Gazette Project

Interview with

Liz Carpenter
Austin, Texas
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Interviewer: Maria Henson

Maria Henson: This is an interview with Liz Carpenter. Today is January 11, 2002. Liz?

Liz Carpenter: Well, it was a great thrill to go to work for the *Arkansas Gazette*. You were always proud of them. They were a progressive paper. They had a terrific publisher, Ned Heiskell, editor. I think he kept that title. He owned the paper. And a remarkable editor-in-chief, Harry Ashmore. It was a fabulous combination. The paper–you were always proud of–I'm going to begin by just saying a little bit about Ned Heiskell, who was quite elderly and lived to be over one hundred. He and his wife I saw mostly when they would come to Washington, when my husband, Leslie Carpenter, and I were running the bureau in the national press building of the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Tulsa Tribune*, who together, [they] had made us a proposition that allowed us to work primarily for those two papers. During their heyday, particularly the *Gazette*, Mr. Heiskell and Mrs. Heiskell would come in in April and be there two or three days, and it was always a festive time because it was for the

American Society of Newspaper Editors [ASNE] meeting. She would always have lined up appointments at her favorite luxury, Elizabeth Arden, for a miracle morning. Several things that you did --- you didn't get that in Arkansas, I don't think, so that was a treat for her. Ned Heiskell was beloved by those editors. Of course, the two things that you carry with you are that the *Gazette* was the oldest paper west of the Mississippi. As Mr. Heiskell once told me, when *The New York Times* became one hundred years old and the *Gazette* was, at that time, I think, one hundred thirty years old, he sent them a wire, "Congratulations, youngster" to *The New York Times*. It was very respected as a sturdy and liberal paper that had statewide circulation. That was the reason people like J. William Fulbright could survive. They were an educated, classy paper and wise enough to hire Harry Ashmore, who was very much in the tradition of southern editors like Hodding Carter and the man from Miami, whose name slips me. But all those three were liberal in the early days of integration–pro-integration people. Of course, Harry Ashmore, you could waltz to his words. He was a magnificent writer and a delightful editor with a great sense of humor. He would come to the editors' meetings, and it would be a real treat to know him because he would include us, and we were young reporters in Washington at all of the events that ASNE had.

They would ask us to luncheons or whatever. So we really got the best of all worlds through Mr. Heiskell and the *Gazette*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, and the *Tulsa Tribune*. But they were more conservative than the *Gazette* was. These were the days when Daisy Bates was very much at work in Arkansas, when you had had the first integration cases in the Little Rock High School. And when we were constantly trying to be in contact, particularly in the Eisenhower years, with Bill Rogers, who was attorney general. He was --- it was a question of whether federal troops would be sent in or not, and we were able to get some scoops because we both were a young journalist couple. And those people were welcome at parties.

[Tape Stopped]

MH: I would also like to know–can you remember who hired you, and if you were working in the main newsroom some down in Little Rock, or was it always in Washington?

LC: No. We were–we had been hired by a combination of Harry Ashmore–he and Jenkin Lloyd Jones both came to see us in Washington. Together they hired us so that we could have a sizable office and maybe a helper or two.

MH: Do you remember the year? What year that might have been?

LC: I could look it up, but I don't remember the year. I think it was–I don't know. I had just been president of the Press Club in 1952. I was thinking this was earlier

than that. You don't have that?

MH: Not with me.

LC: At the LBJ Library there will be pretty good files and a scrapbook . We gave fifty-six scrapbooks to the LBJ Library, and they're full of clippings by Les and by myself, on the whole situation in Arkansas. But it was fun to cover the Arkansas delegation. At one point, while we were covering them, they had four chairmen. Fulbright of Foreign Relations, John McClellan, a totally different type, I think it was Appropriations, and on Ways and Means Wilbur Mills, and Oren Harris, who was chairman of the House, I think, Interstate Committee. But at eighty-one, memory begins to fade. They were, I imagine, in a delegation of just about six people. This was a strong suit for them to have four chairmen. It was always a good story. There was a lot of freedom of roaming the Capitol. You didn't have to show your card every two minutes. You went from the House to the Senate. You went to the cloak rooms and called out whomever you wanted to see. Or you wandered around. Particularly at the House cloak room, there was quite a space there where you often found Wilbur Mills, who was always reading the *Manchester Guardian* or some foreign paper, and you could go visit with him or find him there. All of those people were good to us, one, because they had respect for the *Gazette*; two, the *Gazette* was important to them because of their–it was a statewide paper, and so they wanted that circulation. We covered hearings where they were presiding. We got legislation on tax bills because of Wilbur being chairman of Ways and Means on the House side. It was a totally happy

time with the *Gazette*. The way we would get scoops during the Daisy Bates days on whether federal troops would go in or not was over cocktails, over the shrimp tables, in the late afternoon. Washington was very much congressional centered and an entertaining town, and the press was often included and we were welcome because of the newspaper. So we would go to whatever cocktail parties there were, and there you were quite likely to run into Bill Rogers, who was vital to our coverage because he was Attorney General, and I think there was a lot of pride in the *Gazette* because they had been out front in behalf of Daisy Bates and the integration of the Little Rock High School. Jim Trimble was the most happy memory. He was, again, a liberal. He was from the northwest corner, Fort Smith, Arkansas, I believe. And then Fulbright was always a good story because Fulbright was news, and the *Gazette* loved him. Funny contrast between Fulbright and John McClellan. John McClellan was very much a pork-barrel senator, and he knew how to wheel and deal, and he had early power. He would make deals to see that Arkansas got an air force base, and so forth. But Bill Fulbright was more of an erudite, you know, Oxford graduate. I remember one time when all of the delegation was getting together with the city fathers of Little Rock, who wanted to get a Little Rock air force base there. So they began their discussion. We were allowed to come in and cover the story. Well, Fulbright spoke up and said, "Well, is Little Rock really the right place for an air force base?" Well, John McClellan turned beet red. He was almost apoplectic because he wanted it for Arkansas no matter what, whether it's right for them or not. But,

of course, they ended up getting it. Waterways were a big story. The Arkansas River–I think we built every dam along it. Then, as far as knowing the city room at the *Gazette*, we were in constant contact by telephone, dictating. You dictated stories in those days.

MH: Did you talk to Bill Shelton a lot? Do you remember him?

LC: Yes, I remember Bill Shelton. I remember the women's editor because we were always looking for feature stories. I certainly remember Roy Reed. We were–you joshed a lot. There was a good feeling between the people on the paper. I think everybody had pride in that paper. We wanted to make it show up well. But about once a year they would have us come down there, and we'd go to Arkansas and generally stay through a weekend. And in those occasions, Mr. and Mrs. Heiskell always entertained us in their home. They had a terrific cook who was heavy handed with the bourbon for the meals. I remember one time Mr. Heiskell, who had a delightful sense of humor, said, "It has been said that I have eaten more liquor than anybody in Arkansas." But those are just, you know, the kind of flavor that somebody like Mr. Heiskell contributed. It was lovely.

MH: Do you remember that, at the *Gazette*–we called it the style pile when I got there. It was like your copy-editing rules, and they were all stacked up. And there were some from Mr. Heiskell that were dated 1910. For instance, you don't say "Indian." You would only use "nation" if you were talking about an Indian nation. Little yellowed slips of paper. Did any of that ever reach you all up in Washington on how the style was supposed to work?

LC: No, I don't think it did. I think we were too far away. But we did . . .

MH: Did he call you sometimes and ask you about stories?

LC: Who?

MH: Mr. Heiskell?

LC: Not very much directly. It was more through Harry or through Roy Reed, or somebody.

MH: Talk about Harry. When you called him or when he called you, what was he looking for out of Washington?

LC: Who?

MH: Harry Ashmore.

LC: Oh. Well, he wanted to know, up to date, the whole feeling about the re-election of Fulbright. But, at that point, Orval Faubus was the governor, and he had started out as a liberal and ended up as a [menace?], a conservative. And so Harry was, you know, wanting to know what was the attitude toward him, wanted him put in his right category. Like all good editors, Harry Ashmore was very accessible, and he liked to feel he had a front-row seat in Washington through us. So we did chew the fat a lot. He would keep us aware. I mean, he was on the phone to a lot of his old contacts in the South, so that was part of the conversation. But there was a lot of movement then because of the national news, because of the Little Rock case, and also because the *Gazette* was an influential paper. And because we had four chairmen, and so whatever they were saying was newsworthy.

MH: You know, at that time, Harry Ashmore was under fire in the community. His life was threatened. People were canceling the paper. I remember a story about a woman who came in and apparently slapped Bill Shelton while he was on the desk, and he turned his cheek and offered up the other one for her to slap. How much of that were you and Les aware of in Washington? Did you ever get the sense that there were . . .?

LC: Well, we were both very aware that Harry was under fire from the community. This was not unlike the pattern in other Southern towns–Miami, Atlanta–where they were going through the struggle of facing up to integration. There were plenty of the right wingers, Republican types, and the South was also moving toward being a two-party part of the country. So the political story was just hot all the time, and that was fun, so we were constantly conscious of it.

MH: How did you and Les divide up your duties?

LC: Well, just whoever's hands were empty at the moment and whoever wanted to take the story, but we also had two small children at home. So we were balancing home and family, and that was understood. Our kids grew up knowing how to take a message from an editor. I have one in handwriting that my daughter, Kristi, left us, it's not quite block printing, but not much more. "Dear Mom and Dad–the *Arkansas Gazette* called you and wants you to contact Brooks Haze [*sic*] and find out. . . ," and I can't even remember what it was we were to find out, but she has that framed as a childhood relic. They knew how to answer the phone and to answer to me. And then, of course, you also had a

lot of informal entertainment with your congressmen. We were lucky. We had a home in Spring Valley. We liked to entertain, and we–being a couple I think gave us a lot more identity than we would normally have had, and we had Wilbur Mills over quite–I can remember one time when he came and Kristi Carpenter, our daughter, was really about six or seven years old and he chased her around the back yard, playing some kind of game of–just a minute. Wilbur Mills was amused by this child, and we were sitting out in the garden. We had a lovely garden with dogwood trees and azaleas, and that was Les's golf game. He didn't play golf, but he did garden on the weekends, and so we entertained in the garden of our house a lot. When Wilbur and Polly Mills were there one time, Kristi was dying for somebody to play Peter Pan with her, and so Wilbur just took off his coat, chased her around, waving his arms like he was flying. That was so much warmth and Southern, I think, hospitality–and so much better. Nobody was trying to influence what we wrote, but what we wrote was–we weren't frisking people either. There was a warmth there that I don't think exists today between very many reporters and their sources. It was fair that . . .

MH: So it was fair–you could have conversations.

LC: You could know your sources well. We certainly knew–we were in and out of Lyndon Johnson's house. He was the rising star of the whole scene, and during the Eisenhower administration, was majority leader with two votes operating. Mr. Rayburn was still king of the House and very much the power that was respected. They were practicing state craft and, of course, they were after some

projects for their towns. They were not scared of the federal government, and they were primarily Democrats, all, so that eased a lot of the legislation. And we were still within memory of the Depression. I never heard people call it "The Great Depression"–anybody who lived through it. That's an invented term by people who didn't. We didn't think the Depression was very great. We'd had three and a half years of the same president, FDR, moved right into Truman, and then into Eisenhower. The kings of the Senate were from the South, and from the House, both.

MH: Now, you said you got lots of scoops during the time of Eisenhower administration and the question of federal troops coming into Little Rock. Do you have a memory of some of the stories that you and Les just were so excited that you were able to get on the front page?

LC: We were able to get Bill Rogers, the Attorney General, on the phone to know whether federal troops were going to come in or not, or whether they were going to leave it alone. And they were concerned, politically, of course, about it. But he knew it meant a lot to us, and so we could sidle up to him at a cocktail party, where he wouldn't have to put out a press release and indicate that, if we knew how to question him coyly, that troops were going to go in there. That was kind of a running story for a long time. You could get some advance word for the *Gazette* without too much trouble because people knew what the paper was and what it stood for. And I think it was really the front runner for Southern newspapers and, of course, it's where, ultimately, they won the Pulitzer Prize.

Fred Graham was Mr.Heiskell's nephew, and–what was he doing? He was accompanying the Supreme Court, I believe, or maybe he was on the *Tennessean*. There were lots of ties between Tennessee and Arkansas, and I think Mr. Heiskell was from Tennessee, if I'm not mistaken, originally. But, of course, Louise and Hugh Patterson . . .

MH: Patterson–I was going to ask you about that.

LC: They were often visitors to Washington, and they always took you out for a dinner that was better than you would have bought yourself. If there was something going on at the National Press Club or the Women's National Press Club that was interesting–the press clubs were the most interesting places in Washington, outside of the White House. Well, we made a point of inviting them to everything.

MH: Do you remember A. R. Nelson? Much about him?

LC: I don't.

MH: Okay.

LC: Refresh my memory.

MH: Well, I just had a note from Roy about A. R. Nelson, and it's not someone I know, either, so I don't know if he was . . .

LC: Doesn't ring–was he in a federal job in Washington?

MH: No, I think he must have been at the newsroom back in Arkansas. When you would go down there, did you hang out with reporters and hang out in the newsroom?

LC: It was generally a fast trip, and you made the rounds in the newsroom and somebody took you around and introduced you to everybody. But we weren't down there carousing with the staff because there wasn't time. Our beat was the White House and the Hill, and of course, the budget story when the budget came out on how much money was allotted for the Arkansas River projects, or to make the Arkansas navigable up to Tulsa. It was a big story, how much money had been allotted. That was page one every time. So you were looking for the local story, but it became more of a national story because of the events that were happening in integration.

MH: Did you meet some of the civil rights figures down in Arkansas? Did you have occasion at that time to meet Daisy Bates, for example?

LC: No, we didn't. We certainly knew her as a character and that anything said about her in Washington would be news.

MH: Yes.

LC: It was looking for the local angle.

MH: How long did it take before you would actually get to see a *Gazette*? What was the lag time?

LC: Just about two days or less.

MH: Oh, that's pretty good.

LC: People would come by and read the *Gazette* in our office in the National Press Building.

MH: Yes.

LC: At first we were on the eighth floor, at 812, and then we ended up working our way up to the prestige floor, the twelfth floor. We had a string of papers by now.

MH: Did Les have a specialty that he really thought was pretty good, a topic?

LC: Well, he was very good at dictating without beating it out. Of course, the press galleries then had upright Underwoods, and L. C. Smith's. Nobody had electric typewriters, so they were there available for anybody. And we would–you know, you could cover somebody's speech, and you could go in and beat it out. And then, if the time was right, you called and dictated it. Les could dictate it without ever writing it out. Just in his mind, he was excellent at that. I wanted more time. I wanted to think out the lead. It was a time when newspapering was a real wordsmith craft. You had the fun of sharing leads with each other. You always read your own copy first when the *Gazette* came in–where were you placed and how did it work.

MH: Oh, yes. What made you want to be a newspaper woman?

LC: I always loved words. I grew up in a family of words, hearing a mother quote the British poets. Older brothers and sisters talk about–you learned in high school, you learned to quote the British poets. I mention British because that was primarily where your education was. Then I went to–I wrote the school song for grammar school. I wrote the class prophesies for [my] junior high class, and there were eight hundred prophesies I had to compose.

MH: Eight hundred prophesies! [Laughter] What did you have to pick for yourself?

LC: I can't remember. And then when we went into high school at the ninth grade, I took journalism classes there. I was so blessed with journalism teachers. James Markham at Austin High School. I ended up being the editor of the paper there, and Les ended up being the business manager. That's where we first met. So it was a semi-high school romance, but more of a college romance when we both went to work on the *Daily Texan*. Your pathway was then straight out of school. I graduated in June of 1942, and my graduation present was a ticket to Washington, D. C. The war had just taken place, and my oldest brother was there working in one of the departments, and so I could stay with him. I took my scrapbook from–I'd worked on the *Austin American-Statesman* as well as the *Daily Texan,* and I took my journalism degree, as I say in speeches, with my journalism degree and my virtue intact [laughter], I went to Washington, D. C. I still have the journalism degree. Well, anyway, I knocked on the doors. I was not married at this point. Les was in the navy after graduation, and I was in Washington, knocking on doors in the National Press building, looking for a job with the scrapbook. I got a job. It wasn't hard for a woman to get a job then [because] the men were going to war in 1942. Also, if you were a nice girl, you went to Washington, and you called on your two senators and your congressman. My congressman was in room 504, House Office Building, Congressman Lyndon Johnson from Texas 10th District. He wasn't there. He was in the South Pacific because, like a handful of congressmen, they had voted for the draft, voted for the declaration of war, and they went and signed up.

Roosevelt called them back later. Ladybird was running his office, so she gave me lots of good advice of what to go see. I was still wide eyed and eager to see Mt. Vernon and go to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and see the Hill and the Supreme Court. She was telling–she helped direct you to those things. When she could, she took you to some kind of congressional club event. That's the way the political wives were. I remember so well the power I felt for the first time, that you could hold up your hand and call a taxi cab, just out behind the Capitol. I knew I wanted that for me, and you could go downtown for fifty cents on a taxi cab. As time went on, we walked in a number of inaugural parades because you didn't have a good way to get down from the inauguration ceremonies at the back of the Capitol to the front of the White House where the parade would come by. Les was on the Standing Committee of Correspondents, which had some powers in giving press passes to people because they were trying to see that you were a legitimate reporter for some newspaper. When I first got there, the Pentagon had just been finished, and so there were lots of jokes in the early days because it was so big, the largest office building in the world. I remember that one of them was that there was this woman who rushed up to a guard at the Pentagon, and she said, "Quick, get me out of here. I'm about to have a baby!" And the guard said, "Madam, if you were pregnant, you shouldn't . . .

[End of Side One, Tape One]

[Beginning of Side Two, Tape One]

LC: . . . radio, and you weren't terribly conscious of that, so pad and pencil reporters were the kings of the press galleries.

MH: Did you take notes by shorthand?

LC: No, I just scribbled fast. You learned how to read somebody's desk with the letters upside down. That still stays with me. I can do that, but the talents were so different then, and few people had recording machines. I mean, you saw a few at White House press conferences under FDR. I went to some of his and Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences. I treasure those because I was about twenty-two and twenty-three at the time, but what a wonderful, long corridor of history you're looking back over.

MH: Yes.

LC: Eleanor was the goddess of the newspaper women. I mean, she had made news come our way more by having a press conference about once a month. We all went over to the White House with gloves and hat on and walked up those stairs to the second floor, and at the one end was the largest tea service I'd ever seen. She always sat with us in a circle. I would say there were about eighteen or twenty. She greeted each one of us standing at the top of the stairs. She always had brought in somebody to share the story with. She wanted to point out what women were doing in the women's bureau, which, in some ways, was the cutting edge of the New Deal with unemployment compensation, and then Frances Perkins was the woman in the cabinet and part of that wonderful group of New York settlement club/junior league types who were–they were do-

gooders. They were people who–and, of course, child labor was still a subject. Frances Perkins had been inspired to be there because she saw the Triangle Shirtwaist fire. It's a story I recalled in my book–I forget which one. I guess I told the story in *Start with a Laugh*, my last book, because I've told it in speeches. But she wore a tricorn hat when she was holding a press conference. And women reporters were so aware of . . . women who became news makers. You were still covering wives and doing the "how are you a help to your husband" story, but you almost saw that begin to fade in the early days of the Johnson years when Betty Friedan had come aboard. And then in the early seventies, the National Womens Political Caucus–I was the founder of it, and I am very proud of it because there are not many of us left. Two hundred seventy-one women who stayed in the Statler Hilton Hotel over July the fourth meeting. Nixon was president at this point. But that's where we all got introduced to the word "Ms." and from then on, it was a major step for women that we had become a political force. Often a failed force, but a force nevertheless.

MH: How many of the couples on Capitol Hill were there like you and Les?

LC: Not very many. Jim Free, who was the Washington correspondent for the Birmingham paper, and his wife, Ann Cottrell Free, who had been the first president of Mrs. Roosevelt's press conference. I have somewhere in papers, and I've got to be sorting them out, the copy of the letter written in about 1943, telling me that I am accepted to come to Mrs. Roosevelt's press conference.

And I don't know whether I'm going to turn that loose to the library or give it to my daughter because I don't think many of those documents are lying around anywhere.

MH: No.

MH: Did you encounter any kinds of prejudice against you when you were working the job for the *Gazette*? Would people say, "No, I don't want to talk to you. I want to speak to Les on this topic"?

LC: No, I didn't. The only one I encountered was from the *Tulsa Tribune*, and they labeled in our early bylines, Les Carpenter, Chief, Washington Bureau, and there were only two of us. I thought, "Well, what am I, the squaw?" And I made so much fun of it that they dropped that term.

MH: But that was never a problem at the *Arkansas Gazette*.

LC: No, I can't say that they didn't–see, we were still in the stage where women reporters were kind of new on the scene to anything except the . . .

MH: Society.

LC: . . . society sections, which didn't get to be named Lifestyle sections until years later. But I think Mrs. Roosevelt helped move that along just by being news and by it confining her–she wiped up discrimination by discriminating. She wouldn't allow–she only had it open to women. The AP [Associated Press] had to put on a woman who handled news out of the White House. The UPI [United Press International], the INS. They were really days of change, and we didn't realize how much they were changed.

MH: Now, when there were elections going on in Arkansas, did you get to come down and partake in that at all, travel around the state with the candidates?

LC: No, we covered the national conventions for them, and I can remember so well how we could send–and this is Western Union–your story, or if you didn't have to dictate it to the *Gazette* from–Chicago was the favorite place for both Republican and Democratic conventions. Or we covered the ones in 1948 that were in Philadelphia. We didn't go talk with the candidates. We would cover the candidates if they came to Washington, you know, if they were a candidate running against–I think Orval Faubus came there as a candidate and, you know, we would really be covering what he did while he was in Washington. The local angle. But state races were not so much a part of our lives. It was the national conventions and how the Arkansas–and there was generally somebody there from the *Gazette*, too, where we would mail our interests and cover everything on how they were going vote, whether they were going to split. There was a lot of time of roll calls and splitting delegations to the national conventions because of that constant battle on race.

MH: What year and what caused you to leave the *Gazette*?

LC: I went on to the White House. No, I went first–we didn't ever leave the *Gazette*, I don't think. I don't remember any termination, but we both–well, you see, in 1960, when Johnson was a candidate for president and then on the ticket, we were still reporters until shortly after the nomination of LBJ as vice president. He and Ladybird called me, and by this time, the convention had been in L.A.

[Los Angeles] for the Democrats, and we had driven our two kids from that convention up to Chicago to cover the Republican convention. LBJ called and said, "Ladybird and I want you to take some time off and travel with her and various assortment of Kennedy girls in the campaign, if you can take some time off." So I took off that November of 1960–Seventy-one days–and traveled with Ladybird and Eunice and Ethel, and whoever. There were generally one or two Kennedy girls. Ladybird was the only person safe in the South to take them in, and we would go on trips and do what would not play now, but did then–the flying tea parties, and you had tea parties, but you got thousands out because they're curious about those girls with the funny accents, and Ladybird did the introduction of them in Southern states. We began in Texas. I peeled off from the *Gazette*, and then I got lured away permanently because when we got elected, LBJ was being sent to Senegal, Africa, because there were going to be thirty-one independences in African countries that were coming about. We wanted to get there before the Russians, and so Kennedy sent Johnson, Mrs. Johnson, and sometimes somebody from the State Department. So I wanted to travel the world and see this, and I was, by this time, executive secretary–not secretary–what was my title? Maybe it was executive secretary to LBJ, that was early 1961. And so . . .

MH: And Les at that time was doing what?

LC: Well, he stayed on and ran the bureau and hired people to replace me. But, you know, we were in constant conversation. I was very lucky in that, you know, I

was blessed, either at the Hill first, until 1963 and the assassination of President Kennedy, or I was at the White House from then on, and I had the advantage of having a news man who was my husband, who would call me and say, "Are y'all crazy over there?" He would tell me what the gaff was and what was wrong, and sometimes you could right it, and sometimes you could tell the West Wing of the White House. The press secretary started out being Pierre Salinger and went onto George–Johnson had four press secretaries. Ladybird had one in those years. But, because of my closeness to both, having known LBJ as a congressman and then through the years in reporting for the Austin paper and six other Texas papers, you felt at ease. It wasn't a distance. You wanted them to succeed.

MH: Yes.

LC: And one of the real satisfactions, I think, of the local reporter who is covering Washington is you are watching your news sources, in most cases, move up the political ladder, and you know you were–you want it to happen, in most cases. I'm sure the people who covered John Rankin and those bigoted Mississippians didn't want them to move upward, but you were covering also the delegations that came to town, like Ham Moses, a wonderful Arkansas character who was the lobbyist for the power companies. But he was a fantastic orator, too. I mean, I've heard Brooks Hays, who was a liberal congressman from Little Rock, say, "If you heard Ham Moses on Sunday at the First Baptist Church, you had heard a real ringing oratory." Brooks Hays once told me, "You haven't

heard oratory until you've heard Ham Moses on Mother's Day at the First Baptist Church in Little Rock." And you were conscious of the Bible Belt. Hearing of Bob Kerr, who was the strong senator from Oklahoma and who was very much a friend to Arkansas because of that location. The delegations worked together. Watching Bob Kerr debate Senator [Capehart?]. I think he called [Capehart?] a tub of lard. But they often used biblical quotations. I remember so well saying to Senator Kerr, "Gosh, I wish I knew the Bible the way you do because you use it so effectively in debate." And he said, "My dear, you only have to know the first four words: 'In the beginning, God ....'" So many of the things they would tell you, wisdoms, just keep–you know, they're with you forever.

MH: Did your position in the White House help Les ever get a scoop for the *Gazette*?

LC: I think it gave him more entrance. I'm sure that it did. I don't remember. He certainly got entrance. It also had its curses, too, because he could be accused of taking advantage of it, and he wasn't. I don't think he did take advantage of it. He might have liked more opportunities to, but by this time, he was very well established. And you all knew each other. And, as I say, the kind of first entrance for newspaper people to TV was when TV came in the Kennedy years, and the men started wearing blue shirts and navy ties to be better on television. You began to–it was when the press got uppity because you began identifying yourself before a TV audience.

MH: Yes.

LC: And I don't think it's been healthy, but . . . . [Laughter]

MH: Do you remember the last time you saw Harry Ashmore?

LC: Well, I saw him once. Yes, they came here one time with Ann, the daughter, and Barbara, his wife. But we also went through there after he had retired and was working for the Hutchins–now, who did he work for in that foundation that was . . . ?

MH: Out in Santa Barbara, right?

LC: Yes, in Santa Barbara. In fact, I think I went through there twice and stayed with them a couple of times.

MH: Did you all ever reminisce about the *Gazette*?

LC: Always! I mean, it was it. And we talked over the phone quite a few times. Who was the candidate that he wanted to write some words for? I don't think he lived as long as Clinton. I'm sure he didn't. But, you know, the whole story of Bill Clinton and Fulbright and coming–I mean, there was Bill Clinton, working in the office with Fulbright. I was just not aware that he wasn't just one more–I do remember David Pryor being a page for him up there. But, by the way, I saw Lee–Lee Williams, isn't that his name? Who worked for Fulbright?–and John Erickson were the two main people. And Lee was down here at the LBJ Library and nearly fainted about two or three months ago. I had the best time because he had hired Clinton, this kid from Arkansas, to work in Fulbright's office. Now, I've never heard Bill Clinton talk about Fulbright. In fact, I think the references to Fulbright were very scarce. And I have, incidentally, asked Bill

Clinton–and I hope I get him from my lectureship this year at the university because I'd love to be able to talk to him about things that you never had time to talk to him about when you just saw him in a few presidential moments.

MH: Liz is very busy and has got big dinner plans, so I need to let her wrap up. But I thought I would ask her about the end of the *Gazette*. It closed in 1991, and the building became the campaign headquarters for Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, and now the *Arkansas Democrat* is called the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. They won. They were the afternoon newspaper and won the newspaper war after Gannett pulled out. Liz, what does that mean to you that that paper is no longer there?

LC: Oh, it means we've lost a major respected and liberal voice in the South, the whole South, because it was a pattern that was followed and watched by other papers. I'm heartbroken that it isn't existing anymore, and so maybe the voices that will have to continue are going to be political leaders like Bill Clinton, who is bound to have been inspired by the *Gazette*, conscious of it, and I think many other young–David Pryor, Senator and Mrs. Bumpers. I think the *Gazette* will still echo on, but not with the strength it had before until somebody buys or starts it again, and it needs to be. So I miss it, and everybody who worked there misses it.

MH: Thank you very much today.

LC: Thank you.

[End of Interview]