was in 1979 or 1980. I don't remember.

JM: Yes.

JS: This was in—I mean, it went on until 1991. We were hanging in there, but it didn't get worse, it just got—I guess because of hanging in there. It seemed

better, anyway.

JM: Yes. This might not be some area in which you were really involved and everything, but were there any particular changes that Walter made that you could say, "Hey, that's really been a big help. That's really making us more competitive"?

JS: No. I don't think there was anything he could do to do that.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, the free classifieds, but that happened before Gannett bought the paper.

JM: Yes. Right.

JS: That was one of the better things he did.

JM: Was it? Yes.

JS: People couldn't understand that. He was giving stuff away, but it was making it better. Yes. *Everybody* wanted in our paper because of the free ads. I mean, you had scads of pages of free ads, and everybody was reading them.

JM: People wanted to read the classifieds. A lot of newspaper people—editors and that type of people—didn't understand that because they didn't read the classifieds. They read the news stories. [Laughs]

JS: Yes.

JM: But I think it came as a great surprise to a lot of those people that the free classifieds made that much difference.

JS: Well, it wasn't as much the news people that he was trying to get interested in, it was the advertisers.

JM: I understand that.

JS: [Laughs] The advertisers wanted in it because people were . . .

JM: Were reading it.

JS: Were reading it.

JM: Yes, I understand that. I was just—a lot of the news people, though, were surprised that that had as big an impact as it did. But it did have a big . . .

JS: It did. It really was good.

JM: So all this occurred in 1991. You stayed on as the production manager until you retired. Is that correct?

JS: No, no. I can't remember—in 1981 or 1982—when Walter took over when his dad retired, and he took over the operation—he put Paul Smith in as general manager of the *Democrat*. Paul had been advertising manager.

JM: Yes.

JS: He saw how much I was having to do before—and he said that I could have either one I wanted. I could have the production manager part or I could have the maintenance part.

JM: Okay.

JS: Well, I chose the maintenance part. It's easier to put up with machinery than it is people.

JM: Yes. Okay. [Laughter] So you were still running the computer and all the equipment. You were still in charge of the machinery and everything until you retired.

JS: Yes. Well, just before I retired, they put Clay Carson—did you know Clay Carson? He was a photographer.

JM: I've met him. Yes.

JS: He was put in as—well, we started going to new systems. It was desktop systems. And that—we still had to keep our other system running, and I knew that. I knew the old systems, you know?

JM: Yes.

JS: And I knew it wasn't going to be long until I was going to not be doing it anyway. So I had rather do what I knew—to keep the old one running, and let the new people—the younger people learn the other stuff.

JM: Okay.

JS: They put Clay in as—I forgot what they called it—TI manager or something. I've forgotten what it was.

JM: Yes.

JS: Clay was—when I retired, he was over the—and there's—I don't know—we got a bunch of people that work the computers—and the computer industry—the computer part of the paper changed completely. I mean, when it went to desktop computers, everybody had a computer on their desk. It was all hooked together through a server and all that. That came after the *Gazette* computer—when we took it out and put this new system . . .

JM: Took it over. Yes.

JS: Yes. We used that for a long time, and then we got this new system that was

completely different. And a lot of that stuff was right over my head anyway.

JM: Clay is not with the paper anymore, is he?

JS: Yes.

JM: Is he still there?

JS: Yes, he's still there.

JM: Is he? Okay. He still does that job?

JS: He still does that job. Yes.

JM: Okay. I wasn't sure. When did you retire?

JS: In December of 2001.

JM: 2001.

JS: 2001.

JM: Okay. You had been there forty-seven years.

JS: Forty-seven years.

JM: Forty-seven years. That's a pretty good amount of time.

JS: Yes. I was only gone [the] two years that I was in the service. That time counted.

JM: And by that time, the paper even had a retirement plan, right?

JS: Right. I forgot to mention that. When Walter bought the paper, he had a profit-sharing plan.

JM: Yes.

JS: Well, the first year I made $100 or $200, or something like that. It didn't look like it was going to amount to anything.

JM: Yes.

JS: But as you put money into it, they invested that and invested it, and it just kept growing. One year I made $80,000 just to go into the profit-sharing.

JM: Oh, really? Is that right? Whew!

JS: I had $1,200 after the first twenty years, so I had a little bit more than $1,200 after . . .

JM: How far along was that when you made the $80,000? What year would that have been? Do you have any idea?

JS: Well, that was the year that the market did so good. It was—I don't know—two or three years before I retired.

JM: Yes. Okay. It was in the nineties [1990s] some time.

JS: Yes. It was when the market was just really good.

JM: Okay.

JS: It was the market that did it. It wasn't the profit-sharing.

JM: Well, did he have a separate retirement plan aside from the profit-sharing plan, or do you know?

JS: He put one in—a 401K plan in. It had been in for a year and a half when I retired. So it was put in in 2000, in July.

JM: So when you retired, you did fairly well, then, I assume, from your profit-sharing and everything, which was well deserved.

JS: Well, I hope it'll last a lifetime.

JM: Yes. I understand.

JS: [Laughter] I'm not sure it will, but I hope it does. It was considerably more than

the $1,200 I had after the first twenty years.

JM: Yes. Okay. Well, that's great. Jim, I think that we're getting close to winding up this interview, which has been a really informative interview. Is there anything else that you can think of that we haven't touched on that you've forgotten that you might like to add? Is there anything you want to say about it?

JS: Well, not that I can think of—but how much I enjoyed my time there. I had a job that most people would have called a hobby.

JM: Yes.

JS: I had to put in a lot of hours, but it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it, and I looked forward to going to work every day.

JM: Yes. You were dealing with stuff that was new stuff.

JS: Yes. And it was challenging. Everything you did was, of course, a challenge.

JM: Yes.

JS: That kept it interesting.

JM: Yes. Do you remember your reaction when the *Democrat* actually won the war—when they announced that they had bought out the *Gazette* assets?

JS: Oh, yes, when we had the meeting up in the newsroom?

JM: Yes. Was that a pretty big high?

JS: Oh, it was a *big* high.

JM: Yes, I can imagine.

JS: Walter had a lot of money invested. I had a lot of *time*.

JM: Yes.

JS: Not a lot of money in it, but I had a lot of time and a lot of effort.

JM: Yes, I know what you mean. All right, Jim. Thanks very much. This has been a great interview, and I appreciate it.

JS: Yes, sir. Thank you.

JM: Okay.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pierce]

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